



# Portland Institute

## For Loss and Transition

### **Grief Therapy Learning Retreat**

**August 21-25, 2026 (Friday-Tuesday)**

**IslandWood**

**Bainbridge Island, WA, United States**

#### **Featured Keynoters**

Wendy G. Lichtenthal, PhD, FT, FAPOS

Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD

#### **and Other Presenters**

Brooks, M. P., PhD; Coenen, C., GTMR, FT, CGC;

Elizabeth Coplan, Award-Winning Playwright, 2024 Pulitzer Prize Nominee;

Greenbaum, J., EdD; Hunter, S.; Maes, M. L.; Mahat-Shamir, M., PhD; Ng, C., PsyD;

Pitcho, S., PhD; Rynearson, E. K., MD; Scaut, L., BSW, MFT; Sharma, P.;

van Wielink, J., MA, PGCert (Didactics); and Vaughans, D., PhD, LPC-S

**NOTE:**

*This Retreat offers a range of Orientation, Techniques, Case Studies, and Practicum Modules leading to Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction (GTMR), Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy (AAGT), Certification in Grief Therapy for Non-Death Losses (NDL), Certification in Family-Focused Grief Therapy (FFGT), or Certification in Grief Therapy for Suicide Bereavement (GTSB) offered by the Portland Institute. For more information, simply click: <https://www.portlandinstitute.org/certification>.*

# Grief Therapy Learning Retreat

August 21-25, 2026

Welcome to the *Portland Institute for Loss and Transition*, and our Grief Therapy Learning Retreat, a 5-day, 4-night immersion in experiential workshops designed to add conceptual clarity, hone process expertise, and provide learners practical tools to enhance their practice of grief therapy and bereavement support with a broad range of clients across many contexts of clinical practice. Alongside a rich menu of training options, learners can also explore many modalities for self-renewal as persons and professionals.

Join Robert A. Neimeyer, and PI faculty – Maegan Brooks, Carolyn Ng, Ted Rynearson, Lies Scaut, Jakob van Wielink and Doris Vaughans, as well as other guest speakers including Claudia Coenen, Elizabeth Coplan, Jill Greenbaum, Sandra Hunter, Wendy Lichtenthal, Maddy Maes, Michal Mahat-Shamir, Shani Pitcho, and Prageeta Sharma for an international, interdisciplinary institute that offers a new meaning-focused model of training in bereavement care.

## Target Audience

Psychologists, social workers, counselors, art / music / expressive arts therapists, pastoral care personnel, healthcare professionals, grief coaches, and bereavement volunteers.

### Continuing Education (CEs Processing Fee: \$120 for up to 21 CE Credits)

To qualify for CE Credits, please kindly note that:

- Full attendance of the respective sessions is required to receive CE credits. No partial credit is awarded.
- You are required to sign on a Sign-In/Out Sheet at the beginning and at the end of each session attended.
- The Certificate of CE Credits will be emailed to you within 10 business days after the retreat based on your signatures recorded on the Sign-In/Out Sheets collected.



*Portland Institute for Loss and Transition is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. Portland Institute for Loss and Transition maintains responsibility for this program and its content.*



*Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, [Provider number 1954], is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Organizations, not individual courses, are approved as ACE providers. State and provincial regulatory boards have the final authority to determine whether an individual course may be accepted for continuing education credit. Portland Institute for Loss and Transition maintains responsibility for this event. ACE provider approval period: 09/09/2025–09/09/2028.*

## Disclosure Statement

*This retreat is not supported financially by a manufacturer of any commercial product. There is no known conflict of interest for this CE program or the presenters.*

## Friday (August 21st)

**4:00-5:30** Grief Attacks: What They Are, What They Mean and What to Do about Them (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)  
*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

Significant anniversaries, holidays, unanticipated reminders of loss and even idle reflections can trigger sudden and intense upsurges of grief for those who are bereaved, leaving them hurting and overwhelmed as they attempt to survive the present and move toward an uncertain future without their loved one. But despite their frequency, little is known about such *grief attacks*, in terms of what they are, where they occur, why they arise and how we can best manage them, while also attempting to make a place for those we have loved and lost as a physical presence in our lives.

In this brief presentation, we'll consider these questions in light of a major new survey of hundreds of bereaved people who describe where, when and how they experience these unexpected and painful surges of emotion and exhaustion and their impact on their behavior, as well as what they've found helpful to ride the waves of turbulent emotion associated with them. We'll then add some practical advice about how to find islands of respite in the stormy sea of grief, how to include the deceased in a consoling way as grievors navigate a challenging passage, and how to chart a course toward a changed, but still meaningful future.

### *Learning Objectives:*

- Define the key components of grief attacks identified by a recently developed and validated measure of this frequent but highly distressing experience;
- Describe the circumstances in which these sudden and typically unexpected upsurges of grief occur and the common ways in which the bereaved seek to cope with them; and
- List 4 approaches to mitigating grief attacks and defusing triggers for their occurrence.

### *Content Focus:*

- Application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that have overall consistent and credible empirical support in the contemporary peer reviewed scientific literature beyond those publications and other types of communications devoted primarily to the promotion of the approach.

### *Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- Grief Attacks: What Are They? (10 min.)
- The Grief Attack Questionnaire: Structure and Validation (10 min.)
- A Closer Look: Contexts and Impacts (35 min.)
- Managing Grief Attacks: Coping Strategies and Therapeutic Implications (25 min.)
- Putting It All Together: Questions and Answers (10 min.)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Orientation Module for [All Certification Programs](#).

## Saturday (August 22nd)

**8:30-10:00** Finding Lighthouses: Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy in Clinical Practice (Wendy G. Lichtenthal, PhD, FT, FAPOS)  
*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

*Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy* (MCGT) is a cognitive-behavioral-existential approach grounded in constructivism that affirms the griever's agency, authorship, and ability to choose how they live in relationship to loss. Developed through an iterative process informed by lived experience and federally funded research, the MCGT intervention manual offers a systematic, 16-session approach to meaning-making as an active and intentional process. Rather than treating meaning as imposed or automatic, MCGT explicitly supports deliberate choice and conscious engagement.

Following a brief overview of the development of MCGT, this presentation will focus on its application in clinical practice, using the metaphor of lighthouses to illustrate how meaning can provide orientation amid the ongoing storms of grief. Drawing on MCGT's four core principles, the presentation will explore how clinicians can help grievers recognize their capacity to choose their stance toward suffering, to use sources of meaning as guiding lighthouses, to reconstruct personal narratives as active authors, and to maintain a meaningful relationship with the deceased. Clinical examples will demonstrate how therapists can facilitate this work through dialogue and structured exercises that preserve the griever's authorship and avoid prescription. Throughout, the presentation highlights how MCGT honors the reality of suffering while affirming the human capacity for agency, connection, and meaning making after loss.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Identify meaning-making challenges that grieving individuals commonly face;
- Describe *Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy* and its core principles; and
- Discuss exercises that may facilitate adaptive meaning-making and enhance the griever's sense of meaning.

*Content Focus:*

- Application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that have overall consistent and credible empirical support in the contemporary peer reviewed scientific literature beyond those publications and other types of communications devoted primarily to the promotion of the approach.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- Introduction: Loss as a Crisis in Meaning (15 min.)
- Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy: Overview, Principles and Design (25 min.)
- Processes and Applications: Clinical Examples (35 min.)
- Closing: Questions and Answers (15 min.)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Orientation Module for [All Certification Programs](#).

**10:00-10:30 Morning Break**

**10:30-12:00 Facilitating Core Meaning-Making Processes in Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy: An Experiential Practicum (Wendy G. Lichtenthal, PhD, FT, FAPOS)**  
**1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)**

This experiential practicum will immediately follow the keynote presentation on *Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy* (MCGT) and will focus on the clinical delivery of several key therapeutic processes through structured personal reflection and case-based learning. This session explores the value of meaning-making as an intentional, conscious process that can be supported through therapeutic dialogue and reflective practice.

This practicum will focus on the following key MCGT therapeutic processes:

1. Identifying, reflecting on, and amplifying sources of meaning in the context of loss and adversity;

2. Bringing to consciousness the underlying sources of meaning, values, or responsibilities that contribute to experiences of perceived necessity and related “have to” narratives; and
3. Identifying maladaptive or unhelpful meanings and facilitating adaptive meaning reconstruction through the elicitation of more helpful and compassionate narrative frameworks.

For these therapeutic processes, participants will first briefly engage in guided personal reflection by responding in writing to a focused prompt designed to deepen experiential understanding. Participants will then view a short video-recorded segment of a bereaved parent receiving MCGT that is intentionally selected to elicit the specific therapeutic process being emphasized. Learners will be invited to reflect in writing on how they would respond to the parent by applying that specific therapeutic process. This will be followed by a large-group discussion of learners’ responses, accompanied by demonstration of intervention delivery through video examples or live role-play. Through the integration of personal reflection, clinical observation, case formulation, and group discussion, participants will deepen their understanding of how key MCGT therapeutic processes can be delivered in practice to support adaptive meaning-making in bereaved individuals.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Describe the core therapeutic processes central to *Meaning-Centered Grief Therapy*;
- Discuss how these processes can be facilitated in clinical practice through application to case-based material; and
- Formulate meaning-centered therapeutic responses that support adaptive meaning-making in bereaved individuals.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- Introduction: Overview and Therapeutic Process (5 min.)
- Therapeutic Processes: Personal Reflection and Case Formulation (70 min.)
- Closing: Group Processing (15 min.)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Practicum Module for [All Certification Programs](#).

**12:00-1:00** Lunch

**1:00-2:30** Mini-workshops. Choose between:

A. *The Rowboat: A Metaphor for the Dual Process Model [Part I]* (Lies Scaut, BSW, MFT)

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

This technique module introduces participants to applying both the *Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement* and *Meaning Reconstruction* through the metaphor of a rowboat. Many grieving individuals lack the right words to explain how they feel or how they are experiencing their grief process. By using art-based methods and metaphors, clients are supported in representing their grief visually rather than verbally. Guiding clients to draw their own “grief landscape” helps them to remain with the image while reflecting on their own process, fostering emotional expression, understanding, and meaning making.

Within this framework, participants learn how to invite clients to depict the boat, the two oars, the surrounding environment, and other boats or figures that may accompany them in their grief journey. Facilitative questions such as, *What does the boat look like? Where are the two oars? How does the environment look? Are there other boats travelling with you? and How can you communicate with these other boats?* are used to deepen reflection. This technique can be used with individuals, couples, and families, and is grounded in a systemic view of grief. Diversity considerations are integrated throughout, as participants are encouraged to attend to cultural, relational, and contextual meanings embedded in the clients’ imagery and narratives.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Apply the *Dual Process Model* and *Meaning Reconstruction* principles to the “rowboat” metaphor as a grief counseling technique; and
- Discuss how the rowboat metaphor can be adapted to different client systems, including individuals, couples, and families.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- Theoretical Foundation: Dual Process Model and Meaning Reconstruction (15 min.)
- From Model to Metaphor: The Rowboat and Grief (30 min.)
- Making It Real: Case Illustrations (45 min.)
- From Metaphor to Method: Experiential Practice (60 min.)
- Group Processing: Reflection and Clinical Discussion (30 min.)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Techniques Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#), [Certification in Family-Focused Grief Therapy \(FFGT\)](#) and [Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy \(AAGT\)](#).

*B. “If Only...:” Counterfactual Thinking in Bereavement (Michal Mahat-Shamir, PhD & Shani Pitcho, PhD)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

This 90-minute session will introduce counterfactual thinking, “if only...” cognitions, as a key process that shapes adaptation to loss. Drawing on the four counterfactual foci identified by Neimeyer, Pitcho, and Mahat-Shamir (self, the deceased, others, and circumstances), the presentation will illustrate how repetitive counterfactual rumination can complicate grief and disrupt meaning reconstruction. Through brief case examples and a guided experiential activity, participants will learn practical, constructivist interventions for transforming counterfactual preoccupations into openings for narrative change and psychological integration.

Issues of diversity will be addressed by examining how cultural beliefs, spiritual frameworks, family norms, and sociopolitical contexts shape the content and impact of counterfactual thoughts. This session will emphasize culturally responsive practice, highlighting how meaning-oriented interventions can be sensitively adapted for individuals from varied backgrounds and with diverse understandings of responsibility, fate, and continuing bond.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Describe the four primary foci of counterfactual thinking in bereavement and summarize their impact on meaning reconstruction and the development of complicated grief;
- Apply constructivist, meaning-oriented interventions to address ruminative counterfactual thinking in clinical work with bereaved clients; and
- Distinguish how cultural, spiritual, and contextual factors shape counterfactual cognitions and specify ways to adapt therapeutic responses to diverse bereavement experiences.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- If Only: Introduction to Counterfactual Thinking (15 min.)
- Four Counterfactual Foci: Case-Based Illustrations (15 min.)
- Mapping Counterfactual Cognitions: Experiential Activity (30 min.)
- Constructivist and Experiential Techniques: A Demonstration (15 min)
- Closing: Cultural and Diversity Considerations (15 min.)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Orientation Module for [All Certification Programs](#).

**2:30-3:00 Afternoon Break****3:00-4:30 Mini-workshops. Choose between:**

*A. The Rowboat: A Metaphor for the Dual Process Model [Part II] (Lies Scaut, BSW, MFT)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

A continuation of the above workshop.

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Techniques Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#), [Certification in Family-Focused Grief Therapy \(FFGT\)](#) and [Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy \(AAGT\)](#).

*B. Seasons of Transition: Shedding and Embracing, Relinquishing and Harvesting (Carolyn Ng, PsyD)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

Drawing on *Meaning Reconstruction* and *Composition Work*, this module introduces *Seasons of Transition*, a technique for artfully expressing both losses and gains, while expressing grief, identifying resources, and fostering growth. Through the use of natural elements and relevant prompts, learners will formulate seasonal compositions that invite introspection, sense-making and goal setting for life transitions. Its therapeutic intent and use with variations in different clinical settings will be discussed as well. Experiencing these cyclic processes with nature-based

materials help clients embrace life's inevitable losses and accredit their ongoing growth in the aftermath.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Apply *Seasons of Transition* to name the losses and gains experienced through personal life changes and to identify personal growth in its aftermath; and
- Discuss the possible variations of the procedure in couple / family therapy and group settings.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- Introduction: Meaning Reconstruction and Composition Work (30 min.)
- Seasonal Compositions: Constructing and Processing (45 min.)
- Closing: Extensions and Variations (15 min.)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Practicum Module to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#), [Certification in Family-Focused Grief Therapy \(FFGT\)](#), [Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy \(AAGT\)](#) or [Certification of Grief Therapy for Non-Death Losses \(NDL\)](#).

## 7:30-9:00 Giving Grief a Shape: Language, Poetry, and World-Building (Prageeta Sharma & Sandra Hunter)

This two-part workshop explores grief as both a creative practice and an inquiry. In Part I, we begin with some guided exercises that transform grief from an internal abstract weight into an external expression with visible image and language. This creative process provides a space in which grief can be witnessed and worked with rather than being carried silently. This serves as a gentle threshold, preparing us to move inward in Part II, where we will encounter the deeper resonances of grief through the reading and contemplation of poetry. In Part II, we will closely read two poems – thinking alongside the sensorial intensity and visual memory work of C.D. Wright and additional poets to examine how image, syntax, and silence shape meaning. Through generative prompts, we will unearth the conceits and practices within the poems to better understand our grieving, and how our writing, ideas about language, and sensory experiences inform the ways we world-build our lives, particularly when we are in acute suffering. Together, we will ask what literature and

close reading can reveal about how we see, remember, and construct significant narrative meaning from within ourselves.

## Sunday (August 23rd)

**8:30-10:00** The Restorative Power of Community: Facilitating Peer Support Grief Groups [Part I] (Maegan P. Brooks, PhD, Maddy Maes, Ted Rynearson, MD)

1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)

Grief support groups offer accessible, communal spaces where individuals can share thoughts, emotions, and experiences related to loss. Research consistently shows that participants find benefits in these gatherings: feeling a sense of identification with others, normalizing grief reactions, expressing difficult emotions, exchanging practical advice, and cultivating hope for the future. Unlike celebratory rites of passage—birth, graduation, marriage—that promise hopeful progression, grief marks a different passage, often accompanied by identity confusion and helplessness. Yet by gathering together, listening to one another's stories, and witnessing each other's journeys, peer-led groups create a *restorative* rite of passage, helping the bereaved navigate loss while gradually rebuilding their sense of self. Still, grief groups can present challenges, including emotional strain from hearing difficult stories, discomfort in sharing, and concerns about group structure and leadership. Understanding both the potential and the pitfalls is essential for effective facilitation.

This three-hour session explores the many valuable aspects of peer support grief groups alongside their challenges. We'll begin by examining several group interventions directed by peer co-facilitators using structured, manualized, time-limited protocols. Learners will then divide into small groups, organized by the session leaders, to experience the benefits of peer support firsthand. Finally, we'll reconvene for a guided discussion of common challenges—including uneven participation, comparative grief hierarchies, advice-giving instead of listening, and participant overwhelm—along with practical strategies for addressing them.

### *Learning Objectives:*

- Summarize the main features of the structured, manualized, time-limited group intervention protocols presented;
- Describe valuable aspects of peer grief support and strategies to cultivate these beneficial aspects; and
- Identify common group challenges and strategies to mitigate these challenges.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- Peer Support Groups: Foundational Principles and Practices (45 min.)
- Experiencing Firsthand: Group Interventions (90 min.)
- Closing Reflection: Cultivating Benefits and Navigating Challenges (45 min.)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Techniques Module for [All Certification Programs](#).

**10:00-10:30 Morning Break**

**10:30-12:00** The Restorative Power of Community: Facilitating Peer Support Grief Groups [Part II] (Maegan P. Brooks, PhD, Maddy Maes, Ted Rynearson, MD)  
1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)

A continuation of the above workshop.

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Techniques Module for [All Certification Programs](#).

**12:00-1:00 Lunch****1:00-2:30 Mini-workshops. Choose between:**

*A. Broken Heart Syndrome: The Intersection of Grief, Stress-Related Cardiac Vulnerability, and Meaning Making after Loss (Doris C. Vaughans, PhD, LPC-S)*  
1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)

Individuals bereaved by the death of a loved one due to *Broken Heart Syndrome* (also known as stress-induced cardiomyopathy or Takotsubo cardiomyopathy) may experience a profound and destabilizing disruption of their assumptive worlds. The sudden and emotionally charged nature of this condition often leaves survivors struggling to make sense of both the death itself and the role of stress, grief, and emotional shock in its occurrence. Understanding this medical phenomenon can be instrumental in helping clinicians, caregivers, and faith-based professionals

contextualize the loss, validate the bereaved experience, and identify individuals who may themselves be at heightened risk for *Broken Heart Syndrome*.

First described in Japan in 1990, *Broken Heart Syndrome* was initially understood as a transient, non-fatal weakening of the left ventricle—the heart’s primary pumping chamber—typically triggered by acute emotional or physical stress. However, emerging research and clinical evidence demonstrate that this condition is more prevalent and potentially fatal than once believed, particularly within today’s fast-paced, high-stress global society. As awareness of *Broken Heart Syndrome* grows, it has gained increasing visibility in both media narratives and professional healthcare and mental health spaces.

The impact of death due to *Broken Heart Syndrome* transcends race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and religious affiliation, affecting bereaved individuals and communities worldwide. This presentation seeks to explore the intersection of grief, stress-related cardiac vulnerability, and meaning-making after loss, while emphasizing the importance of informed, compassionate support for those navigating this uniquely complex bereavement.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Describe the pathophysiology and psychosocial stressors associated with *Broken Heart Syndrome* (Takotsubo cardiomyopathy), with particular attention to its implications for bereavement and traumatic loss;
- Distinguish between normative grief responses and clinical risk indicators for stress-related cardiac vulnerability among bereaved individuals and identify populations at increased risk following emotionally traumatic loss; and
- Apply assessment strategies to support bereaved individuals affected by deaths attributed to *Broken Heart Syndrome*, including interdisciplinary collaboration.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- More Than a Metaphor: Broken Heart Syndrome (20 min.)
- Identifying Vulnerability: Risks and Consequences (10 min.)
- Living with Heartbreak: A Case Review (45 min.)
- Bringing It All Together: Questions and Answers (15 min.)

NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Orientation Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#).

*B. Moving through Multiple Losses: Enhancing Inner Strengths and Resilience in the Space In Between (Claudia Coenen, GTMR, FT, CGC)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

Major losses can feel shattering, dropping people into liminal time, a *Space In Between* what has ended and what has not yet begun. Enhancing inner strengths and resilience can help grievers discover how they might live fully again. Imagination and creativity offer things to do inside the grieving space. Understanding the nature of transitions can normalize messy emotions and help integrate the grief experience, stimulating personal growth. Different types of loss, including non-death losses, will be part of our discussion, as well as how cultural differences influence how people are able to move through loss towards thriving.

This session will incorporate several models of transition, including the *William Bridges Model* and the *Kubler-Ross Change Curve*. Elements of resilience and the impact of life-quakes and multiple loss will be discussed. Imagery and prompts will be used to demonstrate methods that participants can use with clients. Tools will include *Soul Cards* and *Wild Cards*, the new deck of *Karuna Cards* and a worksheet called *The Shell of Possibility*.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Describe the different ways people experience transitional times after a major loss, with a view of the impact of previous losses and cultural influences;
- Discuss how the *Bridges Model of Transition* and the *Kubler-Ross Change Curve* can help grieving people through the *Space In Between*; and
- Identify the uses of creative tools to assist clients in locating their own inner strengths and resilience, applying these skills to designing their life after loss.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- Grief and Multiple Loss: From Life-Quakes to Growth (40 min.)
- Bridges and Curves: Models of Multiple Loss (30 min.)
- The Space In Between: Redesigning the Future after Loss (20 min.)

*NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Techniques Module for [Certification of Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#) or [Certification of Grief Therapy for Non-Death Losses \(NDL\)](#).*

**2:30 onwards** Free-and-Easy Time**Monday (August 24th)****8:30-10:00** Mini-workshops. Choose between:

*A. Captured in a Box of Pain: Transforming a Daughter's Endless Suffering [Part I] (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*  
*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

When a client seems to be “frozen” in grief across a period of years or even decades, delicate work with the “back story” of the relationship and complicating dimensions of the continuing bond is often called for. This video case study examines an adult daughter’s ongoing anguish about her mother’s death, to a level that impairs her ability to function as a partner to her husband and mother to her young children. Working toward the goal of a relational realignment that would recruit her deceased mother as a resource rather than liability in bearing her grief, Neimeyer demonstrates the process of co-construction of meaning in a single session that frees the client to grieve more adaptively.

This session begins with a model that orients therapists to the particular focus of grief therapy with bereaved clients, depending on their point of fixation or impasse in processing the loss, as revealed in characteristic symptomatology calling for a specific class of intervention. Learners will then join Neimeyer in a close process analysis of the session, pausing every few minutes to connect the dots between the client’s presentation, the therapist’s intention, and the choreography of meaning-making that arises from their response to one another. Learners will leave the session with a more holistic sense of the integration of the roles of metaphor, visualization, body work and chair work in freeing clients from protracted and preoccupying grief, allowing them to re-enter their family system with less complicated bonds to both the living and the dead.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Analyze factors that contribute to prolonged grief disorder in an actual case of grief therapy;
- Discuss the role of imagery and the language of gesture in vividly conjuring and working with embodied grief;
- Witness the use of externalization and chair work in deconstructing earlier “solutions” that have become problems; and
- Observe the effect of individual therapy on the family system.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research other than application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Advanced

*Content Overview:*

- Finding the Focus: The Tripartite Model of Meaning Reconstruction (30 mins)
- On Metaphors and Mourning: Recruiting Figurative Language of Loss (60 mins)
- Moving to Depth: Externalizing the Grief (45 mins)
- Renegotiating Attachment: Re-engaging Mother (45 mins)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Case Studies Module leading to [Certification of Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#) or [Certification in Family-Focused Grief Therapy \(FFGT\)](#).

## *B. Zentangle: Trauma-Informed Grief Care through Experiential Learning [Part I] (Jill Greenbaum, EdD)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

This session of arts-assisted, trauma-informed grief care is comprised of two complementary halves. In the first half, after co-constructing a safe container for the individual and group work, participants discover the *Zentangle*® method of mark-making to create structured patterns that become beautiful designs. We will explore the foundational set of tools for this meditative art form and how to mindfully make simple, deliberate strokes that build on each other in mesmerizing and surprising ways. While learning a variety of patterns, participants will practice with the philosophy and several techniques. As participants work with the materials, they will achieve increased focus, a greater sense of calm, and delight in their new skills.

In the second half, we discuss the core tenets of trauma-informed care and

speak to the need for such a lens and methodology for our work in the world today. Following this introduction, participants will work in small groups to identify how elements of a trauma-informed approach were integrated into the design of the first half of the session (learning the *Zentangle*® method). Using their experiences and the discussion, participants will develop plans for incorporating aspects of this approach into their own work. The session will culminate in reflection and sharing of individuals' next steps for integration of their new knowledge and skills into their practices.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Analyze the integration of trauma-informed methods into the teaching of *Zentangle*® and discuss findings; and
- Develop a plan for the integration of three methods of trauma-informed care into their own practice with clients.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Introductory

*Content Overview:*

- Creating Safety: Introduction, Agreements and Agenda (10 min.)
- Zentangle®: An Experiential Practice (80 min.)
- Trauma-Informed Care: Principles and Practices (45 min.)
- Taking It Home: Using Trauma-Informed Practices in Personal Practice (45 min.)

*NOTE:* This session confers 0.5 credit of Practicum Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#), [Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy \(AAGT\)](#) or [Certification in Grief Therapy for Suicide Bereavement \(GTSB\)](#).

## 10:00-10:30 Morning Break

**10:30-12:00** Mini-workshops. Choose between:

*A. Captured in a Box of Pain: Transforming a Daughter's Endless Suffering [Part II] (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

A continuation of the above workshop.

*NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Case Studies Module leading to [Certification of Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#) or [Certification in Family-Focused Grief Therapy \(FFGT\)](#).*

*B. Zentangle: Trauma-Informed Grief Care through Experiential Learning [Part II] (Jill Greenbaum, EdD)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

A continuation of the above workshop.

*NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Practicum Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#), [Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy \(AAGT\)](#) or [Certification in Grief Therapy for Suicide Bereavement \(GTSB\)](#).*

**12:00-1:00** Lunch**1:00-2:30** Mini-workshops. Choose between:

*A. Pockets of Reflection: Holding Space for Loss and Survival (Maegan P. Brooks, PhD)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

Across cultures and millennia, the bereaved have incorporated textiles into funerary rituals, mourning practices, and efforts to promote individual and collective wellbeing. This session provides a cross-cultural exploration of the generative connections between textiles, grief, and survival, with particular focus on the hidden history of pockets. Historical research into this common clothing features suggests that pockets hold compelling lessons about possession, protection, privacy, agency, and independence. These insights invite thanatologists to consider how the pocket – as both object and metaphor – holds space for exploring the self in the wake of death and non-death losses.

In this session, participants will create their own textile, a “pocket of reflection,” in response to prompts such as, *How do you hold all that you carry? What is truly yours to carry – and what can you release? What do you most want to hold on to?* Through the slow, bilateral acts of hand-stitching\* and adorning their textiles with symbols of remembrance and survival, participants will experience the benefits of emotional

regulation and meaning reconstruction in the wake of loss. By creating textiles in community and reflecting together through collaborative poetic expression, they will also discover how communal making supports both personal grief work and the capacity to care for others.

*\*Note: No previous sewing experience is necessary, and this activity is designed with a range of accessibility needs in mind. All materials will be provided, including options for various dexterity levels: small to large sewing and embroidery needles, as well as pre-punched fabric with extra-large laces for weaving. While all materials will be provided, participants are welcome to bring textiles of significance with them (e.g. a shirt pocket from a lost loved one or pants pockets from a previous period they are mourning in their own life).*

#### *Learning Objectives:*

- Describe the historical and cross-cultural significance of textiles in funerary rituals, mourning practices, and individual and communal healing;
- Apply arts-based meaning reconstruction methods by creating a “pocket of reflection” that addresses personal experiences of loss, release, and resilience; and
- Identify the therapeutic benefits of individual and collaborative textile-based practices for emotional regulation, meaning making and peer support in grief work.

#### *Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

#### *Instructional Level:*

- Introductory

#### *Content Overview:*

- Cross-Cultural Background: Textiles in Mourning Practices (20 min.)
- Conceptual Framework: Expressive Arts and Meaning Reconstruction (20 min.)
- Pockets of Reflection: From Support Groups to College Classrooms (20 min.)
- Hands-On Creation: Constructing Pockets of Reflection (60 min.)
- Collaborative Poem: Creating Community Reflections (40 min.)
- Application and Adaptation: Applying in Personal Practice (20 min.)

*NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Practicum Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction](#), [Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy](#) or [Certification of Grief Therapy for Non-Death Losses \(NDL\)](#).*

*B. The Five Laws of Transition: Presence, Courage and Meaning in Therapeutic Leadership (Jakob van Wielink, MA, PGCert Didactics)*  
*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 General CE Credits (ACE)*

*The Five Laws of Transition* – the title of Jakob van Wielink latest book – describe the inner architecture of leadership: five universal movements that shape how people grow, bond, take risks, face tension, navigate change, and find and live their true direction. They reveal that leadership is never merely about strategy or structures, but always a journey of the heart. Bonding opens the way to trust. Risk awakens courage. Conflict invites truth. Change calls for relinquishment and renewal. And calling roots leadership in identity and meaning. Together, these laws offer a way of leading that is human, grounded, and spiritually awake.

Within the world of therapy and counselling, leadership takes on a distinctive quality. It is not defined by hierarchy or role, but by presence: the ability to hold space, to recognize what is emerging, and to guide others with steadiness and humility. Leadership here is an act of accompaniment – an embodied way of listening, discerning and encouraging growth in those who entrust their stories to you. In this context, to lead is to walk ahead just far enough to illuminate the path, while staying close enough to feel the human depth of the journey.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Describe and distinguish the five laws of transition as an integrated framework for therapeutic leadership, and articulate how each law manifests in clinical, educational, or organizational contexts;
- Demonstrate how these principles guide presence, decision-making, and ethical responsibility in moments of loss, tension, and transition; and
- Formulate a coherent narrative of the participant's own leadership identity and specify how this narrative informs their stance as therapist, educator, or scholar.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Introductory

*Content Overview:*

- The Beginning: Arrival and Opening (30 min.)
- Short Teaching: The Five Laws of Transition (30 min.)

- Put into Practice: Journey through the Five Laws (45 min.)
- Leadership Dialogue: The Desert (45 min.)
- Closing: Ritual of Release and Commitment (30 min.)

*NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Techniques Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#) or [Certification of Grief Therapy for Non-Death Losses \(NDL\)](#).*

## 2:30-3:00 Afternoon Break

## 3:00-4:30 Mini-workshops. Choose between:

*A. Pockets of Reflection: Holding Space for Loss and Survival (Maegan P. Brooks, PhD)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 Clinical CE Credits (ACE)*

A continuation of the above workshop.

*NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Practicum Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction](#), [Certification in Art-Assisted Grief Therapy](#) or [Certification of Grief Therapy for Non-Death Losses \(NDL\)](#).*

*B. The Five Laws of Transition: Presence, Courage and Meaning in Therapeutic Leadership (Jakob van Wielink, MA, PGCert Didactics)*

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 General CE Credits (ACE)*

A continuation of the above workshop.

*NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Techniques Module leading to [Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction \(GTMR\)](#) or [Certification of Grief Therapy for Non-Death Losses \(NDL\)](#).*

## Tuesday (August 25th)

**9:00-12:00** The Arc of Grief, The Arc of Growth (Elizabeth Coplan, Award-Winning Playwright, 2024 Pulitzer Prize Nominee)

*1.5 CEs (APA) / 1.5 General CE Credits (ACE)*

*The Arc of Grief, The Arc of Growth* is a closing plenary designed as a gentle narrative journey that invites participants to integrate their conference experience through reflection, storytelling, and shared witness. Anchored by a live performance of one of *Grief Dialogues'* newest plays, the session uses theater as a unifying language to explore how grief, love, and transformation unfold across the lifespan and within everyday relationships. The selected play resonates thematically with the plenary's

focus, offering an emotionally accessible entry point into complex experiences of loss, continuity, and connection that cut across culture, age, gender, and belief systems. Following the performance, participants are guided through a structured reflective activity that frames their time at the conference as a three-act story: *what brought them here, what they discovered or shed along the way, and who they are becoming as they prepare to leave.*

A brief mini talk introduces the central premise that grief does not resolve but evolves, and that growth is not the absence of pain but the widening of one's capacity for meaning making. This framing explicitly acknowledges the diverse ways grief is experienced, expressed, and understood across cultural, familial, and social contexts, while avoiding prescriptive or hierarchical models of healing.

*Learning Objectives:*

- Describe grief as an ongoing, non-linear process that evolves over time. Apply a narrative (three-act) framework to reflect on personal or professional experiences of loss and transition;
- Identify how narrative and storytelling practices support meaning making in grief; and
- Explain the role of community and communal witnessing in integrating grief and growth.

*Content Focus:*

- Topics related to psychological practice, education, or research *other than* application of psychological assessment and/or intervention methods that are supported by contemporary scholarship grounded in established research procedures.

*Instructional Level:*

- Intermediate

*Content Overview:*

- Framing the Arc: Grief as Narrative (25 min.)
- The Three-Act Story: Theatrical Performance I (50 min.)
- Grief Evolves and Expands: Pairing and Sharing (40 min.)
- Group Dialogue: Theatrical Performance II (45 min.)
- Closing Ritual: A Roomful of Becoming (20 min.)

*NOTE: This session confers 0.5 credit of Techniques Module for [All Certification Programs](#).*

*For inquiries regarding accommodations for disability, cancellations, refunds, and/or other issues, please email [Carolyn](#).*