

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

***Module: Core Training Courses***

***June 15, 16 and 17. 2020***

***CaixaForum***

***Madrid***

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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  
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***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 the Core Courses addressing grief and its complications, providing a theoretical frame of grief therapy, and conveying practical and research informed strategies for facilitating meaning reconstruction. This phase of the training introduces the constructivist, narrative perspective, according to which grief requires an attempt to reaffirm or reconstruct a world of meaning that has been challenged by the loss. Participants learn trauma-informed interventions relevant to processing the event story of loss (e.g. Narrative Retelling), and attachment informed interventions (e.g. Introducing the Loved One) related to accessing the back story of the relationship and reconstructing the symbolic bond.

## *Day 1. Grief and its Complications: A Conceptual Frame for Grief Therapy*

In this first day of this Module, we present contemporary models of grief, including conceptualization and diagnosis of complicated grief or prolonged grief disorder. Viewed in constructivist, narrative terms, grieving entails an attempt to reaffirm or reconstruct a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss. We will consider adaptive grieving in terms of the ability to process the “event story” of the death to make sense of it and to access the “back story” of the relationship with the deceased to restore attachment security. By extension, complicated, prolonged and traumatic grief can be conceptualized as a breakdown in these same processes. We will exemplify this perspective in videos of actual clients in grief therapy, as well as review the latest evidence supporting this meaning reconstruction model and related theories.

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

- Identify two weaknesses in stage models of grieving identified in recent research
- Recognize components of the Meaning Reconstruction, Attachment, Dual Process and Two-Track Models of bereavement and their implications for coping
- Describe the diagnostic features of Prolonged Grief Disorder as formulated by the World Health Organization
- Summarize pre-loss predictors of complicated grief following the death of a loved one
- Recognize features of complicated grief in the context of clinical interviews

### ***Schedule***

9: 00-10:30h: Models of Mourning: Stages and Beyond  
10: 30-11:00h: Break  
11: 00-13:00h: Adaptive Grieving: A Meaning Reconstruction Approach  
13:00-14:30h: Lunch  
14:30-16:00h: Complicated Grief: Diagnostic Features and Risk Factors  
16:00-16:30h: Break  
16:30-17:30h: Prolonged Grief Disorder: Clinical Conceptualization

## *Day 2: Integrating Traumatic Death—Trauma-informed Interventions*

In Day 2 of this Module, participants first practice establishing a therapeutic sense of presence to the client’s processes as well as their own, and also recognize factors that impede this mindful stance. They then learn how to help clients voice and integrate the narrative of the loss and mine its meaning for their ongoing life in its aftermath. Working in small groups, participants practice how to reinforce emotion regulation, prevent re-traumatization, and foster the construction of a more coherent narrative in which the event story of the loss can be included in a new way. Several additional techniques to assist in the reconstruction of meaning in the loss are considered, clearing a space for renewing and revising the continuing bond with the deceased and opening a path to a stronger sense of self.

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

- Differentiate narrative work focused on processing the event story of the loss from work focused on accessing the back story of relationship to the deceased
- Distinguish between therapeutic “presence” and “absence” in the process of therapy
- Utilize strategies for negotiating safety in revisiting a tragic loss without re-traumatizing the client
- Identify markers of client need and readiness to engage the event story of loss
- Follow principles of bracing, pacing and facing when using restorative retelling procedures to promote integration of traumatic bereavement
- Describe narrative techniques for accommodating loss in literal and figurative ways into the changed narrative of the client’s life

### ***Schedule:***

9:00-10:30h: The Power of Presence: Orienting to Client Needs and Resources

10:30-11:00h: Break

11:00-13:00h: At the Edge: Integrating a Story of Traumatic Loss

13:00-14:30h: Lunch

14:30-16:00h: Restorative Retelling: Mastering the Narrative of the Death

16:00-16:30h: Break

16:30-17:30h: Chapters of Our Lives: Rewriting Stories of Loss

### *Day 3: Accessing the Back Story of Relationship—Attachment-informed Interventions*

Death may end a life, but not necessarily a relationship. Drawing on attachment-informed models of bereavement, we will begin Day 3 of this Module by considering grieving as a process of reconstructing rather than relinquishing our bonds with those who have died, and the circumstances that can interfere with this natural process. We then turn to a close process analysis of a therapy session with an older widow contending with haunting loneliness following the death of her husband of many years. Reactivating and validating their continuing bond, we then explore the use of Composition Work to heal and reveal the relational rupture between the mourner and the deceased. Returning to the video, we witness the novel use of a Symptom Dialogue as a means of harvesting the lessons of loss, moving the mourner toward greater self-understanding and compassion. We conclude by practicing this technique to explore symptoms and their significance in an experiential exercise.

#### *Learning outcomes:*

- Practice Introducing Our Loved One to consolidate a more secure attachment with the deceased and to validate client resilience
- Identify the value of Composition Work in reconstructing a continuing bond with the deceased as the client transitions toward a changed future
- Direct experiential work to access and restructure problematic emotions and identities linked to the loss and its aftermath
- Choreograph imaginal dialogues between the client and his or her suffering to promote self-understanding and self-care

#### *Schedule:*

9:00-10:30h: Introducing Our Loved Ones: Recovering Relationship with the Deceased  
10:30-11:00h: Break  
11:00-12:30h: Composition Work: Exploring the Complexity of the Continuing Bond  
12:30-14:00h Lunch  
14:00-16:00h A Dialogue with Loneliness: Finding Wisdom in Suffering  
16:00-16:30h: Break  
16:30-17:30h: Building a Secure Base: Reflections Group Therapy for Loss

## 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/60/2020. Professionals who attend one of the modules will receive a certificate of attendance. From the Hospital Foundation, accreditation has been requested from the CCFPCS for those who attend both modules (June+November).

### 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 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 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 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 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 an Associate Director for the Portland Institute, and***



*maintains a private practice in The Netherlands focusing on expatriates facing major life transition. She is the founder of Composition Work, an art-therapy/coaching method, and offers training and supervision for practitioners internationally. 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 [inscripcionespi@fundaciohospital.org](mailto:inscripcionespi@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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