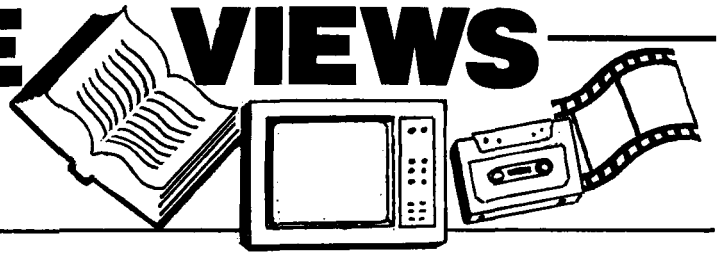
REVIEWS



BEYOND LOSS

Lily Singer, Margaret Sirot and Susan Rodd. New York: Dutton, 1988. (U.K. price not yet available.)

To produce this book, Lily Singer has drawn on her wide experience of working with people who have lost a spouse. Case histories abound. They are all reassuringly individual but within the bounds of "normal" grief. I have met them all in Cruse.

The intention of the book is to chart a course through the maze of emotional and practical issues confronting those facing life alone. There is a wholeness about the approach which recognises the necessity of sorting out the practical implications of bereavement even while floundering in emotional turmoil. In this respect it resembles Margaret Torrie's "Begin Again" rather than Elizabeth Collick's "Through Grief".

Each chapter ends with a list of points to remember. Indeed the chapter on financial matters is so exhaustive that I wonder whether anyone who needed so much advice would be able to absorb it, let alone act on it.

Part 1, "Immediate Concerns", is mainly practical. Widows and widowers are encouraged to take control of their own lives, to consult professionals where necessary and not to "let a little thing like the fear of looking stupid trouble you for a minute . . . You have been through worse." There is good advice about looking after one's health, about safety in the home and about the possible pitfalls of accepting help from well-meaning friends. The comparison which springs to mind is Shirley Conran's "Superwoman".

Part 2, "Grief Work", deals with the emotional upheaval which must be endured not only by the surviving spouses but by those close to them. There is no underestimation of the pain of loss but there is an assumption that there will always be a network of family and friends who may also be grieving but who will offer support. The depth of loneliness and isolation common to all the bereaved people I have met is hardly mentioned. Perhaps because this is one thing we cannot alter?

New and inexperienced counsellors and the families of bereaved people will find much helpful advice in this book, but I feel it might be rather daunting for any bereaved person who had not already made a good start on adjusting to their loss.

CAROLINE BERNASCONI
Cruse Area Organiser

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEPARATION AND LOSS

J. and S. Bloom-Feshbach and associates. San Francisco & London: Jossey Bass, 1987. £42.

This is a large book (nearly 600 pages) written mainly by psychoanalysts taking a mainly psychoanalytic viewpoint of the effects of separations and losses of different kinds on individuals of different ages. It is divided into three parts. Firstly there is a theoretical overview of the role of separation in development. Part 2 considers the role of separation and loss in major life transitions—both normal such as leaving home and abnormal such as moving to a new culture, divorce and death. The third part deals with treatment issues. The editors suggest (p.41) that "The attachment field offers a bridge between psychoanalysis and mainstream academic developmental psychology which is only beginning to tackle the complexity that clinicians have long faced". I am not sure, however, that they have gone further than Bowlby[1] and Bretherton[2].

Other theoretical frameworks are either ignored or touched on too briefly. Only Bloom, in the chapter on leaving home, takes a systems perspective, and Krupnick and Solomon, in their helpful chapter on death of a parent or sibling during childhood, are the only authors to consider Seligman's "learned helplessness" model.

Most of the book deals with psychoanalytic issues which will be mainly of interest to psychoanalysts. Readers of this journal will find the introductory overview by the editors and Krupnick and Solomon's chapter the most useful, but they should look at Helen Block Lewis's intriguing ideas based on her earlier research on the evolution of field-dependence and field-independence in humans and its implications for the development of major mental illness.

DR. DORA BLACK
Consultant Child Psychiatrist

References

1. Bowlby J. (1969) Attachment and Loss. London: Hogarth Press.
2. Bretherton I., Walters E. (eds.) (1985) Growing Points of Attachment Theory and Research. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, **50** (1-2, Serial No. 209).

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH GRIEF

Rosemary Wells. London: Sheldon Press, 1988. £2.95 (paperback).

Rosemary Wells's book should fill a gap in our bookshelves but unfortunately I cannot recommend it. Although Mrs. Wells is widowed herself, with two young children and with much experience as a teacher, and although she has read widely and consulted the experts, what she has produced is unfortunately too muddled and confused to be of much help to parents, teachers, clergy or children. I found it a depressing book to read: her advice is often contradictory. For example, on page 54 she advocates children always seeing their dead sibling, yet on page 60 she appears much more ambivalent about the idea. Her attitude towards professional help is similarly undecided and she seems to be ill-informed about the nature of help available. Several expressions baffled me. What, for example, is "traumatic despair" (page 28)? I'm not sure either what "post-efficiency course" is (page 37), or "textbook survival" (page 48). We have to wait until page 78 to get a description of how children of different ages perceive death and this comes in the section entitled "Religious Attitudes". The section on the practices of other religions is too brief to be useful and inexplicably fails to include Moslems. Extracting from this book the advice needed to help a child to cope with grief would be very difficult. For example, the chapter on the surviving parent is not about that at all, it's about children again, and sections about social workers and counselling skills for public workers appear in a section on unexpected death. I was particularly unhappy about the section on suicide (page 32). This does not clearly distinguish between suicide and attempted suicide. It is using the words interchangeably and also muddles suicide as a reaction to bereavement and suicide as a cause of bereavement.

Although it is somewhat dated (it doesn't, for example, deal with the effects on a child of witnessing a violent death, especially of someone close), the most comprehensive book for parents and counsellors is still "Explaining Death to Children", edited by Earl A. Grollman, published by Beacon Press, New York, 1967. A more comprehensive book, which deals not only with death but with loss and separation through divorce, is "Helping Children Cope With Separation and Loss" by Claudia Jewett, Batsford Academic, 1982. As an insight into how children feel when a parent dies, the book of that name by Jill Krementz, reviewed in *Bereavement Care* 1983, vol. 2, No. 3, still takes a lot of beating.

DR. DORA BLACK
Consultant Child Psychiatrist

SECRET FLOWERS

Mary Jones. London: The Women's Press, 1988. £2.95.

Mary Jones's short account of the death of her husband and of her subsequent bereavement is compulsive reading. Having far too many books and articles to read I approached it reluctantly, quite expecting to find it saying the same old things that have been said too many times before by people who find it therapeutic to work through their grief by writing a book about it. But I soon realised that this book is different. Mary Jones has important things to say and she says them clearly, honestly and intricately. Although written in an episodic way with each brief section standing on its own, there is a tension running through the whole book which locks the reader in and makes it difficult to put down.

This is the story of "Two intelligent, independent, proud, strong-willed people, often at odds with each other, but who occasionally found perfect contentment together. And these times made all the rest worthwhile. I very often mentally packed my suitcase but I never went". It helps us to understand the nature of ambivalence and the reasons why the period which follows the ending of such a marriage is just as stormy as the period which precedes it.

Mary Jones's compulsive independence seems to have been a fragile cover and her aggressive challenging an attempt to find reassurance, rather like the behaviour of the child who says "I hate you" as a means of testing the strength of the parent's love. Without a partner she felt lost and alone—"I had always seen myself as an independent adult and here was the 'little girl' sydrome appearing. I wondered if I had been much less grown-up than I had supposed, if everything I had previously assumed was wrong and I had in fact leaned on Stanley and been a clinging vine".

A turning point seems to have been reached five months after her husband's death when she slipped while out walking alone on a cliff path and broke her ankle. "I was forced to do what I had been avoiding for months, to reach down inside myself, deep, deep to see if I had some essential grit, and guts and strength. I turned over and began to crawl up the muddy slope on hands and knees". This experience and the recovery which followed seems to have reassured her both of her ability to trust herself and also to trust other people, for she also learned to ask for help and to believe in the kindness and care of others.

This process of self-discovery is accompanied by another kind of exploration. "Very slowly—and for some reasons I do not understand I find this of immense importance—I am remembering him for myself. Small details: how his hair grew, the different coloured greys in it; the shape of his brilliantly blue eyes that are echoed in his daughter and two of his sons; the shape of his hands." The family photograph album, which at first she found quite unbearable, has become "an endless joy" and she gathered around her "a small treasury of the things people said, the anecdotes, the repeated letters."

Those who have experienced it will recognise this phenomenon: Mary Jones was falling in love. The preoccupation with the other person, the simple joy of each symbol and memory, the endless longing and all of this made more poignant and, perhaps, more necessary *because* she had previously denied it and had often distanced herself from her husband during his life. It is almost as if this "powerful and overbearing" man was too dangerous, in life, for an unqualified commitment but, being gone, could no longer hurt her save by his absence. So paradoxically, she entered into a new relationship with her dead husband and, in the end, what emerges is this book and . . . "not until the last few pages of typing this did it occur to me that I have written a *love* story."

COLIN M. PARKES
MD, FRCPsych

A RECKONING

May Sarton. London: The Women's Press, 1978 (reprinted 1987). £4.95.

For a work of fiction May Sarton writes with an empathy and understanding unusual in a book of this kind.

Laura has in inoperable cancer and does not have long to live. With courage and determination she faces her last few weeks. She explores her relationships past and present, and begins to see the small world around her with a heightened perception.

This is a poignant novel that is not oversentimental. It provides an insight into the process of dying which could be useful for those who come into contact with the dying and bereaved.

ELIZABETH PARKES
Royal Free Hospital Palliative Care Support Team

NOTICE TO READERS

Books reviewed in 'Bereavement Care' may be ordered from Meditec Medical & Nursing Book Service, York House, 26 Bourne Road, Colsterworth, Lincs. NG33 5JE (Tel. 0476 860281).

BEREAVEMENT CARE is published for all Cruse workers and others who wish to deepen their understanding of bereavement. It is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be lent, re-sold, reproduced in part or in entirety, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's consent.

The editors welcome advertisements and inserts, but do not necessarily associate themselves with the views of the advertisers, or books advertised.

Editorial Office: Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR.

Editors: Colin Murray Parkes MD DPM FRCPsych
Dora Black MB ChB FRCPsych DPM

Managing Editor: Patricia Scowen MA SRN HV

Cruse Director: Derek Nuttall

Training Officer: Nicholas Tyndall

Information Officer: Wendy Wilson
Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR. Tel. 01-940 4818.

Cruse News

Major Disasters Working Party

The Joint Working Party on Disasters, set up at the invitation of the British Government to look at the provision of social and psychological support to the bereaved after major disasters, has met on two occasions and plans to make its report within 12 to 18 months. The Working Party is being organised by Cruse.

The Hillsborough Disaster

A major disaster occurred in Sheffield on 15th April with the death of 95 football fans at the Hillsborough Football Stadium soon after the start of the semi-final match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest.

As soon as the extent of the disaster began to emerge, our Sheffield, Rotherham and Chesterfield Branches made counsellors available and from then on through the weekend they worked extensively at the Sheffield hospitals, the mortuary and other places. We are deeply grateful to them for their ready and willing response and for everything they, and those co-ordinating the Cruse response, did.

Gradually the focus moved to Merseyside and our Liverpool, Wirral and Ellesmere Port Branches are involved in the help being provided there. Again, we are very grateful for their response. A number of those killed lived out of the Merseyside area and Cruse's help is available to them too.

Contact is being maintained not only with Cruse people in these centres but also with the Social Services and other statutory and voluntary carers.

Obituaries

We are sad to report the death of two loved and much respected men.

Dr. George Day was a Patron of Cruse for many years and a founder member of the Norwich Branch. His busy life included a love of music and much work for the Samaritans.

Dr. David Morris was a leading paediatrician with a deep concern for these bereaved by a stillbirth, and the prime mover behind the foundation of the Greenwich and Bexley Branch of Cruse.

We will miss their lively support, but above all we will miss them.

A fuller obituary of Dr. David Morris will appear in a subsequent issue of *Bereavement Care*.

New Branches

Since our last issue, new Cruse Branches have opened at Falkirk (1st March), Peebles (29th March), Blackpool (19th April), West Kent (20th April), Leicester (26th April) and Kettering (27th April).

Steering Committees

Steering Committees, which precede the opening of a new Branch, have been established at Uttlesford (Essex), Burton upon Trent and Canterbury and Thanet.

Bereavement Counselling Courses

For details of Cruse's and other bereavement courses and conferences, please see page 8.

BASIC COUNSELLING SKILLS

A Manual for Trainers of Bereavement Counsellors

by **Lyn Franchino,** Ph D.

This step-by-step programme in six sections is written by an experienced Cruse trainer.

The Manual contains clear teaching material, 22 exercises, 17 handouts, assessment sheets, trainers' notes and bibliography.

Price £25+£1.85 postage & packing (UK). Overseas: please add £2.75 for postage and remit by sterling draft payable in London.

A STRUCTURED YET FLEXIBLE TRAINING PACKAGE WHICH IS A "MUST" FOR WORKERS AND TRAINERS IN GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT

Published by Cruse

Available only from Cruse, Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR, England.

1989 Subscriptions—U.K.: individuals £6.00, libraries and institutions £11.00, Cruse workers £4.50. All inclusive of postage and packing. **Overseas rates: Europe,** individuals £7.00, libraries and institutions £12.00. **All other countries:** individuals £8.25, libraries and institutions £13.25. All inclusive of air mail. Kindly remit by sterling draft payable in London. Some back numbers available at £1.10 per copy, plus 20p postage (inland). Free index on request. Offprints of single articles available at 40p.

"Bereavement Care" is published three times a year in Spring, Summer and Winter. An index to 1988 and 1989, volumes 7 and 8, will appear in the Winter issue 1989.

Copyright Cruse—Bereavement Care 1989
Printed by E. H. Baker & Co. Ltd., 86 Lower Mortlake Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2JH. Ref. 58309