



# Portland Institute

## For Loss and Transition

### September Institute for Grief Therapy

September 14-18, 2020 (Mon-Fri)

Portland, OR, United States

#### Featured Speakers

Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD; Phyllis Kosminsky, PhD, LCSW, FT;  
Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT; Elizabeth Coplan;  
Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH; Evgenia (Jane) Milman, MA, PhD;  
Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT; Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR;  
Sarah Vollmann, MPS, ATR-BC, LICSW; Christina Zampitella, PhD, FT; Nancy Gershman;  
Barbara Rubel, MA, BCETS, DAAETS; Susan Whitmore, BSBM, CGC.

**NOTE:**

- *This Institute offers a range of 3 Core Courses, 14 Techniques, 3 Case Studies and 11 Practicum credits leading to Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction, or 4 Core Courses, 2 Techniques or 5 Practicum credits leading to Specialized Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy by Portland Institute*

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

# September Institute for Grief Therapy

## September 14-18, 2020

Welcome to the *Portland Institute for Loss and Transition* and our September Institute for Grief Therapy, a week-long 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. Whether you register for one day, five days, or something in between, you'll benefit from collaborative learning in a setting that fosters small group practice and close interaction with some of the field's leading trainers.

Join Robert A. Neimeyer, and his colleagues, Phyllis Kosminsky, Sharon Strouse, Elizabeth Coplan, Lara Krawchuck, Evgenia (Jane) Milman, Heather Stang, Carolyn Ng and more for an international, interdisciplinary Institute that offers a new meaning-oriented model of training in bereavement care. Topics include:

- Using film to start death and dying conversations
- Grief and its complications
- Prescriptive Memory & Dreamscaping
- Chair work
- Trauma, loss and doll making
- Restorative retelling
- Art-assisted grief therapy
- Grief therapy and dramatic arts
- If only: Counterfactual thinking in bereavement
- Meaning in loss group
- Helping families after suicide
- Yoga for grief
- Symptom dialogues in grief therapy
- Attachment-informed grief therapy
- Collage: Integrating the torn pieces
- Mindfulness and grief
- Nature-based bereavement rituals
- A BRACE for the lost footing
- Seasons of transition
- Grief and the brain
- Grief of chronic and life-threatening illness
- Secure base mapping
- Intersection of grief and trauma
- Tour of the Dougy Center

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

## Monday (September 14)

### 8:30-10:00 Grief Dialogues: The Theatre of Loss (Elizabeth Coplan)

In this session, through theatre performances specifically written and performed for health care providers, we offer a transformation to the way we generally consider humanity. Attendees observe the untold, unheard, or misunderstood tales of life and death. A post-performance moderated discussion occurs in small groups, and we provide space for attendees to engage with each other about the challenges and grief that arise from the very human work of being a therapist and a healthcare provider.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Describe how observation of theatrical performance can serve as a tool to build compassion for people facing loss;
- Identify emotional themes and ethical dilemmas confronted by protagonists in end-of-life and bereavement scenarios;
- Discuss skillful approaches to developing an empathetic approach to patient/client care.

### 10:30-12:00 Mini-workshops. Choose among:

#### *A. Grief and Its Complications (Evgenia Milman, MA, PhD)*

Narrative-constructivist theory describes how the struggle of grief can become crippling but equally, how it can be negotiated with resilience, even fostering transformative growth. We will consider grief in narrative terms as the reconstruction of a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss. Adaptive grief experiences will be described as a process of integrating the story of loss, both the death itself and the relational dynamics with the deceased, into a life-affirming autobiographical narrative. By extension, persistently debilitating grief will be conceptualized as a breakdown of this narrative integration, exacerbated by avoidance and rumination. Video examples and the latest research evidence will be reviewed.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive forms of grieving;
- Summarize defining features of the Meaning Reconstruction model of grief and other compatible, contemporary theoretical perspectives on the grieving process;
- Recognize processes and qualities of grieving that can disrupt adaptation following bereavement.

### *B. Using Film to Start Death and Dying Conversations (Elizabeth Coplan)*

Humans are story-telling animals, and in this session, we demonstrate the power of the film narrative to prompt sharp questions on dying, death and grief. During the viewing of two short films produced expressly for Grief Dialogues Health Care Education, attendees are encouraged to look within and notice how the darkness of the room provides privacy and safety to experience deeply felt questions and responses stimulated by the human vignettes on loss and grief. After each film, attendees break into small groups to discuss the importance of becoming an active viewer of cinema and how to engage others in the issues raised by a film's story line.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Describe how content, form, and contexts work together to create meaning through film;
- Identify tough topic conversation-starters in every-day scenarios;
- Discuss skillful approaches to motivating discussions through film within your practice.

### *C. Collage [Part I]: Integrating the Torn Pieces (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)*

This didactic, experiential workshop introduces collage as a transformative art therapy technique, which is especially effective in the treatment of traumatic loss. This multi-media approach highlights art therapy-based theory and practices with grief/ bereavement theories such as Neimeyer's Meaning Reconstruction, Worden's Task Model and Rynearson's 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 her bereaved clients. The creative process and product provide learners with opportunities to explore two- and three-dimensional collage making as a way to piece together personal and professional experiences of loss.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Identify three major grief and bereavement theories and describe their application to the expressive arts;
- Distinguish aspects of the collage process and product relevant to helping the bereaved process the event story of the death and back story of their relationship to the deceased;
- Outline three creative interventions that support grief work, anchored in Neimeyer's framework of *bracing*, *pacing* and *facing*.

**1:30-3:00** Mini-workshops. Choose among:*A. Name that Grief: Evaluating Risk Factors of Prolonged Grief Disorder (Evgenia Milman, MA, PhD)*

Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) has been recognized as a mental health diagnosis by the World Health Organization and introduced into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual by the American Psychiatric Association. Accordingly, it becomes critical for mental health professionals to recognize the symptom profile of PGD and identify factors that predict its development. This presentation will summarize what is known about risk factors for PGD, including those related to circumstances of the death, attributes of the bereaved, and quality of social support. We will also highlight clinically relevant variations in how PGD presents in grief therapy, concluding with the application of its diagnostic criteria to a real case.

*Learning objectives:*

- Identify risk factors for intense and prolonged grieving;
- Distinguish among clinically relevant presentations of prolonged grief symptomatology;
- Apply diagnostic criteria for prolonged grief disorder to case material.

*B. Symptom Dialogues in Grief Therapy (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

In this session we conduct a close process analysis of a video-recorded therapy session with an older widow contending with haunting loneliness following the death of her husband of many years. Reactivating and validating their continuing bond, we explore the use of *Introducing the Loved One* to reveal and heal the relational rupture between the mourner and the deceased. We then witness the novel use of a *Dialogue with Loneliness* as a means of harvesting the lessons of loss, moving the mourner toward greater self-understanding and compassion. We conclude with a reflecting team interaction with witnesses to the therapy, which clarifies therapeutic procedures for re-accessing and revising internal monologues that hamper post-loss adaptation.

*Learning objectives:*

- Summarize the role of attachment work to reaffirm a more secure attachment with the deceased and to validate client resilience;
- Explain the role of experiential work to explore and restructure problematic emotions and identities linked to the loss and its aftermath;
- Analyze the impact of a symptom dialogue between the client and her suffering to promote self-understanding and self-care.

*C. Collage [Part II]: Integrating the Torn Pieces (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)*

As above.

**3:30-5:00** Mini-workshops. Choose among:

*A. Secure Base Mapping (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)*

Our grief is shaped not only by the circumstances of the death, but also by our attachment style and the specific relational dynamics with the deceased. While it is essential to explore clients' relationship to the deceased, it is equally important to revisit other sources of security and encouragement as possible healing resources in their post-loss adjustment. Using the tool of Secure Base Map, learners get to identify people living and dead, as well as places and things, that bring them comfort at times of pain and dare them to explore the world once again.

*Learning objectives:*

- Identify the forms and functions of attachment and their implications for coping with loss;
- Use the Secure Base Map to identify healing resources for clients to re-establish their sense of security in the wake of loss;
- Facilitate clients' reflection on how various secure bases may play a role during major life transitions and help them adapt to unwelcome changes.

*B. Facilitating End of Life Discussions (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)*

Professional care providers have a responsibility to guide families facing end of life. This powerful work offers gifts to both helpers and clients. Together we will explore how to utilize relevant grief related concepts; such as anticipatory grief, the dual process model, meaning making, and non-finite loss to support families facing end of life. We will use a compelling case study to explore how to navigate gently through the many challenges this population faces. We will discuss the importance of building partnerships between community-based experts, families and medical teams. Finally, we will explore the impact of this work on our own lives by discussing countertransference, compassion fatigue and the prospect of post traumatic growth.

*Learning objectives:*

- Summarize our professional responsibility to support end of life discussions;
- Describe strategies for effective end of life discussions using an actual case study;
- Discuss the benefits of working at the end of life on our own personal and professional lives.

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

## **Tuesday (September 15)**

### **8:30-10:00 Attachment Informed Grief Therapy (Phyllis Kosminsky, PhD, LCSW, FT)**

Attachment status is one of a very few factors consistently identified by researchers seeking the underlying causes of complicated vs. normal grief. In this presentation we will consider the connection between attachment and loss from several perspectives, focusing first on what we know about the impact of early relational experience on the development of a secure or insecure orientation to interpersonal bonding and then considering the impact of attachment on emotional and relational health across the lifespan, with an emphasis on the response to loss. The presenter will bring attention to recent developments in attachment theory and interpersonal neuroscience that are highly relevant to our understanding of adaptation to loss and will outline the implications of these insights for the practice of grief therapy.

*Learning objectives:*

- Discuss research concerning the impact of early attachment experience on the capacity to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships;
- Identify the role of attachment security and self-regulatory capacity in adaptation to loss;
- Describe the implications of an attachment informed understanding of coping with loss for counseling of the bereaved.

### **10:30-12:00 Mini-workshops. Choose among:**

*A. "Our Braided Paths": Retelling the Relationship (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)*

Post-loss adaptation is not only influenced by the loss event and the griever's personal variables, but also by the griever's relationship with the deceased. In fact, this "back story" of the bereaved-deceased relationship is an essential foundation for the living to restore a sense of attachment security and to adjust well in the aftermath of their bereavement. Thus, it is important for clinicians to gain a glimpse of the relationship nature and history, so as to better understand whom the bereaved has lost, as well as to appreciate the grief reactions the bereaved experienced and manifested.

*Learning objectives:*

- Orient to the relational frame of clients' grief and loss experience;
- Practice a restorative retelling approach to explore the bereaved-deceased "back story";
- Identify multifaceted perspectives of the relational complexities and the intermingled emotions in case of an ambivalent bereaved-deceased attachment.

### *B. Attachment-Related Complications in Bereavement (Phyllis Kosminsky, PhD, LCSW, FT)*

Attachment Informed Grief Therapy is grounded in a set of assumptions about the central role of attachment in how people form relationships, how they grieve, and how grief therapy helps them manage the dysregulating impact of bereavement and integrate their loss. Using examples from her own practice, the presenter will illustrate how sensitivity to variations in client attachment experience and attachment related needs makes for a more robust, trusting client-therapist relationship, reduces the likelihood of relational rupture, and supports the achievement of therapeutic goals.

*Learning objectives:*

- Describe the difficulties in adaptation to loss associated with insecure attachment;
- Design treatment strategies that address specific attachment related impediments to the integration of loss;
- Summarize two techniques that coherent with an attachment informed approach to grief therapy.

### *C. Prescriptive Memory and the Art of Dreamscaping [Part I] (Nancy Gershman)*

How does awakening joy in the griever uncover unmet needs, or delight us about the one we thought we knew? Introducing dreamscaping: a novel, process-directive approach in grief and loss therapy that uses felt-sense resourcing, re-scripting, mental simulations and photo-based art. *Session One Introduction:* With subtitled audio clips and live modeling of the imaginal interview, Gershman walks us through theory, method and dreamscaping's brain-based underpinnings. *Session Two Intensive:* Working in pairs that switch, the Client (furnished with interview notes and pre-selected images) works collaboratively with the Practitioner on a tangible dreamscape that becomes a dosing tool for self-soothing and re-entry.



*Learning objectives:*

- Facilitate evocation of a memory that is reimagined and compounded in the client's own imagination with observational humor, deep play and magic realism to optimize its positive charge;
- Comprehend Dreamscaping's brain-based approach to launching memory reconsolidation to update a distressing long-term memory using a prescriptive memory;
- Acquire participatory arts intervention skills to transform the prescriptive memory into an image-based tangible object for clients to practice subsequently.

**1:30-3:00** Mini-workshops. Choose among:*A. Life Imprint: Trace the Relational Heritage (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)*

In any relationships, we are bound to unknowingly “inherit” or intentionally adopt certain traits and values from one another. Such imprints may not always be life-building, but can be hindering or limiting one's development at times, and these influences may transcend the significant other's physical presence in life. This tool intends to facilitate griever's review of their relationship with the deceased, and invites them to ponder how to constructively move forward in life despite the disruption that resulted from the loss experience.

*Learning objectives:*

- Facilitate the crafting of Life Imprint;
- Use reflective questions to process the deceased's influence on the bereaved;
- Access and utilize the bereaved-deceased relationship to help the bereaved to chart desired directions in the path ahead.

*B. Suicide Postvention: Support in the Aftermath of A Suicide Death (Jim McCauley, LICSW & Kelsey Hoeper, LPC, NCC, CT)*

The unimaginable grief after a suicide death often impacts more than individuals and families. When a young person dies by suicide, schools and communities often experience traumatic grief and other severe repercussions. The goal of this presentation is to demonstrate how effective suicide postvention strategies help facilitate healthy grieving; stabilize a traumatized environment; reduce the likelihood of suicide contagion and lead to a sustainable plan for suicide prevention. You will learn how two different suicide prevention programs support schools using strategies that include the SOS (Signs of Suicide) Program; universal screening strategies; and groups that support grieving students.

*Learning objectives:*

- Describe two evidenced based suicide prevention strategies for schools;
- List strategies for overcoming dilemmas and obstacles to implementing a suicide postvention response;
- Explain how a support group for grieving students can be an integral part of a school's response to a suicide death.

*C. Prescriptive Memory and the Art of Dreamscaping [Part II] (Nancy Gershman)*

As above.

**3:30-5:00** Mini-workshops. Choose among:*A. Chair Work: Orchestrating Dialogues with the Deceased (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

As a major emotion-focused intervention in grief therapy, chair work represents a specific form of imaginal conversation that benefits from artful introduction and management of the ensuing dialogue. With appropriate adaptation chairing can be used to address “unfinished business” with the deceased and to enhance attachment security. This presentation provides coaching in the procedure as participants implement it with one another in an experiential exercise.

*Learning objectives:*

- Distinguish between two forms of unfinished business identified in recent research and describe adaptations in chairing that permit appropriate intervention in each;
- Summarize three practices to amplify and deepen imaginal dialogues between the living and dead;
- Experiment with the choreography of chair work to focus the dialogue and foster transformation and meaning making about the relationship.

*B. Mindfulness and Grief: A System for Coping with Life after Loss (Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT)*

More than a simple meditation technique, mindfulness is an internal attitude that can reduce grief related suffering, build resilience to stress, deepen interpersonal connections, and aid in cultivating forgiveness, gratitude, meaning, and love. In this presentation we will explore an eight-module system that is rooted in contemporary models of grief and creates a wholesome scaffolding upon which a grieving client can engage in grief work and reengage meaningfully in life after a major loss. We will explore the available research and discuss the importance of a trauma sensitive approach to facilitating mindfulness for grief.

*Learning objectives:*

- Summarize contemporary mindfulness research as it applies to grief related symptoms;
- Describe mindfulness-based interventions for grief;
- Discuss the elements of a trauma-sensitive approach to mindfulness instruction.

*C. Open Artful Grief Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)***Wednesday (September 16)****8:30-10:00 Integrating Traumatic Loss: Principles and Practices (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)**

As research documents, when losses are traumatic, mourners commonly contend with profound disruptions of their world assumptions, and equally profound complications in their grief symptomatology. In such cases, integrating the narrative of the loss and mining its meaning require non-anxious presence of the therapist to the previously silent story of the loss, in all its relevant and sometimes horrific detail. In this systematic presentation, we will present procedures that safeguard this work to prevent re-traumatization, reinforce emotion regulation, and foster the construction of a more coherent narrative that can be borne less heavily by the survivor.

*Learning objectives:*

- Summarize research documenting the impact of traumatic loss through homicide, suicide and traumatic accident and the role of meaning making in mediating its impact on grief symptomatology;
- Weave together *external*, *internal* and *reflexive* narrative strands to promote a fuller processing of the event story of the dying;
- Detail safeguards to permit clients to continue the processing of recordings and images of the story of the dying between sessions.

**10:30-12:00 Mini-workshops. Choose among:***A. Restorative Retelling: A Practicum (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

Translating principles to practice, participants work in small groups to apply restorative retelling procedures to a shared account of a (non-traumatic) loss, as PI faculty circulate and provide support, coaching and modeling as needed. We will then share experiences with the exercise, considering the observations and questions of tellers, facilitators and witnesses to more fully grasp its utility.

*Learning objectives:*

- Implement the principles of *bracing*, *pacing* and *facing* in an actual account of significant loss;
- Practice “doubling” as therapist from the observer’s position to provide support and stimulate new directions in the narration;
- Troubleshoot common impediments to restorative retelling to learn vicariously from the experiences of colleagues.

*B. Intersection of Grief and Trauma: A Case Study (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)*

Supporting clients living at the crossroads of trauma and grief can be a delicate process. Current loss can quickly dovetail into the pain of old attachment wounds, leaving clients feeling overwhelmed by pain. We will explore the struggles Maude experiences due to the excruciating intersection of sudden bereavement and old, attachment-based wounds. We will explore the careful work done to help her stabilize her dysregulated nervous system, recognize the intersecting meanings of significant losses, and learn to support vulnerable parts of herself with compassion. We will discuss the merits of using a range of creative, trauma informed, intervention tools to support healing; including meaning making, dual process, mindfulness, and internal family systems (IFS) models.

*Learning objectives:*

- Identify losses related to living with traumatic loss and attachment losses;
- Summarize three trauma informed clinical models that support healing in cases complicated by the intersection of traumatic bereavement and past attachment wounds;
- Conduct a case conceptualization linking a client’s presenting struggles to theory-guided interventions.

*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, as a vehicle for narrative and identity reconstruction, sense making, and benefit finding, as well as 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 processes 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:*

- Discuss three reasons why creative and expressive interventions such as doll making are desirable with those suffering traumatic loss;
- Exemplify how doll-making promotes sense-making, benefit-finding, and integration of the bereaved person's shattered "self";
- Outline three tenets of attachment-informed grief therapy, and describe how the doll making process and tangible product promote a continuing bond with the deceased.

**1:30-3:00** Mini-workshops. Choose among:*A. Reviewing and Rebuilding the Shattered Assumptive World: A BRACE for the Lost Footing (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)*

Having encountered a sudden or violent loss event, one may feel that one has lost one's footing or security in the world. Thus, some form of brace may be needed for one to get re-anchored again in order to move forward in life. By adopting the concept of duality, this tool aims at helping a person explore 'the other side of the coin' when he/she experiences waves of impacts resulted from a loss. Such exploration may counter-balance the mourner's sense of being upended by the loss, as he/she realizes other aspects in life that remain unchanged, or are even strengthened, despite the impact of the loss.

*Learning objectives:*

- Adopt the *BRACE* framework to explore the impacts of loss from five different dimensions;
- Use the concept of duality to help mourners realize the "unaffected" or "fortified" areas in life despite the shattering effects experienced;
- Identify potential risk and protective factors for clients' post-loss adjustment.

*B. "But I Didn't Say Goodbye": Helping Families after Suicide (Barbara Rubel, MA, BCETS, DAAETS)*

In this experiential presentation, we will explore vulnerabilities to bereavement complications after a suicide and the importance of postvention. This workshop will include an overview of understanding suicide from survivor's perspective, including clinician survivors. Participants will be given a simple tool, Palette of Grief® that intends to identify the unique grief experience of suicide loss survivors. We will discuss community-based and national organizations, and postvention in action.

*Learning objectives:*

- Discuss vulnerabilities to bereavement complications after a suicide;
- Describe postvention and ways to provide support to those bereaved by suicide;
- Practice use of the Palette of Grief® to recognize the impact of traumatic loss.

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

As above.

**3:30-5:00** Mini-workshops. Choose among:

*A. Chapters of Our Lives: Explore the Role of Loss in Our Life Narratives (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT, MMSAC, RegCLR)*

As a form of personal exploration, clients are invited to reflect upon their life narratives and organize them into chapters or sections, as if authoring their own autobiographies. In the process of writing about their significant life experiences, they come to appreciate the complexity and richness of their life narratives, as well as realizing how loss has played a part as it is interwoven with these narratives. In a group setting, using facilitative questions that bear on the significant settings, characterizations of self and others, plots and themes, a dyadic interview will be practiced for further exploration.

*Learning objectives:*

- Facilitate a mourners' review of their life narratives and exploration of the role of loss in them;
- Deconstruct people's sense of entrapment in their life story and invite possible life revision;
- Assist people to integrate their difficult-to-assimilate life experiences into their broader self-narrative.

*B. Nature-Based Bereavement 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:*

- Define and describe ecopsychotherapy and nature-based bereavement rituals;
- Differentiate between personal and collective functions of rituals;
- Apply and demonstrate the use of the *Development of a Nature-Based Ritual* form.

*C. Open Artful Grief Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)***Thursday (September 17)****8:30-10:00 Art-Assisted Grief Therapy (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)**

The Portland Institute for Loss and Transition introduces an Art-Assisted Grief Therapy Certification as part of its intense professional training in grief therapy, counseling and bereavement support. Transformative expressive therapies acquaint participants with a broad range of practical techniques, as well as conceptual understanding relevant to clinicians. Case studies anchored in Meaning Reconstruction, Attachment-informed Grief Therapy and Restorative Retelling highlight the efficacy of art-assisted grief therapy and open the door to direct creative experiences in the Artful Grief Studio. Therapies of the imagination are explored through an ethical lens, essential in the implementation of art-assisted grief therapy techniques.

*Learning objectives:*

- Identify four aspects of Art-Assisted Grief Therapy creative practices that are effective in the treatment of traumatic loss;
- Review Art-Assisted Grief Therapy through an ethics-based lens that guides application and implementation in clinical settings;
- Describe three aspects of meaning reconstruction and its theory and practice in art-assisted modalities.

**10:30-12:00 Mini-workshops. Choose among:***A. "If Only...": Counterfactual Thinking in Bereavement (Michal Mahat-Shamir, PhD and Shani Pitcho-Prelorentzos, MSW)*

When grief over the death of a loved one becomes complicated, protracted and circular, ruminative counterfactual thinking in which the bereaved relentlessly but vainly seeks to somehow reverse the tragedy of the loss often plays a contributory role in sustaining the person's suffering. In this presentation we summarize the growing evidence implicating this cognitive process in interfering with meaning reconstruction following loss, and identify four foci for counterfactual, "if only"

cognition, directed at the self, the deceased, relevant others, or the circumstances of the death itself. Therapeutic approaches to resolving, dissolving, mitigating, or redirecting such rumination will be introduced and practiced.

*Learning objectives:*

- Summarize literature on the cognitive processes of counterfactual thinking and the ways they interrupt meaning making processes following loss;
- Identify common patterns of ruminative counterfactual thinking among bereaved individuals;
- Practice approaches to working with counterfactual thinking in order to help bereaved individuals find meaning in loss.

*B. Facilitating Meaning Making in A Group Context: An Overview (Evgenia Milman, MA, PHD)*

The Meaning in Loss Group (MIL) is a meaning-oriented group intervention targeting prolonged grief disorder. The MIL uses a narrative-constructivist approach to facilitate meaning making regarding the death event itself as well as the ongoing relationship between the bereft and the deceased. The reconstruction of a meaningful continuing bond with the deceased is leveraged to encourage re-engagement with life-affirming activities. This presentation will introduce the principles that frame the MIL, and then describe its format and procedures by reviewing the weekly modules and techniques employed in the group protocol. Real client examples will be used for illustrations relevant to each module.

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognize how the narrative-constructivist group framework promotes meaning making and grief adjustment among those experiencing Prolonged Grief Disorder;
- Identify the principles and modules of the MIL Group;
- Describe the application of specific meaning-oriented grief therapy techniques in a group therapy format.

*C. Memory Box [Part I]: 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. 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 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 how art therapy approaches, including both the art therapy process and product, may promote meaning reconstruction for grieving children and adolescents.

**1:30-3:00**    Mini-workshops. Choose among:

*A. Seasons of Transition [Part I]: Reflections on Change (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

Grounded in the research-informed perspectives of meaning reconstruction, the Transition Cycle, and attachment-informed grief therapy, the Seasons of Transition model offers a flexible framework for identifying resources, recognizing ongoing losses, articulating grief, and fostering growth. In this initial module on this approach, we experiment with a variety of reflective formats for making meaning of life transitions, using poetic, narrative, visual and dialogical methods to explore the challenge of change in our own lives, as well as those of our clients.

*Learning objectives:*

- Summarize the four “seasons” of transition and the implication of each for adapting to loss and change;
- Identify narrative themes associated with abundance, reduction, emptiness and emergence arising from your own transitions and those of another;
- Discuss the indications and contraindications for using the Seasons model with a client at different points in the grieving process.

*B. The Meaning in Loss Group: A Closer Look (Evgenia Milman, MA, PhD)*

This presentation will offer a nuanced examination of specific procedures and techniques that address challenges arising in the course of meaning-oriented grief group therapy. We will focus on the use of prescreening protocols for ensuring group member cohesion and the use of dyadic subgrouping for facilitating in-depth processing despite time constraints. The multi-faceted application of techniques that target the ongoing, symbolic *continuing bond* with the deceased will be reviewed,

including their role in resolving *unfinished business* and forming a security-enhancing base from which to re-engage in life. Participants' own experiences and ideas regarding the use of meaning-oriented grief groups will be invited.

*Learning objectives:*

- Recognize the challenges that may emerge in the course of meaning-oriented group therapy with the bereft;
- Identify procedures and techniques that are vital to meaning-oriented group work in grief therapy;
- Tailor therapeutic techniques that target the continuing bond to the evolving and diverse needs of group therapy members.

*C. Memory Box [Part II]: Art Therapy for Children and Adolescents (Sarah Vollmann, MPS, ATR-BC, LICSW)*

As above.

**3:30-5:00** Mini-workshops. Choose among:

*A. Seasons of Transition [Part II]: Recomposing the Self (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

Deriving from Dialogical Self Theory, Composition Work (CW) views identity as multiple and mutable, as the constellation of roles, relations and emotions that constitute our sense of self shift gradually and sometimes abruptly across the seasons of our lives. In this second module on the Seasons of Transition, we use CW to symbolize the constellation of "I-positions" that characterize our community of self, identify which positions are dominant in our lives at present, which are diminishing or slipping away, which are lost or missing, and which are emerging and invite further cultivation. Unfolding these cyclic processes using expressive and body-centered interventions helps us both accept our inevitable losses and accredit our ongoing growth in their wake.

*Learning objectives:*

- Describe the chief propositions of Hermans' Dialogical Self Theory and its relevance for grief therapy;
- Outline the primary processes addressed by the four "Seasons of Self" involved in recomposing the landscape of our lives;
- Practice one expressive and one body-centered technique for exploring significant transitions in the community of self.

### *B. Yoga for Grief: A Whole Person Approach (Heather Stang, MA, C-IAYT)*

The eight-fold path of yoga outlined by Patanjali offers guidelines to live a life of meaning and purpose, and includes physical postures, meditation, and ethical precepts. In this presentation we will explore how yoga and breathwork can ease physical and mental suffering during acute grief. We will also discuss how yoga can help reconstruct a shattered self-narrative by using the body as metaphor, build a greater sense of self-efficacy that is often diminished by loss, and provide a safe way for people who are experiencing trauma to reengage with their body and mind.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Summarize contemporary yoga research as it applies to grief related symptoms;
- Define Patanjali's 8 limbs in the yoga philosophy as they relate to grief;
- Explore yoga-based interventions for acute grief and meaning making.

### *C. Open Artful Grief Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)*

## *Friday (September 18)*

**8:30-10:00** Mini-Workshops. Choose among:

### *A. Grief and the Brain [Part I]: The Impact of Loss (Susan Whitmore, BSBM, CGC)*

In this session, we will review multiple brain research studies incorporating fMRI and other research methodologies that have clinical import in dealing with specific responses to a loss experience. Such responses include post-traumatic stress (PTS), depression, hopelessness and perceived lack of meaning or purpose. Based on two recent UCLA studies measuring grief signals in the brains of two subject groups that experienced parental loss and spousal loss respectively, learners will experience a re-directing technique designed to help clients with obsessive thought and PTS. Besides, learners will also practice specific Mindfulness techniques that seemingly work best for loss, according to studies examining the effect of Mindfulness Meditation in modulating different brain responses.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Describe what changes may be seen in the brains of those experiencing a major loss in life;
- Implement a re-directing technique to assist clients with obsessive thought and PTS;
- Use Mindfulness techniques to empower clients to accept and work on their individual grief process.

### *B. Grief of Chronic and Life-Threatening Illness (Christina Zampitella, PsyD, FT)*

One of the greatest challenges of chronic and life-threatening illness is adapting to the multiple, and potentially permanent, losses that accompany the diagnosis. Because these losses are non-finite, the risk of unrelenting grief is elevated and can be challenging to integrate into the very narrative that has already been disrupted. This presentation, via didactic training and case studies, aims to understand the unique grieving process of those coping with chronic and life-threatening illness. We will explore how to help the clients identify, accept, and adapt to their losses by transforming their experience into something livable, bearable, and perhaps transformative and meaningful.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Identify and discuss the unique nature of the grief of chronic and life-threatening illness;
- Understand the fluid phases often associated with living with chronic and life-threatening illness;
- Develop a potential set of interventions for a person living with chronic and life-threatening illness that can provide opportunities for meaning reconstruction.

### *C. Enacting the Emotions: Grief Therapy and the Dramatic Acts (Evgenia Milman, MA, PhD)*

The grief process often calls on survivors of loss to access difficult emotions toward the deceased. This presentation will describe a technique for facilitating such emotion-focused work with the bereft, particularly with clients who struggle to access their emotions. Inspired by the dramatic arts and specifically, the renowned work of Constantin Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg, this approach to working with the bereft draws on acting techniques that aid actors in accessing emotion retrieval cues in their character portrayals. The 5-step procedure involved in the *Enacting the Emotion* technique will then be presented and demonstrated.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Recognize the challenges that may emerge in working with grieving individuals who struggle to access and tolerate their grief-related affect;
- Identify the steps for using the Enacting the Emotion technique;
- Evaluate and promote safety when using experiential techniques in grief therapy.

## **10:30-12:00 Mini-Workshops. Choose among:**

### *A. Grief and the Brain [Part II]: Effective Interventions (Susan Whitmore, BSBM, CGC)*

As above.

### *B. Tour of the Dougy Center (Jana DeCristofaro, LCSW)*

Join us for a tour of The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families! We will explore each of the creative expression rooms that grieving children and teens use as participants in our peer support groups. In each area, we will discuss and model how we facilitate the physical, creative, and verbal expression of grief. In each area, a senior staff member will provide examples of how the physical space fits with The Dougy Center's model and creates an atmosphere that supports safety, acknowledgment, and peer connections.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Recognize how physical space can contribute to grief support;
- Describe different avenues for physical, creative, and verbal grief expression;
- Discover how children and teens interact with various expression modalities.

### *C. Open Artful Grief Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)*

**1:30-3:00**    Mini-Workshops. Choose between:

#### *A. Intervening in Meaning: Principles of Practice (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

As every experienced therapist recognizes, conducting an effective therapy requires more than mastery of concrete procedures, as helpful as these often can be. Complementing this emphasis on the *content* of intervention is the more basic negotiation of the therapeutic *process*, in the form of a delicate ballet of co-construction of meaning between client and therapist. In this session we will revisit the guiding assumptions of a narrative constructivist approach to therapy, and consider the conditions required for clients to symbolize, voice and articulate painful experience in the service of transformation. Special care will be given to offering memorable principles of meaning making in therapy and in life, and their practical implications for artfully facilitating conversations that promote rapid change.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Identify key assumptions of a meaning-oriented therapy, and the role of narrative in both constraining and enabling change;
- Describe the characteristics of the therapist's stance that help clients find the growing edge of their experience;
- List four helpful hints for guiding therapeutic conversation and addressing client resistance.

### *B. Mitigating the Impact of Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma (Barbara Rubel, MA, BCETS, DAAETS)*

Job burnout, secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma can take its toll on clinicians. Participants will increase their awareness of how to practice self-care and build their personal resilience by putting their character strengths into practice. During this program, participants will identify eight self-care techniques to increase their job satisfaction. This interactive workshop will help participants manage the impact of their stressful career.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Describe compassion fatigue and its two components, burnout and secondary traumatic stress;
- Describe vicarious trauma and its symptoms;
- Select eight pathways of self-care to counter compassion fatigue and enhance resilience.

### **3:30-5:00**    **Closing Plenary: Looking Back, Looking Forward (PI Faculty)**

In this closing panel, PI faculty will share their impressions of the week-long September Institute, as well as where they see the field headed in the years to come. This brief round of reflections will stimulate discussion with audience members, and invite an ongoing dialogue that will help all of us integrate the learning of a rich training experience.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Highlight key learning and insights garnered from a week of engagement with grief therapy;
- Critique limitations in the field as currently practiced and suggest promising new directions in which bereavement care is evolving;
- Identify possible topics for future training offered by the Portland Institute, and address questions regarding Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction.