



Portland Institute
For Loss and Transition

Grief Therapy Learning Retreat

May 7-11, 2021 (Fri-Tue)


Baltimore, MD, United States

Featured Speakers

Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD; Barbara E. Thompson, OTD, LCSW; Wendy Lichtenthal, PhD;
Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT; Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH;
Agnieszka Konopka, PhD; Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT; Doris C. Vaughans, PhD;
Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR; Christina Zampitella, PsyD, FT;
Sarah Vollmann, MPS, ATR-BC, LICSW; and Fabio Lomelino, LCPC

NOTE:

- *This Retreat offers you a range of 16 Techniques, 2 Case Studies and 12 Practicum sessions leading to Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction, or 3 Core Courses, 2 Techniques and 4 Practicum sessions leading to Specialized Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy by Portland Institute.*

 *Select sessions at this conference have been reviewed and approved by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Office of Continuing Education in Psychology (CEP) to offer Continuing Education (CE) credit for psychologists. Full attendance is required at each session for which you are claiming CE credit. Partial credit is not awarded. The CEP Office maintains responsibility for the content of the program.*

Online Registration: <https://www.portlandinstitute.org>

Grief Therapy Learning Retreat

May 7-11, 2021


Welcome to the *Portland Institute for Loss and Transition*, and our East Coast Learning Retreat, a 5-day, 4-night immersion in experiential workshops designed to add conceptual clarity, hone process expertise, and especially give participants practical tools to enhance their practice of grief therapy and bereavement support with a broad range of clients across many contexts of clinical practice. Alongside a rich menu of training options, participants can also explore many modalities for self-renewal as persons and professionals, and explore the relevance of a generous offering of arts-assisted methods for engaging grief and loss as a creative context for growth.

Join Robert A. Neimeyer, and his colleagues Barbara Thompson, Wendy Lichtenthal, Sharon Strouse, Lara Krawchuck, Agnieszka Konopka, Heather Stang, Doris Vaughans, Carolyn Ng, Christina Zampitella and Sarah Vollmann for an international, interdisciplinary Institute that offers a new meaning-oriented model of training in bereavement care. Topics include:

- Grieving Styles Grid
- Trauma, Loss and Doll-Making
- Creative and Imaginative Restorative Retelling of Our Grief Stories
- Nature-Based Rituals
- Chair Work in Bereavement
- Collage: Integrating the Torn Pieces
- Meaning-Making through Creative Imagination and Expressive Arts
- Superhero Grief
- Reimagining A Loss Story through Art Making
- Facilitating Empathic Transitions
- Not-Knowing Mind as A Gateway to the Knowing Body
- Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy
- Virtual Dream Stories
- Exploring Grief through Intermodal Expressive Arts
- A Dialogue with Suffering
- Walking the Labyrinth of Loss
- Tree of Legacy
- Navigating Life, Loss and Hope in Turbulent Times
- When Helping Hurts
- Art of Recomposing Self in Loss and Transition
- Photo Narratives: Exit or Entrance?
- Self-Compassion as Self-Care for Helping Professional

To learn more, just peruse the detailed schedule that follows and the accompanying program for the week.

Friday (May 7)

-  **4:30-6:00** Intervening in Meaning: New Directions in Grief Therapy (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)


Viewed from a constructivist perspective, a central process in grieving is the attempt to reaffirm or reconstruct a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss. As research with bereaved young people, parents and older adults indicates, both natural and violent death losses can leave mourners struggling to process the event story of the death and to make sense of its implications for their lives, and to access the back story of their relationship with their deceased loved one in a way that reaffirms their sense of secure attachment. In this presentation I summarize our group's recent studies of the psychological, social and spiritual struggle to make sense of loss, outline several validated measures of meaning-making problems and processes, and sketch diverse meaning-oriented practices and current research to evaluate their impact and help people find growth through grief.

Learning objectives:

- Summarize research supporting a meaning reconstruction model of adaptive grieving
- Identify four complementary measures of meaning that can be used to assess struggles in sense-making in the anticipation or aftermath of a loss
- Describe four practices to facilitate meaning reconstruction in loss two programs of research investigating their impact

Saturday (May 8)

- 7:30-8:15** Morning Exercise / Meditation: Moring Yoga with Jennifer (Jennifer Hassard, MSc, MBA, BSW)

-  **9:15-10:45** Meaning Making through Use of the Creative Imagination and the Expressive Arts (Barbara E. Thompson, OTD, LCSW)

Imaginal and expressive arts approaches have been used across time and throughout the world as ways of coping with significant loss and as methods for reconstructing meaning that has been challenged by loss. If grieving involves a process of "making sense" of a world challenged by loss, then the sensory-rich, somatically based activities afforded by the expressive arts can be a potent compliment to verbal psychotherapeutic approaches in this fundamentally creative process. I will review the principles and practices of the expressive arts and the literature on use of imaginal approaches in order to provide a conceptual scaffold, and illustrate

application of these approaches in clinical practice through case examples. Particular attention will be given to the value of imaginal and expressive art approaches in working with traumatic loss. A review of research on use of the expressive arts as a data collection method and research on the efficacy of the expressive arts with the bereaved will be summarized.

Learning objectives:

- Discuss the foundational principles and practices of the expressive arts in helping to resource the bereaved;
- Describe three methods for using the arts and imaginal approaches in affirming or reconstructing meaning in the anticipation or aftermath of significant loss;
- Summarize current research on use of the expressive arts with the bereaved and the potential for future research.

11:00-12:30 Mini-workshops. Choose between:

 **A. *Superhero Grief* (Jill Harrington)**

Central to almost every superhero origin story is the experience of the traumatic death of a parent or loved one and the emergence from the depths of profound loss through a powerful transformative grief process. Like most myths and legends born of fiction, superhero narratives are ultimately stories about ourselves, as creators of fictional universes manipulate the superhero worlds to explore the most intricate of all human experiences. Forged by fire, superheroes are popular and relatable, as they are born through a process of life-altering experiences. At their finest, they inspire hope, provide models of coping, and demonstrate vulnerability while emerging to find meaning in their loss through the use of newfound strengths and abilities in service to the greater good. Loss and grief serve as a pathway for the superhero to transformation. One of the greatest lessons in superhero narratives is that even superheroes cannot escape loss. *Transformative Grief* demonstrates that grief is one of our greatest teachers, and that the painful experience of grieving provides us the unique opportunity for self-discovery, finding deeper meaning, awareness of our own resilience and post-traumatic growth. This module will teach participants about principles, concepts, themes, theories of grief, loss and bereavement as well as cinematherapy/bibliotherapy strategies through the use of modern superhero narratives that can be incorporated into clinical practice or death education.

Learning objectives:

- Relate the goals of fictional cinematherapy and bibliotherapy as a therapeutic and/or educational tool;
- Define the concept of *transformative grief* and implications for practice;
- Identify principles, concepts, themes, and theories of grief, loss and bereavement throughout the superhero universes;
- Describe superhero lessons of loss and discover unique approaches to incorporate superheroes in grief therapy.



B. Reimagining A Loss Story through Art Making: An Experiential Workshop (Barbara E. Thompson, OTD, LCSW)

The creative arts can help the bereaved re-imagine and re-story narratives of loss through sensory-rich activities that help to modulate residual distress while recontextualizing a loss experience. Accessing the creative imagination and giving it form through the arts can also assist people in identifying and affirming inner resources and relationships, including those with deceased loved ones. No prior experience with the arts is necessary to participate in this workshop. As personal experience in art-making with various art forms and materials is requisite for their effective use with others, participants will have an opportunity to explore a personal loss through selected expressive activities, with a primary focus on visual art-making in support of narrative reconstruction. The warm-up will involve movement-based activities, followed by a guided meditation intended to help people shift into an imaginal, de-centered state of awareness for the central activity of collage-making. After a period of collage making in silence, participants will work in pairs to dialogue with the image that has been created, with guidance on how to respond aesthetically and with deep listening. In the closing discussion, we will harvest reflections on personal learning and potential applications for therapeutic use of the creative arts with others.

Learning objectives:

- Describe how the creative arts can modulate distress and help people to stay in their window of tolerance;
- Discuss how the arts can promote narrative reconstruction;
- Identify one way that you can incorporate expressive art approaches into your clinical practice.



C. Recomposing the Self in Loss – Part I (Agnieszka Konopka, PhD)

Mourning and bereaved people often need to recompose a world of meaning and identity that has been challenged and shaken by the loss. An artistic, dialogical approach suggests the possibility of answering any experience, even the painful ones, in an artful way, and inviting our clients to take the position of a composer who can potentially open up to new experiences and creatively shape them into a meaningful

whole. Related to this approach, Composition Work stimulates the process of recomposing the self by symbolizing, externalizing, voicing and composing a variety of self-aspects in the form of a small symbolic, artistic landscape. Used in a grief therapy context, this landscape represents a multi-logical, dynamic field of loss, reflecting the qualities of separate elements, their differences, relations, and the overall pattern. A composition allows one to explore separate elements in the context of broader self-organization. It supports exploring new configurations by shifting different positions or including new ones and checking the affective resonance of such changes. Introducing nonverbal, figurative elements, within this methodology, helps attend to preverbal, bodily-sensed meanings as essential sources of change and renewal.

Learning objectives:

- Describe the relevance of the Dialogical Self model for work with the complexity of losses;
- Apply the Composition Work method with clients who experience non-final losses;
- Identify three contemplative and three dialogical aspects of the Composition Work method.

1:30-3:00 Mini-workshops. Choose between:



A. Externalizing the Inner Pain (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)

Very often, people experience grief as an inner pain (e.g. emptiness, suffering) that can be saturating their narratives and restricting their lives. Through externalizing conversations, as people objectify and at times personify their grief, they experience their grief as a separate entity. This opens up possibilities for them to describe themselves and their lives from a new, non-pain-saturated perspective. This also enables them to reauthor their life narratives, to identify their competence and resourcefulness in the face of grief, and to experience a new sense of personal agency over their post-loss adjustment.

Learning objectives:

- Invite clients into a dialogue about the inner pain resulted from their loss;
- Empower clients to take a more proactive role in response to the inner pain;
- Provide a space where clients can reclaim their lives and redefine their relationship with the inner pain.



B. Self-Compassion as Professional Self-Care – Part I (Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT)

Bereavement professionals who serve people exposed to trauma are themselves at a greater risk for developing stress-related illnesses, vicarious trauma, and even suicide. Additionally, on the job performance can suffer, reducing client satisfaction

and increasing conflict and staff turnover. Self-compassion – the practice of treating oneself with care—is a sustainable method that has been proven to reduce anxiety, negative emotions, and the fear of suffering, while boosting immune functioning, emotional intelligence, coping skills, and a sense of connection with others, which also can have a positive organizational impact. It can also reconnect helping professions with their sense of meaning at work, leading to a greater overall satisfaction with life. In this three-hour experiential presentation, I will summarize the research available on this crucial topic, share best practices for individuals and teams, and lead participants through formal and informal mindfulness-based self-compassion practices.

Learning objectives:

- Summarize research supporting self-compassion as an effective self-care intervention;
- Facilitate practices for each of the three components of self-compassion;
- Describe a trauma-sensitive approach to mindfulness and self-compassion.

 *C. Recomposing the Self in Loss – Part II (Agnieszka Konopka, PhD)*

As above.

3:30-5:00 Mini-workshops. Choose between:

 *A. Grieving Styles Grid (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

Loss and grief may be universal, but the ways in which we experience and express bereavement are surprisingly varied. For example, both psychological and cultural studies suggest that mourners vary along two axes, one of which distinguishes them along a dimension of *stoic vs. expressive*, and the other of which characterizes their motivation toward conservation of *continuing bonds with the deceased vs. letting go*. This module will present the Grieving Styles Grid as one interactive procedure for helping participants recognize their distinctive styles as mapped in a two-dimensional space formed by the interaction of these two axes, and to promote their discussion of the origin, advantages and disadvantages of their style vis-à-vis others in their families and social worlds.

Learning objectives:

- Distinguish four styles of grieving as characterized by the Grieving Styles Grid, and describe the strengths and vulnerabilities associated with each;
- Describe commonalities and differences among others in groups of participants who share a common grieving style;
- Discuss personal motivation to change one's historical grieving style, or insights regarding the distinctive styles of others.

 *B. Self-Compassion as Professional Self-Care – Part II (Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT)*

As above.

C. Open Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)

Sunday (May 9)

7:30-8:15 Morning Exercise / Meditation: Meditation for Difficult Emotions (Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT)

9:15-10:45 Mini-workshops. Choose between:

 *A. Chair Work in Bereavement – Part I (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

As most contemporary models of bereavement recognize, accessing and reconstructing the terms of attachment to a deceased loved one is a central process in grieving, both to reaffirm constructive bonds in a sustainable, non-physical form, and to resolve unfinished business in bonds that are more problematic or ambivalent. Facilitating symbolic dialogues with the dead using the technique of empty chair or two-chair dialogue can promote both of these aims. This module introduces principles of chair work through a video demonstration of its use with a bereaved daughter, and extends emotion-focused procedures to promote not only activation and resolution of the bond, but also its fuller integration through an alternation between self-immersive and self-distancing perspectives. Participants will benefit from hands-on practice with this method in a practicum component that follows the formal instruction.

Learning objectives:

- Recognize process markers of when chair work is called for in a therapeutic session with a bereaved client;
- Summarize the procedures involved in introducing, facilitating and processing of symbolic interactions with the deceased;
- Describe procedures for prompting client “witnessing” of the interaction and tailoring it to use safely in cases when the deceased has profoundly abused, neglected or abandoned the client.

 *B. Facilitating Empathic Transitions (Doris C. Vaughans, PhD)*

Transitions are embedded in life and are a part of the human condition. The losses that are an inherent part of these transitions are often unrecognized and unaddressed. This offering will focus on the transitions of adults who move from their homes and downsize due to circumstances, such as divorce, retirement, natural

disasters, loss of a spouse, and loss of income; and focus on the process of reflective empathic engagement with the client.

Learning objectives:

- Identify several personal losses that would be entailed in the transition from one's home;
- List appropriate probing questions that can facilitate a client's ability to recognize losses and to normalize the individual grief experience;
- Foster a reflective empathic engagement with a client transitioning from his or her home through role-playing of a case scenario.



C. Trauma, Loss and Doll Making – Part I (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT and Sarah Vollmann, MPS, ATR-BC, LICSW)

This didactic, experiential workshop introduces doll making as a transformative art therapy technique, effective in the treatment of traumatic loss. Anchored in grief and bereavement theory we explore doll making through the lens of: The Constructivist Theory of Meaning Making, a vehicle for narrative and identity reconstruction, sense making, benefit finding and Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy, where creative process and concrete, transitional objects support exploration of the continuing bond. Case studies demonstrate the efficacy of doll making where non-verbal process “target sensory-emotive-cognitive processing areas of the brain needed for healing.” Participants will create a doll, deconstructing and reconstructing life's fabric.

Learning objectives:


- Understand three reasons why creative and expressive interventions such as doll making are desirable with those suffering traumatic loss;
- Examine three aspects of Meaning Reconstruction, defined by sense –making, benefit finding and identity reformation as important components of doll making, an imaginative process that addresses the shattered “self”;
- Understand three tenets of Attachment-informed Grief Therapy, where the doll making process and tangible product are in service to the continuing bond with the deceased.

11:00-12:30 **Mini-workshops. Choose between:**



A. Chair Work in Bereavement – Part II (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

As above.

 *B. Not-Knowing Mind as A Gateway to the Knowing Body (Agnieszka Konopka, PhD)*

“To know that you do not know it is the best” as it has been formulated in Tao Te Ching. It is a fact of life that we do not know what kind of feeling is about to emerge in our hearts in the next moment and what will be a pattern of sensations, which will unfold in our bodies. The ‘beginners mind” attitude has been introduced by Suzuki and cultivated in contemplative practice of Zen Buddhism. It is like being an empty cup which is ready to receive the fresh liquid of direct lived experience. Not-knowing mind is also a gate to the knowing body, and as such can be applied to access new, emerging, bodily sensed meanings in process of loss and transition. This workshop will be a short exploratory journey into the inner landscape of feelings started from a place of not-knowing. Based on the beginner’s mind attitude, participants will be invited to explore and externalize their bodily sensed new meanings in the form of a small symbolic landscape. We are going to introduce the composition work method, which helps to explore the landscape of feelings and new emerging meanings in process of loss and transition.

Learning objectives:

- Learn an attitude of not knowing to access the bodily sensed meanings;
- Distinguish between bottom-up and top-down processing of emotional experience;
- Describe the composition work method and its application in the processing of grief.

C. Trauma, Loss and Doll Making – Part II (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT and Sarah Vollmann, MPS, ATR-BC, LICSW)

As above.

1:30-3:00 Mini-workshops. Choose between:

 *A. Bonding and Binding in Loss and Separation (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)*

Being wired for attachment, we are bound to develop new relationships and invest in connections. Yet, in life, we are also bound to undergo different types of loss and multiple rounds of separation. In the process, we may lose part of our self, as it is often developed in ongoing interactions involving significant others. Our ways of connecting with others may also alter knowingly or unknowingly. The bittersweet experience signifies a transition, in which we may need to face and navigate the fear and unknowns. Nonetheless, we may also realize incredible potential and opportunities for growth as we explore and experiment with different ways of being and relating. Through an experiential activity using a masking tape, while we

acknowledge the prices of loss and the pain of separation, we also elicit the strength in self and the values in bonding.

Learning objectives:

- Examine the impacts of loss and separation on one's sense of self and perception of relationships;
- Explore how one's attachment pattern remains or shifts after experiencing loss and separation;
- Elicit ways to restore one's sense of self and secure attachment.

B. Walking the Labyrinth of Loss (Fabio Lomelino, LCPC)

Serving the bereaved commits one to a life of accompaniment and a role of guide through the wilderness of loss. Labyrinth walking draws on the beneficial effects of walking meditation with a uniquely structured process and displays spatially the exile of loss. The twisting path of the labyrinth validates the disorientation experienced by those who must strengthen or reconstruct meaning frameworks as they are tested by the heaviness of grief. In a four-part meditative journey, participants will learn how to set intention upon entering, to long for and walk mindfully towards the center, rest and belong to the center, and return enlivened to the world. Drawing on the Dual Process Model, this journey focuses on embodying an awareness of balance between loss and restoration within the labyrinth-as-grief framework. Participants will experience physical, psychological and spiritual renewal through the meaning and insight gathered in the process.

Learning objectives:

- Learn a grief specific walking meditation based on the Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement;
- Practice walking meditation with a labyrinth as a tool for additional benefit of contemplative reflection; and
- Be able to explain in simple terms how bereaved can benefit from walking meditation and labyrinths.

C. Collage: Integrating the Torn Pieces (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)

This didactic, experiential workshop introduces collage as a transformative art therapy technique, effective in the treatment of traumatic loss. This multi-media approach highlights art therapy based theory and practices with grief/ bereavement theories of Neimeyer: Meaning Reconstruction, Worden: Task Model of Bereavement and Rynearson: Restorative Retelling. Case studies include collage images created by an art therapist in response to the suicide of her daughter as well as images created by the bereaved. The creative process and product provide learners with opportunities to explore two/ three dimensional collage making as a way to piece together personal and professional experiences of loss.

Learning objectives:

- Understand the collage process and product through a Meaning Reconstruction focus on the event story and back story narrative;
- Understand how three questions support a creative process that is grounded in Rynearson's: Restorative Retelling;
- Describe three creative interventions that support grief work, anchored in Neimeyer's framework of bracing, pacing and facing.

3:30-5:00 Mini-workshops. Choose between:**A. *Tree of Legacy* (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)**

Developing from Narrative Practices, *Tree of Legacy* is a tool using different parts of a tree as metaphors to explore continuing bond with the deceased loved one, as well as the bereaved's internal assets as a person. The use of metaphors opens up space and opportunities to invite griever to tell stories about their relationship with the deceased love one and their personal life. Through carefully formulated questions in the process, conversations are crafted in ways that reveal stories of connection and hope that make grievers stronger and more hopeful about the future.

Learning objectives:

- Explore the personal assets of the bereaved and the potential heritage from the deceased loved one;
- Trace the imprints of the deceased loved one through the shared memories;
- Harvest life lessons and wisdom from the bereaved through the grief and loss experiences.

**B. *Verbal Acupuncture: Poetic Self-Renewal* (Fabio Lomelino, LCPC)**

Poetry is a practice that is much more than poems, but a regenerative practice of infusing poetic language into the daily operations of the mind. Poetic intuition will be used as a form of verbal acupuncture – skillfully placed words that facilitate the flow of energy in the mind. Drawing from the concept of *autopoiesis*, participants will explore how the mind is a tapestry always weaving itself with new patterns that facilitate creative co-adaptation with complex relationships, events, and environments. Specific writing exercises, like Haiku writing, will be experimented as a practice of directing awareness that can center the mind in the careful, detailed observation of the present moment. Participants will then experience poetry as a practice of exploring the infinite possible pathways of the mind and crafting new meaning to connect the observer to the observed in novel ways as well.

Learning objectives:

- Identify the role and potential use of poetic intuition in meaning construction;
- Employ specific writing exercises to aid in mindful awareness, meaning making, and healthy communication; and
- State a centering verse to be used in working with the fear of death.

*C. Open Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)***Monday (May 10)**

7:30-8:15 Morning Exercise / Meditation: Moring Yoga with Jennifer (Jennifer Hassard, MSc, MBA, BSW)

9:15-10:45 Mini-workshops. Choose between:

*A. A Dialogue with Suffering (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

In every speaking turn, grieving clients will signal verbally and nonverbally both what they need, and what form of intervention they are ready for. “Leading from one step behind,” therapists can then usher them more fully into an encounter with others, with their symptoms, or with themselves in a way that promotes rapid deepening of the work of therapy, and swift encounter with and transformation of the “pro-symptom positions” that contribute to the prolongation of their intense grief. By offering a close process analysis of a full session of therapy conducted by a bereaved mother, we will illustrate the principles and practices that foster meaning reconstruction of integration of loss in grief therapy.

Learning objectives:

- Describe the stance of the responsive therapist in identifying in-session tasks requiring clinical attention;
- Summarize the procedures involved in “analogical listening” to the client’s felt sense of grief to encourage its articulation and recognition of resistance to change;
- Detail steps in facilitating a “symptom dialogue” to promote greater self-compassion and integration of loss.

*B. Nature-Based Rituals (Christina Zampitella, PsyD, FT)*

The integration of ecopsychotherapy and therapeutic bereavement rituals are explored in this presentation. While bereavement rituals are plentiful across cultures and spiritual orientations, nature-based interventions remain a secular, trans-theoretical, and cross-cultural available resource that can be effectively integrated into grief therapy. Participants will leave the presentation understanding

ecopsychotherapy, rites of passage as they relate to the bereavement process, the interface between nature-based interventions and ritual, and a practical intervention aimed at transformation and meaning-making in the bereavement process.

Learning objectives:

- Integrate the rite of passage model with the meaning reconstruction model of bereavement;
- Differentiate between personal and collective functions of rituals;
- Apply and demonstrate the use of the Development of a Nature-Based Ritual form.



C. Grief and the Memory Box: Art Therapy for Children and Adolescents (Sarah Vollmann, MPS, ATR-BC, LICSW)

Art therapy interventions present unique and transformative possibilities for the bereaved. The art therapy process and product encourage restorative retelling, continuing bonds, and meaning making while simultaneously providing opportunities for containment, soothing, and self-regulation. Unconscious content may be given shape in the creative process, fostering integration and healing. It is a beneficial approach for children and adolescents, who grieve differently than adults and may not have the words to express their layered experiences. In this didactic and experiential workshop we will review two art therapy case studies, of a grieving child and a bereaved adolescent, through the lens of meaning reconstruction, family systems, and continuing bonds. The developmental stages of grief will be presented. Participants will engage briefly in their own art making process to create a memory box. (No artistic skill is required. Participants will be invited to create a box as they wish, and the directive can be shifted for fit and comfort. Those who need additional time may continue their boxes in the open studio.) We will conclude with a group exploration of our creative experience, and a discussion of the therapeutic benefits of memory boxes and other art therapy interventions for bereaved children and adolescents.

Learning objectives:

- Understand three reasons why art therapy interventions, such as memory box making, are advantageous in the treatment of grieving adolescents and children;
- Describe how art therapy interventions may be utilized to support continuing bonds for bereaved children and adolescents;
- Discuss the ways that art therapy approaches, including both the art therapy process and product, may promote meaning reconstruction for grieving children and adolescents.

 **11:00-12:30** Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy: Theory, Practice and Promise (Wendy Lichtenthal, PhD)

The loss of a loved one commonly challenges a griever's sense of purpose, meaning, and identity as well as adaptive meaning-making processes. These challenges sometimes contribute to and are even indicative of prolonged grief reactions. Grief experts have therefore long-argued the value of focusing on "meaning" in therapeutic pursuits. This presentation will describe Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy (MCGT), a 16-session, manualized intervention designed to enhance meaning and purpose and facilitate meaning-making in bereaved parents with elevated prolonged grief symptoms. We will describe the development of MCGT, which was adapted from Meaning-Centered Psychotherapy using feedback from bereaved parents and expert grief specialists, and its underlying theoretical model and session content. Preliminary clinical trial results and future applications of MCGT will be discussed.

Learning objectives:

- Identify meaning-making challenges that grieving individuals commonly face;
- Describe Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy and its underlying theoretical model;
- Explain how Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy has been refined over time.

1:30-3:00 Mini-workshops. Choose between:

 **A. Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy: A Deeper Dive** (Wendy Lichtenthal, PhD)

This workshop will take a "deeper dive" into Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy (MCGT), a manualized intervention designed to facilitate meaning-making in bereaved individuals. We will first review the core principles of MCGT. Then, drawing on research of MCGT with bereaved parents, examples of exercises that may facilitate meaning-making processes and may enhance a sense of meaning will be described and illustrated through video-recorded session material, with opportunities for experiential exercises and discussion of applications of MCGT.

Learning objectives:

- Describe Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy and its core principles;
- Discuss exercises that may facilitate making meaning of a loss;
- Describe strategies that may enhance the griever's sense of meaning in life.

 **B. Navigating Life, Loss and Hope in Turbulent Times** (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)

We live in turbulent times. Climate change, political chaos, violence, heightened uncertainty and stories of intense human pain are full of losses and can lead to grief, exhaustion, or a crisis of meaning. Helping professionals, already deeply immersed

in supporting client pain, may be particularly impacted. Some helpers experience the turmoil as a lost assumptive world. Others may grapple with grief, fear, or a lost sense of control. Still others struggle to figure out how to rest and refresh in the midst of distressing news cycles. Over time compounding losses and stressors can take a toll on well-being. In this experiential workshop we will gently explore the impact of living in challenging times. We will utilize a range of experiential tools; including writing, guided imagery and collage to process losses and reconnect with hopes for ourselves, our clients, and our world.

Learning objectives:

- Identify how turbulent times in the world constitute living losses;
- Explore the meaning of these losses for us as humans and helping professionals;
- Explore the power of healing in community through writing, art, guided imagery and wisdom circles.



C. Creative Retelling of Our Grief Stories (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT; and Rebekah Near, LCAT, CAGS)

This didactic, experiential workshop on “Restorative Retelling,” introduces an art therapy technique that combines writing and the creation of a handmade watercolor book, effective in the treatment of traumatic loss. This non-verbal creative process gives form to the Constructivist Theory of Meaning Reconstruction, where the event and back story are enhanced by guided grief narratives and “self distancing” writing. Rynearson’s “Restorative Retelling,” is highlighted by art making that provides structure and coherence to dualistic, disabling experiences of loss. Stories are deconstructed and reconstructed in this experiential with opportunity for theoretical discussions and their application to therapeutic work with complicated clients.

Learning objectives:

- Discuss the art based theoretical foundations that support the use of creative and expressive interventions with the bereaved;
- Understand art based “Restorative Retelling” of the event story and the back story, which are essential to Neimeyer’s model of Meaning Reconstruction;
- Examine a specific art therapy technique well suited to facilitate “Restorative Retelling,” essential to Rynearson’s grief and bereavement model.

3:30-5:00 Mini-workshops. Choose between:



A. Virtual Dream Stories (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

Grief therapy commonly requires emotional validation, exploration and regulation, reorganization of attachment, and practical behavior change. But it also can benefit from the recruiting the healing power of imagination to give voice to subtle, hard to articulate themes and feelings that are easier to express while wearing the protective

mask of make-believe. This module presents Virtual Dream Stories, a narrative technique that invites mourners to formulate a brief, imaginative story around themes of loss using a suggestive scaffolding of story elements, and then to explore its relevance to real-life losses in the experience of the client. As a tool for both assessment and intervention, these non-logical dreamlike narratives can reveal both challenges and resources in the mourner's grief experience, and point toward any of several follow-up techniques for working with the pain and possibilities suggested by the client's production.

Learning objectives:

- Describe guidelines for facilitating the production of Virtual Dream Stories and their underlying rationale;
- Identify 3 alternative techniques for deepening work with the client's story to promote meaning reconstruction, integration of the loss and behavior change;
- Summarize evidence regarding the use of Virtual Dream Stories based on a content analysis of their features.



B. When Helping Hurts (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)

Witnessing intense client pain, navigating stressful workplaces, and managing hectic personal lives places helping professionals at risk for compassion fatigue and burnout. In this experiential program we will explore the root causes of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma. We will practice a range of creative self-care techniques including journaling for healing, mindfulness meditation, and healing wisdom circles. We will return to our lives and clients refreshed and recommitted to the practice of self-care in our daily lives.

Learning objectives:

- Summarize research on compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma and burnout in the helping professions;
- Identify healing impact of self-care practices; including journaling and mindfulness;
- Explore the impact of healing in community utilizing wisdom circles.

C. Open Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)

Tuesday (May 11)

7:30-8:15 Morning Exercise / Meditation: Phoenix Rising
Therapeutic Yoga (Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT)

**9:15-10:15 Re-weaving Strands of Meaning (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD, and PI Faculty)**

Following four rich days of presentations on meaning reconstruction in grief therapy, with major strands focused on therapeutic techniques, therapist self-renewal, and grief and the expressive arts, all of us who have participated in the event may feel challenged to weave the strands of significance into a coherent fabric. To assist with this, a panel of PI faculty share personal observations of the retreat's key themes, offer closing thoughts, and invite the audience into a discussion of what stood out for them that had personal or professional value.

Learning objectives:

- Identify Summarize major themes of meaning reconstruction in bereavement woven through the retreat;
- Highlight promising techniques that can be integrated into practice with grieving clients;
- Illustrate the impact of healing practices by relating them to the personal experiences of the participants.

11:00-12:30 Mini-workshops. Choose between:**A. *Metastatic Ovarian Cancer and the Ghosts of A Traumatic Past* (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)**

Living with the emotional impact of metastatic ovarian cancer can be a delicate balancing act for any woman, but for Mary Lou it was especially difficult due to a legacy of complex childhood trauma and neglect. In this workshop we will explore the struggles Mary Lou experiences due to the intersection of past and current traumas. We will look at the careful work done to help her stabilize her dysregulated nervous system, recognize significant living losses: past and present, examine the meaning of her health struggles, and support the reconstruction of a meaningful present in the face of an uncertain future. We will discuss the merits of using a wide range of creative, trauma informed, clinical intervention tools used to support Mary Lou's healing including tools from narrative, meaning making, dual process, mindfulness, guided imagery, and internal family systems (IFS) models.

Learning objectives:

- Identify losses related to living with metastatic ovarian cancer;
- Describe the intersection between traumatic past and present impacts the work; and
- Practice creative, trauma informed, clinical models to support living losses in the wake of past traumas.



B. Photo Narratives: Exit or Entrance? (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)

Just as an entrance or exit marks a transition from one space to another, the end of this retreat also marks another beginning to advance in life. Standing in between a special getaway week and the normal everyday life, one may notice different pull and push forces at play, or somehow feel like being in limbo. At this junction, one may decide what to leave behind and what to bring along; what to preserve and what to shift; and what to start afresh and what to press on. Use of photography may facilitate a process of reflection to recognize and express one's feelings, perspectives and desires. As one is intuitively drawn to a scene and takes a snapshot without the need for conscious decisions, the photo taken may contain wisdom beneath the presented image, as photography has a power to engage emotions, evade inner defenses and shift stances. They may communicate a different, and possibly deeper, understanding of the experience than can be expressed through written or spoken word as well.

Learning objectives:

- Enhance self-awareness to illuminate what one values and what challenges one encounters;
- Facilitate decisions on necessary shifts and personal growth;
- Use photography as an interventive tool to foster reflective capacity.

1:30-2:30 Farewell Ceremony: Found Objects (Barbara E. Thompson, OTD, LCSW)