

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
NEW YORK SCHOOL

FINAL THESIS APPROVAL FORM

AUTHOR: Fr. Charles Chiew

TITLE: Good Grief Support Group

Vivienne Joyce^{SC}, LCSW, NIA
SIGNATURE OF ADVISOR(S) 3.9.06
Date

Dina Linsk
SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR 3/17/06
Date

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE OBTAINED BEFORE YOUR THESIS WILL BE
CONSIDERED ACCEPTED.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT ALL INFORMATION ON THIS FORM.

Good Grief Support Group

Charles Chiew

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for Doctor of Ministry Degree**

**Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Studies Program
New York, New York.**

March 2006

Advisors: Carol Ochs, Ph.D. and Vivienne Joyce, SC, LCSW.

Dedication

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;

I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and exult in you;

I will sing praise to your name,

O Most High.

(Psalm 9: 1-2)

This Demonstration Project is dedicated to my parents.

Acknowledgement

The project would not have been possible without the encouragement, support and guidance of many people. I remember them warmly, and I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to them.

I am deeply grateful to both my advisors, Dr. Carol Ochs and Sr. Vivienne Joyce for their valuable insights and guidance right from the beginning to the completion of this project. Special appreciation also goes to the faculty of the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health and the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion for their assistance in helping to form and to equip me to be a better skilled pastoral care giver.

I would like to thank all the bereaved who were part of the project.

Finally, my sincere thanks and appreciation go to all classmates in the Doctor of Ministry program as well as all friends for their moral support, encouragement and warm fellowship.

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

Doctor of Ministry Program

Good Grief Support Group

The primary goal of this project serves as a litmus test in gauging the viability and effectiveness of the Grief Support Group as one of the parish ministries. The objective is to facilitate grieving for participating members of the church community in the context of faith – a sort of a spiritual companioning them to shoulder through, courageously in Faith, and with Hope together with other grieverers in their struggle with the pain of loss.

The project seeks to address the process of grief by way of interfacing psychological and theological principles. It will also embark on considering the three phases of *grief work* of Theresa Rando complementing a *rite of passage* in the context of Christian Paschal Mystery. It also want to situate a scenario whereby participating members, accompanied by a leader as facilitator, narrate their own grieving stories at the same time be able to mutually care and support each other in their grieving process, by journeying together in the process of grieving losses, each person will hopefully come to know that they are not alone, and come to understand that mourning is actually a very healthy process.

The project is divided into five chapters. The first is an introduction to the central theme of the project and how it came about. The second chapter explores the clinical and theological principles involved in this particular ministry. Chapter three provides a lay out of the Group Meeting Plan, while chapters four and five, written after the execution of the project, discuss the results and implications of the project.

The project was based on studies and materials from the fields of Psychology, Theology, and to a certain degree Scriptural.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgment.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
A statement of the problem or issue addressed by the proposed project	
Chapter II: Guiding Principles and Literatures	
1. Clinical Principles.....	5
2. Theological Principles.....	8
Reflection and Application.....	13
Chapter III: Support Group Meeting Plan.....	15
1. Emancipation – Separation Phase.....	16
2. Readjustment – Liminal Phase.....	17
3. Reestablishment – Reaggregation Phase.....	19
The role of the Facilitator.....	20
Assessment.....	22
Chapter IV: Result	
A. A description of outcomes.....	24
B. Development not anticipated.....	28
Prayer Service.....	29
Chapter V: Discussion	
Implications.....	35
Unexpected Outcomes.....	38

Contribution to Clinical Principles.....	40
Contribution to Theological Principles.....	41
Contribution to Ministry in Wider Context.....	42
Implications for Future Ministry.....	43
Appendixes	
Appendix A.....	45
Appendix B.....	59
Appendix C.....	66
Support Group Member Evaluation Form.....	71
Voices of Grief – Voices of Healing.....	73
Bibliography.....	76

Good Grief Support Group

Chapter I

A Statement of the problem or issue addressed by the proposed project

We spent a good portion of our lives working diligently to acquire things that make life rich and meaningful – friends, a wife or husband, children, a home, a job, material comforts, money, and security. What happens to us when we lose any of these persons or things which are so important to us?

We, quite naturally, grieve over the loss of anything important. Sometimes, if the loss is great, the very foundations of our life are shaken, and we are thrown into deep despair. When we know little about the nature of grief, we may become panicky when it strikes us, and this serves to throw us deeper into despondency. What ought we to know about the “grief process,” so that we can better cope with it?

Grief, often the most profound form of sorrow, demands the support and compassion of our fellow human beings. In every epoch and culture, people have come together in times of grief to help one another. Grief support groups provide an opportunity for this kind of help and support. People, whether consciously or unconsciously, made the effort to help create a “safe place” to nurture others. When people are privileged to witness the pain soften and hope emerge, they realize it is worth all their efforts (Wolfelt, 2004).

Sometimes death touches us for the first time as a child. Sometimes it is in the teen and young adult years, and for others, death may even spare us until our adulthood. Even though we still speak of death in hushed tones, it is an inevitable human experience.

A loved one has died, and we are left behind. We may be filled with questions, strange thoughts, and many uncommon feelings. Unlike most other life events – death usually comes upon us without much preparation. Even in the course of caring for one who has been chronically or terminally ill, the finality of death still brings about moments of dealing with helplessness, shock, numbness and a self defense called denial.

Grief is our response to loss, and mourning is a process that brings us on a journey towards recovery. Mourning has also been seen as “grief going public.” The process involves physical responses such as somatic or body distress, intense emotional and unexpected feelings, and strange thoughts or uncomfortable behaviors. As we mourn, we are feeling separation pain. While all this upheaval occurs, our mind is also struggling to protect itself from the emotional reality of the psychic trauma that it feels. Grief is the normal reaction to loss, a universal experience repeatedly encountered. And loss is a natural part of existence. We confront issues of loss over and over again. To a certain degree the process of grief occurs in reaction to each of these losses. The nature, intensity, and length of the grief process will be influenced by a number of variables. The process that initiates the full-blown acute grief response to the death of a loved one. Kubler-Ross (1973) stressed that it is important to treat death as a natural part of life. Grief, therefore, is the process that allows us to let go of that which was and be ready for that which is to come. (Rando, 1985)

I choose to do this grief work project because of my observation as well as my own experience about how people grieve the death of their loved ones in my home land, Borneo. I grew up in a culture where people go about mourning their deceased by indulging in heavy consumption of alcoholic beverages that goes on for days. I have

come to notice that this is neither a good nor a healthy way of going through the process of grieving. Sometimes it is worse solely because of the fact that the grieving family has to provide for the food and drink; some for seven days, others forty days, and even a hundred days. It, not only causes unnecessary burden to the family, it also, overtime, breeds unhealthy social problems.

Besides, there was neither any proper "clinical" nor "theological" method, either in the neighborhood or in the parish, where people could mourn their dead. There is also no Bereavement Support Group in the Parish. By taking on the challenge to write up a project, I wish to demonstrate that by interfacing the clinical group process with that of spiritual companioning of the bereaved, there will emerge a more empowering and healthful way of helping grievers. I want to use this project to challenge, to appeal and to facilitate a healthy and healing process of bereavement; firstly, for the grieving members of the parish; secondly, for the native people of Borneo, and also for others who practice similar customs.

This project, therefore, seeks to address the process of grief by way of interfacing psychological and theological principles. It will also embark on considering the three phases of *grief work* of Therese Rando complementing a *rite of passage* in the context of Christian Paschal Mystery.

The objective of this project is not to provide therapy, but rather to facilitate grieving for members of the church community in the context of faith - a sort of a spiritual companioning them to shoulder through, courageously in Faith, and with Hope together with other grievers in their struggle with the pain of loss. As a minister and facilitator of the meetings, I hope to usher them to the realization of how blessed they

would be when they come to understanding, expression, adjustment and renewal - the process of grieving by sharing with one another.

Chapter II

Guiding Principles and Literatures

1. The **clinical principles** shall be based on the study made by Therese A. Rando (1985), who has observed that in order to completely understand the experience of the grief process it is necessary to know the basic tasks of grief. Accordingly, she considered Lindemann's (1944) concept of *Grief work* as still valid as it has been incorporated into contemporary researchers' definitions of the grief process (Parkes & Weiss, 1983; Worden, 1982). She identified three tasks in relation to the loss of loved one, which can be equally applied to other type of losses.

She named the first as *Emancipation from the Bondage of the Deceased*. When people care for one another, they emotionally invest part of themselves in each other. The single most crucial task in grief is "untying the ties that bind" the griever to the deceased individual. However, this does not mean that the deceased is forgotten or betrayed. The relationship is altered to be sure, but it still exists in a very special way in the heart and mind of the griever. What is changed is the griever's ongoing investment in and attachment to the deceased as a living person who could return the investment. The energy that previously went into keeping the relationship with the deceased alive now must be channeled elsewhere, where it can be returned.

The second is *Readjustment to the environment in which the Deceased is Missing*. The task here is for the griever to accommodate to the world without the presence of the deceased. The individual may have to adopt new roles and skills to compensate for the functions that once were performed by the loved one. Many distressing feelings

accompany this adjustment as the survivor struggles to bear the pain of separation and become accustomed to the loved one's absence. The loss affects the survivor emotionally, physically, socially, and cognitively.

The third is *Formation of New Relationships*. Here, the emotional energy that is withdrawn from the previous relationship has to be reinvested in someone or something else. It will constitute a different attachment and reinvestment of emotional energy.

These three tasks of the process of grief are not only ends in themselves, but also are an important rite of passage that the mourners must experience and traverse in order to completely become reintegrated back into the world. The three tasks of grief, cited above, are quite similar to the three stages of a *Rite of Passage* of Arnold van Gennep (1960): Separation from a former state, transition into a new state, and incorporation into that new state.

In order for grief work to effectively move from one stage to another, Rando (1985) identifies a six "R" process of mourning in three consecutive phases.

The first phase is the *avoidance phase*. Accordingly, during this phase there is a desire to avoid the terrible acknowledgement that that which was loved is now lost. The world is shaken and the individual is overwhelmed by the impact. Just as the human body goes into shock after a large enough insult, so too does the human psyche go into shock when confronted with an important loss. It is the natural reaction to the impact of such a blow. During this period the individual may be confused and dazed, unable to comprehend what has happened. A feeling of numbness is quite common. As *recognition* starts to seep in and shock starts slowly wearing off, denial immediately crops up. It is only natural that individual would want or need to deny that such a terrible event has

occurred. At this time denial is therapeutic. It functions as a buffer by allowing the individual to absorb the reality of the loss a little at a time, preventing her from being completely overwhelmed by it. Disbelief and a need to know why the death occurred may appear at this time. When the loss is recognized, the individual, will overtime, come to acknowledge, and understand the loss.

The second is the *confrontation phase*. During this phase grief is experienced most intensely. Denial and disbelief may still occur, but a whole host of new reactions arise that spring from the individual's confrontation with the loss and its implications. Extremes of emotion are felt. The individual *reacts* to the separation, and experiences the pain of loss. The person would begin to feel, identify, accept and give some form of expression to all the psychological reactions to the loss. For some, these emotions will be readily expressed, while others will have conflict about giving vent to them at all. The perception of new reactions in itself may prompt fear and anxiety in the griever. At such instance, the individual *recollect* and re-experience the deceased/lost object and the relationship. Everything would be *reviewed* and remembered realistically, thus, aiding to *revive* and re-experience the feelings. As a consequent, the individual will come to *review* and remember everything about the loss realistically.

The third is the *reestablishment phase*. This phase constitutes a gradual decline of grief and marks the beginning of the emotional and social reentry back into the everyday world. The loss is not forgotten, but merely put in a special place which, while allowing it to be remembered, also frees the mourner to *readjust* to move adaptively into new world without forgetting the old. Thus, the mourner begins to revive and develop a new relationship with the deceased/lost object, and adopt new ways of being in the world. The

mourner learns to live with the loss as emotional energy is *reinvested* in new persons, things, and ideas. This phase, like the others, is not an all-or-nothing phase. Rather, it waxes and wanes during the latter part of the confrontation phase and continues slowly thereafter. It never arrives all at once and for some time it coexists with many of the previous reactions.

2. The **theological principles** will be based on Gerald Arbuckle's (1991) study on Brueggemann's (1987) insights where he sees the Christian's Paschal Mystery parallels that of Rando's clinical rite grief process.

The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane marks the first or *separation* phase of the greatest of all social dramas and rituals of mourning: the agony, death and resurrection of Christ. Jesus becomes both that which is to be mourned and the ritual leader at the same time.

The agony of Jesus Christ situated him facing *separation*, where he struggles with the imminent suffering which he is about to encounter. Thus, the separation stage of a mourning ritual is characterized by reactions like fear, anxiety, and numbness to actual or anticipated loss; after the example of the lament psalmists, Jesus does not camouflage or deny the sufferings he is to experience. Psalm 80 starkly proclaims from the beginning that the psalmist or the community is afflicted. There is no camouflaging of the loss. As in every lament psalm, there is a dramatic recognition of loss:

You have fed them with the bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
You made us the scorn of our neighbors;

Our enemies laugh among themselves (Vv.5-6).

So miserable is the sufferer that there is nothing left but to trust God. In the grief psalms, no matter how terrible the situation may be, there is still the hope that God will intervene, just as he has repeatedly done in the past. The psalmist ponders the desperate situation confronting the Israelites after the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians:

Shepherd of Israel, listen...bring us back,
let your face shine on us and we shall be safe...
...protect what your own hand has planted.
They have thrown it on the fire like dung,
the frown of your rebuke will destroy them (Ps. 80: 1, 7,
15f).

The evangelist Mark records that as Jesus begins to pray he feels 'terror and anguish' (14:34). The evangelist Luke also highlights the intensity of the agony of Jesus, when he describes him praying with such earnestness that 'his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood' (22:44). The dramatic nature of the emotional reaction is further accentuated by the fact that, when Jesus foretold his death previously, only his disciples had expressed anxiety and desolation (Mk 8:32 & 10:32). Confrontation with the immediate harsh reality of death now evokes in Christ *himself* the powerful emotions of horror and fear.

Despite the loneliness and darkness, Jesus prays to the Father with a vigorous trust and hope that he will intervene to help him, according to the format to be found in the lament psalms. The psalmist retells the action of God that molded the Israelites into his chosen people: the Exodus from Egypt and the entrance into the promised land (Ps.

80:8-11). These interventions of God gave meaning to their lives then; the hope is that he will again intervene to restore meaning in the midst of their fearful misery and chaos (vv.16f). The lament proceeds from petition to trust and praise: 'give us life and we will call upon your name' (v.18).

The spirit of separation remains throughout the text: "Let your will be done, not mine' (Lk 22:42). Left alone when he mourned his imminent death, he spent the last night praying at Mt. Olives whence an angel came to give him strength. Rando's emancipation could resonate Jesus' acceptance of his fate of suffering the pain of death, and the fact that he surrendered to the will of God.

The Father does console the abandoned One and this is symbolized in the account of the coming of an angel 'to give him strength' (Lk 22:43). Having prayed, Jesus is strengthened to accept his death for our sins in a fully conscious way. Now there is freshness and a vitality in his actions that contrasts markedly with his earlier fear. He knows what the Father wishes of him, so he tells his sleeping disciples to wake up and come with him to face the betrayal. On his own initiative Jesus asks the guards who they are searching for and then informs them he is the one they want (Jn 18:4-6).

The *liminal* stage of the ritual of our redemption is Christ's crucifixion and death. The scene is in many ways similar to that in the garden: the tragedy continues in an atmosphere of abandonment by most of his friends. All is done with a supreme spirit of separation and humility. He requests a final drink to assuage his thirst and this is seen by the evangelist John, through his reference back to Old Testament imagery: 'they gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink' (Ps 69:21); as a reminder to us that Jesus is consciously accepting the pain of death (Jn 19:28).

The symbols of abandonment or loneliness are graphic. About the ninth hour, Matthew records (27:46), Jesus cries out in anguish, yet with an abiding trust in the Father, using the opening words of the lament Psalms 22: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Surely this is one of the most compelling of all the Old Testament songs, for here the psalmist is pictured as sinking into the uttermost chasm of suffering and despair. Reflect on these lines in which the psalmist struggles to express his desolate state and suffering, an apt description also of Jesus on the cross:

My bones are all disjointed...

My mouth is dry as earthenware,

My tongue sticks to my jaw.

You lay me down in the dust of death (14f.).

While the psalm's phrases prophetically describe the suffering of Jesus, they also point to the world-wide redemptive/renewing potential of his sacrifice. As God created a plague of thick darkness over Egypt for three days to illustrate his sovereign power over the elements of the world (Ex 10:22f), so now the evangelist Matthew refers to a similar God-inspired awesome darkness during the moments of the extreme suffering and death of Jesus. The old world is coming to an end, the new is being born. Jesus himself had earlier foretold the chaos at the end of the world, when 'the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light' (Mt 24:29). Matthew and the early Christian believers see the death/resurrection scene as the precursor of this event, and thus describe the happening here in similar language (Senior, 1985).

The actual description of the death of Jesus – both priest and victim in the ritual of our redemption – is extremely brief, almost an anti-climax after the tragic drama of his suffering: “‘It is fulfilled’; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit’ (Jn 19:30). Here is Jesus totally and freely giving of himself to the Father. The gesture of ‘bowing his head’ means that Jesus is now at peace, because his life’s purpose has been accomplished and accepted by the loving Father (Schnackenburg, 1982). All that now remains is the triumph of his resurrection, which is the *reaggregation* phase of the redemptive ritual:

But he emptied himself... becoming as human beings are; ...He was Humbler yet, even accepting death, death on a cross. And for this God raised him high... so that all beings in the heavens, on earth, and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus (Ph 2:7-10).

And this is the *newness* stage that immediately comes from the death of Jesus. The evangelist writes quaking, boulders splitting apart, bodies of saints rising from their tombs after the resurrection of Jesus: they ‘came out of the tombs, entered the holy city and appeared to a number of people’ (Mt 27:53). This is a literary device of the evangelist, who wants to make a strong contrast between the death of the old and the birth of the new as a result of Christ’s death and resurrection

From death to life, from renunciation to comfort – Christ sets the pattern for authentic mourning for all time. There simply can never be life for any individual or group without a dying to that which is irrelevant or an obstacle to the carrying out of the mission of the Father in Christ: ‘Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus!’ (Ph 2:5). Unless we are prepared to learn separation through grieving in union with Christ suffering, dying and rising, we would find it very difficult to overcome our own grief,

and see separation as a gift. Separation is humanly costly, and without the abiding support of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to achieve (Arbuckle, 1991).

Jesus' *resurrection* brought about a transformed and glorified person who returns to a new type of relationship which constitutes a different readjustment and reinvestment. The disciples, who were disappointed and confused, begin to form a new relationship with the resurrected Jesus (Luke 24). The Paschal Mystery of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection constitute the very center of Christian belief.

These three stages, which are also the essence of the Sacraments of the Church, correspond with the concept of van Gennep's rite of passage as well as Rando's three tasks of the process of grief.

Reflection and Application

What the above exposition aims to do is to show that those with faith similar to that of Old Testament believers see things at a quite different level. They do not deny the reality of loss. On the contrary, they see chaos as the occasion to rediscover the historical fact that the Lord can intervene in human affairs to 'create new heavens and a new earth...[where] no more will the sound of weeping be heard' (Is 65:17, 19). The psalmists use the image of chaos in order to highlight its opposite; namely, the ongoing inventive and redemptive action of God. (Anderson, 1967). The experience of significant loss is likened to chaos: anger, numbness, loss of identity, denial that loss has occurred, nostalgia for the familiar past, guilt over one's failures and sins, depression, fear of the future, a feeling of drifting without purpose and identity. Yet, participation in chaos can

be the preface for an experience of God's ever-renewing love, provided we are prepared to grieve over that which has been lost.

In Jesus Christ, the Anointed One of the Father, we have the triumph of God's Kingdom over all the powers of evil, darkness, or chaos. If we follow his example of grieving, then we will discover through his love what it means to be in 'the new heavens and new earth' (2 Pet. 3:13).

At one point in Luke Jesus condemns those who refuse to grieve in this world, despite all that he has done to call them to this: 'we played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep' (v.32). We cannot be authentic Christians, if we refuse constantly to grieve over our sinful attachments to what does not belong to Christ.

Christ's life, especially in his agony, death, and resurrection, is a journey of grieving, in which he is that which is lost and the leader of the mourning ritual at the same time. Detachment, which is the letting go of all that would hinder individuals or organization from a committed relationship with God, is at the heart of all authentic grieving. Jesus is *the* model of detachment, for 'he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave... accepting death, death on a cross' (Ph 2: 7-8), in order that we might share the new fruits of his victory over death through his resurrection: 'In all truth I tell you, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy' (Jn 16:20).

Chapter III

Support Group Meeting Plan

This project serves as a *litmus test* in gauging the viability and effectiveness of the Bereavement Support Group as one of the parish ministries.

Grieving people need to know they are not alone (Yalom, 1985) – that there are safe places and kind and loving people willing to help them. Even in the wilderness of grief, they can reach out and discover comfort and support. Most of all, they can discover there is hope for tomorrow. These are the critical ingredients for healing.

In trying to meet the objective stated below, a model set of 6 meeting plans or sessions are suggested as guidelines.

1. The Support Group's five Development Phases
 - a. Warm-up and establishing of group purpose and limits.
 - b. Tentative self-disclosure and exploring group boundaries.
 - c. In-depth self-exploration and encountering the pain of grief.
 - d. Commitment to continued healing and growth.
 - e. Preparation for and leaving the group.

The project, therefore, will see the interfacing of the clinical and theological principles (as in Chapters 2) in helping bereaved people through the process of grieving. It will comprise a group of about 5 people [with at least 3 to form a group], who will meet for at least 90 minutes each appointed day and time for six consecutive meetings. The contents cover a variety of important topics, from group meetings to responding to potential problems in the group and evaluating group progress. The six-session step-by-

step meeting plan would help me reach out to minister to participating members who are in need of a meaningful group experience in their different phases of grieving.

In guiding members through the different phases of grieving, I will try to integrate Rando's three tasks of the psychological work on the process of grief; emancipation, readjustment, and reestablishment, with Arbuckle's three complementary theological phases of separation, liminality and reaggregation. It is to be noted that these stages do not form rigid phases and the griever will probably move back and forth among them. All individuals will not experience all phases presented; these are only some of the possible responses to a loss.

1. Emancipation – Separation phase

People will come to know that grieving is a process, and it takes time, which cannot be rushed. Each person handles loss in his/her own way and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. While each experience of mourning is unique, there are, nevertheless, some similarities in the process. One of those similarities is that there seem to be certain phases that we all go through as we grieve. We may be feeling numb, confused, and disorganized. Things may not feel real, that this is a dream, or that our loved one will return. Similar reactions like anger, sorrow, guilt, regret, gratitude and loss of interest in life characterize the separation phase.

It is hoped that members, at this phase, would begin to experience a sense of 'emancipation from the bondage of the deceased'. It also expects that the individuals would come to recognize, acknowledge and understand the loss they experienced (Rando, 1984). Like Jesus, who neither deny nor camouflage the suffering and mourning which is

characterized by reactions like fear, anxiety, and numbness to his actual or anticipated loss when he foretold his death. In loneliness and darkness, it is hoped that griever would emulate Jesus by taking up enough courage to pray to God with trust and hope that he will intervene to console them (Arbuckle, 1991).

These experiences characterize the first stage. This part of grieving doesn't usually last very long, but it helps members get through what they have to get through. In trying to achieve the above objective, group members will need to meet for two sessions.

[See Appendix A]

At the first session, the objectives might include helping members to:

- Speak about their loss and grief
- Develop trust in the group and its members
- Identify what they want from the group
- Make a commitment to work on their grief

The task of working on grief and the coming to know the meaning of loss as well as the psycho-spiritual dynamic way of dealing and coping with them will continue on to the second session. It is hoped that members will come to learn to accept their loss, and then strive to channel and invest their energy elsewhere, where it can be returned.

2. Readjustment – Liminal phase

The second phase is where we end up doing most of our work. Mourning is work: we may not be doing any heavy labor, but grieving requires a lot of mental labor and readjustment. The mourners would learn to readjust themselves to the environment in which the deceased is missing. The task here is for the griever to accommodate to the world without the presence of the deceased (Rando, 1984). The trauma of a major loss

can also be thought of as a kind of wound. Our emotions may run the gamut from deep sadness, to anger, to irritability, to anxiousness, to depression. We should not assume that what we are experiencing at this point is clinical depression – feeling bad is simply one of the aspects of grieving. We may feel that we are losing control or going crazy. We shouldn't be worried. There is no one way to mourn and these are all normal reactions to grieve.

Another aspect of this stage of grief is the experience of "secondary losses." We may find ourselves mourning not only our primary loss, but all the other losses connected to it. When one woman's only son was murdered, for example, she not only mourned her son but the fact that there would be no one to look after her in her old age. These losses are painful, but they are also a part of the process of mourning.

Some people have experiences of seeing or feeling the person who died or actively searching for the deceased. This is a natural response to loss in which the griever is preoccupied with the deceased. According to Rando, it occurs as a wish to undo the loss and a reflection of the internal grief work being done in which the griever is focusing attention on the deceased as they begin to detach emotionally from the deceased in order to be free for new attachments in the future (1984). Sometimes there is even experienced physically as well as psychologically – a gut-wrenching, gnawing emptiness that needs to be filled, or sharp intense pangs of grief that cut into the hearts. A significant proportion of mourners actually experiences some type of visual or auditory hallucination of the deceased, or feels an intuitive, overwhelming sense of her presence, but these experiences are often encouraging and comforting. They remind us of our belief that there is life after death and that both the living and the dead are part of the

“communion of saints” in which all believers share.

Arbuckle (1991) characterizes this phase as adjusting to reality without object lost; where there exists tension between pull of the past and the realities of life and this interiorize myth of Christ’s death/resurrection – seen as the strength to face future without object loss.

The Readjustment – liminal phase would be worked at the third and fourth sessions. [See Appendix B]

3. Reestablishment – Reaggregation phase

The final phase of mourning is called the “re-establishment phase.” This describes the point in our mourning where we feel we are ready to reenter the world. If one has lost a spouse, s/he may feel like dating again. Or we may find that we are motivated to do volunteer work for a worthwhile cause. It may help us know that this phase *will* come; we *will* feel better eventually.

The third phase is a formation of new relationship. Here, the emotional energy that is withdrawn from the previous relationship has to be reinvested in someone or something else. It will constitute a different attachment and reinvestment of emotional energy. In the theological realm, we also see Jesus’ resurrection brought about a transformation and all believers enter a new type of relationship which also constitutes a different attachment and reinvestment. The disciples, who were disappointed and confused, begin to form a new relationship with the resurrected Jesus.

And this is the newness phase that immediately comes after the death of Jesus. From death to life, from renunciation to comfort – Christ sets the pattern for authentic

mourning for all time. There simply can never be life for any individual or group without a dying. Unless we are prepared to learn detachment through grieving in union with Christ's suffering, dying and rising, we would find it difficult to overcome our own grief, and see detachment as a gift.

This phase will be worked through the final two sessions. [Appendix C]

The Role of the Facilitator

This project would want to situate a scenario whereby participating members, accompanied by a leader as facilitator, narrate their own grieving stories at the same time be able to mutually care and support each other in their grieving process. By journeying together in the process of grieving losses, each person will hopefully come to know that they are not alone, and come to understand that mourning is actually a very healthy process.

In order for them to move from one phase to another: Emancipation/Separation = Readjustment/Liminal → Reestablishment/Reaggregation, as group leader, my role is to facilitate ["make easier"] purposeful discussion or sharing about the grief journey of group members. This is a task that requires some planning and fore-thought on my part. The following are some of the suggestions which I might consider:

- *Plan each session*

To write down goals and expectations for each group meeting. For example, the objective in the first session may simply be to get to know each other. How I will accomplish this: in addition to letting members tell their stories, I would plan one or two group activities. I might also use

music and appropriate readings as prompts for group discussion.

- *Have a routine*

Especially when they are feeling vulnerable, people like the comfort of a routine. I might, for example, open each session with a short reading that I or another member has brought. Try to start each meeting slowly; participants may need a few minutes to "prepare themselves" before they can confront their pain.

- *Remember I am leading*

Allow myself to be a contributing member of the group but, not forgetting my role and responsibilities as group leader, either.

- *Be sensitive to differences among members*

As group leader, I am probably an outgoing person who feels comfortable sharing experiences in a group setting. Not all members will be so forthcoming, however. I must remind myself that no one is forced to talk unless they are ready. On the other hand, I'll also need to be on the watch for the member who likes to talk and monopolizes the group's time.

I will adopt the leadership style of companion, who journey along side group members, honoring the spirit of team-work, curiously learning from one another, while encouraging each other to be still, in order to discover the gifts of sacred silence. I will also have to listen with the heart: bearing witness to the struggles of others, to be present to their pain, respecting their disorder and confusion. In a nutshell, it is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being.

With regard to practicality of the group meetings, I will also need to be flexible

and able to share leadership. Being flexible is important because some meetings – especially as the group evolves – will naturally flow without much direction from the facilitator. That means that sometimes my meeting plans, no matter how well conceived, should be put aside if the group dynamic takes everyone in a different direction. Good leadership is never rigid. The ability and willingness to share my role as leader is also very important. As the group evolves, one or two members will probably step forward as unofficial co-leader. This needs to be encouraged. That may mean letting someone else lead a particular discussion or choose a particular meeting. More importantly, though, it means letting the group dynamic – not the meeting plan – dictate the flow of each session when that dynamic is healthy and healing. Whenever necessary, intervention and redirection are needed when the dynamic is not healthy. It follows, naturally, then the necessity of a model of assessment or evaluation.

Assessment

'Progress' in grief is difficult to pinpoint. Grief is something we never truly get over; it is ongoing, recursive process that unfolds over many, many weeks and years. So, if the 6-week support group is finishing up and I feel unable to assess each member's progress, certain measure will have to be worked out.

First, I will need to listen to what my heart tells me about the progress the group has made. Have I felt a growing sense of trust among members? Have members been able to share their experience in a way they would not have been able to elsewhere? Have I noticed particular members are able to open up more or cope better than they were when the group began? Have members been appreciative that I have started the group and

shared how much it has helped them?

Next, in evaluating my own process of facilitation, a number of questions will help in clarifying whether the execution of the project has led to gains, losses, or no change. The following questions will assist to evaluate the effects of the ministry.

- a. How I feel in leading the group?
- b. What were some of my initial impressions of this group? Did these initial impressions change over time? If so, how?
- c. Which, if any, members did I have more difficulty with than others? Do I have any sense of why this was?
- d. What skills did I use and what was the outcome?
- e. What did I learn from this group?
- f. What turning points did I see occurring in this group?
- g. Is there anything about this group experience that I find myself viewing negatively?
- h. What changes will I make for any future groups I lead?
- i. What additional areas of group training might I benefit from?

Finally, I will also consider some of the grief needs of every mourner has and how the group has helped members work through those needs. These needs are characterized as the following:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Need 1. | Acknowledge the reality of death. |
| Need 2. | Move toward the pain of the loss. |
| Need 3. | Convert the relationship with the person who died from one of presence to one of memory. |
| Need 4. | Develop a new self-identity. |
| Need 5. | Search for meaning. |
| Need 6. | Continue to receive support from others. |

Chapter IV

Results

A. A description of outcomes.

Prior contacts with participating members have been made before the commencement of the demonstration project began. There were nine people, initially, who verbally agreed to take part in the project; three dropped out without turning up for the first meeting, two other persons decided to discontinue after the second session, leaving only four who stayed on through till the end. There were all together eight sessions executed; two sessions more than the original six proposed in the project, and all the meetings were carried out on every Saturday evenings in the months of January and February, 2006.

At first, I was feeling apprehensive and doubtful if the project could be carried through considering fact that certain members were dropping out along the way, and the inconsistent attendance of members as well as the unpredictable outcome of weather was really challenging. At the initial phase, the first and second sessions began rather reluctantly, as some members did not seemed to be forthcoming – we did not have enough of a quorum to begin with – this prompted me to extend the first phase of the *grief work* with another additional meeting. This probably explained the reason why we have more meetings than intended. Another additional meeting was also added due to the winter storm, when only one person turned up giving the only option to have a one-on-one counseling session. However, the process of the grief work began to deepen when we moved from the first phase to the second phase where more of the griefs were done.

At the first phase, the two persons who left the group after the second meeting had actually been the more talkative ones, who shared quite willingly about their grief and pain of having lost their loved ones. A widow, in her fifties, complained about her difficulty in accepting the sudden death of her husband, who had died of cancer two months earlier. She was in deep distress and anger, blaming God because her spouse had been separated from her. She dreaded living in her house alone, and she was bitter because she did not get much support from her two children who live else where. She left the group without turning up for the third session. The experience of the grief over the demise of her husband was just too overwhelming for her to continue in the group. In her own words, she mourned: "It is really difficult to live without him, it's so painfully hard, and it's not fair." She rationalized that the group was inappropriate for her since she was the only member who lost a spouse while all the others lost their parents. She also found that it has been too soon for her to join a bereavement group.

One other person who left the group after the second meeting was an Irish woman, in her sixties, who lost her mother two years earlier. She shared about her difficulty in going to sleep at night and getting up the next morning. She also complained about losing appetite. The one particular concern which troubled her so much was the resistance in letting go of her mother. She narrated her interesting journey how, after one year of the passing of her mother, she flew to Ireland to look for her mother's place of birth, the house where she grew up, and asked local folks there to tell to her about her mother. She claimed at the second session that the experience of her grief was still so hurting, that she would be grieving for the rest of life, and she felt there was no point of

trying to work on her grief with the group. A regrettable and unfortunate exit. From then on there was one hundred percent attendance and punctual arrival.

Among the four members who journeyed the whole process, Bill, 42, the only man of the group remained practically unchanged throughout the sessions. Although he was one of the two members, who had a one-on-one counseling session with me, and participated quite actively in the group discussions, he had difficulty in freeing himself from his emotional numbness and indifference. He missed a father's love since the age of twelve after his parents have separated. The thirty years of a father's absence in his life was probably the reason that explained the remoteness and difficulty of getting in touch with his grief of loss. The death of his father complicated and confused him with regard to the loss of a father's presence while he was growing up.

Mary, an African American woman in her late thirties, was the other member who saw me privately in one-on-one counseling. She first *lost* her father when he left the family and gotten remarried to another woman when he moved to Canada while Mary was about six year-old. She never saw her father again. She was told that her father had died twenty nine years ago, but the second family kept the secret where he was buried. Mary joined the group with the hope that there would some way where she could find a closure to the whole episode. Group members were extremely kind and supportive to her. Suggestions were offered to help her in going about finding information about her father's burial. While she continued to come for the weekly meetings, she searched tirelessly for information with regard to her father's burial place. It was at our sixth meeting that Mary shared her joy about having found the information of the exact location where her father was buried. This event proved to be a turning point for the

group. Mary became the center of focus as members continued to reach out in compassion and encouragement. She was quite overwhelmed by the outpouring of sympathy and support. She informed the meeting as she expressed her joy: "I have spoken to my mother, my sister and other members of the family about the finding. They were really overjoyed. We are planning a family reunion in July to have a memorial Holy Mass for Dad, and thereafter, to make a trip to Quebec, Canada to visit his grave. I am now feeling as if I am reliving the grief of the loss of my dad. But, this time round it is moving towards a closure, and hopefully a healing one too." It was a touching experience when Mary brought her husband and children to our final session when we had a simple and meaningful prayer service. We can hope to see that Mary is beginning to experience a healthful healing.

Julie, a retired civil servant, also journeyed faithfully with the group. She has, initially, expressed a lot of emotional pain and tears for having lost her mother. After fourteen months of mourning, she joined the group with the hope of finding support to move ahead with her life. During the first phase, she told the group that she found it difficult to dispose of the items belonging to her mother. She also confessed that she believed that she saw her mother twice; once during Thanksgiving, and another time during Christmas. With the encouragement and empathic concern she has received from the group, she eventually told the group during the seventh meeting that she has begun to donate many of her mother's personal items to charity, and kept only a few items as a memory of her mother. Her long term goal was to eventually sell the house she inherited from her mother, and move on to an apartment closer to her adult children in another city.

Dorothy, a younger woman in her 40s, joined the grief support group with the hope of finding peace and the humility to forgive the driver who killed her younger sister in an automobile accident. She was one whom I found most difficult to cope with as she always dominated in the group discussions. Although some members felt that there was a need to allow her to vent her steam, her over domineering attitude signaled a red flag. With firm but gentle interventions, I invited her to talk about her pain, and especially to speak about her anger. The sensitivity and supportive spirit of other members also helped her in addressing the hurt she had experienced. Dorothy became calmer after much of her hurt has been worked through during the second phase. She confessed to the group at the last meeting that she had contacted the man to tell him that it was not his fault that her sister was killed because it was an accident. Although she had made some progress as she began to experience some peace, she also acknowledged that there still remains much to work on her loss.

Although some members experienced some sort of transformations have begun to take place, the feelings of loss and pain did not disappear. They occurred with a lesser degree of intensity.

B. Developments not anticipated.

The first development which was not anticipated in the original Proposal was the choices of Lamentation Psalms which I used as part of the introductory portion of the opening prayer. They turned out positively in helping participants to express their feelings.

The second was the surprise of the two members who, have individual counseling sessions with me, proved to be assets to the process of the grief work. They not only served as catalysts in the growth of establishing trust among group members, they also contributed in encouraging other members to share their own stories as they moved from one phase to another. Their openness and spontaneity in expressing their feelings took precedence of the planned group exercises.

The third development which was not anticipated but turned out to play an interesting part of the project was the ritual or memorial service which happened at the last session. A member of the group brought his family to last meeting which grew from a preplanned simple concluding ritual to an extended and more elaborated prayer service. The following was the text of the prayer service which I have adapted into the final session:

Prayer Service

Opening Prayer: (All)

Lord God, you have provided a place for us where we could share our experiences of grief, and little by little we have seen ourselves transformed. We have come to realize that the guilt, anger and frustration that we felt were a normal part of our grieving process. Through your love and the support of one another, we know that we are on the road to wholeness of life which you promised us. Lord, we ask you to be with us on this journey so that we may become a haven for others and give back in measure what has been given to us. Amen.

Reading: Eccles. 3:1-4, 11 (alternate sides)

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven;

A time to be born and a time to die;

A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

A time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh;

A time to mourn, and a time to dance;

(All): God has made everything beautiful in its time.

Petitions:

Leader: Christ Jesus, mediator between God and all people, you chose others to share your work,

Response: as a priestly people may we know the dignity to which you have called us.

L: Grant that rich and poor may meet in friendship, for you are the God of both,

R: and may those who have more share their riches with those who have less.

L: Make your Gospel be known to all peoples,

R: that all may know its message of hope.

L: Send forth your Spirit, gentlest of consolers,

R: to wipe away the tears of all who mourn.

L: Receive the souls of all who have died,

R: into the company of the saints who live with you in heaven.

Gospel Reading: John 14: 1-4

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

Psalm 23 (All)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;

for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Meditation:

Love Will Remain

(Henri Nouwen)

Hope and faith will both come to an end when we die but love will remain. Love is eternal. Love comes from God and returns to God. When we die, we will lose everything that life gave us except love. The love with which we lived our lives is the life of God within us. It is the divine, indestructible core of our being. This love not only will remain but will also bear fruit from generation to generation. When we approach death let us say to those we leave behind, "Don't let your heart be troubled. The love of God that dwells in my heart will come to you and offer you consolation and comfort."

Prayer: (All)

Lord God, we thank you:

- for the opportunity to come together and to travel the road from grief to healing with one another.
- for the chance to share our grief – to cry, to listen, to learn, to offer and receive encouragement, and to be aware of God's presence in our lives.
- for the friendships which have developed that allowed us to see the giftedness of one another.

May our contact with one another be a source of grace for us. May we live in faith and love in the firm hopes that no matter how long and dark the night, the dawn will surely come ushering in the eternal day.

Ritual:

Leader: God can change the darkness into light by His presence. If we let that presence be a part of us, we can see in the darkness and need not be afraid. Somehow, light disperses the darkness and brings joy.

We will light candles to celebrate the lives of our loved ones and their rebirth into eternity.

Prayer: (All)

Lighting of Christ Candle

Father, we share in the light of your glory through your son, the light of the world. May this fire, symbolic of Christ, inflame us with new hope. Purify our minds and hearts with lighting of this Christ candle, and bring us one day to the feast of eternal light. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: I invite you to take your own candle and take light from Christ's light. As you do so, please mention the name of your loved ones who we are remembering.

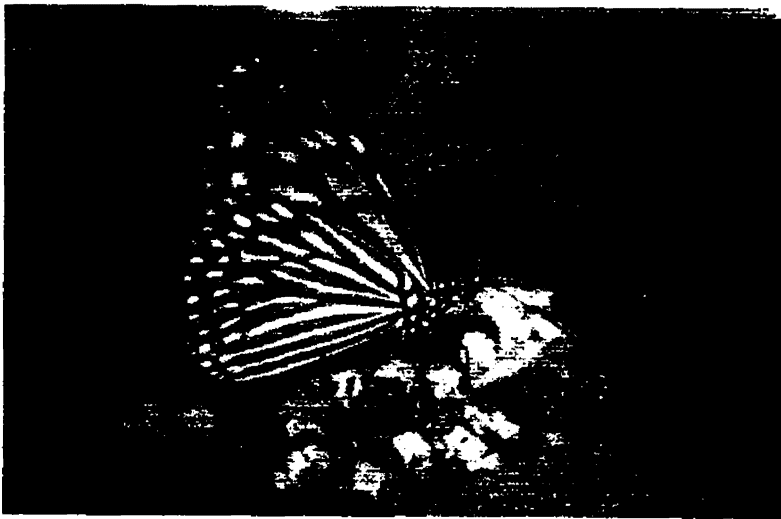
Each candle you hold is symbolic of the light of Christ. It is a flame divided, but undimmed. In fact, it shines brighter in its division.

Prayer: (All)

Lord God, we thank you for the gift of our loved ones. They have, indeed, been reborn in you. We ask you, in the beauty of these candles, to keep us in quiet and in peace, to keep us safe and turn our hearts to you so that we may ourselves be light for our world. Amen!

When we have done all the work
we were sent to Earth to do, we are
allowed to shed our body which
imprisons our soul like a cocoon
encloses the future butterfly.

And when the time is right, we can
let go of it and we will be free
of pain, free of fears and worries-free
as a very beautiful butterfly
returning home to God.



From a letter

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Chapter V

Discussion

Implications

The *separation / emancipation – liminal / readjustment – reaggregation / reestablishment* paradigm of the Paschal Mystery were demonstrated during the eight weeks of the good grief support group experience. When the grieving members, initially, joined the group they felt abandoned by their usual sources of support. The passing of their loved ones had left them isolated, depressed, and vulnerable as they searched to be freed and to readjust themselves in order to find a new identity, apart from the loved ones. Praying the lament psalms helped the bereaved to identify the experience of significant loss was likened to *chaos*: anger, numbness, loss of identity, denial that loss has occurred, nostalgia for the familiar past, guilt over one's failure and sins, depression, fear of the future, a feeling of drifting without purpose and identity. Yet, participation in chaos can be the prelude for an experience of God's ever-renewing love, when the bereaved were grieved over that which has been lost.

In Jesus Christ, the grieving persons have the triumph of God's Kingdom over the powers of evil, darkness, or chaos. They have tried to follow Jesus' example of grieving to discover through his love what it means to be in 'the new heavens and new earth'.

Christ's life, especially in his agony, death and resurrection, is a journey of grieving, in which he is that which is lost and the leader of the mourning ritual at the same time. Detachment, which is the letting go of all that would hinder individuals from a committed relationship with God, is at the heart of all authentic grieving. Jesus is *the* model of detachment, for 'he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, accepting death,

death, death on a cross' (Ph 2: 7-8), in order that we might share the new fruits of his victory over death through his resurrection.

The bereaved were not alone in their grief. The presence of caring of others mediated the grief process. With the facilitator's compassion and the empathic support of group members the bereaved began to understand how it felt to have a loved one die. They had walked the journey of grief themselves. Their commitment and compassion to the bereaved were key factors in making the group experience effective. The following is a summary of their evaluation of the experience.

They felt that the group discussion was very helpful and had brought about intimacy to the group. They recognized the difficulty of the group exercises, especially during at the first phase where they needed to acknowledge the loss as well as in the second phase where they were confronted with the experience of the pain of loss, and agreed that it was necessary if the reality of the death of the loved one was to be addressed and faced. The feelings that surfaced during the group experience validated what they felt when they went through their own grief process.

The demonstration project addressed the process of grief by way of integrating psychological and theological principles: employing the three phases of *grief work* of T. Rando by complementing a *rite of passage* in the context of Christian Paschal Mystery. By using the *separation / emancipation – liminal / readjustment – reaggregation / reestablishment* paradigm, I quite accurately assumed that the bereaved could move from an experience of crisis, to an inner reconciliation, while accompanied on their grief journey by a trusted person or group. I observed that the mutual sharing and listening to one another's stories facilitated grief, as they acknowledged that death had occurred.

Progress in grief is difficult to pinpoint or assess, because it is something we never truly get over; it is ongoing, recursive process that unfolds over time. What I have learned from this group was that although I might have been unable to quantify or assess each member's progress accurately, I do realize that what really counts is not the success in reaching a certain goal or objectives to be achieved, but rather the growth each member experienced from the process. The eventual healing, readjustment and reinvestment of members will depend very much on individual grief process and strength of hope that each member sees in themselves.

My intervention facilitated the grieving process. I invited grieving members of the parish to be a part of this project. They experienced this outreach as therapeutic, which they, in turn, showed by mutually assisted each other during the group experience. During the group experience, as they faced questions and concerns regarding their faith, I became the symbol of Christ's presence. I became a resource in their search for purpose and meaning to their lives. Knowing that someone from their faith community cared for them in a nonjudgmental way facilitated their participation in the group experience. This experience has reminded me of my office and role as Christ's minister - a service to others - by companioning and journeying along side group members, listening and bearing witness to their struggles, to be present to their pain, respecting their disorder and confusion.

Evaluating the overall project, I believe that the objective was achieved, "To facilitate grieving for members of the church community in the context of faith—a sort of spiritual companioning them to shoulder through, courageously in Faith, and with Hope together with other grieverers in their struggle with the pain of loss." As a minister and

facilitator of the project, I have ushered the bereaved to the realization of how blessed they have been when they have come to understanding, expression, adjustment and renewal—the process of grieving by sharing with one another.

Unexpected Outcomes

The poor choice of the season in running this project became an obstacle which could have contributed to the inconsistency and poor attendance of group members. However, despite the above rationale of the unpredictable of bad weather, the show of commitment and dedication of four faithful members, who completed the project, implied that the good grief support group could be a viable ministry for people who suffer the loss of their loved ones. Thorough study needs to be made with regard to weather, location, day, time, availability as well as preparedness of prospective persons before a good grief support group be organized.

I have tried during the process of executing the project always to remind myself that my role as a facilitator was to adopt the leadership style of companioning, where I was expected to journey along side participating members. In trying to do so, I had constantly reminded myself to be respectful and patient with the members when the sessions were moving rather slowly. However, I found myself stretching my attentive listening and patience to their limits. In such instances, interventions were necessary in order to get the process moving. I had to lead and make a considerable amount of effort to direct, especially, the first two sessions, so much so that at times, self disclosure was the necessary tool to evoke active participation. When members struggled to narrate their painful experiences, it pained me to listen, and at the same time, mulling and wandering

how to bear witness to their struggles; to be present to their pain, and respecting their disorder and confusion. The first phase, which comprised the first three sessions, was characterized as an orientation phase where I, as the facilitator, had to take an active part in order to lead. With the taste of frustration and patience, the second phase moved on rather gradually but/ surprisingly smooth.

At the second phase, I saw the two members, who have had personal counseling sessions with me, emerged more prominently as they stepped forward to take the lead in discussions. This development had encouraged me to be flexible; putting aside prior conceived meeting plans, by allowing the group dynamic to lead the direction. Henceforward, the group members narrated their personal stories more willingly and freely. Somehow, it has proven that when resistance to grieving is being worked through in personal counseling, people will have a better, healthy process toward some sort of healing in the group exercises.

The next time I lead a grief support group, I will do several things differently. I will not take for granted that verbal invitation is enough. I will put out flyers, posters, and make church announcement. I will also have to do interview by screening people especially those who are extremely emotional. As the above experience has shown that when the intense emotions were addressed in a personal healing setting there will be less interference in the group process. I have learned this advantage and wisdom from the group of this project. Before they become part of the formal group they will be invited to several individual meetings with me. It is possible that some persons may need one-on-one counseling in order to work through their grief.

Although I discovered the ranges of ages, late thirties to mid-sixties, did not make a difference in this group, there are different types of grieving throughout the continuum of the human development was considered necessary.

I have also come to discover that religious or theological themes are important and relevant in grief work. Theological themes or biblical personages such the Exodus, Jeremiah, Job, Elijah, Mary and the Lamentation Psalms will certainly enrich the process.

In the future, when I lead a support group, a co-facilitator can, perhaps, effectively assist me in facilitating and in reflecting the progress and outcome of the group process. Follow-up meetings will also be organized. The bereaved are expected to return and share about themselves. It is a time of closure and a time to acknowledge healing and growth as they move on with their life.

Contribution to Clinical Principles

Throughout the process of the grief work, I have often tried to use spiritual interventions making references to the theological principles, but, by employing clinical techniques. The physical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive reactions as well as resistance in accepting them were identified as members shared quite freely about them. I observed that during the first phase, the members were confused and dazed, unable to comprehend what has happened. When they come to recognize the feeling of numbness, their shocks began slowly to wear off, denial cropped up, which was therapeutic. It functioned as buffer by allowing the individual to absorb the reality of the loss a little at a time, preventing them from being completely overwhelmed by it. Disbelief and the need

to know why death occurred appeared as a result. But, once the loss was recognized, the group slowly came to acknowledge, and then understand the loss.

At the second phase grief was experienced most intensely. Extremes of emotion were felt. The group reacted to the separation, and experienced the pain of loss. At such instances, the members recollected and re-experienced the deceased / lost objects and the relationship. As a consequent, members came to review and remember everything about the loss realistically.

The third phase showed the decline in the level of intensity of grief. The mourners learned to live with the loss as emotional energy was reinvested in new ideas or identities. They, in their own time, came to acknowledge and accept the reality of the death.

Contributions to Theological Principles

I have come to learn that, in theory, the mourners knew that they were not alone and God has always been present with them. They also believed that Jesus, in his filial obedience to the will of God, was led to suffer, die and rise from death, and it was this Paschal Mystery which gave meaning to human life and death. Even though the grieving members knew these truths, in their grief they could not grasp their meaning for them at this time of their life. Unless the grievers were prepared to learn separation through grieving in union with Jesus' suffering, dying and rising, they found it very difficult to overcome their own grief, and see separation as a gift. More than anything, the grievers need the courage to face death of their loved one, and to get through the present crisis. Unfortunately, two who left at this phase because they could not face the reality of the loss of their loved ones. As the project unfolds, it was the abiding support of the Holy

Spirit, through human agents that gave the remaining members the courage to face the meaninglessness of life. Jesus' agony took on new meaning as it conveyed a message of courage in the face of abandonment. The acceptance of their cross, the death of their loved ones, enabled the griever to have an experience of resurrection as they were being transformed. One member found new hope that she can now prepare to make a closure by visiting the graveyard of her father, and move on with her life in peace. Another came to the realization that in order for her to have a peace of mind, she had to learn to forgive others and to forgive herself. Yet another had come to recognize that she has to let go of her deceased mother, and reinvest her focus and energy with her own children and grandchildren. Each experienced the resurrection in their own unique way.

Contributions to Ministry in a Wider Context

This project is applicable to a wide range of ministries dealing with grief or loss of any sorts, which are grounded in psycho-spiritual dynamic principles. Grief happens all the time, and is the normal reaction to loss, a universal experience repeatedly encountered. And loss is a natural part of existence. We confront issues of loss over and over again. To a certain degree the process of grief occurs in reaction to each of these losses. Grief, therefore, is the process that allows us to let go of that which was and be ready for that which is to come.

Psychological researches as well as theological foundations based on Tradition and Scripture have provided for us the nuances and expressions of all human experience. Human life consists of the 'seasons with life cycle.' As the book of Ecclesiastes Chapter Three accurately resonated that, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every

matter under heaven." (V.1) There are seasons of life, when all is well, which welcomes the statements of gratitude. At these times, the *orientation* psalms burst out in thanksgiving, joy and faithfulness to God. Human life also experiences a season of pain, abandonment, suffering and death. At such instances, the *disorientation / lament* psalms cry corresponding to those moments we saw in this project. There are also moments when God surprises us in encounters when we least expected, the psalms of *reorientation* spring forth to proclaim this new gift and new creation.

The psycho-spiritual dynamic principles used in this project can become for many in ministry a resource of healing and healthful growth. People, especially in the context of community of faith, can enter the journey from whatever they are in life, even when they 'walk in the valley of darkness,' they would experience assurance, affirmation, and strength as they work through issues. In turn, as in Luke 22:23, we may be commissioned to use the transformational experience to minister to others.

Implications for Future Ministry

The above observations obviously are linked to the needs and aims I have mentioned earlier in Chapter I. This project has addressed the process of grief by way of integrating psychological and theological principles. It has, indeed, taken into consideration the three phases of *grief work* of Theresa Rando and complemented *a rite of passage* in the context of the Christian Paschal Mystery. The project's objective in facilitating grieving for participating members has given them an opportunity to realize how blessed they were as they slowly come to understand, express, adjust and make renewal in the process of grieving by sharing with one another.

I believe with much positive enthusiasm and hope that when I use this demonstration project model to challenge, to appeal and to avail a healthy and healing process of grief for the suffering members of the parishes in my home country among the native people of Borneo, I will be contributing a ministry which can truly enrich the local faith communities.

When we begin to learn to acknowledge the need to grieve individually and corporately as a faith community over whatever is lost - a preparedness to learn grieving in union with Christ's suffering, dying and rising—with the abiding support and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will discover that the grief process is a gift.

Appendix A

Session One - Support Group meeting plan

1. Introduction/Welcome

Welcome the participants to the meeting and provide a brief orientation to the purpose of the support group. The introduction and orientation could include comment as the following:

- The group will be a combined *education-support group*
- Each of our meetings will last 90 minutes; we will meet every week for six weeks. The first half of each meeting will be a discussion based on some materials given, either the week before or during the meeting itself. The second half of each meeting will be left for group sharing. Each meeting will begin with a ritual of Psalms reading and opening prayer, and conclude with a closing prayer.
- At today's meeting, we will begin to get to know each other, and go over our group ground rules.

2. Ground Rules

Next the facilitator will distribute a printed list of the group ground rules established prior to this first meeting. [See sample of ground rules]. The group will then review the ground rules and asks questions or share concerns. The group may wish to make changes or additions to this list.

3. Introduction of Facilitator

Following a review and discussion of the ground rules, facilitator introduces himself. And then invite others to do the same.

4. Introductions of members

Essentially, members are to be asked to give information about their loss, e.g. their names, name and relationship of person who died and when the death occurred, what they would like to get out of the group (See list of questions which address feelings about attending a support group). Obviously, part of the role of the facilitator is to bring sensitivity and encouragement to the group members. Acknowledge that the participants can say as little or as much as they like. However, it is helpful to give some suggested timeframe for each person to talk: "Each of us will take five minutes or so." Trust in the process and do not panic when some members take more time than others. Some members may talk more initially out of anxiety, while others will appear withdrawn and may even have to pass.

Again, trust in the process. If a member feels the need to pause for awhile, the group will understand. Tears need not be forced, but certainly will be accepted if they occur. If necessary, facilitator may gently remind the group not to interrupt with questions or interpretations when members are first introducing themselves.

At the first meeting, the sharing is an important initial step in creating a supportive, healing group experience. As people tell their stories, a powerful bonding often begins. The following guideline is always helpful: Listen, learn and heal.

6. Topic: Symptoms of grief. The above exercise helps to lead into a brief discussion of the normal reactions in grief process – discuss fact that grief affects us on every level of functioning: emotional, physical, cognitive and spiritual.

Possible discussion tool: Give a handout listing the Symptoms of grief and ask group to look at and share which ones they can relate to.

Conclusion:

At the conclusion of the group sharing, facilitator will distribute a copy of handout, on some 'suggestions' in helping members through grief, to each person. Explain to members that the material, which is "wisdom teaching" – that are essential physical, emotional, emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual action for them to take if their goal is to heal in grief and find continued meaning in life.

7. Homework

Everyone is asked to read the materials so as to enable them to understand their Grief before the next meeting. Group members should be asked to come prepared to discuss the material and their reactions to what they have both read and written. Finally, each person should be asked to bring to the next meeting a photograph of the person who died.

Again, thank everyone for being a vital part of this group and let them know you look forward to seeing them next week. Some of the advices recommended to members:

- Do something good for yourself this week
- **Handout:** "Suggestions for helping yourself through grief"

8. Closing Prayer: Psalm 37

Purpose

Support groups help grieving people by:

- Introducing them to others who have had similar experiences, thoughts, and feeling.
- Countering the sense of isolation that many experiences in our shame-based, mourning-avoiding culture.
- Providing emotional, physical, and spiritual support in a safe, nonjudgmental environment.
- Allowing them to explore their many thoughts and feeling about grief in a way that helps them be compassionate with themselves.
- Encouraging members to not only receive support and understanding for themselves, but also to provide the same to others.
- Offering opportunities to learn new ways of approaching problems (e.g., the friend or in-law who lacks an understanding of the need to mourn and pushes you to "return to normal").
- Helping them trust their fellow human beings and bond again in what for many in grief feels like an unsafe, uncaring world.
- Giving them a forum to search for meaning in life and death.
- Providing a supportive environment that can reawaken their zest for life and give them hope for healing.

Guidelines:

1. ***Each person's grief is unique.*** While you may share some commonalities in your experience, no two of you are exactly alike. Consequently, respect and accept both what you have in common with others and what is unique to each of you.
2. ***Grief is not a disease, and no "quick-fix" exists for what you are feeling.*** Don't set a specific timetable for how long it should take you or others to heal.
3. ***Feel free to talk about your grief.*** However, if someone in the group decides to listen without sharing, please respect his or her preference.
4. ***There is a difference between actively listening to what another person is saying and expressing your own grief.*** Make every effort not to interrupt when someone else is speaking.
5. ***Thoughts, feelings, and experiences shared in this group will stay in this group.*** Respect others' right to confidentiality. Do not use names of fellow participants in discussions outside the group.
6. ***Allow each person equal time to express him or herself*** so a few people don't monopolize the group's time.
7. ***Attend each group meeting and be on time.*** If you decide to leave the group before this series of meetings is completed, be willing to discuss your decision with the group.
8. ***Avoid "advice giving" unless it is specifically requested by a group member.*** If advice is not solicited, don't give it. If a group member poses a question, share ideas that helped you if you experienced a similar situation. Remember that this group is for support, not therapy.
9. ***Recognize that thoughts and feelings are neither right nor wrong.*** Enter into the thoughts and feelings of other group members without trying to change them.
10. ***Create an atmosphere of willing, invited sharing.*** If you feel pressured to talk but don't want to, say no. your right to quiet contemplation will be respected by the group.

Questions

1. How do I feel about coming to a Grief Support Group?

- Do I have negative feelings about it?
- Am I angry that I need a group?
- Do I feel alone, nervous, tense, anxious, tired?
- Do I feel overwhelmed; in a state of confusion?
- Do I have positive feelings about it?
- Do I feel good that I have the courage to come?
- Do I feel a sense of understanding and closeness?
- Do I feel a sense of relief that there's safe place to share my feelings and cry, and know that I'm all right?
- Do I feel a glimmer of hope that someday the pain will ease?
- Do I have mixed emotions, feeling both negative and positive?

2. What do I hope to find at these sessions? What are my expectations?

Suggestions for Helping Yourself through Grief

This title is not meant to indicate that others in our lives do not help us through grief. We do need the help of relatives and friends, and maybe even the help of professional counseling. At the same time, it is important to make the effort to help ourselves. Remember that grief takes a lot of energy. Treat yourself with the same care and affection that you would offer to a good friend in the same situation. Most of us are aware of *love your neighbor*, but we tend to forget the rest: *as you love yourself*. Not all suggestions will be helpful to everyone. Grief is an intensely personal experience. Choose the ideas that appeal to you.

Be patient with yourself.

- Go gently. Don't rush too much. Your body, mind, and heart need energy to mend.
- Don't take on new responsibilities right away. Don't overextend yourself. Keep decision making to a minimum.
- Throw away notions of a fixed period of mourning; one year, and then you're "over it." This is fiction. Grief takes time, *whatever* time it takes.

Ask for and accept help.

- Don't be afraid to ask for help from those close to you when you need it. So much hurt and pain go unheeded during grief, because we don't want to bother anyone else with our problems. Wouldn't you want someone close to you to ask you for help if they needed it? Our family and friends can't read our minds. Some relatives and friends will not be able to handle your grief. It is very important to find someone who cares and understands, with whom you can talk freely. Seek out an understanding friend, another bereaved person, or a support group member.
- Accept help and support when offered. It's okay to need comforting. Often people wait for you to tell them when you're ready to talk or if you need anything. Tell them.
- Pray to the person who has died.
- If you are troubled and need help, contact your local 24-hour hotline or local minister.
- Join a self-help group. They offer support, understanding, friendship, and hope.
- Give yourself time to sort out your thoughts, but don't build a wall around yourself in fear of being hurt again. It is important to love and enjoy the people in your life instead of distancing yourself from them.
- If grief is intense and prolonged, it may harm your physical and mental well-being. If it is necessary, seek out a competent counselor. Check to see if your health insurance covers the charges. It is important to take care of yourself.

Accept your feelings.

- Feel what you feel. You don't choose your emotions; they choose you.
- It's okay to cry. Crying makes us feel better.
- It's okay to be angry. You may be angry with yourself, God, the person who died, others, or just angry in general. Don't push it down. Let it out, hit the pillow or punching bag, scream, swim, chop wood, exercise, etc. -- but let it out!
- Thinking you are going crazy is a very normal reaction. Most grieving people experience this feeling. You are not losing your mind, only reacting to death.
- Depression is common to those in grief. Be careful not to totally withdraw from others. If your depression becomes severe or you're considering suicide, get professional help immediately.
- The emotions of a survivor are often raw. It is important to let these feelings out. If you don't, they will come out at some other time, some other way. That is certain. You won't suffer nearly as much from "getting too upset" as you will from being brave and keeping your honest emotions all locked up inside. Share your "falling-to-pieces" feelings with supportive loved ones, as often as you feel the need.
- You may have psychosomatic complaints: physical problems brought on by an emotional reaction. The physical problems are real; take steps to remedy them.

Lean into the pain.

- Lean into the pain. It cannot be overturn. You can't go around it, over it, or under it; you must go through it and feel the full force of the pain to survive. Be careful not to get stuck at some phase. Keep working on your grief.
- Put aside time to face the grief. Don't throw yourself into your work or other activities so that you are left with no time for grieving.
- In a time of severe grief, be extremely careful in the use of either alcohol or prescription drugs. Tranquilizers don't end the pain; they only mask it. This may lead to further withdrawal, loneliness, and even addiction. Grief work is done best when you are awake, not drugged into sleepiness.
- Seek the help of a counselor or clergy if grief is unresolved.
- Be determined to work through your grief.

Be good to yourself.

- Keep a journal. It is a good way to understand what you are feeling and thinking. Hopefully, when you reread it later you will see that you are getting better.
- Try to get adequate rest. Go to bed earlier. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea, or soft drinks.
- Good nutrition is important.

- If Sundays, holidays, etc., are especially difficult times, schedule activities that you find particularly comforting into these time periods.
- Read recommended books on grief. It helps you understand what you are going through. You may find suggestions for coping.
- Moderate exercise helps (walking, tennis, swimming, etc.). It offers an opportunity to work off frustrations and may aid sleep.
- Begin to build a pleasant time with family and friends. Don't feel guilty if you have a good time. Your loved one would want you to be happy and want you to live this life to the fullest.
- Do things a little differently, yet try not to make a lot of changes. This sounds like a contradiction, but it isn't.
- Plan things you can look forward to: a trip, visit, lunch with a special friend. Start today to build memories for tomorrow.
- Find quotes or posters that are helpful to you and hang them where you can see them.
- Become involved in the needs of others. Helping others will build your self-confidence and enhance your self-worth. Join either a volunteer or support group, i.e., phoning, attending meetings, typing, collating newsletters. It does much to ease the pain.
- Be good to yourself. Take a hot relaxing bath, bask in the sun (with sun-block), take time for yourself (movie, theater, dinner out, a novel).
- Put balance in your life: pray, rest, work, read, relax, and play.
- When you feel ready, aim at regaining a healthy, balanced life by broadening your interests. Take time for activities that can bring some purpose into your life. Think about doing something you've always wanted to do: taking a class, learning tennis, volunteer work, joining church groups, becoming involved in community projects or hobby clubs. Learn to do something new as well as rediscover old interests, activities, and friends.
- Remember: Take your life one moment, one hour, one day at a time.

Remember, grief takes time.

- Do not have unrealistic expectation of yourself. Grief takes time. It comes and goes.
- Remember, you will get better. Hold on to hope. Some days you may just seem to exist, but better days will be back. You will gradually develop a renewed sense of purpose.

(Schononeck, T.S., 2001)

Session Two - Emancipation-Separation

1. Opening Prayer: Psalm 88

2. Review of group purpose and guidelines

(If a member is not present, tell group why [with permission of member]. Follow up with anyone who has not returned to the group. If someone does drop out, find out why.)

3. Check in with members. Is there anything significant they would like to discuss? Does anyone have any significant dates coming up? Check-in word.

4. Topic: Review the basic symptoms of grief. Discuss grief as having different phases and tasks. Describe these and use handouts. Refer to the "Important Facts about Grief" handout and review. Discuss the fact that while it may seem that grief is only about pain and misery; it is about the process of healing. Although it may seem that the pain of grief continues without stopping, there is change and this signifies healing.

5. Possible Exercises and Discussion starters:

- Ask participants to write down what triggers their grief reactions, e.g., a place, a food, a comment from someone etc.
- Ask participants what changes they have noticed in their grief process?
(The emphasis on change shifts the emphasis to healing – not whether they are doing "better" or "worse".)

6. Summary of group's sharing and introduce topic for next session

7. Handouts:

- “Understanding the Grief process: Expectation versus Reality”

8. Homework: Because *Relationship/Re-adjustment* is the topic for the next session, ask participants to write letters to significant friends/relatives in which they say all they want to say. (These do not have to be read to group or mailed.)

9. Closing prayer

- Objectives, to help members to:
 - Begin to understand the process to grief
 - Identify where they are at in the grief process
 - Begin to feel more comfortable in the group and benefit from sharing with others.

MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF

"I have found that the myths and unrealistic expectations that society maintains for griever are some of the worst problems any griever has." (Rando, 1991, p.7)

Look at the statements below and decide how many you believe.

1. All losses are the same.
2. It takes two months to get over your grief.
3. Grief always declines over time in a steadily decreasing fashion.
4. Family members will always help griever.
5. Children grieve like adults.
6. You should not think about your loved ones at the holidays, it will make you too sad.
7. Expressing feelings that are intense is the same as losing control.
8. There is no reason to be angry at your deceased loved one.
9. Because you feel crazy, you are going crazy.
10. You should only feel sadness if your loved one has died.
11. Losing someone to sudden death is the same as losing someone to an anticipated death.
12. Being upset and grieving means that you do not believe in God or trust your religion.
13. You will have no relationship with your loved one after the death.

This "myth" chart was taken from the book, *How to go on Living When Someone You love Dies*, by Theresa Rando, 1991. (pp. 7-9).

Questions

1. Are you aware of some of the stages of grieving you have experienced?
 - Can you name them?
 - Did some intertwine or overlap?
2. What stage do you believe you are presently in? What feelings are present?
3. Does learning about the stages help relieve the stress you feel?

Break into small groups according to similar losses, for example: widowed in one group, those grieving from other losses in another.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRIEF PROCESS: EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY

EXPECTATION

- a. You shall be over your grief by a certain time and anything after that time is just plain wallowing or self-indulgence.
- b. You have to go through certain stages in order to be grieving properly. You have to do it by the book.
- c. Someone must be to blame. You should have known something was wrong. God is punishing you for doing something immoral or wrong.
- d. It's better not to talk about it. Talking only makes you dwell on the morbid past.
- e. It's better to forget it ever happened to you and put it out of your mind.
- f. Getting pregnant or having another baby right away is the best thing you can possibly do.
- g. As soon as you get all this out of your system, life will be just the same as always and you'll be your old self once more.

REALITY

- a) Grief is as individualistic as you are. We all grieve differently and have our own timetable to work through grief.
- b) While you may go through certain stages, you may skip others. We each have our own grief style.
- c) The hardest thing to accept is that there may be no one to blame. Certain things are beyond human control and understanding.
- d) Talking about it is not morbid, but a necessary, normal part of working through grief.
- e) You can never forget, but the intensity of the memories will change.
- f) A new pregnancy may provide hope, but it will not magically replace your lost baby nor "cure" your grief.
- g) You are never, ever, the same. Life may settle down as before, but you are forever changed (perhaps stronger, better) because you have survived.

In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all. It comes with bitterest agony. Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You cannot now realize that you will even feel better. And yet this is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say.

Abraham Lincoln,

Appendix B

Session Three - Re-adjustment

1. Opening Prayer: Psalm 74

2. Check in – Does anyone want to discuss thoughts from last week's topic or from the homework? Does anyone have any significant dates coming up?

3. Topic: Changes in Relationships and Roles

Relationships: People who are grieving often find that relationships change and they are alternately positively surprised and disappointed at others' reactions. Help group members to look at the varied relationships in their lives: family, friends, co-workers, etc. to discuss what changes have occurred. Ask, "What can they do to cope with changed behavior of others?"

Roles: Get the discussion started by asking the group to call out their varied roles and write them on a board or flip chart. Look at the handout of roles to help trigger a discussion on this topic.

4. Discussion Questions:

What roles have changed? What can help them adjust to these changes? What roles have they lost as a result of the death? This may be a good time to discuss secondary losses and the fact that each loss needs to be grieved. What are some new roles they have had to take on? What can help them in these new roles? What are some new roles they would like to take on? What have they learned from the past that will help them in their present and future roles? What behaviors do they need to change or discard

because they are no longer helpful?

(The facilitator may make a list of helpful hints that are discussed by the group, compile them and give them as a handout at the next meeting.)

5. Summarize group's discussion and introduce topics for next session.

6. The following exercise may help the bereaved to see how their lives changed since their loss (source of stress) and that it can change again.

- Make a pie chart (using white paper plates or drawing a circle) and indicate how they are spending their time since their love one died, e.g. work, taking care of home, finances, time with friends, etc.
- Do another pie chart, indicating how time was spent before the loss, and a third which indicates how they would like to spend their time in the future. (This may be a very good way to start the group experience, as the last group will give members the opportunity to discuss their goals.)

7. Homework: Continue to work on re-adjustment

- Identify ways that some of your new roles can be made more manageable for you;
- Do something good for yourself this week

8. Handout:

- Reaction in the normal grief experience
- Surviving Loneliness

9. Closing Prayer

REACTION IN THE NORMAL GRIEF EXPERIENCE

Some of the Physical Symptoms of Grief:

Hollowness in the stomach	Exhaustion
Tightness in the chest	Over-sensitivity to noise
Tightness in the throat	Body Aches
Breathlessness	G.I. tract disruptions
Weakness in the muscles	

Some of the Feelings in Grief:

Anger	Denial
Guilt	Helplessness
Fear	Relief
Shock	Yearning
Numbness	

Some of the Changed Behaviors in Grief:

Searching	Sighing
Sleep Disturbances	Visiting places
Appetite Disturbances	Treasuring objects of the deceased
Social withdrawal	Dreams
Over-activity	Absent-minded behavior
Crying	Avoiding reminder of deceased

Some of the Beliefs and Thoughts in Grief:

Disbelief	Sense of presence
Confusion	Anxious about the future
Preoccupation	

Surviving Loneliness

Loneliness is a feeling that may be very intense and painful at times. Facing our loneliness is perhaps one of the most difficult problems following loss. It is very important that we deal with our feelings of loneliness, for it is in loneliness that we discover who we are as individuals.

Loneliness is a feeling of emptiness in our deepest self; the feeling that no one cares about us or our feelings. Being lonely means not having a special person to share our thoughts and experiences with, not having human contact, not having someone to hold us close, not feeling safe and secure.

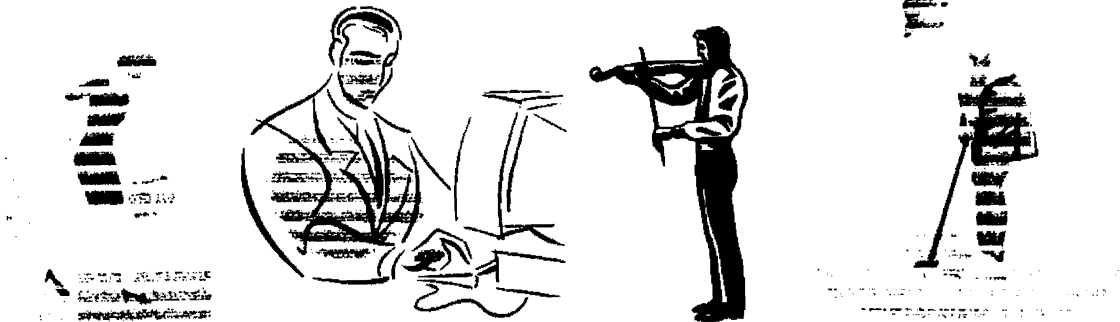
Loneliness involves a feeling of a loss of control. The range of lonely feelings that can surface in us is extensive: pain, fear, lack of companionship, anger, isolation, despair, hopelessness, loss of identity and self-worth, purposelessness, a feeling that no one understands or cares, a sinking-sick feeling, anguish.

These common behaviors block the feeling of loneliness: alcohol or drug abuse, promiscuous behavior, excessive work, or being busy all the time.

Our willingness to face our loneliness is crucial in bereavement.

Here are a number of positive steps to deal with loneliness:

1. Try to identify the times when you feel lonely (nights, holidays, mealtimes, church, when you are with other couples, etc.)
2. At these times try to identify the feeling; recognize your loneliness for what it is and don't mistake it for something else.
3. Accept the feeling within yourself.
4. Share your feelings with close friend, relative, or minister.
5. Be open to accepting help from others who care. There are those who wish to support us, but if we do not let them into our life there isn't anything they can do.
6. Journal, do something physical, listen to tapes, keep busy, get outdoors, do crafts, write poetry, pray, recite verses, meditate, call someone to talk, play cards, read, go for a drive, visit the cemetery, work out, go out to eat



Session Four - Re-establishment

1. Opening Prayer: Psalm 73

2. Check in.

3. Presentation of Topic: Liminal – Christ's crucifixion and death

4. Exercise and Discussion: See attached handout. Ask the members to answer the questions in the handout. Ask members for a reaction to exercise.

5. Summary and topic for the next session.

- 'The Six "R" Process of mourning'

6. Handout:

- Spirituality and Grief

7. Closing Prayer

The Six "R" Process of Mourning

Avoidance Phase

1. Recognize the Loss
Acknowledge the Loss
Understand the Loss

Confrontation Phase

2. React to the separation
Experience the pain.
Feel, identify, accept, and give some form of expression to ALL the psychological reactions to the Loss.
3. Recollect and re-experience the deceased/lost object and the relationship.
Review and remember realistically.
Revive and re-experience the feelings.
4. Revive and remember realistically.

Reestablishment Phase

5. Readjust to move adaptively into new world without forgetting the old.
Revive the assumption world.
Develop a new relationship with the deceased/lost object.
Adopt new ways of being in the world.
Form a new identity.
6. Reinvest.

From T. Rando: *Clinical Dimensions of Anticipatory Mourning*

SPIRITUALITY AND GRIEF

What phases or changes has your faith gone through?

Did you find yourself questioning your beliefs / faith after the death of your loved one?

What was that like for you?

Where are you now in your relationship with God?

How has this affected your prayer life and / or other religious practices?

How have you used rituals (formal / informal) during this period of mourning?

Suggested Reading:

When Bad Things Happen To Good People by Rabbi Harold S. Kushner

Our Greatest Gift by Henri J.M. Nouwen

In Memoriam by Henri J.M. Nouwen

A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis

Appendix C

Session Five - Formation of New Relationship

1. Opening Prayer: Psalm 23

2. Check-in with Group.

3. Presentation of Topic: Time to "Let go" & Reinvest energy

Confronting the death of a loved one makes us look at and sometimes question our belief system. We may find ourselves asking: "What is the meaning of life? Why did my loved one (and I) have to suffer? Why did this happen? For what purpose? This can be a disturbing and challenging time and we may find that we are hampered by certain ideas such as: "It was God's will." "If this happened, God is punishing me." "God is testing me." This is a time to seek God's help. God did not promise us a life without suffering but he did promise to be there for us. God will help us heal. Instead of asking "Why?" we may want to ask "What can I do with this?" We can choose how to respond to our suffering. We can use it in way that will help us grow into people of greater humanity and compassion.

Rituals can be very helpful during this period. They help us acknowledge the loss; give us structure in a time of upheaval; provide a place and time to vent our emotions; and encourage social support by gathering our friends and families together to share our grief.

Rituals can be formal or informal, e.g., funeral, Memorial Service, Planting a

Tree, Lighting a Candle, special book of photos, visiting the cemetery, etc. Rituals can help to build a cherishable memory and realize that by moving on we are not forgetting our deceased loved ones but developing a new relationship with them.

4. Group Discussion: The process we are going through in grief, as Christians, is the participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

5. Summary of discussion and presentation of topic for next (and last) session.

6. Homework

- Ask members to think about personal short-and long-term goals for the next session
- Ask members to bring in a picture of their loved one (in particular, one that evokes a happy memory.)

7. Handout:

- Praying Our Goodbyes

8. Closing Prayer

BEREAVED PERSON'S PRAYER

*We seem to give our loved ones back to you,
Lord. You gave them to us. But just as you
did not lose them in the giving, neither do we
lose them in the return.*

*You don't give in the same way that the world
gives. What you give you don't take away.
You have taught us that what is yours is ours
also, if we are yours.*

*Life is eternal, Lord, and your love is
undying. And death is only a horizon. And
a horizon is nothing but the limits of our sight.*

*Lift us up strong, Son of God, that we may
see farther. Cleanse our eyes that we may see
more clearly. Draw us closer to yourself,
that we may find ourselves closer to
our loved ones who are with you.*

*And while you prepare a place for them,
prepare us also for that happy place where you
are and where we hope to be...
forever. Amen.*

Session Six - Reaggregation

1. Opening Prayer

2. Check-in

3. Presentation of Topic: Setting Goals

Explain that goals are valuable for a number of reasons: there is a sense of accomplishment when the goal is achieved; it allows for a sense of progress; a goal gives one something tangible to work towards as well as something to look forward to. You may try having the participants write down some short-and long-term goals. Or, you may ask them to write down (and share) where they would like to be in one month, six months, one year.

4. Possible Exercise: Ask participants to write down where they would like to be in 3 months, 6 months, 1 year and discuss. Also: Have participants write down 10 things they like to do. Suggest that they include some of these activities when they do their goal setting.

5. Group Sharing. Ask participants to share photos of deceased and recount any pleasurable memories associated with the photo.

6. Summary of Group's Progress: As this is the final session, it is good time for facilitator(s) to share their positive impressions of how the group has progressed and

what has been accomplished. Encourage the participants to identify their strengths and to share something positive about the other members as well. Ask them to write their strengths down on paper and keep them for future when they may be feeling less competent. Everyone should hear something good about their progress before the end of this last group.

7. Final Business and Wrap-up

Let the participants know that they may feel they need additional support (that's OK) and that there are other support groups and resources prepared to hand out or let them know they can contact you for any additional information.

- a. Make sure that everyone who wanted a list of participants' telephone numbers has received it.
- b. Be prepared to respond to participants' question about returning to your next group.
- c. (If you wish), ask group if they would like to get together (e.g. lunch) in a few weeks.
- d. Ask members to complete and return the evaluation form.
- e. If there is anyone you are concerned about, speak to them privately and make referrals.

8. Closing Prayer and / or Ritual

Support Group Member Evaluation Form

What impact has this group experience had on your grief journey?

What were the most valuable aspects of this group experience for you?

What did you learn about "where you are" in your grief journey right now?

What changes have you seen or experienced in yourself that you might be able to attribute at least partially to this group experience?

What are some of your perceptions of the group leader and his /her style of leadership?

Is there anything about this group and how it was conducted that you find yourself viewing negatively?

How did your participation in this group impact your significant relationships at home and with friends?

If you could describe in a sentence or two what this group has meant to you, what you say?

Voices of Grief, Voices of Healing

(This prayer service is especially appropriate for
Participants who have spent some time in the grieving process
and are ready to face new life and new challenges.)

Material Needed:

1. Music tape / CD: Selected Instrumental music.
2. Tape / CD player

In preparation for this service, the leader should seek out several participants who have recently experienced, and began to recover from, a grief experience. Each of these should be asked to share very briefly about their experience of grief and then about their healing. An explanatory page (with examples), following this service, may be duplicated and given to these participants.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Loving God of life, death, and resurrection,
we acknowledge your presence within us and among us.
As we gather before you, we remember and thank you
for the times you have been with us in our life.
As we recall our loved ones who have gone before us,
we ask you to give us ears to hear
the many voices of grief in this world
the wisdom to respond with care and concern to them,
so that soon those voices may be strengthened and healed.
We ask this in Jesus' name Amen.

The leader plays the instrumental music.

All: "We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here;
and we believe that we will see you
when you come in your glory, Lord,
we remember, we celebrate, we believe.

"Here, a million wounded souls
are yearning just to touch you and be healed;
gather all your people, and hold them to your heart,"

Voices of Grief

**Leader: Christ said: "Blessed are they who mourn." Let us listen to the voices of
those who have grieved their loved ones.**

Those who have agreed to share describe their experiences of grief.

Voices of Healing

**Leader: Christ concluded the beatitude "Blessed are they who mourn..." with the
words "...for they shall be comforted."**

**Let us listen to the voices of those who received comfort in the midst of their
grieving and now look forward to new life.**

Those who have agreed to share describe their experiences of healing.

All: "We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here;
and we believe that we will see you

when you come in your glory, Lord,
we remember, we celebrate, we believe.

"See the Face of Christ revealed in every person standing by your side;
Gift to one another, and temples of your love."

Leader: **Let us pray.**

All: Heavenly Father, we have listened to the voices of grief
that we are so familiar with.
Some of those voices are our own.
but we are strengthened by the voices of healing
because we have begun to realize
that with the help and comfort of those around us,
those voices can be ours also.
Continue to be with us on our grief journey
so that we can find the peace and joy
That comes to those who seek you through their sorrow.
Amen.

(Adapted from *Praying Through Grief: Healing Prayer Services for Those Who Mourn*, by Maureen O'Brien, O.P., Ave Maria Press: Indiana, 1997).

Bibliography

- Arbuckle, Gerald A. (1991). *Change, Grief, and Renewal in the Church: A Spirituality for a new era*, MD: Christian Classics, Inc.
- Bruegemann, Walter (1987). *Hope Within History*, Atlanta: John Knox Press.
- Corey, M.S. & Corey, G. (2002). *Groups Process and Practice*. USA: Brooks/Cole.
- Doka, K., & Morgan, J. (Editors) (1993). *Death and Spirituality*, NY: Baywood Publishing Company.
- Floyd, G. (1999). *A Grief Unveiled*, MA: Paraclete Press.
- Fourez, Gerard, (1983). *Sacraments and Passages*, ID: Ave Maria Press.
- Van Gennep, Arnold (1960). *The Rites of Passage*, CO: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hill, G & Alton, P. (1997). *Bereavement: A Handbook for Grief Counseling*. NY: Bailey House.
- Ivaska, David (2000). *Be Not Afraid*. IL: Intervarsity Press.
- Karaban, R. A. (2000). *Complicated Losses, difficult Deaths*. CA: Resources Publication.
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1973). *On Death and Dying*. NY: Macmillan Publishing Co. Office.
- Lewis, C. S., (1976). *A Grief Observed*. USA: Bantam Books.
- Linn, M., Linn, D., & Fabricant, S. (1985). *Healing the Greatest Hurt*. NY: Paulist Press.
- Miller, J. (1998). *Effective Support Group*. Indiana: Willowgreen Publishing.
- Musgrave, B. A. & Bikle, J. R. (Eds.) (2003). *Partners in Healing: Bringing Compassion to people with illness or loss*. NY: Paulist Press.
- Nelson, Jan, & Aaker, David, (1998). *Bereavement Ministry Program: A Comprehensive Guide for Churches*, Indiana: Ave Maria Press.

- O'Brien, Mauryeen (1997). *Lift Up Your Hearts: Meditations for those who mourn*. IN: Ave Maria Press.
- Osborn, R. T. (1967). *Death*. USA: Graded Press.
- Pastoral Bereavement Resources*, Archdiocese of New York – Family Life and Respect Life.
- Rando, T. A. (1984). *Grief, Dying and Death*. IL: Research Press.
- Rando, T. (1991). *How to go on Living when Someone You Love Dies*. NY: Bantam Books.
- Sullender, R.S. (1985). *Grief and Growth*. NY: Paulist Press.
- Westberg, G. E. (1997). *Good Grief*. MI: Fortress Press.
- Willows, D. & Swinton, J. (2000). *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Wolff, Hans Walter (1974). *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Wolfelt, A. D. (2004). *The Understanding your Grief*. CO: Companion Press.
- Yalom, Irvin D. (1987). *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*. NY: Basic Books.
- Zoppo, P. del., (1995). *Mourning: The Journey from Grief to Healing*. NY: Alba House.