ABSTRACTS

Broad-spectrum group treatment for parents bereaved by the violent deaths of their 12- to 28-year-old children: a randomized controlled trial

Murphy SA, Johnson C, Cain KC, Das Gupta A, Dimond M, Lohan J, Baugher R. *Death Studies* 1998; **22**(3): 209-35

Violent deaths caused by accidents, homicides and suicides account for 80% of all deaths among youth and young adults in the USA each year. This study examines the efficacy of a 10-week intervention programme offered to 153 parents from between two and seven months after the violent deaths of their 12 to 28-year-old children. The bereaved parents were assessed for mental distress, post-traumatic stress symptoms, delayed loss accommodation, deteriorating physical health and marital strain. The aim of the study – the methodology of which is described in great detail – was to provide the parents with information, skills and support which would help them to come to terms with their loss. It was found that mothers who were most distressed responded best, while fathers showed no immediate benefit. The authors suggest that further research is needed to investigate this lack of response on the part of the fathers and to characterise further those who benefit from similar programmes.

Mothers now childless: structures of the life-world

Talbot K. *Omega* 1997/8; **36**(1): 45-62

The author of this moving article is herself a bereaved mother whose only child died at the age of nine. The death of a child, especially an only child, presents the kind of suffering and challenge to self that creates a need to search for the meaning of life. She describes interviews which she conducted with 10 mothers who had lost their only child, and who could be divided into two groups of five – those who were unable to visualise the future without their child and those who had made a conscious decision to survive their loss. Significantly, the latter group were all working as volunteers to help other mothers who had lost an only child, which allowed them to keep the mothering (nurturing) part of their identity. She suggests ways of helping such bereaved mothers, above all the need for sympathetic, non-judgemental counsellors and friends who will listen and understand.

Key elements in a framework for helping grieving children and adolescents.

Corr CA, Corr DM. *Illness, Crisis and Loss* 1998: **6**(2); 142-60

It is not easy for adults to accept the death of a loved one; how much more difficult for children and adolescents! This article describes two approaches through which help can be given in such cases. First, that of the Dougy Center in Portland, USA, which operates in the belief that every bereaved child or adolescent should have an opportunity to grieve his or her loss in a supportive and understanding environment. Secondly, it describes the philosophy of Sandra Fox, who identified four tasks that confront grieving children and adolescents, and discusses ways in which they can be helped to understand their loss and learn how to cope with it. This thoughtful and useful article ends with 10 guidelines for adults who are involved with young people.

Long-term unresolved grief: applying Bowlby's variants to adult survivors of early parental death

Dilworth JL, Hildreth GL. *Omega* 1997/8; **36**(2): 148-59.

'Short-term grief resolution in children and adults has received considerable attention,' write the authors of this article, 'but we still know little about the long-term grief resolution of any group.' Attempting to address this lack, they discuss the correlation between loss of a parent in childhood and possible adult pathology resulting from the bereavement. Their study is an extension of Bowlby's disordered variants of childhood grief, and they suggest that behavioural and thought manifestations in adult survivors of early bereavement indicate unresolved grief. They come to no definite conclusions, but stress the need for further research, using appropriate methodological controls. It is surprising to read that, discussing parental worries about dying, in one study none of the mothers in the control group expressed great anxiety about dying and leaving their children bereaved.

Mourning, ritual and recovery after an airline tragedy.

Katz P, Bartone P. *Omega* 1997/8; **36**(3): 193-200.

The crash of a chartered Army plane in Newfoundland, in 1985, resulted in the deaths of 248 soldiers from one battalion stationed in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, whose families all came from that region. This short article first discusses the value of mourning rituals and then describes how, in this particular instance, they made it possible for the families and colleagues of the dead soldiers to come to terms with their traumatic loss. The rituals which were carried out were numerous and elaborate, and it is believed that they helped the bereaved to accept the deaths, re-affirmed the solidarity of the community and enabled individuals and the community to re-establish a sense of control. BC

Sheila Hodges and John Bush

CORRECTION

Bereavement Care 1998; **17**(2): 32
The heading of the final abstract should not have read 'Sibling bereavement...' but 'Communities of feeling: the culture of bereaved parents. Riches G, Dawson P. *Mortality* 1966; **1**(2): 143-61'.

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