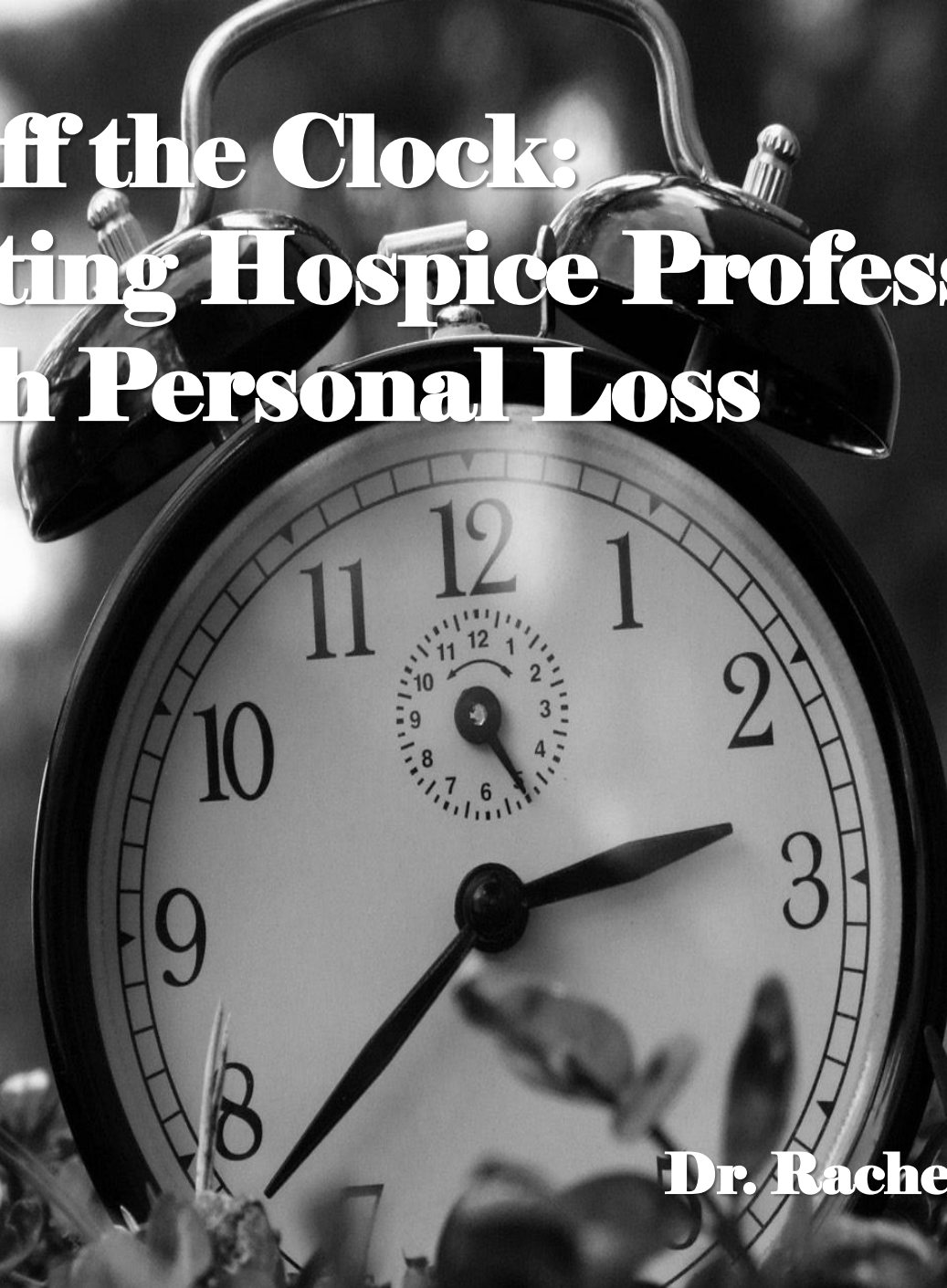




Grief Off the Clock: Supporting Hospice Professionals Through Personal Loss



Dr. Rachel Guimond



**Let's start with what
we know...**

...not much, unfortunately

- Research has largely been focused on the effect of *professional loss* and management strategies
- Virtually no research has investigated the impact of *personal loss* for hospice workers



Let's start with what we know...

- Professional loss has been researched in many different types of hospice workers:

CERTIFIED NURSE ASSISTANTS

NURSES

SOCIAL WORKERS

MEDICAL STUDENTS

DOCTORS





Let's start with what we know...

- Professional loss has been researched in many different types of hospice workers:

CERTIFIED NURSE ASSISTANTS

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CHAPLAINS

VOLUNTEERS

ETHICS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

VISITING SANTAS



What we don't know



- What impact does personal loss have on the hospice worker's ability to do his/her job well?
- What impact does hospice work have on a person's grief process?



Personal vs. Professional Loss

- Social Support
- Culturally sanctioned rituals
- Symptoms of grief are pervasive
- Formal Support (possible)
- Need to continue on in spite of grief
- Symptoms may be confined to workplace or specific settings



So, what happens when both types of losses occur at the same time?



Themes

- **Grief is universal.**
- **Grief as a hospice worker is unique.**
- **Hospice work created challenges with family dynamics.**
- **Personal grief changes the nature of hospice work.**



Grief is Universal

My grief looks like what I see in my clients' families!

- This can create a variety of reactions:
 - Comfort
 - Disappointment
 - Deeper Compassion
 - Hopelessness





Grief as a Hospice Worker is Unique.



Denial isn't an option and I know bargaining won't work.

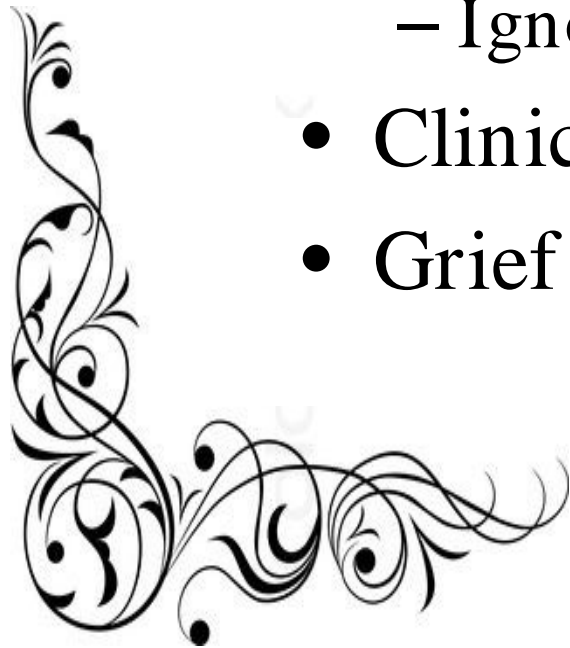
- Not all “normal” grief reactions are possible
- Work is not an escape or distraction
- Work environment is supportive and understanding



Challenges to Family Dynamics

It isn't clear what my role is.

- Personal loss blurs boundaries
 - Looked to for professional tasks
 - Ignored as a professional
- Clinical choices can lead to hostility
- Grief proceeds at a different pace





Changes at Work



I'm not the same employee I was before.

- Negative
 - Difficulty focusing on patient as separate from the loved one
 - Grief triggered at work
- Positive
 - Personal loss enhanced capacity for caring
 - Work gave space to process grief
 - Work gave a chance to “do it right”



Where do we go from here?

- Currently, there are 4,199 hospice agencies in the U.S. alone.
- We need to know:
 - What impact personal loss is having on their work
 - What impact their work is having on their grief process
 - What impact their work is having on their families
 - The best methods to support them

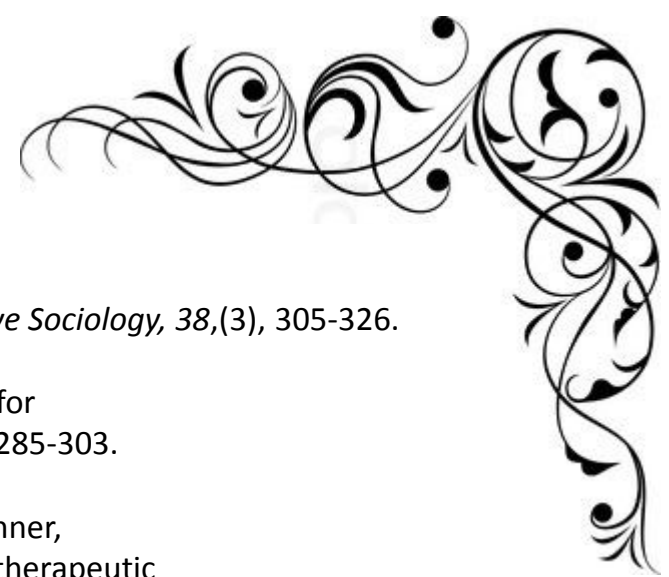




Questions?



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