



## Free to Attend

for all members of the WCM Community; faculty, staff and trainees welcome!



### Elena Lister MD

Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry Weill Cornell Medicine

## The Challenges of Grief Therapy : Helping Patients With Past or Current Grief

### Abstract

Loss is an inevitable part of our lives and will therefore inevitably be a part of what is discussed in therapy. It may arise because a patient comes to you for help about a loss or a loss may occur in the midst of a therapy that was initiated for some other reason. However, we do not get training in how to work with grief with our patients. A loss and how it is processed impacts the rest of our subsequent life. This presentation will present how to understand the main factors to consider in helping people cope with loss, including one important factor: our own responses to death and loss.

### Biography

Elena Lister, MD, is Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical Center and Senior Consulting Analyst for Grief at Columbia Psychoanalytic Center. She treats adults and children facing all life issues, specializes in grief, and is a frequently sought-out expert on dealing with loss in schools and organizations across the country. She presents at Grand Rounds about this topic in medical centers near and far. Dr Lister is published regularly in media such as the New York Times and the Washington Post writing or being interviewed about coping with loss. Her most recent book, coauthored with Michael Schwartzman PhD is called Giving Hope: Conversations with Children About Illness, Death and Loss. It was published by Random House in 2022. Dr. Lister is also the coauthor of I Will Remember You: A Guidebook Through Grief for Teens. Dr Lister's work in this area arises out of her experience of the illness and then death of her 6 year old daughter from leukemia 25 years ago. Since her daughter's death, she has devoted much of her professional life to helping people of all ages not feel alone facing illness and loss as well as other life challenges. A paper about that experience, published in the Journal of Pain and Symptom Management, is frequently used in medical schools and residencies nationwide to train physicians in how to talk with patients and families about dying. Dr Lister also gives the talk on this topic that is part of the Kravitts Foundation Retreat provided to the pediatric residents at our own medical center. She volunteers as a "Grief Chief" with children and with parents at Camp Erin, a non-profit sleep-away camp that is free for grieving children 6-17 years old.

### Learning Objectives

1. Describe the almost universal resistances to thinking and talking about death that occur within ourselves and our patients.
2. Discuss key factors to consider in taking a grief history.
3. Identify the widespread misunderstandings of grief that impact our patients as they deal with a loss.

### Suggested Reading

1. Lister, E. & U.S. Cancer Pain Relief Committee. (2001). Liza's Death: A Personal recollection. Journal of Pain and Symptom Management, 243. <https://www.elenalistermd.com/pdf/lizas-death-a-personal-recollection.pdf>
2. Lister, E., MD, & Schwartzman, M., PhD. (2022). Giving hope: Conversations with Children About Illness, Death, and Loss. Penguin.
3. Dower, L., & Lister, E. (2001). I will remember you: What to Do when Someone You Love Dies: a Guidebook Through Grief for Teens. Scholastic Paperbacks.



Tuesday April 14th 2026 | 7pm-8pm



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Content is appropriate for beginner, intermediate and advanced level practitioners.



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