

Models of Grief and Their Clinical Implications

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Generic Grief and Loss

★ Definitions

Grief – Process of social, somatic and emotional reactions to perceptions of loss.

Bereavement – Objective situation of having lost someone significant.

Mourning – Cultural response to grief, actions and manners of expressing grief.



Generic Grief and Loss

Grief Myths

- **Linear event**
- **Unrelated Events**
- **Time Frame**



Grief Theory

Stage Based Theories

Kubler – Ross

Denial

Anger

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance

Gorer

Shock

Intense Grief
Work

Reestablish
physical and
mental balance

Parke/Bowlby

Numbness/shock

Yearning/searching

Disorganization/despair
Reorganization



Grief Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

*Attachment theory is an important way to conceptualize the grief process.

*Bowlby (1969) suggested that individuals reacted to grief based attachments.



Grief Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

“Since the goal of attachment is to maintain an affectional bond, any situation that appears to endanger that bond will elicit action to preserve it. The greater the perceived threat of loss, the more intense and varied the actions will be to prevent it”

(Rando, 1984, p. 21)



Grief Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

*Attachment theory provides a foundation for the forming of strong, long-lasting bonds between a mother and child. This bond influences both the social behavior of individuals as well as the perception of themselves and others. As the individual ages, this theory can be generalized to the bonds formed in adult relationships.



Grief Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

*In this early stage of grief, an individual tends to try to recreate and restore the lost relationship through searching for the individual.

*When the individual realizes that the person is not returning, despair and detachment take the place of the searching behavior.



Grief Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

*In relationship to grief, attachment theory can be viewed as a paradigm to understand the nature of adult relationships and to understand the belief that as individuals are able to form new relationships, they can heal from the pain of the lost relationship.

(Bowlby, 1980)



Grief Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

*When a loved one dies, there is a heightened level of attachment leading to an intense range of emotions from ambivalence to sadness and anxiety.

(Bowlby, 1988)



Grief Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

*The degree of attachment can be an influential factor in determining how an individual may respond to the death of a spouse.



Grief Theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

*The nature of the attachment is often a predictor of bereavement outcome. The stronger the attachment an individual has to the deceased, the more severe the grief response.



Grief Theory

Rubin's Two Track Model of Bereavement

- 1) Loss is a double process event:
 - a) Attack on the relational bond to individual that requires the bereaved individual to make major modification in their internal relationship,
 - b) Loss and aftermath are major traumatic stressors capable of affecting the bereaved individual at all levels of bio-psychological functioning.



Grief Theory

Rubin's Two Track Model of Bereavement

- 2) Dual Axes clarify two dimensions of loss:
 - a) Relationships
 - b) Functioning



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

Task 1

**To Acknowledge the Reality of
the Loss.**



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

*In Worden's first task, it is important for the grieving individual to realize that his or her loved one *HAS* died and will not return.

*The purpose of this task is to counter the defense mechanism of denial, the belief that the individual may somehow return.



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

*Denial can take many forms, but it most often involves denying either the facts of the loss, the meaning of the loss, or the irreversibility of the loss.

*Denying the facts of the loss can vary greatly. Some individuals experience a slight distortion, whereas others may experience delusions.



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

*Denying the meaning of the loss is another way people tend to protect themselves. Persons tend to experience the loss as less significant than it actually is.

*Denying the nature of the relationship is another way the bereaved may avoid the reality of the death.



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

*It is common for bereaved individuals to make statements such as “We were never really close” or “I don’t miss her” to keep from acknowledging the reality of the loss.

*Some people remove all reminders of the individual so they are not faced with the reality of the death.



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

Task 2

To Process The Pain of Grief



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

*The second task is to work through the pain of grief. Often this task is very difficult for the bereaved individual to complete, since society is not comfortable with mourners.

*It is necessary for the individual to experience the pain of grief in order to heal. The suppression of the feelings could prolong the period of mourning.

(Parkes, 1972)



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

*Working through the pain of grief has to be dealt with on a number of different levels, including emotional, behavioral, cognitive, physical and spiritual.



Symptoms of Grief

Emotional

- Shock/numbness
 - Depression
 - Sadness
 - GUILT/self-reproach
 - Loneliness
 - Anger
 - a) Self
 - b) Others
 - c) Deceased
 - d) God
- Denial
 - Sorrow
 - Relief
 - Anxiety
 - Helplessness
 - Yearning
 - Emancipation
 - Abandonment
 - Powerlessness



Symptoms of Grief

Physical

- Anxiety/heart palpitations
- Dry Mouth
- Tight chest/throat
- Muscle weakness
- Overreaction of loud noises
- Breathlessness
- Loss of sexual desire
- Treasuring objects
- Anorexia

Health Concerns
Lack of energy
Depersonalization
Weight gain/loss
Searching
Hollowness in stomach
Hyper sexuality
Physical pain
G.I. disturbance



Symptoms of Grief

Behavioral

- Sleep disturbance
 - Absentmindedness
 - Dreams of deceased
 - Restless over activity
 - Clinging to reminders
 - Avoidance of reminders of the deceased
- Inability to initiate and maintain activities
- Appetite disturbance
 - Social withdrawal
 - Searching/calling out
 - Crying



Symptoms of Grief

Cognitive

- Disbelief/denial
- Thought pre-occupation
- Concentration difficulty
- Visual/auditory connections
- Confusion
- Sense of presence
- Forgetfulness
- Repetition of events

Spiritual

- Loss of faith and belief systems
- Questioning faith/belief



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

Task 3

**To Adjust to a World without the
Deceased**



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

Loss means different things to different people. Part of the work of grief is understanding what is lost.

Often, survivors are unaware of the important roles played by the deceased for a period of time after their death.

(Worden, 2009)



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

*Bereaved individuals have to adjust not only to the change in roles, but also may be confronted with adjusting to a new sense of self.



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

- *Another area of adjustment relates to one's sense of the world.
- *Often, the death of someone close challenges an individual's fundamental life values and philosophical beliefs.
- *Often, this leads to a search for meaning for the survivor.



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

Task 4

**To Find and Endearing
Connection with the Deceased in
the Midst of Embarking on a New
Life**



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

- * Individuals often tend to hold on to past attachments, thus hindering the ability to make new ones.
- * Some people make a decision to never love or care for anyone again.



Grief Theory

Worden's Task Model of Bereavement

*Many people have a difficult time completing the task of “moving on” because of the belief that their life ended when the loss occurred.



Grief Theory

Stroebe's Dual Process Model

*According to the dual process model, loss adaptation involves a fluctuating process of both confronting and avoiding a range of stressors along two primary dimensions: loss orientation and restoration orientation.



Grief Theory

Stroebe's Dual Process Model

Loss oriented stressors – are those associated with the loss itself, for example, ruminating about the loss or the pre-loss situation, reacting emotionally to the loss, exploring the meaning of loss, missing the absent lost object, experiencing troubled or pleasurable remembering, and reviewing the events surrounding the loss.



Grief Theory

Stroebe's Dual Process Model

When in loss orientation, the griever avoids these stressors at times and confronts these stressors at other times. For example, a griever may feel and express sadness and anger (confronting stressors) with their family and friends but actively distract themselves while at work (avoiding stressors).



Grief Theory

Stroebe's Dual Process Model

*Both avoidance and confrontation are seen as the normal, natural processes of loss adaptation.



Grief Theory

Stroebe's Dual Process Model

Restoration oriented stressors - are associated with the consequences of loss, that is, dealing with the changes that result from the primary loss. These include: reviving one's identity, adapting family roles, making meaning-of-life changes, reorganizing plans for the future, adapting family roles and rules, learning new skills, engaging in different activities, dealing with loneliness and managing emotions related to the changed situation.



Grief Theory

Stroebe's Dual Process Model

A critical component of the dual process model proposes that adaptation normatively involves a dynamic “*oscillation*,” or shifting back and forth, between loss orientation and restoration orientation in a self-regulating manner over the course of time and sometimes within a single day.



Grief Theory

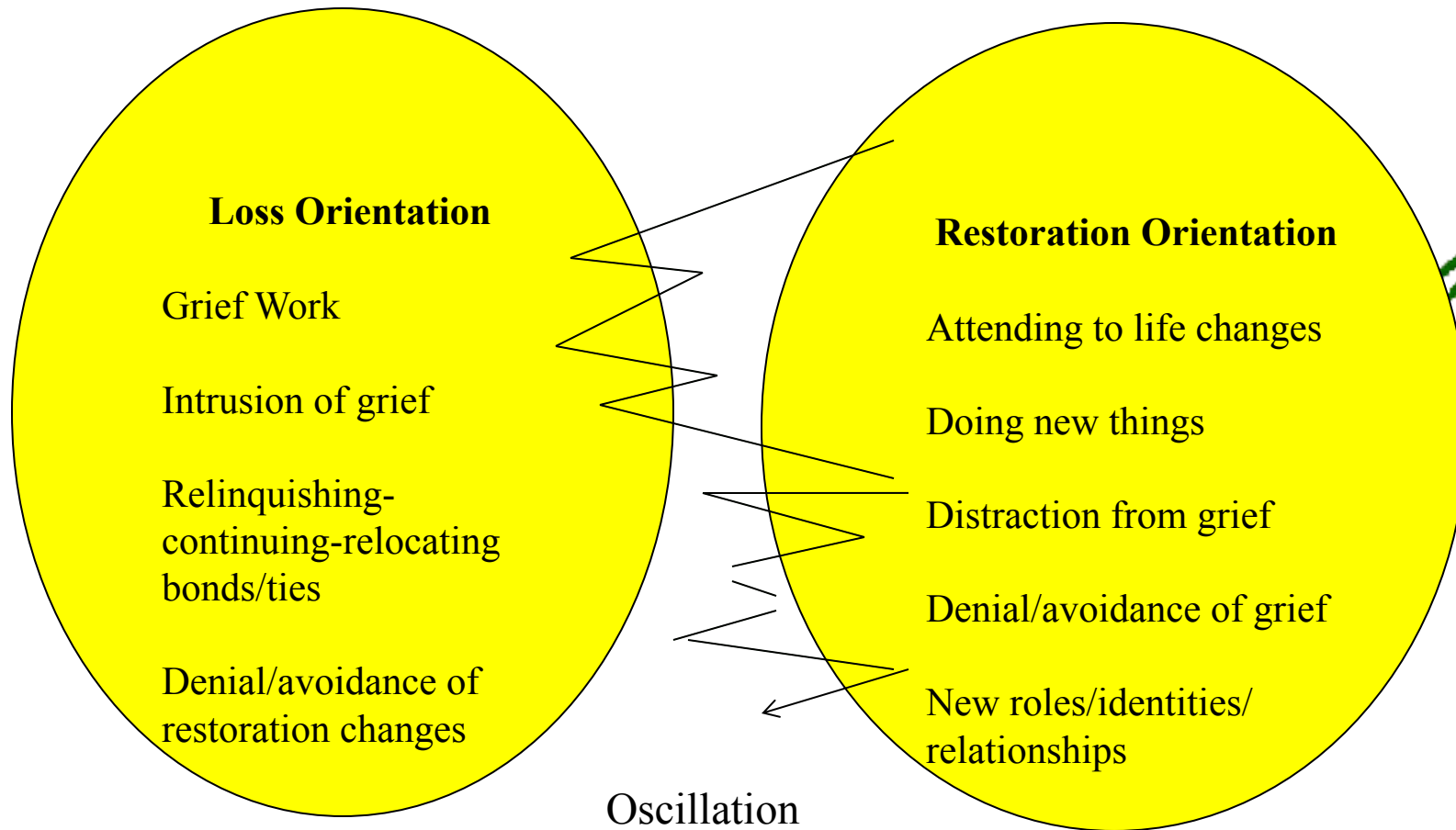
Stroebe's Dual Process Model

The rate and timing of oscillation are affected by the nature and meaning of the loss and the unique personal, social, familial, developmental, and cultural influences at work for the griever.



Grief Theory

Stroebe's Dual Process Model



Grief Theory

Neimeyer's Reconstructionist Model

*Grief is about the delicate balance between holding on and letting go. Marked ambivalence is often present. Yearning and longing are at the heart of grief. Grief is not completely characterized by one emotional state — it lacks the clarity of anger and the longing in sadness. There is continual confrontation with the continual presence of, and the absence of the lost person(s).



Grief Theory

Neimeyer's Reconstructionist Model

“Overarching cognitive-affective-behavioral structure that organized the micro narrative of everyday life into a macro narrative that consolidates our self understanding, establishes our characteristic range of emotions and goals, and guides our performance on the stage of the social world.” Neimeyer, *Narrative Inquiry*



Grief Theory

Neimeyer's Reconstructionist Model

Disorganized Narratives—loss of coherence, such as a trauma (Neimeyer, *Constructions of Disorder*)

- * An event that disrupts one's sense of autobiographical continuity and coherence,
- * Become dislodged from sense of “who you are,”
- * Is usually associated with single incident trauma, high anxiety.



Grief Theory

Neimeyer's Reconstructionist Model

Dissociated Narratives (examples might be incest or suicide—highly stigmatized/disenfranchised loss)

- * “Silent stories” that cannot be told, creating invisible barriers between self and other(s),
- * Fosters further compartmentalization of self, and an attitude of rigorous self-monitoring,
- * Associated with secrecy, stigmatizing the loss.



Grief Theory

Neimeyer's Reconstructionist Model

* We learn to silence ourselves in response to the averted gaze, the poignant and uncomfortable silences after we have shared our stories, or the unreturned phone calls; we may also feel protective of others who would be affected by our sharing.



Grief Theory

Neimeyer's Reconstructionist Model

Dominant Narratives and stories that constrict (for example, depression)

- * A problem-saturated account of self, world, future becomes all-encompassing
- * Sense of self becomes “all too clear”
- * Colonizes person as well as social world
- * Associated with repeated trauma, hopelessness



Grief Theory

Martin and Doka's Adaptive Grieving Styles

This model centers on the different patterns exhibited by grieving people as they experience loss and the various strategies people use to adapt to loss. These patterns and strategies reflect the unique manner in which a given individual inwardly experiences and outwardly expresses grief.



Grief Theory

Martin and Doka's Adaptive Grieving Styles

*Three primary styles are visualized along a continuum:

*Intuitive grieving style,

*Instrumental grieving style,

*Blended grieving style.



Grief Theory

Martin and Doka's Adaptive Grieving Styles

*Intuitive grieving style

People who exhibit an *Intuitive grieving style* experience grief primarily in terms of intense emotions, express their feelings, and talk about their grief in affective language.



Grief Theory

Martin and Doka's Adaptive Grieving Styles

*Intuitive grieving style

*Such individuals benefit from adaptive strategies that facilitate emotional processing and connecting with others (e.g., grief groups).



Grief Theory

Martin and Doka's Adaptive Grieving Styles

***Instrumental grieving style**

People who exhibit an *Instrumental grieving style* experience grief more cognitively and behaviorally, are more modulated in their feelings and tend to express their grief in terms of thought and behavior.



Grief Theory

Martin and Doka's Adaptive Grieving Styles

*Instrumental grieving style

*They benefit most from adaptive strategies that facilitate analysis and activity (e.g., problem solving).



Grief Theory

Martin and Doka's Adaptive Grieving Styles

*Blended grieving style

*People who exhibit a *Blended grieving style* combine elements of both *intuitive* and *instrumental* styles, but with a greater tendency toward one or the other.



Grief Theory

Martin and Doka's Adaptive Grieving Styles

***Blended grieving style**

There is no ideal or preferred grieving style and no suggestion of pathology attached to any particular pattern. Instead, grieving styles simply reflect the natural differences among individuals that result from personality traits as well as social, developmental, and social influences.

(Martin and Doka, 2000)



Non-Finite Losses

*Loss is often seen as the result of death of a loved one or someone close to us, however, many deaths (non-finite losses), also impact an individual on many different levels. Rather than being external losses, they, instead, are internal in nature. These are losses that occur when something dies inside of us.



Non-Finite Losses

Throughout the course of life, people repeatedly experience events that challenge one's view of themselves and the world around them. In struggling with these challenges, and individual often enters the grief process, which helps them to adapt and integrate these changes and losses into the fabric of their lives in a meaningful way.

(Harris, 2011)



Non-Finite Losses

* Oftentimes and individual experiences profound anxiety because they can no longer live under the illusion that things can remain constant and unchanging, and this realization usually occurs as a result of the experience of a significant loss in their lives.

* Even though an individual may attempt to function as if there is certainty and stability in everyday life, the world around them and their bodies change as the result of a loss or life transition.



Non-Finite Losses

*Weenolsen (1988) speaks of our innate resistance to change and our belief that things can remain the same as the “fundamental illusion,” functioning to allow us to feel safe and solid in the world.

However, our clinging to this image causes us great difficulty when the illusion cannot be maintained, such as when a major loss event does indeed occur or when we come to the realization that we have very little control over ourselves and the people, places and things that matter very much to us.



Non-Finite Losses

*Viorst (1986) stated that the losses we experience are necessary for us to grow and adapt as part of our normal functioning. In her book *Necessary Losses*, she stated that loss is natural, unavoidable, and inexorable. She further claimed that losses are necessary because we grow by losing and leaving and letting go.



Non-Finite Losses

“Throughout our lives, we grow by giving up. We give up some of our deepest attachments to others. We give up certain cherished parts of ourselves. We must confront, in the dreams we dream, as well as in our intimate relationships, all that we never will have and never will be. Passionate investments leaves us vulnerable to loss..... And sometimes, no matter how clever we are we must lose”

(Viorst, 1986, p. 3)



Non-Finite Losses

*The experience of loss may be subtle or overwhelming. Our losses may or may not be recognized by those around us, but it is our subjective appraisal and experience of these losses that matter.



Non-Finite Losses

*Harvey (2002) discussed the role of emotional investment and attachment in the loss experience, stating that a major loss is

“...the loss of something in a person’s life in which the person was emotionally invested.... By ‘emotional investment’ I mean that we imbue these events with emotional meaning and in reaction to them we behave in ways that reflect the fact that they matter. They do not go away from our reflection and memory easily. In fact, we hang on to them intentionally and memorialize their value in our lives.

(Harvey, 2002, p. 5)



Non-Finite Losses

Types of Losses

*Death

*Divorce

*Retirement

*Loss of a job

*Being burglarize



Non-Finite Losses

Types of Losses

- *Loss of trust in a friend
- *Moving
- *Fire
- *Loss of brain functioning
- *Loss of health



Thank You!

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