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Eye to Eye Graphic Design

Editorial

The past few decades has seen a proliferation of scientific studies of grief and loss, bringing the total number of published books and articles devoted to these themes to more than 2,000 (Neimeyer & Hogan, 2001). The focus of the overwhelming majority of these studies has been on the loss of a loved one through death. Where non-death related losses have been the focus of study, too often researchers have applied models of bereavement – incorrectly assuming a universal and predictable grief trajectory, irrespective of the particular form of the loss. The papers in this edition of *Grief Matters: The Australian journal of grief and bereavement* represent a wide range of research and practice efforts aimed at developing a fuller understanding of the unique experience and legacy of relationship loss.

The paper by Worden makes some interesting comparisons between children who lose a parent to divorce and children who lose a parent to death. Using data, from the *Harvard Child Bereavement Study*, Worden explores the particular difficulties that these two group of children experience – in particular the fantasy of reunion, loyalty conflicts, feelings of responsibility for the break-up and the particular challenges for restructuring the family in the wake of divorce.

The paper by Gee, from his perspective of a family and child mediator with Relationships Australia, explores the fundamental differences between bereavement, separation and divorce. He explores the unique grief trajectories from the perspective of both the initiator and non-initiator with reference to the negative redefinition of the other, the ongoing connections between former partner's and the heightened role of anger.

One of the significant complications of divorce occurs with the presence of children. Martin, writing from her perspective as a mediator with the Family Court of Australia, explores grief and suffering in the light of separation and divorce. She also explores the interface and impact of the Family Court.

Taking a somewhat different perspective Tudball explores the complex literature that examines the effect of bereavement on marital relationships, in terms of both the quality of the relationship and potential divorce amongst bereaved couples.

Three books are reviewed that explore different aspects of grief and relationship breakdown. The first two texts are both recent attempts at guiding the individual through the psychological and emotional impacts following the end of a relationship. The final book, written for children, conveys the experience of divorce through the eyes of a child.

One of the clichés of bereavement work is that grief is the price we pay for love. It is hoped that this edition of *Grief Matters* will assist us in exploring the toll that is paid in the wake of breakdown and the dissolution of relationships.

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Cover: *Father and daughter lunch.* © Corel Professional Images

Children who lose a Parent to Divorce and Children who lose a Parent to Death

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In the *Harvard Child Bereavement Study* we have been following a group of 125 school-age children from 70 families for two years following the death of a parent. Details of this research can be found in Worden (1996) and Silverman (2000). We anticipate following this unique community based sample over time to better understand the sequelae of parental death on children of school age. These longitudinal studies are not unlike those of Wallerstein and colleagues who have been following a group of children from divorced families for 25 years (Wallerstein, Lewis & Blakeslee, 2000). Using data from our Harvard study and comparing it to data from studies of children of divorce, I want to outline some of the similarities and differences for children sustaining these two types of loss.

Fantasies of Reunion

When a family breaks up through divorce, it is often difficult for the children to believe in the permanence of the situation. Fantasies of reunion are very common and are likely to continue for some time. Many children of divorce believe that, if they are just "good enough," the parent will return and the family will be reunited. When the various strategies that a child uses to bring about this reunion fail, a lower sense of self-esteem can result. Fantasies of reunion are less likely to be found among children who have lost a parent to death. The permanence and irreversibility of the loss are very real to most children, especially to children whose understanding of death is developed to the point that they grasp the abstractions of finality and irreversibility. Although a bereaved child may wish for the situation to be reversed, the belief in that option is short-lived and, in some respects, the knowledge of the permanence of loss helps the child and the family to get on with the task of rebuilding the family unit.

Difficulties in Mourning

Children whose parents are divorcing may feel the need to hide their mourning more than children who have a parent die. Mourning may not be supported by other family members or by the custodial parent, due to ongoing conflicts between parents. Also, mourning may not be acknowledged by these children of divorce because they have not made the loss real. Hopes for reuniting the family may keep the reality of the loss at a distance for some time. When a parent dies, the loss becomes real for the child very quickly. Even though the child struggles to maintain an ongoing relationship with the dead parent, the child realizes that the parent exists in another realm and will not return to make the family complete as it was before the death. The bereaved child is usually encouraged to grieve and is also more likely to find others with whom to share this grief.

Pre-Loss Conflict

Divorce frequently occurs after a period of marital conflict and a deteriorating relationship between the parents. Such conflict between parents affects the ways in which children adjust to the divorce. A divorce occurring after several separations and reconciliations can feed reunion fantasies in these children, even years after the divorce. Although there can be marital conflict before a death, it usually is not the case. Many deaths occur suddenly, but when death is anticipated, the well parent is often drawn closer to the dying parent rather than the opposite. In fact, in our study one couple who was separated at the time of illness actually reunited after the illness developed and supported one another through the final months and weeks of life. However, it should be pointed out that some couples sustain a highly ambivalent relationship. When one member of such a couple dies, the surviving member may have a difficult bereavement, with anger and guilt being the predominant features of the grieving.

Loyalty Conflicts

In many divorce situations the ongoing tension between parents may continue for some time. The anger that spouses feel toward each other will be obvious to the children, particularly if each parent tries to paint a bleak picture of the other. Children in this situation often feel conflicted as each parent vies for the child's loyalty. Even when children are encouraged not to take sides, they often feel they must (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Some children in this situation do not experience this pull and place their loyalty with one parent, often the

custodial parent. However, many children in a divorce situation feel love and loyalty toward both parents and do not want to be caught in between parents in such a struggle. This conflict over loyalty adds to the stress felt by children of divorce. Also, if they side with one parent over the other, the children feel less hope that a reuniting of parents will ever occur. In bereaved families these struggles for loyalty are not present, making this a significant difference between these two types of loss.

The Ongoing Relationship with Children

The quality of the parent-child relationship has a powerful impact on childhood adjustment following both death and divorce. Parents in general, however, may be predisposed to behave in different ways to their children following death or divorce. For example, a bereaved parent, although stressed by the loss, may draw closer to the children and try to make up for the death of the other parent. In divorce, custodial parents may be more likely to see children as adding to their stress and may comment that the kids drive them crazy, However, these are not hard and fast differences; for example, tensions often run high between surviving parents and bereaved adolescents. In the *Child Bereavement Study* we have seen that children who have a poor relationship with the surviving parent are more likely to externalize their conflicts through acting-out behavior.

Choice and Anger

Divorce, more than death, is a matter of choice. The fact that one's parent has chosen to leave the family can leave the child feeling abandoned and less good about him or herself and can lead to feelings of anger toward the person who left. Similar feelings of anger and rejection can also be found in the divorced parent who was left by his or her spouse, and the intensity of anger on the part of the custodial parent affects the adjustment of the child. When death occurs it is usually not the choice of the person who died and feelings of abandonment leading to anger are usually short lived. An exception to this would be parental suicide, where the choice to die often leads to high levels of guilt and anger on the part of the survivor, which may last for a long time (Worden, 1991).

Responsibility for the Breakup

It is common for children to assume personal responsibility for the breakup when divorce occurs. In trying to understand why the divorce happened, children often believe that they are part of the cause (Healey, Stewart & Copeland, 1993). Feelings of self-blame are stronger when children are caught in the struggle between their two parents. Children may feel that if they had just done something more, such as being better behaved, or not done something, the divorce would not have occurred. This sense of personal responsibility can lead to feelings of guilt and culpability. Although it is possible to find guilt and self-blame in children whose parent has died, this phenomenon is less common in a death situation. In the Boston study we only found 12% of the children who were grappling with some sense of responsibility over the death during our two years of follow-up.

Community Support

In general, community support is more available to bereaved families than to divorcing families. It is easier to feel compassion for children who have lost a parent to death than to divorce. Frequently, bad behavior in bereaved children is excused by others, for after all, the child's mother or father has died. When a child from a divorced family shows bad behavior, people may respond more negatively by saying, "No wonder she is a troublemaker, she comes from that broken family." In school the death of a parent is frequently acknowledged in the classroom by the teacher. The same is rarely the case when the family is undergoing divorce. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) found fewer than 10% of the children in their study had any adult speak to them sympathetically as the divorce unfolded.

Financial Struggles

After a divorce, money is often used as a weapon between the spouses. There are numerous examples of fathers who fail to pay alimony or child support, thus leaving the family in destitute circumstances. In some divorced families repeated court appearances over child support are the norm. Conflicts over money are a way to express anger at one's former spouse. This creates financial strains for the family and provides an avenue for ongoing conflict between parents, which takes its toll on the children. When a parent, especially a father, dies, the bereaved family may experience some financial decline. This decline can affect both the family and the surviving children, with the impact being greatest on adolescent children. However, money is rarely used as a weapon in bereaved families. Also, other monies often become available through pensions, insurance policies, and supplemental income sources. In fact, the US government will step in and provide money to bereaved families with minor children through provisions of the *Social Security Act*. Such financial resources are not available to the divorced family. There is one negative scenario that may arise in more dysfunctional bereaved families receiving Social Security income. Adolescents in these families may feel that such insurance, because it is designated for the

children, is theirs to spend as they like, and this can cause family friction.

Feeling Different

More children will experience the loss of a parent through divorce than through death. It is estimated that 20% of children will experience family divorce before age 18, whereas only an estimated 5% of children will experience parental death before that age. The main implication of this difference has to do with social relationships. Children, especially adolescents, do not want to be or appear different than their peers. Bereaved children, being fewer in number, run a higher risk of feeling odd or strange than do divorced children. In the Boston study 25% of the children were given a difficult time by other children at some point during the two years for not having both parents, and one-third of the children reported they felt strange among their peers for not having both parents. Some bereaved children acknowledged that they would have chosen for their parents to divorce, rather than for one parent to die. For example, one elementary school boy whose father was murdered said of boys from divorced families, "At least the other kids have fathers, whether they are living with them or not."

Fears for the Future

A major concern for children of divorce is whether or not this will be their own fate in future relationships. Data show that children from divorced families are more likely to end up divorced than children from intact families. Children of divorce fear repeating their parents mistakes (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Bereaved children are less likely to have such a concern. On the other hand, the death of one's parent makes death real for the child and may increase the child's personal death awareness (Worden, 1976). Concerns for their own mortality and possible fears accompanying this concern will be more prominent for bereaved children than for children of divorce.

Parental Dating Behavior

Although there are exceptions, divorced parents usually begin dating earlier than bereaved parents. In the Boston study only 12% of bereaved parents dated early, and these tended to be more depressed than parents who dated later (Worden & Silverman, 1993). Regardless of when dating begins, it can pose problems for some children. Dating in bereaved families, although not always comfortable, tends to be more acceptable for the children than in divorced families. One reason for this difference is the reunion fantasies often found among children of divorce. If the parent is dating or moving toward remarriage, this dashes any hope for the possible reuniting of the family. On the other hand, although bereaved children may experience some discomfort when a parent dates due to issues of loyalty to the dead parent, many are supportive of their surviving parent. One 4-year-old, eager to replace his dead father, asked his mother if they could go to the "daddy store" to get a new daddy. She informed him with a smile that it was not that easy. Bereaved parents who had a good marriage tend to be more reluctant about dating, for fear that they will not meet someone of equal quality to share their life with. Such was the case for the mother of this 4-year-old boy

Family Restructuring

When a family experiences either death or divorce, some restructuring of the family is necessary in order for it to continue to function effectively (Heatherington, 1993). There are several features in a divorce situation that tend to make this more difficult when compared to a death situation. One feature, mentioned earlier, is the persisting fantasy that reunion is possible. If it is possible to go back to what was, one will resist moving forward toward a restructured family. A second feature has to do with the continued involvement of both parents with the family. When the relationship is acrimonious and tensions high, these dynamics interfere with any restructuring. Challenges for restructuring may be found in the bereaved family but, on the whole, this task seems to be easier for bereaved families than divorced families. The reality of this need to regroup is clearer to all concerned and, although there may be a strong emotional tug to have the dead person back, the realization that this won't happen eventually hits everyone and the family moves forward with restructuring and new role allocation.

Children's Intimate Relationships

A final unique feature comes to us from the research of Heatherington & Deur (1971) and has to do with the way that girls who have experienced father absence relate to men in their lives. Using various research settings, Heatherington and colleagues have found that girls who have lost a father through divorce are much more flirtatious with a male stranger introduced into the research environment than are girls whose fathers died. The latter are more quiet and withdrawn around male strangers than are girls from divorced families. These daughters of widows showed more inhibition, rigidity, avoidance, and restraint around these males than daughters of divorcees. Hepworth, Ryder & Dreyer (1984) found that a group of college students with parental death, as a group, were more hesitant about intimate relationships. Persons with parental divorce generally showed accelerated courtship patterns.

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The Grieving Process in Separation and Divorce

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Abstract

Separation and divorce involves great loss. The grieving process associated with divorce is complex and one that is generally not well understood. While there are many parallels with bereavement, there are also fundamental differences. This article discusses the distinctive features of grief in divorce, and focuses on four main aspects including different experiences of the initiator and non-initiator; negative redefinition of other; ongoing connections between former partners and the heightened role of anger. The impact of practical, material aspects is also highlighted. How former partners deal with these elements largely determines longer term outcomes.

"Divorce is a loss, regardless of whether or not it is a relief. Divorce involves the loss of one's mate, the loss of time with one's children or parents, and the loss of cherished possessions. Divorce is a loss of dreams, of shared goals, and of life roles. Divorce creates a loss of control, a loss of trust, and a loss of security. These multiple losses mean that divorce also is a time of grief."
(Emery, 1994, p. 24)

Relationships form the core of each of our lives. From our earliest connections with parents and carers, siblings, relatives and friends, the power of relationship remains central.

Statistics tell us each year in Australia, there are over one hundred thousand marriages and around fifty thousand divorces; more than half of which involve children (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1999). Two out of five marriages will end in divorce. However, these statistics do not capture the overall number of separations (as not all people divorce) and also do not include defacto or same sex relationships.

Such figures are concerning, but statistics are unable to capture the enormous impact separation and divorce has upon those involved, especially the turmoil and grief most people will experience. In many ways, grief surrounding separation is not well understood nor well validated in our community. For example, apart from a legal divorce (after twelve months separation) for those who were married, there are no publicly acknowledged rituals to mark the process.

Divorce has many dimensions, but the literature often explores issues from one particular dimension to the exclusion of others. Divorce not only involves intra-personal (psychological and emotional) aspects, it also involves inter-personal (connection/disconnection with partner, children and others) as well as practical (legal and financial) aspects. It is clear then, that divorce involves a host of interrelated elements that, in conjunction, form a complex process.

This article aims to broadly explore the grieving process associated with divorce, recognising the complex interrelationship of elements involved. In doing so it draws upon studies in bereavement, as grief associated with life crisis and major loss necessarily involves similar patterns. However, grief in divorce differs in a number of ways, including different experiences of the initiator and non-initiator; negative redefinition of other; ongoing connections between former partners and the heightened role of anger. First, however, a brief comment on attachment.

Attachment

While the precise definition of attachment in a range of relationships may be debated (Weiss 1991), there is little doubt about the power of long-term intimate connections. When attachments are broken, two aspects need to be considered. First, it is clear that the greater and deeper the attachment the more intense and traumatic the grief (Kitson, 1982).

The second aspect is the type of attachment patterns that are basic to each person's experience. These are formed in early childhood and set a template for attachment patterns in intimate adult relationships in later life. Broadly speaking, formative attachment patterns are either secure or insecure (Bowlby, 1988). How each partner will react to divorce depends on a number of factors, perhaps the most important being "… the way his attachment behaviour is organised and the modes of response he adopts to stressful situations" (Bowlby, 1980, p. 172). Divorce activates primary attachment patterns, with insecure attachment likely to lead to much more disorganised and chaotic behaviour. Other losses are also likely to come into consciousness, deepening and intensifying the current loss.

Powerful attachments can also occur to house, to lifestyle, to future plans. From what may have been a relatively secure psychological and material base, separation can mark a sudden transformation in not only relationship with spouse, but also with children, with living arrangements, financial security and fundamentally with self. Often underestimated is the interrelationship between psychological states and external circumstances in divorce. For example, reduced financial circumstances and the impact on lifestyle and life choices can severely

exacerbate and prolong emotional and psychological distress. Research consistently shows that reduced finances are a key risk factor for children and their primary carer's well being post divorce (Emery, 1999).

Grief in Divorce

Discussion of grief in divorce has generally been informed by the literature on bereavement. Most conceptualise the grieving process in divorce, similar to bereavement, with each partner proceeding through distinct stages, from initial separation to eventual acceptance. More recently however, these 'stage' models have been challenged (Bickerdike, 1999), with the experience of divorce being more aptly considered 'cyclical' with a diminishing intensity over time (Emery, 1994). And, while intra-personal, grief in divorce is also highly inter-personal - one partner can continue to impact upon and influence the experience of the other. This is explored in a later section. However, for purposes of this article, a broad pattern of grief in divorce is informed by Bowlby's (1980) four phases of mourning. Within this framework elements distinctive to divorce are discussed.

Initiator and Non-Initiator

Grief in divorce is fundamentally an adaptation to enormous life change. In divorce, while both partners grieve, they generally do so in different ways and at different times. It is rare that divorce is a mutual decision, generally one person (the initiator) makes the final decision - to the relief or the dismay of the other. Often the initiator has grieved for the relationship prior to the actual physical separation, while non-initiators can be unprepared and the separation can come as a surprise. It is worth noting that the majority of initiators are women, and while both genders are equally affected by divorce, women and men generally adapt (or grieve) in different ways (Doka & Martin, 1998). These factors may add to the heightened risks for men, not only at the time of separation (Cantor & Slater, 1995) but also in adjusting longer term (Jordan, 1996).

Non-initiators often go through the stages of mourning in a similar sequence to bereavement. At first there is "numbing" often described as shock, and often an inability to accept the decision. Some describe overwhelming attacks of panic, others disbelief, others anger.

The sequence is more difficult to describe for initiators. Except in extreme circumstances, it is rare impulsive decisions are made. For many initiators, the "numbing" has occurred gradually over a number of years. Sometimes a particular incident or event is remembered as the point where feelings changed. While still well within the relationship the initiator may first carry a 'secret' that all is not well which gradually develops into 'displays of discontent' (Vaughan, 1986). Displays can be recognised as attempts to recover the relationship, and may oscillate between numbing, uncertainty and seeming fine. If displays are volatile, the other is likely to withdraw.

In saying this, it is clear that neither partner's grief began only at the point of separation. Even for the non-initiator, their level of distress may have been acute for some time. In a strained and stress filled relationship which usually precedes divorce (Gottman, 1994), neither partner begins the separation process without a history of distress and there are often several separations before the final parting.

After the shock of the decision, the non-initiator can enter a phase of disbelief. There is often continued hope that separation is only temporary. There can be offers to try harder, to change, to attend counselling - bargaining which if refused can precipitate anger. "Thus, we see restless searching, intermittent hope, repeated disappointment, weeping, anger, accusation, and ingratitude" (Bowlby, 1988, p. 92). Underlying the wish to restore is often a deep level of sadness. Emery (1994) describes sadness as one of three key affective aspects of grief. In his model sadness, along with anger and love, cycle back and forth, with one emotion, then another predominating, eventually diminishing in intensity over time.

The next broad phase marks a period of disorganisation and despair. For the future initiator (who is still within the relationship) the despair is often that the relationship has become irretrievable. Energy levels are low, emotions flat and health is likely to suffer. Some initiators fear they may become ill or seriously depressed if they stay.

For the non-initiator this phase is extremely difficult. There is often a need to answer 'why' (Vaughan, 1986). There can be obsessive focus on the other, and on the relationship. And while an internal re-evaluation is occurring, there can be a host of external issues with which to contend. There is often a need to rehouse, to come to terms with changes in relationships with children as well as financial strain. There is often an emphasis on more basic, survival needs.

Redefinition of Self and Other- Conflict and Anger

Pivotal to this period is a redefinition process. "If marriage involves a construction of a significant shared reality and if it stabilises the reciprocally connected images of self and the other, then

divorce involves first, a major destruction of the reality of the marriage; second, a shattering of self image; and third, a disintegration of the image of other - the ex-spouse… the images of the other are profoundly altered during the separation… and the history of the marriage is fundamentally reinterpreted." (Johnson & Campbell 1988, p. 52).

This presents a powerful picture of the review that takes place in divorce and marks a critical part of the grief process, as redefinition of other, and of self, is needed to disengage. As the history of the relationship is reinterpreted in light of the separation many past events take on a different and negative significance.

Anger can be intense, especially directed at the initiator ("who caused this") and/or at third parties. Being able to 'target' grief reactions so readily (and receive support from relatives and friends as well as an adversarial legal process), is one of the distinctive aspects of grief in divorce. Blame and battle can then be justified. As Vaughan (1986) states, "[it is as if] …they really cannot leave someone they like. To make their own transition out of the relationship, partners must redefine initiator and relationship negatively, legitimising the dissolution" (p. 154).

Within this climate, separating partners still need to make a number of practical decisions, which is a further distinctive feature of divorce. The need to make joint decisions, continue to parent and engage around children (while needing to disengage from other) - while experiencing intense, usually negative, emotions, makes divorce extremely problematic. If tensions are high, former partners are vulnerable to disagreement and can become locked in a pattern of competitive conflict (Deutsch, 1969). Dispute can in a sense 'take over' - fuelled by labile emotions and re-definitions of other. Battle can become a way of dealing with grief, anger may be vented at the former partner, now redefined as 'villain' (Cobb, 1994). Once a cycle of conflict has been established it is often self-perpetuating and reinforcing, with actions further generating reactions, establishing a life of its own, outside of either person's control (Winslade & Cotter, 1997).

While anger is adaptive, and would seem a necessary part of the process, the danger for some is that anger can become chronic and entrenched. Anger can also turn to despair and for many this can be overwhelming. In this phase, the risk of suicide, depression, health problems, and accidents are elevated (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1998).

Turning Points and Renewal

The turning point in the process has been described as 'realisation'. For the initiator this is a recognition that to remain is impossible, even if to go seems impossible also. Some express this as simply realising the relationship has ended, no matter the consequences. Plans may be thought through, advice sought. Often there is a 'transitional person', sometimes a lover, sometimes a friend who becomes a special guide or support through this period (Vaughan, 1986). Once the decision is made, feelings of relief, mixed with guilt and sadness are pronounced. There are also external aspects (living arrangements, finances) as well the former partner's (and children's) reactions that must be dealt with. Often, with the realisation and decision, comes a renewal of energy and focus.

For the non-initiator 'realisation' marks a point where energy is withdrawn from seeking the other, or trying to restore what was, to accepting a need to create or develop something new. Thought patterns shift from the past to the future. It is not uncommon that life courses alter, employment changes, new skills are learned and new relationships developed with children, with others, and with self.

This then begins a period of re-organisation and repair. The depths have been plumbed and now, for many, healing and new growth is the focus. Initiators will often have started this phase while still in the relationship while non-initiators begin much later down the track. In any event it is an individual journey which often involves a period of 'adult adolescence'; being single again, dating, meeting new people, open to new experiences (Ricci, 1997). It is a journey, however, that is still to some extent, linked to the 'other'.

Ongoing Connection with Other

One of the key dimensions of divorce is the ongoing relationship between former partners. In bereavement, the relationship with the lost partner continues to play a central role in the bereaved person's life. Anger is an essential aspect of moving through this phase, underlying which is a strong wish to restore the bond and re-establish the attachment with the deceased partner (Bowlby, 1980).

In divorce the other also continues to play a central role in each partner's life. However, the other is still physically there. There is a real capacity, or at least possibility, to still be able to 'restore the bond'. While divorce involves mourning for each individual, when there are children there is likely to be ongoing contact between former partners which can constantly re-ignite the grief, as restoration (often the hope for the non-initiator) is

thwarted time and again. Feelings of rejection, of abandonment, of anger (and of love), can be rekindled every time there is contact. The force of this dynamic cannot be overemphasised and this underlies the high degree of ambivalence that can accompany divorce.

Ongoing connection and mutual reaction is a significant quality of divorce and one that many struggle to resolve. Separated adults still dance within a living drama, and each retains a capacity to continue to influence and act upon each other in reciprocal ways – constructive or destructive. In some respects, neither can grieve entirely individually. Their grief experience remains connected to each other, as well as to their children. The grief associated with separation from children can be great – especially for the non initiator who may suddenly become a 'contact' parent. As Emery (1994) states, "…this means that the experience of grief in divorce is more likely to be repeated, prolonged, and unresolved."

Contradictions, Connections and Closure

Separation and divorce mark a period of major life change. For most, the experience is traumatic, for all, it involves loss. Grief in divorce has parallels with bereavement, but differs in a number of ways, which have been explored in this article.

Essentially divorce involves contradiction. Remaining connected, while attempting to disconnect, is one of the underlying dilemmas faced by divorcing couples and one that makes closure extremely difficult. While each mourns for the relationship, one is often 'completing' the process at the same time as the other begins. In the midst of these intense emotions former partners are faced with the need to make rational, constructive decisions, about children and finances, with the person they may now view as untrustworthy.

While it is often stated that two to three years (less for initiators) is the usual recovery time, closure can often be only partial. While former partners generally become detached over time, their connection as parents means that wounds can still be reopened and further battles fought. For divorcing couples, the challenge is in how the connection and the contradictions are resolved – both within themselves and with the other. This will largely determine long-term outcomes.

The journey through separation and divorce, while fraught with difficulties, also opens possibilities. Divorced partners review and renegotiate their futures; children grow older. In coming to terms with the losses of divorce, many enter into new ventures and explore new ground - many re-partner. And hopefully, in the course of all the challenges and changes that inevitably occur, all grow wiser.

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Grief and Suffering: Separation and Divorce and the Family Court

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Abstract

Divorce represents the loss of a relationship and involves a grieving process in two people, albeit not necessarily at the same time. The differences in timing and ways of dealing with the attendant suffering can lead to complications. Divorce impacts on other people. It often involves children. The way the adults process their grief or the way they defend against it can either ease children's sense of loss or can increase the burden of suffering for them. This article explores some of the emotional challenges involved in divorce, especially for divorcing parents. It also explores the ways in which suffering is avoided, in particular by using the Family Court, and the potential impact of this on children.

Like any other form of loss, divorce has a shape all of its own and each divorce has its own particular shape.

In western romantically based marriages, divorce signals the failure of an adult relationship that has been chosen and, in many cases, has been based on some degree of passionate engagement that carried with it implicit promises for a lifetime of happiness or at least involvement. Any marriage, whether romantically based or arranged, involves expectations – not only the parties of one another but also in the public arena. Extended family members, children, friends and society generally have expectations, and ideas about how things should be. There is always someone to be disappointed, or sometimes pleased, by the breakdown of a marriage.

Divorce is about failure. It is about the failure of a relationship to meet needs, but people can see it as personal failure – either their own failure or someone else's. Because marriage is linked to a moral system and because of its link, through the avenue of intimate attachment, to primitive abandonment issues, divorce brings with it often quite harsh opinions about right and wrong, good and bad, fault and blame. This can occur not only between the two people most closely involved but also in their wider social network. When a couple in addition has children, most particularly babies, either born or unborn, then the level of harshness in judgements made tends to escalate sharply. People are no longer seen to be leaving a marriage but rather to be abandoning their babies. (This situation is moderated or accentuated by how aggrieved the marital partners themselves feel about the separation.)

With the exception of homicide or some form of real or perceived negligent involvement in the death of a spouse (and perhaps, in some instances, suicide), the loss of a spouse through death does not usually invite blame or accusations of failure. Grieving occurs in an atmosphere of support and compassion. This is not always so with divorce. For example, a person who decides to leave a marriage against the expressed wishes of their partner, can find themselves under attack from not only their partner but also their own friends and family. It is as if in leaving they have forfeited all right to grieving or at least to grieving in an environment of understanding. How many times have I heard the statement, "You chose to leave the family, you can live with the consequences", or words to that effect, as a spouse, who is also a parent, talks about how hard it is to only see their children every fortnight (or sometimes even less). This type of, at times punitive, failure of compassion or empathic understanding, which can be found in various guises in divorce situations, is more likely to be found in divorce than in any other form of loss (except that resulting from certain criminal acts).

Unlike death, where in reality there is no hope left except eventually through memories or, perhaps in a psychotic defence, separation and divorce does not in itself shut the doorway to hope. This gives a different experience of grief in each. Death brings the exquisite anguish of the absolute and irrevocable silence of the other. Divorce brings the anguish of continued but intensified ambivalence. With divorce the other is in existence somewhere on the earth and usually somewhere visible, particularly where children are concerned. Some people find this comforting, others find it tormenting – hence the fantasy amongst some that death is somehow easier to deal with than divorce. Death involves surrendering an attachment in the absence of the other, divorce involves surrendering an attachment in the presence of the other, so to speak, but both require at least some degree of surrender of hope for healthy grieving to occur and for life to go on. Fear of feelings of emptiness and aloneness can interfere with this surrender, as can an excessive feeling of rejection and any attendant feeling of being unlovable and worthless.

Divorce is the loss of a relationship rather than the loss of a person. What is lost is lost between two people. On the other hand, all that is lost is not lost by both of the people at the same time as one another. This can lead to an illusion, which is quite common, that one of the two people has suffered no loss at all. Not only does this thought cause a sense of injury at a narcissistic level; it

can lead to other complications in the grieving process. For example it can lead to a desire to even things up by forcing the other person to experience the loss of something important, such as money or children, or it can lead to feelings of gratification through the relative sanctity of being the victim. Further to this, the person from whom one might, in other circumstances, have expected comfort appears indifferent and callous. On the other hand, should they attempt to offer comfort, this often merely acts to heighten the pain.

Except in situations that have been a matter of two people either drifting apart or feeling quite incompatible with one another and deciding together to end the relationship, feelings of rejection tend to be present in one person or the other where divorce is involved. The sense of rejection can become very acute, however, if there is a third person romantic involvement at the time the decision is made to finally separate. For some people this acts as a resolution of the question of the viability of the marriage. These people shut the door, disconnect from the relationship, suffer the grief and get on with their lives. Others experience a devastating blow to their self-esteem. For some this might lead to depression and therefore the opportunity to resolve and heal old injuries. For others it can lead to ultimately problematic and sometimes destructive defensive manoeuvres – the most common being that of splitting, whereby a distorted view of the self, the other, the relationship and perhaps the third party develops. This not only presents a problem for the resolution of the grief involved in the loss, but also can present serious problems for the other people involved, in particular children.

Being a parent in a divorcing or separating relationship gives an additional dimension to the grief to be suffered. In this situation one is not only losing a romantic or marital relationship but also the other things that are associated firstly with living with one's children and secondly living with one's children together with the children's other parent. Not living with one's children full time is a very serious loss for most parents and, indeed, except for those people with strong narcissistic features in their personalities, it is probably the most serious of the losses involved in the breakdown of a relationship that has produced children. If, in addition, one finds oneself with a spiteful, vindictive ex-partner or indeed an ex-partner who seeks to reduce his or her suffering by minimising involvement even at the expense of the children then the situation can become extraordinarily painful.

Parenting after the death of a spouse is single parenting. This type of loss contains the true and terrible anguish of the loss of not only the husband or wife but also the fellow parent. A fellow parent can also be lost in other ways, either through mental illness, serious and debilitating physical illness or serious inadequacies in personality. Divorce, however, does not automatically mean single parenting, although it does usually involve not living under the same roof. A successful resolution of the grief, and other pain, of separation and divorce, combined with parents who are healthy enough, leads to a continuation of the parenting relationship in common love of, and from, their children. Indeed one of the crucial tasks in a divorce involving children is to separate the dying marital relationship from the parental relationship. A failure to do so presents all sorts of complications for children, who need to straddle both households to have the best possible outcome from their parents' divorce.

Children do not lose parents as a consequence of divorce. Children, however, can lose parents during or after a divorce. This is not because of the divorce itself but rather because of how one or, more commonly, two (and sometimes more) adults behave during or after the separation or, indeed, during the marriage itself. What children lose as a result of their parents' separation, and therefore what they grieve, has a number of elements to it. The primary element, which can be forgotten or minimised, is that of living with each parent all of the time. Most children who live in an intact family see both parents every day, even if it is only for a short time. If they don't, as for example with a father who travels a lot with his work, it is usual for the other parent to acknowledge the difficulties this presents and for both parents to take steps to make it easier for their children. Divorce can, although it doesn't always, produce changes in this behaviour. Thus some children also lose the security of having two parents who understand the importance of each other to their children and who therefore act to secure the relationship with the other parent as much as with themselves. Children can also temporarily lose their knowledge of belonging to their parents and their parents belonging to them. They experience uncertainty in their family world, the level of this uncertainty being moderated by how secure they felt in their relationships with each parent prior to the marital separation. In essence they lose the world as they knew it and for a time they share with their parents uncertainty as to what the future holds. It should be added that this is not a matter for grief for all children as for some children a parental separation can bring relief from fear and suffering.

So how does the Family Court fit into the scheme of things, in the sense of what people might be doing emotionally when they involve the Family Court in their affairs (in other than a straightforward, official declaration of their divorce and/or its terms)? The simplest and most basic answer to this question is that they are seeking to reduce or eliminate suffering. This effort to reduce or eliminate suffering takes many forms, however, and some of these forms are actually about avoiding experiencing the suffering that is there and must be suffered for life to go on.

Some men and women are, in one sense, forced into the Family Court by the actions of an enraged offended and/or personality disordered partner. Such people can, on occasion, find themselves at the mercy of someone who seeks to modify their own experience of suffering through at times highly destructive behaviour, including, at one extreme, murder, murder/suicide or their psychic equivalents. In some instances this behaviour constitutes a continuation of a general pattern of dealing with emotional suffering or the threat of the same. In other instances it constitutes an acute response to an experience of abandonment and signals an inability to bear the associated depression. Of course, which it is will determine the long-term outcome potential, although, sadly, not always the actual long-term outcome.

In the range of the more destructive solutions to the dilemma of loss and grieving in divorce are those involving either the abandonment or manipulation and exploitation of children. For example, some parents may distance themselves from their children as a way of reducing pain and in some cases lose contact altogether. Other men and women can seek to attack their children's relationship with the other parent. This can be done either by interfering with the time available for the child to spend with the other parent or in less direct ways, for example by interfering with the child's view of the other parent. The most disturbed and disturbing instances involve interference with the child's view of his/her own relationship with the other parent. All of these examples ultimately represent the transfer of the burden of grief from the adult to be carried by the child. The reasons for such behaviour might be varied, ranging from vengeance to the simple desire to avoid all contact with the ex-partner because, for some reason or other, such contact is experienced as too painful. In cases of domestic violence the issues surrounding children's contact with the unsafe parent are different and the prevention of such contact may be necessary action to ensure the child's or the other parent's safety. Disruption of contact between a parent and child in those instances is not about transfer of grief but about appropriate protection, although the grief that some children who are in this position can, nevertheless, experience should be acknowledged.

The court is used by some to maintain a level of engagement or entanglement with the other. That is, either the conflict is used to sustain a feeling of connection or there is an avoidance of disentangling the issues involved, be they property or children, as doing so also separates the last strands of the relationship. Sometimes this way of avoiding grief represents a joint effort and sometimes it signals one person's desire to bring the other back into a more personal orbit.

The most significant complications of divorce occur with the presence of children. Without children, and excluding situations involving highly disturbed and dangerous individuals, people would be able to process or not process their grief in whichever way suited with little damage being done except perhaps to their own lives. A child needs parents, however, and, in most instances, has an attachment to the two people they have known as their mother and father from the time of their birth, regardless of whether they are biologically connected or not. Children have more to lose from their parents' separation and divorce than the marital couple has to lose, no matter how it might at times feel to the adults concerned, should the parents be unable to negotiate the difficult course of grieving one relationship whilst keeping the other alive. Just as in their own minds children will always remain psychically linked to the marital relationship and their parents will therefore always be in some sort of relationship with one another, even if it is not talking to one another, so it is also for parents. With divorce, however, can come a movement from "our children" to "my children" or, even more tragically, to "your children". This is often transitional. It can become a permanent state if grieving does not proceed to completion such that the marriage, in its full complexity, can come back to life in memory and the other's existence, as both good and bad, can be tolerated.

Marital Quality, Rates of Divorce and Bereavement: What Does the Research Say? Divorce following Bereavement

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Abstract

The literature pertaining to the effect of bereavement on marital quality and the divorce rate amongst bereaved couples is reviewed. Problems relating to the frequency of small, unrepresentative samples and the lack of longitudinal research are explored. The difficulties in conducting this research include high rates of respondent geographic mobility, attaining baseline data and utilising appropriate comparison groups. The conclusion drawn is that the limitations in existing research make it difficult to identify a link between reduced marital quality and higher divorce rates for bereaved couples.

It is widely accepted that the negative impact of the death of a close family member on marital quality translates into extremely high rates of divorce. In fact, there have been very few systematic attempts to determine the reliable divorce rate for bereaved couples. What does exist is plagued by small, non-representative samples and a lack of longitudinal approaches incorporating measures of pre-loss relationship quality and adequate post-loss observations. An additional complication in the Australian context is that virtually none of the studies have been conducted using Australian data.

Existing research predominantly concentrates on the loss of a child, but it has been shown that the stressful life event of losing other family members, such as a parent, also negatively impacts upon relationships (Umberson, 1991; Douglas, 1990-1991; Guttman, 1991, cited in Moss & Moss, 1995). This review draws upon the literature which examines the impact of bereavement on marital relationships, in terms of both the quality of the relationship and potential dissolution, rather than the circumstances surrounding the loss. As such, I will focus primarily on research examining the impact of the loss of a child but draw from other research commenting on the impact on marital relationships of the death of other close family members. This review is intended to highlight the difficulties in identifying rates of divorce for these couples; the problems with existing attempts to produce such a statistic; and the association between reduced marital quality and divorce among bereaved couples. It is hoped that the limitations of existing research will alert those who work with recently bereaved parents of the potentially harmful effects of employing such statistics in their counsel.

Bereaving the loss of a family member: the negative impact on marital quality

The results of many studies have indicated the negative effects of bereavement on the family and marriage in particular. Lehman, Lang and Sorenson (1989) compared the quality of relationships of 54 parents who had lost a child in a car accident with 61 matched controls and found a significant difference between the two groups in the degree to which parents felt more bothered and tense with each other their daily lives (Lehman et al., p. 354). In her research of the impact of a parent's death on marital relationships, Umberson (1991, cited in Moss & Moss, 1995) found that out of the adult child's marital, parental and sibling relationships, only their marital relationships were affected negatively. This was found even for respondents who were assessed 30 months after a parent's death. In later work, Umberson (1995) employed data from a national two-wave survey of individuals in intact relationships, 209 of whom had lost a parent or parents to death (seven per cent of the 1989 sample). The death of a mother was associated with a decline in social support from the marital relationship and an increase in negative behaviour by their partner. Respondents bereaving the loss of a father reported increased relationship strain, a greater frequency of conflict and a decline in relationship harmony. Qualitative research also indicates the negative impact of the loss of a child on the parents' relationship. Interviews conducted with 20 bereaved parents elicited five themes reflecting anger, frustration, irritability and a loss of communication and intimacy between couples (Schwab, 1992).

In contrast to these findings, a number of studies have shown bereavement to have neutral and sometimes positive effects on the quality of marital relationships. Participants in Lehman and colleagues' (1989) study did not report feeling less contented with their partners, despite feeling more stress and tension in their relationship. Responses to open-ended questions were "fairly evenly distributed across categories" (Lehman et al., 1989, p. 360), suggesting that bereavement may have an equally positive and negative impact on the subjective experience of marital relationships. Lansky, Cairns, Hassanein, Wehr and Lowman (1978) did not find a significantly higher divorce rate among those couples who had a child die from cancer than the divorce rate for couples in the two states from which the sample was drawn. One study examining parental coping with the death of a child discovered a positive outcome for the marital relationship in that cohesiveness increased (Spinetta, Swarner, & Sheposh, 1981). Twelve studies that Schwab (1998) reviewed demonstrated mixed results, where some reported a positive and/or negative impact and others reported no change in marital quality.

So what can account for this apparent paradox in the literature? One oft-quoted qualitative researcher suggests that bereavement can affect marital relationships in a seemingly contradictory fashion. Reflecting on 20 years of experience counselling and researching bereaved parents, Klass (1988) spoke of this paradox in the marital relationships of bereaved parents:

> The shared loss creates a new and very profound tie between them at the same time the individual loss that each of them feels creates an estrangement in the relationship that is very deep… the paradox of a new bond amidst estrangement is a central theme in the marital relationships among bereaved parents. (pp. 42-43)

Klass (1988) also found that many bereaved parents experience difficulties in their marriage that, with time, communication, and re-negotiation of their roles within their individual lives and their marriage, can foster the growth and thriving of the relationship. Effective communication as a key factor in managing bereavement within a relationship has also been identified elsewhere (Riches & Dawson, 1996, Wallerstedt & Higgins, 1996).

Challenges for Research

It may be that quantitative research designs lack sufficient sensitivity to the experience of grief and its associated meanings for couples to elicit the seemingly paradoxical effects of bereavement as identified by Klass (1988). However, only representative, quantitative research over time can give us an idea of the degree of relevance of such findings across a broad range of people. The difficulty in recruiting a representative sample is amplified when the target population is bereaved parents. It may be that those who decline participation in research studies are those having the most difficulties in coping with their loss (Lehman, Wortman, & Williams, 1987). Maintaining a sample over time is also difficult, due to the high rates of geographic mobility of families following the death of a child. Lehman and colleagues (1989) could not track down 33 per cent of their respondents at the second wave of data collection. In their report, they cite Defrain, Taylor and Ernst (1982) as having the same problem: 50 per cent of a sample of families who had lost a child to SIDS moved six to 30 months after the death, leaving no forwarding address (cited in Lehman et al., 1987, p. 350).

The most effective way to measure change in marital relationships following a death in the family is to conduct longitudinal research that incorporates pre-loss studies and post-loss studies over a period of time. Thus comparisons can be made between baseline marital functioning and marital functioning in bereavement. However, where the death of a child is concerned, many studies have not tracked marital relationships for more than three years following the loss. The importance of this was illustrated by Martinson, McClowry, Davies and Kuhlenkamp (1994), who tracked respondents seven to nine years after the death of a child. They found that increased marital strain often occurred, sometimes resulting in temporary separation. Had the follow-up been conducted earlier, it would not have been known that those separations were 'temporary'.

Comparisons of pre-loss and post-loss marital quality could distinguish couples who were at high risk of separation before their loss (Lehman et al., 1989). The qualitative component of Umberson's (1995) study concerning the death of a parent yielded reports that separations occurring partly because respondents no longer had to worry about how their parent would view the break-up. Klass (1988) stated that those who divorce following a child's death "do not seem to feel that the death was a central factor in the divorce itself" (Klass, 1988, p. 46). One respondent described the death of her child as "the ultimate loss" (Klass, 1988, p. 47), an experience which makes remaining in a problematic marriage unjustifiable. The dissolution of such a relationship, once abhorrent, becomes comparatively pain-free in the light of the trauma they have already experienced (Klass, 1989).

While it may be possible to obtain baseline data for people anticipating the death of a family member, this is not possible where families lose a member unexpectedly, since accidental deaths cannot be predicted (Lehman et al., 1989). Where baseline data cannot be collected, retrospective accounts of family functioning prior to the death are often a sensible (but problematic) alternative. A difficulty arises when attempting to reveal the long-term effects of bereavement, as it is not reasonable to assume that families will accurately recall the quality of family relationships prior to the death (Lehman et al., 1989). The most effective way of achieving adequate baseline data with which to compare the marital quality and divorce rates of bereaved couples is to include relevant measures in large, representative longitudinal studies of couple relationships.

Death in the family and divorce

The literature does not cite a sole rate of divorce amongst bereaved parents that is generally accepted by bereavement and family researchers. A citation that appears regularly in papers of parental bereavement is that "marriage and divorce among bereaved parents is among the most discussed and least studied aspects of parental bereavement" (Klass, 1988, p. 41). In searching the relevant literature that included refereed journal articles and self-help manuals, I found that this

is quite frighteningly true. Manuals written for bereaved parents often cite divorce rates of up to 90 per cent (Schiff, 1977; Mehren, 1997; Finkbeiner, 1996). Despite claims that these figures come from published studies, no references are given with which to check their authenticity.

Early reports set the rate of the divorce amongst bereaved couples at between 0 and 18 per cent (Hamovitch, 1964, Oakley & Patterson, 1966; Kaplan, Grobstein & Smith, 1976; cited in Lansky et al., 1978, p. 184; Begleiter, Burry & Harris, 1976, p. 260). Lehman and colleagues (1989) found that bereaved parents were significantly more likely to separate and divorce than non-bereaved parents, but again, their sample was too small to draw any general conclusions (nine out of 39 bereaved couples and three out of 39 control couples separated or divorced). Some studies that have included larger samples have similar findings. Nixon and Pearn's (1977) study comprised 111 participants and found that 24 per cent of couples who had lost a child to drowning had separated, compared to none of the control group. (It is unusual to find no divorces in a control group of this size, given the overall divorce rate. However, this control group comprised couples whose child had nearly drowned. We can speculate that such an incident may make marital relationships stronger.) However, the group of parents whose child died comprised only 29 couples. Lehman and colleagues (1987) investigated 82 parents and found that bereaved parents were significantly more likely to divorce than non-bereaved parents. However, the numbers of couples divorcing was very small and therefore cannot be generalised. Many more studies reporting similar findings with larger sample sizes are needed before we can conclude that bereaved couples are at increased risk of relationship dissolution.

One study with adequate sample sizes found no significant difference in the rate of divorce of bereaved parents and non-bereaved parents. An investigation of parents of 191 children who were treated for cancer were studied over a 7-year period (this included 28 couples, with the marital status of the other 43 families unknown). Results showed a person-year divorce rate of 1.19 per cent, slightly lower than the 2.03 per cent rate among couples in the states from which the sample was drawn (Lansky et al., 1978, p. 184). "For each year of the study, the number of divorces in the study group was expressed as a percentage of the number of families at risk for divorce" (Lanksy et al., p. 185). Marital stress was not found to be any different for those anticipating their child's death and those who had recently lost a child (Lansky et al., p. 188).

Making comparisons: giving meaning to divorce rates

Comparisons of bereaved parents with non-bereaved parents are important if we are to understand changes in marital quality and relationship dissolution among bereaved parents (Schwab, 1998, p. 453). Begleiter, Burry and Harris (1976) compared their figure to the national divorce rate for the United States, and found no statistically significant difference between them. However, as divorce rates vary widely across the United States, the national divorce rate may not be representative of the divorce rate in the region from which the sample was drawn (Lansky et al., 1978, p. 184). (Such a comparison with Australian data would not have this problem, since the national divorce rate is very similar to regional divorce rates). Nixon and Pearn (1977) compared two groups of parents, one whose child had died in a freshwater accident at home, while the children of the other group had survived a similar accident. This method of comparison effectively controls for the impact on marital quality and dissolution of having a child involved in this type of accident. The divorce data Lansky and colleagues used were analysed using the person-year divorce rate, which makes them comparable to state statistics. This yields "far more appropriate and meaningful" (Lansky et al., p. 185) results than comparisons to a control group. The person-year rate statistic can be used to compare two groups of unequal size and takes into account the fact that some bereaved couples would have divorced, even if they had not suffered a death in the family. Although it is important to account for this if an accurate, meaningful estimates of the divorce rate is to be determined, Lansky and colleagues' study is the only study that has attempted to do so.

What is of greatest concern regarding the reported divorce rates for bereaved couples is that they appear to be included in the knowledge base of bereaved parents. In interviews, 58 bereaved parents told Rosenblatt (2000) of divorce 'rates' from 50 to 95 per cent (Rosenblatt, 2000, p. 140). "Most narratives [of the married couples interviewed] referred to a 'fact' that marital relationships are very difficult following a child's death and that many couples who have experienced the death of a child divorce (Rosenblatt, 2000, p. 139)." This was also the case with Schwab's (1998, p. 446) respondents and constituted a cause for great alarm. There is no decisive evidence to suggest that divorce will usually follow the death of a child; this is one stressor from which bereaved parents should be spared.

The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Is there a link between marital quality and relationship dissolution following the death of a family member?

Yes for some people, no for others, but essentially we can't really tell. The research suggests that most couples will experience strain in their relationship following the loss of a close family member. However, this is not the same as separating or getting a divorce (Schwab, 1998, p. 464). The flaws in existing research make it impossible to do any more than speculate about such a link on the basis of the information we have. Even though some studies have seemingly adequate sample sizes, some include only a small sub-sample of divorces (eg: Lehman et al., 1989). This makes it impossible to identify predictors of divorce related to bereavement (Lehman et al., 1989).

Couples who separate following bereavement do not do so in a predictable fashion: they will part at different points in time following a loss. Thus the need for longitudinal research that includes measures of pre-loss marital quality and several, follow-up data collections post-loss cannot be emphasised enough (Schwab, 1998). This is best achieved in large, representative longitudinal studies of marital relationships that include quantitative and qualitative measures which can be analysed in the tragic event of a death in the family. Greater understanding of the course of marital relationships through bereavement would not only benefit academic knowledge, but would also provide clues as to how best to support grieving couples as they mourn what is past, and what will never be.

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Book Reviews

The Journey from Abandonment to Healing

Susan Anderson (2000)
Berkley Publishing Group, New York.
339 pp. ISBN: 0 4251 7228 7
$32.95 (includes GST)

This book presents a framework for understanding and working through the abandonment process, following the end of a relationship.
Susan Anderson describes five stages within this process: Shattering, Withdrawal, Internalizing the Rejection, Rage, and Lifting. She provides a healing task aimed at helping the reader navigate each particular stage. These are called "Akeru" tasks: based on a Japanese word with many different meanings, including "to pierce, to open, to end, to make a hole in, to start to expire, to unwrap, to turn over". She uses the apparent contradication within this word to provide the background philosophy to her work, and incorporates examples from some of her clients' experiences to illustrate the various stages.
This book is written as a self-help text. It is accessible, and takes the reader through a complete program for abandonment recovery. It provides a very normalizing and positive framework for people going through such an experience.
I must admit to some initial bias in my response to this book. It has the same advantages and disadvantages as any construction which describes a stage process. On the one hand, it provides a useful frame within which readers can 'locate' their experience, at the same time as providing a powerful message that they are not alone. On the other hand, it runs the risk of becoming prescriptive, and encouraging to some extent, an anxious 'navel-gazing' attitude. However, reading on convinced me that the positives outweighed these concerns, primarily because of the fact that Susan Anderson names and honours this significant example of a disenfranchised grief process; she gives her readers understanding, a sense that they are not alone, hope that such a painful experience can be turned into positive learning, and some practical exercises to optimize this possibility.

Pam Rycroft
The Bouverie Centre (Victoria)

Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends. (3rd Edition)

Dr. Bruce Fisher and Dr. Robert Alberti (2000)
Impact Publishers, California
290 pp. ISBN 1 886230 17 X
$34.95 (includes GST)

Rebuilding was first published in 1981. The author, Bruce Fisher died in 1998, and the updates for the third edition were completed by his colleague and friend, Robert Alberti. Based around a ten week divorce program devised by Fisher, *Rebuilding* is essentially a step by step guide through the psychological and emotional tasks of divorce.
The book and the program have been going strong for twenty years, which in itself is testimony to its effectiveness, and can be used by individuals or as a focus for discussion in groups. It has a companion workbook also available. Like the groups, *Rebuilding* is structured around nineteen 'rebuilding blocks' that, stepped on top of each other form a symbolical mountain, the climbing of which, according to the book, is needed for recovery from divorce. If one accepts the analogy, the idea of the climb and the steps is one that is easy to grasp. Each 'block' represents a specific 'feeling or attitude' that the authors have identified and each chapter marks a step. At the base of the mountain is Denial, Fear, Adaptation, Loneliness, Friendship, Guilt/Rejection; on the next level is Grief, Anger, Letting Go, Self-Worth, Transition; next Openness; Love, Trust, Relatedness; then Sexuality, Singleness, Purpose and at the apex, Freedom.
Rebuilding is a 'personal growth from divorce' book. It focuses on internal states, is upbeat and positive. It is easily read and accessible to client or professional. It is the bestselling internet divorce book, and this edition, while minimally different to the last, is updated to include internet references. For this reviewer *Rebuilding* comes with several reservations. First, the climb is presented in neat, linear fashion, when in reality, divorce is cyclical or more chaotic. Also anywhere short of the 'top' is construed as failure. Second, the social and economic impacts of divorce are not considered. And finally, this reviewer finds objection to the terms "dumper" and "dumpee" used particularly in one section. Otherwise an informative and educative read and one which is highly recommended.

Tony Gee, Family and Child Mediator
Relationships Australia (Victoria)

Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce

By Cornelia Spelman, Kathy Parkinson (Illustrator), (1998) Illinois USA, Albert Whitman and Company, 21 pp.
ISBN 0 8075 5221 6
$35.35 (includes GST)

Spelman tells the story of divorce and its impact on young children from the perspective of Dinah, the youngest member of the Bear family. This picture story book opens with a note to grown ups highlighting the comfort young children find in sameness.
Complemented by Parkinson's expressive illustrations, Spelman introduces readers to Dinah's emotions and questions as her parents announce their plans for divorce. The youngster's favourite people (her mama, her daddy and her sister), her favourite activities, and her favourite things (her stuffed rabbit and her red sandals) are described and form the basis for the message of reassurance that whilst the experience of divorce may be confusing and distressing for a child, it does not necessarily mean a severing of contact with one of the parents.
Dinah's experience of missing one parent whilst spending time with the other is described simply and effectively from a child's perspective as is the value to the child of retaining certain regular activities and keeping valued possessions when parents have divorced.
Spelman sensitively and effectively conveys what the experience of divorce can involve emotionally for young children. Parkinson adds a particular visual quality to the book which lends the publication well to a 4 to 8 year old audience.

Lesley Harding
Educator, Centre for Grief Education

Programs and Services

The Centre for Grief Education is located at McCulloch House, Monash Medical Centre, 246 Clayton Road, Clayton, Victoria. The Centre provides a range of programs and services to both individuals and organisations. These include:

Consultation and Advice

Centre staff are available for consultation on grief and bereavement issues. These may include advice on program development, staff training, client issues and evaluation. A flexible fee structure has been developed for consultation, which takes the type of organisation into account.

Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision for those who work in bereavement support is essential. Centre staff are available to take on a limited number of supervisees on a regular basis. Both individual and small group supervision is available for a moderate cost.

Research

The Centre for Grief Education acknowledges that research is essential in the development of best practice in grief and bereavement education, support and clinical interventions.
The Centre conducts its own research in addition to collaborative national and international research projects.

Bereavement Counselling Service

The Centre for Grief Education has a free, confidential bereavement counselling service which is available to people who have been bereaved through any cause. This service is provided by mature counsellors participating in advanced training in bereavement counselling. These counsellors are closely supervised by experienced accredited grief and bereavement practitioners.

Counselling appointments can be made by telephone and should be made directly by the bereaved person.
Contact the Bereavement Counselling Service on (03) 9817 7266. The service is located at 39 Sackville Street, Kew.

Referral

The Centre for Grief Education has a referral database and can put agencies and individuals in touch with private bereavement educators and counsellors. This referral database is comprised of professional educators and counsellors who specialise in grief and bereavement. For referrals to private grief counsellors phone the Centre's Bereavement Counselling Service on (03) 9817 7266.

Education and Training Programs

The Centre for Grief Education offers quality education and training opportunities for health professionals, interns, students, volunteers and any other individual or agency wanting to incorporate counselling, therapy, support and education into their current work practice.

Membership

Membership of the Centre for Grief Education offers a range of benefits including receipt of *Grief Matters: The Australian Journal of Grief and Bereavement* (issued three times per year) and a 10% discount for all seminars and workshops. Membership rates and details are as follows:

Individual Membership **$66.00**
includes journal and 10% reduction on seminars and workshops as well as voting rights at the Annual General Meeting.

Organisational Membership **$126.00**
includes journal and 10% reduction on seminars and workshops for two members of staff.

Student & Concessional Membership **$55.00**
includes journal and 10% reduction on seminars and workshops as well as voting rights at the Annual General Meeting.

The above prices include GST - Australia only

Further information on the Centre for Grief Education can be obtained by

Telephone	(03) 9545 6377
Freecall	1800 642 066
Facsimile	(03) 9545 6399
E-mail	info@grief.org.au

Internet Access

The Centre for Grief Education has developed a home page for access on the internet, and includes information about the Centre's activities, resources and a range of grief and bereavement information. Entries include information about education activities offered during the current semester, an order form for resource materials available for purchase, details about the Bereavement Counselling Service and information from Bereavement Support Services in Victoria (a list of agencies and organisations which provide free or low cost bereavement counselling, support and services). Also available is direct access from the home page to other grief and loss sites on the world wide web.
The URL for the Centre is: www.grief.org.au

Instructions to Authors

The Editor welcomes submissions for publication in *Grief Matters: The Australian Journal of Grief and Bereavement* that match the journal's aims and scope.

Scope

The journal publishes work that encompasses both academic and applied aspects of grief and bereavement.
Wherever possible the journal will contain Australian followed by Australasian content (New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and South-East Asia).

Grief Matters: The Australian Journal of Grief and Bereavement is published three times a year in Autumn, Winter and Summer. Three research articles appear in each edition and are not to exceed 3,000 words.

It is a condition of publication that papers have not previously been published, nor are currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Preparation and submission of manuscripts

In preparing manuscripts, contributors should follow the rules set forth in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (4th ed.).

For more detailed information on the submission of manuscripts contact:

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