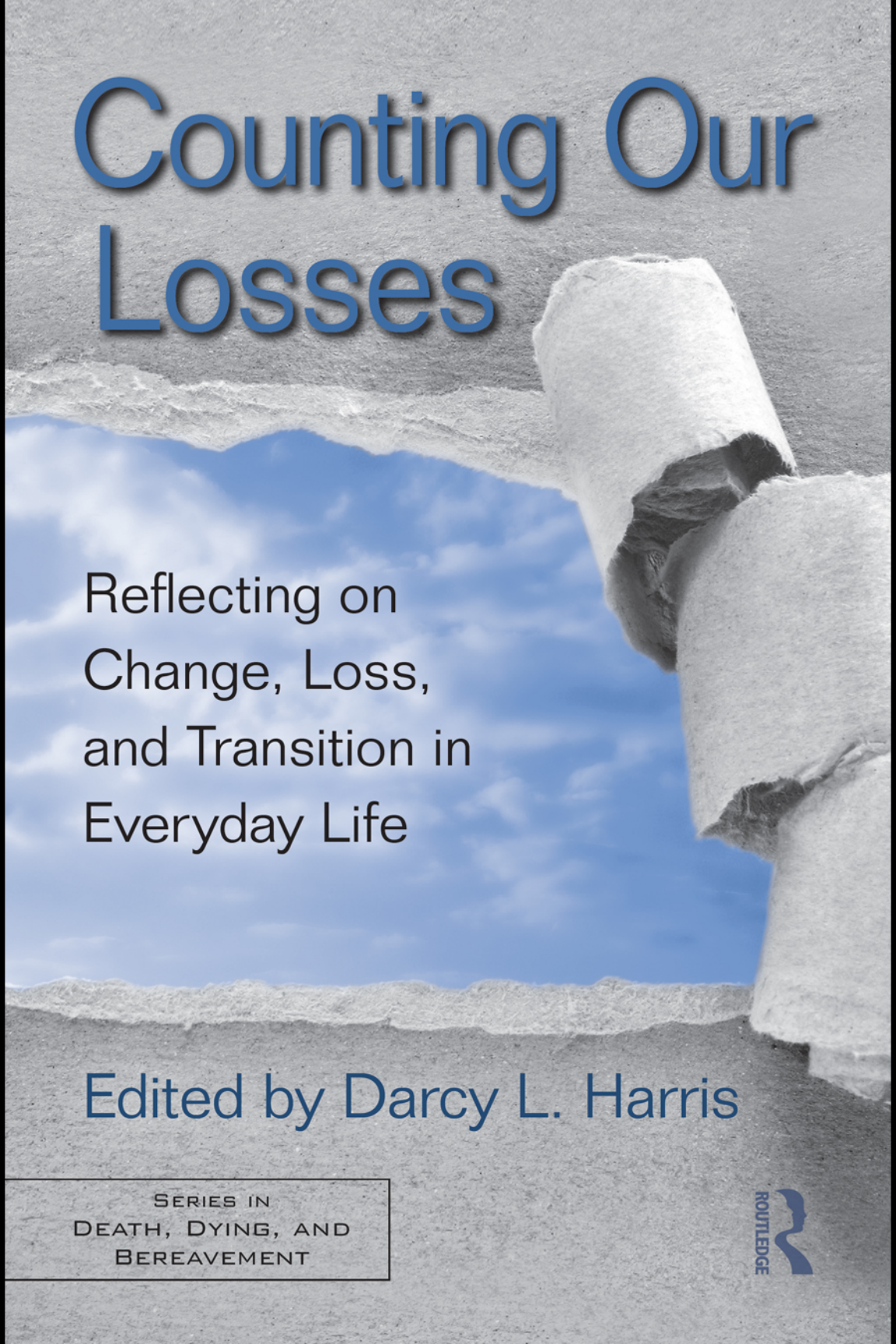
Counting Our Losses

Reflecting on Change, Loss, and Transition in Everyday Life

Edited by Darcy L. Harris



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Counting Our Losses

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For Brad and Lauren

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Series Editor's Foreword

As the prominent family therapist, Carlos Sluzki, once noted, "Losses are the shadow of all possessions, material and immaterial." Viewed in this sense, every person, every place, every project, and every possession we love we will someday lose—at least in a physical sense—and how we adapt to these innumerable losses shapes who we become. This book is about these inevitable transitions, particularly those precipitated by immaterial losses, as of cherished beliefs, security, self-definition, and grounding in a world we once took for granted as solid, substantial, and durable. Often, as the contributors richly illustrate, these more elusive, non-finite repercussions arise in stubbornly concrete contexts, such as relationship dissolution, progressive illness, assault, or disaster, but extend beyond the sharp outlines of the event itself, as a shadow is cast by a material object, and yet may be scarcely noticed in our habitual gaze. By shifting our vision toward the penumbra of grief, uncertainty, and anxious readjustment following in the wake of countless life events, *Counting Our Losses* brings us into full contact with this shadow, greatly extending the focus of a field often concentrated myopically on literal bereavement. Nonetheless, by situating this project in the interdisciplinary context of thanatology, the study of death and dying, Darcy Harris and her capable collaborators implicitly argue that the litany of losses to which life will expose us is better understood as occasioning grief and its integration, rather than, say, merely medicalized depression, narrowly defined trauma symptomatology, or blandly generalized "stressful life events." Common to all of these unsought transitions—whether as normative as aging and launching our children or as particular as immigrating or struggling with infertility—is the need to revise our assumptive worlds, and in doing so, to relinquish an aspect of ourselves and a life once familiar or desired. The rich description of the many contexts in which such losses occur is a cardinal contribution of this book, demonstrating amply that grieving and its complications are not reserved only for those who have lost a loved one to death.

What might surprise the reader is the way the topical coverage of many tangible losses encountered in clinical settings is complemented by thoughtful but accessible meditations on the existential realities of life, in a sense providing a "container" for the book as a whole. Indeed, the tragedy (and opportunity) of the human condition is that *we are wired for attachment in a world of impermanence*, and the book's philosophic meditation on this "noble truth" implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, informs the chapters that follow. What results is a volume that is practical in its purpose, sweeping in its scope, and occasionally poetic in its prose.

Far from leaving the reader mired in hopelessness in response to life's ineluctable losses, it offers a compassionate vision within which to engage them, moving from grief to growth, and from reassessment to resilience. I recommend it highly to all of us who are "counting our losses," as well as to those professionals who endeavor to help us live them with integrity, or perhaps even convert them to gains.

Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD
Series Editor

Acknowledgments

This book has been the culmination of many years' worth of clinical practice and personal reflection. Along the way, there have been numerous individuals to whom I owe a great deal of gratitude for how they encouraged me in my thinking and practice regarding nondeath and nondefinite loss.

First and foremost, I wish to thank the clients in my clinical practice and those who participated in my research for entrusting me with their experiences and for teaching me about the innate resilience that can manifest in the face of great pain and adversity.

I am greatly indebted to my mentor and friend, Dr. Jack Morgan, for his belief in me and his encouragement of my work and choices in the field of thanatology. It is an honor and a privilege to follow in the footsteps of this pioneer of death education.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Willson Williams, Dr. Thomas Attig, Dr. Anne Cummings, Dr. Judith Daniluk, and Dr. Kathleen Gilbert for their hard work and honest feedback. This book began under their supervision and encouragement of my research in the grief and losses associated with infertility, which then expanded into other areas of loss that did not fit neatly into specific categories.

A book such as this one involves the willingness of many individuals to come together from many different backgrounds and spheres of practice. I wish to acknowledge the work and collaboration of my colleague, Dr. Eunice Gorman, as well as Ramona Fernandez, who offered so much of this project through her patient assistance with editing and research. I am also deeply indebted to the contributing authors and their willingness to share their expertise and experiences.

I also wish to express deep appreciation to my partner, Brad Hunter, whose depth and awareness of the true nature of impermanence help to remind me that life and love are truly precious, and that every moment matters. Your unfaltering support in myriad ways means so much to me, from reading portions of the manuscript and offering suggestions for clarity to making my everyday life much lighter so that I could focus on this project—to say thank you is simply not enough.

Finally, to my daughter Lauren, as we experience both the joys and the difficulties that life offers us—for all of the changes, losses, and transitions that we have encountered and that we will journey through in the future. Your light in my life inspires me to reach out to others who find themselves struggling in dark and difficult places.

Introduction

This book began as a desire to explore how loss, change, and transition permeate our lives on a regular basis and as recognition that individuals experience grief as a result of many events that do not necessarily involve the physical death of a significant person. Rather than look at losses that are external to us (i.e., the death of a loved one), I wanted to consider the losses that are internal in nature—when something that dies is inside of us.

Throughout the course of life, we repeatedly experience events that challenge our view of ourselves, others, and the world around us. In struggling with these challenges, we often enter the grieving process, which helps us to adapt and to integrate these changes and losses into the fabric of our lives in a meaningful way. At times, this process and the losses we experience may not be consciously recognized. At other times, the losses may be overwhelming, and the grieving process may completely consume us. No matter the cause or the magnitude of the challenge, it is apparent that loss, change, and transition shape our lives and who we are as individuals. The grieving process is an important part of our human existence, as it can help us to embrace the dynamic experience of living, of which loss and change are a part.

In my clinical work, I frequently see individuals who experience profound anxiety because they can no longer live under the illusion that things can remain constant and unchanging, and this realization usually occurs as a result of the experience of a significant loss in their lives. Even though we attempt to function as if there is certainty and stability in everyday life, the world around us and even our bodies serve as metaphors for the normalcy of loss, change, and transition. The seasons change. Living things are born, grow, reproduce, and die. Many of the cells that exist in our bodies today were not present a year ago and may not be present in our bodies a month from now. This moment is gone and replaced by another moment in time. We cannot stop the changing nature of life, just as we cannot stop time in its place or change the course of events, although this topic has frequently been the subject of fantasy. Weenolsen (1988) speaks of our innate resistance to change and our belief that things can remain the same as the "fundamental illusion," functioning to allow us to feel safe and solid in the world. However, our clinging to this image causes us great difficulty when the illusion cannot be maintained, such as when a major loss event does indeed occur or when we come to the realization that we have very little control over ourselves and the people, places, and things that matter very much to us.

The purpose of this book is not to define all life experiences in the terminology of bereavement theory or to imply that we exist in an ongoing state of chronic, unresolved grief. However, there is scant writing about how the nondeath losses that we encounter on a regular basis shape who we are, how we relate to the world around us, and how we live in an environment that requires us to adapt and adjust to change on a regular basis. In response to the realization of how loss experiences of all types can have an impact on our lives, we introduced a new course in our thanatology program entitled Change, Loss, and Transition. The intention of this course is to explore different aspects of loss and the role that loss plays in human development, growth, and adjustment. When we first proposed this course, a review of the pertinent literature revealed that very little was written about this aspect of loss, as most of what was written focused on the grieving process after death-related losses. We also were hard pressed to find an appropriate text for this course because of the focus on death-related loss in the literature and other texts. Thus, the introduction of this new course led to the birth of this book and to our desire to reflect on the loss experiences in our lives in a more holistic way.

DEFINITIONS OF LOSS

Viorst (1986) stated that the losses we experience are necessary for us to grow and adapt as part of our normal functioning. In her book *Necessary Losses*, she stated that loss is natural, unavoidable, and inexorable. She further claimed that losses are necessary because we grow by losing and leaving and letting go.

> Throughout our lives, we grow by giving up. We give up some of our deepest attachments to others. We give up certain cherished parts of ourselves. We must confront, in the dreams we dream, as well as in our intimate relationships, all that we never will have and never will be. Passionate investment leaves us vulnerable to loss…. And sometimes, no matter how clever we are, we must lose. (p. 3)

The experience of loss may be subtle or overwhelming. Our losses may or may not be recognized by those around us, but it is our subjective appraisal and experience of these losses that matter. Some, like Weenolsen (1988), see the loss experience as something that needs to be conquered and worked through:

> [A loss is …] anything that destroys some aspect, whether macroscopic or microscopic, of life and self. Loss is not change, but change incorporates both loss and its overcoming. (p. 3)

Harvey (2002) discussed the role of emotional investment and attachment in the loss experience, stating that a major loss is

> … the loss of something in a person's life in which the person was emotionally invested…. By "emotional investment" I mean that we imbue these events with emotional meaning and in reaction to them we behave in ways that reflect the fact that they matter to us. They do not go away from our reflection

> and memory easily. In fact, we hang on to them intentionally and memorialize their value in our lives. (p. 5)

In his discussion of the losses that are encountered in everyday life, Harvey (2002) describes the importance of experiences that demonstrate our lack of ability to control our world or exposure to experiences that confront our view of the world and shatter our assumptions about how the world should work. He also describes how losses can be "layered" on each other, magnifying their impact on our lives.

Maass (2008) discussed the role of perception and interpretation in the definition of loss. For example, an event that leads to a change in a person's normal routine may offer opportunities that did not exist before. However, the recognition of these opportunities is often overshadowed by having to let go of what was familiar, comfortable, or even safe. In her discussion of adaptation to lifestyle changes, Maass described our tendency toward dichotomous thinking (e.g., good vs. bad, positive vs. negative) rather than facing change in a way that recognizes the multifaceted and multidimensional aspects of choices and events.

THE ASSUMPTIVE WORLD

At a basic level, one's expectations about how the world works begin to be formed from birth, through the development of the attachment relationships of the infant and young child. Bowlby (1969, 1973) posited that early-life attachment experiences lead individuals to form "working models" of the self and of the world. According to Bowlby, a normal working model based on secure attachment represents the world as capable of meeting one's needs and providing a sense of safety and security. Bowlby's theory also suggested that loss can threaten these working models, leading to efforts to rebuild or restructure one's working models to fit the postloss world. Building on Bowlby's work, Parkes (1975) extended the concept of the "internal working model" to that of the "assumptive world," which he stated was a "… strongly held set of assumptions about the world and the self, which is confidently maintained and used as a means of recognizing, planning, and acting" (p. 132) and that it is "… the only world we know, and it includes everything we know or think we know. It includes our interpretation of the past and our expectations of the future, our plans and our prejudices" (Parkes, 1971, p. 103).

Parkes (1971) stated that the assumptions that individuals form about how the world works are based on their life experiences and attachments. He also emphasized that experiencing a significant loss can threaten one's assumptive world. Recent research that links attachment style to the way an individual navigates the grieving process after a significant loss would also support the role of early experiences with attachment figures as a template for how experiences are interpreted and integrated in later life (Stroebe, 2002). In her extensive work that explored the construct of the assumptive world in the context of traumatic experiences, Janoff-Bulman (1992) stated that expectations about how the world should work are established earlier than language in children and that assumptions about the world are a result of the generalization and application of childhood experiences

into adulthood. Forming a belief that the world is safe is related to the sense of "basic trust" described by Erikson's (1968) model of human development.

Although attachment theory was originally founded in the psychoanalytic tradition of psychology and the discussion here draws heavily on attachment as a means of understanding how assumptions are developed, the broader context of the assumptive world goes far beyond the realm of psychological theory or cognition. If, as Parkes (1971) stated, one's assumptions are based on everything we think or know, then the assumptive world must also be informed by culture, experiences, and the social and spiritual context in which these assumptions are nurtured (Berkey, 2007). Indeed, Attig (2002) cautioned that these assumptions are much more than cognitions, as they "encompass all that we have come to take for granted as we have learned how to be and act in the world in the presence of those we love" (p. 55). In complementary research, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) exploration of stress and coping emphasized the importance of one's individual beliefs about the world and one's self on how stressful events were perceived and assessed.

Janoff-Bulmann (1992) identified three major categories of assumptions. The first category is the belief that the world is benevolent—that there is more good than bad in the world and that people are generally trustworthy. The second category is that the world is meaningful—that good and bad events are distributed in the world in a fair and controllable manner. The category of meaningfulness emphasizes the ideas of justice and control over certain aspects of life. Most individuals tend to believe that misfortune is not haphazard and arbitrary—that there is a person–outcome contingency attached to negative life events. Research in the role of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and locus of control (Rotter, 1966) also expands on this particular category of beliefs. At a basic level, negative events are generally viewed as punishment, and positive events are rewards. Janoff-Bulman stated that this assumption is "…that we can directly control what happens to us through our own behavior. If we engage in appropriate behaviors, we will be protected from negative events and if we engage in appropriate behaviors, good things will happen to us" (p. 10).

The third category is that the self is worthy and has value. Janoff-Bulman (1992) stated that these three categories of beliefs can be called world assumptions, and together they make up an individual's assumptive world. She drew on Piaget's (1954) concept of schemas to explain the nature of the assumptive world. Schemas are mental structures that represent things or events in the world. Schemas govern the interpretation of experiences (*assimilation*), or they can be revised if they are incapable of explaining or integrating a new set of experiences *(accommodation*). Rando (1993, 2002) further expanded on discussions regarding the assumptive world by differentiating between global assumptions (which are general beliefs about one's self, others, the world, and spirituality) and specific assumptions (which are more focused on what has been or is being lost).

Extrapolations of social forces that also may help shape these assumptions can be drawn from the theories of family systems (Bowen, 1985), where the valued need to belong in a social system is reinforced by the adoption of the family "rules" through socialization, which would also include the family's assumptions about the external world. Social pain theory (MacDonald & Leary, 2005) would also explain the strong need to reinforce one's adoption of the beliefs and assumptions of the

social group to which an individual desired inclusion, as failure to do so would result in being ostracized from the desired group, with an accompanying negative response, which is experienced through the same neurological pathways as physiological pain.

With this foundation in place, it is apparent that the assumptive world is deeply ingrained into the fabric of how individuals live their lives and interpret life events. An individual's fundamental assumptions and themes allow for a feeling of safety and consistency in the world (Bandura, 1977; Epstein, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Janoff-Bulman, 1992, 2004; Poulin, 2006; Rando, 2002). Significant change or challenge to these deeply held beliefs would therefore be experienced as a threat to an individual's sense of stability and way of knowing and interpreting the world. In other words, the known is familiar and conceptually comfortable; the unknown is threatening. Significant changes challenge our feelings of safety and security (Maass, 2008). The result is a strong resistance to change in these assumptions, which Janoff-Bulman (1992) termed "cognitive conservatism" (p. 26).

Janoff-Bulman (1992) described how our basic assumptions about how the world should work can be shattered by life experiences that do not fit into our view of ourselves and the world around us. The concept of the shattering of one's assumptive world was further explored in detail by Poulin (2006), who found that there is a complex interplay between one's beliefs and assumptions about the world and other factors such as social support, age, and previous life experiences. Neimeyer, Laurie, Mehta, Hardison, and Currier (2008) discussed events that "disrupt the significance of the coherence of one's life narrative" (p. 30) and the potential for erosion of the individual's life story and sense of self that may occur after such events. What is apparent is that the experience of a significant life event that does not fit into our beliefs can throw us into a state of disequilibrium. Coping, healing, and accommodation after such experiences are part of a greater process that individuals undertake in an effort to "relearn" their world in light of confrontation with a reality that does not match one's expectations or assumptions (Attig, 1996).

Obviously, these life-altering events and losses cause a major shift and upheaval in our lives, and the process of adjusting to a world that is different from what we thought or believed will involve a great expenditure of energy. In putting together this book, experiences that may lead to the loss or challenge of specific assumptions about the world, such as the loss of the self as worthy or valuable, loss of the belief in the benevolence or basic goodness of others, loss of the belief that there is justice or meaning to events that occur, or the loss of the belief that the world is a safe place.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

We begin with an exploration of the recent literature on losses that are not a result of the death of someone and the grief experience after such losses. In this first section, we will discuss in more detail specific aspects of nondeath loss, explore the concepts of nonfinite loss, ambiguous loss, and chronic sorrow, and then look at how these constructs may be applied to the various losses that are described in subsequent chapters. As a backdrop to the discussion of the topics in this book, a

chapter that explores the social context of grief, including the concept of disenfranchised grief as defined by Doka (1989, 2002) will be provided.

The specific losses described in this book are presented in three distinct sections, founded on the basic assumptions as described earlier by Janoff-Bulman (1992). At the start of each of these sections, a brief introduction will be offered, tying together the specific topics to the overall theme of that section. Special contributions have been submitted by authors with specific expertise or experience in the listed topic areas to help provide clarity and description to these experiences.

The first descriptive section includes losses of assumptions related to the view of the world and others: for example, topics such as the loss of safety and security on a macro level, such as in mass disasters and large-scale events, and personal violations, such as rape and harassment. There is also a chapter on vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue in professionals, as it is recognized that professionals who work with traumatized individuals often find their view of the world to be altered as they are repeatedly exposed to stories of human pain, suffering, and helplessness (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). The next chapter in this section explores relational losses that may occur, such as through separation and dissolution, adoption, and specific developmental milestones, such as the postparental transition (i.e., "the empty nest").

The second descriptive section examines the loss of meaning or a sense of justice in the world. Topics in this heading include existential losses pertaining to one's belief system, the realization of the human condition and existential suffering, the recognition that life has very little certainty, and the loss of one's faith community as a result of changes in one's beliefs.

The third descriptive section includes the loss of the view of one's self as worthy or valuable. In losses such as these, the loss of one's identity may lead to a redefinition of the self in ways that cause an individual to struggle for a sense of worth, value, identity, or of belonging. Topics in this section include the loss of the self through abuse or neglect, the loss of one's homeland and identity through immigration or moving, the loss of employment, the loss of reproductive ability, losses experienced by gay men when they "come out" publicly, and the loss of functionality that occurs with aspects of the aging process, degenerative conditions, and head injuries.

After the chapters that describe specific losses, there is a section that explores how individuals cope with losses in life, which will discuss the concepts of resilience, posttraumatic growth, and the role of meaning making with nondeath losses. We conclude with a summary of how loss, change, and transition can be integrated in life in a way that is healthy and adaptive and the potential for transformation that may occur after these experiences.

Doka (1989, 2002) discussed the importance of losses being acknowledged and validated. This book is designed to help individuals articulate their losses, both in the identification of what has actually been lost and the depth of the loss experience. Clinicians recognize the importance of bearing witness to an individual's subjective appraisal of an experience and of validating that experience because they are aware that only that person really knows what is important to himself or herself. Thus, loss, change, and transition are universal experiences, but the

personal responses and appraisals of these experiences are highly individual and unique. The ability to name and describe an experience fully allows us the opportunity to reflect and consider its implications for our lives and our future choices. The need to grapple with our experiences and to try to understand them (even if they initially seem beyond our comprehension) is a key part of our human need to understand ourselves and to make sense of our world. I hope that this book provides a greater understanding of specific aspects of nondeath loss and that it also opens the door for further discussion of the losses that occur when something inside of us dies.

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About the Editor

Darcy L. Harris, PhD, RSW, FT, is a professor in the Department of Interdisciplinary Programs at King's University College at the University of Western Ontario, in London, Ontario, Canada, where she is the coordinator of the thanatology program. She also maintains a private clinical practice with a focus on issues related to change, loss, and transition. She serves as a consultant for the Southern Ontario Fertility Treatment Program in London, Ontario, as well as a community consultant for victims of traumatic loss.

Prior to her teaching responsibilities at King's University College, Dr. Harris worked as an expanded role nurse in the areas of oncology and hospice care in the United States for 15 years. She then completed graduate training in counseling psychology and maintained a full-time therapy practice for another 10 years prior to completing her doctoral studies in psychology and thanatology at the Union Institute and University, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dr. Harris planned and developed the undergraduate degree program in thanatology at King's University College, which provides students from around the world with the opportunity to study death, dying, and bereavement. She has implemented coursework in thanatology in the specific interest areas of critical theory, social justice, and the exploration of grief after nondeath losses. She is also adjunct faculty in the College of Graduate Studies at the University of Western Ontario, and she is on the board of directors for the Association for Death Education and Counseling. She is currently engaged in research on the topic of grief after various nondeath losses.

Dr. Harris has written extensively and frequently provides presentations on topics related to death, grief, and loss in contemporary society. Topical areas include the social context of grief in Western society, women's experiences of reproductive losses, and shame and social stigma in death and grief.

About the Contributors

Susan Abercromby, MEd (counseling psychology), is the coordinator of the Community Group Program for Children and Mothers Exposed to Woman Abuse in London, Ontario. She has worked in the field of violence against women and children for 10 years. She offers training and workshops on violence against women and children to audiences including teachers, child protection workers, students, and various community groups both locally and internationally.

Tom Attig, PhD, applied philosopher, is professor emeritus in philosophy at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He is the author of *The Heart of Grief: Death and the Search for Lasting Love* (Oxford, 2000) and *How We Grieve: Relearning the World* (Oxford, 1996). A past president of the Association for Death Education and Counseling and vice chair of IWG, he currently lives in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, and devotes his time to writing, speaking, and online teaching.

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Eunice Gorman, PhD, RSW, is an assistant professor at King's University College in the thanatology program. She has worked in the areas of oncology, palliative care, bereavement, perinatal bereavement, professional caregiver support, and chronic illness as a clinician, teacher, researcher, administrator, and speaker. She is a member of numerous Canadian and international professional associations related to illness, grief, and loss.

Doug Harvey, MDiv, BCC, CT, is ordained with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and has served for many years in the area of health-care ministry. His previous experiences include ministry to the residents and staff of the Christian Health Center in Louisville, Kentucky, Hospice of Louisville, and Hospice of the Bluegrass in Lexington, Kentucky. Doug has also served as an on-call chaplain with the University of Kentucky Hospital. Doug is currently serving as the interim pastor of Third Central United Christian Church (DOC) in Louisville, Kentucky,

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Brad Hunter, BA, CHT, began a career working in the area of death and bereavement in the early 1970s. At the same time, he started training in various meditative disciplines. These parallel paths converged about 10 years ago as he began introducing others to meditative practices and adapting some of these practices to therapeutic interventions for anxiety, trauma, grief, and depression.

Jessica Isenor, BSc, earned her degree in biology and psychology from Dalhousie University. She has worked in the private sector as a corporate trainer and volunteered at Dalhousie's Frank G. Lawson Career Information Centre and the Metro Immigrant Settlement Association. She is currently completing her MEd degree in counseling psychology at the University of Western Ontario.

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Phyllis Kosminsky, PhD, LCSW, FT, is a clinical social worker at the Center for Hope in Darien, Connecticut, and in private practice. For the past 13 years, she has worked with bereaved adults and children individually and in groups. She is the author of *Getting Back to Life When Grief Won't Heal* (McGraw-Hill, 2007), which deals with the complications of grieving dependent and conflictual relationships and traumatic losses. Along with her experience as a clinician, Dr. Kosminsky has a background in public policy and program development and has taught courses in these subjects as a member of the faculty of Northeastern University in Boston.

Nieli Langer, PhD, received her master's in gerontology from the College of New Rochelle in New York (1985) and her PhD in social welfare (gerontology concentration) from Fordham University, New York (1989). From 1989 until 1994 she taught social work and gerontology at Our Lady of the Lake University in Texas and then chaired the Division of Gerontology at the University of the Incarnate Word (1995–1999) in San Antonio, Texas. Since her return to New York, Dr. Langer has mentored in the doctoral program of Walden University, has been adjunct professor at Fordham University, and has taught in the graduate division of the College of New Rochelle since 2001. Dr. Langer has authored three books in adult education and gerontology and over 40 peer-reviewed and invited articles and chapters. She is a tenured full professor at the College of New Rochelle.

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Carl MacMillan, MA, is director of L'Arche Daybreak in Richmond Hill, Ontario. Before joining L'Arche in 1988, he worked as an advocate for people with intellectual disabilities in Boston, Massachusetts. Carl received his master's in the management of human services from the Heller School for Social Policy & Management at Brandeis University in the United States.

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Wanda Sawicki, BA, OATR, MAPPC, is an art therapist registered with the Ontario Art Therapy Association (OATR), having received a diploma in art therapy from the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada. She has a master of arts in pastoral psychology and a counseling (MAPPC) degree from St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She has a private practice specializing in issues related to loss and grief in London, Ontario, Canada.

Jennifer Schachter is an adult adoptee who lives in Boston, Massachusetts, and is product manager with SensAble Technologies in Woburn, Massachusetts.

Sherry Schachter, PhD, FT, is the director of bereavement services for Calvary Hospital and Hospice in New York where she develops, coordinates, and facilitates educational services for staff and facilitates bereavement groups for families. In addition, Dr. Schachter has a private practice and also publishes and lectures on issues related to dying, death, and loss. She is past president of the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC) and an active member of the International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement (IWG). She is the biological mother of three, the adoptive mother of two children, and the grandmother of eight.

Derek Scott, BA, RSW, is a certified gestalt therapist and group leader (Gestalt Institute of Toronto—five-year training program) and a registered social worker with a BA (honors) in psychology from Keele University in England and has worked in the field of counseling and therapy since 1981. He has experience with a variety of insight-based holistic modalities including action-method psychodramatic work, gestalt two-chair and contact boundary work, body-focused awareness, cognitive therapy and reframing, chakra system and guided imagery, and the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model.