

NR 579 - Week 8 - Disenfranchised Grief

Disenfranchised grief occurs when a loss cannot be socially acknowledged, mourned, or supported. It often occurs in marginalized populations. It happens when there is no recognition of the loss, the griever, or the relationship between the loss and the mourner. Disenfranchised grief is often minimized or not understood by others, which makes it difficult to process and work through. Historically, members of the LGBTQ community have been disproportionately affected by disenfranchised grief.

1. Provide an example of disenfranchised grief.
2. What social pressures, biases, structures, or norms contribute to disenfranchised grief?
3. What advance directives exist to give a voice to less traditional relationships?
4. In what ways can the IDT help support patients and family members at risk for disenfranchised grief?

Grief comes in many forms. When we experience the loss of a family member or even the death of a public figure, grief is expected and accepted. Socially, we are permitted to grieve over events to which we may have no personal involvement, such as a plane crash, earthquake, or other mass casualty event. Humans are capable of a wide range of emotions, and sorrow and loss can be profound, exerting a significant impact on our daily lives.

However, many other things or events can cause us to grieve, such as job loss, the loss of a friend, a stillborn or intrauterine death, or the loss of a pet. For some types of loss, society may not acknowledge that this is a valid reason to grieve. Cesur-Soysal and Ari note that this can cause suppression of grief, which can lead to self-disenfranchisement, as we then subvert our feelings, denying ourselves the grieving process (Cesur-Soysal & Ari, 2022).