

# THE WAY WE DO DYING AND DEATH: PART 2 AN OVERVIEW TO BEREAVEMENT, GRIEF, & MOURNING

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# So What Was Part 1 About?



- A Death Avoidant Society
- End of Life Decisions
- Death and the Interent

# BEREAVEMENT, GRIEF, & MOURNING: OVERVIEW

- What do we mean by loss?
- Definitions of Bereavement, Grief & Mourning
- Physical, psychosocial, behavioral, and spiritual responses.
- Theories of grief and loss
- Types of grief
- Major issues in the field:
  - What is non-death loss and how is it related to the grieving process?
    - *When does a grieving individual need professional intervention?*
    - *Does grief counseling help?*
    - *What is the interplay between grief and depression?*

# Disenfranchised Grief

- **Definition:** Grief that is not acknowledged or socially supported:
- **Examples:** (cognitively disabled; death of an ex-spouse; pets)
  - *Relationship is not recognized*
  - *The loss is not recognized*
  - *The griever is not recognized*

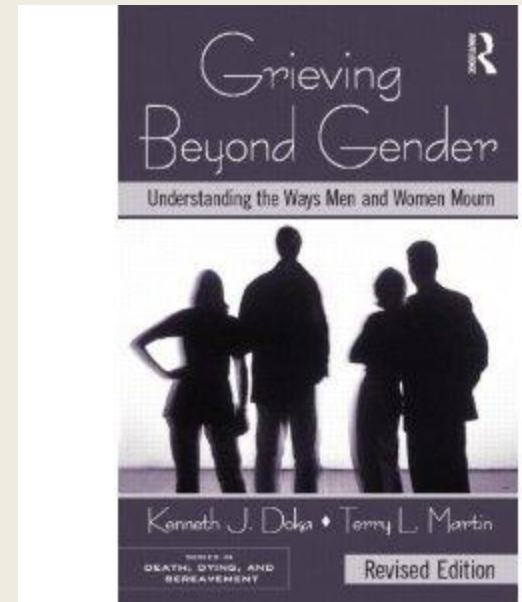


# A SURVEY

- If you were to (or have) suffered a loss, would you...
  - *Cry openly*
  - *Seek to be alone as often as possible*
  - *Start a new project*
  - *Call friends and talk about the death*
  - *Join a support group*
  - *Try to be in control of your emotions*
  - *Become more physically active*

■ Grieving styles are influenced by:

- *Biology*
- *Culture*
- *Gender roles*
- *Temperament*
- *Family*



# GRIEVING STYLES

## (Martin & Doka, 2010)

- INTUITIVE “*FEMININE*”
  - More overt grief behaviors
  - Expressions mirror inner feelings
  - More depression
  - More rumination
  - Sense of depersonalization
  - Sense of meaninglessness
- INSTRUMENTAL “*MASCULINE*”
  - More denial
  - More intellectualization
  - Cope via distraction
  - More problem solving
  - Adaptation generally involves thinking and doing
  - More suicidal thoughts
  - Higher mortality rate

# BLENDED GRIEVERS

- Grieving styles exist along a continuum
- Blended grievers have characteristics of both I and IT:



Both patterns are effective ways of coping with loss.



# Physical loss

- Loss that is tangible



# Psychosocial Loss

- The loss of a person's "assumptive world."
  - *Ideas people develop that contains everything they assume to be true about their world and their selfhood in the world.*
  - *Affects how we live our lives, our feelings of safety and consistency in the world.*



Marjory Stoneman Douglas  
H.S., Parkland, FL 2/15/18

# Non-Death Losses: *Ambiguous Loss*

## 4. What are the types of Ambiguous Loss?

Physically Absent- Psychologically Present	Psychologically Absent- Physically Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Adoption</li><li>▪ Migration</li><li>▪ <b>Missing people</b></li><li>▪ Miscarriage and stillborn loss</li><li>▪ Natural disaster and catastrophic tragedy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Addictions</li><li>▪ Dementia and Alzheimer's</li><li>▪ Mental health issues</li><li>▪ Separation/Divorce</li><li>▪ Traumatic brain injury or coma</li></ul>

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*“ The word ‘ambiguous’ helped me understand what was going on. I’m still married to my wife. I love her, but I don’t live with her. I’ve always been crazy about her and still am. She’s looked after, but it is a huge loss for me. The ambiguity is exactly how I feel. ”*

– A male caregiver in Toronto

*With ambiguous loss, there is no closure;  
the challenge is to learn how to live with the ambiguity.*

*Pauline Boss*



Pauline Boss, Ph.D.

# Definitions

- Bereavement: An objective fact- “to tear”
- Grief: A response to bereavement.
  - *Acute Grief*: The initial response—a mix of separation and traumatic stress.
  - *Integrated Grief*: The long-term response to grief.
    - Emotional responses:
      - *sadness, anger, loneliness, other emotions.*
    - Physical responses
    - Cognitive responses
    - Behavioral responses
    - Social
    - Spiritual responses

# DEFINITIONS

- Mourning:
  - *The process by which a bereaved individual integrates the loss into his or her life.*
- Expectations of mourners– What do you think?
  - *What are our grieving rules?*
    - Influenced by:
      - *Time*
      - *Gender*
      - *Age*



# What Influences Bereavement & Grief?

- The nature of the attachment or the perceived value of that which is lost
- The way in which the loss occurred
- The current circumstances of the griever
- The coping strategies of the bereaved
- Support and assistance received
- The ability to “relearn” the world by finding meaning in the loss
- The developmental level of the griever

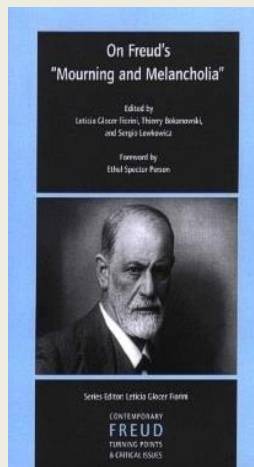
# Theories of Grief

- 20<sup>th</sup> Century Grief Theory:
  - *Grief normal or a psychiatric condition?*
  - *Sever the bonds!*
    - Considered a normal part of the grief process.
  - *This perspective based on:*
    - Freud: Grief freed the mourner from his or her attachments to the deceased.
  - *Mourners are “free” to be involved in new relationships.*
  - *Western value on autonomy and self-control.*
  - *Medical view that death is a failure; grief an illness from which one can recover.*



# THEORIES OF GRIEF

- Freud (1917) *Mourning and melancholia*.



## Grief Work:

- Confront all reminders of the person so that eventually they lose their emotional power.

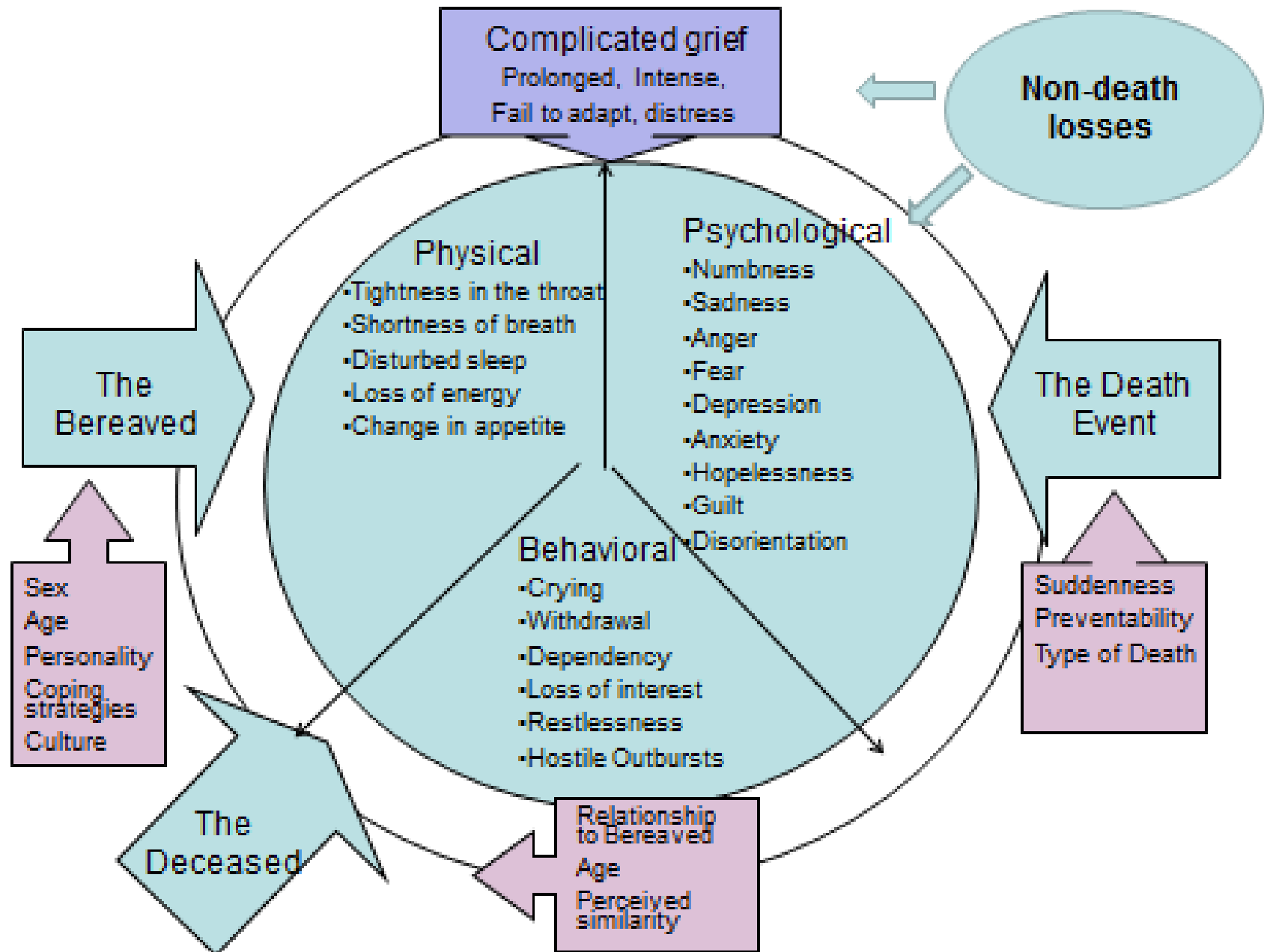
# “Breaking Bonds” Theories

- Freud’s legacy to succeeding grief theories:
  - *Grief is work*
  - *Involves tasks*
  - *“Heal” through self-disclosure*
  - *A belief that maintaining the “bond” with the deceased is resisting reality. Ongoing attachment to the deceased = pathology.*
  - *Successful grieving leads to “recovery.”*
    - Form a mental representation that does not trigger emotional distress when thinking of the person who died.

# Breaking Bonds Theory: Crisis Intervention Model



- Lindemann: Crisis intervention perspective. Cocoanut Grove Fire
- Documented the characteristics of the acute grief response.
- Ascribed to Freud's perspective that grief is normal but involves "work."
  - ***Not the same as clinical depression!***
    - *Clinically depressed believe something is WRONG with them.*
    - *Grievers believe that there is something WRONG with the world!*
- Strongly believed that self-disclosure is essential.



# Attachment Theory (*John Bowlby*)

- ◆ All Social Animals become attached to each other.
- ◆ The main function of attachment is to provide security
- ◆ The function of crying and searching following separation is to promote reunion
- ◆ The basic source of security is the Family



# Breaking Bonds Theories: Stages of Grief

- Kubler-Ross adaptation:
  - *Denial,*
  - *anger,*
  - *yearning,*
  - *depression,*
  - *acceptance*

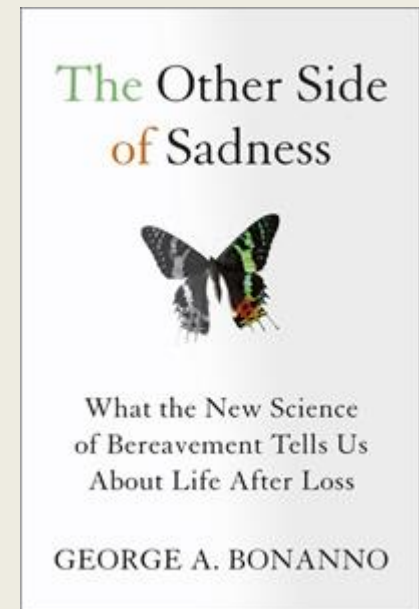
# What does the research say???

- There is no strong evidence of:
  - *A sequence of emotional phases of adaptation to loss.*
  - *A clear endpoint to grieving that looks like a “recovery.”*
- George Bonanno (2004): resilience in the face of loss or potential trauma is more common than is often believed.

**Characteristics of a resilient individual:**

- ✓ • **Enthusiasm for life and work.**
- ✓ • **Capacity to see the future and “go for it”.**
- ✓ • **Capacity to cope with difficult situations.**
- ✓ • **Attitude towards life and work that is positive, full of energy and determination.**
- ✓ • **Capacity to see the options, and to adapt effectively to meet and overcome challenges.**

Mowbray, 2012



# Continuing Bonds Theory





# Continuing Bonds

People who are important to us may continue to play important roles in our lives and in the life of the community for many years after they have died.

This relationship with the dead may be more typical than severing bonds.

***“I would not do that because my mother would be disappointed in me.”***

The relationship continues and changes over time.

Typically provides comfort and solace to the bereaved.

*I had to learn to have a relationship with someone who wasn't there anymore."*

Natasha Wagner, daughter of Natalie Wood, who drowned when Natasha was a teenager



# Continuing Bonds Theory

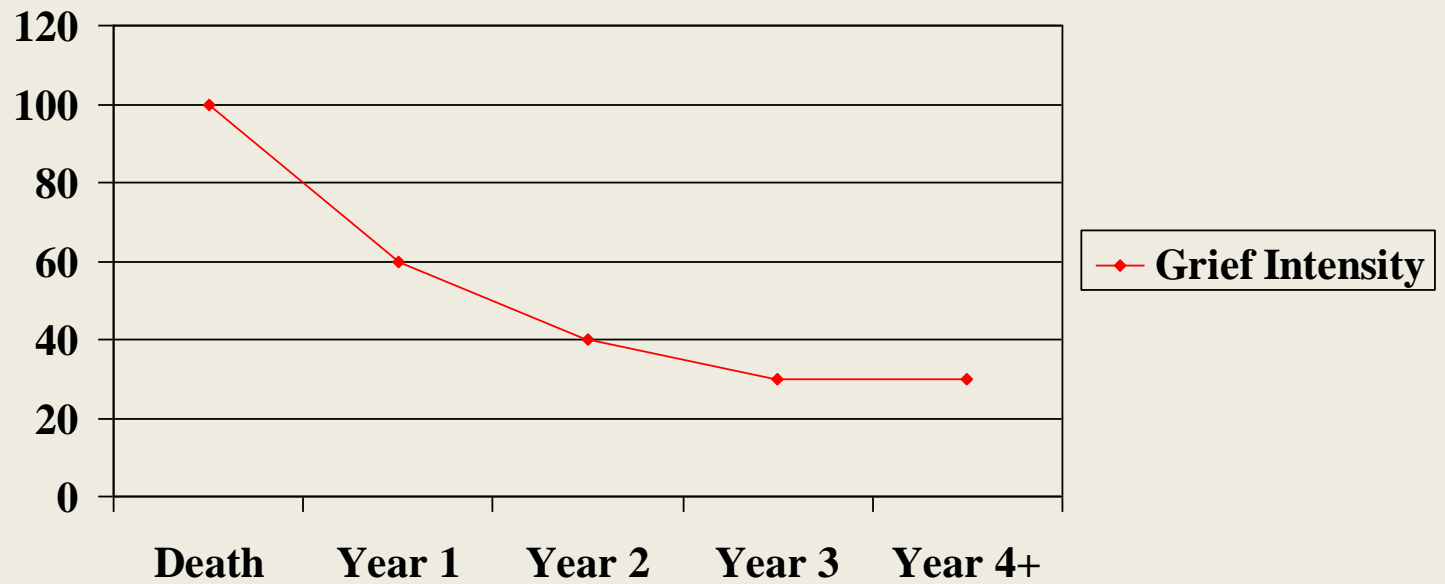
Four main aspects:

1. Many people sense the presence of the dead.
2. Many people talk with the dead.
3. The dead are moral guides; function as a role model
4. Linking objects

# COMPLICATED GRIEF

- **A** Definition: mourning process that is deviant and unhealthy.
- Failure of one or more of the six “Rs”:
  - *Recognize the loss, React to the pain, Recollect and Reexperience the relationship, Relinquish old attachments, Reinvest (a breaking bonds perspective?)*
- Complicated grief involves:
  - *denial or avoidance*
  - *failure to relinquish the lost loved one*
  - *excessive, distorted or unproductive grieving styles.*
- Neimeyer & Currier (2009): 10 – 15% of population has “sustained” difficulty coping with grief.

## Intensity & Duration of Grief



# Proposed Signs of Complicated Grief

- Chronic and disruptive yearning, pining, longing for the deceased.
- 4/8 of the following symptoms at least several times a day—distressing and disruptive.
  1. *Trouble accepting the death*
  2. *Inability to trust others*
  3. *Excessive bitterness or anger related to the death*
  4. *Uneasiness about moving on*
  5. *Numbness/detachment*
  6. *Feeling that life is empty or meaningless without deceased*
  7. *Feeling bleak about the future.*
  8. *Agitation*
- Symptoms must last at least 6 months.

Source: Prigerson & Maciejewski (2006) & Jordan & Neimeyer (2007)

# RISK FOR CM???

- Sudden and unanticipated death
  - *especially in trauma death (esp. difficult when entire community is traumatized; no body)*
- Overly lengthy disease
- Loss of child
- Perception of preventability
- Low social support
- Ambivalence toward relationship
- Bereavement overload
- Disenfranchised grief
- Genetic predisposition for depression

# Trauma and Transformation

- New emphasis on personal growth
  - *Research suggests that following trauma:*
    - Changed sense of self (I am stronger)
    - Changed relationships (more compassionate)
    - Changed philosophy of life (don't take life for granted; increased spirituality)
  
- What about Grief Counseling??
  - *Neimeyer & Currier (2010):*
    - Psychotherapy & counseling; support groups; crisis intervention; social activities groups; writing therapy
    - Meaning reconstruction—finding meaning in the loss.



# NOT HELPFUL!



- Minimize the loss
- Make admonitions not to feel the grief
- Suggest prompt return to former activities (esp. true for intuitive grievers)
- Avoid the mourner
- Avoid mentioning the deceased (this is affected by culture)
- In the case of suicide, saying “Committed suicide.”

# HELPFUL

- Do something specific to help
- Respect family's time when they feel they need to be alone
- Do not avoid contact with the bereaved
- Act normally and mention name of deceased
- Don't try to answer unanswerable questions
- Don't say, "I know how you feel."
- Don't take anger personally.
- Mourners need nutrition, rest, exercise, support.
- Offer reassurance. It is okay to "take a break" from grieving.
- Accept that you cannot make the mourner feel better.
- In the case of suicide, say "Died by suicide."