

Dimensions of Loss: using a holistic framework to understand the many costs and challenges of bereavement



Jan Fish



Our conference

- How can we understand the totality of the costs and changes that come about for the bereaved?
- Do we assume that the 'need' lies in particular dimensions of peoples lives?
- They may be finding other needs are not acknowledged or met?
- Are there areas of need that we neglect?
- How can use this knowledge to adapt the support we offer?

Grief is multi-dimensional

- grief—a multi-dimensional range of experiences following a loss (Bonanno, 2001, pp. 494-495)
- ‘The multi-dimensional approach sits in tension with the one dominant idea in clinical lore and in bereavement training, namely that just one dimension – the emotional – is what grief is ...about’.(Tony Walters, 1999, p158)

A Multi dimensional approach

- Challenges the primacy of the 'emotional' dimension – of catharsis – though some clients benefit from this
- Allows for person centred approach - enables assessment of wider perspective of need
- for clients and
- in planning and delivering provision

Susan Le Poidevin

- framework of dimensions was created by Susan Le Poidevin in the early 1980's
- developed with Colin Murray Parkes as a training programme for volunteer bereavement counsellors
- Tony Walter (1999), acknowledges her as a 'respected trainer of bereavement workers in the UK' and described her work as allowing the practitioner to be aware of the many different areas of 'distress and difficulty' that can arise after bereavement.

Dimensions

- a framework for understanding the experience of the bereaved
- nine dimensions of loss
- provide a wide ranging assessment tool which enable the development of a focus for therapeutic aims
- a focus within bereavement counselling
- to aid what we provide the bereaved
- each of the dimensions encompasses a particular area of change in the life of the bereaved

Nine Dimensions

- **Emotional** – The restoration of emotional balance
- **Family & Support Network** – Acceptance of altered role and strengthening of networks of support
- **Health & Physical Wellbeing** – To promote
- **Identity** – To adjust to a new identity

Nine dimensions

- **Intellectual** – Acceptance of death and Implications
- **Lifestyle & Routine** – Reorganisation of routine
- **Philosophy** – Re appraisal of purpose and meaning of life
- **Practical Issues** – To cope with everyday practicalities
- **Relationship to the Deceased** – Adjustment to the loss of this relationship & exploration of the continuing bond

The Emotions of Grief



Emotional



Emotional – The restoration of emotional balance

- “Grief is different. Grief has no distance. Grief comes in waves, paroxysms, sudden apprehensions that weaken the knees and blind the eyes and obliterate the dailiness of life.” Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*
Crying

Manifestations of normal grieving (Worden, W 1983)

- Feelings/Physical Sensations/Behaviours/Cognitions

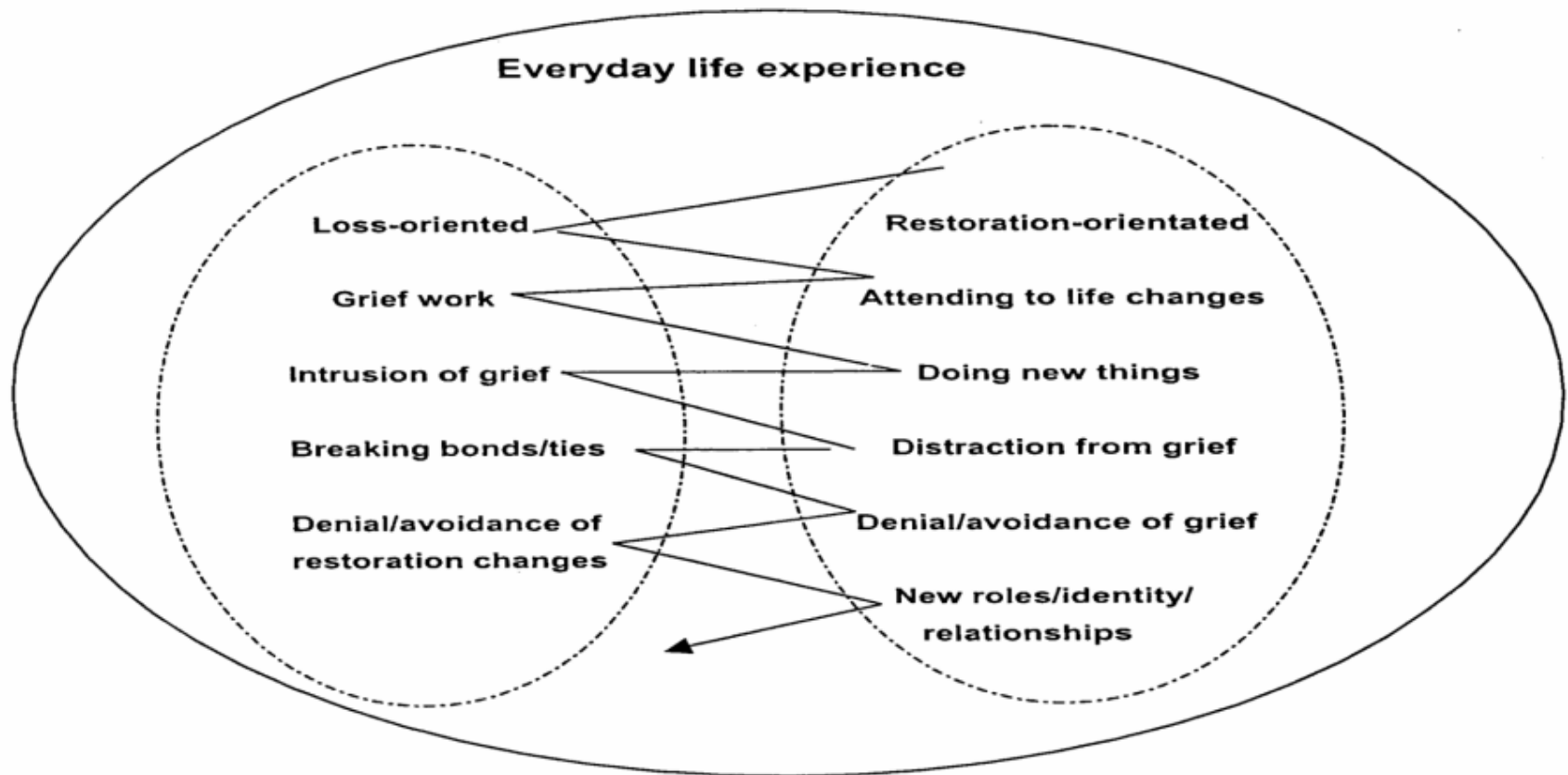
Feelings

- Sadness, guilt and self reproach, loneliness, anxiety,
yearning, emancipation, numbness, fatigue
(apathy/listlessness), shock, relief, helplessness

Emotion & the dual process model

MARGARET STROEBE

People need to confront and avoid



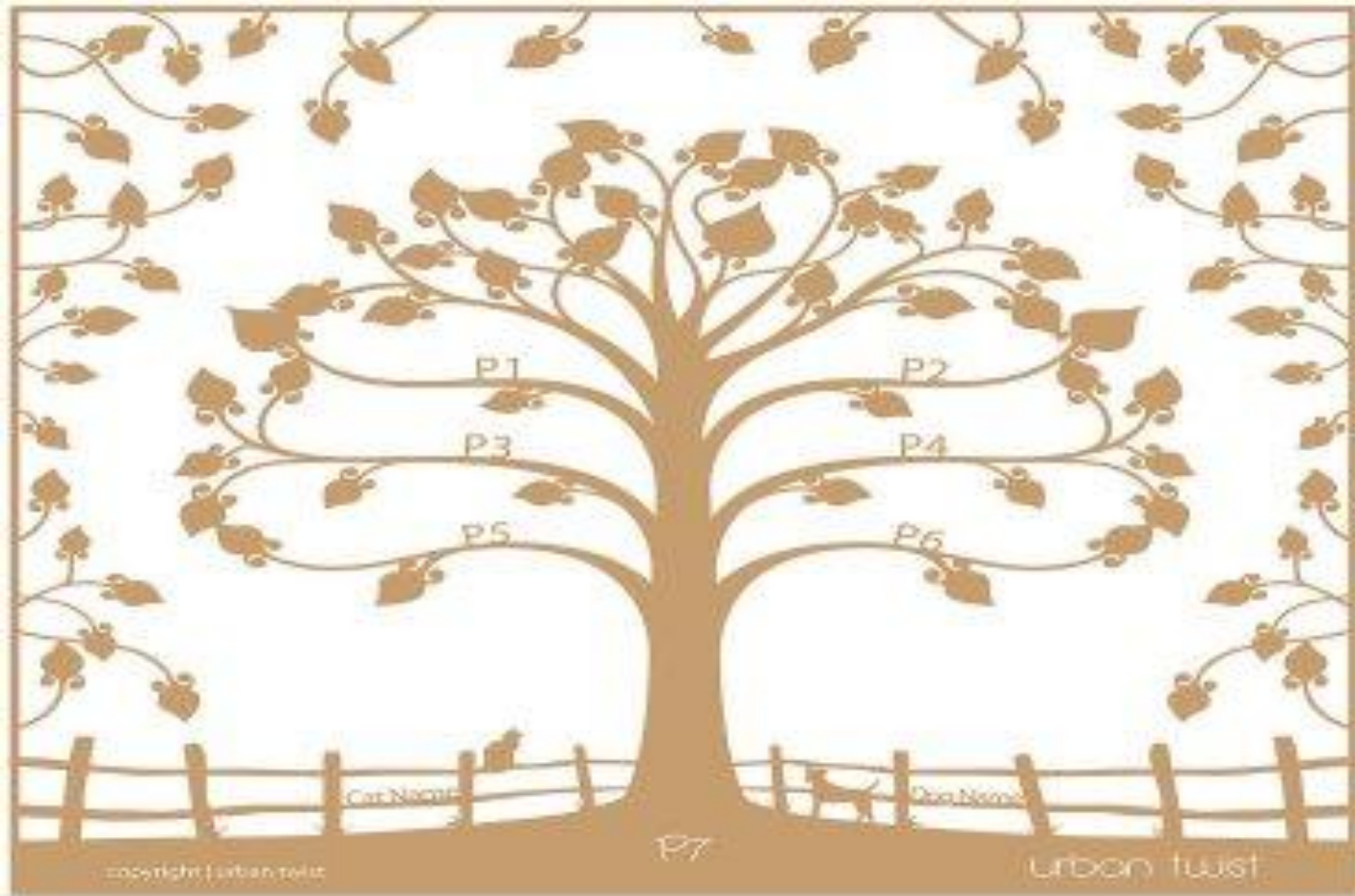
Resilience and Emotion



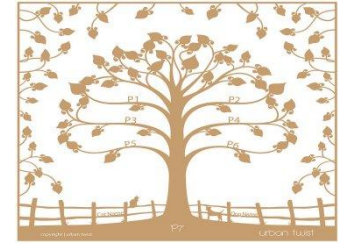
Clinical work

- overwhelmed or over-controlled
- the 'management' of grief?
- adjust therapy to give balance
- When does grief become a disorder?
- assess if vulnerable
 - Notions of complication grief
 - Bereavement Needs Assessment
 - Adult Attitude to Grief Scale

The family and support network



Family and support network



Family & Support Network – Acceptance of altered role and strengthening of networks of support

- The family as a system

Support Networks

- Do others desert us? Avoiding the bereaved
- Social and emotional isolation

The social context of grief

- Shared family events/keeping the dead 'alive' for the family. The Family Tree.

Heath & Wellbeing



Health & Wellbeing



- “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing.”
- The physicality of grief
 - Manifestations of normal grieving (Worden, W 1983)
- Hollowness in the stomach, tightness in the chest, tightness in the throat, oversensitivity to noise, a sense of depersonalisation, breathlessness, feeling short of breath, weakness in the muscles, lack of energy, dry mouth
- Our role to normalise this dimension of the experience of grief
 - grieving is very hard work
 - encouraging self care
- Our clinical interest in the health of the bereaved

Health & Wellbeing

- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Stress
- Stress addictions
 - increases in drugs (prescription/non prescription)
 - alcohol
- Physical symptoms
 - psychosomatic symptoms

Identity



Identity



Identity – To adjust to a new identity

- Who am I now?
- Widow – social pressures on identity.
- Loss of status. The widows mite.
- Parental loss
- The loss of self esteem
- The experience of the irrational/childlike

Identity

- Strengths
- Sense of self from before the relationship?
- Previous losses – previous learning
- Narrative therapy

Intellectual/Cognitive

Intellectual – Acceptance of death and Implications

- The cost of grief
 - Confusion and the inability to focus
 - Letting ourselves know that someone has died
- “There was a level on which I believed that what had happened remained reversible” *Joan Didion, The Year of Magical Thinking*
- The first task of grief – *Worden, W.*
- Cognitions – *Worden, W. Manifestations of Normal Grief*
 - Disbelief
 - Confusion
 - Preoccupation
 - Sense of presence
 - Hallucinations

Philosophy



Philosophy



Philosophy – Re appraisal of purpose & meaning of life

- a loss of meaning purpose
- spirituality
- a loss of faith
- The social expression of grief – ritual, mourning and memorialisation
- Where do people go after they die?

Lifestyle & Routine

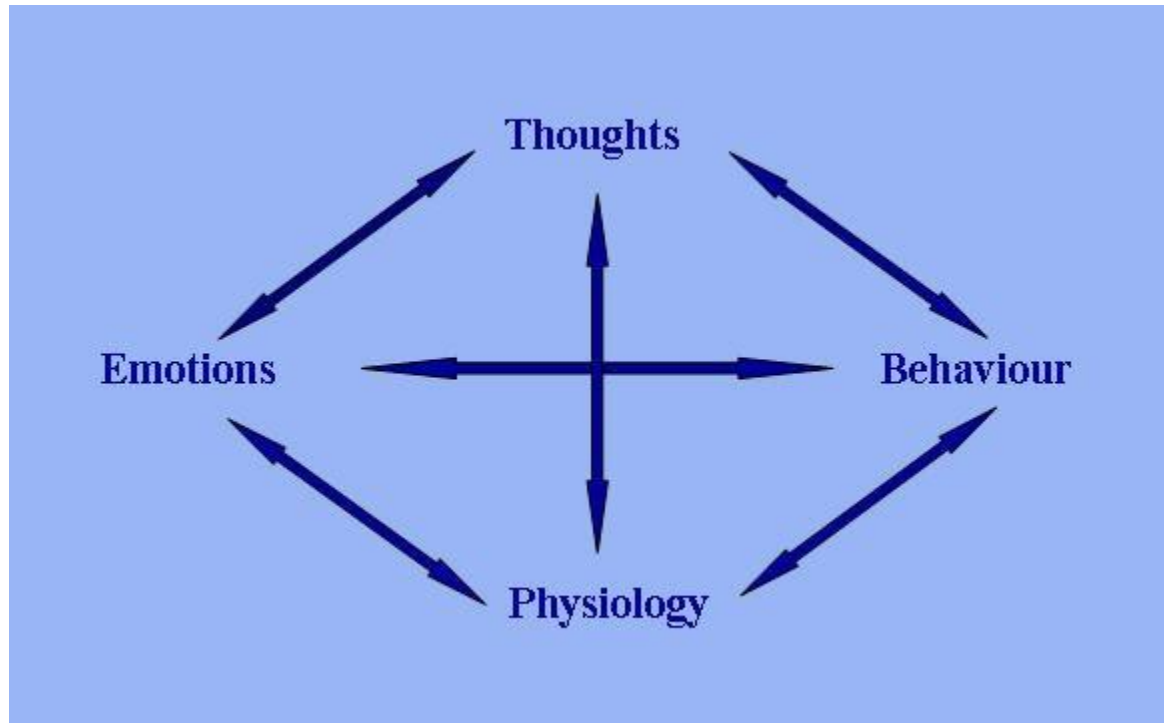


Lifestyle, routines and behaviour

Lifestyle & Routine – Reorganisation of routine

- The 'pattern of our days'
- For Carers – did the day 'revolve' around the deceased?
- Behaviours *Worden, W. Manifestations of normal grief*
Sleep disturbances, appetite disturbances, absent-minded behaviour, social withdrawal, dreams of the deceased, avoiding reminders of the deceased, searching and calling out, sighing, restless overactivity, crying, visiting places or carrying objects that are reminders of the deceased, treasuring objects that belonged to the deceased
- Do new behaviours affect our emotion, our thoughts and our physical wellbeing?
- CBT

Linking the dimensions



Practicalities of Life





Practical

Practical Issues – To cope with everyday practicalities

- Financial implications of losing a family member
- Practical changes that arise – will affect many of the other dimensions. Work or Home
- Current economic background to our work
 - For clients
 - For the services we can continue to offer

Relationship



Relationship



Relationship to the Deceased – Adjustment to the loss of this relationship & exploration of the continuing bond

- “Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything.”
- *C S Lewis - A Grief Observed*
- “A single person is missing for you, and the whole world is empty.” *Joan Didion, The Year of Magical Thinking*

Relationship

- ‘Part of myself has died’/’my other half’
- How couples share psychological tasks
 - dependant or ‘ill’ one/the strong confident one
 - The object of my love
 - Klein, M. objects/projection/transference
 - Bowlby, J. the secure base
 - Attachments – secure and insecure
 - In popular culture - Ghost/Truly Madly Deeply

The loss of a child



Peter Kollwitz, Käthe's son, joined the German army. He was killed at the Western Front in 1914. Thereafter, Kollwitz created drawings that spoke to the anguish of women and children who had lost a loved one due to war



Continuing Bonds

- “I could not count the times during the average day when something would come up that I needed to tell him. This impulse did not end with his death. What ended was the possibility of response.” *Joan Didion, The Year of Magical Thinking*
- How these conversations continue?
- How do we enable these conversations?
 - In our clinical work
 - In our hospice provision

Metaphors of Loss

- The scar of grief. *Grief as a disease Engel, G. (1961)*
- Journey – our role alongside the bereaved on their journey
- The landscape of loss – how do the bereaved chart a way through these changes
- Are there dimensions we have neglected?
- ‘The price we pay for love is grief’

references

- Ainsworth, MDs, (1991) Attachments and other affectional bonds across the life cycle. In: C.M.Parkes, J. Stevenson-Hinde and P Marris (Eds) Attachment across the life cycle, London: Routledge.
- [American Psychiatric Association](#) (2013) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th Edition) Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Bonanno, G. (2001). Grief and emotion: Comparing the grief work and social-functional perspectives. In M. Stroebe, R. Hansson, W. Stroebe, H. Schut (Eds.), Handbook of bereavement research (pp. 493-516). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press
- Bowlby J. 1980. Attachment and loss, Volume III: Loss, sadness and depression. New York, Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1961). Processes of mourning. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 42, 317-
- Engel, G. (1961). Is grief a disease? Psychosomatic Medicine, 23, 18-22.
- Freud, S. (1917) Mourning and Melancholia. The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud, (Ed.) James Strachey & Anna Freud. London, Hogarth Press, 1953- Vol. 14.
- Klass, D., Silverman, P., & Nickman, S. (1996). Continuing bonds: New understandings of grief. Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis.
- Klass, D, Silverman, P & Nickman S, (Eds) Continuing Bonds. New understandings of grief (1996) Taylor and Francis.
- Le Poidevin, S. Coming Through. A Cruse booklet dealing realistically with bereavement and making the most of changed circumstances. Mainly for those who have lost a partner. Practical and constructive ideas for self-help.
- Machin, L. 2001. Adult Attitude to Grief Scale (AAG scale)
- Machin, L Relfs M & Archer, N Guidance for bereavement needs assessment in palliative care. 2nd edition Relf, M. Machin L. and Archer, N. Help the Hospices available on line.
- Machin, L. Working with loss and grief : a new model for practitioners. London : SAGE (2009)
- Parkes, CM (2006) Love and Loss, The Roots of Love and its Complications, Routledge
- Stroebe MS, and H Schut. The Dual Process Model (1999).
- Walters, T, On Bereavement: The Culture of Grief, (1999, p.158) Open University Press
- Worden, W (1983) Manifestations of normal grieving in Grief Counselling and Therapy.