REVIEWS



LOSS—AN INVITATION TO GROW
Jean C. Grigor. Pub. Arthur James. 1986. £5.95.

Jean Grigor has deep and wide experience of helping and counselling. She trained and worked as a teacher and as a deaconess of the Church of Scotland, and after a spell in Australia she returned home to become Assistant Director of Counselling Development for the Church. The fruits of her experience are now offered to us in this book which is described as a "workbook, specially suited to group study . . ."

In the book she builds on Spiegel's outline of the grief process, and she gives useful brief chapters on shock, control, regression and adaptation. But she takes the novel way of weaving the stages of grief into a pattern which includes reflection on her own experience along with insights gleaned from others whom she has helped.

There are useful chapters on grieving children, anger, guilt and our need for ritual. The comments on ritual are especially helpful and will counter any thoughts about 'mere ritual'—for, as we know, an outward act can be a most important vehicle for the acceptance of and expression of our deep feelings. But, rightly, the larger part of her book is concerned with the inner pain of grief and how we might, in Caplan's words, "psychologically bury the dead."

Sensibly, too, she considers how we react not just to death but to any of life's major changes—e.g. marriage or the birth of a child—pointing out that each change is a unique blend of loss and gain.

The book can of course be read by the individual but Jean Grigor would perhaps feel rewarded if people used it as a workbook for group study, and for this purpose she includes many exercises which can be used as they stand or adapted to particular circumstances.

No book can do the work of grieving for us but the best point us in the right direction. Here is such a book—a useful tool for any who are involved in bereavement care, and one which reminds us that any loss is truly an invitation to grow.

DEREK HALEY
Chaplain, Gartnavel Royal Hospital, Glasgow

'I CAN'T FACE TOMORROW'
by Norman Keir
Help for those troubled by thoughts of suicide
Foreword by Monica Dickens. Pub. Thorsons, Wellingborough, Northants (1986) in the 'Life Crisis' Series. £4.99.

Norman Keir, an experienced Samaritan counsellor, states that he has written his book with three specific groups of readers in mind; those generally or professionally interested in the subject of suicide, those with suicidal urges and those bereaved by suicide.

Belonging to the first category I found it rich in statistical evidence, history, ideas and good common sense. Underlying a serious approach is a wealth of quotations which range from Voltaire: 'The man who, in a fit of melancholy, kills himself today, would have wished to live had he waited a week', to Brian Clark's 'Whose life is it anyway'?

Apart from Alvarez's 'The Savage God', few writers have attempted to draw together the complex themes so often surrounding investigation into suicidal deaths. It is a hard subject to focus upon. Durkheim and Halbwachs presented the wide-angle view of man in society, individual case studies give close-up shots, psychiatrists, moralists and philosophers all contribute useful information to those who are involved with caring for the potential suicide or bereaved by such a death. It is a pleasure to discover a book which contains a breadth of focus but also takes time to stop and define the basic terms used in its discussion, such as psychosis, neurosis and parasuicide.

The penultimate chapter deals with the Samaritans and their approach to counselling and to those who turn to them for help, and the book ends with a useful further reading list with the warning given that the 'spirit should have more than an undiluted diet of books on the darker side of life'.

Keir has ensured that although serious his book is in no way dark. I would have liked a larger section on bereavement and feel that the book is more helpful to carers than the suicidal themselves—those who 'can't face tomorrow', or to those who are left to face tomorrow after a death by suicide. However, I welcome its arrival and recommend it as a useful source of information and a thoroughly 'good read'.

SUSAN WALLBANK
Cruse Counsellor

SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR WIDOWS
June Hemer & Ann Stanyer. Age Concern, 1986: £3.50 inc. p & p from Age Concern, 60 Pitcairn Road, Mitcham CR4 3LL, or from Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond TW9 1UR.

I welcome the collaboration of the National Association of Widows, Cruse, Age Concern and Royal Life Insurance Ltd. in producing this practical and sensitive book. The immediate problems following any bereavement are formidable. They are now more complicated because of changes arising from the Social Security Act 1986, which are being brought into effect at different dates in Britain.

Ideally, survival guides for widows and widowers should be read soon after marriage. This is not morbid. In the usual course of life one or other is going to be left alone. Wills should be made early and not left to old age, especially as violent deaths from road and air crashes increase. I know from experience that intestacy creates a misery of uncertainty and delay.

Both should know where birth certificates and the marriage certificate are kept. I didn't, and a kind friend had to go to Somerset House to get copies.

In a truly sharing partnership there should be fewer widows who don't know how much the mortgage is or how to change a plug—and fewer widowers who can't cook or sew on a button. Too many married couples still think that they are coupled in all things ("we always did everything together" syndrome). I often got away from my husband because I couldn't play chess and he didn't like gardening. Keeping one's own interests—and nowadays more often one's job—builds bridges out of the house and diminishes total dependence.

But this book has to take care of situations after bereavement. Each of us has to find our own way. For many it is not a question of getting over the hole in life, but of finding a path round it.

Widows are not a stereotype and advice about how to help must vary. Some need the privacy of grief and others the solace of helpful company. Most do not want experts to point out the need to be glad of what has been, rather than to complain about what is. We know about that. I find one antidote to self-pity is the real realisation of the number of women of my generation who are old and alone because their bright young loves were killed in the war before the benison of marriage: no children, no pensions.

Today there are increasing numbers of unmarried couples—and there will be more. This has to be faced because bereavement of a lover can be more intolerable than a husband. Somehow it is not so respectable, nor so benefited nor comforted. Even the unwelcome status of widowhood is denied.

But, whatever the circumstances of bereavement, this wise book will be of help to many. Not of comfort, for there is none.

LENA JEGER
Patron of Cruse

AFTER STILLBIRTH AND NEONATAL DEATH
What Happens Next. Pub. SANDS, The Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society, Argyle House, 29-31 Euston Road, London NW1 2SD. Price £2.50 inc. p & p.

When a baby dies around the time of birth, the parents can be overwhelmed by the decisions to be made at such a difficult time. Yet those decisions may have far-reaching effects and can strongly influence the process of grieving.

Helping bereaved parents understand the formalities and choices available has proved difficult for health care professionals. Because of the variety of disciplines involved—funeral directors, cemetery and crematoria management, the church and hospital administration—information has, until now, been fragmented.

In response to the need for concise and detailed guide-lines, SANDS has produced an information pack for health care professionals. In thumb-indexed format, the book explains the arrangements and procedures which are necessary following a baby's death. It provides a compact reference with 'fill-in' sections to store local information specific to each hospital or locality.

The book is accompanied by a supply of leaflets written specifically for parents: **'After the death or stillbirth of your baby—what has to be done?'** Both the book and leaflet deal clearly and comprehensively with the practicalities of registration, autopsy, funeral arrangements and memorials, and will prove an invaluable aid to those working in this sensitive area.

GLYNIS FLETCHER
Secretary, Stratford-on-Avon Branch
National Childbirth Trust

continued from page 9

17 Parkes CM. Bereavement counselling: does it work? *Br Med J* 1980; 281: 3-6.
18 Black D, Urbanowicz MA. Bereaved children: family intervention. In: Stevenson J, ed. *Recent Research in Developmental Psychopathology*. Oxford: Pergammon Press, 1984.

MAMA'S GOING TO BUY YOU A MOCKINGBIRD

Jean Little. Puffin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex. 1985. £1.95.

This is a sensitive children's novel about Jeremy, aged nearly 12, who grows up fast one long Canadian summer when his father falls ill and dies of cancer. Many of the issues facing bereaved children are dealt with well, although I would question the parents' decision not to tell eight-year-old Sarah of the seriousness of father's illness so that his death comes without preparation. The book is less good on her reactions and feelings than on Jeremy's. A little sentimental perhaps, and sometimes sententious especially in the religious passages, nevertheless I think the book would be helpful for boys coping with the death of their father, and is well written enough to figure in the libraries of primary schools as a useful book to open up a classroom discussion about the effects of losing a parent.

DORA BLACK
Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist

FOR BURIAL AT SEA

A new company, formed in November, 1986, will arrange a vessel and formalities for a burial at sea, or ceremony for scattering ashes offshore, at any point around the coast. The Britannia Shipping Company at Newton Poppleford, near Sidmouth, Devon EX10 0EF has a 24 hour telephone service for enquiries (Colaton Raleigh 68652) and a Company Chaplain.

'SAYING GOODBYE TO YOUR BABY'

A guide for parents whose baby dies around the time of birth. Pub. SANDS, The Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Society, Argyle House, 29-31 Euston Road, London NW1 2SD. Price 95p inc. p & p.

This gentle and sensitively written booklet was written because 'each baby is an individual person, different and important, and each baby does matter.'

Priscilla Alderson combines an excellent practical guide with a profound understanding of the many aspects of grieving for a lost baby. Many parents, their families and friends will find this moving booklet a source of comfort, as it outlines the stages and emotions of the grieving process.

'Parents used to be told to forget it ever happened, now we understand that grief is not something to be ignored; it is a way of helping people to adjust when something is lost or taken away.'

SANDS should be congratulated for producing this fine contribution to our understanding of infant death with the knowledge that 'slowly things will change until you can carry your memory of your baby and your sadness, and it no longer carries you.'

GLYNIS FLETCHER

CRUSE TRAINING OFFICER

Cruse is pleased to announce the appointment of Nicholas Tyndall as its first Training Officer. He took up post on 1st March.

WE ALL MOURN

—reflections by Terry Waite

The following extract is taken from 'Lent for Busy People', written for this year by Terry Waite. Copyright Shelagh Brown, editor of The Bible Reading Fellowship.

We all mourn, and we have to be able not only to comfort all who mourn but to be comforted ourselves.

I was talking recently with Chris Bonington, the mountaineer, about our reactions when people close to us have died. It was on a television interview, and he spoke about the time when he lost his colleagues on the mountain, and of how he lost his own son in an accident. It was years later, but the tears came into his eyes.

When you know how bitter an experience it is to lose the physical presence of someone you love you know that the comforting of those who mourn isn't saying, "Well, never mind, it'll be all right". Sometimes it's just being quiet with somebody, and allowing their grief to penetrate your own soul. You don't have to say anything.

One of the things that comforts me when I'm sad is the knowledge that there are other human beings who know me from all sides. They know the light and the darkness in me, and because of the closeness of the relationships they have experienced not only the light but the unpleasantness of the dark as well. But the relationship proves to be totally and absolutely dependable, and I know that I am still loved and valued and respected as a person, almost in spite of myself.

CREATIVE BREAKS
SOMERSET

Who Heals the Healers?

Finding a support system for carers in all aspects of the helping professions is essential to our wellbeing.

We offer THE THREE JOURNEYS as a step towards learning to take more responsibility for ourselves. Stages I and II (18th-22nd May, 1st-5th June) are based on clinical and humanistic psychology, with group work, visualisation, gestalt techniques and creative exploration. Stage III (21st-25th September) is for visitors wanting to take their insight further. All the workshop leaders are widely experienced in therapeutic skills.

CREATIVE BREAKS is a small residential centre long associated with Cruse through its unique **Living With Confidence** holiday courses. Luxurious accommodation, delicious dinners with candlelight and wine.

Brochure: Rosemary March Smith, Church Close House, Butleigh, Glastonbury, Somerset. Tel. 0458-50213.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
on
GRIEF & BEREAVEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

12th-15th July 1988
London

Cruse has been asked to organise this next major International Conference.

It will include plenary addresses by internationally known speakers, groups, workshops and poster sessions on themes including

* adult, child and family grief
* bereavement as a result of suicide, AIDS, murder, disaster and accident

There will be a special 'Meet the Author' session

and the first
Professor Shamai Davidson Memorial Lecture

* * *

This will be the largest Conference of its kind ever held. Early reservation is recommended.

Details from Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR.