

Maarten Eisma

Rumination after Bereavement

The current presentation will provide an overview of rumination (i.e., thinking repetitively and recurrently about negative events and/or negative emotions) in adjustment to bereavement.

Bereaved persons who ruminate more generally experience more severe mental health problems both concurrently and longitudinally. While researchers have often assumed rumination is a maladaptive confrontation process, others have more recently suggested rumination has adverse effects because it is an avoidance process. Crucially, these different perspectives have conflicting clinical implications. If rumination is confrontation, then distraction would be a logical intervention strategy to ameliorate rumination and complicated grief; if rumination is avoidance, then the use of loss exposure would be more beneficial.

To solve this important theoretical issue, we recently conducted a series of surveys, laboratory studies and a randomized controlled trial to investigate the function of ruminative coping after bereavement. The present contribution will summarize and contextualize this research, attempt to reconcile both theoretical orientations, and will conclude with recommendations for clinical practice.



Dr. Maarten C. Eisma is assistant professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His main research interests are repetitive thinking and avoidance processes in adjustment to bereavement and (internet-based) psychological treatments for complicated grief. He completed his PhD thesis titled 'Rumination following bereavement: Assessment, working mechanisms and intervention' at Utrecht University in 2015, under supervision of experts on coping with bereavement such as prof. dr. Margaret Stroebe, dr. Henk Schut and prof. dr. Paul Boelen. Subsequently, he worked for a year as postdoctoral

researcher at the University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom. Presently he leads several investigations that aim to further clarify the role of cognitive emotion regulation after bereavement. Simultaneously, he is involved in multiple international research projects, including a trial on the effectiveness of community-delivered bereavement counseling of Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland and reviews of complicated grief models and treatments.