Student Stress/Grief Seminar

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ORU is a missions outreach-oriented university. Currently we are devising missions teams to go to numerous countries across the globe for purposes of healing and sharing the love of Christ.

What about right here on campus? Are there students among us who need healing?
What are we doing here today?

Our purpose is to acknowledge the hurting students among us, who are dealing with various kinds of losses, here on the ORU campus and to devise a plan for how we can best support those students.
How will we do this?

**Goals**

1. To consult what research here at ORU has found about stress due to loss and grief coping and the role of spirituality.

2. To hear from a student who has provided support to friends experiencing acute levels of stress at school.

3. To hear from a student who has experienced her own stress related her grief over the loss of a close friend.

4. To open discussion on how we might create an even more peer-supportive environment here at ORU.

5. To create a specific plan for service or education to meet the needs of our hurting students.
Spirituality/Religiosity Study: Preliminary Results

Thank you for participating!!!
Who participated in the Spirituality/Religiosity Study?

Males = 317
Females = 554

First year = 230
Sophomore = 203
Junior = 211
Senior = 227
Major

- Education
- Nursing
- Theology
- Science
- Government
- Mathematics and Engineering
- Exploratory
- Behavioral Sciences
- Art
- Spanish
- Music

Health and Exercise Science

Business
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Science</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>870</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
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<td>Percentage</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td>496</td>
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<td>Pentecostal/Assembly of God</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.2</td>
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<td>Orthodox Catholicism</td>
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<td>.1</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
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<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roman Catholicism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>99.7</td>
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</table>
Personality Characteristics

- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness
- Neuroticism
- Intellect/Imagination
Significant differences were found between genders on agreeableness (men=15.99; women=17.02) and neuroticism (men=9.61; women=10.34), with women scoring higher on both.
Those students identifying their denominations as “other” scored significantly higher on neuroticism scales (M=12.61) than did students who identified themselves as non-denominational (M=9.99) and Pentecostal/Assembly of God (M=9.54), F(778)=2.306, p=.025.
Nursing majors were significantly higher on agreeableness ($M=17.59$) than business ($M=16$) and mathematics/engineering majors ($M=15.66$), $F(12, 779)=3.72$, $p<.001$.

Behavioral sciences majors were significantly higher on agreeableness ($M=17.47$) than business and mathematics/engineering majors.
Art was the most different, scoring significantly higher \((M=16.91)\) than nursing \((M=14.98)\) and exercise science majors \((M=14.36)\) on Intellect/Imagination.
Daily Spiritual Experiences

- Use the following scale to answer the items below according to how frequently you experience each daily:
  1=not at all
  2=somewhat
  3=neutral
  4=quite a bit
  5=a great deal

- Example items (15 total):
  - I feel God’s presence
  - I find comfort in my religion or spirituality
  - I feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities
  - I am spiritually touched by the beauty of creation.
  - I accept others even when they do things I think are wrong.

- Out of 810 measured on this variable, the overall mean was 63.62
Women were significantly more likely to report having spiritual experiences on a daily basis than were men, $t(516) = -3.34$, $p = .001$. 

How do men and women report their daily spiritual experiences?
Seniors were significantly less likely to report having spiritual experiences on a daily basis than were both sophomores and first-year students, $F(3, 806)=4.17, p=.006$. Seniors were not significantly different from Juniors, however.
How do the different majors report their daily spiritual experiences?

English (M=62.06) and Math/Engineering majors (M=61.49) were significantly less likely to report daily spiritual experiences than were theology majors (M=67.14), $F(12, 795)=2.029$, $p=.02$. 
Students not affiliated with a religion reported significantly less daily spiritual experience than all other denominations except for mainline protestants and those identifying as “other,” $F(7, 793)=3.53, p=.001$.
Religious Doubts

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
1=not at all
2=somewhat
3=neutral
4=quite a bit
5=a great deal

Items:
- I have had frequent doubts about my views toward religion
- I have often questioned the truth of my religious worldviews.
- I have often wondered whether religious beliefs and practices are correct.
- I tend to doubt whether religious worldviews are factual.

The mean Religious Doubts score for the 807 students who provided answers was $M=9.77$
Do men and women doubt differently?

Men (M=10.37) were significantly more likely to report religious doubts than were women (M=9.46), $t(533)=2.88$, $p=.004$. 
Religious doubts increase with every year in school. Seniors were significantly more likely to report having religious doubt than first-year students, $F(3, 805)=3.78, p=.01$

- There are no significant differences among majors or denominations.
Faith Maturity Scale

- Use the following scale to answer the items below:
  1 = not at all
  2 = somewhat
  3 = neutral
  4 = quite a bit
  5 = a great deal

- The scale can be summed for a total score (12 items), and it can be divided into 2 subscales:
  - Vertical “relationship with God” scale (7) – “I have a real sense that God is guiding me.”
  - Horizontal “relationship with others” scale (5) – “I help others with their religious questions and struggles.”

- Out of the 807 students who completed this questionnaire, the mean score was 28.73 for the vertical scale and 19.19 for the horizontal scale.

- Overall results:
  - As a whole, the mean score for the summed total was 47.92
  - Participants scored significantly higher on the vertical score ($M = 28.73$) than they did on the horizontal scale ($M = 19.19$), $t(806) = 63.75$, $p < .001$.
  - No differences were found by classification or denomination.
Are men and women different in how they respond to faith maturity questions?

For the summed total and for the horizontal scale, the difference between men and women was not significant. Women (M=29.05) scored significantly higher than men (M=28.19) on the Vertical Faith Maturity Scale, t(547)=-2.2, p=.028.
Theology majors also scored significantly higher on the vertical scale, $F(12, 792)=2.38, p=.005$, than nursing ($M=28.26$), science ($M=28.36$), English ($M=28$), business ($M=28.63$), and behavioral sciences ($M=28.7$). There were no differences on the horizontal scale.
How does stress/grief relate to students’ spirituality?

- We asked ORU students to answer questions about a stressful event (or grief loss, if they had one) to measure the way they cope.

- “Spiritual struggle” involves efforts to conserve or transform a spirituality that has been threatened or harmed.

- Out of our 833 responses,
  - 429 reported low spiritual struggle
  - 89 reported medium spiritual struggle
  - 315 reported high spiritual struggle
    (nearly 38%)

- Open ended responses
What has student stress/grief looked like at ORU in the past?

- In a randomly selected sample:
  - 39% experienced a death loss within the last 2 years (from a randomly selected sample)
  - A very small portion, about 4% reported having problems with their grief, according to our prolonged grief scale.
What does student stress/grief look like at ORU now?

- In a convenience sample:
  - 45% experienced a death loss within the last 2 years (from a convenience sample)
  - Only 2 students out of 392 reported having problems with their grief. (This is miniscule; other studies have reported 15% or more, whereas ORU students report about .005%!)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to Participant</th>
<th>Bereaved within 12 months; N = 42</th>
<th>Bereaved within 24 months; N = 55</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Grandparent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Aunt/Uncle/Cousin</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extended Family Members</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Siblings</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Reported</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>What was the cause of death?</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
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<td>Illness</td>
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<td>26.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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<td>7.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</table>
What other sources of stress or loss do current students experience?

- Of the 871 participants who responded to this question:
  - 213 of a separation
  - 198 of a friendship
  - 130 of a love relationship
  - 213 of a grade
  - 113 indicated recently experiencing the loss of a pet

- 94 of material goods
- 32 of “other” types of losses
- 54 of a job
- 57 of a cherished ideal
- 49 of self-respect
- 20 of physical function
- 24 of an ability
- 11 of parental divorce
- 1 of divorce from spouse
Providing Support for Friends

Speaker: Emily Tackett
Findings Regarding Grief at ORU

“Girl Before a Mirror” - Picasso
Closeness and Year in School

- How close students were to the dead person affects a myriad of outcome variables related to college student educational experiences.

- Closeness didn’t seem to affect students’ accessing available resources on campus, though; by and large, they didn’t at all!

- Furthermore, first year undergraduates were significantly more likely to utilize personal resources of family and religion than were seniors in dealing with their grief.
Are ORU men “supermen?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Gender Differences on Variables Measuring Distress</th>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
<th>F statistic</th>
<th>p value</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
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<td>GHQ</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>6.12</td>
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<td>Variable</td>
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<td>Family or Friend Loss</td>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress Scale</td>
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<td>54.06</td>
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<td>General Health (higher scores = lower health)</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>2.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact of Event</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>2.29</td>
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Effect of Gender by Closeness on Mental Health Outcomes
Students were told to write the following stories:

- Write a 200-250 word story about the picture. In your story cover four topics:

  (a) Describe what you see in the picture.
  (b) What was going on just before this picture took place?
  (c) What are the people in this picture thinking and feeling?
  (d) How will things turn out for the people in this picture?
How stories were analyzed:

- Death, Grief, and Coping themes

- If coping themes, what kind?
  (a) establishing the meaning of the event
  (b) confronting reality and situational demands
  (c) sustaining personal relationships
  (d) preserving emotional balance
  (e) preserving self-image.
Figure 1 Frequency of Death, Grief, and Coping Themes in TAT Images 3BM and 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme - Image</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death - 3BM</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>Grief - 3BM</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping - 3BM</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Death - 10</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grief - 10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping - 10</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>37</td>
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Figure 2 Frequency of Adaptive Task Themes in TAT Image

3BM

<table>
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<th>Adaptive Tasks</th>
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<td>45</td>
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<td>Coping-Reality</td>
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<td>Coping-Relationships</td>
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<td>Coping-Emotions</td>
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<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping-Self-Image</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>29</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results

- Whether students had experienced a grief loss or not, coping themes were very often mentioned in their stories.

- Of all the types of secular coping mentioned, coping through relationships occurred the least often.

- For bereaved students, frequency of general coping themes in the TAT stories related to IES-R Avoidance subscale ($r=.28, p=.06$)

- Spiritual/Religious coping themes were barely mentioned!
A Personal Grief Experience

Speaker: Keilah Rodriguez
Summary

1. Stress due to some type of loss is a big deal here at ORU.
   - 30-45% of the student body report experiencing a recent death loss.
   - Nearly ALL students report experiencing some type of recent stressful event that is challenging to them.

2. Students tell good stories about their losses.
   - Students tell stories that suggest that they have VERY high levels of coping and low levels of difficulty.
   - Men seem to be especially likely to report that they are coping well.
   - Students in general seem to be hesitant to admit to struggles with dealing with losses and stress.

3. Nevertheless, struggles are happening.
   - Over 48% classify as having moderate or high levels of spiritual struggle in response to the stressful events they are experiencing.
   - Anecdotal data from open-ended responses suggests just this.
What does this mean?

- How might we create a more peer supportive environment here at ORU?

- Do we need services in place on campus for hurting students?

- If so, what might we put into place?

- One suggestion: https://vimeo.com/77810154
References


