

## **A Clinician's View of Complicated Spiritual Grief: Bridging Research and Practice in Chaplaincy.**

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Chaplains meet and journey with many people who are experiencing or have experienced spiritual and emotional crisis, often as a result of death or loss. In such circumstances, it is important for a chaplain to be able to assess and intervene appropriately across the spectrum of unique and varied experiences of grief. Thus, an evidence based understanding of grief responses and potential interventions is a necessary resource in the clinician's tool box.

When death occurs, it can significantly shake up the assumptive world view of those who grieve. Additionally, there are a variety of factors which contribute to a person's ability to adapt during bereavement. Spirituality and religion have been identified as being helpful in coping and adjustment in bereavement. However, recent research has also identified that a percentage of grievers may experience challenges in bereavement, identified as both Complicated Grief (CG) and Complicated Spiritual Grief (CSG).

Seeking to better measure CSG, an inventory was developed by Burke, Neimeyer and colleagues. The Inventory of Complicated Grief Scale (ICSG) was established and validated as a tool to investigate connections between CSG, GC and other meaning making interventions. The ICSG was then used by Burke and Neimeyer (2014) to assess for symptoms of CSG following violent death. A second study, qualitative in nature, was undertaken to investigate the experiences of bereaved individuals following the loss of a loved one in a nuanced way. These research studies have contributed to a greater understanding of the concept of CSG.

Understanding the how the nature of the CSG concept and reality intersects within the work of chaplain's on a regular basis is of paramount importance for the clinical chaplain's approach practice. As a chaplains meets with people and encounter the details and depth of and individual's story, they are better able to assess and accompany the individual as they navigate his/her bereavement journey.

This presentation will summarize this recent literature pertaining to CSG and it will reflect on the implications and opportunities for chaplains working in clinical practice and research.

*Burke, L.A., & Neimeyer, R.A. (2014) Complicated Spiritual Grief I: Relation to Complicated grief symptomatology following violent death bereavement. Death Studies, 38 259- 267.*

*Burke, L.A., & Neimeyer, R.A., Young M.J., Piazza Bonin, B. & Davis, N.L. (2014) Complicated Spiritual Grief II: A Deductive inquiry following the loss of a loved one. Death Studies, 38 268- 281.*

*Burke, L.A. & Neimeyer, R.A., Holland, J., Dennard, S., Oliver, L., Shear, K., (2014) Inventory of Complicated Grief: Development and Validation of a New Measure. Death Studies, 38:239-250.*