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EDITORIAL

Colin Murray Parkes

The Broadway melody is over. If you walk down Broadway today, from Fulton Street to Battery Park, you will see pathetic ruins, masked diggers and grieving people. New York was never meant to be like this.

In the aftermath, the American Red Cross, Cruse Bereavement Care and other organisations who help bereaved people

did what they could to support those who were beginning to face the fact that neither a living person nor even their intact bodily remains would be recovered from the wreckage.

There is good evidence that sudden, unexpected and untimely deaths, particularly if they are the result of murder and associated with horrific images of destruction, often give rise to problematic reactions to bereavement. If, in addition, bodies are not recovered and the usual rituals of funerals and memorialisation cannot be carried out, the risk is compounded. To some extent this increased risk is mitigated by the love and care that such disasters attract, not only from the families of those affected but from society at large. The civilised world shares their grief.

I had the privilege of attending, with the families of British residents who had been lost and the team of Cruse counsellors and police family liaison officers, the moving service in St Thomas' Church, Fifth Avenue, at which Tony Blair spoke and a message was read out from Her Majesty The Queen. A few days later Americans attended their own ritual of remembrance. Such events help to bring home both the reality of the loss and the concern of others.

In this edition of *Bereavement Care* we publish a modified version of a briefing paper (p35) by Colin Murray Parkes which was circulated to all Cruse branches in the aftermath of the disaster. We hope that it will be of help to counsellors and others who are reaching out to the families of people bereaved in the terrorist attacks.

Rage is both the most understandable and the most dangerous reaction to violent death and, to some degree, we all share it. We can only hope that those in positions of leadership will contain their rage.

We also include Robert Weiss's reflections (p46) on a poem by Robert Frost, 'Home Burial'. This describes in uncompromising words, the stark reality of the cold anger that can follow outrageous bereavements. Rage is both the most understandable and the most dangerous reaction to violent death and, to some degree, we all share it. We can only hope that those in positions of leadership will contain their rage and consider carefully the consequences of any actions that they take in response to the disaster. Perhaps the most important question which must be asked is, if we meet violence with violence, do we increase or decrease the risk of further terrorism? Sadly the history of Ireland and other countries suggests that it is events like these which easily lead to an escalation of conflict and the establishment of cycles of violence which may become self-perpetuating.

On a more positive note I am pleased to report that the Cruse counsellors returning from New York all agreed that they had heard no demands for vengeance from the families whom they met. As in Northern Ireland it may well be bereaved people who, at times, contribute most to the fight for peace.