Ignore the Dead

We Want the Living

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> *Oh, freedom! Oh, freedom!*
> *Oh, freedom over me!*
> *And before I'd be a slave,*
> *I'll be buried in my grave,*
> *And go home to my Lord and be free.*
>
> —Traditional Spiritual

One of the distinguishing aspects of New Orleans culture is the jazz funeral. Few cities bury their dead in the high style of this southern city, where a funeral can last a week and feature jazz bands and parades, which draw bigger crowds than weddings. The funeral is a major celebration with roots that have been passed down from Africa. After Africans were brought to America as slaves, providing a proper burial for those who passed away was important for surviving family members and friends who mourned their loss; it fulfilled a cultural tradition of properly honoring the dead. The brass bands that initially accompanied the dead on their way to the cemetery increased in popularity in New Orleans during the early 18th century and were frequently requested to play processional music at funerals. The practice of including music during funeral processions was derived from African cultural patterns of celebrating the diverse aspects of life; death was thus viewed as an important aspect of life.

However, this tradition was interrupted when Hurricane Katrina scattered the communities that made New Orleans funerals so extraordinary. The floods that took so many lives in New Orleans also forced the city's institutions of death (funeral homes, churches, and cemeteries) to shut down. Although holding crypts and refrigeration could preserve the dead, they could not do the same for the traditional New Orleans funeral, because family members, close friends, and neighbors were dispersed all over the country. The sheer number of fatalities made the task of providing each deceased individual with a

New Orleans style burial almost impossible. For thousands of survivors, the inability to provide loved ones with a traditional funeral filled them with guilt and complicated their grieving process. Many were unable to set aside thoughts of those who had died so tragically.

Thus, survivors viewed the statement made by FEMA director Michael Brown, "Ignore the dead we want the living," as lacking in compassion and culturally insensitive; it clearly failed to understand and appreciate the significance of a long-standing funeral tradition practiced by the residents of the Gulf Coast. Instead of focusing on their own survival, the dead and missing absorbed the attention of many survivors who were temporarily housed in shelters. As one survivor appropriately commented, "Those that are living can take care of themselves now . . . the dead cannot; we have to do our duty to those who have passed."

This chapter provides an overview of funeral and burial practices, the symbolic and ritualistic meaning that these practices hold for bereaved families, and coping and recovery after the loss of a loved one. This introduction is followed by a discussion of the different stages of grieving and mourning and a review of some diverse burial practices and the New Orleans jazz funeral in particular. The chapter ends with a discussion of different practices to memorialize the dead and celebrate anniversaries.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

✦ Discusses the ritualistic aspects of funerals;

✦ Outlines strategies to help bereaved individuals overcome loss;

✦ Describes the stages of mourning and grieving;

✦ Outlines some diverse funeral practices, specifically the jazz funeral; and

✦ Discusses the significance of anniversaries and memorials.

THE FUNERAL AS A RITUAL

Funerals are ritualized life events that give survivors opportunities to celebrate the lives of those who have died and an opportunity for mourners to receive support from others. Research evidence suggests that funeral rituals help in the adjustment of bereaved persons (Bolton & Camp, 1986, 1989). These rituals represent both psychosocial and therapeutic benefits for adults and children (Fulton, 1995; Irion, 1990; Marrone, 1997). Thus, ignoring the dead after a major disaster is not wise; it does not support the healing and recovery of survivors.

Bereaved individuals derive many benefits from funeral services or similar rites of passage when a loved one dies. First, the funeral ritual enhances mourners' recovery after the death of a loved one by facilitating and/or renewing the social support of friends and family members whom they may have not seen for a long time but who may attend the funeral. Second, the ritual of the funeral helps bereaved individuals to establish a deeper connection

with the deceased so that the loss experience can be meaningfully contextualized and better understood (Gamino, Easterling, & Stirman, 2000).

According to Fulton (1995), funerals serve important psychological functions of separation and integration. Separation functions are those that acknowledge that a death has occurred; by disposing of human remains through a burial or cremation, there is a symbolic acceptance of the finality of death. The process allows mourners to come to terms with the fact that the deceased will no longer be around. Thus, an initial step toward healing is taken by the ritual of the funeral ceremony.

In addition, funerals give bereaved individuals the opportunity to express their grief publicly while surrounded by family, friends, and other community members. It symbolically acknowledges their loss. This acknowledgment plays a central role in the recovery of survivors, especially those who experience a loss as traumatic. Moreover, the religious rituals that are sometimes conducted at funerals provide survivors with opportunities for spiritual and psychological closure.

Integration functions, according to Fulton (1995), are those functions that support the social order by encouraging survivors to integrate the loss experience into their lives. Funerals provide opportunities to eulogize and pay tribute to the deceased and to socially support the bereaved through fellowship and communal togetherness, and funerals can enhance integration by contextualizing the loss in a religious or philosophical framework of afterlife and continuity.

According to Irion (1990), funerals are human rituals in which bereaved individuals seek a connection with the dead and find meaning in it. In addition, the ritual of the funeral ceremony provides mourners with opportunities to express their feelings of grief and to affirm that life is valuable and something to be celebrated even in the face of death. Thus, funerals are often conducted for the living and not the dead.

Participation in funerals can help the bereaved individual gain "symbolic mastery" over death (Doka, 1984). For example, the bereaved can actively participate in the planning of the funeral ceremony itself, which provides symbolic mastery and imbues survivors with a sense of control and empowerment. In addition, participation in preparing and planning how the funeral will be conducted can aid in the survivor's adjustment after the loss of a loved one. In a study conducted among 74 mourners, active participation in planning funeral services was found to be highly correlated with the subsequent grief adjustment of participants (Gamino et al., 2000). Those who found the funeral "comforting" and/or who participated in planning the funeral reported fewer grief reactions. They also fared better psychologically at a follow-up assessment that was conducted. The benefits of participating in funeral ceremonies included receiving and providing support and comfort as well as allowing for public expressions of grief (Lemming & Dickson, 1994; Welford, 1992).

In another study, Bolton and Camp (1986, 1989) found that grief adjustment among widowed individuals correlated positively with their level of participation in rituals prior to, during, and following funeral rites. Acknowledging gifts or sympathy cards, sorting and disposing of the personal effects of the deceased, and visiting the burial site of the deceased were reported as activities that integrated loss and improved the adjustment of the bereaved. Similarly, the simple act of attending a funeral and/or burial service was found to enhance recovery. In contrast, bereaved individuals who did not attend a funeral displayed significantly greater emotional distress (Faschingbauer, 1981).

Hayslip, Booher, Riddle, and Guarnaccia (2005), in a study that examined participants' attitudes toward funerals, found that the funeral was a much-needed opportunity for bereaved individuals to express their grief in a public arena while receiving emotional support from family and friends. They concluded that the funeral itself can thus be conceptualized as a form of intervention.

The nature of funerals has changed in recent years and currently better reflects the psychosocial needs of bereaved persons and communities (Irion, 1990). Indeed, there is evidence that the funeral is generally positively viewed by the public (Fulton, 1995). Middle-aged and older adults find the traditional funeral ritual to be more valuable than younger adults do. Given the therapeutic value of funerals, it behooves grief counselors and other professionals in the helping field to encourage bereaved clients to participate in appropriate and culturally relevant funeral practices (Bowen, 1991). In situations where funeral participation may not be possible (e.g., travel to the funeral is prohibitive or no formal services are held), mourners should be encouraged to construct a personally meaningful bereavement ceremony to acknowledge their loss, facilitate their healing, and support their recovery (Bosley & Cook, 1993; Rando, 1988).

HELPING THE BEREAVED

In a study conducted among bereaved individuals, Cook and Bosley (2001) found that participants viewed the opportunity to express sad emotions and discuss the loss of a loved one as helpful. However, they perceived helpers who focused on giving advice and who were hasty in promoting recovery to be insensitive and disregarding of their feelings of sadness and not providing them with enough opportunities to share their concerns.

Similarly, Balk (1997) found that bereaved families that reminisced about loved ones, shared pleasant memories, and discussed death openly recovered sooner. Crying, engaging in rituals, and focusing on the present were actions that improved coping abilities and helped bereaved individuals adapt to their losses. In addition, such individuals believed in the importance of resuming their normal routines as soon as possible; staying busy was perceived as one way of coping. They also believed that their loved ones were better off in death, especially if intense pain and suffering preceded their passing. Bereaved individuals valued receiving acknowledgment about their loss and the significance of the deceased individual in their lives. Establishing and maintaining connections with other bereaved individuals, especially those who were going through similar experiences of loss and grief, was perceived as valuable.

Similar findings were reported in a study conducted by Castle and Phillips (2003), who also found that adjustment after the loss of a loved one was facilitated by participation in appropriate funeral rituals. In addition, study participants reported that reminiscing about a deceased individual was often experienced as more therapeutic than professional counseling.

An increasing number of professionals in the helping field are beginning to recognize rituals as powerful tools in managing death. When mourners participate in grief rituals with others who are supportive and empathic, their coping abilities are vastly improved (Klass, 2001; Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998).

Bereaved individuals who experience the sudden death of a loved one interact with many professionals in the immediate aftermath of their loss. The way they are treated by professionals during this critical period shapes the grieving process and how they later manage and cope with their loss. When support is not perceived as helpful, it may prolong and complicate the grieving process. The personal and social costs that can occur from inept or inadequate professional interventions can be quite steep (Janzen, Cadell, & Westhues, 2003). Providing bereaved individuals with appropriate information about their loss may be a core contributing factor to helping them make sense of what has happened; those who are adequately informed about the details of their loss usually adjust better and improve more quickly (Winje, 1998).

Losing someone intiates a period of crisis for most people and thus calls for the development and restoration of coping mechanisms. Crisis theory has much to offer in terms of informing mental health professionals on how to help survivors regain a sense of control and make appropriate choices as they move toward a resolution of the crisis (Golan, 1979). In this way, the manner in which the crisis is dealt with can positively influence the grieving process (Wheeler, 1994). Briefly, the principles of crisis theory encourage helping professionals to observe the following guidelines when working with those who experience a loss:

a. Normalize and validate feelings and experiences

b. Provide information about grief (reactions and phases to expect)

c. Provide referral and resources to help during the grieving process (e.g., support and grief group)

d. Offer immediate assistance in problem solving, perhaps involving advocacy on behalf of the client

e. Listen intently and empathically so that nothing is missed

f. Facilitate the acquisition of basic needs (food, shelter, etc.)

Those that want to help in crisis situations should be skilled in these principles. In addition, knowledge of the stages of mourning and the process that bereaved individuals can expect in both the short and long term is necessary.

Stages of Mourning and Loss

One of the greatest challenges that people face is the death of a loved one. Freud (1959) defined *mourning* as the gradual withdrawal of libido from the loved object that results in dejection, disinterest, and detachment from others and the environment. Recovery from loss occurs when the libido is no longer invested in the person who has passed but is reinvested in a new object (Leick & Davidson-Nielsen, 1991).

Bereavement often results when a loved one dies and grief is the affective expression of bereavement, expressed in feelings of sorrow, guilt, and confusion. Grief comes from the Latin word *grevis* (meaning "something grave and serious"), implying that when we grieve, we are gravely and seriously affected by sorrow (Coryell, 1998). Some people may experience bereavement for a long time without the accompanying reactions of grief. However, at some point, the affective experience of grief has to occur for full recovery from a loss to take place.

Mourning is the physical expression of grief and often influenced by cultural factors. For example, wearing black, crying, praying, and removing oneself from others may be part of a cultural tradition. Worden (1991) describes the four tasks of mourning as follows:

a. Accepting the reality of the loss by coming to terms with the fact that the loved one will no longer be physically around: This acceptance results in a reduction of denial.

b. Grieving and its physical expressions (crying, yelling, or ruminating): This allows for a full expression of loss.

c. Adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing can be challenging for survivors: The survivor has to find new ways of coping and adopt new roles in the absence of a loved one.

d. Withdrawing emotional energy from the deceased and reinvesting it in new relationships is necessary: This can be experienced as a betrayal by some survivors, but those in the helping professions can help survivors to deal with the guilt that may be generated by helping them acknowledge and accept that although the loved one may not be around, he or she will not be forgotten.

Several models of grief and loss have been proposed. For example, Bowlby (1980) described the four phases of mourning as progressing along the following lines: numbing, yearning, and searching for the loved one; and disorganization, despair, and reorganization. However, a widely accepted model on loss and grief was developed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969), who did extensive work with terminally ill patients. The model identifies five stages of death and dying. It has universal applicability and is useful for people who are dying as well as those emotionally close to them. The different stages are descriptive of the antici-pated grieving process. Not every individual goes through each stage, and the stages do not necessarily occur in a predictable sequence:

a. Denial and isolation describes the initial reaction to loss; shock and numbness become pervasive and mourners report feelings of disbelief.

b. Anger follows as the reality of having lost someone sinks in. Rage, envy, resentment, and bitterness may surface as bereaved individuals ask: Why me? How could this happen? Why is life so unfair? Sometimes the anger is directed toward the person who has died, and some survivors may criticize the deceased for not having taken better precautions to maintain their health and well-being, while others may blame the deceased for contributing to their death (e.g., by driving too fast). Feelings of abandonment may become strong at this stage, and sometimes feelings of anger and disappointment may be directed toward institutions and the circumstances that surround a disaster. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, many survivors felt deep resentment toward state and federal institutions for an inadequate response and the hurricane itself for wreaking the havoc it did.

   c. Bargaining occurs as individuals begin to make pacts or promises, hoping that this will obviate an impending loss. For example, survivors may make promises to go to church more regularly or donate money to a charity if a loved one heals or recovers from an illness.

   d. Depression results as the reality of the loss is slowly accepted. Sadness, guilt, pessimism, and a sense of worthlessness become pervasive at this stage.

   e. Acceptance is initiated as mourners disengage from the loss, and the working-through phase of recovery begins at this point.

Mourning is a long-term process and people have different ways of dealing with it. Holidays, anniversaries, and family events may interrupt and complicate the process. Although mourning takes a long time, when the bereaved individual is able to think and talk about a loved one without feeling overwhelming sadness and pain, mourning is considered over.

DIVERSE FUNERAL PRACTICES

The literature on crisis intervention increasingly calls attention to cultural sensitivity when working with diverse communities (Brock, Lazarus, & Jimerson, 2002; Heath & Sheen, 2005; Rabalais, Ruggiero, & Scotti, 2002; Sandoval & Lewis, 2002). However, practical application lags behind what is proposed in the research literature. Cultural sensitivity and understanding, and knowing how to appropriately meet the needs of individuals and families from diverse backgrounds, continue to present challenges to many mental health professionals (Pedersen, 2003; Sue & Sue, 2003). These skills will be more severely tested as U.S. society becomes increasingly diverse.

Recognizing the challenges of providing effective crisis intervention to people of diverse backgrounds, James and Gilliland (2001) state that "although crisis intervention is never easy, cultural insensitivity may make it even more difficult" (p. 26). Communities most in need of crisis and trauma-focused services tend to be ethnically and culturally diverse; as a result, when providing appropriate crisis services to such communities, people in the helping professions must strive to offer culturally appropriate interventions that are reflective of the cultural needs of diverse populations (Romualdi & Sandoval, 1995). For example, to appropriately minister to Asian Americans who experience the loss of a loved one, cultural awareness and an understanding of their perceptions of death is of paramount importance; knowing that their thanatology (interpretation of death) is a part of their ontology (how they exist), from generation to generation, is indispensable (Kwon, 2006).

Another group that may need culturally specific interventions after death are Southeast Asians. An example of an intervention that was initially conducted with a lack of cultural sensitivity was the Stockton schoolyard shooting, a tragic event that occurred in Stockton, California, in 1989, when a man randomly fired shots from his AK-47 rifle across a school's playground. Five students were killed in the incident, and a teacher and 29 students were wounded. The school served approximately 70% students of Southeast Asian descent (Armstrong, 1991). Because most of the parents did not speak English, communication became

a major barrier between the parents and school authorities. Although mental health professionals tried to assist families in the grieving process, these professionals were English speaking and therefore experienced major challenges in supporting the traumatized school community. Following the shooting, many students and their parents avoided returning to school because they believed that ghosts and evil spirits lurked in the hallways. After consultation with parents and community members, a Buddhist monk was invited into the school to perform exorcisms to rid the school of these spirits. This action was perceived as helpful by the parents and helped make the school environment more comfortable. Although not a typical intervention provided by mental health professionals, this was a culturally appropriate and unique intervention that met the needs of this particular community.

Although the fear of death is a universal phenomenon, people in different cultures have different ways of dealing with it. For example, in most of North America, mourning is viewed as a private matter. A 2-hour visiting period with the deceased occurs during the wake, which typically takes place in a funeral home. Mourners are encouraged to control their grief and return to their normal routine as quickly as possible. In contrast, the Black church plays a significant role in the funeral traditions of many African American communities (Holloway, 2002). Such communities hold long funeral services and tributes, which are perceived to honor the dead and testify to the great impact of their lives on the living. Opportunities to process the loss are often restricted to interactions with those in the mental health field through participation in grief groups rather than individual therapy. In some cultures, mourners are encouraged to publicly display their grief. For example, in Arab countries, women commonly ululate (a loud cry) to express their grief at funerals. Haitian women overtly display feelings of sadness and loss by beating their breasts as they wail loudly.

Sometimes there are cultural norms that structure the expression of loss after a funeral ceremony. For example, it is common for some members of Middle Eastern and Catholic cultures to wear black for a year after the loss of a loved one to symbolize a state of mourning. Similarly in South Asia, widows are required to wear white clothing for a year after the death of a spouse. Until recently, *sati* was commonly practiced among Hindu communities in India; widows were expected to immolate themselves on a husband's funeral pyre when he passed away.

Funerals and burial practices are a universal human social experience, and every society has a unique pattern of dealing with the death of its members. The Amish community offers a case in point; their mourning practices follow a defined structure that captures the simplicity and isolation of the Amish culture. After five schoolchildren were slain in Pennsylvania in 2006, the Amish showed quiet faith and strong communal bonds that helped them face a major tragedy and the media attention that the incident generated (Hampson, 2006). Amish funerals are held on the family property because they have no churches. The service, which is more than 2 hours long, is simple. There is no singing or eulogizing of the deceased; nor is there communion or flowers. Scripture is read in an old German dialect and sermons are delivered in the local Pennsylvanian Dutch dialect. Afterward, the casket is taken to a small Amish cemetery in a black horse-drawn hearse, followed by a long procession of horse-drawn carriages. At the grave, which is dug by hand, prayers are recited with perhaps a German hymn sung a cappella style (without any instruments). The casket is lowered into the ground and covered with soil. Later, the grave

is marked with a simple tombstone, the same size and shape as others, as a reminder that in death, everyone becomes equal. Mourners head back to the family farm for a hearty Amish meal of meat, potatoes, vegetables, and pies prepared and served by volunteers. Underscoring the whole process is a strong belief in a close, living God, an unseen actor who controls every aspect of life according to a script that is beyond the understanding of human beings.

Many non-Western cultures perceive death as the passage of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the dead. A great majority of cultures talk of a destiny beyond that of a single lifetime, and funeral rituals are structured to convey the deceased from the land of the living to whatever world they believe lies ahead. Death ceremonies in many non-Western cultures occur over a longer period of time, primarily because there is an expectation that many family members and friends will attend the funeral. Because they may have traveled long distances to pay their respects to the dead, there is an expectation that they will spend an extended period of time in the home of the deceased. For example, in Korean communities, family and friends come to the home of the deceased as soon as they hear about the death of a family member to offer their condolences. This visit lasts at least 70 hours or 3 days; visitors spend the time talking about the deceased, eating, drinking, and sometimes playing cards.

In most African countries, family and friends gather to sing, play the drum, and prepare the body for burial. African funeral processions are fairly common aspect of a ceremony, because the living are expected to support the dead on her or his way to the afterlife. Mourners value the structure of the death ritual to affirm their interconnectedness to their community. In addition, ceremonies for the deceased offer opportunities to re-evaluate and redefine social relationships, as loyalties shift from the person who has passed to those who are living (Hunter, 2007).

In Haitian culture, when a death is impending, the entire family gathers to pray and cry around the bed of the ill individual. Religious medallions and other spiritual artifacts are used in the prayer ceremonies. Once the person dies, the entire extended family becomes involved in the funeral ceremony. The oldest family member makes all the funeral arrangements and notifies family members, and the funeral is not held until it is convenient for all family members to attend. Mourning practices include *veye*, *dernier prive*, and *prise de deuil*. *Veye* are preburial activities. *Dernier prive* is a home-based ritual that consists of 7 days of continuous prayer and is believed to support the soul as it passes into the next world. *Prise de deuil*, which takes place on the 7th day, is similar to a funeral and begins the official mourning period (Colin & Paperwalla, 2003).

All cultures have a period of bereavement for those left behind, and all bereaved individuals experience a redefinition of roles that is the inevitable result of the absence of the deceased. Funerals fulfill many social and psychological functions, and the funeral ceremony is significant in commemorating the completion of human existence.

The Jazz Funeral

African Americans have maintained distinctly African funeral and memorial traditions based on the African belief that death is not the end of life but rather a transition into the spirit world. The majority of African belief systems are monotheistic and based on a hierarchical pattern,

with God at the highest point, followed by spirits, human beings, animals, and plants. When people die, they are elevated to the status of a spirit. In this form, they are capable of exercising control or authority over the living. Thus, proper burial practices are viewed as important, and there is a strong belief that the dead should be respected and revered.

The New Orleans jazz funeral procession is a tradition derived from West Africa, a place where many African people were captured and brought over to the New World to serve as slaves. The joyful music and exuberant dancing that accompany the funeral reflect the belief that the deceased is about to enter the domain of the spirit world and it is a moment to be celebrated. Rejoicing over death was also a symbolic response to a life of enslavement and oppression. Death became a triumph of redemption, an entry to freedom, and an escape from the oppression of slavery. According to historian Sybil Kein (2000), most slaves believed that when they died, their spirits would go back to the ancestral land of Africa. Death was therefore not a time for mourning but a celebration, because they believed it gave them a passage to the homeland. It was a belief that sustained them through difficult times and instilled them with hope. These African rituals, ways of thinking, and worldviews became a powerful part of the cultural memory of slaves in Louisiana. It is this idea of celebration that is epitomized in the jazz funeral, which is constructed as a tribute to life rather than a concession to death. Often, the funerals are arranged according to the wishes of the deceased who will sometimes choose the music and even the musicians who will play at their funerals.

The jazz funeral follows a detailed structure. A typical jazz funeral begins with a march by the family, friends, and a brass band to the cemetery from the home of the deceased, the funeral home, or the church. Throughout the march, the band plays somber dirges and hymns. A change in the tenor of the ceremony takes place after the deceased is buried, when the hearse leaves the procession and members of the procession say their final farewell. The body is considered to be "cut loose" at this point. Then the music becomes more upbeat, often starting with a hymn or spiritual music played in a swinging fashion and continuing with more popular, upbeat tunes. This is followed by raucous music and cathartic dancing; onlookers can join the procession at this point to celebrate the life of the deceased. Those who follow the band just to enjoy the music are called the "second line." They sometimes twirl a parasol or handkerchief in the air as they walk or dance.

The grave is a powerful point of contact between the world of the living and the dead. In the American South, for example, the burial traditions of the Bakonga African culture have persisted. Mourners who follow this cultural tradition place a variety of objects on graves to assist the deceased in their spirit journey home and to discourage spirits from haunting the living in search of their belongings. Thus, objects placed on graves include those owned by the deceased, such as clocks, dishes, and other objects that are broken to free the spirit. White objects, especially shells, are common grave decorations, because the world of the dead is considered to be "white and watery." There is evidence that some of these practices were taken to the American North, where non-Christian burial traditions have persisted. The recent excavation of a 19th-century African American cemetery in Philadelphia revealed that shoes, coins, and plates had been placed on some burial sites, reflecting the African belief in the use of such items by the deceased on their journey to the spirit world.

Unfortunately, most people whose lives were abruptly taken by Hurricane Katrina were not honored with the traditional jazz funeral. Instead, they remained unidentified, stored in warehouses with a simple toe tag, until they were found by family members several days, weeks, and months after the storm. This anonymity in death was perceived as disrespectful of the deceased. Mourning for many survivors became complicated by the fact that they were not able to give their loved ones a proper burial, which highlighted the multiple losses they already experienced by the storm.

MEMORIALIZING THE DEAD

Creating a memorial to remember a loved one is important in preserving the memory of the deceased person; in this way, it establishes a new relationship with the deceased. Mental health professionals can contribute to this process by helping bereaved individuals explore ways they may want to memorialize the dead. One of the central goals of the grieving process is incorporating memories of the deceased into the bereaved individual's life in a different way; it involves planning and preparing for a new life without the deceased person (Rando, 1993).

Rituals and other forms of memorializing surged after the 9/11 terrorist attacks; they were public expressions of grieving that held important meaning for mourners (Lawrence, 2005). According to *U.S. News & World Report* (Schulte, 2005), the first homage after the Oklahoma City bombing appeared on the sidewalks and fences near the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, just hours after the explosion. Many other commemorative acts soon followed. For example, the simple flowers that were painted by the hands of children to acknowledge the passing of their peers marked the beginning of a remarkable flood of tributes from the people of Oklahoma City—a Vietnam veteran who donated his Purple Heart, requesting that it be given to the parents of a murdered child, and children who donated their special toys to survivors of the bombing.

There are many diverse ways to memorialize the dead. Traditionally, members of the Catholic faith hold a special mass after the death of a loved one. Jewish families may conduct an unveiling ceremony a year after the death of a loved one when a marker or a monument is placed on the grave and unveiled for family and friends; the widow or widower is not allowed to remarry until this ceremony is conducted. Other Jewish families continue to remember the deceased on special anniversaries through the lighting of candles, special prayers, and commemorative plaques.

Perhaps no disaster saw more memorials than those that were created after the World Trade Center bombing on September 11, 2001, when family and friends peppered New York City with shrines and pictures of missing victims. Messages, personal possessions, and poems that expressed their lamentations were placed on any available space. In Manhattan parks, miniature reconstructions of the Twin Towers surrounded by candles were commonplace. New Yorkers chose to publicly express their loss through memorials; their sense of communality often transcended their religious beliefs and any prior differences they may have had. The entire nation joined them in their grieving. National and global sympathy was manifested through the organizing of church services, candlelight prayer vigils, and other community gatherings to symbolically express feelings of compassion and support for survivors.

Condolence books, in both electronic and paper formats, are ubiquitous features of funerals that can serve as a special memorial to the passing of an individual (Brennan, 2007). Providing mourners with an opportunity to record and express their grief in a socially appropriate manner, such as condolence books, bridges the gap between the living and the dead and connects acutely affected communities with the wider society. It helps the bereaved to begin to come to terms with their loss. An initial step in the recovery process is to allow family, friends, and acquaintances to share their personal grief with others through statements in a condolence book. Several researchers have reported on the benefits of writing to access and articulate feelings of loss; the act of writing becomes a vehicle that leads toward greater inner understanding (Houlbrooke, 1998; Pennebaker, 1997; Smythe & Pennebaker, 1999).

Two significant and traumatic events that occurred late in the 20th century in the United Kingdom are testaments to the revival of the forgotten tradition of condolence books and their inherent value: the 1989 Hillsborough soccer stadium disaster that occurred in the United Kingdom when soccer fans were crushed to death after a game, and the death of Princess Diana in 1997 in a car crash in Paris. There was a widespread resurgence in the use of condolence books to record and express feelings of loss and grief, and the condolence book served an important purpose in that it was able to reach a large group of people. Such condolence books then became a historical record of the way society mourned and helped make meaning of their loss at a particular point in time. Condolence books thus provide a social forum, a thanatological resource for the public expression of personal grieving (Sofka, 1997). As a therapeutic outlet, it can support mourners toward an eventual resolution of their grief.

Traumatic Anniversaries

Recognizing and acknowledging feelings that may surface around the anniversary of the death of a loved one is a crucial part of the recovery process. It is therefore important for people in the helping profession to remind bereaved individuals not to ignore this special time and to find a way to acknowledge the significance of anniversaries. At the same time, survivors should be directed to seek healthy ways to cope with the distress that may emerge during this critical time by spending time with family and friends or sharing memories and feelings with trusted others. Contemplative practices such as walking, meditating, praying, journaling, and scrapbooking may also offer bereaved individuals much-needed solace during a challenging time.

The anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon is an example of a remembrance ceremony acknowledging those who were tragically killed in 2001. Every year at the exact time that the disaster occurred, family and friends of deceased individuals and other New Yorkers gather at the site of the World Trade Center to faithfully remember those whose lives were taken in the attack. In what has become a traditional ceremony at the site of the bombings in New York, the names of the 2,972 individuals who died or went missing are read aloud. The commemoration is carried out at the same time that the tragic events occurred in 2001; the accompanying bell ringing is a reminder of a somber and significant moment in the lives of the mourners.

Some people find other ways to honor the passing of a loved one. For example, many African American communities have a tradition of hosting a barbecue around the time when a loved one passed away, family and friends drop in whenever they can to pay their respect to the mourning family, and T-shirts are made to commemorate the anniversary. Families also visit the graveside of the deceased, place flowers, or simply stand around reminiscing about the individual who died. Some families volunteer at soup kitchens or homeless shelters as symbolic reminders of their loss and a way of helping others who are less fortunate. Most important, survivors should be encouraged to reach out to others and not isolate themselves during this challenging time. The connection between the dead and living is probably best exemplified in the Hispanic cultural practice of celebrating the Day of the Dead.

The Day of the Dead

The Day of the Dead is a special day designated to remember loved ones who have died. Many people of Hispanic descent believe that on this day, the dead visit the earth and it is easier for departed souls to visit the living. Altars with candles, photos, memorabilia of the departed, and their favorite foods are displayed to welcome the spirits, and people go to cemeteries to communicate with the souls of dead relatives. The intent is to encourage visits from departed souls so that they will hear the prayers and comments of the living.

Celebrations sometimes take on a humorous tone, as family and friends recall pleasant memories and share anecdotes about the departed. Plans for the festival are made throughout the year as family members gather special objects that are later offered to the dead. During the dates of November 1 and 2, families visit the cemeteries where their loved ones are buried. The graves are cleaned and decorated with *ofrendas*, or offerings, which often include orange marigold flowers, also known as the "Flower of the Dead."

These flowers are thought to attract the souls of the dead to the graveside. Families also place trinkets or the deceased's favorite candies on the grave as an enticement to the departed souls to "visit" the living. *Ofrendas* are also put in homes, usually in the form of foods such as candied pumpkin, "bread of the dead," or "sugar skulls" as a welcoming gesture for the deceased. Some people believe that the spirits of the dead eat the "spiritual essence" of the *ofrenda* food, so even though family members may eat the food after the festivities, they believe it lacks nutritional value. Pillows and blankets are also taken out so that the deceased can rest after their long journey. In some parts of Mexico, people spend all night beside the graves of family members. Thus, the separation between the living and the dead is viewed as almost nonexistent and the dead are treated as if they are a living part of the family.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- The funeral is a significant ritual in many cultures, and serves several functions: specifically as an expression of public grieving and an opportunity to generate support and establish a new relationship with the deceased.
- Crisis theory provides several principles to help bereaved individuals.

- Several stages of mourning and grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) have universal applicability and help those who are dying and those close to them (Kubler-Ross, 1969).
- Anniversaries and memorials are an acknowledgment of loss and are positive mechanisms to honor the dead and to help survivors manage their loss.

CONCLUSION

Remembering the dead and honoring their passing is important for bereaved individuals and families. Funerals and other burial practices are rituals that have become traditionally entrenched. Reeves and Boersma (1989) outline some advantages of using rituals as a psychotherapeutic technique in dealing with maladaptive grief. They point out that it provides a sense of structure and stability, increases feelings of personal power and control, and adds meaning to the experience of loss. In addition, a ritual motivates mourners to change and grow, creates a sense of community, and allows bereaved individuals to integrate their loss as they receive acknowledgment, support, and acceptance from caring others. Given the psychosocial and therapeutic benefits of funerals, ignoring the dead after a major disaster is not wise; it does not promote the healing of survivors.

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Effective Disaster and Crisis Interventions

Priscilla Dass-Brailsford

$\mathbf{T}$he primary objective of disaster interventions is the stabilization of injury and illness and the preservation of life. The priority of those responding to a disaster is attention to the physical and psychological needs of survivors. Mental health professionals who provide psychological first aid in the aftermath of natural disasters must be adequately prepared.

C H A P T E R   H I G H L I G H T S

✦ Defines a crisis and discusses its expectable phases and reactions;

✦ Discusses effective disaster interventions and important ecological and cultural considerations for disaster responders;

✦ Reviews important principles and guidelines that address the psychological needs of survivors; and

✦ Outlines specific interventions and the appropriate steps in disaster counseling.

DEFINING A CRISIS

Caplan's (1964) conceptualization of "psychological disequilibrium" and an individual's inability to escape its debilitating consequences is frequently cited in the crisis literature as a definition of a crisis (p. 53). Similarly, Slaikeu (1990) defined *crisis* as "a temporary state of upset and disorganization, characterized chiefly by an individual's inability to cope with a particular situation using customary methods of problem solving" (p. 15). Thus, a crisis typically results in an increase in tension, anxiety, and emotional unrest, and an inability to maintain daily functioning.