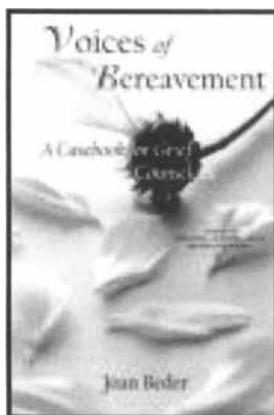


## BOOK REVIEW

# Connecting theory with practice

## Voices of Bereavement

A casebook for grief counselors



**Joan Beder**

Hove, East Sussex UK:  
Brunner-Routledge, 2004  
221pp

£52.50 hb

ISBN 0 415 94614 X

£17.99 pb

ISBN 0 415 94615 8.

IN THESE DAYS OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE, there is a need for the links between theory and practice to be made more explicit. Thus this timely publication goes some way to filling a gap in the literature. In 15 chapters, Beder takes us through the range of bereavements that people present with in clinical practice, including some that are not necessarily openly acknowledged. Bereavement may be ignored if the pre-death relationship was disenfranchised or stigmatised in some way (eg a lesbian relationship) or simply because there is little literature on the area (eg death through physician-assisted suicide). I found the chapter on the death of a therapist particularly interesting as it was a position I found myself in many years ago, and I could relate to many of the issues that the author addresses.

As well as exploring aspects that are particular to a specific loss, each chapter also looks at 'Relevant History', 'Conceptual Issues', 'Suggestions for Intervention' and 'Issues for the Counsellor'. It is this last that I found particularly helpful, as the author takes the opportunity to constructively explore the challenges and satisfactions of this kind of work, which can be very difficult and confusing for bereavement therapists, particularly those who are new to this area of work.

While *Voices of Bereavement* does fill a need, I do have concerns about books that are somewhat prescriptive in their suggestions for intervention. Bader is very clear on the different types of grief that can ensue from various losses, but many of the interventions she discusses derive specifically from the bereavement literature, whose central tenets relate to loss and transition, and not to the wider arena of psychotherapy. So, while reference to the bereavement literature is very useful, it may not always be the most appropriate paradigm for clients with more complex or ruminative styles of coping.

It is the case that the current bereavement intervention literature is very much in its infancy. Thus we may still have as much to learn from the work of existential psychotherapists such as Yalom<sup>1</sup>, Spinelli<sup>2</sup> or, particularly for people who are prone to rumination, from approaches such as 'mindfulness'<sup>3</sup>. I also find the bereavement books by Spall and Callis<sup>4</sup> and Neimeyer<sup>5</sup> more helpful in terms of thinking through possible interventions than the approach taken in this book. However, this could be a reflection of the length of time I have been working in this field.

I would certainly not hesitate to recommend this book to newly qualified counsellors, bereavement or otherwise, as I believe, in addition to good supervision and support, it makes a valuable contribution to the field. ●

**Christine Kalus.**

*Macmillan Consultant Clinical Psychologist*

1. Yalom I. *Love's Executioner and other Tales of Psychotherapy*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1989.
2. Spinelli E. *Tales of Unknowing: Therapeutic Encounters from an Existential Perspective*. London: Duckworth, 1997.
3. Kabat-Zinn J. *Full Catastrophe Living: How to Cope with Stress, Pain and Illness using Mindfulness Meditation* (15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edn). London: Piatkus, 2004.
4. Spall B, Callis S. *Loss Bereavement and Grief: A Guide to Effective Caring*. Cheltenham, UK: Nelson Thorne, 1997.
5. Robert A Neimeyer. *Lessons of Loss. A Guide to Coping*. Memphis, USA: Centre for the Study of Loss and Transition, 2001.

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- 6 The feelings and needs of bereaved people
- 7 Loss of a partner
- 8 Disaster, war and terrorism
- 9 Suicide
- 10 Cultural and religious aspects
- 11 Funerals
- 12 Traumatic bereavement

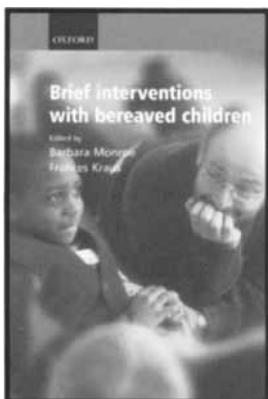
Prices from £4.25-£6.80

Order direct from Cruse +44 [0] 8939 9530  
info@crusebereavementcare.org.uk

## BOOK REVIEW

# Approaches to childhood loss

### Brief Interventions with Bereaved Children



**Barbara Monroe, Frances Kraus (eds)**

Oxford, UK  
Oxford University Press, 2004  
245pp  
£24.95 pb  
ISBN 0 19852 909 0

PRIMARILY AIMED AT PROFESSIONALS, this book is, I believe, the first to focus exclusively on short-term bereavement services for children. The title is a good one – brief interventions are usually what are needed, and the title implies interventions *with* children rather than *for* them! The brief interventions described here, according to the editors, ‘underpin the strengths of bereaved children, supporting their recovery rather than pathologising the grief process...[speaking] to the current interest in the concept of resilience and working with the strength and possibilities of children, young people and their families, rather than merely identifying their problems.’ This philosophy informs each chapter, recognising that loss can be a focus for personal growth and development.

The editors, Chief Executive and Candle Project Leader at St Christopher’s Hospice, London, are both highly experienced practitioners and have gathered together an impressive range of contributors, acknowledged experts from the UK and abroad. The first chapters include a clear and helpful discussion of the evolution of existing services, and an overview of the development of the child’s understanding of the concept of death, and the tasks of grieving. Family assessment and the family perspective in bereavement are also described.

There is much sensible and essential advice here – for example, about working with volunteers to provide bereavement support, working with schools, and working with families. Interventions in critical care environments, such as after pregnancy loss, cot death and road traffic accidents, are included. Other chapters cover working with traumatically bereaved children, supporting a family following suicide, and helping parents to help their children. There is also very useful advice about running a help line and the use of the internet.

Most chapters are enlivened by small clinical vignettes, thankfully without excessive detail. Each chapter has a

useful list of references.

The book is well produced, attractively presented and priced. It provides an essential resource for all practitioners

who may be asked to work with bereaved children and families.

**Martin Newman**

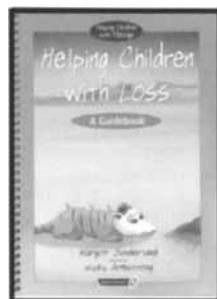
*Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist*

### RESOURCES

#### Helping Children With Loss

#### The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back

**Margot Sutherland**



Bicester, UK: Speechmark, 2003

£19.95 pb (pack), 77pp  
ISBN 0 86388 467 9

£7.95 pb (book) xxxpp  
ISBN 0 86388 463 6

£25.95 (both). ISBN 0 86388 471 7



Sutherland’s wealth of practice skills and illuminating intelligence is distilled into every well-crafted line of the text of the handbook and storybook that comprise this extremely useful pack.

She describes the biochemistry of attachment and loss, relating loving interactions to the opioids (hormones generated in the brain by experiences of emotional warmth) producing a

‘good-to-be-with-you’ feeling, and loss to the production of pain-inducing hormones that need the balm of soothing comfort. Her choice of powerfully emotive language communicates the intensity of the child’s experience of loss; the raw emotions, terrible pain and bleakness that need to be expressed or the child will close down on life and become emotionally dead.

Some children need professional help and, through the medium of play, can connect with and resolve complex feelings and re-work trauma.

A helpful diagnostic guide to depression – tables covering a range of losses and the rollercoaster of responses children may have – is linked to indicators that suggest when seeking professional help may be appropriate. The final section contains several photocopiable paper-based activities that encourage emotional exploration and sharing.

Hospice social workers, bereavement supporters and counsellors will all find this pack very useful, not only for their own practice, but also as information for parents and children. I intend to make copies of the activities for my playroom and as part of my travelling play set. However, as with all publications that contain information and therapeutic materials, their use is best defined by the practitioner on a case-by-case basis.

A separate part of the pack is a beautiful storybook entitled *The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back*. The carefully worded story, with lively, meaningful illustrations, offers a wealth of opportunities to connect with the emotional intensity of loss and the painful struggle inherent in mourning and reconstruction. Like Sutherland, I am confident that this exemplary balance of narrative and pictures will help many children to feel less alone with their grief because they can hear in the story and see in the illustrations that someone else understands their experience.

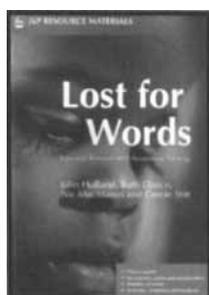
**Peta Hemmings**

Senior Practitioner, Barnardo's Orchard Service

## Lost for Words

Loss and Bereavement Awareness Training

**John Holland, Ruth Dance, Nic MacManus, Carole Stitt**



London: Jessica Kingsley, 2005  
128pp  
£29.95/\$49.95 pb  
ISBN 1 843 19324 9

I looked forward to this publication, hoping it would provide much-needed new ideas and activities for use in training professionals working with children in schools and other settings. Unfortunately I found it disappointing: *Lost for Words* offers little that is new either in information, activities or presentation material.

The package does provide a useful skeleton that

could be fleshed out by trainers who already have knowledge and experience of the field. It is a fairly comprehensive checklist of the issues, the format is accessible and the templates for handouts and overhead slides are welcome. However, the approach lacks creativity and dynamism, offering only one learning method in most of the exercises – group discussion prompted by a question or statement.

Elements of the package may be misleading: the descriptions of the models of loss emphasise a linear progression, whereas the leading proponents of 'stage' models stress that the process is *not* a linear one. Worden's fourth task of mourning has not been updated in line with his more recent thinking. Timings for each exercise would help, as would more detailed guidance notes for trainers to ensure that key learning points are covered.

Finally, a couple of printing errors cause some confusion but, more importantly, the Childhood Bereavement Network is misnamed, and the National Association of Bereavement Services ceased to function some years ago and the number given is a private residence!

**Simon Eedle**

DCSM, Barnardo's Orchard Service

## Grief Encounter

**Shelley Gilbert**



London: Grief Encounter, 2004, 58pp £9.99  
ISBN 1 90478 721 5

This is a well presented resource intended for adults to use with children to help them to talk about their loss and feelings. It is aimed at children aged 8-15 but could be adapted for use with other age groups.

Some of the ideas presented are brilliant, for instance helping the child to make a personal newspaper of items important to them. The inclusion of lyrics from pop songs and quotes from familiar popular children's novels is excellent. However, in places the author's approach is unnecessarily prescriptive. Making postcards to tell other adults things that the child might not be able to say is a lovely activity and the tick box format provided is very easy to use, but some 'blanks' for each child's own thoughts would be a welcome addition and the adult information on the reverse of the cards is intrusive. In another activity the author specifies the colours children should use to code various

emotions. Why not let them choose their own?

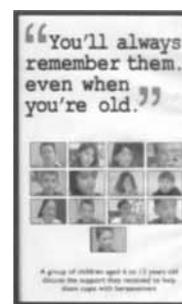
The drawings of people seem rather bland, but probably they are intended to be anonymous so that all children can identify with them. I found the layout a little 'busy'. I would prefer to use Marge Heegaard's more open-ended workbook, *When Someone Very Special Dies* (Minneapolis, MN, USA: Woodland Press). However, *Grief Encounter* has potential to appeal to children, and will, no doubt, enable many to express their feelings.

**David Trickey**

Chartered Clinical Psychologist

## You'll always remember them...Even When You're Old

**Child Bereavement Network**



London: Childhood Bereavement Network (made with the help of Jigsaw4U)  
2003  
37 mins  
£17.50

This video offers a good introduction to bereavement issues, highlighting the fundamental importance of listening to children and being sensitive to their needs. It includes the essential messages that are well documented in research: the importance of open emotional communication, of involving children in funeral preparations, and of a supportive network.

The most striking and unique aspect of this video is the power of the child's voice without any adult interpretation. The children, aged 6-12 and from a variety of backgrounds, eloquently discuss their individual experiences, both positive and negative, drawing attention to how isolating school life can be and the importance of sharing feelings with other bereaved children. They explain how friends, family and professionals could respond positively and sensitively and what this would mean to them.

A wide-ranging audience – adults, children, young people and professionals within a bereaved child's network – could learn from the issues raised by these children. The video has the potential to promote a culture of open emotional communication through remembering and conversation, which are essential components of mourning. •

**Karen Staker**

Senior Practitioner, Barnardo's Orchard Service

**Rachel Holmes**

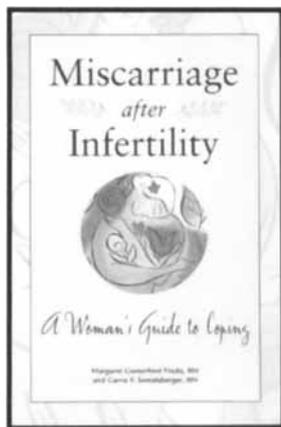
Social Work Student

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Bereavement through miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death

### Miscarriage after Infertility

A woman's guide to coping



**Margaret Comerford Freda,  
Carrie Semelsberger**

Minnesota, MN, USA  
Fairview Press\*, 2003  
80pp  
\$14.95/£12.99 pb  
ISBN 1 57749 135 1

\* Available in the UK from Roundhouse Group, Devon

This American publication is jointly written by a professor of obstetrics and gynaecology and a nurse who miscarried after fertility treatment. I first read it when producing a leaflet, *Infertility and Pregnancy Loss*, for the UK charity The Miscarriage Association. I was keen to see if Freda and Semelsberger's book could be another source of support for people experiencing this double burden and, for the most part, I think it is. The language in its 80 pages is clear and direct, the chapters are short and the text includes not only Carrie Semelsberger's personal experience but also the thoughts and feelings of a number of others who have been through infertility and miscarriage. It is also helpful that this author describes her doubts and anxieties in a subsequent healthy pregnancy – concerns that many who have miscarried will recognise.

However, I do have some reservations. First and foremost, the chapter, 'Some facts about miscarriage', is full of errors. Even allowing for differences between the USA and the UK in definition and medical practice, there are some extraordinary statements. The only treatment the authors mention by name is relatively uncommon, 'cerclage' (a cervical stitch), and they do not say in what circumstances it is used. Furthermore, they refer to this only in a paragraph on recurrent miscarriage and then state, without explanation, 'Cerclage doesn't work for all women who have recurrent miscarriages, however'. Readers who have miscarried may well be aware of that, but others could find these mixed messages confusing.

Another surprising comment relates to ectopic pregnancy: 'Fortunately, most ectopics are diagnosed well before a woman has any symptoms'. If that is the case, it suggests that early scanning and/or blood tests must be much more common in the USA than in the UK.

Also, there is a clear emphasis on surgical management (D and C or similar) as the only safe way of treating miscarriage, whereas research evidence shows otherwise.

Finally, the authors try to end the book on a positive note, which may not feel right for every reader. We do not all find strength through adversity. While some may find that the experience brings them closer to their partner or gives them a deeper faith, that is not the case for others. It might have been more helpful to acknowledge the additional burdens which some women – and their partners – encounter.

Even so, I would still recommend this book, only warning that readers may find it hard to relate to some parts of the text and that they should check any confusing medical information with a trusted local source (eg the USA definition of miscarriage is pregnancy loss before 20 weeks, rather than 24 in the UK).

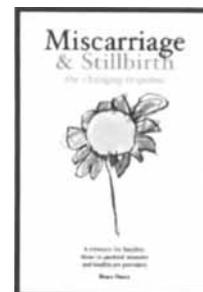
**Ruth Bender Atik**

National Director, The Miscarriage Association

### Miscarriage and Stillbirth

The changing response

**Bruce Pierce**



Dublin, Ireland  
Veritas, 2003  
144pp  
€12.95 pb  
ISBN 1 85390 810 X

This useful book is clear and easy to read. It contains helpful definitions and background information about miscarriage and stillbirth. It wisely points out 'it is the personal significance of the loss, and not the gestational age of the baby, that determines the extent of the parents' bereavement and their need to grieve'. Topics covered include the death of a twin and 'shadow grief', and there is useful advice on preparing children for funerals. There are plenty of practical tips and clear principles of

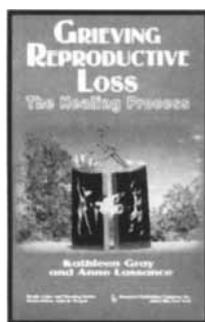
## B O O K S

good practice. Although published by the Association for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, the book is recommended for those of all religious persuasions and none.

## Grieving Reproductive Loss

The healing process

Kathleen Gray, Anne Lassance



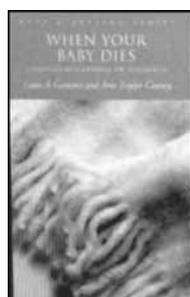
Amityville, New York  
Baywood, 2003  
219pp  
\$45.95 hb  
0-89503-227-9

This book covers similar ground to Bruce Pierce's *Miscarriage and Stillbirth*, and in addition, such topics as giving up a child for adoption, termination of pregnancy, and sudden infant death. There are descriptions of the tasks of mourning and, correctly, the authors stress the importance of asking for a history of other losses, especially all reproductive losses, that the parent(s) may have experienced. The book is 'written in plain language to make it readily understandable especially for those who are grieving a loss'. However, I found it less accessible than Pierce's book (above), although this may reflect to some extent its North American origin, and there was considerable overlap between chapters. All resources listed are in North America, which may limit their practical use in other countries.

## When Your Baby Dies

Through miscarriage or stillbirth

Louis A. Gamino, Ann Taylor Cooney



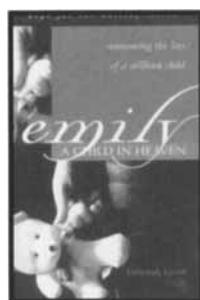
Minneapolis MN,  
USA: Augsburg,  
2002  
48pp  
\$4.99 pb  
0-8066-4355-2

This attractive pocket-sized book in the 'Hope and Healing' series from Augsburg is clear and concise. One of the authors is a father whose son died shortly after birth, whilst his co-author's sister was stillborn. Chapters ask questions, such as 'Why do I feel so helpless after my newborn died?' and 'Am I

still a mother, even though my baby died?' These are then used as starting points for discussion. Each chapter concludes with a short list of 'Points to remember'. Grandparents and siblings, as well as mothers and fathers, are considered. The book is easy to read, achieves the authors' aim to 'offer some perspective and guidance on the experience of losing a child', and can be highly recommended.

## Emily: A Child in Heaven

Deborah Lycett



Milton Keynes, UK  
Authentic Lifestyle  
2004  
170pp  
£5.99 pb  
ISBN 1 86024 443 2

Written by the mother of a daughter who was stillborn, this is a moving description of what happened and the impact of this on her and her family. Of all the books reviewed here, this is probably the one that best conveys the emotional experience of parents/families. It is clear that the author's Christian faith is of huge importance in her life and in that of her family, and I found the endless references to what the Bible says somewhat exhausting at times. Having said that, I am sure that the author's account would be of great help to others going through a similar experience, even if they did not share her religious convictions, and provides a useful insight for those who help families following such a bereavement.

**Dr. Martin Newman**

Consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist

*Died...* 30 parents have written accounts of their baby's death through SIDS. It is impossible not to be deeply moved by the pain and the love that is in every story. The feelings of shock and anguish, and the devastating effect on those left behind are powerfully described in the words of these parents.

At the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS) we know how important it is for parents bereaved in this way to know they are not alone. They ask, 'Is it normal to feel like this?' as they struggle with the pain and anger of their grief. Reading accounts like these is tremendously reassuring – other people have been there too, and they have survived.

By offering insights into the reality of grief and by describing the words and gestures which have been comforting or, sadly, those which have caused additional pain, this book also holds important lessons for those who want to offer support or whose work brings them into contact with bereaved families (eg police, health workers). The importance of good support in coping through such a traumatic experience is clear, whether it comes from family, friends or organisations such as FSID, whose 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this book celebrates and commemorates.

The strongest message of this book is the immense love and longing felt by the authors for their baby: their precious child is always missed and will never be forgotten. •

**Janet Scott**

Communications Manager, SANDS

### UK CONTACTS for miscarriage and neonatal death

**The Miscarriage Association:** tel: 01924 200799; [www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk](http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk)

**Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS):** tel 020 7436 5881; [www.uk-sands.org](http://www.uk-sands.org)

**The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (FSID):** tel 0870 787 0554; [www.sids.org.uk/fsid/](http://www.sids.org.uk/fsid/)

### A B S T R A C T S

## Loss and bereavement among Israel's Muslims: acceptance of God's will, grief, and the relationship to the deceased

Rubin SS, Yasien-Esmael H. *Omega* 2004; 49(2): 149-162

The beliefs and practices of Muslim citizens in Israel stem from a cultural-religious worldview that organises the public and private experience of loss and bereavement. Prolonged public experience of grief and ritualised mourning are discouraged in Islamic practice, which places great value on the acceptance of God's or Allah's will with restraint and understanding. This emphasis on acceptance and a return to functioning is clear-cut, while at the same

## 'When my baby died...'

Thirty parents tell their stories



London  
Foundation for the  
Study of Infant  
Death (FSID)  
62pp  
2001  
£3.50 pb

Losing a baby, and all the dreams and possibilities that are embodied in such a young life, is almost unbearable but the additional cruelty of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), or cot death, is that the death is so unexpected. In *When My Baby*