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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

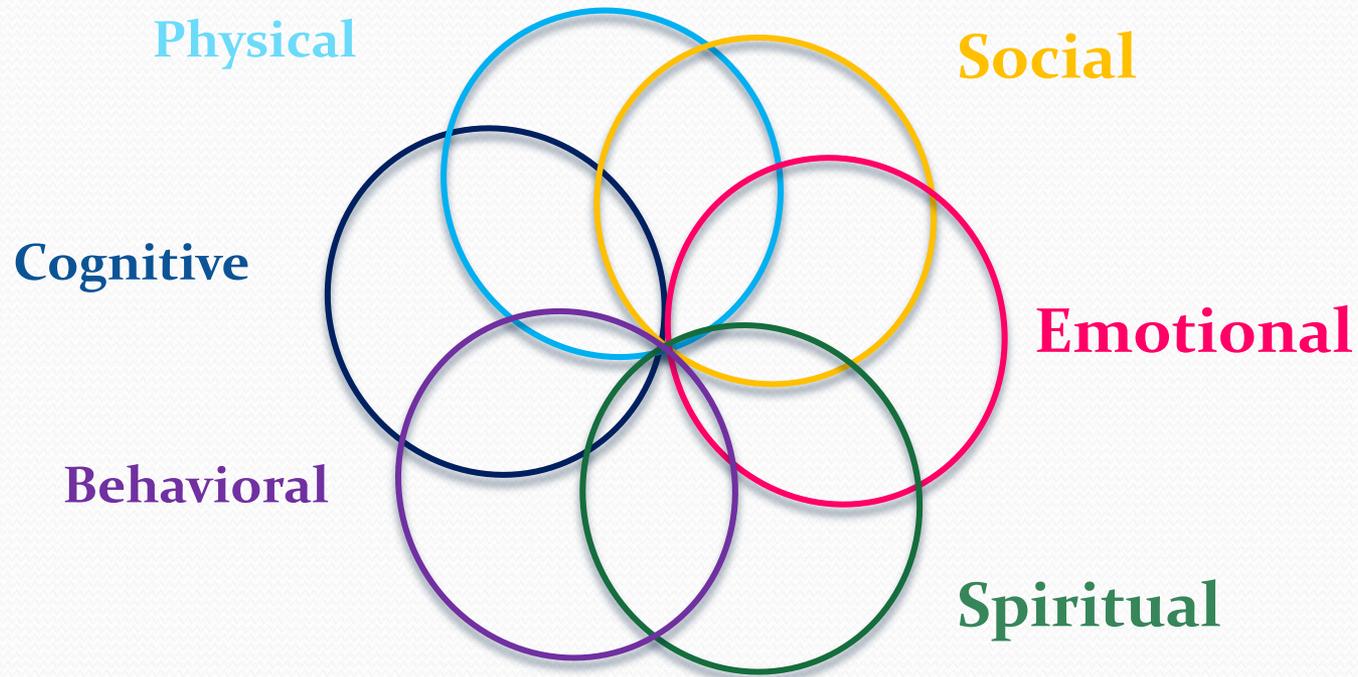


Parke & Bowlby

- 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

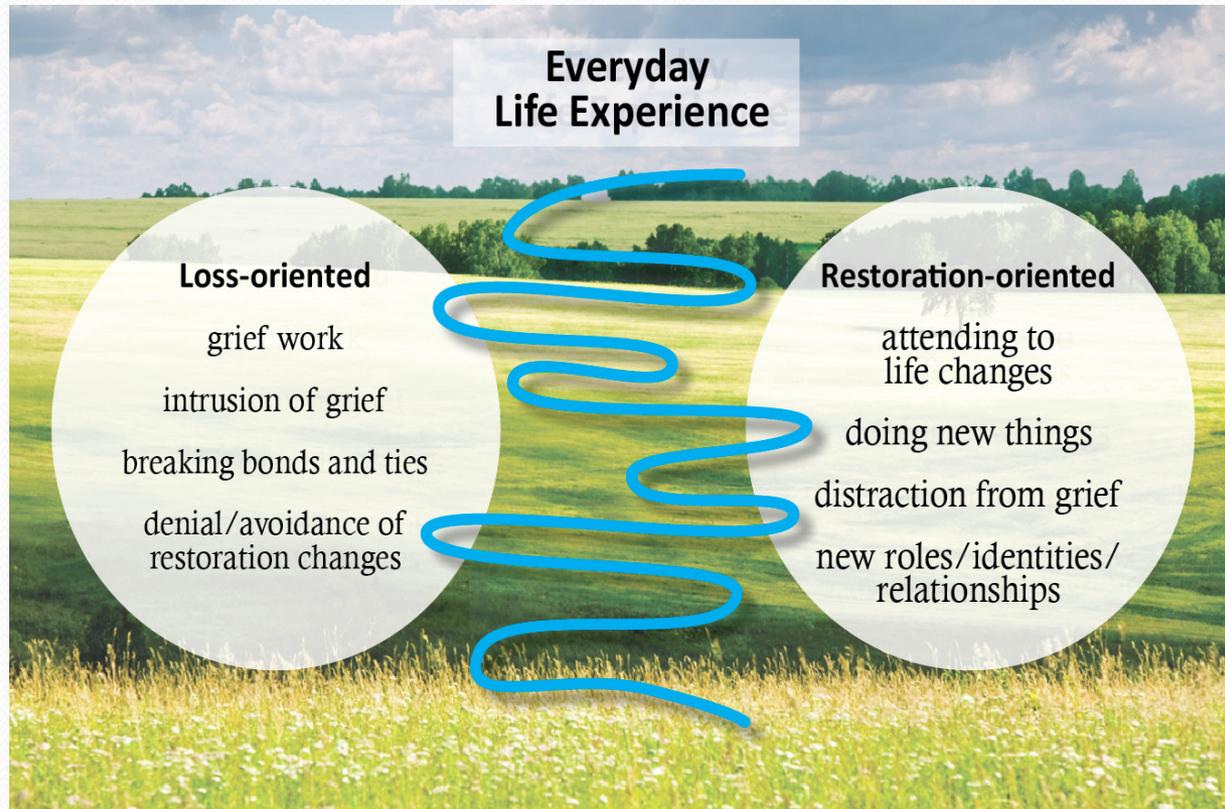
Skill at:

- 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

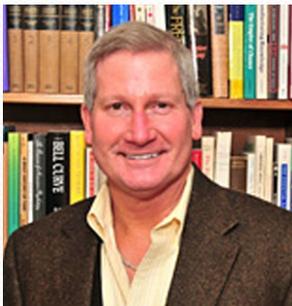


~Rubin, 1999

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

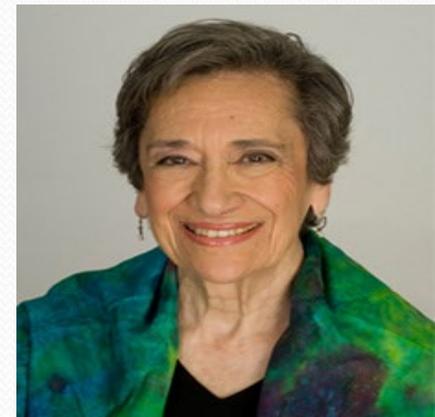
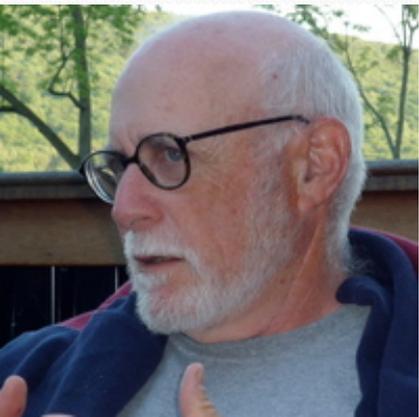


Concept of Continued Bonds

- 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

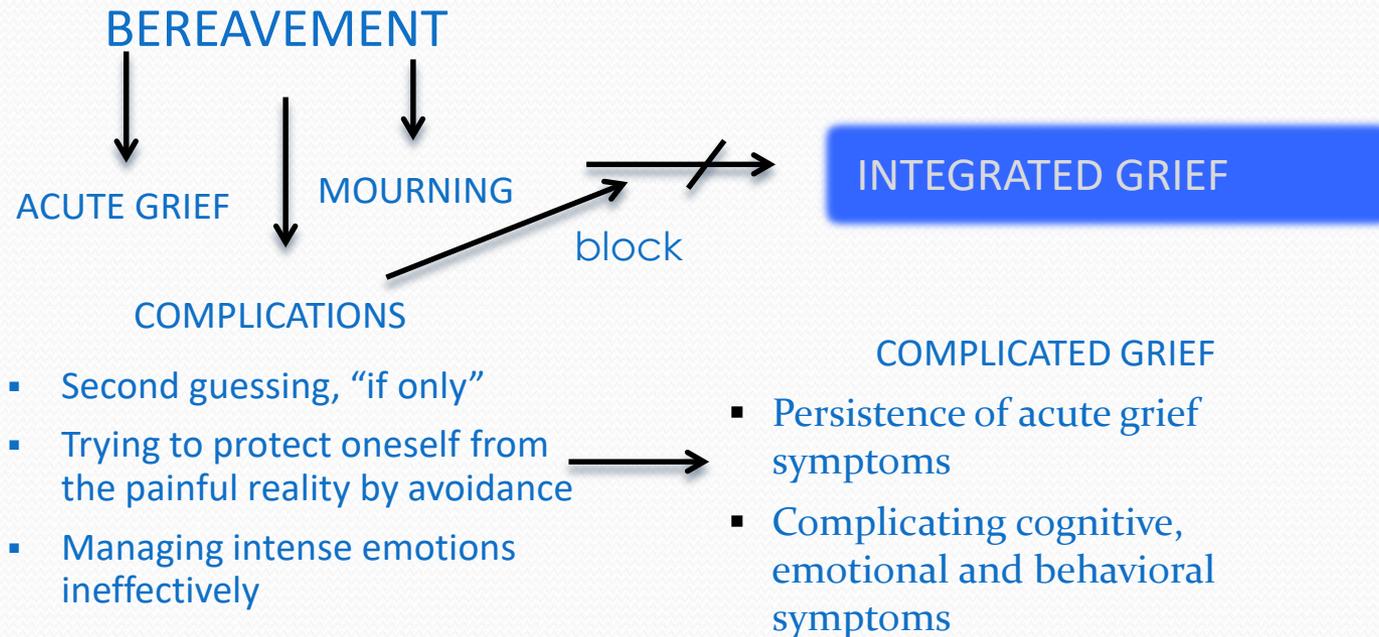
- “Rather than being external losses these are internal in nature. These are losses that occur when something dies inside of us.”
- Loss types: ambiguous, nonfinite, chronic sorrow & intangible or tangible losses

~ Darcy Harris, PhD

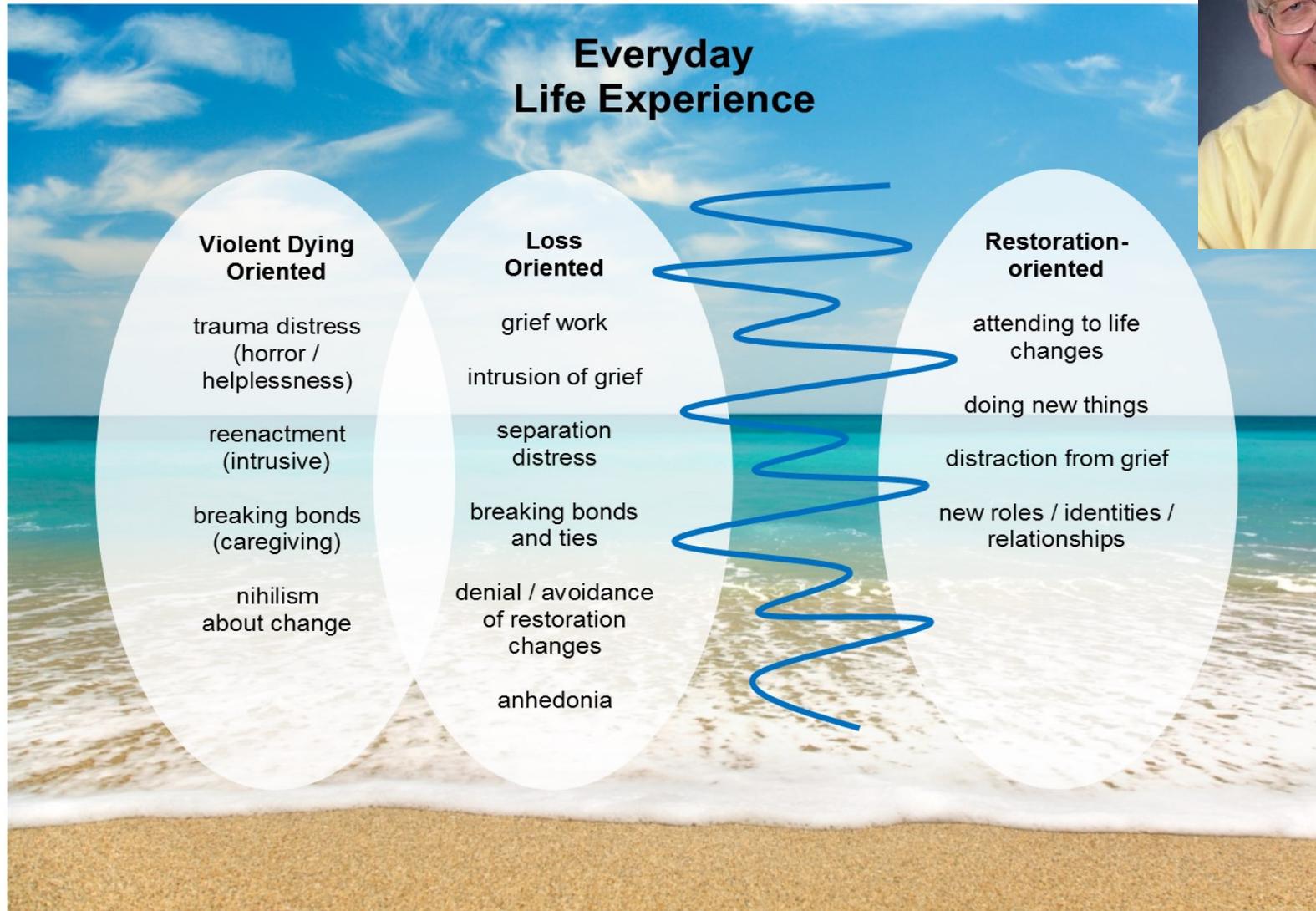
Complicated Grief



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

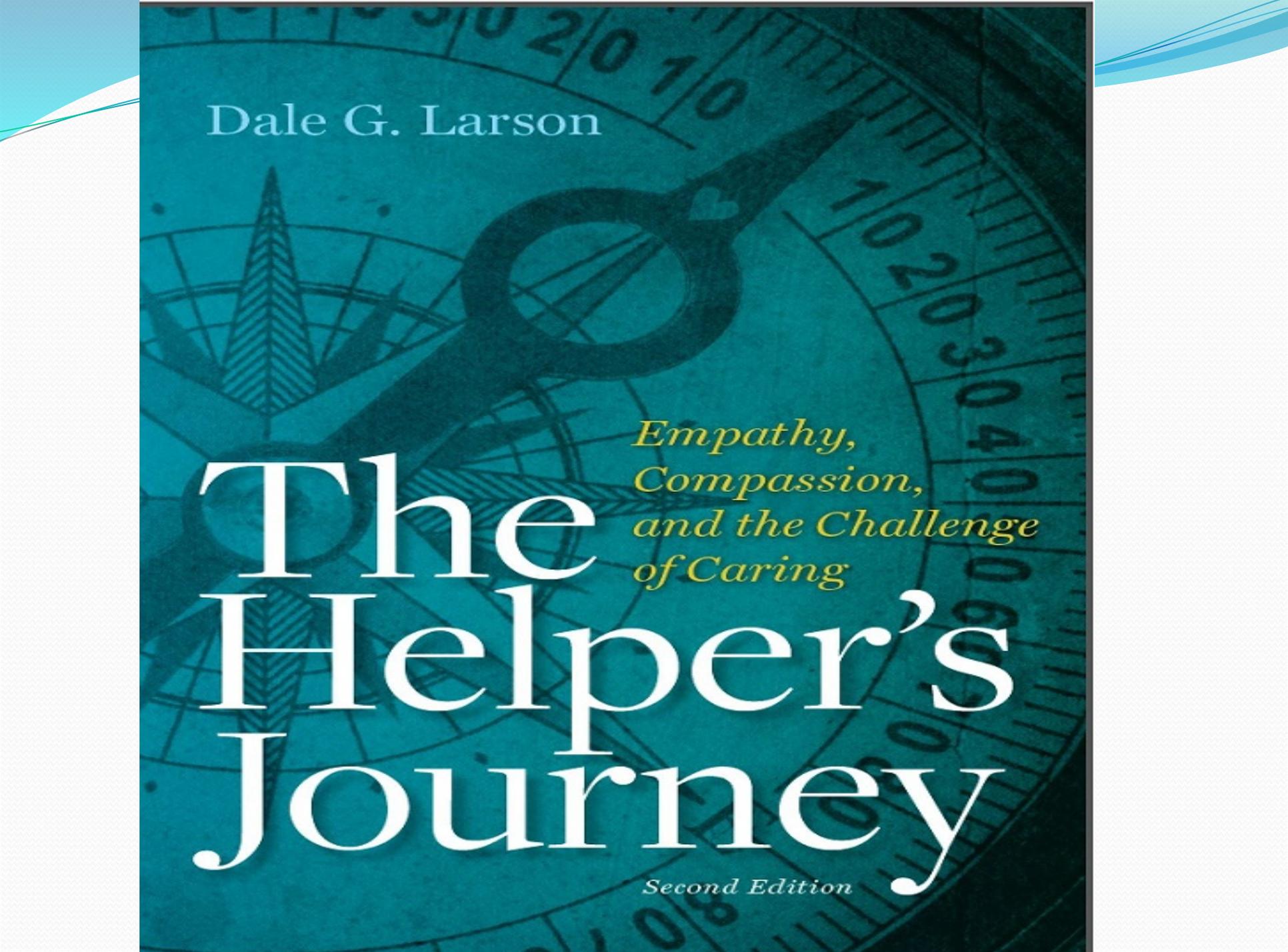
Core Principles

- 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