“...a pain that is understood, does not remove the pain but heals the soul, because the sufferer is not alone.”

(Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2013, p.16)

‘Good Enough’ Endings: Ways Both Clients and Therapists Can Benefit From a Mindful End to Therapeutic Work

By Jenny Field, Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

T.S. Elliot said ‘in my beginning is my end’ (in Mander, 2000). This powerful phrase captures an essence of what endings can mean in a grief and bereavement counselling context. That is, the ending of a therapeutic relationship may transform prior challenging or traumatic endings. However, therapists are often faced with the expectation of being able to ‘cure all pain’, including grief arising after the death of a loved one. Given this, how then do we support clients to understand the meaning of these experiences in the knowledge that our therapy relationship will at some point, also be another ending? Furthermore, in acknowledging as clinicians that endings may also impact us, how do we create a space where therapy supports both attentive holding and the ability to let go (Lanyado, 1999)?

This article will address therapeutic beginnings and endings and how they are linked in ways that will define how the ending is determined.

There is a plethora of research outlining therapeutic modalities to best treat persons impacted by the events of loss, death and grief (Lendrum & Syme, 2004; McLaren, 2010; Neimeyer, 2007; Rando, 1993). Within this context, the acknowledgement of therapy termination, be it short or long-term, is highlighted in terms of its impact to clients (Roe et al., 2006). There is even the important, albeit challenging acknowledgement, of holding the balance between therapy and economics (Lanyado, 1999) that is ever present in light of government funding requirements that can often dictate the length of therapy sessions. What seems to be given less attention however, is the relationship between therapists and clients, how endings are navigated in this context and the meaning of these endings (Lanyado, 1999; Mander, 2000; Wittenberg, 1999).

As endings can be very potent and have the potential to revive previous ending experiences, it is essential to give credence to endings from the beginning of therapy. That is, the notion of ending in a counselling context can arouse deep-seated anxiety, sometimes leaving the topic or the therapeutic process involved neglected (Lanyado, 1999; Wittenberg, 1999). Therapists need to consider the importance of therapeutic relationships and the role they play in facilitating ‘good enough’ endings, which aid in moving towards healing imposed or traumatic past endings, and can be integrated...
Internally for the client in order for them to navigate other life transitions and losses (Wittenberg, 1999).

This is also true for the therapist, who likewise has the capacity to be transformed by each therapeutic relationship, its process and its ending. (Lanyado, 1999). An important part of this is when therapists are comfortable confronting closeness and distance from potential losses in themselves, so that they can effectively model this possibility for clients (Hooyman & Kramer, 2006). Hence, self-awareness is a gift that brings a therapist in contact with their humanness, but at the price of acknowledging their own mortality and imminent death (Yalom, 2008).

Endings are often talked about in terms of agency criteria and funding restrictions, or the dialogue around the meaning of endings in therapy is just absent, rather than it being a joint collaborative conversation, where both therapist and client explore the meaning of endings in the therapy relationship.

A different way to consider exploring endings that acknowledges the shared experience between therapist and client could include things like:

**Creating a space to explore therapist and client experience and tolerating of endings**

It is important that the therapist has the capacity to tolerate separation and loss. Bringing endings into the therapy agenda and exploring their joint meaning is a powerful way for clients to witness the modeling of therapists embracing endings in acknowledgement of the strong emotion this raises.

**Planning therapy ending that expresses the experience of the relationship and the process**

While endings will evoke powerful emotions for both client and therapist, the opportunity to collaboratively explore the work achieved and ways it has impacted each person is essential.

**Transforming the ending experience**

The opportunity to curiously explore how an ending can take place allows for choice rather than an imposed event. Too often in life, many events such as death occur without warning, leaving no time to process their meaning. It can be helpful to think about this process as a protracted transitional experience that transforms the loss experience.

**Allowing the therapy relationship to matter**

Finally, therapists recognising that relationships do not occur in isolation, as they are present and equally impacted by this connection as humans. The gift of allowing clients to matter and acknowledging that the therapy has touched us, can only expand our work and our relationship with it. In daring to companion our clients and allowing them to matter, we have the satisfaction of doing meaningful work. We see clients reclaim themselves and their lives. We gain wisdom and have endless opportunities to learn about the recesses of the human heart, our own included (Walsh & McGoldrick, 2004).

**Conclusion**

While endings arouse anxiety and require us to come to terms with their meaning in the therapeutic relationship, embracing them can result in enriching our professional journey as we companion clients who seek to make sense of endings in the context of loss. Preparing ourselves for endings will assist clients to be receptive to explore and embrace endings, integrating their experience of past losses. While there will always be external criteria and pressures that impact how we engage endings in the client relationship, maintaining a therapeutic presence that holds and models endings, particularly in the context of grief and bereavement, is not just advantageous, but is essential in facilitating ‘good enough’ endings and continued transformation for ourselves and our clients.

**References**


Welcome to the Summer 2015 edition of *Bereavement Practice for Clinicians and Service Providers*. I hope that the New Year has brought you renewed energy and enthusiasm for your work in this field.

The feature article in this edition looks at endings in the context of grief counselling. While endings are often defined by funding or agency criteria, this article focuses more on ‘good enough’ endings and ways both client and therapist can benefit from a mindful end to therapeutic work.

Alongside the feature article, we have also included information on our upcoming International Educator Tour (Dr Louis A. Gamino, USA); attendance information for the 2015 Grief Lecture (Australian author Brooke Davis); a featured resource; and part two of our list of useful online bereavement resources that may assist in your work.

I welcome feedback around topics and resources you would like covered in 2015 and as always, please let me know if there is anything we can do to improve this publication to best meet your needs.

Warm regards,

Jenny Field
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**Grief Lecture: Brooke Davis**

Melbourne | 17th March 2015

Brooke will be presenting the Grief Lecture for the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement in March 2015. Don’t miss this unique opportunity to hear Brooke speak candidly about her grief experience!

Brooke Davis is a young Australian from country Victoria who has a car with a history and a novel that has become a runaway success around the world.

Seven years ago, Brooke was travelling overseas when she received bad news from home. From that sad turning point, she’s unexpectedly created a funny and touching book that challenges conventions around loss and grief, and advocates living life to the fullest — whatever your age.

**Date**
Tuesday, 17th March 2015.

**Time**
7.00 pm — 8.30 pm
(tea and coffee from 6.30 pm)

**Cost**
ACGB Member: FREE
Non-Member: $20.00

**Venue**
Village Roadshow Theatrette
State Library of Victoria
Entry 3, 179 Latrobe Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000

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**Registration**
To register for this event please go to [www.grief.org.au/education](http://www.grief.org.au/education) and follow the links to complete your online registration.

*Please note: Registration is essential for both members and non-members.*

**Enquiries**
For further information and enquiries, please contact the Centre on (03) 9265 2100 or email education@grief.org.au
The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement is delighted to announce that Louis A. Gamino, PhD (USA) will be delivering a series of workshops for us this May in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney.

This is a rare opportunity to attend in-depth training workshops with an international expert specialising in bereavement counselling and ethical practice.

### Program Outlines

**NOTE:** These workshops can be done consecutively, as part of a two-day program, or separately as individual workshops.

**Program One:** Counselling Clients with Complicated Grief

This workshop will explore the assessment of the bereaved client, examining in particular the risk factors, which can complicate the bereavement experience. Drawing upon a number of contemporary theoretical perspectives and using videotape vignettes of actual counselling sessions, this workshop will explore a range of clinical techniques.

**Program Two:** A Practitioner’s Guide to Care of the Dying

This workshop is designed to help medical practitioners and mental health professionals incorporate theoretically sound and empirically derived principles into sensitive and effective care of dying patients and their families. This workshop will examine an assessment strategy, which balances an understanding of the patient’s ‘life story’ and his/her ‘end of life story’. The presenter will draw on elements from the dual process model, attachment patterns, grieving styles, contributions of positive psychology, forgiveness/spirituality, and legacy building. Case material and video examples of patient interviews illustrate the counselling principles described.

Full workshop outlines and learning outcomes can be found at [www.grief.org.au/education/gamino](http://www.grief.org.au/education/gamino)

### About the Presenter: Louis A. Gamino, PhD

Louis A. Gamino, PhD, ABPP, FT, is Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at Texas A&M Health Science Center College of Medicine, and Baylor Scott & White Health in Temple, Texas.

Dr Gamino is a Diplomate in Clinical Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) and a Fellow in Thanatology (FT) through the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC).

He is co-author (with R. Hal Ritter) of Ethical practice in grief counseling (2009), and co-author (with T. Ann Cooney) of *When your baby dies through miscarriage or stillbirth* (2002). Dr Gamino’s research focuses on adaptive grieving after loss. He is Founder and Program Director of the Scott & White Biennial Bereavement Conferences, inaugurated in 1997 and endowed in his honour by the Volney A. Acheson Fund. In recognition of excellence in care of the dying and the bereaved, Dr Gamino was honoured with the Clinical Practice Award by ADEC in 2008.

### Program Rates

All rates include one full day registration, morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

**Member rate**

$240

**Standard rate**

$290

Registrations close Friday, 1st May 2015

For further information and registration, visit [www.grief.org.au/education/gamino](http://www.grief.org.au/education/gamino)
Useful Australian Bereavement Support Services (Part 2)

Continuing from the Spring 2014 edition of Bereavement Practice for Clinicians and Service Providers, listed below are a range of Australian bereavement agencies, including links to their websites, that may be useful in your work with the bereaved.

Griefline
Telephone and online bereavement counselling (operates between midday and 3am).
Website: www.griefline.org.au

Hope Bereavement Care
Bereavement counselling, support groups, information resources and a telephone support service for those in the Barwon/South West region (VIC) who are impacted by the sudden or unexpected death of an infant, child or young person under 18 years of age.
Website: www.bereavement.org.au

Hope for Life Suicide Prevention and Bereavement Support
A Salvation Army program, providing information, resources and training for those that support people who are at risk of suicide or have lost a loved one to suicide.
Website: www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au

Lifeline
24/7 telephone crisis support and suicide prevention services.
Website: www.lifeline.org.au

My Grief Assist
Information and resources for the bereaved.
Website: www.mygriefassist.com

The National Centre for Childhood Grief
Counselling and support for children and teens from 3–18 years of age, information resources, education and training.
Website: www.childhoodgrief.org.au

Road Trauma Support Services
Information, counselling and support for people affected by road trauma, education and advocacy.
Websites: www.rtssv.org.au (Victoria)
www.roadtraumasupport.org.au (Tasmania)
www.roadtraumasupportsa.com.au (South Australia)
www.rtswa.org.au (Western Australia)

SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support)
Support groups, peer support, online chat service, information and 24-hour telephone support for families requiring miscarriage, stillbirth & newborn death support.
Website: www.sands.org.au

SIDS and Kids
Counselling and support services, support groups, online forum, information and 24-hour bereavement support line.
Website: www.sidsandkids.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service
Provides free nationwide professional telephone and online counselling for anyone affected by suicide (including those bereaved by suicide).
Website: www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Support After Suicide
Information, counselling and group support for those bereaved by suicide and education and professional development for professionals.
Website: www.supportaftersuicide.org.au

Very Special Kids
Bereavement support program for families inclusive of counselling support, events and information.
Website: www.vsk.org.au

Featured Resource

Working With the Bereaved: Multiple Lenses on Loss and Mourning
Simon Shimshon Rubin, Ruth Malkinson & Eliezer Witztum
$39.95

This book summarises the major themes in bereavement research and clinical work and uses the authors’ own cutting-edge research to show mental health practitioners how to integrate these themes into their practice. It provides clinicians with a framework for exploring their own emotional and intellectual assumptions, and it goes on to summarise state-of-the-art thinking in the field.

This book, along with a range of other useful resources, can be purchased from the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement. To order, visit www.grief.org.au/resources to download a resource guide/order form or email us at info@grief.org.au
Our Services

Newsletter enquiries
For all enquiries about this publication, please contact Jenny Field on (03) 9265 2100 or email j.field@grief.org.au

Bereavement Counselling and Support Service
The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (ACGB) operates a statewide Specialist Bereavement Counselling and Support Service for Victoria. This program is supported by the Victorian Government Department of Health and has counsellors located across metropolitan Melbourne, and in regional areas (Grampians, Gippsland, Hume, Barwon South-West, and Loddon Mallee). For further information, call (03) 9265 2100, or email counselling@grief.org.au

Support groups
ACGB operates a range of support groups, including groups for adults, children, bereaved partners, loss of a parent and more. For further information call (03) 9265 2100 or email support@grief.org.au

Practitioner Consultancy Service
This service provides free information, consultation and support for practitioners who are working with bereaved clients experiencing complex and prolonged bereavements. To access this service, call 1300 858 113 during business hours.

Internships
ACGB has a limited number of placement opportunities for experienced counsellors seeking to advance their knowledge and skills in bereavement counselling. For further information contact the Centre on (03) 9265 2100 or email counselling@grief.org.au

Education and training
ACGB offers quality education and training opportunities for health professionals, students, volunteers and any other individual or agency desiring to enhance grief and bereavement knowledge and practice. Education and training programs are offered as seminars, workshops, short and long courses, conferences and customised training. For full details of all programs and services offered, go to www.grief.org.au/education

Bereavement Courses
The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement offers research-informed, high-quality courses, including post-graduate training program, the Graduate Certificate in Bereavement Counselling and Intervention (nationally accredited). For more information contact the Centre on (03) 9265 2100 or email courses@grief.org.au

Customised training and consultancy
ACGB offer a range of customised training and consultancy services that provide research-informed, high quality professional development programs that meet the specialist training needs of organisations, groups and individuals. For further information contact the Centre on (03) 9265 2100 or email education@grief.org.au

Grief Matters: The Australian Journal of Grief and Bereavement
Published by ACGB three times per year, this journal encompasses both academic and applied aspects of grief and bereavement and is a ranked journal with the Australian Research Council as part of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative. To find out how you can subscribe to this journal, call (03) 9265 2100 or email griefmatters@grief.org.au

Membership
Access a range of benefits through the ACGB membership program, including discounted education workshops and three editions of Grief Matters: The Australian Journal of Grief and Bereavement. For more information about membership options and benefits go to www.grief.org.au/get_involved or call (03) 9265 2100.

Donations
Donations over $2 are tax deductible and allow ACGB to continue to provide services including bereavement counselling, support groups, newsletters, events, education and training. To make a donation, visit www.grief.org.au or call (03) 9265 2100.

We value your feedback
If you have feedback about this publication, or any of the services delivered by the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, we’d love to hear from you. Contact us on (03) 9265 2100 or email info@grief.org.au

Contact Us

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Practitioner Consultancy Service
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