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# The NLP Loss Pattern: Imagery and Experience in Grief and Mourning

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**THE NLP LOSS PATTERN:  
Imagery and Experience in Grief and Mourning**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE NLP LOSS PATTERN:**

#### **Imagery and Experience in Grief and Mourning**

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship of the smaller units of perception known as submodalities to the grieving person's internal experiencing of bereavement. This exploration was facilitated by examining self-reports and drawings of those who had experienced loss within the past six years.

This study takes the position that there are significant meaningful connections between submodality perception, internal experience interpreted as grief and mourning and that this experience is discernable in self-reports.

Six persons were interviewed using a heuristic qualitative methodology. Co-researchers dialogues were examined for linguistic markers representing internal sensory experience with the dialogue taking the form of a conversational interview. Five universal themes surfaced from the analysis of the dialogues. Each of the five themes were matched with specific sensory submodalities.

This study builds on the psychoanalytic processes of differentiation, representability and symbolization by suggesting that loss is a state-dependent memory. The outcome of this study indicates that there are two distinct states of consciousness of bereavement, (1) grief and (2) mourning. Universal themes emerged from the dialogues which were isomorphic with internal imagery and submodalities. The dialogues and individual drawings showed distinct changes in submodalities and differentiated the states of grief and mourning. This study suggests that grief is a response to a state-dependent memory while mourning is a different experience that is a response to a state-

dependent learning. This study also implies that the symbolization process assists the bereaved in by-passing defenses to work through any pain of loss or other stage, phase or task of grief. The study suggests that conscious control of specific submodalities can direct the shifting of internal representations and states to facilitate a more rapid healing of the experience of loss.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Definition and Purpose**

#### **Introduction**

Two aspects of the aftermath of profound loss from death, divorce and other trauma will be discussed within this PDE: grief and mourning. Various authorities, researchers and clinicians use the two terms interchangeably. With the exception of the chapter on Freud, Worden and NLP in this paper, the following pages originally did not aim at making such a distinction between grief or mourning. In this introduction I will briefly discuss several perspectives of grief and mourning not acknowledged in the Literature Review, the theoretical orientation, research question and methodology will be introduced, and a definition of grief will be proposed.

#### **What is grief?**

The bereaved person initially reacts with grief which is followed by mourning. Rando (1988) recognizes that grief is usually an intense response, process and reaction to the immediacy of a perceived loss, whereas mourning is the long-term psychological work of learning to let go of the lost object with the purpose of adapting and, finally, with the goal of accommodating to a new way of

living. This definition of grief is on target with many person's personal experiences and includes all-encompassing reactions of psychological, social, spiritual and physical responses (Graves, 1994; Rando, 1988).

Grief is a response. A response to what? The "what" here is a perception which interacts with internal representations, beliefs and attitudes of the bereaved. The perception of loss will determine the severity of grief and quality of mourning. When loss touches our lives our perception is filtered or influenced by our assumptions, beliefs and history in relation to the object of loss. Since assumptions are a portion of the very fabric of epistemology, any sudden change in the gestalt or "perceptual package" (Cedillos, personal communication, 1996) representing one's relationship with a significant other can be extremely shocking. Janoff-Bulman (1992) writes of assumptions that are shattered because our epistemology is threatened during traumatic loss. The literature review will detail these specific beliefs that are vital in most trauma related losses, while the following research will illustrate some of the universal themes in all losses. However, it is the relationship of these universal themes to the internal representations that bereaved persons are processing as part of the perceptual package that is a primary focus of this study.

Larry Dossey (1991); Graves (1994); Rando (1991); Worden (1991); Levine (1991); Moustakas (1975, 1996); and Raphael (1983) recognize grief as a process of total involvement for the individual that is inescapable and commonly

a reaction to loss. Grief has been described as the “personal internal experience of loss” (Worden, p. 34); “the behavior of transition” (Graves, p. 2); “the process of experiencing the psychological, social and physical reactions to one’s perception of loss” (Dossey, p. 251). Grief has been described metaphorically by writers such as Levine (1991) as “the rope burns left behind when what we held to most dearly is pulled out of reach” (p. 235). Again Levine writes of grief as “homesickness” (p.253) to express the perception of a unique kind of loneliness, isolation and separation. Clark Moustakas (1996) writes of grief as a “painful recognition and experiencing of paradox...the immediate experience of where there is loneliness, there is love and where there is suffering, there is joy” (p. 103).

### **Definition of grief**

With my understanding from researchers such as those that have been quoted, I began to search for my own operational definition of grief. A working definition evolved that served well for focusing my research: grief is a cluster of emotional, physical, psychological and behavioral reactions we have resulting from sudden shifts of our internal representations of attachment(s). These internal representations form the “structural package” in the bereaved’s perceptual image of loss. Within the structure of an internal representation are visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory sensory codings. The visual sensory codings of loss, grief and mourning will be the central focus of this PDE

research. These visual sensory codings have even more specific qualities, qualities that are vital to understanding the possible perceptual structure of epistemology. Clinical experience reveals that the subjective elements (submodalities) forming the qualitative pieces of our internal images are among the most significant determinants of meaning in the context of grief. By focusing on the bereaved's internal representations as a complex of individual perception, interpretation and meaning rather than emotion, physical arousal, a greater range of coping skills can be utilized and more progress in applied research can be made.

### **Why choose grief as a topic?**

Our cultural tendency to deny experiences (Kubler-Ross, 1969) has made some research in the area of grief and mourning difficult. I have chosen this topic for personal and professional reasons. Since death and loss comes to us all, the topic made sense as a way of personal preparation through study and practice. Professionally, I have been a therapist, counselor and trainer who encounters a great number of personal requests for assistance of various kinds. Wisdom would indicate that increased knowledge of this area of study is needed. So widespread are the effects of grief that as much as 15% of individuals seeking psychiatric help at Massachusetts General Hospital have a grief-related reaction that could be described as pathological (Lazare, in Lynch, 1977). Bowlby (1980) does not give figures but states his conviction that "psychiatric illnesses such as anxiety,

depression, and some personality disorders are many times the results of pathological mourning” (p. 23). Worden (1980); Dossey (1991); Graves (1994) and many other researchers tend to agree that grief “exacerbates physical and psychiatric morbidity” (Worden, p. 2). These researchers have also inquired if those who experience loss need more psychiatric care than others in the general population that are not mourning. Reports are inconclusive in this area but much literature indicates some increased risk of depression and psychosomatic distress (Stroebe & Stroebe, 1987).

### **Purpose of the study**

The basic purpose of this study is to initiate research that is exploratory with the intent of explicating a deeper understanding of internal representations of grief and mourning. A specific objective of this study is to explore the smaller units of sensory perception within the internal visual representational system of bereaved persons in the context of grief and mourning. Individuals will be interviewed with the goal of examining each transcription for linguistic indicators and metaphors indicative of their internal experience relative to loss to explore these relationships.

Although the purpose of this study is exploratory, one objective is to provide data and generate hypotheses for further research. Particularly in light of the statistics of those persons seeking help, it becomes obvious future treatment strategies for clinical intervention in grief could utilize outcomes of this study.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Introduction**

In this review I will present theoretical contributions from psychoanalysis, psychology and perception to the study of loss and grief. Efforts are made in this review to bring together, connect and relate the above which results in a base for understanding loss and grief.

Following this introduction is a statement of my view, then major theorists are briefly cited. Following this is the examination of meaning, the role of perception and how state-dependent learning and memory factor in internal imagery in the context of loss and grief.

Specifically, Klein's (1940) perspective on object-relations helps to inform much of the thinking of the early developmental process of forming attachments. Lorenz' (in Dilts & Smith, 1990) work with imprinting further elucidates the importance of early perception of relationships in animal and human life.

Particularly relevant to this current study on internal representations of loss is Susanne Langer's (1953) emphasis on the relationship of meaning to the structure and qualities of internal images. These qualities and their relationships will be detailed later in this chapter. Langer's work joins research in the psychology of perception which involves the major sensory systems of the brain,

the subsystems (submodalities), and the communication between and within systems known as synesthesia (Gordon, 1978) and how meaning is encoded within the brain. Ernest Rossi's (1986) work in psychobiology serves to expand and reinforce the importance of differentiation, representability, and symbolization in psychoanalysis by relating state-dependent learning and memory to a wide range of everyday experiences, including trauma such as loss.

James Lynch (1977), C. M. Parkes (1972) and Larry Dossey (1991) all have discovered similar themes essential in the study and understanding of loss and grief. The theme of loneliness is a constant in much of the literature. Loneliness is experienced by survivors as a "broken heart". All research shows without doubt and with certainty that how those who suffer loss interpret being alone is vital to coping with a broken heart.

The medical, psychiatric and psychological investigations reviewed in this study reinforce each other and support further exploratory research. The review of this literature orients readers to imagery from psychoanalytic sources, connects these theoretical views with current research in perceptual psychology and psychobiology while reviewing certain major writers in the field of grief studies.

### **Primary Researcher Stance**

To begin a heuristic inquiry, I begin with a general statement of my position with the neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) Loss Pattern in relation to the literature. Later presuppositions of this NLP pattern will be acknowledged in



detail. My theoretical position is that the neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) Loss Pattern is well-grounded and supported by psychoanalytic, psychobiological and perceptual theories. Langer's (1953) theoretical focus on the qualities of internal imagery, Gordon's (1978) collection of research on submodalities and synesthesia along with Rossi's (1986) landmark work in state-dependent learning and memory all serve to shed light on and support the NLP Loss Pattern.

The Loss Pattern is a coping strategy that can successfully assist the mourner with consciously shifting the internal representations that are state-bound memories of the lost object/deceased. I further assert that the conscious shifting of specific qualities of these internal images results in an isomorphic shift of belief, identity and affect of the mourner. The overall results of this internal shift is usually one of the mourner moving from constant loneliness, sadness and isolation to a richer experience of hope and gratitude.

Conscious manipulation of internal imagery with neuro-linguistic programming and its effects on grief has not been the subject of any empirical study. With the exception of anecdotal reports and a recent published case study by Carla Woody (in *Anchor Point*, December, 1995), the Loss Pattern intervention is mostly utilized by clinicians assisting persons experiencing trauma from loss through death, divorce, separation, loss of job, amputation, AIDS victims and their families, and even loss of future hoped-for possibilities.

## **Theorists**

### **Introduction**

To begin this section several criteria will be listed that seem to be universally accepted across theories for “successful” grieving. Successful grieving is accepted in professional circles as the bereaved accomplishing Worden’s (1991) four tasks of grief or passing through Kubler-Ross’s (1969) stages of grief. Worden’s tasks will be detailed in Chapter Three of this dissertation. These criteria are taken from a number of clinical interventions and succinctly categorized as: 1. Fragmentation, 2. Realizing, 3. Weighing, 4. Appreciating, 5. Re-ordering, and 6. Reframing (Cedillos, 1996, personal communication). These categories possibly represent steps or a sequence that is defined as:

1. Differentiation establishes the survivor’s ability to internally represent loss. This is a developmental process that naturally occurs allowing one to draw and sense boundaries of self that distinguish one from others. This also allows one to see what was lost that was valuable.
2. In working through the pain to the loss, one must be able to symbolize the loss. Symbolizing a loss internally imbues an image with personal/cultural meaning.
3. A comparison of the symbolized loss with another loss that has since become a source of “strength”.

4. Identification and representation of the qualities of the survivors' valued experience with the lost object.
5. Learning to shift the internal representations of one's experience of loss.
6. Projecting into the future this valued quality that was a special criteria of the loss (Andreas, 1987 & 1989).

The sequences of fragmentation through reframing may be envisioned as steps or a sequence that can serve to enlighten much of the research in this study. The six steps/sequence is only to be thought of as guiding one's understanding of the psychoanalytic contributions to the study of imagery in loss and grief. Basic to this understanding of imagery are writings of Freud.

Visual imagery and dream formation were explored by Freud in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). He recognized that if a dream can be represented in visual imagery then the mind looks for a way of symbolizing the experience. This ability of the brain/mind to facilitate a linking of experience with internal packaging of perception is known as representability. The indirect symbolic representation that we recognize as dream memory is directly related to the process of representability. Freud (1900) outlines his observations of dream thinking and how dreams come to express meaning. According to Freud, for a dream/image to have meaning the components of that dream must be flexible

enough to be translated by the brain into a visual representation. It is the internal search by the brain for a suitable visual representation of dreams that initiates a variety of processes, among which, is displacement. It is this ability to represent meaning in a visual memory that is one of the basic components of how one knows that one should grieve and mourn a loss.

The bereaved survivor's ability to configure an internal visual image relating to the loss/lost object relies on representability. Representability is similar to realizing that the menu is not the food as we order in a restaurant. For example, the words, phrases and syntax of a menu are indirect representations, therefore, becoming symbols for a desired culinary experience.

This dissertation will, in later pages, examine the self-reports of internal sensory impressions of several mourners and how symbolized images demonstrate the representability of that mourner's internal experience. The self-reports will be understood from the perspective that those images are indirect representations of a suite of experiences wrapped up in a symbol. This PDE will attempt to expand upon this base of understanding by suggesting that the elements of the internal representations, such as color, brightness, size, location and other qualities are the major pieces (known as submodalities) that contribute to the meaning of loss in one's grief. By asking persons to report on these internal representations during the process of mourning we find these elements shifting as the bereaved discover ways to meaningfully rearrange these smaller

elements of the representations.

Psychoanalytic thought assumes that cognitive and emotional milestones of early life are vitally connected to our important achievements and failures that become our developmental history. A number of analytic writers imply that the grief process is similar to our childhood developmental efforts at individuation resulting in separation from the object of attachment (Freud, 1917, Anson, 1994). In early childhood separation and in mourning there is a loss of the object of attachment (Bowlby, 1980). In both instances one's task is to form internal representations of self and other, body image, time and even space. This task might be considered similar to the fragmentation/differentiation through reframing steps in the six-step sequence previously outlined.

The developmental achievement of differentiation is so important that art therapist Suzan Anson (1994) takes the view that it is a "prerequisite for representation and symbolization, which in turn is necessary for successful mourning..." ( pp. 14-15). It appears reasonable to view differentiation as a continual process that begins with the infant's discernment of physical boundaries. This process becomes more complex with the rapid development of the brain and with experience in the world, such as the adolescent continuing the above by exploring the identity question, "Who am I?". According to analytic thought, this question when faced and updated in each developmental phase sets the stage for more successful working through of grief.

Symbolization is possible when differentiation has been achieved developmentally. That is, to successfully have an internal representation of a loved one, one must have begun to sense or perceive and form a mental concept that “I am different from the object of attachment”.

Significant in the psychological processes of the growing infant is the cybernetic achievement of object relations. The maturing infant in an environment in which protection is available can develop trust as a major component of object relations. It is the assumptions contained within the natural development of object relations of which one result is trust that will be focused on in detail in later pages (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). The differentiation that occurs, in the early stages of growth in humans allows a child to form a gestalt of self-images that includes self-other concepts (trust is among these) which are basically illusions and also known as internal representations. This gestalt is simultaneously encoded in the infant with evolving concepts of space and time.

When an organism has developmentally differentiated an object of attachment and then formed internal representation(s) of the object that is imbued with personal meaning, one can say that symbolization has occurred. Psychoanalysis looks for meaning in the internal representations called symbolizations. The neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) Grief/Loss Pattern utilizes the same internal images, but the NLP approach does not interpret the symbolic meaning. The NLP pattern works directly with the conscious

representations, that is, the images that are possible for the mourner to immediately recall that are symbolic of the grief experience. The NLP Loss Pattern assumes that the meaning is inherent within the qualities (submodalities) of the symbol itself and that for the symbol to be changed will result in a shift or change in the total configuration of meaning for the bereaved and the grief experience. Other theorists, such as Segal (1961) conclude in the Kris Study Group that symbolization is so important to the personality that even before the ego forms, the first occurring cognitive process may be symbolization. If Segal is accurate, then it becomes more understandable why the loss experience is so shattering and wrenching. The experience touches us at the earliest roots of our development and encompasses all areas of our existence.

Freud's contribution to the theoretical literature in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) demonstrated his professional and personal awareness of loss. He spoke of the task of reality testing for the mourner as a shifting of internal representations. This shift functions as a means to restructure, reorganize and reassociate various internal resources of affect and self-identity, subsequently empowering the mourner to look for new experiences and to form new attachments with persons and objects. Freud (1917) does not detail this shift from reality to memory or the mechanics of this shift. To my knowledge other theorists do not specify how to accomplish this internal shift. A significant part of the presupposition of this dissertation maintains that one can consciously

without weeks or months of talking or “working through”. Utilizing one’s personal symbols that contain the gestalt of experience one terms loss/grief, one can rapidly assist the bereaved on their way to progress through the various tasks of mourning.

Studies by Piaget in the area of mental representation led him to report his conclusions on the lost object. Although Piaget recognized the process of image formation as internal representation, he did not specify much beyond the kinds of imagery such as psychic, instinctual, memory, body image and so forth (Beres & Joseph, 1970).

Focusing on the formal elements of works of art, Langer (1953) developed a frame for understanding symbolic communication in what she termed the presentational symbol. She implicitly asks, “How can a nonverbal medium communicate?” She further explored the possibilities inherent in the qualities of the images such as light, color, size, distance, location, and numerous other distinctions (Bandler, 1985). According to Langer (1953) these qualities, “contribute meaning and expression in a nonverbal medium, (which is essential to experience and understanding)” (Anson, 1994, p.51). Langer was the first theorist to so clearly point to the power of the minute elements of images and her belief that these elements contribute meaning for the symbolic image. We shall see below, how later researchers agree with Langer and develop her ideas more fully in the discipline of psychoneuroimmunology, a field of psychobiology.



The relationship between the symbol and what is symbolized has been studied by Deri (1984). In mourning and grief, Deri's work contributes greater understanding of how the internal image occurs. She recognizes the phenomenon of perception and its role in symbol formation. Where Freud focuses on the pathological connections of imagery, Deri emphasizes the positive aspects of symbolization as it facilitates differentiation. She sees this as a natural function of the individual and reframes the process as an ability that is functional and useful. Symbolization serves the function of communicating meaning and experience (Anson, 1994). Internally, symbolization seeks to preserve important personal meaning that is sensed internally as a visual image(s). This is to say that not all images are necessarily evocative of strong states of consciousness. When that image is capable of eliciting strong responses, for example, from the bereaved, then the image is elevated to a symbol. Later discussion will expand this preservation process of symbolization into the chemicals that become involved physically within the brain during the representing of symbols internally. This occurrence forms meaning with the symbol on a biological level by encoding the image with very specific chemicals in the body and brain simultaneously and the image becomes a biological state-bound learning process.

### **What gives perception meaning?**

We have seen the beginning of theorists suggesting that the nonverbal carrier of communication in imagery is in the structure of the image itself.

Pribram (1971) explains that human experience is recorded and stored holographically in the human brain to be retrieved at a later date. Differentiation, representability and symbolization can be conceptualized as names for a natural sort of neuronal firing that is a genetic patterning within the brain's neural network. What gives this neuronal firing of perception meaning in the brain? Contextually, this is equivalent to inquiring, "How do we know that we are grieving or lost something important?"

Gordon (1978) in Therapeutic Metaphors states, "the way in which meaningfulness is developed is by the correlation of perceptual experiences" (p.216). For example, relationships could be described as configurations of correlative experiences that involve pairings of visual representations of a loved one with the sound of their voice and touch/smell of that same person. Neurologically this configuration of visual representations is formed naturally as a result of the normal functioning of the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and tactile sensory modalities. Simply, what makes a loss meaningful are our many previous sensory experiences with the person that is now deceased. The survivor has a multitude of internally stored representations that are remaining and it is these symbolic images (and what these images represent symbolically

and physiologically) that must be dealt with in the tasks, stages and phases of grieving.

In the context of loss, meaning is culturally and personally dependent on a number of factors. When forming relationships, individuals share a number of patterned experiences that begin to define the meaning of that relationship. The brain records these events via internal perceptual mechanisms and simultaneously encodes the sensory perceptions contextually within the body/brain.

The phenomenon of representing and then encoding an event while translating it into an internally meaningful experience is a process known as state-dependent learning (Rossi, 1986). State-dependent learning has been experienced by all persons in some form. For example, a test can be given by a college professor in the classroom which was the usual meeting place for a particular course. The same test can be given across campus in a different location with the same students who just completed the test a few moments earlier. The test scores will most usually be considerably lower in the second trial. This is because the students learned the material within a certain context that included the location. Another example occurs when a student studies with the radio tuned to music. The learning of the academic material becomes associated with the music and is state-dependent. When the student can recreate the state, the learning will be recalled much more rapidly and easily. Although these are examples of environmental influences, there can be many other variables that are factors

important in state-dependent learning such as one's internal mood, external lighting, temperature and even smells.

Within the past ten years research has shown that immune system responses are depressed or excited in relation to external/internal circumstances (Ader, 1981, Solomon, 1985). This research relates many areas of human functioning that include intriguing aspects of psychiatry, psychology, biology and physiology. Rossi (1986), in The Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing states that various types of conditioning such as Pavlovian and Skinnerian, along with the dynamics of psychoanalysis can be placed within a framework of state-dependent memory, learning and behavior. When one responds on physical and biological levels to external events, one's immune system sensitively registers the interaction and codes this relationship chemically within the brain and body. Whether the immune system responses are depressed or excited can depend on the personal interpretation and the meaning an event holds for the individual. In the case of trauma or loss, the shock of the event can depress the immune system. Rossi (1986) cites research from the Brain Biochemistry Division of the National Institute of Mental Health that shows the central and autonomic nervous systems and the endocrine and immune systems are pathways for molecules functioning as messengers with the neuropeptide system of the body. These molecules contain messages from the brain about events and how the individual has interpreted the event. The molecules signal other systems throughout the body on

how to behave or function as they travel to specific sites. When loss occurs that is personally meaningful, these molecules are “charged” with this depressed interpretation and communicate this message to all systems of the body. This is an oversimplified explanation of grief being such a physical trauma to many persons. State-dependent memory also is seen by biological researchers as the physiological and chemical way to understand the early mental processes of development described by Freud, such as differentiation.

### **Synesthesia and Grief**

Gordon (1978) points out that there is a sharing of information between the various modalities of sight, sound and kinesthetics, a process known as synesthesia. Corresponding to this on a physical level is the sharing of information within the autonomic, endocrine, immune and neuropeptide systems of the body (Rossi, 1986). Synesthesia, which is an intermodal mixing that occurs on a perceptual level, probably plays a role in symbolization.

A simple explanation of synesthesia is when we see someone externally and then have immediate feelings of disgust or joy internally. The “see” then “feel” pattern is a communication that is common between sensory modalities that is termed synesthesia. A “constellation of submodality distinctions” (Gordon, p.122) is formed from emotionally important events within the brain. These experiences then become synesthetic and known as state-dependent learnings. Bach-y-Rita (1972) has written of the cell specialization that supports

this neurological encoding or associating of meaningful events. Within the visual area of the brain there are cells that specialize and respond to specific shapes, cells responding to color and cells that are sensitive to certain movements.

### **Submodalities and Perception**

Further distinctions must be recognized regarding perception and the major sensory modalities. Meaningfulness is closely related and reported to occur on a smaller micro-level of perception than that of one of the major sensory modalities. The smaller unit of distinction is referred to as submodality. A chart is shown to illustrate the sensory modalities and the submodalities associated with each modality system of representation in the brain (Appendix A). Discrimination on the submodality level creates meaning through correlations within and between the modalities.

The visual sensory modality is a dimension that is perceived by humans as containing qualities such as size, brightness, focus, movement, location, contrast, etc. Clinical results increasingly confirm that within one or more of these qualities (submodalities) is the “difference that makes a difference” (Bateson, 1979) in perception and subsequently the meaning of an event. This “difference” in the context of grief will be carefully examined in the research section of this study. Clinical experience and reports suggest the submodality within loss and grief to focus on is “location”. The submodality of location is the only quality of perceptual distinction that extends throughout all sensory systems

and when consciously altered (e.g. image moved from one mental location to another internally) most persons report significant positive shifts of interpretation and personal meaning for the loss/grief (Appendix A). Awareness of the differences that makes a difference and the submodalities that accompany the differences is vital in creating more compassionate ways to respond to those who suffer multiple losses which can result in a lifetime of grief.

Utilizing the above we can ask the following question, “What is the difference that makes a difference in the Loss/Grief Pattern?” and again, “Which submodality(ies) make the difference in transforming loss into gratitude?” These questions imply that the NLP Loss Pattern as a clinical intervention can make a difference in the experience of grief for the bereaved. Further defining “difference” we can explicitly say that the results of the NLP Loss Pattern is a transformation of loss into a more positive experience.

### **Belief and Assumption**

In this literature review, the meaning of loss has been reviewed on an elementary physiological/neurological level of perception. Perception relates to meaning in another vital way. The meaning of an event such as loss is directly impacted by our interpretation of perceptions (Lynch, 1977). This is where one can ask “why” of the trauma or loss. For example, “Why do those persons who experience sudden bereavement react with shock, denial, anger and any other symptoms we know collectively as grief?”

When we gain insight into this inquiry we find that survivors of sudden bereavement can teach us much about the internal processes, changes and coping that are necessary and unavoidable for most everyone in managing grief and mourning. Janoff-Bulman (1992) has studied the “why” aspect of traumatic events and the meaning that this particular stress has to survivors. This meaningfulness is formed by a core set of beliefs that forms an “assumptive world” (p. 6) which is composed of perceptions and submodalities. There are three basic beliefs that, when threatened by loss or other trauma we begin to experience the stress of anxiety, grief, etc. Janoff-Bulman (1992) summarizes those beliefs as:

1. The world is benevolent
2. The world is meaningful
3. The self is worthy (p.6)

These three beliefs are core beliefs and when any one or combination of these are shaken by external reality, such as death, stress in the form of grief usually results. This kind of stress most often causes us to question all three beliefs and at times for the mourner can create a survival issue. Many mourners feel as if a part of themselves is gone when a loved one dies. In visual artist's work there are sometimes literal holes depicted within sculptures that reflect this emptiness (Anson, 1994). Many persons describe this emptiness in literal physical ways as feelings in their heart and/or stomach area. All of these experiences of emptiness (one of several themes in loss) are reflections of these



core assumptions that are always threatened when major personal loss is experienced. When the mourner's assumptions about benevolence, meaning and worth (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) are rudely trampled by loss, the mourner's question although sometimes unconscious is, "What am I going to live for now?". The internal imagery relating to the perceptual package within the gestalt of loss and grief for the mourner at this point is many times shattered, decimated or significantly altered compared to a preloss time frame where the internal image was solidly representative of the known world which was previously safe and secure. Postloss images are empty voids that reflect the verbal question, "What am I going to live for now?".

Realization of loneliness and isolation can cause a mourner to feel confused, vulnerable, terrified and ultimately question the reason for going on with one's life. Although a crisis point, this can be a tremendous opportunity to utilize one's loneliness to ask, "What do I want to live for?". The months following a loss or trauma can be a time for discovering what a worthwhile mission really would be for one's self as a survivor (Nouwen, 1981). The time after loss is a period Freud (1917) described as when one experienced shifts of internal representations. These internal representations are images that are symbolic to our basic identity.

In dealing with loss, the "reality check" with sensory based modalities is complicated because we discover a drastic incongruity between what our senses

show/tell us and what we thought we believed about the world and ourselves.

The “assumptive world” (Parkes, 1975) and “working models” (Bowlby, 1969) are ways psychologists have recognized the human need to stabilize a changing world by forming in early development certain essential presuppositions. Earlier, these presuppositions were outlined as benevolence, meaning and worth. These assumptions form the structure for security and trust for all human beings (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

The strongest beliefs are formed in early years of life and reflected in stable internal representations that serve to grant safety, security and feelings of trust for the person holding the beliefs. Psychoanalytic, object-relations theory, developmental, cognitive and social psychology all agree that our “working models” (Bowlby, 1969) are traceable to early development. These images seem to reflect the basic configuration of the assumptions of benevolence, meaning and worth (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Janoff-Bulman (1992) further observes what happens psychologically as the previously listed three basic beliefs intersect. There seems to be an internal representation for each of the three assumptions in addition to a meta-image or meta-meaning formed from this set of core beliefs. In other words we tend to form a meaning about the three meanings. In the context of loss the meta-meaning revolves around trust for all individuals. From this perspective when any one of the three basic assumptions are threatened through loss, it follows that

in the imbalance one's ability to trust is deeply shaken (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

When one's trust is shaken there arises the simultaneous task of facing one's loneliness. To not trust and survive is to be alone. A significant part of our grief is the experience of surviving and discovering we are left alone. How one interprets loss, survival and aloneness is a crisis factor and frequently this crisis continues for months after the loss while the survivor struggles to cope with shifting internal representations.

During this transition time, the bereaved's rearrangement of internal images and meanings of loneliness is critical physiologically and psychologically. What are the effects of the brutal "shaking of our core beliefs"? What are the effects of surviving to discover we are not just sad, mad, and denying but that we are alone? Many persons tend to interpret this aloneness as being left behind and experience an internal loneliness that is significant in the aftermath of loss.

### **Loneliness**

Research suggests that the effects of the bereaved person's personal interpretation of loss, how one perceives being alone is critical in determining physical and mental health and the eventual coping with loss. This coping includes the cognitive and emotional process of coming to terms with reality, how we will accept and what we will accept of the loss to reconfigure one's internal representations.

The emotions that are commonly felt from loss such as anger, sadness, shock and confusion with the attending grief are the result of one's growing loneliness and sometimes hopelessness. The increasing realization of loneliness for the bereaved results in an array of problems. This understanding is important for economic, health, social and other reasons, the most vital of which is the happiness of individuals.

Statistics have evolved views relative to the basic need for human companionship and how the sudden loss of love and relationship effects the bereaved person. Colin Parkes (1972) in Bereavement has introduced statistics that show loneliness is a risk one takes when one establishes loving relationships. It is when one's love is interrupted through death, divorce or otherwise unavailable, that we pay the price through our grief marked by loneliness.

### **The Broken Heart**

The phrase, "broken heart" is more than a metaphor. In over three-fourths of Colin Parkes' (1972) cases studied, the statistical cause of death in grief-stricken persons was heart attack or a form of heart disease. Further work cited by Parkes of researchers in England of over 4,000 bereaved men in their mid-50's discovered that the first six months of bereavement were the most critical in coping. The British researchers found a 40% increase in the death rates for this population of widowed men during the six months following death of a spouse. The factor of loneliness results in morbidity in bereavement that hastens physical

degeneration. More research in Europe suggests this. From 1960 to 1965 in Wales approximately 900 survivors of relatives who died were studied. Within the first year after the death of a loved one, 5% of the relatives died. When compared with a group of nonbereaved persons of the same age and the same community, the latter group's death rate was only 0.7% (Parkes, 1972). Results suggest that whether the deaths were by suicide or other causes, there were increases in death rates for these 900 survivors compared to the nonbereaved persons of similar age within the community. Death in bereaved survivors is 2.5 times higher during the first twelve months of grief. When this is compared to married persons, suicide rates by widows is much greater and remains so throughout the fourth year of grief in this population (Lynch, 1977).

James Lynch (1977) in The Broken Heart cites many medical and psychological studies to support his assumption that people die of loneliness. He examines the metaphor of broken hearts which is directly related to the "lack of human companionship" (p. 31) within his research. In fact, for all causes of death among all populations, both male and female, the most glaring results confirm Lynch's Broken Heart assumption of why divorced, single and widowed persons generally don't live as long as married persons. This result is that married persons whether they have experienced loss or not, tend to live longer because of love, companionship and relationships (Lynch, 1977; Schleifer, 1983). Further evidence of companionship being crucial to happiness and survival comes

from New York's Mount Sinai Hospital where research shows an increase of mortality of surviving spouses as being two to twelve times higher than that of married persons the same age. In a study of persons aged 50 and over who lost a spouse by death, about 35,000 out of 700,000 persons die during the first year of grief. Schleifer (1983) suggests that around 20% or 7,000 of these deaths are directly related to the feelings of loss, loneliness, and isolation experienced by the surviving spouse.

While Schleifer's figures are supported conceptually by the social Readjustment Scale created by Holmes and his colleagues. In 1967 at the University of Washington, Holmes and others developed a scale to measure the psychological effect of certain events. Out of approximately 5,000 patients the most likely event to shock and threaten those interviewed was the death of a spouse (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Although shock from the loss of a loved one was an understandable factor in these losses, the long term effects of loneliness was more significant than any other variable.

While Lynch amasses evidence of the effect of loneliness on the heart, others have focused on the immune system. Dossey (1991) in Meaning & Medicine reports on the immune function becoming depressed even without grief. Of 76 first-year Ohio State University medical students studied, "those who had the highest loneliness scores and highest stress on psychological tests had the lowest levels of natural killer cells. Students having the highest level of 'NK'

cells, in contrast, had the lowest loneliness scores” (Dossey, p. 94). This implies that those persons with the lowest levels of natural killer cells and the highest loneliness scores can be expected to have more physical complications from lower immune system functioning.

The effects of a depressed immune system are also seen in some cancer studies. Dossey (1991) ferrets out an important factor in the cancer research literature that has implications for grief studies. He cites a study of 7,000 healthy adults in California for the purpose of examining any relationships between cancer, emotions and loneliness. A significant finding in this study for women was on hormone-related cancers. The cognitive and affective results of those females who perceived and felt themselves to be socially isolated had almost 2.5 times the normal risk of dying from a hormone-related cancer. This risk rose 5 times when the women were socially isolated and perceived (interpreted) themselves as lonely. When all variables were accounted for the “critical factor in determining the effect of social isolation is the meaning to the individual of being alone” (Dossey, p.94).

From a biological perspective Ernest Rossi (1986) in Psychobiology of Mind-Body Healing, details how some of the experiences of loss might work in the body. Other authors have agreed that grief is physical/ biological and emotional (Graves, 1994). But Rossi goes into exhaustive detail of the chemical/biological processes that occur in the autonomic, endocrine, immune

and neuropeptide systems of the human body as a person undergoes a traumatic event, such as death of loved one, divorce, etc. These major systems of the body function as pathways of communication for neuro-transmitters or messenger molecules. The molecules from these body systems are responsible for the encoding of loss on a chemical level in our lives. Thus, loss and the resulting grief is simultaneously a perceptual and biological event for the body that is encoded as state-dependent learning and memory (Rossi, 1986).

### **Loss as a state-dependent imprint**

Lorenz' (Dilts, 1990) work with ducks and their forming of attachments by imprinting the mother's image relates to humans in the perception and meaning of loss and loneliness. During the first few hours of life the duck imprints with any close object that moves. Similarly, children during early infant years form attachments to parents, especially imprinting the mother. Should one or both parents die, this bond is threatened with resulting feelings of terror, loneliness and sometimes isolation in the child.

Researchers beginning with Freud (1917), Bowlby (1969), and others have documented the results of early parental loss. In spite of good food, excellent medical care and adequate shelter, several studies have shown that many orphaned children will still die. This is what many persons intuitively know. We know children need companionship to thrive and grow.

The impact of early loss and subsequent unresolved grief in children is



only vaguely recognized in our society. Loss in critical early developmental phases has been “unequivocally linked to a lack of parental contact during early infancy” (Lynch, p.78). Studies too numerous (several hundred) to list have all demonstrated the trauma of unresolved grief in children and how this continued loneliness results in multiple psychiatric problems of those same children as they mature to be teens and adults. Lynch (1977) cites a study by Wahl of almost 400 men diagnosed as schizophrenics, all of which were enlisted in the U.S. Navy. An extremely high percentage of this schizophrenic population had been documented as having lost a parent before they were 15 years old. In fact, 40% of the schizophrenics had a loss compared to 11% in the “average” navy sample (p. 78-79).

One study features a cross-culture study of a tribe in Liberia. Dr. J.H. Nolan while at University of Maryland investigated schizophrenia in this population to discover that slightly over 90% of the schizophrenics had lost a parent at an early age ( Lynch, 1977).

The impact of early loss in children has been studied by the Rochester Medical School research group (Schmale, 1958), the Middlesex County Heart Study (Bahnson, 1975), the Manhattan Mental Health Study (Bahnson, 1966), Johns Hopkins School of Medicine (Thomas, 1974), among others. All of this research confirms intuitions of physicians and lay people that there is a strong relationship between loss of one’s parent during early years of life and later

development of physical disease such as cancer, heart disease and psychiatric morbidity.

In her book Expressions of Healing: Embracing the process of Grief, Graves (1994) implies a conceptual bridging of the pioneers who have studied mourning. Freud thought of grief as “work” (1917), William Worden writes of grief as a series of “tasks” (1991), Kubler-Ross identifies mourning as made up of “stages” (1969) and Parkes has defined grief in “phases” (1972). Graves implies that grief is a process which is as normal (not necessarily pleasant) as most other psychic functions. The process embraces the work, tasks, stages and phases of a universal experience. Chapter three of this dissertation will examine the work, stages and tasks of grief.

Though Graves (1994) has produced a work for those interested in self-help, her strategies for coping with grief can easily be related to levels of logic and learning hypothesized by Gregory Bateson (1987) in Steps to an Ecology of Mind. Below is a simple comparison, in chart form, of Bateson’s levels of learning and Graves’ strategies for coping with grief.

**Bateson****Graves**


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*logical levels  
of learning*

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*strategies  
for coping*

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- |                           |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. environment.....       | 1. gain information                |
| 2. behavior .....         | 2. become aware & express emotion  |
| 3. capabilities .....     | 3. develop rituals                 |
| 4. beliefs .....          | 4. structure attitudes             |
| 5. identity/ .....        | 5. identify with healthy practices |
| spiritual community ..... | 6. & reach out to support others   |

Bateson, in this model, theorizes that when changes occur on the environmental level, those changes are not likely to generalize to other levels. However when one is able to (re)structure attitudes one is likely to experience more pervasive change in the levels immediately above (such as rituals) and then even in the following level of awareness and emotions.

When these two models are seen in context of the focus of this investigation, relationships begin to emerge. The psychoanalytic processes of differentiation and representability occur originally in response to an environmental level event that is in turn encoded by state-dependent learning and symbolized and stored in the brain/body as a result of the above perceptual process. This symbolization becomes a part of our internal attitudes, beliefs and sometimes identity. Graves (1994), Andreas (1989) and Janoff-Bulman (1992 ) recognize the intense effect of loss that can shatter all levels of ourselves extending to the identity level.

Andreas' (1989) work in the Loss Pattern seeks to intervene in the support of coping strategies (Graves, 1994) on the level of logic where the grief is symbolized, that is the level of beliefs and identity (Bateson, 1987, chart above). By intervening at the level of representation (symbolization) one theoretically experiences a domino effect of shifting internal meaning that affects one's beliefs, capabilities, behavior and environment.

This review has led to several questions that reflect a curiosity about the assumptions and possibilities inherent in the literature such as:

1. How can (if at all) the internal shift of imagery spoken of by Freud be influenced consciously?
2. What can initiate this internal "shift"?
3. What are the major qualities of imagery that stimulate the "shift"?
4. Are the qualities of imagery that stimulate the shift the same for all kinds of loss, such as death, divorce, temporary separation, suicide?
5. Would the NLP Loss Pattern be appropriate for all age groups, children, adolescents, adults, older adults or cross-culturally?
6. When is the optimal time frame after the loss for consciously stimulating the internal shift of representations of one's loss?
7. What are the effects of accelerating the grief tasks/stages?
8. Is it necessary to proceed through the stages of grief as generally laid out in step by step fashion?

9. Are there drawbacks or advantages for skipping or accelerating a stage of grief?

10. Would the NLP Loss Pattern be beneficial for the most difficult and painful of losses, the loss of a child?

11. For those persons who have not learned to differentiate and/or symbolize adequately...would the NLP Loss Pattern be contraindicated, useful or even possible?

### **Discussion**

This literature review has focused on imagery and grief with the specific finding of the vital aspect of perception and interpretation of the personal meaning of loss as these processes are linked to differentiation, representability and symbolization. The ability to represent and then symbolize one's perceptions is proposed by psychoanalytic theory as processes directly related to the lost object in grief.

This review has looked at Freud, Langer, Loewald, Deri, Piaget and others who have studied mental representation with internal basic abilities of representability, symbolization to grief and mourning. Loewald's efforts have centered on observing how a portion of the mourning process can, at times, be conceived as the effort to preserve/unite with the object of loss.

Deri's views are important for contributions to presuppositions on symbolization. Deri sees symbolization as positive and natural which actually

enrich and integrate many cognitive processes.

Langer's presentational symbolism departed from most psychoanalytic practice of looking for meaning in literal or representational content of symbols. To Langer, meaning was in the qualities and structure of images themselves, such as light, color, shape, size, location, etc. Following Langer's writing, Gordon suggests that the elements of an image that give meaning to an internal representation are elements of visual imagery called submodalities. Ader and Solomon; Rossi; Pert, Ruff, Weber and Herkenham (1985) all show how one's early life experiences factor in creating representations that become physically and neurologically encoded symbols that tend to affect us for a lifetime through the process of state-dependent learning and memory.

After a physiological review of imagery in the context of loss, the psychological meaning of loss based in internal representations was considered through the work of Bowlby, Dilts, Janoff-Bulman and Parkes through their working models and assumptive world metaphors.

Going deeper into perception and meaning, Bowlby, Lynch, Parkes, Dossey, Schleifer, Holmes and Rahe and Nolan strongly show that the critical perception in loss is how one interprets the meaning of one's loss. All of these researchers/theorists agree that the price of loss can be loneliness sometimes

known as a broken heart. The following chapter will compare Andreas' (1989) NLP Loss Pattern with Freud (1917), Worden (1991) and Bowlby (1980) while adding to and elaborating the ideas presented so far.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Freud, Worden and NLP**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the following is to present the neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) grief coping strategy, The Loss Pattern, in light of William Worden's four tasks of mourning. A presupposition is that the NLP Loss Pattern is a coping strategy that can be taught consciously, rather than relying on "time to heal". The relationship of Freud and Worden's concepts of grief, differences in stage and task concepts, Bowlby's attachment theory and the theory's relationship to the above are outlined by a chart (Appendix B) formulated to show the flow of these perspectives and their relationships.

This chapter is included as an introduction to the NLP method, preparing for the chapter on research and methodology and aligns it with major theory and successful mourning. The following chapter demonstrates strong relationships between the "what" of coping with grief (Worden, 1991) and the "how" of coping with grief (Andreas, 1989).

The Loss Pattern can accomplish several major concerns of researchers and practitioners in the field. With cooperation from the mourner, the NLP strategy can be successful in rapidly working through denial and to the pain of the loss. Second, the NLP approach can consciously assist the mourner in utilizing his or her own abilities to shift the internal imagery that is so crucial to



transforming one's internal beliefs and experience of loneliness into an experience of gratitude. Grief counselors familiar with the ground-breaking work of J. William Worden (1991) will find this paper making comparisons with NLP work in grief. Where Worden tells what work is to be done in grief, the NLP pattern tells how the task can be accomplished.

### **Grief: What needs to be done**

J. William Worden (1991) has streamlined the essential tasks to be approached and completed by the bereaved. They are:

1. Accept the reality of the loss facing sadness and emptiness
2. Work through to pain of loss.
3. Adjust to environment in which deceased is missing
4. Emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life.

These four tasks will be compared with the NLP Loss Pattern later in this paper.

### **Grief: How to go about doing it**

The Loss Pattern was developed by Connirae and Steve Andreas (1989) utilizing a method of modeling behavioral excellence called Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), (Dilts, 1980). Persons who have processed and progressed well through their grief were discovered to have had certain mental characteristics in common. The Loss Pattern is a record of how to reproduce this skill of grieving successfully. The basic premise here is that people do the best they can and would welcome the opportunity to get through their grief—if the

bereaved only knew how. The implication is that most grief “takes time” because we have to discover how to grieve all alone and many times without any models to guide us through this crucial period of transition. For most person, this “hit and miss” approach tends to make the unavoidable experience of grief more prolonged than is commonly thought to be necessary.

### **Steps to The Loss Pattern**

#### **Grief to Gratitude**

The following is typical of highlights from a therapy session with a client presenting bereavement as a response to the death of his spouse. This example is included for understanding and clarity. The reader should be aware that a major characteristic of NLP is working with coded experience, in this case, grief. In NLP the elements of experience that make up internal meaning are coded in imagery (Dilts, 1980). This imagery is worked with directly in the process of change for the client.

When a client named George presented himself to his therapist, the therapist discovered that George had an internal visual image of his wife who recently died. The image was described by George as very small, transparent with little color, located slightly above his center of vision, and very far away, This was the report of George’s first step of the NLP pattern (Andreas, 1989) that asks an individual to:

1. Notice how you represent the loss internally and begin to notice/discern what you lost that was so valuable.

George's next task was to think of a comparison to use as a guide in changing the grief image. A second internal visual image was recalled that was very colorful, life-size, and located eye level and to his right. The therapist had requested George to:

2. Think of someone who is not physically present in your location that currently you sense as "present" to you.

After retrieving the two images, George had two very different representations. The therapist assisted George in changing the subjective experience of loss into one of "presence" by making his image of grief look as much like the image he had described in step two above.

Next, George thought of what specific aspects of the loss experience made it valuable and he began to let form in his mind in a third location (of his internal visual field) a symbolic image of these qualities. This was step three of the NLP pattern. The therapist then assisted George in imagining and placing this symbolic image in his future, a form of fantasy rehearsal or future-pacing for the fourth step.

The commonly used phrase, "time-heals", appears to be true for most grief. The NLP discovery in modeling grief strategies of "successful" mourners, reveals what happens when time heals. Another presupposition of NLP and even

Freud (1917) and Worden (1991) is that we don't have to wait for time to heal. By modeling the internal mental processes of the bereaved who report that they have relatively little trouble with the grief process, the time it takes to heal from our losses can be reduced considerably.

### **Phases, stages and tasks in grief**

Before defining the four tasks described by Worden (1991), his concept of the grief experience will be examined. It is imperative that one understand why Worden chooses to describe the process of mourning as "tasks".

The process of mourning has been conceived in various ways depending on the researcher. Kubler-Ross (1969) in Death and Dying outlined her observations that many dying patients passed through identifiable stages. Mourning has been defined in phases by Parkes (1972) as well as by Bowlby (1980) and others. Freud (1917) and Worden (1991) prefer to structure the process differently.

Worden (1991) thinks of mourning as involving tasks. Tasks relate to Freud's (1917) concept of "grief work", implying that the mourner can actively, consciously do something to facilitate the process.

Worden, Freud and the NLP Loss Pattern are consonant in that each approach implies that mourning can be influenced and facilitated by personal as well as professional intervention. In contrast, the concept of mourning utilizing a phase or stage approach, from a clinical point of view, is somewhat fatalistic.

This latter thought implies that mourning is mostly out of our control and something to be passed through. Whereas, the task approach tends to engender a more balanced, positive and empowering guide for mourner and counselor alike.

The point of the above is not to look at each of the phases or stages in a specific researcher's observation, but to think about the implications of how one goes about thinking about the mourning process. For the practitioner, the difference that makes a difference can be an intervention that gives people a sense of hope in their grief, that something can be done about their pain and that the grief will become bearable and for most of us can be transformed.

It might be said that in the mourning process, Freud (1917), Worden (1991) and The Loss Pattern (Andreas, 1989) are related. By saying that grief is work, Freud implies that the mourner can actively influence his/her personal experience. Worden lays out these tasks in a clinically useful way, while The NLP Loss Pattern builds on the task approach to mourning by operationalizing Freud's grief work, Worden's Tasks, and even Bowlby's (1980) Theory of Attachment (Appendix B).

### **Worden's Tasks and The Loss Pattern**

Worden's first task of mourning is to accept the reality of the loss. The reality here, in the NLP approach, is the internal experience of the bereaved that is represented by imagery. The imagery is a subjective record that embodies the meaning of the entire experience the individual is reporting as grief. The first

step of the NLP coping strategy for grief typically suggests for the bereaved to consciously consider how they represent a particular loss experience to themselves internally (Appendix B). The answer to this request is usually in language that is evocative of visual, auditory and/or kinesthetic imagery. At this point in the intervention, there is no explicit discussion of denial or feeling in most cases. There is the assumption in the above request that a person is aware of the reality of the loss, thus powerfully presupposing that one is or will be accepting the facts of the loss.

Typically the bereaved's response consists of an internal representation that includes visual imagery of the lost object. It is the understanding of the therapist that this imagery is isomorphic to one's lost meaningful relationship and usually is tied to self-identity. Isomorphism is not always a literal one-to-one representation but can include symbolic imagery in loss. Whether literally representing the lost object or when the internal image is more symbolic of the loss, the representation is symbolic of the contextual environment that the bereaved's grief is affectively and chemically bound to (Rossi, 1986). Symbolic images in loss and grief are idiosyncratic, in that they can be isomorphic and literally be an equal representation of the lost object. The internal representation can also be isomorphic or "equivalent" in the sense of "maintaining the same relationships among the parameters of the (lost object) as those found in the actual situation" (Gordon, 1978, p. 40).

The second task Worden summarizes as essential in the completion of mourning, is for one to work through to the pain of grief. The NLP Loss Pattern addresses Worden's task assisting the grieving person, by transforming the sense of loss and separation into an internal experience where the survivor senses the lost object as being "present" internally (Appendix B). The major pain in grief comes from the valued lost experience being sensed by the survivor internally as dissociated in the past time frame. Since the object of attachment is usually dissociated, and thus unavailable to the survivor internally and externally, the positive feelings of the valued experience are lost and the bereaved only senses sadness and emptiness. Bandler and Grinder (1979) describe this process:

"What's going on in the grief-stricken person is this:

they make a constructed visual image of being with the lost person. They are seeing themselves with the loved one who is now dead or gone, unavailable somehow.

Their response called "grief" or "sense of loss" is a complex response to being dissociated from those memories. They see their loved one and themselves having a good time, and they feel empty because they are not there in the picture. If they were to step inside the very same picture that stimulates the grief response, they would recover the positive kinesthetic feelings of the good experiences they shared with that person

they cared very much about. That would then serve as a resource for them going on and constructing something new for themselves in their lives, instead of a trigger for a grief response.” (p. 64).

Worden’s second task is completed when the NLP strategy guides the bereaved to change the sense of loss into a resource that is experienced in the present time-frame. The NLP coping strategy directs an individual past the pain of loss to prepare the mourner for the next task of mourning and the second stage of reconnecting with the unique and valuable meaning of the loss.

Worden’s third task is for the bereaved to adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing. The Loss Pattern has already begun to implicitly prepare for this task in its first stage. The question, “Think about the person who is not there and notice how you represent this to yourself,” simultaneously initiates the the first and second tasks of mourning in Worden’s model. The internal representation that is called up in memory at this time is one’s loss that is an image in context. This is to say that the third task that Worden feels is essential, recognizes the internal and external context he calls environment. The internal representation is an encoded image that is chemically bound in the body/brain to form a molecule resulting in a permanent record of the bereaved’s attachment. Furthermore, the external environment is included within the



imagery to form a complex of meaningful associations that becomes the gestalt of grief for the bereaved.

An important difference in Worden's third task and The NLP Loss Pattern is that in Worden's meaning for "adjust", there is much latitude for a grieving person to accept less than is actually possible for their outcome of grief resolution. The NLP Loss Pattern usually results in the bereaved finding the loss to be a resource in the present and helps the bereaved to generate new versions of the original meaning of the loss object in appropriate ways in the current world.

Worden's third task is insightful by dealing with meaning rather than symptoms or interpretation. To directly confront the meaning of one's loss is to assist the bereaved on a different logical level than only considering the intervention from cleaning up the emotional impact of loss. In titling this task an "adjustment phase", Worden is on target with those who grapple with the effort it takes to transform the sadness and emptiness of grief into manageable symbols that is at the heart of NLP grief work. The transforming of one's personal meaning of loss to symbolic imagery, results in the adjustment crucial to the next stage.

Since the NLP model is a practical one, it is silent in regards to theory and/or speculation. But Worden's research elucidates much of what occurs for most persons at this level of grief work. At this level, the transformation of meaning, Worden's third task and the NLP model's stage II challenges one's

fundamental life values and beliefs. What appears to occur at this stage in The Loss Pattern is that the bereaved is led past the pain of loss to the core of grief to rediscover and recover the central part of why attachments are formed. The Loss Pattern focuses here beyond the pain of loss to the core of attachment and the value of the grief not by inquiring “Why is this so painful?”, but “What is so valuable that was lost?”

This latter question ties The Loss Pattern directly to Worden’s third task and Bowlby’s theory of attachment. It is Bowlby’s contention that attachments come from a need for safety and security. This is a common rationalization behind most understanding of why we grieve. The NLP Loss Pattern rapidly identifies this core value, works to discover how an individual experiences this core value in relation to the object of loss and then projects the core value symbolically into the future to build hope and eventually expectancy. For example, the death of a child can represent loss of future hoped-for possibilities, grandchildren, seeing one’s genetic contributions continue beyond one’s own life, etc. These items are symbolized and projected by the survivor. Until the bereaved recognizes the value of what was lost it makes little emotional or cognitive sense to begin to adjust to one’s environment. The shift from pain to discovery of the value of the loss creates an awareness that further adjustment is possible. Worden’s third task prescribes the scope of this adjustment as being an external rearrangement of roles and an internal rearrangement of one’s sense of

self. The roles and relationships form a complex of associations that collectively could be called the environment of the bereaved. This grouping of associations is a context or gestalt that gives meaning to our lives and is a point of matching between The Loss Pattern's second stage and Worden's third task (Appendix B).

Worden writes that the fourth task of mourning is vital if one is to move on to the future by "finding an appropriate place for the dead in their emotional lives - a place that will enable them to go on living effectively in the world," (p.17). This task is observed in process in the mourner's language when a widow speaks of her husband in the present tense and then gradually begins speaking of her dead husband in some form of future perfect expression, such as "what he would have said or done," (Marris, 1974, p.38). The NLP Loss Pattern leads the survivor to construct an internal visual image utilizing the symbols identified in the previous steps of this pattern and project these symbols into the survivors sense of the future. The submodality of location becomes an important element in most persons time frames to distinguish past, present and future (Appendix B).

The above has attempted to describe some relationships between The NLP Loss Pattern and researcher William Worden's four tasks of mourning. What this paper has not done is to describe the major piece of work that is the distinguishing difference of this NLP pattern from most interventions in this field. The major difference in the NLP approach is, rather than waiting for "time to heal", the mourner is instructed in how to consciously change the subjective sense

of emptiness into a sense of presence. The source for this difference comes from modeling the abilities of those persons who claim that they have traversed this road of life and found ways to do so. The NLP Loss Pattern provides direction for the mourner in how to accomplish Worden's four tasks. The NLP strategy is explicit about how to find appropriate ways to go on living effectively in the world and accomplishes this by:

1. Directly acknowledging the internal experience of loss while bringing into consciousness the representation of the sadness.
2. Focusing on the idiosyncratic value of the loss to the individual
3. Explicitly reassociating the valued loss psychologically
4. Symbolizing and reintegrating the experience
5. Further integrating the former loss so that the experience is transformed into a continuing resource in and through time

The Loss Pattern specifically supports the bereaved by instructing explicitly how one can transform one's internal loss by translating the experience into symbols and projecting these symbols onto one's sense of internal time from the present to the future. For most persons, this begins to place the previously dissociated sense of values (safety, security, love, affection, etc.) firmly into one's future while simultaneously creating an ongoing internal subjective sense of hope and gratitude.

## **Chapter 4**

### **METHOD**

#### **Research Question**

The research in the following pages explores the question: “What is the experience of loss as reported in the internal representations of persons who grieve and mourn?”

The words that form the above question are loaded with meaning and contain beliefs and attitudes. The meanings of the words used for the research question that focuses this study, are derived from a number of factors. In general, these meanings emerge from culture. Language itself is structural, semantic and syntactical (Pearce, 1974). These elements are responsible for communicating psychological and philosophical direction to this inquiry.

The word “experience” refers to a personal-self-reference of the variety of ways an individual is aware of his or her perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Experience in this context, refers to one’s total descriptive awareness that is physical and mental, a gestalt.

Van Kaam (1966) acknowledges that experience is spontaneous in several ways. The level of spontaneity this study focuses on is conscious perceptual awareness. Within this realm of spontaneous perceptual awareness are many descriptors indicative of internal experience that include linguistic predicates,

descriptors for submodal sensory perception and metaphorical description.

Although there are many kinds of losses, in this study the word “loss” refers to the experience of an actual loss of a person, physically through death. Death comes to us all. The significance of loss is undeniable psychologically and philosophically at all levels socially and individually.

This study attempts to expose the minute internal representations of thought and feeling related to the reactions of loss that are recognized as grief. The research question refers to the curiosity I have regarding relationship(s) of the internal imagery of loss with verbal expressions of that loss. For example, “Are these images isomorphic with one’s total subjective experience of loss?” “In what way is isomorphism present, if at all, and how are the images and experience isomorphic?” And finally, “Is this isomorphism significant?”

### **Study Design**

To gather data for this question six persons were interviewed who have experienced loss within the past six years. For this study it was determined to be unnecessary to narrow selection factors such as age, sex, socio-economic status, etc. The interview plus analysis of the structure and content of the language of the interview transcript and drawings of co-researchers provided clues to answer the research question which includes the internal representations of grief.

The following research is a method of inquiry that is a qualitative approach and includes individual responses in context to maintain the integrity of

a gestalt. This is a method of heuristic inquiry that uses the raw data of self-report, perception and observation of the individuals agreeing to participate in this project. This approach allows one to gain access to the qualities of personal experience such as feelings, values, thoughts, beliefs and perceptions that coalesce to make up meaning in our lives.

A particular interest in this research is the focus on the symbolic internal representations of persons that are encoded images of grief/loss within verbal reports and diagrammatic illustrations/drawings by those who were interviewed. In order to share findings of these interviews, focus, observation and evaluation will concentrate mostly on the structure, rather than the content of the subjective experience of loss.

So reviewers will have a similar opportunity to experience the individual research phenomenon, excerpts from interviews are featured. Assessment of these internal representations was made on the basis of research on submodalities (Gordon, 1978) cited earlier in the literature review.

### **Validity in Heuristic Research**

Clark Moustakas (1990) states that “the question of validity is one of meaning: does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one’s own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience?” (p. 32)

A central thread of this thesis is that meaning of internal imagery is in the qualities of imagery, (such as color, light, location, volume, distance, etc.) rather than content. For a valid depiction of the loss experience this investigator continually refers to the verbatim raw data (context) of the interview as well as checking repeatedly with the research participant.

### **The Research Model**

This model is indebted to Craig (1978), Douglas and Moustakas (1985) and Moustakas (1961, 1975, 1990). These researchers have pioneered descriptions of the methodologies, procedures and attitudes of the heuristic research paradigm. The method seeks to facilitate gathering and analyzing of data while encouraging persons to openly express what their experience means to them. This method of scientific inquiry must allow the researcher to maintain intimate contact with the meanings and patterns of experience in a compelling context and allow for the free flow of subjective data throughout the research endeavor.

### **Definition of Heuristics**

Heuristic inquiry is a subcategory of phenomenology. Therefore heuristics is a “way of knowing and seeking the essence of human experience from the vantage point of the self” (Spoon-Simonton, 1987, p.74). A basis of this format of scientific inquiry is that it emanates from within the self of the researcher. This basis is always a curiosity, the desire to know and understand



one's own as well as other's experience. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) state that heuristic inquiry is a qualitative method that discovers data from a "self-search that is autobiographical, original and...descriptive of the texture and structures of lived experience" (p. 40).

### **Heuristic Model**

Researchers recognize the heuristic approach as one that demands a total commitment manifest's itself in practices of daily submerging one's life in an experience focused by a specific question. The heuristic process is initiated from a personal concern from within the self. This process is an effort by the researcher to discover the qualities of a particular truth in which the researcher is personally involved. Before and during the inquiry the researcher is involved with self-inquiry and self-exploration (Polanyi, 1969).

The heuristic inquiry as method tends to (re)connect the researcher with the roots of being, through personal experience, by emphasizing a trust in one's intuitive recognition of a relevant, compelling theme for investigation. In addition to self-dialogue, Moustakas (1990) identifies five other processes of heuristic research. They are (1) tacit knowing, (2) intuition, (3) indwelling, (4) focusing, and (5) the internal frame of reference. Following these processes, Moustakas (1990) has developed over the years and refined six phases of heuristic research that flow from the (1) initial engagement, (2) immersion, (3) incubation, (4) illumination, (5) explication, (6) and final presentation of data in a

creative synthesis. These processes do not correlate with any of the recognized stages, tasks or phases of grief or levels of logical type.

This investigation of grief and mourning attempts to follow the above concepts and processes as a guide through a commitment of self-dialogue, self-honesty and questioning of personal experience of the interviewer (primary researcher) and the research subjects (co-researchers).

### **Stance of Researcher**

As the literature review states, this investigation is grounded in psychoanalytic theory, object-relations theory, psychology of perception and psychobiology. In addition to the widely understood assumptions surrounding loss in psychoanalytic theory, I have examined my own assumptions concerning the literature review along with personal experience and list those assumptions below:

1. The process of verbal and artistic production is an expressive ability that simultaneously communicates meaning about self-identity, beliefs, emotions...
2. The processes of grief and mourning follow rhythmical, natural progressions when supported, encouraged and respected as part of the total scheme of life.
3. The process of expression (verbal and artistic) assists in the natural progression of mourning.

4. Internal representations can be ascertained from verbal descriptions of the loss.
5. Internal representations have a tendency to naturally shift as grief progresses to mourning.
6. Internal representations are rather literal and isomorphic to linguistic expressions of descriptions of the loss experience.
7. Internal representations are coded within the physiology of the mourner involving a perceptual phenomenon known as synesthesia.
8. Internal representations can be intentionally shifted with positive benefits to the mourner.
9. Symbols and internal representations function to engage all logical levels of learning simultaneously.
10. Loss is a state-dependent memory.
11. “Working through” as a part of mourning can be accomplished without conscious insight via symbolic expression and reordering of symbols.
12. The meaning of loss is contained in the internal structure of the mourner’s imagery rather than the content of that imagery.
13. Smaller units of perception known as submodalities form a bridge to conscious manipulation of internal states of consciousness of the mourner.
14. Specific submodalities function for accelerating the grieving and mourning process for the bereaved.

### **Data Collection**

Although several basic approaches to interviewing exist in heuristic research, the method of collecting data intended for use in this study is the conversational interview. A general interview guide was prepared to focus the conversation and elicit common information from the participants (Appendix C).

The goal of the conversational interview is to encourage the participants to freely share their ideas, thoughts, beliefs and personal meaning as much as possible. Encouragement of self-disclosure is critical in the conversational interview. The creation of a “safe-space”, positive regard and direction of questioning are also critical elements.

To preserve these stories in conversational tone and style the interviews were taped.

### **Sample selection**

Selecting participants for this study involved finding six persons who had experienced loss of someone important to them through death. Persons with a history of unstable relationships, psychiatric hospitalizations and/or various abuses of substances were politely deferred for this investigation. The subjects that were accepted were evaluated on the basis of their willingness and ability to participate, articulate and elaborate on their experience in coherent and meaningful ways. This included the participants ability to focus internally, express their internal experience and tolerate, possibly at times, a certain amount

of psychic and emotional stress while observing and communicating about their internal representations.

### **Acquisition of co-researchers**

The six co-researchers were recruited via a snowball sampling. Initially, I made a request which told about the need for volunteers in research on grief which was posted in a local newsletter for area churches. Later I facilitated a support group from which three of the six persons originated. Contact with most persons was made by telephone where I explained what was being done, the purpose of my study, how their experience would be utilized and invited them to share their experience for the study.

Five of the co-researchers ranged in age from 40 to 57, the sixth person was 33, with a mean age of 46.5 years. Five co-researchers were female and one was male, all were college graduates and were employed in jobs that required contact with the public. Four of the participants had experienced the loss of a close family member within the past six years. Two of the losses were sudden in that the loss was not expected by survivors.

### **Human subjects assurance**

This study followed revised guidelines published by the American Psychological Association (1992) for conducting research with human subjects. The co-researchers were sent by mail an explanation of their role in this research, what would be done with the information, issues of confidentiality, the purpose of

this research inquiry and what kinds of information were important for them to share. An additional form was enclosed with this letter that was a release form and statement of confidentiality. All participants understood that their stories would be utilized in the completion of this PDE (dissertation) and that they were granting permission for use of this information for this purpose and any other possible future publication. Each participant understood that they could withdraw from this endeavor at any time with full support of this investigator. Each participant also was fully aware of the need for audio-taping interviews for purposes of transcribing and study.

For the face-to-face meeting, explanations and details were offered regarding the purpose of this study with reminders of confidentiality, recording of the interview and the option they had to withdraw from the study or not answer any question they chose.

The informed consent and release forms (Appendix D) were read and signed by all participants.

### **Interview preparation**

Before meeting with the co-researchers, I developed a set of questions that were to serve as a general guide for each interview. These questions helped to keep the interviews on a path of providing data that could be productive for the PDE. Because of the nature of the interview topic, many digressions were expected and tolerated for purposes of rapport. Some digressions turned out to be

informative insights into the topic by revealing thinking and feeling strategies relevant to internal representations of loss.

### **Interview questions**

Before the interviews, I created a set of questions that were to be used as a general guide and direction for the focus of each meeting (Appendix C).

Understanding of the nature of this topic necessitated the awareness of planning for possible abbreactions and provide ways to assist the participant in regaining some dissociation from the interview. Experience proved that it was unnecessary to utilize any dissociative techniques for assisting participants for uncomfortable reactions. During the interview meeting, all questions were focused on directing the co-researcher to reveal as much as possible their experience through essences, qualities and patterns of their cognitive and affective lives surrounding loss.

Questions were used only to stimulate conversation or to guide the co-researcher back to the relevant task of expression of personal experience.

### **Transcribing the interview**

Listening to the audio recordings of the interviews allowed me the opportunity to become more intimate with the structure of each participant's language. Seeing the interview on paper was very helpful in providing a timeless void in which to engage with the participant so as to see the essential elements of the language of loss. The transcription process was beneficial for the research in that it provided a psychological distance so vital in observing the participants

language for elements of internal imagery, structure of language for representational systems, synesthesias, etc.

The purpose in qualitative research is to:

1. Reveal more fully the meaning of a phenomenon of human experience.
2. Discover the qualitative aspects of experience by focusing on uniqueness and differences of the phenomenon.
3. Engage one's total self and evoke a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the process.
4. It does not seek to predict or to determine causal relationships.
5. To illumine meaning through descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue and creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings or scores. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 42)

### **Individual portrait preparation**

After finishing the transcription process, I reviewed paragraphs and sentences for linguistic signs of internal imagery relating to loss, mourning, grief, etc. This process took me closer to how the participant was structuring an internal experience called grief. I looked for themes and essences that revealed themselves in unique ways to the participant. By highlighting each of the individual depictions and underlining certain text relevant to grief and mourning, I began to see common threads emerging from the material. These threads became major themes that were listed like "mind-mapping" so I could refer to the list for the writing of portraits to illustrate the subjective experience of the co-



researchers. While composing the portraits, reference was made back to the original interview material as well as diagrammatic sketches.

A part of each interview was used in requesting literal reports or diagrams of any internal awareness of representations related to loss. The questions for this portion of the interview were centered only on internal visual representations.

The manner and content of this particular form of questioning is a delicate operation due to the nature of influence and suggestion and the effect this has on many individual's internal imagery. All renderings were executed on plain 8 ½" X 11" paper with a pen or pencil. Co-researchers understood that they were not to do a work of art or even a drawing, but to diagram or illustrate the internal image they were sensing.

## **Chapter 5**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Presentation of data**

##### **Introduction**

The processes of grief, mourning and the shifting of internal representations is idiosyncratic to each person. The heuristic research process seeks to elicit this experience by presenting individual depictions of those participating in this study. These depictions are taken from the original interviews and transcribed information. Following the depictions is a composite depiction, then exemplary portraits and finally, a creative synthesis.

The abilities of the co-researchers varied for observing and expressing their inner experience. This was made up for somewhat, by my reading the transcript for certain predicates indicative of submodalities that represent one's internal imagery.

##### **Individual depictions**

The following depictions are results from reviewing all material derived from individual interviews, journal entries, poems, etc. by a co-researcher. The following brief essays attempt to distill from the raw material of expression the qualities and themes that sometimes lie hidden within the material.

##### **Interview # 1**

"I was in shock and overwhelmed. My family and I had never dealt with

these topics while I was growing up. Fortunately I had enough experience and education to understand what was happening to me in my grief. So I was shocked by the death of my husband when he was 40 years old and I was shocked by the feelings of sadness I was experiencing. This sadness was so difficult, so overwhelming and something I was not good at or in control of, I couldn't make decisions or change anything. I couldn't even write about it. Later I could talk and cry but not write about the loss for a long, long time."

"I went to bed for three years, only getting up a little past noon each day and only going out for things like food. At 12 years of age my oldest child pretty much became the mother for her brother who was six".

"During the first weeks after the accident, my emotions and thoughts seem to be only a blur. So much so that I became frightened that I would forget so many of the good memories we had as a family. The thing I remember most during this period that provided the greatest strength were the little hand-pats that both my children would so freely give me. These pats were truly comforting. I learned that children are miracles. During these early weeks, I could only take what might be called baby-steps, walking around the house like I was on egg shells because my heart was so fragile."

"I was never angry with God for this or angry with my husband for dying because he was doing what he loved when he died. So when the shock finally started to dwindle and the depression and sadness set in, I realized how

devastated I was. I had lived my life 120% to make my husband happy. This may have contributed to my mourning engulfing me totally. In the midst of the darkness, I wanted to be there for the children and was barely able to make a home for us.”

“My experience of being in bed was one of a feeling of dread, the feeling like just before you wake up. My sense of time was that some days seemed like an eternity and other days passed in a second. Mostly, time seemed to stand still and I was watching from outside the experience at times.”

“The biggest change in myself I’ve noticed has been the task or rediscovering who I am again and being a single parent. I had given myself totally to the relationship of making my husband happy and seeing that he was going to succeed. Now I’m faced with, “What are my interests?”, “What am I about?”, and “Who am I?”.

“I’ve learned by my experience that everything in life is temporary. This is what my husband kept trying to communicate to me. His death really brought this to my awareness. Ironically this is helping me to value, love, and enjoy life more in the present.”

## **Interview #2**

“For several weeks I felt so guilty. Since I was working, I couldn’t be with and take care of my mother who was in another town dying of cancer. I also

had my own family with young children that needed me at my own home. I just didn't have the freedom to take off and be with her."

"My mother understood why I couldn't be there, she even told me. One thing I realized was that I had no "say-so" in critical decisions concerning my mother, her quality of life or her treatment. This was possibly the first time I've experienced such helplessness."

"It was in the middle of the night that a neighbor requested I come and stay with their daughter while they went to the hospital because a grandfather was dying. This was several months after my own mother had died. After coming home from the friends house I began to cry, because all I could do was see inside my mind, my mother lying in that hospital bed just before she died."

"At this point, I fully felt the impact of her loss on my life, I'd lost my mother who happened to be my best friend. I couldn't pick up the phone or go see her, share my thoughts, feelings or ask for her advice anymore. We were such good friends—I've lost that. It hurt. It was so lonely."

"I think I began to understand just how much I had depended on my mother. I think as I look back at our relationship I can understand her depending on me for some friendship too. My father was usually drunk, could not hold a job and was sick much of the time that I remember. I was, and mother was too, embarrassed to have friends over to our house. I never knew if he would be drunk or not. This was the setting for the friendship between mother and me.

She came to depend on me for some closeness and friendship because daddy apparently was just drunk most of the time.”

“It was after returning home that night that I realized how much I depended on mother, how lonely I felt and in a way how little and helpless I experienced being in the world. Now that I could admit she was really gone—I knew I had to figure out some way to do things myself. Since this, I have begun to think more independently, assume some responsibility and grow up a little more.”

“I’ve actually become more like my mother. At times, I see that I’m moving myself into the role that she had with me when she was alive. This has resulted in a shift of priorities for me. I realize that the things I thought were important to me are just not that big of a deal. This also has resulted in me having more patience with my son and more compassion for others in the world.”

“My mother’s death brought home to me the reality that we’re all gonna die. I finally realized that I’m not a teenager and soon will not even be a 40 year old. My mother’s death means I’m getting older. I’ve been able to see what I miss and value about my mother. She was my best friend, a wonderfully happy person and mother. This means if she taught me half of what she was like then I’m going to be OK.”

“My mother was such a responsible person—she took care of several members of the family while working full-time in a public job. She assumed

responsibility for their care. After they died her hair began to fall out. I'm convinced the stress, frustration and responsibility contributed to her hair loss."

"Since my mother's death I've noticed myself more compassionate and patient with people. I've even caught myself stopping and thinking, "What would mother do and say in this kind of situation?" I try to mirror that. I really believe that mother's death helped me to change myself in a positive direction. I am becoming a happier, kinder, loving, compassionate and more responsible, thoughtful person. Along with the accepted responsibility is an overwhelming stress that I haven't learned to handle yet. I'm finally able to believe what I say: "Life is more important than a job!"

"I just feel really good when I think of her now."

### **Interview #3**

"I've come to realize that we all experience grief differently. But there are some commonalities too. The biggest fear I have is a terror of being alone; it is a kind of fear of everything, a total lack of confidence. I have no way of knowing what's going to happen."

"Another common experience friends and family are sharing is a feeling of a void that my husband's death has left. The things, activities and experiences we used to share—we can't do that anymore—ever. There is a tremendous feeling of emptiness. I realize the intensity of this experience will subside but I don't think the void will ever go away. This death has been like—the other half

of me is gone!”

“Sometimes my friends make the loneliness and void difficult to bear because they don’t know what to say or do, so they avoid me. This turns the loneliness into isolation; I’m left alone. Surprisingly, I don’t feel anger about it. My children have been the biggest support in listening and recognizing when I need and choose to be alone or want their company. That’s a blessing.”

“I don’t know what to do—about anything since my husband’s death. I have gone to bed at night thinking, “what am I going to do?”. I depended so much on him. This death and loss have plunged me into a deeper appreciation for the moments I shared with my husband. I’m so glad he and I were close.”

“Since I’m not on the social treadmill anymore, my sense of time has changed. Ever since his death I have had much more intense awareness of the present. This is allowing me to actually have the needed time to assess and prioritize many things. I’ve come to realize that so many of the things we let bother us are not really that important. I have come to understand that my relationship to myself and others has changed because of this loss and that my values are much more intense in the sense of what is and is not so important. This inner slowing down has brought about a greater awareness of what I think and feel and I’m beginning to see that this process is helping me to become more independent. This loss has been a wake up call for me and my friends. The loss has awakened me to listening better to myself and others with compassion.”



“The absolute fear of everything that was so much a part of my everyday life at first, has helped me to realize that even though my confidence is shot, my faith has increased. I’m suspicious of the “Bible-thumping” person who seems to be obsessed with other’s conversion. My growing faith is strengthened with an increasing sense that God is in charge of things—I’m certainly not in charge!!! The experience of my husband’s death has enabled me to reach out to others who need compassion, (not sympathy) and to also be a part of the healing process for them and for me.”

“My kids tease me, “You know mom, she thinks there is a reason behind everything!” My husband’s death has been terrifying, confusing, fearful, most intensely lonely experience, while at the same time being one of the most meaningful experiences ever to happen in my life. I tend to look at life as a learning experience. This has been a big one!!! The death and loss have plunged me into a deeper appreciation for the moments I shared with my husband.”

#### **Interview #4**

“There’s no other way to say it. I’m just afraid. Then there’s the loneliness. What would happen if I did reach out? And what will happen if I don’t? Although I enjoy and sometimes need the expansive space that comes from the isolation, I discover that I get lonely in this space. What stops me from crossing that frightening chasm?”

“Within this space a kind of sadness permeates the very air around me and

my environment...the sadness actually engulfs me. Some days this joylessness manifests so heavily that I find it next to impossible to extract myself from beneath the bed covers and face another day. The sadness has become despair on other days so that I find myself walking as if through heavy molasses. If only this experience were as sweet as the syrup. I'm almost surprised that others cannot literally see this sadness as dripping from the trees and casting a greyness in an atmosphere that is thick enough to swim in."

"The fear as a component of this loneliness keeps me meek and worried that no one will stay with me or that persons will leave me. It is the dawning understanding of how little control I really have over much of anything in this life. (I should be glad, because trying to exert that kind of control is a full-time job!) This can be a daily terror."

"And then there is the ever-sickening private pretending masquerade of which I perpetuate. To contrast my internal terror with the facade of calm control is at times so strange and yet at times comical...if I could only laugh."

"This sadness has stopped time and now has become eternity. I am actually aware of not quite fitting—anywhere. So I plod here and there trying to look brave, all the while apparently scaring away those persons I need, or certainly not attracting them."

"My very body at times, feels heavy and at other times seems invisible. I actually have wished that I could just disappear or at least become invisible. But

when people act as if I'm invisible—it hurts!”

“Recently I’ve wondered what it would be like to fly. What could I do to get myself off the ground and even soar? I want and need a different environment because I just don’t fit here anymore. There’s no longer any room or space for me. I yearn to find a place I can be at home and spread my wings. For so long I’ve had a straight-jacket on—it’s time I am free from my hesitations, fears and uncertainties.”

#### **Interview #5**

“Five and one-half years ago when I was in school I began dating a guy that I met the first day I was there. After our first date I called my mom and said, “I met the guy I’m gonna marry!” Absolutely certain. It was so intense, madly in love over night!”

“I had a fantasy of us marrying, singing together...it looked like it was going to happen. We dated for a year and a half and I was still certain but...when he was pulled to make a choice between me or his mother...it was shocking...he dumped me. He told his mom of his plans to marry and she refused to come to the wedding, so he canceled the plans and just stopped our relationship.”

“Well, I was angry, just floored!! I couldn’t believe it!! Even when I suggested giving him more space, dating others, etc., all he would say was “This is it, it’s over, it won’t work.”

“This was at the end of the semester with finals, recitals, concerts, etc. and

I went to pieces. You think of every argument...a year and a half FLASHED before my eyes. Just like before you die...just FLASHED before me!! I began to blame myself and then realized this is it!. I had nothing left...no hope...I just stopped.”

“I can’t live with the pain anymore. I had no hope left and I don’t want to be a part of it anymore. I was terrified, scared...later I saw a therapist, began talking about this loss and then kinda came out of the cloud, fog and the therapist helped me to laugh. Then I thought...I’ve hit bottom...I can’t go any lower...I’ve gone as low as I can go. I knew this then. I was very serious but not very smart. This guy dumped me and I was devastated.”

“I asked, “what have I done to deserve this?” “Why?” I couldn’t understand how he could love me that long and then just stop. My dreams were falling apart, it had all been shattered. This loss was on top of all my other losses, my dad, a previous boyfriend.”

“It was like a gray cloud constantly over me...a gray fog around me for so long. As long as I still believed that maybe there was possibly a chance with this guy...I began to have some hope. After some weeks, I decided to move back to the larger city I had lived in before going to school. I called him to say goodbye, to see him, to say goodbye...but he wouldn’t do this.”

“I needed to move because I was so lonely, so alone and depressed, disappointed and broke. For a long time I had the vision of the doorbell ringing

and him being there. But after all these years it's obvious it's just not going to happen."

"I'm frustrated with my life. I'm not happy with myself or my body. I wish the pain would go away. After five and one-half years, good grief, get over it!!!"

"Part of me is afraid even to try again, but there is risk and then if I don't try I'll be alone for the rest of my life. It really scares me. It really terrifies me. I wonder if the pain will ever go away?"

#### **Interview #6**

"The loss of my second husband has been harder for me to deal with; the most painful of any experience of my life. This was the first time I'd ever been alone with no control over much of my life. I've never known such hurt, loneliness and emptiness. For me, I've felt so cheated from not having a normal life. At times, I guess I'm still angry for not meeting my second husband sooner and for having to live with my grandmother from age 9 to age 18, for the poverty I've lived through when I couldn't have adequate medical care for my vision I'm missing in one eye and the helplessness from this that resulted in me not getting a driver's license. I didn't know how happy I could be until he and I met—at least we had six wonderful years together. It's been two years since he died."

"My husband was 22 years older than me. Although very healthy he

developed some artery problems and a series of unfortunate circumstances, I think, cut short his life. We had so much in common, cooked together, watched TV together, laughed together, we were together all the time. I tried to prepare myself for the day I would no longer have him with me because the doctors had warned us that he only had a couple of years to live. But you're never prepared...it is still a shock! My heart hurts so bad."

"Although I was not ready and still have trouble accepting it, I was fortunate to be with him when he died. After the funeral everyone went home, even my daughter had to leave because she lived away at the time. After a few weeks off from work I returned and dragged myself through the day. As I returned home that night, I opened the door, looked at the living room, I just burst into tears and began screaming. The reality of loneliness was so terrifying and overwhelming at that moment! Most nights after work for several months I would react the same way...get to the door of the house and burst into tears. I couldn't go out at the time because I didn't drive, so I had to come home and stay, it was like being trapped. We had moved to a nice neighborhood but far away from the places I used to walk to...I realized that I had no control over getting to the grocery, church, work, etc. Even the simple things became a horrible loss."

"When my first husband died, it was two months later that I awakened in the night and he was lying next to me---very real, I was startled!! He looked at me and said, "That's OK, I just came back to check on you." Then he vanished.

From that moment on—peace came over me, maybe this was my way of accepting the death.”

“A similar incident happened 4 or 5 months after my second husband died. I had been hoping for something like it to occur...so I could know and feel that there is still some kind of connection between me and him. One night I again awakened to find that now my second husband was lying next to me very close as he and I used to. He didn’t say anything but stayed very close...then he left.”

“I’ve learned a lot through these deaths. I’ve learned to be more independent and take a little more control over my life in some practical ways by learning to drive. I’ve also discovered that I just don’t care about the things I used to care for. This means my values and priorities have changed. For example, I don’t clean or take care of the house or worry about paying the bills so compulsively as before the loss. Some of this is from depression and some of the not caring seems to be a shift in values that I’m OK with. I’ve learned that material things mean nothing. Even though I have two jobs and need the money as a single person, I work so much so I won’t have to be at home alone. I actually feel like a part of me stopped and died when he died. It’s just such an empty feeling that you never get over...like a wound that never heals.”

“I am grateful for the years that he came into my life when I was not expecting it. I’m thankful to God for showing me what true love/happiness is—I’ve learned so much about life from my second husband that will be of value to

me for the rest of my life. I wish though, that I could have gone with him.”

## **Composite Depiction, Themes and Portraits**

### **Introduction**

Previous research (Spoon-Simonton, 1987) confirms practical experience of what most persons who are intimate with loss know. There are universal themes which are present as part of each individual's experience that are recognizable with the descriptions of grief and mourning. This chapter will set forth some of the major themes that are universal within the experience of grief and mourning while relating those themes to internal representations of co-researchers. As seen in earlier chapters, loss stimulates predictable tasks that confront the bereaved. A loss of one's pet, ring or a loved one lost to death can stimulate similar internal processes so that when one tunes an ear or watches carefully one's experience one can discern major themes and qualities emerging from heuristic research.

Of significance is to remember that the heuristic process does not occur in linear fashion. Even the well-published stages of grief (Kubler-Ross, 1969) are not always experienced in sequential linear process. One can revisit those stages and flip from one to another idiosyncratically.

Many previous heuristic investigations (Anson, 1994 ; Levine, 1991 ; Spoon-Simonton, 1987) share common observations of universal themes in the



context of grief. I will briefly discuss these universal themes and then show through linguistic observations the relation of the theme to internal imagery.

### **Composite Depiction**

A major universal theme of grief involves the reactions one has to loss which is experienced as a loss of control felt with anxiety, fear and terror. This is accompanied by a feeling of helplessness and, at times, panic. This leaves the person vulnerable and insecure in a changing uncontrollable world.

This aloneness is without doubt, perceived as an utter isolation like being marooned on a tiny island surrounded by a gigantic ocean. Depending on the quality of object attachment in the separation from a loved one, the experience of loneliness is, at times, described as disorientation. One of my co-researchers likened her experience as when she was a child and three years in a row her three best friends moved away.

Affect is no respecter of gender in the context of grief and mourning. There are, sometimes differences in manifest expressions of affect due to social context but most persons report varieties of emotions such as anger, guilt, despair, shock, sadness, and crying.

A common response to one's loss is one's sense of time becoming skewed in relation to others sense of time. A loss that is traumatic, shocking or devastating typically is felt as isolating the bereaved from the social treadmill and perceptually one senses time as stopping, slowing down, or rarely, speeding up.

Universally, the experience of grief can be so devastating that one's sense of identity is shattered. Those who are surviving spouses find theirs and friend's roles have changed in their social world. The survivor is commonly left out of former activities usually participated in by couples. Friend's roles have changed as well. The loss of a child is noted by researchers and parents alike as the most difficult of losses to manage emotionally. When a parent survives their offspring the parent has lost the one who was to ensure that a sense of their continuity will extend into the future. These and other losses stimulate us to question, "Who am I?" The direction of this questioning is of a different logical order (Bateson, 1987; Dilts, 1992; Dilts and Epstein, 1995) than a behavioral or emotional concern. These losses shake most persons at the core of their being and cause them to question their identity and reevaluate the meaning of their lives.

Frequently there is a major shift in what is important in the life of the bereaved. Loss assists in the reordering of priorities and shifting of values. The majority of those in my study admitted to believing that now "everything in life is temporary". One person said that the death in their family was a wake-up call, another admitted a growing inability to remember what she would have normally thought were important things, while another co-researcher said her mother's death finally proved to her that we are all going to die.

The above themes are not intended to be exhaustive but are reflective of previous studies in the experience of grief. The above is presented as background

for the following internal representations/submodalities that form a composite for the six co-researchers in this study of grief and mourning. Submodalities are recognized in perceptual psychology as the smaller units of our representational systems within the human brain (visual system, auditory system, etc.) (Gordon, 1978).

In the charts that follow, first the universal theme is listed, then across from the theme the internal representation or submodality relating to the theme is presented. These illustrations are presented to demonstrate the relationship between internal representations and the universal themes in loss, grief and mourning that have emerged from this heuristic study. Although the submodalities are idiosyncratic, there are commonalities that are not surprising, such as the submodality of color being faded, black and white or neutral in the context of grief. For example, Spoon-Simonton (1987) reports similar results in her composite themes for color. The following submodalities are excerpted from actual interviews with the six co-researchers for this study and represent universal themes. For each co-researcher there are two sets of submodalities, one for grief and one for mourning (Appendix E).

Following the detailed illustrations for each co-researcher are two charts that illustrate the composite submodalities and composite themes. For reading the charts/figures, one will find the theme is within a circle, the description is within a square and the submodality is in parentheses (Appendix F). An

additional chart was prepared so that the reader may get an overall sense of the visual diagrams rendered by each of the co-researchers as they perceived their representations (Appendix G). All of this information including the individual and composite depictions was utilized in determining the universal themes and relationships of submodalities for an individual co-researcher and as a group.

### **Exemplary Portraits**

#### **Introduction**

Portraits utilize the individual depiction to stay close to the co-researcher's experience. The following portraits keep the flavor of the individual's experience while being supported by some autobiographical detail obtained in the initial interview. Moustakas (1990) suggests choosing at least two depictions to present as portraits for heuristic research. The names used in the portraits have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

#### **Portrait #1**

##### **Joanna**

Joanna grew up in the eastern part of the state of Kentucky. Her family was very poor as most families are in that region. Joanna's father was an artist and had a small shop and gallery in her home town which her mother still manages. Joanna's father had died just a few weeks before her husband.

Joanna's husband was 40 years old when the aircraft he was piloting developed mechanical problems, crashed and her husband was killed and burned

in the resulting fire. Joanna and he had two children, a boy who was six and a girl who was eleven. Joanna was in her mid-30's.

Joanna thought of her husband as a very strong person. His work even involved the medical aspects of death. She was in shock not only from the fiery accident that claimed her husband's life, but she was shocked that over a thousand persons attended the funeral. She says that her husband thought he didn't have many friends. Joanna was shocked, overwhelmed and surprised.

Joanna stated that after the funeral she plunged into a deep depression and she went to bed for three years only getting up past noon each day. She was further hurt that so many people just disappeared the first weeks after the funeral--they dissolved, faded out of the picture. She was grateful for the very few friends that did not abandon her, her feelings or the tasks of helping her to live daily.

Joanna says she was so sad and that dealing with this feeling was new to her because her mom and dad did not deal with this emotion, it was denied when she was a child. A time came for Joanna to write thank you notes to the thousand persons. When two friends saw she was still sad and listless, they requested that she sit at the kitchen table while they wrote the notes for her. The friends engaged her in conversation for several days while completing the notes. Joanna reveals that this was when she began to laugh; something she thought she would never do again. They actually made jokes and she remembered humor was a big

thing in her family.

One of Joanna's most difficult experiences was realizing her husband's family had abandoned her. This family was a concrete connection to her husband just as her children were a connecting link to memories of her husband. There were so many losses during a period of a few months for her family, her father's death, her husband's accident and death, divorces; it was like a snowball. With so much all at once, she was overwhelmed and went to bed for three years. Joanna's eleven year old daughter became the mother during those years to her six year old brother.

Joanna was never angry but reports feelings of utter loneliness and isolation with a constant internal sense of dread. Suicide was not considered because her dead husband and father had instilled in her such an appreciation for life.

Joanna reports that she experienced massive fear that was terrifying and devastating from this loss. She was vulnerable, insecure and found herself forgetful...afraid she would forget the many memories of her husband. These memory lapses even extended to small daily tasks.

The depression, darkness, sadness and fear would literally engulf her, swallow her daily for months on end. At times panic would creep in to be added to the hopeless fear that gripped her with terror. When these feelings subsided there remained a dull dark emptiness. Joanna says that during these times she

was literally on the edge and the actual physical contact from her children kept her from dropping out of reality completely. Her children would pat her and this was the comfort she remembers that softened the long dark night of three years.

Within the space that grief claimed in her life, Joanna experienced a continuing confusion that further dissociated her from the world. This confusion was experienced as a warping of her perception of time. Some moments Joanna would feel stretch into eternity as if time had stopped and she reports being in a void that had no beginning or end.

The first holidays were so sad, so difficult for Joanna and the children. She and the children would automatically remember how her husband did things such as the process of getting a live Christmas tree. Joanna's husband's birthday rolled around and she and the kids had a birthday dinner for their dad while they recalled good memories.

The biggest change Joanna notices is her rediscovery of who she is again since the death of her husband. She says people react to her differently because of her being single and a single-parent. Joanna is also discovering what her interests are without a husband. Philosophically Joanna has learned that everything is temporary and some things are not as important as she used to make them. She says she values her experiences more in the present than before her husband's death.

When asked how she thinks of her husband, Joanna reveals she sees inside

her mind a tall oak tree with a hole in it. The leaves are red, yellow and purples falling to the ground. It is a fall day in her picture and the air is cool and the light is bright. Joanna is strengthened by this symbol.

## **Portrait #2**

### **Amy**

Amy grew up as the youngest of two children to parents who struggled with finances, alcoholism and difficulties most families encounter. She was nine years younger than her brother. Amy says that because of the differences in the age of her brother and her, she felt like an only child. Amy's father was kind but intoxicated much of the time, as she recalls. She and her mother didn't have friends over to their home because of the unpredictable drinking of her father. This resulted in Amy and her mother developing a close friendship that continued throughout both their lives until Amy's mother was diagnosed with cancer and died about one year after this.

Before and after her mother's death, Amy experienced much guilt because her own family and job responsibilities kept her from being with her mother in another town. Amy and her mother talked about this with her mother making efforts to reassure Amy that she understood her daughter's responsibilities. After her mother's death, Amy continued her daily routine until one night a phone call came requesting her to come and stay with a neighbor's daughter while the parent's rushed to the hospital to be at the bedside of a dying grandparent. Amy



returned home after a couple of hours, went to bed and suddenly broke into tears. Although this was several months after her mother had died, now the image of her mother lying in a hospital bed was haunting her.

Amy was beginning to fully feel the loss and realize she had lost her mother who was also her best friend. She said that, at that moment she felt the impact of never being able to go to her mom for advice again, never picking up the phone to talk again, never being able to share her thoughts/feelings again with this best friend.

For Amy the meaning of her loss was that she now understood how dependent she had been on her mother. A task for Amy became to begin developing in herself a greater sense and practice of independence. This understanding began a path to maturity that at first was terribly lonely, dark and frightening. Amy during this time began to understand how much her mother had needed this friendship too. Her father's alcoholism had obviously kept a closeness from developing between her parents. So Amy's mother came to depend on her daughter for friendship.

With this loss Amy began to experience how small, lonely and helpless she felt without her mother. She admits that she realized she now had to figure out ways to do things herself, assume more responsibility and learn to grow up finally at age forty-one.

An important way Amy has discovered to develop her independence is

through an internal modeling process that utilizes memories of her mother successfully accomplishing things. Amy then moves herself into the role mentally rehearsing and experiencing the results within herself. She is aware that she has become more like her mother since the death. A major shift of priorities has Amy realizing now that the things she used to value so much are not that important. Since her mother's death, she describes herself as having more patience with her teenage son and more compassion for others.

Amy's successful transition from grief to mourning brought to her awareness the reality of the finiteness of her own life. She says she realizes she is not a teenager or even forty years old anymore. This means for her that we are all going to die and Amy is finding that she cherishes more of the present and what she has, because of this experiential understanding of the fragility of life.

Amy reports that in her daily life she often stops and thinks, "What would mother do and say in this situation?" or "How would mother have acted?". And Amy mirrors what she imagines and remembers. Amy believes that her mother's death helped her to move in a positive direction to being a genuinely happier, kinder, more compassionate and more responsible person. Amy is finally able to say with conviction and peaceful confidence, "Life is more important than a job!"

### **Reflective Summary**

### **The Submodalities and Themes**

Universal themes and common motifs have been presented in the charts

(Appendix F) illustrating submodalities and qualities of grief and mourning.

Although themes and categories of internal representations are similar between persons, there are individual differences within the representations that make generalizations difficult.

It is possible to comment on some relationships of occurrences when comparing states such as grief and mourning. This study shows among other things that writers would do well to differentiate more clearly in their uses of the terms grief and mourning. Currently, even many researchers use these terms interchangeably. This investigation shows clear differences and supports Rando's (1991) claim of grief being a distinct state and process from mourning.

### **Themes:**

There were several universal themes that emerged from the composite depiction. Five of the themes are detailed below. The themes are also reformatted in chart form in Appendix E and F.

#### **Theme 1: Everything is temporary**

Careful listening provides clues to the subtle differences between grief and mourning along with evidence in the structure of language itself. The submodality category of transparency in grief is recorded in this study with descriptions of "faded, dim, dissolved or a gray fog". The sense of transparency corresponds to the theme of the co-researcher's sense of existential temporal finiteness. The theme of everything being temporary and one feeling

insecure/vulnerable with the context of mourning is quite different. Rather than a shift in polarity from temporary to permanency quite often the bereaved, when mourning, begins to sense their internal world as “more solid, more visible”. There is more of a qualitative shift rather than an “either-or” experience within this submodality.

### **Theme 2: Fear, Terror, Dread**

The theme of fear expressed in grief can be related to the submodality of brightness. In their bereavement experience all the co-researchers revealed their internal representations of grief as “dark” or “dim” when compared to the state of mourning. The latter of which is generally reported as “clear as day, rather bright” and almost like “normal”.

### **Theme 3: Loneliness, isolation**

The theme of loneliness and isolation in grief is portrayed in the language of dissociation, such as, “I cut myself off” and “I must have pushed him away”. When the same theme of loneliness in mourning is compared with grief, most persons are beginning to find a way to internally shift their representations so that they can move through the stages and tasks of grief/mourning such as accepting the reality of loss, work through to the pain, adjust to the environment with the missing object and emotionally relocate the deceased (Worden, 1991). At this point, the bereaved is speaking of the lost object as “they are right here with me, or a “growing sense that he is present and that God is in charge”, and “my dead

husband is symbolized by the tree—this makes me feel stronger in an eternal way”.

#### **Theme 4: Emotions, Sadness**

The theme of emotions commonly expressed as varieties of sadness in grief will be heard as the bereaved talk about their experience as being as if in a “gray fog or a dark cloud”. In grief, as most persons might expect, the theme of sadness is represented via the submodality of color. In this case, all co-researchers confirmed either a lack of color, a dark hue and drab or faded colors as their internal representation that expressed the theme of sadness.

In the state of mourning, the universal theme of sadness shifts submodalities when compared to grief. As reported by co-researchers, color is “more normal, bright, shiny and clear” within their internal imagery.

#### **Theme 5: Hopelessness, despair, depression**

The universal theme of hopelessness in grief is many times uttered in language representing the submodality of location. One hundred per cent of the co-researchers gave responses indicating location as being a major submodality representing the theme of hopelessness. The various statements such as, “I’ve hit bottom, I’m floored, ...in the depths of a well, ...in the depths of despair, my worries go up” and “...as low as I could go”. The words “bottom”, “floored”, “depths”, “up” and “low” indicate location and tend to be very literal in being isomorphic with internal visual representations of the grief experience.

When the theme of hopelessness in grief is compared with mourning there emerge distinctions. In mourning, there occurs a shift in the sense of location of an internal image. Rather than the bereaved feeling “floored, flattened or low”, the image in mourning many times has an upward movement/direction, or most commonly a shift from one side to another within the internal visual field as reported by co-researchers.

The above five themes are a few of only several that are common in the experience of grief and mourning. The above submodalities are a few of the many distinctions humans are capable of making internally. A purpose in this description is to begin to relate the experience of grief and mourning with internal imagery while showing that internal representations are directly related to the nominalizations of hopelessness, fear, depression and sadness. Other purposes will be examined in the discussion section after the creative synthesis.

### **Creative Synthesis**

The preceding paragraphs have focused on universal themes in grief and mourning with the relation of five themes to the internal representations of six co-researchers. In the following pages, a creative synthesis of the themes and internal representations is presented. I have chosen to present two sculptures to synthesize a major theme of the outcome of the submodality comparisons of the two states of grief and mourning. Background will be provided to orient the reader and then a dialogue based on Carl Jung’s (1973) and Shaun McNiff’s

(1992) active imagination technique will lead the reader to an understanding of this phase of heuristic inquiry. Finally color reproductions of the sculptures are presented (Appendix H).

Helen Landgarten (1996) outlines eight functions of art that are useful in supporting the validity and purposefulness of creative synthesis. Landgarten observes that art “frees us for a sense of discovery, deals with existential loneliness, is a transitional object, a visual diary, serves to preserve memories, functions as sublimation, compensatory purpose, and functions to aid in transformation and resolution of major life issues” (personal communication, Kansas Art Therapy Association Conference, 1996).

### **Background**

The creative synthesis involves the presentation of artwork that is influenced by the Northwest Coast American Indian. This tribe created their form of the totem to memorialize a deceased community member, many times a chief or elder. The images on the pole were always various animals important to the spiritual life of the tribe and the family that suffered the loss. These images form a part of the basic epistemology of the tribe. The form we know as the totem is more than a sculpture, it is an archetypal form that embodies a culture’s epistemology. The images are representative of much of the native American beliefs about life, relationships and what experientially it means for an Indian to live in an environment that, from their world view, is filled with spirit.

For the tribe, the point of carving totems was not simply to express grief or sorrow, or to tell a mythological story of a cute, fearsome animal, but the purpose of making a totem was to create a container for the soul. To carve and then erect the totem in the midst of the community was a way of preparing for the daily welcome and encounter of the soul and its transforming grace upon the individuals in the tribe. Because of its immense size, the totem, with the drama of its images and daily presence in the environment, served to consolidate and transform the individual identity to the larger community. This kind of memorial became a way that the Northwest Coast Indian built a memory of itself, simultaneously transforming itself from the individual to universal and spiritual concerns. The subsequent formation of totems in the life of the Indian was a way to respond to important events, such as death, with imagination rather than with linear thought.

The placement of some totems at the entrance to a dwelling or meeting place was vital to the social psychology of the tribal community. In much the same fashion as European builders of Gothic cathedrals lined entrances to the center of worship with biblical characters and animals, the totems greeted the tribe members daily as they entered and exited their structures. No doubt, the unconscious influence of such images were powerful and served to aid the transition of the cathedral worshiper to another state of consciousness as they entered the holy place.



The tribe would place their totems at the shoreline of their fishing waters. This strategic placement of the totem image, it was hoped, would serve to remind the fisherman and hunters of the state of consciousness that they needed for the journey. The fishing or hunting expedition was not an individual safari but was important to the sustenance and continuity of the family and the entire tribe. The totems became reminders that there is something in the universe greater than one's self and that greatness is intimately involved with their lives.

### **The Totem in Grief and Mourning**

The totem project began as a memorial to my father who died when I was three years old. Due to my age I was not allowed to attend the funeral or say goodbye. So in one sense, the totem is a goodbye.

The totem as presented here is not meant to be a sentimental illustration of a man who died when he was 37 years old, but the totem is meant to be an agent of transformation. For the totem to maintain its archetypal function, it must do more than stand symbolically for experience, the art should act directly upon the present time frame.

The totem works within the present time frame by transforming experience, reassociating the resources of the lost relationship with the survivors and encourages survivors that one is not alone. A vital task in grief work is to discover how to reassociate cognitively and experientially with what we valued about the lost object. To fail at reconnecting with one's psychological resources

can result in physical and medical consequences.

Many studies conclude that the consequences can be death from loneliness, broken hearts and a lack of human companionship. Further research suggests our interpretation of loss and how we perceive our loss is the key to how we will cope with the inevitable losses that all persons will experience.

The message of the totem is not simply to express grief or sorrow or to tell a mythological story. The carving and erecting of a totem creates a container for the soul in the epistemology of the Northwest Coast Indian. This form of imagery focuses on emphasizing a way of being in the world that is responsive to one's existence in terms of interacting with the world of symbols, signs and metaphors. The image is respected as having a life of its own with the ability to reanimate the environment. Upon the death of a member of the tribe, there is an opportunity to honor the deceased and the community by creating a totem that will fill the world with the spirit of the loved one.

### **The Dialogue**

The dialogue that follows below is created in the spirit of the active imagination process set forth by Carl Jung (1973). In dealing with images in active imagination, one becomes listener rather than explainer (McNiff, 1992). This stance with images and objects can begin to reenchant or reanimate daily life with meaning and spirit (Moore, 1994). This approach tends to quiet the ego, develop wisdom and expand perceptual relationships in those who utilize it. An

intent of active imagination is to discover new sources of expression and expand our habitual frames of reference.

The following is a dialogue with the upright totem image. Two reproductions follow this dialogue. To begin the dialogue, I welcome the form because this is a new process for me. Addressing the totem I say, “I want to know you and welcome you. I don’t know if I can do this, so please be patient with my hesitancy. What are you feeling?”

The totem responds, “Don’t be so shy and backward! I won’t break. I do appreciate your courtesy and politeness. As for my feeling—I am feeling relaxed, energetic and calm. I stand alone and at a safe distance from people. I have front and back sides with four faces on my front. My faces were made or almost born as Rorschach Ink Blots—by chance and spontaneity. Then the lines were colored-in like a child’s coloring book. A fun aspect of my birth was not knowing which lines to color and going outside the lines when I felt like it. This “not-knowing” made me tense and anxious but after awhile I discovered these feelings stimulated a curiosity to explore, serving as energy to motivate me to do things.”

“I like standing in the grass. I haven’t felt this grounded, well-rooted and balanced in a long time. I can hear birds and can feel the changing shadows and light on my surface as alternate cool and warm spots. I also enjoy the expansive space around me, but I get lonely. In all of this is a sadness that seems to permeate my relationship with the space around me. I am too big in scale to live

inside the house and outside I seem so small among the trees and hills. Some of my sadness seems to come from my not quite fitting in this environment.”

“My feathers actually seem to make me more 3-dimensional and emphasize that I can be flexible with the current winds. Some of the inkblots on my surface are wing-like but remain 2-dimensional on my skin, the addition of feathers makes wings seem more possible. What could I do to get myself off the ground? Then I would be the first flying totem pole!”

“Inside your house I felt gigantic with my top touching the ceiling. Out here in the yard I am dwarfed by the trees and space. I “fit” better outside. There’s no longer any space/room for me where I’ve been...I’ve got to get out, to fly and maybe even soar. I’ve certainly got to find a bigger environment that is more natural for me, where I can be at home and “spread my wings”. In many ways I feel stymied, restricted by the grass rope tied around me—almost like a straightjacket.”

After a few moments I ask the totem, “What do you need?” The totem responds, “I need more lift, more movement. I need to take-off in flight occasionally. I’m still too heavy, I need to be lighter. I like my size, being bigger and standing up rather than lying down on that silly couch. Standing up has given me more visibility and power and strength. When I got up off the couch I was surprised to discover how big I had become—(I grew from 14" to 7 ½ ft!).

“I need the space around me to provide some of the isolation I need to

work, think, create and just “be”. This space reminds me that I have a tendency to let others ask too much of my time and energy. The space provides a much needed boundary for my rest and regeneration.”

### **Closing Comments and Reflection**

The process of researching, thinking, immersion, incubation and physical activity coupled with a personal curiosity, propelled the creative synthesis through many frustrations of waiting for my unconscious to assimilate the creative activity and eventually direction. The totem also served to incorporate most of the functions of art introduced in the section on creative synthesis at the beginning of this section (Landgarten, 1996). As a project, the totem serves as a (1) visual diary of the thought, feeling and content. This visual diary becomes a container for the personal experience of loss. Certainly the traditional function of a totem is to (2) “preserve memories” as a memorial for a deceased person chosen as significant. This totem seeks to preserve memories of values and attitudes rather than concrete events. In addition to preserving memories and functioning as a visual diary, the totem (3) dealt with the condition of existential loneliness. There was no term for existential loneliness in the epistemology of the Northwest Coast Indian. One did not experience loneliness because of the belief of the world being filled with spirits in the environment of the Northwest Coast Indian. Therefore, to erect a totem meant to continue the recognition of the universal spirits in the community. The totem in today’s world has the same

function. By daily presenting its shapes, forms, and colors, the totem keeps us in touch with those vital values, beliefs, and attitudes that we hope for in our lives individually and communally.

The fourth function (4) of the modern day totem was as a “transitional object” that encompasses and embodies beliefs, attitudes and values I have chosen to recognize as significant from my father who is deceased. With the transitional object present in large scale, the totem is a continual daily reminder of the presence of these cherished values that further deals with existential loneliness.

Landgarten (1966) lists another suggestion as the function of art as being (5) “transformational and resolving”. The totem image (Appendix H) acknowledges (as opposed to ignoring or denying) the death. The totem acknowledges through shape, form and image important individual and interpersonal essences of, in this case, my father, specifically spontaneity, freedom, respect and response to one’s intuitive unconscious needs for expression and recognition.

These essences, when acknowledged in the form of the totem (and in other art forms), have the ability to transform the individual and the community. Suggestions as to how this occurs were postulated in the background information for the totem.

Carrying Landgarten’s (1966) function’s of art a step further, one can

view the totem project from an additional perspective. The functions of art do at times in some forms and in some images coalesce or “gel” to express something greater than itself. In Jungian thought this something is known as the archetype. The expression of something greater than itself is a jump in logical levels from the environmental, behavioral, capability, identity levels to the spiritual level (Dilts, 1992). The archetypal influence will be touched on below.

A proponent of Archetypal Psychology and a main spokesperson for this perspective in our time is James Hillman (1996). How do the spiritual and the archetype figure in consideration of the totem? The totem is an expression of the archetype. The kind of image refers to much more than mythological or literary content. The totem is a way to respond to important events with imagination rather than linear thought. Jung suggested that a major purpose of the archetype was the opening of a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious minds. The concrete form of the memorial totem is not a sentimental illustration that is a mirror image of the deceased. Rather, the animal forms that are stacked vertically in many totems function as agents of transformation. The totem does more than “stand for” experience, the art acts directly upon the present time frame through its availability for continuing dialogue between the unconscious and conscious (McNiff, 1992). The totem’s physical presence is one manner of its direct influence on the present time frame.

My experience has been that this totem has and continues to engage me

with significant life-affirming dialogue when I take the time to do so. This totem engages me through imagination rather than through interpretation and so is teaching me to become a better, more sensitive listener, while granting me some discernment in matters of the heart.



## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion, Findings, Closing**

#### **Introduction**

The research question evolved (from examining the efficacy of the NLP Loss Pattern) to “What is the experience of loss in the internal representations of those who grieve and mourn?” This question proposes to examine some of the basic imagery assumptions needed in order for the Loss Pattern to be effective.

Further connections with literature are made below and in these final paragraphs, the five-themes, results of this research, findings and other implications of this study will be addressed. The findings are detailed in the units on perceptual submodalities, and then a particular configuration of submodalities is postulated.

#### **The Five Themes**

The universal themes emerging from this study are motifs that have been expressed throughout the literature and are familiar in the context of loss and grief. The themes were: (1) Everything is temporary; (2) Fear, terror, dread; (3) Loneliness, isolation; (4) Emotions, sadness; (5) Hopelessness, despair, depression. These themes may not be the only themes connected to grief and mourning but there were the ones revealed in this study.

Like themes, the smaller units of perception known as submodalities are universal. For example, in this study the composite of grief the universal theme

of “everything is temporary” is represented internally in the visual representational system primarily by the submodality of transparency. The same universal theme (“everything is temporary”) in the composite of mourning does not switch and become the opposite of “everything is temporary”. This theme of “temporary” in the composite of mourning (Appendix F) changes in quality by a thematic sense of acceptance, with a sense of one being able to move on with life. This qualitative shift is reported in internal imagery as visually represented with objects being more 3-D and sensed with more solidity. By examining closely each submodality with a universal theme and comparing them with their counterparts in the other state, i.e. grief to mourning, one will find in most cases when there is a change in theme there will be a shift of submodality.

The universal theme of “everything is temporary” represents a level of logic that must be noted to increase our understanding of this research. To state that everything is temporary is a global generalization that includes one’s environment, capability, beliefs and most likely one’s identity (Dilts, 1992). This illustrates what a shattering event loss can be. When an event touches us at the identity level, changes are experienced and processed on all levels (Bateson, 1979, 1987) of cognition and affect. The submodalities of the composite illustrate what this internal state of vulnerable insecurity and temporariness can be like.

## **Literature**

This study affirms the psychoanalytic literature of the importance of differentiation, representability and symbolization (Anson, 1994; Bowlby, 1980; Deri, 1984; Freud, 1900 & 1917; Langer, 1953; Loewald, 1962; Segal, 1961) in loss and grief. More specifically the research in this study confirms Langer's (1953) assertion that the meaning in internal representations is contained within the qualities of the image itself such as brightness, color, size, distance, etc.

The research in this study appears to strengthen Rossi's (1986) broad literature review in psychobiology. Specifically, the internal imagery and the reports of internal states of mind / emotions of the co-researchers in this study tends to fit the model of state-dependent memory which Rossi relates to Pavlovian and Skinnerian conditioning.

## **The Role of Perception and Meaning**

This study in grief and mourning concurs with the literature in perceptual psychology (Ader, 1981; Solomon, 1985; Rossi, 1986; Rossi and Cheek, 1988, Pert, Ruff, Weber and Herkenham, 1985) with co-researchers affirming in self-reports the multilevel effects of loss occurring throughout the internal and external systems of an individual. Each co-researcher expressed the physical, mental and social results of being a survivor. The aspect of perception and meaning that emerged upon listening and examining the interview material revealed two separate states of consciousness related to loss. The analysis

suggests that at least for five of the six co-researchers there are significant differences between the state of grief and the state of mourning. Theoretically the experience of loss is a state-dependent memory. The difference in grief and mourning is state-dependent learning. If loss is a state-dependent memory (Rossi, 1986) it explains the frequent descriptions of loss on multiple levels or the “four faces of grief” (Graves, 1994, p. 3) to express the physical, psychological, social and spiritual portions of existence. This is to say that loss becomes an imprint (state-dependent memory) that is paired or associated, within the survivor, with specific neuro-transmitters.

This research and analysis of the co-researchers reports confirmed that “meaningfulness is developed by correlations of perceptual experiences” (Gordon, 1978, p. 216). As in imprinting, one’s loss is meaningful because the image of loss represents a multitude of patterned experiences that have become unavailable to the survivor.

### **Grief and Mourning**

The co-researchers in this study report submodalities that differentiate grief and mourning. For all but one co-researcher, interviews established an event or some internal change that resulted in a definite redirection of the quality of the experience for the survivor. A co-researcher stated that after weeks of visiting the cemetery, she “realized” she didn’t want to be depressed anymore. From this point on, she reports more satisfaction in her life. Another co-

researcher experienced a “vision” of her dead husband who told her “It’s OK...I came to check on you.” She states that immediately a feeling of peace accompanied this midnight experience and has continued to this day. A third co-researcher in conversation with a friend came to “realize” that the qualities she missed so much about the deceased could not die but were available now and in the future.

Before each co-researcher experienced these events their daily lives were marked by shock, denial, despair, anger, depression and bargaining among other states of mind in relation to the loss. This was their grief.

After these co-researchers experienced, “understood”, “realized” or had a “vision”, there was a significant, definite change they noticed in how they experienced themselves, events and relationships (after their “vision”). Even these co-researchers after their “Ah-Ha” experience report good and bad days where they alternate from grief to mourning, to grief and back to mourning again.

All of the co-researchers were interviewed at late enough stages in their grief and mourning for the primary researcher to observe changes in submodalities over time. These changes in submodalities accompany and match the reports of “vision” and “realization” that resulted in a shift from grief to mourning. Comparing Appendix E’s grief and mourning submodalities resulted in the composite of grief and mourning for this investigation. The composites

appear in Appendix F with universal themes as they represent submodalities in the self-reports of co-researchers.

### **Future Research**

Future research will use this study as a base to go a step further and ask questions similar to, “What happens to the experience of grief when one consciously, intentionally alters one’s own internal grief imagery via submodalities?” The current investigation has established some relationships between submodalities and universal themes in loss, grief and mourning. It is hoped that these relationships will serve as stimulus for more exploration in the direction of the efficacy of The NLP Loss Pattern and NLP in general. Clinical experience and anecdotal reports suggest that many persons are able to intentionally and rapidly effect a major shift from grief to mourning by altering one or more targeted submodalities.

It is likely that future research on submodalities such as location would need to recognize the effect of synesthesia. This is the relationship that location as a submodality has with another submodality in another representational system. For example, location in the visual representational system may be related to a submodality of volume or pitch in the auditory system. Should one intentionally move a perceived image of loss from one location to another, that individual may experience a simultaneous change in the volume and/or pitch as well. The synesthesia process within the image (“perceptual package”) is

responsible for a variety of codings that are tied together in this manner.

Further research may require intensive combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods looking at specific elements of imagery with an intent to discover even more subtle processes about which submodalities and synesthesias are influential in shifting grief to mourning. Future research could focus on what qualities (submodalities) of imagery stimulate the shift of grief to mourning in death, divorce, temporary separation, suicide, soldiers missing in action and other losses. Although the content of internal representations for divorce may be different from suicide in survivors, would research find a common submodality effective to stimulating mourning for clinical intervention in divorce and another distinctly different kind of loss?

Future research may need to inquire into the generalizability of The NLP Loss Pattern, (e.g. “Is it class-dependent or culture specific, and would it be appropriate for all age groups?) What populations may respond best with this particular intervention and would altering The Loss Pattern internally make the Pattern more accessible across populations?

Future research may wish to consider if there is an optimal time for intervention after the loss for attempting to consciously stimulate the internal shift of one’s imagery. This is to ask, “Is there an appropriate time for intervention?” There are also reports of clinicians using The Loss Pattern as a preloss preparation for those who anticipate being a survivor.

The above question suggests a reassessment of the commonly accepted stages of grief. Researchers may wish to consider, “Is it necessary to proceed through the stages of grief as generally laid out by some researchers (Kubler-Ross, 1969) in step-by-step fashion?” This also brings to the forefront the question “Is it necessary to wait for time to heal?”

Future research would most likely at some time include the consideration of how beneficial (if at all) The Loss Pattern is with reportedly the most painful of all losses, parents who have survived the loss of a child. Another area of research interest is those persons who have not learned to differentiate and/or symbolize adequately. Would The NLP Loss Pattern be contraindicated, useful or even possible?

### **Two research results**

Two results of this study were unexpected. The first result surfaced through analysis of the interviews and discriminated between the states of grief and mourning. This was unplanned. The second anticipated result did not occur. The submodality of location was expected to be a primary stimulation for changes and/or shifts in the internal states of the co-researchers. Gordon’s (1978), (Appendix A) collection of work on submodalities indicate that location is the only submodality that appears listed in ALL representational systems on a chart illustrating the internal representational systems. Clinical experience suggests that when the location of an internal image is changed intentionally,



there is an accommodating shift in most other submodalities within the particular representation. When this shift occurs, clients usually report a change in the meaning of the symbol or representation. This would indicate that the submodality of location is in most cases a driving or key submodality for conscious intervention in loss and grief. However, this investigation was not designed to question what specific submodality may be a potent, more driving element in shifting one's internal experience.

Another research problem is the idiosyncratic nature of imagery. There is no standardization of submodalities or any agreement on how to interpret these units of perception from one individual to another. An individual may report on the submodality of size and actually be reporting on distance. One can also report on the submodality of color and simultaneously report on transparency. This occurred in this study and took some discussion with the co-researchers to determine their meanings. In some self-reports, co-researchers would be unable to express what their representation was, and at other times, the co-researcher would have a different descriptor than the descriptor commonly agreed upon but would imply the same thing as the common descriptor.

Some of the above difficulty extends to the nature of state-dependent memory and perceptual ability. The capability of synesthesia, for example, can arise when one feels sad but has no other awareness of internal representations. This synesthetic experience is commonly called depression. The feeling most

typically is a synesthesia in a kinesthetic representation crossing-over from the auditory and/or visual system. To accommodate synesthesia, methodologies would need to be developed or borrowed from previous brain research that could account for cross-over effects.

### **Summary**

Woven within the discussion above has been some of the following:

1. Freud (1917) suggested that internal imagery shifts as grief and mourning progress. By calling grief “work”, he hints that this particular kind of imagery can be changed consciously.
2. The research within this study suggests that submodalities are the significant connection one has consciously with state-dependent memory and that submodalities of grief imagery can be utilized to influence the important shift from grief to mourning.
3. Although clinical reports suggest that the specific submodality of location within all the representational systems is the major submodality for influencing the shift spoken of by Freud, the research in this study did not indicate this.
4. The research in this study exposed a difference in grief and mourning as distinctly different state-dependent processes. Specifically, grief appears to be an acute response, in many cases, that is resulting from the bereaved’s state-

dependent memory. Mourning is a more dynamic process that is characterized by state-dependent learning.

### **Closing**

So where does the bereaved person who has begun to mourn go from here? What does one do with a broken heart? These would be common questions in a world dominated by the medical model of “fixing” things that are broken. In so many endeavors in the western world we want to know what is the outcome for this journey, what is the purpose of the mission?

The experience of loss comes to all in some shape or form sooner or later. The character of those who shared their loss revealed three things as I reviewed the analysis of the transcripts. Each person had discovered (1) courage and demonstrated (2) resilience while facing loneliness. Five of the six co-researchers were beginning to experience a transformation of their loneliness to (3) solitude.

Most of the co-researchers would just say that it hurts and is painful to lose someone so dear to them and if given a choice they would have nothing of courageousness or resilience or solitude— “just give me back my lost love!” would be the unanimous reply.

I was struck by the assumption that we all make at some early stage of our development. The assumption seems to be universal in that we assume that which we love is permanent, an assumption of immortality. In spite of what we know about reality we insist on believing that the world is “benevolent,

meaningful and that the self is worthy” (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, p. 6) and that objects are permanent. Our insistence on this assumption and the tenacity with which most persons live out the assumption reveals a quality of obdurate nobleness about the human will. Personal loss comes and shakes the tree all the way to the roots of these beliefs. Many times, we don’t see the forest for the trees, and we are fooled into placing our trust into “things” rather than the qualities, values and processes living through the temporary object.

Further contemplation on what to do with a broken heart led to more study in spirituality. Avoiding spirituality, western medicine approach’s tasks from a mechanical metaphor (such as the heart being a pump that needs to be fixed or transplanted through surgery). But especially as a result of this study, I see a mechanical metaphor is useful for a physical need, but a heart broken from loss and grief doesn’t need repair but transformation.

Transformation of loneliness into solitude could be William Worden’s fifth task of mourning were he to expand the tasks. The loneliness of loss is an opportunity for us to face our perceived nothingness, attachments, compulsions and addictions. Courage is born out of the decision to go into the loneliness rather than drowning one’s terror in talk, drink, anger, depression, food, drugs, etc. The decision to face one’s loneliness is also one’s responsibility and choice.

Nouwen (1981) in The Way of the Heart warns of what happens when we do not choose solitude but remain stuck in loneliness often characterized by

anger, greed or depression. When one fails to move on with acceptance of loss, one becomes a flailing victim among social expectations and practices.

Sometimes these practices include the bereaved developing psychiatric symptoms such as depression and/or medical problems directly related to unresolved grief.

Briefly, social expectations become characterized as one's epistemology.

All of the co-researchers in this study commented on needing to take time out from their social treadmill in order to get a perspective on the loss experience. They were all seeking solitude. In a wordly sense, solitude, if taken literally can refer to the logical level (Bateson, 1979, 1987; Dilts, 1992) of one's environment, a time and place for ourselves where we can think and not be bothered by others. Solitude at this logical level is utilized for the purpose of recharging one's batteries so as to re-enter the competition of the same old self.

In another sense, solitude occurs on the logical level of identity or even spirituality and becomes nothing less than an overhaul of one's epistemology. This solitude requires courage and perseverance to face one's cultural habits while learning to observe rather than entertain the confusion, terror and seduction of the remnants of internal images. Nouwen (1981) emphasizes that "solitude is not a therapeutic place"...but... "it is the place of conversion, ...where the old self dies and the new self is born..." (p. 15).

A variation on the comments of the six co-researchers in the interviews revealed where they were on this journey of transformation or conversion. Five

of the six persons said that their loss and the time afterwards had made them more compassionate towards others. Nouwen (1981) even states that “compassion is the fruit of solitude” (p. 20).

It is this compassion that keeps solitude from becoming isolation. The co-researchers all confirmed using their compassion to recognize their oneness with others in their broken hearts, disappointments and shattered dreams. This compassionate experiential understanding helps us shed the old epistemology and welcome a new way of measuring meaning and value in our lives. The Apostle Paul from the Christian tradition is quoted in the Bible as saying, “Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you, but let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind...” (Romans 12:2). The “new mind” spoken of by Paul is the same “new self” referred to by Nouwen (1981) above. This process of dynamic transformation is suggested by Bateson (1979, 1987) and Dilts (1992) as the challenge of accepting the responsibility to choose and face one’s loneliness at the identity and spiritual level of logic rather than the environmental or behavioral level.

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## **Appendix A**

**SUBMODALITY**  
*Equivalences*  
*known as*  
**SYNESTHESIA**

<u>VISION</u>	<u>AUDITION</u>	<u>KINESTHESIS</u>	<u>OLFACTION</u>
color	pitch	temperature	fragrance
brightness	loudness	pressure	concentration
saturation	timbre	texture	essence
shape	patterning	form	-----
location	location	location	location

For example, the submodality of color in the visual representational system of the brain is affected by pitch or sound from the auditory system. This cross-over relationship is a synesthesia. Also the submodality of volume/loudness can affect the visual sensory submodality of brightness. Insurance companies have found through research that many auto accidents of teenagers have discovered a significant variable of the radio being at a loud setting before an accident. It is believed that the loudness hampered the drivers ability to distinguish certain visual cues resulting in a natural but unfortunate synesthetic reaction.

A most interesting observation of the above chart is the submodality of location. It is the ONLY submodality to be common in ALL representational systems of the brain. When one intentionally alters this submodality consciously through visualization there are major changes in all the internal systems shown above, usually resulting in changes for the client in personal meaning and interpretation of a specific event, in this case loss and grief.

(Gordon, 1978)



## **Appendix B**

# **Bowlby's Theory of Attachment**

## **Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning**

## **NLP Loss Pattern**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Accept reality of the loss<br>by facing sadness & emptiness..... | How do you represent this loss to<br>yourself and what did you lose that<br>you valued?   |
| 2. Work through to pain of loss.....                                | Who is not here<br>physically in this room that is a<br>sense of "presence" to you?<br><br>Consciously change the subjective<br>experience of loss into one of<br>"presence"  |
| 3. Adjust to environment in which<br>deceased is missing.           | Identify and represent the qualities/<br>aspects of your valued experience<br>that make it valuable and special.<br><br>If this experience were available and<br>to occur in your future, what form<br>might it take? |
| 4. Emotionally relocate the deceased.....<br>& move on with life.   | Project into future onto one's<br>personal time-line..  |

What needs  
to be done

How to go about  
doing it



## **Appendix C**

## **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

- 1. When did you experience this loss?**
- 2. Share with me some of the events, people connected to your experience.**
- 3. What feelings/thoughts have you had since this loss?**
- 4. How has this loss affected your life? How do you feel now and what do you think about now with regards to this loss?**
- 5. What changed about you/your life after this experience?**
- 6. What does this loss mean to you?**
- 7. What have you thought about yourself since this loss?**
- 8. How (if at all) has this loss affected the way you relate to other persons and the world in general?**
- 9. Have you kept any diary, journal writing of your thoughts since the loss?**  
**If so, would you care to share any portion that would explain your experience?**

**Pretend that this paper represents the video screen in your mind. Please show in a diagram-like drawing the image you feel sad about.**

**Pretend that a second piece of paper represents the video screen in your mind. Please show in a diagram-like drawing the image of someone that when you think of them it seems to you that they are here with you now.**

## **Appendix D**

**Instructions for co-researchers**  
(adapted from: Moustakas, C. (1990). Heuristic Research.  
Newbury, CA.: Sage Publishing Company. pp. 57-58.)

November 22, 1996

Dear

Your participation in my research on the experience of grief is deeply appreciated. Your thoughts and feelings concerning your grief experience and recovery are valuable to my study. Although we may have already discussed the items in this letter, the purpose here is to repeat those things and ask you to sign the release form which you will find attached.

I am basically interested in your experience as you describe your thoughts and feelings concerning your grief. Your willingness to share this portion of your life will answer my research question.

By recalling episodes and events from your life that relate to your grief you will help me to understand your experience. It is important that you relate as accurately and vividly as possible what these times were like for you; just as importantly, your feelings, behaviors and ideas connected with the people, places and events of your grief experience. You are also welcome to share any letters you may have written, journals or poems that would assist in helping me to understand your experience.

Thank you for your willingness and commitment of time. Please feel free to ask any questions before signing the release form by calling me, if you need, at 502-781-6813.

Sincerely,

Clayton Miller  
(Fred)

**RELEASE FORM  
AND STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

"I agree to participate in a research study of grief and recovery as described in the attached letter. I understand the purpose and am participating voluntarily. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing a Ph.D. degree, including a dissertation and any other future publication. I understand that my name and other demographic information which might identify me will not be used.

I agree to meet at the following location \_\_\_\_\_  
on the following date \_\_\_\_\_ for an interview of  
1 to 1 1/2 hours. I also grant permission for the tape recording for the interview."

\_\_\_\_\_  
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT / Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRIMARY RESEARCHER / Date

PLEASE BRING THIS FORM WITH YOU TO YOUR INTERVIEW.



## **Appendix E**

**Co-researcher #1**

**GRIEF**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF REPORT</b>
1. SIZE	1. "I was overwhelmed..." "It was a snowball effect..." "Humor was big..." "They were big parties..." "Big birthday dinner..."
2. LOCATION/POSITION	2. "I was in a deep, deep depression..." "...in a well..." "...can't get out of..."
3. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	3. "I cut myself off..." "As long as my husband was with me I was fine."
4. COLOR	4. "...faded out..."
5. BRIGHTNESS/DIM	5. "dark...like just before you wake up." "darkness...engulfed me..."
6. CLARITY/FOCUS	6. "...such a blur..."
7. TRANSPARENCY	7. "...people kind of dissolved..." "...faded out of the picture..."

**Co-researcher #1**

**MOURNING**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF REPORT</b>
1. MOVEMENT/STILL	1. "...falling leaves..." "...breeze blowing..."
2. SIZE	2. "...I see the whole picture..." "...I could see the full picture..." the diagram fills and goes off the page
3. LOCATION/POSITION	3. center of field of vision/page
4. COLOR	4. "...fall colors, reds, yellows, etc."
5. BRIGHT/DIM	5. "...bright fall day..."
6. CLARITY/FOCUS	6. sharp/clear
7. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	7. "...my husband is symbolized by the tree"

**Co-researcher #2**

**GRIEF**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF REPORT</b>
1. BRIGHTNESS/DIM	1. "...dark in the room except for one light"
2. COLOR	2. "...night time...when she died..." black & white
3. LOCATION	3. "top of the page (field of vision)"
4. DISTANT/CLOSE	4. "...far away..."
5. CLARITY/FOCUS	5. not too clear because of darkness in hospital room
6. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	6. "...mother wasn't there anymore"

**Co-researcher #2**

**MOURNING**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF REPORT</b>
1. SIZE	1. "huge"
2. DISTANCE	2. "close"
3. LOCATION	3. "right in the center" "I have a different perspective on life and death."
4. MOVEMENT/STILL	4. "I think of her having fun, enjoying..."
5. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	5. "I think of her as being right here."
6. CLARITY/FOCUS	6. "...very clear..."
7. COLOR	7. "...normal..." "...bright..."

**Co-researcher #3**

**GRIEF**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF REPORT</b>
1. SIZE	1. "...the biggest fear... is terror..." "...biggest support..."
2. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	2. "...of being alone..." "...a feeling of a void" "...tremendous emptiness..." "...other half of me is gone..."
3. DISTANCE/CLOSE	3. "...the farthestest thing..." "...I'm glad we were close..."
4. COLOR	4. none
5. LOCATION	5. "...mostly straight in front..." "...worries go up..."
6. BRIGHTNESS/DIM	6. dim
7. MOVEMENT/STILL	7. "still"

**Co-researcher #3**

**MOURNING**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF REPORT</b>
1. BRIGHTNESS/DIM	1. bright
2. SIZE	2. "biggest"
3. DISTANCE	3. "...we were close..."
4. LOCATION/POSITION	4. "...to the right..."
5. MOVEMENT/STILL	5. movie
6. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	6. "...growing sense that God is in charge..."

**Co-researcher #4**  
**Self**  
**GRIEF**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>ART WORK/SELF REPORT</b>
1. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	1. "I am lonely" "...the expansive space..." "...at times comical..."
2. COLOR	2. "greyness" "faded" "atmosphere" "disappear or invisible..."
3. LOCATION	3. "...in the middle..." "...flattened & horizontal"
4. MOVEMENT/STILL	4. "...thick enough to drag myself..." "...stopped time...eternity"
5. SIZE	5. "...small..."
6. 2-D / 3-D	6. 2-Dimensional



**Co-researcher #4**  
**Self**

**MOURNING**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>ART WORK/SELF REPORT</b>
1. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	1. "...more visibility..." "...more spontaneity..."
2. COLOR	2. bright, shiny, gold, blue, red
3. TRANSPARENCY	3. solid, 3-dimensional "more visible"
4. LOCATION	4. vertical, upward, central
5. MOVEMENT/STILL	5. upward, mobile, "I want to fly..." "...spread my wings..."
6. SIZE	6. bigger than life size "more visible"

**Co-researcher #5**

**GRIEF**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF-REPORT</b>
1. BRIGHTNESS/DIM	1. "flashing"
2. SIZE	2.
3. DISTANCE	3. "throwing this away..."
4. LOCATION	4. "low, hit bottom, floored, dumped"
5. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	5. "lonely, alone, ...pushed him away"
6. COLOR	6. "gray cloud,...fog"
7. CLARITY/FOCUS	7. "shattered, falling to pieces..."

**Co-researcher #5**

**MOURNING**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF-REPORT</b>
1. BRIGHTNESS/DIM	1.
2. SIZE	2.
3. DISTANCE	3.
4. LOCATION	4.
5. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	5.
6. COLOR	6.
7. CLARITY/FOCUS	7.

NO REPORT

**Co-researcher #6**

**GRIEF**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF-REPORT</b>
1. SIZE	1. "...he's so far away..." "...kinda small"
2. LOCATION/POSITION	2. "...in front..."
3. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	3. "...there's no connection..."
4. COLOR	4. "...no color..."
5. BRIGHTNESS/DIM	5. "...sorta dim..."
6. CLARITY/FOCUS	6. "...foggy around my husband..."
7. TRANSPARENCY	7. (No report)

**Co-researcher #6**

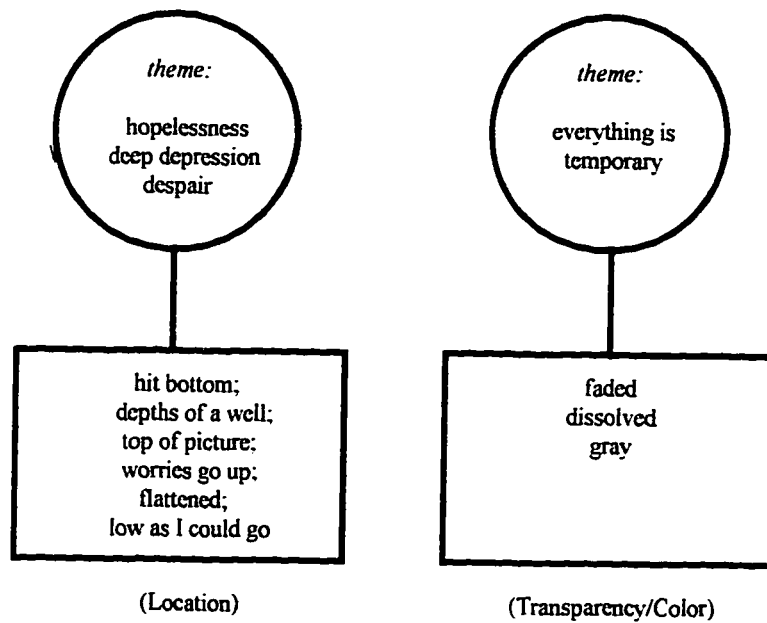
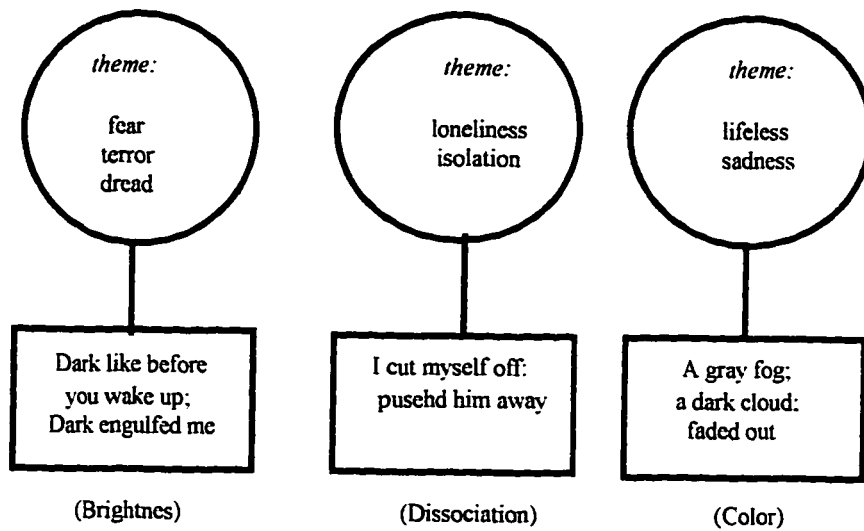
**MOURNING**

<b>SUBMODALITIES</b>	<b>DIAGRAM/SELF-REPORT</b>
1. SIZE	1. "big, lifesize, (panoramic)and close"
2. LOCATION/POSITION	2. "directly in front"
3. ASSOCIATION/DISSOCIATION	3. "peaceful..."
4. COLOR	4. "about average"
5. BRIGHTNESS/DIM	5. "vivid"
6. CLARITY/FOCUS	6. "clear"
7. TRANSPARENCY	7. more solid than the grief image

## **Appendix F**

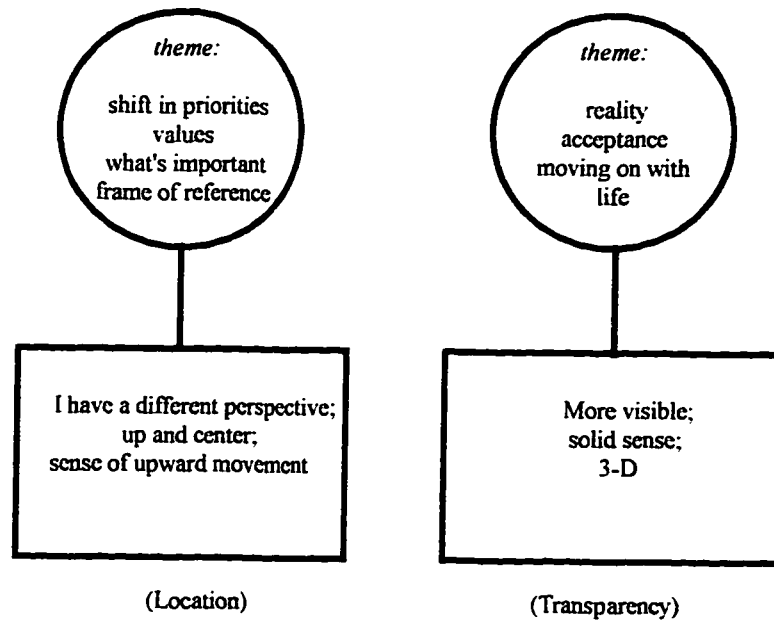
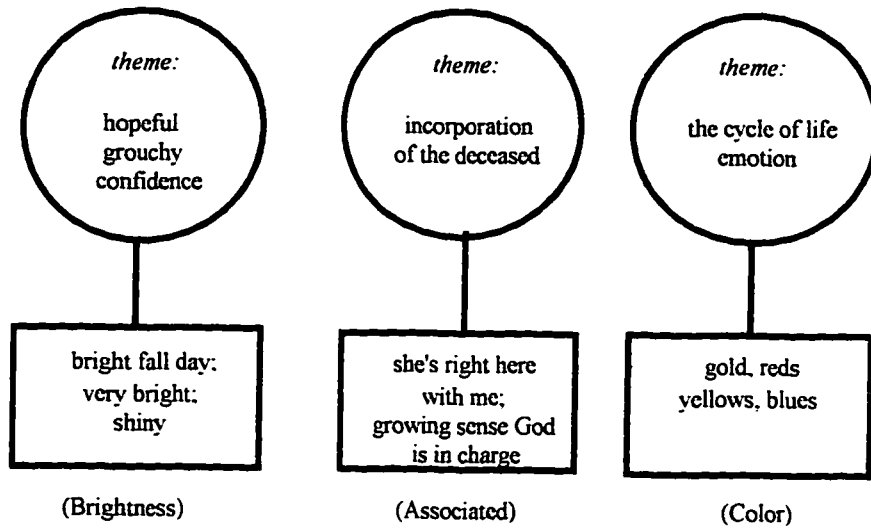
# GRIEF

## composite



# MOURNING

## composite





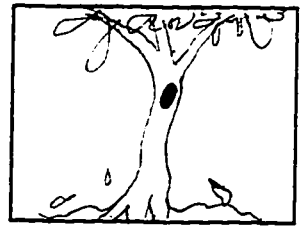
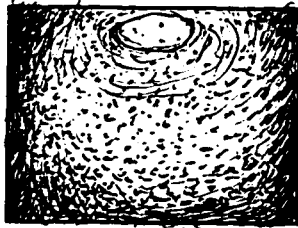
## **Appendix G**

Co-researcher

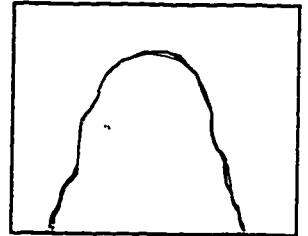
GRIEF

MOURNING

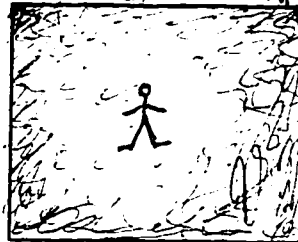
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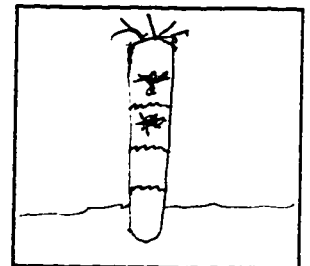
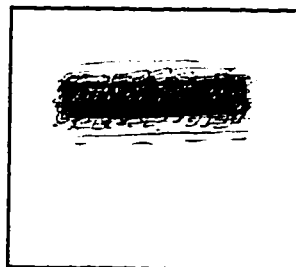
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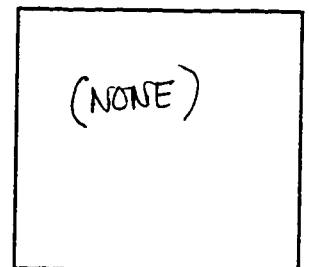
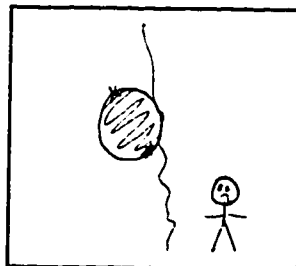
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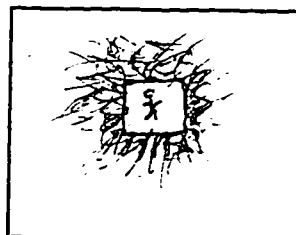
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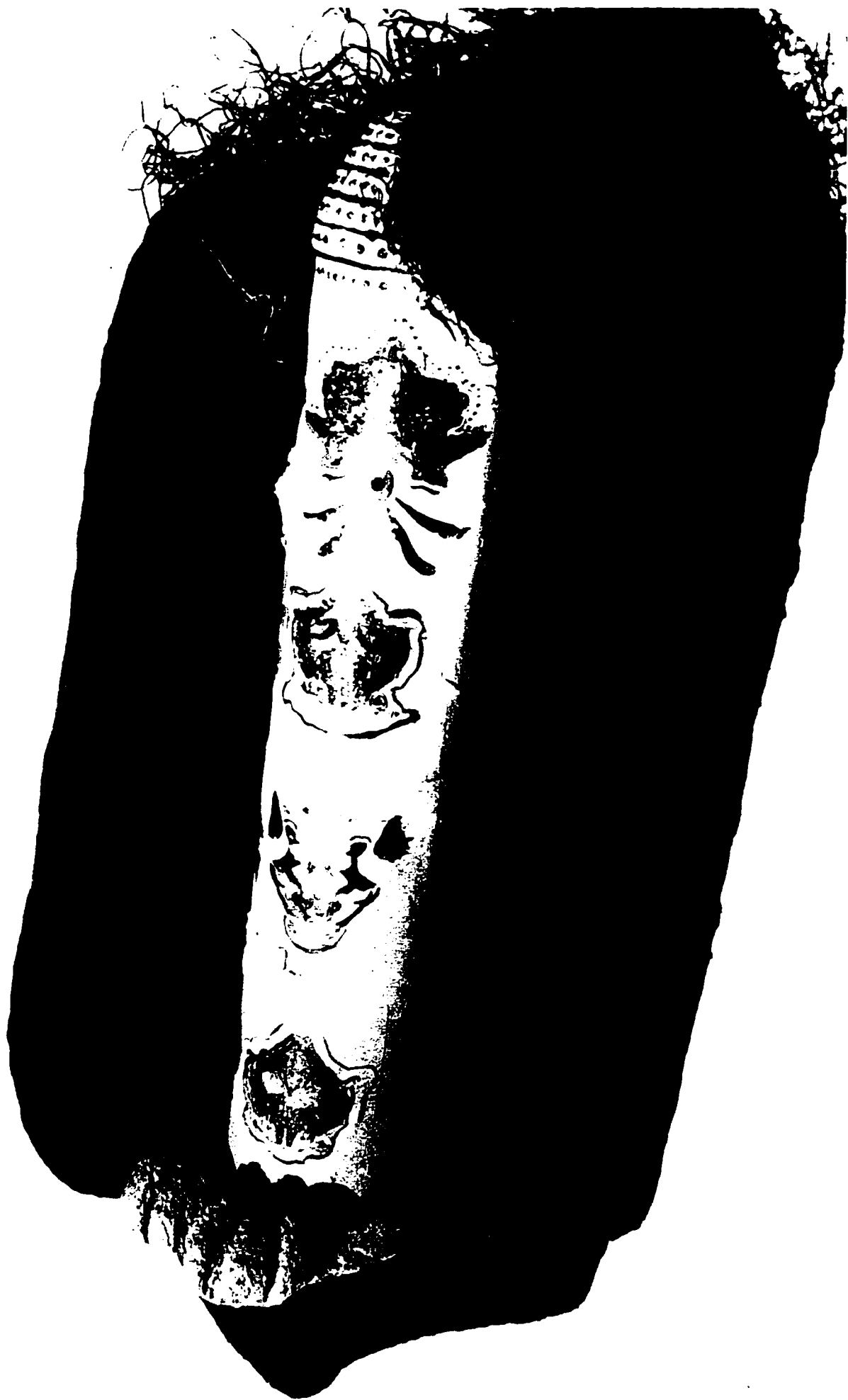
#5



#6



## **Appendix H**



- Bottom -

