

# When the Recession Comes Home

## Loss, Grief and Resilience

Eunice Gorman RN, PhD, RSW  
OCSWSSW annual meeting  
June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009

1

1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Economic downturn

- Loss of control
- Depression
- Impaired functioning
- Poor health
- Manufacturing and service sectors
- Barriers
- Personal issues
- Systemic concerns
- Exhaustion
- Short term
  - Heightened arousal
  - Distress
  - Withdrawal
  - Lower motivation
  - High risk for adverse outcomes
- Working poor
- No benefits
- No security
- Multiple losses
- Job loss
- Downsizing threat
- Impact on those left behind
- Pay cuts
- Hours reduced
- No new hires
- The newer more energetic employees may be the first to go
- **Never in isolation**

2

2

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Scaled back spending
- Going without
- Poor nutrition
- Friction
- Difficult times make matters worse
- Low paying substitute jobs
- Threats of /to
  - Poverty
  - Sense of mastery
  - Relationships
  - Cascade of secondary losses
  - Changes in coping strategies
- Men at greater risk
  - For loss of control
  - Somatization responses
  - Decreased self worth
  - Decreased social contacts
- Hopelessness
- Increased suicide risk
- Increased risk of CAS/CCAS involvement
- Children left to the care of other family
- Separation
- Poor role functioning
- Decreased emotional functioning
- Cumulative stress
- Eroded sense of identity
- Especially for
  - Those unemployed the longest
  - Have dependents
  - No notice that job ending

3

3

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## consider

- Attachment to the former job
- Length of time since the loss
- Age
- Gender
- Social support
- Financial resources
- **Community trickle down**
  - Whole town impact
  - Ripple effect
  - Can't sell house
  - Can't find another job
  - Partner also out of work
  - Other commitments keep you in place
- Skill level
- Perceived job prospects
- Self efficacy
- Self management
- Self confidence
- Locus of control
- Personal distress
- Over time shifts in responses
- Loss of work relationships
- Daily structure eroded
- Borrow money, loan sharks
- ODSP, Ontario Works
- Relatives
- RRSP's, pensions, life insurance
- Move
- Adjusting to a new work environment if hired

4

4

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Complicated by

- Job lock
- Health issues
- Disability
- History of abuse
- History of depression
- Concurrent stressors
- Prior history
- Gender
- Recent death
- Culture
- Relationships, family, friends, quality of ties
- Family commitments-
  - care giving,
  - financial support,
  - sending money home
- If there was limited notice
  - Higher risk for
    - Despair
    - Anger
    - Hostility
    - Social isolation
    - Loss of control
    - Depersonalization
    - Death anxiety
    - Traumatic effect
    - Pain
    - Shame
- Age, developmental stage
- Social status
- **lack of social support**

5

5

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Losses on many levels

Physical	Economic
Relational	Safety
Political	Sexual
Power	Existential
Freedom	Spiritual
Authority	Cultural
Psychological	Financial
Functional	Communal
Cognitive	

6

6

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Loss experienced as...

- Primary / Secondary
- Major / Minor
- Actual / Threatened
- Internal / External
- Chosen / Imposed
- Direct / Indirect
- Sudden / Anticipated

7

7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Grief can be

- Traumatic
- Anticipatory
- Delayed
- Complicated
- Disenfranchised
- Masked
- Sudden
- Chronic
- Pathological
- Exaggerated

8

8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Feelings....one model of job loss experience

- Shock
- Active hunt for a new job—
  - Optimistic
  - Un-resigned
- Become fatalistic as he/she fails to find a new job
  - Distress
  - Pessimistic
  - Broken attitude
  - Decrease in employment commitment
  - Resigned adaptation

9

9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Relief...It is finally here/over
- Fear
- Anger
- Grief
- Injustice
- Irritability
- Family violence, family problems
- Increase in ETOH, drug use/abuse
- Why? Why me?
- Racing thoughts
- Nervousness
- Uncertainty
- Confusion
- Problems concentrating
- What if we lose the
  - House
  - Car
  - Pets
  - Friends
  - Neighbors
  - Extras

- Intensity
- Helplessness
- Overwhelmed
- Resentment
- Disengaged
- Cynicism, Critical, Negativity
- Stonewalling
- Defensiveness
- Unrealistic expectations
- Anxiety, Worry
- Tension
- Paranoia
- Blaming
- Isolation, Loneliness
- Criminal activity
- Gambling
- Late nights
- Disorganization
- Volatile, labile
- **OLD LOSSES RESURFACE**

10 10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## And the cycle begins

- Increased stress
- Increase in illness
- Decreased immune system
- Increase in
  - heart rate
  - blood pressure
  - respiratory rate
  - muscle tension
  - sensitivity of sensory organs - some organs receive more blood flow than others
  - migraines, headaches, back pain, tension, diarrhea, constipation
  - ....

11 11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The body responds. • it is not just in your head

- Neuro-hormonal dysregulation, adrenaline released
- Difficulty adjusting arousal level overly responsive-startle response
- Over production of catecholamine –anxiety, sleep problems
- Underproduction of serotonin –reactivity, irritability, impulsivity
- Underproduction of cortisol – “anti stress hormone”, immune system compromised
- Hippocampus shrinks with prolonged flood of stress hormones – memory problems

12 12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## And so...

- Letting go of friends
- Bitterness
- Poor self care
- Forgetting family
- Silence
- Loss
- Grief
- Mourning
- Suffering
- Not saying no
- Not asking for what you need
- Not telling people what is appropriate
- Stewing
- Never seeing the light of day
- No idea what to expect
- Chronic sorrow
- Forgiveness
- Making peace
- Resilience
- Hope
- Meaning making
- Temporality
- Reflexivity
- Enduring
- Tragic optimism
- Self transcendence
- Post traumatic growth
- Post traumatic depreciation

14

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Children react too...not just little adults

Grieve longer  
Need help processing  
Coping styles  
Identification  
Sense of self developing  
Linking objects  
Rely on the adults for help, guidance, support

15

14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Infants -0-2 years

Aware of shifts and changes but few ways of communicating  
sensory and motor processing in the here and now

## Toddlers and young children 2-7 years

- Concrete thinking
- Centration
- Egocentrism
- Irreversibility
- Animism
- Fantasy
- Transductive reasoning
- Magical thinking
- Do not understand the future, time

16

15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Middle childhood (7-11+ years)

Diminished egocentrism  
Decentration  
Reversibility  
Conservation  
Transformations  
Related phenomena  
Understand time, yesterday, today, tomorrow

devil, ghosts, bogeyman  
Fear mutilation, personal injury, death anxiety

17

16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Adolescence 11-18yrs...the drive toward and away

Ability to abstract  
Understand future but "near" future  
Concept of unknown is manageable  
Peers  
Integration of personality  
Conceptualize death, life, endings  
Problem solving  
Want  
    acceptance, to be the same  
    respect  
    autonomy,  
    increased responsibility

18

17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Normal

- Regression
- School problems
- Acting out
- Withdrawal
- Staying home from school
- Forget stuff at home
- Anger, Temper tantrums
- Blaming
- Bed wetting
- Bullying
- Health gets worse, flares up
- Shock
- Class clown
- Attention seeking
- Nightmares
- Loss /increased appetite
- Not wanting to go to bed, sleep
- Sadness
- Loss of interest
- Defiance
- Separation problems
- Self protection
- Restlessness
- Crying, Clingy, Needy
- Laughing + + +
- Short spurts of grieving
- Repetitive play
- Easily upset
- Lack of concentration
- Switching off
- Guilt, Shame
- Anxiety, fearful
- Ambivalence
- Accident prone
- Headaches, Stomachaches
- Parentified child

19

18

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Trouble brewing

- Suicidal ideation, actions
- Risk taking
- Promiscuity
- Depression
- Destructiveness
- Withdrawal and isolation
- No interest in any activities
- Eating disorders
- Stealing
- Running away
- Refusing to sleep alone
- Violence
- Psychosomatic illnesses
- Self mutilation or self harm
- Total denial of the event
- Dropping out of school
- Chronic depression, sleeping difficulties and low self-esteem
- Isolation from family and friends
- Academic failure or overachievement
- Dramatic change in personality or attitude
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Fighting or legal troubles

**Or when "normal" responses become prolonged, intensified, or debilitating**

20

19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Resilient People

Flach, 1997

- Creative
- Insight
- Tolerate pain
- Independent spirit
- Self respect
- Restore self-esteem
- Learning
- Make friends
- Depend on others
- Autonomy
- Set limits
- Support system
- Give, take, ask for help
- Resourceful
- Patient
- Responsibility
- Open-minded
- Range of interests
- Focus, commitment
- Tolerate uncertainty

21

20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Protective factors

Individual, Family, Community

- Recruited relationships
- Surrogate love
- Hired love (counseling)
- Reparative kindness of strangers
- Altruistic peer relationships
- Restorative animal love
- Romantic love
- Safe harbours that promote autonomy and competence

22

21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What helps

- Time
- Friends
- Church, spirituality
- Family
- Time away
- Time out
- Baby steps back
- Cry
- Safe places vs. hiding places
- Practical, instrumental help
- **Support**
- Permission to live
- Permission to laugh
- Who else needs me
- Write it, Paint it, Scream it, Punch it
- Comfort
- Good to self
- Information
- Asking
- Recreating meaning
- Identifying roles that can keep them engaged and productive in family and community
- Networking
- Support groups
- Employment counseling

22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## constructive adaptation

- Stabilization
- Development of interests
- New activities
- Different aspirations
- Increased sense of autonomy
- Sense of competence

26

23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What we can offer...

- Support
- Listen\*\*
- Care
- Compassion
- Creative
- Comfort
- Communication
- Normalize
- Open heart
- Generosity of spirit
- Self care
- Awareness
- Presence
- Touch
- Acceptance
- Permission to feel it all

27

24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Perceptive adults

- Questions and answers
- Comfort and support
- Symbolic play
- Art, music
- Meaning making
- Sand tray/sand play
- Bookmaking
- Direct sharing
- Know normal vs. troubling responses
- Open communication
- Sadness and grief normal
- Model
- Listen, hear the story
- Assess for adjustment disorders
- Observe
- Advocate
- Repair, recognition, reconnection, recovery of childhood

28

25

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Interventions, supports

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Poetry       | Photographs                               |
| Collage      | Memory books                              |
| Metaphor     | Linking objects                           |
| Psychodrama  | Journaling                                |
| Play writing | Forgiveness                               |
| Education    | Rituals                                   |
| Normalizing  | Peer support                              |
| Drama        | Peer mentoring                            |
| Sports       | Ceremonies ---careful                     |
| Art          | Empty chair                               |
| Music        | Meditation                                |
| Drumming     | Relaxation                                |
| Sports       | Interest                                  |
| Outings      | Keep trying                               |
| Quiet time   | Drives ---the magic no eye contact method |
| Camps        | Groups                                    |
| Clubs        | Faith                                     |
| Play         | Visions                                   |

26

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## On the other hand...

- Catalyst for growth
- Maturity
- Compassion
- Self awareness
- Life more serious
- World view changes
- Empathy
- Responsibility
- Turning points
- Second chances
- Not crushed but made more by suffering
- Different dreams
- Appreciation
- Priorities straight
- Not wasting time
- Life is too short

24

27

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---