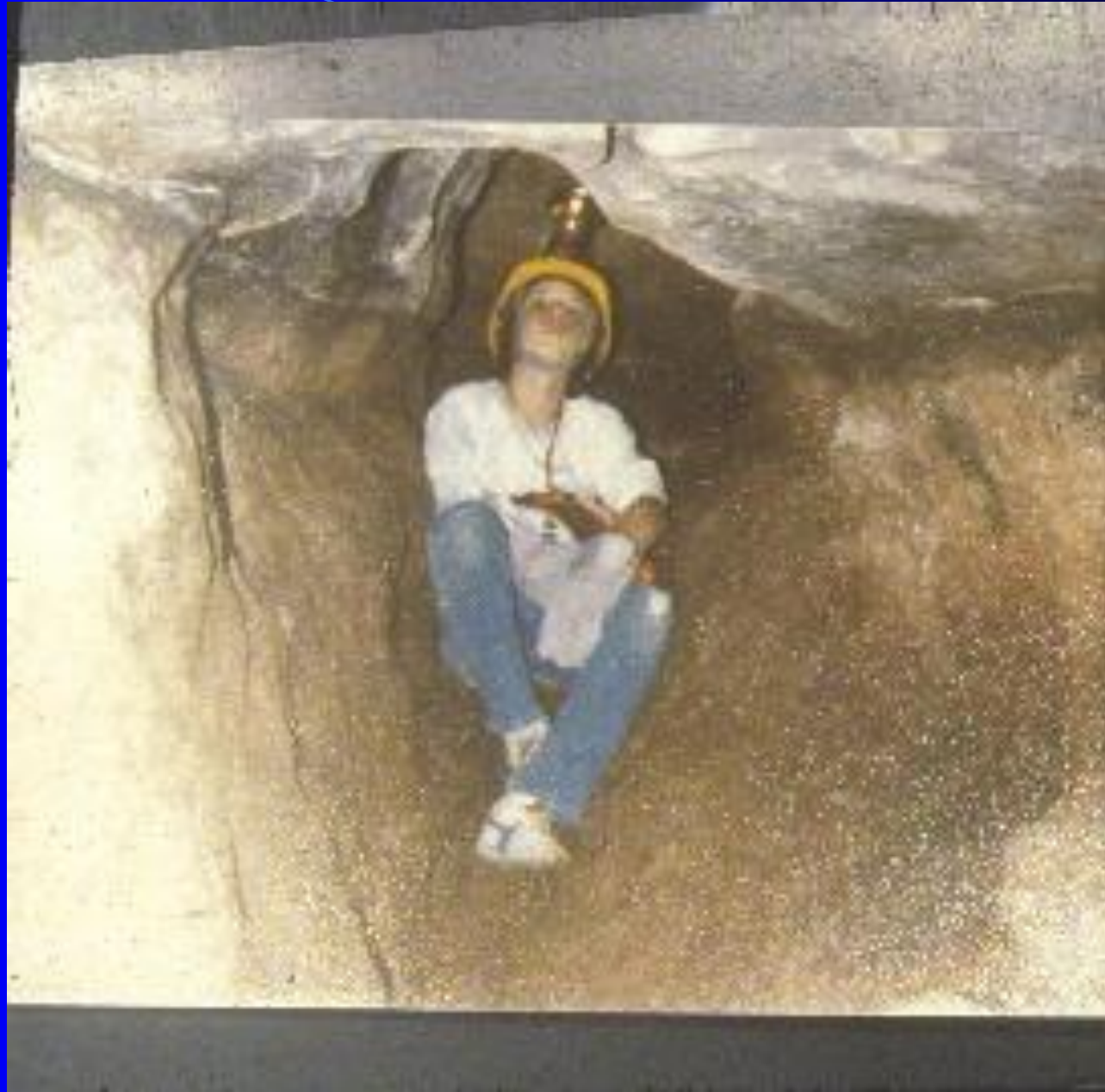


Growing in Grief

Kenneth J. Doka, PhD

Professor Emeritus, The College of New Rochelle
Senior Vice-President, The Hospice Foundation of America

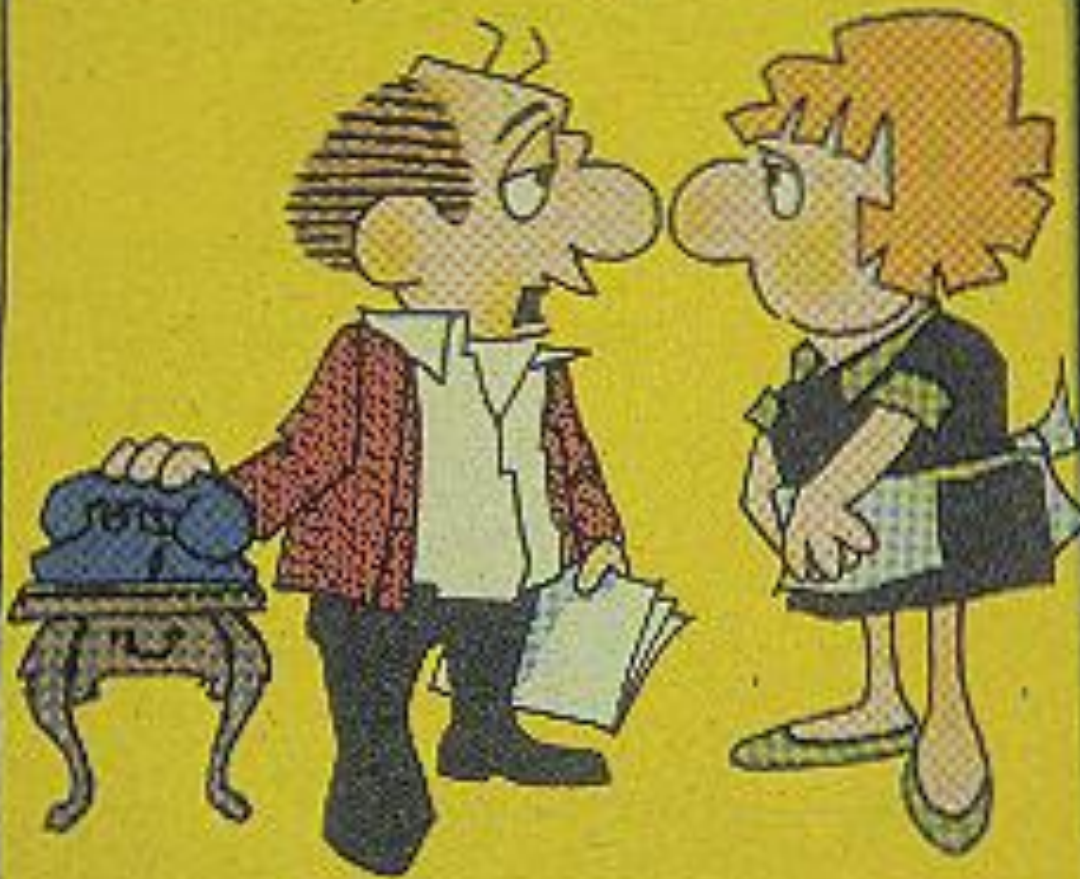




"Relax, honey—change is good."




"Don't stand so erect! You want to GROW like that?!"

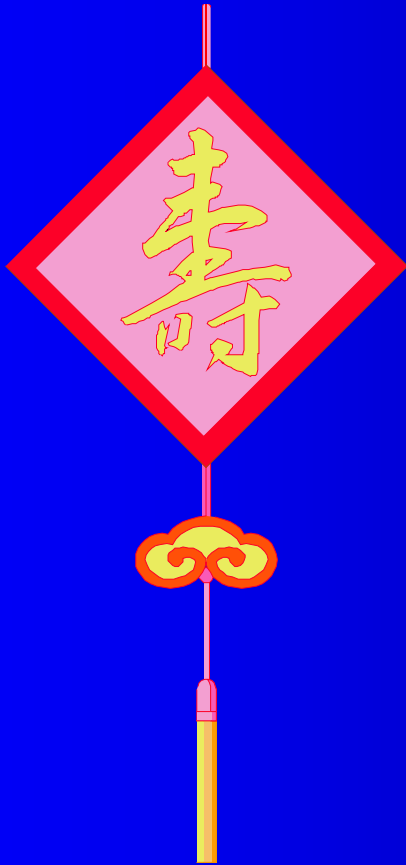


"THE HOSPITAL SAID YOUR
MOTHER'S CONDITION IS SATISFACTORY,
BUT THEY DIDN'T SAY TO WHOM."

Can grief be an impetus to
new growth?



Loss as a Transforming Event



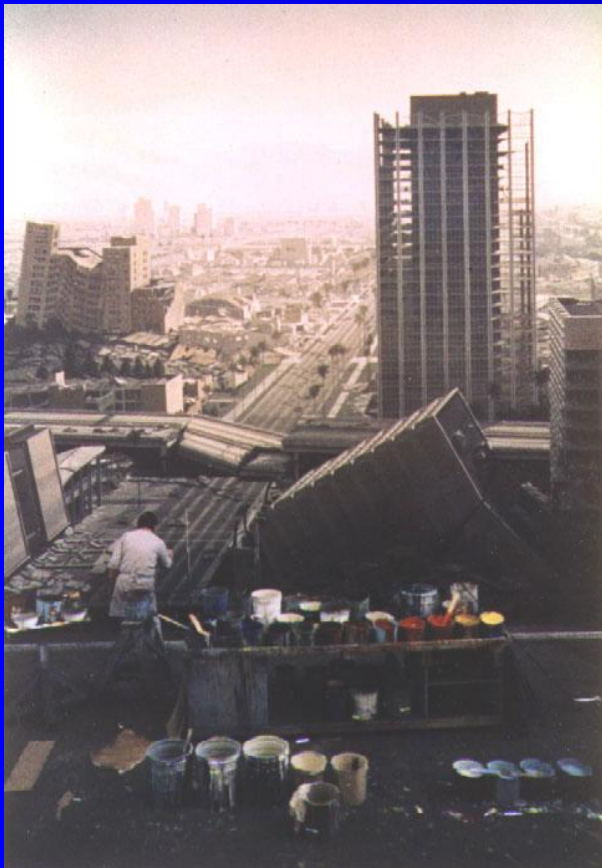
- Crises offers Challenge and Opportunity.

Transformative Grief

- In Celtic Mythology, *thin places* are places where the boundaries between this world and the other world are permeable
- In a sense, grief exists within this thin place



Significant or Traumatic Loss



- Significant or traumatic losses are seismic events that not only cause emotional distress but challenge beliefs, goals, and one's sense of personal narrative
- Life is now divided into before and after the event
(Calhoun & Tedeschi)

A Lesson From Winnie the Pooh

- *"If ever there is tomorrow when we're not together.. there is something you must always remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. but the most important thing is, even if we're apart.. I'll always be with you."*
Winnie the Pooh (A.A. Milne)



Catherine Sanders

Professionally and personally offered
a model of grief as a transformative
force

Sanders' Phases of Grief

- Shock
- Awareness of Loss
- Conservation – Withdrawal

Choices in the Conservation- Withdrawal Phase

- To die
- To maintain the status quo
- The decision to change

Sanders' Phases (Con't)

- The Turning Point
- Renewal
- A suggested “Sixth Phase” – Fulfillment

The Mysterious Math of Grief

- $3-1=2$
- $3-1=0$
- $3-1=5$

Parental Loss and Achievement

Motivation a “will to power and
control”

Eisenstadt

Blooming Widows

Widows who are socially constrained
may be pushed into greater self-
reliance with rise in sense of self-
esteem

Calhoun & Tedeschi

Spiritual Alchemy



- The ability to create positive meaning from negative experiences
- To Jozefowski, an essential attribute is a person's inner spirituality (as distinct from religion which is following a belief system)

Jozefowski, 1999

What is the relation of resilience to transformation?

- Are resilient people more likely to experience transformation?
- It depends
- If one defines resilience as the ability to transform negative experiences, certainly yes
- If you define transformation in line with Calhoun & Tedeschi's sense of post traumatic growth, then resilient people are less likely to experience significant personal growth since they weather the trauma well

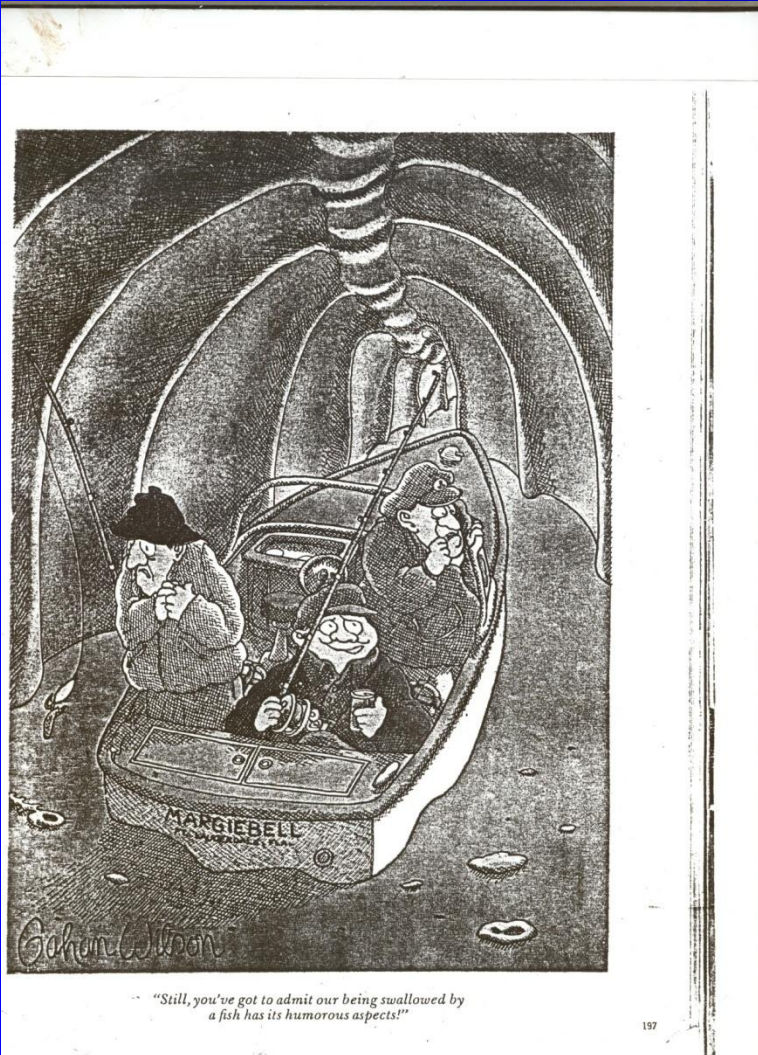


Resilience as a Pattern

- Some people have a comparatively limited reaction to loss
- Part is situational – Resilient grievers had fewer losses or other stress, death not sudden so chance to say goodbye, intrinsic spirituality, and good psychological health – loss as a challenge



Resilient Grievers

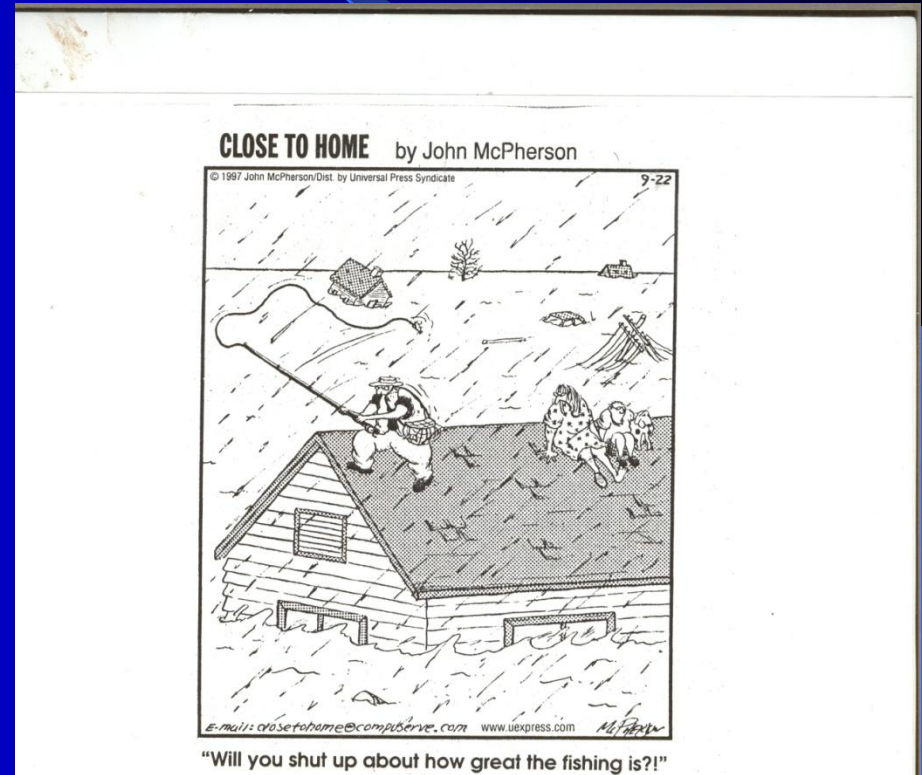


- Had an optimistic mindset
- Responded to challenges
- A belief that even in the worst things, they could learn and grow
- Engendered positive memories

Summary

Transformation and Resilience

- Both have in common the ability to create something positive out of a negative experience
- In resilience this occurs almost naturally, while the transformative model stresses struggle
- Calhoun & Tedeschi suggest there is a curvilinear relationship as some resilience is needed in order to grow
- Here the focus is on the transformative as resilient persons are likely to enter counseling for validation
- The Scott and While study suggests persons may share common characteristics



Possible Changes

- Greater Appreciation of Life, Relationships, and Priorities
- Growth in Character – Perceptions of Strength
- Existential Awareness
- Growth in Skills
- Changes in Lifestyle
- Renewed Spirituality

Calhoun & Tedeschi



Scott & White Grief Study

Adaptive model

1. Social support
2. Absence of previous mental health history
3. Fewer other losses
4. Perceived low preventability
5. Personal growth model
6. Seeing some good resulting from the death
7. Having a chance to say goodbye to the loved one
8. Intrinsic spirituality
9. Spontaneous positive memories of the deceased

(Gamino, Sewell & Easterling, 2000)

How Can We Enhance Transformation?

- Language of Survivorship
- Empowering Language – Challenge, Courage, Confidence (Chappelear)
- Small choices empower bigger ones
- Assist clients in developing a mission
- Examination of positive and negative adaptations
- Reflection “*How has this loss changed you?*”
- “*Can you imagine what your life would be like (what you would have become) if this had not happened?*”
- The value of “benefit finding” in the experience of grief

Looking Backward



- What is lost?
- What is left?
- Reviewing strengths
 - Internal
 - External

Looking Forward



- What do I need to bring from my old life into my new life?
- What do I need to leave behind?
- What do I need to add?

Locking Forward, Backward

- Consistent with the Dual Process Model of Stroebe and Schut (1999)
- Allows acknowledge of loss while adjusting to a new life created by loss



Grief Counseling



- Studies show that clients will do better in groups when leaders have transformation rather than coping as a goal of therapy or support

Support Groups



- Lund found that one of the other benefits of support groups was a sense of using your own negative experience to assist others

Transformative Group Technique: *Grief Narrative*



- Begin each session with a group round
- *How has my story changed since the last session?*
- Focused on what was learned, new insights, skills growth

Looking Forward: A Group Exercise

- At termination
- Ask individuals in the group where they will be a year from now if you meet in the future



Summary: Strength-Based Grief Counseling

- Focuses on personal strengths
- Strengths of significant others
- Reviews strategies and solutions that worked in the past
- Focuses on hopes for future

