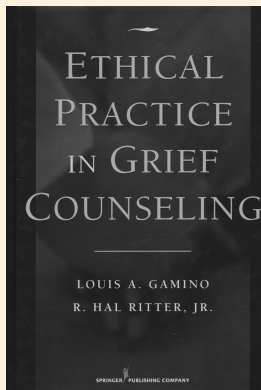


Book Reviews



Ethical practice in grief counseling

Louis A Gamino,
R Hal Ritter Jr

New York: Springer, 2009
419pp
£38.50 hb
ISBN 978 0 82610 083 2

‘Sound ethical practice is good counseling practice, and good counseling practice requires sound ethical practice.’ This is the message of this excellent book. Grief counsellors should practise ethically not just to defend themselves against litigation, but to help their clients.

Gamino and Ritter offer professionals who work with the dying and bereaved a comprehensive handbook for navigating end-of-life ethical dilemmas. It defines grief counseling broadly as any professional endeavour, including counselling, education, consultation, support, advice and advocacy, aimed at relieving suffering brought about by dying, death and bereavement.

The authors review the range of ethical theories before presenting their Five P model: Person Problem Place Principles Process. These are, they argue, the ‘who, what, where, and how’ of ethical dilemmas and decision-making. They explore death practitioners’ ethical responsibility to have overall ‘death competence’, and then go on to apply their Five P model to various ethical dilemmas. The chapters cover consent, confidentiality, end-of-life dilemmas, multiple professional relationships, ethnicity, cultural and spiritual issues, internet counselling, the ethics of grief counselling, public service, acting as expert witness, moving/closing private practice, and complaints. Each chapter is illustrated with case studies, linked with the ethical code of the American Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC), supported by research, thoroughly referenced, and backed up by appendices, including guidelines, questionnaires and templates.

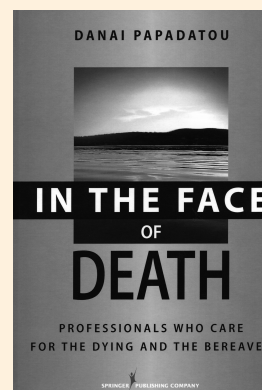
I recommend this book for a wide range of professionals – counsellors, social workers, doctors, nurses, chaplains – working in end-of-life care and bereavement, but with two caveats. First, the breadth of topics means not all

chapters will be relevant to all readers. Second, UK readers should be aware that this is an American book and some aspects of the role of ‘grief counselor’ it describes (including the spelling), the way medical and psychosocial care is organised and the case law cited are all American. Notably, there is no reference to an equivalent UK code to the US ADEC one.

As a hospice bereavement co-ordinator, I nonetheless found the ethical dilemmas, ethical principles and model of ethical decision-making both informative and thought-provoking and thus really useful. I would also welcome a UK version. ■

Sharon Cornford

Bereavement service co-ordinator/psychotherapist,
St Joseph’s Hospice, London



In the face of death: professionals who care for the dying and bereaved

Danai Papadatou

New York: Springer, 2009
330pp
\$55.00
ISBN 978 0 82610 254 0

This is a unique, thoughtful and thought-provoking book. The book’s central thesis is that professional caregivers are inevitably affected by the lives and deaths of those they seek to support and that we should endeavour to acknowledge and understand the processes involved. The integration of such experiences can lead to personal and professional growth; ignored they can become inhibitors to the potential benefit both clients and professionals may derive.

None of these insights are new; what is new is the book’s comprehensive, systematic, logical and practical presentation of how to develop a positive, ‘relationship-centred’ approach to care and the behaviours and attitudes

that foster or hinder this at an individual, team and organisational level.

Danai Papadatou is professor of clinical psychology at the University of Athens. This highly personal book is informed throughout by the depth of her clinical experience in the care of the dying and the bereaved and the breadth of her review of the available literature, enriched by her own research. The sometimes rather philosophical approach is made concrete and clear by the use of personal stories and vignettes from a wide variety of practice settings and professional disciplines. The leitmotif of Greek mythology provides continuity and narrative depth, and the writing throughout is engaging and easy to understand.

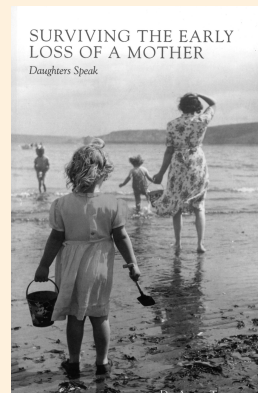
Papadatou discusses the challenges faced by health care professionals supporting dying and bereaved individuals and readers will readily find reflections of their own dilemmas. She explores compassion fatigue and the inevitability of suffering. There are interesting sections on caregiving organisations, with recommendations for effective interdisciplinary services. Her own research, with its proposed model for the grieving process of professionals, underlines the importance of shared meanings and the power of team narratives and organisational myths. Papadatou notes the inevitable interactions between personal and work-related experiences and explores professional and cultural differences in the way individuals respond, emphasising the value of both formal and informal peer support and effective supervision. She examines the team's functioning in the face of death and considers the challenges of creating truly reflective programmes of education and learning.

The tone of the book is realistic. Papadatou presents the 'good enough' team and suggests that individual professionals should strive to be 'vulnerable enough' – neither over-involved, nor retreating into over-professionalised behaviour or 'chronic niceness'. The message is essentially optimistic: 'All teams have the potential to function with competence,' she avers.

Papadatou is stronger on the dynamics of individual relationships than on systemic and structural issues. The role of the professional with couples and families is only hinted at. The professional also very much dominates the book. I would have liked to see some acknowledgement of the power and value of the relationships between patients (or the bereaved) themselves when teams and organisations foster and provide space for them to develop. But these require a different book. This volume will be of value to anyone working with the dying and bereaved, for novice and highly experienced alike. ■

Barbara Monroe

Chief executive, St Christopher's Hospice, London



Surviving the early loss of a mother: daughters speak

Anne Tracey

Dublin: Veritas, 2008

160pp

€10.95

ISBN 978 1 84730 130 7

This book is based on Tracey's research for her PhD, which was itself inspired by her own experiences of bereavement, and her work as a volunteer with Cruse Bereavement Care in Northern Ireland. It is through this work that she learned how helpful it can be for bereaved people to share their stories in order 'to work through and resolve their feelings of loss and grief'. Moreover, for those supporting bereaved people: 'The more we know about the meaning of a loss and the course of grief that follows, the better equipped we will be to provide the help and support that bereaved people need.'

Tracey interviewed 26 women whose mothers had died in their childhood. Three were under 12 months old when their mother died; one woman had been bereaved 70 years ago, when aged just seven. All had been under 11 years at the time of their mother's death.

Tracey organises her data into seven themes, titled using the words of the women themselves to describe what happened to them and their feelings, then and now: The Silent Game, Your Worst Nightmare, Digging for Information, Milestones in Your Life, You Learn to Cover Your Heart, He Was a Very Good Father, and The Incalculable Loss – all speak eloquently for themselves.

Still vivid in their lives is the memory of the bubble of silence around the illness and death of their mother, of being excluded from the wake and the funeral, and told not to cry. The lack of permission to talk about their loss or, indeed, to grieve, then led to 'the worst nightmare' – the aftermath and the shadow it cast over their childhood and teenage years. Teachers often had not been told that the child's mother had died. Those that did know had no training in how to manage angry, upset girls. Some girls could not continue their education because, in a rural, impoverished community, they were expected to take on their mother's tasks on the farm and in the house. Some described the cruelty of relatives with whom they had been sent to live, especially when they wet the bed in their distress and fear, and of stepmothers who mocked and teased them and favoured their own children.

Almost all felt a strong need to 'dig for information': they felt they had to know who their mother was – what she looked like, her history, her life, how she died – in

order to understand who they were. One woman had never been told the date of her mother's birthday. Several had to arrange health screenings when they learned that their mother had died of a disease with a high likelihood of genetic inheritance.

'Milestones' such as marriage and pregnancy frequently renewed their loss and grief, and sometimes led to severe depression. Women described the difficulties in bringing up their own children when they had no role model: 'Whether or not a daughter remembers her mother, the loss of her will be felt continually throughout life.'

The women also talk movingly of coming through life 'with this huge burden (of loss) on your shoulders'. They talked of 'learning to cover your heart', of being unable to trust anyone ever again and of concealing their emotions in order to bury their hunger for love and affection: 'Enough was never enough.'

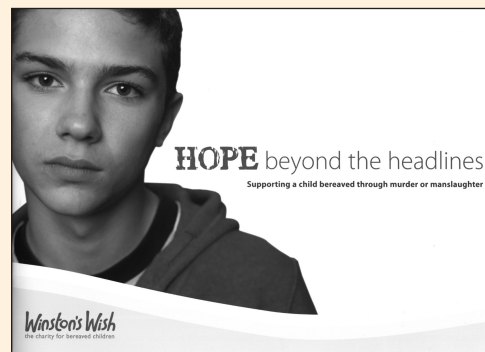
Not all the stories are completely bleak. Some fathers did not remarry and took on the role of mother (although this became more difficult as the children grew to teenage) as well as wage-earner: 'He became two parents.' Some could not cope with their children's distress: 'He couldn't deal with it himself, so how could he help three kids deal with it?'

The book demonstrates the lasting damage experienced by children from being excluded from the death of their mother and denied the chance to grieve. Many of them would have benefited from pre-bereavement support (not heard of at that time and in that place). All would have benefited from being able to talk about the death after it happened and over the years since. All still carry the scars, although it is of course not possible to know how their lives might have turned out if their mother had not died.

There were no studies such as this 40 years ago when I became stepmother to two children bereaved by suicide when they were both under five years old. Reading it now, this book helps me to understand why the impact of the death never goes away. Academic books on the topic do exist, but this is an accessible, powerful book that lets the women speak for themselves. It would be helpful to bereaved teenagers and adults, as well as to bereavement volunteers, teachers, social workers and health professionals. ■

Joyce Rimmer

Chair, West Midlands Cruse



Hope behind the headlines

Di Stubbs, Danny Nugus, Kate Gardner

Cheltenham: Winston's Wish, 2008

40pp

£5.99

ISBN 978 0 95595 391 0

This booklet is intended to help those caring for and supporting children and young people bereaved through murder and manslaughter. As with all Winston's Wish publications, it is incredibly well presented and contains a wealth of solid advice, based both on sound psychological principles and the authors' wealth of experience in this field.

The booklet opens with a helpful discussion on what makes bereavement by murder or manslaughter different to other bereavements. It has long sections on how to explain murder and manslaughter to children, and (very important) practical ways to support children bereaved in this way.

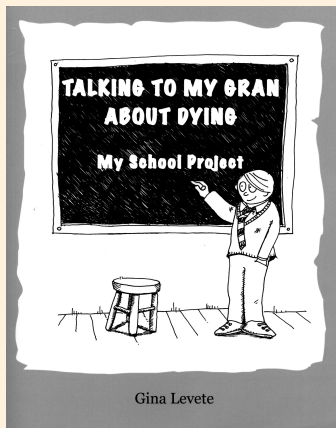
It is short enough to be extremely readable, and long enough to be very useful. It is well illustrated throughout with quotes from families and young people. In my opinion, its particular strength lies in the very helpful and practical advice that really does give carers some concrete suggestions for what to do. For example, without being prescriptive, it breaks down into six stages the incredibly difficult task of telling children about a murder or manslaughter. This may help to make the task feel less overwhelming. For those carers who just don't know where to start, it even gives actual examples of the words they can use.

It is difficult to find fault with the publication. There are a couple of ideas that I personally would not use, but I can't criticise it for that – they are presented simply as suggestions that the reader might consider.

I am not aware of any other publications on the market that are specifically written for the adults caring for a child bereaved by murder or manslaughter. And now that Winston's Wish has produced this one, there is no need for anyone else to try. ■

David Trickey

Consultant clinical psychologist



Talking to my Gran about dying: my school project

Gina Levete

London: Third Age Press, 2010
64pp
£7.50
ISBN 978 1 89857 617 4

This book is about a boy called Tam who has chosen as his school project talking to his Gran about dying. He has a total of five talks with his Gran. After each talk, the author lists some relevant discussion points.

For example, at the end of the first talk, the discussion points include: Why do people have to die? When you grow old would you like to live to be over 100 years old?

After the second talk, discussion points include: Where do people go when they die? Have you ever thought about what happens to people or pets after they die?

This book is written for children aged 8–12 but, it is stressed, should always be read with an adult. Its aim is to open up the subject of death and encourage discussion and debate, in the classroom or in the home.

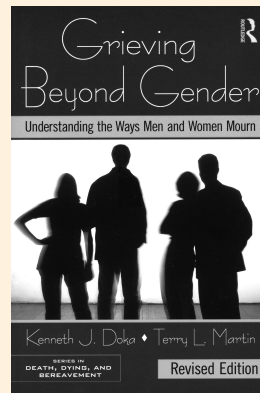
It is presented in the format of a school exercise book, using italic handwritten font rather than standard typeface. It is also well and sensitively illustrated – enough to break up the text without detracting from it.

In my view it is a very useful publication that can support discussions with all children about of death and dying, not just the bereaved. It would certainly be very helpful for children who are recently bereaved or if someone very close to them is dying. It puts into words the questions that bereaved children often tell us go racing round in their heads, and provides thoughtful and truthful answers.

The book would be very helpful for teachers to provide a framework for classroom discussions on death and bereavement. It would also be useful for bereavement supporters working with young children. In my view, the book may be most useful in group work, as children would potentially learn much and gain much from sharing views, thoughts and opinions. Families and carers can also read it together, with the bereaved child. The publisher says older children might prefer to read it on their own, although personally I doubt they will find this so useful. ■

Wendy Rayner

Bereavement volunteer



Grieving beyond gender: understanding the ways men and women mourn

Kenneth J Doka,
Terry L Martin

London/New York: Routledge, 2010
238pp
£19.00
ISBN 978 0 415 99572 6

This book is a companion piece to an earlier work, *Men Don't Cry, Women Do*, by the same authors. In *Men Don't Cry, Women Do* we were introduced to the continuum of intuitive and instrumental grief and encouraged to consider grief responses other than those that involve affect and feelings, which are the most recognisable and expected response to loss. We were invited to look at all the variations and influences that can have an impact on a grieving person, wherever they might be on Martin and Doka's continuum.

Grieving Beyond Gender looks again at intuitive and instrumental grieving and takes these theories and ideas further. Once again we are encouraged to look at cognitive approaches to death and dying and case studies are offered to demonstrate the validity of Doka and Martin's ideas and guide use of the theories in practice.

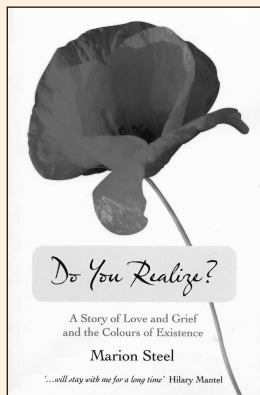
I particularly liked the descriptions of dissonant responses, where the chosen style of grieving does not fit with the individual's usual style of behaviour, or where the influence of, for example, culture, personality and gender may result in unhelpful strategies and adaptations to loss. Grief does not always go according to plan and throughout the book we are reminded that there is no correct way to mourn. If practitioners incorporate this one principle in their bereavement support work, the book will have a huge and positive impact.

This book, like so many recent publications on death and dying, reminds us of the unique nature of the end of life and that one size does not fit all. It reminds us also of the highly complex, individual nature of grief. Coincidentally, while writing this review I was reading a biography of the author Roald Dahl, which describes his response to the death of his young daughter Olivia: 'Roald kept himself to himself ... He did not talk about his feelings ... did not want to talk about Olivia ... wouldn't let anything come out, nothing.'

This was Roald Dahl's own way of grieving a beloved daughter. Doka and Martin would have us respect this, not stereotype it as a typically dysfunctional male response. ■

Judith Hodgson

Lecturer/practitioner in social work, University of Hull



Do you realize? A story of love and grief and the colours of existence

Marion Steel

Winchester/Washington DC: O-Books,
2010
184pp
£9.99
ISBN 978 1 84694 330 0

This is a most disconcerting book. It intersperses poetry and prose, scatters words and ideas like chaff, and has a confusing tendency to move back and forth in time, with little guidance from the author. Much of it is barely comprehensible and may indeed be the loosely-connected utterances of hypomania – Marion Steel is well aware that she is at times afflicted with this condition, which disturbs her judgement, swamps her with irrelevant thoughts that seem to her important, and gives rise to the elation that is another feature of this mental state.

But it would be a mistake to dismiss the book as the irrelevant ramblings of a crazy lady. There is gold in them there hills and the perceptive reader will find links between the many well-phrased passages and anecdotes.

Marion is also a psychotherapist and in the first pages she relates her shock at the death of one of her patients – an event that was sufficiently distressing to precipitate a recurrence of hypomania. Hypomania is a term used for episodes that fall short of the severe psychosis of mania but are clearly close to it. These episodes often alternate with periods of depression – hence the term manic depressive disorder. The reader will learn much about these conditions in this book, from the horse's mouth.

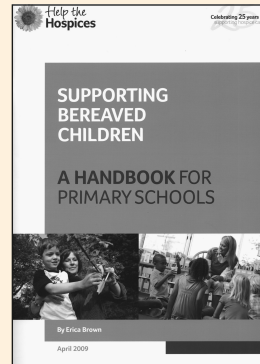
Psychotherapists with a history of mental illness may be able to use the insights that come from experience in their work with patients. But they are also at risk if they become too closely identified with them. Steel quotes Paul Brok's warning to therapists not to 'resonate with every tremor of feeling ... sometimes there are visions of horror and raw fear that can only be observed obliquely ...' She ignored this advice, and reports the unhappy outcomes.

Bit by bit the picture merges of a talented woman whose insecure attachment to her father in childhood probably gave rise to attachment problems later in life and to vulnerability to the various losses and separations that she experiences. At such times her descent into the abyss of depression or the desperate elation of hypomania evokes our sympathy. But there is also hope, and the book ends with the following words:

'The distant voice of other walkers seemed to ebb away. And everything in the wood was still. For a second, I experienced

the strangest feeling, as if there was only us, myself and my son, in the world, together with the floating leaves, falling. The words flashed into my head. All is always now. Then I looked at my son's face and saw that he was laughing' ■

Colin Murray Parkes



Supporting bereaved children: a handbook for primary schools

Erica Brown

London: Help the Hospices, 2009
62pp
£10.00
ISBN 978 1 871978 63 6

This short booklet is a welcome recognition of the vital importance of the school environment and community in providing children with the skills needed to cope with change, grief and loss.

Engaging, practical and sensitively written, it provides helpful and comprehensive guidance on understanding and responding to the social, emotional and cognitive effects of bereavement in childhood. It also highlights the influential role that primary school can play in preparing children to cope with life events and difficulties by addressing emotional coping, change and loss throughout the school curriculum.

It includes practical examples, such as how to talk with children and how to incorporate these topics into lessons to help school staff apply the ideas discussed. There is a comprehensive list of resources and a brief summary of different religious beliefs and practices around death. I was also pleased that the author emphasises the importance of ensuring that the emotional and training needs of school staff are also met when they are working with issues of loss and bereavement.

There are some issues that could have been included, and which staff frequently raise. The book does not deal with deaths within the school – of a pupil or teacher – and how schools can respond. The needs of the bereaved child are discussed, but little is said about how to manage the reactions of other children and parents in the school. Nor does the book discuss the importance of working with the bereaved parents/carers and respecting their views and beliefs – more practical guidance on how to do so would have been helpful.

That said, the booklet is a welcome addition to the resources available to schools. ■

Catriona Matthews

Child clinical psychologist