

**Impact of Ambiguous Grief on Families and Caregivers Caused by a Loved One's
Addiction**

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Impact of Ambiguous Grief on Families and Caregivers Caused by a Loved One's Addiction

Grief is often associated with death or significant loss, it can also manifest when someone witnesses a person, they care about suffer from addiction, this type of grief, sometimes referred to as "ambiguous grief" occurs when a loved one is physically present but psychologically or emotionally absent due to their addiction (Oswald, 2023). The problem is that this type of grief is often more complex due to societal stigma, guilt, and uncertainty about the circumstances of death (Dyregrov et al., 2020). Families' traumatic exposure to addiction leads to intense feelings of anger, guilt, depression, ambivalence, and unresolved grief, as well as overwhelming anxiety caused by the enormous responsibility of preventing death (Thatcher, 2023). Worldwide, alcohol is the seventh risk factor for ill health, both in terms of mortality and disability for years (Gual & Drummond, 2022). The rate of comorbidity among individuals with mental and addictive disorders provided clear evidence that mental disorders have an impact on the psychopathology of substance dependence like alcohol addiction (Salazar-Guerra et al., 2020). All forms of trauma are characterized by losses, such as the loss of safety, loss of sense of self, loss of hope, loss of relationship, loss of a loved-one, etc. (Giacomucci, 2020). Ambiguous loss can occur when one's sibling abuses substances, as the sibling may be physically present yet be psychologically absent in terms of the co-sibling (and the family). The intangible grief that can occur while a person who is addicted is still present requires further examination (Sampson et al., 2023). Mental health professionals need to be aware of the devastating impact of addiction problems on all family members to validate their experiences and support them in recovering from trauma and loss in the family (Missouridou, 2023). Those who grow up with a dysfunctional individual who

is addicted to substance experience two layers of loss; the loss of childhood, and the loss of letting go of the idealized or fantasy image of a caring loved one (Bekesi & Kassai, 2024).

Problem Statement

Although the aforementioned research regarding the prevalence of addiction and its impact on addicts who are addicted to substance. I have not found research that has examined the prevalence of addiction and its impact on families and caregivers' mental health regarding ambiguous grief. Given such further research is warranted that could examine the prevalence of addiction and its impact on families and caregivers' mental health in an effort to address the problem of individuals needing mental health help from the ambiguous grief of their loved one's addiction (Giacomucci, 2020).

Research Proposition

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative generic study is to conduct an in-depth examination of the lived experiences on a mental health perspective of family members and caregivers who are dealing with ambiguous grief from a loved one's addiction.

Research Question

"How does ambiguous grief due to a loved one's addiction impact patterns of mental health issues in family members or caregivers?"

Keywords/Definitions

Ambiguous Grief: A person's profound sense of loss and sadness that is not associated with a death of a loved one (Oswald, 2023)

Addiction: is a state of psychological and/or physical dependence on the use of drugs or other substances, such as alcohol, or on activities or behaviors, such as sex, exercise, and gambling (American Psychological Association, 2021).

Depression: is more than just sadness; it is the most common mental disorder. People with depression may also experience altered eating or sleeping habits, lack of energy or motivation, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, and withdrawal from social activities. Anxiety (American Psychological Association, 2021)

Literature Review

Addiction profoundly impacts individuals and their families, leading to complex emotional responses such as ambiguous grief. Ambiguous grief arises when a person experiences a loss that is not clearly defined or socially acknowledged, often occurring in cases of addiction where the addicted individual's presence oscillates between physical absence and psychological unavailability. This literature review explores the nuances of ambiguous grief in the context of addiction, examining its unique characteristics, effects on families, and therapeutic interventions.

Characteristics of Ambiguous Grief

Ambiguous grief is a distinct form of grief characterized by uncertainty and lack of closure, Oswald (2023) describes ambiguous loss as an emotional experience where the grieving process is complicated by the unclear nature of the loss, making it difficult to achieve resolution. This type of grief is prevalent in families dealing with addiction, as the loved one is physically present but emotionally and mentally altered by substance abuse (Oswald, 2023). Typical symptoms of ambiguous grief are persistent and intrusive, a person dealing with ambiguous loss may feel emotional numbness, feeling that life is meaningless, and feel lonely and adrift (Dyregrov, 2020).

Impact on Families

Families of individuals with addiction experience a unique and profound form of grief. Dyregrov et al. (2020) highlight that the grief following drug-related deaths is marked by social stigma and a lack of understanding from others, which intensifies the grieving process. The ongoing nature of addiction means that families are in a continuous state of mourning, not only for the potential loss of the individual but also for the loss of the person they once knew (Dyregrov et al., 2020). This continuous state of grieving and the accompanying stigma often led to feelings of isolation and a lack of social support, exacerbating the emotional burden on family members. Missouriidou et al. (2023) provide an interpretative phenomenological analysis of mothers' lived experiences with addicted family members. The study reveals that mothers often feel isolated and unsupported, grappling with feelings of guilt, shame, and helplessness. The unpredictable and often chronic nature of addiction exacerbates this ambiguity, as family members may experience periods of hope during recovery phases followed by deep despair during relapses (Oswald, 2023). Their grief is compounded by societal judgment and the persistent hope for their child's recovery, which perpetuates the ambiguity of their loss (Missouriidou et al., 2023). The research emphasizes the need for social support systems that can provide emotional validation and practical assistance to these mothers, helping them navigate the complexities of their emotional experiences and find ways to cope with their ongoing grief. The study underscores the profound emotional turmoil faced by siblings and spouses, who struggle with the dichotomy of loving the person and despising the addiction, this duality creates an ongoing cycle of hope and despair, contributing to the complexity of ambiguous grief (Sampson et al., 2023). Siblings often experience a sense of loss not only of their relationship but also of their family dynamics and future shared experiences. Spouses, on the other hand, may face a

unique set of challenges as they contend with the emotional, financial, and social implications of their partner's addiction, all of which compound their grief.

Psychological Effects

The psychological toll of ambiguous grief in the context of addiction is significant. Salazar-Guerra et al. (2020) discuss the neurocognitive impairments and personality changes associated with alcohol addiction, which exacerbate the emotional strain on families. The unpredictable behavior and cognitive decline of the addicted individual further complicate the grieving process, leaving family members in a state of chronic sorrow and anxiety (Salazar-Guerra et al., 2020). Anxiety, depression, and PTSD are common among family members, as they navigate the ongoing uncertainty and emotional upheaval. These psychological effects can have long-term consequences, affecting family members' overall well-being and their ability to function in daily life.

Case Studies and Autoethnographic Research

The use of psychodrama and sociometric connections to address grief and guilt in addiction, this therapeutic approach helps individuals process their ambiguous grief by reenacting past experiences and exploring their emotions in a safe environment. The case study highlights the potential for healing and resolution, even in the face of complex grief (Giacomucci, 2020). Through psychodrama, individuals can gain insights into their feelings and relationships, fostering a sense of understanding and acceptance. The use of sociometric techniques, which involve mapping out social connections and interactions, can also help individuals identify and strengthen supportive relationships, providing a valuable resource in their grieving process. The ambiguous nature of their grief is reflected in their struggle to reconcile the love for their parents with the pain caused by their addiction (Békési & Kassai,

2024). These narratives provide a powerful insight into the lived experiences of children who grow up in such environments, highlighting the need for early and sustained support. By understanding the specific challenges faced by these children, practitioners can develop more targeted interventions to help them cope with their grief and build resilience.

Therapeutic Interventions

Effective therapeutic interventions are crucial for helping families navigate the complexities of ambiguous grief. Writing provides an outlet for expressing unresolved emotions and fosters a sense of control and understanding over their grief (Thatcher, 2023). These methods encourage participants to engage in role-playing and social interactions that mirror their real-life experiences, promoting emotional catharsis and cognitive reorganization (Giacomucci, 2020). Such techniques can help individuals externalize their feelings, view their situations from different perspectives, and build stronger support networks. By participating in these therapeutic activities, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of their grief and develop healthier coping mechanisms. Importance of family-based approaches in addressing addiction-related grief emphasize the need for comprehensive support systems that include both individual and family therapy, helping to mitigate the feelings of isolation and helplessness that often accompany ambiguous grief (Gual & Drummond, 2022). Family therapy can facilitate open communication, mutual understanding, and collective healing, reinforcing the family unit's resilience. Integrative therapies that combine traditional and alternative methods can also be effective. Techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, and art therapy can complement conventional therapeutic approaches, providing holistic support for individuals and families dealing with ambiguous grief. These therapies can enhance emotional regulation, reduce stress, and promote overall well-being, making them valuable additions to the treatment arsenal.

Synthesis

Ambiguous grief in the context of addiction is a multifaceted and deeply challenging experience. The literature underscores the profound emotional impact on families and the need for specialized therapeutic interventions to address this unique form of grief. Through continued research and the development of targeted support strategies, it is possible to provide more effective care for those affected by the ambiguous loss associated with addiction. Interventions that acknowledge and validate the complexity of ambiguous grief can help individuals and families navigate their emotional journeys, fostering healing and resilience. By recognizing the unique challenges faced by those experiencing ambiguous grief, practitioners can better support their clients and help them find a path to recovery and emotional well-being.

Method

Overview of Design

This study is a qualitative generic design to explore the understanding between addiction and ambiguous grief. This design allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' personal experiences and emotions without being constrained by the frameworks of specific qualitative methodologies such as phenomenology or grounded theory. The flexibility of a generic qualitative approach is particularly suited for examining the nuanced and subjective nature of addiction and ambiguous grief (Giacomucci, 2020; Missouridou et al., 2023).

Case Selection/ Participation

The study will involve 15 participants aged 21 and older. Participants will be recruited based on their self-reported experiences with addiction and ambiguous grief through an online survey created by the researcher. The inclusion criteria for participants are: Must be 21 years or older, have experienced a loved one with addiction, and have experienced ambiguous grief

within their loved one's addiction. The researcher interviewed the participants for about 15-30 minutes over video call on Zoom. The researcher saved the audio of these interviews and took notes during the interview to collect accurate data of what the participants said during the interview. Participants will be recruited through an initial online survey (Appendix A) distributed by the researcher via social media platforms, and in person. The survey will serve as a screening tool to identify individuals who meet the study's criteria. It will include demographic questions and preliminary questions about their experiences with addiction and ambiguous grief. Potential participants who meet the inclusion criteria will be contacted by the researcher and invited to participate in an in-depth interview with 10 questions (Appendix B) asked by the researcher. Observation of their emotions will also be taken into consideration.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was carefully determined by the researcher who felt that a number of 10 participants is more than enough to collect the data needed for this study. Conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 participants to explore their lived, in-depth experiences with loved one's addictions (Sperandio et al., 2023). These participants will be family members, friends, and caregivers of individuals who are currently dealing with addiction. Exploring the experiences of friends and family members affected by a loved one's addiction makes it narrow and specific (Sampson et al., 2023). These participants will be ages 21 or older to really grasp the severity of ambiguous grief. The researcher is using a convenience sample, where the participants are selected from a convenient location to the researcher, these are social media and workplace.

Procedure

The researcher generated an online survey (Appendix A) and posted the link to the survey on a public social media platform and asked individuals in person if they would like to participate. This online survey was used for recruitment. The participants who were selected and accepted by the researcher were then invited to a 30-minute Teams' or in-person interview of 10 questions (Appendix B) that asks personal questions about how they are coping on dealing with ambiguous grief. The researcher asked participants if they can be in a quiet and private setting in case of emotional reactions during the interview.

The interview began with the researcher telling the participants how the interview would go, along with asking them if they were ready to answer questions that could possibly make them emotional. This is all to warn the participants that whatever they say or do will be observed and used for the research.

The researcher transcribed the audio of the interviews to keep accurate data to be recorded along with notes that the researcher took during the interview. The researcher used generated transcripts to capture the full conversations that happened during the interviews with each participant. Participants were asked during the recruitment survey if they would like to stay anonymous, but the researcher kept all participants anonymous, due to only needing the data required for research from a friend, family member, or caregiver that are dealing with ambiguous grief. The researcher plans to organize data by transcribing the interview and finding patterns or themes between the participants' answers to each question. These answers will be recorded on a word document.

The interview was semi-structured and open dialogue, and the researcher encouraged the participants to say anything they deemed important and not hesitate about their emotions. The participants were asked questions on their mental health, who they know about addiction, why

they think their loved one's addiction has impacted them the way it does, and what mental health services they have sought because of their situation with ambiguous grief. The interview then ended with the participants signing the consent form (Appendix C) to distribute their anonymous answers and reactions to the researcher, which will then be formed into data.

Thematic Analysis

The researcher used Thematic analysis in their study to grasp how the participant expresses themselves, the language they use, and their personal experiences with anonymous narratives. The researcher will categorize each participant by letter (Ex. Participant A). Thematic analysis is used in qualitative research to entail derive meaning and identify themes from data with no preconceptions (Damyanov, 2023). Damyanov provides a 6-step process to thematic analysis. These steps include (1) Familiarizing yourself with the data, (2) creating your initial codes, (3) collating codes with supporting data, (4) grouping codes into theme, (5) reviewing and revising themes, and (6) writing your narrative. The researcher utilized these steps to gather narratives of each participant.

Researcher Credibility

In qualitative research, the credibility of the researcher is paramount to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the study's findings. This study on ambiguous grief and addiction was conducted with rigorous attention to ethical standards and enhancing the credibility of the research process and outcomes.

Recognizing the potential for personal bias, the researcher engaged in continuous reflexive practice throughout the study. Reflexive notes were maintained to document personal reflections, reactions, and potential biases that could influence data collection and analysis.

Establishing trust and rapport with participants was a critical component of the research process. Prior to the interviews, the researcher provided participants with comprehensive information about the study, including its purpose, procedures, and the ethical considerations in place to protect their confidentiality and well-being. This transparency helped build a foundation of trust, encouraging participants to share their experiences openly and honestly.

The study employed a narrative analysis approach, which is well-suited for exploring personal and complex experiences such as ambiguous grief and addiction. Ten carefully crafted interview questions were designed to elicit detailed narratives from participants. The questions were piloted and refined to ensure clarity and relevance. The interviews were conducted in a questionnaire format, allowing for flexibility and the opportunity to explore emerging themes in depth. This approach ensured that the data collected was comprehensive and nuanced, capturing the nature of participants' experiences.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the researcher employed triangulation by cross-referencing data from multiple sources, including participant narratives and existing literature on ambiguous grief and addiction. Additionally, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to validate the accuracy and resonance of the interpretations. Participants were invited to provide feedback and clarify any misinterpretations, which helped ensure the findings accurately represented their experiences.

The documents gathered for this research study included consent forms, transcripts of participants, notes by the researcher, recruitment survey, and interview questions. Participant documentation is from participants that are dealing or dealt with ambiguous grief caused from addiction of a friend, family member, or caregiver.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, as approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants provided informed consent and were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities, and all data was stored securely to maintain confidentiality. By adhering to these rigorous standards and practices, the researcher has ensured that the study's findings are credible and reflective of the true experiences of individuals dealing with ambiguous grief and addiction. The research contributes valuable insights to the field and provides a robust foundation for future studies and interventions.

Results

Data Recording

The researcher transcribed audio recordings through a program called Clipto.ai and included the transcripts along with notes the researcher took to find themes and patterns from the participants responses (Appendix D). All documents have been maintained on Microsoft OneDrive to ensure safety and organization of data throughout the entire process. The researcher then organized the themes and patterns found for discussion via physical and manual analysis.

Demographic

Demographics included 8 participants of all races aged 22-36. The goal was to get 10 participants in total, but 2 could not make the interview. Of all the participants 6 of them spoke from the perspective of feeling ambiguous grief of a loved family member, 2 spoke from the perspective of feeling ambiguous grief of a friend, and 1 spoke from the perspective of feeling ambiguous loss from clients they have worked with or work with. The participants who spoke from a client perspective worked in mental health for homeless addiction. The participants that

spoke from a family member perspective was greater, 2 spoke about a parent, 2 spoke about a sibling, and 1 spoke about an ex-wife.

Table 1

Demographic Variables

Demographic	# included in study	% included in study
Gender:		
Women	4 Participants	50%
Men	4 Participants	50%
Ambiguous Grief of a Family Member	6 Participants	75%
Ambiguous Grief of a Friend	2 Participants	25%
Ambiguous Grief of a Client	1 Participant	12%

Test of Research Questions

The research question for this study was ambiguous whether grief due to a loved one's addiction impacts patterns of mental health issues in family members or caregivers. After

Concluding the interviews, and observations, the results to that question revealed that ambiguous grief of a loved one's addiction does impact a person's mental health, but find it hard to seek professional help to help with mental health issues caused by their loved ones or clients' addictions. The data also revealed that the mental health issues were more serious when they were caused by a family member's addiction, than a client's.

The three themes found in this study were how the participants knew they had mental health issues caused by their loved one's addiction, but they did not seek the help needed, another theme found was that the participants found comfort in suppressing and running away from their loved one's addiction, and lastly the participants realized that a lot of their personal problems stem off of their loved one's addiction. See Table 2 for snippets from participants on each theme. A complete table of collected data can be found in Appendix E.

Table 2

Study Themes and examples from participants

Theme	Example from Interviews
Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help	<p>P1 I really it was I didn't really want to talk to anybody because at the end of the day, like I felt embarrassed and guilty</p> <p>P3 I have gone to therapy for other reasons mainly for raising my kids but I know that I should definitely seek therapy for my situation with my ex-wife because there is still a lot of things I hold on to from that relationship that I still think about and hold emotions for. It makes me sad thinking about it and I definitely felt sadness.</p> <p>P4 No, that's one thing that I have not taken initiative towards, like seeking professional help. I guess that could help. But no. No, just I haven't. It's just kind of been me.</p> <p>P5 I should seek professional help to help me with my stress of my job and just the things I have seen with my friend and what I see on a day-to-day basis. I have not taken the initiative to seek professional help, but I am not opposed to it.</p>

<p>Suppressed Emotions</p>	<p>P1 Yes, there was a time where I literally felt like my life was just falling apart. And I told myself, oh, no, it's not because of this. It's not because of that. But really, it was literally just dealing with the fact that my dad wasn't the person I would come home to sometimes.</p> <p>P2 I think it's easy for us to get lost, um, in that aspect of thinking that we've done something wrong or failed to meet something, but there's that that old saying, or just, there are some things that are out Of our control, it's one of those situations, um, and you have to sit there and remember yourself.</p> <p>P3 I mean, raising my kids is really the biggest challenge because it's hard to cope with your own grief when you're responsible for another person's well-being and you know if I didn't have kids if it was just her that I lost and I could just focus on me then it would have been probably a lot easier to, um, to cope and to get through it.</p>
<p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issues</p>	<p>P6 Yeah definitely living my day-to-day life holding that trauma in the back of my head sometimes especially about my confidence, and just knowing that it still happens to this day, that she is still addicted to alcohol, and I feel like I can't do anything about it.</p>

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Loved ones of family members, friends, and clients have experienced ambiguous grief through their addiction. There are different kinds of addictions; here, the loved ones dealt with addiction to alcohol and drugs. The number of addictions in the world is at max; here, 8 participants of this study speak about their views of their loved one's addiction. Through in-depth online interviews, the researcher was successful in confirming that ambiguous grief caused by another person's addiction is a big enough factor to cause mental health issues. The purpose of this study was to focus on qualitative findings in order to gain an in-depth understanding of what a loved one's addiction can cause to their family, friends, or caregivers. The research

question that this study tried to achieve is: "How does ambiguous grief due to a loved one's addiction impact patterns of mental health issues in family members or caregivers?"

The present study explored the impact of a loved one's addiction on participants, revealing three primary themes: the awareness of mental health issues without seeking professional help, finding comfort in suppressing emotions and avoiding the addiction, and recognizing that personal problems stem from their loved one's addiction. These themes highlight the complex interplay between personal distress and the challenges of addressing mental health needs within the context of addiction.

Participants in this study reported significant mental health challenges as a result of their loved one's addiction but often did not seek professional help. For example, Participant 1 expressed feelings of embarrassment and guilt and had suicide ideation, which likely contributed to their reluctance to pursue support. Similarly, Participant 4 acknowledged not taking the initiative to seek professional help despite recognizing its potential benefits. This reluctance to seek help is supported by literature indicating that stigma and personal barriers frequently prevent individuals from accessing mental health services (Bradley et al., 2022). Such findings underscore the need for interventions aimed at reducing stigma and facilitating access to mental health resources.

A key theme in this study was the tendency of participants to suppress their emotions and avoid confronting their loved one's addiction directly. Participant 1, for instance, described their experience of feeling overwhelmed yet avoiding addressing these emotions openly. Participant 2 also highlighted a tendency to get lost in personal struggles rather than dealing with them directly. These findings align with research on emotion suppression, which suggests that avoiding or suppressing negative emotions can have detrimental effects on emotional well-being

and worsen mental health issues (Ruan et al., 2020). The study's results suggest that promoting healthier emotional expression and coping mechanisms could be beneficial in mitigating the negative effects of suppression.

Participants also recognized that their personal problems were deeply intertwined with their loved one's addiction. For example, Participant 3 noted that the demands of raising children while dealing with grief added to their stress. Similarly, Participant 6 acknowledged ongoing trauma and its impact on their self-confidence. This theme reflects broader research on the impact of a loved one's addiction, which indicates that such situations can contribute to additional personal and family-related stressors (Fuchs, 2017). These findings highlight the importance of addressing both the addiction itself and its broader impact on individuals' lives.

The study provides valuable insights into how a loved one's addiction affects individuals' mental health and coping strategies. The findings suggest a need for comprehensive support systems that address barriers to professional help, encourage healthy emotional processing, and consider the extensive impact of addiction on personal well-being. Future research should continue to explore these themes and assess the effectiveness of interventions designed to support those navigating the challenges associated with a loved one's addiction.

Limitations of the Study

This study faced some limitations of qualitative research. The sample size of this study was anticipated to be 10 participants but only 8 were able to give their feedback. Of the sample size, most of the participants spoke about a close family member or friend, and only 2 spoke about clients; the researcher noticed that ambiguous grief was not as impactful as the client's addiction to their caregiver, but a larger sample size could have found otherwise. Another limitation found was that only 2 of the participants sought professional mental health services

when it came to their mental health issues caused by their loved one's addiction, a larger sample size could have helped to find individuals who are open to mental health services if necessary.

Future Directions

Future research on ambiguous grief caused by addiction can go above 10 participants for the sample size to find more accurate findings on caregiver ambiguous grief as well as finding participants that have sought professional help and ask if that helped them and creating a more diverse population. Future research could evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions aimed to address ambiguous grief and improve mental health among those affected by a loved one's addiction. This could include exploring different types of therapeutic approaches, support groups, and educational programs to help with healthier coping mechanisms. While this study focused on alcohol and drug addictions, future research could explore more ambiguous grief related to other types of addiction, such as gambling or food addiction. Understanding the differences and similarities across various types of addiction can provide deeper insights into other aspects of ambiguous grief.

General Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative study explored the impact of ambiguous grief caused by a loved one's addiction to alcohol and drugs on the mental health of family members, friends, and caregivers. Eight participants were interviewed to understand how such grief influences mental health patterns, guided by the research question "How does ambiguous grief due to a loved one's addiction impact patterns of mental health issues in family members or caregivers?"

The analysis identified three main themes: participants acknowledged their mental health struggles but were reluctant to seek professional help, they tended to suppress or avoid facing the reality of their loved one's addiction, and they realized that many of their personal issues were

closely tied to the addiction they witnessed. The study found that ambiguous grief had a more significant impact in those dealing with a family member's addiction than those working with clients, indicating a deeper emotional toll in closer relationships.

Participants reported experiencing feelings such as embarrassment, guilt, and even suicidal ideation, which often prevented them from seeking help. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that stigma and personal barriers are common obstacles to accessing mental health services. The tendency to suppress emotions in response to their loved one's addiction contributed to worsening mental health issues, indicating the need for interventions that promote healthy emotional expression and coping strategies.

While this study highlights the profound effects of a loved one's addiction on mental health, it faced limitations due to its small sample size. Only eight participants were interviewed, with most discussing family members or friends rather than clients, limiting the understanding of ambiguous grief from a professional perspective. Only two participants sought professional help, suggesting a need for further research on barriers to accessing support.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of comprehensive support systems that address not only the impact of addiction on individuals struggling with substance abuse but also the mental health challenges faced by their loved ones.

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Appendix A

Hello! Hope you're doing great today!

- My name is Yoana Andrade, I am a Human Behavior Psychology Master's student at National University.
 - I am doing a research project on ambiguous grief and the impact it has on family members and care givers, of a loved one's addiction to drugs or alcohol. Ambiguous grief is defined as a person's profound sense of loss and sadness that is not associated with death.
 - With this research I hope to find if ambiguous grief really is a feeling that greatly impacts an individual's mental health.
 - If you would like to participate in this study, please be sure that you are 21 years or older, have experienced ambiguous grief caused by a loved one's addiction to drugs or alcohol, and please answer the following recruitment questions that follow...
 - This research is completely voluntary and if you have any questions you can contact me at y.andrade0451@student.nu.edu and I will respond as soon as possible.
1. Are you interested in participating in a research project on the topic of addiction and ambiguous grief?
 2. Have you or someone you know experienced grief or loss because of a loved one's addiction?
 3. Do you feel comfortable discussing your experiences and emotions related to ambiguous grief caused by addiction in a confidential research setting?
 4. Are you willing to share your insights and perspectives to contribute to a better understanding of how addiction impacts individuals and families?
 5. Have you ever sought support or counseling to cope with the challenges of ambiguous grief associated with addiction?
 6. Would you be interested in participating in a research study aimed at exploring the emotional effects of addiction-related ambiguous loss and potential coping strategies?
 7. You will be completely anonymous in this research project, but I will need your name and a proper email to contact you for the interview. What is your name and email?

Thank You so much!

These questions aim to identify individuals who have relevant experiences and are willing to participate in your research on addiction-induced ambiguous grief.

Appendix B

Interview questions:

1. Can you describe your experience with a loved one or caregiver who has struggled with addiction?
2. How has the addiction of your loved one or caregiver impacted your emotional well-being and daily life?
3. In what ways have you experienced grief or loss related to your loved one's addiction?
4. How do you perceive the concept of ambiguous grief, and do you feel it applies to your situation?
5. Can you share any specific challenges you've faced in coping with the ambiguous grief caused by your loved one's addiction?
6. Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with other family members or friends as a result of your loved one's addiction?
7. What support systems or coping mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with the ambiguous grief caused by addiction?
8. How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to your loved one's addiction?
9. Have you sought professional help or counseling to cope with the effects of your loved one's addiction on your mental health?
10. Looking ahead, what do you envision as potential steps toward healing and coping with the ambiguous grief associated with your loved one's addiction?

Interview Protocol:

These questions aim to delve into the personal experiences and coping mechanisms of individuals affected by a loved one's addiction, as well as their perceptions of grief and loss in this context. Participants will be warned that the questions are personal and will speak about emotional concerns.

Appendix C
Consent Form

RESEARCHERS NAME: Yoana Andrade

AFFILIATION: I am a master's student at National University.

PROJECT TITLE: Impact of Ambiguous Grief on Families and Caregivers Caused by a Loved One's Addiction

PROSPECTIVE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:

I am conducting an interview to figure out the mental health issues and ambiguous grief a loved one or caregiver feel when dealing with an individual who is addicted to a substance. In order to participate, you must be 21 years or older, have experienced ambiguous loss due to addiction, and be willing to answer personal questions that bring up mental health.

PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY:

You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to acquire an understanding of what Addiction could cause to family member's and caregiver's who are experiencing Ambiguous Grief. The understanding of possible mental health matters.

PROCEDURES:

You have been asked 10 interview questions in a one-on-one interview with the researcher that includes questions about mental health, addiction, therapy, counseling, and feelings of loss or trauma. This interview will take about 30 minutes of your time to complete. This interview will be audio-taped for accuracy of your responses and to analyze the study.

POSSIBLE RISK OR DISCOMFORT:

This study can be based off trauma from grief and addiction. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, or to report research-related problems, you may email the National University IRB at irb@nu.edu

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, your responses will be anonymous - that is, recorded without any identifying information that is linked to you. If you have any questions regarding this Interview, please contact me at y.andrade0451@student.nu.edu

AUTHORIZATION:

By signing this consent form, you have read and agreed to this consent form and to participate in this study. You are aware that this interview will be audio-recorded and understand the sensitivity of the questions asked. **By signing below you are telling the researcher “YES” to continue to use your responses, and audio for this study. By signing below you are telling the researcher “YES I would like to participate in this study.”**

Participant Name (Print): _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D

Transcripts

Participant 1

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Researcher:

Good afternoon. I am the researcher, Yoana Andrade, and this is the interview with Participant 1 on ambiguous grief of a loved one's or client's addiction. I will be asking you 10 questions on this topic. Feel free to share any information you are comfortable with sharing. I will start with question number one. Can you describe your experience with a loved one or client who has struggled with addiction?

Participant 1:

Yes, I had two experiences. One was with my dad and the other was with my uncle. They are both related siblings. My dad was an alcoholic and a drug addict for about 15 years, and it sometimes comes and goes, but mentally it doesn't; I don't think it gets any better. Sometimes I feel like maybe it affects him due to the fact that he did. He did lose his brother, and that's another thing with my uncle. He was an addict as well. He never wanted to tell anybody how sick he got due to being an addict. He drank a lot. Doctors kept telling him, 'Don't do this,' 'Don't do that,' and he would just continue to drink, which caused him to get sick and have cirrhosis in the liver; it just kept getting worse and worse. To the point where he ultimately lost his life, but that could come further on. But with him, with my dad's experience, he had already fought that addiction. And I guess, mentally, that's not good for that. Wasn't good for me because the impact with my dad was more like: he told himself, 'oh, I am OK.' And he got back into his path because our family, we are faithful. We do believe in God, and we just believe that my uncle would get better. But mentally, I was like, 'OK, yes, my dad did say that he stopped drinking, but he didn't completely stop because once he lost his brother, like it broke him more, which broke us because we were seeing how different he would become and what personalities he would express.' Because his expressions, his personality would literally be screaming every single time or take out his anger on us. And it was not easy mentally and physically. So we try, we would try running away from that. But with my uncle, he it just was sad to see how his personality would change because he was such a joyful person and he would literally come to our house every single day and would come visit. And as you would see in time, like as he would drink and as he would do more drugs and get more into his addiction and how he would just look sad all the time and made him like a different person, he wouldn't smile the same. As. How he used to his face, the more weak he looked, more his body looked weaker as a person. And it just makes you think about how it's not just thinking it, but like you see it and then it makes you sad and it makes you overthink and it makes you wonder, what can I do to make it better? But really, we can't make it get better. It's more he would have to have fought for himself and we just have to be there faithfully trying to pray to God that it would get better. But. With my dad, it was more of a struggle due to the fact that I lived with him and I had experienced all those things, and he was just his the transitions that he would go from in the morning to the afternoon were completely different. I could go to school and he would take me to school and he looked totally fine because he was sober. And as soon as I would get home from school, he was already a completely different

person because of how much he would already have consumed throughout the day while I was at school. So it was like seeing two different people throughout the day, and in the night, it would just get worse because of how bad his addiction was. He would literally go through a bunch of boxes of beers a day, and then his drug, his drug addiction was more crystal. So him, it's just like how much he consumed in a day, ounces wise. Not too sure, because the only time I remember him actually telling us how much he consumed was when we were taking a flight. And he just said, 'I just took like eight ounces of crystal and just said I was going to just be done with it for the rest of my life.' But really, we don't know until this day if it's true that if he stopped. But it's just hard to see how that person changes and how my mental health like doesn't get better because I tell myself, 'Yes, he has changed.' But really, is it is that the truth? Is that really what's happening or am I just trying to lie to myself to fix my own mental health and to try to make myself...? Better?

Researcher:

How has the addiction of your loved one or caregiver impacted your emotional well-being and daily life?

Participant 1:

So, honestly, it's hard because with my dad, he is. When I was younger, it was like I had to do everything mainly because I am an older sibling. I had to make sure that my siblings were OK, that they were fed. And my mom had to work basically for a family of five. She had to make sure that everything was paid for, things like that. But my dad, he wouldn't do anything because of how much he was just addicted and mentally and emotionally unstable.

That was not easy for me because I had to make sure the house was clean. I had to make sure my sisters were fed, and my mom wouldn't come home till late at night. So sometimes my mom had to be fed as well, and I had to take care of that, take care of all those necessities. And then, I had to still make sure that I did my homework, that I did everything. And physically, it just took a toll on my mental health because I thought that that's what was normal until I reached high school and I was like, this is not normal. And we moved into a house, and everything was a little different because with that, it was like more.

It's like if my dad had more freedom to just scream and just still do what he needed to, like still scream and still like treat us like humans. We were not humans, we were like objects to him because of how his personality would just switch from one second to another, like he would be nice to us for a little bit and then just start screaming, and the neighbors would be able to hear. And then it just got worse and worse every time. And then when he would see that neighbors would hear, it's like he would just get even worse, mentally that that took a toll on me because I had to make sure that my sisters were okay, and I had to like either run away with them or try to stay there but hide somewhere.

Because if anything, my sisters were like my priority. Like, yes, my mom, I had to try to help my mom too. But at the same time, it was like, if any of us are going to survive, it's going to be me and my sisters because my dad would not become abusive till we moved houses because he was able to like go to his own little back house. And that's where he would consume more of his thing because he didn't have to hide or do it in like a little garage or stuff like that anymore. No, he went to his own little back house and he was just consuming more and more and more. And then when he got physical with my mom, is when I was like, I believe I was around like seven, 15, 16, maybe. But when he got physical with my mom, it just got worse and worse and worse.

And then that's when I felt like I had to step in. And I kept telling myself, 'oh, the only way that your mom is going to survive or your siblings are going to survive is if you fight.' And mentally. And physically - at that age, I don't think I'm supposed to have been dealing with that, or I don't think I should have been the one to have been thinking, 'oh, I shouldn't have been the one to be thinking, oh, I have to fight for this.' No, like that's I don't think at that age I should have been I should have been still like going to like either parties or like football games or things like that in high school, because that's like what's known going to football games or going to any games or rallies, things like that. But I have to be worried. I have to make sure that my mom was OK, or I had to go to school worried, making sure that my sisters actually were safe, because if it wasn't me, who would it be? My dad didn't really care about us because, because of how strongly he was just into that stuff. So I feel like mentally and emotionally it did not do well with me. And then I decided to start working. I was the age of 17. So I would go straight from school to work, school to work, school to work. And since I said like earlier, I was faithful, so I would go to church and try to run away from that. But I still was doing all these things which caused me to get Bell's palsy. And that, I guess, was they said it was due to stress. I got on that and they told me and my dad was the first one to be like, oh, what are you stressed about? You're not stressed about anything. But little did he know that all of the things I had to do at such a young age just caught up to my life like I was mentally, physically tired. I was drained. My body felt exhausted. My body was literally on fight or flight mode. And they were like, 'Well, that if the next time if you don't take care of yourself, it could turn into a stroke. It could get worse.' And I just thank God that I haven't gotten to the worst. But but my dad literally due to addiction, I feel like that's what caused me to have that type of emotional distress in my life. And it caused me to just overthink everything and just try my best to just try to save my my siblings. Because if it wasn't because of if it wasn't because of them, I probably wouldn't have been at that house anymore. But I still dealt with it and I still try to understand why is it that he was like that?

Researcher:

In what ways have you experienced grief or loss related to your loved one's addiction? Yes.

Participant 1:

So in April, in April, I did experience a loss. It was my uncle's loss. He did end up, I said earlier that he did end up dying due to cirrhosis in the liver. And it was because of his addiction. Addiction to what? His addiction was alcohol and alcohol. More his beer. And then drugs never was confirmed what drug he was taking. I know that my dad sometimes says it was crystal as well as what he was taking. But I never was to confirm and I never like really wanted to know if it was that. But if you could tell in his face, he just wasn't doing well; his belly would get bigger, was getting bigger. He wasn't eating. His eyes were getting yellow. And it's and it sucks because he was the. He was the one person that was like there to like help us through the process, because my dad, right before, well, maybe months like four to five months before my uncle passed, he did end up getting arrested. It was a false, a false accusation, but he did get arrested, and was arrested up until my uncle's death. And that took a very big toll on our lives as well, because of the fact that my dad couldn't see my uncle for the last time alive, at least. But I did lose my uncle to that addiction to alcohol and drugs because he just couldn't stop. I felt like maybe he just was sad and that's why maybe he kept going and going. But we always told them, 'like', do it for your son, do it for your son. And i just he kept saying, 'yes, I'll do it for your son' or 'I'll do it for your family'. But it just would not get better. And my uncle was the one that throughout the whole

process of like, well, my dad's arrested and things like that, he would be the one to go to our house constantly. He would be making sure that we were OK, that we were all safe because there was only girls in the house after my dad decided to. After my dad got arrested, it was just girls. So my my uncle would literally drive past our street, make sure we were OK after I'd get out of work. I live and work kind of close to his house. So he was literally like following me down the street to make sure I was OK, to make sure I was safe. And sometimes it isn't easy because now when I drive home, it's like I don't see him. I can't find him in the street anymore. I can't just be like, 'Oh, I see my uncle down the street' because he's not there. But it doesn't get easier mentally. Mentally, I try to go to sleep, but I've been having a lot of sleep insomnia due to the fact that I did lose an uncle and I did lose someone who was literally like the person who was. Trying to help us. He was like the man of the house, basically, even if he didn't live with us. But he was like the man of the house because my dad wasn't there and he was like my dad's like second person. He was like, 'Don't worry, don't worry.' Like, 'I've got your family. I'll be there. I'll be there for him.' And his loss really took a toll on us because we didn't think that we were going to lose him so soon after the fact that so soon after the fact that my dad had gotten arrested. And he did get into he didn't get to the hospital and like basically went into coma for for a month before he passed, but it was hard. It was hard on this mentally and physically, not just to me, but to my family as well, especially my dad. And I feel like maybe that retrace my dad to go back maybe to at least to just drinking because he felt like that was like his coping mechanism, which shouldn't be. But. It was hard on all of us. And it just it's sad to see that my to not see my uncle anymore and to not see him driving around or to not see him constantly knocking on our door or calling us to make sure we're okay and and telling us all like, did you guys eat already and things like that? And I'll be and I would even tell him when he would ask me, did you eat already? I'm like, have you ate already? Because he wouldn't even want to eat. He's like, no, no, I'm okay. I'm okay. But really, he wasn't okay. And I know he was wasn't okay. But I know he's in a better place now.

Researcher:

How do you perceive the concept of ambiguous grief? And do you feel it applies to your situation?

Participant 1:

Yes, because with my dad, I felt like he, yes, I like I have said earlier. I, I felt him being my dad when he would take me to school when I was younger. But when I would come home, it like felt like. If he wasn't even my dad, it felt like I had a stranger in my house because he was a completely different person. He would scream. He would even if he wouldn't scream, it was like if he were there, but he really wasn't there. Like, there were just times where, like, I'd be like, 'Dad, Dad, do you want to eat? Do you want to do that?' And then he'll just be like, 'Just leave me alone already.' Like, I don't know why you're talking to me or things like that. And I'm like, and I would think in my mind, I'm like, 'Well, I'm just asking,' but that's where I noticed that he wasn't really himself; it was basically be a different person. And I due to my faith, I feel like maybe I will understand. I see it as if like it was the devil inside of him. And it wasn't just in that situation. There were a lot of situations where, like, he was beating up my mom, and I would literally stare at him in the eyes. And I would just see a completely different person. It wasn't himself. It wasn't him. And I remember when he laid hands on my sister, I just dragged him out, And he was just like, 'Why are you touching me? I don't know who you are.' And he would

literally say that he didn't know who we were. And I just would see he's not himself under the influence. Like, I could tell he wasn't himself. And I felt I had lost who my dad was in that, in those moments, because he wasn't acting like himself. He would never put a hand on his own kids. Never, in his life. But in those moments, he did. And then when you would ask him the next morning, 'Do you remember doing this?' Or he would ask why he had a bruise on his face. And I was like, 'Well, because I stopped you because you did that.' He's like, 'No, I did not. I don't know why you're like hitting me and things like that.' Like, 'Did you do it while I was asleep?' It was like he would even wake up as if he didn't even know who he was. It's like he had lost himself, to the extent that he was losing. He was having the same ambiguous grief because he was losing his own body or something. But I felt like I experienced that experience that a lot due to the fact that he literally was just addicted and mentally ill.

That was not easy for us, because we would see one person and then we see another and it would be like, 'Okay, well, when can we talk to him?' Like we couldn't even talk to him in a specific way because he would already be like, 'Oh, are you lying to me? Are you doing this? Are you doing that?' Like it was already like him overreacting. And my dad would never ask us things like that. Like you when he was my dad, like he would just act normal. He or he will be like, 'Oh, have you guys a like, are you guys?' Okay, and then when he would become a different person, it was like we would lose him because he was just a different tone, a different everything. And when we would talk to him, it's like we had to speak to him in a different way too. So that's what I mean. Like when I feel like I lost my dad in that moment, like I didn't recognize him because I had to speak to him like a different person. It was like if I was in customer service, I and I come home and I speak customer service again. It's like you can't do that. You can't just be speaking customer service throughout the whole time. It's like you're home with your family and that's how it should be. But I was speaking to him more like, 'oh, like I have to speak to him.' Kind of like, softly and like in a tone because or like a monotone voice because I was saying, 'oh, like maybe he's going to get mad at the way I talk to him.' Is it the right way or things like that? And with my uncle, it was like I was when he would come to our houses when I was younger. I would see him and he was just always joyful, always happy and like always ready to talk, always ready to. The first thing you would do when you come to our house is turn on the news and he was already ready to see the news. Like that was his thing. Seeing the news. And then watching games. And then, throughout, like the end, before he physically lost his life, I couldn't really tell who he was. Like, there were times where like I would tell him, 'oh, uncle, do you remember this?' Or 'do you remember that?' He'd be like, 'no, really?' Like, that happened, or like and I was like, 'who am I speaking to?' Is that in my mind?

I'm like, 'who am I speaking to?' Like, is this really my uncle? Like, even then I would be like, 'whoa', like, in my. Like, what's going on? Why is he not remembering this? Or it's like things from art from my childhood that I remember, like funny stories about him. And it's like you would tell him and he'd be like, 'Really? I don't remember that.' But maybe I'll remember later, but really wouldn't remember anything. Or sometimes I'll be like, 'Oh, Uncle, do you remember like this and this of the game that he would remember the things about the football games?' But because he was probably already like in his other life or something like that when he was like, 'I'm watching the games,' but you would tell him like, 'Oh, what's going on? This and this,' and he'll be like, 'Oh, I don't remember that.' And like, it's just completely different. But with him, I, I thank God that I didn't really have to like change my tone of voice with him or I didn't have to. He was still my uncle. He was still there. But, like, in his eyes, you could tell that he was a completely different person because of the fact that, like, I feel like he felt sad and lost. And it's

like we were losing him even before we physically lost him because he just wasn't there anymore. His mindset was not even there. But I think it was due to the addiction and all the things that he was just taking in his life. And it's just—it just was due to the fact that he was always drunk. Like, no matter what, I feel like if I wanted to catch him sober, I had to be at his house. I liked six in the morning because even with his like insomnia, I feel like he wouldn't sleep or sometimes he wouldn't even do anything because. He was just always drinking or he just wouldn't sleep. It's like he didn't have a piece in his heart or something. But I would pray. I would pray. I'm like hoping that things would get better. But no, if I wanted to see him sober, it would be best for me to go early in the morning, like to see him sober. But no, throughout the day, it was already like before.

I remember when he wouldn't be drinking so much and he was just normal and like it felt like he was still kind of himself. But when he started drinking more, it was like he was drinking every single second. Like you would have. You would ask him, 'Oh, what were you doing in the car, Uncle? Oh, I was just taking a sip, taking a sip.' But really, it was just he was already drunk throughout the whole day. But him, it's like he would be drunk, but he wouldn't be like wobbling off his feet. It was more like that's just what he was with his regular drinks. He wouldn't even drink water or nothing; that his drink was always his beer. That's all he would have in his in his life all the time.

Researcher:

Can you share any specific challenges you faced in coping with the ambiguous grief caused by your loved one's addiction? Like, were there any times where you noticed that you can't cope with what was happening with your dad or your uncle?

Participant 1:

Yes, there was a time where I literally felt like my life was like just falling apart. And I told myself, oh, no, it's not because of this. It's not because of that. But really, it was literally just dealing with the fact that my dad wasn't the person I would come home to sometimes. And I was like, why am I even going to go home? Why am I even going to do this or why am I like, what's the point of going home and cleaning? If my dad's just going to be like, why isn't the house clean? Like his his thing, his mindset, like he wasn't clean himself because before it's like that's another thing that with my dad, it was like he just became a different person because before he was a freak, like for. Like this man would literally would literally iron his pants, iron his shirt, iron his underwear. It's like everything was ironed. And then all you and then when he became like this different person, like just with his addiction and with beer and with alcohol and drugs, it was like he was always just in dirty work clothes all the time. He was like a mechanic, but really he wasn't getting any money. Like all his money would just go to his alcohol. And to be honest, it just was a challenge. Because I would literally just see him like that. He was a completely different person. It's like, you know what? I can't do this. And I there was this one time where, like, I just couldn't handle it. I couldn't handle it. And I just decided to I went to Panorama. Like, I just wanted to go to a park and I just was staring at the sky and I was like, 'What am I doing with my life? Like, why am I here? Why?' And I questioned myself like mentally. It's like dreaming - you don't want to be continued. You don't want to continue with life. Because, what's the point? And I wasn't in a relationship. I wasn't in anything. I just told myself, you know, why

like what's the point of this? Like there's no need for it. And I just went went back to the fact that when I was about 12 years old, I remember I even asked myself, I was like, 'Why am I even here?' If my dad doesn't love me, my mom is depressed herself. She doesn't—she just literally going through it her own way. So she wouldn't even see like the efforts that I would make. Like, what's the point? I'm like my sisters are too young; I don't care about my life. And I remember I was like cutting myself and I and everyone would be like, oh, you're just doing it for trend. But really I tried like killing myself. Like that was like my thing. Like I didn't want to be here. I didn't want to do that. And I remember like cutting my wrists and my dad just would hear he heard me scream and he was like, what are you doing? And instead of asking if I was okay, he just kept saying like, oh, why are you trying to catch attention? Why are you trying to do this? But I was like, I'm not doing it for you. I'm doing it for myself because I'm tired of it. I'm tired of everything. And I and I felt like that was one of the challenges. I think when I was younger, it's that I went to cutting myself instead of going to something else. But when but now, like as I get as I'm older, and I'm like, okay, like that's not mentally right or that's not the right thing to do with my faith. I feel like I've been able to cope with it better now, like going to church or reading.

Researcher:

Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with other family members or friends as a result of your loved one's addiction?

Participant 1:

Yes, I have noticed some changes more with friends. It was more like due to the fact that I had to be like basically a caregiver for my siblings, or like, to take care of them. I couldn't have friends like that. Like I couldn't be like, oh, I'm gonna bring a friend over because my dad was a completely different person. It was like, oh, I bring a friend around. Oh, he's going to try screaming at them. Like I couldn't have friends like that. I feel like I just never and I was also like with that mentality. Like, oh, I don't need friends because either way like I can't hang out with them or things like that because my dad when I would ask them. Hey dad, like can I go do this? He he would just start screaming and like went like he was just a completely different person. So I'm like, what's the point of even asking him? So after I got older, I was just like, 'ah, there's no point in even asking her.' Like, why am I even going to go there? And then with there's like a like relationships. I couldn't really maintain like a relationship with a specific person or I couldn't really maintain a relationship with a significant other because I literally kept that wall up all the time. And I would just be like, 'you know what?' Like I don't want to marry somebody or I don't want to date somebody. That's like my dad and I just kept saying, 'you know what? I'm never going to date.

I'm never going to marry' because I was just so afraid of that fear. Like, why do I want to deal with another? Ambiguous grief if I already have to deal with this one all the time.

Researcher:

What support systems or coping mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with the ambiguous grief caused by addiction?

Participant 1:

So, more like a coping mechanism that I've had was when I wanted to run away instead of, like, going to a party or a club by with my faith. I felt like I became stronger. Longer in my faith and I would go to church and I would just pray to God and like ask to please take me out of whatever it is that I was going through in the moment or like if I think God, because they're like my church would have Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

So I felt like I was able to at least run away on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and I was able to just stay away from him. And then if I didn't, and if I didn't go to church, I was at work. So I would feel like that was a coping mechanism for me, like going to work as well. Like I was thinking, 'Oh, at least I'm not home.' That was like my mentality, but I feel like that helped me a lot and just writing it writing everything out because I was like, 'if I can't talk to if I can't talk to friends about it, because I was kind of embarrassed to talk to my friends about it, because it's like they weren't going through that.

They hadn't I felt like they had perfect lives compared to mine.' Like, I couldn't just go and be like, 'oh, you know what? Like this and this is going on.' Like, can you please help me? And I didn't want to bother anybody else because they would just tell me, 'oh, you're just seeking attention.' Like, I had other like friends that I felt like were my more hater friends. Like, they would be like, 'oh, you're just seeking attention. You're only like trying to show that you have a more tough life than we do or things like that.' So, I would never go to anybody. My main thing was seeking God and just working the entire time.

Researcher:

How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to your loved ones' addiction?

Participant 1:

Yeah, so I felt like I felt a little more of guilt when I was younger and maybe even right now, too. Like sometimes I do because with my dad, he had me at a young age. My mom had me at a young age. So, my dad from the start like he was like, 'Oh, I'm going to work. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that.' Like, he had a business to run and he was also working. It was also working like a managing position, but it was like for a big company. So he was literally like basically running that place and running his business. So he literally, I felt like that's what got him into his addictions because he was just, his mindset was all, 'I need to maintain my family. I need to do this.' So I felt guilty because of the fact that, like, oh, because of me, he had to start working to job there because of me, like he had to do everything that he could in his power to like make sure we were okay and things like that, which I felt like brought him to the ground. And it wasn't even just like feeling like the guilt. Like sometimes he would tell us he would be like, oh because of you guys. I couldn't have this life or because of you guys. I couldn't do this, but I know that that was just him not being himself. That was just him being under the influence. I couldn't I do this. I couldn't be successful and like I felt that guilt. I felt that guilt in me and I was, and I felt guilty all the time. And sometimes my mom would be like no don't feel guilty is not your fault. It's our fault for like wanting you so early and just remember, like your dad did want you. He still wants you. He's just a different person, and we all knew it. We they would all like our family was like, 'oh yeah, I hear that is different.' He's not the same, but I just felt like I just felt guilty throughout the whole time because of that fact, I was the oldest and because of me, basically because he wanted me at the beginning. He had to deal with all that stuff.

Researcher:

Have you ever sought professional help or counseling to cope with the effects of your loved one's addiction on your mental health?

Participant 1:

I have not to be honest, but only because I felt like with my faith. I was so strong with my faith that all I would do was really pray to God. So that's why I really didn't go for professional help or counseling. I do have an aunt that she's a like a counselor like she's or the kind of like a psychologist. So sometimes she would text me and be like, oh if you need to talk like I'm here for you, really it was I didn't really want to talk to anybody because at the end of the day, like I felt embarrassed and guilty and I was like, well, I felt like maybe they would tell me oh, it's your fault. That's why it is. But no like it was I just didn't really think I needed to seek professional help or counseling, but maybe ahead. I probably should seek for professional help. But now I've gotten better because everything has just kind of changed. But I tried just coping with it on my own. Honestly with all the. Addictions of my whole everything of losing my uncle and my dad.

Researcher:

Looking ahead. What do you envision as potential steps toward healing and coping with ambiguous grief associated with your loved ones addiction? Or have you already been healing and what has been helping you heal from that?

Participant 1:

So honestly, I felt like what has helped me healed a lot. Well, I did end up finding a significant other and I did end up getting married, and I felt like not running away, but moving out has helped me a lot. I do feel guilty because my siblings are still at that house and they're still kind of dealing with it. It's gotten a lot better though. The addiction has gone a lot better, but mentally, I feel like I've gotten so much better because now I can go home to a quiet house, and sometimes I'm like, 'What is wrong? The house is way too quiet,' but like you couldn't hear the creaks of the wall sometimes. But mentally, that helps me just have a quiet time. Like, also another thing, in the mornings: Once my significant other goes to work. I just started journaling and listening to music, and I feel like that's another like a coping mechanism. I do have as well. And that's a step towards healing because I just write my thoughts and I if I need to cry, I do cry. I do let my emotions out, and I feel like that is like my healing. I feel like I am healing throughout that. Then at night, instead of feeling guilty for crying, I just cry it all out. And I know my significant others there for me to support me, and I feel like that moral support is there for me as well. Thank you very much for this interview.

Participant 2

Record 2024/08/29 20:12:54.mp4

Researcher:

Good afternoon. I am the researcher Yoana Andrade, and this is the interview with participant two on ambiguous grief of a loved one or client addiction. I will be asking you 10 questions on this topic. Feel free to share any information you are comfortable with. So, I will start with the

first question. Can you describe your experience with a loved one or client who has struggled with addiction?

Participant 2:

Yeah, so I mean as a professional when you have a client that is willing to openly share personal struggles and feelings of that nature it's very, sometimes it's very rare for that to happen. But when they do, it connects. Yeah. It connects. It connects you in a different way because that vulnerability and that openness that one shows, it really it allows it to allow you to see someone from a full spectrum instead of having just maybe having a bias. And so what happens is that you quickly see for some those that have perception knowledge of what it is they're dealing with, and some of those that are just completely engulfed and don't really have control over what it is that they're currently struggling with. So I've kind of seen you know both in that aspect some that I feel have an idea of what it is that they struggle with and what they're I guess making a plan or how they currently cope and deal with it. And then we have some that I can tell that it's just simply not something that they're snowballing, I guess, out of control where they have, you know, no real way of finding a solution or, you know, finding a way to stop what's happening. Yeah. Okay.

Researcher:

How has the addiction of your clients impacted your emotional well-being and daily life?

Participant 2

Well, I mean, that's something that, like I said, when someone is vulnerable with you, when someone is open in that regard and willing to share deep, dark secrets. As much as you want to keep in tow that line of keeping your personal beliefs and opinions and biases out of that, naturally, as humans, our beliefs and morals are going to tend to creep in. And so what happens is that we find ourselves building perceptions. We start to try to find ways of thinking outside the box, helping somebody. It's kind of, we become one, I guess you could say, individual. It's like we're like their new little buddy that's just come alongside them and we get to, you know, experience all of that. And so, what's hard is it's maintaining the professionalism as well as the human morality side of things, whereas an individual, especially in situations of things that tow that line of what's right and wrong, it's very, very challenging to be able to look at somebody and give pros and cons, good and bad, of all sides and angles. Instead of just wanting to neglect certain tendencies and just spew information that you feel personally that would help. Sitting back and, you know, for me, being able to listen to them and present things without a bias or with less bias as possible. That's probably the best I can do. The best way of putting it is probably the most challenging, keeping my personal opinion or how I would deal with that out of it and allowing them to maybe see options or see things maybe they haven't seen from my perspective and just allow them to, I guess, work with the knowledge and the information that I'm giving them to best help them either have conversations with me or start conversations, that aspect we can see what we can do about maybe finding a solution or some kind of solution.

Researcher:

In what ways have you experienced grief or loss related to your clients' addictions?

Participant 2:

I mean, I think, you know, when you look at people from a human side of things and you look at things from a position of someone's sister, she says, 'Hey, I am, you know, I'm struggling with drug addiction,' and then you see that they have a family and you understand that that addiction isn't simply affecting that one individual; it's having an effect on maybe a brother, a sister, a daughter, a son. And it's that reality of that, you know, these personal choices that we make – in fact, do have other consequences and it's very difficult, I guess; it's probably the most challenging part is that. I think the best way would be to say: when you're inside of the addiction, you have blockers on to not understanding and seeing everything that goes on necessarily out in the outside world. But when you're the bystander on the opposite way looking in, you see these things, and so it's when you're presenting options, presenting different ways out or, you know, presenting plans, you know, a five-step plan to do this or whatever that may be. And an individual doesn't know how to do it. It doesn't want to go that way or, you know, if an individual, you know, relapses or goes further down the rabbit hole, it just, you know, obviously as humans, our nature is we've failed or we've done something wrong. We've been incompetent in some way of failing to provide for them and meet their needs. And so, once again, it's the ability for us to take out our personal-ness and just be kind of like a brick wall. And it's hard. You don't, you know, you don't know how to do it. It's hard being emotionless when people need you to be emotional, and it's that's probably one that's a very, very challenging thing, especially in the aspect of, even though you might be we might be emotional towards someone, not every individual is going to be going to be able to reciprocate and to be able to take that and receive that and be able to utilize that. And so, you have that emotional gift that I guess you've given to them. And so, especially if you know, I know it's always probably the hardest part for me is probably when people withdraw, they backslide, whatever. I think that when people are finding ways to get out of it, for whatever reason, get brought back in, that's probably the hardest part for me because it's that old motto of 'one step forward, two steps back'. steps back and it's like how do we get ourselves out of this dark hole so um that's probably like you know obviously with the you know side effects the psychological mental all these different variety of ways that these play it's just so many things you know that i would say each and every day that someone's struggles and whatever that is they're dealing with it's just one more day wasted of them fully reaching their full potential so it's just you know it's heartbreaking to see in that aspect.

Researcher:

how do you perceive the concept of ambiguous grief and do you feel it applies to your situation?
so ambiguous grief is basically the loss of someone who is still alive and but not really themselves because of addiction

Participant 2

yeah i mean it's so that's something that definitely you can see um it's kind of like you know when we say definitely there's people let me see them walk and say they're walking around like a zombie it's like their Their body's physically there, but mentally they're elsewhere or the drugs have taken over where they've, you know, the neurological brain's just completely blocked and um, yeah, I think that's just something that's um, I mean, the physical like, I mean when you physically see something and like when you see the change in people and you can see them, yeah, it's horrible. I mean, I don't know what else there is to say. It's like somebody that's you know, you see a client who's 30-40 pounds and next thing you know they have um, you know, marks and cuts and all kinds of different things. You take it instantly, it's you know, even when

you talk to them you can just tell that the person that once was no longer the same person so it's just uh yeah it's it's just loss yeah it's just that sense of hopelessness.

Researcher:

can you share any specific challenges you faced in coping with the ambiguous grief caused by your clients addictions?

Participant 2:

i mean I've already said it but I think um it's the ability like that that emotional ability to be there for someone but not be just emotionally dumping on them where they're trying to tell them how to live or how to get out of it or how to do this um and it's that we have to have an understanding that people are going to make Their own choices, so, um, I think what's hard, uh, with that, I mean, what I've seen is just that this, you know, I don't even want to put a percentage on it, but just understanding that so many people, um, no matter what it is that they're doing, they're not going to be able to do what we do; they're never going to make those choices and so they're going to go their own separate ways. So, we have to, um, not allow the not allow that to control us. I mean, I think it's easy for us to get lost, um, in that aspect of thinking that we've done something wrong or failed to meet something, but there's that that old saying, or just, there are some things that are out Of our control, it's one of those situations, um, and you have to sit there and remember yourself. I think it's hard, especially if you have a heart of caring and stuff like that; it's very difficult. Um, to want to help someone but then also understand that there has to come a time you have to give up on someone and you have to allow someone to um, not I don't want to say suffer the consequences, but they have to learn from the choices they've made and deal with the consequences that might come from that, whether those are good or bad. So uh, that's that's not fun whenever we lose power and control when we're giving that up to someone. Especially in a situation when they've come to us with something, it's yeah, it's very difficult.

Researcher:

Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with other family members or friends as a result of your clients' addictions or working with your clients?

Participant 2:

I mean, yeah, I mean, I definitely think that uh, I mean it's lucky, I mean I'm I'm lucky to sit there and say that I don't have you know, family or friends that are dealing with situations like this, but the heart of it is that um, when you're around this population on a day-to-day basis, the stories in real-life things that you face, they leak into your personal life, and so there are times when I find myself in personal situations or dealing with things where things um, kind of, I'm triggered with, like, PTSD for other things, and so I'm able to relate in that aspect. And so, um, yeah. The whole idea of leaving work at work and keeping your personal life personal... it doesn't really work like that when people are constantly um, calling you, reaching out to you, needing you, when you're literally a lifeline for so many people. The thing is, you don't just clock in at eight and clock out at five; it doesn't work like that. And so, you know, you're going to be wide awake on a weekend at one o'clock in the morning, thinking about what a client did, and you know, you're going to have these things, and it's just, yeah, it's naturally going to bleed in. I don't know, I don't know how anybody could like, how they could differentiate and separate those two, especially if you're um, when you're so encapsulated by it. It's just, I don't see how possible it is.

Researcher:

What support systems or mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with the ambiguous grief caused by the addictions that you deal with?

Participant 2:

I think I mean not necessarily... I don't use the word 'trial and error', but I think what Helps a lot is that when you're working with this population, there's going to be a lot of crossover, meaning that Client A could be experiencing an addiction with uh drugs; Client B could be some kind of say sexual assault. I'd see could be they're all going to be different, but there's still going to be tendencies and methods and ways of um going about doing those that overlap and interweave together. And so um, I think just having the awareness of kind of what you've already dealt with, what you've seen – not only, I mean it's not always going to work for everybody but what may or may not work, and just being able to bring that to light as a possibility of the solution um i think that growth aspect allows you to push yourself further i guess you know you can't grow like failure is where you learn to grow you learn what not to do is how you learn to grow so when things don't work your way don't go out as the way it's supposed to go you can still take those things you know and pivot from those and know how to move forward and so um it's just about having an open mindset i think um at least for me um like i said for me it's it's different because i'm not i don't have a family i don't have a lot of in that nature and so like um i it might it would probably be different If I had, um, you know, a wife or a family or something like that, it probably I would probably handle in a different manner. But, um, you know, like for me, I can honestly say that there's some days that when I drive home and I just have any music on and it's just days where I'm decompressing. I have days where it's literally I have to get everything out, like on the way home, because I know that when I get home, I don't want to take what's been bottled up all day or what's what I've dealt with and then sit there and um blast it onto my sister or somebody else, and that nature, where they're just a bystander, and also they get hit with um just a whole lot of crap, you know, that you know I couldn't deal with or that I couldn't find a way to compartmentalize, and thankfully, no addictions for you know what I mean, because I do know people that have had their own certain... that that's they've seen people with addictions and they want to help them and they phone their own so I know like that's you know I'm blessed with that, so yeah, that's good.

Researcher:

How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to your clients?

Participant 2:

Um, this is a part of life, I don't say that in a life manner but like We're always going to let people down. We're not perfect, um, we're going to make mistakes, we're going to fail people. Um, we're not going to have all the answers and I know that. I think that's the biggest thing. That is what I take just into conversations with people like you: show me grace and I'll show you grace. You're going to make mistakes, and what it is that you're struggling with. And I'm going to make mistakes, trying to help you out, and I'm going to make mistakes, finding a solution how to work with this. And that's how you work together. You can't expect people to be perfect. That's um, and I think that's where I think a lot of Us do make mistakes, is that when we're trying to help formulate plans for somebody or whatever that may be. Is that we set plans up to be

perfect, and we have; we fail to realize that we're not perfect, and people are going to make mistakes or backslide, or the support system that we think is set up is not really a support system at all. Um, so that's one of my big things is that um, yes there are times when I do feel like I completely feel; it is horrible; it is hard. But at the same time um, I I tell people this: that every night I go to sleep, I know that I laid my head down on my pillow and I've done everything that I can. It's different if you're not trying it's different if you're not exhausting resources or whatever that may be but when you're literally making phone calls or making connections or getting with another team or other team members or whatever that may be or you know when you're showing up it's different you've tried you've you know you've put in the effort and stuff um and so i don't take anything from like in that aspect because i know that it's not always going to work out um you know and i know it's not just a meeting meaning that there has to be a support team yeah it's not just not just a client or a loved one or whoever it's not just me and them there Needs to be other individuals, that that individual needs to find their own outlets, their own ways of handling of growth because as much as I want to say that I'm, that I'm right, uh, I'm not always right. There are always better ways to do things. People need to be able to have other people speaking life into them and you know, I need we need to have people that contradict things with them. Give me healthy conversations. You know, if someone's always agreeing with you, that's not... you have somebody that's going to say no or going to challenge your beliefs where you can sit there and have a healthy debate or conversation, whatever that may be to find better solutions instead of just sitting there and always going with somebody a lot of people don't like don't like that but that's what's needed so um yeah I mean guilt that's always going to happen like that's just life man like we're always it's just like when we slip and fall or whatever like you know you make mistakes i make mistakes mine might be in public but yours aren't probably it's just the same thing like it doesn't like I don't know I don't it's easier I think it's easier once you get to that point of letting go in that aspect because trust me if I if I had a list of every time i failed like A client, or something, It would just weigh you down, like you'd sit there and just like you wouldn't be able to, like you wouldn't want to help somebody. You just sit there and be like, 'Well, I didn't do this' or 'I didn't do that.' You can't think like that. You can't; no.

Researcher:

have you ever sought professional help or counseling to cope with the effects of your loved one's addictions on your mental health?

Participant 2:

Um, I mean, so my sister is a therapist, I don't know; I've never sent... went specifically about any of the clients or anything like that, so I don't know. I feel that us in our profession we need to have about less. I think that that's one of the things that we need to...whatever professional help looks like, to an individual that could be joining a softball team and having fun one time you know, one night a week where you just get together, whatever getting help professionally, you know. With that and I think that um because if you allow the things, the conversations to just do and you don't give yourself some opportunity to release Some of these energies, what's going to happen is, is that your level of competency with things as they continue to come in are going to be minimized just because you have so much stuff already built up. You must find ways to release that way you have um, as much open ground to be able to maneuver. And I said, 'I know, trust me.' There are times when I would love to just sit there and you know, see it in these TV shows people just sitting there on like a couch just you know, therapists asking them questions,

you just like saying whatever, like you know what I mean? Like I'd love that. You know, especially when a lot of times It's the opposite way, right? We're the ones who are the ones who are sitting there taking the time to really try to dive in and figure out what's going on. Um, and we can see how, in some of those instances, how fulfilling that can be when somebody has this session of maybe 30 minutes or an hour of just venting or talking, and then at the end of it being so at peace, just because you sat there and just provided two ears and just allowed them to just yap-yap-yap, whatever, sometimes I think that's just what we need.

Researcher:

Looking ahead, what do you envision as potential steps towards healing and coping with the grief of your client's?

Participant 2:

Just remembering that we won't be able to save them all but that we can save some and give them a shoulder to cry on even when I know they are not feeling their true self. That gives me a sense of peace and also doing things that I enjoy doing to get my mind off of the issues that arise in the workplace.

Participant 3

Record 2024/09/02 14:17:48.mp4

Researcher:

Good afternoon I am the researcher Yoana Andrade, and this is the interview with participant three on ambiguous grief of a loved one's or client's addiction. I will be asking you 10 questions on this topic. Feel free to share any information you are comfortable with. So, first question, can you describe your experience with a loved one or client who has struggled with addiction?

Participant 3:

Yes, my ex-wife got into, well, she had a history of drugs, of drug addiction growing up from the time she was a teenager, off and on throughout her 20s, leading into our relationship and our marriage. And she had been clean for years prior to us getting together. But after being married for about a year and a half and having our first child together, she started getting back into it again, started with hanging out with friends and kind of being reintroduced to that world again. And then she started leaving once every couple of weeks and then once a week and then once every couple of days. And then eventually. You know, we separated because of what she was doing. And then I found out later that she was doing drugs again. And it just, yeah, it completely changed her priorities. It changed what she was passionate about. It changed her as a mother, her as a wife, as a friend. I mean, everything she went from being someone who I consider to be my best friend to being someone that I looked like looked at like she was a stranger.

Researcher:

So how has the addiction of your loved one impacted your emotional well-being and daily life?

Participant 3:

In the beginning, it was difficult because it was still fresh. And so any time I had seen her or heard about what she was doing. You know, it was hard to process and it made it difficult for me to focus on my own stuff, especially taking care of the kids. Because every time I looked at the kids, I would see her and she wouldn't be around. So it was really difficult to process that. But as time went on and as you know, I became stronger and I went through this, you know, the court process of getting custody and guardianship. Um. Um, it's gotten easier, but I mean, it's still stings because, you know, you know, at some point at one point in time, I love this this person and then, um, you know, through a series of events and choices that she made, um, you know, here we are today, but I still can't erase the past. So, um, you know, from time to time, it does come into my head. And of course, with the kids, um, you know, being around them. Daily, it's kind of a reminder of, uh, of who she used to be and where she is now.

Researcher:

In what ways have you experienced grief related to your loved one's addiction?

Participant 3:

Um, I think initially it was an anger. It was anger more about the choices she was making and less about her actual addiction. But that anger kind of went to sadness. And then from sadness to kind of numbness, um, so, and that's kind of where I'm at now. Like I, I acknowledge that it's still there. It's still happening. She's still out there somewhere doing what she's doing. Um, and I can't help but acknowledge that because I'm raising her kids. Um, but yeah, at this point it's less, less anger, less sadness, and more just, um, kind of acceptance. So.

Researcher:

How do you perceive the concept of ambiguous grief, and do you feel it applies to your situation?

Participant 3:

Yeah, I mean, it's being, um, experiencing the loss of someone, um, who isn't alive or who is still alive. Like, uh, what was mentioned, um, you know, someone who is no longer themselves, like the death of their ego or who they are. As a person, basically, um, or just lose, like when someone changes, when, when, you know, you go from knowing someone your entire life and then suddenly, they are not that person and it feels like you lost them, even though they're still alive. Um, it applies to the situation because, you know, she, um, is not the person that I knew when we first met and when we were married and, um, it definitely, you know, is, uh, connected to her drug use. And the choices she's made, so.

Researcher:

Can you share any specific challenges you've faced in coping with the ambiguous grief caused by your loved one's addiction?

Participant 3:

Um, yeah. I mean, raising my kids is really the biggest challenge because it's hard to cope with your own grief when you're having to, when you're responsible. First. For another person's well-being and you know if I didn't have kids if it was just her that I lost and, and I could just focus on me then it would have been probably a lot easier to, um, to cope and to get through it. But you

know having to take care of my kids and make sure that they're all right and that they're taken care of I had to put my own feelings and my own you know grief on the back burner so that way Yeah. I would say that the biggest challenge for me um coping with it is has been having to be a father and just having to live life and take care of normal responsibilities and not just throwing the towel because things get hard. But, you know, I must, I have no choice but to work and to take care of the kids and everything. So, I would say that's the primary challenge.

Researcher:

Have you noticed any changes in your relationship? Relationships with other family members or friends as a result of your loved one's addiction?

Participant 3

Uh, yeah. I mean, there's been changes in the relationships with, um, myself and her family. So, you know, her mom and her, her brothers and sister, um, who were, I was all close to, uh, now there's just like an underlying kind of awkwardness at all times. My family was never close to her but my kids were close to her family and it sucks to say that they are not close to their family anymore because of everything that has happened.

Researcher:

What support systems or coping mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with the ambiguous grief caused by your ex-wife's addiction?

Participant 3:

When I was with my ex-wife, she was Mormon, I wasn't but people from the church would come every week to talk to her but once she left, they would still come around and started to ask me questions. At the time I had no one to really go and talk to so I essentially started talking to them and they were basically my therapy. I also looked at alcohol and cigarettes and marijuana, I did other drugs, but I stopped doing all those for the sake of my kids.

Researcher:

How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to your loved one's addiction?

Participant 3:

I still feel guilt and shame for many reasons. It takes two to tango so there are things I think about that I could have done or could have not done to stop her from going the direction she went. I think the biggest thing was taking the kids away from her, but I had to put it in the perspective of whether she is a safe person to let my kids be around, and she's not. I either had to think about whether I should take my kids away from her and that environment or risk their lives. I feel guilty because my kids don't know their mom and won't know their mom, but it was either that or they would be dead.

Researcher:

Have you ever sought professional help or counseling to cope with the effects of your loved one's addiction?

Participant 3:

I have gone to therapy for other reasons mainly for raising my kids but I know that I should definitely seek therapy for my situation with my ex-wife because there is still a lot of things I hold on to from that relationship that I still think about and hold emotions for. It makes me sad thinking about it and I definitely felt sadness.

Researcher:

Looking ahead, what do you envision as potential steps toward healing and coping with the ambiguous grief of your ex-wife?

Participant 3:

Since time has gone by I have seen better days and now know that time heals, we will still remember things we have gone through but having positive outlets like doing what I like to do and reaching my goals does make me feel better.

Participant 4

Record 2024/09/02 21:13:20.mp4

Researcher:

Good afternoon. I am the researcher, Yoana Andrade, and this is the interview with Participant 4 on Ambiguous Grief of a Loved One or Client's Addiction. I will be asking you 10 questions on this topic. Feel free to share any information you feel comfortable with. So, first question is, can you describe your experience with a loved one or client who has struggled with addiction?

Participant 4:

Yes. So, my own personal experience with a loved one has been kind of ongoing for years, and it's been with my brother, which has struggled with addiction for basically almost half his life, which then kind of takes a toll on to not only his self, but on to our family as well. And me personally, with just feeling powerless to help him effectively, just to help him get the help he needs, which then kind of like, basically, leads to like a sense of instability in my own life, and just making it difficult to maintain a sense of normalcy into like my own life at home.

Researcher:

How has addiction of your loved one or caregiver impacted your emotional well-being in daily life?

Participant 4:

So, like, I feel like my own anxiety stems from seeing his own struggle with addiction, kind of leading to a whole bunch of stress in my life, and like my daily life just basically being turned upside down with a lot of chaoticness. And like the constant fighting, and just dealing with him, and his lashing out, and his own struggles, which kind of just like brings fear into me, because again, you don't, with these types of people, your kind of don't even know what they're thinking or whatever. And then again, seeing him constantly wanting to fight with me, my siblings, my parents, it just kind of like basically disrupts my daily routines, and causes for me to neglect my own personal responsibilities, as the focus kind of just starts to shift into like basically managing

and trying to like to help him calm down, or whatever. Just basically try to get like everything into order in my home.

Researcher:

How do you perceive the concept of ambiguous grief, and do you feel it applies to your situation? Like, do you see loss in him, even though he's still alive?

Participant 4:

Oh, yeah, most definitely. I feel like it does relate to my situation in the sense like basically that his addiction has created a loss of the person he once was, and like basically who I grew up with. Again, I grew up creating memories with this person. And like, as a sibling, you know, we kind of like, I guess like we just don't have that relationship that was once there. And this kind of just like the grief gives last closure again, because like, it disrupts into what the potential of the future with like, with my other siblings and him. I just feel like that's lost. And like, I just feel like it's a dead end. And very much feeling like he's dead but alive, just because of how much he has struggled with his addiction. And again, doesn't understand that he needs the help. And it's just kind of selfish.

Researcher:

Can you share any specific challenges you've faced in coping with the ambiguous grief caused by your brother?

Participant 4:

Yeah, so like, I guess some challenges again, go back to like, the home thing, just not being able to find peace in my own home or feeling like this is a home. And like this, I've had so many times and struggles of like, not even wanting to live here if he's here around. Because again, just being like the disruptiveness and then because like, just being scared. And I feel like it's just very selfish of him, because it's just like, like home is not home anymore. Like if I'm trying to like figure out a way to get away from him and not being able to live in my own house, I feel like just creates a lot of challenges and stress into like my life. Yeah. Yeah.

Researcher:

Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with other family members or friends or loved ones as a result of your loved one's addiction?

Participant 4:

Yeah, so most definitely like the person being my mother, like again, we have a very close relationship. But when it comes to this type of topic, since she's like that type of mother, like, oh, he's my son, I can't do nothing about it. We've had to bump heads so much because of it, because she's not understanding where me and my other siblings are coming from. So it kind of like disrupts her own personal relationship with me not creating, not hating, but just kind of like having some sort of like resentment towards her. Because again, she's being selfish, too. She sees that. She sees that this person is not safe to be around with, but she still proceeds to have him in her life as a constant. And again, like she's that's also very selfish of her. So I guess my mother and mines relationship has been kind of rocky because of that. And then with my siblings, too, we've had so many disagreements because one of my siblings, like, oh, he kind of wants to like

still has hope in him. While me and my other sibling are kind of like going back at back and forth with him, telling him, like, no, I don't think you're understanding. Like, you don't get the severity of the situation. So I feel like I kind of buff heads with my brothers. As well, too, because we're not really on the same page as to we're not basically seeing what he they are not seeing what I'm seeing with how much his addiction kind of has taken over. And then again, like I can't I feel like I can't even have friends or people over because of like me just being scared because of anything that can happen or because I feel like he's very unpredictable. And when he starts 'slashing out, or have his episodes kind of doesn't affect him, but everyone around him.

Researcher:

What support systems or coping mechanisms have you found helpful? And dealing with the ambiguous grief caused by his addiction?

Participant 4:

So, I guess like for me, it's like just kind of like music, I guess, like whenever I do hear like him, because again, like his addiction kind of like causes him for him to have like basically yell and hear voices. So, I guess like whenever that does happen, I tend to like try to tune him out with music and just like basically not paying attention to him. And I don't know, I feel like. I found support like with my own like. I guess with my own other siblings, like we kind of sometimes connect with each other we're all going through the same thing together. So, kind of like having the same similar experiences and then also just like focusing on my own self-care, I guess, like finding de-stressing with like with activities I like enjoy. I guess like journaling to like talking about the situation, writing down has kind of helped. But I feel like that's kind of like a rocky thing for me. Like I haven't really been able to find any like accurate, you know, something that really like kind of helps me cope with that. But like it's kind of hard.

Researcher:

How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to his addiction?

Participant 4:

So, I guess like how I navigate with that is just kind of like I kind of understand that. Yeah, like he has like mental health problems and like the addiction has taken over him. Like by recognizing, I guess, that it's like a very like hard and complex situation. And just kind of like compassion or like not to really blame him, I guess. But I feel like it's just very, very hard to navigate that shame with him. I don't know.

Researcher:

Have you sought professional help or counseling to cope with the effects of his addiction on your mental health?

Participant 4:

No, that's one thing that I have not taken initiative towards, like seeking professional help. I guess that could help. But no. No, just I haven't. It's just kind of been me.

Researcher:

Looking Ahead, what do you envision as potential steps toward healing and coping with the ambiguous grief associated with your brother's addiction?

Participant 4:

I think just being more passionate for who he has become and understanding that it might not get better, so I don't hold on to the past. I think also just sticking to my goals and knowing that it will get better eventually.

Participant 5

Record 2024/09/03 12:49:07.mp4

Researcher:

Good afternoon. My name is Yoana Andrade. I am the researcher of this research project for ambiguous grief on a loved one's addiction. This is my interview with participant five. I will be asking you ten questions. Feel free to share anything that you are comfortable with. So, the first question, can you describe your experience with a loved one or caregiver who has, or client who has struggled with addiction?

Participant 5:

Yes, I have a friend who has been in recovery for, I believe, three years, and they had a relapse a couple of months ago. It was actually pretty bad. They almost passed away. And yeah, so that was my most recent one. Other than that, in the field of work we're in, we do deal with people who are addicted to substances. And it's just hard when you get to know people and you see that they're good people, like a lot of them are actually still pretty good people, but they're just stuck and addicted to these drugs and substances. And it's just hard watching them stuck in that. Yeah.

Researcher:

How has the addiction of your loved one or client impacted your emotional well-being in daily life?

Participant 4:

For my friend, it was a lot of fear. There was a lot of stress, feelings of helplessness because you didn't know how to help. And. Yeah, it just, the biggest thing was the stress. You're always wondering, oh, are they still in it? They have now gone back to recovery and are sober now. After those, it was a two, two incidents that she had. you're always just kind of worried about them and you're always stressed out. Like, hoping that they're okay, wondering where they're at and if they're not responding back, you know, you just hope that they're doing good. And then as a case manager, when you don't hear back from them, again, it's a lot of stress because not only is this part of your job, but you also get to know them and, you know, you build this type of relationship with them and you're just hoping for the best. But deep down inside, you know that if they don't want to help or want to change, then there's not much you can do about it.

Researcher:

In what ways have you experienced grief or loss related to your loved one's addiction?

Participant 5:

For my friend, it was, thankfully, they didn't pass away, but they almost did, and it was a fear and a sadness I hadn't known yet. I mean, I've lost family members for natural causes and things like that, but this was just something different because, you know, that they were in a spot that they felt like they couldn't control. Part of it was an accident. They didn't know what was in it. And, you know, it could have just been a random fluke, You know, nothing could have happened or in this case, the worst could have happened, but thankfully nothing did. Yeah, there's a sense of losing control as well, even though you're not the one in it, but, you know, you can't do anything for your friend.

Researcher:

How do You perceive the concept of ambiguous grief and Do You feel it applies to Your situation?

Participant 5:

For me, ambiguous grief. I perceive it As You see the person And You know who they were, But In the middle of their addiction, they're completely different. You can sometimes see a hint of who they used to be, but because they're so unwrapped in this thing, especially if they're on a binge or right in the middle of what they're going through, they're just different. You don't know what they're going to do, even if you've known them for a while. And it's hard seeing someone like that. It's hard seeing. It's hard seeing someone you care about or a client and you know that they could be doing better or, you know, they could be doing all these things, but because they're in the middle of their addiction, they can't and there have been times when I've seen the feeling of uncontrol in their own eyes because they know how far off they've been, you know.

Researcher:

Can you share any specific challenges you've faced in coping with the grief caused by your loved one's addiction?

Participant 5:

The hardest thing is just not being able to help. Me personally, I like being there for the people I care about. So, knowing that I can't is really hard and it stresses me out. It makes me feel helpless, and you know, it's just hard not being able to do anything for them. And yeah.

Researcher:

Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with other family members or friends or with them as a result of their addiction?

Participant 5:

For my friend, no. Once they got out of it, you know, they started back on their sobering path. You know, it was easy. I was still weary or more feeling like nervous about, but it was more about their state of mind, their well-being. As far as the relationship between us personally. You know, I felt like I had my friend back and even though things kind of were, I would say, back to normal, there was still that, not so much fear, but there was that wondering if, you know, if they were going to fall off the wagon and stuff like that. And then with my clients, it's harder because you must draw the line between case manager and friend. And for lack of better words on this,

you must, like, let them hit the rock bottom and because you can't do anything else for them. You've given them the resources. You've talked with them. You've given them steps and tools. But at the end of the day, they're the ones that must choose to do it. You can only do so much as a case manager.

Researcher:

What support systems or coping mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with the ambiguous grief caused by their addictions?

Participant 5:

Personally, for me, it's getting out of that state of mind where you're just feeling helpless or stressed or anxious. I like to go on walks or go to the gym and, you know, get my feelings of frustration out in a healthy way. Yeah. Just get out and moving and keep doing it that way.

Researcher:

How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to, you know, your addiction?

Participant 5:

It's hard. I'm a person that takes things inwardly. Like, there are times where I feel like it was my fault, like I didn't do enough. I didn't see signs, or I didn't notice any change in their behavior. So, for me, I'm an emotional person. I feel my feelings big. So, it takes a while. But at the end of the day, I must figure out.

Researcher:

Have you sought professional help or counseling to cope with the effects of your loved one's addiction on your mental health?

Participant 5:

I should seek professional help to help me with my stress of my job and just the things I have seen with my friend and what I see on a day-to-day basis. I have not taken the initiative to seek professional help, but I am not opposed to it.

Researcher:

Looking ahead, what do you envision as potential steps toward healing and coping with the ambiguous grief associated with your loved one's addiction?

Participant 5:

Definitely being there for these people has a sense of healing within itself, like with my friend, knowing that she is still here and able to go into rehab and possibly get a little better definitely gives me a sense of healing. I think also being there and knowing that I am someone people who are addicted come to for help is also nice. I am not opposed to seeking mental health services but it is more so doing it and starting the process.

Participant 6

Record 2024/09/03 21:36:29.mp4

Researcher:

Good afternoon, I am the researcher Yoana Andrade, and this is the interview with participant 6 on ambiguous grief of a loved one's or client's addiction. I will be asking you 10 questions on this topic. Feel free to share any information you are comfortable with. So the first question is, can you describe your experience with a loved one or a client who has struggled with addiction?

Participant 6:

Um, yes, I've personally dealt with it with my mother. Um, she, I'm still like, I'd say, well, yeah, my mother, it's been a struggle my whole life dealing with her. Um, she is an emotional amazing person sober and is very caring. One of the most caring people in this whole world. Like obviously she, she does think about others a lot more than her own self, but alcohol is something that she must heavily rely on, which turns her into a completely different person. Um, and it's a person I don't like, and I've had to deal with it my whole life and she also tends to have a nasty side come out of her when she does drink and it, it spills over to when she's sober also but has like narcissistic tendencies and is very hypercritical. Um, things I do, things I, how I look, um, things I say, if you don't say things the right way, then you get criticized. Um, but yeah, just having to deal with somebody that's just super hypercritical, doesn't see that they do anything wrong whatsoever, is frustrating and hard to deal with. Um, but yeah, just having to deal with somebody that's just super hypocritical, doesn't see that they do anything wrong whatsoever, is frustrating and hard to deal with. Life's okay so yeah, emotional well-being and in the negative side of it just still thinking about the criticisms and like, kind of applying that unknowingly or like thinking about it unknowingly, like where it's like a subconscious thing. Um, that's like the negative side of it, girl, like that. Now after dealing with it, but um, the positives I guess I would say is that I'm a lot more conscious and cautious of my own behaviors since um, I did kind of go down like a negative path and was kind of leaning towards her behaviors, I guess, and quickly it was like, 'Oh no, like this is not, I don't want to be like that.' So, I'm very more conscious on my social life and how I um define alcohol in my life and where I fit that.

Researcher:

In what ways have you experienced loss or grief related to your mom's addiction?

Participant 6:

um I feel like oh I'm going to cry no i know i think like childhood experiences like those could have been better like when she's sober she's really great but um but when she'd drink it's like you know being so little and having to pick your mom up from the floor yeah and like cleaning throw up yeah it was um it looked all hard i wish that that didn't happen but um yeah it's I don't think she realized what she was doing she was um just living life and learning as she went so sorry no it's okay i know and i'll dress it and i'm just Like, it's crazy, yeah, um, it could affect your, um, so I'm looking for my settings right now, no, it's fine, affects you know, personal life so much, yeah, subconsciously.

Researcher:

how do you perceive the concept of ambiguous grief, and do you feel it applies to your situation?

Participant 6:

I'd say it's hasn't really, I haven't really thought of it like that because I still feel like you know nothing's changed much since um since I was younger, but it's, I don't know, I feel like maybe slightly been better just because like other external stuff is happening for my mom where she has to change to her behaviors so you know she kind of has to look within a little bit and take care of her health where it's been slightly better a little bit but um yeah um, I don't know, really feel like I've lost her yet but it's, I feel like it's been like a same like neutral.

Researcher:

Can you share any specific challenges you've faced in coping with the ambiguous grief caused by your loved one's addiction?

Participant 6:

Yeah definitely living my day to day life holding that trauma in the back of my head sometimes especially about my confidence, and just knowing that it still happens to this day, that she is still addicted to alcohol and I feel like I can't do anything about it.

Researcher:

Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with other family members or friends as a result of your loved one's addiction?

Participant 6:

Yes definitely, I have noticed me getting meaner after a while and noticing that I was mean to her and to others. I also noticed that when she was around my friends or around my family and she was drunk, she would say things that I would be like "why would you say that? Or "don't say that that's not normal" and I would feel bad because I know I was being mean and agitated.

Researcher:

What support systems or coping mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with the ambiguous grief of your loved one's addiction?

Participant 6:

Definitely my sister, she is the one that I go to for everything especially because she gets it, and she is older. I also like to go out with my friends. I recently also started going to therapy and taking antidepressants.

Researcher:

How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to your loved one's addiction?

Participant 6:

I definitely feel shame and embarrassment with my mom's addiction because of the way that she is when she is drunk is just something I don't like or relate too, she is a total completely different person that doesn't see the wrong. When she talks while drunk I just feel angry and shame for it.

Researcher:

Have you sought professional help or counseling to cope with the effects of your mom's addiction on your mental health?

Participant 6:

Yes, I just started going to therapy because I realized there were so many emotions that I suppressed caused by my childhood and my mom's addiction to alcohol. I realized that I need to let go of this hurt and find a gateway because my mom is still addicted to alcohol, and it just ruins my emotional well-being.

Researcher:

Looking ahead, what do you envision as potential steps toward healing and coping with the ambiguous grief associated with your mom's addiction?

Participant 6:

Therapy has been helping a lot and being on antidepressants as well, I don't live with my mom anymore but I go visit her often and it's nice to see her be sober even just for a little bit. I hangout with friends and talk to my sister and have my dog that help me with my healing process.

Participant 7

Record 2024/09/04 14:58:32.mp4

Researcher:

good afternoon i am the researcher Yoana Andrade and this is the interview with participant seven on ambiguous grief of a loved one or client's addiction I will be asking you 10 questions on this topic feel free to share any information you are comfortable with so the first question can you describe your experience with a loved one or client who has struggled with addiction?

Participant 7:

yes so my brother nine years ago um suffered from addiction um i was 22 um that's when he was really deep in his addiction it started though when he was in high school um on pain pills it started when he was in high school uh my brother was a very highly loved athlete in our small town football star baseball star um and he was hanging out with the wrong crowd um he also got injured during football um i think that's what started the pain pills um and then his senior year he just you can see him starting to spiral he just started spiraling um so things kept happening um car accidents um just life was just spiraling he wasn't doing his homework he was getting bad grades he failed classes he had a hard time even getting grades to play football he didn't get to play his senior year baseball it was just really bad uh then in college he um went to play football he got to play football he walked on to a local junior college which was huge for somebody who was his size and his age and coming from a small school that we came from um and then um the addiction just got to him so then he spiraled more and got into lots of other drugs um my parents he would bounce back and forth from my parents' house my mom, and my dad, my grandma's and it was yeah about a year and a half of just enabling until he finally can get some help yeah how has the addiction of your loved one uh or caregiver uh impacted your emotional well-being

and daily life yeah I think it keeps me on Edge a lot, um, it's like, not only that I want to be able to be able to be able to be able to be able to be my brother in my daily life and then it's like, but I kind of keep that wall up too, um, because even though I know it won't go back to that, it's always like that fear, yeah, that fear.

Researcher:

What ways have you experienced grief or loss related to your loved one's addiction?

Participant 7:

What ways have I experienced grief or loss, um, yeah, at one point during his addiction he, I just kind of had to shut him off, block him, not have any contact with him because it was affecting my daily life and my relationships with my family, with my boyfriend at The time with everybody, with my school, my work everything I would and I was so stressed out about him. I had to, um, pretend he was not there and completely shut him off, yeah.

Researcher:

How do you perceive the concept of ambiguous grief and do you feel it applies to your situation?

Participant 7:

Um, okay. So, ambiguous grief to me would have been... I felt like I lost my brother; he wasn't my brother anymore. Like he would um, he would use me for money, and my brother would never do that. Um, he was in my family dinners, um, he would call in psychotic um phases of his life or during his time where he was in such a psychotic phase, he was seeing things, he was um, you know doing All that I had, I felt like I lost my brother. Like he was just yeah, like he was...he wasn't the sporty, outgoing one then he was skinny, sucked up, lazy, homeless at one point, yeah.

Researcher:

Can you share any specific challenges you faced in coping with the ambiguous grief caused by your brother's addiction?

Participant 7:

Um, faced with coping, I think for a long time. Specific challenges...I'm still fighting myself when I'm around him. Like that's not him anymore. He's been clean for nine years, but it still is affecting me now, today. To be anxious around him or not want to be around him for a long time...like, it just like enough is enough.

Researcher:

Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with other family members or friends as a result of your brother's addiction?

Participant 7:

Yes, I think, what's it called, um, very, what's the word I'm trying to think of, on edge sometimes when we all get together. What, what's that word? Awkward? I don't know. Yeah. Because we all would like, because we all did like family therapy together. And then we all had to be on the same page because, like I said, he was bouncing from family to family, and I have divorced

parents. And so, like my parents never talked until this. And so it was, it's, um, that was a good change in the relationship with our family, my family, was that my parents started talking again.

Researcher:

What support systems or coping mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with addiction?

Participant 7:

Um, we did family counseling. We did, when he was in there, when he was in rehabs, um, we went to family days and did family counseling with the counselors up there. I went to, we went to a family counselor outside of the, outside of rehab. I went to my own therapy and coping mechanisms, um, church and rehab. So we had families that were, kind of self-care and self-reading and self-care for coping.

Researcher:

How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to your brother's addiction?

Participant 7:

Um, I really don't have a lot of guilt or shame. That's good. I don't really know what his addiction is, because I, I guess I did in the past. I don't remember the feeling. But now thinking about it, I guess I had it in the past. I don't remember it, actually, I felt like I had to fix him. I felt like I was responsible for him and that like I was trying to get him to and from work. So I was still trying to like, um, enable him because I did, I didn't want to believe it was drugs. I didn't want to believe it was drugs at first. So that, in the beginning, yes, but, um, not anymore.

Researcher:

Looking ahead, what do I envision as potential steps toward healing and coping with the ambiguous grief associated with my brother's addiction?

Participant 7:

Um, continuing therapy, um, because I think that's true. Trauma, even though I don't think about it, does affect me in my life in other ways. So I continue to go to therapy, um, to deal with it. Okay. All right. Thank you.

Participant 8

Record 2024/09/04 15:34:44.mp4

Researcher:

Good afternoon, I am the researcher Ioana Andrade and this is the interview with participant 8 on ambiguous grief of a loved one's or client's addiction. I will be asking you 10 questions on this topic. Feel free to share any information you are comfortable with. So first question, can you describe your experience with a loved one or a client who has struggled with addiction?

Participant 8:

It was actually the hardest thing seeing my closest friend fall into of course drug addiction and alcohol addiction.

Researcher:

How has the addiction of your loved one or caregiver or client impacted your emotional well-being and daily life?

Participant 8:

I don't want to, life I actually want to be able to help people out that has addiction problems knowing that since we were 18, of course we were partying and this was actually during when we were in the military.

Researcher:

In what ways have you experienced grief or loss related to your friend's addiction?

Participant 8:

Well, the hardest part was being at work one day and just seeing a post that he actually passed away, but knowing that he had been in this cycle for a while it is sad to say but it was expected.

Researcher:

How do you perceive the concept of ambiguous grief and do you feel it applies to your situation?

Participant 8:

So, ambiguous grief is just basically like the loss of someone that is still alive but is lost basically for a long period of time. Basically, because of their addiction. So, like, they're not sober anymore, they're not themselves anymore. You know the hardest thing is knowing that he's not there no more. It's like physically yes, but he's just not himself.

Researcher:

Can you share any specific challenges you faced in coping with your friend's addiction?

Participant 8:

The hardest thing was actually just watching people down that rabbit hole. No matter how many times you try to help them out and you're there for them, doing everything you can to talk to them, it's still in the back of my mind that I wish I did more to where sometimes I just have to go into a little room or just speaking to somebody about it helps out.

Researcher:

Have you noticed any changes in your relationships with family members or other friends as a result of your friend's addiction?

Participant 8:

I try to be there for, according to my friends. I do everything I can. Even if they send me a message at 3 in the morning, I do what I can to get back to them.

Researcher:

What support systems or coping mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with the addiction of your loved one?

Participant 8:

Talking to a former teacher who was an alumnus. I'm not uh, a BPD officer. He actually did help me out, telling me about the results of addiction and what to do to get through it as well as learning more about addiction which is why I work with addicts now.

Researcher:

How do you navigate feelings of guilt or shame that may arise in relation to your friend's addiction?

Participant 8:

The guilt, I say every day, I just wish I had capped up that phone, but I do it every now and then. I do that with my friends that actually do need me.

Researcher:

Looking ahead, what do you envision as potential steps toward healing and coping with, uh, addiction in general?

Participant 8:

Carrying on his legacy is actually the biggest thing I do. Uh, talking to people, especially. Raising awareness on addiction because addiction can be different things, but when they're actually going through addiction, that's always part because they go down the rabbit hole and you're doing everything you can to throw them out of that person's river. That way they can stay up.

Appendix E

Thematic Analysis of Raw Data

Answers from 8 Participants	Initial Codes	Defining and Reviewing Themes
<p>P1 had two loved one's struggle with addiction - their father who was an alcoholic and drug addict for 15 years, and their uncle who was an alcoholic and drug addict until his death from cirrhosis of the liver. As a child, Participant 1 had to take on caregiving responsibilities for their siblings while their mother worked, as their father was consumed by addiction. This took a major toll on their mental health, and they even attempted suicide at one point but did not seek professional help. Believed that because she was the older sibling, and her father was not mentally there, she had to be strong and not show weakness for her little sisters.</p> <p>P2 shared their experience working with clients struggling with addiction. They highlighted the vulnerability and openness required for clients to share their struggles, which allows a deeper connection. However, maintaining professionalism while</p>	<p>Death</p> <p>Taking adult roles at a young age</p> <p>Suicide Ideation</p> <p>Vulnerability for addicts</p> <p>Professionalism while having emotions</p>	<p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issues</p> <p>Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help</p> <p>Suppressed Emotions</p> <p>Suppressed Emotions</p>

<p>showing empathy is challenging. Participant 2 described the grief of seeing addiction's impact extend beyond the individual to families. They expressed difficulty remaining emotionless when clients need emotional support, especially when clients relapse or withdraw from treatment. The ambiguous loss of the person's former self to addiction was poignantly described as being "like a zombie" - physically present but mentally elsewhere. He believes that getting professional help was possibly the answer but instead he found it by doing activities outside of work like creating a softball team.</p> <p>P3 shared their experience with their ex-wife's drug addiction, which resurfaced after being clean for years when they got married and had their first child together. Her addiction caused a complete change in her priorities, passions, and role as a mother and wife, to the point where Participant 3 felt like they no longer knew her. The addiction impacted Participant 3's emotional well-being and daily life, making it difficult to focus, especially on caring for their children. They</p>	<p>Empathy</p> <p>Difficulty remaining emotionless when there are emotions</p> <p>Physically present but mentally elsewhere</p> <p>Addiction caused a change in priorities, passion, and role as a mother.</p> <p>Difficult to focus on being a dad</p> <p>Numbness, anger, sadness</p>	<p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issues</p> <p>Suppressed Emotions</p> <p>Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help</p> <p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issues</p> <p>Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help</p>
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<p>experienced grief through anger, sadness, and eventually numbness and acceptance of the situation. He at some point sought alcohol and drugs himself to cope with her loss, but eventually stopped for the sake of his children.</p> <p>P4 described their experience with their brother's ongoing addiction for many years, which has caused instability, anxiety, and disruption in their daily life and home environment. They feel a sense of ambiguous grief, as their brother's addiction has led to a loss of the person he once was and the relationship they had. Specific challenges include not feeling at home, fear, and inability to have a normal life. Their relationships with their mother and siblings have been strained due to differing perspectives on the situation. Coping mechanisms include music, journaling, self-care activities, and connecting with understanding siblings. They navigate guilt and shame by recognizing it as a complex situation and having compassion, though it is difficult. Participant 4 has not sought professional counseling. Looking ahead, they envision healing through accepting who</p>	<p>Instability, anxiety, and disruption.</p> <p>Not feeling safe, inability to have a normal life</p> <p>Disagreements with family</p> <p>Guilt and shame</p>	<p>Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help</p> <p>Suppressed Emotions</p> <p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issues</p> <p>Suppressed Emotions</p> <p>Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help</p>
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<p>their brother has become, not holding onto the past, and focusing on their own goals with the understanding that it may not get better.</p> <p>P5 describes their experience with a friend who has been in recovery for addiction for three years but recently relapsed severely, almost passing away. They also work with clients struggling with addiction. The addiction caused fear, stress, and feelings of helplessness in trying to support their friend. There was grief and sadness at the prospect of potentially losing their friend, which felt different from grieving natural deaths. Participant 5 perceives ambiguous grief as seeing glimpses of the person they knew, but their addiction makes them seem like a different person at times. It's hard seeing someone they care about unable to get better due to their addiction. The biggest challenge is feeling unable to help, which causes stress and a sense of helplessness.</p> <p>P6 Participant 6 shared their experience with their mother's addiction to alcohol. Their mother is a caring person when sober, but becomes a different,</p>	<p>Recovery</p> <p>Relapse</p> <p>Feels different from grieving someone who has passed away.</p> <p>Helplessness and stress</p>	<p>Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help</p> <p>Suppressed Emotions</p> <p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issues</p>
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<p>critical and narcissistic person when drinking. This has been a lifelong struggle, causing traumatic childhood experiences like cleaning up after their mother. Participant 6 feels ambiguous grief applies somewhat, as their mother's addiction hasn't changed much over time, though there have been slight improvements recently due to external factors. Coping with the ambiguous grief is challenging, carrying that trauma and lack of confidence from their mother's criticism. It has strained relationships with family and friends, making Participant 6 meaner at times. Support systems like their sister, friends, therapy and antidepressants have been helpful. They feel shame and embarrassment over their mother's drunken behavior.</p> <p>She stated that she has recently started therapy but has not touched on the topic due to not realizing how much it impacts her which surprised her when she started crying during the interview.</p> <p>P7 shared their experience with their brother's addiction that started in high school with pain pills after a sports injury. Their brother spiraled into addiction, facing car accidents, failing grades,</p>	<p>Criticism and narcissism from an addict.</p> <p>Still in addiction</p> <p>Low confidence in present time caused by mother's criticism.</p> <p>Having different attitudes towards others in present time.</p> <p>Spiraling causing self-damage</p>	<p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issues</p> <p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issues</p> <p>Suppressed Emotions</p> <p>Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help</p>
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<p>They described the profound grief and loss experienced, as their friend was physically present but lost to the addiction - an example of ambiguous grief. Coping was extremely challenging, despite efforts to help and be supportive. Participant 8 found solace in talking to others, including a former teacher, about addiction. They navigated feelings of guilt by focusing on supporting friends in need. Moving forward, Participant 8 aims to raise awareness about addiction and carry on their friend's legacy by helping others impacted by this issue.</p>	<p>Felt guilt that he didn't do enough to keep his friend alive.</p> <p>Sought Help to cope</p> <p>Impacted their career path</p>	<p>Suppressed Emotions</p> <p>Mental Health Issues but Not Seeking Professional Help</p> <p>Loved One's Addiction Leads to Other Personal Issue</p>
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Appendix F

IRB Approval

The screenshot displays the Cayuse Human Ethics interface. At the top left is the logo for Cayuse Human Ethics. On the top right, there is a notification bell icon with a red '15' and a user profile for Yoana Andrade. Below the header, there are navigation tabs for 'Submissions' and 'Tasks'. The main content area is titled 'Study Details' and shows a green 'Approved' status badge. The study title is 'IRB-FY23-24-725 Comparison of One-Month and Semester Classes'. Below the title are two buttons: 'PDF' and 'Delete'. A table of metadata follows:

Approval Date: 07-22-2024	Expiration Date: N/A	Organization: Users loaded with unmatched Organization affiliation, National University Current Policy Post-2018 Rule	Active Submissions: N/A Sponsors: N/A
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