

Robert A. Neimeyer

Finding Meaning in Loss: An Orientation

Over the last dozen years, our understanding of bereavement has been extended by a conceptualization of grieving as a process of reaffirming or reconstructing a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss. In these brief remarks I will orient fellow professionals to this constructivist perspective, sharing selective findings from our program that consistently establishes a link between an anguished struggle to make sense of the death of a loved one and adverse outcomes in bereavement, as well as between successful meaning making and long term adaptation, resilience and growth. Touching on research in contexts as diverse as palliative care and violent death losses through suicide and homicide, I will then sketch some of the growing edges of this research program, as it has spawned new means of clinical assessment of coping skills in bereavement and grief adaptation, the latter delivered via a smartphone app, and been extended into studying a Meaning In Loss therapy protocol in collaboration with Portuguese, British, Canadian and American colleagues.



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: Creative Practices for Counseling the Bereaved and Grief and the Expressive Arts* (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 recipient of the MISS Foundation's Phoenix Award: Rising to the Service of Humanity, Neimeyer served as Chair of the International Work Group for Death, Dying, & Bereavement and President of the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC). 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 ADEC and the International Network for Personal Meaning.