

following broad-based protective mechanisms:

- minimising the impact, that is, helping the children to see their disabilities and/or adversities in a new light
- providing psychological buffers or shields that 'allow the recovery process to begin and restore a sense of psychological integrity'⁴
- 'safety nets', which give children a chance to retain feelings of control and stability when circumstances are chaotic and help them to develop a sense of mastery and self-sufficiency. These include a focus on their multiple talents rather than on any specific area of vulnerability, so that they can present a 'shop-window' of abilities and have them valued by others. An important aspect here is that this process helps each child to find personal skills and talents that will lead to achievements
- protective mechanisms and turning points: the former guard the young people from traumatic events; the latter involve a new experience (such as obtaining a job, getting married, having a new and helpful relationship) that allows them to move in a different direction.

Katz's personalised review of intervention consists of compassionate vignettes (some of which have a supporting basis in the literature), which describe not only how early adversities, privation and disadvantages may have lifelong consequences but also how these can be mitigated. He offers a variety of pragmatic suggestions on how each individual child can be helped to cope with and overcome adversity. These 'treatment vignettes' may be attractive to the clinician; however those working in the field need to view them with a degree of caution as the approaches suggested do not always have a sufficient evidence base. They should, therefore, be regarded as clues to what can be achieved and what could be attempted, or even subjected to research.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editors

I have among my papers a model of grief entitled 'The Whirlpool of Grief', likening the process of grief to someone travelling in a small boat that suddenly hits a cataract and plunges into a whirlpool.

It is by far the most realistic model I have come across to describe the process for most people, but I have not been able to find anybody who knows its source. As I am engaged in writing on the subject for some research I would be grateful to anybody who can supply information as to where this model originated, so that I can give proper attribution.

BRIAN CRANWELL
9 West View Close
Sheffield S17 3LT
Brian-cranwell@lineone.net

The above caveats are only minor: the book is eminently enjoyable and readable. Its educational qualities will be appreciated by social and mental health workers and by paediatricians in training or in practice. **BC**

Issy Kolvin*

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

*Issy Kolvin died in March 2002

1. Werner E, Smith R. *Overcoming the Odds: High-risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1992.
2. Kolvin I et al. *Continuities of Deprivation? The Newcastle 1000 Family Study*. Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1990.
3. Sadowski H, Uguarte B, Kolvin I, Kaplan C, Barnes J. Early life family disadvantages and major depression in adulthood. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 1999; **174**: 112-120.
4. Pynoos R. *Understanding Psychological Trauma: Part III. Healing our Children* (video series). Urbana, Ill, USA: Baxley Media Group, 1991.

WEB WATCH

Learning disabilities and bereavement

Amanda Aitken BA PGCE DipCouns

Counsellor, Torbay Social Services, Devon, UK

As community mental health care grows, both in the UK and abroad, those supporting the bereaved will have a greater opportunity to work with clients who have learning disabilities. However, I was unable to find any internet resources for this group dealing exclusively with bereavement, so the two sites I have chosen provide information on a wide range of issues in relation to learning disabilities, including bereavement.

The Arc of the United States was set up 50 years ago to support parents of children with learning disabilities. Today the Arc's extensive web site, at www.thearc.org provides a resource for anyone wishing to know more about learning disability, or 'mental retardation', the current USA official term. Although rather awkward to navigate, **articles** of good quality are provided which can be read direct from your browser or downloaded as PDF files. To access these, choose 'resources' from the menu bar and then 'publications and videos'. Of particular interest is Charlene Luchterhand's booklet *Mental Retardation and Grief Following a Death Loss*, 'based on research and first hand experiences'.

To find the many other articles on the site, click on 'search' at the bottom of the home page, then 'site map', and then 'table'. One of the most useful sections here is the **FAQs** containing, amongst a number of quite lengthy documents, one by Sheila Hollins, Professor of the Psychiatry of Disability at St George's Hospital Medical School, London, 'Managing grief better: people with developmental disabilities'. She warns that exclusion from family grief may lead to denial, prolonged searching and possible delayed anger, and provides some recommendations for those assisting in this area of grief work. In another interesting article, 'Mental illness in persons with mental retardation', Steven Reiss provides information on methods of diagnosis and types of treatments available, including counselling and psychotherapy. Other articles explore health issues, family relationships, group counselling, support services, and there are several documents concerned with USA disabilities acts.

Another extensive site, **Intellectual Disability** at www.intellectualdisability.info

was launched in 2002, with UK government support, as a web-based **learning resource** for students and professionals.

People with learning disabilities are also encouraged to contribute. Sheila Hollins is site editor and the authors are a team of academics and healthcare workers.

The **information** on the site is displayed in headed sections. Under 'Diagnosis, Causes and Prevention' you can research antenatal screening, the environmental causes of intellectual disability, the genetics of Down's syndrome and some of the myths relating to this. In 'Complex Disability', various authors consider the health problems associated with certain disabilities and there are interesting contributions on the development of communication and on visual impairment and cognition. In 'Life Stages', Tim Booth writes about parents with intellectual disabilities and Stephen Trumble's article here on Down's syndrome not only provides a history of the syndrome but also links to another informative article about depression.

The 'Mental and Physical Health' section includes a paper by Sandra Dowling, 'Exiled grief: the social context of bereavement in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities'. Exploring the concept of disenfranchised grief and drawing on previous research, she considers the loss of a parent and the possibility that the grief reactions of people with leaning disabilities can be misinterpreted as signs of mental illness.

The 'How To' section of the site includes an article on clinical communication, mainly aimed at the medical profession but with some useful points for counsellors. There are details of Sheila Hollins' **picture book series**, 'Books Beyond Words'. The 24 titles in the series are useful aids for exploring difficult issues with clients, as they illustrate emotions as well as visual information and cover a range of subjects, including depression and bereavement. Ordering details are provided together with suggestions on how to use these books with clients.

Finally, site visitors are given **updated information** on new articles and changes in the 'What's New' section and the site provides plentiful **references** and useful **links** throughout. **BC**