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The three assigned reflections this semester educated me on understanding various perspectives on grief and ultimately helped me engage with my peers in materials being learned in the course. The reflections in this course helped my peers and I understand different perspectives on divorce or separation, remembering and celebrating, and a matter of life and death. Within these three sections, I learned the differences between how being raised as a child could correlate with how an individual copes. My interactions with my peers will be a tool that I will keep at the forefront to assist patients and their families through times of bereavement or grief.

The knowledge I have obtained from the sections learned this semester will help my future career as a child life specialist by acknowledging that every family dynamic is different. After reflecting on each section with my peers, I learned that religion and culture play a big part in how a patient and family experiences their grief process. For some families, this may result in a catholic mass to a public funeral with 1,500 people in attendance. After the section regarding remembering and celebrating, Weymont and Rae (2006) emphasized the importance of having various customs and outward forms of observance and celebration that vary significantly from place to place. Since culture and religion impact bereavement, being culturally sensitive is essential when working as a child life specialist. Walsh (2011) states that the appropriate statement regarding death is, "I would like to help make this manageable for your family as I can. Perhaps you can tell me what you or your family would prefer?" As a future child life specialist, trusting to take action to learn and remove biases regarding bereavement care is crucial for me to educate myself within this profession.

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The following section we reflected on that impacted me the most was divorce or separation. Within my peers, we all educated each other on what this could be like within different family dynamics. This could be an affair, a breakup, or a custody battle over a child. In McCue's (2011) section regarding parental divorce or separation, addresses how a guardian coming into the picture for a short amount of time could cause confusion within a family dynamic. An example of this scenario could be when the parent who has custody must leave the hospital due to work or other essential commitments. McCue (2011) states, "Both parents must give a very clear message from the start: Daddy's going to be here only for this week while Mommy has her operation. After that, he's going back to his new family. Daddy still loves you, but Daddy and Mommy don't love each other again." This section made me aware of the impacts these scenarios could have on a child. As a victim of a custody battle between my parents, I strive to learn techniques on how to assist a child through the trauma effects that could affect them mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Overall, the reflections I have endured from these three sections have allowed me to be open-minded and allow new ideas into the differences in how death or loss looks like between families. One of them is regarding a celebration of life. A celebration that provides comfort and discussions about memories with a group of friends, family, or coworkers about the dead individual. In the reflection sections, I did uncover bias through the religion section regarding catholic funerals. Before reading the section on remembering and celebrating, I had a general notion that catholic masses are long and overly dramatic. But my peers went into detail with the importance of Catholicism and opened my eyes to the beauty of its spiritual influence. What I may struggle with as a child life professional is that some cultures believe that asking for help is a weakness. In Walsh (2011), they go into detail regarding how accepting help from those

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outside the immediate family could be difficult due to it being contradictory to their value. In conclusion, in the various aspects of these reflections, self-care is essential to practice as a child life specialist. Shuck, Shuck, and Reio (2013) go into detail regarding assistance for child life specialists to assist in burnout and emotional labor of the job. Shuck, Shuck et al. (2013) stated, "In caring for children and their families, child life specialists are required to maintain certain emotional affects, such as being supportive, comforting, and reassuring, in the wake of traumatic circumstances; as a result, potentially authentic expressions of anguish, sadness, and pain must be managed or suppressed." Burnout due to suppressing the emotional labor from your work could result in a lack of self-care. That is why finding a balance between work and life balance assists in mental health for a child life specialist. My self-care routine looks like going on walks, eating sweet treats, listening to podcasts, or spending time with friends or family. This course has provided me with insight on how to apply new bereavement techniques and knowledge on the various practices within family dynamics that I will apply to my child life profession.

References

- Walsh, K. (2011). *Grief and loss: Theories and skills for the helping professions* (3rd ed.). New York: Pearson.
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- Shuck, A. L., Shuck, B., & Reio, T. G. (2013). Emotional labor and performance in the field of Child life: Initial model exploration and implications for practice. *Children's Health Care*, 42(2), 168–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02739615.2013.766116>