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Unfolding Meaning from Memories: An Integrative Meaning Reconstruction Method for Counseling the Bereaved

Unfolding meaning is an integrative method developed by the authors that interweaves some important grief theories, as *continuous bonds*, *meaning reconstruction*, *meanings made*, *rebuilding shattered assumptions* among others. Although these theoretical approaches conceptualize the experience of bereavement in different ways, when operationalized in this unique psychotherapeutic method, they appear to be strongly complementary.

Using a dialogic intervention focused to the re-experience of specific relational memories of the deceased, the bereaved can rekindle the relational emotional experience of the past. The therapist's respectful inquiry promotes a mindful awareness that gives space for the details of the memoir to emerge, allowing the bereaved to get in touch with the deepest parts of the intimate relationship that took place. New material that was out of consciousness at that moment can then be naturally unfolded. The memory evoked offers fertile ground where different attributes or aspects of the lost relationship such as values, feelings, unfinished business emerge and are available for inquiry, clarification and tracking. The incorporation of the somatic and emotional levels of information, aligned with their cognitive and behavioral correlates, provides a greater depth and a higher level of integration, promoting awareness of specific aspects of those memories that may have been unconscious

Integrative Meaning Reconstruction takes place in the present re-experienced bond as the bereaved observes, explores, elaborates and integrates this new material. As a result, new personal meanings appear as spontaneous outcomes that reveal a complete, renewed panorama of the experience of remembering. This renewal can lead to a new aspects of the self, transformed and expanded.



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