REVIEWS



THE HOSPICE WAY
by Denise Winn. Macdonald Optima 1987. 121pp. £3.95.

In a brief but useful guide the author has drawn on her own personal experience, supplemented by reading, to produce this account of hospice care for a general readership. She first gives historical details about the Hospice Movement, and describes the types of hospice care currently available. Having set the scene, the next chapter considers the types of patient for whom hospice care is appropriate and examines briefly some criteria for admission. There is a description of in-patient units and reference to the different members of the multi-disciplinary teams. Next the role of relatives is discussed, with emphasis on the importance of including them in the patient's care and of considering their needs as well.

Chapter 6 is entitled: "Controlling symptoms" but, apart from listing eight other troublesome symptoms, concentrates almost exclusively on pain control. Since dying in pain is still one of the greatest fears of cancer patients, this emphasis would be particularly reassuring to the non-professional reader for whom the book is intended. The author describes pain control techniques used in hospice care and also makes the point that the fear of addiction in patients with terminal cancer is unfounded. A comment that: "morphine injections are very rarely necessary", could be misleading, but avoids mentioning Diamorphine (heroin) which has other connotations to the non-professional reader.

There is a focus on the emotional needs of the dying patient and on how to provide an atmosphere in which people feel they can be open with one another about what is happening and can be free to talk about death if they wish to do so. Further attention is paid to supporting the relatives and particularly to alleviating the guilt which can cause such distress, when they feel admission to a hospice means they have failed to care for the patient as well as possible. Chapter 10, the longest in the book, looks at the development of home care services for the terminally ill. It covers the role of the home care team, method of referral, assessment of needs, and the support provided not only in the home but also through outpatient clinics and day centres.

Hospice support for the family continues after the patients' death, and there is brief coverage of reactions which may occur in bereavement and some suggestions on ways of coping with grief.

The book concludes with practical guidance on how to obtain hospice care, and includes a list of useful organisations. Many questions commonly asked by people about hospice care have been clearly answered in this book. Chapters are short, with several topics covered in each, all indicated in the contents list. There is a slight tendency to generalise and to provide a somewhat idealised picture of hospice care, but apart from that the book give a most valuable overview to the general reader.

BARBARA GREENALL
Librarian, St. Christopher's Hospice

MY MOTHER IS DYING
Rebecca's Story. Ed. Linden Nicoll.
Pub. Family Welfare Enterprises Ltd. 1986. 56pp. £2.50 from FWE, 501-5 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU.

What are the parallels between Rebecca's Story, and Simone de Beauvoir's **A Very Easy Death** (first pub. by Penguin in 1964)? Rebecca's Story, **My Mother Is Dying** is short, just 56 pages, and has no pretensions to being great literature. Yet both relate, from the standpoint of an adult daughter, the experience of watching a mother die.

De Beauvoir's title is deliberately chosen. On the scale of deaths by cancer her mother's death was described as 'easy' by the professionals. Rebecca's mother, too, could be said to have had a relatively easy death, again by cancer, requiring only a few weeks of home care at the last, pain being controlled successfully by the use of drugs. Rebecca and de Beauvoir describe the process of dying and the effects this process has on a daughter forced into a sudden close proximity with her parent in the final stages of life.

The power of Rebecca's Story lies in the honest day to day record of the problems she faces after taking in her dying mother for nursing, and the solutions she finds. What to do with highly dangerous drugs in a home which contains young children? How to cope with visitors? How to find time for family, cooking, shopping, extra washing and sleep as well as the nursing? Sheer exhaustion begins to dominate all else.

Dying is rarely 'easy'. Many who turn to Cruse or other bereavement services after the death of someone they love, have lived through such an experience as that described by de Beauvoir or Rebecca. Dying often involves a concentration on the bodily functions; on faeces and vomit, incontinence and catheters. Nursing a dying patient involves touching at an intimate level. Where the patient is a parent, and carer a child, it attacks the very roots of the role structure within the family.

Rebecca's Story is unique and not intended to be a model for dealing with this family situation. The author (who wishes to remain anonymous) draws a parallel between the last days of her mother's life and experiences she had as an adolescent caught up in Israel's Six-Day War. Dying is a war situation, death is the ultimate enemy, but there are other enemies—discomfort, pain and degradation.

Although the medical and nursing professions have an intimate knowledge of dying, perhaps others of us in society are innocent enough to hold a more simplistic view of what it will entail. In spite of excellent support from her family doctor and a home nurse, Rebecca needed more help than she was given. Some have far less, and are left to carry an intolerable burden virtually unsupported. If they should break down under the strain and the patient is removed to hospital or hospice care for that reason, there can be a sense of great failure as they face the fact that they have been unable to complete the task they set for themselves, and for which willingness and love was not enough. This book draws attention to The Carers Project, recently set up by the Family Welfare Association in London to help women caring at home for elderly relatives. Rebecca discovered it the day her mother died.

How one copes with the dying period may deeply affect how one will grieve. The memories of pain, success or failure will be carried forward into the present, early months of bereavement when the mind turns constantly back to the past, re-living time and again the events leading up to the death. How valuable these personal stories are to all who care in one way or another for the dying and bereaved. As counsellors, there can be times for putting aside our skills, our knowledge, our ability to analyse and theorise, and simply to sit back and listen with humility to stories such as that told by Rebecca.

SUSAN WALLBANK
Bereavement Counsellor

BRIEF LIVES: Living with the death of a child. Thames Television series April to July 1987.

Thames Television faced a daunting task with the inception of a series of programmes on death in childhood. They have allowed families who have suffered awful loss to express their sorrow and their rage while offering no easy answers. But this does not mean that answers are lacking. The answers which do emerge, slowly and painfully, are convincing because they come from the sufferers, the bereaved and those experts (doctors, nurses, social workers, and others) whose responsibility is to care for the dying and the bereaved. These are no armchair philosophers but men and women who have learned the hard way, by experiencing or sharing, and they are not easily satisfied by simplistic solutions be they in the form of drugs or prayers or old wives' tales. Not that drugs or prayers or folk wisdom are without value, but they need to be seen as part of a range of possibilities and to be offered out of an understanding of the special needs of particular people rather than out of a blanket assumption that "all you need is a tranquilliser, a verse from the Bible or to keep busy".

For there is hope: despite the worst that fate or man can bring, with help from the rest of us, people can come through and may even grow in emotional stature in the face of death.

DR. COLIN MURRAY PARKES
Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry
London Hospital Medical College

This extract is taken with permission from the introduction to the book BRIEF LIVES by Suzanne Foster and Pamela Smith reseachers for the Thames TV series. Pub. May 1987 Arlington Books, in association with Thames Television. £3.95.

DEATH

I had him and cared
He ran from man but not from me.
I played with him when I was in a good mood
And I even gave him his food.
I cried when he died.
He could have survived.
But the pain was with him.
He died.
I cried for five days
But he was not alive to play.

SATEKI FALETAU aged 10

With acknowledgement to the King Alfred School Chronicle.

REVIEWS

SUICIDE: YOUR CHILD HAS DIED
by Adina Wrobleski. Pub. Afterwords, 5124 Grove Street, Minneapolis, MN 55436-2481, USA. US$4.95 + $2 handling.

This is a very helpful booklet about a limited aspect of bereavement (the suicide of one's own child) by an American writer who has herself suffered this experience. Aimed at reducing the mourner's distress by giving a clear picture of what may be expected, it deals with such areas as stigma of suicide, fears, anger, guilt, dealing with other people's reactions (or lack of them), understanding suicide and depression. It ends with a section on rebuilding one's life as time goes on, making practical suggestions for rituals to cope with anniversaries and so on.

The author comes down very heavily in favour of complete openness about the nature of the death, even to telling young children what has happened. She speaks very helpfully about fears for oneself and for other family members, and also about guilt, real and imagined—and imputed. Her aim seems to be to reassure the mourner that s/he is not going crazy, but is experiencing a normal grieving process. The one point on which I would take issue with her is her assertion that "it takes about a year to pass through your grief". While no one would wish to prolong the process any further than it has to be, my own experience with those bereaved in this way shows that it usually takes considerably longer, even in people who are doing all the "right" things to help themselves; it would be a pity to add a sense of "failure to get over it" (common enough in any case) to an already heavy burden. Apart from this, I think Mrs. Wrobleski succeeds in her aim, and has produced a down-to-earth booklet of real practical help.

BARBARA of Reading
Samaritan

MY YEARS WITH CRUSE
Margaret Torrie, 1987. £3.50 inc. p & p from Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond TW9 1UR. (Special price to Cruse members & workers £3.00 inc. p & p).

Despite its uninspiring title this is very much more than a history of the foundation of Cruse, the organisation for the bereaved. Margaret Torrie has always had a way with words, as her poems testify, and she has managed to bring to this slim volume a depth of understanding and care for the widow which will continue to inspire all who work for their welfare.

She traces the foundation of Cruse to its roots in her work as a social worker married to a psychiatrist. Her Quaker faith, her organising ability and her restless energy made her a formidable pioneer in a field of service which had been long neglected. Despite suffering from long-standing ill health, she battled on bravely after her husband's death until new premises and a new director enabled her to step down. She described Derek Nuttall as having been "caught up" in the disaster at Aberfan but this is not strictly accurate. It was Derek's compassion and experience in the field of social welfare that caused the Churches to ask him and his wife to work in Aberfan after the disaster. This detail apart, Margaret Torrie's account of how Cruse began cannot be faulted. She is evidently proud of the impressive organisation which it has now become but does not conceal her fears that by emphasising the importance of bereavement counselling and widening the service to include all bereaved, Cruse may cease to be the source of long-term help for the widow which she envisaged. Perhaps her book will help to ensure that these fears are unjustified.

COLIN MURRAY PARKES
MD, FRCPsych
Consultant Psychiatrist,
London Hospital Medical College

CHILDREN OF THE VOLCANO
Alison Acker 1986. Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DN. Hardback £18.95, paper back £5.95.

The title refers to "the volcanic pressures of poverty, repression and revolution". The author travelled through Central America to find out what effect the wars and official casualty reports (6,000 orphaned in Nicaragua, 3,500 children killed; 50,000 killed or disappeared in Guatemala) are having on the young. In her account children, students, widowed mothers speak for themselves: in some cases they are beyond speech. "Remember, he saw his parents murdered", she was told at the orphanage where she took a seven year old who had not been heard to speak for five months. "He will eventually begin to trust the world again, that's the magic of being a child. And don't ever under estimate it, because that's the hope of the world".

The author is a teacher and journalist in Canada, a widow and grandmother. She says she found very little published material on children from other wars, or research to indicate why some children "stay whole" and others do not. She talked to children of four countries and those trying to care for them, and spent time in a village of widows in Guatemala, whose husbands had been killed in army massacres, and who are now helping each other and shouldering the responsibility for their own and other children. Mostly the interviewees produced pleased smiles for Mrs. Acker's camera, even the waif for whom home is a cardboard box, and the gentle 15-year-old girl soldier with her arm shot off. This book does not claim to be a scientific survey. It does however give selected glimpses of the responses and aspirations of children caught up in shock, bereavement, violence, insecurity and unusual responsibilities for political reasons.

BARBARA PENTREATH

GRIEF THERAPY (Video).
Treatment for intensely grief-stricken people (1975). Dr. Ronald Ramsey.
£70.00 from Concord Films, 201 Felixstowe Road, Ipswih, Suffolk. Available on hire. Time 20 mins.

Ramsey is an American psychologist practising in Amsterdam who demonstrates his technique of forced mourning live with a woman whose mother and daughter died in a caravan fire two and half years previously. We presume that the woman has had difficulties with her mourning although we are told little about the reason for referral. Ramsey sees her daily for six days and gently but persistently forces her to picture the events leading up to her daughter's death and reiterate the facts of her death. He makes her look at photos, tells her to talk to her daughter and tell her how she feels about her death. "Send her away —she's dead". The mother's distress is great as she struggles with her aroused emotions, but by the sixth day she feels that the tearing pain she has carried for two and a half years is gone and she is feeling marvellous.

The copy I viewed had no accompanying literature and there is no discussion on the tape of the theoretical basis for the techniques used or for whom the tape is intended. It is too brief to be useful as a training tape for counsellors to learn the flooding behavioural technique on which Ramsey's work is based. It might be useful to show to morbidly grieving individuals to prepare them for treatment, but I would not feel that necessary. Perhaps it is best used to illustrate Ramsey's writings on this subject and to show a talented, sensitive and effective behaviour therapist at work.

DORA BLACK
Consultant Child Psychiatrist

CANCER: a positive approach for women, and CANCER: a positive approach for men. Audio-cassettes.
Matthew Manning. Obtainable from Matthew Manning Centre, 39 Abbeygate Street, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1LW. Price £5.95 each + 50p postage.

These tapes are intended for men and women who have recently learned they have cancer. Manning runs a Healing Centre and claims to have participated in controlled trials of his healing capacities—but gives no references in his accompanying literature. His talk on side 1 is a mixture of half-digested scientific facts and findings, and a pep talk to the listener of the exhortatory kind. On the whole I think patients would find them helpful although I am not sure if I would want to be referred to as "a mastectomy". I am also unhappy about his firm statement that cancer occurs in certain types of people. We do not have unequivocal evidence of that yet.

Side 2 is a relaxation tape which is useful in teaching the listener to relax and in helping to visualise the cancer cells being destroyed by the "soldier" white cells. This draws on the Simonton's work.

With the above reservations I think these tapes are useful additions to the psychological treatment of cancer and might be useful for counsellors to give to patients and their families.

DORA BLACK

THE LESSON
by Edward Lucie-Smith

'Your father's gone', my bald headmaster said.
His shiny dome and brown tobacco jar
Splintered at once in tears. It wasn't grief.
I cried for knowledge, which was bitterer
Than any grief. For there and then I knew
That grief has uses—that a father dead
Could bind the bully's fist a week or two;
And then I cried for shame, then for relief.

I was a month past ten when I learnt this:
I still remember how the noise was stilled
In school-assembly when my grief came in.
Some goldfish in a bowl quietly sculled
Around their shining prison on its shelf.
They were indifferent. All the other eyes
Were turned towards me. Somewhere in myself
Pride like a goldfish flashed a sudden fin.

Copyright © 1964 by Edward Lucie-Smith.

CRISIS INTERVENTION: Grief and Bereavement. (Audio-cassettes) Dr. Nira Kfir. 1986.

Set of 4 tapes £13.99 from Adlerian Workshops & Publications, Museclear Ltd., 36 Dobbins Lane, Wendover, Bucks HP22 6DH.

This audio package of four tapes, each running 45-60 minutes, records lectures by Nira Kfir during a conference in London in September 1986. Dr. Kfir has extensive experience of working with bereaved people in Israel. Having personally attended several sessions of the conference I found her to be an excellent lecturer, and this comes through on the recordings. She relates her lectures to life through many case examples and a welcome lack of jargon.

Tape 1 includes an overview of crisis, what it is, how it develops and how an individual may experience growth as a result of crisis. Tape 2 discusses the three main components of crisis intervention: giving information, support and alternatives. Kfir goes on to exemplify the importance of each component through the use of a case history.

Tape 3 discusses family crisis. In this lecture Kfir explains the ways families function, parent/child interactions, and the individual's role and influence within the family.

The fourth tape, Bereavement and Grief, is perhaps the one most relevant to Cruse counsellors. It would also be educational for individuals working within the organisation in other capacities. In this tape Kfir points out that bereavement is not a crisis but has crisis potential. She goes on to discuss when bereavement can become a crisis and illustrates her point with case material. This lecture emphasises the value of lay volunteers and the importance of what they have to offer.

There seemed to be only two problems with the tapes: Dr. Kfir's accent, while easily understandable for the most part, makes the occasional word difficult to understand. Additionally, the recordings have picked up background sounds of traffic which some listeners may find distracting.

Although Dr. Kfir is an Adlerian psychologist she does not emphasise a particular theoretical model of counselling in her lectures. One of the main values of these tapes is that she allows for individual differences in counselling approaches, "There is no single right way". While the tapes are not entirely specific to the work of Cruse I feel they would be an asset to any professional or lay person working with bereaved people.

LYN FRANCHINO, Ph.D. Counsellor



From:

MAGGIE FISHER, Matron
REVD. COLIN KASSELL, Chaplain
St. Catherine's Hospice, Crawley

Dear Sir,

Re: Article in Bereavement Care—Volume 6 Number 1—Spring, 1987. **BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING: a therapeutic hypothesis, by Dr. Robert Johnson.**

We support the concept of bereavement counselling being a re-education process for the client. We are, however, concerned about Dr. Johnson's hypothesis, particularly in the following areas:

1. He states that the motto is "if they don't like it don't do it" and also subsequent to this "to argue with the patient is to lose". Firstly, yes, we feel that we should negotiate the counselling process but if the individual being counselled feels that they don't want to continue we should try to enable them to look at why. Perhaps they are feeling frightened or vulnerable, etc. Secondly, we wonder whose loss? What are we trying to gain?
2. He states that "patients in this situation believe *falsely* that they cannot survive . . .". Who are we to judge? Counselling surely involves empathy and trying to see the world through the other person's eyes and not to judge.

So finally we wonder about his concept of bereavement counselling and particularly its brief time scale.

Dr. Johnson replies:

It is hardly surprising my approach to counselling evokes sceptism or even "incredulity" as in the earlier editorial comment. Based on 20 years' careful research, it proposes a new approach to mental distress, and breaks the old rules.

I use it daily in my work, finding it more effective and quicker not only for bereavements, but for all mental disease. Even a six-year-old is coming to see he is "blaming" everyone (and therefore hassling his grandparents) for his mother's recent suicide. I ask him to re-evaluate his strategies for emotional survival—though not quite in so many words!

My approach is explicitly prescriptive—I invite people to agree that adults no longer need the parental care and attention they did when infants. They may wish for it, but they can physically survive without it. Not everyone believes this, or behaves as if it were true. Their life-survival strategies need bringing up to date, especially when they continue to view the deceased as a derelict parent-figure.

Only negotiation and consent can safeguard the danger of my becoming parental, which may be what they want, but which helps neither them nor me. I offer it strictly on a take-it-or-leave-it basis: if they decline, I try again—but only within limits they set.

What we all stand to lose is that the bereaved may actually "join" the deceased, as some threaten, and too many do. My objective is actively to change how they see the world which their emotions are now telling them "falsely" holds no future for them. I aim to re-educate their emotions. The rational mind can at last be engaged in controlling the irrational. It is sad how often this approach is resisted. Thank you for your interest.

COURSES & CONFERENCES

Bereavement & Loss. 9th-11th September, 1987. British Institute of Mental Handicap, Wolverhampton Road, Kidderminster, Worcs., to be held at Whirlow, Sheffield.

Dealing with Bereavement & Loss. 8th October. WILL (Workshop Institute for Living & Learning), 105 Christchurch Road, S.W.14.

Age Concern Courses at Seebohm House, Maryland Drive, Northfield, Birmingham. 15th-16th September, for **Voluntary Community Services for Terminally Ill People.** 26th-27th November, **Helping Elderly People to cope with Bereavement.**

St. Christopher's Hospice Fourth International Conference: A Kaleidoscope of Hospice Medicine. 28th September - 2nd October 1987, at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. £30.00 per day (£50.00 overseas delegates). Information from Avril Jackson. St. Christopher's Hospice, 51-59 Lawrie Park Road, Sydenham, London SE226 6DZ. Tel. 01-778 9252.

Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice. First International Conference: Multi-disciplinary Aspects of Terminal Care. 8th-10th September, 1987, at 73 Carlton Place, Glasgow G5 9TD, Scotland.

Cruse Study Day on Disasters and how to cope with them. 28th November at Bristol. £25. Details from: Cruse, 81 Park Street, Bristol, Avon.

Cruse Annual Course on Bereavement Conselling. See page 24.

GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT
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ALL IN THE END IS HARVEST

An anthology for those who grieve

Compiled by
AGNES WHITAKER

Introduction by
COLIN MURRAY PARKES

Published by Darton, Longman & Todd/Cruse
£3.95
Available from Cruse House
(add 40p postage) or bookshops