



Coping with Loss & change

Rev. Alan Donald

Woodrow Wilson:

If you want to make enemies, try to change something.

Change and loss in life is inevitable – what is important for us to know is not how to avoid it – we can't - but how do we respond to it!

John F. Kennedy:

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.



We all have some experience of Loss

- ✓ the ending of a relationship/divorce
- ✓ moving or migrating
- ✓ losing a job, our health, a role in life
- ✓ giving up something that mattered a lot
e.g. losing a dream
- ✓ loss of a pet
- ✓ changed roles within a family
- ✓ loss of the family home and friends
- ✓ loss of a planned future
- ✓ loss of a body part through illness or
accident



We will all be affected by a death at sometime in our lives

It is estimated that each day 500 women will become widows.

It is estimated that 175,000 men become widowers each year.

Approximately 165,000 children under the age of 16 years lose a parent.

About 12,000 children die in the UK each year.

Many others are affected by the death of a parent, a friend or a much-loved pet.



Loss & Bereavement often affects us emotionally at a very deep level



Virginia Ironside
*Journalist wrote after
loosing her father*
*'You do not work
through
bereavement
It works
through you'*

Loss and Bereavement

Loss broadly defined is being deprived of someone or something of value



Bereavement is when this happens to you – it is an **individual** experience and **cannot be predicted**



Grief in Bereavement

Grief is the reaction people have to any loss in their lives. It includes a wide range of responses which vary with each person

When people grieve they are coming to terms with what has changed in their lives and this takes varying periods of time. 6 months – 4 yrs

'The death of a family member or close friend is the most shattering and stressful event we will ever have to face.'



Grieving

- The intensity of the grief is dependant on a number of different factors -
 - a) the depth or meaning of relationship
 - b) the circumstances of the death
 - c) their social circumstances
 - d) their past experience.
 - e) their personality & character



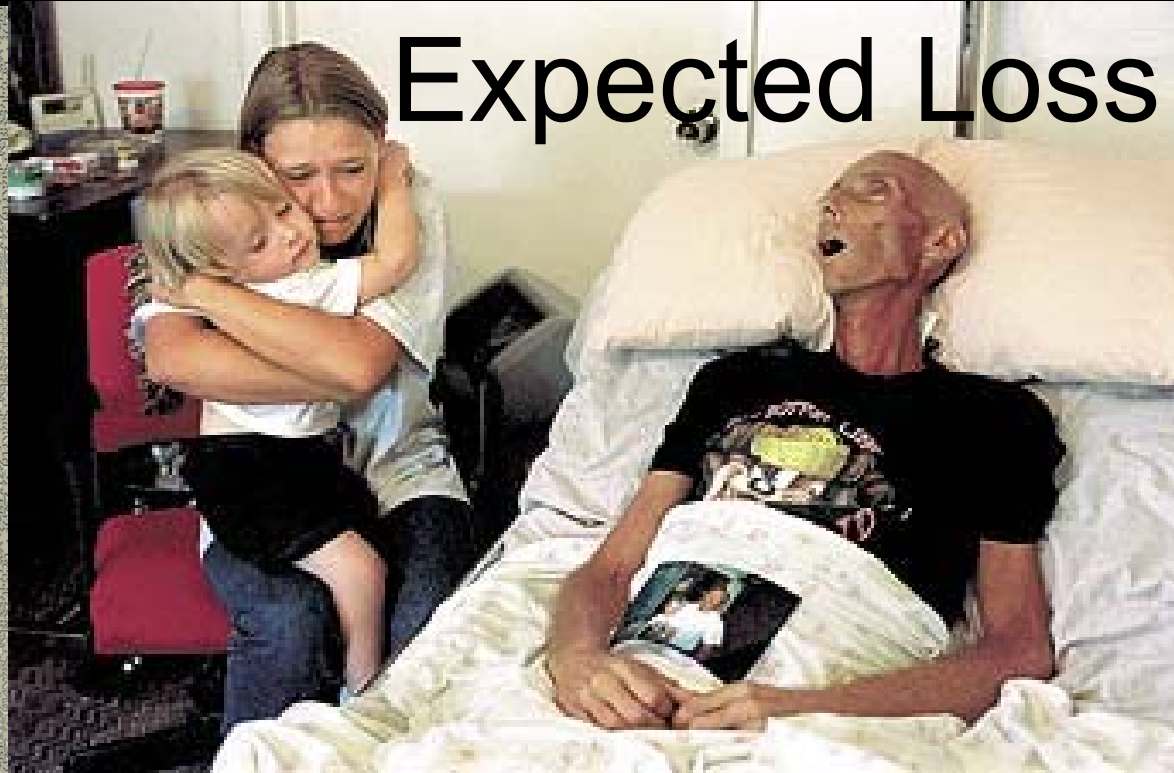
Sudden Loss



- This is where bereavement occurs very suddenly and unexpectedly.
- There may well be a need to see and touch their loved one to confirm their loss
- Denial and disbelief are usual reactions to sudden loss and can last for some weeks, even after the funeral.



Expected Loss



- No matter how expected a death was, the finality of death brings a sudden stab of grief, along with all the usual responses and feelings.
- There is often a kind of relief on the part of the family when their loved has struggled with the illness for a long time, however, this can lead to a sense of guilt.

Prince & Princess of Wales

Hospice

18/12/2006

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Common Reactions to Grief

Feelings/Emotions



Sadness, Despair, Anger, Tired, Emptiness,
Numbness, Disbelief, Denial, Regret, Distress,
Guilt, Relief, Fear, Lost, Isolation, Depressed,
Confusion, Shock, Yearning.

Common Reactions to Grief


Thoughts



Why? Could this have been prevented? I'm alone! How will I cope? Could I have done more? I want to die to! What have I got to do? How am I going to tell.....? What next? Relieved it's over! If only?

Common Reactions to Grief

Physical Symptoms



Physical exhaustion; Uncontrollable crying; Disruption of sleep; Chest pain and palpitations; Shortness of breath; Headaches; Recurrent infections; High blood pressure and racing pulse; Loss of appetite; Stomach upsets; General aches and pains; Hair loss; Disruption of the menstrual cycle; Irritability ; Worsening of any chronic condition such as eczema or asthma; Visual and auditory hallucinations

Common Reactions to Grief

Actions & Behaviours

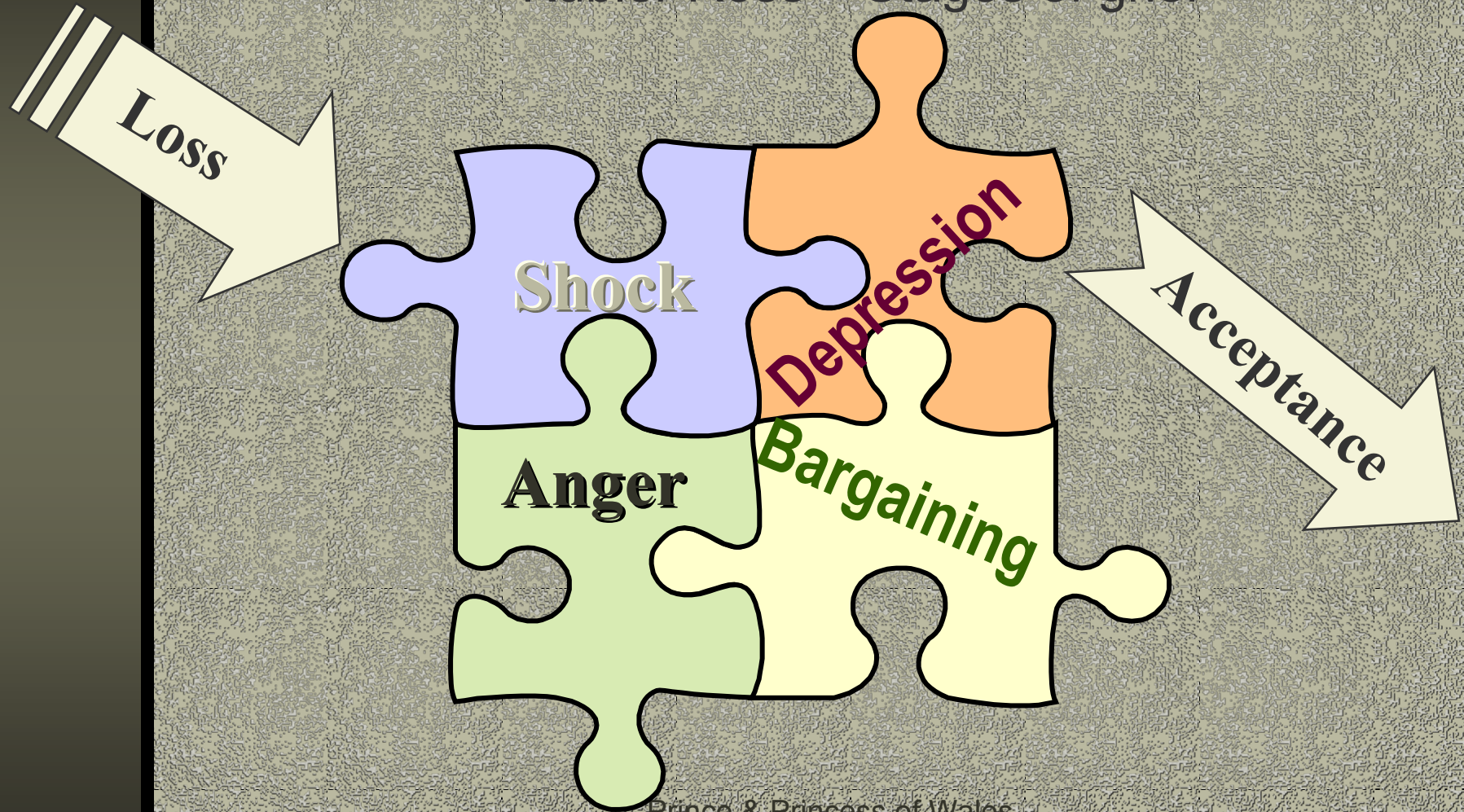


Scream, move away, compulsion to do something, seeing & talking to the deceased, need to have others around, need to be alone, crying, sobbing, need to be in control, anger & violence, agitated, drunk, organising everything, detached from surroundings



The Grief Process

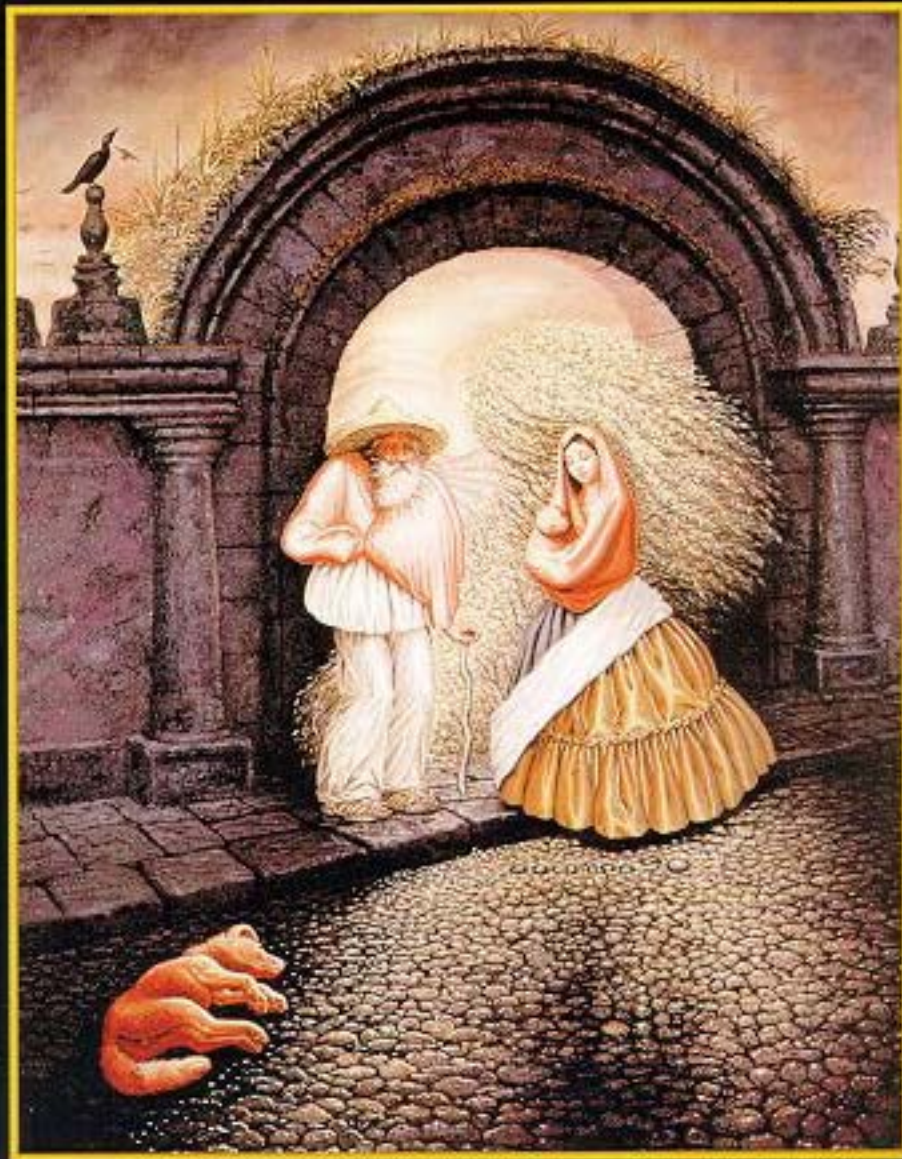
■ Kubler Ross – Stages of grief



Dual Process Model

Stroebe and Schut (1999)





How many
people do
you see?

We are rarely
dealing with
only one
person!

Wales



What can you do?

- 1 Contact the person as soon as you hear of the death. Tell them you are sorry to hear of their loss.
- 2 Maintain contact personally or by telephone, notes, cards. Visits need not be long.
- 3 LISTEN: This is possibly the most important thing you can do.
- 4 Talk about the person who has died.
- 5 Accept their behaviour crying, screaming, being quiet, laughing.
- 6 Allow expressions of anger, guilt and blame.
- 7 Indicate that grief takes time.
- 8 Include children in the grieving process.



Bereavement **always** takes TIME!

- ❖ Bereavement always takes TIME!
- ❖ Everyone is an individual.
- ❖ Each person copes in their own way.
- ❖ Bereavement has no 'quick fix solutions'.
- ❖ Feeling 'overwhelmed' at times is normal and often comes in 'waves'
- ❖ Sharing your feelings does help you to 'come to terms with your loss'
- ❖ *'It is important to acknowledge the need for grief'*



MANAGING BEREAVEMENT IN PRIMARY CARE : WITHALL (2002)

- **MAINTAINING BONDS**
- **WATCH FOR SIGNS OF DEPRESSION**
- **OVER 2YRS WATCH FOR SYMPTOMS
OF ILLHEALTH**
- **ACKNOWLEDGE ANNIVERSARIES &
DIFFICULT TIMES OF THE YEAR**
- **OBSERVE SOCIAL LIFE**



Quality of Presence

- Be Respectful - listen and give time
- Be Accepting - be non-judgemental
- Be Reassuring - this is normal
- Be Aware - recognise your own feelings



Listening

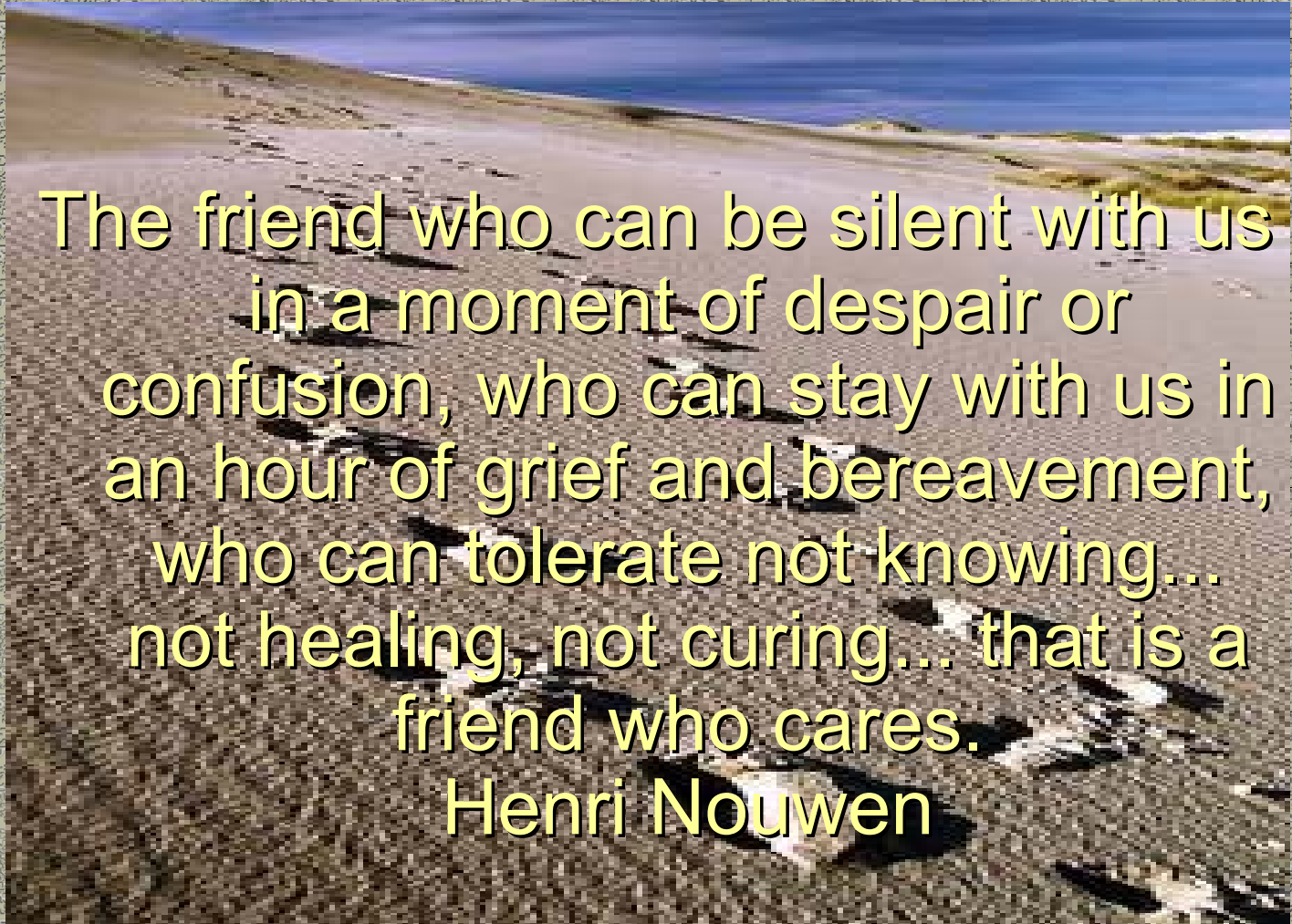
*The good listener is the best
physician for those who are ill in
thought and feeling*

*When we listen we can be a bridge
into spiritual connectedness for the
one torn apart by grief or fear*

Wilcock (1996)



HELPING THOSE GRIEVING

A photograph of a sandy beach with waves crashing against the shore. The sand is light-colored and the water is a deep blue. The sky is a pale blue. The text is overlaid on the image.

The friend who can be silent with us
in a moment of despair or
confusion, who can stay with us in
an hour of grief and bereavement,
who can tolerate not knowing...
not healing, not curing... that is a
friend who cares.
Henri Nouwen



Bereavement Support

- There will ALWAYS be things left
 - UNSAID
 - UNEXPRESSED
 - UNRESOLVED

This is to be expected and is natural



Be Aware of 'SELF'

- Take time to think why am I taking this course of action?
- Is it more about me ~ my fears, my sense of failure, my discomfort with death?
- Putting on a 'brave face' might fool others but will still leave you with all the feelings inside.
- Find someone you can trust or a trained counsellor to speak to and explore the whys.