Suicide Bereavement: What Helps and What Hurts?
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Importance:
Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among ages 15-25 and the 10th leading cause of all ages. There is a commonly held sentiment that Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are only comfortably addressing a narrow range of “problems of living” and not mental disorders. Only 29% of MFTs report feeling comfortable treating severe mental illness. This is problematic because the suicide and more specifically the bereavement literature commonly calls for family- and systemic-based interventions. This is even more problematic because of the intergenerational transmission—an foundation of many MFT theories—of depressive and suicidal tendencies. This study’s purpose is to develop a systemic understanding of suicide bereavement and what helps and what hurts the healing process.

Methodology:
Grounded theory methodology was used to structure the research process. Participants were recruited through UNLV’s training facility and through calls for participants on social media websites (Facebook & Twitter). Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed through constant comparison. Each member of the analysis team independently open-coded the data and then met to discuss and agree upon common themes. Each participant was invited to further reliability through completing member checks.

Results:
Three broad hurtful and three helpful themes were identified in each interview, with sub-themes that were shared by at least three participants. It is also specifically worth noting that suicidal ideation was only spoken about as a helpful process by the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hurtful Themes:</th>
<th>Helpful Themes:</th>
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<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
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<td>• Feeling excluded</td>
<td>• Not being willing to talk about it</td>
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<td>• Lack of connection</td>
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Respect
• Feeling responsible for death
• Feeling pressure to replace

Responsibility
• Addiction
• Suicidal ideation

Helpful Themes:

Social support
• Funeral
• Respect
• Feeling included
• Love and attachment
• Communication and talking about suicide
• Connection with other survivors

Making meaning
• Letting it be good
• Making it have meaning

Continuing bonds
• Keeping memory alive through artifacts
• Spiritual belief and continuation of existence
• Previous grief and loss
• Suicidal ideation

Implications:
There are profound issues of internalized shame and attachment-related issues of the internal working model that have potential to significantly impact many, if not all, future relationships in some suicide survivors. Half of the participants report high attachment insecurity and anxiety. Suicidal ideation functions as a double-bind both acting as a connection while preventing “getting over it.”