

Literature and Coping Skills
Professor Ajit K Mishra
Department of Humanistic Studies
Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) Varanasi
Lecture 23

Alfred Lord Tennyson “Break, Break, Break”

Hello everybody, I am Ajit K. Mishra, your course instructor for Literature and Coping Skills. I am here again with another lecture of this module that is called defeating depression. So, as you all know in my last two lectures on this module. I talked about various aspects of depression including touch and feeling absolutely disturbed and a variety of other things. So, today I am going to talk about a very important aspect of this particular idea that is depression and how we can develop certain coping skills and strategies to defeat depression comprehensively. So, let us take a look at each of these components.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:14)



The slide is titled "Defeating Depression" and features a yellow background. On the left, there is an illustration of a wooden ladder standing on a small, circular patch of green grass. To the right of the ladder is a bulleted list of topics. The third bullet point, "Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Break, Break, Break'", is circled in yellow. In the top right corner of the slide, there is a small circular logo with the text "NPTEL" below it. On the right side of the slide, a man in a dark blue shirt is standing and speaking.

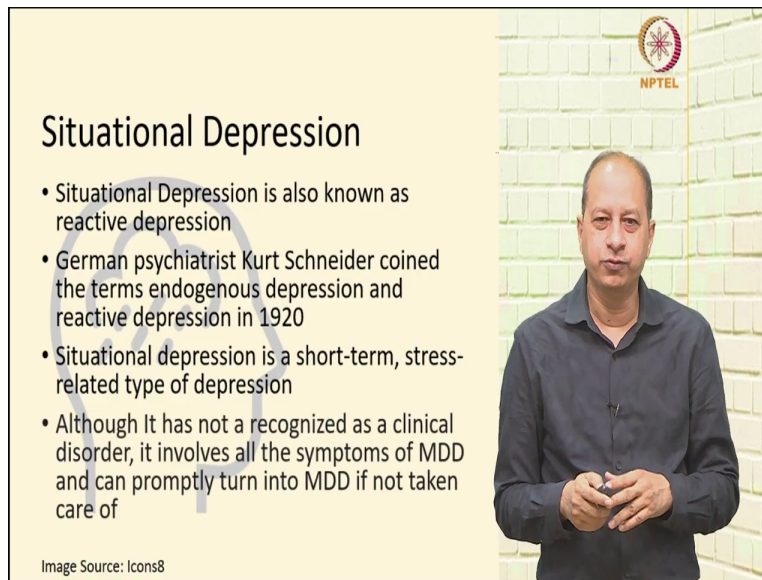
Defeating Depression

- Feeling Weird, Losing Touch-I
- Feeling Weird, Losing Touch-II
- Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Break, Break, Break"
- John Keats, "Ode on Melancholy"

I have already talked about feeling weird and losing touch. If you remember, I talked about depression and its various aspects in that first lecture in this module. Then I moved on to talking about Feeling Weird, Losing Touch Part 2 in which I talked about touch starvation in great detail. Today I am going to focus on this particular aspect and after this discussion or this lecture I am going to talk about the last segment.

So, today I am going to talk about Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Break, Break, Break" and I am going to show you how this particular poetic composition can help us understand the processes, the stages through which we can develop skills, we can devise our strategies to defeat depression. So, let us start with today's lecture.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:14)



The slide features a yellow background with a grid of sticky notes on the right side. A man in a dark blue shirt is standing in front of the grid. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner. The text on the slide is as follows:

Situational Depression

- Situational Depression is also known as reactive depression
- German psychiatrist Kurt Schneider coined the terms endogenous depression and reactive depression in 1920
- Situational depression is a short-term, stress-related type of depression
- Although It has not a recognized as a clinical disorder, it involves all the symptoms of MDD and can promptly turn into MDD if not taken care of

Image Source: Icons8

This is exactly what I am going to do today. I will talk about "Break, Break, Break" but before I bring in that poetic piece I will be starting with a few introductory elements so that you get a greater exposure to the idea of defeating depression with the help of a poetic composition and this is a very interesting lecture because in this lecture I am going to talk about how this particular poetic composition actually brings us face to face with the idea of developing certain skills, which will help us either cope in a positive way or cope in a negative way.

So, it remains to be seen whether this particular poetic composition helps us cope with the onslaught of depression or not. So, as we moved, I can tell you that I am going to talk about situational depression today. This is a very different kind of depression and it has not been included in the DSM as a mental disorder, but it has all the components of the major depressive disorder.

So, situational depression as you all probably know or you can guess from the name itself that it is dependent on a certain situation so if you are faced suddenly with the kind of situation that disturbs you a lot then there is every possibility that you will begin to experience situational depression.

So, when that happens it will definitely push you into the realm of the dark, the depression in multiple ways. So, because situational depression is also called reactive depression, reactive depression because we react to certain situations, to certain events in a certain manner so these reactions are so sudden, so intense, so grief stricken that we promptly enter in to the realm of the dark, the depressive realm.

So, these depressive phases generally occur when we come face to face with a situation and then we register a certain kind of reaction and as a result of that reaction this kind of depression we experience. The German psychiatrist Kurt Schneider coined the terms endogenous depression and reactive depressions in 1920.

Endogenous depression is all about finding the cause of your depression within. That means there is something that disturbs you from within. It cannot be genetically tuned or featured or it can be something that disturbs you from within as a result of which you are experiencing some depressive doubts, so that is endogenous depression. The other type of depression is this, that is reactive depression, which we also call by the name situational depression. So, as early as 1920 this German psychiatrist was able to discover the symptoms of these two very different kinds of depression.

Situational depression is a short term. Stress related type of depression, so, that is probably one big reason why it is not treated as a depressive disorder or a major depressive disorder because it does not last for a prolonged period. So, it has a very short life but that is not the reality in all cases. There are instances in which this kind of depression does not leave, does not go or does not pass off. It remains with the person who is afflicted with this depression. So, in such cases there is not much difference between this kind of depression and major depressive disorder.


So, it is very, very important that we look for the intensity and the duration of such depressive attacks or doubts, so that we get to know whether it is a short term, stress related type of depression or it is a long term, and has all the elements of a major depressive disorder. Depression as we all know by now is in fact a stage of low mood and an aversion to activity, these two are very important when it comes to our understanding of depression. So, depression results in low mood, persistent and constant low mood and aversion to activity.

That means you do not feel like doing anything. You will find that you have suddenly become helpless, hopeless, worthless, therefore you will not take any interest in any activities in life. So, that is exactly when your motivation, your feelings, your thoughts, your sense of well being will be affected by those depressive doubts and these are some of the symptoms of depression.

And a core symptom of depression is that you experience anhedonia that means the loss of pleasure. You do not take any interest in anything. However pleasing or entertaining or enjoyable those experiences may be. So, anhedonia is a major symptom of major depressive disorder. But when we look at situational depression, we also find that it has several similarities with the major depressive disorder. So, therefore at times the distinction or the division between situational or reactive disorder or depression and major depressive disorder seems to be very thin and blurred.

So, I have already told you that it has not been recognized as a clinical disorder yet it has all the symptoms of major depressive disorder, MDD, and it can promptly turn into or transform into MDD if not taken care of in a proper manner. So, therefore it is very, very important that we understand that situational depression or reactive depression has all the elements of promptly turning into a major depressive disorder if we do not take care of it.


(Refer Slide Time: 10:06)



Situational Depression: Triggers

- Traumatic event
- Sudden stress
- Major life change.
- Serious accident
- Divorce
- Job loss
- Death of a loved one

Image Source: VisualPharm



So, it is important for us to understand the triggers of situational depression. What are the causes of situational depression generally? So, when you take a look at the causes of situational depression you will find a lot of similarities between these and those of the major depressive disorder. So, there has to be a traumatic event; it can be the sudden loss of a loved one. It can be a divorce. It can be a sudden stress. You are suddenly faced with a stressful situation and you are frozen. You do not know what to do about it, and that causes a lot of pain and suffering in you.

So, if that even turns out to be traumatic then it has the potential to cause situational depression in you. So, it can also be due to a major life change. Sometimes these can be positive life changes, for example somebody is getting married to somebody else and that person can also experience depression because that person will be visited by a lot of questions and ideas so the person may experience depression.

So, major life changes including marriage and loss or trauma can also result in situational or reactive depression and the serious accident of course. So, when somebody meets with a serious accident. I mean an accident that renders a person either disable or leads to the amputation of any of the limbs of the person so such serious accidents also have the potential to lead to this kind of depression. It is a reactive depression.


And then divorce I have already told you all that divorce has that potential, has that power to suddenly push somebody into situational depression, because especially when divorce is sudden. I mean if a couple are contemplating the idea of divorce for quite some time then the onslaught or the impact of the onslaught will be less and it might not lead to situational depression, because both the couples are aware of it and they are probably working towards a proper divorce and an amicable divorce.

So, that way may not lead to situational depression. If divorce is a sudden one, unexpected one and if it is one sided it will cause situational depression to the other side, so, that is the difference. And then job loss we all know. I mean one fine morning if an employee reaches his or her office and within minutes learns that he or she is no longer a part of that company, not on the job list of that company.

So, there is every possibility that such a person will experience situational depression, and then finally the death of a loved one. This has been considered one of the major causes of situational depression. Death of a loved one, because these are the situations for which we are never prepared.

We can be prepared for job losses, divorce, we are not prepared for serious accidents, we can be prepared for major life changes and a variety of other things but we are not prepared for a few things and this is one such thing. So, death of a loved one turns out to be a major contributor to situational or reactive depression, so that is the reason why I am going to focus on this particular thing and with the help of “Break, Break, Break” by Tennyson I am going to talk about the impact that the death of a loved one leaves on a person's psyche, on a sufferer's psyche, and how that leads to situational depression or reactive depression.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:01)



Situational Depression: Symptoms

- Feelings of low mood and sadness
- Hopelessness
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of pleasure
- Withdrawing from normal activities
- Loneliness or social isolation
- Thoughts of suicide
- frequent bouts of grief

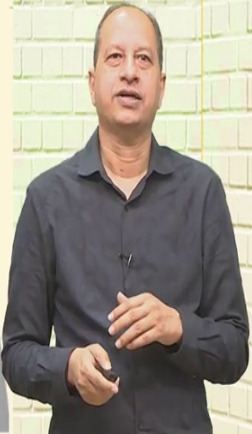



Image Source: Iconscout

So, situational depression has certain symptoms on the basis of which a trained psychiatrist or a psychotherapist can tell whether a person is experiencing reactive and situational depression or not. So, there are a few symptoms that include feeling of low mood and sadness, which are similar to that of MDD. And then hopelessness again, lack of motivation I told you that is in fact caused by depression or MDD and then loss of pleasure, anhedonia again and MDD element, and then withdrawing from normal activities, such people begin to withdraw from normal life or normal life activities and then get stuck in one particular thing only.

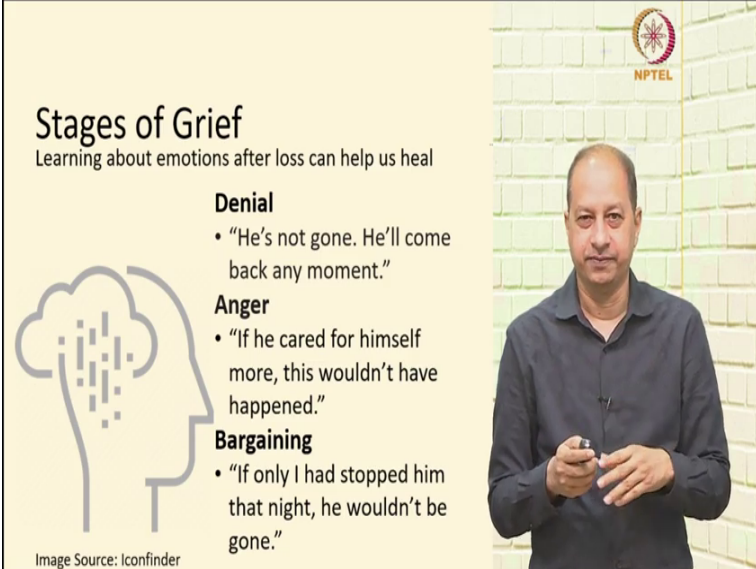
They are stuck in that loss. In that trauma and do not do anything special to move out of it and focus on the other aspects of life. So, this is a very important symptom of situational depression and then loneliness or social isolation. Such people, since they withdraw from normal activities, find it extremely difficult to be in the company of other people because they continue to think about the loss.

They are so engrossed in that loss that even being in the company of other people they are not there, so that is one big reason why such people also experience social isolation, and then such people also contemplate suicide because they experience thoughts of suicide because they suddenly begin to think that their life has been rendered useless and futile by that particular life changing event or a situation. Therefore, they do not have any further interest in their lives and they would like to put an end to all this suffering. So, they are also visited by the thoughts of

suicide and then we come to a very important symptom which is frequent bouts of grief and mourning.

So, such peonies begin to cry quite often. They experience grief and they also express grief. So, grief turns out to be the most important activity for such people. They always grieve. They always find themselves in an aggrieved state. So, I am also going to focus on the idea of grief in relation to “Break, Break, Break” by Tennyson, so, that takes us to the idea of the poetic composition. Now, we can focus on poetic composition with these important things in mind.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:21)



The slide features a yellow background with a white grid pattern. On the right side, a man in a dark blue shirt is speaking. On the left side, there is a diagram of a human head in profile, with a cloud-like shape inside containing vertical lines, representing thoughts or emotions. The text on the slide is as follows:

Stages of Grief

Learning about emotions after loss can help us heal

- Denial**
 - “He’s not gone. He’ll come back any moment.”
- Anger**
 - “If he cared for himself more, this wouldn’t have happened.”
- Bargaining**
 - “If only I had stopped him that night, he wouldn’t be gone.”

Image Source: Iconfinder

NPTEL logo is visible in the top right corner.

Since I have told you that I am going to talk about grief it is very important for all of us to understand the importance of grief, the role of grief in our lives. By now you all know that there is no such classification as negative and positive emotions. Such a classification exists for the sake of knowing the difference between one type of emotion or one aspect of the same emotion and the other aspect of it, but there is no such classification. The same emotion can turn out to be negative which is otherwise perceived or seen as a positive emotion, for example love.

When it becomes unscrupulous, uncontrollable, when it becomes an obsession. It can promptly turn into a negative emotion. It can destroy the person who experiences it and it can also destroy the person for whom this person experiences that particular emotion. So, love here may not be a

positive emotion. So, when it comes to distinguishing between emotions a better idea is to go by the valiancy quotient. Whether an emotion has a positive valence or a negative valence so on the basis of that we can say whether an emotion is going to exercise a positive impact or a negative impact on the person who experiences that.

Similarly, when it comes to sadness, grief, fear, all those emotions that are otherwise negatively perceived they all have a huge and important positive role in our lives, in existence. I have talked about all those things in detail. Similarly, when it comes to grief it also has certain positive aspects. It in fact prepares us, it in fact helps us heal and that is the reason why learning about emotions after loss. Especially those emotions that we experience after loss can in fact heal us, but they can heal us only when we allow them to do so.

If we do not allow grief to heal us it will not heal us. It will continue to disturb us. So, the decision lies not in the emotion, but in the person, who experiences that particular emotion. So, grief is most often perceived as cloud burst or depression is also perceived as a cloud burst, a sudden cloudburst so that is the reason why most people associate depression with a downpour or a sudden outburst of rain.

So, grief can be healing if we allow it to do so and if we allow ourselves to pass through these distinct stages of grief. There are five of them. If we take care of each of these stages. If we understand these stages properly it will be easy for us to take care of our grief. Whenever there is grief, a person begins by denial.

So, a person begins by denying that that has happened because the person is not prepared to accept that this particular thing has happened. In this case if somebody is dead the person who is suffering from that grief may say he is not gone, he will come back any moment. I am not prepared to believe that that person is dead, that person is no more and he or she is gone. The person can come back any moment. I am not prepared.

And this is something that we all have come across. People generally start by denying. So, they start with denial. They say that no, that cannot be, that person cannot die. He was so healthy and


happy, cheerful, that person cannot commit suicide. We are taken aback, we are shocked. Therefore we begin by denying that it can happen or it has happened.

So, during the denial stage we do accept it. And then we begin to accept that yes, it is true. When that phase is over. We enter another phase. That is the phase of anger. Then we begin to focus on the person say the person should have taken extra care. The person should not have been so reckless about his or her diet or driving if it is an accident.

If he cared for himself more this would not have happened. So, we are not necessarily angry with the person but we are expressing our anger, our displeasure for something that the person has probably not done. So, denial has been replaced by anger. In this stage we will express our anger, our displeasure and once this phase is over, we will enter this phase. The bargaining phase. In this phase we are going to engage in a lot of what if or if things or if questions. If I had stopped him from going out, driving his vehicle he would not have died. What if I had asked the person to be with me tonight or here, the person would not have been gone.

So, if only I had stopped him that night he would not be gone. So, in this stage the shift can be seen which is taken away from the person who is gone to the person who is suffering. So, in the previous stage the focus is on the person who is gone and in this stage the focus shifts from the person who is gone to the person who is suffering. Who is bearing the brunt of that event, that trauma, that crisis, that life changing event? So, beyond the bargaining stage of grief we come across to the other stage.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:39)



Stages of Grief

Learning about emotions after loss can help us heal

Depression

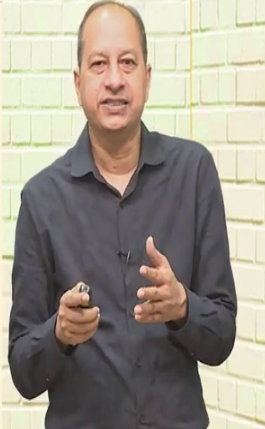
- "What am I without him?"

Acceptance

- "I am so fortunate to have had so many wonderful years with him, and he will always be in my memories."

-- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

Image Source: Iconfinder



And this is a very, very important stage. Everyone who is aggrieved, who is briefed passes through this particular phase, the depression phase, this depression phase is divided in to two parts. The first is the person focuses on the things that were there and then suddenly shifts his or her attention to those things that are not there.

That means if somebody has lost one's friend. The person focuses on the things that he and his friends get together. Those wonderful things, moments and suddenly shifts to the things, the current state that those things are absent. Are gone forever now. So, there is a sudden shift to loss, and that is very, very important.

With this shift if the person's psychological focus gets stuck in the current state that is loss then that will lead to severe problems for the person. The person will not be able to overcome this particular stage or come out of this particular stage, so that the person experiences the healing power of grief. It is very important that the person comes out of this stage and does not allow this stage to be a prolonged one.

So, what am I without him? So, you begin to devalue yourself, develop self hatred and then you also engage in self blame and then you say I am hopeless, I am worthless, I am useless without


that person. Now, that the person is gone, this life is useless, I am useless, I am worthless. What will I do with this life now, because I am nothing without that person.

So, this is the phase where several things may happen. The person may contemplate suicide. The person may not be able to come out of this stage. So, this is the most important grief stage. Once a person is able to overcome this stage and how does that happen. It is only when the person is ready to shift the perspective from what is gone to what is on, that means what is happening around.

So, from what is gone to what is on there has to be a shift of one's perception. Therefore, this stage is called the acceptance stage in which a person generally says I am so fortunate to have had so many wonderful years with him and he will always be in my memories. So, those memories, those wonderful moments that a person has shared with the other person who is gone forever will help the person come out of the depression stage. Say I will always cherish those wonderful moments, and the person will always be alive in my memories.

So, these are some of those approaches that will help the grieving person, the sufferer to come out of the depression stage and enter the acceptance stage and once the person enters the acceptance stage the healing cycle will be complete. Otherwise, the acceptance stage will never ever happen and the person will get stuck in the depression stage. So, with that we will switch to other ideas, but before that I must tell you all that this is a model of grief that was developed by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, the American-Swiss psychiatrist and this has been extremely popular amongst scholars of grief.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:48)




Break, Break, Break
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Break, break, break
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

Cont.



With that we come to “Break, Break, Break” by Tennyson, and we will see whether the problem that the speaker is struggling with finally disappears because the speaker has developed certain coping skills and the speaker has devised certain coping strategies with the help of which the speaker is finally able to overcome the problem.

So, let me give you a quick idea of what this poetic composition is all about. “Break, Break, Break” is elegy, I mean a sad poem, which is composed on the sudden demise, death of the poet's closet friend Arthur Hallam, so that way we know that this point is composed on the sudden death of a loved one.

So, the sudden death of a loved one, grief that means situational depression. There is an element of situational depression or reactive depression for one and the second is there is an element of grief since it is an elegy, mourning, lamentation and then we will notice, we will get to know how does the speaker cope with the problem or whether the speakers actually copes with the problem or not. So, let us take a quick look at this poetic composition.

So, it has four stanzas and very nicely designed and symmetrical stanzas or lines. So, when you take a look at the first stanza, the first four lines you will get an image of death. Pain and suffering, so “Break, Break, Break” suffering pain and then “On thy cold gray stones” image of death cold, gray, stone, all lifeless things.

So, that creates an image of death right in front of us. We get to know that there has been a death and that has been a life changing evening that has been a stressful, traumatic even for the speaker, and then there is an address to somebody and who is that somebody? That somebody has been personified, "O sea!"-so that is a mournful address to "O sea!" and then we come to those second part of the stanza where we see that the speaker is still struggling with the problem of being able to talk, being able to articulate his emotions well.

So, if you all remember I talked about how most peonies struggle with the desire to speak. I have so much to speak but I do not know how to do that. Now, the poet is also struggling with a similar problem that is of not being able to speak therefore "My tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me" I have a lot of thoughts in me but I am sorry to say that my tongue cannot articulate or utter those words. I do not have those words. I am speechless.

So, that means there is a confession to the fact that the speaker is not being able to articulate his pain and suffering properly. So, when we come across all these things we get to see "Break, Break, Break" and instance of pain and suffering and then an image of death and then there is an attempt at speaking to somebody. I have talked about talk therapy. So, this is an instance of that. The speaker is trying to speak to somebody by addressing somebody, by personifying somebody, but the problem is in this case it is not a human. So, when you are talking to somebody who cannot intervene, your talking to that person becomes futile.

It does not achieve its desired result, so that is the problem, there is still a gap, and then I cannot articulate all my feelings or thoughts so that is an inability which the speaker accepts, confesses. So, if you cannot name it it will be extremely difficult for you to tame it. Since the person cannot completely or fully name it the person finds it extremely difficult to tame it and then something interesting happens, something positive happens. There is a sudden shift from one particular perspective that is the perspective of death, inability, helplessness, worthlessness to something that is worthwhile, that is full of life and that is quite positive.

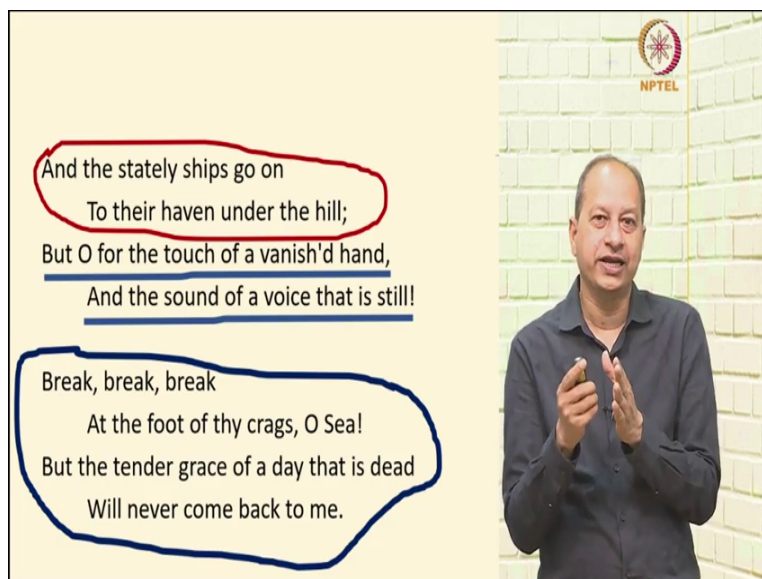
So, now there is a perspective shift and this perspective shift is a wonderful coping skill that we all require in order to take care of our challenging emotions, disturbing emotions, so the speaker

does that. The speaker suddenly shifts the perspective from the idea, the image of death to the image of life.

Now, what we get to see is the fisherman's boy is playing with his sister and they are making merry, they are laughing, they are shouting, they are so happy. So, they are enjoying a lot. Similarly, the sailor lad is also singing in his boat on the bay, so that is also an instance of life. The boat on the bay. The sailor lad is also singing, but there is some problem with these expressions, which you might have taken a note of. The first is this and then there is a contrast between these two things.

The first is O and the same O is repeated in the second instance as well. "O, well for the sailor lad" so when O is repeated twice back to back, we get to know that there is something important about this O and this is not the other O that has an H after the O. So, this very different kind of O, which is very wistful and mournful. That O with an H is indicative of the pain and suffering, but in this case there is something beyond the pain and the speaker is in fact mourning. So, therefore the use of O back-to-back. And this is the same O which was used with "O Sea!" there is mourning, there is wistful thinking.

(Refer Slide Time: 38:13)



NPTEL

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

And when we switch to the other part of it we get to see similar things “And the stately ships go on to their heaven under the hill”. So, again something that is indicative of life. The stately shifts go on. So, moving on, movement, indicative of life, but there is a sudden return to the same old state.

“But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand, and the sound of a voice that is still!” so the perspective shift which had happened 6 lines ago suddenly ends and the speaker returns to the same old state of mourning, grieving, lamenting, and the same old stage of focusing on the loss rather than trying things to move out of the loss.

So, you can see that there was an attempt at moving out of the grief stage to the acceptance stage but there is a sudden recoiling as a result of which the speaker returns to the same mode or the same state again, plus there is something very interesting which you might have noticed here. “Touch of a vanish'd hand” this is a classic example of touch starvation or touch deprivation or skin hunger. I have talked about touch starvation in detail, in one of my previous lectures if you remember.

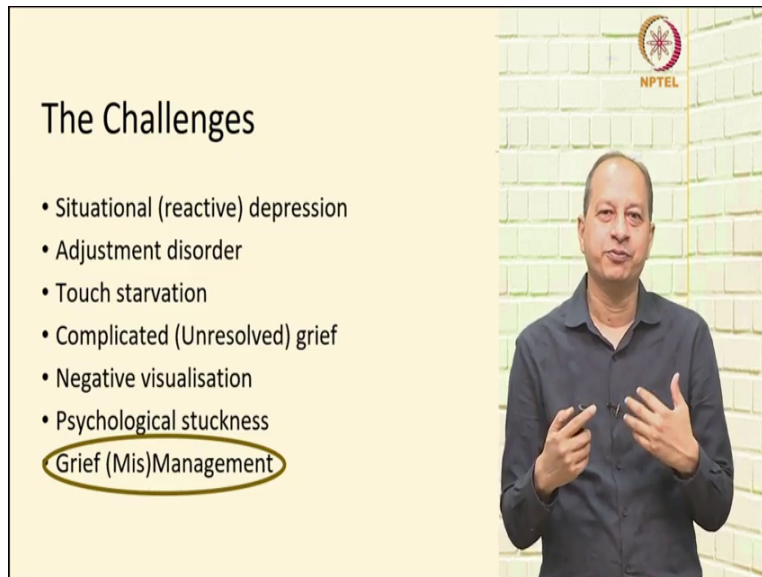
Touch starvation can lead to severe mental problems and that is one instance of it. The person, the speaker is in fact striving for the touch of his friend. He is missing the touch of his friend a lot. Therefore “But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand, and the sound of a voice that is still!”. Still means again the image of death. Stillness that is death. So, you can see the recursive pattern here. We started with “Break, Break, Break” and then we are reentering the same manhole, the same dark realm again. “Break, Break, Break at the foot of thy crags, O Sea! But the tender grace of a day that is dead will never come back to me.”

So, what we get to see is this particular poetic composition has 16 lines if you have counted the lines, out of which 10 lines have been devoted to the image of death and only 6 lines have been devoted to the image of live. Now, you can tell the difference. When somebody focuses so much on the image of death it shows as if the person has developed some kind of infatuation for or obsession with the objects of death, and the person is stuck. It is a psychological myopia, an

emotional catatonia. The person is stuck in that particular point. Stuck in loss, and the person is unable to move beyond it.

So, that is exactly what I talked about before I started discussing this poem. I wanted you to take a look at it, so that you can tell what else the speaker should have done in order to overcome the problem. That is of the sudden loss of his closest friend and what should the poet or the speaker have done in order to overcome the situational depression and touch starvation. So, this is one important instance in which there is an element of coping which is partial and which is incomplete.

(Refer Slide Time: 42:31)



The Challenges

- Situational (reactive) depression
- Adjustment disorder
- Touch starvation
- Complicated (Unresolved) grief
- Negative visualisation
- Psychological stuckness
- Grief (Mis)Management

So, that brings us to the idea of the challenges that we generally encounter in this particular poetic composition. So, there is situational or reactive depression because of the loss of a loved one, that is a friend of the speaker. And we also see there is an adjustment disorder because situational depression is also synonymous with adjustment disorder because it leads to adjustment disorder. So, you suddenly find it very, very difficult to adjust because you cannot accept, therefore it becomes difficult to adjust. Touch starvation, there is touch starvation which is established from the statement that, “But for the touch of a vanish'd hand” so there is touch starvation.

So, when touch starvation sets in people will experience bouts of depression, and then this important thing, the grief which should have healed the person, the speaker, in fact turns out to be the cause of concern. Turns out to give more and more pain to the person, because it is an instance of complicated or unresolved grief. Complicated grief becomes an ongoing process. Where mourning is an ongoing process so you can see the use of O right from the beginning of the poetic composition, this particular poetic composition to the end of it.

So, there is mourning everywhere, so that means in complicated unresolved grief the mourning becomes an ongoing process. It continues forever and the person becomes unable to overcome the setback, the loss. And there is also negative visualization that means we do not get a single


line about the happy times that both the friends spent together. There is not a single line about it. There is no image of that. So, there is no talk about the happy times.

So, if you remember in the acceptance stage a person needs to recall those wonderful cherish-able memories of the past. That will help the person enter the acceptance stage, that does not happen here, because there is no visualization of any happier moments. And there is psychological stuckness, the person is stuck in the idea of loss, death, nothing else. So, when that happens that leads to complicated, unresolved grief. That means a person cannot see anything else except that particular thing.

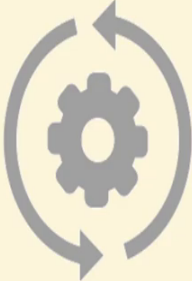
So, there is a moment, there is an opportunity for the speaker in the poem where he tries to see how this fisherman's children are playing, the sailor lad is singing, the stately ships are moving to their safe places but those images, those happenings have not been able to help the person overcome his psychological stuckness. He is stuck, he is frozen.

And then grief mismanagement. The person is not able to manage grief properly. So, we need the right kind of grief management. So, when it comes to grief management we need to focus on this idea because that is a wonderful skill, because we all are bound to experience grief. There is no one in this world who will not be faced with grief of any kind. So, when grief is the ultimate reality it is better that we learn how to manage grief well.

(Refer Slide Time: 46:44)



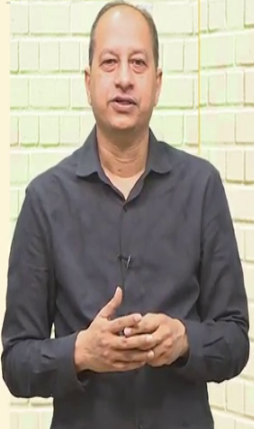
Grief Management



- Shock and numbness
- Yearning and searching
- Despair and disorganization
- Reorganization and recovery

-- Colin Murray Parkes

Image Source: UXWing



So, with the help of this particular model developed or offered by Colin Parkes I am going to talk about grief management. I must tell you all that Colin Parkes has modeled this model of his upon the model of Kubler-Ross, the five stages of grief. So, you will find a lot of similarities between Kubler-Ross model of grief and this model of grief by Colin Parkes.

So, we all start with shock and numbness, we cannot believe that something has happened. We suddenly feel we are frozen and then we develop a yearning and we begin to search for the person who is gone. We begin to search the thing that we have lost. We begin to bring the lost object back into our lives and therefore this wistfulness or yearning. So, yearning is exactly what we can see all through this poetic composition “Break, Break, Break” and the use of that single letter O is indicative of that yearning.

And the searching is still on. The speaker thinks as if it is possible for him to bring back his old friend or his dead friend to life, which is not a possibility anymore, but the searching is on. Although the speaker says at the end of that poem that that will never come back to me but the speaker does not say that I am going to stop this search now.

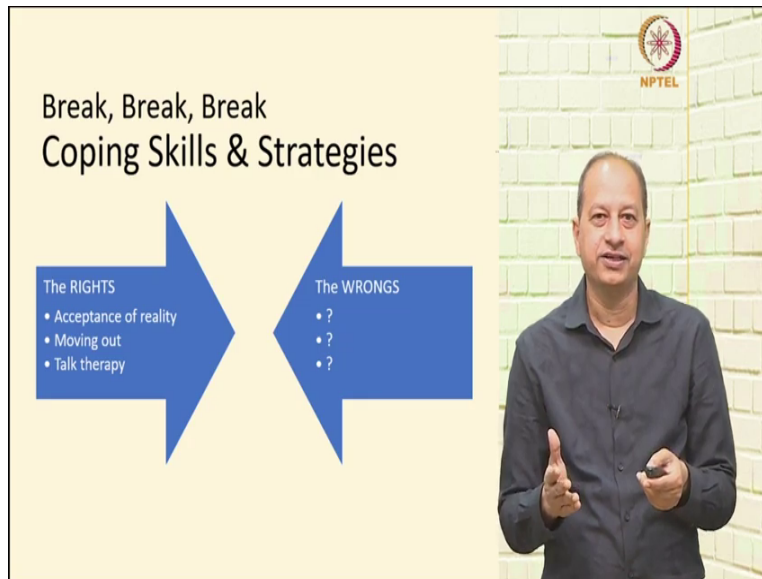
There is no hint, there is no indication that the search will also come to an end and that is a reason why the speaker is unable to cope with the problems. All those problems that I talked

about a while ago. And then there is a despair and disorganization stage, which nobody can help. Everyone is bound to pass through these stages of despair and disorganization.

You will feel as if you are being disorganized, you are fragmented, but beyond that stage there is this reorganization stage and recovery stage, and that is how people recover from their grieves only by accepting the fact, only by shifting their focus that yes, there is something else that is far more important than just grief than just this particular thing.

There is much beyond this particular happening, this particular life changing event. There is life beyond this life changing event. So, this particular acceptance is exactly what we all need, but that does not happen here. So, there is grief mismanagement, and then the coping skills and strategies that we come across when we take a look at this poetic composition.

(Refer Slide Time: 50:00)



These are some of the rights that we come across. For example the speaker begins by accepting the fact that the friend is gone. He has lost his friend therefore he says that I have a lot of things to say but I do not know how to talk about them. I just wish my tongue could utter. Then there is an occasion where he says that but for the lost hand, the touch of a lost hand, so that is another instance. When he says, yes, the friend is gone and there is another instance towards the end of the poem when he says yes, that friend is not coming back to me.

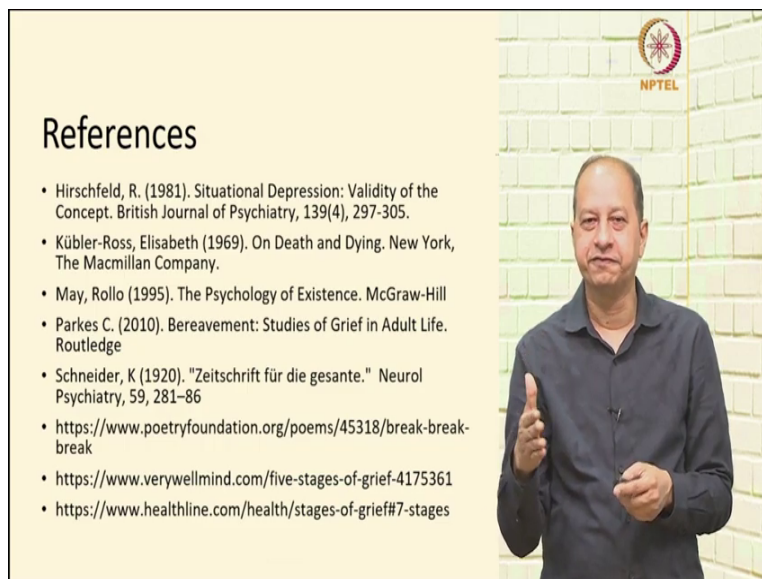
So, there is another right coping strategy adopted that is moving out. It is a wonderful skill in fact. It is a wonderful coping skill because everyone who experiences this stuckness needs to move out physically so that it offers you an opportunity to move out psychologically as well. So, the person, the speaker tries to move out but then for how long. It was very short lived. After a short span the speaker returns to the same old state that is the state of psychological stuckness. So, this moving out is curtailed and then talk therapy. The speaker does engage in talk therapy but the person the speaker is talking to is not a human.

It is a non-human who has been attributed a personification that is "O Sea!". The speaker is speaking to the sea and the sea cannot intervene in this case and that is exactly what happens.

There is no help from sea. It is a one-sided communication only. And there are lots of wrongs which could have been turned in to rights had the speaker taken care of those things.

Now, you can fill in these wrongs and then you can think of how the speaker could have turned them in to rights. I in fact have used this particular poem, because I wanted to show you how not being able to cope with a certain problem can also give us a greater insight into the coping skills and strategies. That we can look for in that particular attempt, in that particular endeavor. It is an endeavor of course but a curtailed endeavor, an incomplete endeavor. Therefore the grief of the speaker is unresolved, so that is how we come to the end of this lecture.

(Refer Slide Time: 53:02)



The slide features a yellow background with a grid of sticky notes. On the right side, there is a video inset showing a man in a dark blue shirt speaking. In the top right corner of the slide, there is a circular logo with a star and the text 'NPTEL' below it.

References

- Hirschfeld, R. (1981). Situational Depression: Validity of the Concept. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 139(4), 297-305.
- Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth (1969). *On Death and Dying*. New York, The Macmillan Company.
- May, Rollo (1995). *The Psychology of Existence*. McGraw-Hill
- Parkes C. (2010). *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*. Routledge
- Schneider, K (1920). "Zeitschrift für die gesamte." *Neurol Psychiatry*, 59, 281-86
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45318/break-break-break>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/five-stages-of-grief-4175361>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/stages-of-grief#7-stages>

I hope it has been helpful and it has helped you understand the idea of situational depression or reactive depression and the idea of grief. Well, thank you very much for joining me.