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# It's Not About Stages: Current Perspectives on Grief & Loss

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*"Just give me the broad strokes."*

GREGORY

# Stage Based Theories

## Kubler – Ross

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

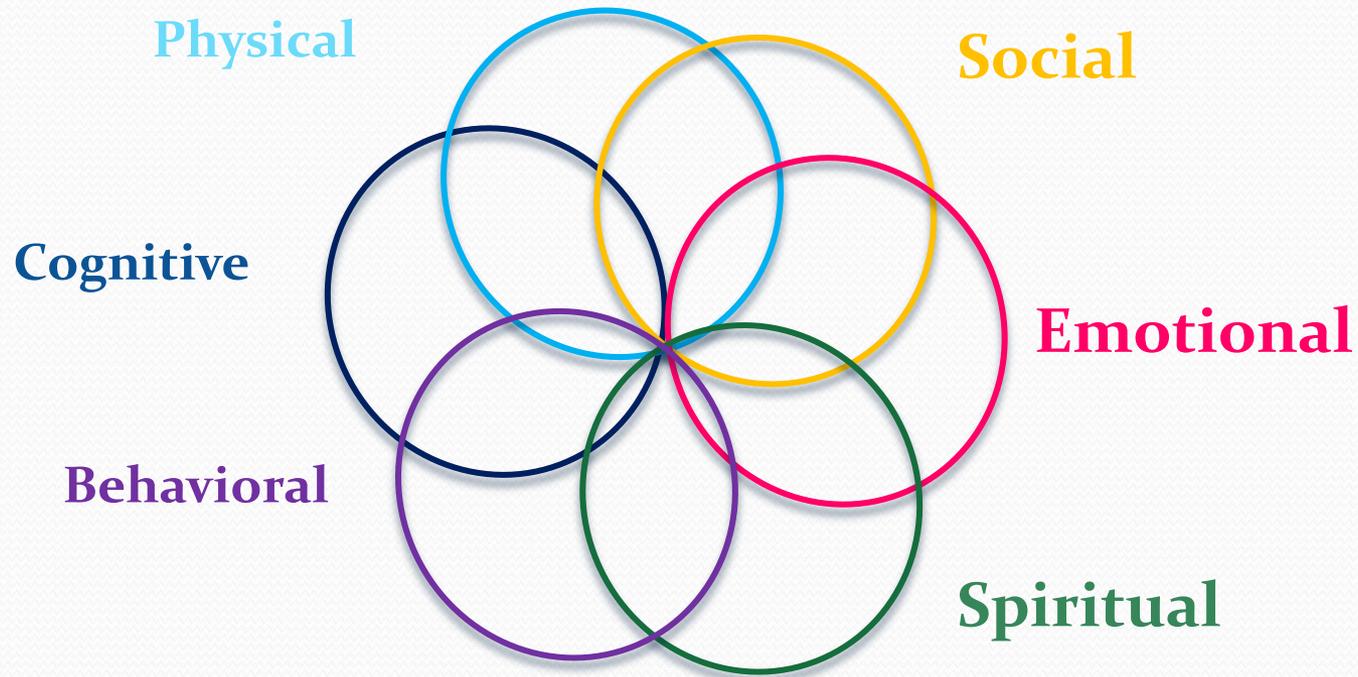


## Parke & Bowlby

- Numbness & shock
- Yearning & searching
- Disorganization & despair
- Reorganization



# Aspects of Grief





*Our clients cannot choose what  
grief responses they experience.  
We help them realize they **can**  
choose how they express those  
responses through their  
**mourning style.***

# Mourning is a Process of Skill Acquisition

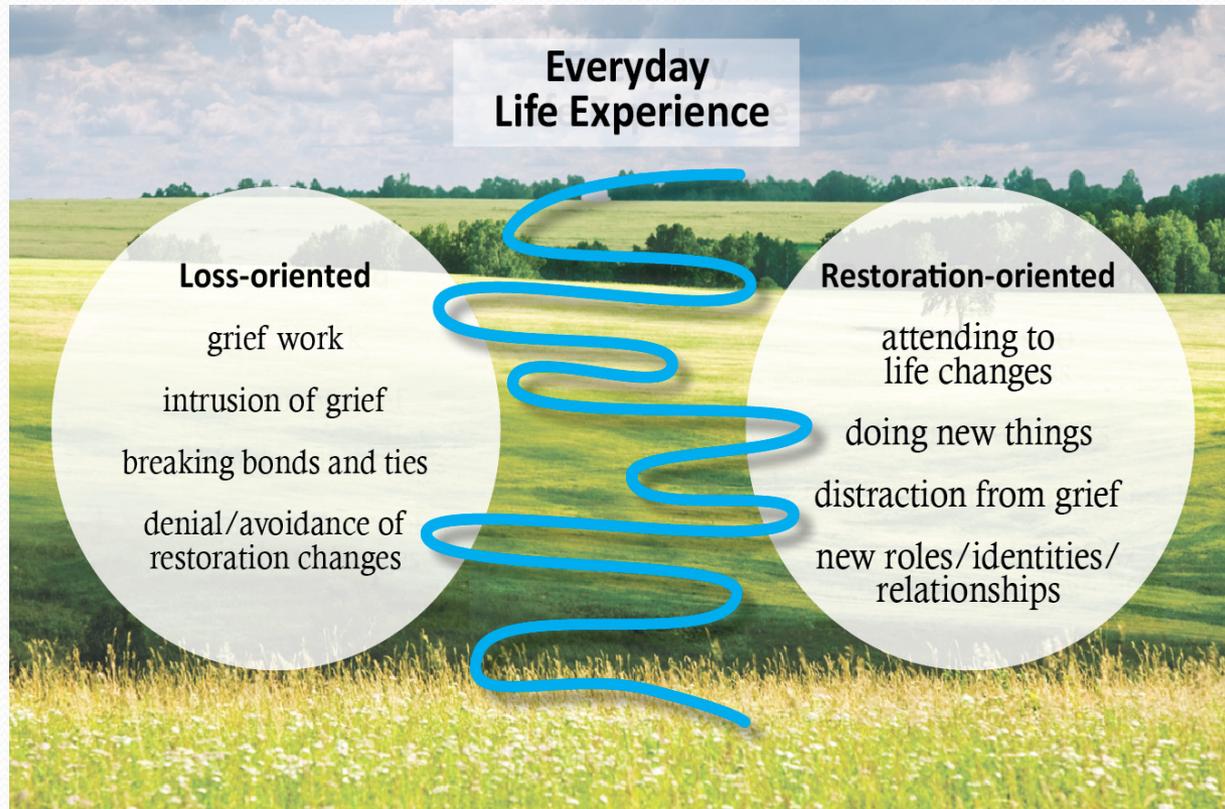
Skill at:

- Managing grief reactions (self soothing)
- Managing social interactions
- Identify formation
- Life management in a changed world

~ J. Jordon, PhD



# Coping with Loss



Adapted from Stroebe & Shut, 1999

# Tasks of Mourning

- To Believe - accept the reality of the loss
- To Feel – to process the pain of grief
- To Adjust - to a changed world
  - Internal – sense of self
  - External –roles, functioning
  - Spiritual – shattered assumptions, beliefs, values - meaning making
- To remember - find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life

~Worden, 2018

# Mediators of Mourning

- Who is the person with the illness?
- The nature of the attachment
- Personality variables
- Social variables
- Concurrent stressors

~Worden, 2018



# Supporting Widowed Persons: Testing an Individually-Tailored Bereavement Intervention Based on the Dual Process Model

Rebecca Utz, PhD, Michael Caserta, PhD, Gary Donaldson, PhD, Dale Lund, PhD,  
Katherine Supiano, PhD LCSW

## Research Question:

Does an individually-tailored, theoretically-based  
intervention produce more favorable bereavement  
outcomes for widowed persons?

“Enhancing End-of-Life and Bereavement Outcomes Among Cancer Caregivers”  
(PI: Kathi Mooney). **National Cancer Institute: NCI P01-CA138317.**

“Living After Loss: An Intervention Study to Test the Effectiveness of the Dual Process Model of Coping” (PI: Michael Caserta.). **National Institute on Aging: NIA R01-AG023090.**

# Rando's Six "R"

## Processes of Mourning

- Recognize the loss
- React to the separation
- Recollect and re-experience the deceased and the relationship
- Relinquish the old attachments to the deceased and the old assumptive world
- Readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old
- Reinvest



# Rubin: Two-Track Model

## Track I Functioning

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Somatic concerns
- Psychiatric symptoms
- Family relationships
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Self-esteem
- Meaning structure
- Work
- Investment in life tasks

## Track II Relationship

- Imagery & memory
- Emotional distance
- Positive & negative affects to deceased
- Preoccupation
- Idealization
- Conflict
- Shock, searching
- Impact on self-perception
- Memorialization

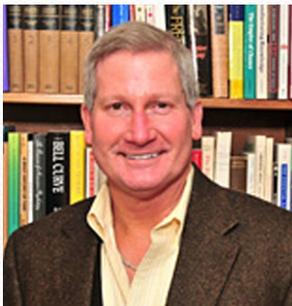


~Rubin, 1999

# Martin & Doka's Mourning Styles

## Intuitive

- Experience grief primarily in terms of intense emotions
- Need to express their feelings
- Benefit from adaptive strategies that facilitate emotional processing and connecting with others



## Instrumental

- Experience grief more cognitively and behaviorally
- Feelings are modulated
- Tend to express grief via thoughts and behavior
- Benefit from adaptive strategies that facilitate analysis and activity

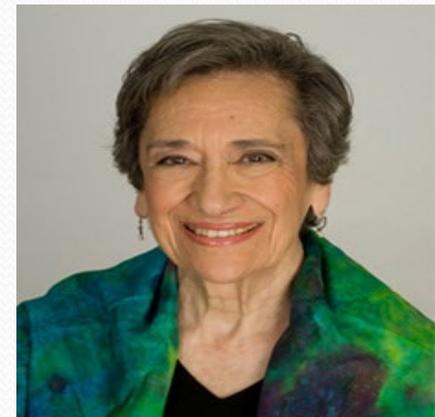
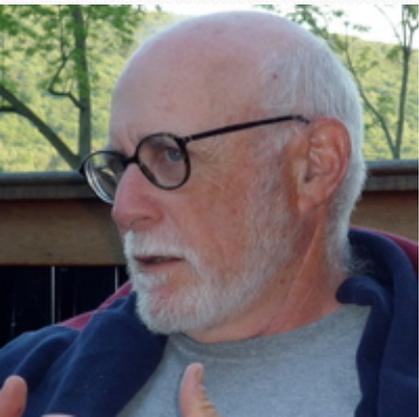


# Concept of Continued Bonds

- Remembering, not forgetting
- Learning to live with the change, in a completely different way
- Provides comfort, solace, reassurance, meaning and purpose

*This kind of connection, “provided solace, comfort and support and eased the transition from the past to the future.”*

~Klass, Silverman & Nickman (1996)



Mood's

I MISS YOU

IDIDN'T

GET TO SAY  
BYE.

YOU'RE

ALWAYS  
IN MY

HEART

# Meaning Making

Grieving is the act of affirming or reconstructing a personal world of meaning that has been challenged by loss

We construct and reconstruct our identity as survivors in connection with others

**Adaptation to loss involves restoration of coherence to the narratives of our lives.**



~Neimeyer (2001)



# Resilience

- Bereaved people do not go through stereotypic stages of grief
- Bereaved more resilient than we thought

~George Bonnano, PhD



# Non-Death Loss

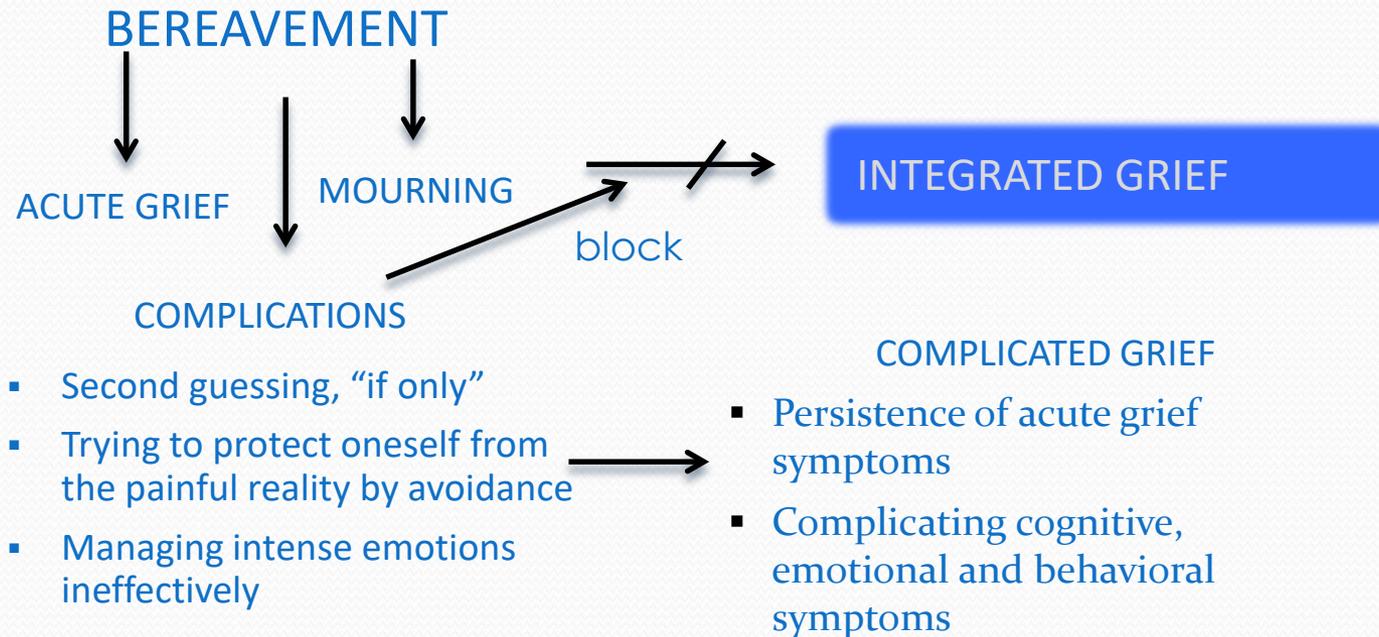
- “Rather than being external losses these are internal in nature. These are losses that occur when something dies inside of us.”
- Loss types: ambiguous, nonfinite, chronic sorrow & intangible or tangible losses

~ Darcy Harris, PhD

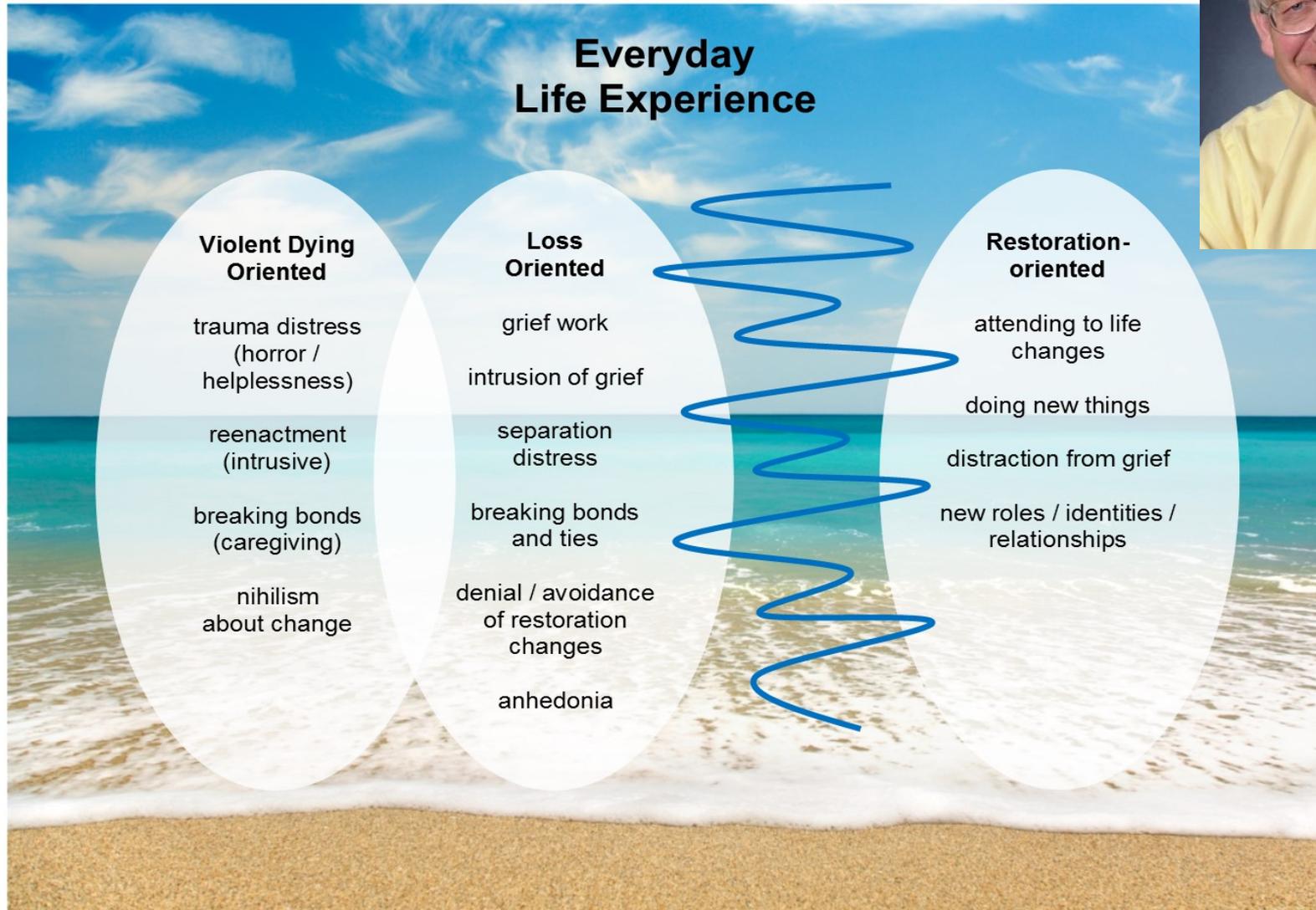
# Complicated Grief



THE TERM “COMPLICATED” used in the medical sense of a superimposed problem that interferes with healing



# Coping With Loss



Adapted from Stroebe & Shut, 1999 and Rynearson, 2015

# Working with Multiple Loss

- Collaborate with the client based on relationship, attachment, circumstances of death, unfinished business
- Rank each death from least to most complicated
- Start with the least complicated (who, how died, how impacted them, etc) looking for conflicts of separation
- Jump start the mourning process

~Worden, 2019

# Harvard

## Child Bereavement Study

- First longitudinal study of bereaved children
- 80% of children will show resilience in adjusting to loss
- 15-20% will display significant emotional and behavioral difficulties even 2 years post death
- Children demonstrated an inability to maintain healthy levels of self-esteem or a sense of connectedness to their remaining social network
- Stable environment helps
- Continuing bonds are important

# Family Bereavement Program

- Compared the adjustment of families participating in the program with families that received books about bereavement.
- Program for caregivers of parentally-bereaved youth
- Taught skills for parenting effectively after bereavement
- Provided support for using the parenting skills and meeting their program goals
- Take home resources

# Family Bereavement Program - Major Findings

One Year Later

- Children had reduced levels of problematic grief
- Bereaved caregivers were less depressed
- Families reported lower levels of stress

Six Years Later

- Children showed improved self-esteem
- Decrease in aggressive behaviors
- Caregivers reported a higher sense of coping efficacy
- Higher quality caregiver-youth relationships

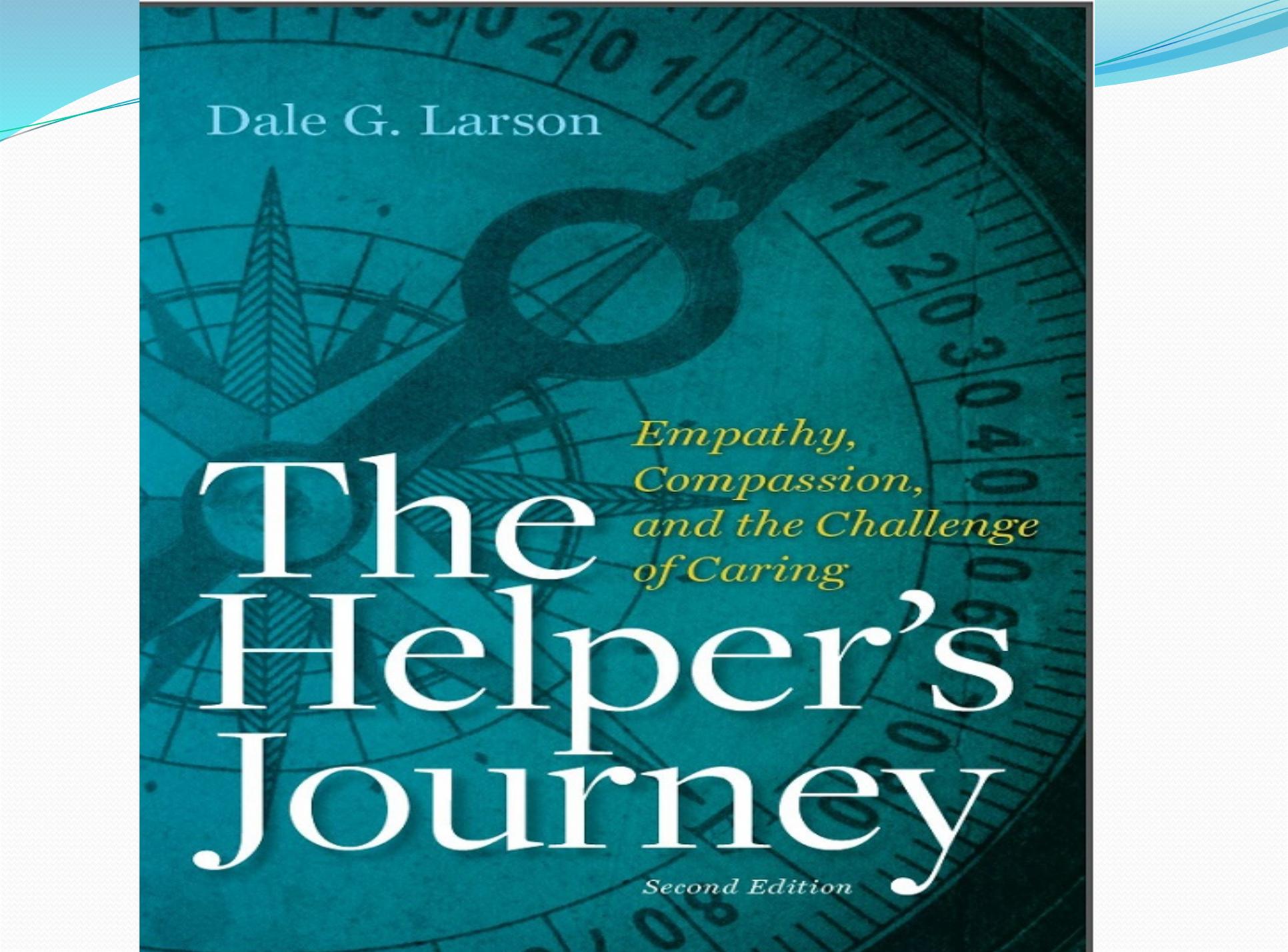
# Core Principles

- People have a natural inborn capacity to adjust to loss that utilizes the adaptive unconscious
- Successful mourning is facilitated by
  - Receiving meaningful support
  - Self-compassion
- Addressing self-determination needs
  - A sense of belonging and mattering to others
  - Meeting meaningful challenges
  - Authenticity

~M. Katherine Shear, MD, Center for Complicated Grief

# Discussion





Dale G. Larson

*Empathy,  
Compassion,  
and the Challenge  
of Caring*

# The Helper's Journey

*Second Edition*