



Grieving on the Street: Supporting Homeless Patients through Loss



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INTRODUCTION

- The **death rate in the unsheltered homeless population is exorbitantly high**, yet patients do not often have the capacity to grieve in a healthy way.
- **Unsheltered homelessness can interfere with the ability to grieve normally** (e.g. lack of funerals, burial sites, obituaries; delayed grieving due to focus on survival), leading to further suffering and increased risk of mental illness.

METHODS

Based on our experience caring for patients on the street through Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, **we offer clinicians ideas for how to support patients on the street through loss.**

RESULTS

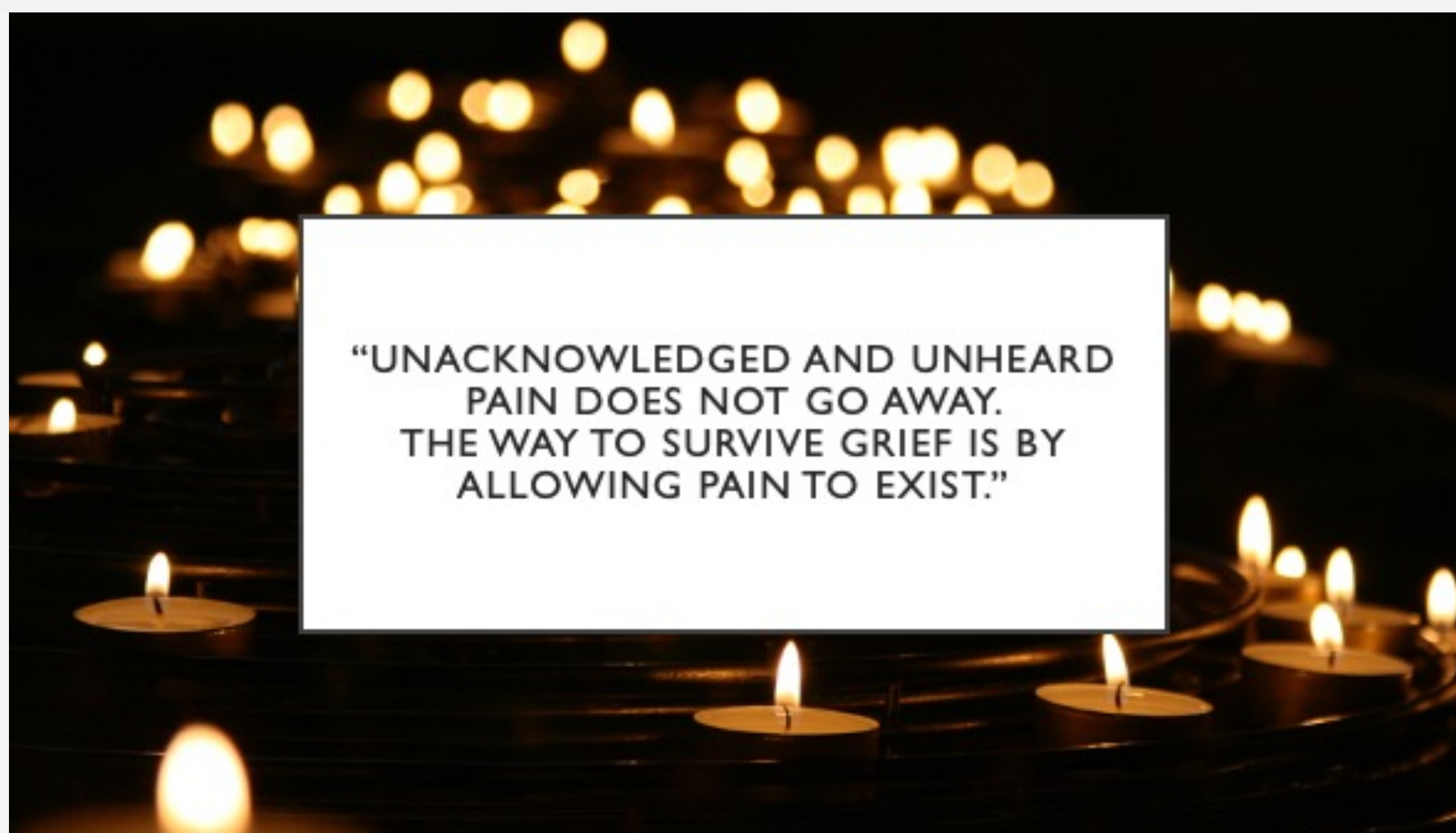
IDEAS TO SUPPORT PATIENTS ON THE STREET THROUGH GRIEF

CHALLENGE

- Lack of funerals/memorial services
- Lack of obituaries
- Nature and frequency of deaths
- Trauma associated with witnessing death
- Lack of reliable family and community support
- Survivalism may deprioritize grief

APPROACH

- Create annual memorial
- Encourage writing and connection
- Fight for high-quality clinical care
- Grief group and frequent touch points
- Connect patients to local supports and nurture strength of community
- Hold space to process loss in face-to-face clinical encounters



CONCLUSION

Clinicians can be **proactive in helping patients to grieve on the street** using creative approaches.

REFERENCES

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