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Cover. Making a 'film strip' of the sequence of events before, during and after a death can help young people to process and control their memories, as Brendan McIntyre and Jemma Hogwood explain on page 47. Photo by Juliet Caesar

The recent news that body parts have been found at the site of the USA World Trade Center five years after the effects of 9/11 reminds us, if reminder were needed, that to have physical remains of the deceased is often very important to bereaved people.

Those who suspect that someone they loved has been killed, but the body is missing, often yearn for that person's body to be discovered in the hope that it will facilitate mourning and grieving and bring some peace of mind and closure. This may also be true for those whose loved one has been a victim of murder or terrorism, for the relative of a soldier killed in action, or for those bereaved by a natural disaster. Such a wish may last long after the attention of the media and the public have moved on to other events.

In this issue Geoffrey Glassock introduces us to his study on the grieving experiences of families and friends 'as they face the reality of the ambiguity of living with a person missing', and we look forward to hearing of the outcomes of his research. I was reminded of the presentation by Lisa Dinhofer at the Seventh International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in 2005*, where she discussed the reactions of bereaved relatives who know that organs of someone they loved have been transplanted posthumously into a recipient – another situation, relatively recent in origin, where there may be a sense of ambiguity about the death. Modern technological advances and increasingly sophisticated treatments bring new areas for research into grieving and bereavement.

Chris Paul (p50) discusses the roles of guilt and blame in the grieving process. Guilt is an emotion frequently ignored or underestimated in studies and discussions and yet, as she points out, it may be very important and serve underlying functions. Brendan McIntyre and Jemma Hogwood, from Winston's Wish, remind us (p47) that we often use narratives to organise and make sense of our experiences and communicate them to others. Their 'film script' activity helps children put their experience of bereavement into a story-board, so that they can record their understanding of events, a technique that can be helpful both immediately and in the longer term. In this context, we need to remember that children may also blame themselves and feel guilty about things for which they are not responsible. Young children's levels of understanding may mean that they causally link incidents that happen close together in time, or they may attribute events to thoughts that they have had. New interventions that are shown to help children and young people after bereavement are to be welcomed. ●

* Conference report. *Bereavement Care* 2005; 24(3): 54-47.

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