

## **Transforming Grief: Integrative Tools to Assist the Client & Practitioner**

By

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*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....* Donna Eden and David Feinstein Co-Authors, *The Energies of Love* - excerpt from *Peaks and Valleys: Integrative Approaches For Recovering From Loss* by Sherry O'Brian, LCSW, DCEP

Many losses go unrecognized or are subtle—some are life changing. Whether you have lost a loved one, a relationship, or a job, the energy of grief often weighs heavily upon your heart, making it difficult to enjoy life after a loss. Nevertheless, loss is often misunderstood and is frequently prevalent among those suffering from chronic illness and other life experiences. Grief is both an emotion and a process. If grief is left untreated or unacknowledged, its effects can accumulate, causing psychological blocks that may interfere with one's ability to enjoy life. Today it is more important than ever to understand the process of recovery from loss, as many individuals struggle with unemployment, loss of a home, individual lifestyle/status, loved ones, and so forth.

Loss is unique because *all* individuals will eventually experience it in some form or other. Whenever there is any kind of attachment, if the bond or connection is broken, a loss cannot be avoided. Even when this disconnect is beneficial, such as recovery from addiction, a loss can occur. The loss of friends, family, activities, and coping behaviors that were once acceptable are now severed.

When an event occurs that destroys our understanding of the meaning of life, our beliefs and expectations come under attack, and we experience loss. Dreams may fade away as we age, goals may become unattainable, and a sense of loss can occur. Physical limitations, illnesses, and disabilities may create a sense of loss. Such losses may be gradual or sudden. Unfortunately, many individuals are unaware they have experienced a loss. Therefore, they ignore or deny the emotional process of grieving, and the energy of these emotions becomes "frozen" within. As these emotions accumulate, they can cause each subsequent loss to be even more difficult to process.

In our 2015 ACEP pre-conference workshop, Dr. Larry Burk and I will be discussing the various models of grief/loss, as well as explore the various tools & techniques designed to create a somatic release of the energy associated with grief & loss. Practical tools & exercises designed to decrease the debilitating effects of a loss, as well as prevent compassion fatigue will also be shared. In addition, we will explore the latest in Epigenetics & Ancestral/Multigenerational grief/loss, Chinese five element grief symbolism, as well as the use of acupuncture for physical manifestations of grief.

I invite you to attend the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual International Energy Psychology conference. If you haven't attended before you'll be pleasantly surprised – the training & networking opportunities are outstanding; those individuals who have attended before often report it's like coming home to family. Please check out ACEP's website to see all of the quality presenters and don't forget to join Dr. Larry Burk and I for our pre-conference workshop.