

Pat Sowa  
Starfish, Mental Wellbeing in Education

Bereavement Part 1  
Getting Ahead in your school or college  
community



## By the end of the hour we will ...



Have a core basic knowledge of grief and bereavement



Explore the possible implications of the Covid19



Share an Action Planning Framework to take away



Try to answer your questions

**Wherever there is change there is....**

*“...Loss is a universal experience...the reactions to that loss are as distinct and individual as you are.”*

*Dr Kenneth J. Doka, Grief is a Journey*

# Private Reflection

What losses have you personally experienced?

What helped?

What made it harder?

**Bereavement** *'The period of mourning after the loss of a loved one'*

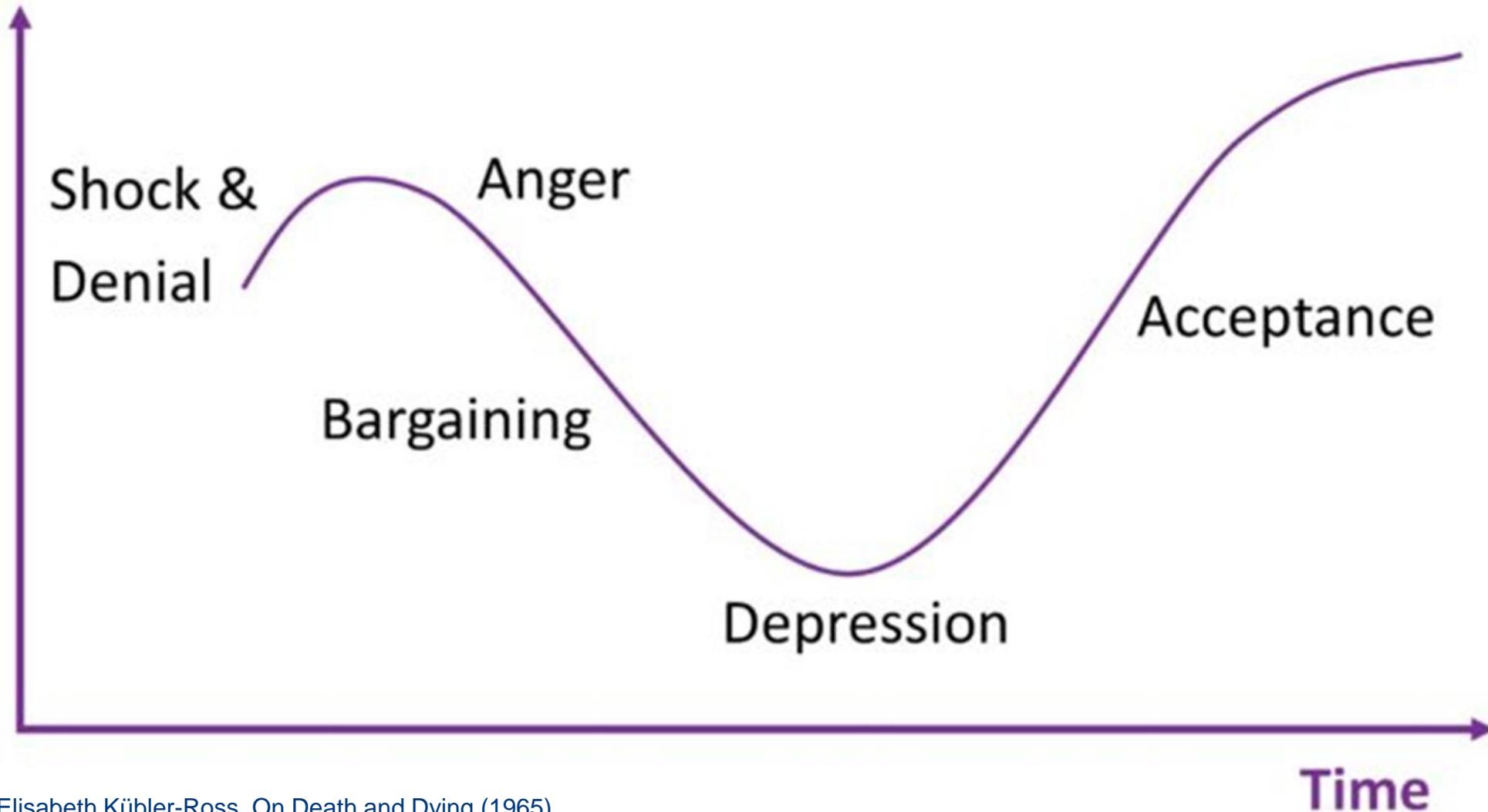
**Grief** *'The intense sadness that comes after losing someone or something precious'*

**Grief & bereavement are triggered by....**

Death of a loved one, death of pets and celebrities, moving house, changing jobs, moving schools, death of dreams, death of certainty, loss of optimism, failing an exam or interview, retirement, divorce, marriage, empty nest, finishing an intense project, losing your phone or photos

# Understanding Grief

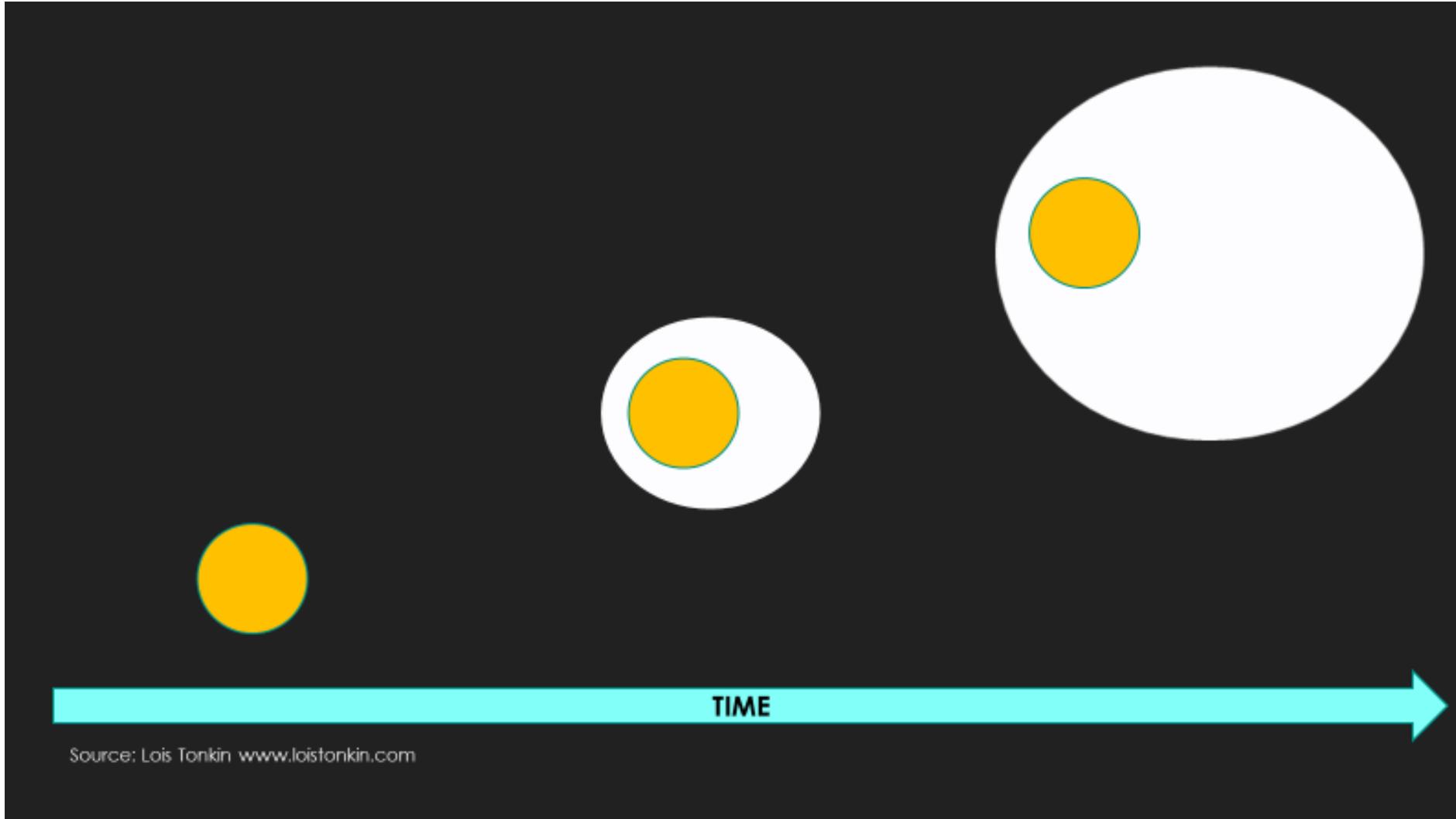
# Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Stages of Grief



Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, On Death and Dying (1965)



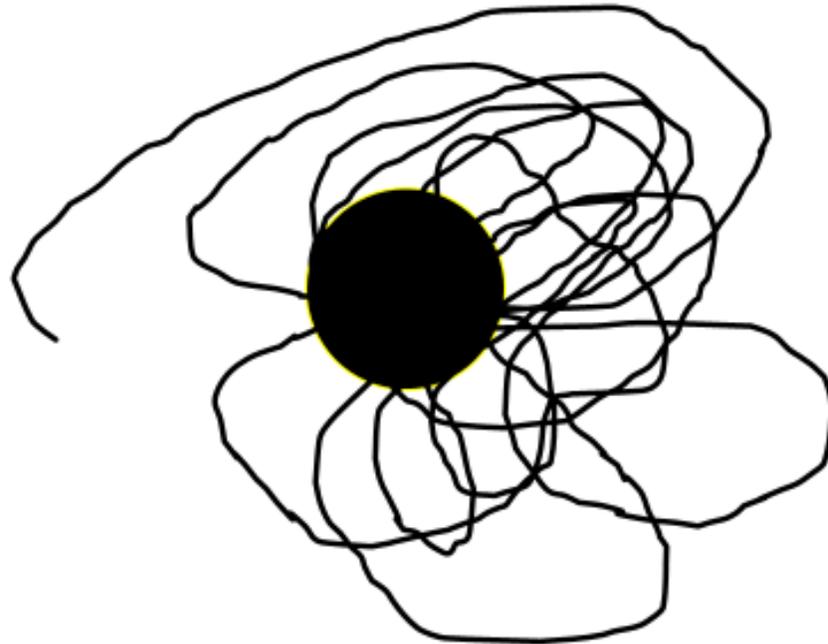
# The Fried Egg Model of Grief



## Useful bereavement theories

- Worden (1983) Three tasks of grieving: 1. Accept reality 2. Experience emotional pain 3. Adjust to new situation
- Stroebe & Schut (1999) Dual Process: oscillating between avoidance/future focus and focus on loss (in and out of grief)
- Klaas et al (1996) Continuing Bonds model. Gradual integration of past and present so that a changed relationship continues whilst new relationships can also develop/future focus increases

# My Personal Experience of Grief SO FAR



# Grief is influenced by beliefs, cultural context, age, cognitive development, social support networks



“I’m sorry for your trouble”

“Everything that has a beginning, has an ending. Make your peace with that and all will be well.”  
- The Buddha



‘Sorry business’

Life is for the living  
My Mum

“The seed of suffering in you may be strong, but don't wait until you have no more suffering before allowing yourself to be happy.”  
—— THICH NHAT HANH

Don't be dismayed at good-byes. A farewell is necessary before you can meet again. And meeting again, after moments or lifetimes, is certain for those who are friends.  
Richard Bach  
*Illusions, The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*

You have power over your **mind** - not **outside events**. Realize this, and you will find strength.  
- Marcus Aurelius



# Some common experiences of grief

## Behavioural/Cognitive

Shock, Loss of concentration  
Memory loss, Impaired thinking  
Idealization, Extraordinary Experiences  
Confusion  
Lashing out  
Staying in bed  
Hyper activity  
Zoning out/ appearing not to listen  
Crying  
Irritable  
Self-harm  
Over/under eating  
Hyper-Sensitive to criticism  
Self-focussed  
Over working  
Absence  
Lack of self-care  
Humour (overuse/'inappropriate')

**Keep goals/expectations reasonable**

## Physical

Fatigue  
Exhaustion  
Lack of focus  
Aches & pains  
Lethargy  
Sleep difficulties  
Stomach ache  
Headaches  
Nausea  
Reduced immune system  
Over-sensitivity to noise/smells/light  
Shortness of breath  
Tight throat/difficulty swallowing  
Panic attacks  
Living on adrenaline/nerves

**It's important to tend the physical too**

## Emotional/Spiritual

Anger  
Fear  
Worry  
Stress  
Sadness  
Guilt  
Loneliness  
Overwhelm  
Frustration  
Anxiety  
Numbness  
Love  
Yearning  
Self-absorbed (which can lead to lack of awareness of others' feelings)  
Relief/liberation (if relationship difficult or loved one was in pain)  
Doubts/changes in beliefs  
**Processing grief adds to the emotional range - doesn't replace it**

# The possible Implications of Covid19

1

## Impact in general

### Lockdown

Loss of normality

Fears of death

Loss of dreams/certainty

Different for everyone:  
home learning, enjoying  
family time/simple  
pleasures Vs. worries  
about future, money, lost  
learning time, abuse,  
neglect, poverty,  
addiction, illnesses of the  
body and mind

2

### Fear of contagion

Loss of contact with  
others

Physical withdrawal/lack  
of human touch

Bullying and stigma with  
having the illness

Disconnection/delay for  
the dying and grieving  
process

Rising anxiety,  
sleeplessness, obsessive  
thoughts, depression

Maybe harder to  
reconnect for some

3

### Re-emerging

All emerging from different  
experiences and at different  
rates

Some will have loved ones  
who have died, ones others  
not

Return may be bumpy/lumpy  
and not overnight

Coming out of home may  
cause anxiety about  
separation from home/family  
and proximity to others

Fear of lockdown being re-  
started/state of alert

Learning to live with  
uncertainty

**1**

## Impact on bereavement

### Intensity

- Sheer number of deaths reported
- Constant news
- Imagined suffering/graphic details
- Alone with sorrow/sadness
- Funerals small and not able to physically comfort each other or share memories
- Loss without warning/little warning
- Multiple losses in families

**2**

### Isolation

- Not able to say goodbye/be with a loved one
- Loss of contact with others in family/friend support network
- Physical withdrawal/lack of human touch
- Stigma from having or being linked to the illness
- One of many but a personal loss
- Disconnection from the reality of death – loss of rituals
- Initial shock and distress may not be well supported 'out of sight out of mind'
- Special status of key-workers
- If not a Covid death does it get recognised/supported?

**3**

### Delay

- Complex grief or delayed grief feelings
- Possible emotional contagion/hysteria if not given a channel/framework
- May not receive attention from others
- May not be able to raise their feelings without prompting
- May be expected to be 'over it'
- Confusion when feelings of sadness recur
- Survivor guilt
- National events out of own control timing/process

## A leader may offer

- **Safety** through structure, routines and human kindness
- **Hope** through purpose and wisdom
- **Support** through signposting and investing in resources
- **Perspective** through understanding and involving others
- **Skills** through building and sharing knowledge
- **Resilience** through sharing your own experience
- **Openness** through the courage to talk about grief and death as part of life
- ...

# Mental Health can be affected by bereavement



Our mental Health changes over time, day to day, week to week, year to year

## **Just because it's a normal experience doesn't mean we can't help as leaders in our community**

- 44% surveyed say mental health has suffered in the lockdown period
- Bereavement can trigger a mental health crisis

***By offering clear encouragement and a structure to ask for support, remember or talk to others we can make grieving a more hopeful and less distressing experience***

# Everybody needs somebody...

- Self
- Staff
- Pupils
- Families & Wider community
- *REMEMBER* culture/beliefs/individual and community context



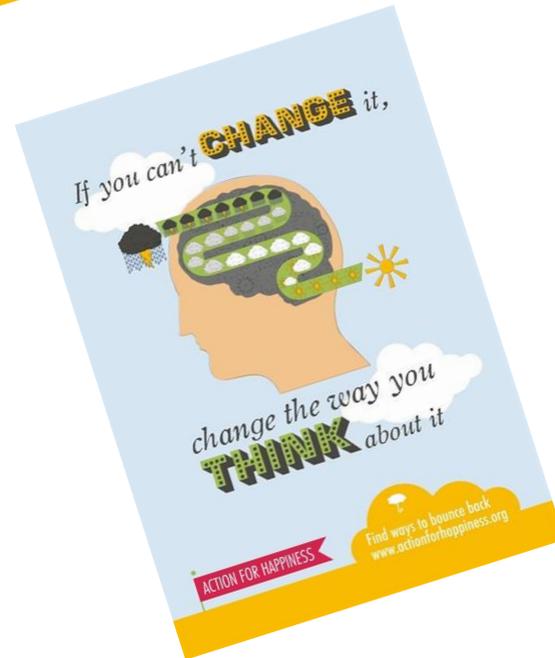
# GREAT DREAM

Ten keys to happier living

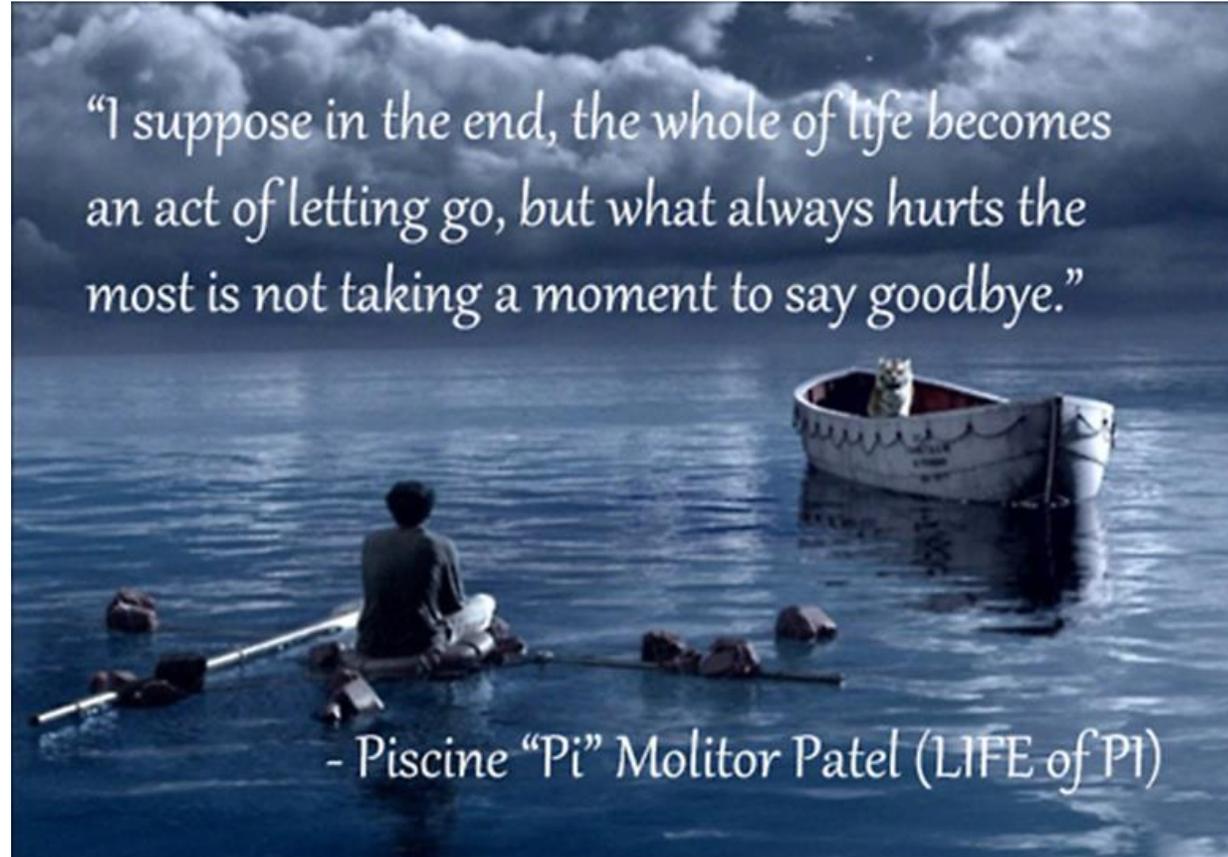
- GIVING**  Do things for others
- RELATING**  Connect with people
- EXERCISING**  Take care of your body
- AWARENESS**  Live life mindfully
- TRYING OUT**  Keep learning new things
  
- DIRECTION**  Have goals to look forward to
- RESILIENCE**  Find ways to bounce back
- EMOTIONS**  Look for what's good
- ACCEPTANCE**  Be comfortable with who you are
- MEANING**  Be part of something bigger

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

[www.actionforhappiness.org](http://www.actionforhappiness.org)



# It's a delicate balance between encouraging openness and respecting personal pace of grieving



*"I suppose in the end, the whole of life becomes an act of letting go, but what always hurts the most is not taking a moment to say goodbye."*

*- Piscine "Pi" Molitor Patel (LIFE of PI)*

# Action Planning Framework

Theme	Key Elements	Action Steps	By who? By when?	Resources needed
<b>Leadership Role</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What kind of role works best for you? <i>Play to your strengths</i></li> <li>2. What experience can you bring to the community to lead and keep a sense of safety and support?</li> <li>3. What additional expertise do you need to deliver support well?</li> </ol>			
<b>Steering Group</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How well-prepared are we?</li> <li>2. Do we need a steering group to accelerate preparations?</li> <li>3. Who needs to be on it?</li> </ol>			
<b>Staff Training/Current Resources</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How many trained staff do we have?</li> <li>2. What additional experts can we draw on?</li> <li>3. Do we need further training?</li> </ol>			

Theme	Key Elements	Action Steps	By who? By when?	Resources needed
<b>Policy Review &amp; update in Covid context</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which policies do we need to review in light of Covid context? – see list below</li> <li>2. Do we have a specific Bereavement Policy and protocol to support a family who lose a child or parent?</li> <li>3. Do we have a specific policy and protocol for supporting a member of staff and their family?</li> </ol> <p>Student policies: Critical Incident, Pupil safeguarding, pastoral care, pupil wellbeing, behaviour &amp; relationships</p> <p>Staff Policies: Sickness, Bereavement, Compassionate Leave, Staff Wellbeing</p>			
<b>Communications</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do we have a clear communications plan for staff or pupil death?</li> <li>2. Do we have an out of hours and emergency plan?</li> <li>3. Do our plans take into account social distancing, lockdown and unique circumstances of Covid crisis for deaths student, family and staff member or their family)?</li> </ol>			

Theme	Key Elements	Action Steps	By who? By when?	Resources needed
<b>Recording Information</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do we have a way of recording information so that it gets passed on (including statutory reporting if relevant)</li> <li>2. Do we have a way of having a consistent way of raising concerns?</li> <li>3. Do we have a way of making sure key dates/anniversaries are remembered/recognised?</li> </ol>			
<b>Managing transitions (including return after lockdown)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have we got a plan for finding out who is bereaved during lockdown?</li> <li>2. Have we included a sensitive question in change of setting information?</li> <li>3. Have we got a process for handing it on when students move on?</li> </ol>			
<b>Governors</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do Governors need bereavement training?</li> <li>2. How can Governors support SLT – do we have any Governors with relevant expertise?</li> <li>3. Do we have a protocol for the death of a Governor and supporting their family/them as a group?</li> </ol>			

Theme	Key Elements	Action Steps	By who? By when?	Resources needed
<b>Additional Support</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What additional expert counselling/mental health support do we have access to?</li> <li>2. Do we have an up to date list of sources e.g. websites/local support groups</li> <li>3. Do we have self-run support groups for pupils/staff?</li> </ol>			
<b>Looking after yourself</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where will your own support come from?</li> <li>2. What will you find most challenging around bereavement?</li> <li>3. What will help you most?</li> </ol>			

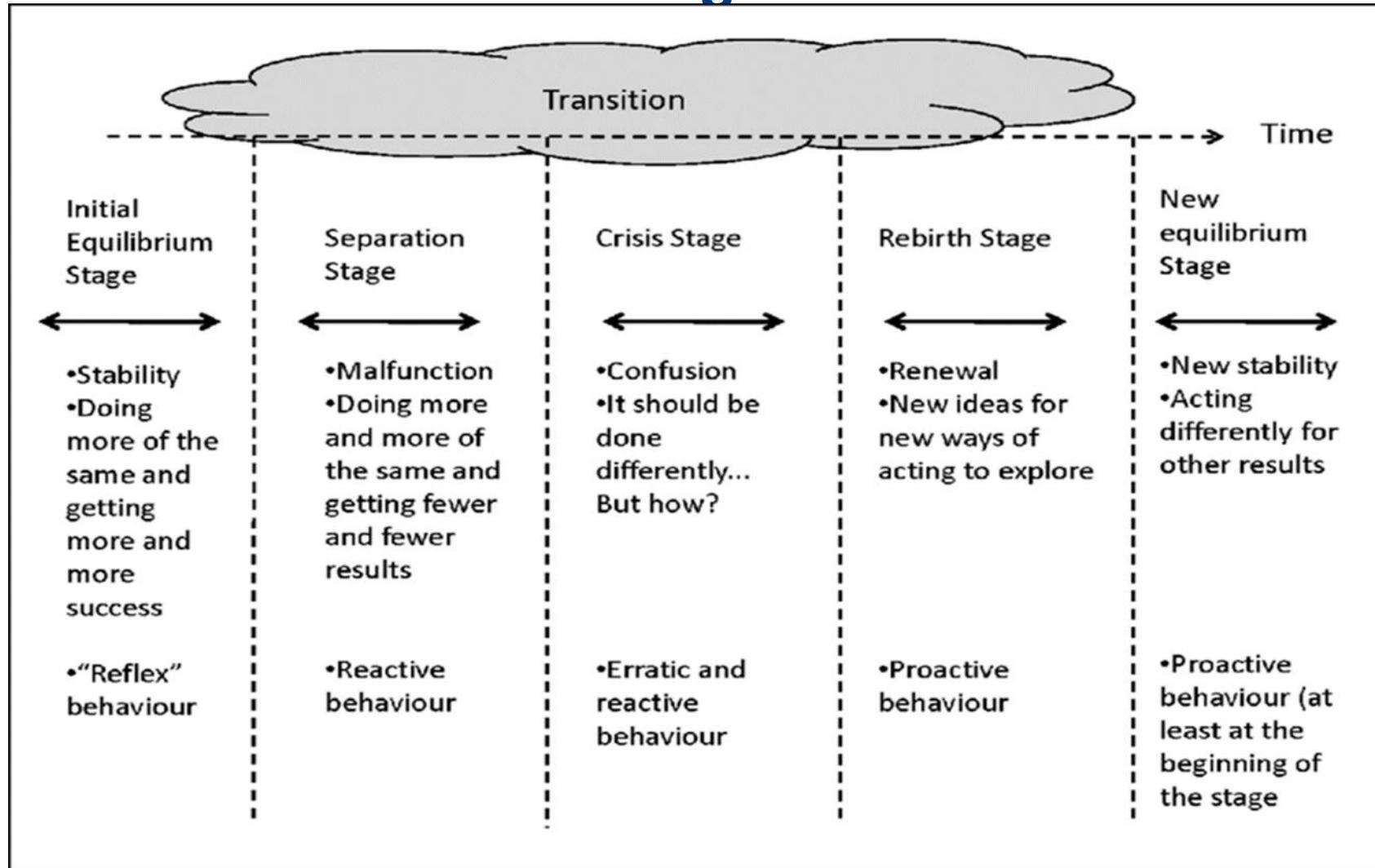


Robert Macfarlane  
@RobGMacfarlane

Word of the Day: "hleów-feðer" - "a sheltering wing" (Old English, literally "shelter-feather"); an arm placed in protection around another; one who keeps another safe, who stands to windward to take the gale's force, to make a lee.



# Applying grief processes to change can help us manage The Great Revival/Return to in school learning



Nortier, 1995, Five phases of transition

# Covid Context to take into account

- **Unable to visit** /be by side of someone at the time of death → possible unresolved grief/things left unsaid/additional guilt/imagined suffering leading to traumatic memories
- **Unable to follow comforting rituals** important for the grieving process or make physical contact with others at funeral → need to create different ways to remember and honour lives
- **One of many deaths** → feel like their loved one is being ignored ‘just a statistic;’ can lead to resentment/anger directed at carers or others
- **Constant news/public memorials** → lack of control of how grief is processed and when
- **Scale of deaths** → risk of overwhelm of emotions and resources for those in supporting roles meaning individuals do not get support/feel they cannot ask for it
- **If not a Covid death** may feel (or actually be) overlooked or minimized → risk of resentment or shame at needing help
- **May have multiple deaths** in one close community or family → hard to look after each other when dealing with own grief

## Covid Context to take into account

- **Survivor guilt** → may not feel able to ask for support/succeed in life, or over-compensation of living up to a promise
- **Key-worker status** may give rise to resentment from others or differential treatment of loss → be aware that all death is painful
- **Fears of Covid contagion** may lead to bullying → brief staff to be alert
- Return to setting may **risk a hysterical response** if there are several bereavements in the community → setting needs to channel and direct emotional responses during lockdown (and especially social media)
- Some **national or regional moments of remembrance** may be planned → settings can take lead from these and get involved
- **News or chatter** about the topic may trigger individual grief responses → need to provide places of respite either in real world or via virtual spaces
- **Implications for leaders** → need to be ahead of organizing resources and responses rather than waiting for return to school. Many are living with bereavement currently so virtual learning needs to include access to mentoring and support for those dealing with this and other mental ill-health symptoms