

Convention Presentation Summaries

Each year, CCAPS sponsors several programs for continuing education credits for psychologists. At this year's convention in Las Vegas, we sponsored 28 programs. If you couldn't make all the programs you wanted to attend or weren't able to attend the convention this year, you can still find out more about some of the quality presentations that were sponsored. Below are descriptions of several presentations from this year's convention.



Cyber Grieving: Social Media In Addressing Grief and Loss and Inspiring Well-Being in Students

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With the explosion of social media impacting society, politics, governments, and the student affairs field, the significance that Facebook, Twitter, and other media formats play cannot be understated. Social Media has even impacted the grieving process of children, adolescents, and adults (Sofka, Cupit, & Gilbert, 2012). Counselors and student affairs professionals who deal with issues of grief and loss in their work with students need tools to effectively assist those who express their grief online, and to ensure that online grief resources and interventions are ethically, professionally, and culturally responsive. In particular, adolescents and college students are turning to social media to express their grief publicly, as well as privately within their social circles. This presentation examined various theories/models of grieving and applied them to social networking settings. It also examined how virtual memorials, cyber funerals, blogs and Tweets all impact how people express their individual and collective grief. This interactive presentation shared various examples of how college students share their grief and loss through their online social communities. This presentation filled a void in grief counseling settings and what student affairs practitioners need to know about assisting their campuses in handling their grief and loss.

Grief is an individualized process. Symptoms of grief and complicated mourning can lead to severe depression, impaired functioning, and physical symptoms such as panic attacks, and heart troubles (Neimeyer, Harris, et al. 2012). It is important to note that cultural differences can significantly impact symptoms of grief and how grief is expressed by students. When it comes to complicated mourning, students may often be afraid to turn to traditional forms of help, and because of these disenfranchised losses (such as infidelity, suicide, and homicide), individuals may be more comfortable seeking assistance through online forms, such as social networks and other virtual groups or communities (Sofka, Cupit, and Gilbert, 2012). This presentation examined the unique needs of grieving college students (Balk, 2011; Servaty-Seib & Taub, 2008) and addressed both traditional (Kubler Ross & Kessler, 2005; Worden, 2010) and postmodern (Neimeyer, et al., 2011) theories of grief and applied them to use in online interventions. College students are especially astute at using social networks for support and community and it was a goal of this interactive presentation to help student affairs practitioners use social media in ways that promote well-being in grieving students.

This presentation used case studies, small/large group discussion, and examination of sample websites, blogs, and social media tools that have been used by college students who have faced issues related to grief and loss.

References:

Balk, D. (2011). Helping the bereaved college student. NY: Springer.

Kubler-Ross & Kessler (2005). On grief and grieving. NY: Scribner.

Neimeyer, R. Harris, D., Winokuer, & Thornton, G. (2011). Grief and bereavement in contemporary society. NY: Routledge.

Servaty-Seib & Taub (2008). Assisting

bereaved college students. New Directions for Student Services, 121.

Sofka, C., Cupit, I., & Gilbert, K. (2012). Dying, death, and grief in an online universe. NY: Springer.

Winokuer, H. & Harris, D. (2012). Principles and practice of grief counseling. NY: Springer.

