



# Portland Institute

## For Loss and Transition

### Inaugural Summer Institute

**June 17-21, 2019 (Mon-Fri)**

**Portland, OR, United States**

#### **Featured Speakers**

Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD; Edward K. Rynearson, MD; Laurie A. Burke, PhD;  
Darcy Harris, RN, RSW, PhD, FT; Jakob van Wielink, MA;  
Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH; Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT;  
Donna L. Schuurman, EdD, FT; Jana DeCristofaro, LCSW;  
Laura Takacs, LICSW, MPH; Kathy Story, MA, JD; and  
Carrie Arnold, PhD, M.Ed., RSW, CCC, FT

**NOTE:**

- Depending on the sessions attended, you may get up to 3 Core Courses, 8 Techniques Modules, 4 Case Studies and 4 Practicum credits leading to Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction by Portland Institute;
- Select sessions at this conference have been reviewed and approved by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Office of Continuing Education in Psychology (CEP) to offer Continuing Education (CE) credit for psychologists. Full attendance is required at each session for which you are claiming CE credit. Partial credit is not awarded. The CEP Office maintains responsibility for the content of the program.

Online Registration: <https://www.portlandinstitute.org/shop/2019-summer-intense>

# Inaugural Summer Institute

June 17-21, 2019

Welcome to the *Portland Institute for Loss and Transition*, and our Inaugural Summer Institute, a week-long immersion in experiential workshops designed to add conceptual clarity, hone process expertise, and especially give participants practical tools to enhance their practice of grief therapy and bereavement support with a broad range of clients across many contexts of clinical practice. Whether you register for one day, five days, or something in between, you'll benefit from collaborative learning in a setting that fosters small group practice and close interaction with some of the field's leading trainers.

Join Robert A. Neimeyer, and his colleagues Ted Rynearson, Laurie Burke, Darcy Harris, Jakob van Wielink, Lara Krawchuck, Carolyn Ng, Donna Schuurman, Laura Takacs, Jana DeCristofaro, Carrie Arnold and Kathy Story for an international, interdisciplinary Institute that offers a new meaning-oriented model of training in bereavement care. Topics include:

- Adaptive vs. Complicated Grief
- Diagnosis of Prolonged Grief Disorder
- Ambiguous Loss
- Ethical Decisions at the End of Life
- Immunity to Change in Grief Therapy
- Trauma-informed Interventions
- Restorative Retelling of Violent Dying
- Group Work with Violent Death Loss
- The Dougy Center Model for Grieving Children
- Complicated Spiritual Grief
- Working with Embodied Grief through Analogical Listening
- Grief in Children and Adolescents
- The Power of Presence
- Attachment-informed Interventions
- The Transition Cycle
- Introducing the Loved One
- Correspondence with the Deceased
- Re-working the Continuing Bond
- Chair work for Unfinished Business
- Name the Loss
- Analysis of Video Case Studies of grief therapy
- The Life Imprint
- Imaginal Conversations with the Deceased
- Healing the Healer

To learn more, just peruse the detailed schedule that follows and the accompanying program for the week.

## Monday (Jun 17)



### 8:30-10:00 Grief and Its Complications (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

Viewed in constructivist, narrative terms, grief entails an attempt to reaffirm or reconstruct a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss. In this overview presentation, we will consider adaptive grieving in terms of the ability to process the “event story” of the death to make sense of it and to access the “back story” of the relationship with the deceased to restore attachment security. By extension, complicated, prolonged and traumatic grief can be conceptualized as a breakdown in these same processes. We will exemplify this perspective in videos of actual clients in grief therapy, as well as review the latest evidence supporting this meaning reconstruction model and related theories.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive forms of grieving
- Summarize defining features of the Meaning Reconstruction and Dual Process Models
- Discuss contemporary research supporting these models of bereavement adaptation and recognize their relevance in grief therapy



### 10:30-12:00 Name that Grief: Evaluating Risk Factors and Symptoms of Prolonged Grief Disorder (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

With the formal recognition of Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) by the World Health Organization, it becomes critical to recognize factors that prospectively predict intense, persistent and debilitating grief, as well as its associated symptoms. In this presentation we will summarize what is known about vulnerabilities to bereavement complications, offering participants both a checklist of relevant risk factors and guidelines for identifying process signals of blockage of adaptive grief. Finally, we will conclude by practicing the application of diagnostic criteria for PGD to an actual case, and consider the clinical utility of this diagnosis.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Identify 5 known risk factors for intense and prolonged grieving
- Discuss research on incidence and consequences of complicated grief
- Apply diagnostic criteria for prolonged grief disorder to actual case material

**1:30-3:00** Mini-workshops. Choose between:**A. Immunity to Change (Kathryn E. Story, MA, JD)**

In this experiential workshop, participants will develop tools for understanding why many clients seem to be stuck in their grief, and how to get unstuck. Participants will be guided through the examination of their own attempts at personal change, including commitments to change and behaviors that get in the way of those commitments. They will then uncover their hidden or competing commitments and big assumptions that hold this “immunity to change” in place, thereby preventing them from achieving the change they seek and develop competence in a new technique to assist their clients.

*Learning objectives:*

- Explain the Immunity to Change model of Kegan and Lahey
- Apply the model to our own efforts of bringing about change in our own lives
- Develop an action plan to examine our own Big Assumptions or core meanings that prevent us from achieving change, and discuss transfer of these methods to grieving clients

**B. Helping Grieving Children: The Dougy Center (Donna Schuurman, EdD, FT)**

Since 1982, more than 500 organizations worldwide have used The Dougy Center’s peer support group model with bereaved youth and their families. This workshop covers the theoretical foundation, core principles, and their application to grieving children with a mix of lecture, participant engagement, and time for Q & A.

*Learning objectives:*

- Describe 10 needs of grieving children and youth
- Cite core principles of working with grieving children
- Apply the theoretical foundation to practical services to bereaved youth in an individual or group setting

**3:30-5:00** Mini-workshops. Choose between:**A. The Transition Cycle (Jakob van Wielink, MA)**

In this experiential workshop we explore the cyclical process of transitions on our lifelines through the lens of secure bases. What inspires us to seek new challenges and connections in the face of separation and grief?

*Learning objectives:*

- Describe the role of secure bases during major life transitions
- Discuss how therapists and coaches can function as a secure base for their clients when they seek meaning in adversity
- Discriminate between *caring* and *daring*, and identify the role each makes to client progress in adapting to unwelcome change

*B. In Honor of Ambiguous Loss (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)*

Some losses do not follow death and are not finite in nature but have a profound impact and need to be grieved. In this experiential workshop participants will review core principles of ambiguous loss, discuss case studies and explore creative ways to support clients healing through these difficult, but often invisible transitions.

*Learning objectives:*

- Review core principles of ambiguous loss
- Explore assessment and intervention strategies using diverse case studies
- Experience creative ways to support clients in meaning making and reconstruction after ambiguous losses

### 8:30-5:00 Artful Grief Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)

Specific art therapy techniques for clients with traumatic loss experiences will be presented. There will be informal case presentations, displays of client art work and opportunities for hands on exploration of: Two and Three Dimensional Collage, Doll Making and Traumatic Loss, Creative and Imaginative “Restorative Retelling” of Grief Stories: Handmade Watercolor Books and much more...

*Learning objectives:*

- Distinguish between verbal therapies and art therapy approaches to healing
- Make several major theories in grief and bereavement visual and enlivened by a variety of art therapy modalities
- Provide a safe place for the conscious and unconscious explorations using art therapy approaches that encourage insight and mastery.

## Tuesday (Jun 18)



### 8:30-10:00 Trauma-Informed Grief Therapy: Restorative Retelling of Violent Dying (Ted Rynearson, MD)

The traumatic narrative of violent dying may eclipse the living narrative memory shared with the deceased. Restorative retelling reconstructs a narrative of release from the traumatic fixation of traumatic dying reenactment. Participants will learn the rationale for the procedure guided by an understanding of its neurological and psychological substrates.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Differentiate the syndromal effects of violent dying from natural death loss
- Clarify the neurobiology and psychodynamics of traumatic grief
- Recognize clinical essentials applied in the treatment of traumatic grief



### 10:30-12:00 Restorative Retelling: Principles and Practices (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

Particularly when losses are traumatic, integrating the narrative of the loss and mining its meaning require non-anxious presence of the therapist to the previously silent story of the loss, in all its relevant and sometimes horrific detail. In this systematic presentation, we will present procedures that safeguard this work to prevent re-traumatization, reinforce emotion regulation, and foster the construction of a more coherent narrative that can be borne less heavily by the survivor.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Describe the principles of *bracing*, *pacing* and *facing* as they are implemented in retelling protocols
- Weave together *external*, *internal* and *reflexive* narrative strands to promote a fuller processing of the event story of the dying
- Detail safeguards to permit clients to continue the processing of recordings and images of the story of the dying between sessions

### 12:00-1:30 Lunch and Learn. Choose between:

A. *Violent Death (Ted Rynearson, MD)*

B. *Teaching and Supervision (Janna Henning, JD, PsyD, FT)*

C. *Meaning in Loss Group Therapy (Jane Milman, PhD)*



## 1:30-3:00 Rehearsing Retelling: Experiential Practice with RR (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

Translating principles to practice, participants work in small groups to apply restorative retelling procedures to a shared account of a (non-traumatic) loss, as PI faculty circulate and provide support, coaching and modeling as needed. We will then share experiences with the exercise, considering the observations and questions of tellers, facilitators and witnesses to more fully grasp its utility.

### *Learning objectives:*

- Implement the principles of bracing, pacing and facing in an actual account of significant loss
- Practice “doubling” as therapist from the observer’s position to provide support and stimulate new directions in the narration
- Troubleshoot common impediments to restorative retelling to learn vicariously from the experiences of colleagues

## 3:30-5:00 Mini-workshops. Choose between:



### A. *Child and Adolescent Bereavement (Carrie Arnold, PhD, M.Ed., RSW, CCC, FT)*

This workshop will include an overview of the central ways in which child and adolescent bereavement differs from typical grief processes seen in adults. Additionally, important developmental concepts will be presented as they relate to children’s capacity to understand death and loss at various ages and stages. Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive concepts will be featured, along with ideas from the field of interpersonal neurobiology that can help support children’s ability to emotionally regulate during times of grief. This workshop will include case studies that can be discussed in small groups as a way in which to learn the application of theoretical and clinical concepts.

### *Learning objectives:*

- To gain knowledge regarding central developmental concepts that influence a child’s ability to understand death and the subsequent grief process.
- Learn how to explain death to children in age appropriate ways.
- To understand how best to support a grieving child or adolescent and when a referral may be necessary.



### *B. On the Edge: A Father's Traumatic Grief (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

To avoid re-traumatization following a tragic loss, restorative retelling requires delicate attunement to the client's moment-to-moment need and readiness to process the event story of the loss in all of its anguishing detail, while granting the client continual agency over the retelling and partnering in emotion regulation. This video recording of a session of therapy with a father who had lost not one but two young adult children exemplifies this procedure as it is analyzed in conjunction with participants.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Describe the role of metaphor as providing a possible container for difficult-to-formulate experiences
- Analyze instances of bracing, pacing and facing in actual therapeutic interactions
- Identify three means of safeguarding clients as they engage in retelling protocols

### **8:30-5:00** Artful Grief Studio (Sharon Strouse, MA, ATR-BC, LCPAT)

Specific art therapy techniques for clients with traumatic loss experiences will be presented. There will be informal case presentations, displays of client art work and opportunities for hands on exploration of: Two and Three Dimensional Collage, Doll Making and Traumatic Loss, Creative and Imaginative "Restorative Retelling" of Grief Stories: Handmade Watercolor Books and much more...

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Distinguish between verbal therapies and art therapy approaches to healing
- Make several major theories in grief and bereavement visual and enlivened by a variety of art therapy modalities
- Provide a safe place for the conscious and unconscious explorations using art therapy approaches that encourage insight and mastery.

## Wednesday (Jun 19)



### 8:30-10:00 Integrating the Loss (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

Integrating the loss experience into the self-narrative of the client places both personal and technical demands on the therapist. In this segment, we will begin with an exercise to cultivate our capacity for non-anxious *presence* to a client's story, and then progress to a consideration of several *procedures* for fostering its greater mastery.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Distinguish between therapeutic presence and absence, and recognize factors that impede the former for both client and therapist
- Discriminate between forms of directed journaling whose goals are to foster emotional expression, sense-making and benefit finding
- Discuss two alternative strategies for integrating journaling and other forms of therapeutic writing into sessions of grief therapy



### 10:30-12:00 Analogical Listening: Finding Meaning in Metaphor (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

Shakespeare once famously counseled Hamlet to “give sorrow words” in the case of his grief for his father, but frequently grief resists simple logical expression, and instead resides as a subtle but painful felt sense in the body. In this presentation we will witness the use of analogical listening to voice to the embodied grief of a bereaved mother, and implement this emotion-focused practice in small groups.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Identify markers that suggest the utility of analogical listening in grief therapy
- Direct body scanning and articulation of felt sense of the loss in figurative terms
- Process new awareness and insight arising from the analogical listening to the voice of grief

### 12:00-1:30 Lunch and Learn. Choose between:

*A. Attachment and Life Transitions (Jakob van Wielink, MA)*

*B. Grief Etiquette with a Meaning-Making Twist (Doris C. Vaughans, PhD)*

*C. Pongo Teen Writing (Richard Gold)*

**1:30-3:00** Mini-workshops. Choose between:**A. Tour of the Dougy Center (Jana DeCristofaro, LCSW)**

Join us for a tour of The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families! We will explore each of the creative expression rooms that grieving children and teens use as participants in our peer support groups. In each area, we'll discuss and model how we facilitate the physical, creative, and verbal expression of grief. In each area, a senior staff member will provide examples of how the physical space fits with The Dougy Center's model and creates an atmosphere that supports safety, acknowledgment, and peer connections.

*Learning objectives:*

- Observe how physical space can contribute to grief support
- Describe different avenues for physical, creative, and verbal grief expression
- Discover how children and teens interact with various expression modalities

**B. Name the Loss (Darcy L. Harris, RN, RSW, PhD, FT)**

This workshop will explore different types of non-death loss experiences and their unique features. Participants will have the opportunity to evaluate case studies presented through videos and descriptions to identify specific losses and explore their clinical implications.

*Learning objectives:*

- Define and describe various aspects of non-death loss experiences
- Identify losses as they are shared through video case studies
- Explore the use of a loss template to delineate clinical features and implications of specific non-death loss experiences

**3:30-5:00** Mini-workshops. Choose between:**A. Loss Epicenters in Life (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT)**

This workshop introduces a simple tool for reviewing one's loss history and facilitating an integration of these experiences into one's broader life narrative. Participants will have opportunities to construct their personal Loss Epicenters and practice processing questions in dyads.

*Learning objectives:*

- Identify major Loss Epicenters in Life
- Use processing questions to help clients comprehend the impact of their loss experiences and embrace these experiences as part of their life stories
- Facilitate meaning-making and benefit-finding through this tool



### *B. Ethical Imperative to Discuss End of Life (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)*

Professional caregivers have an ethical responsibility to guide families facing end of life. We will use a compelling case study to explore how to gently navigate through the denial, ambivalence and anticipatory grief that challenge this population. We will discuss ways to build partnerships between community-based experts and medical teams.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Discuss the ethical imperative to support end of life discussions
- Review strategies for effective end of life discussions using a powerful case study
- Strategize about ways to build better community mental health expert and medical team partnerships to support families facing end of life

## *Thursday (Jun 20)*



### **8:30-10:00 Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)**

Our grief is shaped not only by the circumstances of the death, but also by the character of our relationship to the deceased. We will begin by reviewing recent research that suggests a link between attachment styles and complications in bereavement, as well as specific relational dynamics that impede adaptive grieving. Anchoring our conceptualization in a continuing bonds model of coping with loss, we'll then consider how to utilize ongoing attachment to the deceased as a resource in grief therapy, while also assessing forms of bonding that are associated with prolonged suffering.

#### *Learning objectives:*

- Identify the forms and functions of attachment and their implications for coping with loss
- Describe how closeness and conflict with the deceased interact with attachment style to predict bereavement outcome
- Discuss two alternative procedures for evaluating possible complications in bereavement as a function of the continuing bond with the deceased



## 10:30-12:00 Reconstructing the Continuing Bond (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

With a clear rationale for working with attachment themes in bereavement, the question remains how to do so. Tacking between systematic presentation and experiential learning, we will learn the lessons taught by the most recent research on letter writing to the deceased and practice “introducing the loved one” as a way of bringing forward an adaptive bond even in physical absence.

### *Learning objectives:*

- Summarize results linking specific forms of imaginal correspondence with the deceased to bereavement outcome
- Identify the function of “introducing the deceased” in both trauma-informed and attachment-informed interventions
- Practice appreciative inquiry about the relation with the deceased as a way of resourcing the client’s grieving process

## 12:00-1:30 Lunch and Learn. Choose between:

*A. Spiritual Struggles in Loss (Laurie Burke, PhD)*

*B. Ambiguous Loss (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)*

*C. Grief at End-of-Life (Louise Marasco, PhD)*

*D. Grief Dialogues (Elizabeth Coplan)*

## 1:30-3:00 Mini-workshops. Choose between:



*A. Complicated Spiritual Grief (Laurie Burke, PhD)*

This experiential presentation addresses *complicated spiritual grief*—a spiritual crisis following loss—and its relation to traumatic death loss and other complicated bereavement outcomes. As participants, clinicians who witness spiritual struggle in their bereaved clients can acquire skills to broaden their understanding in terms of symptomatology, measurement, and intervention techniques, with an opportunity to apply this learning to personal losses or those of their clients.

### *Learning objectives:*

- Correlate spiritual crisis with grief distress
- Utilize an updated, validated assessment tool
- Develop strategies for effective treatment



### *B. My Life Footprints (Carolyn Ng, PsyD, FT)*

This practicum session provides a small-group setting for participants in dyads to practice using a tool with persons with poorly prognosticated illnesses. The tool intends to facilitate clients' life review and consideration of how to live their remaining life constructively despite the dire health conditions.

*Learning objectives:*

- Facilitate the making of My Life Footprints
- Use reflective questions to process clients' legacy
- Access and utilize clients' back story of relationship for them to chart their desired directions in their lives ahead

**3:30-5:00** Mini-workshops. Choose between:



### *A. Group Applications of Restorative Retelling: Basic Components and Potential Modifications (Laurie A. Burke, PhD and Laura Takacs, LICSW, MPH)*

Group Restorative Retelling (RR) is specifically designed for use with traumatically bereaved adults. Presenters will provide experiential opportunities for participants to learn the basic components of RR in a group therapy setting, while also offering viable options for modification based on participant feedback and clinical judgment.

*Learning objectives:*

- Differentiate the protocol of group Restorative Retelling from its individual therapy application
- Describe treatment techniques such as weekly check-in, relaxation, introducing members' loved ones using a presentation format, death imagery drawing, and inviting social supporters to attend
- Discuss variations on the original group RR protocol for use in different settings



### *B. A Box of Pain: A Daughter's Endless Suffering (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)*

When a client seems to be "frozen" in grief across a period of years or even decades, delicate work with complicating dimensions of the continuing bond is often called for. This video recorded case study examines an adult daughter's ongoing anguish about her mother's death, and demonstrates the roles of metaphor, visualization, body work and chair work in freeing her to grieve more adaptively.

*Learning objectives:*

- Analyze factors that contribute to prolonged grief disorder in an actual case of grief therapy
- Discuss the role of imagery and the language of gesture in vividly conjuring and working with embodied grief
- Observe the effect of individual therapy on the family system

## Friday (Jun 21)



### 8:30-10:00 The Quest for Connection (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

This presentation extends the focus on reconstructing the continuing bond in bereavement by fostering practice with the Life Imprint, which explores the life legacy of the deceased in terms of their multifaceted impact on the life and personality of survivors. It also describes variations on imaginal dialogues for addressing unfinished business with the deceased, depicting introduction of the technique and its impact through videos of actual clients.

*Learning objectives:*

- Practice use of the Life Imprint to trace the influence of the deceased on the living, and discriminate between imprints to cherish and relinquish
- Identify markers of unfinished business and unfulfilled attachment needs suggesting the relevance of imaginal dialogues at a specific moment of grief therapy
- Observe the impact of chair work on clients grieving parents and children



### 10:30-12:00 Chair Work: Orchestrating Dialogues with the Deceased (Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD)

As a major emotion-focused intervention in grief therapy, chair work represents a specific form of imaginal conversation that benefits from artful introduction and management of the ensuing dialogue. This presentation provides coaching in the procedure as participants implement it with one another in an experiential exercise.

*Learning objectives:*

- Summarize three practices to amplify and deepen imaginal dialogues between the living and dead
- Experiment with the choreography of chair work to focus the dialogue and foster transformation and meaning making about the relationship
- Experience first hand the impact of chair work and trouble shoot its application

**1:30-3:00 Healing the Healer (Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH)**

Witnessing intense client pain, navigating stressful workplaces, and managing hectic personal lives places helping professionals at risk for compassion fatigue and burnout. In this highly experiential workshop we will review the root causes of compassion fatigue and practice several creative self-care techniques; including reflective journaling and a healing Wisdom Circle

*Learning objectives:*

- Discuss the impact of helping on healers
- Explore strategies for effective self-care
- Practice Wisdom Circle healing by sharing our passion, our pain and our many hopes

**3:30-5:00 Closing Plenary: Looking Back, Looking Forward (PI Faculty)**

In this closing panel, PI faculty will share their impressions of the week-long Summer Institute, as well as where they see the field headed in the years to come. This brief round of reflections will stimulate discussion with audience members, and invite an ongoing dialogue that will help all of us integrate the learning of a rich training experience.

*Learning objectives:*

- Highlight key learning and insights garnered from a week of engagement with grief therapy
- Critique limitations in the field as currently practiced and suggest promising new directions in which bereavement care is evolving
- Identify possible topics for future training offered by the Portland Institute, and address questions regarding Certification in Grief Therapy as Meaning Reconstruction



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