

Leeds Bereavement Forum

*Narrative Power: Finding Words for Living, Dying,
Death and Bereavement*

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Ted Bowman – Grief and Family Educator

Tedbowman71@gmail.com

www.bowmanted.com

Assertions Which Inform This Session

Humans are Story-tellers

You don't have anything if you don't have the stories.

Laguna writer Leslie Silko

Stories and Words are Ambiguous

*Someone might read what I wrote and discover something there
that I myself did not see but which might just as valid as my original
thought.*

Henri Nouwen

Stories evoke Stories

*If I tell my story anything like right, the chances are you will recognize
in many ways it is also yours*

Frederick Buechner

The Guest House

**This being human is a guesthouse.
Every morning is new arrival.**

**A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.**

Welcome and entertain them all!

Beginning lines of a poem by Rumi



Definitions

LOSS Refers To
Being Deprived Of Or Ceasing
To Have Something
That One Formerly Possessed
Or To Which One Was Attached

Grief Is A Whole-Body Response To Loss:
Emotional

Cognitive

Spiritual

Visceral



Losses – Conspicuous and Perceived

Some losses are obvious – loss of health, mobility, hearing, retirement, death, move from one house to another, from childhood to adulthood...community resources

Other losses are known only to the individual person, family or a few others – independence, hopes, self-image, one's future story, sense of self



Both Direct and Indirect Methods Are Useful for Grief/Bereavement Care

Direct methods are those that invite the person to tell or address their own story, using questions, life review, nostalgia, and other methods

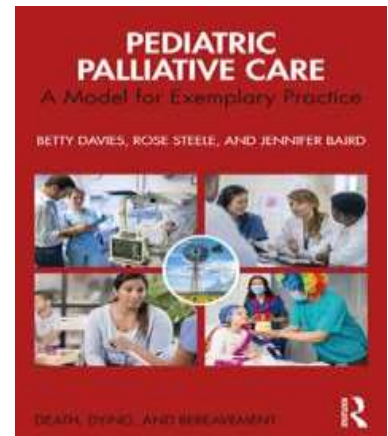
Indirect methods include the use of prompts (someone else's words – poetry, memoir, other sources) to elicit reactions, comments, or stories

For this session, both methods are affirmed

Milieu of Mattering

A milieu of mattering is a setting/culture/ambience/way of being that affirms that all involved (children, parents, siblings and "assumed" or "chosen" family members) may affirm and embrace a milieu of mattering...living, dying, death and bereavement...it matters to all involved.

Leeds Bereavement Forum has been an example of that for 27 years. Resources, modeling and support for challenging conversations are affirmed, practiced, and regularly renewed.



Polling Question

Rate the following as best examples of whobodies
Choose the 2 you aspire to routinely practice

- _____ They listen
- _____ Humility
- _____ Persistent
- _____ Hopeful
- _____ Transparent
- _____ Validate the story told
- _____ Curious
- _____ Coach
- _____ Honesty
- _____ Presence – fully, not distracted

Listening Means Listening.

**Many People Do More Preparing
Than They Do Listening**

**Listening, Really Listening,
Requires One To Pay More Attention
To What The Other Person Is Now
Saying Than To One's Response**

**Understanding Can Be More Important than
Agreement**



Assumptive Worlds

All of us from the moment of our birth, have been building inside ourselves a model of the world, a set of assumptions on the basis of which we recognize the world that we meet and plan our behaviour accordingly.

We rely on the accuracy of these assumptions to maintain our orientation in the world and to control our lives.

Anything which challenges this model incapacitates us.



C.M.PARKES

Stories Change

Life changes fast. Life changes in the instant. You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends.

Joan Didion

I thought I could describe a state, make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process...There is something new to be chronicled every day. Grief is like a long valley...a winding valley.

C.S. Lewis

Grief reconfigures time, also space. You enter a new cartography...the Desert of Loss, the Lake of Indifference, the Bog of Self-Pity...Caverns of Memory

Julian Barnes

Re-Authoring Lives / Narrative Power

Narrative therapist Michael White's (2007) concept of reauthoring stories began as he perceived the parallels between literary stories and those he saw in therapy. Effective therapy, he asserted, is about engaging people in the reauthoring of the compelling plights of their lives

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**Narrative is interested in power –
who has the power to speak/write stories into existence and the ways
in which we might stand against or join with this account**

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Narrative is NOT about having people tell their stories

- **Michael White, Founder of Narrative Therapy 1948 - 2008**

Metaphors

Bowman perspective –

Metaphors, especially as relates to loss and grief, are ambiguous. When one hears someone use metaphors for their loss or grief, you MUST follow their metaphor at that time and place in order to get closer to potential meanings.

Metaphor is the most underdeveloped and under-researched part of grief care – Paul Rosenblatt

Metaphors for Loss and Grief

**...grief never leaves only changes, it waits
outside doors keep a place at the table**

Susan Williams

One morning, cereal. The next day, cancer.

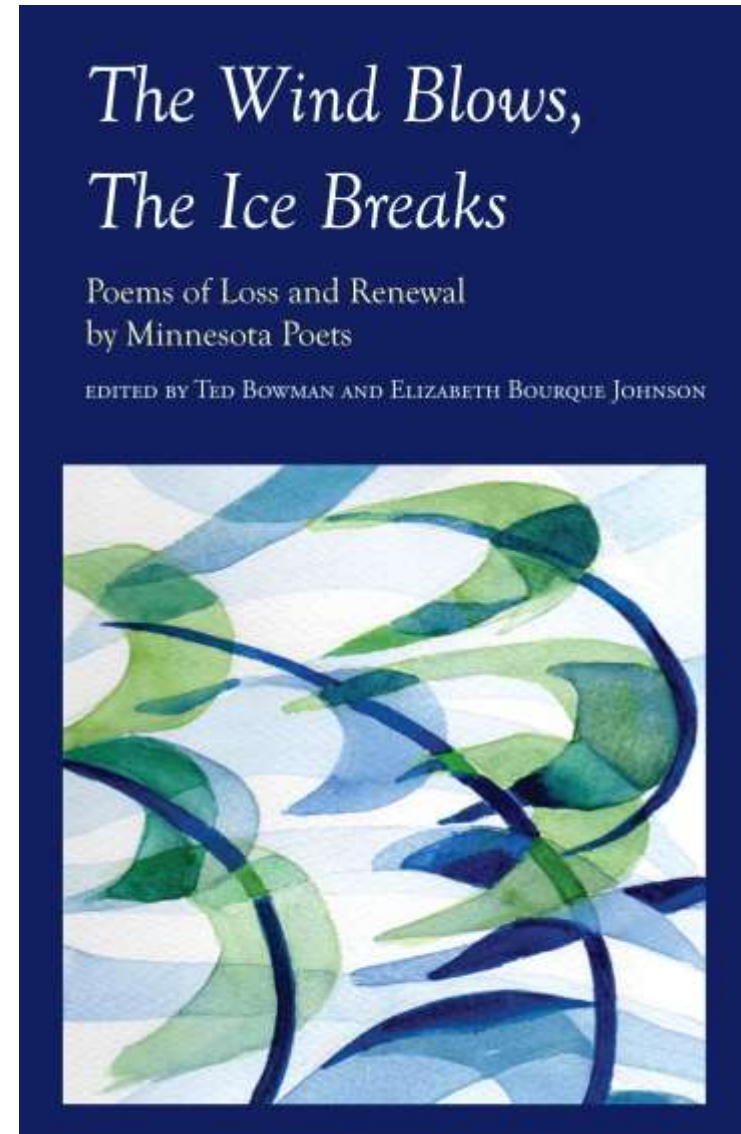
Richard Solly

**...disaster sucks all the air from the room,
swings shut doors in our brains' corridors**

Heid Erdrich

**All I have is a broken voice,
a heart immense with sorrow**

Wang Ping



Grief is Not

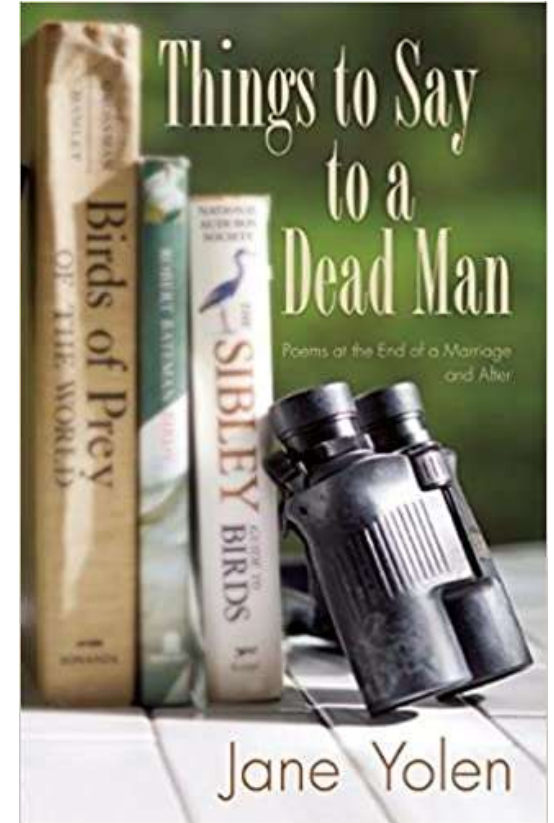
Grief is not getting easier,
But becoming more ordinary,
As if I've always carried this stone in my breast,
Calling it a heart.

Grief is not going away,
Just not arriving in tsunami force.
Rather it's a steady high tide,
Which makes me wonder about the rocks below.

Grief not a one-time thing,
Not several days, weeks, months,
But is a visitor who has moved in for good,
And occasionally helps out around the house.

Grief is not unwelcome here,
For it reminds me of how much I have lost,
And how blessed I was
To have so much to lose.

By Janet Yolen



Curiosity and Metaphors

- **Embrace curiosity**
- **Listen, Listen, Listen**
- **Use open questions**
- **Acknowledge “their” words**
- **Avoid/check assumptions of shared meanings**
- **Clarify – “let me be sure I understand”**
- **Follow metaphors**
- **Manage time – avoid hurrying**
- **If critiquing, focus on the flow, clarity, etc., not the metaphor**
- **Avoid fixing, rescuing, advising**
- **Take risks – be curious “help me get a picture of what you are describing”**
- **Remember metaphors for future use**

**The World Loves Closure, Loves A Thing That Can,
As They Say, Be Gotten Through**

**This Is Why It Comes As A Great
Surprise To Find That Loss Is Forever,**

**That Two Decades After The Event
There Are Those Occasions When
Something In You Cries Out At**

The Continual Presence Of An Absence.

Anna Quindlen

Dual-processing model

(Stroebe and Schut 2001)

Loss Orientation

Grief work

Intrusion of grief

Denial and avoidance
of restoration changes

Restoration Orientation

Attending to life changes

Doing new things

Distraction, denial,
avoidance of grief

New roles, identities,
relationships