



Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction

A Trauma-Informed Approach

Presented by

Robert A. Neimeyer, Ph.D.

Overview:

As contemporary models of bereavement have become more nuanced and empirically informed, so too have the practices available to counselors and therapists who work with complicated, prolonged and debilitating forms of grief. This module offers in-depth training in several of these techniques, nesting them both within the therapy relationship and in the context of current theories and research that provide flexible, trauma-informed frameworks for intervention.

Drawing on clinical videos of clients contending with losses through sudden natural death, accident and suicide, we will learn to listen between the lines of the stories clients tell themselves and others about the death to grasp more fully the unvoiced meaning of their grief, and how we can help them integrate the event story of the death into lives with less reactivity, and find a compassionate audience for its telling. We will also explore the role of metaphor in helping clients reach beyond literal language to symbolize how they carry their grief, and what it can tell them and us about how they now might move toward healing.

Objectives

Participants will be better able to describe:

- Differences between therapeutic “presence” and “absence”
- Essential features of Meaning Reconstruction and trauma-informed models of grief
- Restorative retelling procedures for mastering the event story of the loss
- Guidelines for Analogical Listening as a procedure to help clients make greater sense of their emotions and themselves
- How a non-literal, figurative form of inquiry into the felt sense of loss can help clients symbolize their implicit embodied meanings
- Differences between emotion-focused, sense-making and benefit-finding approaches to journaling

Agenda

The Power of Presence: An Online Experience

(1 hr 15 min 47 sec)

Restorative Retelling: Principles and Practice

(1 hr 33 min 19 sec)

Meaning & Metaphor:

Analogical Listening to Embodied Wisdom

(1 hr 24 min 30 sec)

Lessons of Loss: Writing through Bereavement

(1 hr 32 min 34 sec)

Robert A. Neimeyer, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of the Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, and maintains an active consulting and coaching practice. He also directs the *Portland Institute for Loss and Transition*, which provides online training internationally in grief therapy. Dr. Neimeyer has published 30 books, including *Techniques of Grief Therapy: Assessment and Intervention* and *Grief and the Expressive Arts: Practices for Creating Meaning*, the latter with Barbara Thompson, and serves as Editor of the journal *Death Studies*. The author of over 500 articles and book chapters and a frequent workshop presenter, he is currently working to advance a more adequate theory of grieving as a meaning-making process.

Dr. Neimeyer served as President of the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC) and Chair of the International Work Group for Death, Dying, & Bereavement. In recognition of his scholarly contributions, he has been granted the Eminent Faculty Award by the University of Memphis, made a Fellow of the Clinical Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association, and given Lifetime Achievement Awards by both the Association for Death Education and Counseling and the International Network on Personal Meaning.

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