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THE CHINESE BRUSH STROKE EXPERIENCE IN BEREAVEMENT
COUNSELING

A DISSERTATION

Submitted by

GRACE PUI-YAN KWAN

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Expressive Therapies

LESLEY UNIVERSITY
November 25, 2011

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this publication to my late parents, Pastor and Mrs. K. S. Kwan, who have been my role-models for hard work, perseverance, and personal sacrifice. Being educators themselves, they always emphasized the importance of education and had confidence and pride in me in reaching higher goals throughout their lives. Without their knowledge, wisdom, and guidance, I would not have my goals to strive and be the best to reach my dreams. Thank you for your unconditioned love and support and giving me a chance to prove and improve myself through my life journey. I am so honored to have you as my parents.

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Toward the end of this long learning journey, I would like to thank God for His protection and granted wisdom.

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ABSTRACT

In the field of expressive therapies, there are different techniques to help bereaved people to better cope with their losses (e.g., Attig, 2000; Thompson, 2003; Gullledge, 2003; Rogers, 2007; Chandler, 2007). Among various expressive arts techniques, Chinese calligraphy has been used as a therapeutic intervention for behavioral, emotional, and mental health issues (Kao, 1991; Chen, 2003). However, there is no research on using Chinese brushstroke techniques in working with people who have experienced losses. This research focuses on the experience of practicing Chinese brushstroke technique as an expressive therapeutic approach to work with seniors in expressing their feelings toward the lost of a loved one.

Six participants with recent loss of a loved one, aged 78 to 94, from the Hebrew Senior Life Rehabilitation Center in Boston, Massachusetts were recruited for this study. The participants attended six sessions of workshop with one and a half hour each. The workshop focused on the application of the Chinese brush stroke techniques in forms of painting and calligraphy as therapeutic intervention for coping with the loss of their loved ones.

In this paper, meaning making, continuing bonds with the deceased loved one, and maintaining balance have been identified among many contributing factors to healthy bereavement coping. Practicing Chinese brush strokes techniques in forms of painting and calligraphy appeared to be helpful in promoting these factors.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Gift of Choice

I came into this world without being asked

And when the time for dying comes

I shall not be consulted;

But between the boundaries of birth and death

Lies the Dominion of Choice;

To be a doer or a dreamer,

To be a lifter or a leaner,

To speak out or remain silent,

To extend a hand in friendship

Or to look the other way;

To feel the suffering of others

Or to be callous and insensitive.

These are the choices

It is in the choosing

That my measure as a person

Is Determined.

—Gertrude Hildreth Housman

This research focuses on the experience of practicing Chinese brushstroke technique as an expressive therapeutic approach with seniors who have recently lost a loved one. My interest in bereavement counseling evolved when I was working as a bereavement counselor in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a hybrid of Eastern and Western cultures. Because Hong Kong was a British colony for over one hundred years, people experienced both modern and traditional ways of living. In some aspects, Western influences are much stronger than the traditional beliefs, as evidenced by the tendency of most medical and nursing professionals, who are greatly influenced by Western training and practice, to overlook the value of holistic healing that originated in the East. On the other hand, Chinese are relatively conservative people. They usually deal with their concerns with families and close kin. The idea of seeking help from an outsider is foreign, although this is beginning to change.

In Hong Kong, I came to believe that the idea of applying Eastern philosophy into Western therapy is both applicable and appropriate. I wondered about the role of Eastern culture in dealing with emotional issues, especially those related to loss, death, and dying. My interest in applying Chinese brushstroke techniques in supporting better bereavement coping was inspired by a series of videos for the Body-Brush project (Ip, Young, & Tang, 2002), which was initiated by the departments of Computer Science, Centre for Innovative Applications of Internet and Multimedia Technologies, and the Research Centre for Media Technology of the City University of Hong Kong. The concept merged art and the technology of computer vision to create a human-computer interface that transforms body gestures into 3-D paintings. This innovation captures and records

body movements and then translates those movements into a virtual canvas filled with 3-D color-path strokes.

In 2003, the creative minds behind the Body-Brush invited Hong Kong's art therapists to explore the possibility of applying this technique in therapeutic settings. This resulted in some therapists beginning to incorporate the Body-Brush technique in their therapy for emotionally and physically abused children. The therapeutic application of this invention has the potential to be further explored in many areas of mental health services, such as in the treatment for depression and secondary trauma and in bereavement counseling.

Watching a therapist use the Body-Brush technique, I became intrigued about the efficacy of similar techniques. I wanted to explore how the movements of a body part (i.e. the hand) aid the expression of grief as well as in coping with bereavement. In particular, I wanted to study how practicing the Chinese brush in painting and calligraphy might relate to healthy bereavement.

Another reason I chose the Chinese brush as the medium in this research study is that the tool carries some cultural meanings. Chinese calligraphy is one form of Chinese brush techniques, and this is often found in tombstones as epitaphs telling the stories of the deceased (Wo, 2004). These carvings were done in order to let people know about the persons and to maintain their legacy. In practicing with the Chinese brush, I was hoping to connect the participants with this cultural connotation in two ways. I wanted to help the bereaved 1) to better express their feelings of loss and 2) to honor the deceased and carry on their legacy.

In the field of expressive therapies, many use different techniques to help the bereaved to better express their feelings of the loss (e.g. Attig, 2000; Thompson, 2003; Gullledge, 2003; Rogers, 2007; Chandler, 2007). Among various therapeutic expressive arts interventions, Chinese calligraphy has been used as an intervention for behavioral, emotional, and mental health issues (Kao, 1991; Chen, 2003). However, there has yet to be a research done on using Chinese brushstroke techniques in working with people who have experienced loss. In light of this, I wanted to introduce a tool that would bridge the East and the West. I wanted to explore how practicing Chinese brushstrokes, in particular, aid in the grieving process.

Rationale

My personal experience of losing both of my parents and my grieving experiences marked a significant pathway of confirming this research study. In order to further experience the therapeutic effect of brushstroke techniques, I decided to take lessons in Chinese brush painting and resumed Chinese calligraphy, which I worked on weekly for a year after my father passed away in 2006.

Although practicing Chinese calligraphy was somewhat familiar to me, I discovered many new things during the process. It helped me realize and articulate the unexpressed feelings toward the losing of my parents. For example, I remember during the first few months after my mother died, there were many times I “saw” her walking on the street. To be more accurate, I saw a woman who looked very much like my mother—her hairstyle, her dress, her body shape reminded me of my mother. I was extremely

thrilled to see her. I almost ran toward her and gave her a big hug. I wanted to tell her that I loved and missed her very much. On the very next second, I realized that it was not her. She had died, it could not be her. The void and regret were enormous. I dreamed of my father sitting on a rocking chair looking very happy and contented. In the dream, he told me that he was with my mother and they were both happy. Although they missed me dearly, it was their time to go, so they had to go. They told me that they loved me very much and that love would stay with me so long as I lived.

I believe these images reflected symbolically and metaphorically the situations around the death of my parents, showing what was missing from me and what I was longing for after they had passed away. I was not able to say good-bye to my mother, and I did not want it to end just like that. Thus, I was there trying to reconnect, and seeing her on the street gave me another chance to continue the bonds with her. As for my father, I felt guilty and blamed myself for not being there for him when he needed me. Of course, it was beyond my control how long he lived. I was trying to make sense of what happened. It was time for them to go, and no one could change that. As far as I was concerned, my parents lived happily together, which was more important than me having them here even as they were suffering. This realization offered me some relief, and I was finally able to get closure on their passing. It has been a personal journey as well as a meaning making and maintaining bonds process for me.

I realized that the feelings and emotions associated with losing a loved one are universal. Practicing the Chinese brushstrokes and Chinese calligraphy helped me to better cope with losing my parents. I would like to further utilize this medium and its pertinent skills to help others who have similar experiences. The focus of this research,

therefore, is applying the Chinese brush techniques to the endeavor of acquiring better coping skills and experiencing a healthy bereavement.

Perhaps as a way of giving back and honoring my parents, I chose to work with the elderly. Therefore, I began working as a volunteer at the Hebrew Senior Life Rehabilitation Center (HRC) in 2009. My experience inspired me to conduct this research, so I could better determine what indeed could be beneficial in working with the elderly. Thus I proposed to do my research study there.

My close encounters with a group of older people made me realize that very often older people are regarded as frail, and they are valued less. People tend to overlook their psychological and emotional needs, especially in a time of bereavement. The assumption is that older people have experienced loss so much they should not be impacted as much by it as supposed to younger people (Thompson, Gallagher-Thompson, Futterman, Gilewski, & Peterson, 1991). I felt they also have needs to be understood and listened to. They too deserved a voice and a chance to share their stories. I wanted to honor this group of people who have served society and yet get very little attention paid to their emotional needs in their twilight years.

Another reason why Chinese brush techniques apply to working with older people is that it could work well with older people's learning style and preferences. The concreteness and order of each stroke in calligraphic writing could provide a structured learning mode for this age group. The visual and hands-on learning experience in handling the medium could also fit well with their way of learning. According to Kuznar, Falciglia, Wood, and Frankel (1991), older adults prefer some kind of a routine and structured learning setting with simple, comprehensible goals and simple materials. They

further explain that older people learn better with visual materials and oral presentation, as well as activities that encourage hands-on manipulation. Theis and Merritt (1992, 1994) concur that old-aged clients prefer “structure, organized and well-defined arrangements, and detailed instructions about learning requirements” (p. 679). They state that older adults desire structure and detailed information about what is to be learned and how to learn it. They also claim that older people show better learning results with the aid of visual materials. Wenzel-Miller (1996) states that older adults tend to decline in abstract activities; thus practical learning seems to be more helpful with this population.

Being born and raised in Hong Kong, I have been mainly influenced by the Eastern culture though I was educated in the United States in my adult years, which accounts for why most of my knowledge of different bereavement counseling models is anchored on Western theories and practices. Hong Kong, a British colony for over a century, is a bridge, linking two worlds by retaining the traditions of the East on one hand and recognizing the modern developments of the West on the other. I hope, with my research, to have been able to bridge two experiences from both sides and therefore offer an approach that will better serve the East and the West.

In the literature review section, I will discuss in detail the categories of grief; approaches to bereavement; elements of healthy bereavement (meaning making, continuing bond, and maintaining balance); bereavement and elders; use of expressive therapies to help the bereaved; kinesthetic and sensory experiences in the art-making process; art with seniors; Chinese brushstrokes/calligraphy; Chinese brushstrokes in relation to meaning making, continuing bond, and maintaining balance; clinical

application of the brushstroke techniques/calligraphy; and Chinese view on death and bereavement.

This leads to the research question:

How might the application of Chinese brushstrokes support the dynamic nature of the change of the three elements of bereavement (meaning making, continuing bonds with the deceased loved ones, and maintaining balance) that will lead to healthy grieving for normal elders?

Sociocultural Background and Personal Competency and Bias

Henderson, Spigner-Littles, and Milhouse (2006) claim that “we are all prejudiced for or against other people; it is behaviors, not attitudes that comprise the major intergroup problems confronting us” (p. 22). They further explain that no matter how much we believe we treat all people the same, we do not treat people the same; this is even true among most of the well-educated professional helpers. As a counselor, it is important to be aware of my own bias and to be multiculturally competent.

According to Fuertes and Ponterotto (2003), multicultural competency is defined as “The counselor’s ability to integrate theoretical and technical approach to assessment and intervention relevant human diversity factors that are important to the process and successful outcome of therapy” (Fuertes & Ponterotto, 2003, p. 52). The ability to identify and make use of these factors in the counseling process is essential to the therapist, the counselee, and the therapeutic relationship.

As a Chinese growing up in a relatively traditional cultural background, there is a hidden standard to all of us in terms of maintaining “filial piety.” This is an unquestioning respect for and deference to parents and authority. Each individual is expected to comply with familial and community authority. We are taught to respect authority and maintain filial piety toward our parents and ancestors regardless. I remember my mother used to tell me that “parents are always right.” Although I disagreed with the concept, I did not argue with her because I knew I was always “wrong” whenever I disagreed with her. Furthermore, individual achievement is pursued in order to enhance the family name, and therefore, any noncompliance to these norms would induce feelings of guilt and shame. We are also taught to avoid calling attention to ourselves; therefore, I tend to be more likely to remain silent in public settings. Likewise, in the Christian beliefs that I was raised on, God and the church always come before the congregation. Growing up as a Christian, my mother often instilled in me the thought that I should sacrifice myself to serve the Lord and others. Therefore, I learned to devalue myself and suppress my feelings at a very young age. My own beliefs integrate a mixture of Eastern and Western philosophies. The training and exposure in the United States have resulted in the adoption of a more individualistic way of thinking. However, the fact that I grew up in a relatively conservative Christian community has secured within me collectivist values. Sometimes I struggle with placing myself between these value systems, especially when I worked with clients who experienced similar struggles of weighing between the family and individual needs.

The Chinese culture has been considered a collectivistic society. In her research, Li (2004) states that Western belief molds children to become independent individuals

and personal uniqueness and autonomy are more emphasized in the West. The Chinese belief system seems to mold children to become obedient and socially sensitive individuals. Morality, virtue, and adult guidance are more emphasized in Chinese culture. Traditionally, Chinese people value men over women. In many cases, possessions are passed along to men or firstborn sons. Chinese society still largely believes that marriage is the ultimate goal for women. Although I have nothing against marriage or raising a family, I do not believe it should be my ultimate goal. Therefore, I paid extra attention to my responses when related topics came up.

Coming from a traditional Chinese cultural background, I was used to seeing people being more reserved with their expressions and their ways of dealing with grief. This has affected my reactions to people with different responses to so-called normal grief. It was therefore necessary to pay attention to my reactions and responses when I worked with people from a different culture. I was aware that my responses might affect my views in leading the workshop and when I analyzed the data. I needed to be aware that different people might hold different values and look at things with different perspectives. As a counselor and facilitator of the workshops, I needed to be aware of my own cultural perspectives and how they shaped my personal biases and limitations, which might affect my reactions or responses to different participants.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter discusses the general and commonly observed grieving responses of bereaved people and will address the different models of bereavement approaches that help the bereaved to cope with their losses. Followed are the three elements that I identified for of healthy bereavement coping: meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance. Since this research was done with a group of elderly, a section on bereavement with the elders will be discussed. The main intervention used in this research was the application of the Chinese brushstroke techniques as an expressive therapy tool. Use of expressive arts therapies in helping with grief and loss is also reviewed. The process of art making aroused the different senses of the participants, therefore, a section on the kinesthetic and sensory experiences in art making as well as a section on arts therapy with the elderly will be discussed. For the purpose of the readers, the history and origin of Chinese brushstroke/calligraphy will be addressed. I will then talk about the Chinese brushstroke/calligraphy in relation to meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance as well as the therapeutic use of Chinese calligraphy. Lastly, for reference purposes, a discussion of the Chinese views on death and bereavement will be included.

Bereavement is a painful experience. The loss of a significant loved one can bring on a wide range of responses from the bereaved, such as intense preoccupation with the image of the deceased (Bowlby and Parkes, 1970), hypersensitivity, increased dependency, avoidance of or withdrawal from social interactions, a general loss of

interest in things, diminished self-esteem, and inability to maintain good relationships with friends and relatives (Parkes, 1972, 1987, 1996). Others may suffer from depression, feelings of hopelessness, and show indifference, suicidal ideations, and overwhelmed by the feeling of being unable to continue without the deceased (Sideman, 2005).

Research shows that the ability to make meaning of the death of a loved one, continuing a bond with the deceased, and maintaining balance in one's life are all correlated to healthy bereavement (Neimeyer, 2001; Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Worden, 1996).

There is an extensive literature on grief and bereavement, many of which focus on the nature of grief and provide guidelines for coping with it (e.g. Worden, 1996; Stroebe & Schut, 2001). Expressive arts therapists have used different forms of creative arts to help people deal with their loss. These forms include multi-models, combination of movement, visual, writing, and dialogues (Thompson, 2003), song writing (Skewes & Erdonmez-Groce, 2000), creative writing (Davis, 1999; Rogers, 2007), poetry (Bertman, 1999), dance and movement (Gulledge, 2003), drawing and painting (Gamino, 1999; Stillion, 1999), touch drawing (Koff-chapin, McIntyre, & Koeleman, 2007), sculpting (Fried, 1999), storytelling (Gersie, 1991; Moore, Waksh, Wayman, & Allport, 2007), letters or diaries (Attig, 2000), music (Bailey, 1999; Forsyth, 1999; Burgess, 2007), visual images (Sherebrin, 1999; Rogers, 2007); drama (Chandler, 2007), and guided imagery (Cadrin, 2005-2006). Art therapists also note that nontraditional arts and crafts can provide comfort for the bereaved as they work through their grief (Malchiodi, 1998; Jones, 1997; Walker, 1998; Vajentic & Calovini, 2001).

Numerous research studies have also focused on the effectiveness of Chinese calligraphic writing with different populations suffering various mental and physical illnesses and dealing with their emotional and psychiatric needs (e.g., Kao, 1991; Chen, 2003; Kao & Zhao, 2000; Kao & Li, 2000; & Fan, Kao, Wang, & Guo, 2000). However, there is a gap in research on the use of the Chinese brushstroke techniques in therapy for the bereaved.

Within the research on grief and bereavement, three of the major areas of the literature focus on meaning reconstruction and meaning making, continuing bonds with the deceased, and regaining a sense of control or balance. Meaning making, according to Thompson and Janigian (1988), is the ability to develop new goals and purpose, or to construct a sense of self that incorporates the significance of the negative experience. Continuing bond is the act of keeping the connections with the deceased loved one in memory, in practical life, and in soul (Attig, 2000). Establishing a sense of balance is to accept the loss as a definite fact, adjust to life without the deceased, and form new relationships in the world (Lindemann, 1944). These factors are believed to constitute healthy bereavement and provide a rational explanation of the expression of grief (Weiss, 2008).

Definitions of Terminology

The words *loss*, *grief*, *bereavement*, and *mourning* are often used interchangeably. To Rando, there are two kinds of loss: the “physical,” or “tangible,” such as the death of a loved one, and the “symbolic,” or “psychosocial,” such as getting a divorce or losing a

status because of job changes (Rando, 1984, p. 16). Sanders (1999) uses the terms *actual* or *symbolic* (p. 5) referring to the same concept. Weiss (2001) refers to loss as the death of an “emotionally important figure” (p. 47). Bereavement represents the state of having suffered a loss (Rando, 1993), and the expression of “emotion, experiences, changes, and conditions that take place as a result of the loss” (Sanders, 1999, p. 4). Grief is a normal reaction to loss—the process of psychological, social, and somatic reactions the person experiences during the time (Rando, 1993; Sanders, 1999). Mourning is the response to grief, which is socially and culturally influenced (Rando, 1993; Sanders, 1999).

Categories of Grief Responses

In the past, grief counselors stress mainly on the emotional responses to the loss of a loved one. As the paradigm shifted, a wider range of responses have been put into consideration from a more holistic point of view (Doka, 2010). Grief reactions may be manifested in responses to physical losses or in responses to symbolic or social losses (Benoliel, 1999). The bereaved are likely to demonstrate a wide range of reactions and experience an acute grief in response to their loss. This response is exhibited in five categories: affective or emotional responses, behavioral responses, physiological or somatic responses, cognitive responses, and social responses (Rando, 1984, 1993; Worden, 1996, 2002).

Emotionally, bereaved people may experience sadness, anger, anxiety, fear, guilt, self-blame, longing, loneliness, denial, disbelief, vulnerability, hopelessness and helplessness, alarm, tension, and a state of arousal (Bowlby & Parkes, 1970; Parkes,

1972, 1987, 1996; Bowlby, 1980). Weiss (2001) also talks about how feelings of guilt, anger, fear, and anxiety often intertwine with protest and despair. Weiss says that the feeling of guilt implies that the bereaved blame themselves and believe the loss is their fault. The feeling of anger means that the bereaved put the blame on others. Weiss further suggests that feeling fear and anxiety entails the lost relationship is needed as a “reassurance of security” (Weiss, 2001, p. 48).

Parke (1972) notes that the bereaved attempt to make sense of what has happened as one way of restoring what is lost. Parke further explains that the urge to search for a lost object is a subjective and emotional component found in many bereaved people. “People who attempt to avoid painful reminders of the dead person by moving away usually come back, and the bereaved person who avoids reminders is aware of a sense of being pulled in two directions” (Parke 1972, p. 78).

Behaviorally, the bereaved may experience restlessness, insomnia, absentmindedness, and an inability to concentrate or to initiate and maintain normal, daily activities (Parke, 1972, 1987, 1996). In some cases, the bereaved assume the manners or traits of their loved ones. Moreover, they may need to retell the story of their loved one’s death, search for the deceased, wander aimlessly, and continuously sense the loved one’s presence. The bereaved may also focus on their behaviors before the death of the loved one, looking for evidence of their negligence and failure. Bowlby (1982) names the behavioral responses after losing a loved one: “protest, which includes [being] preoccupied with the loss, pain, agitation, tension, and vigilant attentiveness to the possibility that the deceased may disappear” (Weiss, 2001, p. 48). Parke (1972)

suggests the bereaved has a compulsion to search for the lost figure and yearn for the figure to return.

Physically, Bowlby and Parkes (1970) note that the physical somatic symptoms that the bereaved may experience include tightness in the throat, choking, shortness of breath, sighing, empty feeling in the stomach, lack of muscular strength, and intense subjective distress described as tension or pain. Some may experience trouble sleeping and resting. Rando (1993) notes that some bereaved may experience loss of appetite, weight loss or gain, hair loss, fatigue; others may be trembling, shaking, restless, and suffer headaches. Some people may experience hot flashes or chills, nausea, and frequent urination. Some extreme cases may even involve the same symptoms of illness that the deceased had (Rando, 1993).

Cognitively, according to Bowlby and Parkes (1970) and Bowlby (1980), at the time of the loss, the bereaved may be intensely preoccupied with the image of the deceased, accompanied by feelings of unclarity and unreality. Others may dream of the person and/ or sense the presence of the deceased (Bowlby, 1980). They may pay attention to places where the lost person is likely to be and then call for the person (Parkes, 1972, p. 67). Others may assume the manners or traits of their loved ones, search for the deceased, and wander aimlessly. Some may exhibit states of depression, despondency, and unresponsiveness (Seideman, 2005), while others may imitate of the dead, want to die, and feel unable to move forward.

Socially, the bereaved may be overly sensitive, become more dependent, and avoid or withdraw from social interactions. Some lose interest in personal appearance and other matters that normally occupy their attention (Parkes, 1972, 1987, 1996). The

bereaved may also show a lack of initiative and interest in things, experience low self-esteem, and have difficulties in relationships with friends and relatives. Bowlby (1980) notes that the bereaved show a continual low moods and sadness and he names this social responses “despair,” in which the bereaved cease to pay attention to their daily lives and eventually fall into depression and apathy (p. 94). Weiss (2001) also attributes this despair to the loss of hope that the deceased will return and the beginning of the acceptance of the loss.

Models of Bereavement Counseling

Raphael, Minkov, and Dobson (2001) state that some bereaved are at a high risk of developing depressive and anxiety disorders during the post-bereavement period. Others are at risk of developing pathologies such as chronic grief and complicated grief. They further explain that there are also many factors that contribute to a high risk of complicated grief responses. McCall (2004) points to the following as high-risk contributing factors to unhealthy bereavement: the nature of the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased; the nature of the loss; the physical, psychological, sociological, and spiritual condition of the bereaved; previous psychiatric illness of the bereaved; and the circumstances surrounding the sudden, unexpected, and untimely loss. Therefore, the concept of preventive intervention becomes the main reason for bereavement counseling (Raphael, Minkov, & Dobson, 2001).

In light of helping people cope with their losses, various researchers and influential writers in the field of bereavement have created their own theories, concepts, and models of work in providing help to people who experience losses. Some of these

theories try to understand bereavement in terms of phrases (Rando, 1984, 1993; Sanders, 1999; Bowlby & Parkes, 1970). Some see it as a stage (Kübler-Ross, 1969), others see it as a process (Rando, 1993) and some see it as tasks (Worden, 1996, 2002).

Freud, from a study conducted in 1917, describes grief as an adaptive response to loss (Freud, 2007). It facilitates the gaining of peace of mind and reintegration into society. To Freud, the task of the bereaved is to detach from the deceased, and the purpose of grief is to completely withdraw emotionally from the deceased. The basic goal of grief work is to accept the reality of the loss and work through the process of this emotional detachment. Along this line, Sullivan (1956) supports the belief that detaching oneself from the bond with the deceased is the ultimate goal of grief. To Sullivan, the bereaved needs to be reminded that the deceased person no longer lives. The constant reminder will diminish the need to cling on to the deceased loved one, and the bereaved will eventually begin to hold on to the reality, thus, the association with the deceased will be completely erased.

Later, the stage or phase view of grief was introduced. Bowlby (1980) and Bowlby and Parkes (1970) note four phases of grief: “numbness and disbelief,” “yearning and searching,” “disorganization and despair,” and “reorganization” (p. 85). To Bowlby, numbness and disbelief is a natural defense as an initial response, and it serves as a short-term shock absorber. Parkes (1972) describes yearning and searching as the act of reliving of old times and going over circumstances of the loss, often accompanied by anxiety and anger. To Parkes, feeling anxious is a result of not knowing what to do or is caused by being unable to concentrate or sleep. Anger is also the initial response of refusing to accept the loss (Archer, 1999). To Bowlby (1982), disorganization and

despair is manifested by feelings of depression and lack of interest in things. The reorganization phase signals recovery from bereavement (Bowlby, 1982).

Similar to Bowlby, Kübler-Ross (1969) identifies five self-explanatory stages of grief—“denial,” or “isolation”; “anger”; “bargaining”; “depression”; and “acceptance”—from her extensive work with terminally ill patients and the bereaved families. She further explains that denial is a time of shock and disbelief, which also serves as a buffer against the overwhelming reality. “Bargaining is when the bereaved think of things they can do to change the situation and the bereaved appear to be making pleas to God or to the doctor to prevent the loss or exhibit behaviors that help to avoid needing to grieve.”

Rando (1993) identifies three phases of grief and mourning and six processes of mourning (6Rs). The three phases are “avoidance,” “confrontation,” and “accommodation” (p. 30). The avoidance phase is when bad news of the death is learned and the bereaved show natural desire to avoid accepting or acknowledging the reality of the loss. As soon as the shock and the numbness have faded away, denial immediately takes place. Denial serves as a buffer that helps the mourner to slowly and gradually absorb the reality of the loss. The confrontation phase is when grief is intensely experienced. This is when the bereaved is confronted with the reality of the loss and eventually absorbs what the loss means. The bereaved will eventually realize that the loved one is gone forever when they are reminded repeatedly by the unfulfilled desire of seeing the loved one again. The last phase of accommodation takes place when the acute grief symptoms have gradually declined and the bereaved begins to reenter the world socially and emotionally.

Rando (1993) further explains that within the three phases of grief are six individual and interactive processes of mourning. Rando calls them the six Rs of mourning. The first process is called the “recognize” the loss, where the bereaved acknowledges the death of the loved one and understands the reasons of the death. The second process is “react,” where the bereaved experiences and feels the pain of losing the loved one and identifies, accepts, and expresses the various and mixed emotions of the loss. The third process is “recollect and reexperience,” where the bereaved realistically reviews past events and remembers the deceased and reexperiences all the feelings involved including both the positive and negative aspects of their relationship. The fourth process is “relinquish,” during which the bereaved realizes and accepts the loss and begins to detach from the deceased and the past. The fifth is “readjust,” where the bereaved moves forward and adapts to the new environment without the deceased. The last process is “reinvest,” where the bereaved redirects his/her energy and emotions in new relationships and commitments.

Sanders (1999) suggests an “integrative theory of bereavement,” which consists of five phases: “shock,” “awareness of loss,” “conservation-withdrawal,” “healing,” and “renewal” (p. 36). During the first phase, the bereaved is in a state of confusion and disbelief. When the numbness begins to fade away, the bereaved must face the reality of the loss. During this second phase, the bereaved may experience the seesaw effect of emotional outbursts. Almost all the negative feelings and emotions emerge during this time, which adds even more stress to the situation. The third phase, conservation-withdrawal, is when the bereaved needs to recuperate from the loss. The bereaved now realizes the old life will never return, new life must be built, and changes must take place.

The next phase, healing, is the turning point, during which the bereaved slowly regains control. To Sanders (1999), this is a period of “forgiving and forgetting” (p. 40). It is also the time for the bereaved to “let go” (p. 40) and keep thoughts and feelings appropriately in his/her heart. The last phase is the renewal phase, where the bereaved gathers the strength to try new things, meet new friends, and live a new life without the deceased.

Unlike the previous theorists who suggest a concept of “letting go,” Worden (1996; 2002) proposes a new theory, which claims that the bereaved have a specific set of tasks to complete in order to reconcile their grief. Thus, the bereaved are seen as active and self-determining, rather than passive, participants in the grief process. Particular tasks can exist simultaneously. The four tasks are as follows: accept the reality of the loss, experience the pain or emotional aspects of the loss, adjust to a changed environment without the deceased, and emotionally relocate and memorialize the deceased and move on with life (Worden, 1996, pp. 13–15). Worden further explains that the task for the bereaved is not to give up the relationship with the deceased; rather, it is to appropriately memorialize the deceased loved one in their emotional lives.

Stroebe and Schut (2001) introduce the dual-process model of coping with bereavement, which consists of two types of coping orientations, which are also stressors—the “loss-orientation” and the “restoration-orientation” (p. 395). An “oscillation” (p. 395) between the two types of stressors is needed for adaptive coping. Stroebe and Schut explain that bereaved people not only need to cope with the loss of the loved one, but they also need to adjust to life and environments without the deceased. Loss-orientation refers to going through the different aspects of loss such as crying,

missing, and pining for the deceased. Restoration-orientation, on the other hand, refers to learning new tasks, making new arrangements, and developing new identities.

All of these give researchers and counselors a better understanding of natural and human responses to grief as well as provide helpful hints for those who work with people experiencing major losses.

Elements of Healthy Bereavement

Meaning Making

Recent research studies show that in order for the bereaved to cope better, three major elements: meaning making of the loss, continuing bonds with the deceased, and maintaining some sense of control or balance, are needed to put the loss into perspective. The following sections will focus on these elements.

To some researchers (Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998; Davis, 2001), meaning making can be defined in two ways. The first is sense-making, or “meaning-as-comprehensibility” (p. 562), which is when the bereaved makes sense of what happened and what happens fits into the bereaved’s view of the world. The second is the benefit-finding aspect, or “meaning-as-significance” (p. 562), which refers to the value or worth of what happens for the bereaved’s life. In addition, the bereaved finds benefits from the experience such as personal growth, gaining new perspectives, and strengthening relationships. To Davis (2001), people tend not to make sense of the loss when they feel that the death seemed unfair and unjust. In their research, Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, and Larson (1998) interviewed 455 people recruited through eleven hospices in the San

Francisco Bay area from one month to eighteen months after a loss. They found that people whose distress levels were higher could not see any benefit from the loss experience. Those who were able to make sense of the loss also reported doing better than those who were unable to make sense of the event.

Other researchers, such as Thompson and Janigian (1998), suggest that meaning making is the ability to develop new objectives and rebuild a sense of self out of any negative experiences. They further explain that searching for meaning is the search for meaningfulness, which consists of two components: “order and purpose” (p. 263). It is one’s way of understanding an event in an orderly manner based on one’s views and beliefs. It also serves a purpose that identifies with our own values. Thompson and Janigian maintain that negative events, such as the loss of a loved one, disrupt one’s sense of order and purpose. To them, searching for meaning is a process of altering one’s perception of an event; thus the feelings of order and purpose can be reestablished.

Nadeau (2001, p. 106) more specifically describes points at which the bereaved express meaning making. These points include 1) when the bereaved use the word *meaning* to describe their understanding or opinion of what happens and 2) when they talk about topics and things that have philosophical meaning or religious connotations. Moreover, meaning making is expressed when the bereaved talk about anything related to the afterlife, the circumstances of the loved one’s death, the way the deceased viewed death, and changes in the family after the death. Lastly, meaning making is shown when the bereaved describe lessons learned and new insights gained.

Roberts (2003) notes that human beings are the only creatures that search for meaning and constantly ask such questions as “Who am I?” and “Why was I born?”

Roberts further explains that the job of grief counselors is to help the bereaved discern the meaning of their loss and rediscover meaning without their loved one. Park, Edmondson, Fenster, and Blank (2008) concur that meaning making may include processes of questioning, searching for, and changing global meaning (p. 18). Davis (2001) also notes that many bereaved individuals have a persistent need to make sense of the loss; thus it is important for them to cope with the loss with meaning and purpose. Davis (2001) says meaning making is seen when the bereaved view the event and gain some growth in character and perspective, and strengthen their relationships. Many researchers (i.e. Neimeyer, 2001; Moos & Schaefer, 1986) agree that finding meaning is crucial for successful adjustment and healthy coping with bereavement. Further, Keesee, Currier, and Neimeyer (2008) claims that the bereaved who have a difficulty finding meaning or making little to no sense of what happened tend to have a greater intensity of grief.

Neimeyer (1998, 2001) offers another view of meaning making. He claims that the bereaved need to reconstruct the meaning existentially and redefine their relationship with the deceased. He states that each person's response to bereavement is unique and personal. What is normal or pathological grief is related to the person's "personality, relationship to the deceased, and familial and cultural background" (Neimeyer, 2001, p. 25). Instead of leading to a complete resolution, mourning is seen as open and evolving. Neimeyer (2001) also suggests that grief therapy should aim at helping the clients to make sense of the inconsistencies and conflicts that arise from the loss and to focus on integrating the loss into their life.

Attig (2001) suggests that bereaved people make meaning by relearning. He states that the bereaved relearn their own character roles, identities, self-confidence, and self-esteem, in the absence of the deceased person. They also relearn aspects of themselves and their relationship with the deceased. Attig clarifies that “relearning the world” (p. 41) is learning again how to be and act in an environment without the deceased loved one. Attig (2001) explains that the bereaved relearn in many ways—physically, biologically, emotionally, behaviorally, socially, intellectually, and psychologically. Emotionally, they need to temper the pain of suffering; behaviorally, they need to transform habits and way of doing things; physically and biologically, they need to expend energy to meet new challenges; psychologically, they need to readjust the need for closeness; socially, they need to reconfigure their interactions with others; and intellectually, they question and seek answers and meanings. Attig further explains that when the bereaved begin to temper the pain of suffering, transform habits, modify ways of doing things, expend energy to meet new challenges, readjust the need for closeness, reconfigure interactions with others, and ask questions and seek answers and meanings, they are conforming their meaning and reconstructing their meaning toward the loss (p. 41). Thompson (1998) concurs that following a serious loss, a person finds meaning through cognitive and behavioral changes. Thompson (1998) claims that finding meaning following a serious loss can be accomplished in five ways. The first is to restore the adaptive assumptions, which change the cognitive representation of one’s life through reordering priorities and changing reachable goals. The second is to adapt self-image in a positive way that incorporates the loss and change the perception of the event through reinterpretation using a positive focus and changing perspectives. The third is to make a

downward social comparison with those who are worse off. The fourth is to find a sense of control by accepting the situation and adjusting to it. Finally, finding meaning is done by focusing on areas of higher-perceived control experiences. This entails making references to and calling upon past successes in gaining control over negative experiences.

Neuman, Nadav, Bessor (2006) write about using remembrance as a way of making meaning. Remembrance is a way for the bereaved to try to rebuild what they know of the deceased person. It is a way of giving form to the deceased by connecting bits and pieces of experiences and forming a complete picture of how the deceased was to the bereaved.

In a constructivist perspective, grieving the death of a loved one involves reestablishing or reconstructing a world of meaning that has been disturbed by the loss (Neimeyer, 2001) because our very sense of security and identity is tied together with those to whom we are closely attached (Bowlby, 1982). Oftentimes, separation from the significant others can initiate a need in the bereaved to reorganize their self-narrative to accommodate the reality of the loss (Neimeyer, 2011). Attig (2004) concurs that although death ends a bodily life, it does not end the relationships between the bereaved with the deceased loved one, it does not cancel any meaning of the lives of the deceased person, and it certainly does not lessen the meaning of the bereaved's life (p. 359).

Continuing Bonds with the Deceased

In general, older models of bereavement coping focus on detaching from the deceased loved one. Theorists such as Freud (2007) and Bowlby (1982) once believed that "letting go" or "detachment" was necessary for coping and resolution. Ever since Klass, Silverman, and Nickman (1996) brought up the role of keeping continuing bonds

with the deceased as a fundamental part of successful adjustment to bereavement, the concept has always been an important element and draws much focus on more researches. In fact, contemporary models stress that maintaining a bond with the deceased is supported by many other researchers (e.g. Attig, 2000; Klass & Walter, 2001; and Neimeyer, 1998, 2001; Bauer & Bonanno, 2001; Silverman, Nickman, & Worden, 1992; Bonanno, Mihalecz, & LeJeune, 1999; Belicki, Gulko, Ruzycki, & Aristotle, 2003) is more effective than detachment for healthy bereavement. Continuing bond does not refer to prolong the grieving process; rather, it is a continuity of past meaningful goals, relationships, and activities into present context (Bauer & Bonanno, 2001). In their research with thirty-six bereaved of spousal loss, Bauer and Bonanno (2001) found that those who could construct their lives with some aspects of their goals and spousal relationship continued into the present showed better bereavement adjustment. In order to do that, the bereaved need to internalize the past goals and their meaning and view them as a manifestation of activities in their present lives (p. 154). Bonanno, Mihalecz, and LeJeune (1999) support the claim and note that having some form of connection with the deceased helps lessen the somatic symptoms and complaints from the bereaved.

To Stroebe, Schut, and Stroebe (2005), a healthy bond with the deceased occurs when the bereaved are able to recognize and accept that the love object is no longer physically present but can still be remembered, honored, and referred to in ongoing life. This kind of attachment permits survivors to retain a sense of connection to the deceased but allows them to move forward with their lives.

The first systematic study on loss and bereavement was done by Freud in 1917 (Freud, 2007) who proposes that grief is a process in which loss is resolved through

hypercathexis followed by gradual decathexis related to internalized bonds of attachment. In his research study *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud notes that emotional attachments are created (cathexes) that hold individuals together. Freud presents the work of grief, or grief work, as decathexis, or the process of “letting go” of attachments to the bereaved. Grief is the process of struggling to give up the emotional and internal attachment to the “love-object,” and this process is called “grief work.” To Freud, decathexis (detachments) must be achieved on both emotional and intellectual levels and failure to complete grief work would result in misery and dysfunction.

Bowlby (1982) looked at how grief influences our interpersonal relationships. He believes that grief results from our biological need for security in the face of danger. The goal of attachment behavior is to maintain the security provided by a significant interpersonal relationship (Kavanagh, 1990). He maintains that when the bereaved observe that the object of their affection or attachment no longer exists, the result is grief. The demand to withdraw libido (energy) from the love object in order to reinvest in new relationships may be opposed by the bereaved, resulting in tension. To Bowlby, the bereaved may turn away or deny the reality of the separation and attempt to rescue the attachment to the lost love object. The working through of grief is the repeated engagement of this reality of loss until the libido is eventually freed and the ego (personality) is freed of its clinging attachment. Bowlby further points out that responses by a grieving adult is similar to separation distress in children, in which the absence of the lost figure induces stress, vigilance regarding the return of the figure, restlessness, intense distress, protest at the separation, inconsolability, and feelings of insecurity.

To Bowlby, there are two main types of attachments, the “secure” and the “insecure”; and there are three subcategories of insecure attachments: the “anxious/ambivalent,” the “avoidant,” and the “disorganized/disoriented” (Parkes, 2006, p. 13). The secure attachment is shown when children who receive adequate care for their needs for security would tolerate brief separation from their caregivers without much distress and respond quickly and warmly to the adult’s comfort when he/she returns. The anxious/ambivalent attachment is illustrated when caregivers are overanxious and discourage the child to explore; these children would show a great deal of distress during the separation and would cling and cry angrily when caregivers return. Avoidant attachment is shown when caregivers don’t show any feelings, cannot tolerate closeness, or punish the children’s attachment behaviors. These children would appear to be indifferent and uncaring during separation and continue to ignore the caregivers when they return. The disorganized/disoriented children show contradicting behaviors. They may cry during separation but they also avoid their caregivers when they return.

Field, Gao, and Paderna (2005) support Bowlby’s idea by stating that individuals with different attachment styles show different coping responses. Individuals with avoidant attachment are unable to make use of the continuing bond with the deceased as a secure base in confronting the stresses of their new life situation. On the other hand, individuals with anxious attachment style have difficulties in detaching from the deceased, and they subsequently have problems in constructing a new life (Field, Gao, and Paderna 2005, p. 296).

Other research studies (e.g., Eagle, 1994; Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2005; Charles & Charles, 2006) contradict Bowlby’s (1982) claim on attachment and

detachment. These studies show that positive attachment or continuing bonds with the deceased can have a positive influence on bereavement and coping. Stroebe, Schut, and Stroebe (2005) concur that individuals with a secure attachment style are likely to retain bonds with the deceased and have effective means of coping with the loss. It is easier for the bereaved to realize and accept that the loved one is no longer present in their daily lives but can still be remembered, valued, and referred to continuously (Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2005). To Attig (2004), to grieve is to relearn the world without the deceased. This echoes the existential theory of bereavement counseling in which the bereaved relearn their relationship with the deceased. Attig further explains that the death of a loved one affects the bereaved profoundly because “many of the feelings, desires, motivations, dispositions, habits, and expectations that shaped daily life when he or she lived remain within us but no longer cohere with reality” (Attig, 2004, p. 347). Therefore, it is important that the bereaved search for a sense of lasting love because “it fulfills our desire to still love them without falling into the futility of desiring their return. It gives them a continuous presence in our lives without their physical presence. It helps us to cherish their legacies and mitigates the pain of missing them” (Attig, 2004, p. 358).

Researchers (e.g., Shuchter & Zisook, 1993; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1991; Silverman, Nickman, & Worden, 1992; Bonanno, Mihalecz, & LeJeune, 1999) observe that adults and children, from various cultures, seek out ways of maintaining connections with their deceased loved ones. Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen, and Stroebe (1992, 1996) note that continuing bonds with the deceased is more common in some non-Western cultures. This seems to be true with the Chinese culture, and this will be discussed further in the section on how the Chinese view death and bereavement.

Neimeyer (1998, 2001) and Klass and Walter (2001) claim that the bereaved do not detach from the deceased; rather, they transform the emotional and relational bonds in order to keep the deceased an important element in their lives. Attig (2000) concurs with them by observing the importance for the bereaved to maintain a bond with the deceased. He suggests four ways of maintaining this bond: holding the loved one in memory, giving the deceased person a place in practical life, keeping the deceased in soul, and holding the deceased's spirit. This can be in the form of holding the same values or beliefs as those of the deceased person. Attig (2000) further claims that when a bereaved person accepts the loss, remembers the deceased, reveals the relationship with the deceased, and talks about them coherently, they are making connections and maintaining bonds with the deceased. Shaver and Tancredy (2001) note that secure individuals can access attachment-related emotional memories without difficulty and can discuss them coherently. One form of memory can be seen in dreams. Belicki, Gulko, Ruzycki, and Aristotle (2003) claim that dreams often occur during bereavement, which allows the bereaved to maintain certain positive connections with the deceased.

Neuman, Nadav, and Bessor (2006) concur that to human beings, memory is not simply the extension of their past into the present, but is also the complicated relations and interactions in which their existence is actualized in the present. When the bereaved remember their loss, they do not simply retrieve moments of their past. They actively form their identities by ratifying the unique characteristics of their mourning (p. 1,377).

Regaining Balance / Reestablishing Control

Lindemann (1944) is one of the first to talk about reestablishing a sense of equilibrium after loss. To Lindemann, establishing a sense of equilibrium is to accept the

loss as a definite fact, adjust to life without the deceased, and form new relationships in the world. Similarly, Wood (1981) notes that when the bereaved are willing to accept the loss, to examine it and to interpret it (making their own meaning), a sense of balance can be reached. Therefore, when a person is willing to express his/her feelings toward the loss and shows signs of accepting it, some sense of balance has been established.

Although it was more than half a century ago, Lindemann's 1944 study of acute-grief responses of survivors of a deadly nightclub fire in Boston served as a stimulus for the development of research and theory by investigators in many fields. In his study, Lindemann observed bereaved patients and noticed similar patterns of responses—somatic or bodily distress, preoccupation with the image of the deceased, guilt relating to the deceased or the circumstances of the death, hostile reactions, and inability to function as competently as they did prior to the death. Lindemann also notes that survivors sometimes adopted the mannerisms or traits of the deceased in their own behavior. In his paper *The Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief* (1944), Lindemann describes three steps that survivors seemed to go through before some sense of equilibrium was established. These steps are 1) accepting the loss as a definite fact, 2) adjusting to life without the deceased, and 3) forming new relationships in the world (p. 143).

Later researchers (Thompson, 1998; Stroebe & Schut, 2001; Wood, 1981) agree with Lindemann on the importance of maintaining balance after a major loss; however, they suggest different strategies to maintain an overall sense of balance. For example, Thompson (1998) suggests accepting the outcome, which can help the bereaved to feel less helpless and concentrate on areas that they can influence. Another strategy is to

heighten awareness of areas where the bereaved previously succeeded in exercising of control.

Cochran and Claspell (1987) note that the pattern of grief involves the strike for balance between “what is and what is not” (p. 118). In other words, the bereaved is often pulled by the two opposite feelings as a result of the loss, such as feeling the presence of the deceased loved one and a sense that the person has gone forever. Stroebe and Schut (2001) concur and have formulated a new concept of keeping balance—the “dual process model” (p. 294). They state that in order to better cope with the loss, the bereaved need to balance between the two stressors. Hansson and Stroebe (2007) explain that both loss-orientation and restoration-orientation are stressors created when the bereaved tries to cope with the loss. Loss-orientation includes reviewing memories related to the deceased and the inference of the death, such as going through old pictures, envisioning how the deceased would respond, crying, longing for the person, seeking reminders of the deceased, feeling relieved that the person is no longer suffering, or feeling despair that they are left alone as a result of the death. Restoration orientation indicates the secondary source of stress and coping with it. Besides grieving the loss of the loved one, the bereaved also need to make numerous adjustments that surface from the loss. For example, handling household tasks, dealing with financial arrangements, and struggling with new identities, and experiencing the fear and anxiety of managing everything on their own are secondary stressors that result from the loss. To Hansson and Stroebe (2007), it is impossible to attend to both loss-orientation and restoration-orientation at the same time. The bereaved will need to deal with the loss at times; at other times, they will be distracted and seek relief by doing other things.

Oscillation is the process of alternating between the two orientations, a balance between attending to and avoiding the different stressors. It is a necessary element in successfully adjusting to life without the deceased. In addition to stressing on accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to an environment without the deceased, and emotionally relocating the deceased and move on with life, the dual model extends to accepting the reality of the changed world,; taking time off from the pain of grief; mastering the changed environment; and developing new roles, identities and relationships (Hansson & Stroebe, 2007, p. 48). Hansson and Stroebe (2007) also claim that focusing on only one of the orientations will not be helpful to the adjustment and will instead cause psychological exhaustion.

According to Ray (2004), a person's psychological equilibrium is determined by how well he/she balances between the demands of the surrounding world and his/her coping skills. Ray notes that there are four types of coping skills that affect the physical and psychological health of a person. These coping skills include a person's knowledge of the environment, inner resources, social support, as well as his/her spirituality.

Wood (1981), speaking from the personal experience of losing her son, claims that grief can be a way to regain emotional balance and restore equilibrium after a major loss. She also believes that self-expression is necessary for the bereaved in order to reach this balance (p. 249). She notes that when the bereaved is willing to accept the loss, to examine it and to infer it, "it may become for him/her the mainspring of creative life" (p. 264). This supports the therapeutic use of expressive arts therapies as forms of self-expression in coping with loss.

Rawnsley (1989) claims that taking active control is way of responding to loss and helps the individual to better cope with the situation. Instead of being struck by the uncertainty and the unknown, one should take an active role in confronting the loss—for example, by planning for events and important dates or holidays without the deceased. Bull (1992) similarly notes the importance of maintaining balance in time of loss, in order to cope with it more effectively. He points out that a good way of keeping balance is to “see loss as an opportunity for change and growth” (p. 114). He further explains that to balance is to finish as much business as possible in order to have less regrets; to anticipate losses rather than to ignore or deny them; to make use of laughter, which helps to put life in perspective; to apply the concept of aikido, which is to go along with the flow while maintaining truthfulness; and to live in the here and now; to “celebrate endings with rituals, memories, and symbols” (p. 117). To Bull, celebrating endings with rituals, memories, or symbols is using certain ceremonial activities, such as a funeral, to acknowledge what happened, to facilitate expression toward the loss, and to complete any unfinished business.

Rando (1993) stresses the need for and importance of empowering the bereaved through regaining some aspects of control. Rando states that when the bereaved feel they have some control over certain things—such as timing, pacing, content, and content in dealing with the loss, they would be more open to explore the previously untouched and painful areas of the experience. Rando also believes that having some sense of control would help the bereaved to partly overcome the sense of helplessness and being overwhelmed.

Machin developed the Adult Attitude to Grief scale in 2001 to measure adult grieving responses in three areas: “overwhelmed,” “balanced,” and “controlled” (Machin & Spall, 2004, pp. 1 & 17). To measure balance, she used related subjective feelings reported by the bereaved, such as feeling able to face the pain of loss, feeling aware of an inner strength when facing grief, and feeling able to come through the grief experience (p. 17). The purpose of using the scale is to understand the client’s needs and provide therapeutic interventions to help him/her regain a sense of balance after a major loss.

Bereavement and Elders

Longevity is often referred to as a sign of honor, as it states in the Bible, “The silver-haired head is a crown of glory” (Prov. 16:31). However, it is inevitably true that “old age is also a time of multiple and sequential losses” (Moss, Moss, & Hansson, 2001). In addition, people who live to a very old age could outlive all the members of their friendship networks (De Vries & Johnson, 2002). Older people are more likely to have experienced previous and multiple losses as described by Lalive D’Epinay, Cavalli, and Spini (2003): the older a person gets, the more he/she becomes a “survivor” (p. 266), because most likely his/her friends and relatives have already died.

Moss, Moss, and Hansson (2001) identify four very important factors that affect bereavement coping among the elderly. They are changes of physiological functioning, interpersonal contexts of aging, regulation of emotion, and ageism (pp. 242–44). To many older people, losing physiological function diminishes their abilities to cope as well as reduces their resources of coping. Their support network also becomes less available

because of poor health, deaths, and relocation of family members. Older people are reported to have better emotional controls and more stable moods (Lawton, Kleban, Rajagopal, & Dean, 1992). Generally people tend to view older people as “less valued, frail, rigid, sexless, and isolated” (Moss, Moss, & Hansson, 2001, p. 244).

Although it is generally believed that older people have better coping skills with loss, because they have experienced it many times, some researchers (Hansson & Stroebe, 2007) claim that bereavement increases the vulnerability of elderly people in terms of physical health. The elderly also tend to experience “bereavement overload” (Hansson & Stroebe, 2007, p. 61), because old age increases the risk of experiencing numerous and chronological losses.

Researchers (Hansson, Remondet, & Galusha, 1993; Wortman & Silver, 1992) argue that bereavement at old age contributes to an increased psychological resilience and better adaptation to later losses. Losses in later life are less stressful to older people for several reasons. For example, older people can better manage their emotions (Lawton, Kleban, Rajagopal, & Dean, 1992); and they have more wisdom to handle life stresses and can better accept stressful events (Baltes, Smith, & Staudinger, 1992). In addition, older people are better prepared for loss as they may have experienced previous significant losses (Thompson et al., 1991).

Carr (2003, 2008) suggests that a “good death” (p. 429) of the deceased significantly affects how the bereaved copes with the loss. Good death means a person dies suffer-free and pain-free. Carr further explains that several factors indicate and influence the perception of good death as well as the bereaved’s coping process. These are the deceased’s acceptance of the death, peace with death, lack of pain, and timeliness

of the death; the quality of the relationship between the bereaved and his/her spouse; social support from loved ones; the availability of appropriate physical care; having the opportunity to live a full life; and being of little burden to the caregivers.

Carr (2004) also states that the pre-loss marital relationship affects the bereavement outcomes significantly. Results of Carr's study (2004) showed that some bereaved people experienced personal growth and self-confidence after the loss when they were able to overcome a task or endure an event that once seemed overwhelming and impossible. For example, the ability of handling financial matters or house tasks that used to be taken care of by the deceased could be a rewarding element.

Lund et al. (1985-86) find that there is a wide range of reactions among different elderly people. Even though some are able to cope and adjust better to the loss of a loved one, others seem to be distressed by the experience. According to Lopata (1996), the most common source of distress among bereaved elderly is emotional and social loneliness. In particular, the loss of a spouse carries with it emotional losses of shared understanding, interaction patterns, validation of self-worth, and love.

The context of loss for the elderly may have different meanings, and may therefore result in different reactions. For example, Hansson and Stroebe (2007) state that the death of a spouse in late life may result in disorganization and dislocation and loss of a meaningful social role, and may affect personal status and support systems. Moss and Moss (1996) explain that the loss of a child among the elderly can bring more intense and problematic grief. This often induces feelings of unfairness, survivor guilt, lost opportunities for generativity and legacy, and a realistic concern over losing one's

support network. In addition, the loss of a sibling may represent the loss of a lifetime of shared meaning, identity, and experience.

Hansson and Stroebe (2007) note that older people are more likely to be affected by the long-term impact of the chaotic changes and the loss of meaningful roles and opportunities for rewarding interactions. Hansson and Stroebe (2007) also note that older people are generally less adaptable to environmental changes. Bereavement can result in problematic changes in social and physical environment; likewise, the problematic environment can exacerbate the experience of bereavement. According to Hansson and Stroebe, individual differences in experiencing the loss as well as physical, social, and psychological competencies may substantially affect the capacity to adapt to this problematic social or physical environment. Carr (2008) further argues that older people may be overwhelmed not only by the death of their spouses but also by other acute and chronic stressors (e.g., their own physical declines, loss of social roles, and the stress of caring for the spouse with a long-term illness) that accompany the death, which may affect their coping. Therefore, bereavement care among the elderly is very important.

Expressive Arts Therapies in Helping with Loss

Expressive therapies have played a major role in helping people expressing their feelings toward their losses and eventually help with coping with the situations. Different expressive arts therapists adopt different models and approaches to help people going through the difficult time of losing someone they loved. For example, Thompson (2003) applied multi-models (movement, visual, writing, and dialogues) with thirteen colleague

students after the September 11 event. Participants of this workshop reported that the expressive arts workshop was helpful in coping with the tragic event. Similarly, Isis (2003) also used poems, songs and images to help people through traumatic losses. Participants in her art group found the art-making process helpful because it provided a “container” (p.10) to hold the pain of grief. Moreover, through sharing similar experiences, they found the “connectedness” (p.10) which facilitated the healing process. Strickland (2003) chose Blues Music and Gospel Music to work with families of those died on the Columbia shuttle. To Strickland, the lyrics of songs can convey different messages to the bereaved; some songs can help to recall happy memories and others can facilitate deep thinking such as a person’s own mortality (p.10) which was a good way of helping the bereaved to express their feelings. Hochberg (2003) made use of photography to help parents of losing young babies to revisit the loss and to express their feelings. He took pictures of the baby and pictures of parents holding the baby to create a sense of closeness and precious memories for the bereaved parents. This art form was helpful to the parents because they said the picture provides something tangible that they can cherish and remember. The photos also gave them details of the baby who died but with precious memories which help them through their tough time. Likewise, Gough (2003) applied photo therapy to help bereaved adults to express their grief. She used images of “landscapes, animals, abstract images, and gravestones, and people with different facial expressions” (p.7) to work as prompt to enhance dialogues with clients. Bowman (2003) used words such as quotes, poems, and literatures to help clients to articulate their unspoken feelings of the loss. He found that written words can be powerful, soothing, and healing when used properly. Gullede (2003) used dance and

movement to help herself in time of losing her daughter to brain tumor. Although these are not empirical researches, the therapists made use of different creative art forms to help those who were going through grief and the clients that they worked with all responded positively and found the expressive arts helpful.

People who suffer from trauma, crisis, or loss often find it hard to articulate their emotions in words; therefore, they may internalize them. This causes depression, confusion, anxiety, hopelessness, or frustration. Also, victims of trauma often experience alexithymia—the difficulty of processing and verbally expressing emotions (Malchiodi, 1998). People often feel helpless when they experience loss and have traumatic experiences. The process of art making offers a way to gain symbolic control over terrifying circumstances and a way to establish an inner sense of security and safety in response to tragic events (Malchiodi, 1998).

Mourning and grief in funeral rituals often employ symbols to express loss (Malchiodi, 1998) and love and remembrance (McKissock, 1992). Visual memorials are often created for remembrance, documentation, and to bring healing to the family and community (Frankenstein & Brady, 1995). This is demonstrated by a very touching film about a father in Alaska who carved a totem pole in remembrance of his son who died at age twenty-four. In the film, the father felt strong pain and hurt after his son's death yet couldn't talk much about his feelings. However, he felt a strong need to make something to help him remember his son and to express his sadness. By carving a totem pole, he drew the attention of the whole community, and in the process of carving the pole, healing occurred. On the completion of the totem pole, the father felt comforted, and for the first time after mourning for three years, he felt that healing had taken place.

Having worked intensively with children who experienced loss, McIntyre (1990) states that art therapy is a process in which the bereaved gain self-confidence, develop coping skills, and maintain a balance to the loss (p.17). According to Davis (1995), the goals of art therapy is to “facilitate awareness, express emotions, work through problem issues, as well as enhance creativity and joy” (p. 324). Each of these objectives connects closely with the goals of bereavement intervention approaches, which include the need to accept the loss, experience the pain, adjust to the loss, and form a new relationship with the deceased as well as with other people (Baker, Sedney, & Gross, 1992; McKissock, 1992; Worden, 1996). Art therapy facilitates awareness, which helps the bereaved to move beyond denial and come to the acceptance of their loss (Malchiodi, 1998). Also, the ability to express emotions through art making can help the bereaved grieve healthily and express their feelings and emotions.

Art is a nonthreatening medium, which reduces tension and defense levels and provides a safe boundary for the bereaved to express their intense emotions and help them to better understand their feelings. Vajentic and Calovini (2001) claim that art making helps the bereaved to process their grief as they foster remembering and reminiscing about their loved ones. Speaking from years of experiences of working with patients who suffered from schizophrenia and organic brain disease, Wilson (2001) notes that making art helps to free clients who have difficulties expressing themselves verbally. Speaking from personal experience of losing her father, Rogers (2001) claims that art making helped her express her feeling of overwhelming and helplessness as well as allowed her to be in control of her feelings of sadness. Natalie also believes that using art as another language brings the therapist closer to the client's world.

Wilson (2001) further states that symbolism plays an important role in the relationship of the unconscious to the consciousness. Simon (1981) concurs that art therapy stimulates both the conscious and unconscious of conflicts and provides a safe setting in which to work on their ultimate resolution. Malchiodi (1998) claims that when people do not have an outlet for their painful feelings, those feelings will take control of their lives. Art making, however, offers a safe way to release those feelings. Through the process, the person can understand the painful feelings, look at them differently, and change them eventually.

Art expression can convey painful and confusing experiences that are difficult to express verbally (Malchiodi, 2003), such as loss and grief. Furthermore, group art therapy can improve social support through sharing of art expressions with others and engaging in interaction in groups. In her work with people who experienced trauma, Malchiodi (2003) finds that art making can reduce stress and resolve intrusive memories and posttraumatic effects. Malchiodi's years of experience working with those who experienced trauma offer a wealth of stories. The process of art making is "a sensory activity which involves tactile, visual, and kinesthetic senses, which also involves repetitive activity that can induce relaxation and well-being" (p. 353). In her work with a group of women with breast cancer, Malchiodi (2003) noted that art making served four purposes: "confronting mortality," "finding meaning," "crisis resolution," and "authentic expression" (Malchiodi, 2003, pp. 354–55). In confronting mortality, practitioners show a desire to revisit their life stories and recreate them. For finding meaning, art expression can assist the practitioners to find new purpose and explore changes in lifestyle and relationships. In crisis resolution, art expression helps to alleviate posttraumatic

symptoms like fear and anger. Art expression can help the practitioners to reconcile with their present situation and live fuller lives. This concurs with Schafer and Moos (2001), who claim that the bereavement process can bring about personal growth, introspection, and a search for meaning, and can redefine roles and relationship (p. 146).

Malchiodi (1998) states that people who experience loss or grief often show desire for self-expression through creative art making. She notes that art therapy is particularly helpful for the bereaved to express their emotions and build a new concept of self and life following the loss. She further expresses that in time of loss, art making help not only to relieve emotions, but also remember, record, and immortalize someone who has died” (p.143). Creating art overcomes the lack of words when people express their feelings and meaning, and so “art making also provides a way of remaking the self after a loss through exploring, expressing, and transforming feelings into visual images” (Malchiodi, 1998, p. 148). Finn (2003) agrees on the power of art making and observes that when her client began to pound on a piece of clay with anger or draw tears while feeling sadness, she was learning to cope with her feelings.

De Petrillo (2005) notes that creating art can improve mood because during the process, the bereaved are actively constructing images; thus their feelings and emotions are fully expressed. Kohut notes (1984) that artistic work can help the bereaved to transform their pain and tension into images. For example, Ferszt, Hayes, DeFedele, and Horn (2004) used specific art therapy techniques and themes to help women in prison who had lost their loved ones. The activities included scribble drawing, bridge drawing, tree drawing, feeling drawing, magazine-photos collage, mask making, and memory drawing. These techniques were particularly useful for these women because they were

able to access and express their feelings. Wadeson (2001), an art therapist, also notes that art offers her a powerful way of dealing with the suffering in her own life. She uses quick sketches to express her grief after losing her father. She further explains that although the images created during the time of her grief did not remove the pain; instead, they gave the pain a form. She concludes that art making gives way to the “transfiguration” (p. 59) of her pain because she felt gratifying in the process and creating art helped move on.

Other Forms of Art.

In addition to drawing, painting, and sculpting, art therapists note that nontraditional arts and crafts can also support the bereaved as they work through their grief. These techniques include memory boxes (Kaufman, 1996), self-soothing image books, quilts (Malchiodi, 1998), model bridges, feeling maps, self-images (Jones, 1997), sand plays (Walker, 1998), nurture boxes, memory collages, picture frames, family banners, and memory pages (Vajentic & Calovini, 2001). These forms of arts can help the bereaved to express their feelings and, at the same time, find healing and growth through the experience of creating these pieces.

Kaufman (1996) suggests that box making is a powerful means to help the bereaved to hold emotions and to comprehend the loss and pain, as well as to embrace and embody the love, relationship, and the memories. Kaufman made a series of boxes to help her work through her grief over the loss of her son.

Using the feeling map exercise Jones helped 120 victims and their families six months after the tragic event of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. In the *feeling map*

exercise, Jones (1997) asked clients to use different colors to represent their feelings of anger, joy, sadness, fear, love for others, and love for self. Jones used the *anger resolution* technique to encourage clients to get in touch with their anger by blackening a large piece of paper with a pencil using as much force as they could. Then he asked them to create some positive images from the “sea of black”(p. 92) they made with an eraser. This process helped the clients to feel that it was appropriate to express their anger through art making and at the same time to attain healing and growth through the experience.

Malchiodi (1998) suggests the use of the “self-soothing image book,” creating a safe place, “feeling maps,” and “color the emotions” (pp. 158–61) when working with people experiencing trauma and loss. Here, art making is used as a way for clients to express their feelings and take care of themselves by creating self-soothing and positive feelings. Similarly, Salmon (2005) used painting to help himself over the time when he lost his daughter in a car accident.

Using a “life map” and a “lifeline” (Malchiodi, 2003) can help people review significant events in their lives and to explore or expect the possible future. Gladding and Newsome (2003), Kahn (1999), and Miller (1993) concur that these art techniques can also help clients to explore their coping patterns, enhance self-expression, and prepare their lives more effectively. With their exploration of the future through art making, they can expect the possible outcomes and, therefore, can better cope with it.

Jones (1997) also finds the bridging exercise useful in helping with traumatized populations. In the bridging exercise, Jones asked the clients to make a bridge that depicts the feelings of safety from pre-trauma to present time. Included here are elements that

represent the beginning point, the nature of the bridge, the purpose of the bridge, what is under the bridge, and the end point of the bridge.

Walker (1998) claims that empowerment and resolution can be achieved through the use of sand play to help children express and work through the loss of their significant others. Issues like anger, lack of control, chaotic feelings, sadness, loss, and confusion can be addressed through symbolic play and storytelling. Similarly, Speert (1992) claims that art therapy can help the bereaved to regain a sense of competent and control as the loss appeared to be out of their control. The structured and therapeutic environment of art making process provides a sense of concreteness and it contains the context of the loss and further allows the bereaved “to take risks, practice new behaviors, gain control, and develop a sense of mastery” (p. 124).

Kinesthetic /Sensory Experiences in Art Making

In order to better comprehend the therapeutic concept of art making, it is important to understand its relationship to kinesthetic and sensory experiences. Lusebrink (2010) summarizes the distinctive elements of art therapy: the use of art media as a means of expression and communication, the multileveled meaning present in visual expressions, and the therapeutic effects of the creative process (p. 168). To Lusebrink, the sensory experience of art making is involved in the exploration of materials, surfaces, and textures (p. 171). Both Lusebrink (1990) and Hinz (2009) notes that more fluid media such as paint, watercolor, and finger paint can enhance the sensory, affective, and symbolic components of art making. Rogers (2001) concurs and suggests using

movement to express the line or color in a painting, which helps the person to embody his/her art. Moreover, movement is also a way to expand feeling by putting them into kinesthetic form. Lusebrink (2004) also claims that all art experiences involve motor actions and movements.

Jensen (1997) claims that the use of senses allow emotional recall to safely emerge in the visual image, both as an expression of self and as a container for the person who cannot verbally express the felt emotions to others.

Couch (1997) notes that making marks on paper initiate a process of inner healing that ultimately increase a measure of achievement and restore or support self-worth. Kahn-Denis (1997) similarly expresses that painting involves a process of “moving the paint around and seeing the immediacy of image” (p.197), which helps the elderly to find pleasure through the sensual quality of the art medium. Weiss (1984) also notes that movements and the kinesthetic process of art making can be a positive and creative experience because it stimulates participants to get in touch with their bodies.

One of the roles of an art therapist in the therapy session is to listen and respond to the nonverbal communication and spoken words of the client (Hadley, 1998). It is important to visually listen to the image and the voice given to the image by the image-maker.

Hadley (1998) further explains that verbal elaborations of the image help the clients keep a connection between themselves and the images they created. It also helps both the clients and the therapist to visually listen to the “externalized visual form” of the image (p. 32).

Whitaker (2004) claims that our body is not merely a vehicle that moves us around; instead, it is the way we experience ourselves, others, and the world we live in, as well as the diversity of meaning and action. To Whitaker, art therapy offers the space that can handle a variety of events through a series of images and visual forms. The images created in the art therapy session suggest that we move, and it records the essence of our movements and the experiences of moving. Therefore, images, to Whitaker, are an expansion of our understanding, and art therapy is the way of learning.

The art images stimulate conversations between the client and the therapist. It also allows therapists to be in touch with themselves and others and enables them to participate in shared experience. During the art-making process, the therapist may notice various postures and gestures made by the client, such as tensions, repetitive movements, and changes in pace all of which can broaden the client's physical, emotional, and intellectual awareness of the art-making process, which in turn encourages communication between client and therapist. Whitaker (2004) claims that it is important for the therapists to be aware of self body language such as movements, postures, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, ways of handling of artwork, as these will help them to better understand a client's nonverbal communication.

Art Therapy with Seniors

Shearring (1992) cites the common myths about aging as follows: Older adults cannot comprehend new skills, cannot receive new knowledge, cannot process new concepts, and cannot develop. However, Shearring holds a different view: "Creativity is

a matter of recognizing problems and opportunities, retrieving relevant materials from memory, and rearranging the material in productive new patterns” (p. 11). In fact, any person can be trained on these three Rs (recognition, retrieval, and rearrangement) regardless of age (p. 11). Moon (2011) calls it “transformative learning” (p. 23), which is learning to transform. To change the old assumptions and expectations to something more open, reflective, and emotionally able to change (p. 23). Similarly, Doric-Henry (2004) notes that the art-making process can be helpful to older adults because it involves “gaining new knowledge and achieving new accomplishments” (p. 25).

Spaniol (1997) notes that there are three major myths about the elderly: “Psychotherapy does not work with elderly, elders’ artwork has little value, and there is little diversity among the elderly” (pp. 155–59). Spaniol explains that because of their physical decline, the elderly tend to redirect their attentions inward, which may result in a sensitive and revived emotional experience due to past unresolved conflicts and repressed memories. They also have a tendency to recall and retell their stories. Therefore, the art-making process captures the core essence of their core life events, and the art product serves as a concrete and tangible record that reveals their wisdom and legacy in coping with the unavailability of decline and death. To Spaniol, there are more differences among the elderly than in any other age group. This is evidenced by Spaniol’s experiences working with elders, whose art often reflected their cognitive, affective, and physical aspects.

Hickson and Housely (1997) claim that participating in art making can bring about the sense of well-being and experience life satisfaction for the elderly because creative arts put “meaning of life” and “meaning of aging”(p. 539) into perspective.

Engle (1997) concurs and further explains that art therapy can help older people to regain some sense of “power, control, and autonomy” (p. 208), which they have lost as they age.

Many art therapists employ different art forms to help the elderly express their feelings and thoughts. These forms include making pottery (Doric-Henry, 1997, 2004), using sand trays (Baker, 2004), making life books (Perry-Magniant, 2004), and painting (Messman, 2004). Doric-Henry (1997, 2004), Baker (2004), Ward (2003, 2004), and Perry-Magniant (2004) all agree upon the therapeutic benefits of art making, the amazing creative capacity of older adults, and the evidence of lifelong learning and growth in later life.

Callanan (1994) suggests that the focus of art making for the elderly should be on actively using the time instead of just passing time (p. 21). She further explains that art therapists should offer opportunities for the elderly to draw and paint their personal expressions of memories and feelings. She also claims that the effective use of brush would make possible a meaningful expression of emotions and aid in the communication of inner experiences regardless of the elderly’s failing functional abilities.

From their experiences of art making with the elderly, Johnson and Sullivan-Marx (2006) conclude that the creative process of art making is a multisensory experience that can stimulate memories, free emotions, and increase activity level (p. 310). They also claim that art therapy can facilitate communication among the elderly, help them to manage their emotions, provide the elderly with a chance for life review, and offer connections among them. Most importantly, art making allows the therapist to see the strengths and essences of the person and see beyond their limitations through their life story. Having worked with many older adults, Wald (2003) concurs that the creative

process in art making can renew energy and stir up potentials of the elderly. With the help of art therapy, her clients from her case studies showed an increase in both cognitive and perceptual skills. She further claims that art making can also stimulate the different senses of the elderly as well as enhance social interactions among these older adults.

Weiss (1984) says that for elderly people who are verbal, expressive arts therapy can help further reveal, uncover, and clarify their feelings and thoughts. From personal experience, Weiss (1984) suggests that self-portrait, clay molding, collage, finger painting, spontaneous drawing, and painting are very useful and effective techniques when working with older people. He also claims that painting with brush promotes visual stimulation, encourages hand and arm movements, and enhances eye-hand coordination among elders (p. 40). In line with Weiss (1984), Wikstrom, Ekvall, and Sandstrom (1994) also note that creative experiences can help the elderly to express their feelings, increase their sensory stimulation, improve their self-esteem, increase the dynamic awareness of self, and enhance their connection with others in a meaningful way.

Shore (1997) claims that in order to grow, everyone goes through certain degree of struggle. To Shore, "Some elders have not effectively resolved earlier struggles and when they get old, they have closed off the opportunity for struggle for the fear of pain involved and therefore they become more rigid as they age" (p. 172). Art therapy provides an opportunity for the elderly to safely display and contain their previous failures. Through the struggle in art making, the previous unresolved issues can be examined and transformed, and therefore, growth can be reached. Additionally, Jensen (1997) claims that older people who have lost their verbal ability can engage in visual art making. They are able to integrate and express their feelings because the process of art

making allows them to get in touch with their creativity, which is naturally revealed through their rhythm and balance (p. 179). The application of art in working with older people who are dealing with a loss is logical and legitimated.

Chinese Brush Calligraphy

Background and History

Calligraphy means “art of writing” (Liu, Ching, & Smith, 1999, p. 009). In Chinese, *calligraphy* (*Shufa*) literally means “handwriting method of systematic instructions concerning principles and rules” (Tseng, 1993, p. 354). *Shu* (“handwriting”) is the record of speech through a writing tool (Chen, 1993, p. 60). The archaeological findings indicate that writing in China started several millennia ago (Tseng, 1993). Many of the ancient writings were found in oracle bone in engraved form on tortoiseshells and flat bones (Tang-Loaec & Colombel, 1995). Early Chinese calligraphy contained magic symbols and images used to communicate with the supernatural world (Tseng, 1993). The early form of calligraphy was derived from pictograms that were associated with nature. Tseng (1993) states that every line and dot in calligraphy represents objects of nature. The standard writing system was established by Emperor Shi Huang during the Chin/Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC). Scholars (Tseng, 1993; Ouyang, 2008) note that since the Han Dynasty, (206 BC–AD 25), the standard script (*Kai-shu*) has become today’s typical calligraphy and is now practiced by every school child. Tseng (1993) notes that the use of brush has a long history in China and can be traced back to as early as the Neolithic Age (ca. 6000–2000 BC). However, the invention of the writing brush or

the improvement of the tool has been credited to Meng Tian of the Chin/Qin Dynasty around the third century BC. Meng Tian refined the primitive brush into the type of brush known to us today. In fact, the only writing tool in East Asia was the brush before the pen and pencil were introduced. Tseng (1993) notes that the earliest brushes were made of crushed bamboo and weeds. Later, animal (goat, horse, wolf, and rabbit) hairs were employed for the development of brush making. According to Tseng (1993), the art of calligraphy flourished in the Chin/Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC), and the art of painting flourished in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618–906). The two had a close relationship because they became part of the “three perfections” in the process of mastering brushwork. According to Fu (1980), a practice among the ancient scholars was to integrate painting with calligraphy and poetry. This skill of mastering all three—*san chueh* (“three perfections”)—was spread during the eighth century and has subsequently become a “significant concept of the Chinese aesthetics” (Fu, 1980, p. 179).

According to Liu (2007), some people consider Chinese calligraphy as a form of art while others disagree because of its practicality and communicative function. Tseng (1971) notes that the old term for writing was *tze hua* (“word painting”), a term conveying that calligraphy is an art form that involves considerable hand movements. Tseng (1971) claims that calligraphy represents the “perception” (p. 7) of the calligrapher. In other words, calligraphy represents how the calligrapher perceives nature and his awareness of the environment around him. Practicing calligraphy with spontaneous responses can be a transcendental experience that brings “enlightenment” (p. 7) to the practitioner. In other words, enlightenment arouses a self-reflection, fostering a connection between the calligrapher and the environment around him. Wo (2004) claims

that calligraphy is an art form which involves three levels or aspects: the art of forms meaning the presentation of the characters; it is the art of lines meaning the expression of the thoughts and feelings of the calligrapher; and it is the art of the abstract meaning the combination of imaginations and images. Ng (1992) holds same opinion that Chinese calligraphy and painting serves the purposes of self expression, reflecting thoughts, and revealing the personalities of the practitioners. Visual images help restore connection with self and others (Thompson, 2003). Chen (2003) concurs that calligraphy is a creative form of art that provides an opportunity for expression and communication because the line movement is highly related to emotional expression.

The way the wielding of the brush and its effect can be understood from the perspective of movement therapy and how it relates to brain function. In her research of how brain functions relate with body movements, Hartley (1995) states that “movement is essential to the physical, sensory, perceptual, psychological, and mental development of a child” (p. 27). Hartley (1995) further explains that movement is a result of awareness and intention and action. First, the mind directs the energy, and then this energy creates bodily movement. Through the touch of our hands, and through our own sensory preconceptions, we are able to feel this movement and stillness—its quality, direction, and degree of freedom. The subtle level of movement initiation is going on continually throughout the body and is in response to a myriad of thoughts, images, feelings, bodily processes, sensations, and sensory perceptions (Hartley, 1995, p. 66).

Pierce and Pierce (1989) concur that all human movements are expressive, and sometimes they even express intentions. Through these personal movements, we form our characters, attitudes, and behaviors (p. 15). A person’s character and habitual

patterns are expression of what the person cares about and values (p. 18). They further claim that what we love and hate determines how we act—that is, a person’s behaviors speak for his/her “heart,” the tendencies and desires.

Chen (1993) says calligraphic writing is unique in that there are no repetitions on the strokes. Each stroke is a representation of an independent movement, unlike in painting or drawing, where one can go over the images to make corrections to reach perfection. Therefore, before the act of writing, the calligrapher needs to plan ways of wielding the brush, the amount of ink load, and the structure and presentation of the character.

Chinese Brush Writing

Chinese Brush Writing and Meaning Making

Research on the application of Chinese calligraphy does not show a clear correlation of meaning making. However, it does show that calligraphy conveys meanings and is the representation of the calligrapher’s whole person (Tseng, 1971), which can be part of the larger meaning making. Calligraphy is a communicative tool between the calligrapher and the viewers. The calligrapher shares his thoughts and feelings as well as his personality with the viewers through his work of art. The richness and beauty of the image and the powerful life force is resonated within the viewers (Chen, 1993). Chen (1993) explains that calligraphic writing delivers the thoughts and meanings of the calligrapher, which includes five progressive levels. The first one involves making simple and basic lines. The second level is the flat presentation of a word or an image

formed by lines. The third is the three-dimensional and individualized image formed by lines. This level shows the three-dimensional and the calligrapher's individualized presentation of the creative structures of the character through the unique way of wielding the brush and ink. The fourth level involves the process of time and movements while writing the characters. Finally, there is the psychological presentation of the calligrapher's personality as well as his thoughts and emotions. It serves as a communicative tool between the calligrapher and the viewers. The communication of emotions could be an aspect of ultimately connecting with a purpose; however, nobody has done any research in this area.

Tseng (1971) holds the similar idea that the lines and brush motions of Chinese calligraphy symbolize emotions that convey meaning, as it is in Western art. She further explains that Chinese painting and calligraphy also present the moods and feelings of the artist. Tseng notes that the calligrapher captures "form, value, and character in a single stroke" (Tseng, 1971, p. 13) with their heart and then project the sense of wholeness into their art. In other words, these three elements formulate the "totality" and "unity" (p. 13) of each word. To Tseng (1993), a person's calligraphy demonstrates the calligrapher's temperament, intellect, personality, and emotions. Therefore, the calligraphy represents the "whole self" (1993, p. 355) of the calligrapher. Wen (2008) too states that writing a character engages the calligrapher's hand, body, eyes, and mind; and writing calligraphy, to Wen, serves two functions: the "representational" and the "presentational" functions (p. 3). The meaning of the image does not exist in the image only but also in the body of the calligrapher as well. In other words, the structure of a character represents certain meaning, and the meanings of the character also exist in the mind of the calligrapher and

the way he presents it. This seems to agree with Tseng (1971) in terms of calligraphy being the presentation of the calligrapher's whole self. Ngan (1998) concurs and explains this idea in greater details. To Ngan (1998), calligraphy involves two levels or purposes: the formal and the ideational, or idea-image (p. 3). The formal refers to the functional purpose of the language itself, while calligraphy serves as a communicative tool to help the viewers understand the meanings of the characters. The ideational refers to the aesthetic function, which encourages the viewers to appreciate the movements of the strokes. Ngan (1998) claims that calligraphy is "idea images" (p. 3), which is the representation of one's "personality, sentiments, culture, and education," coupled with their observation of the forms and movements of nature. Therefore, calligraphy can also be called the "mind-painting" (Ngan, 1998, p. 6) of the calligrapher. In other words, one can appreciate the art of calligraphy without understanding the meanings of the characters, but by actually perceiving the mind-painting of the practitioner. One can also be an idea-image maker without mastering the skill of brush manipulation by simply letting the brush move freely and letting the ink expand and spread randomly.

Many of the writings about Chinese brushstroke techniques and healing processes are written by practitioners and calligraphers speaking from personal experience and reflection after years of practice. Among these practitioners, some discuss how practicing Chinese brush can help in achieving calmness and control over body and mind (Guo, 1995; Peng, 1999; Shen, 2000). Researchers and scholars also support the idea that practicing Chinese calligraphy enhances effective communication (Ouyang, 2008; Liu, 2007), facilitates expression of feelings and emotions (Ouyang, 2008), and helps an individual reach a state of self-harmony and acceptance of the inevitable, as well as

maintain connection with others. All of which seem to contribute to the larger sense of meaning.

Kao (2000) describes calligraphy writing as a process that involves whole bodily and cognitive functions, and its presentation is an integration of the mind, the body, and the character all in one. Kao further claims that practicing calligraphy requires the practitioner's perceptual, cognitive, and bodily functions to be involved in the changes and representation. Based on his previous research studies, from 1986 to 2004, on the effects of the use of Chinese brush writing in therapy for people suffering from Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, heart disease, and depression, as well as for children with attention deficit disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism, and retardation, Kao (2006) claims that practicing calligraphy can bring about psycho-physiological and cognitive changes in the practitioners. Psycho-physiological changes include heart rate, respiration, blood pressure, pulse, EMG, EEG, skin conductance, and skin temperature. Cognitive changes include clerical speed and accuracy, spatial ability, abstract reasoning, digit span, short-term memory, picture memory, and cognitive reaction time (Kao, 2006, p. 284).

Many practitioners and researchers claim that practicing calligraphy can improve the practitioner's health and bodily conditions (Kao & Goan, 2002). Yen (2005) points out that it is widely believed that practicing calligraphy can tame impulsive thoughts, can calm the mind, can soothe agitation, and can balance the restless mind. Researchers (Kao, 2000; Chen, 2003) confirm that practicing calligraphy is able to activate the whole body functions, enhance physical health, improve mental alertness, sharpen sensitivity, and cultivate psychological health. Kao, Lam, Robinson, and Yen (1989) also state that

Chinese calligraphy is believed to be able to bring the practitioner to a state of mental harmony, peacefulness, and calmness.

Practicing Chinese calligraphy can also help the practitioner to cut him/herself off from all distracting thoughts and worries (Yen, 2005). Kao, Lam, Robinson, and Yen (1989) explain that because practicing calligraphy involves intense attentional activities and complex self-monitoring movements that lead to a state of relaxation as in transcendental meditation (p. 350). It seems practicing calligraphy can help the practitioner reach a clear mind that encourages objective thinking, an important element during the meaning making process.

The need for making sense, questioning, searching for answers, and creating a narrative in order to better understand the world around us is an aspect of human nature (Robert, 2003). To Davey (1999), Chinese calligraphy encourages practitioners to revisit their life stories and create meaning (p. 31). Yen (2005) also states that practicing Chinese calligraphy embodies one's living experiences, which generate rich meanings connected to one's life. Yen further explains that in confronting mortality, practitioners show a desire to revisit their life stories and recreate meaning.

Yen (2005) points out that it is a general belief that practicing calligraphy can slowly and gradually change the practitioner's character and way of thinking. The idea of having educated and transformed by writing is another essential belief in the Chinese culture. It is because in Chinese philosophy, practicing calligraphy represents civilization—that is, one's intention to improve one's handwriting by practicing more represents his/her intention of improving him/herself as a whole. In the old times, handwriting was considered "an extension and reflection of one's character and moral

quality” (p. 64) and “temperament” (p. 67). Yen (2005) also points out that calligraphy reflects the calligrapher’s character and moral standing. In the process of learning from the master, the calligrapher is not only learning the master’s technical skills but the master’s moral qualities as well. Therefore, the “only way to good calligraphy is to work on one’s quality as a person” (p. 67). It is no surprise to see many Chinese devote a great deal of attention to perfecting their handwriting.

The moving of the brush helps to bring life and motion back to the practitioner. Chen (2003) explains that when a person is wielding a brush, as in calligraphy, the person has to focus and plan his movements. In the process of practicing calligraphy, the practitioner is utilizing his knowledge; by moving the brush, one helps to restimulate the brain. In his discussion on arm movements and brain function, Chen (2003) notes that as one moves one’s hands when practicing calligraphy, the activities of his/her right brain have been activated.

In their studies, Kao (1991) and Kao and Goan (1995) found that practicing calligraphy regulates breathing and heart rate and lowers blood pressure—all of which contribute to a higher level of a “state of consciousness” (p. 72). Chen (2003) concurs that practicing Chinese calligraphy increases the practitioner’s cognitive level and sense of self. After practicing calligraphy on a regular basis, participants showed an increased self-esteem (Lam, 2000). Practicing calligraphy also stimulates brain function and therefore increases cognitive level. In their studies where they performed tests on brain activity, Kao and Goan (1995) found that after a subject has been practicing Chinese calligraphy for half an hour, the brain’s activity level increased significantly on the right hemisphere. The right hemisphere is believed to relate to cognitive processing capability,

mental activities, and human intelligence. This seems to support the Thompson and Janigian (1988) research findings about meaning making and rebuilding a sense of self.

Calligraphy is often used as tool for self-expression. Cao (2008) notes that through self-expression, calligraphers can express their genuine feelings and convey a rich association of ideas. Cao also notes how some great ancient calligraphers believed that practicing calligraphy with the heart follow the natural flow of the hands and would be the best mode in creating their art. Cao quotes one of great calligraphers from the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), Mi Fu, to illustrate how practicing calligraphy can satisfy the calligrapher, “Doing calligraphy is like playing a game, never mind whether my work is awkward or skillful, I will be contented so long as I have fully expressed myself, putting down the brush, let’s call it the end of the game” (Cao, 2008, p. 263). Liu (2007) has the same opinion that calligraphers work with their hands, which follow their minds. Cao further explains by quoting another great calligrapher Su Shi from the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) about natural posture of that is to let the brush do the job. Which means the hand is open and loose and “the mind forgets about the hand and forgets about the brush which leaves the calligrapher in his best mood for the art creation” (p. 250). Practicing calligraphy can change the practitioner’s personality and cognitive thinking. Chin (2001) states that calligraphy is an intellectual and physical process whose practice involves attentiveness, sincerity, and endurance; it helps to shape the practitioner’s “character and personality” (p. 10). In their research, Kao and Goan (1995) found that people who had been practicing calligraphy for fifteen years or more (p. 63) showed significantly quicker responses than those who had no calligraphic writing experience. In a different research, Kao and Goan (1998), note that long-term

practitioners showed significant differences in the following areas than those who did not practice on a regular basis. Those who had practiced calligraphy for a long time appeared to be more stable and mature. They also seemed to be more humble and got along with others more easily and tended to be more responsible and perseverant, and they also seemed to be mellower and more congruent. Although, none of these researches directly correlate to meaning making, these maybe aspects of meaning making as all of these qualities may enhance personal growth, to deepen self-reflections and thoughts, thus enriching the meaning-making process.

Chinese Brush Writing and Continuing Bonds

Existing and available research do not make a direct connection between practicing Chinese brush writing and continuing bonds. However, one of the functions that writing calligraphy serves is writing a memoir of the deceased. Some scholars (e.g., Liu, 2007; Tseng, 2003) note that many scripts of Chinese calligraphy were carved as epitaphs on tombstones in order to tell the life story of influential people. Sometimes these carved pieces were done by family members or by children of the deceased. Other times the carving was done by a professional. These carvings were done in order to let people know about the deceased and to maintain their legacies. Ho and Tsui (2001) support these scholars and note that a continuous bonding with the dead seems to be important in Chinese culture. Ho and Tsui (2001) describe the ancient Chinese character for death as entailing three concepts—loss, grief, and mourning (p. 2). The image of the character conveys a message of remembering the deceased loved one. Ryan (1986) claims that Confucian teaching in Chinese culture emphasizes regular attendance at

rituals that relate the living with the dead. This is done in order to remember one's parents/ancestors, to show gratitude, and to express emotions. Chinese funeral and mourning rituals emphasize a continuous bond with the deceased. The application of rituals helps to minimize negative feelings toward the separation (Bonanno, 2005). The practice of Chinese calligraphy could offer an opportunity for remembering the deceased and maintaining their legacy. Besides writing their stories in calligraphic form, the bereaved could also practice writing characters that contain emotions and feelings related to loss and separation, or write stories of the deceased person.

In addition, researcher Chen (2003) and scholar Ouyang (2008) believe that calligraphy expresses the calligrapher's feelings and emotions. The emotions and strokes are interdependent. The emotions of the practitioner are expressed through the lines and strokes of the calligraphy, and the structure and forms of each stroke are demonstrations of those feelings and emotions. To Ouyang (2008), the understanding and appreciation of Chinese calligraphy can be done through two important themes. The first is that calligraphy captures the beauty of nature through images. The second is that the aim of calligraphy is to express the feelings and emotions of the calligrapher. Therefore, the practice of Chinese calligraphy, an expressive art form, can be used as a prompt to help the bereaved to express their feelings toward the loss of their loved ones.

Chinese Brush Writing and Regaining Balance/Reestablishing Control

Chung (2006) claims that the belief of Daoism (Taoism) influences the aesthetic expression of arts in East Asia; and all aesthetic practices such as dance, martial arts, and brushwork (painting and calligraphy) are all paths for reaching enlightenment. Chung

cited Dao-De Jing (Way of Virtue) about the Daoism belief of brushwork: “The brushwork should reflect a balanced execution of yin and yang; a balance between substance and abstraction, motion and stillness, decisiveness and uncertainty, and other conflicting forces that reflect the Daoist precept that nothingness can conceal action and action can express nothingness” (Chung, 2006, p. 34). Chung further states that balance and harmony are essential elements in Chinese calligraphic writing and painting. “In calligraphy, harmony and rhythm exist between characters and between characters and between rows of characters” (Chung, 2006, p. 36).

The physical and psychological aspects of calligraphy interplay to maintain a good balance of one’s life. The brushwork represents the unification of the practitioner’s body and mind through breathing, concentration, and contemplation (Davey, 1999). Davey further says that the contrary body movement in practicing calligraphy is the same as in walking and dancing. The use of Chinese brushstroke requires the involvement of the whole person, including the mind and body. Davey further explains that when drawing a line, the right shoulder balances with the brush at the left side; the brush and the body are balanced equally in the middle of the line; as the line moves, the left shoulder balances the brush on the right. Davey added states that a master of calligraphy must coordinate his mind with his physical body. That is, practicing calligraphy is to combine mental power and physical force. To Davey, each character or each brushstroke is the exhibition of the mental power; and the “internal energy” (Davey, 1999, p. 57), the creative energy or mental force of the calligrapher, flow through his body. The practitioner will achieve different levels of state of mind in terms of patience, insights, and persistence. Chung concurs that the practitioner unifies his body and mind in order

to reach the conscious of state of nothingness. “Through focused concentration, the practitioner becomes the center of the universe, and the brushstrokes emerge naturally” (Chung, 2006, p. 36). Kao (1991) claims that practicing calligraphy can help the practitioner with regulating breathing, forming proper body gestures, calming the mind, and exercising the will. Yen (2005) also notes that practicing calligraphic writing in Chinese is essential to the making of a person. Yet, writing concerns with issues of *wen* (balance) which is mainly about “relation-centredness” and “individual-centredness” (p.33), that is the idea of maintaining balance. Yen further explains that writing is an essential part of becoming a person in the Chinese philosophy through the attainment of *wen*, the achievement and maintenance of balance.

Empirical research shows that practicing Chinese calligraphy has a close relationship with regulating bodily functions and responses. For example, Kao (1991) and Kao and Goan (1995) measured the relationship between practicing Chinese calligraphy and heartbeat, pulse rate, breathing patterns, blood pressure, and brain activity. All of these tests were done with scientific recording systems and machinery (e.g., ambulatory monitoring system, Medilog recorder, FM tape recorder, EEG) to monitor the physiological changes in each participant. Kao (1991) and Chen (2003) found that practicing Chinese calligraphy slows breathing down. During the time that they were practicing calligraphy, the participants’ breathing became slower, and the time to breathe in was longer, and the interval between each breath was longer (Kao, 1991, p. 155). Although the participants varied in experiences and years of practice, their breathing patterns showed similar changes.

Similar to Kao's (1991) findings on breathing rate, Chen (2003) claims that experience with calligraphy was not an influential factor in the result of slowing heartbeat and pulse rate. Other researches also show similar results with people who practice Chinese calligraphy with their nondominant hands (Kao, 1991). Both tests by Kao (1991) and Chen (2003) yielded results showing that practicing Chinese calligraphy helps to lower and regulate blood pressure. The study by Kao (1991) shows that participants with Chinese calligraphy experience of more than five years had a lower blood pressure than those who had fewer experiences (Kao, 1991, p. 305). Ngan (1998) explains that Chinese calligraphy is not some tedious art; rather, it is a highly coordinated activity. The details of Chinese calligraphy immerse the practitioner's thinking and movements. Only after the physical requirements of utilizing the whole body are met can a Chinese calligrapher practitioner know how to develop mind power. The processes may seem long, but they will make the practitioner feel enlightened and experience a journey of personal growth without limitation. This process helps to delight the practitioner's heart, and therefore develops well-being. The practitioner should empty his mind and hold the brush as if the brush, hand, and the body are one unit. To Hough, the brush is only an extension of mind and intention. When we focus deeply, we will reach a higher consciousness level as if the brush and the body do not exist. It's only the mind that is working, without confinement of brushwork. The mind or the intention always leads before the brush or any physical movement.

According to Yen (2005), writing calligraphy not only mobilizes all bodily resources, it also sharpens one's sensitivity to the surrounding world. The practice of calligraphy is believed to be simultaneously a way of achieving artistic excellence,

enhancing the physical health, improving mental agility, and cultivating psychological tranquility (p. 107). To Peng (1999), brushstroke techniques help to relax and calm one's mind; through the process of doing calligraphy, we learn to relax by breathing along with the movement. Chen (2003) states that practicing calligraphy can help the practitioner to reach a state of relaxation. Both Kao (1991) and Chen (2003) make similar claims in their studies that practicing calligraphy can regulate breathing, pulse, and heart rate, and blood pressure; and the effects are more obvious when using soft-tip Chinese brush than when using a hard-point pen. Through concentration and breathing, the brushstroke technique encompasses both meditative and reflective components for both relaxation and discipline.

The strokes used in Chinese characters and calligraphy always strive for a sense of balance, proportion, and harmony (Kao, 1991; Guo, 1995; Chung, 2006). All these are keys to helping the practitioners attain balance both physically and psychologically or symbolically and echo the needs of the bereaved to search for a sense of balance, which is temporarily missing during the period of grief. In the process of calligraphic writing, one must balance and coordinate one's body and mind, which in turn leads to psychophysiological changes. In addition, the practice of Chinese brush writing can lead to healing and change as the process of art making helps the bereaved to achieve symbolic control and safety, which are essential elements for establishing a sense of balance. No one has explicitly made the connection between the two, although there is some evidence that practicing calligraphy does help practitioners reach some sense of balance (Davey, 1999; Kao, 1991), which is an important element of healthy bereavement (Wood, 1981; Thompson, 1998; Cochran & Claspell, 1987).

Therapeutic Application of Chinese Calligraphy

Kao (1991) has done extensive research studies on the effectiveness of practicing Chinese calligraphy with different populations in Taiwan. For example, in one of the studies, he tested twelve people to trace, copy, and write free-hand the same twenty characters. Results showed lowered heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate in these participants. Kao (1991) claims that calligraphy therapy is effective with “normal” people as well as with emotionally disturbed children, children with intellectual disabilities, people with mental illness, and people with physical illness. Chen (2003) has written many creative learning curriculums for elementary school students in various places in Taiwan. In the curriculums, he integrated calligraphy writing into creative learning for those students who were poor in concentration, self-image, and interpersonal relationship. Results showed that after practicing Chinese calligraphy for forty minutes every week in class, students showed improvement in the above areas at the end of the semester. Chen (2003) concurs with Kao and explains that calligraphy therapy is specifically effective in seven areas: 1) increasing concentration, 2) decreasing hyperactivities, 3) enhancing cognitive level, 4) decreasing negative behaviors, 5) improving problematic behaviors, 6) increasing self-image, 7) and stabilizing negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, confusion (Chen, 2003, p. 107). In addition, Chen claims that practicing calligraphy shows very positive therapeutic effects on people with mental illness (Chen, 2003, p. 40). Goan (2000) claim that practicing Chinese calligraphy helps in the physical, cognitive, psychosomatic, behavioral, and psychological areas. Physically, it helps bring about emotional stabilization, mental

relaxation, and physiological slowdown. Cognitively, it improves attention and concentration, enhances problem-solving ability, hones spatial and abstract reasoning abilities, develops a quicker response, and improves short-term memory. It also has a positive effect on those who have hypertension, Type II diabetes, the emotional condition of mental patients, and children with ADHD (p. 1).

Various researchers have studied the effectiveness of practicing Chinese calligraphy with different populations. Research on Chinese calligraphy therapy with those who suffered from different mental health problems and/or physical symptoms show positive results (Kao, et al. 2000). For example, in the study conducted by Kao and Liu (2000) on an elementary school in Guangzhou, China, on 32 children of ages 9 to 11 with behavior issues such as impulsive behaviors, rapid emotional changes, and interruptive behaviors, they used the Conners' Parent and Teacher Rating Scale to measure these children's emotional states and behavior. With four weeks of structural design calligraphy practice of 40 minutes a day, five days a week, these children showed significant improvement on the children's concentration and reduced the incidence of interruptive behavior. Lam (2000) conducted research using calligraphy therapy with 24 primary grade students in Taiwan, with the average age of 11, who showed emotional disturbance symptoms. Lam used several different instruments to measure the participants' emotional states, feelings toward practicing calligraphy, and learning activity. These were the Scale of Children's Emotion, the Scale of Calligraphy Self-Feeling, and the Review of Calligraphic Learning Activity. The self-reporting items include the concentration, the calmness, the satisfaction, and the willingness exhibited in calligraphic writing. Results show that after eight weeks of practicing calligraphy, the

level of suspiciousness, insecurity, low self-esteem, isolation, and attack tendency were reduced significantly.

Kao & Zhao (2000) did tests on 40 Beijing children aged 11 to 15 with mild-grade mental retardation. Results show that after three months of practicing calligraphy, they all showed significant improvement in concentration, flexibility, fine motor control, action and motion accuracy, analytical skills, judgment, self-control, and observational skills. Another research done by Kao & Li (2000) in a special school in Beijing on 50 children with IQ between 50 and 70 and 10 of them also exhibited ADHD. Measuring their concentration ability with the Test of Variable of attention, Kao and Li (2000) found that practicing calligraphy was most effective for the hearing concentration of children with ADHD. In addition, practicing calligraphy also showed significant improvement in children with mild retardation. Hu (2000) did a similar study on 34 children with mental retardation. After calligraphy training for one hour per day, five days a week for three months, the children showed significant improvement in their attention abilities, attention stability, attention selectivity, and attention flexibility.

Kao, Li, Huo, and Gao (2000) also applied calligraphy therapy on children with autism. They used the Conners' Parent and Teacher Rating Scale to measure the result of these children's behavioral changes. Results showed that with calligraphy practice, their general behavior, classroom behavior, behavior in group, behavior at home, and attitude toward parents improved.

Kao, Cheung, Chiu, and Ng (2000) have done a study among 45 college students of the University of Hong Kong. They divided the participants into three groups: one group practiced for 0.5 hours, the second group 1 hour, and the last group 1.5 hours.

Several instruments were used to measure the changes of the students' anxiety levels, such as the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale, and the Affect Adjective Checklist. Results indicated that the anxiety levels were reduced significantly after the students practiced calligraphy. They also found that the longer (1.5 hours vs. 0.5 hours) participants practiced calligraphy, the more their anxiety level dropped (Kao & Liu, 2000, p. 218).

Guo, Kao, Liu, and Yang (2000) also used calligraphy and then measured the anxiety levels of a group of 12 patients with high blood pressure with the average age of 63. Participants needed to fill out questionnaires, from State-Trait Anxiety Inventory to the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire before and after the experiment to measure their anxiety levels. Although the changes are not significant, results did show a decrease in the participants' blood pressure after 30 minutes of practicing.

Kao, Cheung, and Gao (2000) did a test on the effectiveness of Chinese calligraphy on 28 participants, aged 59 to 82, with Alzheimer's from the psychiatric unit of An Ding Hospital in Beijing. After 25 minutes of practicing calligraphy, all participants showed significant changes and improvement in their short-term memory; language skills; ability to comprehend questions; reading, writing and drawing; as well as eye-hand coordination. Kao and Tang (2000) tested the effectiveness of calligraphy on 21 patients with depressive disorder from the psychiatric unit of An Ding Hospital using the Profile of Mood States to measure their tension-anxiety, depression-dejection, anger-hostility, fatigue-inertia, vigor-ability, and confusion-bewilderment. Results showed that even with 20 minutes of practicing, their anxiety levels, depressive symptoms, fatigue, and level of confusion decreased significantly. Fan, Kao, Wang, and Guo (2000) used

calligraphy to work with 119 inpatients who were diagnosed with chronic schizophrenia from four different psychiatric hospitals in Beijing. Using the Scale for the Assessment of Negative Symptoms, they performed a test to see if changes occurred in three areas: interpersonal relationship, daily activities, and cognitive and affective (affective, attention, and behavior). After three months of treatment with calligraphy therapy, all the patients showed significant improvement in those three areas.

In their research study with 287 nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC) patients, Yang, Li, Hong, and Kao (2010) found that practicing calligraphy demonstrated positive results. In this study, participants were asked to practice calligraphy writing for 30 minutes per day for four consecutive weeks. Results showed that practicing calligraphy elevated the patients' level of concentration and improved their mood.

Guo, Gao, and Kao (1993) did a study on 32 children age 7 to 16, comparing the effect of calligraphy writing activity and other activities—including English writing and calculation—on their reaction time in the two hemispheres. The researchers found that the children's reaction time was significantly shorter after calligraphy writing, whereas English writing did not show significant changes.

Kao and Yam (2000) claim that practicing Chinese calligraphy is a meaningful activity that brings about a positive influence, and even transcends racial boundaries and language barriers. They have done research on the effectiveness of practicing Chinese calligraphy in lowering the anxiety level of a group of thirty non-Chinese native speakers in the University of Hong Kong. They divided the 30 participants into three groups: those who understood (able to read and write) Chinese characters, those who did not understand (able to read but not write) Chinese characters, and a control group of those

who were Chinese illiterate (unable to read and write). The experimental groups were involved in calligraphy writing for 30 minutes, and the control group engaged in free activities for 30 minutes. All three groups filled out the Profile of Mood States to measure their anxiety levels before and after the experiment. After 30 minutes of practicing calligraphy, both experimental groups showed positive results in lowering their anxiety levels. Results showed that changes were significant for those who understood Chinese than for those who did not.

Chinese Views on Death and Bereavement

Death is a universal subject, but the response to the matter differs among cultures (Zohery, 1989). Meagher and Bell (1993) say that the attitude one holds toward death and dying are rooted in one's cultural values. These values affect the way people conceptualize death, which influence attitudes toward death and bereavement, which then affect behavior, the way they grieve. Similarly, both Gire (2002) and Mantala-Bozos (2003) state that although death occurs to all humans, cultures vary in terms of how people perceive death. In some cultures, death is viewed as a transition to another form of existence; in others, they view death as the final end. These different conceptions can have a noticeable influence on people's willingness to talk about death, their expressions of grief and mourning, and the rituals they practice.

Cheung and Ho (2004) state that many Chinese characters are pictographic. In their research, Ho and Tsui (2001) and Cheung and Ho (2004) concur with the above statement and describe the ancient Chinese character for death as entailing three

important death-related concepts—“loss, grief, and mourning” (p. 48). The character depicts the relational dimension of the loss, which “concerns the adjustment of the survivor” (p. 48).

Ho and Tsui (2001) note that a continued bonding with the dead seems to be important in Chinese culture. Watson (1988) states that “the notion of exchange between living and dead is the foundation of late imperial China’s ideological domain” (pp. 8–9). Cooper (1998) concurs that death does not end the bond among patrilineal kinsmen (p. 10). Yick and Gupta (2002) have the same opinion that the “Chinese believe that the relationship between the dead and living is continuous” (p. 5). They further explain that the spirits of the deceased live on and the family members are to provide continuous care as part of the concept of filial piety.

Yick and Gupta (2002) further explain that death rituals and practices also serve to maintain “Chinese identity” (p. 7) among the Chinese. Ryan (1986) claims that Confucian teaching in Chinese culture emphasizes regular attendance at rituals that relate the living with the dead. This is done in order to remember one’s parents/ancestors, to show gratitude, and to express emotions. Chinese funeral and mourning rituals emphasize a continuous bond with the deceased; this bond helps to minimize negative feelings toward the separation (Bonanno, Papa, Lalande, Zhang, & Noll, 2005).

According to Bonanno et al. (2005), within the Chinese culture, there is a focus on expressing remembrance, grief, and emotions through rituals rather than through verbal means. Terry (2000) notes that rituals allow the bereaved to move into the grief experience in a safe way. Yick and Gupta (2002) note that mourning rituals in the Chinese culture serve three main purposes: help the deceased and the bereaved journey to

a new status, provide a forum for the bereaved to express their grief, and provide social and emotional support to the bereaved (p. 3). Bonanno, Papa, Lalande, Zhang, and Noll(2005) concluded that the Chinese mourning rituals symbolize and reinforce cultural connectedness and the continuation of the relationship with the deceased. Pang and Lam (2002) note that mourning rituals (whether pre-funeral, funeral, or post-funeral) are intended to help the bereaved to accept the death of their loved ones. They further explain that performing these rituals also serves to ensure, in the minds of the bereaved, that the deceased arrived at a better world at once. Furthermore, these rituals help the bereaved gain peace of mind for having seen to those requirements that guarantee their loved ones' eternal happiness.

According to Martinson, Chao, and Chung (2005), Confucianism places a high respect on ancestors and that remembering and honoring those who died provides a moral basis for family and society. Buddhism acknowledges that the present life and its sufferings are transient. The doctrines of karma and reincarnation play an important part in shaping the belief of suffering, death, and dying, which also fills the void and lays some hope in the face of death (Lin, 1995). In Taoism, death represents a return to the origins of life, with dying being a journey of return to Tao (Way), the vibrant process of all things (Martinson, Chao, & Chung 2005).

In Confucianism, five important human relationships are central to one's life, even if the other person is no longer living. These include relationships between ruler and subject, between father and son, between husband and wife, between brothers, and between friends (Ho & Brotherson, 2007). These relationships are hierarchical, and the lower-ranking person is expected to respect, obey, and be loyal to those above him. To

Ma (2005), filial piety (children's obligation to respect their parents) is a central value system of Confucian belief, and it has deeply influenced Chinese culture. The idea of unquestioning obedience to parents is encouraged in children at an early age. This is maintained throughout life even after the individual already has his/her own family (Hamilton, 1996). Therefore, during the bereavement period, elderly parents do not get support from their friends; rather, they expect support from their adult children (Li, Liang, Toler, & Gu, 2005).

In Chinese culture, ancestors represent the continuous connection of social structure. Ancestor worship consists of a system of religious beliefs and rituals, and these beliefs and rituals correspond to the behavioral norms of society (Ma, 2005). According to Ho and Brotherson (2007), filial piety is greatly emphasized in Chinese belief and practice. Children are expected to treat their parents well, which includes giving them a proper burial and keeping their memories after they pass away.

The concept of death among the Chinese derives from a mixture of superstition and folklore (Yick and Gupta, 2002), Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (Brent, Speece, Lin, Dong, & Yang, 1996). The concepts of gods, ghosts, and ancestors are transposable in Chinese cultural belief (Hsu, Kahn, Yee, & Lee, 2004). Many Chinese believe the dead become living creatures in another form (Yick & Gupta, 2002). Tang, Wu, and Yan (2002) state that death in the Chinese culture is not the end but, rather, is "a transition in life, and a continuous and integral part of life" (p. 492). Yick and Gupta (2002) note that deceased ancestors are believed to play an important role in a family's prosperity, health, and achievement. Therefore, paying the ancestors proper respect will ensure blessings from them.

Hsu, Khan, and Hsu (2003) note that the Chinese in general believe that “the spirits of the deceased can travel, communicate, see, feel, and make decisions affecting the lives of their descendants” (p. 311). In their study of widows in Taiwan, Hsu, Khan, and Hsu (2003) found that many Chinese women in Taiwan feel that the death of a spouse brings them the feelings of abandonment and hopelessness. As they further explained, husband and children provide them a sense of “mission and meaningfulness” (p. 319) in life. The death of the spouse makes them feel incomplete as they believe the only way to achieve a sense of “wholeness” (p. 317) is to reunite with the deceased spouse in the afterlife.

Although the Chinese are very respectful to their ancestors, when addressing death and loss, they have a propensity to be silent. Researchers (e.g., Yang & Chen, 2002; Wu, 2005) observe that Chinese people are superstitious and that death is often a taboo subject. It is widely believed that simply talking about death or related matters can attract evil spirits, bring bad luck to a person and his family, and even cause premature death (Chan & Yau, 2009). This belief is so central to the lives of many Chinese that they even avoid using words that have similar pronunciations to the word “death.” For example, the number 4 (*Sei*) sounds closest to the word “death,” especially in Cantonese *Say*. Therefore, the number 4 is often avoided in speech, and even in the numbering of floors in buildings, especially in residential complexes.

According to Chow, Chan, and Ho (2007), the Chinese seldom share their feelings and talk about their losses with others because of several reasons. First, the display of intense emotions is considered harmful to one’s health. Second, it is ideal for the Chinese to be able to maintain a harmonious balance in all aspects of life. The

expression of strong emotions would interrupt this harmony. Third, showing intense emotions also indicates the inability to cope with the situation and maintain balance. Fourth, according to Taoism, death is part of nature, and we should accept it peacefully and subtly.

Talking about death and grief is generally taboo in Chinese culture. In addition, most Chinese people tend to rely on themselves and their family members as their sole support in times of bereavement (Li, Chan, & Lee, 2002). Li, Chan, and Lee also note that because of this, Chinese people very seldom seek support and bereavement service from outside sources. However, since even discussing death is taboo among family members, more distress is created (Li, Chan, & Lee, 2002, p. 290).

Summary

The focus of Western bereavement research and counseling over the past century has moved toward the model that emphasizes existential concerns and the maintenance of relationships. Accepted practice has changed from the need for “letting go” originated by Freud (2007) and the need of detaching from the deceased (Bowlby, 1982), to forming new relationships (Lindemann, 1944), establishing a new identity (Parkes, 1972, 1987, 1996), and viewing bereavement as a set of stages (Kübler-Ross, 1969). Klass and Walter (2001) affirms that grief resolution begins when the bereaved are able to integrate the deceased into their ongoing lives. The emphasis has shifted from letting go to the recognition of the need to maintain some healthy and symbolic bonds between the living and the dead (Attig, 2000; Klass & Walter, 2001; and Neimeyer, 1998, 2001; Bauer & Bonanno, 2001; Silverman, Nickman, & Worden, 1992; Bonanno, Mihalecz, & Le Jeune, 1999; Belicki, Gulko, Ruzycski, & Aristotle, 2003).

Many theories provide us framework of understanding the concepts of grief and human responses. None of them answers all our questions because as human beings, our ways of grieving are highly related to our culture, values, and beliefs. Newer researchers such as Schuurman (2003) agree that bereavement is not some set of stages or tasks; rather, it is an experience that the bereaved have to go through.

Although literature has not been focused on the application of Chinese brush writing on loss and bereavement, both researchers and practitioners support the belief that practicing Chinese calligraphy can enhance the development of a sense of balance (Chen & Lum, 1995; Peng, 1999; Shen, 2000; Wang, 1995). To them, practicing calligraphy can lead to

physical relaxation as well as calming the mind. It can bring a sense of liveliness, interactivity, and engagement. Speaking from many years of personal experience, many of these practitioners believe that practicing Chinese brushstrokes can enhance concentration and focus, as well as change one's emotional state and subsequently help one have more control over mind and body (Guo, 1995; Wang, 1995); Peng, 1999); restore active interaction with others, as it serves as a means of communication (Davey, 1999; Thompson, 2003; Chen, 2003); and subdue distracting thoughts and worries (Yen, 2005). Moreover practicing Chinese calligraphy encourages practitioners to revisit their life stories and create meaning, as well as accept the inevitable (Davey, 1999, p. 31). All these are inevitable important elements in a healthy bereavement process (i.e., Attig, 2000; Klass & Walter, 2001; Neimeyer, 1998, 2001). Therefore, this research study was attempted to establish the important role of brushwork in helping the bereaved in the hope that similar results could be drawn to support more and further study in the application of the tool. I hope that my research on the topic of exploring bereavement and loss through expressive forms of calligraphy as a prompt to opening conversation about the grieving process will be a contribution to the academic gap in the current literature.

Chapter 3

Method

This chapter concerns the methods of collecting data on the research questions and the method used in the research. It includes detailed descriptions of the research setting, the participants, data collection, and interview protocols, as well as the data analysis decoding methods.

Research Question

Many different expressive therapists of different modalities use different art forms to help people through grief (e.g., Bailey, 1999; Sherebrin, 1999; Skewes & Erdonmez-Grocke, 2000). There are also many researchers on the application of Chinese calligraphy as therapeutic interventions for people with physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral problems. However, there is no research on the use of Chinese brushstroke techniques in working with people who have experienced loss. In light of this, I wanted to explore how Chinese brushstrokes techniques, served as a prompt, in particular while practicing calligraphy, contribute to possible changes in the nature of meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance during the bereavement process.

In this dissertation, I focused on the experience of Chinese brushstroke techniques among normal bereaved elders who have recently lost a significant relationship. It led to the following question:

How might the application of Chinese brushstrokes support the dynamic nature of the change of the three elements of bereavement (meaning making, continuing bonds with the deceased loved ones, and maintaining balance) that lead to healthy grieving for elders?

Qualitative Research

This is a qualitative research study. Creswell (2008, 2009) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process using a specific method to explore a “social or human” (Creswell, 2009, p.15) issue. In doing the qualitative research, the researcher constructs a “complex, holistic picture” (p. 15) of the participants or settings by studying words and recording details of the views of the participants. Ary (2002) concurs that qualitative researchers look into a specific issue by focusing on the picture as a whole through in-depth understanding. Glesne (2006) holds a similar view of qualitative research, which is that it is a way of understanding certain observable facts and issues from the perspective of the participants in a particular “social-cultural-political” context (p. 4). Glesne further explains that through in-depth and long-term observation of, questionings of, and interactions with the participants, qualitative researchers can identify patterns. Slavin (1992) also claims that qualitative research is descriptive because data are collected in the form of words and pictures. Slavin further argues that qualitative researchers treat everything in the environment as potential clues for understanding a situation or a phenomenon.

Creswell (1998) identifies five types of qualitative studies: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (pp. 47–64). Glesne (2006) identifies six qualitative research modes using slightly different names: life history, grounded theory, case study, critical ethnography, feminist ethnography, and action research (pp. 11-17). I have adopted the case study format for this research project.

Case Study

In my research, I used the case study format with pre-and-post-study interview questions as part of the data collection to find any differences in the three elements that lead to healthy bereavement. Stake (1995) defines a case study as the inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Stakes further explains that a case study is bounded by time and activity during which the researcher collects detailed information over a period of time. Researchers note that a case study is an in-depth analysis of a question or a problem (Creswell, 1998), which can be focused on an individual, a group, an organization, or a program (Ary, 2002). As summarized by Creswell (2008), the “case” in the case study can be a single individual, several individuals separately or in a group, a program, events, or activities. The “case” can also be a process consisting of a series of steps that form a sequence of activities. The researcher seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of the case by collecting multiple forms of data (Creswell, 2008, pp. 476–77). Ary (2002) concurs that the case study can be an in-depth study on any individual, a group, an organization, or a program. For this research, I conducted a workshop that introduced the

practice of the Chinese brushstroke into different art activities as a form of expression. This expression focused on elders who are coping with grief over a recent loss of a loved one. In my study, the “cases” were the six participants who experienced the loss of a loved one. The “cases” were the series of different art activities applying the Chinese brush as the medium used in the workshop sessions.

The study was conducted at the Hebrew Senior Life Center, a long-term care nursing facility for the elderly, for a consecutive period of six weeks. I explored the personal experiences of these elderly people who have recently lost a loved one recently. For the workshop, I recruited anyone who was willing to participate in the research study. The instruments used were pre- and post-study interview questions, dialogues during the workshop session, observations, and artwork done by the participants. Thoughts and feelings related to the topic, art activities, and art-making process were addressed in each session. The participants were encouraged to share and retell stories of their lives with their loved ones as well as talk about their feelings and personal experiences of the loss. The analysis of this case study was done using the typical procedures of analyzing each case separately and then conducting a cross-case analysis to identify common and different themes (Creswell, 2008, p. 490).

Using Art in the Research Design

Expressive therapy was used in this research as a prompt to aid in bereavement counseling. The main purpose of art making was using themes and images to lead the participants to open up so that they would feel more at ease when talking about intense

feelings of loss. The process of art making created a channel for them to talk about their feelings. The images served as containers to hold the feelings as well as a visual evidence of the process. Their willingness to participate and the process of making art were more important than the end products themselves. Thus, the meaning of each stroke, the way participants held and wielded the brush, the way the strokes were created, the direction of the strokes, the pen pressure, and the thickness of the strokes were not the focus of this study.

Weber and Mitchell (2004) note that the reasons for using art forms in research are similar to the reasons for using arts as therapeutic tools. The reflexivity of art making allows practitioners to connect with themselves, and at the same time to create a distance from themselves. On one hand, artistic self-expression reveals aspects of the self. It puts the artists in closer touch with how they really feel, see, and act. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the self. On the other hand, artistic self-expression allows the artists to step back and look at themselves from a new perspective, which could lead to self-analysis if necessary.

Art can also capture what language cannot describe. Weber and Mitchell (2004) view arts-based methods of inquiry as capable of helping people access inexpressible experiences. Arts create stronger impacts than words alone because arts bring out the emotional and intellectual awareness and responses of the viewers. To Weber and Mitchell (2004), art can communicate holistically, keeping both the whole and its essential parts in view.

Weber and Mitchell (2004) adds that the process of making art enables the artists to feel alive and to discover what was hidden and to see what others never noticed before.

Therefore, using artistic modes of expression increases the chances of finding one's "voice," and therefore influences the artists and viewers at the same time. Weber and Mitchell (2004) further explain that art can be a personal and private experience as well as a social and public matter. This is because the function of art is to break through the predictable and the routine and carry messages that can be reflected in the world around us.

Wadeson (2010) sums up the advantages of art therapy. Images in art are more powerful, and they come to our minds before language because imagery plays an essential role in our early "personality development" (Wadeson, 2010, p. 10). Wadeson further states that art, to most of us, is not a daily used form of communication, as images and themes can emerge unexpectedly in art that could lead to new insight and further learning and development. To Wadeson (2010), language and verbal expression is a "linear communication" that requires sequential structures and logic (p. 13), but art is "spatial" (p. 13). In a single picture, the person can show "closeness and distance, bonds and divisions, similarities and differences, feelings, particular attributes, and context" (p. 13). Furthermore, art making energizes and revitalizes those who engage in the process. Art making can increase one's sense of success and confidence, especially for those who are less articulated.

Research Study

Background: Selection of Participants

Initially, I wanted to do a study exploring whether practicing Chinese brushstrokes aided Chinese immigrants to better cope with their bereavement in terms of meaning making of the event, continuing bonds with the deceased loved one, and maintaining balance. To me this seemed more logical and culturally appropriate. However, after I conducted two pilot studies, I found that the techniques could be applied to non-Chinese populations as well. One of the two pilot studies were for Chinese-speaking participants who did not experience any major losses at the time of the study, and the other one was for non-Chinese-speaking participants who have lost a loved one within a three- to six-month period. In fact, the non-Chinese-speaking group was more receptive to trying new things; therefore, they seemed to be more ready to explore the medium. On the other hand, the Chinese-speaking group felt that they had the knowledge, and they found the warm-up exercise of drawing lines unhelpful and meaningless. It seemed that the Chinese-speaking group did not engage in the line drawing activity due to their previous knowledge of basic strokes in calligraphy.

During the process of practicing calligraphy of pictograms, the non-Chinese-speaking group felt that the structure of each character was interesting, and they would put more effort to learning to write them. The more they practiced, the more they became interested in knowing the meaning behind each character and wanted to make the connections between their feelings and the characters. As for the Chinese-speaking group, the fact that they knew the meaning of the characters that related to feelings and emotions made them show less interest in practicing to draw them, and they found it hard to make personal connections with the meanings of those characters. They instead were looking for something new from the researcher. Moreover, it was difficult to recruit

Chinese-speaking participants with loss experiences for the study. Chinese people, in general, are more reserved when it comes to sharing their personal feelings with strangers, and grieving is one of the seldom-addressed issues in the Chinese culture.

After trying for a while, I decided to shift the focus and started recruiting a multicultural group instead. To be more specific, I accommodated participants who were non-ethnic Chinese. This included people not raised in a traditional Chinese background, who spoke minimal Chinese or none at all, and/or who did not have previous experience with Chinese brushstroke.

The use of a multicultural research group is supported by Kao (2000), who concludes that non-Chinese research participants can show positive results in practicing Chinese calligraphy. To Kao (2000), calligraphy is an activity that transcends the boundaries of race and language. Following this, I planned to examine the therapeutic effect of the Chinese brushstrokes rather than focus on particular cultural influences on its effects. Additionally, recruiting non-culturally Chinese participants for the study would increase the generalizability of my findings.

The pilot study of applying the Chinese brushstroke techniques (CBST) to the therapy for bereaved adults who have recently lost a loved one was done at the Nashoba Nursing Service and Hospice at Lunenburg, Massachusetts, in 2008. The purpose of the pilot study was to look into the possibility of applying Chinese brushstroke techniques in bereavement counseling with non-Chinese-speaking participants. The participants in this pilot study were six non-Chinese-speaking women who experienced a recent loss. Six group sessions in total was held in which experimental activities using the Chinese brushstroke were introduced to aid the participants in expressing their feelings and share

memories related to their loss and grief. Although these participants were neither Chinese speaking, nor were they familiar with the Chinese brushstroke techniques, they were able to benefit from the experience. Data collected from this pilot study suggested that practicing Chinese brushstroke techniques in coping with bereavement could be a helpful experience for the bereaved. The finding was that practicing the Chinese brushstroke could help the bereaved to relax, actualize their loss, connect with their emotions, recollect memories of the deceased, and embrace hope for the future. These are all elements essential to healthy coping with bereavement. The data collection methods were similar to those used in this study—pre- and post-study interviews, six sessions of workshop, audio-taping, note taking, and photos of the artworks used for data collecting and analysis purposes. All audio-taped materials were transcribed to look for themes that were related to grief and loss expressions. Both verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotions were observed, recorded, and analyzed. Verbal clues included the shared feelings and thoughts regarding the loss or regarding the art creation experience. I also used a notepad to record the nonverbal expressions and gestures. The pilot study did not have preset themes; the themes evolved and were identified as the workshop progressed and through transcription of audio materials.

Setting

This research study was done at the Hebrew Senior Life Rehabilitation Center (HRC) in Boston, Massachusetts. It was established in 1903 to provide long-term care for Jewish elderly around the Greater Boston area. It aims to provide complete, integrated, quality health care and housing facilities and services for seniors. The center

provides over 600 long-term-care beds for seniors and is affiliated with the Harvard Medical School. It also has a floor that caters to Russian-speaking seniors. The majority of the residents are of Jewish ethnicity or background. I started working at HRC as a volunteer in mid-2008. In November 2009, a new campus—New Bridge on the Charles (NBOC), in Dedham, Massachusetts—began its operation. About 200 residents moved to the new location. Many among those 200 were residents that I had been working with at the old location, so I began to work at the new campus as well. Space is very limited at HSL. Majority of the programs and activities were held in the dining room, the only common area in each of the units. The rooms I used for the group workshop were located in the basement level of the building. The basement level also housed the Expressive Therapies Office, the Recreational Department, and the Day Care Program.

The sessions were held in two different rooms in HRC depending on which was available at the time. One of the rooms used was a ceramic room about ninety square feet with a kiln in the corner and a large table in the middle. There was a sink next to the kiln, which was convenient for art making. The good thing about this room was that it was quiet and free from disturbances; it was ideal for the workshop. The problem with this room, however, was it was too small for participants in wheelchairs. When all participants were in wheelchairs, it could hold only four people at most. The other room I used was two hundred square feet with many long tables and a sink. The room was ideal for group activities. The problem was it was also the rest area for the recreational department staff, which made the sessions not as private and confidential as they should be.

Space was more easily available at the NBOC campus. The room I used was the activity room located in the center of the unit with glass doors on both sides. When the room was not in use, its doors stayed wide open to let residents pass through to their rooms. During the sessions, these doors were closed for privacy and confidentiality. The room was quiet and free of disturbances.

Timeline

Intervention is vital during the early stage of the bereavement because many bereaved people seek bereavement service within the first year of their loss, and majority of them seek related services in the first six month after the loss (Cherlin, et al., 2007, p. 148). Therefore, the target participants were those who had experienced the loss of a loved within the past 12 month of the study.

I adopted a six-week workshop format with one and a half hour each for the research study because most of the bereavement counseling and support groups are in either a six- to eight-week format. I used the six-week format because of the residents' health and mobility concerns. Many of my study's elderly participants were within the age range of 78 to 94. Although they were mentally intact, their physical condition often prevented them from participating in a lot of the activities, especially the ones that were held away from their units. It was difficult to predict their availability or presence from week to week. One and a half hour was a good length for them.

Worden (1996, 2002) and many bereavement counselors maintain it is normal for a person to take two years or more to recover from a major loss. For this study, I applied

the Chinese brushstroke techniques in only six sessions. I was expecting to see some results, with participants being able to make meaning, maintain bonds with the deceased, or develop more awareness of maintaining bonds with the deceased as well as becoming more balanced both psychologically and physically. Introducing a new intervention focusing on a short-term goal within a six-week period is analogous to the solution-focused brief therapy.

Brief therapy is often highly strategic, exploratory, and solution-based rather than problem-oriented. It is less concerned with how a problem arose than with the current factors sustaining it and preventing change. Brief therapists do not adhere to one “correct” approach; rather, they accept that there are many paths, any of which may or may not, in combination, turn out to be ultimately beneficial (de Shazer, 1985, 1988).

De Shazer (1985, 1988), describe solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) as a type of talking therapy that focuses on what clients want to achieve through therapy rather than on the problems that made them seek help. Rather than the formal analysis of historical causes of distress, the primary approach of SFBT is to help the client view the present from a wider context and to utilize more functional understandings. By becoming aware of these new understandings, successful clients will undergo spontaneous and generative change.

Actual Time of the Workshop

I held the first workshop in October to December 2009 at the HSL, with three participants.

The second round of sessions took place at NBOC individually with three participants six weeks each in March, May, and August of 2010, respectively.

Recruitment

Six bereaved adults of mixed age, gender, and ethnicity from the Hebrew Senior Life Center who have experienced a recent loss (less than a year) of a loved one qualified for the workshop/study. Participants were recruited through referrals from the staff of the center, including social workers, recreational workers, expressive arts therapists, and chaplains.

Recruiting participants for the group was one of the major challenges. My original plan was to work with the family members of the residents. I was told the social workers were the ones who knew the family members very well and worked very closely with them. Despite the effort of conducting two in-service training workshops for the social workers and nurses, referrals were still limited. Finally, I received several referrals from the recreational therapists and the creative arts therapists. However, not many of them were willing to participate as they did not feel comfortable talking to a stranger about their losses. In order to gather at least six participants, I had to accept almost anybody who was willing to participate. I originally wanted to work with those who have experienced a recent loss within a year. However, with the small number of referrals, two of the participants had a loss of more than a year.

Each participant was given an informed consent form (see appendix), and the study was explained to them during the initial interview before the first session of the

workshop. Then they were asked to sign the form upon agreeing to the content of the form.

Participants

All participants were white Jewish elderly. Five of them were residents of the Hebrew Senior Life Center except participant 6. They had all recently lost a loved one or a close friend within the past 12 months. All of them had no previous exposure to Chinese brushstroke techniques. According to Wallace and Hirst (1996) old age is divided into three groups: the young old (60 to 69 years), the middle old (70 to 79 years), and the old (80 years and older). The average age of the participants in this research was 87.6, which put them at the third category. To protect their identities and privacy, I assigned them pseudonyms.

Having waited for a long time, I finally gathered six people and the average age of these potential participants was 88. Upon receiving the referrals, I approached them individually to explain to them the purpose of the study and confirm their interest in participating. They all agreed to participate when I first approached them. I then conducted individual pre-workshop interviews the following week. However, on the first day of the workshop, two of the participants refused to come to the workshop because they did not remember either having met the author or having agreed to participate in the project. At last, there were only three participants in the group for the workshop.

The physical condition of the participants was another major issue affecting their attendance. For example, one of the potential participants initially agreed to join the

group, but because she was not feeling well, she was not able to come to the first session of the workshop, and she eventually did not want to join the latter sessions even if she was feeling better later on the following weeks. Participant 3 was absent on the first sessions due to her physical condition, and participant 2 was absent on the fourth session for the same reason. This affected the group coherence and the continuity of the workshop.

Needing to compete with other programs and disciplines for room and space for the workshop was another issue that affected stability of attendance. Participant 1 was absent on the second session because a rabbi visited him. Participant 3 missed the fourth session because she needed to do physical therapy. As a result, participant 1 missed the chance of getting more familiar with the tool. And participant 3 did not get to try Chinese painting.

Participant 1 (Roger)

- 89-year-old white male
- Wheelchair bound
- Lost his best friend and roommate, March 2009
- Diagnosed with depression by in-house psychiatrist
- Slightly hard of hearing but otherwise able to express himself clearly
- Had received some form of counseling (first stage of grief) from the center's social worker and chaplain, which ended prior to this study

The pre-workshop interview took place in his bedroom, which was his preference. He was eager to participate in the study as he said nobody seemed to be interested in talking to him about his loss and grief. And he thought what I did was meaningful and helpful to bereaved people. He was smiling as I approached him and greeted me with a firm handshake. He invited me to sit close to him so he could hear me better. I explained the study to him and we read the consent form together. He manifested clear understanding and agreed to sign the form so he could participate in the study. During the interview, he was in tears and paused a few times as he mentioned his friend and his wife. He seemed to be very comfortable talking and sharing with me; he was comfortable sharing his feelings with me as he also asked me if I had experienced any losses in my life.

Participant 2 (Denise)

- 88-year-old white female
- Wheelchair bound, living at the center for nine months
- Lost her best friend, June 2009
- Diagnosed with depression due to the loss by in-house psychiatrist
- Slightly hard of hearing but otherwise able to express herself clearly
- Had received some form of counseling (first stage of grief) from the center's social worker and chaplain, which ended prior to this study

The pre-workshop interview took place in her bedroom, per her preference. She normally refused to join any group activities, but she agreed to participate in my study

because, she told me, she was drawn to my sincerity and thought what I did was meaningful and that she would like to help me. She invited me to sit on her bed as we began reading the consent form together. She agreed to sign the form after she showed understanding of the study and agreed to participate in it.

Participant 3 (Maureen)

- 94-year-old white female
- On a walker, living at the center for two years
- Lost her eldest son to leukemia, June 2009
- Diagnosed with depression due to the loss by in-house psychiatrist
- Sound mind; clear verbal communication
- Had received some form of counseling (first stage of grief) from the center's social worker and chaplain, which ended prior to this study

I interviewed her in her bedroom, where she invited me to sit on her bed as the interview progressed. I explained the study to her and we read the consent form; she showed clear understanding of the study and signed the form. She was in tears as she talked about her son. However, she told me that having a chance to talk about it was helping. Toward the end of the interview, she told me about her roommate who had also lost her son to illness around the same time she lost hers. Since they often shared and exchanged support at nights, she thought her roommate might be interested in the study and that I could offer her some support as well.

Participant 4 (Eddie)

- 94-year-old white male
- On a walker, legally blind, living at the center for four years
- Lost his 90-year-old wife of 69 years, October 2009 (They celebrated their anniversary shortly before her death.)
- Mentally sound, communicated clearly

The interview took place in his bedroom. He clearly understood the consent form and signed it. Eddie and his wife were in my weekly art therapy group before she passed away. He expressed the need to continue the art therapy sessions as he felt that the weekly painting session with me helped him with expressing his feelings. When I invited him to participate in the study, he gladly accepted and seemed eager to try a different medium.

Despite his blindness, he was eager to participate in the workshops and enjoyed painting very much. Eddie was able to see the colors and images when he held the picture very close to his face as if he tried to smell the picture. However, his blindness did not stop him from coming to the art sessions, nor did it keep him from using visual art materials to express himself. He was eager to come to each of the sessions, and he would wait for me in the reception area and greet me with a big hug every week. The workshop with Eddie was in the form of individual sessions held in the activity room of his unit.

Participant 5 (Bernard)

- 83-year-old white male

- Wheelchair bound, living at the center for three years, suffered a stroke a year before moving in
- Suffered from paraplegic due to the stroke
- Lost his 18-year-old grandson to sudden death of unknown medical cause
- Mentally sound and able to communicate clearly
- Used non-dominant to eat, write, and draw

As a result of Bernard's stroke, his dominant right hand had become weak and he had begun using his nondominant hand to do most of such daily tasks as writing and eating.

The interview took place in his bedroom per his preference. Despite his difficulty moving, he managed to sign the consent form with his left hand.

Bernard also seemed eager to come to the session. He would sit and wait for me by the hallway of his unit each week, so that I would see him as soon as I walked out of the elevator. The workshop with Bernard was in the form of individual sessions that took place in the dining area of the unit. Although privacy was not guaranteed, we were lucky that interruptions or disturbances were minimal and tolerable.

Participant 6 (Deborah)

- 78-year-old white female
- Mobile, can drive around, self-caring, helps take care of her grandchildren, who, with their mother (her daughter), live upstairs
- Lives in a two-storey family house

- Lost her husband to heart attack, March 2010
- Mentally alert, can communicate clearly

Deborah was referred to the study by the social worker at the Hebrew Senior Life Center New Bridge on Charles (NBOC), as she was an appropriate candidate. I approached her through e-mail and phone. The interview took place at her home, in the dining room per her preference. She signed the consent form. She had done watercolor painting before but had no experience using the Chinese brush. She seemed eager to explore the medium.

The workshop with her was held in the form of individual sessions at her house. We worked at the dining table in her kitchen. The house was quiet and free from disturbances.

Data Collection

Audiotapes, notes, and photos of the artworks were used for data collection and analysis purposes. All the pre- and post-study interview sessions and the workshop sessions of all six participants were audio-taped. I then transcribed each of the recorded material to look for themes that were related to meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance.

Both verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotions were observed, recorded, and analyzed. Verbal clues included the shared feelings and thoughts regarding the loss or

regarding the art creation experience. I also used a notepad to record the nonverbal expressions and gestures.

Nonverbal clues included the participants' tone of speeches, the intensity and volume of their voices, their body movements, hand gestures, as well as their facial expressions were all recorded in note form. I also made a detailed list of descriptions of the room setting, the size, the location, and the lighting when the interview took place, as well as the seating and distance between me and the participants, the way they sat, how comfortable they appeared. As I said, only audio-taping was used during the interviews and each session of the workshop. In terms of recording the participants' nonverbal behaviors and facial expressions, I had to rely on note taking. I took brief notes during the interviews and during the workshop and wrote down more detailed notes at the end of each session. Therefore, the records of their nonverbal descriptions were based on my subjective observation of what happened during the interviews and in each session of the workshop. In doing the transcription, I have revisited the above of each session and interview.

In addition, artwork, any images, composition, the color of the painting, and calligraphy created by participants were photographed and analyzed.

Interview Protocol

The pre- and post-study interview questions were designed to elicit participants' thoughts and feelings toward their loss in terms of their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral states. Questions both pre- and post-workshop assessed the participants'

general behaviors and feelings associated with bereavement (Zisook, 1982), grief reactions and support system (Barrett & Scott, 1989), guilt and responsibility (Bailey, Dunham, & Kral, 2000), and self-report on grief experiences (Burnett, Middleton, Raphael, & Martinek, 1997).

Although there are existing instruments on determining bereavement, I did not use them. Some instruments were in checklist format, which consisted of too many questions or items such as the Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist, 61 items (Hogan, Greenfield, & Schmidt, 2001), and the MM Caregiver Greif Inventory, 50 items (Marwit & Meuser, 2002), which I did not think were appropriated for this particular group of participants. These participants had relatively low energy levels due to their age. Even if I provided them a considerably longer time to complete the questions, they would still have been exhausted by the questions. This would have led to invalid data. None of the existing instruments were designed to measure the level of meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance specifically. Many of these instruments focused on specific emotional responses to measure the severity of certain emotions such as the depressive symptoms, anxiety levels, and anger (Psychological Distress Measures, Carr, 2003). However, I did use some the existing instruments as reference, such as the Texas Revised Inventory of Grief, or TRIG (Faschingbauer, DeVaul, & Zissok, 1987), and the Greif Evaluation Measure, or GEM (Jordan, Baker, Matteis, Rosenthal, & Ware, 2005), when designing my own interview questions. Grieving responses were different for everyone, and not everybody dealt with grief in the same manner or at the same pace. In this regard, I felt that open-ended questions would be more appropriate; therefore, I designed a set of open-ended questions for the interviews. The questions could lead to talking about

meaning making, maintaining bonds, or maintaining balance. When the participants' responses geared more toward one direction or area, I then asked follow-up questions toward the same direction and area. Depending on the situation and the capacity of the participant, I may have asked some of the following questions when the situation allowed and seemed appropriate.

Interview Questions

Some of the questions were derived from the TRIG (Faschingbauer et al., 1987), such as follow-up questions a, b, c, and e in question 1, follow-up question c in question 2, follow-up questions b and c in question 6, and follow-up question c in question 7.

Pre-workshop Interview Questions

(The participants answered this set a week prior to the first session of the workshop.)

1. Over the last week, what were your thoughts and feelings when you thought of the deceased person? (*Behaviors and feelings associated with bereavement; Zisook, 1982*)

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. Do you find it hard to accept the person's death? (*Meaning making*)
- b. Is it painful to recall the memories of the deceased? (*Bond*)
- c. Have you tried to avoid thinking of the person? (*Bond*)
- d. Do you worry a lot? What about? (*Balance*)
- e. Have you ever hoped this didn't happen? (*Meaning making*)
- f. How often do you think of the person? (*Bond/balance*)

2. What have you done with those thoughts and feelings? (*Behaviors and feelings associated with bereavement; Zisook, 1982*)

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. Have you ever thought about why it happened? (*Meaning*)
 - b. Do you sometimes feel responsible for the death? (*Meaning*)
 - c. Have you felt a need to do things that the deceased had wanted to do? (*Bond*)
 - d. Is there anything you learned from the event? (*Meaning*)
3. How have things been for you after he/she died? (*Self-report on grief experiences; Burnett, Middleton, Raphael, & Martinek, 1997*)

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. Are there any major changes that have occurred in your family after he/she died? (*Meaning*)
 - b. Have you lost interest in things that you used to enjoy? (*Balance*)
 - c. Do you find it too hard to be around people? (*Balance*)
4. How do you usually spend your day? (*Grief reactions; Barrett & Scott, 1999*)

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. Do you find it hard to keep up with your normal activities? (*Balance*)
 - b. Do you find it hard to work well after the person died? (*Balance*)
5. Please describe some of the things you feel you are really good at or enjoy doing. (*Grief reactions and support system; Barrett & Scott, 1999*)

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. How do you feel when you are doing these activities? And how often do you do them? (*Balance*)

- b. What else do you do to help you when you are sad?*(Bond/balance)*
6. When you think of the deceased, what aspects of the person do you frequently remember?*(Grief reactions and support system; Barrett & Scott, 1999)*

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. Can you think of some of the positive and negative aspects of the deceased person or the relationship? *(Bond/balance)*
 - b. Do you ever feel angry at the situation, at God, or at the person for what happened? *(Meaning)*
 - c. Do you feel you need to get it over with?*(Bond/balance)*
7. Have you ever thought about any of the following . . . *(Guilt and responsibility; Bailey, Dunham, & Kral, 2000)*
- a) Have you asked why your loved one died?*(Meaning; Grief Recovery Questions, Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986)*
 - b) Do you believe there is some larger meaning or purpose in the death of your loved one?*(Meaning)*
 - c) Have you ever felt it's unfair that the person died?*(Meaning)*
 - d) Are you able to think through what the person's death meant to you?*(Meaning)*
8. Is there anything you like to see change?

Possible follow-up questions:

- a. What changes would you like to see in yourself? *(Meaning/balance)*
- b. What are some of the things you would like to see happen or strengthen?*(Meaning)*
- c. What do you think your crying or upset means?*(Meaning)*

Post-workshop Interview Questions

(The participants answered this set four to six weeks after the end of the workshop.)

1. Over the last week, what were your thoughts and feelings when you think of the deceased person?
2. What have you done with those thoughts and feelings?
3. How have things been for you since we last met?
4. How do you usually spend your day?
5. Have there been any changes in your family since the last time we met?
6. Please describe some abilities, strengths, and activities you enjoy doing.
7. When you think of the deceased, what aspects of the person do you think of?
8. You mentioned the changes you would like to see in our initial interview. Did any of these changes take places? Please describe in detail.
9. Have you recently thought more any of the following questions . . .
 - a) Have you asked why your loved one died?
 - b) Do you believe there is some larger meaning or purpose in the death of your loved one?
 - c) Have you ever felt it's unfair that the person died?
 - d) Are you able to think through what the person's death meant to you?
10. In what way do you think the Chinese brushstroke experience helped you in coping with the loss?
11. Is there anything in particular you like to say regarding your experience with the expressive Chinese brushstroke experience?
12. Do you have other concerns or questions you wanted to bring up?

These questions were asked with the purpose of trying to elicit responses that indicated the person was making meaning in any sense, keeping continuing bonds with the deceased, and retaining some sense of balance. Each question was set to allow the participant to answer in any direction that could lead to any area of meaning making, continuing bonds, or maintaining balance. The follow-up questions were specifically created to encourage further discussion leading to thoughts and responses in relation to meaning making, maintaining bonds, and maintaining balance. I was mindful when asking those questions following the flow of the conversation led by the participants. Since it was a semi-structured interview, questions were not asked in the same order or necessarily in the exact wording. Some of the questions were not even asked when the conversation did not lead in that direction.

Question 1 is an open-ended question that was asked to see the general thoughts, feelings, and emotional states of the participants about their loss. Their answers could lead to further explorations in meaning making, continuing bonds, or maintaining balance. Attention was paid to the participants' body language, tone of voice, themes, phrases, and scenarios that related to the loss. For example, when a participant mentioned anything related to preoccupying thoughts of the deceased or over worrying about certain things, it could be a sign of an imbalance, and I would ask the follow-up questions to further explore the preoccupying thoughts. When the participant talked about having painful memories or tried to avoid thinking of the deceased, it could be a sign of an unhealthy bond, and I would ask questions that related to maintaining a bond with the deceased. When the participant mentioned anything about hoping it did not happen, or that it was

hard to accept the death, it could be a sign of making meaning, and I would then ask more meaning-making questions.

Question 2 is related to meaning making, and it was asked to see how the participants were coping. When they related the loss to reasons, meanings, results, and consequences, it was a sign of them trying to make sense of the loss. When they mentioned anything about needing to do some unfinished business for the deceased or blaming themselves for what happened, it could also be a sign that they were making meaning of the loss.

Question 3 was asked to understand the participants' present situations, how they were coping, and their views of the loss. This was designed specifically to determine their level of balance. When participants talked about having difficulty sleeping or getting along with others, it could be a sign of avoidance of contact. I would then ask follow-up questions.

Question 4 is also about maintaining balance, which encouraged the participants to describe their daily activities. When participants mentioned doing the same thing such as sitting around or watching TV the whole day, it could be an indicator of normal grieving response. I would then ask further questions about their experiences and feelings related to their idleness as well as their lives before the loss.

Question 5 is related to maintaining balance or continuing bonds. It was asked to determine whether the participants did anything to maintain bonds with the deceased or maintain a balanced life physically and emotionally. It was intended to get a clear picture of their daily structures and to focus on how they described what they did. When

participants talked about feeling sad when doing things they used to do, I would then ask follow-up questions about what else they did that helped.

Question 6 is geared to meaning making to see how participants described their relationships with the deceased and how they felt about making connections with the person. When they mentioned painful memories of things and people around reminded them of the deceased, I would then ask further questions on more specific feelings such as anger or guilt. When the participant mentioned more specific emotions such as anger or guilt, I would encourage them to share more about those feelings by asking questions such as, “Can you tell me more about it?” or “Where did the guilty feeling come from?” If the participants were able to reveal the positive and negative aspects of the deceased or their relationships with the deceased, they were maintaining a relatively healthy balance.

Question 7 is also about meaning making. It was asked to see if the participants began talking about the reason/s or cause/s of the death and the results of the event or changes from the experience. For example, when the participants said “I find it hard to accept the death of the person,” or “I feel it’s unfair that my loved one died,” I further asked them about their thoughts and how they saw the results of the event and the changes after the death of their loved ones.

Question 8 was asked to see if the participants were motivated to change or whether they needed to change certain things they saw. This was intended to determine whether participants had resources or activities to maintain their level of balance and the frequency with which they engaged in different activities. When they mentioned wanting or not wanting to cry, I would ask more meaning questions regarding their responses.

Question 9 in the post-workshop interview to see the changes in the participants' thoughts related to meaning making before and after the intervention. They were asked the question to see if practicing the Chinese brushstroke techniques had changed for them the nature of meaning making, continuing bonds with the deceased, maintaining balance.

Question 10 was asked in the pre-workshop interview and then was asked again in the post-workshop interview for comparison purposes.

Two new questions, 11 and 12, specifically related to the workshop experiences were added to see if the participants saw the connections between changes and practicing Chinese brushstroke techniques.

Format of the Workshop

The format of the session was based on the Worden's model, the Four Tasks of Mourning (Worden, 2002). The four tasks are accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of grief, adjusting to a changed environment, and emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life. The workshop was designed to address issues in different sessions. For example, sharing of what happened and their view of the loss in the first session was to help participant to actualize the loss. The session of practicing Chinese characters that contains feelings and emotions related to loss was to help them to express the feelings. The exercise of creating a plant representing their virtues was designed to strengthen their self-esteem to better adjust to life without the deceased. The last session of creating a place to cherish their memories of the deceased loved ones was designed to help them relocate the person in a safe place symbolically. The study was in

a workshop format: six sessions, 1.5 hours each. The first three sessions focused on techniques and discussions related to meaning making from the loss. The discussion was focused on feelings induced by practicing brushstrokes with specific themes and concerns associated with loss. The second three sessions focused on techniques and discussions related to continuing bonds and maintaining balance. Discussion was focused on feelings evoked by images and themes associated with the deceased person as well as coping with the loss.

Session 1: Meaning making through actualizing the loss (Worden, 2002)

1. Welcome/introduction/checking. (10–15 minutes)
2. Expression through brushstrokes with water and ink, with different-sized brushes. Exploration and experiment with the medium according to the theme of the session. (30 minutes)
3. Discussion: Feelings induced by the art activity and images will be addressed. Feelings of loss will also be addressed. (30 minutes)
4. Support, connect: utilizing the group as mutual support and connection to eliminate isolation and loneliness. (10 minutes)

In this session, participants were shown ways of practicing the Chinese brushstroke in order to familiarize themselves with the tools and materials by drawing upward strokes, downward strokes, and circular strokes of different sizes as basic strokes in Chinese painting and calligraphy. Participants were then invited to freely explore the brushstrokes. They were encouraged to pay attention to the differences between the tips and sides of the brush, the feelings created by moving the brush in different directions,

and the tactile sensation of the tips and the sides of the brush touching the paper, the different strokes or images created, and the differences between the dryness and the wetness of the brush. They were also encouraged to try practicing the brushstrokes with water and then ink to see the differences between the two forms of liquids. Images of water would be dried shortly and would disappear. This could perhaps create a sense of permanent loss and intangibility. Images created with ink were permanent on one hand but were irreversible on the other. This might also create feelings or emotions related to the irreparability and uncontrollability of the death and loss. Another purpose of using water is to help the participants to be more comfortable and familiar with the materials. Images created by water are less profound and less threatening. It allowed more time for the participants to rehearse and therefore become more ready for the changes and exhibit a higher level of acceptance of the tools as well as of the images.

The purpose of doing the hand movement and breathing exercise was to help the participants to feel relaxed and to increase their readiness with the materials. Art making is a physical activity that brings changes to the physiological and biological awareness through sensory experience and movements. This would also evoke feelings and thoughts pertaining to body movements and emotions. Espenak (1979) states that gaining knowledge of the body through movement patterns increases the knowledge of the self and the environment. The purpose of practicing upward strokes, downward strokes, horizontal lines, vertical lines, and circular strokes with water and then with ink was to help participants familiarize themselves with the brush and to lessen their anxiety and hesitation at maneuvering a new tool. This concurs with what Terayama (2003)

notes about how practicing straight lines leads to balance and focusing the mind and the body.

Discussion was facilitated through specific questions being asked to elicit responses focused on actualizing the loss, feelings, and memories evoked by the exercise/activity, and on identifying elements related to meaning making.

Session 2: Meaning making through actualizing the loss (Worden, 2002)

1. Welcome/introduction/checking (10–15 minutes)
2. Expression through brushstrokes with water and ink, with different-sized brushes. Exploration and experiment with the medium according to the theme of the session. (30 minutes)
3. Discussion: Feelings induced by the art activity and images will be addressed. Feelings of loss will also be addressed. (30 minutes)
4. Support, connect: utilizing the group as mutual support and connection to eliminate isolation and loneliness. (10 minutes)

In this session, participants were asked to practice drawing circles with big circular movements. The circles represented the immenseness and encompassing of the universe. Participants were then asked to add a horizontal line and a vertical line to represent heaven and earth. Later they were asked to add a dot to represent a human. Lastly, they were asked to write a word or a phrase that came to mind that represented the voice of the human. Attention would be focused on arm movement, breathing, directions of the brush, different images created by water and ink.

Specific questions were asked to elicit responses that describe the feelings toward the stories related to the present feeling evoked by the exercise and the images.

Discussion also focused on feelings or emotions evoked by the movements, images, and sounds of practicing the brushstrokes as well as the feelings toward the loss, and on identifying issues related to meaning making.

Session 3: Meaning making and continuing bonds with the deceased through getting in touch with the pain of grief (Worden, 2002) and practicing Chinese calligraphy using characters associated with feelings

1. Welcome/introduction/checking (10–15 minutes)
2. Expression through brushstrokes with water and ink, with different-sized brushes. Exploration and experiment with the medium according to the theme of the session. (30 minutes)
3. Discussion: Feelings induced by the art activity and images will be addressed. Feelings of loss will also be addressed. (30 minutes)
4. Support, connect: utilizing the group as mutual support and connection to eliminate isolation and loneliness. (10 minutes)

In this session, participants were shown Chinese pictograms, the basic form and structure of Chinese characters, such as the sun, moon, mountain, cloud, rain, heaven, human, and earth. Participants were invited to try practicing these pictograms for Chinese characters on newspaper and then on white paper. Later, participants were shown with more complex characters that contained feelings and emotions such as

“sadness,” “loneliness,” “happiness,” “love,” “missing,” and were invited to choose words that resonated with them most and try practicing those characters pertaining to specific meanings. At first participants were given a paper with grid to trace. After practicing several times, participants were then encouraged to write them without the grids. Participants were encouraged to try several different characters if they felt comfortable with it. The purpose of copying Chinese characters associated with feelings and emotions was to help participants to articulate their feelings and to be more in touch with those feelings. This also provided them a chance to acknowledge and accept their feelings through meaning making. Yen (2005) claims that practicing Chinese calligraphy embodies living experiences that generate rich meanings connected to our lives. Guo (1995) explains that practicing strokes in Chinese characters and calligraphy helps a practitioner to strive for a sense of balance, proportion, and harmony.

Specific questions would be asked to elicit responses describing feelings about the stories related to the person or the object. Discussion also focused on feelings or emotions evoked by the movements and images created as well as feelings toward the loss, and on identifying issues related to meaning making regarding the loss and continuing bond with the deceased.

Session 4: Maintaining balance through getting in touch with reality

1. Welcome/introduction/checking (10–15 minutes)
2. Expression through brushstrokes with water and ink, with different-sized brushes. Exploration and experiment with the medium according to the theme of the session. (30 minutes)

3. Discussion: Feelings induced by the art activity and images will be addressed. Feelings of loss will also be addressed. (30 minutes)
4. Support, connect: utilizing the group as mutual support and connection to eliminate isolation and loneliness. (10 minutes)

In this session, participants were asked to choose two colors of paint that represented something they liked and disliked about the deceased person or the positive and negative aspects of their relationship. This was intended to see whether the participants held a relatively balanced view of the deceased person. As no one was perfect, the willingness to reveal the relationship with the deceased and accept the reality was a sign of becoming more balance in the grieving process. Attention was paid to colors they chose, their ways of mixing colors, the images created by the colors, the association of colors, and the feelings and memories evoked by the color and images. The purpose of addressing the positive and negative aspects of the deceased or the relationship with the deceased was to explore the relationship between the participants and the deceased person, to explore the participants perceptions of the deceased, and to maintain balance in terms of well-being by holding a balanced view of the deceased.

Liebmann (1986) states the importance of the need to maintain a balanced perception of self and one's relationship with others. Reaching a balanced view of the deceased person helps the bereaved to be more in touch with reality. Attig (2000) also claims that when a bereaved is able to talk about the deceased coherently, he/she is establishing a bond with the deceased.

Discussion would be focused on the participants' ways of mixing the two colors, images that were associated with the stories and the person. Specific questions were asked to elicit responses that describe the feelings related to the person and the stories. Discussion also focused on feelings or emotions evoked by the movements, images, and sounds of practicing the brushstrokes as well as feelings toward the loss and the issues related to maintaining balance in terms of their well-being and in terms of their relationship with the deceased.

Session 5: Continuing bonds with the deceased (Emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life)

1. Welcome/introduction/checking (10–15 minutes)
2. Expression through brushstrokes with water and ink, with different-sized brushes. Exploration and experiment with the medium according to the theme of the session. (30 minutes)
3. Discussion: Feelings induced by the art activity and images will be addressed. Feelings of loss will also be addressed. (30 minutes)
4. Support, connect: utilizing the group as mutual support and connection to eliminate isolation and loneliness. (10 minutes)

Participants were shown simple Chinese paintings of the Four Gentlemen, also known as the Four Plants of Virtue: the plum, the orchid, the bamboo, and the chrysanthemum. Each of these plants represents one of the seasons: The orchid is spring, the bamboo summer, the chrysanthemum autumn, and the plum winter. Each of the four

plants also represents certain good virtues: The plum symbolizes courage and hope; the orchid stands for humility, modesty, beauty, and refinement; the chrysanthemum symbolizes those who maintain their virtues despite adversity and temptation; and the bamboo symbolizes uprightness, perseverance, resilience, gentleness, gracefulness, and refinement. Participants were invited to share those virtues that they identified with and would like to pass on to their children and grandchildren. They were then asked to choose to paint one of the four plants that they identified with.

Discussion was focused on the images and stories that were evoked by the exercise. Specific questions were asked to elicit responses related to their own experiences. Feelings or memories evoked by the images and stories, as well as feelings toward the loss, issues that related to continuing bonds with the deceased were explored.

Session 6: Balance through creating a place where they cherished their memories related to the deceased; emotionally relocating the deceased through continuing bonds and maintaining balance

1. Welcome/introduction/checking (10–15 minutes)
2. Expression through brushstrokes with water and ink, with different-sized brushes. Exploration and experiment with the medium according to the theme of the session. (30 minutes)
3. Discussion: Feelings induced by the art activity and images will be addressed. Feelings of loss will also be addressed. (30 minutes)
4. Support, connect: utilizing the group as mutual support and connection to eliminate isolation and loneliness. (10 minutes)

Participants were invited to draw a picture of their dearly held and cherished memories of their loved ones. For example, a place they would find support and comfort in: this place could be an actual place that they had been to or a place they would love to go. The purpose of drawing a place that held their memories associated with the deceased was to explore their memories and relationships with the deceased, their ways of coping, and their ways of connecting or maintaining bonds with the deceased. As Whitaker (2004) says, art therapy offers the space in which the bereaved can follow a continuum of happenings as they emerge. Worden (2002) also states the importance and need of emotionally relocating the deceased.

Themes, images, people, and composition of the picture would be discussed. Discussion would be focused on the feelings and memories evoked by the exercise. Feeling and thoughts toward the loss, memories of, and stories related to the deceased loved ones were explored. Issues regarding continuing bonds with the deceased and maintaining balance were identified. Participants' strengths and their support network were also explored.

Researcher's roles and background.

In the sessions of the workshop, I had dual roles. I was a researcher on one hand, someone who was supposed to be overseeing the group and the participants from a distance, without putting myself in the group. However, I was also a therapist in the workshop where I introduced a new intervention in coping with loss and grief. In that sense, I was part of the group. I too contributed to the group dynamics as well as to the group interactions. As the facilitator, I was supposed to adopt a peripheral vision to

oversee the group progress. Being part of the group, I affected the interactions of the participants. Therefore, it was important that I was aware of what I brought to the group. It was important that I was sensitive to the individual cultural differences between group members as well as between myself and the participants. In terms of how I conducted the workshop, I might have unknowingly promoted or emphasized the hidden agenda of meaning making, continuing bond, and maintaining balance when facilitating the workshop.

With my cultural background, I needed to be aware of my bodily reaction and verbal and nonverbal responses when people talked about their point of view. I needed to be aware of how I might have put my own value judgments on the participants. For example, in many Asian cultures, it is not unusual to have unmarried adult children live with their parents. Should people make causal comments about this phenomenon, I needed to be aware of my responses and communications with the participants. I was lucky because all the participants showed great respect to me as well as to the tools and this research study. They all showed great interest in the art making and were eager to try the medium. I felt honored to have done this workshop with this group of participants.

In terms of using the Chinese brush, which has a strong cultural symbol and meaning to me, as soon as I picked up the brush, the association of childhood memories arose, which made the brush an expressive tool. However, when working with participants who have no previous experience with the brush, in case they showed less or no interest in it exploring the medium, I might feel disappointed. Furthermore, the medium may have some cultural and personal meaning to me. In other words, I might feel that when people showed interest in the medium, it indicated that I was accepted and

welcomed, which was unnecessary. With that said, I needed to be aware that when the participants showed no interest or were not nearly as excited as I anticipated, I should try not to take it personally.

I am a counselor from a different cultural background, which affects my value system and my beliefs, and therefore, my worldview may be very different from those born and raised in a different country. The very fact that I was born and raised in one culture that exposes me to a certain value at the same time limits me from other cultural perspectives and experiences already makes me biased to a certain extent. It is my hope, though, that the experience that I brought into this study would not be a hindrance to learning for myself or a hindrance to the development of the participants, but rather, that it would expand learning opportunities for all.

Data Coding and Analysis

A set of coding were used to identify conversations of the participant during the pre- and post-interview and for each session for the workshop to check if they were making meaning, keeping continuing bonds with the deceased, and maintaining balance.

Meaning making

Participants were making meaning when they shared their views in a broader sense that related to the philosophical aspects of death and dying such as fairness (Nedeau, 2001), were questioning, were searching for and changing global meaning (Park, Edmondson, Fenster, and Blank, 2008; Roberts, 2003); when they talked about subject

matters that had religious connotations (Nedeau, 2001); when they described lessons learned, new insights gained, or changes in themselves or in the family (Nedeau, 2001); and when they talked about relationships among family members that had been strengthened (Davis, 2001).

Table 1. Coding used for meaning making.

Coding that indicated participants were trying to make meaning when they exhibited the following:	Supporting literature
Talking about circumstances related to the death	Nedeau, 2001
Trying to rationalize what happened	Nedeau, 2001
Making sense of the loss	Davis, 2001
Expressing philosophical meanings of the loss	Nedeau, 2001
Questioning about, searching for, and changing of global meaning	Park, Edmondson, Fenster, and Blank, 2008; Roberts, 2003
Speaking in religious context related to death issues	Nedeau, 2001
Discussing afterlife or destination in the future.	Nedeau, 2001
Mentioning the deceased's view of death	Nedeau, 2001
Sharing of insights gained, lesson learned, or changes due to the loss	Nedeau, 2001
Pointing out relationships with other family members being strengthened	Davis, 2001

Continuing bonds

Continuing bonds is expressed in various manifestations such as missing the loved one, thinking and remembering the deceased person, seeking ways of maintaining connections with their deceased loved ones (Shuchter & Zisook, 1993; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1991; Silverman, Nickman, & Worden, 1992; Bonanno, Mihalecz, & LeJeune, 1999) such as writing and talking to the loved one; feeling the presence of the person; doing the same things that the loved one used to do; taking on, keeping, and passing on the habits or good virtues of the deceased. Some of the terms are the same in the meaning making category. Attig (2000) note that the bereaved are making connections and maintaining bonds with the deceased when they hold the loved one in memory, giving the deceased person a place in practical life, keeping the deceased in soul, and holding on to the deceased's spirit. Another way of showing the bereaved are keeping bonds with the deceased is when they accept the loss, remember the deceased, reveal their relationship with the deceased, and talk about the deceased coherently (Attig, 2000).

Table 2 Coding used for continuing bonds with the deceased

Coding that indicated the participants were keeping continuing bonds with the deceased when they exhibited the following:	Supporting literature
Thinking and remembering the deceased	Nedeau, 2001 Davis, 2001
Missing the deceased loved one	Nedeau, 2001
Maintaining any form of connections with the	Nedeau, 2001

deceased such as writing letters, journals, and stories	Park, Edmondson, Fenster, and Blank, 2008 Roberts, 2003
Keeping the same habits or good virtues of the loved one	Nedeau, 2001
Keeping the deceased in practical life and in soul, holding the deceased loved one's spirit	Nedeau, 2001
Revealing their relationship with the deceased	Attig, 2000
Talking about the deceased coherently	Attig, 2000

Maintaining Balance

Balance is shown when the bereaved actually talks about the word *balance*—such as when they seemed to maintain a sense of balance in their daily activities. For example, spending the majority of their free time just watching television, sleeping, or idling would be considered imbalanced living. Whereas, spreading their free time between watching television, reading books, or participating in different activities would be balanced. Balance is also manifested in the way they viewed the deceased and their relationship with the person. When talking about the person or their relationship with him/her, it would be imbalanced if only a one-way view is presented—that is, the person was totally good, and the relationship between the two of them was almost perfect. Participants should be able to talk about the deceased in a more balanced way as they could see both positive and negative aspects of the person and the relationship. When a person is willing to express feelings toward the loss and shows signs of accepting the loss, some sense of

balance have been established (Wood, 1981). Hansson and Stroebe (2007) also suggest that it is important for the bereaved to keep a balance between the “loss-orientation” and the “restoration orientation.” A person is trying to maintain a sense of balance when he/she juggles between the two orientations. For example, when the bereaved go back and forth between viewing pictures of the deceased, envisioning how the deceased would respond to things, crying, longing for the person, seeking reminders of the deceased, includes reviewing memories related to the deceased, and handling household tasks they are in the loss mode. Whereas, when bereaved are dealing with financial arrangements, and struggling with new identities, the person is in a restoration mode.

Table 3 Coding related to maintaining balance

Coding that indicated the participants were trying to maintain some sense of balance when they exhibited the following:	Supporting literature
Using the word <i>balance</i>	Wood, 1981
Talking about the relationship with the deceased with both positive and negative aspects	Wood, 1981
Examining and interpreting the loss	Wood, 1981
Creating balance between their daily activities	Hansson and Stroebe (2007)
Learning new tasks	Hansson and Stroebe (2007)
Establishing new identities	Hansson and Stroebe (2007)
Accepting the loss	Lindemann (1944)
Adjusting to life without the deceased	Lindemann (1944)

Forming new relationships	Lindemann (1944)
Identifying and showing changes	Bull (1992)
Living in the “here and now”	Bull (1992)
Celebrated endings with rituals, memories, and symbols	Bull (1992)

Validity

For the purpose of improving validity and reliability of this research, triangulation was used to collect data. Besides audio-taping the session and conversation of each session, I also took notes of the participants’ non-verbal behaviors and facial expressions to compare with their verbal expressions. Their art works made in the sessions were also examined as visual records of their journeys. I also asked a colleague to examine all transcribed materials. She drew similar themes and conclusions as mine.

Chapter 4

Results

Research Question

In this dissertation, I focused on the experience of Chinese brushstroke techniques among normal bereaved elders who have recently lost a significant relationship. It led to the following question:

How might the application of Chinese brushstrokes support the dynamic nature of the change of the three elements of bereavement (meaning making, continuing bonds with the deceased loved ones, and maintaining balance) that lead to healthy grieving for elders?

Field Note Observations for Group and Individual Workshop Sessions

All workshop sessions were conducted in both group and individual formats. Roger, Denise, and Maureen belonged to the group, and the other participants—Eddie, Bernard, and Deborah—were individual participants. Both group and individual sessions used the same activities. The group was held in Mid-October to Early December of 2009. The three individual participants were seen in March, May, and August of 2010.

Differences Between Group and Individual Format

In the individual sessions, full attention was given to the participants. I was able to allocate more times in demonstration of the medium. Thus the participants in the individual session seemed to master the techniques better than those in the group.

Individual participants' sharing of feelings and responses related to grief and loss was very deep and they all seemed to stay on topics as expected. However, they did not have a chance to hear the sharing from other participants, thus shared feelings and support from each other was missing for these individuals.

Within the group, individual attention was not adequate for the participants during art making process. Participants would have to wait for me to show them ways of handling the medium while I was helping others during the session. They got carried away often when they shared something they had in common such as the good times they had with their children and grandchildren. Often, I needed to bring them back to the group and discussion. However, the cohesiveness of group was easily formed and shared feelings and issues were easily identified. Thus support among participants seemed to play a major role in the group process. Often, rich discussion was generated in a group session, such as the shifting of mood after the realization of how much they missed the person was due to how much they loved the person. However, a more articulate and outspoken person would sometimes dominate the discussion.

The Sessions: Session 1

During the session, I introduced myself and restated the purpose of the workshop and thanked the participants for being there. I then discussed the history of the Chinese brushstroke. I showed them the proper way of holding the brush and demonstrated the proper posture and movements, as well as how to maintain normal breathing.

I asked all the participants to follow my movements while paying attention to their breathing. I then invited them to practice drawing horizontal and vertical lines with

the brush. I showed them the proper way of holding the brush and reminded them that as they moved from left to right, their body should also be making the shift from left to right at the same pace with their hand movements. I told them of the philosophy behind practicing Chinese brushstrokes and calligraphy. The philosophy of Chinese calligraphy represents the relationship between a human being and the universe as well as the people around him/her. The practitioner is at the center of the universe and connecting heaven and earth. Holding the brush with four fingers represents centering and connecting with the four directions. Moving the brush from left to right represents the sense of being centered and grounded and then reaching out to and forging connections with others. This parallels with the Western view of holistic approach. As the workshop began, I asked the participants to try making horizontal lines with water on newspaper, and then later try practicing vertical lines with ink. Finally, I encouraged them to practice the same strokes on white paper with Chinese ink to see the difference. Figures 1 and 2 are examples of the exercise.

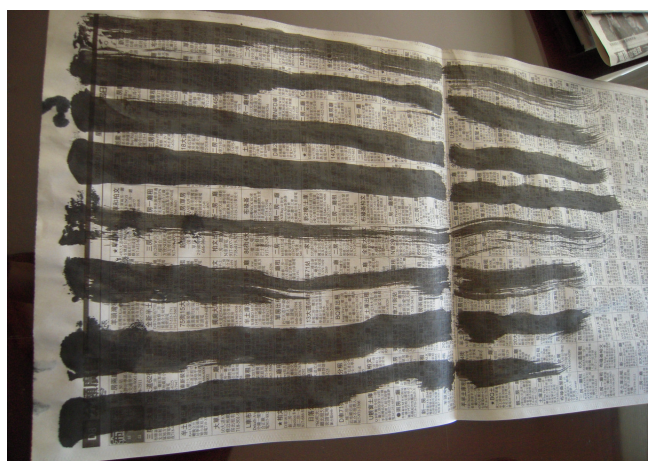


Figure 1. Horizontal Lines.

Some participants reported that at times they found themselves holding their breaths until they finished drawing a line. Others reported that when they drew with water, they were more concentrated on their movements, and when they used ink, they shifted their concentration on the lines and images. When drawing with ink, they would pay attention to the thickness of the lines, the wetness of the ink, and the spaces between the lines. They seemed to pay more attention to making the lines perfect by applying the same amount of ink and making sure the spaces between each line were equal.



Figure 2. Vertical Lines.

To Roger, the exercise appeared to be a little repetitive, and his movements seemed a little rushed, as if he wanted to get it done quickly. Eddie, Denise, and Deborah found the exercise interesting and meaningful with soothing, calming, and relaxing effects. Almost all participants also reported that the exercise helped them concentrate and be more patient. Some participants also commented that it was important for them to build up their relationship with the tool (i.e., the brush).

Roger said that the lines reminded him of venetian blinds, which represented protection on one hand and isolation on the other (Figure 3). Roger, Denise, and Maureen became more serious as they talked about the feelings related to their loss, such as loneliness, isolation, and emptiness. The discussion seemed to bring them closer together as they found some common grounds among them, which also encouraged them to continue with the group the following week.

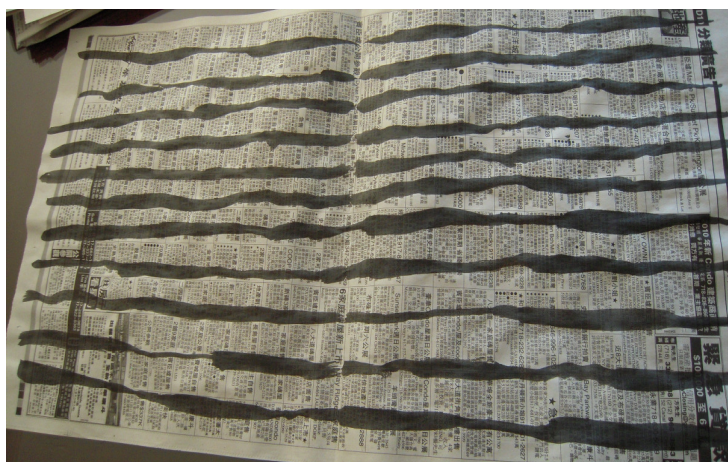


Figure 3. “Venetian Blinds”

To Deborah, the lines reminded her of uniforms in the concentration camps or in prisons. Although she had never lived in a concentration camp, her husband spent several years in one as a youngster. She said that at the age of fifteen, her husband buried his own father who died after he was tortured in the camp. She then burst into tears thinking about the difficult times that her husband went through in the concentration camp as a teenager. My empathic response was that it must be extremely hard for him to have to go through something so terrible as a young man. Deborah stopped there as it was too much for her to think further how much sufferings her husband had gone through when he was young. Everyone grieves differently and I respected Deborah as how much

she liked to disclose at this point of her grief. Having acknowledged how difficult it was to recall some of the horrendous experiences and the courage of moving forward, I then remained silent and allowed Deborah to take her time and decided where to go with her thoughts.

I wrapped up by asking them if they had questions or doubts about the session and discussion and restated some of the highlights. I thanked them again for trying the medium and for their input during the discussion. This session seemed successful in terms of helping the participants get familiar with the tools. All of them actively participated in the exercise and the art-making processes.

Session 2

As participants were seated, I restated the purpose of the workshop and thanked them again for being there. I invited them to share their present feelings.

I reminded them of the philosophy behind practicing Chinese brushstrokes and demonstrated the proper way of holding the brush, as well as the proper postures and movements along with maintaining normal breathing. I then asked them to practice drawing circles with big circular movements. I told them the circles represented the immenseness of the universe. Participants were then asked to add a horizontal line and a vertical line to represent heaven and earth. Later they were asked to add a dot to represent a human. Lastly, they were asked to write a word or a phrase that came to mind that represented the voice of the human. They could position the elements anywhere they liked on the paper. Again, these were done slowly with water first and then with ink later.

Participants wrote words like *relax*, *one*, and *love*. Figures 4 and 5 are examples of the exercise.



Figure 4. Love.

Eddie and Deborah stated that making circles felt freeing and relaxing. It also created a sense of wholeness. Deborah also reported seeing the symbolic meaning of everything being encompassed by the universe and that human beings were one with the universe.

Roger, Eddie, and Deborah shared that using the Chinese brushstroke seemed to make them feel less in control because of its unpredictable nature; it could lead to two extreme results. On one hand, it was easy to go out of the boundaries and make mistakes, and therefore, practitioners would be more careful with the tool that helped them to be more concentrated and more patient. On the other hand, the flexibility of the brush also

allowed them more freedom and space for exploration, and therefore encouraged genuine self-expression.



Figure 5. Relax

Most of the participants found the exercise relaxing and freeing as they could stretch their movements. Others such as Deborah and Eddie reported seeing the meaning behind it. Deborah commented on the exercise as she made the connection between heaven, earth, and human beings. To her, the universe seemed so big that the human beings became very small and helpless. This led to the discussion of feelings toward their loss. Like many other things, the death of a loved one often is out of human control.

Session 3

In the beginning of the session, I restated the purpose of the workshop and once again thanked the participants for being there. Then I invited them to talk about how they were feeling at the moment.

In this session, participants were shown Chinese pictograms and the basic forms and structures of Chinese characters, such as sun, moon, mountain, cloud, rain, heaven, human, earth, etc. Afterward, they practiced on them on newspaper and then on white paper. This was intended to help those who were unfamiliar with Chinese characters to learn the language a little easier and in a more interesting way since many Chinese pictograms are driven by nature or the human relationship with nature.

Participants reported that using water didn't seem to show the result of their efforts, and therefore they seemed to put less effort in doing it. When applying ink, they could see the images that seemed to become more interesting and rewarding, and therefore they put more effort in them and tried to make them more beautiful. Doing pictograms was more fun, challenging, and felt more like drawing pictures.

Later, I showed the participants more complex characters that contained feelings and emotions such as "sadness," "loneliness," "contentment," "love," "missing," and invited them to choose words that resonated with them most, and they practiced on those characters pertaining to specific meanings. Figure 6 is examples of the exercise. At first, I gave them a grid paper for tracing. After they had practiced several times, I then encouraged them to write without the grids. I also encouraged them to try several different characters if they felt comfortable.

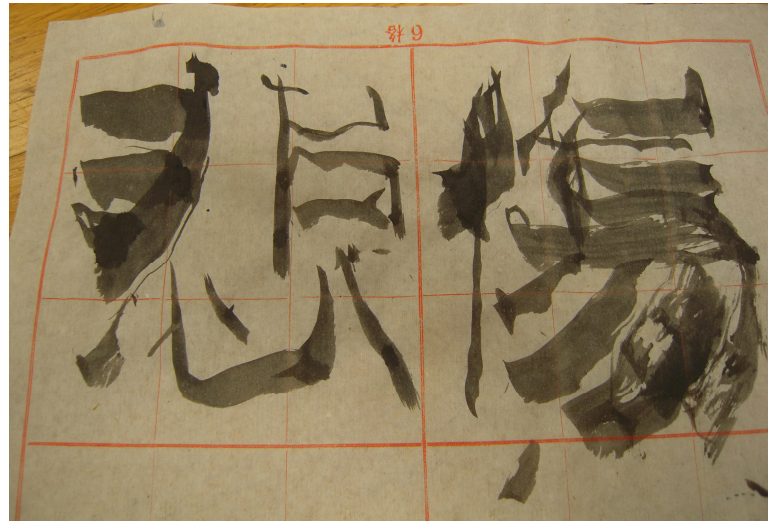


Figure 6. Sadness.

Roger, Eddie, and Deborah reported that as they were drawing, they were curious about the structure and composition and formation of the characters. They said the experience helped them understand the origin of the culture more and helped them think about the symbolic meaning of the characters. For example, majority of the feeling words contain a part that represents the “heart” as in “missing,” “sadness,” and “love” because emotions spring from the “heart.” Figure 7 is an example of this exercise.

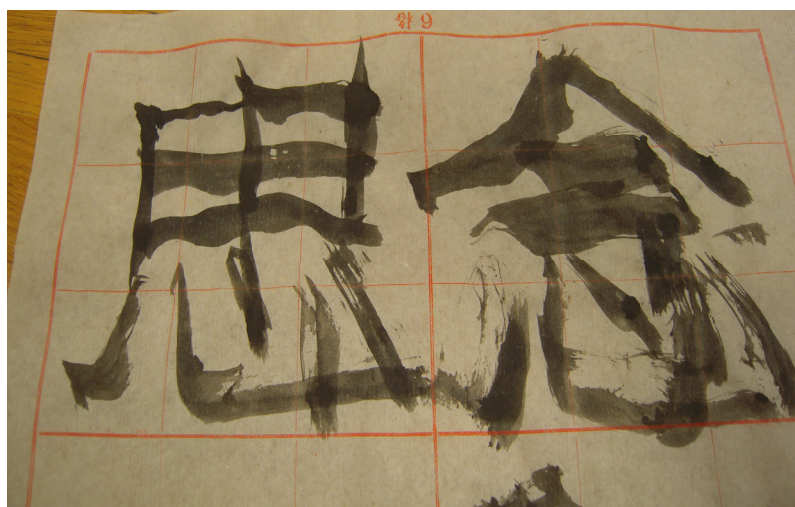


Figure 7. Thinking and Missing.

Although many participants talked about being sad and feeling depressed as a result of their loss, they did not choose to write the characters that represented those negative feelings. Instead, they chose something more positive such as “missing,” “love,” and “contented.” (Figure 8). Interestingly, all the participants chose the character “love” (Figure 9) as they saw it was an important element in their lives and it played an important role in the relationships between themselves and their loved ones. This also led to the rich discussion of the connection between missing someone and loving someone. This would be discussed further in the section on continuing bonds with the deceased.

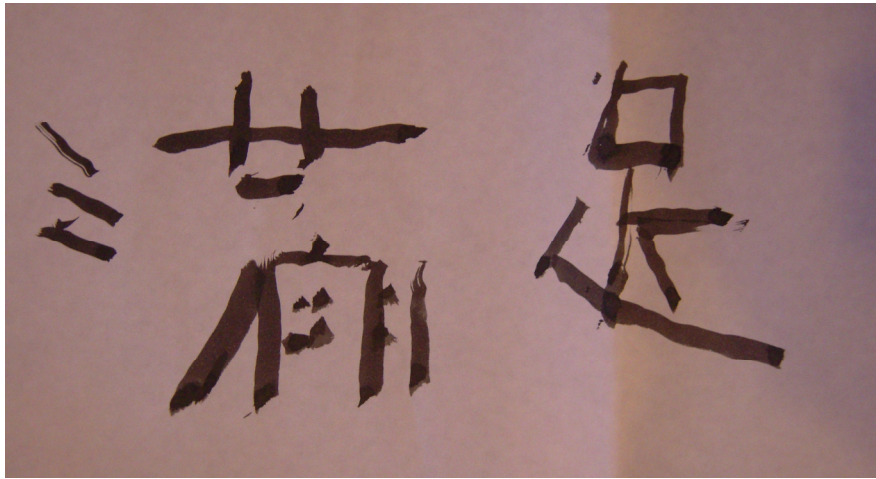


Figure 8. "Contentment."

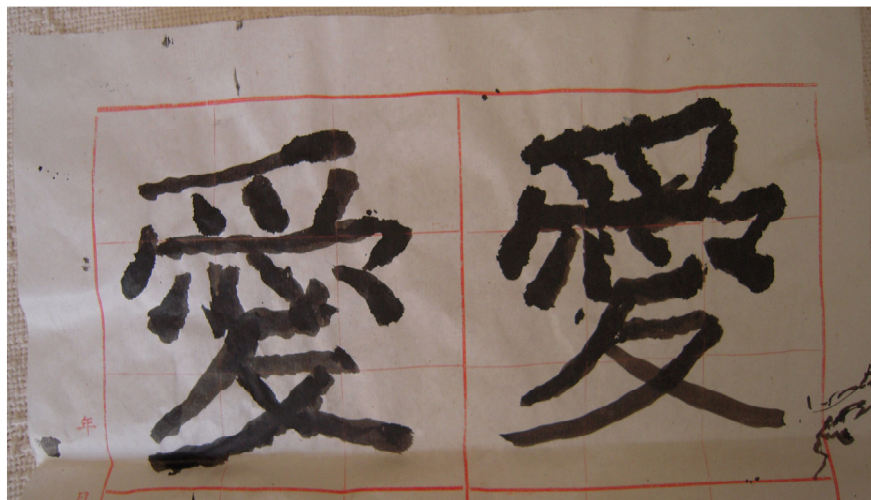


Figure 9. "Love."

Session 4

When the session began, I reviewed with the participants what we did in the previous session and invited them to share what they were presently feeling.

In this session, I asked them to choose two colors of paint that represented something they liked and disliked about the deceased person, or the positive and negative aspects of their relationship. This was to see whether the participants held a relatively balanced view of the deceased person. As no one was perfect, their willingness to reveal their relationship with the deceased and accept the reality of their loss was a sign of them becoming more balanced in their grieving process. I asked them to pay attention to the colors they chose, their ways of mixing these colors, the images created by these colors, the association of these colors, and the feelings and memories evoked by the colors and images. Figure 10 and 11 are examples of this exercise.



Figure 10. "Like and Dislike."

To some participants, choosing the colors was easier than drawing the picture. In fact, only Eddie and Bernard were able to finish the task. Deborah began with choosing some colors but she seemed to have difficulty making a picture and she ended up talking about her relationship with her husband and how he encouraged her to pursue higher education and helped her become a more confident person as well as all the hard times they went through together as a couple. Others, like Roger, Denise, and Maureen chose to talk about their relationships with the deceased, without using colors. This could have been related to the task being a little abstract to handle, as Wenzel-Miller (1996) states that abstract activities are less attractive to older adults.



Figure 11. "Like and Dislike."

Session 5

When the session started, I reviewed what we did in the previous session and invited the participants to talk about their feelings.

In this session, I showed the simple Chinese paintings of the Four Gentlemen, also known as the Four Plants of Virtue: plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum. Each of these plants represents one of the seasons: The orchid is spring; the bamboo, summer; the chrysanthemum, autumn; and the plum, winter. Each of the four plants also represents certain good virtues: The plum symbolizes courage and hope; the orchid stands for humility, modesty, beauty, and refinement; the chrysanthemum symbolizes virtues preserved despite adversity and temptation; and the bamboo symbolizes uprightness, perseverance, resilience, gentleness, gracefulness, and refinement.

I invited the participants to share those virtues that they identified with and would like to pass on to their children and grandchildren. I then asked them to paint one of the four plants that they identified with. Figure 12 is an example of this painting exercise.

Denise chose to draw a plum blossom as she identified the virtue of courage of the plant. However, she did not finish the picture as she later decided to just talk about her story. The rest of the participants identified themselves with the bamboo as they saw in themselves the values symbolized by the bamboo—perseverance, righteousness, and humbleness—and they would like to pass these virtues on to the younger generations. Eddie, Bernard and Deborah tried drawing the plant (bamboo), and the rest talked about the meanings and the virtues that they would like to pass on to their children and grandchildren.



Figure 12. Bamboo.

Some participants reported that painting the bamboo leaves made them relax. Others commented that the ability to paint something recognizable was rewarding and helped them build their self-confidence. Figure 13 is another example of this exercise.



Figure 13. Bamboo.

Session 6

In this session, I reviewed what we did in the previous session and invited the participants to share issues that were left over from the previous session. Then they talked about how they were feeling.

Then I invited them to draw a picture of a place that they cherished, a place where they would find support or comfort in, or a place that held their memories of their deceased loved ones. This place could be an actual place that they had been to or a place they would love to go. Only three of them were able to draw an ideal place, and the rest were able to share about places they had been to or places they liked to go.

All the participants talked about places that they liked and places they had been to with the deceased person. Bernard, Eddie and Deborah completed the task. Deborah depicted the good times she shared with her husband in the form of a running river. She captured the good times that she loved to remember (Figure 14). Eddie drew a beach scene that reminded them of the beaches they used to enjoy (Figure 15).

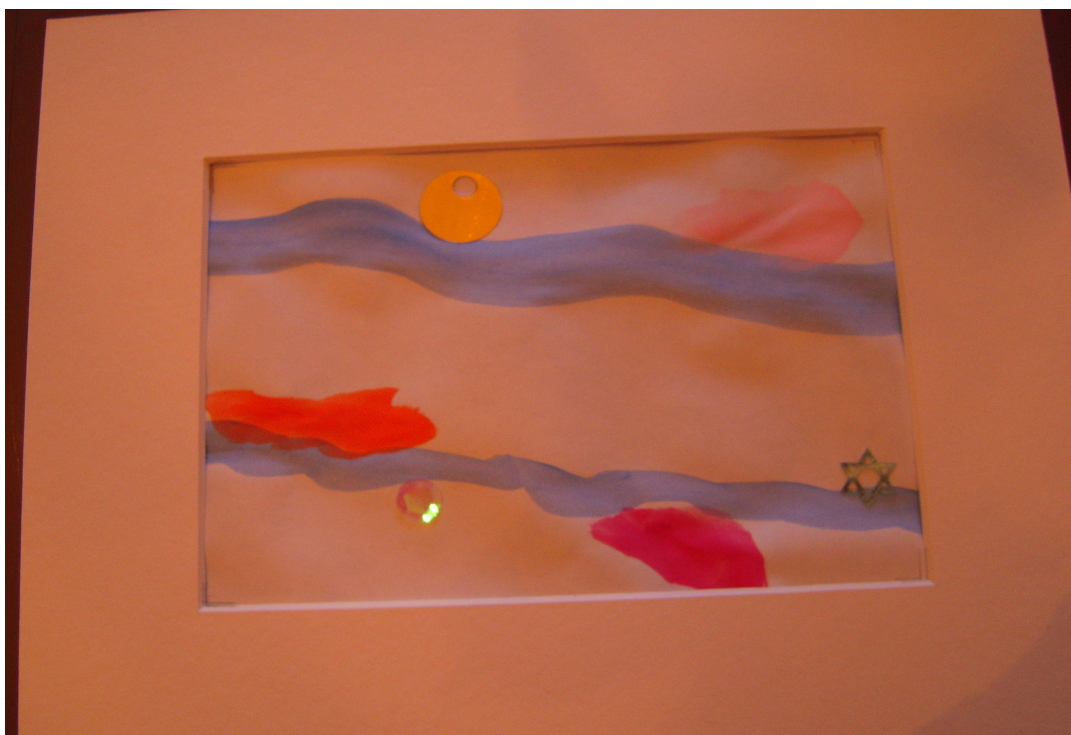


Figure 14. "Good Times."



Figure 15. "A Place of Contentment."

Meaning Making

I collected data from all pre- and post-study interviews, as well as from all the six sessions. I especially made sure to collect data at the second half of each session, where the content was mostly the participants' thoughts and feelings toward the art-making process and related issues provoked by the themes and images made. I looked for details of how the nature of grief changed in terms of meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance. Grief responses do not come in chronological orders and each person responds differently with their own pace. However, for the purpose of this study, and in order to see the changes of nature of three elements of bereavement, I divided the data into three sections or periods: the early phase (pre-study interview and the first two sessions of the workshop), the middle phase (the third and fourth sessions), and the last phase (the last two sessions and the post-study interview). Therefore, I could see the

progress and the changes of the nature of grief during different phases. The following are themes derived from various phases.

A. Meaning making during the early phase

Circumstances related to death

In the first session, each participant introduced him/herself and talked about whom they lost. Almost all participants talked about what happened on the day of their loved one's death. This was an important piece of information and an essential part of their stories as they repeatedly talked about it in the pre-study interview and in the first session of the workshop.

When Roger was asked to share about his loss, he talked about the death of his best friend during the pre-workshop interview as well as in the first session. "We talked on the phone every week, but he didn't call me that day. So I called. His son answered the phone and told me about it." His voice dropped, and he was in tears. He shared with us that he was unable to speak even when his best friend's son had asked to. It was just too much and too sudden for him. He also told us that they had known each other for more than fifty years. They lived close by each other, and their children were friends and they and their wives often spent time together.

Similarly, when asked whom he lost, Eddie talked about his wife of sixty-nine years during the pre-study interview and in the first session. He went into detail about his wife, who went into a semi coma two months before she died. He seemed a bit frustrated as he mentioned that no one could tell him what happened and what caused that. Later, he was told that there was a tumor in her head. So she had an operation, and she hadn't talked since. Although the tumor was removed during surgery, she seemed to be in a

coma in the last month of her life. He shared with me that he would sit beside her every day even when she was not able to talk. However, one day, “she opened her eyes and looked at me. I said to her, ‘I love you.’ I was holding her hand, and I felt that she squeezed me, but she didn’t say a word. And then she closed her eyes again. She never opened her eyes.” He also talked about what happened on the day of her death. “I was sitting next to her. She was lying on her side as if she was asleep. I didn’t know she died until they told me.” He mentioned the same feelings in the first and second sessions: “I can’t get past thinking about her last days . . . It’s not an easy situation.” He said it in a low voice, and he seemed to be saddened by the fact that she never woke again after that time. However, he felt good that he had told her that he loved her, and he felt that she heard him.

When asked what happened and how he felt regarding his grandson’s death, Bernard responded in a flat voice, “My son-in-law gave him his last meal that night. He went to bed and never woke up again.” Although he did not show sadness, nor was he in tears when he talked about his grandson, his voice flattened every time he talked about his death. When asked how he felt, he said he was sad in the beginning but was OK when we had the session. He also said he never cried, but that his wife and his daughter cried a lot. When asked why he did not show his emotions, he said he didn’t want to upset them, referring to his wife and daughter. He seemed to be holding back his emotions to protect the others.

Similarly, Deborah spoke in a very soft voice when she shared during the initial interview and the first session what happened on the day that her husband died. She was in tears as soon as we talked about what happened on the day of her husband’s death. “It

was so sudden . . . He was just standing there by the dining table, and I was sitting on the couch reading a book. He later went to the bathroom. All of a sudden, I heard a loud noise. I figured he might have fallen, and I went to the bathroom. There he was, lying and unconscious. So I called my daughter, and she called the police. They came to take him to the hospital. They told me he was gone.” When asked how she felt, she said, “He said something very sweet to me just shortly before he died. He said I was the nicest person he had ever known. I was reading at that time, so I didn’t pay too much attention to what he said. I just said thank you to him. I should have gotten up and given him a hug.” She talked about her feelings about what happened several times in the initial interview and in the first two sessions. “My thought has been going to his last hours. A lot of times, I just want to replay that day to see if there is anything I can do to change . . .”

Reasons for what happened or understanding of what happened

For these participants, knowing the reason or cause of the loved one’s death seemed important. So besides sharing what happened on the fateful day, they also talked about the cause of death or how they perceived and understood the death of their loved ones. For example, Eddie shared his understanding of his wife’s death: “They told me they found a tumor in her head that was why she couldn’t talk for a month before she died. It bothered me that she was not able to talk. I had no way of knowing how she felt. I was so used to talking to her every day. Now I have nobody to talk to.”

When talking about the same issue, Bernard seemed a little upset because he did not know the cause of his grandson’s death. “It would be better if we know what caused it. Nobody knows.” The cause remained a mystery till the end of our workshop.

Deborah also voluntarily talked about the cause or reason for her husband's death as she talked about what happened on that day. As usual, Deborah spoke in a very soft voice, especially when she talked about the death and her feelings related to the loss. "He had Parkinson's . . . because Parkinson's has to do with the muscles of your body . . . it eventually diminishes the body functions in various ways . . . because the muscles are weakened or almost nonexistent . . . The heart is a muscle, and I thought that was how it connected."

Insights gained and lesson learned

From the data collected, the following emotions are indicators of meaning making in terms of new insights that the participants gained, lessons learned, or changes they have undergone after the death of their loved ones. Meaning to this group of elderly people was often expressed in various terms such as emptiness, loneliness, and isolation; and meaning was also expressed in terms of accepting what seemed to be unchangeable, irreplaceable, and irreversible.

I also noticed that in the beginning, especially in the pre-workshop interview and the first session of the workshop, participants tended to talk about loneliness, emptiness, and isolation more. As the workshop progressed, they began to express more positive aspects of the loss, such as hope for the future and changes in their thinking. The insights gained from the experience included emptiness, isolation, loneliness, and irreversibility.

Emptiness

The word *empty* or *emptiness* was the first word that came to the participants' minds when they talked about how they felt after their loved ones passed away. Roger spoke of his feeling about losing his best friend in the pre-study interview: "Everything

has emptiness in it.” He was the first one who shared in the group in the first session. He further explained and shared the same feeling in the first session as he shared whom he was mourning. “When you lose someone, you feel numb, you get angry, you fight to accept it . . . then you realize that there is an empty place in your life . . . It’s a horrible feeling . . . It’s very empty.” Again his voice dropped, and he gazed away as he spoke. He seemed to have fallen back to his memories. Everybody seemed to agree with what Roger said.

Denise responded by expressing the similar feeling—“There is a void . . . there is a void in my life”—as she talked about the loss of her best friend and how they used to talk, joke, and laugh together. Now nobody shared the same kind of humor. As she spoke, her voice dropped, and she spoke a lot slower.

Maureen echoed what the others shared as soon as she heard Roger talk about emptiness. She said, “Emptiness is the core feeling.” She talked about losing her son to leukemia. She said, “After my son died, I felt like I have lost all my hope. He was my oldest son. The feeling of emptiness was so strong. He had leukemia. I thought it was something for younger people. He was in his sixties. It was so painful to lose your children.”

In responding to the same question, Bernard stated, “I used to do a lot of different things, but now everything has emptiness in it.” I believe he did not just talk about his grandson but also about losing his own ability to do a lot of things as he shared about how active he used to be being a chairman in the social club and being a top salesperson in the real estate business.

When asked how he felt after his wife died, Eddie said, “When my wife passed away, I felt very bad . . . because she wasn’t there for me to talk to . . . there was a black hole in my system . . . I felt my living isn’t mixing properly . . .”

Isolation

As indicated in the methodology session, the discussion took place after the art making in each session. Issues like the participants’ feelings toward the art-making process, thoughts and themes brought on by the topics and images would be covered. In session 1, when asked about what the images of the lines reminded them of, most of the participants immediately brought up the feeling of isolation. For example, Roger said, “When people died, I went to a different planet, I locked myself . . . I shut down.” He drew vertical and horizontal lines on the same pages that looked more like a “cage” which gave him a strong sense of isolation. Figure 16 showed this feeling very clearly. When asked if he had talked to people around him about how he felt, he said, “They won’t understand. All they care about is what to eat.”

In response to Roger, Maureen expressed a similar feeling, “I have been mostly stacking myself a lot . . . I don’t talk to as many people as I used to.” Although she did not express it in the first session, I believe she felt that no one could share the same things with her as her best friend could when they used to have meals together, joke, and laugh together.

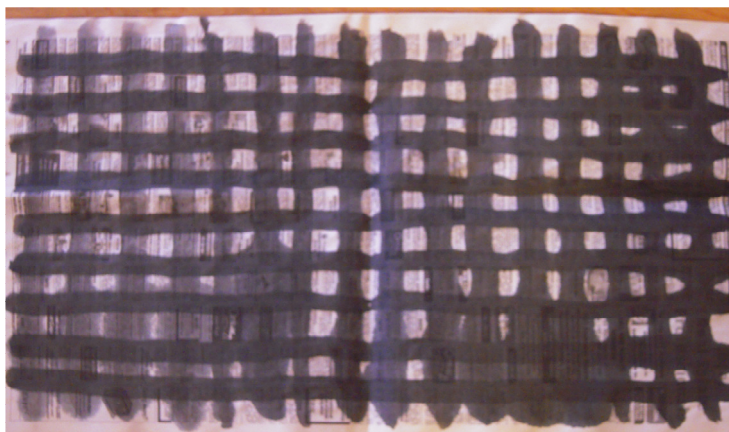


Figure 16. "Cage"

Even though Bernard was not in the same group, when asked regarding the differences before and after his grandson's death, he shared that he had similar feelings of isolation and that nobody understood how he felt. Bernard stated, "I retreated to myself, I don't talk to people about it much. Some people here knew what happened, and they sent me card and stuff, but I don't talk to anyone about it." When asked why he did not share what happened with others, he said, "They don't understand." I believe he kept things to himself as he felt the need to be strong in front of his family. Nobody could share his deeper feelings as he seemed to be fine on the outside.

Loneliness

Meaning was also expressed in terms of loneliness. For example, Roger spoke of his lonely feelings several times during the pre-study interview and in session 1. In the pre-study interview, Roger talked about his best friend's death, and then he went on with those in his generation who were gone one by one and how he felt he was left alone. "Everybody in my generation is gone, I feel very lonely . . . First, my wife died, then his wife [his best friend's wife] died, and he [his best friend] died. Now I am truly alone." In another session, he mentioned that he was the last one alive among all his siblings and

cousins. He first talked about his grandmother having seventeen grandchildren, all of whom were boys. He shared that some of the fun memories of his grandmother was being surrounded by those boys. At first, he was delighted to share his stories about his grandmother and his cousins. But he was saddened as he talked about being the last surviving member of his family. It seemed to me that he remembered the good times in the past but was saddened by the reality that no one from his generation could share those memories.

Denise expressed similar feelings: “It is a terrible feeling to feel that you are alone . . . Oftentimes, when you lose someone close, the lonely feeling comes very strongly. I have other children, but every time I think of my son, I feel lonely.” All of a sudden, the group fell into silence. Everybody seemed to be saddened by the topic of the discussion.

Several times during the pre-workshop interview and in the first session, Eddie talked about how he felt after his wife died. “The feeling that I had was all of a sudden very lonesome. She wasn’t there for me to talk to.” He then shared with me how he missed the time that he could talk to his wife even when she was not responding during her last days. He still talked to her every day believing that she could hear him.

Deborah expressed similar feelings during the first two sessions of the workshop: “Loneliness is the major thing,” and “I feel lonely a lot.” She also shared with me the things they used to do together such as going to the museums and movies, and grocery shopping. Now she would refuse to go to the movies and would try to get out of the market as soon as possible.

Irreversibility

As mentioned before, Roger talked about losing many friends and relatives during the pre-workshop interview and in the first session. He went on to explain why he felt lonely. His voice shook as he talked about not having more time to develop new relationships. “At our age, it is impossible to reestablish another lifetime commitment . . . I haven’t got another forty years.” Again, in the second session, Roger expressed a similar feeling: “Even though I have a son, it’s not the same . . . they are from a different generation . . . When my wife died, I lost my life companion.” He was saddened as his voice all of a sudden turned so soft that I almost could not hear him. I could feel his sadness and that time was running out for them.

Denise expressed a similar feeling in the pre-workshop interview: “There is nothing I can do to change it [what happened].” Also, in responding to Roger in the first session, she stated, “When someone passes away, everything changes . . . Everything you used to be suddenly changes, and you are not the same anymore . . . you have to really make a lot of allowances . . . and I guess I am not someone who has a lot of allowances.” It seemed to me that she expected herself to adapt to the environment without the deceased sooner, or better, as others expect the bereaved would do.

When Deborah was talking about things, she said the universe was so big and human beings seemed very small and powerless and thus have very little control of many things. Again she talked about the day that her husband died. She said, “I keep thinking if there were things I could change that day . . . I know there really wasn’t something I could change . . . I know I don’t have the power to change it.” It is so often and natural

for the bereaved to visit the same path over and over trying to find the missing pieces and fill the gaps with reasons.

Here, participants talked about how they felt losing someone they loved. The expression of feelings was necessary and therapeutic during the beginning of the loss. They were at the feeling level of the meaning-making process. Without addressing how they felt, it would be difficult for them to move on to a more cognitive level of meaning making.

B. Meaning making during the middle phase

Philosophical meaning, questioning, searching for, and changing global meaning

During the third and fourth sessions, the participants began to talk about death on a deeper level. They began to question why things happened the way they did and began to search for reasons in a more philosophical or religious manner. This happened when they talked more about their relationships with the deceased and when they tried to make sense of what happened and looked for a deeper meaning.

The question of whether they have ever thought about why their loved one died was raised during the third and fourth sessions. Three of the participants talked about the philosophical meaning of death. When talking about why people die and when they die, Denises hared too about how she was now the only one still alive of her generation in her family. She was the second of four children, with two sisters and a younger brother. Her husband passed away a long time ago. In responding to the question, she said, "I have thought of it all the time. I always wondered why. I don't know . . . maybe it had something to do with what you did in the past. I don't know what I did good and what I

did bad. I did not do good, and I live long. I am 88. My brother and my sisters did good, but they didn't live long. I don't know, you tell me."

Maureen listened silently and sighed several times. She responded to what Denise said: "I don't know why he [her eldest son] had to die before me. I know I should have died first. I am old, and I don't need to live so long. It's not fair." When asked if she ever felt angry at God for letting it happen, she said no. It was because she believed "God has a plan." In general, we all hope and feel death should have a chronological order that children are supposed to live longer than their parents.

In responding to the question, Bernard felt it was unfair that his grandson died at such a young age (21). "It's hard to come up with a reason. He was just too young. He should have had a bright future. There are so many things that he could do . . . he was a very bright kid. It's not fair." When asked if he ever felt angry at God for letting it happen, he said no. He said, "Bad things come from Satan, good things come from God."

Since Eddie was in an individual session, I raised the same question in the fourth session when he talked about his wife. He said, "I thought I would die first. I guess there is always a reason behind everything. In fact, I thought I almost died about ten years ago when I went through a major surgery. I bought some properties and opened up an art store in Florida when we lived there. I wanted to make sure my wife had a place to live and a business that she could live on after I died."

Afterward, the participants shifted the focus to a more cognitive level of meaning making or reasoning. Here they did not just ask for the cause of their loved one's death; they began to think *why* people died and *when* they died. They queried about whether

what they did and what they did not do had something to do with what happened afterward. They were trying to make a connection between behaviors and results.

C. Meaning making during last phase

Afterlife or destination of the future

Coming to the later sessions and in the post-workshop interviews, several participants began to talk about afterlife issues and topics, such as where the person's soul would be after they passed away.

The issue of where the person would be was raised in the last two sessions. For example, Bernard shared his belief that being good could lead to heaven. He said, "You never know, when you die, you don't know where you are going to be. Maybe if you are good, you will make it [to heaven]." He went on sharing his belief on seeing his grandson again in heaven, which made him feel better.

Participants also brought up the issue of wondering where the deceased would be after they died. In responding to that, Eddie said, "You can believe in almost anything . . . The thing that helps me is that when I think of her, I think of her lying there and looking very contented . . . and that solves a lot of my problems. In other words, I feel that her soul has gone to where it should be in heaven . . . and that makes me comfortable."

Deborah shared her belief while wondering where one's soul would be after death: "That is the energy . . . I wonder, where does that go . . . and how do I think about it? Should I believe there is an afterlife?" She continued to talk about being Jewish; they don't believe in afterlife. However, she would want to believe that there is a heaven as it would make her feel better to think that her husband is in heaven.

When talking about how they coped with the loss in the last session, Bernard shared his hope of seeing his grandson again. “Pretty soon, we will be hurt no more. The big band . . . The triumph, very strong, very powerful . . . The march . . . We all will be in heaven.” He further expressed his wish to see his grandson again in heaven. “I will see him again too.”

During the second phase, participants shifted their discussion from more concrete to more abstract. They moved from talking about the situations and causes of the death to what would happen after a person died.

Accepting what happened and continuing to live fully

We expressed meaning making in terms of accepting what happened as part of a life process and trying to live as fully as possible. In the last two sessions, the participants shared how they coped and what they believed was good for them and their deceased loved ones. For example, Denise said, “I don’t think you overcome, you just learn to cope with it.” Maureen echoed, “What happened, happened, you just have to learn to live with it.” She continued, “The pain will not go away. It is how you shape yourself and accept it. I am learning to be thankful for what I have and try not to think of what I lost.” Denise said, “It is life, I guess.”

Roger responded, “Well, I think we came here to construct our lives. We have to find a path to walk. Each of us here has a different path.” He then shared with us an incident with his 6-year-old grandson. “Grandpa, how old are you?” I said to him, “I am 90 years old.” “You lied, Grandpa.” “Why, what made you say that?” “Because, nobody lives to 90.” He laughed as he shared this piece with us. He continued in a more

serious tone, “I don’t know when I will die, but as long as I live, I will make every day worth it.”

Issues of coping with loss and accepting reality were brought up in the fifth session by Deborah. She said, “I do see that there are times that we are trying to control things, but there are things that we really don’t have much control of. Accepting what we can’t control and trying to let go is something we have to learn.”

Regarding the same issue, Eddie stated, “When I think of her, I try to think of the positives. When she [his wife] passed away, I knew she was satisfied and she was contented because she had lived a full and good life. I believe she didn’t want me to suffer from remembering the negative things. I know she wanted me to continue to live happily and fruitfully. My goal is to live and to enjoy life to the best I can, and that’s what I will do.”

Insights gained and lesson learned

The issue of possible gain or lesson learned from the experience was addressed during the last session and in the post-study interview. Participants talked about what things they learned from the experience as well as the changes in their thoughts toward what happened.

Roger said, “You never get an answer. You just get the help solving it. You don’t get the answer. You just get the feeling that you are able to take it.”

Maureen echoed, “You learned a lot from your experiences.”

Similarly, Denise shared that what made her feel better was that knowing the deceased loved one was resting in peace. “Feeling that she is resting in peace makes me feel better.”

Eddie expressed what he realized after the loss: “I think what I am doing is to create something, to build something, and to understand something.”

In session 4, the participants were asked to draw a picture with two colors that they like and dislike to represent the positive and negative aspects of their deceased loved one or the relationship between them. Bernard started using brown to make a coconut tree, which he said he did not like. Later he added his favorite color green to the painting. And then he said he started to like it better. He noticed that his feeling changed as he drew. He then talked about the ability to change something negative into something more positive. “When I am faced with something that I can’t change, I move around it and just won’t get stuck.” When asked how he did it, he said, “Just use a different way of thinking . . . adopting a different perspective.” Figure 17 shows the “like and dislike” by Bernard.



Figure 17. “Like and Dislike.”

The same issue of lesson learned or gained from the experience was explored by Deborah. She also identified something she gained from the loss. “I guess in some way, I am stronger. I think I became a very strong person. Something did turn out from things that didn’t seem so good.”

Here the participants began to talk about the afterlife and discussed the question of whether there was life after death. Changes seemed to have taken place on the nature of meaning making. They could identify some positive aspects of the loss. They began to talk about ways of seeing or connecting with the deceased loved one in the future.

Continuing Bonds

Again, for the purpose of this study and categorizing themes from the data, the data collected in related to continuing bonds was also divided into and carefully looked at three time periods. They are the early phase (pre-workshop interview and first two sessions), the middle phase (third and fourth sessions), and the last phase (fifth and sixth sessions and post-workshop interview). The

A. Continuing bond during the early phase

Thinking and remembering

Continuing bonds is expressed in terms of thinking and remembering the deceased person and feeling the person’s presence. Oftentimes, this thinking process gave the participants a sense of connection as well as made them feel good. This theme emerged in the beginning sessions of the workshop and stood out very strongly when participants practiced Chinese calligraphy that contains feelings and emotions. Most of

the participants chose the character for “thinking and remembering.” For example, as Roger was practicing the character of “thinking and remembering,” he talked about his best friend: “I think of him every day. He was such a wonderful person. We have known each other for more than fifty years. My family and his family used to do a lot of things together. Now just me.”

Denise also shared her feelings about her best friend as she was practicing calligraphy. “I keep all the memories. The memories are all in me.” When asked what she thought of most, Denise said, “I think of the good times, that’s what I think of the most. I remember the time we spent together. We used to have our meals together. We talked and we joked. We used to talk a lot, and sometimes we laughed a lot. She understood a lot of the things that I was saying, and I understood a lot of the things that she was saying. Her family knows me too. They brought me stuff every time they visited her. Nobody shares the same kind of friendship [with me] as she did.”

Similarly, when Bernard talked about his grandson, he said, “When I think of him, I think of the good things. He was bright, smart, good-looking, and athletic. I am very proud of him.”

Eddie shared his experience: “It is the memory . . . you just don’t forget them. In other words, thinking of her [his wife] brings good feelings to me. I think of her every day.” When asked what aspect of her he thought of most, he said, “My wife and I have been together for so many years. She knows me well. She never had to worry about anything. She lived a good life. I make a prayer once a week on Sabbath . . . to remember her and those who have passed away.”

Deborah said, “I can find the strong connection with my husband and the strong presence of his. Sometimes I feel he is there guiding me, especially when I had to deal with the bank accounts and financial statements. I had to separate our accounts because I couldn’t do anything with the accounts with both of our names. I have to learn to do all those little things because he used to take care of all those things.”

In a different session, Deborah also shared that thinking of her husband’s presence helped her feel better. “When the statements come, I would feel frustrated, and I could hear his voice saying . . . just take your time . . . do it slowly again, and it will be fine . . . and sure that was.”

B. Continuing bond during the middle phase

Missing the person

Interestingly, the theme of missing the loved one did not come up in the beginning of the sessions or in the pre-workshop interview. It came up only in the middle phase around the third and fourth sessions, especially during the session of practicing Chinese calligraphy. Many of the participants chose the character for “missing.”

Denise expressed her feelings as she was practicing the characters that meant “missing” someone that she loved. Someone asked her whom did she miss, and she said, “I miss my husband, my son, my brother, my sisters, my parents, and all those who passed away before me. I am the last one from my generation, so I have a long list of people that I miss.”

Roger talked about how much he missed his best friend. “I miss him every minute of the day.” He continued to share about his feelings toward other people that he loved.

“I miss my wife, my parents, my brothers, my cousins, and everyone in my family, and I am the only survivor in my generation.”

Eddie talked about his feelings toward his wife as he was practicing calligraphy of the characters for “missing.” “I miss her every day.” Figure 18 is the example of this activity.



Figure 18. Thinking and Missing.

Bernard talked about his grandson—“I miss him a lot, yes. I miss his face”—as he practiced the character “missing.” He also talked about how he used to play ball with his grandson when he was little.

Deborah also said, “Oh, I miss him so much.” She spent a long time writing repeatedly the character for “missing.” She was silent when she practiced calligraphy. She seemed to be very involved in the process and getting satisfaction out of the process (Figures 20 and 21).

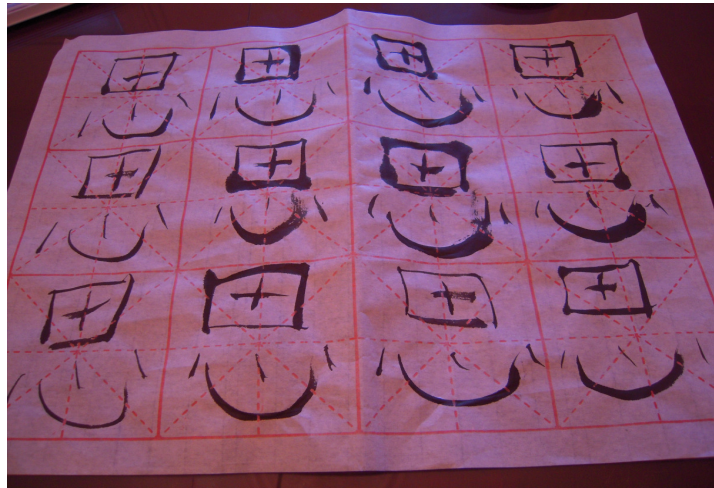


Figure 19. Thinking and Missing.



Figure 20. Thinking and Missing.

Both Eddie and Deborah talked about the process of writing the characters and how it helped them to connect with the feelings: “I feel more connected to the feelings, and it helped me relax.”

Love

The theme of love was expressed in the middle sessions of the workshop, and it remained as a strong theme until the end. The theme of love came up when participants were introduced to practicing Chinese calligraphy and copying Chinese characters that related to feelings and emotions.

In the session of practicing Chinese calligraphy to identify their feelings, all participants chose to write the character “love.” In the discussion, they made the connection between the degree of missing someone they loved and the depth of loving that person. In other words, the more love they had for the deceased person, the more they would miss the person.

Roger said, “Do you know why we miss them so much? Because we love them, because they loved us, because they made our lives full and meaningful.”

Maureen echoed, “I agree. They brought us joy and happiness. Yes, it’s true, and that’s what keeps us going.” Despite the fact that her eyes were very watery, which irritated her very much and worsened her eyesight, she spent a great deal of effort writing the character of “love” (Figure 21).



Figure 21. Love.

Eddie shared the same feeling as he also chose the same character for “love” in the session. “When you miss someone, you realize how much love you have for that person... I still love her.” Figure 22 was done by Eddie as he was writing the character and telling me stories of his wife. He later talked about the art experience. “When I started writing the characters, I didn’t feel anything... but after a while, I began to feel that the feelings synchronized. It sunk in.”

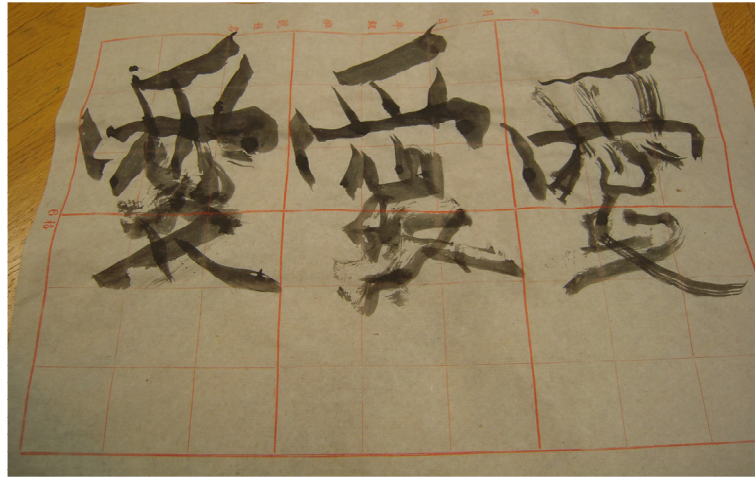


Figure 22. Love.

Bernard also expressed his love for his grandson while he was practicing the Chinese character for “love.” Although he did not purposely stretch the character, he was having some difficulties holding the brush properly. All of his characters turned out to be a little elongated. At the end, we talked about how the character has been stretched. He said, “My love for him will always be there... extend till the end” (Figure 23).



Figure 23. “Extended Love.”

C. Continuing bond during the last phase

Other ways of keeping connection

One of the most commonly used methods in keeping connection with the deceased is writing letters, stories, or journals. Others find visiting the cemetery or making something special for the person helpful. For example, when asked what they would do when they missed the person, Deborah talked about the fact that she has developed a habit of writing a journal. “I decided when I go to the cemetery; I would like to take my journal with me so that I can jot down my thoughts. There is a little bench. I can sit down and write . . . it’s so quiet and it’s a good time to write.” In a different session, Deborah also shared a different way of keeping connections with her husband, which was by doing something special for him. She said, “I made a little memorial garden for him. I had wanted to do this for a long time, just got the energy to do it. Last week, I decided I want to do it, so I spent an afternoon cleaning the backyard and planting some flowers to make it his place. I felt good.”

Eddie shared, “I say a prayer for my wife and for those who died in the family every week when I go to the temple. I mention the name of each person. It is a way of remembering them. I picture my wife, my parents, my siblings, and all those that have already passed away. In my mind, I have a picture of all of them . . . and I get contentment out of the prayers and out of the thinking process.”

Revealing their relationship with the deceased

Attig (2000) notes that when the bereaved participants revealed their relationships with the deceased, it was one way of keeping continuing bonds with the person. Several times throughout the sessions, Denise shared with us how she and her husband met.

“When I met my husband, I told myself that I must marry him because of his four-lettered last name . . . because my maiden name has ten letters. I wanted to get rid of my ten-letter last name and get a four-lettered name. That’s why I married him.” She also shared with us how the two of them met and how they courted and married later with delight and joy.

All the participants demonstrated that keeping continuing bonds with the deceased loved ones made them feel good. However, what they did was not important. The fact that they were able to do something for the deceased loved ones and were gaining satisfaction from the process was more significant.

Maintaining Balance

Same as meaning making and continuing bonds, data on changes in terms of maintaining balance was also divided into three time periods. They are the pre-workshop interview and the early-phase sessions (pre-workshop interview and the first two sessions of the workshop), the middle phase (the third and fourth sessions), and the last phase (the last two sessions and post-workshop interview).

A. Maintaining balance during the early phase

In the beginning, participants did not talk about maintaining balance, and most of them seemed to stay in the grieving mode and tried to assimilate what happened. For example, Roger talked about being in “a different planet . . . I shut down.”

Maureen showed a similar response and said, “I retreated to myself.”

Denise admitted feeling the same way. “I have been mostly stacking myself a lot . . . I don’t talk to as many people as I used to.”

B. Maintaining balance during the middle sessions

Revealing the relationship with the deceased

The only theme related to balance was revealing the relationship. Eddie talked about his relationship with his wife both positively and negatively. He chose green to represent the negative aspect and blue for the positive aspect of his wife and their relationship. He used green to draw a person with a square head representing his wife, who could be very stubborn at times, which upset him very much. He then used blue to draw a round headed person to represent the gentleness of his wife (Figure 24).



Figure 24. "Like and Dislike."

C. Maintaining balance during the last phase

As time progressed, maintaining balance seemed to become a more important issue for the participants. When participants were asked to share how they spent their days during the post-workshop interviews, most of them said that they tried to think of

something else—talk to people, take part in different activities. For example, Roger said, “I keep myself busy by reading books, joining different groups, and talking to my son.”

Denise also expressed in the last session, “When I am sort of down, I try to get myself sort of up. My mission here is to keep myself happy.”

Eddie also shared a similar view at the last session: “Finding the balance between honoring the person and to be there for the living and to those who need you is a delicate issue. You need time to grieve and not to forget the person, but also be there for those who need and love you.”

Bernard talked about his daily activities. “I have physical therapy in the morning every other day. I read magazines, and I sit in the dining room just to be around people.”

During the post-workshop interview, Deborah shared in the last two sessions, “You don’t want to forget the person who died, but you also want to be there for the living and those who need you. There is a fine balance. It’s like the seesaw.” Again, she talked about a similar issue during the post-workshop interview when asked of her present feelings. She said, “It has been ups and downs. There were moments that I felt I was all right. My grandchildren needed me, and oftentimes attending to their needs took my mind off the sadness. How do you make the balance between honoring the person and being there for those people who are here and need you? It is a very delicate thing.”

Eddie said, “I try to reach out to people, to help others . . . helping others makes me happy too.”

Some of the participants talked about wanting to just remember the good and positive things. In response to that, Denise stated, “To me, it is important to remember both the bad and good things . . . it is part of life.”

Adjusting to life without the deceased or learning new tasks

When sharing with each other how they cope, several participants shared that they felt important to continue to live a full and good life because of those who were still around, and they believed that was what the deceased person wanted to see. Denise said, “I have a daughter. A daughter is better than a lot of other things. I wouldn’t trade anything for her.”

Maureen echoed in a delighted tone, “I have a daughter and a granddaughter too. I want to be with them, and I love being with them, and seeing them makes me happy.”

Eddie said, “I feel that my wife and I had lived a good life, and I want to continue with my good life.”

Balance is also a major issue for Deborah, especially coming toward the later sessions of the workshop. This is how she described it: “Balance seems to be the major issue in my life now. Balancing between grieving for my husband and being there for my daughter and my grandchildren is important to me too. You know, what really helps are my grandchildren. I have an essential role. I guess I have a purpose and I have specific things to do. It’s working and certainly makes me feel good. I realized that my life isn’t over . . . and that there is something that I can do.”

Deborah also talked about the change she wanted to see and said, “I push myself a lot in life, and I am trying to take a break now. It is a way of taking care of myself.”

Table 4 Major themes and their constituents derived from the transcripts and interactions of the participants during the three phases of the study

	Initial Phase (pre-workshop interview and	Mid-phase (second and third sessions)	Late Phase (fifth and sixth sessions and
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	first two sessions)		post-workshop interview)
<i>Meaning Making</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Circumstances related to the death ❖ Understanding of the event ❖ Insights gained or lessons learned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emptiness • Isolation • Loneliness • Irreversibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Philosophical meaning, questioning, searching for, and changing global meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Afterlife or destination of the future ❖ Accepting what happened and continuing to live fully. ❖ Insights gained and lesson learned, or changes
<i>Continuing Bonds</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Thinking and remembering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Missing the person ❖ Love 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ways of keeping connection ❖ Revealing the relationship with the deceased
<i>Maintaining Balance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Absent in this phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Revealing relationship with the deceased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Living in the here and now ❖ Accepting the loss ❖ Adjusting to life without the

			<p>deceased</p> <p>❖ Learning new tasks through art making</p>
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Participants' Art Making Experiences

In the post-workshop interviews, participants also shared their experiences in using the Chinese brushstrokes in painting and calligraphy. All of them spoke positively regarding their experiences with the medium as well as with the creative process.

Although Roger said he did not see the connection between practicing Chinese brush stroke and healing of grief, he said the exercises could help him feel relaxed and concentrate. Roger said, "I think that artwork can help people who go through a difficult time... to help them create something... and help them to feel peaceful... This is helping them to meditate so that they can handle that situation better. Yeah, I think so, once you stop thinking about it. I experience things that I am doing... in this particular stage, I feel it can help me. I can feel a little more relaxed and calm."

Denise did not produce many pieces of artworks, but she said she enjoyed the process. "You automatically develop a different feeling... you keep going. Gradually as you continue to do the line, and you watch the line, the next thing you know, you forgot already what certain feelings are. When you do the line, your mind slowly takes the pressure away and stays in the here and now. The feelings kind of go away or disappear."

Maureen enjoyed the slowness of the artmaking process, “It kind of has to do it very slowly . . . when you’re practicing it, you are practicing your patience, calmness, concentration, and balance. It is also a way of training your perseverance.”

Eddie said the art making process helped him in two ways; one was it relaxed him and he felt he cope with the situation better and he felt the process of art making gave him pleasure and he was able to enjoy the activities. “It released the pressures, the mental pressure . . . the pressure in your mind. It made me relaxed, calm, and I could concentrate and was able to learn something new. I have gained something, some knowledge that helped me to handle the situation better. In other words, it was something that helped me move forward...I have a lot of fun (during the art making process). What I am trying to do is I am enjoying what I do. I am trying to enjoy my thoughts on paper. I have a happy ground to work on.”

Bernard talked about feeling calm and at ease when wielding the Chinese brush and said, “I like it . . . very good... Makes me calm and relax more. I think this is helpful because sometimes people can’t think of anything to do. This gives them something to do, and relax, and then they will be able to concentrate.”

It was a totally new learning experience for Deborah. She enjoyed the process and gained some sense of enjoyment from the experience. “I felt joy and enjoyment when I wrote the character ‘happiness.’ I am getting a lot out of this. I can relax mentally. I learned something new. I can do something different. I get a sense that I can do it too . . . very satisfying... thank you.”

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter focuses on the discussion of major themes and their constituents derived from the transcripts of the interviews and transcripts from the workshops of the participants during the three phases of the study. The first section of the chapter mainly focuses on general discussions in each session of the workshop. The second section covers the discussion of the major themes and their constituents from the participants from each of the sessions of the workshop. The third part is a discussion on the participants' artworks and their relationships to the major themes. The last section is about my personal learning from the experience.

General Discussion

There is much research on meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance as important elements for healthy bereavement coping, but there seems to be no research about the chronological order of these aspects in time of loss. This may have to do with what Neimeyer (1998, 2001) says of how each person copes differently and at one's own pace. It is important to acquire these elements for better coping, but "time," in terms of when the bereaved is able to acquire these elements, is not an important factor in the relationship to overall coping or healthy bereavement. Although this research and analysis was limited in scope, this was a positive experience for most of the participants. As indicated, this conclusion was supported by the participants' own personal sharing and the artwork they made. The result suggested that the art making (practicing of

Chinese brushstrokes) provided an opportunity for them to express their feelings and thoughts related to their loss as well as a chance to explore their strengths in coping with the loss. The workshop and the art making provided a safe place for the participants and allowed them to mourn and to vent emotions in a supportive manner. Participants engaged in the sessions, which also seemed to provide a place to talk about their losses and some feelings about the loss. It was especially true for Bernard as he was trying to restrain himself from showing and sharing emotions with his wife and daughter. This seemed that art, as a nonthreatening medium, provided him an opportunity to reduce his tension and defense levels and a safe boundary for him to express his intense emotions.

Most of the participants reported that the process of art making, whether it was making lines or practicing calligraphy, helped them feel calm, relax, and concentrate. This could be because practicing Chinese brushstrokes required physical balance and worked directly with breathing techniques as suggested by Kao and Goan (1995). It was also because reaching calmness and relaxation was essential to maintaining a sense of balance (Kwo, 1981). This also supports the claim of Malchiodi (2003) about how art making can reduce stress and induce relaxation.

Some participants talked about feeling differently after the process of art making. This could be related to image making that helped them to be more connected with their feelings and emotions, or the image itself brought what was in the unconscious up to the surface. According to Weiss (1984), creative art therapy aids the expression of natural and personal feelings and thoughts from both the conscious and the unconscious, and the process can help the elderly gain new perspectives.

Several participants reported that copying Chinese characters representing feelings and emotions helped them better connect with their feelings. As some of the participants stated, the process of copying the characters helped them become more deeply in touch with their feelings. It allowed them sufficient time to express their feelings and move on to a different feeling. Moving on helped them gain a new perspective on their feelings, which could help them define their own meaning of their loss. This may have to do with the participants already knowing the meanings of the characters they chose. The meanings could have aroused certain emotions that helped them identify with the meanings and connect with them more easily. Through this exercise, participants were encouraged to get in touch with their feelings and express them through visual images. Besides, the copying of the characters also helped participants have a better understanding of the culture. In fact, many Chinese characters reflect the relationships between humans and nature and the relationships among humans. This also seemed to concur with Davis (1995), who claims that the goal of art therapy is to “facilitate awareness, expression of emotions, and working through issues” (p.324). Practicing Chinese calligraphy was a form of art therapy that served the same purpose. According to Worden (2002), it is necessary for the bereaved to accomplish the four tasks of mourning, and the second task is experiencing and working through the pain of grief.

The art activities chosen in each session was either to help the participant relax or to elicit discussions related to grief and loss. Activities chosen in sessions 1 and 2 seemed to be appropriate as they helped the participants stretch and relax. Participants were able to connect their loss with images they made, which led to some meaningful discussions later in the sessions. The associations made with images were highly related

to their needs and present situations. They provided them a chance to talk about their loss, and the feeling of being out of control was significant and universal. This seemed to support the points made by Malchiodi (1998) on the process of art making, which offers a way to gain symbolic control over the circumstances and a way to establish an inner sense of security and safety.

In session 4, I asked the participants to choose two colors to indicate the positive and negative aspects of the loved one or their relationship with the deceased. To some participants, choosing the colors was easier than drawing the picture. In fact, only two participants were able to finish the task. Some of the participants tried choosing and mixing colors; others chose to talk about their relationship with the deceased instead. This may suggest that the task of using colors to represent positive and negative attributes of the deceased or the relationship between them was a little abstract for some of the participants. It could also mean that they were not yet ready to address the negative aspect of the person or the relationship. To some participants, such as Denise and Roger, the art activity suggested a theme for them to focus on, to share more specifically about their relationship with the deceased, and the positive and negative aspects of the relationship. To others, such as Deborah, the wielding of the brush relaxed her as she said it was a difficult topic to address. Although, she did not draw a picture out of the two colors, she seemed to talk more readily as she was playing with the colors and the brush. She was able to talk about the tough times they went through and how she managed to maintain keeping it up during the lowest points of their lives. Yet to others, like Denise and Eddie, the art making served as a good prompt for them to talk about the deceased person. Eddie never said any negative things about his wife. Having done the

activity, he was able to share some of the differences between him and his wife and how he handled arguments between the two.

In session 5, participants were asked to choose a plant that represents their virtues. The purpose of this session was to help participants identify and acknowledge their good virtues. This session seemed to help the participants regain self-worth as they continue their lives without the deceased. From their verbal responses and eagerness to try, participants seemed to be highly motivated by the art activity as well as by the meaning behind the drawing. Interestingly, five of the participants identified themselves with the bamboo and three of them drew pictures of a bamboo. According to Kwo (1981), the proper way of drawing bamboo leaves should start in the air, like an airplane gliding down and touching the runway. The bamboo leaves on paper may be two or three inches long, but the movements should be much longer. Perhaps the pattern of swinging the arm back and forth gave them a soothing sense and may be helpful to relax the participants' minds and thoughts. In Chinese art, bamboo is symbolic of many positive human attributes. According to Nilsson (2004), bamboo symbolizes trustworthiness in Chinese art. McCormac (2005) explains that a bamboo is flexible and can withstand storms without breaking; it is a symbol of strength, resilience, endurance, and survival in adversity. Furthermore, Kwo (1981) notes that the hollowness of the bamboo represents a virtuous scholar. The hollowness implies a spacious heart and the modesty that is ready to receive advice at any time. Ebrey (2000) notes that bamboo is considered the emblem of the perfect Confucian gentleman who keeps his virtue pure and his emotions in check; like a bamboo stalk, one keeps his inner self clear and untroubled. Perhaps the image of

bamboo symbolized both strength and comfort to the participants to endure the pain of the loss and discover the resilience within them.

In the last session, participants were invited to draw a picture of a place that they cherished, a place where they would find support or comfort in, or a place that held their memories associated with the deceased loved ones. This seemed to be a good closure as it provided a place for the bereaved to safely keep their memories of their loved ones and things that they treasured in a creative but concrete way. This seems to reflect what Junge (2008) claims about how in art therapy memory is expressed through the process of image making.

Meaning Making

Meaning making was shown when the participants were trying to make sense of the loss (Davis, 2001). Meaning making was also expressed when the participants talked about things that were related to the circumstances of the loved one's death, the way the deceased viewed death, and anything related to afterlife (Nadeau, 2001). Meaning making was when the bereaved talked about their understanding of what happened and things related to the reasons of the death (Nadeau, 2001).

According to Park, Edmondson, Fenster, and Blank (2008) and Roberts (2003), the bereaved made meaning when they shared their views in a broader sense that related to philosophical aspects of death and dying such as fairness, posed questions, and searched for and changed global meaning. Meaning making was also shown when participants talked about subject matters that have religious connotations (Nadeau, 2001).

Participants were also trying to make meaning when they described lessons learned, new insights gained, or changes in themselves or in the family (Nadeau, 2001) and relationships amongst family members that were strengthened (Davis, 2001).

The data shows that the participants felt loneliness as a result of the loss. Elderly people often felt lonely as a result of losing people from their generation and being the last surviving part of it. Even though all of them have children and grandchildren, they still feel lonely and isolated. Perhaps it is because they feel that only those who are from their generation could fully understand and support them, and since they have become the last person from their generation, they feel no one can relate to them in terms of sharing the same experiences and interests. If so, this would seem to agree with what Lopata (1996) says about how loneliness ties with shared understanding and interaction patterns as well as validation of self-worth and love toward people from the same generation and important people who shared their lives with.

Some of the participants' sharing showed that when they could not make sense of the loss, they tended to look for a more philosophical explanation of the loss. This could be related to the need for making sense in order to complete the missing piece. As Neimeyer (2001) states, the bereaved need to make sense of the inconsistencies and conflicts that arise from the loss and focus on integrating the loss into their lives. This may be because in the beginning phase, participants were more likely in a grieving mode and their world was upset by the death of the loved one. They had yet to accept the reality of the loss and allow time to assimilate what happened.

Some participants shared that they have gained some insights from the loss, some talked about getting more confident as they completed certain tasks without the help of

the deceased, and others talked about becoming a stronger person. This supports what Carr (2004) notes that some bereaved people experience personal growth and self-confidence after the loss when they are able to overcome a task or endure an event that once seemed overwhelming and impossible. This also seemed to agree with McIntyre (1988) that practicing Chinese brushstrokes is an art therapy process that helps the bereaved build self-confidence and develop coping skills after the loss.

One of the insights gained by the participants was the irreversibility of the loss. When they seemed to accept the loss as a permanent fact, they began to talk more about their feelings and how they were coping. This could be because they came to realize that no matter how they felt, there was still a life to live here. Therefore, they regarded their loss experience as a chance at rebuilding their lives, coping with their loss, and accepting it finally. This concurs with Worden (2002), who notes that the first task of mourning is for each bereaved to accept the reality that the loss is irreversible. Zisook (1987) describes it pertinently: “The process of integrating loss begins with the realization of the loss and cumulating with acceptance of a physical and psychological reality” (p. 180).

Bernard gained insight from his experience of changing something he disliked in the beginning and liking it later. He addressed the ability to change something negative into something more positive. This reflects what Weiss (1984) talks about that the creative process can help the elderly gain new perspective as they share their feelings, thoughts, and memories (p. 149). It also agrees with the claim of Malchiodi (1998) about how the process of art making can enhance a better understanding of the participants’ feelings, so that they look at them differently and change them eventually.

During the second phase of meaning making, participants shifted their focus to a more cognitive level of meaning making or reasoning. They did not just ask the cause of the death, they began to think about *why* people died and *when* they died. Their discussion moved from concrete topics to more abstract ones. They began to question or verbalize their query about whether what they did or what they did not do may relate to what happened. They also tried to make the connection between behavior and result. They have moved from talking about the situations and causes of the death to what would happen after a person died. This may reflect the need or process for accepting the reality that death is a permanent thing. It seemed to me that this was a universal feeling and that there is a cause and effect in things that happen in people's lives. Again, this may reflect that the participants were beginning to accept the reality of the loss. Although not explicitly expressed, I believe this was also a sign to keep a continuing bond with the deceased loved one. It would seem to be easier to keep a bond with the person when they know where the person is.

Toward the last phase, participants began to talk about afterlife and questioned whether there was such a thing. Changes seemed to take place on the nature of meaning making. They could identify some positive aspects of the loss. They began to talk about ways of seeing or connecting with the deceased loved one in the future. It seemed that when the reality of the death had sunk in, they began to accept that death is permanent and irreversible. They then tried to search for ways to reconnect with the deceased. The belief in the afterlife offers them a hope for the future and comfort in the meantime. It seemed that when people could not explain what happened, they turned to a greater power, believing in someone greater who knows the answers.

Continuing Bonds

Continuing bond is expressed in various ways such as missing the loved one, thinking and remembering the deceased person, and seeking ways to maintain connections with their deceased loved ones (Shuchter & Zisook, 1993; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1991; Silverman, Nickman, & Worden, 1992; Bonanno, Mihalecz, & LeJeune, 1999). Connections can be in the form of writing and talking to the deceased loved one, feeling the presence of the person, doing the same things that the loved one used to do, taking on, keeping, and passing on the habits or good virtues of the deceased to others. Some of the terms are the same in the meaning-making category. Attig (2000) notes that the bereaved are making connections and maintaining bonds with the deceased when they hold them in memory, giving the deceased person a place in practical life, keeping them in the soul, and holding on to their spirit. Another way of showing that the bereaved are keeping bonds with the deceased is when they accept the loss, remember the deceased, reveal the relationship with the deceased, and talk about the deceased coherently (Attig, 2000). For these participants, a continuing bond was expressed in terms of thinking and remembering the person and feeling the person's presence. This could be because the thinking process gave the participants a sense of connection as well as made them feel good. These data supported what Neuman, Nadavm, and Bessor (2006) wrote about using remembrance as a way of making meaning as remembrance is a way for the bereaved to try to rebuild what they know of the deceased person. It is a way of giving form to the deceased by connecting bits and pieces of experiences and forming a complete picture according to how the deceased was perceived in the eyes of the bereaved. When the bereaved remember their loss, they do not simply retrieve moments

of their past. They actively constitute their identity by enacting the unique characteristics of their mourning (Neuman, Nadav, & Bessor, 2006).

In the beginning phase, participants talked about thinking of their loved ones and their thoughts were mostly occupied by the person. Later, during the middle phase, some participants tended to talk about missing the person, feeling the presence of the person. Lastly, some of them talked about doing something more actively for the deceased person or to remember them. It appeared that in the beginning, some participants took on a more passive mode of keeping the bond with the deceased. Their thoughts were occupied with the person involuntarily. Later, it appeared that they took on a relatively more active mode of keeping the bond by missing and thinking of the persons and things related to them. When it came to the last phase, participants took on an even more active mode of keeping the bond by actively doing something for the deceased person. For example, Eddie would pray for his wife on a regular basis and Deborah had specially made a garden for her husband.

Commonly used methods in keeping connection with the deceased are through talking to the deceased, writing letters, stories, or journals (Klass & Walter, 2001). Others find visiting the cemetery or making something special for the person helpful. As an example, Deborah took a journal with her every time she visited her husband's grave and deliberately wrote down things that came to her mind and shared that with her husband, as well as keeping a record of her thoughts and feelings. Deborah's sharing supported the claim of Stroebe, Schut, and Stroebe (2005) that better bereavement is associated with different forms of attachment, and this attachment allows the bereaved to retain a sense of connection to the deceased, as well as allowing them to move forward with their lives.

The theme of love was expressed in the middle of the workshop, and it remained as a strong theme until the end. Participants began to talk about the relationship between loving and missing someone they loved. They realized that the more they loved the person the more they would miss the person. The theme changed their meaning of the loss as well as strengthened the bond between them and the deceased loved ones. Because the death did not take away everything or feeling being deprived (Attig, 2001); it did not take away the love they had between them. They would continue to feel the love of that person and they would continue to love the person even if they were not physically present. Instead of missing the presence of the person, they now felt the love strongly existing. This also seems to support Attig's (2004) claim about the need for the bereaved to find a sense of lasting love.

This realization of love changed the mood from a relatively passive and negative sense of viewing the loss to a more active and positive way of looking at the loss. This supported what Attig (2004) claims—that it is important for the bereaved to search for a sense of lasting love because “it fulfills our desire to still love them, it also gives them a continuous presence in our lives without their physical presence, and it helps us cherish their legacies and alleviates the pain of missing them” (pp. 357-358). This also concurs with Roberts (2003), who claims that “mourning is the price one pays for loving” (p. 65). The result seemed to agree with the suggestion of Kwo (1981) that practicing Chinese brushstrokes enhances interactive and engaging motivation and results. It also reflected Thompson (2003), that making visual images helps restore connections with self and others. Moreover, it concurs with the claim of Chen (2003) that Chinese calligraphy

provides an opportunity for expression and communication because the line movement is highly related to emotional expression.

As time progressed, participants seemed to be able to talk more about their loved ones without the intense hurt and sadness. This would be because they found ways to connect with the deceased—such as writing a journal, planting a garden, and praying—as they realized that the deceased was no longer in their lives, but the memories still lived and continued to live. As Stroebe, Schut, and Stroebe (2005) state, it is important for the bereaved to realize and accept that the loved one is no longer present in their daily lives but can still be remembered, valued, and referred to continuously. This also seemed to agree with what Bonanno (2005) talks about, that keeping a continuous bond with the deceased helps minimize negative feelings toward the separation.

Maintaining Balance

Balance was shown when the bereaved actually talked about the word *balance*, when they seemed to maintain a sense of balance in their daily activities. Balance is also manifested in the way they view the deceased and their relationship with the person. When talking about the person or their relationship with him/her, it would be imbalanced if only a one-way view was presented. That is, the person was totally good and the relationship between the two was almost perfect. Participants should be able to talk about the deceased in a more balanced way as they could see both positive and negative aspects of the person and the relationship. When a person is willing to express feelings about the loss and shows signs of accepting it, some sense of balance has been established (Wood, 1981).

Hansson and Stroebe (2007) suggest that it is important for the bereaved to keep a balance between the “loss-orientation” and the “restoration-orientation.” A person is trying to maintain a sense of balance when they juggle between the two orientations. For example, when the bereaved go back and forth viewing pictures of the deceased, envisioning how the deceased would respond, crying, longing for the person, seeking reminders of the deceased, including reviewing memories related to the deceased and handling household tasks, they are in the loss mode. Whereas, when the bereaved are dealing with financial arrangements and struggling with new identities, the person is in a restoration mode. During the pre-workshop interview, when asked how they spend their days, most of the participants reported that they just sat around or watched television, or stayed in their rooms. They also talked about wanting to retreat to themselves, had no interests in activities, and were unwilling to talk to people around them. All these activities seemed to be isolated and, in some sense, unbalanced. This might be because they were overwhelmed by what happened and they needed time to assimilate what happened. Thus reaching out or making connections with others seemed to be a very low priority at the beginning of the loss. This seems to support what seems to be common and normal among the bereaved as they become avoidant or withdraw from social interactions (Parkes, 1972, 1987, 1996), lack initiative and interest in things, and have difficulties in relationships with friends and relatives (Parkes, 1972, 1987, 1996).

Coming toward the later sessions, participants showed signs of changes in that they expressed hope for the future and cared about others around them. This may have been related to what Hansson, Remondet, and Galusha (1993) and Wortman and Silver (1992) discuss about, that old people have better psychological resilience and can better

adapt to later losses. Furthermore, older people have more wisdom to handle life stresses and can better tolerate stressful events (Baltes, Smith, & Staudinger, 1992).

Toward the end of the workshop, participants began to talk about accepting the loss as part of the life process and keeping the deceased loved one in their memories. Some participants talked about making new adjustments in life without the deceased. This concurred with what Attig (2001) states that the bereaved relearn their own characters, roles, identities, self-confidence, and self-esteem in the absence of the deceased person. They also relearn aspects of the self and relationships with the deceased. This also supported the claim of Thompson (1998) about the bereaved needing to find a sense of control by accepting the situation and adjusting to it.

Although participants were saddened by their loss, at the same time, they also felt they needed to be strong and deal with all the daily challenges. This concurred with what Hansson and Stroebe (2007) suggest that it is important for the bereaved to keep a balance between the “loss-orientation” and the “restoration-orientation.” Some participants talked about making a balance between honoring the deceased person and at the same time attending to the needs of the loved ones around them. It supported what Bull (1992) notes that in order to cope more effectively, it is important to maintain a balance in time of loss. This seemed to concur with the claim of Kwo (1981) that practicing Chinese brushstrokes helps the bereaved reach a state of self-harmony and accept the inevitable.

The majority of the participants spoke of getting some sense of balance when practicing the Chinese brushstrokes. This seems to support the belief that practicing Chinese calligraphy helps subdue impulsiveness, bring about mental quietness, pacify

restlessness, and introduce an anchor to the fidgety mind (Yen, 2005). It may also help a practitioner reach a state of relaxation because it regulates breathing, pulse, heart rate, and blood pressure (Kao, 1991; Chen & Kao, 2000; & Chen, 2003). The practitioner may achieve calmness and control over body and mind (Guo, 1995; Kwo, 1981), with the additional benefit of subduing distracting thoughts and worries (Kao, 2000; Chen, 2003).

From the topics and themes of the data emerges the suggestion that practicing the Chinese brushstroke techniques can change the nature of meaning making and continuing bonds with the deceased. Participants did not speak much about these. However, they spoke a great deal about reaching a sense of balance in terms of relaxation, concentration, and calmness. As indicated by most of the participants, practicing Chinese brushstrokes helped them concentrate, relax, and grow calm, which helped evoke feelings and thoughts pertaining to the body movements. This seemed to support what McIntyre (1990) states that art therapy process helps the bereaved maintain a sense of balance to the loss. It also appears to support what Malchiodi (1998) claims about art making can help “achieve and restore psychological equilibrium” (p.134). Perhaps the reason for this is that physiological changes are relatively easier to identify than cognitive ones. As Kwo (1981) claims, practicing Chinese calligraphy coordinates the whole body. It maintains bodily balance by shifting body weight from one side to the other.

Participants’ Artworks: Correlated to Healthy Bereavement Coping

As stated in the methodology section, the format of the workshop and the art activities in each session was designed based on Worden’s Four Tasks of Mourning model. The four tasks are accepting the reality of the loss, working through the pain of

grief, adjusting to a changed environment, and emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life (Worden, 2002).

The artworks by participants were correlated to the four tasks of mourning and elements of healthy bereavement coping. Figure 3 is called the “Venetian Blinds,” as Roger was talking about his feeling of isolated after everybody from his generation passed away. The process of drawing the lines confirmed his feelings and actualized the loss, which concurred with Worden’s first task of mourning. This was the same for figure 13 as the participant shared the feeling of isolation in the expression of a cage. Figures 6 and 7 showed that practicing calligraphy related to feelings and emotions allowed the participants to revisit the feelings as some of them described the process to have helped them get in touch with their feelings, which matched Worden’s second task of mourning, which is to experience the pain of loss. Such as Figure 10 and 11 were done with two colors, which represented the positive and negative aspects of the deceased person and their relationship with the person. As the participants talked about their relationship with the deceased, they had to reexperience the stories and events related to the deceased. The process of making the picture helped the participants get in touch with reality. Again this was the second task of Worden’s model. Figures 12 and 13 were drawings that matched with Worden’s third task, adjusting to life without the deceased. The plants in the pictures represented the virtues that the participants acquired as they began to talk about the need to care for people around them, and it was also what the deceased person would like to see. Here they began to adjust to a life without the deceased as they saw strengths from their own qualities. Figures 18, 19, and 20 were done in forms of calligraphy. As the participants practiced the characters, they began to

feel that although their loved ones were gone; their love for them would stay till the end.

This indicated that they began to emotionally relocate the person in their memories, as

Worden named it the fourth task in the bereavement process.

Table 5 Participants' artworks in correspondence to Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning and the three better bereavement coping elements

Participants' Artwork	Four Tasks of Mourning	Elements of Healthy Bereavement Coping
Figure 3 "Venetian Blinds"	1st Task – Actualizing the loss	Meaning making
Figures 6, 7, 8, & 9 Practicing Chinese Calligraphy "Love," "Missing," "Sadness"	2nd Task – Experiencing the pain of the loss	Meaning making Continuing bonds
Figures 10 & 11 "Like and Dislike"	2nd Task – Experiencing the pain of the loss	Balance Continuing bonds
Figures 12 & 13 "Bamboo"	3rd Task – Adjusting to life without the deceased	Balance
Figures 14 & 15 "Place"	4th Task – Emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life	Continuing bonds Balance
Figure 16 "Cage"	2nd Task – Experiencing the pain of the loss	Meaning making
Figures 18, 19, & 20 "Thinking" and "Missing"	2nd Task "Experiencing the pain of the loss"	Continuing bonds

	4th Task – Emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life	
Figures 21, 22, & 23 “Love”	4th Task – Emotionally relocating the deceased and moving on with life	Continuing bonds

Summary of Discussion

The results of this study show that although participants were non-Chinese-speaking people, nor were they familiar with the Chinese brush techniques, they were able to benefit from the activity. Data gained from the transcript and interactions suggest that using Chinese brushstroke techniques in coping with bereavement could be a helpful experience for the bereaved, even to non-Chinese populations. Participants could benefit from using the Chinese brush technique to cope with loss and bereavement. Results of this study indicate that practicing the Chinese brush technique could help the bereaved relax, concentrate, gain better balance, actualize their losses, connect with their feelings and emotions toward the loss, enhance meaning making, and strengthen the continuing bonds with the deceased. These are all elements essential to coping with bereavement in a healthy way.

Although showing the participants the basic techniques of using the Chinese brush was necessary during the process of art making, the goal was not in mastering or

perfecting their skills in calligraphy or painting. Rather, the art making served as a prompt to enhance the expression of feelings. My role as an expressive therapist was to listen, support and facilitate healing within the therapeutic context. The artwork served the purpose of holding and containing the emotions as well as the memories. The art pieces concretized the feelings and memories of the bereaved because the artwork was a permanent piece that not only held their feelings and emotions but also contained memories of the deceased loved one. The artwork demonstrated the participants' actions and manifested their connections with the deceased. This supports Edwards' (2001) claim that the completed image is a statement about the person who makes it and a representation of that person's internal experience.

Based on the themes identified from the data, practicing Chinese brushstrokes seemed to be helpful to these participants. Some changes in each of the three areas of meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance were identified during the pre-workshop interview and the early sessions of the workshop, during the middle sessions of the workshop, and in the late sessions of the workshop and post-workshop interview. It is noted that participants did not speak much about changes in meaning making and continuing bonds, but they did talk about changes in maintaining balance. This could be because physiological changes were relatively easier to identify than cognitive ones. As Kwo (1981) claims, practicing Chinese calligraphy is coordinated by the whole body; it is maintaining bodily balance by shifting body weight from one side to the other.

Participants also indicated that practicing Chinese brushstroke techniques seemed to help them reach a sense of balance more easily. They reported that they experienced a

sense of balance in terms of relaxation, concentration, and calmness. As indicated by most of the participants, practicing Chinese brushstrokes helped them concentrate, relax, and calm down, which helped evoke feelings and thoughts pertaining to body movements. This seemed to support what McIntyre (1990) states that the art therapy process helps maintain a sense of balance to the loss. This seemed to agree with a research on practicing Chinese calligraphy, which states that it helps to reach a state of relaxation because it regulates breathing, pulse, heart rate, and blood pressure (Kao, 1991; Chen & Kao, 2000; Chen, 2003). It helps in achieving calmness and control over body and mind (Guo, 1995; Kwo, 1981). Although participants gave a high admiration to the Chinese brush experience and expressed positive reception toward the medium. They also spoke highly of the unique learning opportunity that they had engaged in. I am fully aware that this could be a polite thing to say and their way of showing gratitude toward the things that I have done.

Research does support that meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance are important elements for healthy bereavement coping; however, no research has focused on the chronological order of these elements in particular time of the loss. Data from this study show that changes for all three areas of meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance were seen during the initial stage, in the mid-stage, and in the late stage of therapy. Meaning making seemed to play a major role in the initial stage when participants tried to make sense of their loss. Continuing bonds was not clear and strong at the initial stage, but emerged toward the mid and the late stages. Participants also seemed to have relatively less balanced daily activities during the beginning phase of the study. As time progressed, the need for meaning making

decreased, and the occurrence of continuing bond and maintaining balance increased. Stages of brief therapy do not necessarily reflect the actual pacing of grieving for each participant, but helped to identify the process of change and elements involved.

The data did not show a direct connection between practicing Chinese calligraphic writing and the changes of meaning making and continuing bonds. However, the transcripts showed that changes did occur during different phases of the study. This could be because of the thematic elements of the artwork and art activities selected—for example, the thematic element of a “cage,” as a result from the line drawing from session 1 and the art activity of manipulating two colors in session 4.

When the participants spoke from personal experience, they did claim that they regained some sense of balance after practicing the brushwork, whether in pictorial or abstract forms. Further research is definitely needed to explore the influences on changes of meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance in relation to practicing Chinese brushstroke painting and writing.

This study was relatively small in scale, it showed that practicing Chinese brush writing or painting has some impacts on the changes of the three elements leading to healthy bereavement. The study provided a preliminary view and possibility of helping people going through grief.

Applications

The research study was done with six non-Chinese-speaking elders who had recently lost a loved one. Six group sessions in total were held in which experimental

activities using the Chinese brush were introduced to the participants to aid them in expressing their feelings and memories related to their loss and grief. These participants were non-Chinese-speaking people, nor were they familiar with the Chinese brush techniques. Data in this research study suggested that using Chinese brushstroke in coping with bereavement could be a helpful experience to the bereaved, and even participants of non-Chinese cultural backgrounds could benefit from the experience. Result suggested that practicing Chinese brushstroke techniques could help the bereaved to relax, to acknowledge their losses, to connect with their feelings and emotions, and to connect with the deceased and maintain some sense of balance. These are all elements essential to healthy coping with bereavement.

The data showed that these participants seemed to respond positively to the Chinese brushstroke techniques. They particularly identified with the balance aspect of the experience. It would be helpful to spend the first ten minutes of each session repeating the simple hand movement and breathing exercise. I believe this would help them tune in more quickly. For older participants like this group, the art-making section should be limited to no more than 20 minutes as they tend to get tired very easily. The sharing part should also be kept within 20 to 30 minutes. Participants seemed to enjoy the process of practicing calligraphy or copying characters with meanings. It would be helpful to do maybe just a few characters at a time and spread all the feeling words in all six sessions and have a deeper sharing after each session. As participants also seemed to respond to characters with positive meanings, it might be helpful to include more positive characters to promote a more positive atmosphere.

Limitations and Future Research

The group was small and consisted of only six people from one cultural background. The group was formed by six white Jewish elderly from middle class and relatively well-educated backgrounds, which may have affected their openness and willingness to try a new medium such as the Chinese brushstroke techniques. Future study should include different people with diverse background, age, and ethnicity if possible in order to apply the same techniques to other ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Most of the participants were residents of Hebrew Senior Life and their average age was 88. The fact that the physical setting limited their daily lives as well as their choices and the availability of daily activities could affect the result of balance. Future research should include other age groups.

Due to difficulties in recruiting participants, the workshop was done in both group and individual formats. This could affect the result in terms of sharing common themes as those participants were not involved in group processes. Future research should explore with one format in terms of seeing the changes in the three elements of meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance as a group.

In general, participants spoke positively of the Chinese brushstroke experience as it helped them feel better. This may have been because the participants said so to please me. Perhaps this also reflected what De Petrillo (2005) notes that the process of creating art improves mood because it allows the bereaved to express their feelings and emotions fully through active image constructions. Future research could inquire into a

comparison between a self-described experience with an experimental group and a control group to see the differences.

Several participants reported that copying Chinese characters that represent feelings and emotions helped them better connect with their feelings. Future research could explore more on the effect of practicing Chinese calligraphy on the changes of the nature of meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance.

Some participants said that the exercise of drawing a picture with two colors that represented the positive and negative aspects of the loved ones or their relationships with the deceased helped them remember both the positive and negative aspects of the person, which also gave them a more balanced vision of the deceased person. Future research could explore the role of colors in meaning making during the time of bereavement.

There are many researches on meaning making, continuing bonds, and maintaining balance as important elements for healthy bereavement coping, but none of them talk about the chronological order of these aspects in time of loss. Future research could look into the chronological order of these elements in relation to coping with loss and bereavement.

Since Chinese calligraphy and painting are mostly done in black, the contrast of black and white on paper may have been of some contribution on expression of feelings. Future research may look into the color association of using just black and white in art therapy with people who experience major losses.

Moreover, painting of bamboo seemed to be a more preferred option to these group of participants. Future study would look into the painting of a specific image attribute to the more detailed expression of feelings relating to loss and bereavement.

Learning and Reflections

I thank all my participants in this research study for their genuine sharing and contribution to the project. They have enriched my life as well as my learning. My encounter with them reminded me of my long-forgotten passion with this age group. Their willingness to learn, to share, and to support me with open minds really touched me. Working with them allowed me to get to know them better by hearing their personal stories. It also gave me a chance to do something for them, which also was a way of honoring my parents by paying respect to people from their generation.

This group of elders seemed to respond to politeness, genuineness, and sincerity. I remember that one of the participants very seldom joined any group activities in the unit. She declined almost all invitations to group activities or projects. However, she accepted my invitation for the study the first time I approached her. We remained friends, and I visited her every week after the study was over until she passed away. I asked her why she came to my group. "I felt that you needed help, so I decided to help you," she said, laughing. She also told me that she felt that I was very gentle, polite, and sincere, and that she did not have the heart to reject me. I learned that people would respond to my sincerity and genuine care regardless of cultural and age differences.

I made genuine friends with these older people. I visited them on a weekly basis after the project was over until they passed away. In fact, three out of the six participants passed away in the following year after the study was completed. The experience heightened my sensitivity to transference and countertransference issues. The participants treated me as their friend and they really cared about me, even my personal life, just as my parents or grandparents would. I remember two of the female participants

asked me if I was married, and when they knew that I was not, they began to urge me to get married soon. Later, they said they had to find me a nice fellow because I was a nice person. This reminded me of my mother who often urged me to get married before it was too late. I had to remind myself not to feel annoyed as I would have with my mother.

Another interesting issue that I experienced was cultural differences in handling sensitive issues. One of the male participants was particularly fond of me. He would hug me at the beginning and the end of each session. He would call to see if I was fine during the weeks that I was absent due to an illness or bad weather. I remember that before the sessions officially began, he said he needed to talk to me about something. He spent almost an hour telling me about how he loved me as a good friend and that he was old enough to be my grandfather. He did not want me to misunderstand his actions or intentions. He did not want to embarrass me and would like to make sure that I did not have any uneasy feelings toward him. I laughed about it as I found it somewhat hilarious, but I also thought about whether I had conveyed any messages that showed any signs of doubt around him. I thought about issues of transference and countertransference. Of course, to me, this was not a romantic relationship, but this could be a desire for having some kind of fatherly or grandfatherly love that I missed in real life. However, I would have never thought that someone who could be my grandfather would talk to me about this. I could never imagine this conversation happening between a Chinese client and a Chinese therapist. Chinese people tend to be more reserved, and they would not address sensitive issues like this with someone they are not close to. I appreciated his open-mindedness, his honesty, and his caring attitude.

The general belief is that people from the West are more open and ready to talk about their feelings than people from the East. I realized that when it comes to loss and bereavement, it is more or less universal. People tend to hide their feelings of sadness. For example, Bernard would hide his sadness from his wife and daughter in order not to further upset them. It would be interesting to me to conduct a research study on cultural differences in grieving expressions between people from the East and people from the West.

The Chinese brushwork seemed to be a positive experience for this group of participants. Their ages, although posing some difficulties and hindrances, did not seem to stop them from trying and learning a new skill. I was intrigued whether this was culturally related. I would like to know more whether Chinese older adults would respond in the same way when they learn a new task or skill.

Older participants like this group seem to respond better to structure, organization, and detailed instructions. Therefore, they seem to do well with tasks like making lines and copying and practicing calligraphic writings. It is interesting to me intellectually if the same would apply to other age groups or other cultural groups.

Older people seem to have more difficulty handling abstract materials and concepts, as suggested by Wensel-Miller (1996). This could explain why the participants seemed to be less responsive when asked to manipulate two different colors to represent the positive and negative aspects of the deceased loved one and/or the positive and negative aspects of their relationship. On the contrary, they seemed to respond better when asked to draw lines and copy characters that seemed to be more concrete. I was intrigued that perhaps the named feelings of each character helped them identify some of

the very common feelings and therefore they seemed to connect with those particular feelings more easily. I wonder if the result would be totally different if the definitions of those characters were not given to them in the beginning.

I hope to continue to look into possibilities of getting in touch with other Chinese clinicians, therapists, and researchers who have applied calligraphic writing in their work and research in helping people cope with their various issues. I would like to bring my research a step further in two directions. First, I would like to do longer term studies on the therapeutic effects of calligraphic writing for the bereaved in more structured environments. Second, I would like to integrate relaxation exercises and movements in improvising bamboo painting with the bereaved as well as with other populations. The bamboo represents certain virtues in Chinese philosophy and it was a popular object among the participants of my research study.

APPENDIX A**CONSENT FROM****LESLEY UNIVERSITY**

Expressive Therapies Division
Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study

The Chinese Brush Stroke Experience in Bereavement Counseling

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Julia Byers, Expressive Therapies Program, Lesley University
(29 Everett Street, Cambridge, MA 02138).

Student Researcher:

Grace Kwan, Doctoral student in the Expressive Therapies Program,
(550 Main Street, Apt. 9, Malden, MA 02148)

Description of the research

You are invited to participate in a group workshop using Chinese brush strokes as an intervention for coping with loss and bereavement. You have been asked to participate because you have experienced a recent loss of a loved one.

The purpose of the study is to explore the application of Chinese brush strokes as a therapeutic technique in coping with loss. I would like to find out whether certain aspects of this technique aid in a healthy grieving process. I will aim to explore in what ways this form of artistic expression can be used to help the bereaved from any culture to work through their grief.

Hence, participants will be encouraged to explore the use of the Chinese brush to express their feelings concerning their loss. Artwork created by participants will be photographed for reference and educational purpose only. Original artwork will be returned to participants at the end of the sixth session.

Audiotape materials may be used in the sessions if all participants agreed to do so. The audio recording is for data collecting purpose only. All information on the recordings will be kept confidential.

Participation

If you decide to participate in this pilot project, you will be asked to participate in an individual pre- and post- interview, questionnaire, and a series of individual/group sessions. In a group format, there will be altogether 4-6 participants in the series of workshops. The student researcher, Grace Kwan will conduct the workshops. A follow-up individual phone interview after the workshop will be offered.

Your participation in the workshops will require six sessions of one to one and a half hours each depending on numbers of participants. The pre- and post-interviews will be held over the phone and will last for approximately 10-15 minutes each.

Workshop format:

1. Introduction / Welcome / Checking in
2. Explanation of Chinese brush strokes theories and philosophy
3. Demonstrate of Chinese brush strokes techniques
4. Exploring art materials and approach
5. Sharing and discussion
6. Closure

Venue of the Workshop:

Hebrew Senior Life and Rehabilitation Center

Date of the workshops:

Six consecutive sessions

(October to December 2009 for Group Sessions)

(March to August, 2010 for Individual Sessions)

Risks

Using the Chinese brush stroke technique poses no known risks. Aspects of the workshop may evoke memories of the lost loved one. The creative arts therapists and social workers of the Hebrew Senior Life will be available for any emotional support and follow-up that a participant may need.

Benefits

The participants are recruited on voluntary basis and receive workshops at no cost. Any participant will benefit from increased art skills, opportunity for creative expression, and psychosocial support.

Confidentiality

Any publication or conference materials would be for research purposes only. Your privacy and anonymity will be protected unless otherwise stipulated. Original artwork will be retained by the participants.

Contact Persons

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research, you may contact the Principle Investigator, Dr. Julia Byers at 617-349-8436 as well as the student researcher, Grace Kwan at 781-526-7-8357.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to engage in this pilot study.

Name of Participant (please print): _____

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

GROUP SESSIONS

Session 1

g: This is Roger, this is Denise, and this is Maureen.

r: My wife's name was Denise.

d: What?

g: His wife's name was Denise

d: Your wife's name was Denise too?

r: Yes

g: Must be a beautiful name

d: I think Grace is a beautiful name

g: Thanks"

g: Hello everyone... Thanks for coming... can you hear me?? This is my support group and also part of my research project... I doing this support group not only just talking group... I use the Chinese brush to do some art work... To help us concentrate and meditate... I believe not too often we can talk about our feelings regarding our losses... so I hope with this hope we can have a time to share to support each other... the group meets maybe 4 to 6 times... depending on how we all doing... I have 5 people for the group... but 2 of them are not feeling well today... so we just have 3 to begin with..." usually the group will start with some art time... we are here to make beautiful paintings... we just try it, feel it and if it doesn't work for you, it doesn't work for you..." it doesn't necessary have to be nice and beautiful... we just try and see how it goes...

m: I can't see well with my eyes.

g: just try if you feel ok to continue... if not, you can stop anytime you like...

m: Sure

g: Thank you...

g: Let me show you the right way of holding the brush... if you are too tired... you don't have to do it... the right way of holding the brush is to hold it with 4 fingers... first hold it with your thumb and index finger... the index finger pull it toward the South and the thumb push it toward the North... then adding the middle finger pulling it toward the East and with the Ring finger pressing against it to the West... the idea is to stabilize the brush in the middle... the philosophy of Chinese belief of practicing calligraphy or Chinese painting is the Heaven is above, the earth is below with the human in the middle being the connection... we are sitting straight up... with the brush straight up in the middle balancing all four directions... the idea is to be a good person... you hold everything in the middle, in balance... not too much of this or that...

Can you try it?

M: I can't do it... my hand can't hold it like that...

g: It's ok... you hold it however you feel comfortable... The hand should be relaxed... not too tight??? Feel like you are holding an egg in your palm...

g: Let's try it with just water... dip it in the water and get rid of the excess water... slowly make some horizontal lines...

r: How do I do it?

g: Let me show you... As you begin, you breathe in and slowing breathing out as you move your hand towards the right... the philosophy behind it is to start with the center, you, and slowly expanding it... reaching out to others and making connection... and come back re-centering yourself...

g: Breathe in, as you go breath out... thinking centering, and reaching out making connections... and centering again, reaching, and making connection again... centering... expanding... centering... expanding... breathe in... breath out..."

g: One stroke... one direction... slowly... from left to right... end it and lift up the brush... come back and start another line again... starting from the West to the East

m: Not doing it right...

g: it's ok... how the lines look doesn't matter...

g: shall we do some vertical lines... from the North to South... the same idea... expanding... centering... Remember to breathe..."

d: Remember to breathe... That's a good idea...

g: Maureen, are you tired???

m: A little...

g: How about you, Roger?

r: I see the lines... some being straight and some being curvy... Why are we doing it? What is the purpose of doing it?

g: do the lines remind you of anything?

m: Nothing...

d: It reminds me of the line we used to make music scale... I am not a musician...

r: You know what it looks like to me? The Venetian Blinds...

g: The one you use to cover the window and keep you shaded... Very interesting... what does the blind do?

r: To protect... to keep the sun out...

d: To cover up, keep the light out?

g: How does it feel to have the blind up?? Does it remind you of something regarding the loss experience?

g: What come to your mind... when you say it looks like the venetian blind?

r: The blind is to cover, to protect... to keep me inside... It feels lonely... (lonely)

g: You mean with the protection or without?

r: Both... sometime the protecting is necessary... but sometime it keeps you out or away from the others... there is nothing you can do to change it... you just have to cope with it...

g: Do you feel the same? Roger says, when everybody of his generation is gone, he feels very lonely... Do you sometimes feel lonely, Maureen?

m: All the time...

g: What do you do when you feel lonely?

m: Nothing

g: What do you do when you feel lonely?

d: I used to do a lot of different things... but now everything has emptiness in it?
m: The word Emptiness is the core feeling...
d: I am a very big worrier... when people died; I went to a different planet... lock myself... I shut up
r: The family, the children is trying to protect me... people asked me to give a speech... my son was trying to help me and protect me by saying he would say it for me... but it was very emotional and very difficult for me... I couldn't say a word...
g: Do you ever get over it
d: Never
r: How do you cope, with her not being keeping the memories?
The memories are in me
g: Is that how you cope? By keeping all the good memories?
Probably... sometimes, I don't want to cope...
g: Is it too painful to deal with it?
d: I have enough...
g: Enough of?
r: I have enough... I am the youngest of 18 grandchildren, all boys... my grandmother used to put the shades down so we all will be safe...
I remember going to the family's funeral... I said to myself... the next will be me...
g: How does that feel?
It's a horrible feeling... that's what comes in old age... it's very empty... you can't do it alone...
m: Empty is the word...
r: I would say ninety percent of the people have loss experience... there is certain degree of resentment...
g: it is a terrible feeling to feel you are the only one...
d: It is a terrible feeling to feel that you are alone... Oftentimes, when you lost someone close, the lonely feeling comes very strongly...
r: Losing a spouse is the worst thing that happens to a person...
m: God knows...
I agree with Maureen... I was chosen to be the survivor of the family... does it mean to be? I don't know
d: It is very hard to compensate your mind when someone you love died... you feel like you would never make it... I feel a little uneasy...
g: Because of what we talk about?
d: No, I mean the loss
g: I remember you told me after losing your best friend, you found it difficult to make new friends...
r: I don't think we can make new friends at our age... it is impossible to reestablish another life time commitment... it is very painful... when you are young you have 20, 30 even 40 years to make friends... I haven't got another 40 years...
m: I agree...
r: It is very painful
g: To lose someone close is very painful...

r: I remember when my Denise died, my son said to me, I lost my mother... and you lost your life companion... and it's just as painful...

The feeling is sad, I guess...

How do you feel?

m: Mostly empty...

Session 2

g: Can you tell me who you lost?

d: My best friend

r: My best friend too

m: My son

d: I miss her a lot...

r: me too

g: how have you been?

d: Not good

r: I been mostly stacked myself a lot... I don't talk to as many people as I used to...

d: I feel the same... when you are around 20 people, you don't want to talk to them... if you are alright the rest of the people are not alright... And so it hard t talk to them and a lot of time you don't want to hear what they tell you.. so I mean feel I should just be myself.

g: do you feel the same, Maureen?

m: sometimes it's hard to tell people how you feel...

g: can you tell me more?

d: We use to talk a lot and sometime we laughed a lot... we were just friends... she understood a lot of the things that I was saying and I understood a lot of the thing that she was saying... she was 96 and I am only 88... I say only cos compare to 96, I am only 88... but we had nice times together... she has a lovely family... with grand children and all that... I don't have any grand children... so when her kids came over, I always enjoyed being with them... and they were cute... and we were not getting much out of this place... I found that I was getting a little more than I expected...

r: He wasn't my roommate... he is my best friend... I knew him for 45 years... It was... I spoke to his kids... I was the courtesy uncle... my wife and I were sort of God parents... and we were very close... the kids... everybody... our families... very close... we were in the same building... after his wife died, and my wife died, I moved up here... and we talked constantly... and we didn't talked anymore... so I called... nobody answered... so I called my son... he said he tried to call me... but I didn't get to the phone... I asked what happened... he said a stroke... went to his home yesterday...

g: I see... it must be very difficult for you... What kind of feelings and thoughts come to you when you think of the person?

d: I like to have friend that I can talk with and joke with... and I have a stories that I could tell... but people around here just don't feel like talking to...

g: When you think of your loved one, what kind of feelings that comes to you???

d: Sort of Lonely

g: When do feel lonely, what do you do?

d: Try to get out of the mood, either watch television or something...

g: Do you often feel lonely?

d: Yes, especially after she passed away... We used to eat our meals together...

When it comes to meals, I don't like the people that I sit with... I mean I don't have to sit with them... but the ones that are available to me... I mean sat with... so I don't talk too much...

g: So you think of her every time you eat...

g: What about you Roger?

r: Even though we were stayed apart... we called each other and we talked to each other...

We used to live in the same building when we lived in the same city... it was wonderful... and the kids played together... we went to many many different places together... it was a very wonderful life... we shared a lot of things... my wife and his wife were good friends... now I am truly alone... I often wonder what would happen to some of my compatriots when they lost someone... I don't think there would be much different... because they are too wrap up in their own illness... when they cry, they cry for themselves... I am not saying when I cry, I don't cry for myself... now I am truly alone...

d: I wasn't going to replace her just like that... So I haven't been able to replace her since... I look around there really aren't that many people that I want to talk to ... I supposed I should just talk to everybody... but when I look around, I feel it's just a waste... they are not going to change and I am not going to change... I usually a friendly person... I don't find anyone that would like to come half-way and I certainly don't want to go all the way... that's my problem... I don't think you could fix it...

g: I don't think we are trying to fix any problems... we are just trying to support each other... you know what? People just say hello... it is the way t it is... at my age of 89... I can't expect to develop new relationship... I don't have 45 years... I am too old and too tired to be running...

d: Even if you make some new friends, nobody can replace her... You know, when someone you know died, It means you have one less friend in this world...

g: it must be hard

d: not easy...

r: We came here to construct our lives... we have to find a path to walk... people at our age is not going to bounce back...

d: It's not easy to make friends at our age... little children can make friends easily, when we are young, it is easy to make friends... once you get old and once you started working, sometimes, it's hard to know who you can fully trust...

is that how you feel too, Roger?

r: you are so right...

g: How do you cope?

d: Everybody is different... every body copes different... if you feel comfortable with what you do, by all mean do what you feel comfortable with... So there are a lot of things that you need to get used to... when someone passes away. Everything changes... everything you used to suddenly changes you are not the same... you have to really

make a lot of allowances... and I guess I am not someone who has a lot allowances... I don't know what to tell you...

I was always very sort of down and I then started to get myself got sort of up mood... and it sort of go the other way... so now I just take as it comes...

g: does your family help in time of your lost?

r: Even though I have a son, it's not the same... they are form a different generation... just like your parents... and your neighbors...

g: How do you usually spend your days?

How do I usually spend my day?

I read, and watch television...

Session 3

g: Welcome to the workshop again... We are going to use the Chinese brush to express our feelings and then talk about the experience...

d: About the person??

g: Both the person and how you feel

r: What does it say?

g: There is a little English translation of what it means... Can you see?

m: My eyes are not very good... I can barely see...

g: we are going to go over all of them to see which one/ones suit you most...

g: This one is "exhausted." This one is "hopeful." This is "anxious," "bored,"

m: That is a good one

g: "Confused", "Depressed";

d: that's a good one too

g: "Frustrated" ...

r: that's me

g: That's you?

m: You and I have the same feelings...

g: what made you frustrate??

m: my eyes

d: no one understands

r: no one listens to what I have to say.

g: that must be hard

r: Yeah.

g: "Lonely"

d: That's me... I used to sing a song with my boy when he was little... "nobody wants me... I am sad and blue... just send somebody to love me..." He would sat there and cried, "Mommy, I love you."

g: That's so sweet of him

g: "Sad" ...

r: That's me...

d: I guess we all are...

g: What do you do when you feel sad?

d: Nothing

r: I just let it be

m: I pray

g: does it help?

m: It Usually does.

g: "Love" ...

d: Yes

g: miss someone you love...

d: Yeah

g: "Lonely"

m: Yes

r: Oh yes

g: "Sad"

m: Yes

d: yes

g: Do you often feel sad?

m: yes

g: what do you do when you feel sad?

m: nothing

d: talk to my daughter

d: I like this one too (To miss)

g: You miss somebody?

d: Oh yes

g: All of these characters contain a "heart" here... Most of the feeling words contain a "heart" in it... we use our heart to think, to feel... we use our heart to think of someone... to miss someone, to love someone... all with our heart...

m: Oh that's nice...and meaningful

d: I want to do this one (Love)

d: I am the last one in my family... so I have a lot to miss...

m: I wrote Love

g: Who do you love?

d: Who do I love? Many... You can't forget

r: I guess... I don't think anybody get through life without going through some of what we are talking about...

m: When you get this old... you lost so many of them loved one

d: I lost everybody except my daughter

r: I am the last of my generation ...

r: I don't think you overcome... you just learn to cope with it...

d: That's it...

m: That's exactly it

g: So how do you cope?

d: Just try to go out of life... sometimes the deals are dirty deals not always sugar...

g: What about you, Maureen?
 m: I have a lot of faith in God... and I have friends...
 d: When it boils down ... that's all we have
 m: Exactly...
 r: Why do we miss our loved ones? Because we love them... We missed someone so much because we love them very much... and they loved us too... They brought us joy and happiness...
 m: Yes, it's so true... that's what keep us going
 d: Well, I guess, it's 2 sides of the coin...
 g: You mean the love? Or the memories?...
 d: Both, I guess
 r: It would be much worse if we don't miss anyone in our lives... that mean we never loved anyone... or nobody loved us...
 d: I guess you are right...
 r: We are fortunate to have so much love...
 m: Yeah...

Session 4

g: Were you thinking of anything... while you were doing the hand movements? Were you thinking of anything? Or you were just too concentrated?
 r: Concentrated
 d: I didn't ant to concentrate... I just want to relax and get comfortable with the brush... see what it did...
 g: Were you able to relax?
 d: sort of...
 m: It ok... just enjoy doing that...
 d: I did the same... as I did that I did relax...
 g: You were doing what you want...
 r: I guess, when people feel they can't concentrate, like their mind is all over the places... this can help them calm and concentrate... for others who are unable to relax, this can help them relax... I felt relaxed...
 g: people react diffidently... Did any body share that feeling?
 m: I want to do exactly like the teacher... I wasn't doing what the teacher want me to do... it's stupid I know it's the process... I just kept trying to do it better...
 g: Do you find you usually do that?
 m: Yes I do that a lot... with paper... I would always redo and redo it...
 g: What did you do when you were frustrated, you keep trying?
 m: I kept trying...
 g: Did it make you more frustrated?
 m: Sometimes...
 g: do you feel the same, Denise?
 d: I just like to be in control...
 g: Does it make you feel out of control when someone you loved died?
 d: Yes, there isn't anything you can do...

r: Acknowledge that you don't have control of everything... it's not easy" "it's a lot easier that it used to be" ...

m: I felt like I need to be in control... but I learned, as I aged... I realize that control; doesn't stay with you...

g: how does that make you feel?

r: That's is life... you just have to cope with it

g: there no right or wrong as how you feel or how you deal with it as long as you feel comfortable with it...

r: help me focus... I think it's important that there are things that keep our minds off...

Session 5

r: This is a difficult exercise?

g: Is it difficult to think of the negative or something you don't like so much?

m: It is easier to think of the positive...

d: It is painful... the things that we did together...

r: I couldn't think of anything that is negative about him... he was such a wonderful person... the negative thing I could think of was when they asked me to say something at his funeral... it was too painful...

g: can you tell us more?

r: I just feel sad... I just couldn't say a word... we had known each for more 50 years... We spent most of our adult lives together... my family and his family lived next door...

g: What kind of feelings that came to you when you think of him?

r: It makes me happy and makes me sad too...

g: I am sure the good memories will stay with you always...

d: we just have to deal with the feelings... I sometimes keep myself busy...

m: I remember the joyous time I had with son and my daughter...

d: I remember the good times I had with my husband..

g: can you share it with us?

d: my husband was very smart... he wanted to be doctor... but he became a chemist...

m: I have children and grandchildren... someone is going to take good care of me...

d: My mission here is to keep myself happy...

g: Are you doing it???

d: I am trying... when you are young, it seems like you could talk about anything... the person you were talking to either agree or doesn't agree, you might have a little argument about it... people are just people there are different kinds of people...

r: I don't know other people, that's me and that the way I am... and that's way I'll be I think...

g: do you feel better after talking to people?

d: It depends...

g: it depends on who you talk to?

r: Sometimes, I can't understand their thinking?

g: do you think they understand you?

r: No.

g: If you could change something what would you like to change?

d: If there was something I could change, I like to get more caring people here...

d: same here.

Session 6

d: So what are we going to do today

g: we are going to do some Chinese painting ... The 4 plants we have here represent different virtues and good qualities...

g: What are some of the good qualities that you want to pass on to the next generation?

d: Good qualities that we want to pass on?

r: I have one son and three gorgeous grandchildren and a daughter-in-law... I am finding as they grow older, they grow away... they are so involved in their own lives and you are pretty much on your own...

r: Most of the people here mind their own business... that's why I eat downstairs... cos most people don't want to talk... they just sit there and eat... won't say a word... not grieving, not anything... I think they are just so overwhelmed with their illness...

d: Yes

r: I just don't understand... they just pick up the spoon or fork and pour in the food with their head down... and they don't talk... when the food is finished on the plate... they look for some more...

g: Do you see the same thing

d: people here don't care about other people...

r: I don't think it's a matter of not care... it's a matter of not capable of...

d: That's why I retreat to myself...

g: When we talk about losses, what come to you mind...

r: My wife

d: My husband, my son, my brother, my sisters and my parents and all those who passed away... I am the only one left in my family

r: Let me tell you something... I have had a very large family... I was the youngest of 18 grand children, all boys... I lost my brother, I lost my mother, I lost my father when I was 6 years old... and that still hurts... you feel you have nobody? No way to turn to...

r: Do you have friends?

d: A few

r: Are they still here or are they pass?

They live, but they are in different States... one in Connecticut, and New Jersey... and I am in Massachusetts... I don't want to be in MA... but I am here

I was completely uprooted... I was born and raised and lived my life in New York City...

r: I was there for a long time... Here I find myself like a fish out of water...

d: Yeah

g: That must be a difficult feeling...

g: you both said you are the last one live in your family... have you ever thought about why? Is there a purpose of that?

r: I ask myself that question all the time...

g: You have any answer to that

r: No. My brother died when he was 58. My dad was 43... my mother was in her 70s... nobody was long life... and my cousin was 61... I mean I've been for every part of my life... one day I looked up... and my little grandson... asked, he said, "Grand pa, how old are you?" "I said I would have been 90" He said, "Grandpa" I said, "What's the matter?" "No one gets to be ninety years." I said to him, "you will."

g: Do you think there is a purpose in your life... or in what things happened they way they did?

r: I just take my relatives or my brother's generations and mine ... I think the life extension, I don't know...

d: I don't know it either

g: Have you thought about the question too?

d: I have thought of it all the time... we had 4 children in my family I was the only one sick a lot... I mean a lot I asked why, why me... I always wondered I was the only one get all the sicknesses... and yet I came out of it and still here... and they get the pattern and they all passed... I don't know... I don't know what I did good... I don't know what I did bad...

r: That's interesting... what makes people pass... it's like another arm cut off... you don't have any arm left...

d: we feel sad and hurt because we lost our loved ones... it's like a flip side of the coin... if we look at it differently...

r: We had them, they were in our lives, we loved them and they loved us... we have a lot of love and we have a lot of memory...

d: the sad thing is you can't see them anymore... you can't feel and touch them anymore...

r: I have my best friend died 6 months ago... I mourned him more than I do my family... I have known him for more than 40 years... we were just good friend... we would talk on the phone once a week... I called and him, and he called me... by the time we knew, it was already 2 hours... he lived in NY city... I lived here... he said I looked forward to talking to you again... I had nobody to talk to ... I had nobody to talk to either...

r: When my son called me and told me that he passed away... my son said, "Don't worry, Dad... I will stay in NY city... I will attend the funeral and I will speak instead of you... I said who decided that? It's a maybe because I still hurt... I didn't expect to be hurt this much... I think not everybody is this fortunate to have a good friend for over 40 years...

d: Well, we were four children... I had an older sister and I am the second one, I had a younger sister... and then we used to call him "Jesus Christ" my younger brother... my parents were so thrilled they finally had a boy... they were absolutely

r: I am sure... especially your father...

d: But my father used to love me... when he came home he would take me to a walk or something... I would be always by his side... I used to think you would pick either # 1 or # 3 why #2? I always felt very close to him...

r: Well, you told us in the beginning why.. he tells jokes...

d: Yeah, he was the one who taught me all these jokes ... I got most of them from him... there were other jokes that I learned from somewhere else...

r: See? See? You mean you learned some jokes that you wouldn't tell him?

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

Eddie: Session 1

e: I am not young anymore:

When she came along, she filled the gap... and it doesn't mean tomorrow I will get out and get married... she is enjoyable... It's not an easy situation... We are friends... and that's all I want to be

g: Making decision to start a new relationship with Sylvia meaning

e: I will let her know that I am involved in a special project... Inviting Sylvia to join us to art together

g: So you help yourself by helping others?

e: I am trying to enjoy the day...

g: Is it helping her more or helping you more?

e: Well, both... I started out not thinking of that... I saw her as someone who needs help and I need someone that I could talk to...

g: Is she replacing Paula?

e: I didn't measure it that way... my wife and I have been together for so many years... she knew that I had loved her... and I still love her

I felt there is a hole... my living isn't mixing properly... I need someone to be with me... So when Sylvia comes along, I feel that the hollow is gone... When my wife passed away, I felt very bad... because she wasn't there for me to talk to... there was a black hole in my system...

e: after my wife passed away, I don't think I would be ever healed... I live for the day... I am a thinker... I feel I have no future... so I live for the day...

g: This is related to loss

Not just free painting or painting anything comes to your mind... Sometimes I will tell you what to do

As we are doing it we are centering... As we reaching out... We are building lines... Just keep thinking that we are making connections with other people... when we come back to the center, we get grounded and centering ourselves

e: Is this a religious thing?

g: It could be... It is more a spiritual thing rather than a religious thing

e: A lot of people think in terms of saints or angel... Somewhere in the Bible, angels refer to good and the good things...

e: I guess I have done these pretty well

g: Try to follow your movements... Use your left hand to anchor

e: If there is a story that goes with you... I would like to know it

g: If you think of anything, you can tell me too

e: I figure, I am learning how to use the brush and how to do it properly...

g: why, do you think there is a story behind?"

e: well, I am just curious... I guess there is always a proper to do things...

g: Did you breathe? Or are you holding your breathes?

e: I am breathing... Am I supposed to hold my breaths?

e: This line isn't too good... You are doing a much better job than I am

g: No comparison... The experience and the process is more important

e: Yeah...

e: I am not good in this... Next time I do it I can do much better... cos I understand it now... I am not doing too good...

g: That's ok

e: I move my brush, I move my body...

g: In terms of the exercise, we are done for today... What do you think?

e: I am thinking of I am learning how to use the brush properly and how I am doing it comfortably... To draw the lines properly... To a certain extend, we learn to do things in a proper way and we do things from the very basic...

g: What do you think of the exercise?

e: I understand it we are doing a method of developing it so that we can paint or whatever perfectly...

g: Do you think the exercise was helpful in anyway?

e: I think it helps me in a sense like meditation

In other word, I am doing it in a method through meditating... eventually when I am doing something that I plan it will help me to follow to do it... it's like penmanship... developing your arms and the arms will follow to finish the

g: Some people feel that doing the lines help them to move away from sad feelings... what about you?

e: The same thing I feel... it released the pressures, the mental pressure...

g: Any feelings when seeing the line disappear?

e: Not at thins point

g: How about the line with ink?

e: With ink, yes, because I can see... I could follow the line... still in the base of developing the skills that I can follow with it...

e: Couple of ways... Realizing meditation, the fact that you can actually are doing it to relieve the pressures... the pressure in your mind... you are watching what you doing... after a while, the feeling you are... You automatically develop a different feeling... you keep going... gradually as you continue to do the line, and you watch the line, the next thing you know you forgot already what certain feelings are...

g: There is no right or wrong...

g: What are you trying to create?

e: The feelings kind of go away or disappear... When you do the line, your mind is slowly take the pressure away and stays in the here and now... I can see what you are doing here with this project... you are working with people that are handicapped by their

loss... that they are disturbed by the situation... and this is helping them to mediate so that they can handle that situation better

Yea, I think so once you stop thinking about it... I experience things that I am doing... in this particular stage, I feel it could help me... There was a thrill inside of me... I enjoy it... I wouldn't feel hesitate sharing with you about my feeling... I feel very comfortable telling you how I feel...

Session 2

g: Do you remember the philosophy of doing Chinese brush work?

e: I remember the lines but I don't remember the meaning behind it...

g: We are reaching out to others... reaching to all four directions as we being in the middle... trying to center and maintain grounded...

g: Do you still remember what it helped you?

e: To mediate...

g: we are making circles today... See which one is more comfortable for you? Small circles or big circles?

e: I am not doing so good...

g: What make you say so?

e: I am not getting exactly what I want?

g: Maybe you are pressing the brush too hard... Just use the tip... not too much ink... don't press it too hard... bend your elbow a little as you turn... just use your fingers and elbow... without moving your body too much...

What do you think?

e: Just practice... practice make perfect

g: If the vertical line represents the heaven/ sky, where would you put it? If the horizontal line represent the earth, how would like to put it and where??

However the shape or length is fine... Whether they meet or not is fine...

Now please add a little dot in anywhere of the paper to represent human, where would you put the person?

g: If you need to put a word or a phrase what would you put?

e: Write the whole word?

e: I put "one"

g: Is that a reason for he word "one"

e: Cos it's the first thing... I just start it... This is the sky, the earth, and the person...

g: Any meaning??

e: The meaning is to create something...

g: How is the human in the universe?

e: The human is the one who supplying knowledge and doing it... I like to understand what I am doing...

g: What do you think?

e: The smaller circle is quicker as it covers less space... The larger one is stretching yourself

g: Can you think of something?

e: I am thinking what I am doing is to create something, to build something to understand something...

g: Does that mean you are always ready to learn something new? Does it mean you are always on the move? You won't stop?

e: Right.

g: If something bad or sad happens, what is your attitude?

e: The attitude is to cope with it...

g: How would you cope with it?

e: Mental reaction, something would help you, something that helps you to digest the problems without covering the hurts... In general, when something happens, people would say, "Heaven help me!" To me, if something seems stressful... I look up the sky, please help me to solve this and help me to cope with this situation... in other word, I am asking a friend in up and above to help me with a solution and help me cope with the situation...

g: Do you often get an answer

e: You never get an answer... you just get the help solving it... You don't get the answer, you just get the feeling to be able to take it...

g: In the case of Paula, do you think you get the strength to cope with it?

e: It is stressful ... in a sense that she is not here...

g: When she is here, you don't have to talk to the friend up there?

e: The thing that helps me is that when I think of her I think of her lying there and looked like contented... and that's solve a lot of my problems. In other word, I felt that her soul was gone to where it should be in heaven... and that makes me comfortable...

e: That helps me the fact that, she wants me to be happy... and she doesn't want me to be lonesome... I make a pray once a week on the Sabbath... to remember those who have passed away... That makes me feel better... The fact that she really was contented and she lived a very good life makes me feel good...

e: She never had to worry about money, food, and life... she had no problems that I know of... I never hide anything from her...

g: In other word, you are a good husband and a good provider for her and your family...

e: Yes, she never have to worry about anything... The fact that she had lived a good life makes me feel better...

g: Would you say you have no regrets?

e: I don't like the word regrets... the words they use satisfy them...

g: What word would you use then?

e: I think the word regrets has some negative meaning in it... I like to think of the positives... Feeling that she is rest in peace make me feel better... Whatever I did, I never feel guilty... the fact, my mind is free from guilt...

g: How did you feel when you were making the circle??

e: Exercise your mind... to draw circles with your eyes close... you would get contentment when you do it.... It feels like doing yoga...

e: I know what I get is satisfying... I don't go to sleep peacefully

These things you can't shut out... you just have to cope with it... That's what I am doing...

g: Have you ever thought why Paula had to go first?

e: We spoke of this long time... if I passed away, I would guarantee of a living... but Paula always said that she would want to go first... I was always well prepared... anything that I felt I could do for her; I would make sure I do it... I had a bad ulcer... so bad that I didn't think I would live pass 50... so I was well-planned...

g: Have you have planned if she goes first?

e: No, because I never stopped working... I enjoy so much... I never gave it a thought...

g: Do you think it would be make a big difference if it was you that die first?

e: I told her if I die first, you are only grieve for a week, and after that I want you to go out and have fun and enjoy life...

g: When did you tell her that?

e: Many times... I have made arrangement of giving my children grandchildren all my stuff... all kinds of stuff... jewelries that I got for Paula... I gave away everything... my business, my properties, and my money, paintings... I feel satisfying...

g: You are finding meaning in helping yourself when you help her to feel better?

e: Yes, I get a lot of satisfaction in helping her... I am very happy talking to you... things that I would not talk to her about... because it is very different...

e: What I am getting at is whatever things going on work out... I guess we are both helping

g: Thanks for helping me out

e: I guess we are helping each other...

g: What are you accomplishing with the system that you are using?

e: I think it has its limitations... Not necessary work well or apply with everybody... I think the art work that can help people who go through a difficult time... to help them create something... and help them to feel peaceful...

Session 3:

g: we are going to do a little bit of calligraphy... some simple ones... some feeling words that are related to the loss...

e: when people deal with feelings, some love them, some hate them, and others cope with them...

When it come to feelings, some people cover it... some show it... doesn't mean those who show it miss them more... just the idea that how people let things out... Like myself... with Paula... we never had a fight in so many years... so my feeling is contentment... I didn't expect her to pass away at that time... Your method is trying to

help people going through this kind of situations... To me, I am getting contentment out of it...

e: It is getting complicated

g: This is lonely... Do you sometimes feel that?

e: Yes... there is black hole in my heart

g: Can you tell me more about it? And what do you do with that hole?

e: My life in one sense is complicated... I avoid thinking of anything that would get me in troubles...

when my wife died, it started to hurt me... I felt there was a black hole in my life... The feeling that I had was all of a sudden a very lonesome feeling... I wasn't scared... but unhappy... I mentally needed to solve something... and I was actively looking for something to help myself... I always love people... I never wanted to be alone... others might want to be alone... and solve problem on their own...

I felt that it would help me if I could extend the care to others... or help others to feel better... that's what I feel...

g: I see... is there other feeling?

e: I would think Contentment

g: What is your definition of contentment?

e: Contentment would be a thought regard a incident that give you comfort... I think the feeling was when she passed away, she knew she was satisfied and she was contented...

g: I see... Would you like to try something else?

e: I guess I will try something else...

g: Love? Happiness?

e: May be happiness

g: What do you think?

e: I feel like I am developing something... I am trying to figure it what it means in order to draw it...

g: Have you figured out what it means? What this is going through mentally?

e: When you draw that line out you might feel contentment... I am not trying to figure out by doing it... I am enjoying it tremendously...

e: But I am trying to developing something mentally...

g: When you write the character of "contentment" do you feel content?

e: Yes, I feel good... I also feel joy and enjoyment when I wrote the character "Happiness"

Not sure if I am getting what you want me to gain here...

g: what you feel is more important than what I want you to get...

g: Someone, when they started writing the characters, they didn't feel anything... but after a while, when they keep copying the words, they began to feel it ... and the feelings synchronized... sink in...

e: It is exactly how I feel... we are on the same track, maybe not using the same words...

g: Right

e: I guess, by the end of this project, I will gain something knowledge wise to handle this situation better... In other word, we are looking for something to help us move forward... I am also getting the pleasant of learning something new... gaining some

knowledge... I am thinking in helping you I am also adding something to my knowledge and helping myself too...

g: I believe by the end of this project, we both getting something out of it...

g: When talking about losses, different people have different reactions to it... some associate it with negative feelings... some gain positive response out from the experience... How about you? What has it been for you?

e: I can't say fully one way or the other at this point... should it be a happy thing in my life? I am not sure... I know she didn't want me to suffer from remembering the negative things... she wants me to be able to enjoy life...

e: I say a pray for the dead once a week when I go to the temple... I mention the name of the person... it is a way of remembering the person... So I picture my wife, my parents, my siblings and all those that have already passed away... I am getting a picture of all of them... let myself know that I have all these people in my life that I loved... and I get contentment out of the prayers and out of the thinking process... It is a memory... that you just don't forget them... in other word... it is a way of bringing satisfactory feeling in me...

e: I feel contented because Paula had lived a full and good life... I feel that we both had a good life... and I want to continue with my good life...

e: I think what you are doing is wonderful... and I think you are helping me... to confirm my contentment... I don't think I would express it out loud if I hadn't involved in this project...

Session 4:

g: today we are going to do a free picture using 2 different colors...

I would like you to think of some positive aspects of your relationship with Paula and some negative aspects of the relationship...

e: We had a very good relationship... We never argued, we might disagree, but we tried to talk about it before the end of the day...

g: Nobody is perfect... we do have to compromise sometimes... is there anything negative aspect about Paula or the relationship?

e: Well, the thing about Paula was that she was very stubborn... but it wasn't so bad that it became hurtful... we talked about things...

e: I am sure there are lots of thing that she didn't like... Or things that she did that I didn't like... but we spoke about it openly... She never said a thing that was not true... in other thing she never lied...

If she made up her mind on something... she made up her mind... if we knew about these... we never get serious that to let our arguments or disagreement to go on... We managed... the system that we used kept un in good faith in each other... I gave her credit for what she has accomplished... She would mention it when she didn't like something that I said or did...

g: Is it possible that if you choose 2 colors to represent the relationships... What colors would you pick? What kind of pictures would you make out of the 2 colors?

e: The good or beautiful color would be purple or blue... and the ugly or negative one would be brownish green

g: If you have to make a picture with these 2 colors, what would you do?

e: A face... A person

g: What is the person doing?

e: Smiling, happy

e: Now I have to draw something negative?

I don't want to use black... black is a color that people speak of but don't use that much in terms of decorating... Trying to think what I will do with the negative...

e: You see, I describe it the person has a square head... in other word, that person has a square head... the person has 2 fists... and this one here has fingers... Making a fist and being on the negative side... In other word, the person is angry..

g: Do you get angry?

e: I get angry, but I am not a person that lives with it... it doesn't mean that I am angry with it today, tomorrow, and the next day... if I get angry, I wipe it off that night... Whatever solution that it would be made, I would make immediately... Am I stupid?

g: What made you say that? Did people say that you are stupid?

e: No... but I made many mistakes in my life... I made mistakes, that losing thousands and thousands of dollars... I walked away as if it never happened... That gives you an idea of what kind of person I was...

g: Did Paula say anything about all these?

e: She didn't know... There are times that you were angry, but you don't stay angry...

g: What about Paula, was she every angry?

e: Oh yes, sometimes, she got angry... She helped me with my business... Whatever I said, I was the boss... I might have said something... She never made an issue of it...

She gained a lot of wt after my son was born... I didn't like it and I mentioned a few times... she didn't like it... I want my wife to look perfect... To me, there was no point to argue about it...

I had all these things... but I never saved a dime... I always in some places for fun... Fortunately, I lived through with it... I decided to give away everything... because at one time was very ill and they was told me that I only had 6 months to live...

Session 5

g: Chinese painting...

e: What do you want me to do?

g: What kind of good quality do you have?

e: Nothing... I am thinking of in terms of specialty for me, anything involved with arts, music, drama, if I had the time, I would be involved... I would enjoy it... The youngsters today enjoy the type of music that I think it's making noise...

g: how about personality? the way you handle things and feelings...

e: Yes, I don't hold any grouches...

g: If that is some good qualities that you can pass to your children and grand children, what would that be?

e: My dispositions... that I don't carry grouches and I like to help people...

g: Which of these plants do you think best describing you?

e: The bamboo, I guess

g: the bamboo represents resiliency, humble, simplicity, and honesty... what about it you think best describe you?

e: The bamboo represents resiliency and humble... I am very flexible...

g: What is the meaning of it...

e: I think I have all these qualities... It kind of has to do it very slowly... when you practicing it, it is practicing your patience, calmness, concentrate, your balance... It is also a way of training your perseverance... I guess this can be applied in many things in general... when you do things slowly and patiently... the more like you are going to succeed...

e: I feel this is relaxing in a sense... like doing yoga... Trying to relax the mind... You have to relax the mind... you are trying to teach them to relax... in order to accept and settle the problems you have...

e: You are teaching them relax by doing it... I am determined... I like learning things and what they mean... Some of the things that we have done... it can definitely help people to relax and they will be able to do something nice...

g: Do you find this helpful in anyway?

e: I think so... because sometime people can't think of anything to do... this gives them something to do and relax and then they will be able to concentrate and do off their mind a little...

g: what about yourself?

e: I am getting a lot out of this... I can relax mentally... I learn something new... I can do something different... I get a sense of I can do it too... very satisfying... thank you...

Session 6

g: this is our last session... Do you remember what we did last time?

e: The bamboo

g: The bamboo represents many good qualities and you possess a lot of them...

e: I try to

g: I would like you to draw a picture of peaceful and contentment...

e: Lie down and close your eyes and think of the good things... I am just trying to draw in order to draw something to represents peaceful... Maybe some water... slight waves... with sun shining down... I guess we should try to make some water... I want to make some water to represent motions...

e: Sometimes I use black to represent motion... something darker... It depends what kind of feeling you are trying to bring out... Use different shades of green to make the water more fluid...

g: Do you need anything else in the picture?

Well, we have the sky... I guess the sun shining down to give it a more pleasant look...

e: I have a lot of fun... What I am trying to is I am enjoying what I do... I am trying to enjoy my thoughts on paper... I have a happy ground to work on...
It is a treat...

Bernard: Session 1

g: What comes to your mind now?

b: Relax

b: The Sun, The Moon, The Man, Tree, Mountain

g: Let's try some simple ones

b: OK

g: Let's do some more complicated ones

b: Sure

g: do you remember?

b: I think so

g: do you have enough for today?

b: that's enough

g: We talked about you were beginning to accept what happened to your grandson...
How do you feel now?

b: He is too young

g: Meaning...

b: He should have a bright future... there are so many things that he could do...

g: Do you think it's unfair?

b: Yes.

g: Are you angry at God?

b: No.

b: They still don't know the result of the autopsy... wonder why it took so long... my
daughter called, they said not yet...

g: would it be better if you what happened and what caused it?

b: Yes

g: Do you think there is a reason for what happened?

b: I don't know... It happened.

g: People often think there is a reason for everything

b: I don't know... maybe...

b: It's hard to come up with a reason...

b: It's not easy to accept

g: Do you often think of your grandson?

b: Yes

g: When do you usually think of him?

b: When I am not busy

g: What do you do when you miss him?

b: I think of the good things...

g: Does it make you feel better?

b: Yes

g: Can you tell me more about your grandson?

b: He was very smart, bright, good looking... etc

g: How was your relationship with him?

b: good... He came to see me every week...

g: What do you do together?

b: We chatted... He told me about his school and sports...
g: He was an athlete?
b: Yes... he played football...
g: you like it?
b: Yes... we used to play ball together when he was little
g: So you often think of the good time?
b: Yes
g: Is that how you cope?
b: Yes
g: Do you share any of your feelings with your wife and daughter?
b: No.
g: Why?
b: They would cry
g: you don't want to upset them further
b: That's right
g: is it tough?
b: No.
g: because you are used to doing things to protect them?
b: yes
g: how do you feel now that you have told me about your feelings?
b: good...
g: would you like to talk more next time?
B: sure

Session 2

g: How do you usually spend your day?
b: I have physical therapy in the morning every other day
b: I sit around the dinning room,
b: I read...
g: what do you read?
b: Magazines... Reader's Digest... I subscribe it...
g: How about your family? How often do you see them?
b: Every week
g: Do you go out???
b: I don't go out... too cold
g: What about when it's warmer?
b: I go out to the patio...
g: Have you always lived in MA?
b: Yes.
b: There he comes
g: Who is he? You know him?
b: He smokes, a lot...
g: does that bother you?

b: a little
g: you smoke?
b: Not anymore... I used to... I quitte
g: Good for you... when was it?
b: Long time ago
g: what made you quit?
b: for health reasons
g: how did you quit?
b: I just did
g: With your determination? Willpower?
b: Yeah
g: You have strong will power?
b: yes
g: Does that help you with coping with what happened
b: yes
g: Can you tell me more?
b: I just accepted it
g: does it hurt?
b: no
g: it doesn't hurt to accept what happened or it doesn't hurt that it happened?
b: what happened hurt... but I tell myself, it already happened, it's no use to cry...
g: Do you often think of the people that you love?
b: Yeah
b: Sometimes, when I think of something bad happens, I feel that human being is so small... g: meaning?
b: Meaning and there is so little that we can do... We just have to do what we can... We cope
g: how do you cope? What is the philosophy of your life? Your belief?
b: I believe in God... I believe I will see my grandson again someday...
b: I used to go to church everyday
b: Greek Orthodox... next week is Ester...
g: Can you tell me more about your belief?
b: They (The Jews) have matzo whole week
b: They did everything, but... no good...
g: what do you mean?
b: They crucified Him (Jesus)... they put Him on the cross...
b: Let my people free... In Egypt, he (Moses) took the Jewish people to the Promised Land...
b: Pretty soon, we will be hurt no more... The big band... the triumph, very strong, very powerful... the march...
g: Does that help you to cope?
b: There is hope that I can see my grandson again...
g: So you believe in heaven?
b: Yes

b: You never know, when we die, you don't know where you are going to be... maybe, you will make it...

b: I used to go to the Orthodox church in Rosendale... I used to be there all the time... I was the president there... 5 times... The priest here gives me communion... I don't call him... he comes on his own... he knows I am here...

g: What are you thinking?

b: I don't know... Sometimes, I doze away...

g: are you tired?

b: a little

g: shall we stop here.

b: sure

Session 3

g: has the report been released yet?

b: The report is not been back yet... I don't why it's so long... My daughter called up, nothing...

b: My son-in-law gave him his last meal... the day he never woke up...

g: It must be hard on the family too

b: Yeah

g: Depressed?

b: Sometimes

g: Frustration

b: Sometimes

g: Guilty

b: No

g: Sad

b: Yes

g: Do you often feel sad?

b: Sometimes?

g: what made you sad?

b: that my grandson died

g: what do you do when you are sad?

b: nothing

g: you think of the good time?

b: yes

g: you miss your grandson?

b: Yes

g: what do you miss him the most?

b: everything... he is a good student... smart and good looking

g: so you love him very much

b: Yes

g: Which ones of theses Chinese characters are more appealing to you?

b: Sadness, Love, (to) Miss
g: What do you see here?
b: Love
g: Do you feel loved?
b: Yes
g: Would you like to try more?
b: Yes
g: Which one?
b: anyone
g: Do you think you can do it without tracing?
b: Sure (laughed)
g: Which one do you like to try?
b: This (as he pointed at "Love")
g: is that a reason you pick this one?
b: because I like the meaning
g: does it make you feel more love when you are doing it?
b: yes
g: your "love" is stretching... Looks like you are stretching your love to the people around you
b: it is extended
g: meaning?
b: meaning my love for my grandson will never die
g: um... I am sure his love for you will with you too...
b: yes
g: how does that make you feel?
b: good

g: you said you felt sad sometimes, how often do you feel sad?
b: Once in a while
g: What makes you sad?
b: My grandson died... he is so young
g: Do you feel sad talking about him?
b: Yes, a little bit...
g: Would you rather not to talk about it?
b: No, it's natural... I don't talk about it to the people here...
g: why not?
b: They don't understand?
G: Do you think this is helping?
C: Yes, I can talk about him... a time to think of him...

g: What do you do when you feel sad?
b: Nothing
g: I remember you told me you think of all the good things about him and you feel proud of him and that makes you feel a little better...

b: Yeah
g: is the thought helping?
b: Yes
g: you miss him a lot?
b: I miss him, yes
g: tell me more
b: He's good looking... He used to be very smart in school...
g: What do you do when you miss him?
b: Nothing
g: Would you tell anyone, like your wife or daughter?
b: no, because I don't want to make them unhappy... Especially my daughter?
g: I see
g: I wonder how you express your love? How do you let them know you love them?
b: just feel it
g: Do you feel the love when you were doing the characters?
b: Yeah
g: Can you tell me a little more about how you feel when you were doing the exercise?
b: I feel more connected to the feelings and it helped me to relax...
g: were you able to enjoy the process?
b: yes

Session 5

g: Do you remember what we did last week?
b: Yes, Palm tree
g: Yes, we did a tree together... it was a bamboo...
b: Right
g: Today, I would like you to draw something with 2 different colors, most favorites and least favorite colors...
g: What is your most favorites color?
b: Red
g: and your least favorites color?
b: Black
g: can you draw a picture with these 2 colors to represent something positive and something negative in your life
b: Oh boy
g: What is that?
b: A Palm tree
g: You don't like palm tree
b: not a black one
g: what does it mean too have black palm tree?
b: don't know
g: Is there a reason why you like Red and dislike Black?
b: I like it better now

g: Interesting... something you didn't like at first and now you like it... Can you tell me what happened?
 b: I add red in it...
 g: so the color changed how you feel...
 b: yes
 g: Can you think of any positive thing about what happened to your grandson?
 b: No.
 g: You began to accept it.
 b: Yes. You have to.
 g: it is amazing that you are able turn something bad into something good...
 g: What are some of the positive experiences you had in your life?
 b: I was a real estate broker
 g: You were very successful in your work?
 b: Yes
 g: You helped people to get good house, to build a home and helped them with good investments... were those positive experiences in your life?
 b: Yes
 g: When you think of your career, what does it make you feel?
 b: Feel good
 g: I remember you said you were a humble person, a righteous person, and you had a lot of good qualities
 b: Yes
 b: Just a different way of thinking... adopting a different perspective...
 g: What about losing your grandson, it was a very bad experience, and is there anything positive come of out of it?
 b: He used to come here every Saturday... play with my hand... he had big hands...
 g: You realize how much you love him and how much he loved you...
 b: Yes...
 g: That love will always be there.
 b: Yes
 g: Does it look as if when people pass away, they leave a mark in the world... meaning their influences on their families...
 b: Could be

Session 6

g: you like to go to the beach?
 b: Yes, I did... Nutaket Beach
 g: Did you go there often
 b: Yes... Very cold water
 g: Do you swim
 b: yes
 b: That's water and the sand

g: So where are you
b: Somewhere
g: Does it make you feel peace?
b: Yeah
g: what else would you add?
b: A swimmer here and a swimmer there...
g: Were you a good swimmer?
b: No
g: Did you take your children there here?
b: No... I took my wife there
g: She was a good swimmer
b: Pretty good
g: What do you think of this whole thing?
b: I like it
g: What do you like about it
b: Makes me calm and relax more
g: Which do you like better, the calligraphy? The painting? Or the exercises?
b: I like painting better
g: How about calligraphy?
b: Not good with my hand... can't use my good hand
g: does it make you frustrated
b: I have no choice
g: So you make changes, to adapt...
b: That's the way it should be... I do that all the time, when something that I can't change, I move around it and just won't get stuck...
g: That seemed to be a very positive attitude...

g: what else do you do?
b: Before, I used to cook the whole lamb... now I can't
g: Are you a good cook?
b: The best... I was the best...
b: I used to be able to do a lot with this hand (pointing he right hand), I can't anymore...
g: g: is there anything that you are good in?
b: I used to dance... at the Crazy Greek club
g: You danced well?
b: the best
g: who do you dance with?
b: my wife
g: Wow... you are the best cook, the best dancer...
g: What does it remind you of?
b: Good places
g: Like
b: Hawaii... Nice people and nice place
b: When the leaves fall off, it leave a mark on the truck...

g: just like you, keep trying... never give up on what seemed to be impossible.

b: Yes

g: Just like you, making a painting here

b: Yes, Palm trees

g: how does it make you feel when making something you like or enjoy?

b: good.

g: is that what you want to pass on to your grandchildren?

b: may be

g: your perseverance... your resilience??

b: yes

g: you made a good example to them

b: yes

Deborah: Session 1

g: Deborah, do you mind telling me a little about your losses

d: In terms of?

g: When did your husband pass away?

d: My husband passes away on March 22nd, 2010

g: He had Parkinson?

d: He had Parkinson, but he didn't die of Parkinson... but I thought there was a connection... because Parkinson has to do with the muscles of your body... and it eventually diminished your ability to functions in various ways because of the muscles are weakened or non-existing... so you take medication to try to help that... and because the heart is a muscles and I thought it was also connected, but I spoke to his neurologist, to his knowledge is, whether it's Parkinson's, that his heart appeared to stop beating and it happened very suddenly...

g: I see

d: It was, although there were a lot of things that he couldn't do... I thought that... I had no idea that this was the end... but it happened very suddenly... one minute he was here, next minute he was gone...

g: Was he in the hospital?

d: No he was home ... he was in the bathroom... I heard a noise and I was on the phone I said to the person, I called you back... I went into the bathroom... he was sitting on the toilet... and he was not responding... I was afraid he was going to fall... so I held him to hold him in a position that he wouldn't fall... my daughter and her partner that they lived on the 2nd floor... they heard me crying and so they came in and called 911... I think before they came he was gone... so they put him on the floor and pulled his shirt off all the buttons flew off... they worked on him for half-an-hour...

g: They did CPR on him

d: Yes, I am not sure exactly, but I am sure they did that... it was some kind of injections that they gave him... afterward, I realized that the people who came, in emergency situations, they can not pronounce anyone dead... so they had 2 ambulances, they said they would drive me in the 2nd ambulance not on the same ambulance he was in... I think he was already gone, but they couldn't tell me that... so as soon as we arrived the hospital, the doctor came out and said he was already gone... yeah... my daughter drove she was there too...

g: So sudden,

d: So fast...

g: And so shocking too...

d: Yeah

g: He is still you know in your heart...

d: yeah

g: and how old was he?

d: 82

g: Um

d: He was standing right here ... I was sitting here reading my book... it was about an half-an-hour before... and he said something very lovely... he said, "you were the most beautiful person in the world"

g: Um

d: At that point, he often said things like that... I said "oh, that's so sweet of you... and I love you very much too"... I went on to read my book... I should have gotten up and put my hands around him... but, you know you think about these things afterwards...

g: Yeah

d: Anyway, it was very touching when he said that... he was very loving... he was very appreciative of me, I think... and I really think that... life was hard for him... he was a holocaust survivor... so he had a lot of traumas in his life...

g: Actually, I don't know you probably don't look at the obituary, there was a feature obituary story about him... if you are interested... he accomplished quite a bit in his life... he came to this country didn't know much English... having known that his family has gone because they were killed in the holocaust... he buried his father when he was 16... his father went to the Auschwitz with his relatives... and much of his relatives were killed... so he had really nothing but himself... he knew he wasn't good with his hands... I remember he was telling me that I had to do something with my mind because I knew I couldn't work with my hands... and so, he became an university professor, got his PhD in Harvard...

d: He was a member of an honor society because he had all A's... he graduated with Summa cum Laude... He was a top student at Harvard... he worked really very hard... because he knew... he got scholarship... he got scholarship to Harvard... and he was the founder of an honor society in economics... he decided to do that because he wanted to join and he wanted to be a participant there was no honor society so he said oh well, I guess I have to create one... and he did and today that honor society is still functioning and it is international organization and it has 600 chapters... so he really has achieved a lot...

g: So was he teaching at Harvard?

d: He started out at Harvard... and then he got an offer to go to Southern California... and we lived there about 6 years... and then he got a visiting professorship at Indiana University at Bloomington and he was there for 2 years... we went back to Los Angeles for a year... and then he got an offer at the University of Windsor in Ontario...

g: So you moved a lot

d: Yes we moved a lot and we had 3 children... all our children were born when he was a graduate student... it was hard... he taught there until he retired in 1994...

g: And then you moved back here

d: Yeah... we moved back here... our daughter lived here... so we wanted to live close by and we have other relatives live around here... 2 sisters lived nearby... so

g: I can you are very proud of him... as you talked your eyes are brightened...

d: Yes, well, he never talked about himself... when we were together with people and people didn't know who we were I always tell them... he was very modest and he didn't think it was any big deal...

g: So he was very humble...

d: He was... we lived here for 14 years since 1997 he had almost 200 people at his funeral... we had a Jewish funeral... Jewish funerals are very fast, we don't do any xxx ... I am not sure if you are aware of that... so the burial has to be very fast... many people from all walks of lives that we met here and they came to honor him... and he had beautiful eulogies that were said... that was a real tribute to him...

g: That was nice... at least you can be comforted by it...

d: Absolutely...

g: What are some of the feelings or thoughts that came to you when you think of him?
A lot of feelings... you mean about...

d: Anything...

I was a really very shy person... and he encouraged me in many ways... I think he helped me to have more confidence in myself... On the other hand, I was very devoted to him... I am not saying things are always very beautiful... in a marriage there were always ups and downs... but I am talking basically, you know... We've had things that were difficult in our marriage... I think to a lot of people, what happened is to tear us apart... but somehow it did the opposite to us... it brought us closer together... I think that says a lot...

g: Is it kind of hard to accept that he is gone?

d: Oh my goodness... it's very difficult... it's lonely in so many different places... in the house... I haven't changed anything... his pills are still in the kitchen table... and his shoes are still in the same place, his clothes are in the closet... I haven't moved anything or change anything... for now I just want to keep things the same... and it doesn't matter what I do, there are always reminders of him... I go to the supermarket... I used to enjoy shopping because he loved food... so I got special treats for him... ice-cream and cookies all those good things... now I see those things... I just want to go as quickly as I can... and get out...

g: So, it's true that sometimes, you really want to think of him... you want to remember every little thing... but other times you try to avoid, because they remind you so much of the pain?

d: Well, maybe I mentioned this to you... there is a very fine balance between grieving and being here for the people that I love... it was his idea that we moved here since the 2 years... he knew that he would go before I did... and he thought that it would be good that I'd be with family... with support... he said that would be good...

Session 2

g: As human beings, we are the center of heaven and earth... we are making connection with heaven and earth and making connection with others...

We are holding the brush in terms of connecting all 4 directions

g: You are always in the center... We are reaching out to others

As we come back, we are making a new chapter, a new beginning... The body follows the brush

d: Feels a little strange... The brush feels drying out... I think it's me not the brush...

Should I go faster?

g: Just slow enough to feel the breathing and the movements
g: You hold the brush upright... representing the true righteous person is always up right... and never go to the extreme in any direction...
d: Maintaining a balance
d: Helping with the breathing doesn't it?
g: There are some researches show that calligraphy therapy helps to regulate the breathing, and blood pressures...
d: I don't think with painting it usually think about your breathing... but Chinese painting seems to be a part of it... Am I correct?
g: Right...
d: Shall we do one more?
g: How is that so far.
d: Good so far... Interesting... What kind of ink is that?
g: Chinese ink or Japanese ink
d: I am going to watch you first
g: If you can, try to lift up your elbow
d: To make the lines straight?
g: So your hand can move freer
d: You breathe in?
g: Breathe in as you begin and breathe out slowly as you move out... If you can let you the air in one line, it would be ideal...
d: Yours are so straight... mine are crooked
d: Should you be thinking a particular thing when you are doing it or should you be concentrating on what you are doing?
g: Doesn't matter
d: Should we be talking?
g: It depends... sometimes... If you do that you can focus on your breathing and positioning...
If any thought come to your mind, just let it be...
g: What do you think? Relax? Concentrate?
d: I was trying to concentrate on what you told me... because all these are kind of foreign to me
g: Is there anything come to your mind?
d: I was trying to focus on the breathing, positions, and fingers... just focus on those things
g: When you look at the lines, do they remind you of anything?
d: Reminds me of the uniform in prison... I think they aren't very good things to think of, right?
g: Well, there is no right or wrong thoughts... they are just thoughts...
d: I was just recently reading a story about a family and they were shown pictures that they were never shown to... about pictures of Nazi guards taking pictures of people in the concentration camps...
g: Does that thought make you feel very uncomfortable?
d: Yeah, it's not something I want to think about...

d: My husband was youngster when he worked in the Labor camp... I guess it's very different

A lot of times, with my son, I just want to replay that day to see if there is anything I can do to change...

d: So those are what other talked about when they did it the first time and thought that came to them?

g: So how do you feel now?

d: Curious about what are we going to do... It's interesting that It's not just painting... but it involved your whole body and that you connect with the world...

g: Does it make sense? Making connection with others

d: Yes, I never thought of it this way, but it makes sense

g: This is just trying to help you to get used to the tools and feel comfortable with it It does take time to do that... because I do have some problems with my shoulders and it takes time get comfortable of the motions

d: It fits with the idea of slowing down, of listening to your breaths, giving yourself space, meditation and mindfulness...

g: Do you have any question?

d: I don't think so...

g: Anything that we talked about or did that make you feel uncomfortable?

d : No...

Session 3

d: It happened in Jan... this group happened in Oct.

g: So you and your husband both went?

d: Yes we both did... He used to be a more talkative person than I am... But the Parkinson's took away his voice... He listened a lot... he was a good listener...

He was just there... For me it was a good group... I got everyone's phone number... we just never got together...

d: My husband died and I called her... I left her a message after 10 days after my husband died...

But I haven't heard form her... I learned a lot from Charlene... backing away... taking it slow...

If I have thought... just be with those thoughts... Or write them down...

g: It's good that you look back and see how you have changed...

d: When they found his body... Why he took his life... I like to put these aside... Last time I took journal... I decided when I do go there I would like to take my journal... and when I go to the cemetery... my thoughts were there.. .there is a little bench there... maybe its' a good time to write

g: Will you be able to think of your son as a person without thinking of the horrible things?

d: That's what I think of the most... I know he had a lot of happy times... he loved to travel... he did a lot travel when he was young with his back pack... he traveled to 30

counties in Europe... He always planned his trip... he never took tours... and he did exciting things... he tried skydiving... and he took piloting... he was very adventurous...

d: My thought has been going to his last hours... and that has been ever since that what wakes me up sometimes... It's so unbelievable... I would like to be able to think of the happy times in his life

d: The future is the hard part... because it's the future without him... it's real... I know that the way it is but it's hard to come to term with it... It's hard to see...

g: It must be so difficult for you to think all of these...

d: I think of him every day the first thing in the morning ... I still do... it's not as intense... I guess that's what life is

d: A lot of old people tend to think that I am old and I can't change...

You know it really helps is with my grandchildren... I have an extensile role ... I guess I have a purpose... and I have specific thing to do... it's working and certainly make me feel good... my life isn't over... and that there is something that I can do...

d: She is making so much progress. And that really makes me feel good...

You have to have a purpose of some kind... if you don't reach out to people they are not going to know that you are there...

d: That why I am pushing myself to reach out to people... to go to some place, to a lecture...etc...

I can't go to the movies, opera, plays... because we did that together... I guess it has something to do with association... I just don't feel like doing those things...

g: Sometimes you need to take care of yourself too

d: It is a balance of doing some art work and talking expressing what we are going through and what we are thinking of...

Today's theme is also about balance

d: When would you add the person? Where would you be? How do you judge? How would you know?? How do you make the decision? It depends how you feel about yourself??

The universe is huge... I don't know where we are...

What would you write if you need to write a word?

How about love?

g: Just write it

d: I thought of peace too...

g: Tell me a little about the exercise? What do you think?

d: I feel that I am learning a new way of expressing myself... My whole body is involved... Your breathing has to involved too... it's kind of learning to relax, meditate... Kind of take time...

Making balance too... sometimes thin and thick

d: It's about sense of control

g: Yes, sometime in times of loss, we feel things are out of control...

d: The idea is to feel some kind of control no matter how chaotic the situation would be This is true... I do see that there are time that we are trying to make control of and there are things that we really don't have control of...

g: Accepting what we can't control... and trying to let go of what we can't control...

d: Is this the therapy???

g: This is part of the philosophy... is that what is helping you?

d: Even in creating the universe and ourselves in the picture... seems so big and we don't have control of... but once we put it down... we feel that's something we can manage... I begin to understand it a little bit... and beginning to see the relationship between the art and grief...

g: The movement of making a circle could mean some kind of completion and sense of closure

d: I am trying to absorb the philosophy and the meaning of the whole thing...

Session 4

g: This is the characters for heart... a lot of the feeling words have to do with the heart...

d: That makes sense... because feelings come from the heart

g: what are some of your feelings now?

D: It's hard to say... what I find is so mixed... You do what you do all along... and all of a sudden, the feelings come and that brings you to the thoughts and memories... and then something happens again... and it brings you back to the reality... You really don't have time to think of the sadness.

Something, or anything just like the sun, or anything that would remind you of what happened again...

d: Lonely ..., yes, sure

I don't feel guilt about things that I didn't do... but you think of little things... but little things that I didn't do enough of... things that we could always do better...

d: I think the relationship happiness but not happy all the time... again very mixed... I thought I think I would sit in the car instead of the bench... and I could see the road... and I thought I would do this again...

g: Grieving... relief... would be... I think I would take it back no matter how difficult it was...

He was the one who took care of all financial things... few years ago he encouraged me that we needed to do it together... When the statements comes in... I would be frustrated... because there were mistakes that I made and I hear his voice saying that take your time... do it slowly again and it will be fine and it did...

d: With my son, I cannot find that connection, but with my husband, I can find the strong connection and the strong presence of his... I don't know why... I think maybe, I didn't see my son a lot... he lived far away... I didn't really know me...

I think he hid a lot from me... I think he was trying to be in control in a lot of things... I think more sad than frustrated... I am just giving you the meanings of these words to me...

g: You talked about Sadness, Lonely, Miss them very much... The more you miss the person that makes you realized how much love you have for that person...

d: It's like 2 sides of a token; on one you miss because you love and you love so you miss...

g: Miss this is combination of thinking and remembering... so you think of the person and remember

g: How do you feel?

d: That I accomplished something...

d: You began to see the little things and how they fit in the big pictures...

g: What do you feel?

d: I like that the idea of how getting it down in some way is helpful... One thing that you expect to get something out of doing it.... That you can express the feelings in a different way...

It reminded me of that my father loved me very much... on one hand, I was sad... but at the same time, I know my father love me no matter what happened... so it's kind of a very good balance...

He didn't make it the second time... I was still very angry at myself...

I have a sense that you understand what I am going through... because you have experienced it yourself... I appreciate it because it helps me feel that you are not up there and I am down here...

Session 5

d: I wasn't thinking so much of the word...

g: Are you really into the feelings as you wrote the word?

d: No, I was kind of doing it as an exercise... just to see if I could do the next one better... How do you feel when you were doing hopeful?

Do you feel the feeling?

d: I was purposely doing the negative ones and then moved on to the more positives ones...

g: Did you feel the same?

d: Yes a bit... I do feel a sense of hopefulness...

d: There are mix feelings and ups and down during the day... In the morning, I don't want to get up... I was thinking let me just sleep so that I don't need to feel and think about the sad things... But once I get up, I feel that well, there are things that I could do and that wasn't that bad I often during the day... ups and downs... it depends on what is happening... and what reminds me of... very mixed...

I don't know how other feel... I am not sure if it was just me... and I also don't know whether it's normal or not...

g: What came to your mind most?

d: I can't get pass thinking about his last hours... I keep thinking if there were things I could change... I know there really wasn't something I could change... just can't help thinking it... I know don't have the power to change it... What if...

g: It is very common... you are certainly not alone

d: I keep thinking about that too... just that things happened the way they did... either you are good luck or bad luck ...

g: We don't have a lot of control to what happened...

d: Is this what it is all about? Control?

d: I would like to have control the way you draw give you some power or feeling of some power over...

There are so many things in our lives that we have no control of... maybe with you accept it change yourself... Maybe this helps to do to gain some sense of control...

g: It certainly has that kind of message... it takes time for different people to process and figure out their own meanings...

g: You are a very deep-thought person...

d: I think having so much loss in my life... that make you look at things in a different way... I

When he had his loss, it was so profound... The pain was so intense...

g: Does it have to do with what you believe... the afterlife... you can have a relationship with the person who died... but it's not the same life... or relationship...

d: People know that in the end... people die... but it was so abstract... that you don't think of it that way... it was so unreal...

g: It is so difficult to accept it...

d: I have so many mixed feeling... Judaism is so ... you can believe in anything...

d: I am wondering where is the soul? That was the energy... but I wonder where does that go??/

How do I think about it?? Should I believe there is an afterlife... My husband had a difficult relationship with God... he buried his father at age 16... he battled with God all his life... all these people were so wonderful people... how could this happened to them??/ If he was a loving god, how could he allow this to happen??

g: I can see it must be difficult for him...

d: He said that you should live your life as if there was a God... not necessary that he believed in God...

g: Just live the way you feel is the right way...

g: Pick 2 colors to make a picture... You favorite one to represent the positive aspect to the relationship... And the least favorite color to represent the negative aspect of the relationship

d: I like the bright colors... my favorite color is purple

g: You can think of it in terms of incidents... or episodes...

d: Brown is the color I don't like so much... This is a new idea that to think of feelings and colors and relate them... I find it difficult to do it... maybe because I haven't done it...

d: When I look at this color... I think of warmth, caring, and love... sharing...

d: Shall I verbalize the positive aspect about the relationship with Alan?

g: Anyway you feel comfortable... Some people find it easier to verbalize it, other feel easier with pictures or images...

d: I helped preparing dinner for my daughter and grandchildren... and it feels good that I could help...

d: The positive aspect of the relationship is warmth, sharing, caring...

We lived together for 54 years... not always wonderful... competitiveness on my part... it was a little difficult in the beginning...

d: I wasn't a poor student... but I didn't have the confidence... he helped me with it... and I did prove to myself that I was able to do it... he helped me to have faith and trust in myself... There were a lot going on... he was getting his doctorate... he had breakdown... He had psychotic breakdowns... he was hospitalized three times... Hungarian Jews... they never thought that they would be persecuted...

d: Anyway, I see he felt it was a betrayal... He had so much emotional things going on... I think he was having a hard time to deal with all these... He was the bread-winner... having 3 children... going to school and a lot of going on inside... Things that were difficult ... I think what happened made us stronger and closer... it was hard ... but we were going through... We moved to California... away from family and friends... But overcame all of the things...

d: Our son was getting married to a woman who was not Jewish, which is a big thing... We also found out that our daughter was a lesbian... that was a huge thing too... We did go to a group and get help... parents and friends of gays and lesbians... that helped us a lot... We never reject our daughter... we just didn't know how to deal with it... And then our youngest son took his life...

With all these things... some how it brought us closer... It makes us stronger... we look at life in a different way... It changed us...

g: There is so much in it... I wonder how you made it?

d: Where did you get the support or the strength to copy with it? We took my sister with us... she was 14 years younger... She didn't have the confident in her... The idea was that Alan would help her... and he did... she graduated in UCLA

d: He was very good in guiding people all his life... I realized that somehow I had to carry on and be strong for my children and move on... And did what we had to do... It kind of made me stronger...

And it turned out well... my 2 sons both have doctoral degrees... They are all confident children... I am sure they got it from Alan...

g: I guess things like that either made you fall apart or you just had to do the best you could...

d: I think I became a very strong person...

g: Something did turn out from things that didn't seem so good...

d: As I look at the total picture... something positive did turn out form the negative experience and what happened... I truly saw our relationship was caring and positive things about it...

You have to be strong for your children... you have to be for the family... for husband... for your sister...

g: That takes a lot of courage and confidence...

d: I think the confident developed during the process.. we are not collapsing... we are managing...

g: When your husband was in the dark aide... you remain to be strong to balance him, to balance the family...

d: Overtime, it brought us stronger and closer... I think the basic is we have a lot of caring and respect for each other... I guess it is something that you can develop... may not be there in the beginning...

g: Do you think you would become a stronger person after this?

d: I don't know... many people commended that I am a strong person... sometime I feel very vulnerable... Sometime I feel that I achieved something...

g: mixed feelings could be co-existed...

d: I had to tell the credit card company that he died... We have made new arrangements... With the accounts, pensions, credit cards...I have to deal with all... I didn't have the confidence to do it...

I just have to do it... try to be strong and be firm... I guess in some way, I am stronger... In some way, I am lonely, and sad... mixed... More or less maintaining the balance... we don't have to be always up all the time...

g: It is balance in away ... at times, you feel good and other times you feel not so good... It is ok to feel down sometimes... we are just normal humans... We can't feel up and strong all the time... allowing us to be true to ourselves...

d: I was so proud of myself that I made a little memorial garden for my husband... just right outside...

I cleared it and I as going to do it... just didn't the energy to do it... So that was what I did... I finished it... looking for things to make him a nice little garden... Part of it is the grieving process...

It is very healing to work on the garden... I just feel good I was able to accomplish something...

Session 6

d: If I did more of it (confidence)... I could expressing better... Sometimes it is scary...

g: I remember you telling me about the good things about your husband... he sees the good thing in you...

d: He had faith in me

g: can you tell me more?

d: Like handling the computer... I am afraid... we tend to be more cautious when we get older...

With children, they don't see all the possibilities that things could have happened... Alan used to take care of all the bills... own that you have to do it on your own... And it is a little scary...

Sometimes I feel he is there guiding me... Somehow I feel his presence...

d: Keeping the balance again is very important... It's like I can't afford to make other mistake or I can't afford to lose something else again... Not the negative things... but something happier thought and something I want to remember... If you don't remember the bad times, wouldn't you make the same mistake?

g: we learned from our experiences...

d: yes, again it's keeping the balance... With grieving, I think you don't want to live in the past and you don't want to forget it... How do you make the balance between honoring the person and feeling and moving to the living and being there for those people who need you...

g: It is very delicate thing...

g: Is it difficult to maintain that balance?

d: Sometimes it is... I try to start my day... but maybe I mentioned to you I have a little meditation that I do... I found some prayers that I thought were appropriate and I have been doing it for my son... and I found some other prayers that are appropriate for him... he was not a very religious person... so I didn't want to bring a lot of God into the prayers... because he always had a battle with God... you know how could this had happened... people whom he loved were destroyed... and they were good people and how could God had done that... and I understood that but on the other hand, I wanted to bring up my children in the Jewish faith... he's Jewish... but I think his beliefs were destroyed during the holocaust which I totally understand... So, that's how I try to start my day... sometimes it's not possible, if I have, for example, an appointment early... some such things... but I try to do make that the beginning of my day... because it's kind of like... that I have sometime to think of both my son and my husband... and then I know it is important and in the Judaism teaches that too... that you should always be mourning... that you spend a year grieving but it lessens as time goes on ... after a year, you should be back into the society and move on with life... I have been reaching out to people and people have been reaching to me... and I have been accepting visits... and not joyous happy things... I don't want to go to movies and things like that... but just to be with people and that's important... I also enjoy fare amount of childcare... with my grand children... an example is, this morning... so we have two grandchildren that live upstairs... Jenny, my daughter's partner, was taking the older one to school... she lives a couple mile away... she goes to a accelerating class which is a couple of mile ways... so she calls to let me know that she was leaving is case of the little one wakes up... so just to be aware... I was in the shower... She came down... and she was sitting in the couch... I somebody gave her a recorder (the musical instrument)... I actually heard her coming down... we leave the door open so they can come freely ... I open the door, I said is it Mia, she said yes... I said ok... I'd out in a few mins... she has a real bonding with our cat... which is unusual for 5 year old... because they move too quickly and usually cat would move away... but I think this is a special bond...

d: I sometime wonder, if I am doing it more than I should be doing???

g: what do you mean?

d: People don't know what the best way is for me... or the best for them is not necessary the best way for me... It doesn't affect the way the way it is if you live with the person... maybe people don't know how to deal with it... so they want you to move on and be happy... On one hand they really want to see you getting better... Your sadness also stirs up their own vulnerability and they don't know what to do with it... so they urge you to feel better sooner...

g: I guess each person has their own pace... Just take your time... do it when you feel ready... there is no right or wrong way of doing it...

d: At this point, I feel that my family needs me and that's what I want to do... I feel that my sister also needs me and there is something I can offer... Worry and grieving... the forgetfulness...

d: Not being able to focus... I need to write things down... I kept forgetting things... I need to see the total picture... I go through the whole fold of things that could happen...

I think that's where I need to be... Just here and do what I can do... I feel that that's all I can do at this point... I push myself a lot in life and I am trying to take a break...

g: It is a way of taking care of myself...

d: You need the time to recuperate psychologically, mentally, and physically... There are so many things that you should be doing...

g: We take on the expectations of others and we also have those expectations on us...

d: There are certain things in the world that you have to do it in a certain way; you would be endanger yourself if you don't... things that is a right way... But with grieving, there is no should...

d: Balance seems to be a big word in my life all of a sudden...

d: You don't want to forget the person who died, but you also want to be there for the living and those who need you... there is a fine balance... It's like the seesaw...

g: In order to be healthy, you need to keep a balance... taking care of others is always a good thing, but you need to take better care of yourself before you can really take care of others... a fine balance again...

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