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Professor Contributes to National Grief Counseling Curriculum

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Melissa Brown, assistant professor of social work at Cedarville University, has a history of helping others process grief and is now sharing her expertise with a national audience.

Since 2014, Brown has served as a medical social worker at both Crossroads Hospice in Dayton Ohio and Dayton Children's Hospital. She has more than 10 years of medical social work practice, and throughout her field experience, she has worked with thousands of small children, centenarians and their loved ones process pain, loss, abuse and neglect.

While continuing her positions at Crossroads, Brown joined the Cedarville faculty as an adjunct professor, transitioning in 2015 to her full-time role. She graduated from Cedarville with a Bachelor of Science degree in social work in 2008, and six years later earned her master's in social work from The Ohio State University.

Brown's career as a social worker has left her with second hand trauma, a common experience for those in her field. Though weighty, this trauma has allowed Brown to connect well with her patients and students. Brown explained how her continued hands-on experience with patients has added value and relevance to her classroom because, though humans and their struggles often do not change, their environments and influences do.

Brown's experience has allowed her to contribute not only to the classroom but also has given her a platform to reach many more through GriefShare, a nationwide, faith-based organization that produces curriculum to help those walking through grief and loss.

Brown has been interviewed for a video portion of the curriculum that will accompany GriefShare's workbook and will give a professional perspective on grief and loss.

"I am grateful to be able to contribute to the curriculum. People just don't talk about death. It's taboo and uncomfortable," Brown shared. "Many times, people are most fearful of the actual unknown process of dying. I appreciate the opportunity to be asked and help people discover a healthy way to grieve."

Brown helps patients to reframe their perspectives on their situations. For example, she points out that just as people celebrate new life, people should also acknowledge death as a part of reality.

"We should not shy away from reflecting on our last days as a healthy discussion to find wisdom," Brown said.

Ultimately, Brown accepts her role as someone who helps others process grief because she values life. As a mom to her three children, a host parent to a boy from China, a social worker in the hospital or a teacher in the classroom, Brown seizes every opportunity to walk with people through pain and suffering and share a radically new perspective. Even situations like hospice, Brown explained, are “not for the dying, but for the living.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,715 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit cedarville.edu.

Written by Anna Grace Galkin