

Post Traumatic Growth: Strategies in Dealing with Disenfranchised and Complicated Grief ©

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PTSD and Grief as a Transformative Struggle: Post Traumatic Growth

- An emerging area of research concerned with the positive psychological changes that can follow the experience of traumatic events
- Draws from the earlier work of Victor Frankl, Abraham Maslow, Irvin Yalom, Martin Seligman and Richard Tedeschi

Post Traumatic Growth

- Frankl: The way in which we accept our suffering gives us an opportunity to add deeper meaning to life
- Maslow: The most important learning experiences are traumas that force people to take a new perspective
- Yalom: Meaning in life arises through the suffering caused by life threatening illnesses

Post Traumatic Growth Involves:

- Philosophical changes: new found sense of what is really important in life
- Relationship changes: newly placed value on human connection: family, friends
- Sense of compassion for self and others is heightened
- Reordering of priorities and heightened authenticity

The Processing of Grief:

- ◆ ‘Medical model’ of understanding human behavior impairs the grief process
- ◆ Takes responsibility from the bereaved and puts it into the hands of the therapist who “treats” the patient
- ◆ Treat: the latin root is *tractare* which means

To DRAG

Wissel, Doughty, Glorfield, (2011)

Transition Process of Recovery and Grieving the Loss of Dreams

Clinician as an “Guide” who:

- Learns from the bereaved
- Tolerates the ambiguity
- There for the duration
- Helps to create a new vision for the future

Doka, Martin (2008)

Limitations of Technique

“The limitation of technique is at no time more apparent than when we are faced with naked grief, when someone is crying helplessly in the grip of an experience that is too painful for words, when we can say nothing that would not seem presumptuous or trivial.”

Peter Lomas

When asked Who/What Meant the Most...

- It is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions or cures, acknowledge the pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand,
- Someone who can be silent in a moment of despair or confusion, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing.
- And face with us our loss

Companioning

- Companioning is about being present with another person's pain, not taking it away
- Companioning is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being;
- It is not about thinking your responsible for finding the way out
- Companioning is respecting disorder and confusion; not about imposing order and logic
- Companioning is about honoring the spirit
- It's about curiosity not expertise
- It's about walking along side, not leading
- It's about finding the gifts of sacred silence, not about filling every painful moment with words

A Wolfelt (2004)

Nothing in the world changes from one reality to another until it turns into nothing, then it's made into a new creation. Nothingness is the primal state that proceeds creation and that's called...

Chaos

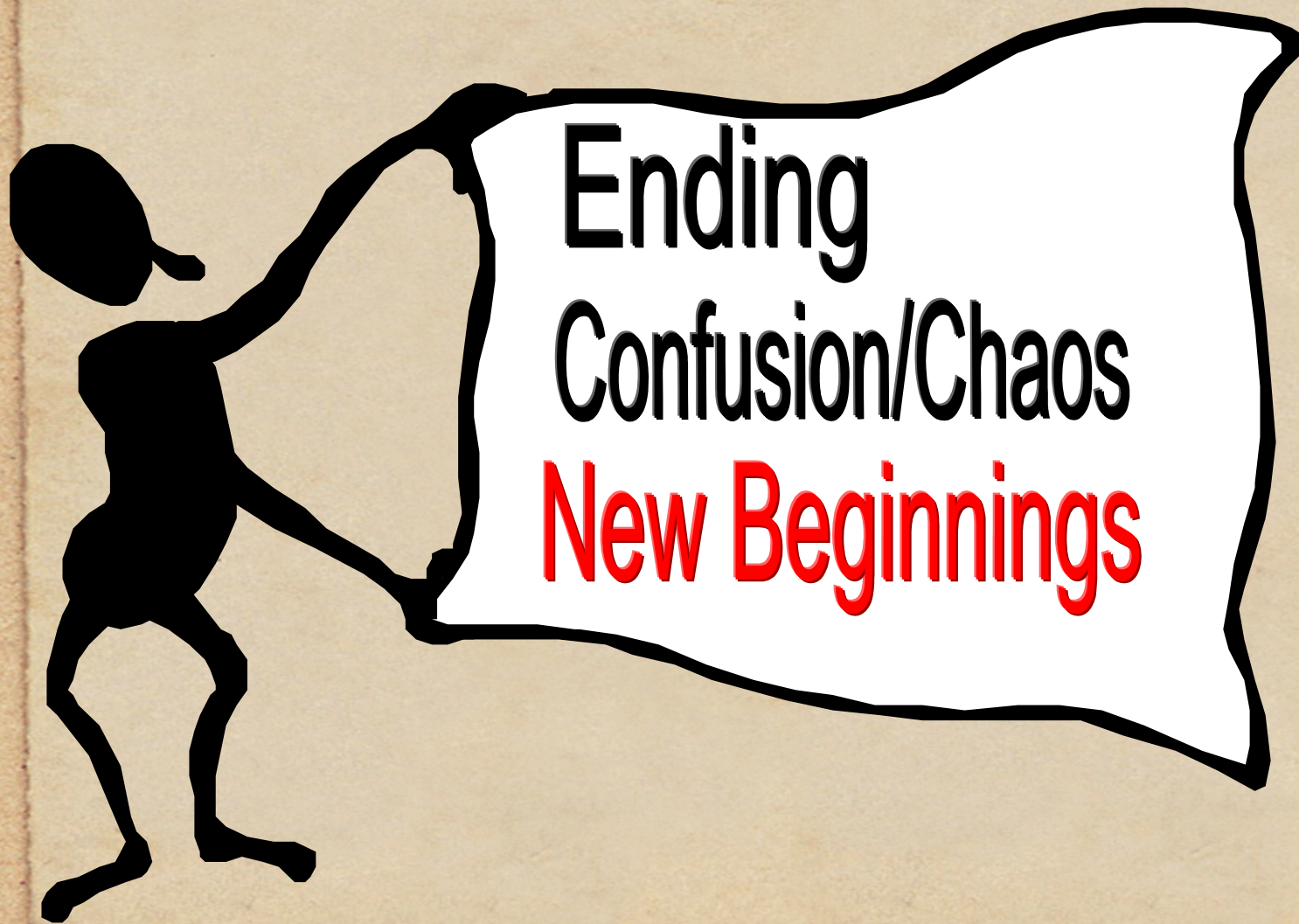
Predictable Life-Cycle Transitions

- puberty
- peri-menopause
- midlife
- birth of children
- emotional growth
- relationship changes
- empty-nesting
- career change
- change in sexuality
- lifestyle choices
- friendship changes
- life balance
- retirement
- aging, physical

“Surprise Attacks”

- End of a relationship
- Serious illness
- Abortion, infertility or pre-natal death
- Affairs
- Addiction
- Abuse or neglect
- Death of a pet
- Traumatic events: (burglary, war, fire, destructive weather)
- Betrayal by a partner, friend or business associate
- Financial loss or set back

Transition:



Ending
Confusion/Chaos
New Beginnings

- ◆ My boat struck something deep...
- ◆ Sounds, silence waves
- ◆ Nothing is happening
- ◆ Or, perhaps everything is happening, and I'm standing in the middle of my new life

Juan Hernandez

Differences in Transition

Did your client choose their endings?

Were they forced into an ending?

How did they learn to say goodbye?

Surrender:

An Act of Powerlessness Transformed into Power

We don't surrender our will. We surrender our
willfulness

- I'm angry that...
- The price I pay for holding on is...
- The gifts I received are...
- I regret that...
- I want to forgive myself for...

Complicated Grief

- ◆ Instead of declining in intensity over time, one's grief remains chronic and severe, giving rise to protracted misery and an inability to function in the roles that make life worthwhile.
- ◆ Although not included in the DSM, A study in 2005 reports that prevalence rates are estimated at approximately 10% to 20% of bereaved persons.

Katherine Shear, MD; Ellen Frank, PhD;
Patricia R. Houck, MSH; Charles F. Reynolds,
MD, (2005) Prigerson et al, 1995)

Disenfranchised Grief

- Any loss that is hidden or that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported.
- Examples: Miscarriage, loss of job, infidelity or betrayal, loss of pleasure, loss of a loved one to a socially unacceptable cause, loss of a pet
- Grief can become disenfranchised when well-meaning friends and family attempt to set a time limit on a bereaved person's right to grieve

K Doka, (2005)



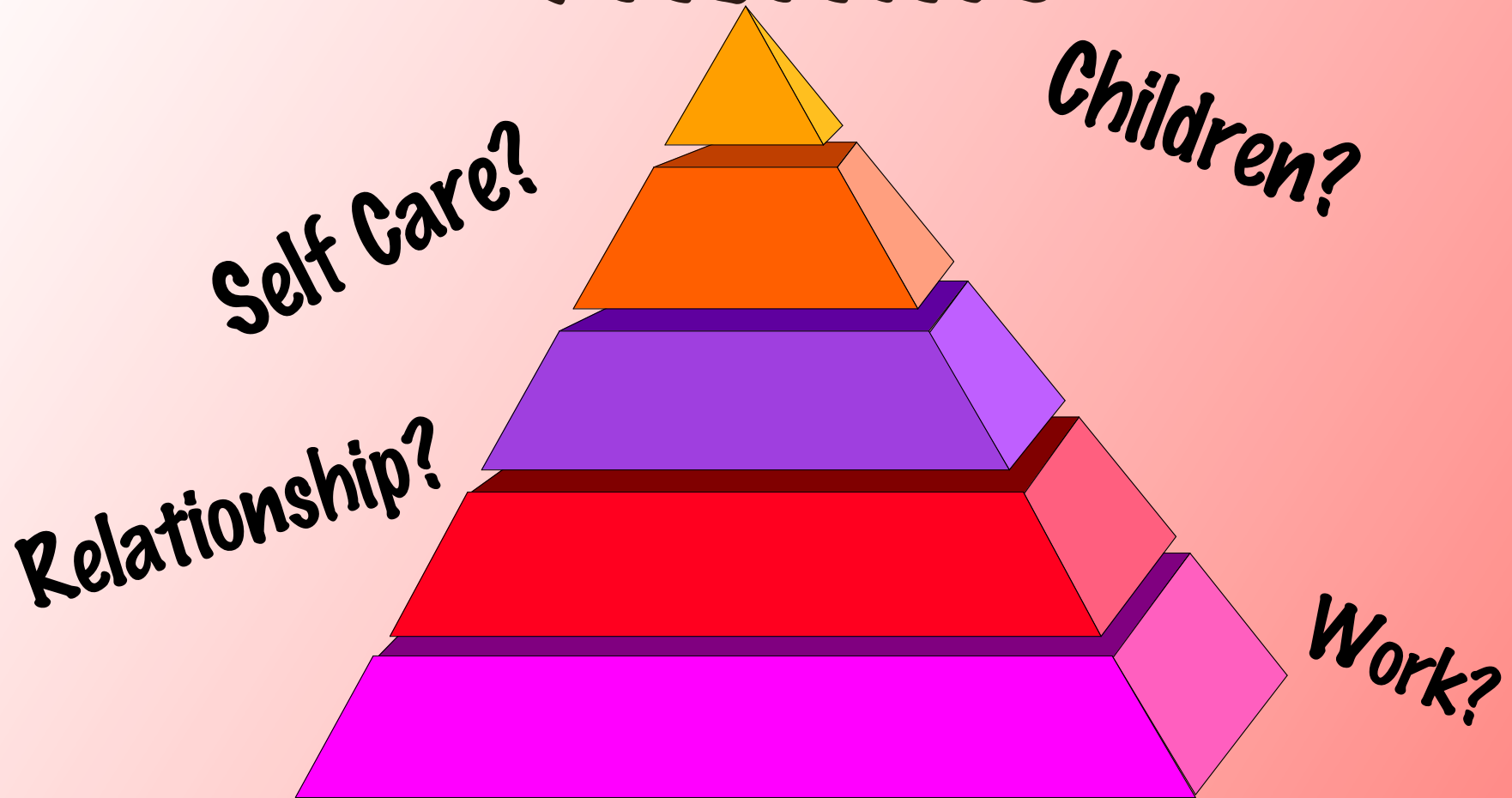
Hyper-arousal: Fight, flight, anxiety, panic, rage
(Sympathetic)

OPTIMAL ZONE

Think and feel at the same time!

Hypo-arousal: Dissociation, numbness, depression,
oversleeping
(Parasympathetic)

Priorities



Loss of Dreams

- The loss of an emotionally important image of oneself, one's family, or one's situation; the loss of what might have been; abandonment of plans for a particular future; the dying of dreams.
- More than the wishes and hopes common to most people.
- Assumptions about life in which we “lock in.”
They must happen!

Bowman, (1998)

Healing the Loss of a Dream

- ◆ Help the client to name the dream
- ◆ Gain Perspective
- ◆ Educate those close to you by telling your story
- ◆ Create safety
- ◆ Borrow hopefulness from others
- ◆ Utilize Metaphor
- ◆ Keep dreaming

Soul Retrieval:

- Singing
- Dancing
- Story telling
- Silence
- Creative Arts

Angeles Arrien (1998)

Story is more than just an occasional diversion. We live and die in story and there is no clear demarcation between literal and symbolic language. Every time we describe our life's events, we are both providing and discovering underlying patterns of meaning

Writing the Story

- *Once Upon a Time:*
Wounding
- *And when she/he grew up:*
Present
- *And the story changed when:*
Vision

“Our most spectacular answers to prayers have come when we were so helpless, so out of control that we could do nothing at all for ourselves”

Catherine Marshall

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