



‘Loss, Sorrow and Parental Adjustment for Social Workers in Disability’

Presented as part of an action research project

Background to Project


- Action Research (AR) project as part of an MSc Loss and Bereavement
- Aim of the study was to establish if social workers identified loss in parent carer's and saw it as important to address
- These losses are referred to as non-finite loss and include;
 - The loss of hopes, dreams, wishes and expectations
 - The loss of a 'normal' parenting experience
 - The loss of future opportunities for their child
- Study is focused on enhancing the emotional support provided by social workers to support parents to adjust to their changed circumstances
- AR allows that knowledge accrued by the 'insider' researcher can be used to investigate issues or concerns in order to bring about change (i.e. use of practice wisdom is allowed!!)

Taking Actions





During this workshop we will

- Feedback on research findings
 - Explore loss –personally, professionally, for parents we work with
 - Review some grief and loss models from current literature
 - Introduce Range of Response to Loss Model and Adult Attitudes to Grief Scale
 - Collaborate on developing a practice guidance
 - Take breaks!!
- 




Key Learning Outcomes



- Confidence in considering loss as part of the parental experience
- Explore the significance of the story of the loss experience
- Enhance knowledge and skills in working with loss and grief in the parents we work with to support their adjustment and build resilience



Reflective Practice – Mirroring the AR Process

- 
- Does the theory presented resonate with you?
 - Is it applicable to your practice?
 - Can you share an example with participants today?



Research Findings

► Survey:

- 11 participants had provided emotional support specific to the loss of the “anticipated” child to ten or more families
- Responses to questions on training indicated that 12 respondents strongly agreed and a further 2 agreed that they would like further training
- Ten participants addressed issues of loss at the initial assessment stage.

► Thematic Analysis:

- The Story of the Loss: using the narrative process to affect change
- Navigating Alone: individual practitioner responses
- Opportunities for Support: mapping Interventions



Exploring Loss

- **Loss:** Losing something that is significant to us. Loss is a constant companion in life
- **Circumstantial Losses:** (Parkes, 1971/1988)
 - Not common to everyone
 - Loss or change which takes place over a relatively short period of time with little time or opportunity for preparation
 - The implication of the loss or change are lasting rather than transient
 - There is a need to revise one's assumptions about the world in a major way
- **Grief:**
 - It is the natural process of reaction and adjustment to loss and change
 - Intense sorrow-mental, physical, emotional and spiritual suffering resulting from loss
 - Is a transforming experience, can lead to personal growth

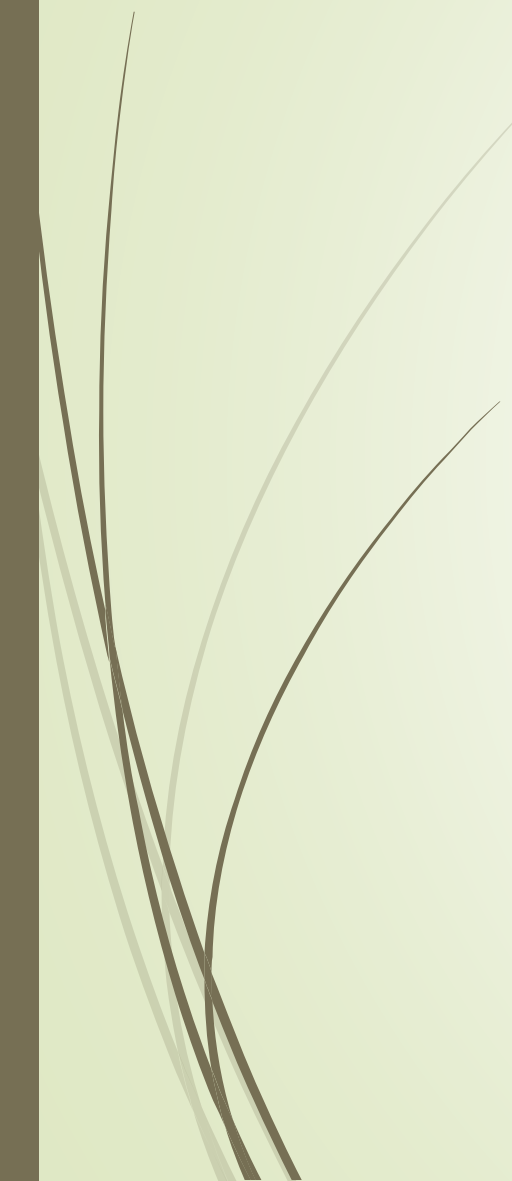


Exploring Loss

- Loss of the child that was expected
- Loss of expectations in relation to future life for the child and the family
- Loss of “normal” child development trajectory /peer comparisons
- Loss of “certainty”, identity, assumptions can be shattered
- Increased stress and worries impacting on other children, parent relationships
- Accompanied by other practical changes such as one parent giving up work, financial pressures, extra planning required for schooling, holidays



Exploring your own life losses to date:

- Using the handout for guidance complete the reflective piece on your own
 - Decide how much you want to share
Think of this as a parallel process for parents (what would you / they struggle with in your first meeting)
 - Take a few minutes to reflect and become aware if there are any things coming into your awareness that need a few minutes reflection
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Personal loss reflection

Personal Loss Experience:

Please draw a ring around any of the following losses you have experienced. There is space at the end to write in other experiences you may have experienced.

Draw a square around a *significant loss* you experienced.

Cat died	home broken into	purse stolen	car accident
Lost job	dog died	children left home	loss of health
Grandmother died	friendship ended	partner died	failed exams
Loss of home	miscarriage	friend died	broke arm or leg
Father died	Mother died	loss of faith	parents separated
Marriage breakdown	moved away from place where you grew up	moved country	
Loss of financial security	changed school	fell out with best friend	
End of relationship with first love	good neighbour or friend moved away		
Moved to the other end of the country	failed exams	didn't get specific job	
Birth of sibling caused upset	death of sibling	adoption	abortion
Suicide	Mental health issues	Other.....	



Feedback from Exercise





Break -10 mins



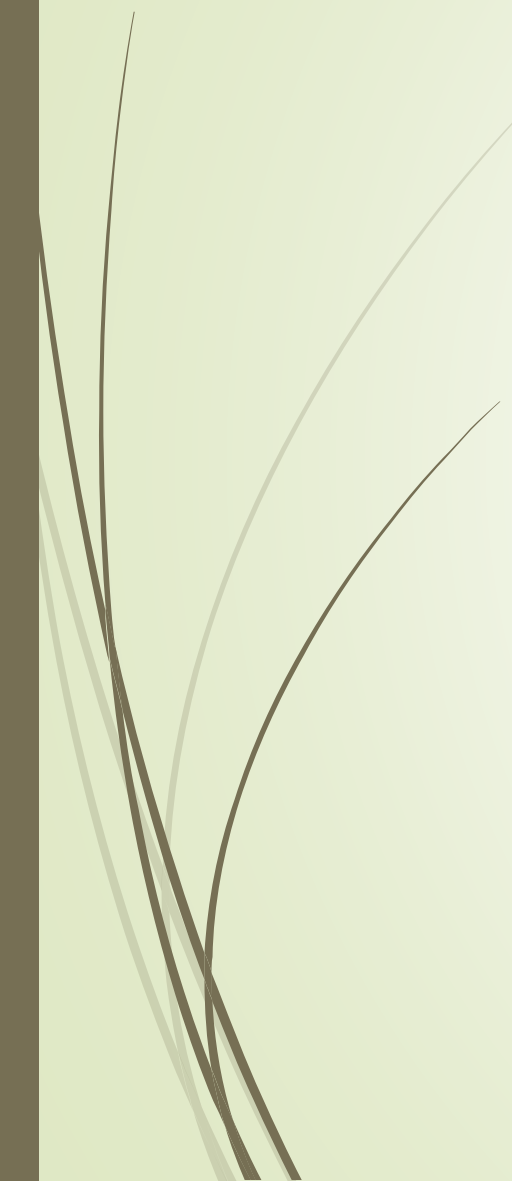


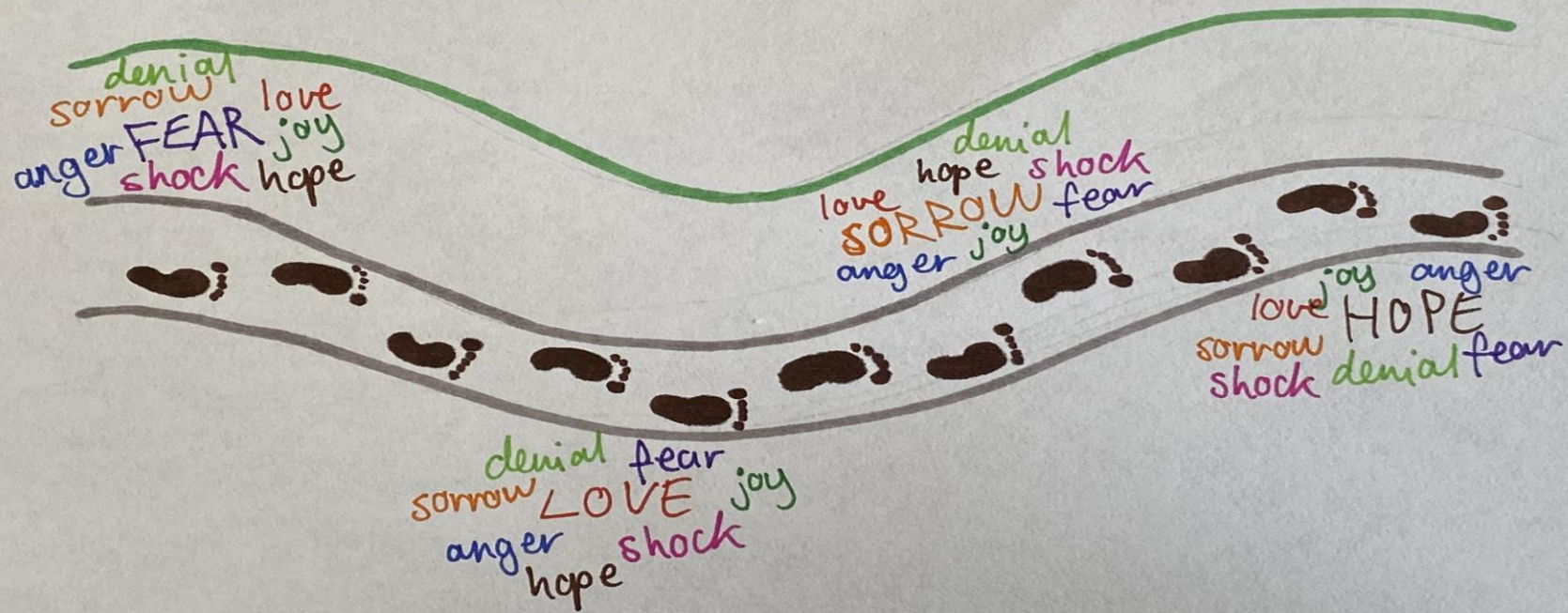
Current Models

- Chronic Sorrow (Olshansky, 1962)
- Psychosocial Transitions (Parkes, 1971)
- Dual Process Model (Stroebe and Schut, 1999)
- Ambiguous Loss (Boss, 1999)/Disenfranchised Grief (Doka, 2004)
- Concept of Nonfinite Loss (Bruce and Schultz, 2001)
- Resilience (Bonanno, 2004)
- Range of Response to Loss (Machin, 2001)
- Meaning Reconstruction (Neimeyer, 2002)



Chronic Sorrow

- A normal grief response in parents of children with developmental disability,
 - The loss experience is frequently misunderstood, unresolved, pervasive, continuing and resurgent.
 - It is defined as a periodic resurgence of grief related emotions, triggered by events, and associated with the ongoing disparity between the desired and actual reality
 - In the context of a strong attachment to another.
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Reflection

- Does this concept resonate with you?
- Can you relate it to your practice?
- Can you give an example?



Psycho-social Transition Theory

- Our experience of life enables us to build up an internal model of the world and ourselves which we assume to be true-Our Assumptive World
- This enables us to recognise the world we meet and its vissitude's
- Major losses create major discrepancies between the world around us and our Assumptive World
- Our working model of how the world should be provides a sense of control, balance and certainty, Nonfinite losses: psychological threat and we respond with fear and anxiety, strive to regain a sense of control



Shattered Dreams

- Losing an emotionally important image of oneself, one's family, one's life one's work
- Losing the possibility of 'what might have been'
- Abandonment of a plan for a particular future
- The dying of a dream



Grieving Shattered Dreams

Needs:

- Storying and re-storying after the loss
- Involves grieving the old story
- Before creating the new story
- Listen for:
 - Major components/ themes /values of the old story
 - How can they be reframed in the new story



Reflection



- Does this concept/theory resonate with you?
- Can you apply it to your practice?
- Can you give an example?



Ambiguous Loss/ Disenfranchised Grief



- Loss that is uncertain, incomplete or unresolved – a major stressor which can defy resolution
- Losses associated with the Assumptive World are frequently ambivalent
- Permission to grieve not always present/lack of rituals for the person, the family and the wider community
- People are not maladaptive but their circumstances are complicated or “ambiguous”.

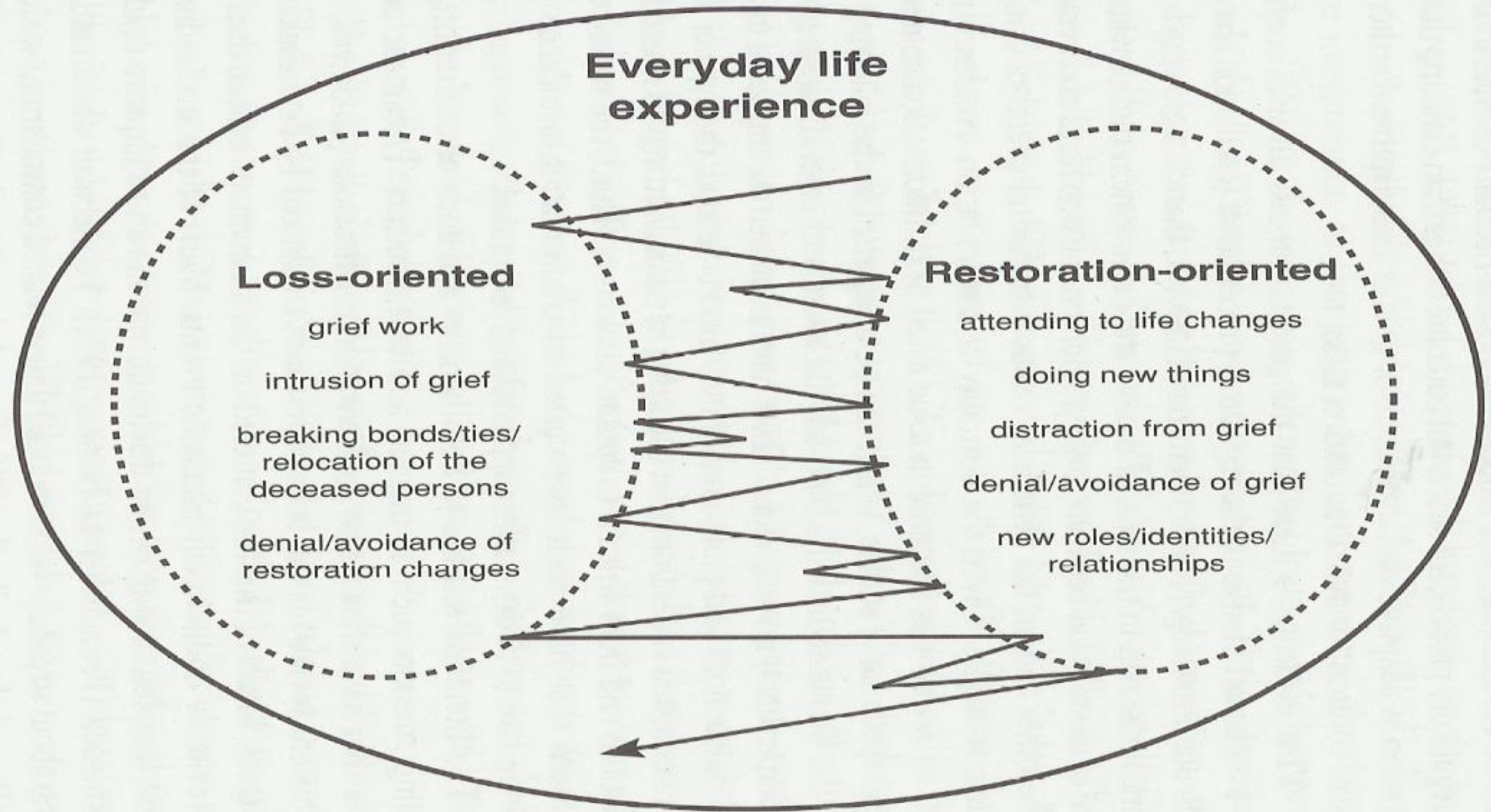


Reflection



- Does these theories resonate with you?
- Can you relate it to your practice?
- Can you give an example?

A Dual Process Model of Coping With Bereavement





Dual Process Model

- Describes what is happening
- Key to adjustment is oscillation
- Avoidance of loss orientation, grief will be delayed (controlled)
- Avoidance of restoration orientation, chronic or prolonged grief,



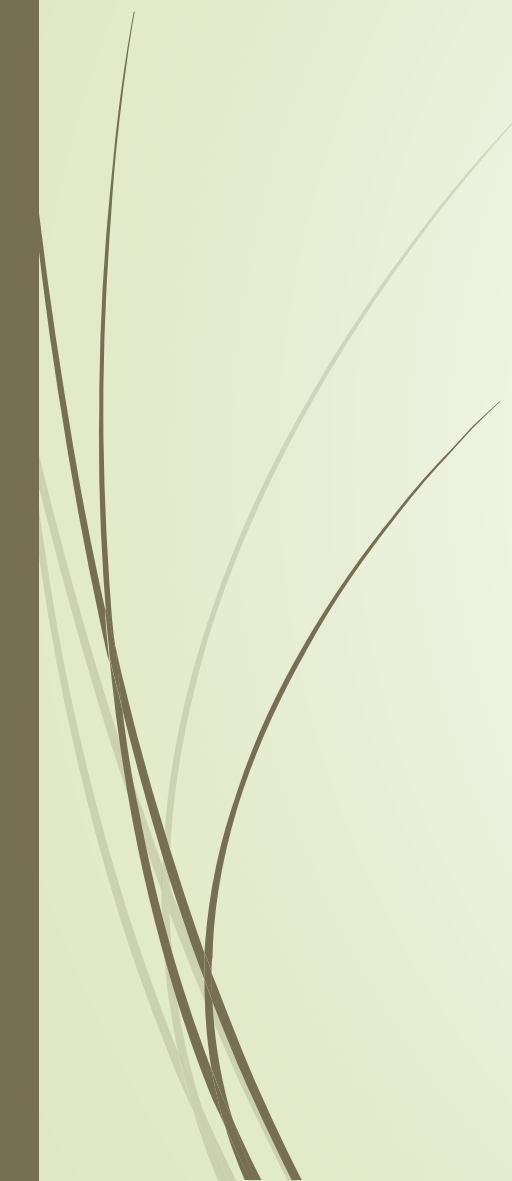
Reflection



- Does this theory resonate with you?
- Can you relate it to your practice?
- Can you give an example?



Meaning Reconstruction

- Grieving is the act of affirming or reconstructing a personal world of meaning that has been challenged by the loss.
 - Reconstructing a world that restores a semblance of meaning, direction and predictability to a life transformed.
 - The task of the counsellor is to help the griever build a bridge between the past and a changing and uncertain future.
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Reflection




- Does this theory resonate with you?
- Can you relate it to your practice?
- Can you give an example?



Evolving theories about Grief and Loss

- Newer thinking on grief process, not linear e.g. Dual Process (used with families to explain what is happening)
- No such thing as recovery, getting back as things were before...rather the emphasis is now on adaptation to the loss
- Main task is now seen as making sense of the loss in some way – Meaning Reconstruction (Niemeyer)
- Notion of detaching emotional energy from the event and moving on is no longer seen as paramount



Break – 10 mins





Range of Response to Loss Model

Model and Scale to identify positive adaptation to loss

key word is **resilience** which is defined as:

- ***personal resourcefulness***
- ***positive life perspective***
- ***social embeddedness***



Resilience



- Is the source of stress greater than the resourcefulness of the individual
- Therefore coping capacity is not predictable but has to be looked at in the context of the interplay between the individual and the events which occur



Four themes

- **Overwhelmed**- 'sunk in the distress of grief'
- **Controlled**-need to subdue emotions and focus on life demands
- **Resilience**-face the loss in all its contexts with equilibrium
- **Vulnerability**-tension and feeling overwhelmed

*** emphasises the social context of grief



Range of Response to Loss

- Two elements at the core of the **grief reaction**
 - Overwhelmed feelings dominate, sadness, anger, guilt,
 - Focus is on feelings



Range of Response to Loss

- The second element is a controlled loss response
 - This is manifested through a predominant focus on day to day concerns and planning for the future



Conflict

- These two competing elements create uncomfortable contradictions between a sense of powerlessness and the need to regain control



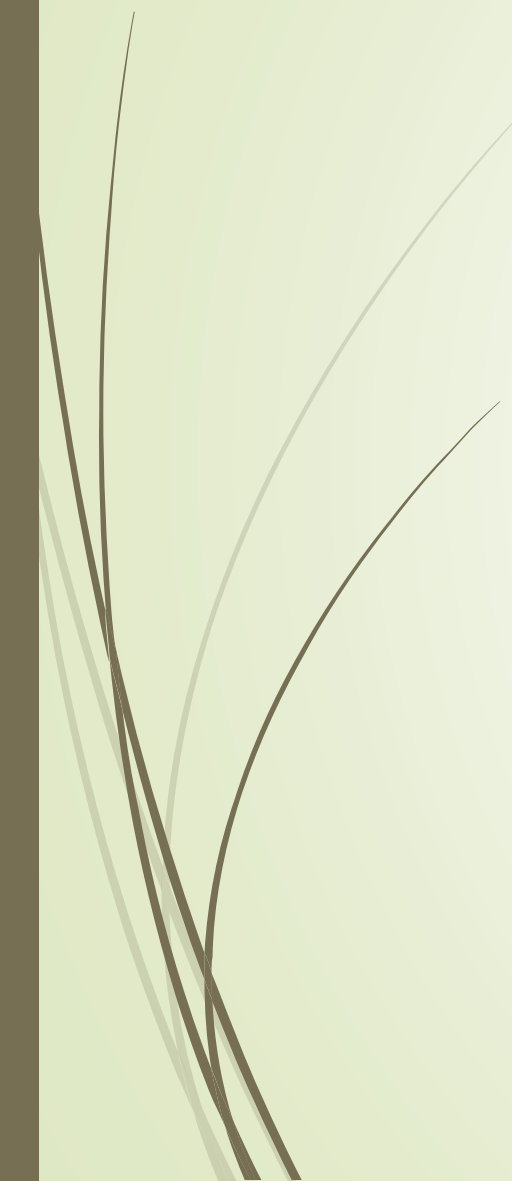
Resilience



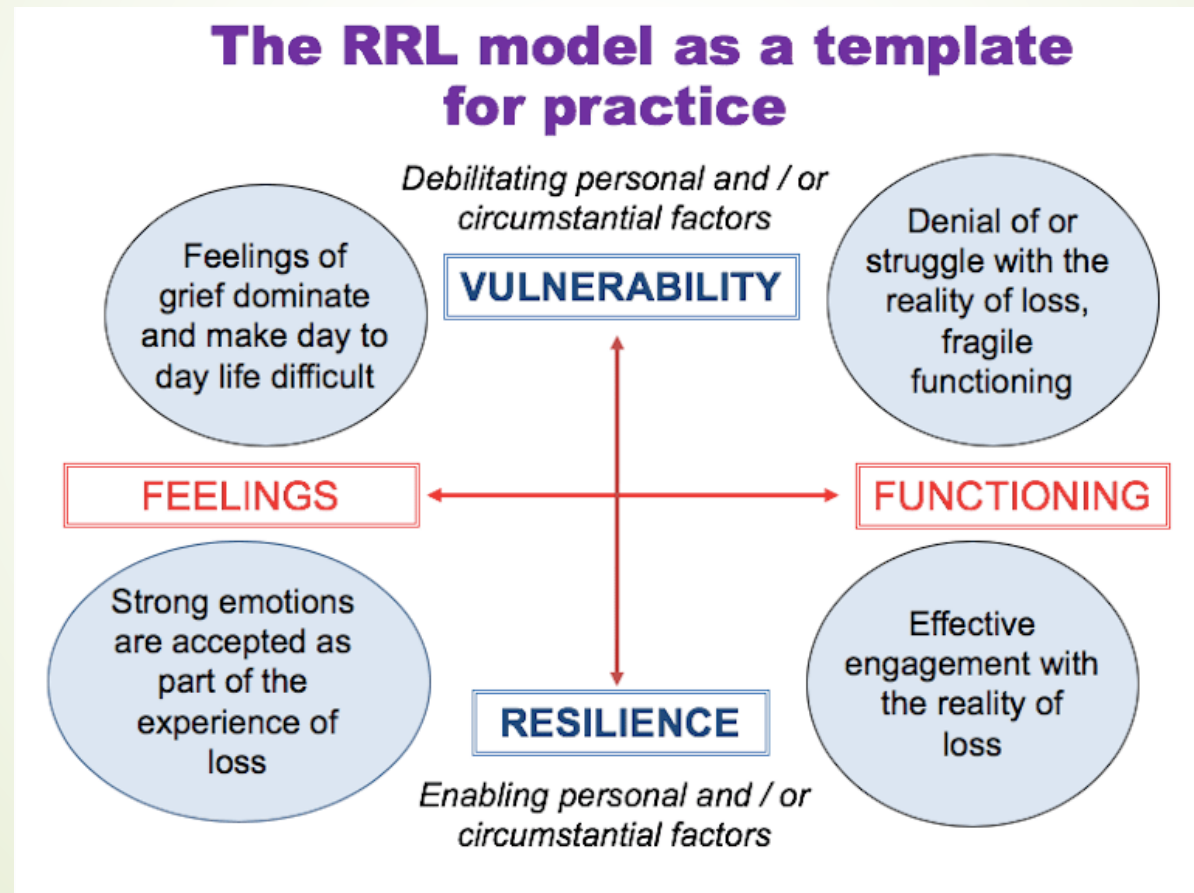
- An ability to face the distress while still being able to distinguish those area of life where control and choice are possible
- The distress is mediated by an awareness of personal resourcefulness as well as being able to make sense of the loss
- It allows individuals to integrate the overwhelming and controlling elements of their grief



Vulnerability

- An absence of resilience
 - Tension between powerlessness and the need to be in control when the need to be in control is essential to the person's sense of well-being
 - Persistent overwhelming feelings
 - Being in control is the normal coping style but the usual strategies fail to subdue distressing emotions
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Range of Response to Loss Model




Adult Attitude to Grief scale

Indicate (tick) your response to the attitude expressed in the following statements:

Adult Attitude to Grief scale	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I feel able to face the pain which comes with loss.					
2. For me, it is difficult to switch off thoughts about the person I have lost.					
3. I feel very aware of my inner strength when faced with grief.					
4. I believe that I must be brave in the face of loss.					
5. I feel that I will always carry the pain of grief with me.					
6. For me, it is important to keep my grief under control.					
7. Life has less meaning for me after this loss.					
8. I think it's best just to get on with life and not dwell on this loss.*					
9. It may not always feel like it but I do believe that I will come through this experience of grief					

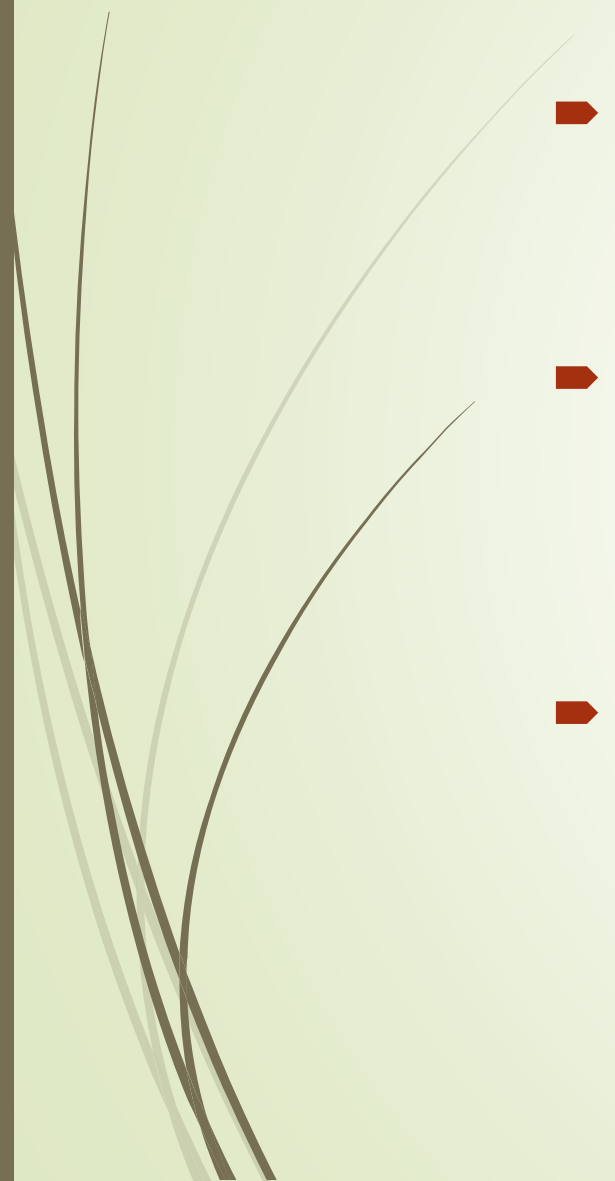


The Story

- Why is it important?
 - Helping parents to tell their story helps them to adjust
 - Person-centeredness
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Narrative Process- Making Sense of the Loss

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- External- the story of what happened helps confirm the reality of the loss “ tell me about ...”
 - Internal- telling the story of the impact of the loss helps address the emotional consequences of it “ tell me what you are feeling and thinking...”
 - Reflexive- the story is a way of integrating the loss into changed life circumstances and making sense of the loss experience “ tell me how you are making sense of what happened..”



Reflection



- Does this model make sense to you?
- Can you relate it to your practice?
- Can you give an example?



The story: What would we include in a practice guidance

- How do you start the conversation?
- How do you stay with the conversation?
- How do you revisit the conversation?
- How do you suggest that people need more support?