REMEMBRANCE: an anthology of readings, prayers and music chosen for memorial services

Ned Sherrin (ed). London: Michael Joseph, 1996. £17.50 hb*.

Christians usually have only one opportunity to gather together after one of their members has died, at the funeral. These can be deeply moving occasions, but they come too soon to mark the end of a relationship: for those most affected by bereavement, it is still too soon to say 'goodbye'. Unlike many other religions, Christianity provides no second liturgy to mark the end of mourning and to give people reassurance that their duty to mourn the dead is done.

A remembrance service can fill this gap. As Ned Sherrin, in the introduction to this book, says, 'It is often a happy way to put a period to a time of mourning'. It also provides those who were not able to come to the funeral with an opportunity to remember the person who has died and, because it is not bound by the stricter rules of a formal liturgy, it gives the family an opportunity to create a ritual that reflects the uniqueness of the dead person and the particular needs of those who survive.

This book has been compiled by drawing together, in successive chapters, the readings, poems, prayers, hymns and other music, both sacred and secular, that were used in 36 memorial services. Other items have been suggested by 25 distinguished contributors. They range from popular hymns, such as 'Jerusalem' and 'Abide with me', to idiosyncratic readings and verse that may have had special significance to a particular person but cannot be recommended for wider use.

Memorial services need not be expensive. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that so many of the services reported here are those of the great and famous. Most of us cannot afford a full symphony orchestra and choir at our memorial service and the inclusion of popular recorded music would have added to the usefulness of the book (The most popular recording to be played at American memorial services is said to be Frank Sinatra's rendering of 'I did it my way'). This said, I was relieved to find most of my own special preferences among the items recorded here and I do not doubt that anyone planning a memorial service, either their own or someone else's, will find this book an invaluable source of ideas. Its value would be even greater if it were accompanied by a compact disc of extracts from the music. Perhaps some enterprising recording company would help Cruse Bereavement Care with this.

Colin Murray Parkes
Consultant Psychiatrist

*Available at the special price of £14.95 from Cruse Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR, UK. All royalties go to Cruse Bereavement Care.

SUICIDE: SURVIVORS

Adina Wrobleski. Minneapolis, USA: Afterwords, 1994. US$18.45 pb inc p&p.

This is the second edition of Adina Wrobleski's guide for those who have been bereaved by suicide. Like Alison Wertheimer, author of *A Special Scar*, the writer begins with an account of a personal experience. Since her 21-year-old daughter's suicide in 1979, Wrobleski has accumulated knowledge on this subject and her clearly-written book contains a wealth of accessible information for the reader. It a user-friendly, practical guide offering advice and addressing such issues as: how to talk about suicide both inside and outside the family (one of the problems that distinguishes this form of bereavement); what to tell children (the truth); how to deal with panic attacks; and that contest which can take place for 'worst place' in the hierarchy of grief. Bereaved people, and those who enjoy books with a transatlantic flavour, may find this an easier read than Alison Wertheimer's classic‡.

Wrobleski is dismissive of the suicide prevention movement and, perhaps in a desire to prevent self-blame, emphasises depression and mental sickness as the major causes of suicide. Having survived a suicide bereavement herself, her book carries a message of hope into what she sees as the doom and pessimism so often forecast for those who grieve following this particular form of bereavement. As she writes, 'ultimately it is not how they died, but that they died that is so terrible'.

Susan Wallbank
Bereavement Counsellor

‡ Wertheimer A. A Special Scar. London, UK: Routledge, 1991. Available from Cruse Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond TW9 1UR, UK. £13.99pb.

BEREAVEMENT AND SUPPORT

Marylou Hughes. Washington, USA: Taylor and Francis, 1995. £19.95 pb.

Those new to group work will find this book particularly useful, although more experienced practitioners will also find it a good refresher and an opportunity to think again about different approaches.

Against a summary of theories of grief and bereavement, the author covers all major aspects which should be considered when working in bereavement groups. The reader is taken through some basic material – the benefits of bereavement groups, setting up, getting people to come, structured and unstructured groups – using an approach which is practical, rather than mainly theoretical. The many sub-headings, quotes from group members and copies of handouts appropriate for some groups are helpful and the scope is wide including, for example, semi-educational groups with speakers and 'breakfast' groups for retired people.

Hughes writes in an American context (eg references) but his sound advice is pertinent to counsellors everywhere and his demystifying of the subject ensures the text is user-friendly and readable. With a limited range of writing on group-work and bereavement in the literature, this book makes a welcome addition by relating theory to practice so well.

David Olivere
Senior Lecturer in Social Work

VIDEO

'I Still Can't Believe it': basic communication skills for bereavement counselling.

David Cleverly, Lynn Franchino, Philippa Weitz. London, UK: St Geroge's Hospital Medical School, 1995. £55.00 inc p&p†.

Aids to the teaching of communication skills are much needed and this video comes from a group of experienced and talented teachers. It is intended as the first of a series and deals only with the elementary skills: listening, empathy and body language; paraphrasing; reflecting feeling; integrating feelings and experience; clarifying; questions and probes; and summarising. Each is explained and then illustrated by scenes, showing good counselling and poor counselling. Viewers will have little difficulty in telling the difference.

The video runs for 26 minutes and is accompanied by a training guide which suggests how it can be used and provides a number of additional exercises and suggested role play situations. The whole programme is well produced, well organised and tightly scripted.

The basis problem with this, as with any similar video, is that of finding actors who can truly reproduce the verbal and non-verbal communications of real life. From the moment when the commentator steps primly from a wooded garden into the counselling room, this reviewer felt uncomfortable. They seemed to be saying the right things, yet I was constantly distracted by the artificiality of a situation in which it was obvious that everyone was reading lines. The only people who came across as natural were the 'good' counsellors.

What are the alternatives? Video tapes of real counselling would be ideal and, while there are ethical difficulties, these are not insuperable. It would, perhaps, be unfair to show examples of bad counselling, and educational psychologists claim that viewers easily find themselves modelling bad examples as well as good.

The guide suggests that the video 'may be helpful to trainers who feel uncomfortable with role-play demonstrations' and it is certainly true that some teachers and trainees do feel self-conscious at exposing themselves in this way. Whether the use of this video will make it any easier I doubt. I would go as far as to say that these people should not be selected to teach communication skills and, among the trainees, there are usually one or two extroverts who are willing to 'break the ice'. One thing is for sure: we cannot teach communication skills without role play. In one evaluation of training students rated it as both the most painful *and* the most valuable part of the entire course. In my view no-one should become an accredited counsellor unless they have experienced in role play many of the life situations that they will have to face in counselling. No video can be a substitute and this one, while it is full of good ideas which may be useful to counsellors and trainees, should be seen as supplementing rather than replacing other methods of teaching.

Colin Murray Parkes
Cousultant Psychiatrist

† Available from the St George's Hospital Academic Services Dept, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE.

ABSTRACTS

Death Education: a Model of Student-Participatory Learning

Heuser L. *Death Studies* 1995; **19** (6): 583-90.

The author, who teaches in the sociology department of a small liberal arts university in the USA, was asked by one of her students to initiate a course on dying, death and grieving. The students were encouraged to take an active part in formulating and running the course. The article is a clearly written, straightforward account of the methods adopted, the subjects discussed, and the nature of the students' participation. The project sounds an excellent one, giving the students a better and deeper appreciation of life and death, and likely to help them in any future experience of bereavement.

The Disenfranchised Grief of Teachers

Rowling L. *Omega* 1995; **31** (4): 317-29.

Based on research in two large schools in Australia, this article discusses loss and grief within a school community, especially in relation to the teachers' grief and the impact this has on their professional work. Teachers feel they need to fill three roles: to 'be human' in their relationships with their pupils and colleagues; to control their emotions; and to care for their charges. This leaves little room for expressing their own grief and sense of powerlessness in the face of traumatic events. The author believes that they have the