Loss, Grief and the Quest for Meaning

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Room

Edward Hopper:  *Sun in an Empty Room*
The Universality of Loss

“Losses are the shadow of all possessions--material and immaterial.”

--Carlos Sluzki
Principles of Self Care

Acknowledge the pain of the loss, and understand its function.
Sketching the Territory
Man’s Search for Meaning

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Viktor E. Frankl
Adaptive Grief

**Acute Grief Processes**
- Process “event story” of the death, oscillating between waves of painful emotion and ‘time outs’ of defensive exclusion
- Access “back story” of the relationship that provides attachment security

**Integrated Grief**
- Finality of death acknowledged
- Bittersweet emotions accessible & changing
- Mental representation of deceased revised
- Coherent narrative of loss formulated
- Life goals redefined
Waves of Grief
The integration of loss...

Like the warming of a room, or the coming of daylight, when you first notice the changes they have already been going on for some time.

--C.S. Lewis
Embrace a continuing bond with your loved one, rather than seek a final goodbye.
Two-Track Model

Simon Shimshon Rubin,
Haifa, Israel
Two-Track Model of Bereavement
(Rubin, *Death Studies*)

**Track 1: Biopsychosocial Functioning**
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Somatic concerns
- Relations with others
- Self-esteem
- Work

**Track 2: Relationship to Deceased**
- Imagery and memory
- Affect re deceased
- Preoccupation
- Idealization
- Impact on self
- Loss process
- Memorialization
Recognize that grief is processed between us, and not only within us.
Interviewed 48 members of 10 families about death of one of their members

Meaning-making processes included stories, dreams, comparison, and “coincidancing”

- Grounded theory categories of meanings
  - What death was not
  - No sense to be made
  - Death was unfair
  - Philosophical meaning
  - Religion and afterlife
  - Nature of the death
  - Attitude of deceased
  - Lessons learned
“Coincidancing”
Open to the growth that may come with grief.
Complicated Grief Symptoms & Posttraumatic Growth
Currier, Holland & Neimeyer, *Traumatology*

- 617 ethnically diverse adults in first two years of loss
- Controlled for cause of death, nature of relationship and other background factors
Post-traumatic Growth
The Life Imprint

• Mannerisms and gestures
• Interests and vocation
• Ways of speaking and relating
• Personality and values

José María Subirachs, Introversión