Adolescent Bereavement and Traumatic Deaths

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Abstract
Adolescent traumatic bereavement is characterized by the interaction of traumatic loss with developmental tasks involving both differentiating from family and developing increased social support outside of the family. During the loss of a parent, for instance, these dynamics can create a unique experience of desiring independence from parents while simultaneously mourning the loss of a parent. The violent nature of a death can further complicate the bereavement experience. The purpose of this chapter is to review issues related to adolescent bereavement and traumatic death, with special attention afforded to the risks of complicated grief. The chapter will discuss (a) the challenges specific to traumatic death, (b) traumatic death within the developmental stages of adolescence, (c) grief challenges nested within specific relationships to decedents and types of traumatic losses, and (d) review of available literature on successful therapeutic approaches to treatment of adolescent traumatic grief. Throughout the chapter, the terms “complicated grief” and “prolonged grief disorder” are used interchangeably.

Comments
Contribution to a book: Adolescent Encounters with Death, Bereavement, and Coping

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Objective Whether bereaved relatives should be encouraged to view the body after a traumatic death is uncertain. This analysis of narrative interviews interprets people's accounts of why and how they decided whether to view the body and their emotional reactions to this, immediately and at a later stage. Design In depth interviews with qualitative analysis. Participants A maximum variation sample of 80 people bereaved because of suicide or other traumatic death. Setting Most people were interviewed in their homes. Results For those who had the option, decisions about seeing the body varied. You may have witnessed the death, or the deaths and injury of others. Everyone’s experience and responses will be different and there is no right or ‘normal’ response. However there are some common reactions and feeling you may experience in the hours, days, weeks and months after a traumatic event. These feelings can sometimes be very strong and frightening. Cruse Bereavement Care is here to support you after the death of someone close. Our helpline is available - call freephone on 0808 808 1677. You can chat to us online.