Agenda and Learning Objectives for the Grief Support Specialist Certificate, Fall 2015

DAY ONE

Morning: Doug Smith explains a “Psycho-Spiritual Model of Care” and discusses grief-counseling assessments, assessing for someone’s style of grieving, personal strengths and personal needs.

Afternoon: Doug continues, explaining the counseling theories and tools of William Worden, John James, Russell Friedman and Thomas Attig, as well as presenting several additional grief counseling tools and techniques from his own publications.

Objectives:

- Explain a style of counseling that helps people find meaning and value in the midst of suffering, even if the suffering cannot be removed.
- Describe the differences between “intuitive” (feeling-centered) grievers and “instrumental” (cognitive-centered or action-centered) grievers.
- Use a client’s own strengths to encourage self-help and self-determination.
- Identify and use various tools and techniques that help clients process their feelings and thoughts related to loss.
- Describe ways of presenting counseling to those who would normally not enter a counseling relationship.

DAY TWO

Morning: Molly Tomony discusses approaches to counseling children who are suffering from loss, looking at the special needs and concerns of children, looking at tools and techniques that can be used to open up communication with children.

Afternoon: Molly continues presenting tools and techniques applicable to children, tools that can be used within families as well as during individual counseling, presenting tools that can also be used with the “inner child” of adults.

Objectives:

- Identify variables affecting children’s grief.
- Identify cognitive, emotional and physical grief responses based upon a client’s developmental age.
- Describe some cathartic tools to help children break through adult/child communication barriers.
- Develop creative individual interventions for grieving children.
- Develop creative interventions for grieving children that can be used in group counseling settings.
DAY THREE

Morning: Doug Smith helps you consider spiritual issues and variables influencing attitudes towards loss, looking at tools for assessing a client’s spiritual language as well as tools for addressing a client’s spiritual concerns.

Afternoon: Ridley Usherwood discusses cultural influences in grief counseling: the effects of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism and other prejudices as well as looking at geopolitical influences upon grief.

Objectives:
• Explain several ways of assessing someone’s spiritual language.
• Describe how to discover someone’s spiritual concerns and expectations.
• Use prayer/meditation with clients of various religious/spiritual backgrounds.
• Explain the influences of various prejudices on grief counseling, examining both the counselor’s and client’s perspectives.
• Develop a basic set of multicultural clinical practice competencies that can be used as guidelines for working with diverse patients and families.

DAY FOUR

Morning: Anne McGuire discusses how to create new positions/jobs that focus on grief counseling as well as how to enhance a counselor’s current work so that it maximizes the counselor’s talents and interests.

Afternoon: Doug Smith examines ways of encouraging ongoing positive relationships with the departed, how clients can have a sense of an ongoing comforting presence of the departed, especially looking at how our dreams can be used as a grief counseling tool along with other creative counseling techniques like “virtual dreams,” guided imagery and gestalt empty-chair dialogues. There will also be role-plays focusing on course content from previous days of instruction.

Objectives:
• Explain ways of enhancing current work by developing new grief support programs.
• Describe multiple job possibilities in the field of grief counseling.
• Develop a strategy of creating a new job in grief counseling.
• Discuss how “after-death communication” can be used as a positive healing tool.
• Explain how dreams (as well as virtual dreams, guided imagery, and gestalt dialogues) can be used to finish “unfinished business” and heal previous wounds.

DAY FIVE

Participants will summarize their project/paper by presenting it to the rest of the class.

Objectives:
• Summarize the depth and breadth of participant projects.
• Integrate key learnings into your own life and work.
• Develop an action plan for yourself on how you will utilize this experience going forward.