

***Training and Certification Program in Meaning Reconstruction  
in Loss and Transition***

***Module: A Clinical Toolbox for Grief Therapy***

***June 6, 7 and 8, 2020***

***Palau Macaya***

***Barcelona***

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*With the participation of other collaborators of  
Portland Institute For Loss and Transitions*

Portland Institute for Loss and Transition  
[www.portlandinstitute.org](http://www.portlandinstitute.org)

Fundacio Hospital Sant Jaume i Santa Magdalena  
[www.fundaciohospital.org](http://www.fundaciohospital.org)

This *Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction Training Course* offers intense, professional training in grief therapy, counseling and bereavement support which acquaints participants with a broad range of practical techniques, as well conceptual understanding relevant to their practice.

By participating actively in systematic experiential workshops and mentoring, learners

a) develop competencies in helping the bereaved:

- process traumatic loss
- reconstruct a symbolic bond with the deceased
- access new meanings as essential sources of change and renewal
- explore and restructure problematic emotions and identities linked to the loss and its aftermath
- re-compose new identity after the loss

b) learn

- a broad range of useful, applicable techniques to process grief in individual and group settings,
- different forms of dialogue to process grief,
- art based methods to work with loss in grief therapy
- to process their own grief, deepening emotional awareness, presence and enhancing self-care,
- to apply knowledge and methods to particularly difficult losses, such as suicide, violent death, and loss of a child or a spouse

This **Module** includes essential skills for addressing grief and its complications, in a form that is coherent with the theoretical frame of meaning reconstruction. Building on a constructivist approach to both death and non-death losses, participants will learn a range of dialogical, reflective and narrative procedures for reconstructing a symbolic bond with the deceased, addressing unfinished business in the relationship, recognizing subtle and significant sources of both loss and growth in their own lives and those of their clients, and deepening work with implicit emotions and internal positions through expressive methods, body work, and creative writing. With ample opportunities to view actual videos of work with clients, witness live demonstrations, and receive coaching in a “hands on” practicum with selected methods, the goal is to offer participants a well-stocked toolkit of therapeutic techniques to use with a broad diversity of grieving clients.

## *Day 1. Dialogical Practices in Grief Therapy*

In this first day of this Module, we present a model of the Dialogical Self, in which our sense of identity constantly evolves and shifts as we encounter life transitions of all kinds, in the form of losses through death, relationship dissolution, illness, loss of work or career, and more. Viewed in constructivist terms, the resulting grief calls for us not only to make sense of our loss, but also to reconstruct our relation to the lost object, our history, and ourselves. Summarizing recent research on the challenges that the bereaved face in this process of meaning reconstruction, we will then closely analyze a case of anguished, prolonged, and life-limiting grief on the part of a woman mourning the death of her mother, revealing the impact of targeted therapeutic interventions to reaffirm the broken bond and resolve relational factors that interfere with her adaptation. We then will practice dialogical and narrative procedures that support the development of a healthier continuing bond and that facilitate revision and resilience in our self-narratives in the wake of loss.

### ***Learning Outcomes:***

- Describe the key propositions of a Dialogical Self model and its implications for grief therapy
- Summarize recent research on the continuing bond with the deceased and how different forms of attachment to the deceased and relationship quality contribute to the severity of prolonged grief
- Identify pivotal techniques and their impact in the actual process of grief therapy
- Experiment with correspondence with the deceased as a way of reaffirming or revising the continuing bond
- Implement the Chapters of Our Lives exercise to promote integration of loss and the evolution of our life stories

### ***Schedule***

9: 00-10:30h: The Dialogical Self: Transitional shifts in the grounds of identity  
10: 30-11:00h: Break  
11: 00-13:00h: Reconstructing the Continuing Bond: A process analysis of grief therapy  
13:00-14:30h: Lunch  
14:30-16:00h: Correspondence with the Deceased: Resolving unfinished business  
16:00-16:30h: Break  
16:30-17:30h: Chapters of our Lives: Narrating change and continuity

## *Day 2: Seasons of Transition: Reflections on Change*

Grounded in the research-informed perspectives of meaning reconstruction, the Transition Cycle, and attachment-informed grief therapy, the Seasons of Transition model offers a flexible framework for identifying resources, recognizing both clear and ambiguous losses, articulating grief, and fostering growth. In the first half of the day, we will experiment with a variety of reflective formats for making meaning of life transitions, using poetic, narrative, visual and dialogical methods to explore the challenge of change in our own lives, as well as those of our clients. Then, merging this model with Dialogical Self theory, we will use Composition Work to symbolize which of our “I-positions” are dominant in our lives at present, which are diminishing or slipping away, which are lost or missing, and which are emerging and invite further cultivation. Unfolding these cyclic processes using expressive and body-centered interventions helps us both accept our inevitable losses and accredit our ongoing growth in their wake.

### ***Learning outcomes:***

- Summarize the four “seasons” of transition and the implication of each for adapting to loss and change
- Identify narrative themes associated with abundance, reduction, emptiness and emergence arising from our own transitions and those of another
- Discuss the indications and contraindications for using the Seasons model with a client at different points in the grieving process
- Describe the chief propositions of Hermans’ Dialogical Self Theory and its relevance for grief therapy
- Outline the primary processes addressed by the four “Seasons of Self” involved in recomposing the landscape of our lives
- Practice one expressive and one body-centered technique for exploring significant transitions in the community of self

### ***Schedule:***

9:00-10:30h: Seasons of Transition: Embracing loss, cultivating growth  
10:30-11:00h: Break  
11:00-13:00h: Radical Inquiry: A dialogue on impermanence  
13:00-14:30h: Lunch  
14:30-16:00h: Recomposing the Self: The evolving ground of identity  
16:00-16:30h: Break  
16:30-17:30h: The Body Speaks: Sensing sources of resilience

### *Day 3: Dialogues with Self, Dialogues with the Deceased: A Practicum*

To hone our skills with two key techniques, we will devote the final day of the series to a practicum, during which participants will more deeply engage two core practices in meaning-oriented grief therapy—*analogical listening* and *chair work*, before concluding the day with an final creative narrative technique to help them harness the expressive and healing power of the imagination. In the case of the first two practices we will first witness therapeutic videos or live demonstrations of their use, and then review clear step-by-step guidelines for their implementation. We will then practice each method with one another, in order to gain first-hand experience with implementing the procedure and sensing its power from the position of the client. Our goal in doing so is to learn to navigate using analogical listening the domain of internal, embodied sensed meanings associated with the loss, and with chairing to reaffirm a more secure relation with a deceased loved one, while resolving unfinished business. Finally, by constructing and sharing virtual dream stories we will consolidate a metaphoric map of how we now hold a personal loss, and consider how this can be extended therapeutically through relevant additional procedures.

#### *Learning outcomes:*

- Practice body-focused attention to give form to the felt sense of how we hold a loss, and give this form in imagery with a partner
- Choreograph a dialogue with the deceased to reaffirm or reconstruct a relationship that was challenged and changed by the loss
- Utilize creative writing to explore and express important themes, relationships, feelings and goals encountered in moving through a story of loss
- Extend this work through a multi-modal linking of the symbolic story to additional narrative or dialogical procedures as well as behavioral action steps

#### *Schedule:*

9:00-10:30h: Analogical Listening: A dialogue with self  
10:30-11:00h: Break  
11:00-12:30h: Chair work: A dialogue with the deceased  
12:30-14:00h Lunch  
14:00-16:00h Virtual Dream Stories: Writing a path through loss  
16:00-16:30h: Break  
16:30-17:30h: Putting it all together: Steps toward a multi-modal process

## Useful Information

### Participants:

The program is aimed at all health professionals interested in the care of loss and grief: psychologists, doctors, nurses, social workers, among others.

### Accreditation:

Upon completion of this Module, a Certificate of Participation issued by the Portland Institute will be awarded.

Once you have completed the requirements of each program, you will be accredited by the corresponding Portland Institute, Core Certification or Specialized Certification<sup>1</sup>. Once you have completed both programs, you have the opportunity to obtain accreditation as a university expert.

The program of Training and Certification in Bereavement Therapy as Reconstruction of Significance has the recognition of Activity of Health Interest (RIS) issued by the Department of Health of the Government of Catalunya with registration number 9002E/87/2019 and is accredited with 5.0 credits by the Catalan Council for the Continuing Education of Healthcare Professionals (09/025079-PG)

### Price

Early registration: 650 euros (before 17 April 2020).

Regular price: 750 euros (after 17 April 2020).

Register early taking into account that the number of places is limited.

This training can be subsidized through the FUNDAE.

### Registration and inscriptions:

Interested participants must complete the registration form. Your participation will be considered confirmed once payment has been received.

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<sup>1</sup> Students interested in certification must pay a fee of 100 dollars to the Portland Institute at the time of registration: this is necessary for your Progress Tracker to be enabled on your Account page.

***About the presenters:***



***Robert A. Neimeyer, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of the Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, and 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* and *Grief and the Expressive Arts: Practices for Creating Meaning* (both with Routledge), and serves as Editor of the journal *Death Studies*. The author of over 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 founder and Director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, Neimeyer also has served as Chair of the International Work Group for Death, Dying, & Bereavement and President of the Association for Death Education and Counseling. 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 the Association for Death Education and Counseling and the International Network on Personal Meaning. For more information, see: [www.robertneimeyerphd.com](http://www.robertneimeyerphd.com)*

***Agnieszka Konopka, PhD, is a Practicum Faculty member of the Portland Institute, and***



***conducts training and retreats in Europe, Asia, North America and South America. Konopka is the founder of *Composition Work*, an art-therapy/coaching method well suited to processing the impact of significant loss. She is co-author (with Hubert Hermans) of 'Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-positioning in a Globalizing Society', and editor of the *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory and Psychotherapy*, with Hubert Hermans and Miguel Gonçalves. Agnieszka is an author of publications in 6 languages, including *Composing the Self: Toward the Dialogical Reconstruction of Self-Identity*, with Robert Neimeyer and Jason Jacobs-Lentz.***

**For further inquiries,:**

Visit the web <https://fundaciohospital.org/formacio-i-coneixement/portland-institute/>,

send an email to [inscripcionspi@fundaciohospital.org](mailto:inscripcionspi@fundaciohospital.org) or

phone at 696 836 700 / 93 741 91 60 (business days from 17:00 to 19:00h).

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For more information about training and  
Certification in Meaning Reconstruction in Loss,  
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