

Question Report		6/12/2020		
Using the Lens of Ambiguous Loss to Treat COVID-19 Pandemic Fear and Anxiety				
Question Details				
#	Question	Asker Name	Asker Email	Answer(s)
1	Thank you Kristina, do you know if Dr. Boss teaches full courses?	Maria Amestoy	amestoy.mj@gmail.com	Full course is taught online; see www.ambiguousloss.com . Also recommend <i>Ambiguous Loss</i> (Boss, 2000) and <i>Loss, Trauma, and Resilience</i> (Boss, 2006).
2	Do you mentor others?	Carly Banks	cbanks@americanrenal.com	I do mentor therapy trainees and students here at the University of Minnesota but do consultations with others online. I also wrote a book for mental health professionals; <i>Loss, Trauma, and Resilience</i> (Boss, 2006).
3	Q: Do you see familial estrangement as being under the umbrella of Ambiguous Loss?	Marisa Cherry	marisaacherry@gmail.com	Yes, it is an all too common example of ambiguous loss. Physically, a family member cuts off from the rest of the family or just cuts off from one person. I use the same six guidelines to work with such clients, but tell them early on that such cases take a long time to heal, if ever, sometimes five years, so the goal is to make the person left behind emotionally stronger and more resilient. That seems to make reunion more likely. Also both/and thinking is essential; thinking in absolutes does not work for reunion. See <i>Loss, Trauma, and Resilience</i> (Boss, 2006) for more on the guidelines.
4	How is ambiguous loss differ from guilt ? Does guilt over loss make it more ambiguous ?	Dee Stoddard	stoddardd@fsdbk12.org	Ambiguous loss is a type of loss; guilt is an emotion. Yes, guilt and shame can be so strong that the person experiencing these emotions is not psychologically there for others, thus ambiguously lost to others.

	<p>Can you say more about potential rituals for coping with the ambiguous losses in the pandemic? 5 Perhaps that will come later on today.</p>	Shanna Sullivan	ssullivan@chw.org	<p>Rituals for pandemic losses already used are the new versions of weddings, funerals, graduations, and birthdays -- drive by, Zoom, etc. So many of the rituals are for the same events as before but not greatly altered. This is good; better than canceling the ritual altogether. You might also say the demonstrations are a ritual that resulted from this stressful time. The pain and stress of COVID uncovered the pain and stress of killings caused for years by the injustice and prejudice against Black Americans. Yes, I see peaceful demonstrations as a ritual of this time, one calling for change as we did in the 1960s.</p>
6	<p>What is the relationship between ambiguous loss and guilt ? Dee Stoddard</p>	Dee Stoddard	stoddardd@fsdbk12.org	See answer #4.
7	<p>how can a child absorb that ambiguous loss? is it the same with adults?</p>	Ursula Andrea Pascua	ahhnnnddddreah@gmail.com	<p>Children are often more resilient than adults are. They are most concerned about their parents so we must take care of ourselves first, grieve with them, be straight with them, though if they are young, do not go into as many details. Kids want their parents to be honest and real with them. And they understand if a parent says, " I don't know where ___ is." An ambiguous answer like this is ok if it is honest. The same with adults, but you can give more details with adults. Kids may want such discussion shorter.</p>

8	<p>Any ideas on how to help children with ambiguous loss- an object lesson, story, or concrete way to help. My own children express powerlessness over an invisible virus and frustration at being cooped up and separated from family and friends</p>	Carly Banks	cbanks@americanrenal.com	<p>Concrete ways to help kids: especially about helplessness. Make sure they have some thing to do that they CAN control. A game, artwork, putting on a play, learning to cook or bake, do a sport. Something they can control. This helps to balance out feelings of helplessness. True for adults, too.</p>
9	<p>As an educator, what are things that I can set up in a school to help students (middle school: 6-8th grade) during ambiguous times without knowing if school will be in session or not WHILE maintaining a positive relationship?</p>	Jennifer Roden	Jenniferoden2008@u.northwestern.edu	<p>Explain what ambiguous loss is to them, simply, and then say that when things are ambiguous, we need some things we can control, something that is clear, to balance the ambiguity, the uncertainty. Use a metaphor. We are all walking in the fog right now, so we all, kids especially, need something concrete to hang on to. That would be an activity that is clear, and non ambiguous. If you are communicating online, find something that will work that way. They could do a project—baking, art, sculpture, at home and then all would show the result on Zoom. Also tell them that math is not ambiguous, as 2 plus 2 is always 4. But today, with the virus, things are less clear. We can cope with this as long as we know that the problem is the fog and not us. Kids catch on to this sometimes faster than adults.</p>

10	I'm wondering about normalizing new grieving experiences. For example, when clients attend a memorial service via Zoom and don't feel enough closure.	Ramanda Brockett	rbrockett@rediscovermh.org	<p>I have participated in Zoom memorial services and was surprised to find out how moving it was. I recommend them. Most important, I no longer use the word "closure" as it is hurtful to mourners. Also, it is the wrong word, as we do not close the door on the deceased; instead we remember them, but we do have a changed and more symbolic relationship with them now. Instead of seeking closure, we should seek meaning in the loss. Instead of closure, we mean we want to be sure we have said goodbye. We can do that on Zoom, too, if we tell others a story about the deceased. Those stories can honor the lost person; they can be a way to say goodbye to them by honoring them with our words or our participation in a new kind of gathering. Please stop using the term closure unless it is a road closure or store closure.</p>
11	Can you speak more about Frozen Grief?	Sarah Wurster	swurster@porterstarke.org	<p>See <i>Ambiguous Loss</i> (Boss, 2000, paperback) for full discussion on frozen grief. It just means unresolved grief, an immobilization, being stuck because the person you lost is not gone for sure—like a missing soldier, a kidnapped child, etc. Important point is that it is not a psychiatric problem but rather, a problem in one's environment or context—like a flood or a pandemic. The ambiguity is the culprit, not personal weakness.</p>

12	what's the anxiety book?	Krysten Farrell	kfarrell@spectrumvt.org	Reference for anxiety book: <i>Anxiety Disorders</i> (W.W. Norton, 2011) by Carolyn Daitch.
13	Is the data for increased substance use and abuse included in this Presentatjon?	Sharon Webb	swebb@gardner-webb.edu	I did not give data about increased substance abuse in this presentation; am sure you can find online.
14	As an adoptive mom, my kids deal with ambiguous loss of their birth parents. Few answers, no opportunity to answer them. My job is to sit with them in their grief, support their frustration with the ambiguity, help them take control over what they can do. Also, help them access helping resources.	Lisa Mason	mason@xsector.com	Read <i>Ambiguous Loss</i> (Boss, 2000, paperback), available on Amazon or at your bookstore, with your kids. It will name the real problem that is causing pain for all of you. The goal for all of you, parents and kids, is to increase your resilience to live with unanswered questions, with the ambiguity of adoption. Sometimes those questions are answered eventually, but even so, there is always with adoption some fog. Parents of young kids are worried they are not fully loved as THE parent, and kids worry who holds their biology, their DNA, and why they gave them up. Read the book and discuss together. For all ambiguous losses, and adoption especially, the task is to learn to live well despite some unanswered questions. My 2006 book, <i>Loss, Trauma, and Resilience</i> (W. W. Norton) tells you how to do this with six guidelines.
				Dr. Boss encourages all registrants to read <i>Ambiguous Loss</i> (2000, paperback) and <i>Loss, Trauma, and Resilience</i> (2006) and see www.ambiguousloss.com for more information.