signify acceptance, even defeat, but her shoulders are still upright, braced back, and her hand is strong, stretched out and suddenly halted in some practical task or gesture of life. Only her head has suddenly dropped forward. She is no longer able to look at the child's face because of what she has seen there. The girl is no longer looking at her but through and beyond her. There is a remoteness in her look that goes deeper than resignation. Her remoteness transcends humanity, transcends her age. She is now past any stages of hoping, despairing or fretting. Munch has painted an unbearable moment of truth. In sickness the loss does not always come at the moment of death but at the time when the loved person moves out of the reach of our experience into the loneliness within themselves, and we who love them so much are left behind. No wonder the crowds in that Norwegian exhibition nurtured on sentimental 19th century versions of death bed scenes were shocked into screaming and hardly knew if they should laugh or cry. Nearly a hundred years later we are used to images of grim reality but are no better than they were at facing mortality, so this picture retains all its poignancy and power to shock us into a moment of stillness. BC

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COUNSELLING BEREAVED CHILDREN

The volcano of anger

AGE RANGE
six years +

An exercise to help children analyse, understand and manage anger

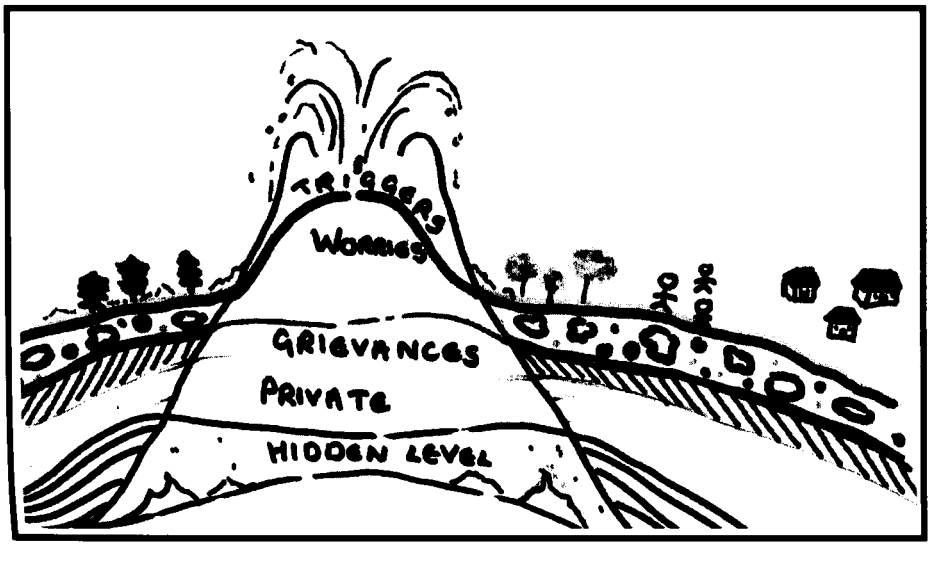
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Anger is an integral part of bereavement. It is a very intense, powerful state which has many sources. Its roots lie in the powerlessness we feel to effect change, to stop the illness progressing, to bring back the person who has died. It underpins the abandonment we feel at being left behind to suffer the pain of grief and to carry on living without the person who has died. A parent bereaved of a partner may feel anger at being left to bear the responsibilities of parenting alone. The child bereaved of a parent may feel anger at being left by the parent he had expected always to be there.

Anger is not a single emotion but a cluster of feelings and thoughts generated over a period of time. The complexity of the final state is often belied by the seeming simplicity of its appearance. The mood may have been building up for days or weeks and, like the spring which is gradually tightened, turn by single turn, it is the final twist of the key which snaps the wire, releasing its coiled energy as it unravels and lashes out at everything around it. All we see is the outburst of rage because the rest of the process has been hidden from view.

An additional complication lies in the fact that anger is the one emotion which culturally is least tolerated, and most readily condemned. It is considered to be a dangerous state, one which threatens stability and order and consequently must be either suppressed or punished. We attach pejorative labels to its manifestations, describing angry children as having tantrums or being naughty, angry teenagers as anti-social or delinquent and so on. Because we see only the end result, the lashing out, we are much readier to judge than to understand.

The challenge when working with angry children is to help them to analyse the process and, through understanding, gain mastery over its effects. This requires a degree of abstract thought not usually found in children younger than six or seven years and even then the concepts need to be helped along with concrete explanations - which is why the volcano metaphor is so useful. It allows an analysis of the different sources, levels and intensities of anger and incorporates personal elements which help construct an understanding of the individual's unique experience. At first sight this may appear quite complicated but a picture-exercise makes it much simpler.



Constructing a volcano

I start with a simple volcano set in a cross section of the Earth's crust and encourage the child to draw the surrounding area, ensuring that there are some human figures in the overall landscape. I then describe how, when we are angry, we are like a volcano. There are some bits of ourselves which are so deep that we rarely see them but they are there, rumbling away in the bottom layer. There are other parts of ourselves which we can understand more easily and by understanding them we can see why we get angry and what it is that finally triggers off the outburst which causes us so much trouble.

The second level is for the experiences which the child knows about and cannot talk about right now but may choose to do so later. By acknowledging that there are some aspects of their condition which cannot be addressed at present, children are allowed to maintain their defences and exercise some control over the process. This is a critical element in the exercise.

The third level is for bereavement-related experiences, events in which the child feels their needs were either overlooked or ignored. Children will often hold grievances to themselves for may years, silenced by the imbalance of power in the adult-child relationship. It is when they are given permission to voice those grievances that we hear that they deeply resented not being allowed to visit Dad in hospital, or not being asked if they wanted to go to the funeral. There is nothing that can be done about them now that time has passed, but some of the injustice the child experienced can

be redressed by voicing feelings and having them heard. Although not a wholly cathartic experience, this can release some of the emotional tension associated with the event.

The fourth level is for bereavement-related worries and these may be continuing to have a powerful effect upon the child. For example, the child may be profoundly troubled by anxieties about the welfare of a surviving parent. This anxiety may be most apparent in an inability to tolerate unpredictable or extended separations, or be manifested in angry reunions when parents return home or come to collect children who have been waiting for them. What we see is a cross child who continues to be grumpy and fractious long after the time of the parent's return. In the circumstances it may appear quite reasonable either to reprimand children for moodiness or send them to their room. Unfortunately either of these responses only serve to increase the child's anxiety because the underlying cause has not been understood. The sequence of anxiety, inappropriate response and anger swiftly creates tensions the child is obliged to contain - and so the emotional pressure increases.

The final layer is for the experiences which trigger off the behaviour which has been defined as 'angry'. Maybe another child has said something relatively innocuous but, because the bereaved child is already having to contain so many other stressful thoughts and feelings, this otherwise unremarkable comment triggers off an eruption of anger. The angry response often far exceeds the event and can frighten both children by the intensity and level of the angry child's behaviour. It is at this point that the lava of anger boils to the surface and spills down the sides of the volcano, destroying everything in its path and making everyone around run away. In this way children can see that explosive anger drives people away, and isolates them at a time when they need more friends and support, rather than less.

By understanding the ways their anger has built up, children can begin to explore what they want to do about it. Some issues may, with help, need to be discussed with the parent; others the child may need to think through with a social worker or counsellor. There may be some things which children cannot look at and others which they want to think about for themselves. The volcano metaphor enables children to locate the different levels of their anger and emotional life and be helped to construct strategies to manage them.

Although I am here describing work with a child, the applications of this metaphor are unlimited by age and it is equally useful in working with teenagers and adults. The volcano image lends itself to analysis of the process and effects of anger, allowing the individual to explore the personal elements that go to make up this complex emotional state and then go on to construct ways of controlling the repercussions. BC

NEWS AND VIEWS

WELCOME

New Editor for *Bereavement Care*

In March this year, the Editors were pleased to welcome Martin Newman as a new member of the Editorial Board of *Bereavement Care*. Dr Newman is consultant and honorary senior lecturer in child and adolescent psychiatry with the South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust and Medical School.

His varied experience includes service as a medical officer with the Royal Navy in the Falklands, and a placement at the Traumatic Stress Clinic (London) which originally stimulated his interest in working with young people. Widely-published, he co-edited *Psychological Trauma* (London, UK: Gaskell, 1997) and has contributed a paper to *Bereavement Care*, 'Helping children after a traumatic bereavement' (1995; **14**[2]: 18,19).

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

Whilst I was interested to note your abstract of my article from *Mortality* in the Spring edition of *Bereavement Care* (1999; **18**[1]: 16), I was concerned to see that there were four significant errors in your text:

My name, which was given as McAllen J, is McLaren J;

Para 2, line 9: you quote 'emphatic understanding' whereas the article was concerned with empathic understanding, which is an entirely different concept;

Para 2, lines 2-3: your text states that I am 'a bereavement counsellor, though with no formal training'. What I state in the *Mortality* paper is, 'I believe I am at an advantage in not having trained as a bereavement counsellor' (p280, last para). The emphasis in this sentence is on bereavement which is obvious when placed in the context of the paper. I have, in fact, received extensive professional training over a 16-year period in counselling and psychotherapy.

Whilst I recognise an abstract cannot summarise all areas addressed in a paper, a substantial part of the *Mortality* paper argued that, in my experience, the bereavement counsellor works in a diverse way. In particular, I challenge Walter's assertion that the main purpose of the counselling process is 'the working through and resolution of feelings' (p285, para 3). In focusing upon whatever clients choose to bring to our sessions, I state that 'this may be feelings associated with their loss but equally, much of our time is spent addressing cognitive issues. Feelings and thoughts merge on a continuum' (p285, para 3). This was ignored in the abstract.

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We apologise to Jan McLaren for incorrectly printing her name and the word 'empathic', and for omitting part of the argument from her original paper. Eds.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Bullying, Suicide and Self-harm. 11 November, 1999. London, UK. Kidscape conference. Speakers include Michael Kerfoot, Richard Graham, John Coleman, Alison Hall, Alison Weisselberg. Apply to Lisa Flowers, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH. ☎ 0171 730 3300.

Children and Death. 5-8 September 1999. Bristol, UK. 4th international conference, chaired by Peter Fleming, with over 20 speakers. Details from EMAP Healthcare, Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7EJ. ☎ 0171 874 0294.

'Saying Goodbye?': Current issues in bereavement research and practice. 26 November 1999. Southampton, UK. Multidisciplinary day with lectures and workshops. Speakers: Tony Walter, Margaret Stroebe. Contact Jo Mai, Palliative Care Dept, Portsmouth HealthCare NHS Trust, c/o The Rowans, Purbrook Heath Road, Waterlooville, PO7 5RU. ☎ 01705 250001.

Challenges in Bereavement into the 21st Century. 4 September 1999. Manchester, UK. Manchester Bereavement Forum's 6th annual conference. Speakers include Colin Murray Parkes, Jack Morgan, Kevin Kendrick. Write to 362 Manchester Rd, Droylsden, Manchester M43 6QX. ☎ 0161 3718860.

Mole Conferences Events. London, UK.
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. 22 October 1999. Conference organised by Stuart Turner of Stress Studies UK.
Death and Dying: Facing grief. 8 November 1999. Training course with Lyn Franchino.
Gone but not Forgotten: The impact of past trauma in later life. 21 February 2000. Conference.
Suicide: The ultimate abuse. 29 March 2000. Conference.
Contact Mole Conferences, 26 Church Road, Brighton BN41 1LA. ☎ 01273 242634.