

# Nourish to Flourish

Nourish to Flourish brings together practitioners' voices and creative practices, and appreciative reviews of books that support strengths-based approaches to human interactions.

## Book Appreciation



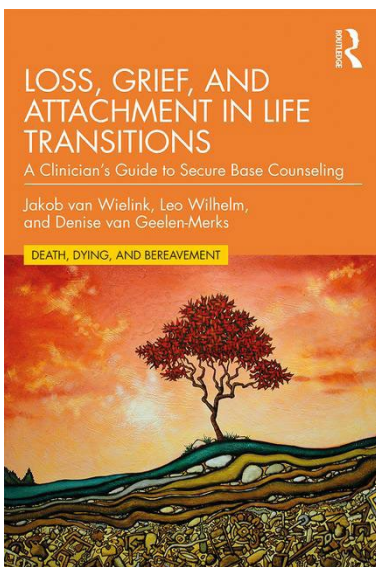
### Neena Verma

Neena Verma, Ph.D. is an Appreciative Inquiry thought leader, an ICF-PCC coach, NTL professional member and TAOS Associate. As well as editing three issues of AIP, Neena has authored two books and several articles. She serves on the AIP editorial board and contributes book appreciations. Neena runs a library movement for underprivileged children and volunteers for various social causes.

### Loss, Grief, and Attachment in Life Transitions: A Clinician's Guide to Secure Base Counseling

By Jakob van Wielink, Leo Wilhelm and Denise van Geelen-Merks  
Routledge, 2020

ISBN – 978-1-5230-9401-1



Having read and benefitted from several books on the intense themes of loss, bereavement, trauma and grief, my search for a book that would offer subject knowledge, case-based understanding, food for reflection and practice toolkit all in one place was meaningfully fulfilled by the seemingly unassuming yet richly endowed book called *Loss, Grief, and Attachment in Life Transitions*. This book stirred my curiosity by its intriguing description – “an attachment-informed grief counselling framework and a new way of understanding non-death loss”. However, as I immersed myself in the book, it offered so much more than the promise that its brief description holds, helping me gain a nuanced understanding of **grief work** across various realms of loss and trauma.

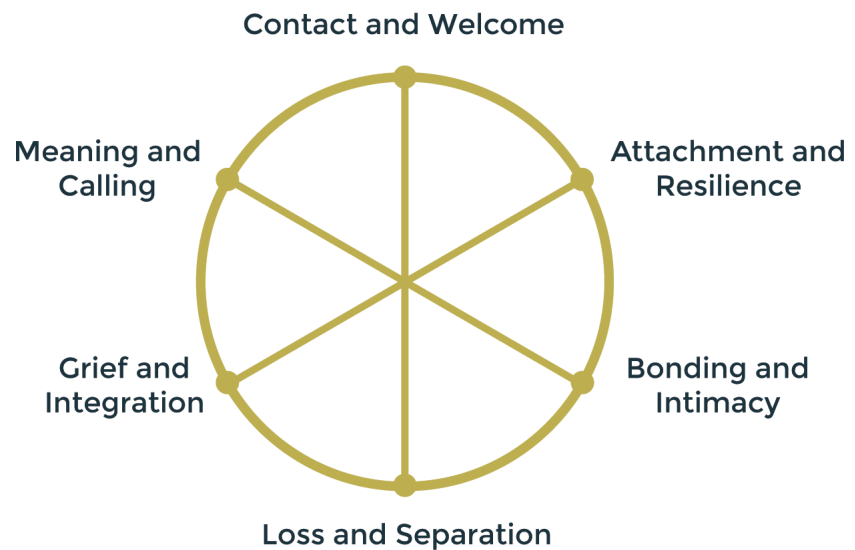
*The authors explain the importance of taking a secure base (safety, care, inspiration, facilitation, energy) approach to grief counselling.*

### Core Proposition

Grounding their proposition in the attachment theory of British psychiatrist John Bowlby, the authors explain the importance of taking a secure base (safety, care, inspiration, facilitation, energy) approach to grief counselling. Explaining the four-quadrant attachment styles as arranged on the simultaneous dimensions of “Self/Other” and “Avoidance-of-intimacy/Separation-anxiety”, the authors highlight the importance of a secure attachment style since the helping-professionals represent attachment figures in the context of grief counselling. Such a style balances a positive view of the self and others; low separation anxiety and low avoidance of intimacy; being available and being present; and caring and daring, thereby supporting the therapeutic process in a secure way.

The authors deftly weave together several concepts into a coherent model of a transition cycle which forms the framework for grief-counselling work that they teach with care and competence.

The Transition Cycle model for secure base counselling work



The six-faceted Transition Cycle model, the central concept of this book, guides secure base counselling work that helping-professionals can do with clients going through loss, grief and life-transitions. The authors explain each facet along with its flip side that is likely to manifest in case of solidified grief. These facets include – *contact* (flip side – isolation); *attachment* (flip side – detaching or clinging); *intimacy* (flip side – avoiding intimacy); *loss and separation* (flip side – denying loss and separation); *grief and integration* (flip side – resistance); and *meaning reconstruction* (flip side – meaninglessness, cynicism).

*The authors dwell at length on the duality of grief journey between its loss-oriented and restoration-oriented aspects.*

While their focus remains on explaining the healthy side, the authors take care to caution against labelling the flip sides as purely negative or unhealthy. Instead their advice to the helping-professional is to stay mindful of the natural oscillation that the clients may experience, and aid them in moving towards the ultimate goal of meaningful reconstruction.

Addressing a wide range of factors and differences such as bio-psycho-social, emotional, relational, gender, age, and even acquired brain injury – the authors dwell at length on the duality of grief journey between its loss-oriented and restoration-oriented aspects.

Though all chapters of the book are richly relevant, the most valuable part of the book for me waited in chapter seven, devoted to meaning-reconstruction, the sixth and final facet of the transition cycle. Combining the dual-process model of Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut with the meaning-reconstruction model of Robert Neimeyer, the authors present an insightful matrix to understand and practise meaning-reconstruction, explained along twin dimensions of loss/restoration-orientation and positive/negative meaning-making.

### What stands out for me

The authors explore and explain the phenomenon of loss in its full dimensionality – both the locatable and tangible loss such as death, as well as ambiguous and less-tangible losses such as lost dreams, illness or an unfulfilled desire to have children. They also address primary loss, such as parents' divorcing while a child is still young and its secondary manifestation such as resultant loss of sense of security or having to bear the reflected tension of the parental conflict.

*The helping-professional must honour the client's natural way and pace.*

The authors insist on maintaining a client-centered approach to grief work, underlining the responsibility that the helping professional must assume to honour the client's natural way and pace while staying self-guarded to avoid – dispensing advice, problem-solving, clichés, diversion, dilution or leading questions.

Discussing the issue of resiliently coping with trauma, the authors pay attention to neurological development and the role of brain functioning. They also touch upon the possibility and dynamics of growth after loss. They explore the generally ignored and unacknowledged issue of grief in the context of work, delving into both the employees' personal grief that organizations can help deal with through supportive employee care initiatives, and the organizations as a source of loss.

*The book is richly endowed with meaningful and practical exercises.*

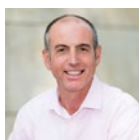
The final chapter of “dialogue” feels practically like a masterclass on attachment-informed grief work, offering elaborate guidance on designing a complete counselling program along with detailed tips about individual session dialogues. The book is richly endowed with meaningful and practical exercises. Having tried (with positive impact) some in my client work, I find it both difficult as well as unfair to pick one over the others. That said, I do wish to acknowledge with gratitude the virtual dream story exercise (Page 152) that impacted me immensely at a personal level.

This book offers a comprehensive resource to helping-professionals working with clients dealing with loss, grief, trauma and life transitions. The authors have thoughtfully designed each chapter with case-studies, knowledge segments, counseling dialogue transcripts, questions for self-reflection and exercises for skill-building. Competently combining theory and practice, the authors richly reference and build upon several research-grounded models. Their writing flows with ease, elegance, appeal and impact. I gained much more than my expectation. I highly recommend this book to not just the grief counsellors and coaches, but as much to those who are themselves coping with grief and trauma, to caregivers, and just about anyone keen to learn about attachment-theory guided grief work.

The book is easily available on all online marketplaces.



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