

Editorial

The field of loss and grief has developed substantially since the 1970s. New knowledge includes recognition of the ways in which multiple life events can involve loss and grief; the inadequacy of stage-based models and the importance of more nuanced understandings of the complexity and unique nature of grieving processes; the need for a holistic and flexible perspective; the place of meaning-making; and the potential for post-traumatic growth following major loss. Despite the illuminating and powerful therapeutic guidance they offer, these new insights have been disappointingly slow to permeate both our professional and wider communities. The first two articles in this issue, however, contribute to bridging this gap by presenting perspectives on therapeutic practice in the addictions field, the first specifically in relation to loss and grief, and the second focusing on considerations of spirituality and its place in therapeutic work in addiction and trauma—which is integrally related to loss and grief.

In the first article, Peter Huggard and Karen Himiona raise awareness of the significance of loss and grief in the context of addictions, presenting and discussing the results of a systematic literature review which examined existing research on this subject. As a senior therapist in a community alcohol and drug service, Karen Himiona became aware of the lack of attention given to experiences of loss and grief in the addiction field, despite the ways in which loss and grief could contribute to the development of addictions and could also be factors in the struggles associated with the recovery process. As well as exploring the question of the relationship between loss, grief, and substance abuse, questions that guided the literature review included whether addressing loss and grief in alcohol and other drug (AOD) counselling helps reduce the harms of substance abuse or relapse, and what interventions have been found to assist AOD clinicians in working with grieving clients. This article will be of interest not only to practitioners and researchers in the addictions field but also to readers working across diverse contexts, whose clients may be struggling with substance use that could be a coping mechanism for unacknowledged loss and trauma.

The second article presents the voices of experienced mental health professionals, including counsellors and psychotherapists, working with clients with alcohol and

substance addictions, who met regularly as an interest group to explore the significance of spirituality for their clients and share ideas about ways of incorporating this in their practice. The dominance of the medical model in addictions work tended to inhibit the open acknowledgement and discussion of spirituality in the professional lives of most of these practitioners. In the collegial safety of the group, however, they shared their experiences and observations about the significance of spirituality for themselves as well as for their clients. They also perceived the development of addiction as an outcome of clients' attempts to cope with the effects of trauma in their lives—corresponding with similar views about loss and grief in the previous article. In this instance, spirituality is identified as a possible pathway to renewed meaning and healing.

While this article will be particularly interesting to readers working in the addictions field, like the first it also speaks to a wider audience: to practitioners interested in spirituality as well as the effects of traumatic loss in clients' lives, and the implications for our work with them. In addition, the deeply reflective discussion group this article depicts, facilitated by author Peter Bray, could serve as an example for others of collaborative professional development undertaken around a topic of common interest, fostering professional growth in an environment of personal support.

The next two articles report the results of research undertaken into aspects of agency-based practice and training. The value and importance of accurate record-keeping by counselling agencies, and the use of such information for self-reflection, are underscored by the insights gained from research by Robert Manthei into the services provided by two counselling agencies. In a study based on a notably large sample, he analysed data from three sources involving the two agencies, more than 5,500 clients who had completed their counselling over nine years, and 65 counsellors. While these numbers may seem daunting, as may the very idea of undertaking research into one's own or one's agency's practices, the author makes the essential point that the methods for gathering the information used were "simple, straightforward, and within the means of any counselling agency that keeps records on all new clients and completed counselling relationships." Such information is vital for obtaining a clear picture of how counselling services are functioning, for seeing patterns that are occurring in the delivery of services, for identifying any aspects of concern, and for well-informed decision making in determining policies and future developments. Robert Manthei also discusses the implications of the key results obtained from this study, not only for the agencies involved but for others as well.

The final article, by the Research Unit at Lifeline Aotearoa, presents the results of research into the effectiveness of the One Model Foundation Training for 24/7 helpline volunteer telephone counsellors. Kirkpatrick's Four Levels evaluation model was used in this study, which demonstrated the trainees' satisfaction with the programme in terms of both effectiveness and quality. The training improved their knowledge and awareness regarding interventions for use on the helplines, and most trainees were able to apply their learning in practice. This evaluation also revealed some difficulties for trainees in working on the telephones, valuable information for those overseeing the training and supervising the helpline counsellors.

The development of the Research Unit at Lifeline Aotearoa and the work they have undertaken under Christine Yang Dong's leadership have been commendable and could serve as a model for other agencies. It is regrettable that this research unit has been disbanded as part of the retrenchment at Lifeline Aotearoa, when the survival of this long-established and well-regarded agency was uncertain.

Margaret Agee and Philip Culbertson

Editors