

Editorial

Denise Brady

In the most detailed article in this edition of *Bereavement Care*, Maarten Eisma and Margaret Stroebe (p58) highlight a natural consequence of every bereavement and traumatic situation - that of rumination.

The insights in their 'invited' review provide a focussed history of the definition of rumination as well as of theories and research that serve to help bereaved people so that this activity does not take over their lives in a negative way. Theories and research on rumination are described initially in terms of depression. The authors outline how studies on rumination within depression led to studying its relevance in bereavement. For both depressive and grief rumination the authors make a distinction between brooding rumination and reflective rumination. For example, in grief rumination, brooding might involve thinking such as 'Could I have done something different so that this loss could have been prevented?' but reflective rumination might instead involve trying to understand *why* one is emotionally reacting in a particular way to the unique set of circumstances that has taken place in your bereavement. The former is more likely to cause psychological problems if it is constant (although time frames are not specifically addressed).

The authors describe two theories of likely maladaptive rumination in relation to bereavement, providing discussion as well as results of psychological tests to assess the extent of avoidance versus confrontation issues in rumination. These merit careful reading and it is refreshing to learn about competing theories, recognising the thinking behind each. In future editions of *Bereavement Care*, it would be helpful for practitioners to have results and discussion about the specific intervention outlined in this article as well as ongoing discussion on different theories of rumination by these authors and others. It is a vital concept to consider in caring for bereaved people and Eisma and Stroebe have provided this journal with discussion and robust research on the subject.

Reading through the articles in this edition, it strikes me how different they all are. Each contribute to knowledge and understanding of bereavement but they range from the article above which, I calculated, refers to research with over 450 bereaved people, to pieces that are about single individuals' experiences. Eisma and Stroebe work in a specialist academic department with, no doubt, many researchers contributing their ideas and with leaders who have an international reputation. It is invaluable, intricate work. In a very different way, one person's experience of bereavement can be as useful as a source of knowledge for

furthering an understanding of bereavement. Sometimes this may help another bereaved person who has no previous experience of major loss and who is seeking validation of his or her experience. Sometimes a concept by one individual, outlined in an unusual or original way, can help researchers or practitioners to consider their own work in a new light.

The personal account of bereavement by Florence Wilkinson (p51) reminds me of the title of Colin Parke's book on his seminal writings, *The price of love* (Parkes, 2015). It is around 6 years since Florence Wilkinson's mother died and it was that price of love that was the cause of her great sadness and distress. She describes her coping mechanism as trying to find a sense of purpose and she kept herself incredibly busy in the year following her mother's death. At the same time, she describes how alone she felt 'in my own experience'. This was because none of her peers had had such a major bereavement. It was also because she needed to find someone with whom she could closely identify. In the end, she found this largely in books. She always had support from friends and family but it was the uniqueness of her experience for which she needed validation. I wondered if she had read *When parents die* (Abrams, 1999) – about a young adult whose father and stepfather had died close in time whilst she was at university. I re-visited the book as I remember that author also looked for written materials that might help her. For a variety of reasons, her concerns were different to those of Wilkinson. Yet both were, in many ways, age-related.

There are photographs in the article by Wilkinson that are joyful and sometimes funny. The obvious friendship between mother and daughter was made so clearly visible so that there was no need for words on their closeness. Photographs usually offer so much as a way of honouring our memory of people close to us who have died. *Dying Matters* (p75) aims to start discussions about death and dying so that people can feel more comfortable talking about it. They received hundreds of photographs in a recent competition titled 'Celebrating life in the face of death'. Most of them commemorate people each photographer knew closely in various ways. One offshoot of the competition will be the pride of those who were singled out to be in the exhibition as well as their satisfaction that their loved one is being remembered in a new way. Families and friends will feel the same. This may not be the primary aim of the competition but it is nevertheless a key part of a positive aspect of the bereavement experience.

The article by Lauren Patrick DiMaio and Alexa Economos on attitudes to music in bereavement (p65) illustrates how music can help people in the dying phase and how it can be used to 'mask silence' but also as 'helping to feel silences'. The research outlined by Ros Scott, Stewart Wilson and Debbie Butler (p55) on volunteer bereavement support workers for Cruse Scotland illustrates volunteer generosity and reciprocity. One of the main motivations for becoming volunteers was people's own experiences of loss and how they – or their relatives - had been helped at that time.

The backdrop to writing this editorial has been terrorist attacks in the UK and worldwide, as well as the Grenfell fire disaster in London. These are momentous and life-changing events for so many people. In this edition of *Bereavement Care*, one can see threads that may help in healing. May we be strong, but there is a tapestry of need. ■

Abrams R (1999). *When parents die* (2nd ed). Abingdon: Routledge.

Parkes C (2015). *The price of love: the selected works of Colin Murray Parkes*. Abingdon: Routledge.

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BereavementCare



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- Stigmatised and disenfranchised grief
- Supporting children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Peer support for drug and alcohol-related bereavement
- What helps families bereaved by suicide?
- Telling the story of a same-sex couple

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- Remembering Daniel: Artist's bereavement sculptures inspired by husband's death
- Bereavement needs following physician assisted suicide
- Accessing crime scene photographs after violent death
- Tattoos as memorials

Call for papers

Bereavement Care would like to invite submissions to the journal. We are an international publication and we would particularly welcome submissions from authors and practitioners working throughout the world on best practice in bereavement support.

We are interested in submissions as follows:

- Research articles for peer review
- Arts articles that focus on community practice and involving people in exploring bereavement
- Spotlight on Practice articles that explore the way practitioners are working to improve and diversify bereavement support practices
- First Person articles from people who have been bereaved and are open to writing about how this has impacted upon their lives

Submissions can be sent directly to the Managing Editor, Jessica Mitchell, at jessica.mitchell@cruse.org.uk. Interested authors are also welcome to approach the Managing Editor to explore ideas and to ask questions about journal submissions.