

Introduction

- Despite the strong alignment between bereavement symptomology and the occupational therapy framework 4th edition (OTPF-4), there is a clear gap in services and understanding related to occupational therapy's role in grief and bereavement care (Ramano et al., 2022).
- The experience of grief is physical, biological, psychological, social, behavioral and spiritual.
- Grief and bereavement have the capacity to disrupt an individual's occupational engagement in everyday life.
- The impact of grief on roles is significant, particularly for those who engaged in co-occupations with the deceased (Dahdah et al., 2019 and Dahdah & Joaquim, 2018).
- Marginalized populations are at a higher risk for developing complicated grief, and experience higher overall rates of grief (O'Connor, 2025).
- The social determinants of health shape grief trajectories (O'Connor, 2025).
- Continuing bonds and meaning making through occupational engagement can be a powerful tool in bereavement recovery (Hoppes & Segal, 2010).

Project Description

- This project was in collaboration with a non-profit organization, California Grief Therapy Inc., to educate and inform mental health providers on the value of an occupational perspective on grief and bereavement recovery.
- Part two of the project included the development of educational modules to advocate for and inform the interdisciplinary team on the value of the occupational therapist's role in this area of practice.
- Connection to HPU OTD Curricular Threads and Core Values
 - **Aloha** embodies a spirit of lifelong learning and leadership, driven by evidence-based practice.
 - **Pono** ensures safe and ethical practice in psychosocial, mental health, and community-based practice settings.
 - **Kuleana** guides the utilization of person-centered strength-based evaluations to inform and design innovative evidence-based interventions for bereavement recovery.
 - **Kokua** fosters leading with self-reflection, compassion, empathy, and a client-centered lens.
 - **Laulima** promotes a culturally humble community and interprofessional collaborative approach when supporting clients' psychosocial needs during the bereavement process.

Purpose/Aims

- To provide a baseline of evidence-based understanding regarding the relevance of performance patterns in psychosocial rehabilitation.
- To develop education and training modules for mental health providers on how the disruption of performance patterns can hinder or support occupational performance and wellbeing.
- To educate mental health providers on the occupational therapy's role in grief and bereavement recovery.
- To educate mental health providers on evidence-based interventions focused around role recovery and meaning making after the loss of a loved one.

Methods

- The first phase of the project began with a comprehensive literature review on current research to determine relevance of the occupational therapy (OT) scope of practice on grief and bereavement recovery.
- The second phase of the project included a needs assessment which revealed the need for educational training on OTs role and distinct value in grief and bereavement for mental health practitioners.
- The third phase of the project included the creation of two educational courses focusing on defining grief and bereavement and an occupational perspective on grief and bereavement.
- The last phase of the project consisted of a hybrid-style educational program with predominantly asynchronous learning activities and one live synchronous session to allow for an open discussion.



Defining and Understanding Grief...



An Occupational Perspective on ...



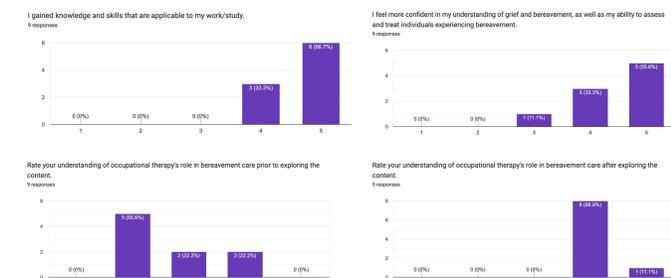
Results/Outcomes

Throughout the courses, students:

- Gained knowledge and skills applicable to their work and/or study as mental health providers.
- Increased their understanding of occupational therapy's role in grief and bereavement care.
- Increased confidence in their understanding of grief and bereavement, as well as their ability to assess and treat individuals experiencing grief and bereavement.

The Impact:

- Increased empathy and confidence.
- Broadened perspective on how grief/bereavement impact individuals.



Note: Portions of this data analysis were developed with the assistance of generative artificial intelligence (i.e., [Microsoft, Copilot]). The results have been reviewed, edited, and verified by the researcher for accuracy and alignment with data collected.

Discussion

- Through research and the findings of this project, it is clear that there is a need for an expanded role of occupational therapy in grief and bereavement care.
- Occupational therapists have a unique and comprehensive lens to understand the various ways in which grief impacts each area of life and engagement.
- Advocacy, research and education are key in increasing occupational therapy's visibility and effectiveness in treating this population.

References

