

ARTICLES

Figures of grief: metaphors from a bereavement writing groupMurphy E. *Omega* 2007-2008; 56 (4):359-367

This paper describes a community-based writing group that helps members identify and deal with death, dying and other forms of loss. A model is used that encourages the expression of difficult emotions in several ways. The leader makes a suggestion and group members write in response to this. They are

asked to read their first drafts to the group immediately and this often allows raw feelings to show.

This can be a risky process. However, the group members are asked to react to the writing by simply telling the writer what they remember and what struck them about the work. All are asked to discuss this as fiction, taking the emphasis off the writer's personal identity. This may seem contrived but it keeps discussion on the writing and communication rather than on the writer, with the aim of making everyone feel less vulnerable.

The case examples focus on a variety of

metaphors around death and dying. The author divides these in two with one connoting breakage, eg a ripped page, and the other erasure, eg empty chairs, fading clouds. Then she describes metaphors of grieving using natural forces, technology and fibre arts (like spinning wool into yarn) to make grief transformative into something useful or to help integrate it into the life of a bereaved person. Some moving and complex metaphors emerge.

An outline of a seven-week programme is provided including, for instance, writing on anger, on humour, and composing one's own obituary.

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