Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy

Part 2:
Addressing Relational
Complications

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Meaning Reconstruction in Grief Therapy

Restorative Recreation

- Analogical Listening
- Chapters of Our Lives
- Composition Work

DevelopmentInformed Approach
to the Personal
Story of Self

GOALS

- >> Re-establishment of coherence
- > Re-integration of loss, relationship & self

Restorative Retelling

- Drawing Out the Loss
- Directed Journaling
- Virtual Dream Stories

Trauma-Informed
Approach to the
Event Story of
Death

AttachmentInformed
Approach to the
Back Story of
Relationship

Restorative Realignment

- Introducing Loved One
- Imaginal Dialogues
- Correspondence

Goals of Grief Therapy

- Redress deepest sources of fixation that impede adaptation to loss
- Revisit and reintegrate event story of the death
- Renegotiate the terms of attachment to the deceased
- Review and revise the self
 narrative in a recomposed
 social world
- Reestablish a life of coherence and meaning in light of deeply unwelcome transition





Working with Presence within Absence

- To reconstruct continuing bond; say "hello again" rather than goodbye
- To invoke deceased as resource in the therapy
- To address unfinished business
- To promote restorative realignment of relationship

The Continuing Bond

Adaptive Grieving commonly involves:

- Reclaiming rather than relinquishing our connections to those who have died
- Having access to consoling, proud and inspiring memories
- Projecting our loved ones into our future rather than leaving them behind in our past
- Recruiting them as active participants in the story of our lives
- Being able to speak their names
- Accessing their voice and values
- Honoring them in cultural and personal rituals of remembrance





Restorative
Realignment
of the
Continuing
Bond

Introducing Our Loved Ones



- Practice a "Person-first" grief therapy
- Honor the continuing bond
- Recruit the relationship with the deceased as a secure base
- Clarify the distinct focus of the grief
- Identify unfinished business requiring therapeutic attention



Re-membering Conversations

- How and when do you feel close to ___?
- What were ___ moments of greatness in life?
- What advice would ____ have for you about how to handle this?
- What would ____ hope for you now and in the future?
- Who can help you keep _____'s stories alive?

Internalizing the Bond



Meaning Reconstruction in Loss

Neimeyer & Ng

Establish
Holding Environment

Recruit Resources:

Self-soothing,
Social support, Spirituality,
Relation to Deceased

Fixation on
Event Story of Dying:
Traumatic Distress, Avoidance,
Rumination, Reenactment



Restorative Retelling

Drawing Out the Loss, Collage, Directed Journaling, Virtual Dream Stories, etc. Fixation on
Personal Story of Self:
Identity Disruption,
Meaninglessness, Social
Invalidation, Existential Dread



Analogical Listening, Chapters of Our Lives, Composition Work, Meaning Co-Construction in Family, etc.

Fixation on
Back Story of Relationship:
Separation Distress, Ambivalence,
Loneliness, Unfinished Business



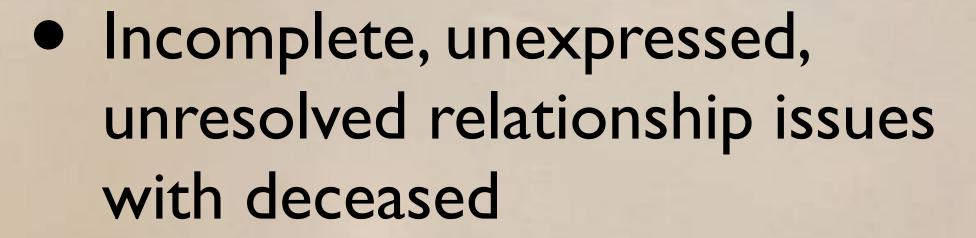
Restorative Realignment

Introducing Our Loved Ones, Imaginal Dialogues, Correspondence with Deceased, Legacy Projects, etc.



Unfinished Business

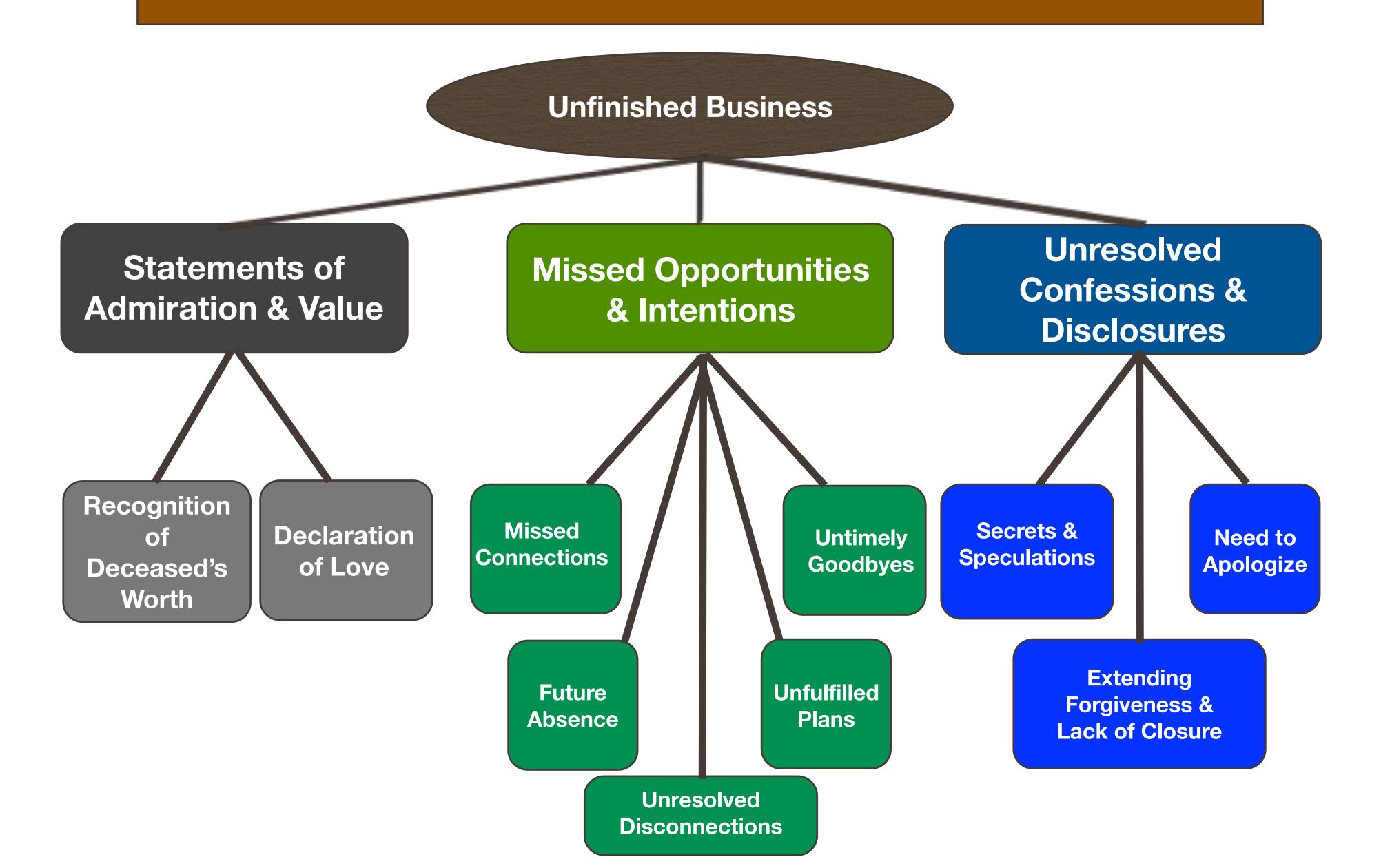
Klingspon, Holland, Neimeyer & Lichtenthal Death Studies

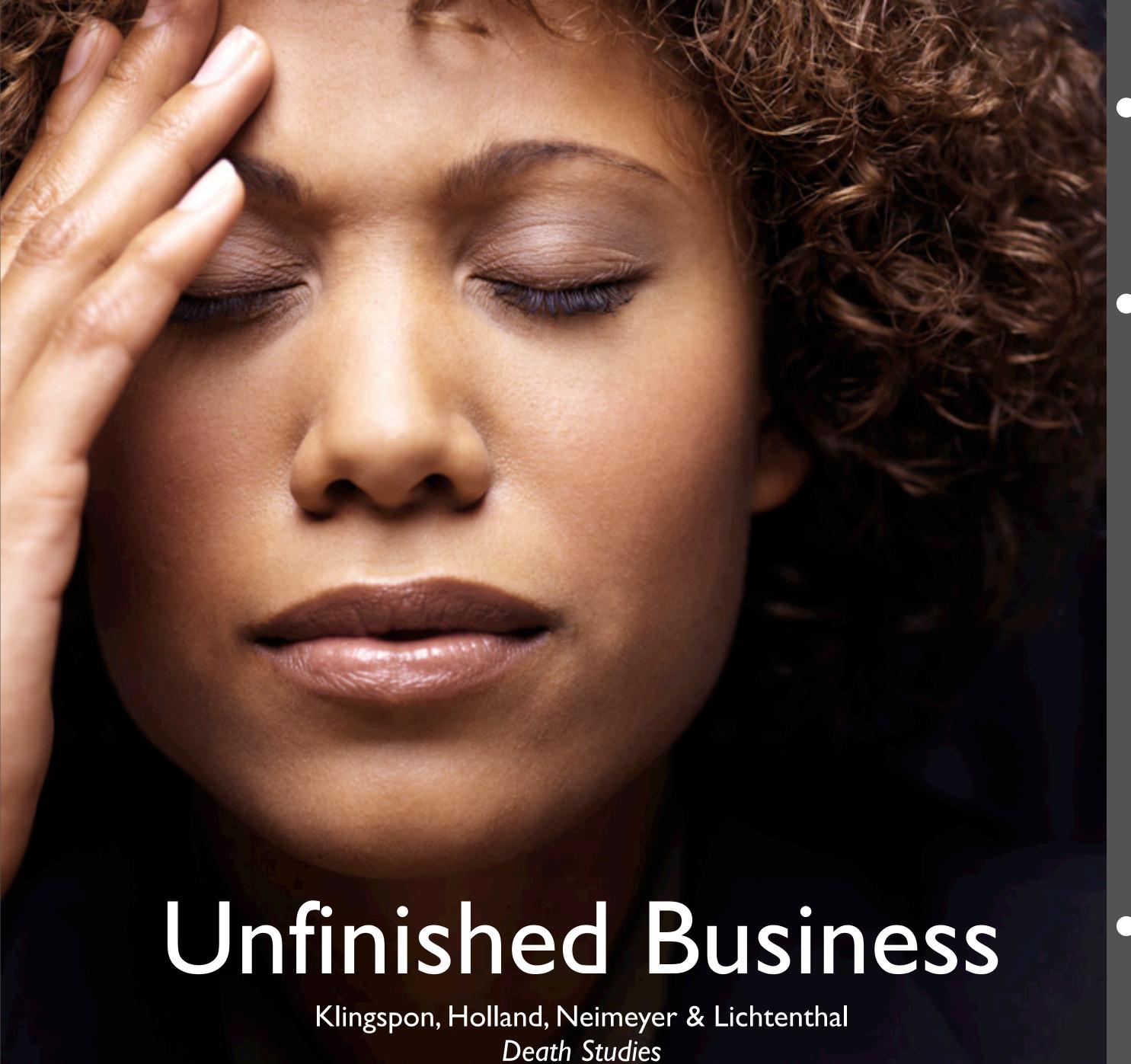


- Studied in narratives of 224 adults bereaved of a variety of relationships
- Unfinished business reported by 43% of sample



Taxonomy of Unfinished Business





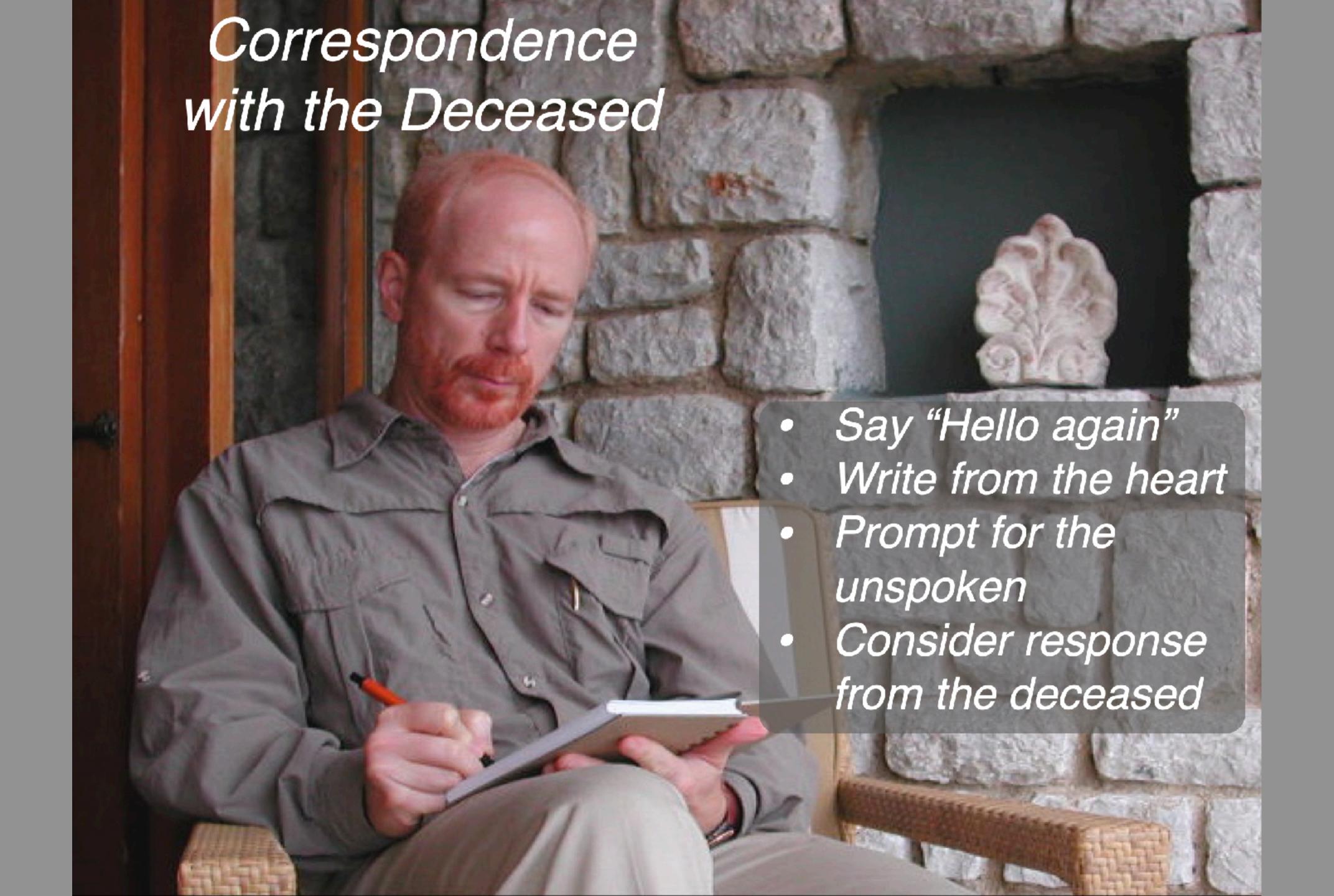
- More common in immediate family relationships and sudden, tragic death
- Controlling for age, gender, race, education, relationship to deceased, cause of death and time, distress about UB uniquely associated with:
 - More complicated grief on the ICG-R
 - Less meaning made of the death on the ISLES
 - More intense continuing bonds on the CBS
- Type of unfinished business unrelated to bereavement outcome

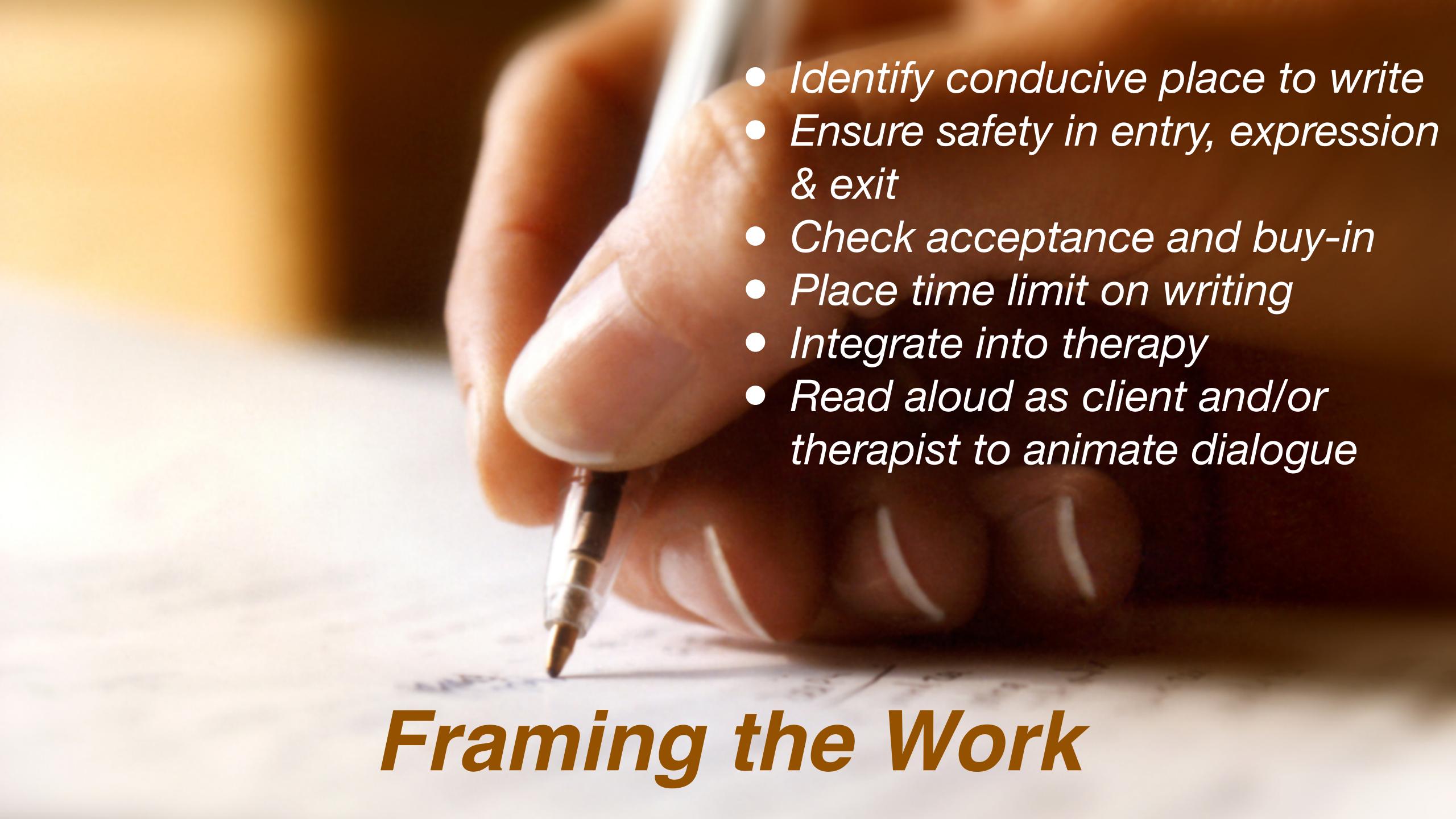
Unfinished Business in Bereavement Scale



28 items rated on 5-point scales of distress over past month, e.g.:

- I wish I had told ____ how much s/he meant to me.
- I wish I could have attended to ____'s needs more closely in his/her final days.
- I should have been there when ____ died.
- I held onto a secret that I wish I had told .
- I wish I had had the chance to tell ____ that I forgive him/her.
- I never got to resolve a breach in our relationship.





Conversation Starters

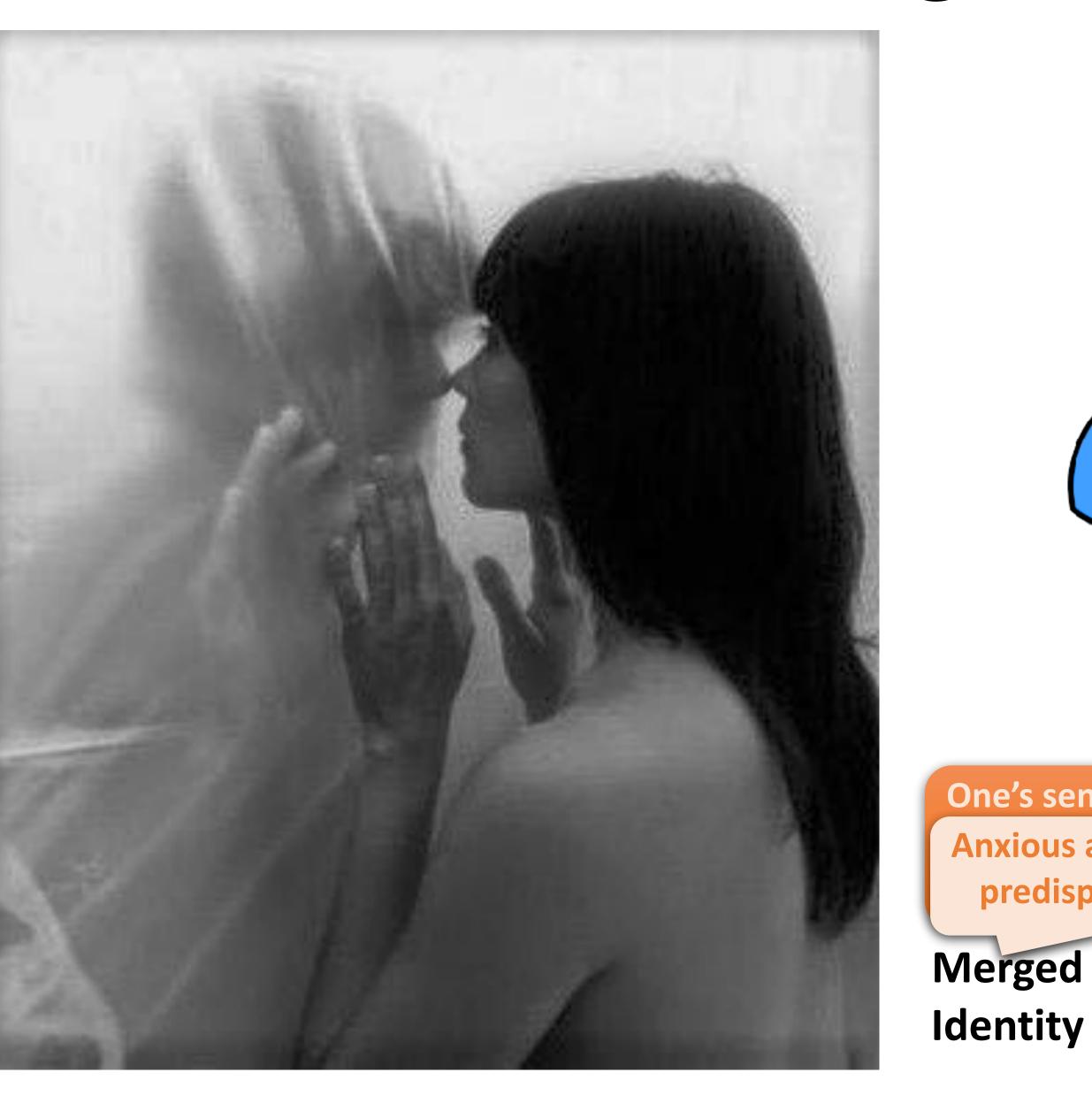
What I have always wanted to tell you is....
What I want you to know about me is....
I want to keep you in my life by....

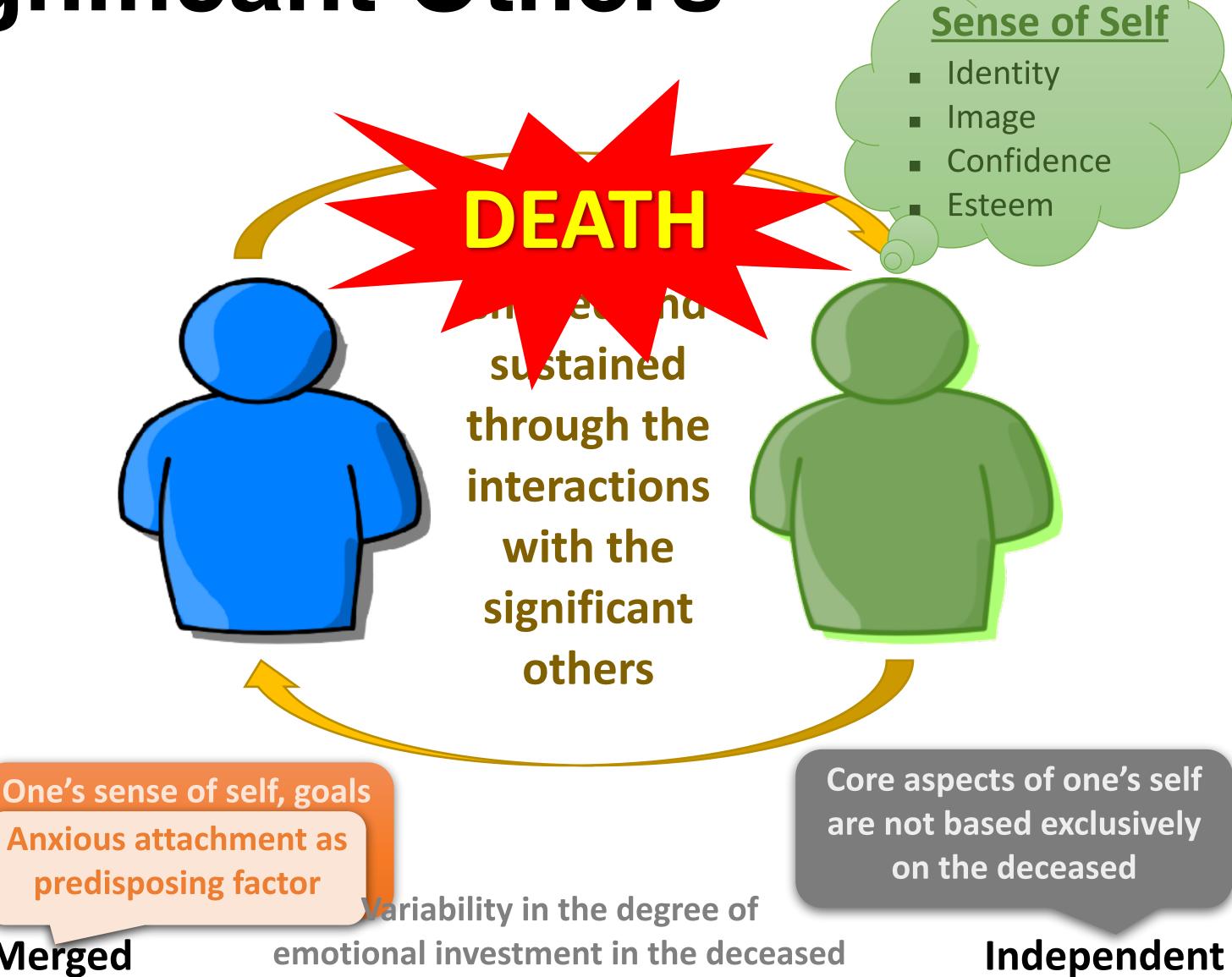
Use to:

- Voice unspoken affirmations
- Address unresolved conflict
- Renegotiate terms of attachment

What I never told you was....
What you never understood was....
The one question I have wanted to ask is....

Self & Significant Others



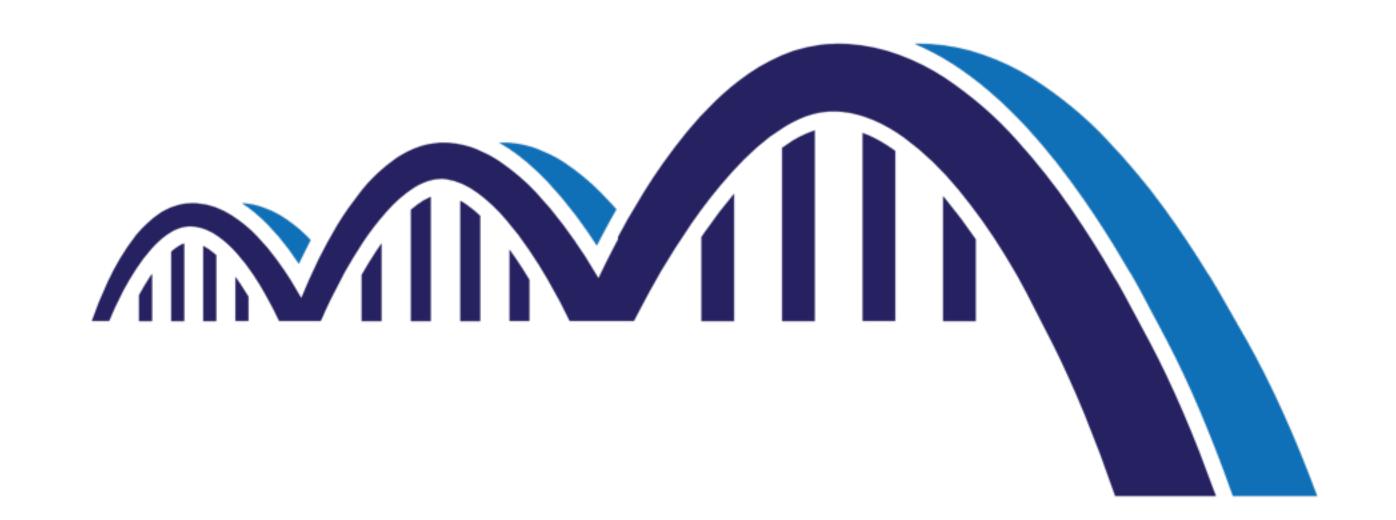


Implications for the degree of change

in clarity of mourner's self-concept

Identity





Portland Institute

For Loss and Transition

www.portlandinstitute.org