



After the one we love has gone

Holding on or letting go

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What am I going to talk about?

- The people that have influenced our understanding about grief









Conversation

In the stillness of noon
a breeze wraps the house
bowling dust along the path
ruffling conversation.

Is that you, Angus?
who of late
has been so quiet
for one so young
and vibrant.



If you ride the wind
would that explain
the flapping pages
of October and December

the hawk that sails
the valley troughs
the groaning beams
a rattle in the roof iron.

Are you resting
in the feathers
of a speckled thrush
who turns its head
and swings a skinny worm
watching as I type.



Do you hold your father steady
as he frames and joins
your hand upon his shoulder
a whisper on his cheek.

If I close my mind
cleave to rational thought
I ask
can you be in all these places
with me ... with him
with out.

I notice more and more
you are here
there
that in our conversation
the last word is yours.



How do modern societies respond to bereavement

- Wait and see
- Mobilise the bereaved to help themselves
- Wait for the bereaved to declare themselves
- Ignore the psychological/emotional impact of traumatic events
- Question the efficacy of bereavement intervention

What do bereaved families want?

- Early help
- Support from trained personnel
- Information about the event and reactions that may arise
- A chance to meet others who had experienced a similar situation
- More help for surviving children
- Help over time

Kari Dyregrov 2005

“As the parents who took part in our research pointed out, people are offered immediate treatment and routine follow up after a heart attack or broken leg, but when they experience a huge life crisis, resulting in both physical and psychosocial problems there is no service for them.”

Kari Dyregrov 2005



GRIEF
CENTRE



“After our son died, our 4 year old kept asking if she could go to visit him and God. My teenage son got angry and said “ No God would have let this happen!” and he kept shouting at his sister for asking such stupid questions. I didn’t know what to say.” (Stokes, 2004 p37)

3 important questions children might not ask but you might help to answer



- Who will look after me?
 - Will I get sick?
- Did I cause my sister/mother... to die?

Grief Theory

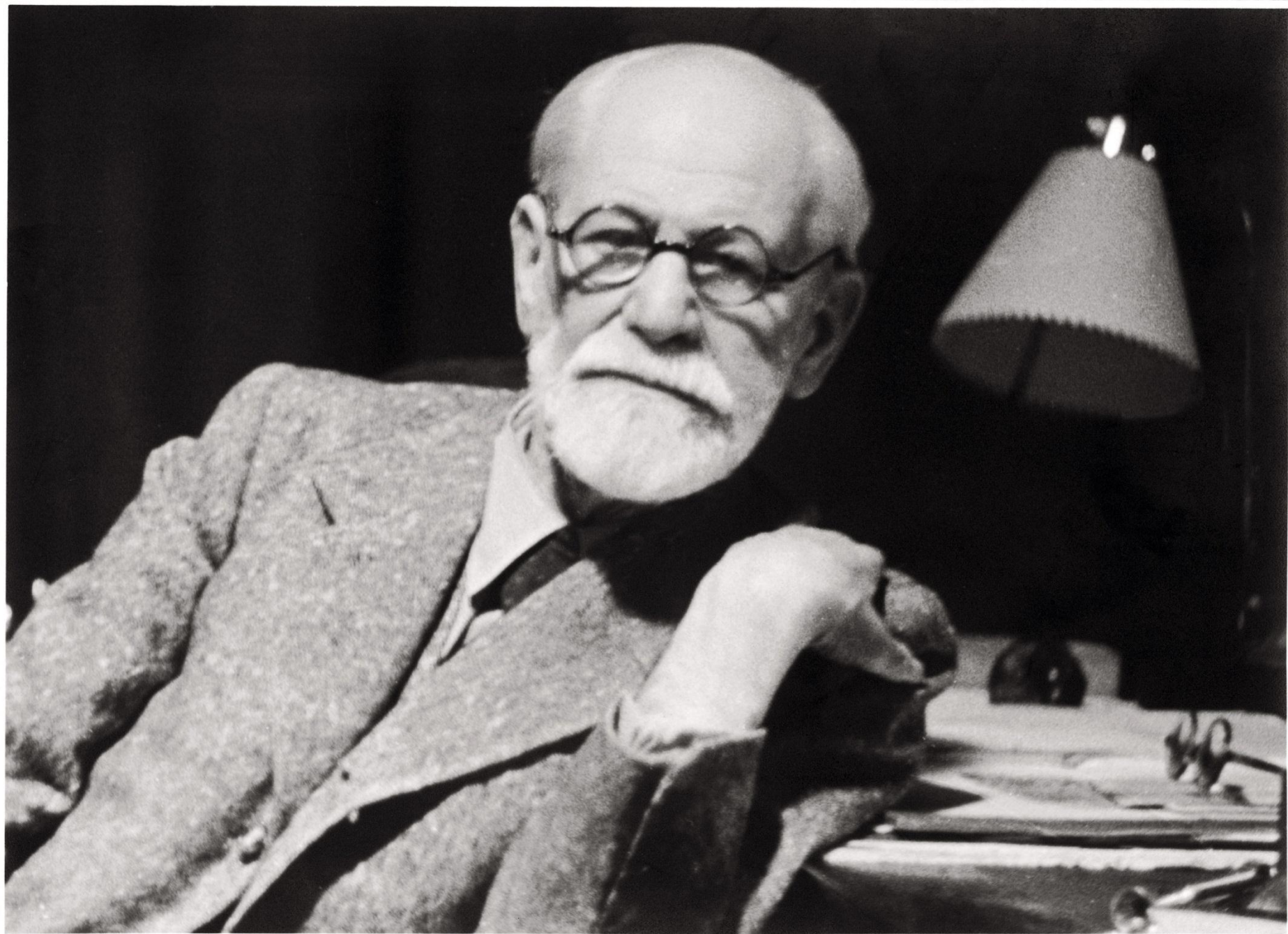


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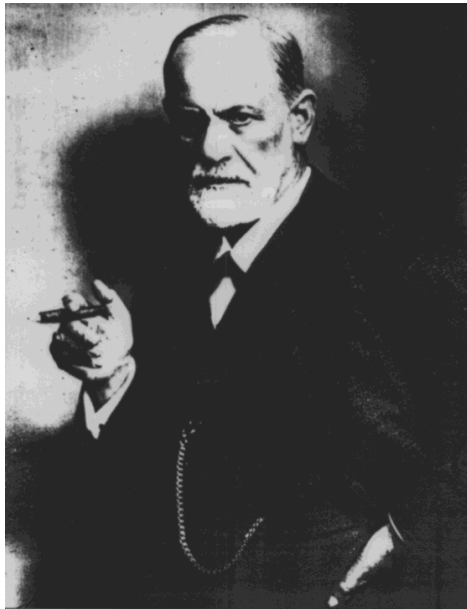
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Sigmund Freud

- **Grief** is an adaptive response to loss. It facilitates the gaining of peace of mind and reintegration into society
- **Griefwork** is time consuming and difficult
- **The basic goal** of grief work is to accept the reality of loss and work through the process of decathexis (letting go) Decathexis must be achieved on an emotional and intellectual level.
- **Griefwork** occurs through a long series of confrontations with the loss.
- **Survivors** naturally, or instinctively, resist letting go of the attachment.
- **Failure** to complete griefwork results in misery and dysfunction
- **The objective of griefwork** is to establish a new identity in which the deceased is not present.
 - *Mourning and Melancholia 1917*



Eric Lindemann



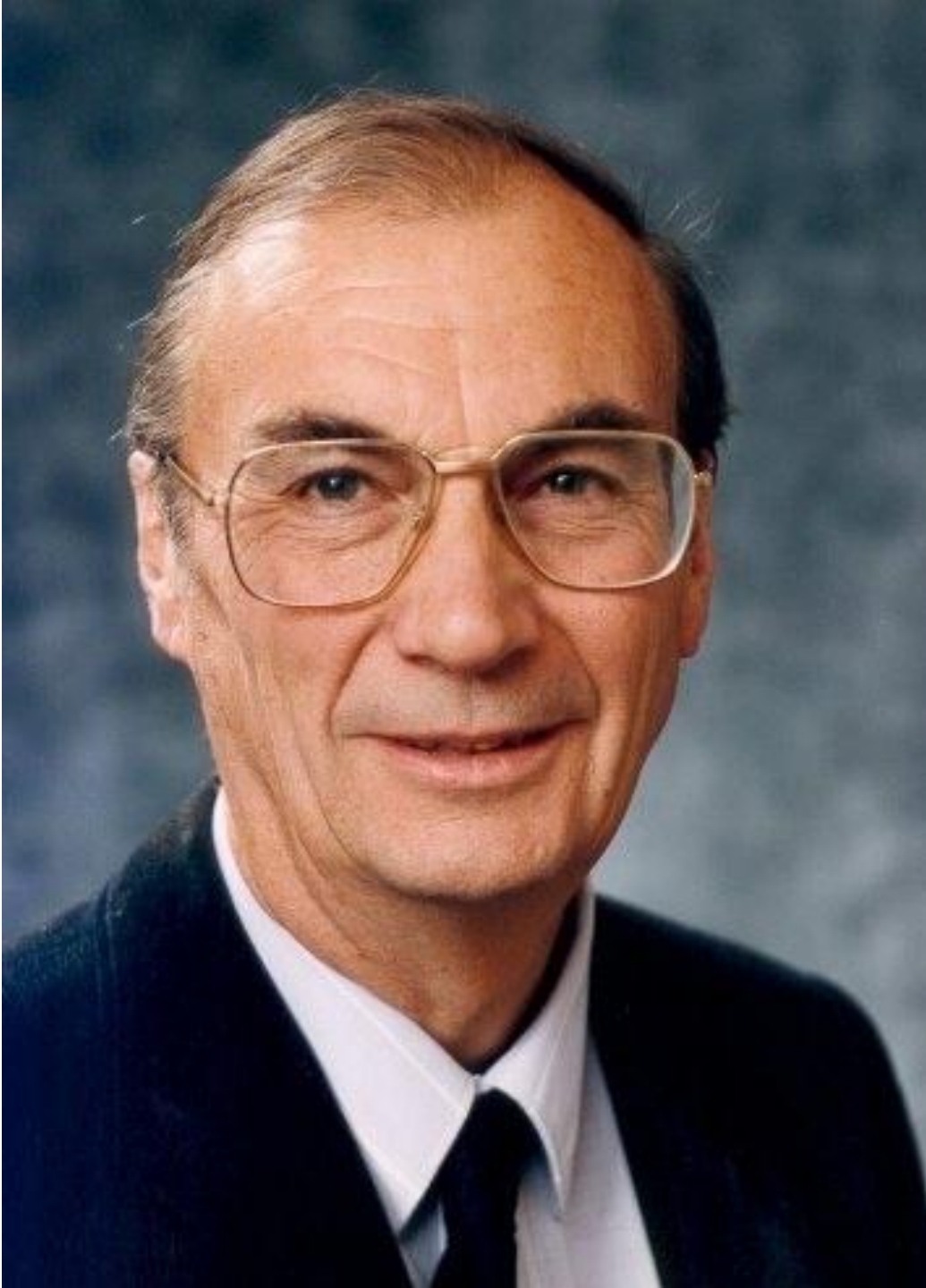
- Coconut Grove Night Club - Boston
- 492 people died
- Studied reactions of 101 bereaved people

"The Symptomology and Management of
Acute Grief" (1944)

Elizabeth Kubler Ross

- **Denial and Isolation**
- **Anger**
- **Bargaining**
- **Depression**
- **Acceptance**





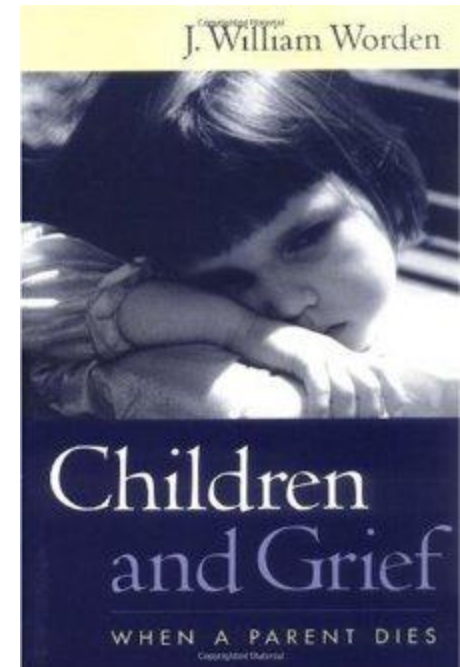
Colin Murray Parkes

- Sensing the presence

J. William Worden

- To accept the reality of the loss
- To experience the pain or emotional aspects of the loss.
- To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing.
- To relocate the dead person within one's life and find ways to memorialise the person.

Children and Grief 1996

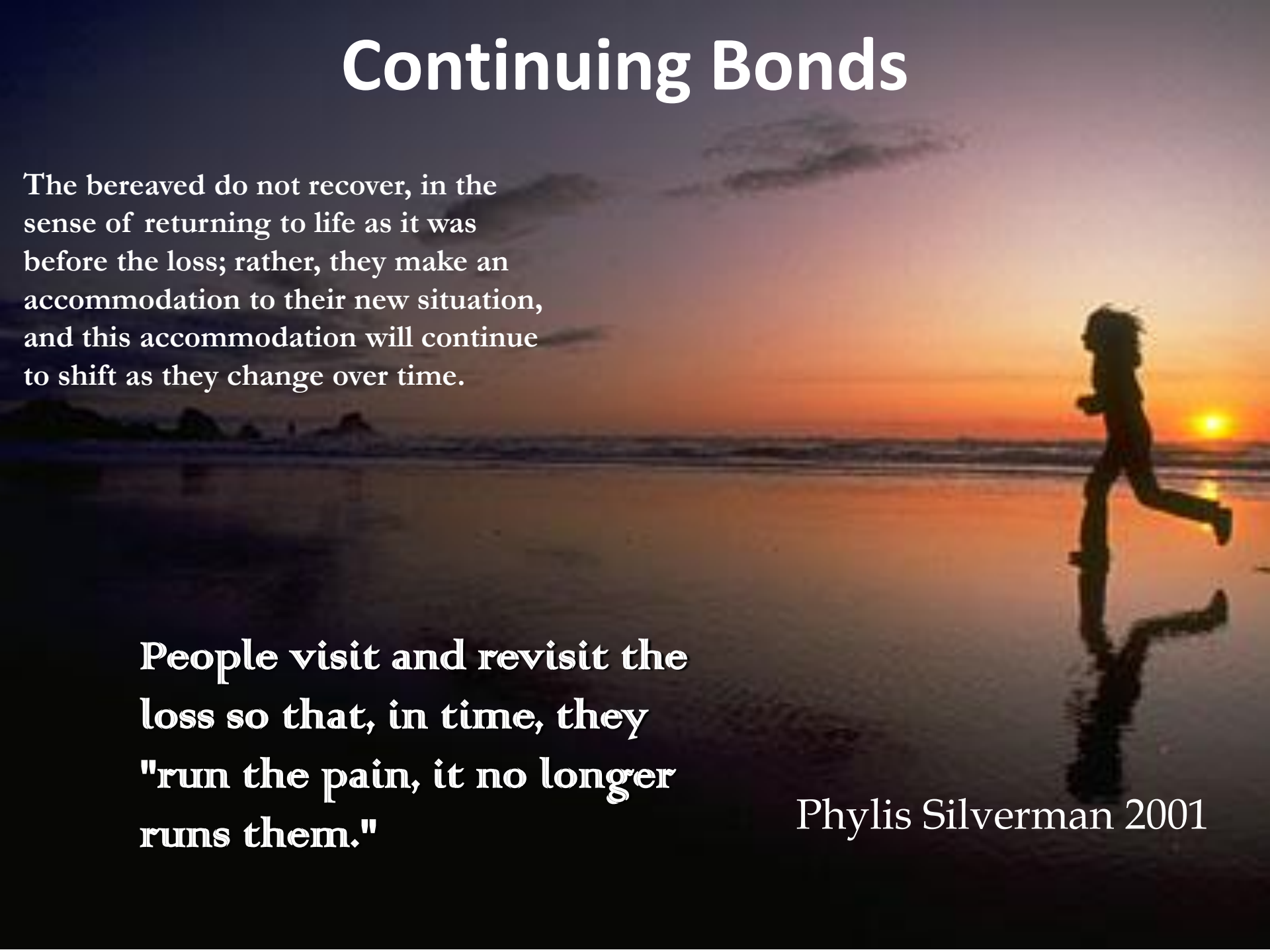


Continuing Bonds

The bereaved do not recover, in the sense of returning to life as it was before the loss; rather, they make an accommodation to their new situation, and this accommodation will continue to shift as they change over time.

People visit and revisit the loss so that, in time, they "run the pain, it no longer runs them."

Phylis Silverman 2001



Dennis Klass



Linking objects

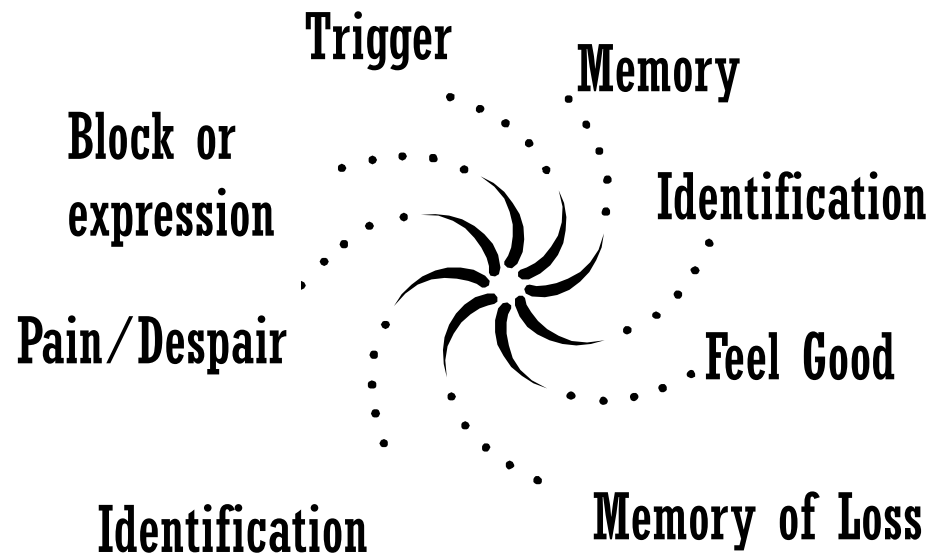
The Supermarket Template



Adaptation or Pathology?

- Talk to the dead child
- See the Child
- Sense the presence of the Child
- Weekly/daily attendance at a burial/memorial site
- Concern for the dead child's wellbeing
- Dream about the Child
- Continue rituals associated with the child
- Hold on to the child's toys/clothes

The acute experience



The death of a loved one challenges our beliefs of a coherent, predictable and controllable world. Neimeyer (1998) identifies the human tendency to organise experience in narrative form and to construct accounts that “make sense” of the troubling events in our lives.



- **Telling the story** – The most common strategy families use to make sense of their loss is telling the story of how the death occurred.



Dr. Janice Winchester Nadeau

- **Family Speak** – Families make meaning by using family-speak. This speak consists of asking each other questions, exploring each other's meanings, finishing off each others sentences, disagreeing and interrupting each other.

- **Sharing dreams** – Another common family strategy for making sense of someone's death is the recounting of dreams.



- **Comparison** – Another common meaning-making strategy is comparison

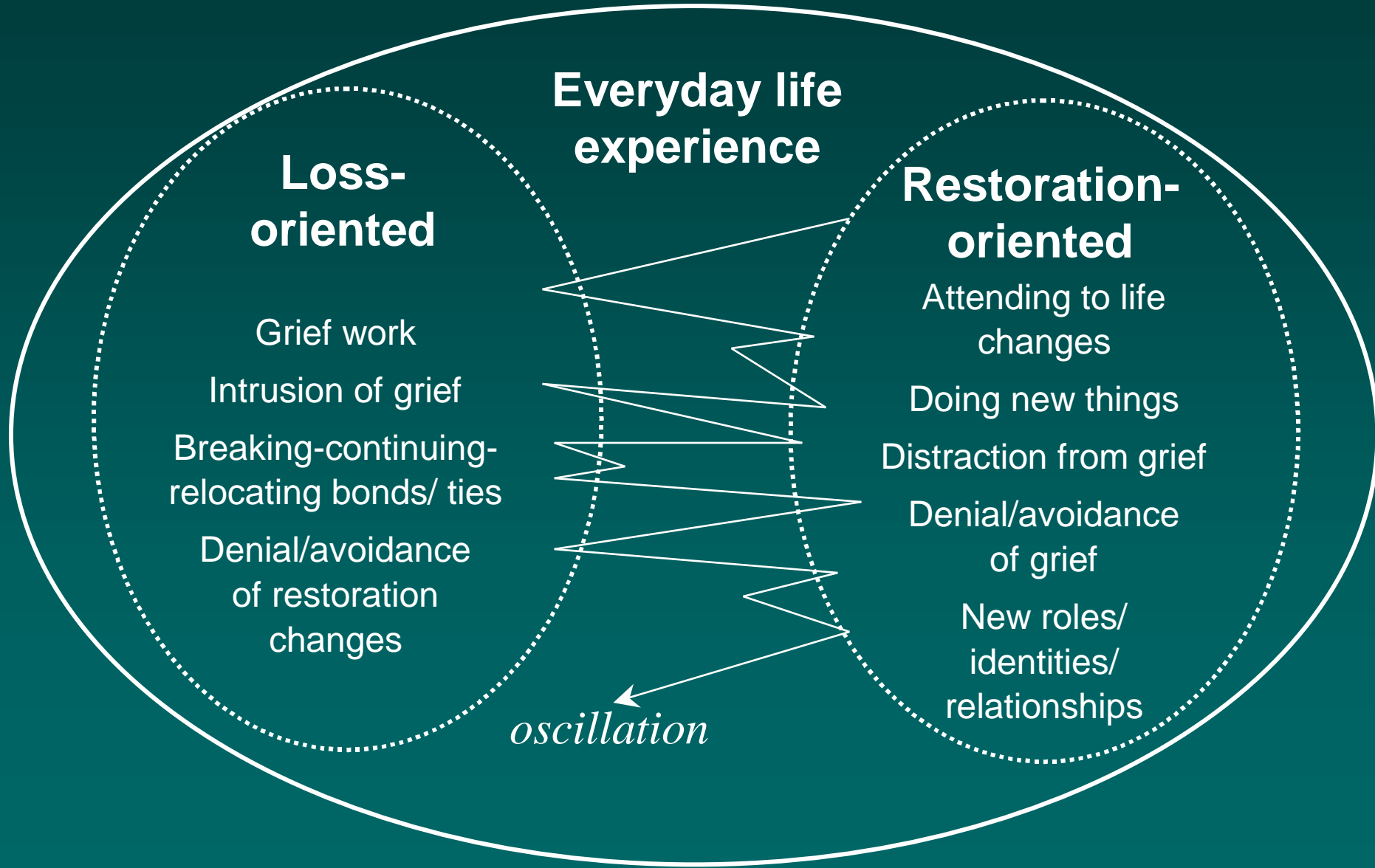




- **Coincidancing** – Another strategy that grieving families commonly use to make sense of the loss is coincidancing

The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

Stroebe & Schut (Death Studies, 1999)



The Continuing Bond

“Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No **matter** what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish.”

Freud's letter to Ludwig Binswager after he learned that Binswager's son had died. Written nine years after the death of his daughter Sophie.

So what can we do?
Looking in



Companioning Philosophy

Dr. Alan Wolfelt

Companioning is about honouring the spirit; it is not about focusing on the intellect.



Companioning is about listening with the heart; it is not about analysing with the head.

Companioning is about curiosity; it is not
about expertise.





Companioning is about learning from others; it is not about teaching them



Companioning is about walking alongside; it is not about leading or being lead.

Companioning is about discovering the gifts of sacred silence; it is not about filling every painful moment with talk.



Companioning is about being still; it is not about frantic movement forward.

Companioning is about respecting disorder and confusion; it is not about imposing order and logic.



Companioning is about bearing witness to the struggles of others; it is not about judging or directing those struggles.



Companioning is about being present to another persons pain; it is not about taking away or relieving the pain.

Companioning is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.

