



Portland Institute
For Loss and Transition



Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction: Creative Practices for Counseling the Bereaved

21 & 22 February, 2019

Boutersem, near Leuven, Belgium

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Portland Institute for Loss and Transition
www.portlandinstitute.org
Verbinding in Verlies
www.verbindinginverlies.be

As contemporary models of bereavement have become more nuanced and empirically informed, so too have the practices available to grief counselors and therapists. This two-day workshop offers in-depth training in several of these techniques, nesting them both within the therapy relationship and in the context of current theories and research that provide flexible frameworks for intervention. While the first workshop day addresses tragic death and trauma-informed interventions, the second day focuses on attachment-informed interventions. Making extensive use of actual clinical videos as well as *how-to* instruction in the use practical therapeutic tools, we will discuss and practice several methods for helping clients integrate the reality of the loss into the ongoing story of their lives, while also reconstructing their continuing bond to their loved one.

About the presenters:



Robert A. Neimeyer, Ph.D., is Professor in the Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, where he also maintains an active clinical practice. Since completing his doctoral training at the University of Nebraska in 1982, he has published 30 books, including *Techniques of Grief Therapy* and *Grief and the Expressive Arts: Practices for Creating Meaning* (both with Routledge), and serves as Editor of the journal *Death Studies*. The author

of nearly 500 articles and book chapters, he is currently working to advance a more adequate theory of grieving as a meaning-making process, both in his published work and through his frequent professional workshops for national and international audiences. The founder and Director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, Neimeyer also has served as Chair of the International Work Group for Death, Dying, & Bereavement and President of the Association for Death Education and Counseling. In recognition of his scholarly contributions, he has been granted the Eminent Faculty Award by the University of Memphis, made a Fellow of the Clinical Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association, and given Lifetime Achievement Awards by both the Association for Death Education and Counseling and the International Network on Personal Meaning. For more information, see: www.robertneimeyerphd.com

An Hooghe is a Clinical Psychologist and Marital and Family Therapist in Belgium. She combines clinical work with teaching and qualitative research at Context (University Hospital Leuven), and in her private centre '*Verbinding in verlies*' (Connection in loss). Her main domain of expertise relates to parents who have lost a child and complicated grief processes in families. She published several articles on couple communication in national and international journals, and a book she wrote with bereaved parents '*Anders Nabij*' (Being near in a different way). She is a member of several organisations, including the International Workgroup on Death, Dying and Bereavement (IWG). For more information, see: www.verbindinginverlies.be



Agnieszka Konopka, PhD, is an Associate Director for the Portland Institute, and maintains a private practice in The Netherlands focusing on expatriates facing major life transition. She is the founder of Composition Work, an art-therapy/coaching method, and offers training and supervision for practitioners internationally. She is co-author (with Hubert Hermans) of '*Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-positioning in a Globalizing Society*', and editor of the *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory and Psychotherapy*, with Hubert Hermans and Miguel Gonçalves. Agnieszka is an author of publications in 6 languages, including *Composing the Self: Toward the Dialogical Reconstruction of Self-Identity*, with Robert Neimeyer and Jason Jacobs-Lentz.



Day 1: Integrating Violent Death— Trauma-informed Interventions

Note: *This course satisfies requirements for one Case Study and two Techniques Modules toward the Portland Institute’s Certification in Meaning Reconstruction in Loss.*

Beginning with a discussion of a trauma-informed Meaning Reconstruction model of adaptive and complicated grief, we will consider the power of presence as a fundamental dimension of the therapeutic “holding environment,” which grounds both our tracking of the therapy process and our use of particular procedures or techniques. We will then illustrate the construction of a safe relational container for a healing “re-telling” of the loss experience, and address ancillary between-session methods that can augment the power of in-session exploration. Drawing on a close process analysis of a father contending with the sudden loss of not one but two young adult children to accidental death, we will learn to listen between the lines of the stories clients tell themselves and others about the death to grasp more fully the unvoiced meaning of their grief, and how we can help them integrate the event story of the death into the larger narrative of their lives. Participants should conclude the session with a clearer appreciation for the challenge to meaning associated with tragic bereavement, and an expanded toolbox for using metaphor, body work and a variety of narrative procedures for helping clients make sense of the loss and their response to it.

Learning outcomes:

- Differentiate narrative work focused on processing the event story of the loss from work focused on accessing the back story of relationship to the deceased
- Distinguish between therapeutic “presence” and “absence” in the process of therapy
- Utilize strategies for negotiating safety in revisiting a tragic loss without re-traumatizing the client
- Identify markers of client need and readiness to engage the event story of loss
- Follow principles of bracing, pacing and facing when using restorative retelling procedures to promote integration of traumatic bereavement
- Describe narrative techniques for accommodating loss in literal and figurative ways into the changed narrative of the client’s life

Schedule:

8.30- 9.00	Arrival and registration
9:00-10:30	The Power of Presence: Orienting to Client Needs and Resources
10:30-11:00	Break
11:00-1:00	At the Edge: Integrating a Story of Traumatic Loss
1:00-2:00	Lunch
2:00-3:30	Restorative Retelling: Mastering the Narrative of the Death
3:30-4:00	Break
4:00-5:00	Chapters of Our Lives: Rewriting Stories of Loss

Day 2: Accessing the Back Story of Relationship— Attachment-informed Interventions

Note: *This course satisfies requirements for one Case Study and two Techniques Modules toward the Portland Institute's Certification in Meaning Reconstruction in Loss.*

Death may end a life, but not necessarily a relationship. Drawing on attachment-informed and Two-Track models of bereavement, we will begin by considering grieving as a process of reconstructing rather than relinquishing our bonds with those who have died, and the circumstances that can interfere with this natural process. We then turn to a close process analysis of a therapy session with an older widow contending with haunting loneliness following the death of her husband of many years. Reactivating and validating their continuing bond, we then explore the use of Composition Work to heal and reveal the relational rupture between the mourner and the deceased. Returning to the video, we witness the novel use of a Dialogue with Loneliness as a means of harvesting the lessons of loss, moving the mourner toward greater self-understanding and compassion. We conclude with a reflecting team interaction with witnesses to the therapy, which clarifies therapeutic procedures for re-accessing and revising internal monologues that hamper post-loss adaptation.

Learning outcomes:

- Practice Introducing Our Loved One to consolidate a more secure attachment with the deceased and to validate client resilience
- Identify the value of Composition Work in reconstructing a continuing bond with the deceased as the client transitions toward a changed future
- Direct experiential work to access and restructure problematic emotions and identities linked to the loss and its aftermath
- Choreograph imaginal dialogues between the client and his or her suffering to promote self-understanding and self-care

Schedule:

9:00-11:00	Introducing Our Loved Ones: Recovering Relationship with the Deceased
11:00-11:30	Break
11:30-12:30	Composition Work: Exploring the Dialogical Self in Transition
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-3:30	A Dialogue with Loneliness: Finding Wisdom in Suffering
3:30-4:00	Break
4:00-5:00	Presence, Process and Procedure: Reflections on Change

Practical Information

Price:

Early Bird Registration: \$385 USD [325 Euros] (before 1 December 2018)

Regular price: \$550 USD [470 Euros] (after 1 December 2018)

Price includes lunch, coffee and tea.

Please register soon taking into account that the number of places is limited.

Registration:

<https://www.portlandinstitute.org/shop/workshop>

Venue:

Verbinding in Verlies

Leuvensesteenweg 30,
3370 Boutersem
Belgium

Plan to arrive 30 minutes before the workshop begins to check in and enjoy a coffee with us!

For further inquiries, write:

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For more information about training and
Certification in Meaning Reconstruction in Loss,
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www.portlandinstitute.org

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