

### THE BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS TRAINING MANUAL

*Alice Goodall, Tim Drage, Gillian Bell.* Bicester, Oxon, UK: Winslow, 1994. £95.00

This is an excellent training manual. Theoretical material is presented with quite exceptional clarity, brevity and simplicity, the detail of clients' and counsellors' preoccupations in counselling is sensitively presented, and the aims and objectives of the experiential side of the pack are clear; the exercises are appropriate. The quality of production and the standard of organisation are very high.

At the heart of the manual are six sections: normal grief, complicated grief, essential counselling skills, working with complicated grief, looking after yourself, and endings. There are also sections on planning, preparing and initiating a course, a bibliography, 'masters' for handouts and overheads, and seven programmes.

These programmes are of special interest. Each refers back to the central sections, showing how the sections can be used for various training situations, from a 90 minute session to a 48-hour-long training scheme. Each programme integrates information about the grieving process with ideas about support in a way which is appropriate for both the time available and the audience. They would be useful to anyone who has to undertake bereavement training in different settings, and who has to design courses to answer the needs of various organisations.

To make some comparisons, Lyn Franchino's classical pack, *Counselling and Supporting*<sup>1</sup>\*, was designed as a single course plan and separates aspects of grief from the counselling training. Though there is a section with guidance on bereavement issues, the main emphasis is on listening/counselling skills. A major second section covers setting up courses, groups and supervision.

The *Bereavement and Loss* pack, on the other hand, encourages the integration of grief work and counselling, gives more detail about the grieving experience. It is smaller and perhaps more accessible for the beginner trainer.

Maggie Fisher and Jane Warman's *Bereavement and Loss Skills Companion*<sup>2</sup> aims to 'deepen your understanding of yourself, your own losses and the grieving process, and to be aware of interpersonal skills and self-knowledge...'. It is designed to be used by either an individual or small group and comes with an audio tape. Although not centrally about counselling skills in the Franchino sense, it is full of insights about the counselling relationship and is well-written, but the continual movement between activities, case studies, question points etc may bring confusion, and no clear development in understanding.

The *Bereavement and Loss* manual gives a more open and clear exposition of theory showing how courses may be developed for different groups of trainee and offering a more exploratory approach. The theory is combined very effectively with the activities.

The Church Pastoral Aid Society resource, *Living with Loss*<sup>3</sup>, has a strongly religious emphasis. A basic course is for people who need to know about bereavement but are not attempting to counsel formally; there is a more extended reading for those who wish to offer further support. It is informed and illustrated by two videos, and the work is shaped through these videos, discussion, reading and prayer.

In contrast, the *Bereavement and Loss* manual offers a lay approach, with emphasis upon activities which may enable the trainee, and so the bereaved person, to discover and find the strength to cope with the changes which are besetting them.

While the *Bereavement and Loss* manual could be used for those who need to offer bereavement support as part of their work, more would be necessary for those wished to specialise in bereavement counselling. There would need to be:

- many extended opportunities for wide ranging, one-to-one interactions in a wider variety of contexts, so that trainees can learn to respond appropriately to the 'client', and to gain confidence in their own strengths;
- opportunities for trainees to experience, in conditions of safety, some of the confusion and high emotional pain that counselling may bring;
- more on self-awareness in developing counselling techniques, in visiting clients and making good use of supervision;
- further examination of the theories of bereavement and bereavement counselling so that trainees can incorporate them into their own thinking.

Those working clinically in this field would need more still, for example, their own training analysis, and a wider knowledge both of specialist bereavement fields and general counselling theories.

*Peter Bowie*  
*Bereavement counsellor and trainer*

1. Franchino L. *Counselling and Supporting*. Ottershaw, Kent, UK: Counselling Services, 1989.
2. Fisher M, Warman J. *The Bereavement and Loss Skills Companion*. Cambridge, UK: National Extension College, 1990.
3. Church Pastoral Aid Society. *Warwick*, UK: CPAS, 1989.

\*Available from Cruse Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR.

### CHILDREN MOURNING, MOURNING CHILDREN

*Kenneth J Doka (ed).* Bristol, PA, USA and London, UK. Taylor and Francis, 1995. £11.00 pb

Death in childhood remains perhaps one of the most difficult and challenging subjects for professional caregivers, even for those who work with dying and bereaved adults. Understanding the needs of children requires not only the knowledge and skills to communicate at the right level about death and dying, but also the ability to tolerate our own reactions to seeing children of different ages and developmental stages exposed to such experiences. *Children Mourning, Mourning Children* aims to help both professionals and families with the issues surrounding the psychological support of dying children, and grieving for children after death. It was produced by the Hospice Foundation of America, following a successful teleconference in the USA in 1994, and includes some expanded presentations by the panellists, plus three research papers.

It has four sections: the child's perspective of death; the child's response to life-threatening illness; grieving; and research. There is a compilation of useful literature for children at the end. The authors are all eminent workers in the field. The style throughout is informal and free of jargon, and perhaps particularly suited to the lay reader. The chapters on 'Grief of children and parents' (Catherine Sanders) and 'The role of the school' (Robert Stevenson) are outstanding. I personally found the research section the most stimulating, with contributions from Bluebond-Langner on healthy siblings, Silverman on detachment, and McClowry on the process of family grieving over seven to nine years.

The book contains an enormous amount of helpful information about children and their responses to death, which anyone who comes into contact with such children will find immensely useful

*Gillian Forrest*  
*Consultant Child Psychiatrist*

### HOW WE GRIEVE Relearning the World

*Thomas Attig.* Oxford, UK and New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 1996. £25.00 hb, £12.99 pb.

As its sub-title indicates, this book emphasises the relearning task which bereaved people all face in the new world they have now entered. Rather than withdrawing from the world, bereaved people need to take active steps to move forward and Attig quotes Thomas Aquinas, 'A ship is safe in harbour, but that is not what a ship is for'. This get-up-and-go approach is very much in keeping with

the findings of the research by Schut<sup>1</sup> which showed that widows, to a greater extent than widowers, benefit most from therapy aimed at helping them to solve problems and replan their lives. By contrast the men who he studied benefited more from a traditional form of counselling aimed at helping them to express grief and other disturbing emotions.

Attig is a professor of philosophy who has been working with bereaved people for over 20 years and is currently President of the Association for Death Education and Counselling, the hosts of this year's conference in Washington DC. Although it was his recognition of the philosophical importance of grief that led him to study the subject, his philosophy sits lightly on him and the book is commendably easy to read and free of jargon.

Because each person's view of the world, and of other people, is unique so too is the reaction to bereavement. The loss of a loved person requires us to relearn a wide range of things and is, inevitably, a complex process which takes a long time, much longer than we expect. Attig uses a series of case examples, which are studied in depth, to illustrate the relearning process.

Although it is aimed at bereaved people and full of practical reassurance and advice, this book will also be of interest to all those who strive to understand and to support bereaved people. It adopts a common sense approach and makes little use of psychological theories. For this reason, it may not appeal to psychologists.

*Colin Murray Parkes*  
*Consultant Psychiatrist*

1. Schut H, de Keijser J, van den Bout J. A controlled efficacy study into short-term individual counselling: client variables. Paper read at the Third International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society 1991, Sydney, Australia.

### NO ONE SAW MY PAIN

*Andrew Slaby, Lili Frank Garfinkel.* London, UK: WW Norton, 1994. £17.50 hb, £9.95 pb.

Suicide in adolescence is an area of increasing concern. In the UK the incidence of suicide amongst young males is increasing and any contribution which can help us to understand and possibly reduce this phenomenon must be welcomed.

Using a number of detailed case examples, this book describes what can lead up to an adolescent making the decision to kill themselves. The cases are based largely on the work Dr Slaby has carried out with the families of young people who have committed suicide. Some readers may be uncomfortable about his use of the medical model, often describing adolescents as suffering from a 'depressive illness', but he also weaves a very detailed picture of the many other social, family and psychological

factors which may come together resulting in the suicide.

In the final chapters the author draws on the lessons he has learned from his work with the families of adolescents who have killed themselves, particularly in helping them move towards coming to terms with their distress, guilt and loss. In addition, he suggests how this knowledge can be useful in treating and preventing suicide in other 'depressed' adolescents.

The style of writing makes this book very easy reading and accessible to non-professionals and professionals alike. Although the context for the case examples is clearly American, I think the main themes and lessons are equally applicable to a UK audience. I would recommend this book to both professionals and families in contact with suicidal adolescents who wish to increase their understanding of what can lead a young person to take such devastating action.

*Andrew Cotgrove*  
Consultant Adolescent Psychiatrist

## LIFTING THE TABOO:

**Woman, Death and Dying**  
**Sally Cline.** London, UK: Little, Brown & Co, 1995. £18.99 hb, £7.99 pb.

There have been several publications which specifically address women's relationship to cancer or to AIDS or their experience as widows, but no comprehensive cultural and sociological studies of death have taken gender into account or made women's experience a specific focus of exploration. This book aims to fill that gap and to examine every aspect of women's relationships to death and dying.

Cline interviewed 150 women as the basis of her study and the voices of these women are woven in and out of a great wealth of information, statistics and research to support her central thesis that women do have a distinct relationship to death, determined partly by the patriarchal structures that inform all women's experience and also by their particular relationship to birth, to the creation of new life. To explore this, Cline looks at women's role as primary carers to the dying; their role in the death process historically and cross-culturally; their experience of undertaking, both as consumers and workers; widows; the loss of children; cancer; Alzheimer's (seen as particularly relevant to women due to their increasing longevity); AIDS; suicide; and the difficulties faced by lesbian partners whose loss can go unacknowledged. One aspect of women's experience of death that Cline fails to address is murder, and since this is an area of conspicuous gender difference it is a shame that she felt – due to lack of space – that this had to be omitted.

It is a long, sometimes rambling book, which might have benefited from more rigorous editing. Yet despite

this it never loses the intimacy and intensity of its subject matter, and readers sympathetic to Cline's feminism will find it a forthright and moving celebration of women's strength in facing death and bearing grief.

*Rebecca Hiscock*  
Counsellor

## WHAT DO WE TELL THE CHILDREN?\*

**Kerstin B Phillips.** Edinburgh, UK: Paediatric AIDS Resource Centre (PARC), 1996. £5.00 + £1.00 p&p.

This is a useful if rather pricey pamphlet, well organised, describing in factual terms books published for children (mainly fiction) and for adults, both lay and professional, (mainly non-fiction) about children facing serious illness, death and bereavement. It is pretty up-to-date, and it is easy to identify books for different categories of readers. However it is rather uncritical, does not compare books of a similar nature and is therefore not as helpful as one might hope in making the choice of the right book for a particular purpose. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given its provenance, I found the book's approach to publications on AIDS much more constructively critical than those on bereavement. Rosemary Wells' rather muddled and, in my opinion, unhelpful book, *Helping Children Cope with Grief*<sup>1</sup> is more enthusiastically described than Dyregrov's much more useful book *Grief in Children*<sup>2</sup> \*. If you want a list of books available on this subject with an idea of what each contains, you will find this book meets that need. My copy was poorly bound and fell to pieces on first reading.

*Dora Black*  
Consultant Child Psychiatrist

1. Wells R. *Helping Children Cope with Grief*. London, UK: Sheldon Press, 1988.
2. Dyregrov A. *Grief in Children*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley, 1991. Available from Cruse Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR.

\*By order from PARC, 20 Sylvan Place, Edinburgh EH9 1UW

## IN THE MIDST OF WINTER

**Gillian Walker.** London, UK: WW Norton, 1991. £25.00 hb, £13.95 pb.

In 1991, when this book was first published, only a few family therapists were applying systemic ideas to the setting up and providing of services for patients and their contacts with HIV infection<sup>1-3</sup>. This revised edition updates changes in the treatments for HIV infection, though neither edition takes into account activities outside the USA.

Walker highlights the way in which AIDS has forced a review of the delivery of medical care, and the impact of the illness on relationships – the focus of a systemic approach. This approach not only enables families to marshal their own resources but also helps to deal with 'burn out' in health care workers who, because of the

stigma and intensity of the illness, may easily take on their patients' dilemmas and try to shield patients from society, friends and family. The systems method helps to break through cultural, social and personal barriers and the case examples here illustrate its practice in various situations. Comprehensive chapters on bereavement and paediatric AIDS from the inner-city perspective of New York, where HIV tends to affect poor families and people of colour, are also pertinent in the wider world.

The clarity of the introduction and synopsis allow the reader focus on areas of interest. Beliefs about illness, behaviours causing it, and the way in which society has given a meaning to AIDS (as it has to TB and cancer) are clearly described. However a review of published research would complement this book<sup>4</sup>, for example, Bateson and Goldsby<sup>5</sup> provide ideas about the social response to a biological threat.

Walker comments that AIDS challenges us all, even systems thinkers, to re-examine core issues such as sex and sexuality, and reminds workers in this field that psychosocial interventions must focus on prevention as well as managing illness.

*Riva Miller*  
AIDS Counselling Co-ordinator

1. Bor R, Miller R, Perry L. Systemic counselling for patients with AIDS/HIV infections. *Family Systems Medicine* 1988; 6: 2139.
2. Miller R, Bor R. *AIDS: A Guide to Clinical Counselling*. London: Science Press, 1988.
3. Bor R, Miller R, Goldman E. Theory and practice of HIV Counselling: a systemic approach. London: Cassell, 1992.
4. Bor R, Miller R, Goldman E. HIV/AIDS and the family: a research in the first decade. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 15(2): 187-204.
5. Bateson MC, Goldsby R. *Thinking AIDS: the social response to the biological threat*. Addison Wesley Publishing, 1988.

## LIFE AND LOSS: a Guide to Help Grieving Children

**Linda Goldman.** Muncie, Indiana, USA: Accelerated Development (Taylor and Francis), 1994. £14.95 pb.

Writing for children and for adults who are helping children to work through loss and grief, Goldman aims to help adults tune in to the world of children and use their simplicity and openness as a healing tool. As she states early on, 'If a child is old enough to love, he or she is old enough to grieve'.

Each chapter contains basic theory or explanation, real-life stories to illustrate the topic and a section entitled 'What can we do for the child?' The theory is simple and would be familiar to most *Bereavement Care* readers and the stories are distinctly American, but the suggestions are practical and useful. There are chapters on 'The myths of grief' and 'Techniques of grief work', and a particularly moving one on preparing for a goodbye visit, where a parent describes how she talked to her children about whether they would

like to visit their grandfather for the last time. This provides an excellent model for others to use.

I found the format somewhat distracting, in quite short sections with frequent changes of typeface, use of boxes etc. However, for this very reason, the book will appeal to younger readers. The photographs of children are engaging and would capture the interest of children: their power is that they show the grieving child as also an active, playing child. This guide will be particularly useful for schools; it would be helpful to adults and children alike.

*Judith Bevan*  
Family Therapist

## LIVING AWAKE: Some Reflections on Life in the Nineties<sup>‡</sup>

**Margaret Torrie.** London, UK: Cruse Bereavement Care, 1993. £3.50 pb.

Margaret Torrie is well-known as the founder of Cruse Bereavement Care, set up in 1959 to draw attention to the plight of widows and their dependent children. At that time they were largely ignored and marginalised by state and society, often struggling against great odds to make ends meet. Alfred Torrie, her husband, well-known and much loved as a psychiatrist at the Retreat in York, contributed his wide experience and understanding in helping to train and encourage volunteers to listen to widows coming to terms with loss and change in their lives. The fact that death is no longer seen as quite the taboo area it once was, owes much to Margaret's skill and dedication in arousing awareness about the situation. Since then, the organisation has expanded nationwide and skills have been developed in understanding and counselling anyone who is bereaved.

Now in retirement, Margaret continues to feel challenged by many developments in our troubled modern world: by the many changes, upheavals and failures that leave us perplexed and baffled. She does not flinch from exploring political and social issues that confront us. The fruits of her reflections are collected in this little volume. Her writings concern matters of life and death and her own readjustment to deeply personal loss. Speaking from a woman's perspective, she highlights the needs and pain of women in what is still a largely patriarchal society. In order to achieve a true partnership between male and female and to make sense of the many contradictions, she points to our deep yearning for spiritual understanding. We need to leave behind the idea of God 'out there' and to listen to the 'still small voice' with humility, compassion, a willingness to learn and to be led. As the quality of our lives is

<sup>‡</sup> Available only from Cruse, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR. Proceeds go to benefit Cruse funds.

enriched and is purged of its chains, we are in a position to explore the true meaning of love. 'When we know this we are truly awake. It is the essence of our birth, not of blood and pain but of spirit.'

This little book should not be digested at one gulp but sampled at leisure, possibly as bedside reading. Its short reflective passages provide much food for thought.

Rosalind Priestman  
CruseWorker

**LIVING BEYOND LOSS:  
Death in the Family**

**Froma Walsh, Monica McGoldrick (eds).** London, UK: WW Norton, 1991. £19.95 hb, £12.95 pb.

This was the first book to address death and bereavement from a family perspective and, like several more recent publications<sup>1</sup>, it draws heavily on family systems theory while emphasising the political, economic, social and cultural contexts of grieving families.

The early chapters explore the impact of loss on the organisation and development of the family system at different stages in its life cycle. As the title suggests, bereavement is viewed as a normal transition with the potential to increase a family's capacity to deal with future challenges, but also to render its members stuck or derailed in their development.

Subsequent chapters cover various losses – a child, a parent, a spouse or a sibling – as well as different time frames; the anticipation of loss, the immediate aftermath and long-term repercussions. These provide moving and enriching insights into how an individual's mourning can be profoundly influenced, not only by their immediate living family, but even by the way previous generations dealt with family losses.

Later chapters focus on specific issues: designing and using family mourning rituals, ways of resolving the 'ambiguous losses' created by Alzheimer patients and missing persons, and novel approaches to grief blocked by guilt.

All the authors are accomplished family therapists and the case examples richly demonstrate how their practice flows naturally and with insight from the underpinning theory. However, many of the techniques focus on changing family interaction patterns and shared beliefs and are likely to be unfamiliar, if not challenging, to many bereavement counsellors whose practice is likely to be informed by the very different, and potentially conflicting, humanistic and psychodynamic traditions.

While I have no hesitation in recommending this text as a valuable resource of both ideas and techniques for the practitioner already experienced in family work, I suspect that many bereavement counsellors will

find it difficult to translate the complex theory and specialised methods herein into their regular practice.

Bill Young  
Consultant Child Psychiatrist

1. Shapiro ER. Grief as a Family Process: a Developmental Approach to Clinical Practice. New York, UK: Guilford, 1994.

**JOHN'S BOOK\***

**Jill Fuller.** Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 1993. £9.99 hb.

This is a children's book about John, probably aged about 11, whose father dies suddenly and unexpectedly, so that he is left to deal with his own confused emotions and his desire to help his mother. Many of the reactions we might expect from a boy of this age are sensitively described – his anger is vented on the greenhouse which a kindly neighbour helps him repair, and on his teacher who embarrasses him by reporting the death to the class in front of him. His fear of losing his mother as well, leads him to attempt an amusing and elaborate subterfuge to stay off school in order to keep an eye on her; but together they face the difficult things – the first 'family' outing without Dad, various domestic problems and, especially, Christmas. His mother's remarriage to a widower with an eight-year-old daughter, and their move to a different house, illustrate well how children are deeply affected by secondary losses. The reason for the title is that John's aunt wisely gives him a book about his family tree and encourages him to continue it.

Many of the incidents concern things that matter to children – school and relationship with peers, holidays and a fair. Unfortunately the cover and illustrations have an old-fashioned look. I find it hard to imagine a child picking it off a shelf without encouragement. It certainly looks less appealing than *Two Weeks with the Queen*<sup>1</sup>, which is aimed at a similar age group. I can, however, imagine it being very useful to a teacher or counsellor who persuades a young client to read it, and to comment on John's story, comparing it with his or her own. It could be a good way of distancing children sufficiently from their own experience to get them talking.

Mary Bending  
Cruse Counsellor

1. *Two Weeks with the Queen*. Gleitzman M. London, UK: Macmillan, 1995.

\*Available from Cruse Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR

**ABSTRACTS**

**Ancestor Worship in Japan: Dependence and the Resolution of Grief.**

Klass D. *Omega* 1996; 33(4): 279-302

'Japanese ancestor worship provides sophisticated theory and ritual to accomplish what is described in the

West as the "resolution of grief"'. In his informative, interesting article Klass explores this concept through an examination of the rituals by means of which the Japanese keep alive their bonds with their ancestors who, they feel, are constantly present and interacting with the living. He places this phenomenon in its historical/political context and discusses the fact that, in contrast to the West, it is dependence within the family, not autonomy, which is valued, and which forms the basis of the continuous link with the dead.

His description of the various stages of the obligatory rituals throws valuable light not only on the attitude to death in Japan but also on the way in which the rituals reflect Japanese society as a whole.

**Beyond Bereavement Support Group Meetings: Exploring Outside Social Contacts Among the Members**

Caserta MS, Lund DA. *Death Studies* 1966; 20(6): 537-56

This article examines the extent to which participants in bereavement support groups make informal contact with other members of their group outside the regular meetings, and the effect this has on the bereavement outcomes. Although such contact is discouraged for various reasons – such as the possibility that participants who do not have this contact may feel 'left out' - the writers of this article suggest that in some cases it may be helpful. They propose other measures through which support groups can help those who take part in them.

**Paternal Bereavement in Older Men**

Goodman M, Black HK, Rubinstein RL. *Omega* 1996; 33(4): 303-22

This article summarises the findings of a project which studied the reaction of 25 men aged between 60 and 88 to the death of an adult child. The authors identify three categories of adjustment. The first group of bereaved, who regarded themselves as having been successful in life, appeared to adjust best. A second group used avoidance, denial and dependence on others as the best way of coping. Only two of the men, who felt they had been failures, were unable to come to terms with their loss.

The article concludes that traditional male modes of thinking, feeling and acting may protect older men from their deepest selves, and thus buffer them against potential setbacks in life, including bereavement.

Sheila Hodges and John Bush

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