



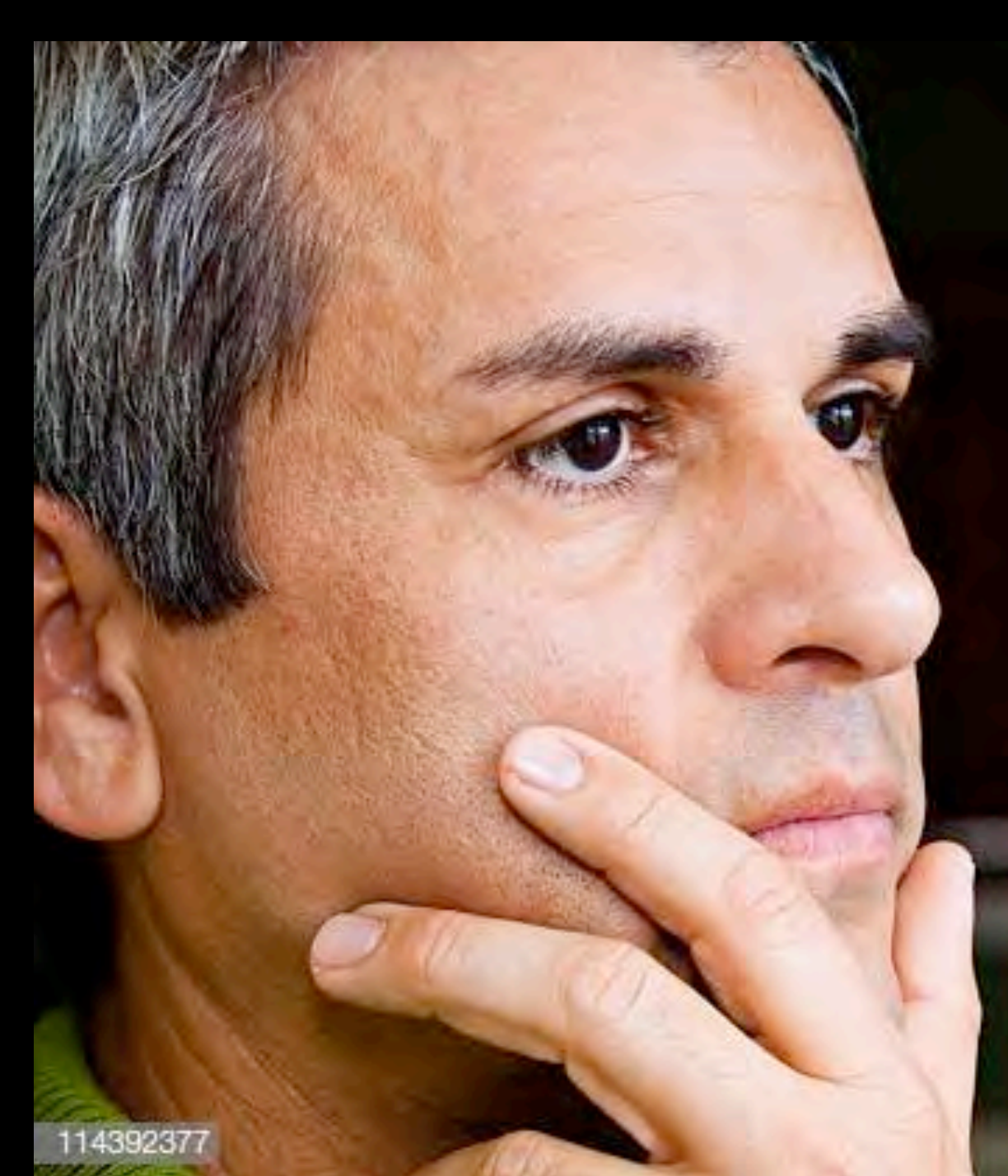
Posttraumatic Growth

Reconstructing the Self
In Bereavement

Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD



Portland Institute
For Loss and Transition



Your Absence

Your laughter was my laughter.

Your tears were my tears.

Your dream was my dream.

You left, and your laughter and your tears left.

Your dreams shattered, my dreams ended one day in Spring.

Today I recall your face and my soul aches and cries.

There's no warmth in my heart, nor hope in my life that comforts me
for your absence or that relieves the anguish
of living without your life.

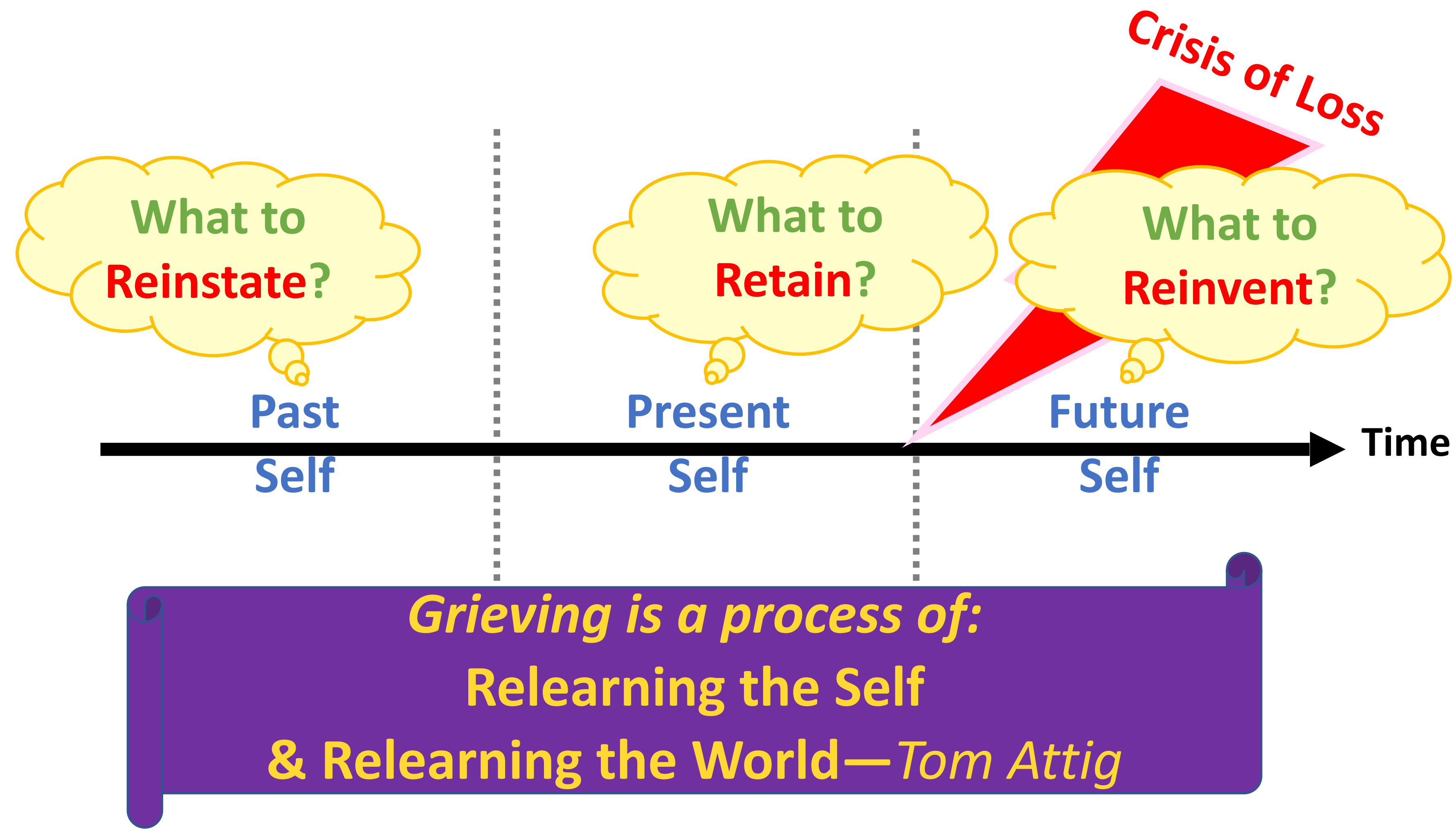


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“A significant loss can induce a “crisis of self” by disrupting its continuity because, after losing a significant relationship that once sustained one’s self-identity, mourners not only need to revise the event narrative of their life, but also review who they were before the loss, who they are now, and who they may become in the future.”

—Ng & Neimeyer

Identity Revision & Re-Authoring of Life Narratives (Turner, 2020)

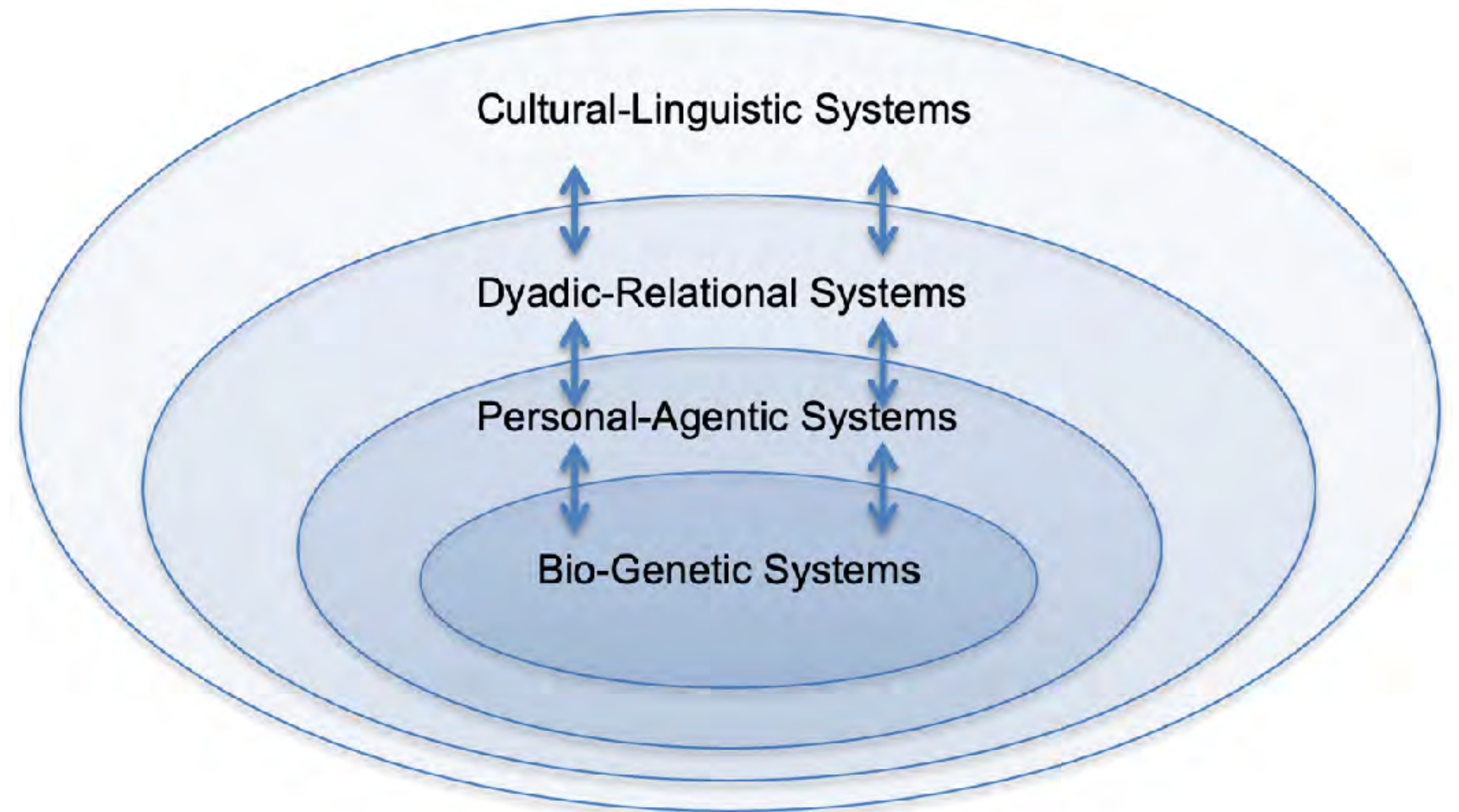


A Developmental Model of Grief

Neimeyer & Cacciatore, *Techniques of Grief Therapy: Assessment and Intervention*



- **Epigenetic:** Experience & behavior emerge through co-actions of multiple systems
- **Grieving** is a:
 - Situated
 - Interpretive
 - Communicative activity
- Proceeds through “**crises**” involving dialectical tension between two poles
- Moves from grief to growth



A Developmental Model of Grief

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Period	Time Frame	Crisis	Synthesis	Core Question	Meaning Priorities	Psychosocial Needs	Therapeutic Methods
Early Grief: <i>Reacting</i>	Weeks after loss	Connection vs. Isolation	Self-Acceptance	How and why did this happen?	Event Story of Loss: Safety, Trust, Survival	Empathic Listening, Identification, Compassion	Non-anxious presence, Emotion regulation, Containment
Middle Grief: <i>Reconstructing</i>	Months after loss	Security vs. Insecurity	Continuing Bond	Where do I locate my loved one?	Back Story of Relationship: Validation, Understanding, Rituals of remembrance	Audience for deceased person's stories, Permission to maintain bond	Memorialization, Legacy projects, Correspondence with deceased, Imaginal dialogue
Later Grief: <i>Reorienting</i>	Years after loss	Meaning vs. Meaninglessness	Posttraumatic Growth	Who am I now, and who am I becoming?	Personal Story of Identity: Self-reinvention, Altruism	Permission to change, Support for exploration	Self portraits, Directed journaling, Social action

Therapeutic Journaling: Making Sense of Loss



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- A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to write on a piece of paper. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the hand and the writing instrument. The overall tone is contemplative and focused.
- *Self immersion*
 - *Self regulation*
 - *Self distancing*
 - *Self transformation*

Re-writing the Self in Bereavement

Guidelines for Journaling

Focus on a difficult experience of death or loss

Ignore grammatical structure or spelling

Journal a minimum of 20 min./day

Construct conditions of safety

Explore emotional salience

Plan post-writing

transition

(Neimeyer, van Dyke & Pennebaker, Narrative Medicine)

Guidelines for Sense-Making

Lichtenthal & Neimeyer



- How did you make sense of the loss at the time? Now?
- What spiritual or philosophical beliefs contributed to your coping? How did they change, in turn?
- Are there ways this loss has affected your direction in life?

Guidelines for Benefit-Finding

Lichtenthal & Neimeyer



- Have you found any unsought gifts in grief? If so, what?

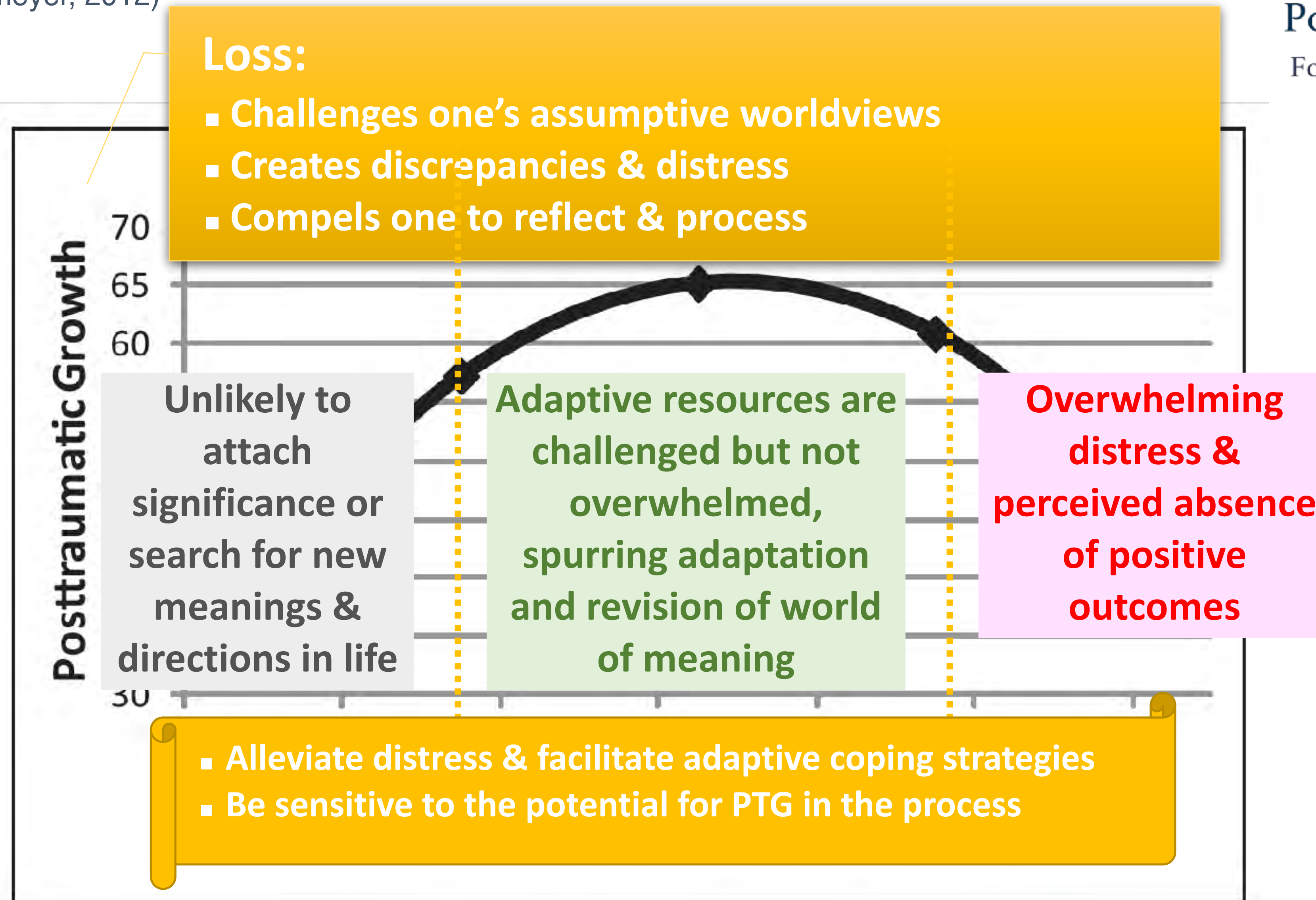
- How has this experience affected your sense of priorities?
- What qualities in you contribute to your resilience?
- Has this transition deepened your gratitude for anything you've been given? If so, how might you express it?

Loss as a Catalyst for Growth

(Currier, Holland & Neimeyer, 2012)



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AND BEREAVEMENT



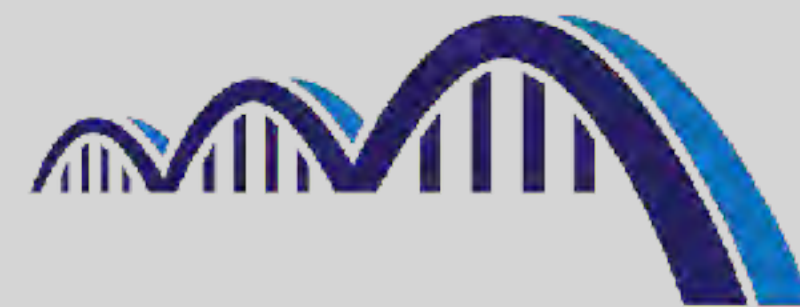
New Techniques of Grief Therapy

Bereavement and Beyond

Edited by Robert A. Neimeyer



Grief Toolbox



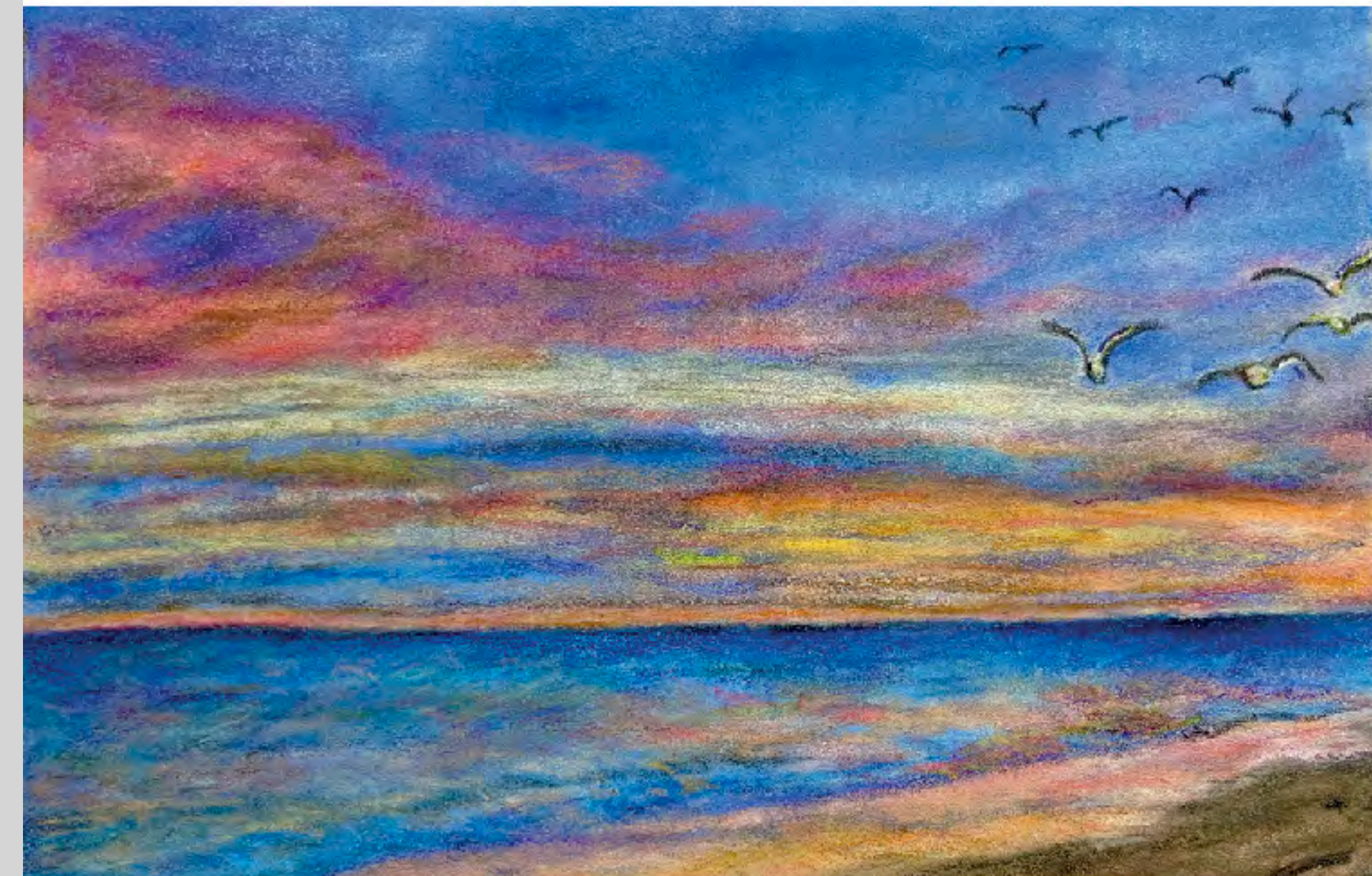
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LIVING BEYOND LOSS

Questions and Answers
about Grief and Bereavement



Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD



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