

Background

- Bereavement is common in young adults - 77% of people are bereaved by 18 years old (Harrison & Harrington, 2001)
- Bereaved young adults are at an increased risk of physical, social, and mental health problems (Høeg et al., 2017; O'Connell et al., 2022; Parsons, 2011)
- Grief in young adults is poorly understood and under-researched (Breen et al., 2023)

Aim

- To better understand experiences of grief in bereaved young adults

Discussion/ Conclusions

- Bereavement grief in young adults is complex and can be isolating
- Connections to others and to the person who died can provide a sense of hope
- Young people want to experience their grief without others trying to solve or minimise it
- Grief may present in different ways and at different times - we should hold space for, and support people through all experiences

Method

- Co-designed and conducted in collaboration with an advisory group (made of 3 types of stakeholders)
- Purposive convenience sampling through social media and community organisations
- Semi-structured interviews and a creative activity to represent grief
- Collaborative reflexive thematic analysis with advisory group

Participants

- Fourteen bereaved young adults
- 19-26 years old (M=22.1 years, SD= 2.3 years)
- 9 women, 3 men, 1 non-binary person, 1 genderqueer person
- Varied bereavement experiences
- Diverse backgrounds/ demographics

Grief in Bereaved Young Adults: A Qualitative Creative Arts Elicitation Study

Munro, Caitlin^{1,2,3}; Shelton, Tyasha¹; Breen, Lauren J.^{1,2}; Hill, Elizabeth^{1,4}; Mancini, Vincent^{2,3,5}; Manchanda, Amrita¹; Carroll, Audrey¹; Hohaia, Tahlia¹; Bech, Alana¹; Lavorgna, Bianca⁶ & Myers, Bronwyn^{1,7,8}

Scan here to email me



- 1 Curtin enAble Institute, Faculty of Health Sciences, Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia
- 2 Curtin School of Population Health, Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia
- 3 The Kids Research Institute Australia, Perth, Western Australia
- 4 Curtin School of Allied Health, Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia
- 5 Centre for Child Health Research, University of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia
- 6 Department of Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria
- 7 Mental Health, Alcohol, Substance Use, and Tobacco Research Unit, South African Medical Research Council, Tygerberg, South Africa
- 8 Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, South Africa

"Art can permeate the very deepest part of us, where no words exist"
- Eileen Miller

Dualities in Grief



It's like a dark cloud is always there next to me... [I] could be happy, it doesn't matter what I'm feeling, it's always there. (Anika)

- Sadness and joy can exist at the same time
- Things will **never be the same**, but there is still a **desire for normalcy**
- Meaning-making and meaninglessness

Hope through Continuing Connection



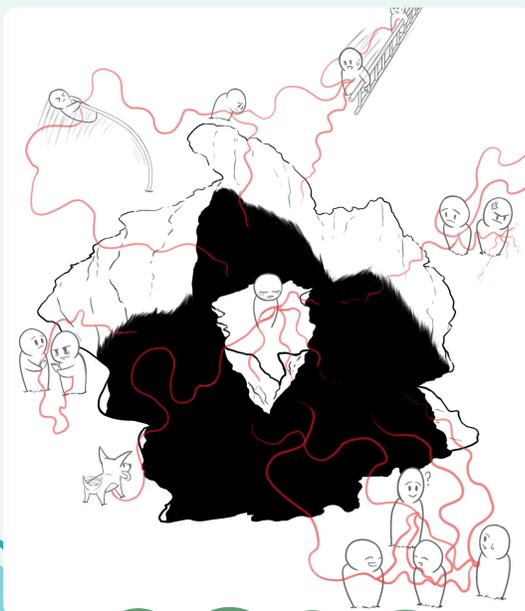
My grandpa taught Mum this. Mum taught me this. And I'm 20 now, and I still do this. I still go to the creek, and then I'll do this. And sometimes I would invite a friend to go on a nature walk with me, and then I'll show them this as well. (Jasmin)

- Allowing time and space to **feel grief** is important
- Continuing connection** to the person who died provides comfort and **hope**
- Connections with others** are important / sharing grief

FINDINGS

The Chasm of Grief

- Grief is: **pain, sadness, anger, guilt, confusion, shock, stressful, surreal, love**
- Bereavement **profoundly changes**, makes **different** from others
- Difficult to reach out** to others & be supported

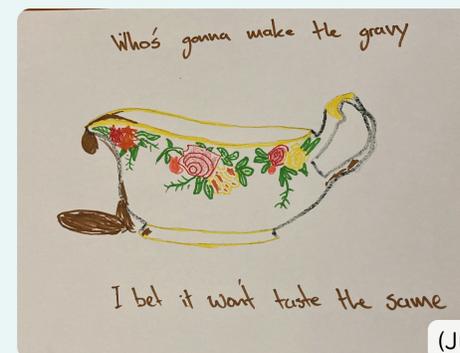


I just felt like I was going through life, having to deal with all this pain and feeling like I'm alone... It looks like he's like in a chasm. Can't be reached by anyone. That's how I felt. (Elias)

Cascading Losses

I didn't have as much of, like, a father figure, so it's kind of hard for me to figure out, who I was as a man as well... I probably would have turned out differently if my Dad was still around. (Elias)

- Multiple losses** cascade: loss of relationships, disappointment in support
- Loss of **identity**, and **cultural & family** connections



(Julian)

Multi-level and Dynamic Supports Needed

- More accessible resources** needed suitable for bereaved young adults
- Resources for family, friends, supporters** required
- Different types** of support, from **different people/levels**, at **different times** in grief

So, it's not a very linear experience...you don't just get over it. A little bit sort of stays with you. I think having the tools to deal with it is important because it doesn't just go away. And you'll experience it in lots of different ways in your life. (Elena)