

Exploring the Therapeutic Role of Alternative Tribute Practices in Bereavement: A Longitudinal Study during the Pandemic

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Background:

A significant loss can deeply impact how the bereaved individual perceives themselves and the world around them. When this loss additionally involves traumatic aspects, there is a greater likelihood of the bereaved experiencing difficulty in making sense of it.

Rationale:

By exploring the mechanisms between grief/trauma and the challenges in making sense of loss, we gain a deeper understanding of the individual's adaptation process. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore the moderating role of engaging in alternative forms of tribute (such as creating memorials on social media, writing letters to the deceased, and using the deceased's belongings) in the relationship between grief/trauma, and the difficulty of making sense of the loss.

Design:

The sample consists of 141 participants, aged between 18 and 76, who lost a loved one during the pandemic. This is a longitudinal study with two assessment times, the first being 3 to 6 months after the loss and the second being 9 to 12 months after.

Results:

The results demonstrate that creating memorials on social media and writing letters to the deceased buffered the effect of symptoms of grief/trauma and the difficulty of making sense of loss.

Conclusion:

The contribution of this study lies in increasing knowledge about the impact of alternative forms of tribute in the grieving process. These alternative forms of tribute, when framed as coping strategies for grief, can be beneficial in clinical settings.

Keywords: Grief; Trauma; Meaning-Making; Alternative Forms of Tribute

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