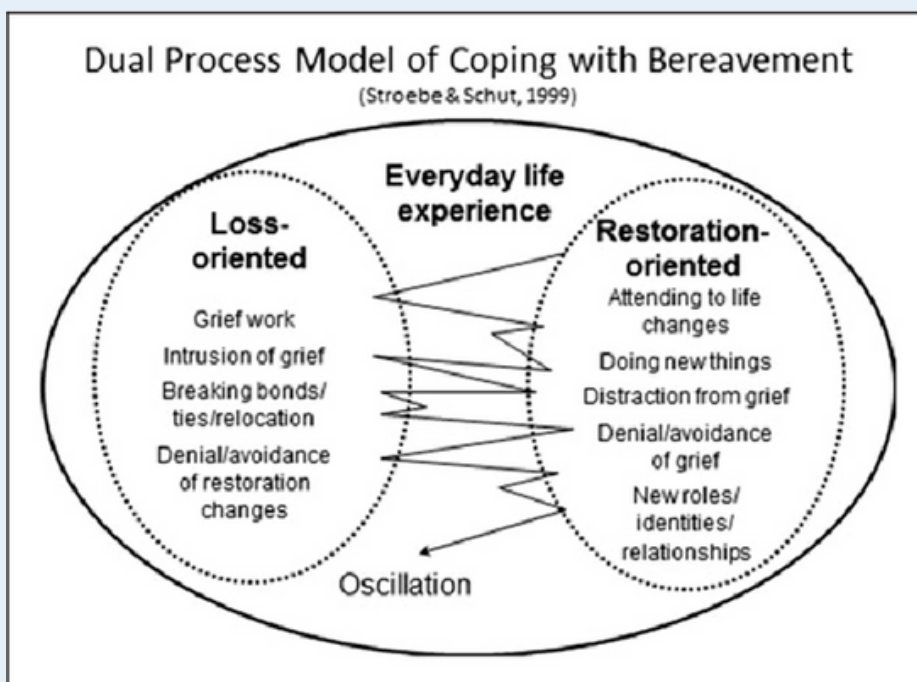


Bereavement: The four models of grief

There are four Models of Grief that can be helpful to keep in mind when working with children, young people and families; they are summarised simply below

The Dual Process Model

The **Dual Process Model** by Stroebe and Schut looks at two sorts of activities in grief: those that are loss oriented and those that are restoration oriented. Essentially a healthy grief includes both activities and someone will move between the two; this is a normal process and probably both need to be done as someone adjusts to their grief and mixed feelings. It might be worth seeing if you or the person who is bereaved can give examples of both.



Continuing bonds theory

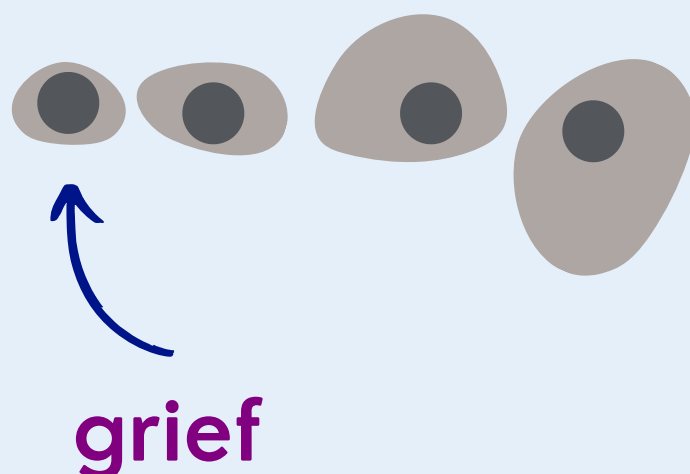
Continuing Bonds Theory by Klass, Silverman and Nickman identifies that a bereaved person needs to make a new relationship with the person who has died so that their relationship can continue, but be different, in order for someone to grieve and be at peace. Talking to the dead person, maybe a photo of them, and perhaps including them in daily arrangements, such as laying a place for them at the table sometimes or cuddling a jumper that belonged to the deceased are normal and comforting and the theory reminds us that the idea of letting go, moving on or closure with grief can feel unhelpful for someone who loved the person who has died.

The tasks of mourning

The Tasks of Mourning by Worden are four areas of grief that can be helpful to 'undertake', to: accept the reality of the loss; process the pain of the death; adjust to life without the deceased person; find a lasting connection with the person who has died while building a new life. These can form the basis of any input that someone might need if you are supporting them but also it can help someone experiencing grief as long as it isn't presumed to have a specific time scale or that one step will necessarily follow the other. Someone might be clearly 'doing' one task at a particular time and skip into a different task shortly afterwards; importantly this is normal and acceptable.

Tonkin's model of grief

Tonkin's model of grief suggests that someone's grief stays pretty much the same but their life grows around it as new experiences and people become part of the bereaved person's life as they begin to enjoy different times and develop. Again this is not a sequence and someone might find themselves in different places with this as their life continues.



Lois Tonkin (1996)

This theory could be helpful in terms of a young person's grief which they might experience afresh and acutely as their understanding develops or they pass through rites of passage without the person they loved.

Tonkin's model and Worden's tasks can also be seen as part of the 'puddle jumping' often described as children's experience of grief where they are suddenly in a place of sadness and curiosity and once the conversation is complete for them, they return to another activity apparently without difficulty. Often children need to check out the information they are given about a death and want to repeat a question or hear an answer again; this is part of their developing understanding and not about how much they care or are affected.

It's also worth noting that children and young people (as well as anyone bereaved) needs to feel accepted for what they are feeling, be assured that all feelings are alright and normal and can be experienced safely, even if they are distressing at the time and that we need to remember that we can't make this bereavement better or 'cure' it so we need to be mindful of our own feelings of wanting to do that.