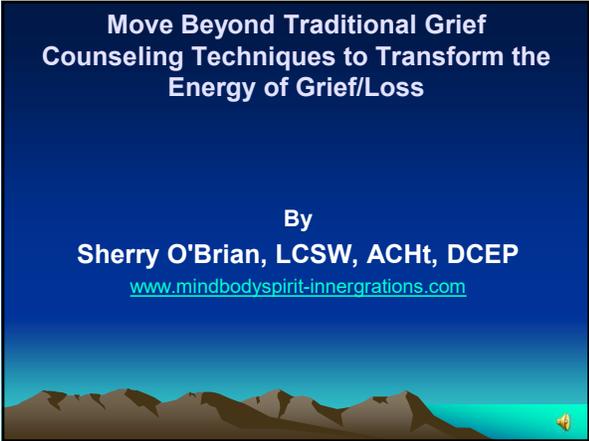


**Move Beyond Traditional Grief
Counseling Techniques to Transform the
Energy of Grief/Loss**

By
Sherry O'Brian, LCSW, ACHt, DCEP
www.mindbodyspirit-innergrations.com



An Overview

1. Breaking the Stages of Grief Myth
2. Introduce the Grief Cycle
3. An Exploration of the Types of Loss
4. An Overview of The Body's Energy System
5. Overview of Integrative Techniques to Transform the Energy of Grief
6. Overview of Compassion Fatigue (CF)



DSM-V Bereavement Exclusion

- Committee believed no consensus for addition of Prolonged &/or Complicated grief.
- Removed Bereavement Exclusion from Depression & Adjustment disorders.
- Rationale – job loss, divorce not excluded & deprived clients of needed help.



Defining Loss

Dictionary definition:

- “The harm or suffering caused by losing or by being lost.”
- “The power decrease in a circuit, circuit element, or device caused by resistance.”

Types of Loss

- Death of a loved one
- Relationship
- Mobility/Abilities
- Identity/Status/Life style
- Ancestral/Multigenerational
- Job/Retirement
- Home
- Dreams
- Beliefs/Meaning in Life
- Faith/Divine Homesickness

Divine Homesickness

- *When we are constantly focused on externals, we are not centered, that is, we are not aligned internally—body, mind and soul. Without that alignment, we have a case of Divine Homesickness. We feel empty and lost, always trying to find our way Home . . . always looking for something 'out there' to fill us up. And nothing out there can.* --Susan Jeffers
- A profound sense of loss from or connection with the Divine. Often, life seems too difficult to deal with, and there is a deep longing to return to the spirit world.

Ancestral Grief

- *Whole communities can grieve as a result of group consciousness. The morphic field of groups, such as the American Indians, African Americans, the Jewish community, and so on, have endured mass trauma. This trauma is held at a cellular level within the human body and within the energetic field or group consciousness of these cultures. Other generations within these communities can continue to hold this energy of grief for generations to come unless it is recognized and released at a cellular level.*

Breaking the Stages of Grief Myth

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

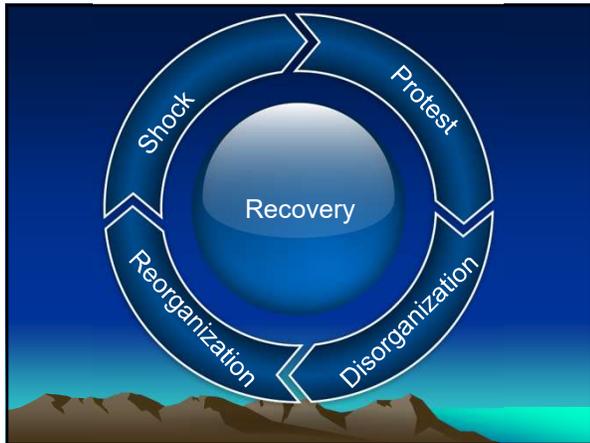
* Elizabeth Kubler Ross worked predominantly with the terminally ill

The 4 Tasks of Mourning

1. Accept reality of the loss
2. Work through the pain
3. Adjust to environment
4. Emotionally relocate & move on with life

Grief Cycle

1. Shock
2. Protest
3. Disorganization
4. Reorganization
5. Recovery



Exploring the Types of Grief

- **Normal** – has a know cause & no correlation with self-esteem.
- **Anticipatory** – an expectation of loss
- **Traumatic/Complicated** – a disruption in the normal grief process prohibiting healing. (prolonged, absent, distorted, delayed, excessive, unresolved, traumatic, multiple losses)
- **Epigenetics: Ancestral/Multigenerational**

Epigenetics

- *Epigenetics* is the study of mechanisms (Mental/Emotional) that switch genes on or off.
- It is suggested they are involved in every aspect of life and such reversible, heritable changes affect the way we live as well as our future generations.

Trauma & the Mind/Body Connection

- “The cause of all negative emotions is a disruption in the body’s energy system.”
✦EFT’s Discovery Statement
1. Amygdala becomes over charged
 2. Hippocampus becomes disabled
 3. Chemical cascade interferes with electrical transmission within nervous system.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

An individual experiences or witnesses a traumatic event which involved actual or threaten death or serious physical injury to oneself or another & felt intense fear, or helplessness.

- Symptoms last longer than 1 month & include:
Intrusive thoughts, sleep problems, difficulty concentrating, depression, anxiety/panic attacks, etc.

Vicarious Traumatization & Compassion Fatigue

Often experienced by professional & non-professional care-givers who work with traumatized individuals. Results from repeated exposure to, & empathic interaction with, another's traumatic material.

- These effects are cumulative & can become permanent, impacting both personal & professional life.
- Often manifests as disturbances in information processing, & self-doubt, apathy, anxiety, somatic reactions, etc.

Grief & Heart/Brain Coherence

The heart communicates with the brain and body in four ways:

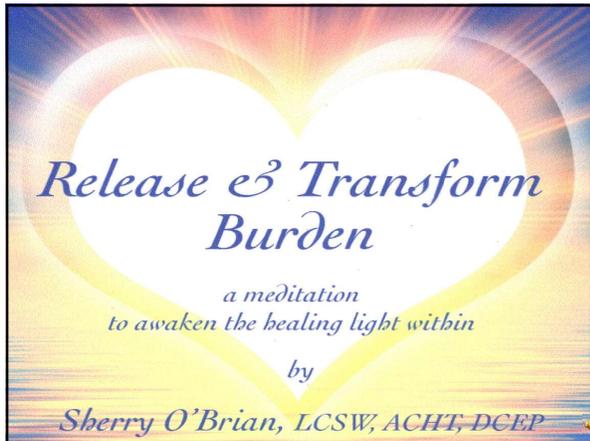
1. Neurological communication (nervous system)
2. Biophysical communication (pulse wave)
3. Biochemical communication (hormones)
4. Energetic communication (electromagnetic fields)

Heart Math's Research Key Points

- States of increased heart rhythm coherence are associated with improvements in cognitive performance.
- When people touch or are in proximity, one person's heartbeat signal is registered in the other person's brainwaves.

Heart Math's Research con't

- *The heart is the most powerful source of electromagnetic energy in the human body.*
- *As people learn to sustain heart-focused positive feeling states, the brain can be brought into entrainment with the heart.*



Impact of Thoughts/Feelings on the Human Energy System

- **Pert** Research – location of the mind is **NOT** primarily located in the brain.
- **Lipton** Research – cells function based on environmental input – Epigenetics.



Pert's Research

Pert's research established that the mind is **NOT** primarily located in the brain, rather it's distributed throughout the body via signal molecules (neural receptors) present on most of the body's cells.

The memory of a trauma gets stuck in a chemical feedback loop & is stored at the level of the neuropeptide receptor – this is bodywide.

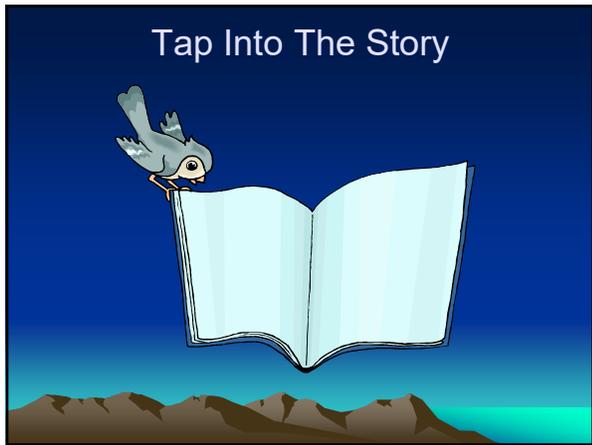
Lipton's Research

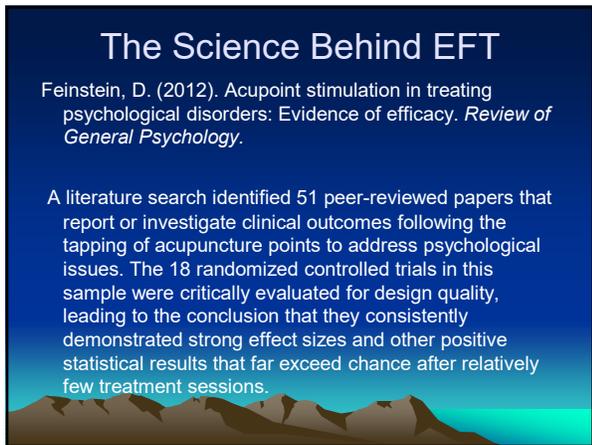
Lipton reveals how each cell is equipped with a protein membrane which responds to environmental stimuli. The functions of the cells are directly related to the movement of the protein "gears" of this membrane.

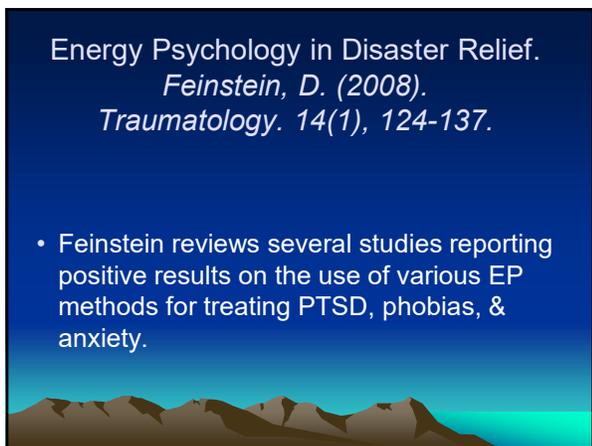
The mind's energy (thoughts) as well as our emotions can activate or inhibit a cell's function. (Lipton, 2005)

Techniques to Transcend Grief/Loss

- Guided Imagery/Meditation
- Acupoint techniques
- Healing Rituals







Energy Psychology & Memory Reconsolidation

- Emotional memory or learning accessed,
- Conclusions drawn from original experience are concurrently activated & contradicted,
- Acupoint stimulation deactivates limbic response,
- Pairing is repeated as needed.



Rituals & Healing

Rituals give significance to life's passages. They provide form and guidance to our lives, prescribing behaviors during perilous times when bodies, minds, and spirits are broken. Without rituals, we would have no map for how to act, no occasions for people to share their common bonds and experiences.

- Achterberg, J. Dossey, B. & Kolkmeier, L., 1994, *Rituals of Healing: Using Imagery For Health and Wellness*



Defining Ritual

Dictionary definitions: *an established and prescribed pattern of observance, e.g., in a religion; the observance of actions or procedures in a set, ordered, and ceremonial way; a pattern of actions or words followed regularly and precisely, and so forth.*

What is missing from these definitions is intention. Without attention to the intention, the behavior just becomes a routine.



Defining the Healing Practice of Ritual Necessary Components

1. Structure:

Beginning - Awareness of universality,

Middle - Severing from everyday reality &

Transitional: healing/rebirth,

End - *Return*: rejoin community.

2. **Preparation**: time, place, etc.

3. **Belief**: honor individual belief system

4. **Intention**: release, remember, redefine, etc.

Integrating Ritual Into a Practice

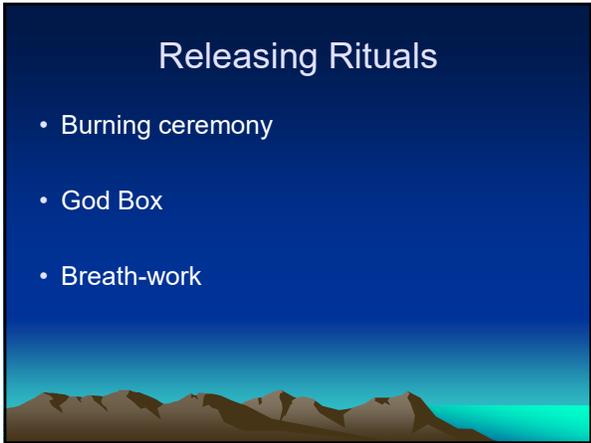
- Group work – bereavement, recovery, etc.
- Beginning each session.
- Ending each session.
- Client Homework
- Practitioner Self-Care: daily energy hygiene & creating sacred space.

Rituals for Healing

- Releasing Rituals.
- Remembering Rituals.
- Redefining & Rediscovering Oneself – an exploration of self.

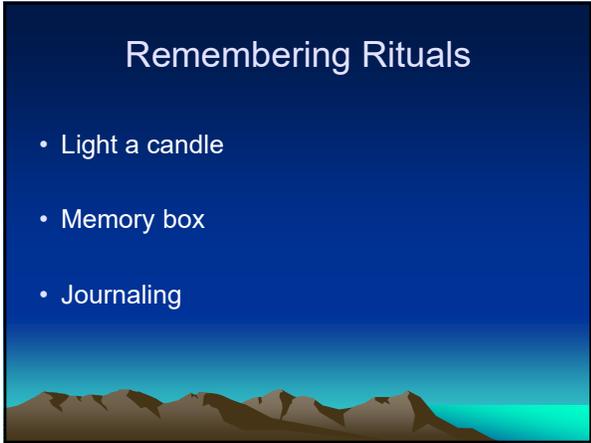
Releasing Rituals

- Burning ceremony
- God Box
- Breath-work



Remembering Rituals

- Light a candle
- Memory box
- Journaling



Redefining & Rediscovering

- Self Exploration: Who am I? What can I do without? How do I feel safe again?
- Self-growth: How can I make myself feel better?



Labyrinth



Definition of Compassion Fatigue (CF) & Vicarious Traumatization (VT)

- CF & VT - is secondary traumatic stress often experienced by professional & non-professional care-givers who work with physically, emotionally, &/or psychologically traumatized individuals.
- Often manifests as disturbances in information processing.

Transference & Counter Transference From an Energetic Perspective

- Practitioner may become impaired & incompetent as a result of:
 - a. Practitioner attunes to client - their energy feels familiar in its frequency & a sympathetic response occurs resulting in absorption & internalization of this energy.
 - b. Practitioner re-experiences dormant emotions that have been triggered by an interaction with a client.

Signs & Symptoms of CF

Physical Symptoms

- Weight changes
- Gastrointestinal complaints
- Chronic fatigue & adrenal fatigue
- Somatic reactions
- Rapid pulse



Signs & Symptoms (continue)

Emotional Symptoms

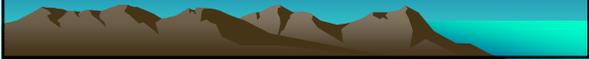
- Hypersensitivity (emotional)
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger/irritability/rage
- Hopelessness
- Apathy



Signs & Symptoms (continue)

Cognitive Symptoms

- Confusion/foggy thinking
- Diminished concentration
- Disorientation
- Self-doubt
- Ruminating thoughts of harm to self or others



Signs & Symptoms (continue)

Behavioral Symptoms

- Impatient
- Sleep/appetite disturbance
- Hyper-vigilant
- Elevated startle response
- Negative coping mechanisms
 - Alcohol/drug abuse



Signs & Symptoms (continue)

Interpersonal Symptoms

- Mistrust/Paranoia
- Withdrawal from others
- Projection of anger, etc.
- Intolerance
- Us/them orientation



A Few Causes of CF

- *Lack of time* – increasing demands from others interfere with healthy practices.
- *Expectations & Beliefs* – from self & others, conscious & subconscious.
- *Hypersensitivity* – increase in empathy & intuitive connection.
- *Energy leaks & blocks* – lack of self awareness & protection.
- *Unclear boundaries* – unconsciously internalizing & feeling traumatic emotion of another.



Identifying appropriate boundaries

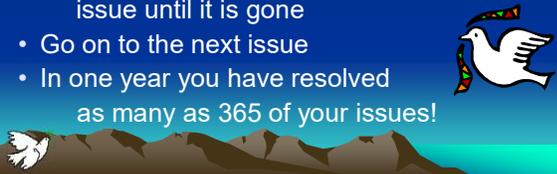
- Practitioner intent
 - Check for transference issues
 - Don't coerce client
 - Keep clear on highest good for client
- Energetic boundaries
 - Avoid absorption & internalization of familiar energy
 - Keep your issues out of your tissues
 - Do Healer's attunement

Using EFT & For Practitioner Self-Care

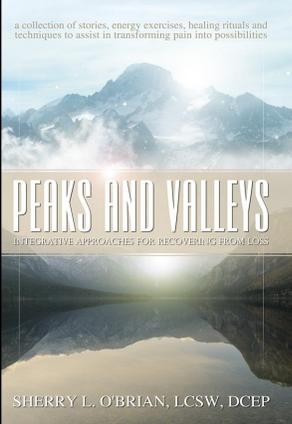
- ✓ Daily EFT as a release – get your issues out of your tissues.
- ✓ Smooth behind ears (sedates triple warmer) when stressed.
- ✓ Do EFT exercises with clients as a demo.
- ✓ 5 minute daily EP exercises – i.e. Heaven & Earth, Wayne Cook, 3 thumps, Cross Crawl, etc.

Personal Peace Procedure

- Make a list of all issues you can remember
(Most people have well over 100)
- Tap on at least one per day
- Keep tapping on all aspects of the one issue until it is gone
- Go on to the next issue
- In one year you have resolved as many as 365 of your issues!



a collection of stories, energy exercises, healing rituals and techniques to assist in transforming pain into possibilities



Now Available

Change is the only constant. But we are wired to hold on to what we have loved, to what was known and familiar. Therein lies much of our suffering since change always involves the loss of what was, making the way for what will be. Sherry O'Brian has written a wonderful guide for navigating our way through the peaks and valleys that accompany the changing landscapes of our lives.

Donna Eden and David Feinstein
Co-Authors, *The Energies of Love*



Inner-grations
Sherry O'Brian, LCSW, ACHT, DCEP
Transformational Integrative Counseling
www.mindbodyspirit-innergrations.com
17555 Willowview Rd., Ste. 203, Noblesville, IN.
317-470-2328

Specializing in:

- ✦ Grief & Loss
- ✦ Mood Disorders
- ✦ Energy Therapy
- ✦ Chronic Illness & Pain
- ✦ Personal & Professional Growth
- ✦ Workshops on Mind/Body/Spirit Healing
