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Title

Determinants of Loneliness Trajectory Following a Brief Storytelling Intervention about COVID Pandemic Grief

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Behavioral, psychosocial, and mental illness

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: Loneliness has profound implications for individuals' well-being and a massive impact on public health. COVID-19 social distancing policies exacerbated the prevalence and depth of loneliness, particularly relating to experiences of death and loss. Objective: To describe the short-term impact of a scalable, conversational storytelling intervention on self-reported loneliness on those experiencing grief during the COVID-19 pandemic. Study Design and Analysis: Single-arm, two-week pre-post analysis. Setting or Dataset: StoryListening Project telehealth-delivered intervention with national recruitment. Population Studied: Family (n=36), friends (n=12) and clinicians (n=16) who experienced the death of a person from any cause during social distancing policies of the COVID-19 pandemic. Intervention/Instrument: Single televideo encounter with an interventionist who successfully completed an end-of-life doula training program as well as study-specific StoryListening training. The StoryListening protocol is grounded in holding space and bearing witness to stories without judgment or expectation. Outcome Measures: Pre-post change in average three-item UCLA Loneliness Score at two-week follow-up. Results: Of the 60 participants (94%) completing the follow-up assessment, we found a 0.4 point (d=0.31) mean reduction in loneliness (95% CI: 0.1, 0.7). The magnitude of improvement was stronger among friends/family compared to clinicians and demonstrated a graded response with tertiles StoryListening encounter duration. Participants telling the longest stories (48 min. or longer) experienced 3.5 times the odds (95% CI: 1.1, 10.7) of improvement in loneliness compared to those telling shorter stories. Conclusions: A single event, doula-led StoryListening telehealth intervention is associated with reduction in loneliness. The duration of the storytelling experience demonstrates a graded association with loneliness reduction.