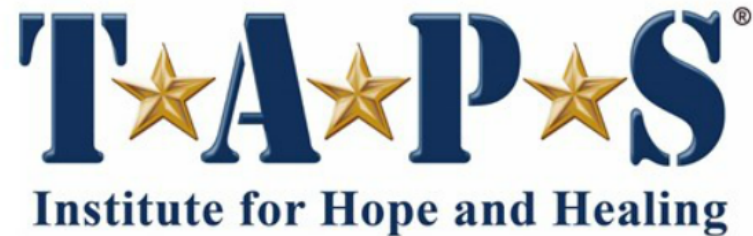


# Grieving a Substance Related Death

The collage includes several distinct elements:

- Top Left:** A grid of colored squares (yellow, blue, white).
- Top Center:** A graphic with the text "2007-2011" and a grid of small icons.
- Top Right:** A bar chart with three bars of increasing height.
- Middle Left:** A graphic with the text "MINDY" and a small image of a person.
- Middle Center:** A graphic with the text "Lentiviral" and "Research for Opioid Use" and a small image of a person.
- Middle Right:** A graphic with the text "What are some unique ways that arise when a family is not aware of a loved one's substance use prior to an overdose death?" and a small image of a person.
- Bottom Left:** A graphic with the text "What are some unique ways that arise when a family is not aware of a loved one's substance use prior to an overdose death?" and a small image of a person.
- Bottom Center:** A graphic with the text "Common Grief Reactions Observed in Families Exposed to Substance Related Death" and a small image of a person.
- Bottom Right:** A graphic with the text "What are some unique ways that arise when a family is not aware of a loved one's substance use prior to an overdose death?" and a small image of a person.



## ***Understanding the Grief of Addiction and Overdose Death***

**Litsa Williams, MA, LCSW-C**  
Co-Founder, What's Your Grief

**Eleanor Haley, MS**  
Co-Founder, What's Your Grief

December 11, 2018

Presented by Boeing  **BOEING**





# Grieving a Substance Related Death



# Grieving a Substance Related Death

**2008-2014**

**2014-2018**

**2018-2022**

**2022-2024**

**2024-2026**

**2026-2028**

**2028-2030**

**2030-2032**

**2032-2034**

**2034-2036**

**2036-2038**

**2038-2040**

**2040-2042**

**2042-2044**

**2044-2046**

**2046-2048**

**2048-2050**

**2050-2052**

**2052-2054**

**2054-2056**

**2056-2058**

**2058-2060**

**2060-2062**

**2062-2064**

**2064-2066**

**2066-2068**

**2068-2070**

**2070-2072**

**2072-2074**

**2074-2076**

**2076-2078**

**2078-2080**

**2080-2082**

**2082-2084**

**2084-2086**

**2086-2088**

**2088-2090**

**2090-2092**

**2092-2094**

**2094-2096**

**2096-2100**

**2100-2102**

**2102-2104**

**2104-2106**

**2106-2108**

**2108-2110**

**2110-2112**

**2112-2114**

**2114-2116**

**2116-2118**

**2118-2120**

**2120-2122**

**2122-2124**

**2124-2126**

**2126-2128**

**2128-2130**

**2130-2132**

**2132-2134**

**2134-2136**

**2136-2138**

**2138-2140**

**2140-2142**

**2142-2144**

**2144-2146**

**2146-2148**

**2148-2150**

**2150-2152**

**2152-2154**

**2154-2156**

**2156-2158**

**2158-2160**

**2160-2162**

**2162-2164**

**2164-2166**

**2166-2168**

**2168-2170**

**2170-2172**

**2172-2174**

**2174-2176**

**2176-2178**

**2178-2180**

**2180-2182**

**2182-2184**

**2184-2186**

**2186-2188**

**2188-2190**

**2190-2192**

**2192-2194**

**2194-2196**

**2196-2198**

**2198-2200**

**2200-2202**

**2202-2204**

**2204-2206**

**2206-2208**

**2208-2210**

**2210-2212**

**2212-2214**

**2214-2216**

**2216-2218**

**2218-2220**

**2220-2222**

**2222-2224**

**2224-2226**

**2226-2228**

**2228-2230**

**2230-2232**

**2232-2234**

**2234-2236**

**2236-2238**

**2238-2240**

**2240-2242**

**2242-2244**

**2244-2246**

**2246-2248**

**2248-2250**

**2250-2252**

**2252-2254**

**2254-2256**

**2256-2258**

**2258-2260**

**2260-2262**

**2262-2264**

**2264-2266**

**2266-2268**

**2268-2270**

**2270-2272**

**2272-2274**

**2274-2276**

**2276-2278**

**2278-2280**

**2280-2282**

**2282-2284**

**2284-2286**

**2286-2288**

**2288-2290**

**2290-2292**

**2292-2294**

**2294-2296**

**2296-2298**

**2298-2300**

**2300-2302**

**2302-2304**

**2304-2306**

**2306-2308**

**2308-2310**

**2310-2312**

**2312-2314**

**2314-2316**

**2316-2318**

**2318-2320**

**2320-2322**

**2322-2324**

**2324-2326**

**2326-2328**

**2328-2330**

**2330-2332**

**2332-2334**

**2334-2336**

**2336-2338**

**2338-2340**

**2340-2342**

**2342-2344**

**2344-2346**

**2346-2348**

**2348-2350**

**2350-2352**

**2352-2354**

**2354-2356**

**2356-2358**

**2358-2360**

**2360-2362**

**2362-2364**

**2364-2366**

**2366-2368**

**2368-2370**

**2370-2372**

**2372-2374**

**2374-2376**

**2376-2378**

**2378-2380**

**2380-2382**

**2382-2384**

**2384-2386**

**2386-2388**

**2388-2390**

**2390-2392**

**2392-2394**

**2394-2396**

**2396-2398**

**2398-2400**

**2400-2402**

**2402-2404**

**2404-2406**

**2406-2408**

**2408-2410**

**2410-2412**

**2412-2414**

**2414-2416**

**2416-2418**

**2418-2420**

**2420-2422**

**2422-2424**

**2424-2426**

**2426-2428**

**2428-2430**

**2430-2432**

**2432-2434**

**2434-2436**

**2436-2438**

**2438-2440**

**2440-2442**

**2442-2444**

**2444-2446**

**2446-2448**

**2448-2450**

**2450-2452**

**2452-2454**

**2454-2456**

**2456-2458**

**2458-2460**

**2460-2462**

**2462-2464**

**2464-2466**

**2466-2468**

**2468-2470**

**2470-2472**

**2472-2474**

**2474-2476**

**2476-2478**

**2478-2480**

**2480-2482**

**2482-2484**

**2484-2486**

**2486-2488**

**2488-2490**

**2490-2492**

**2492-2494**

**2494-2496**

**2496-2498**

**2498-2500**

**2500-2502**

**2502-2504**

**2504-2506**

**2506-2508**

**2508-2510**

**2510-2512**

**2512-2514**

**2514-2516**

**2516-2518**

**2518-2520**

**2520-2522**

**2522-2524**

**2524-2526**

**2526-2528**

**2528-2530**

**2530-2532**

**2532-2534**

**2534-2536**

**2536-2538**

**2538-2540**

**2540-2542**

**2542-2544**

**2544-2546**

**2546-2548**

**2548-2550**

**2550-2552**

**2552-2554**

**2554-2556**

**2556-2558**

**2558-2560**

**2560-2562**

**2562-2564**

**2564-2566**

**2566-2568**

**2568-2570**

**2570-2572**

**2572-2574**

**2574-2576**

**2576-2578**

**2578-2580**

**2580-2582**

**2582-2584**

**2584-2586**

**2586-2588**

**2588-2590**

**2590-2592**

**2592-2594**

**2594-2596**

**2596-2598**

**2598-2600**

**2600-2602**

**2602-2604**

**2604-2606**

**2606-2608**

**2608-2610**

**2610-2612**

**2612-2614**

**2614-2616**

**2616-2618**

**2618-2620**

**2620-2622**

**2622-2624**

**2624-2626**

**2626-2628**

**2628-2630**

**2630-2632**

**2632-2634**

**2634-2636**

**2636-2638**

**2638-2640**

**2640-2642**

**2642-2644**

**2644-2646**

**2646-2648**

**2648-2650**

**2650-2652**

**2652-2654**

**2654-2656**

**2656-2658**

**2658-2660**

**2660-2662**

**2662-2664**

**2664-2666**

**2666-2668**

**2668-2670**

**2670-2672**

**2672-2674**

**2674-2676**

**2676-2678**

**2678-2680**

**2680-2682**

**2682-2684**

**2684-2686**

**2686-2688**

**2688-2690**

**2690-2692**

**2692-2694**

**2694-2696**

**2696-2698**

**2698-2700**

**2700-2702**

**2702-2704**

**2704-2706**

**2706-2708**

**2708-2710**

**2710-2712**

**2712-2714**

**2714-2716**

**2716-2718**

**2718-2720**

**2720-2722**

**2722-2724**

**2724-2726**

**2726-2728**

**2728-2730**

**2730-2732**

**2732-2734**

**2734-2736**

**2736-2738**

**2738-2740**

**2740-2742**

**2742-2744**

**2744-2746**

**2746-2748**

**2748-2750**

**2750-2752**

**2752-2754**

**2754-2756**

**2756-2758**

**2758-2760**

**2760-2762**

**2762-2764**

**2764-2766**

**2766-2768**

**2768-2770**

**2770-2772**

**2772-2774**

**2774-2776**

**2776-2778**

**2778-2780**

**2780-2782**

**2782-2784**

**2784-2786**

**2786-2788**

**2788-2790**

**2790-2792**

**2792-2794**

**2794-2796**

**2796-2798**

**2798-2800**

**2800-2802**

**2802-2804**

**2804-2806**

**2806-2808**

**2808-2810**

**2810-2812**

**2812-2814**

**2814-2816**

**2816-2818**

**2818-2820**

**2820-2822**

**2822-2824**

**2824-2826**

**2826-2828**

**2828-2830**

**2830-2832**

**2832-2834**

**2834-2836**

**2836-2838**

**2838-2840**

**2840-2842**

**2842-2844**

**2844-2846**

**2846-2848**

**2848-2850**

**2850-2852**

**2852-2854**

**2854-2856**

**2856-2858**

**2858-2860**

**2860-2862**

**2862-2864**

**2864-2866**

**2866-2868**

**2868-2870**

**2870-2872**

**2872-2874**

**2874-2876**

**2876-2878**

**2878-2880**

**2880-2882**

**2882-2884**

**2884-2886**

**2886-2888**

**2888-2890**

**2890-2892**

**2892-2894**

**2894-2896**

**2896-2898**

**2898-2900**

**2900-2902**

**2902-2904**

**2904-2906**

**2906-2908**

**2908-2910**

**2910-2912**

**2912-2914**

**2914-2916**

**2916-2918**

**2918-2920**

**2920-2922**

**2922-2924**

**2924-2926**

**2926-2928**

**2928-2930**

**2930-2932**

**2932-2934**

**2934-2936**

**2936-2938**

**2938-2940**

**2940-2942**

**2942-2944**

**2944-2946**

**2946-2948**

**2948-2950**

**2950-2952**

**2952-2954**

**2954-2956**

**2956-2958**

**2958-2960**

**2960-2962**

**2962-2964**

**2964-2966**

**2966-2968**

**2968-2970**

**2970-2972**

**2972-2974**

**2974-2976**

**2976-2978**

**2978-2980**

**2980-2982**

**2982-2984**

**2984-2986**

**2986-2988**

**2988-2990**

**2990-2992**

**2992-2994**

**2994-2996**

**2996-2998**

**2998-3000**



# WELCOME

**Who am I? Who are you?  
What are we doing here?**





# Kenneth Doka on Grief Counseling and Psychotherapy

by Victor Yalom

A leading expert on grief counseling and therapy, discusses how understanding individual grieving styles is essential to grief counselors and all therapists helping clients deal effectively with loss.

Interview



What is grief and what is its function?

"I think it's probably important to acknowledge and recognize that grief is a reaction to loss. We often confuse it as a reaction to death. It's really just a very natural reaction to loss and we can experience grief obviously when someone we're attached to dies, but we can also experience it when we lose any significant form of attachment. You can certainly experience grief in divorce, in separation, in losing an object that's particularly meaningful or significant, in losing a job that has meaning or significance. Whenever we experience an attachment and we experience loss in that attachment, grief becomes the natural way we respond to that. We used to look at the function of grief as kind of allowing a process of detachment and a restoration of life in the absence of that person. But we no longer really use that old sort of Freudian model. We really emphasize that people really don't detach. They have a changed and continued bond with the person. It's the process of adjusting to in many ways what's going to be a new relationship and a different relationship rather than simply the dissolution or detachment from a relationship."

-Kenneth Doka

## What is grief and what is its function?

"I think it's probably important to acknowledge and recognize that grief is a reaction to loss. We often confuse it as a reaction to death. It's really just a very natural reaction to loss and so we can experience grief obviously when someone we're attached to dies, but we can also experience it when we lose any significant form of attachment. You can certainly experience grief in divorce, in separation, in losing an object that's particularly meaningful or significant, in losing a job that has meaning or significance. Whenever we experience an attachment and we experience loss in that attachment, grief becomes the natural way we respond to that. We used to look at the function of grief as kind of allowing a process of detachment and a restoration of life in the absence of that person. Now we no longer really use that old sort of Freudian model. We really emphasize that people really don't detach. They have a changed and continued bond with the person. It's the process of adjusting to in many ways what's going to be a new relationship and a different relationship rather than simply the abolition or detachment from a relationship".

-Kenneth Doka

**COMMUNITY**

loss of home

**SECURITY**

death of a person

**RELATIONSHIP**

death of a pet

**HOPES AND DREAMS**

**IDENTITY**

loss of job

**TYPES OF LOSS**

loss of cognitive abilities

**FUNCTIONALITY**

injury

**SAFETY**

physical illness

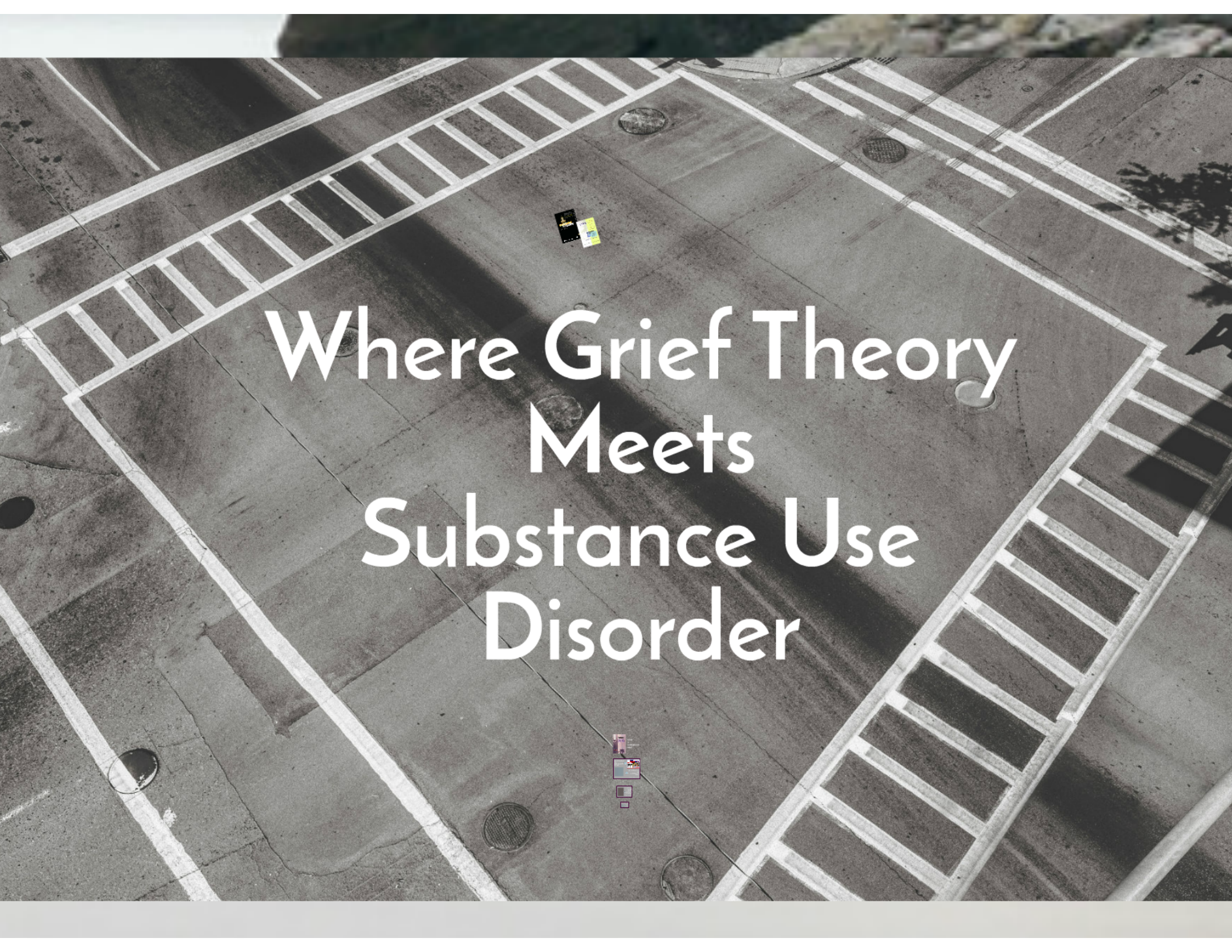
**FAITH**

divorce

**INDEPENDENCE**

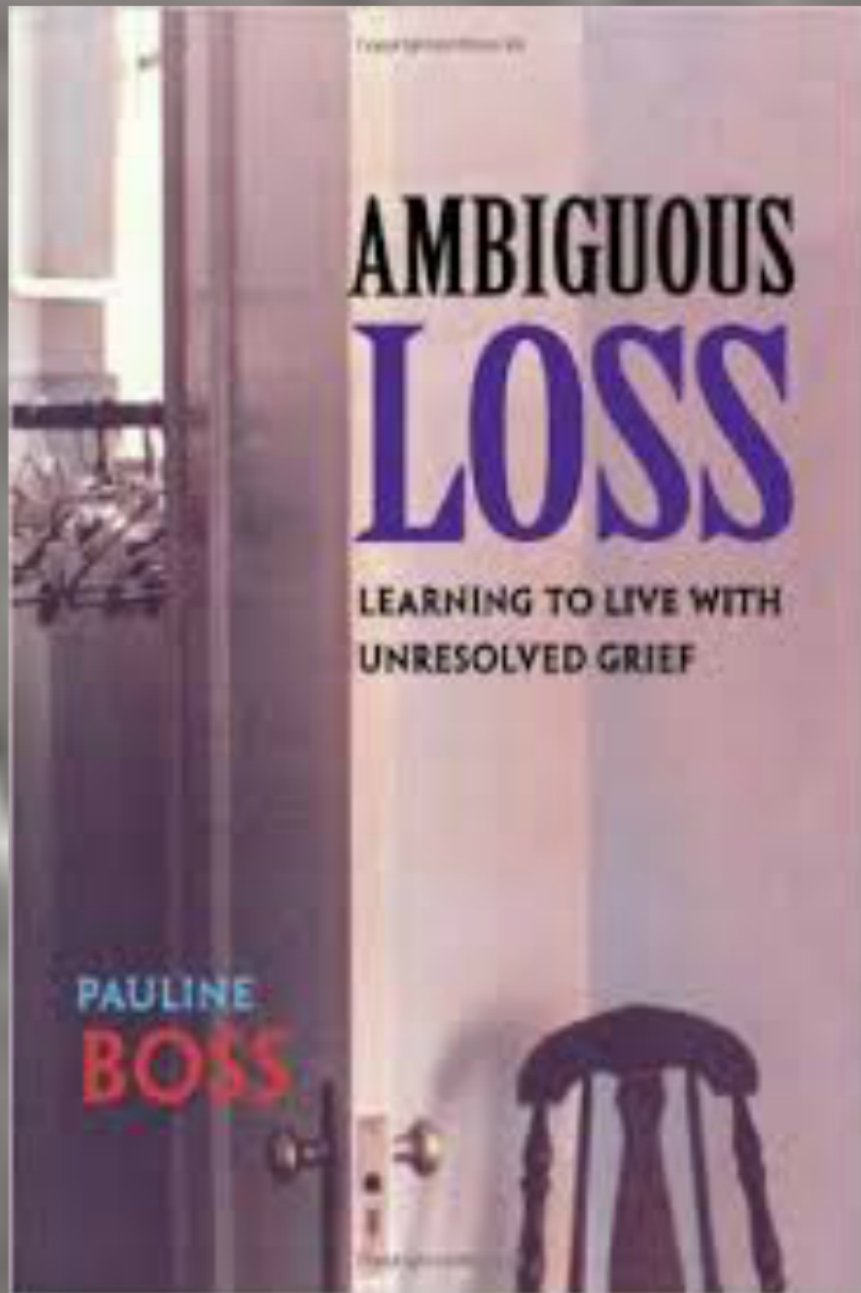
**ASSUMPTIVE WORLD**





# Where Grief Theory Meets Substance Use Disorder





what  
is  
ambiguous  
loss?

physically absent  
and  
psychologically  
present



**ENDANGERED  
MISSING**

**REWARD \$5,000**  
leading to information towards the safe return  
of Shanna Peoples as offered by family.

**Shanna Peoples**

**MISSING FROM:**  
Geneva, Alabama

**DATE MISSING:**  
September 8, 2011

**Age:** 19 **Eyes:** Brown  
**Height:** 5' 11" - 6' tall  
**Weight:** 120 lbs. **Hair at time missing:** Long Sandy Blonde



physically present  
and  
psychologically  
absent



Ambiguous Loss, Pauline Boss (2002)





loved ones who  
are physically  
present but  
have had an  
identity change  
are expected to be  
who they always  
were.

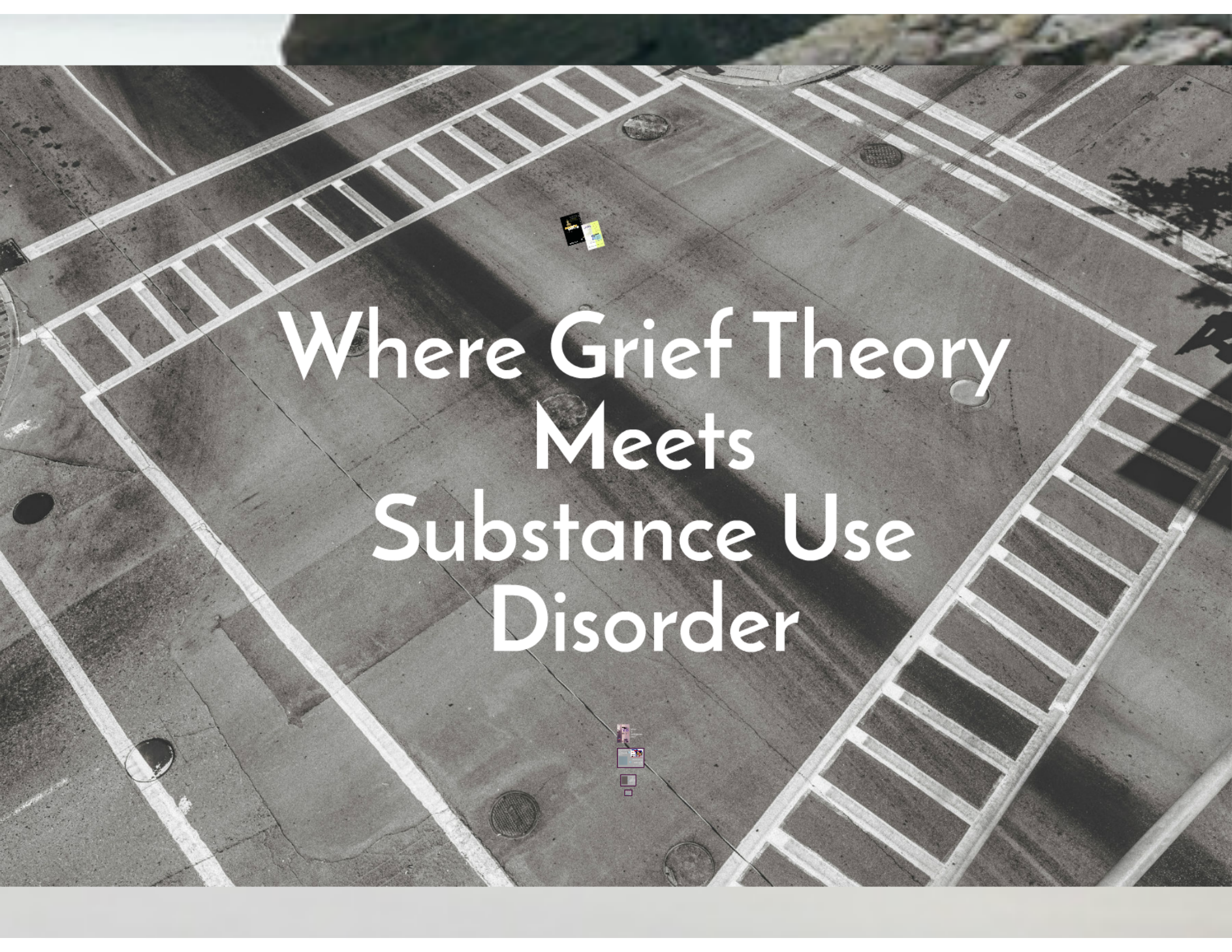
Ambiguous Loss, Pauline Boss (2002)

# Goals of Counseling for Ambiguous Loss

Boss (1999, 2002)

- Find meaning
- Accept ongoing uncertainty
- Reconstruct identity
- Learn to live with ambivalence
- Revisit attachment
- Discover hope



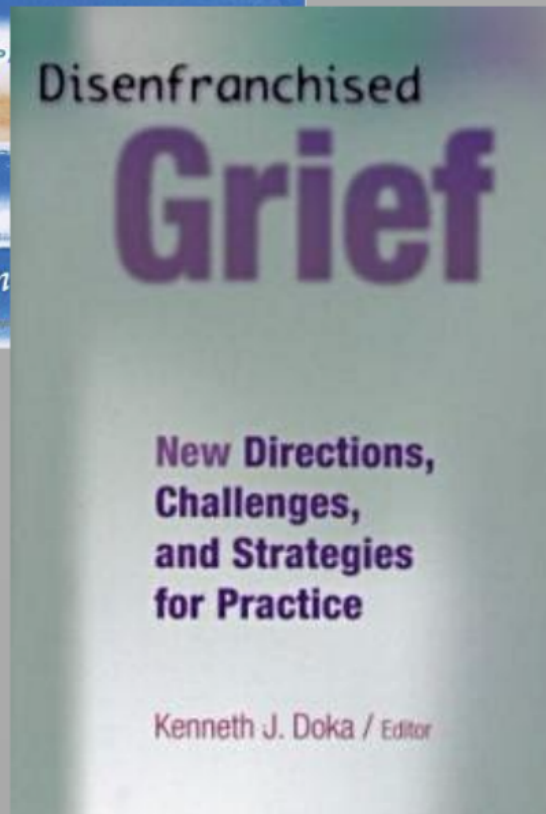
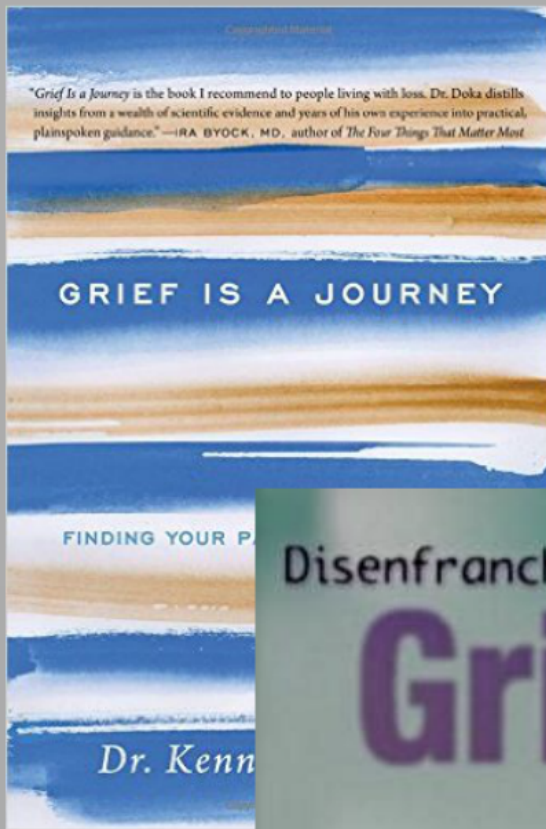


# Where Grief Theory Meets Substance Use Disorder



Bridging  
'Living Loss'  
and  
Overdose Grief  
Disenfranchised Grief





a loss that isn't  
socially  
sanctioned,  
openly  
acknowledge or  
publicly mourned

Doka (1989, 2002, 2016)

# Reasons Losses Can Be Disenfranchised

Doka (1989, 2002, 2016)

The loss isn't recognized as a loss.

The griever isn't recognized.

The relationship is stigmatized.

The mechanism of death is  
stigmatized by society.

The expression of grief is not  
accepted.

# What's the impact?

Doka (1989,  
2002,2016)

isolation

alienation

shame

lack of honesty about  
mechanism of death.

questioning  
validity of  
emotions

suppressed grief  
expression

loneliness



# When families lose someone to overdose: what does the research tell us?

In 2011, a comprehensive research review by Feigelman et al found TWO total research studies focusing on grief of a substance-related death and both were done abroad with small sample sizes.

In the last 5 years a handful of studies additional have been completed.



# families grieving a substance-related death



family/  
friends  
who are  
also using

families  
who were  
aware of  
substance use

families  
who were  
not aware of  
substance use



What are some unique issues that arise when a family was not aware of a loved one's substance use prior to an overdose death?

# The Biggies

## processing the secret:

- "did I really know my loved one?"
- "what else were they hiding?"
- "I feel so guilty I missed the signs"

## someone knew, not everyone:

- "why didn't you say something?"
- "why didn't you make them get help"

## isolation:

- no previous support network of others who have a loved one with a Substance Use Disorder (sud)
- increased deception about the cause of death.

## higher rate of shock, disbelief, denial

- upon notification, higher likelihood to assume error in identification, toxicology and autopsy results, etc

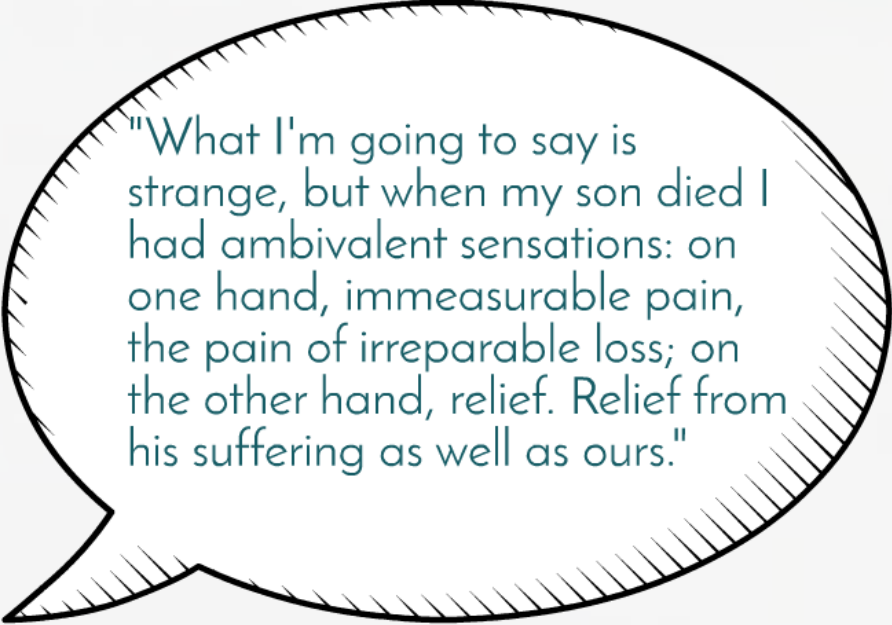


What are some unique issues that arise when a family was aware of a loved one's substance use prior to an overdose death?

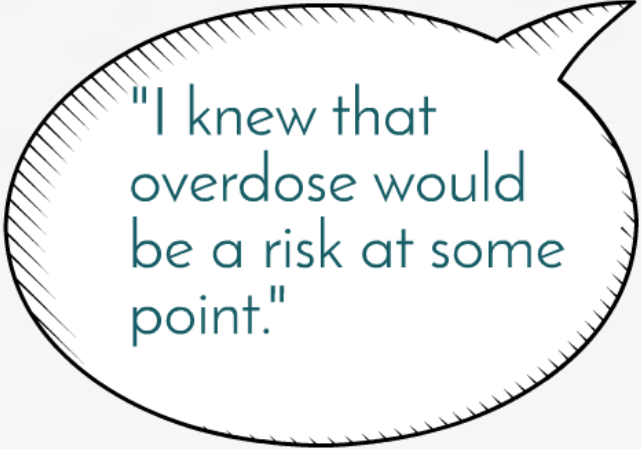


# Anticipatory Grief Characteristics

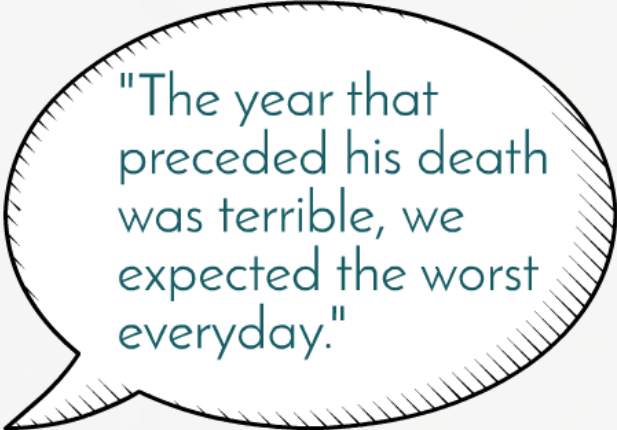
In cases "where the use is intense and open, it is possible to observe a "veiled preparation" for a possible death by overdose. This brings about ambivalent situations: pain on one hand and relief on the other hand." (Da Silva, Noto, Formigoni 2007)



"What I'm going to say is strange, but when my son died I had ambivalent sensations: on one hand, immeasurable pain, the pain of irreparable loss; on the other hand, relief. Relief from his suffering as well as ours."

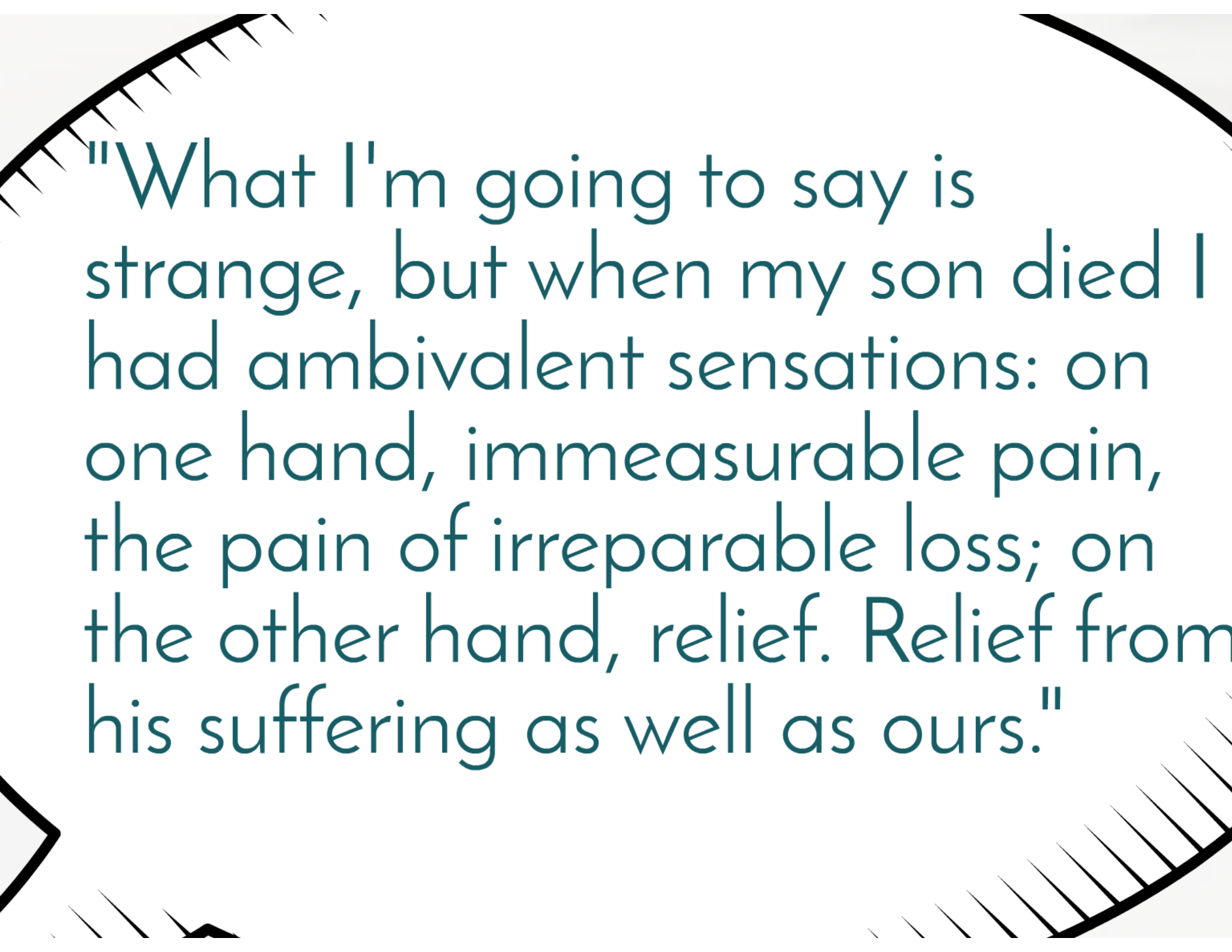


"I knew that overdose would be a risk at some point."

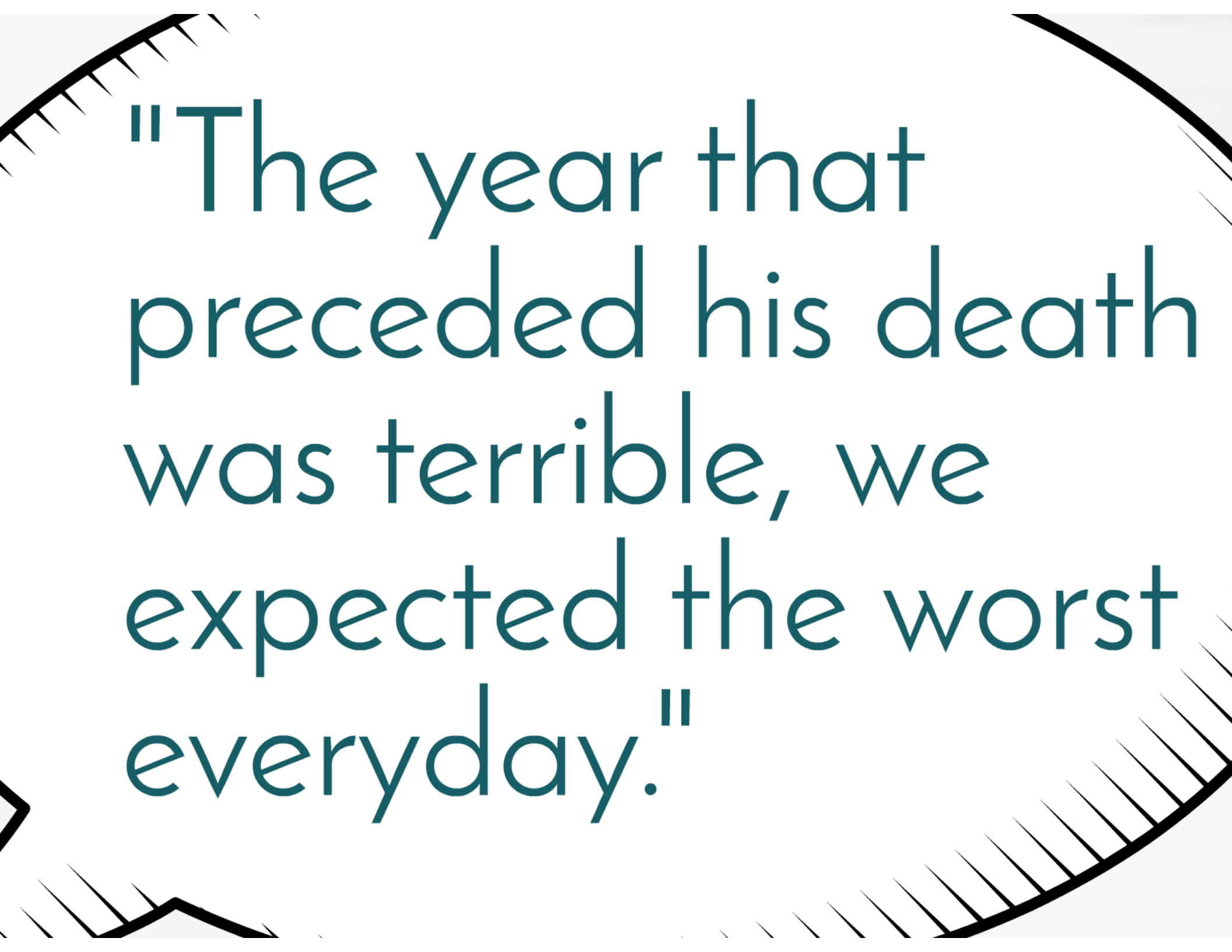


"The year that preceded his death was terrible, we expected the worst everyday."

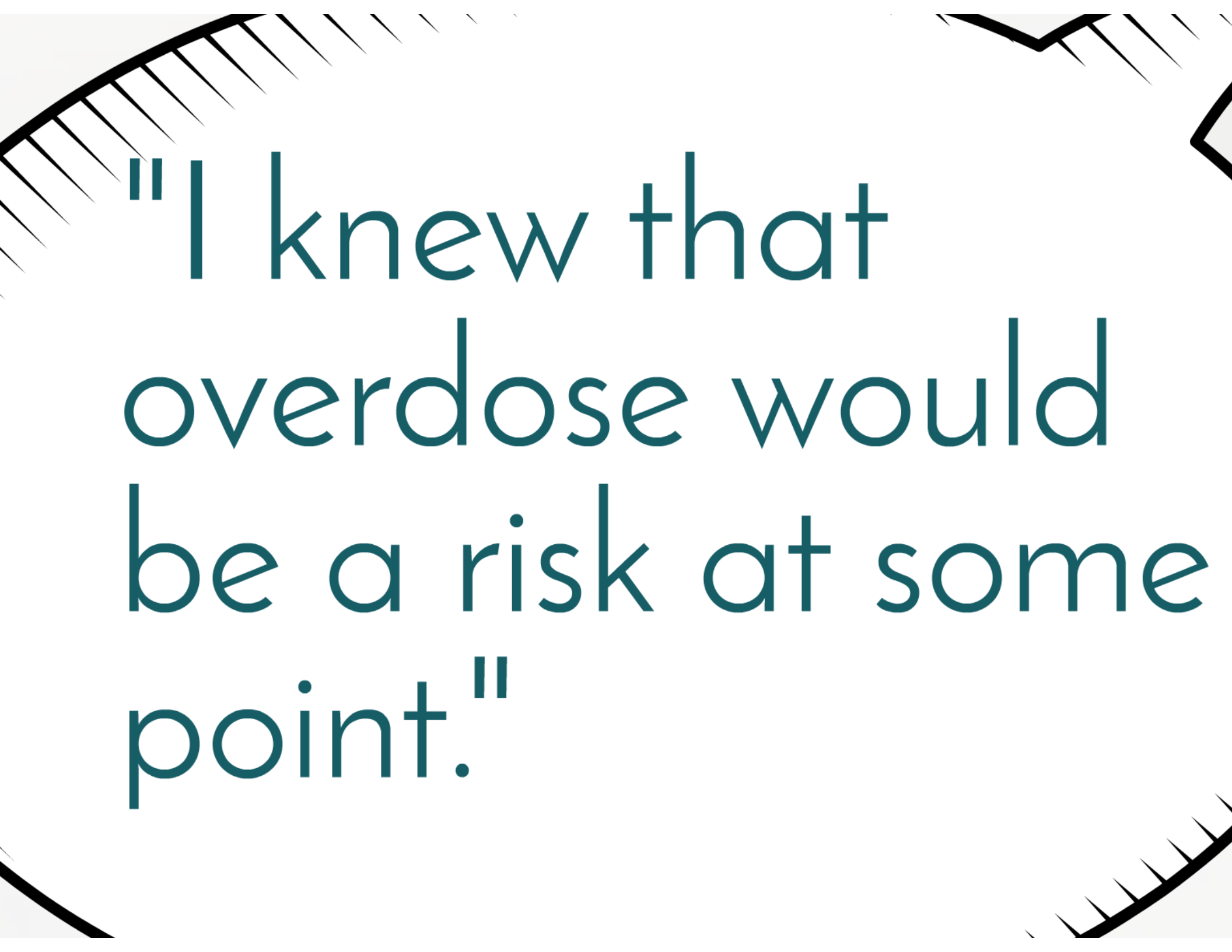




"What I'm going to say is strange, but when my son died I had ambivalent sensations: on one hand, immeasurable pain, the pain of irreparable loss; on the other hand, relief. Relief from his suffering as well as ours."

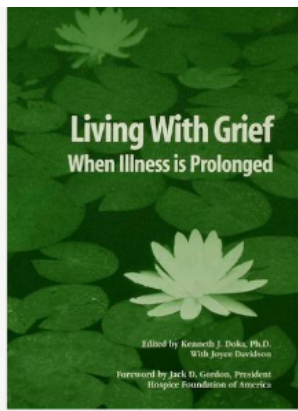


"The year that preceded his death was terrible, we expected the worst everyday."

The background features a stylized clock face in the top-left corner and a gear-like shape in the top-right corner, both rendered in black outlines. The main text is centered and reads: 

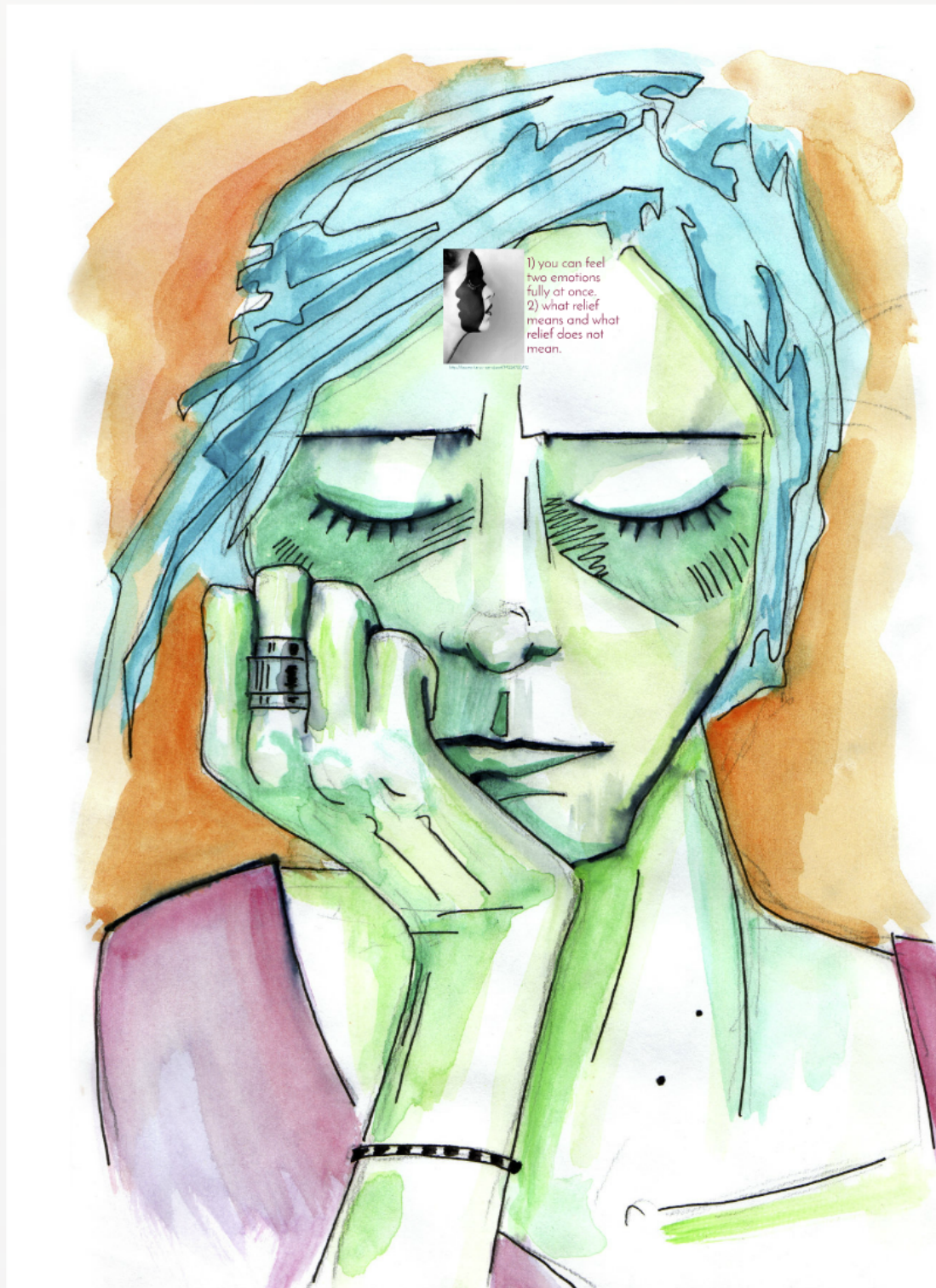
"I knew that overdose would be a risk at some point."





# Anticipatory Grief Defined (Rando 1986, 1997)

“Anticipatory grief is a complex and multidimensional experience that can be defined as follows: . . . the process of mourning, coping, interaction, planning, and psychological reorganization that are stimulated and begun in part in response to the awareness of the impending death of a loved one and the recognition of associated losses in the past, present, and future. It mandates a delicate balance among the conflicting demands of simultaneously holding onto, letting go of, and drawing closer to the dying loved one.”



1) you can feel  
two emotions  
fully at once.  
2) what relief  
means and what  
relief does not  
mean.

# Relief



1) you can feel two emotions fully at once.  
2) what relief means and what relief does not mean.

<http://laoless.tumblr.com/post/39226700512>



# families grieving a substance-related death



family/  
friends  
who are  
also using

families  
who were  
aware of  
substance use

families  
who were  
not aware of  
substance use

What are some unique issues that arise when a family member or friend is also using substances at the time of an overdose death?

# No research on grief and active substance use; minimal recovery and grief specific research.

What we do know:

- increased likelihood of multiple losses/ cumulative grief.
- family/societal expectations about the impact of the death on others using.
- blame from family/friends.
- potential for delayed grief due to active substance use during one or more losses.
- survivor guilt/recovery guilt
- don't feel welcome memorializing.
- stigma and judgement of being defined exclusively by their addiction ("addict", "junkie").
- no resources for grief treatment/support.



# Common Grief Emotions Observed in Anyone Grieving a Substance-Related Death



Cognitive perspective: guilt is an emotion that people experience because they believe they have caused harm.

got guilt?

Stop  
telling  
me not to  
feel guilty.  
Seriously.

We can't wish it  
away, so what helps?  
- talking  
- listening  
- journaling  
- meditation  
- therapy  
- support groups  
- self-help books  
- support groups  
- self-help books  
- support groups  
- self-help books

- We really did.
- We think we did.
- We want order/control.

Stop  
telling  
me not to  
feel guilty.

Seriously.

We can't wish it  
away, so what helps?

- validate.
- determine if real or perceived
- distinguish guilt from regret.
- education about SUD
- work toward self-compassion.
- work toward self-forgiveness.
- CBT when appropriate



# Understanding Guilt vs Regret



## What's the difference and why does it matter?

Posted 27 July · 🇺🇸



The lesson and your podcast on differentiating guilt and regret was so helpful to me. I knew that guilt was a normal part of grieving. But I began to feel so responsible for Ben's death, especially that I couldn't save him using CPR. I felt like I owed everyone unending apologies. I even felt like the police would show up at my door and take me away. After listening to your podcast and reading the lesson, I've really found a peace about the way you separate guilt and regret. I didn't intentionally mean to withhold any treatment, like CPR, that I could provide. I truly did my best. I regret that things didn't turn out differently. This alone has brought me some peace.

Thank you!

Posted 27 July · 🇺🇸



The lesson and your podcast on differentiating guilt and regret was so helpful to me. I knew that guilt was a normal part of grieving. But I began to feel so responsible for Ben's death, especially that I couldn't save him using CPR. I felt like I owed everyone unending apologies. I even felt like the police would show up at my door and take me away. After listening to your podcast and reading the lesson, I've really found a peace about the way you separate guilt and regret. I didn't intentionally mean to withhold any treatment, like CPR, that I could provide. I truly did my best. I regret that things didn't turn out differently. This alone has brought me some peace.

Thank you!

# Stigma: what the research tells us

- Feigelman et al 2012
- n=575
- combination of stigmatized losses (suicide, homicide, overdose, and ambiguous)

Grieving a stigmatized loss was correlated with higher rates of:

- depression (.37)
- suicidal thoughts (.35)
- suicide attempts (.23)
- complex grief (.47)

Feigelman et al. 2012



Grieving a stigmatized loss was correlated with higher rates of:

- depression (.37)
- suicidal thoughts (.35)
- suicide attempts (.23)
- complex grief (.47)

Feigelman et al 2012

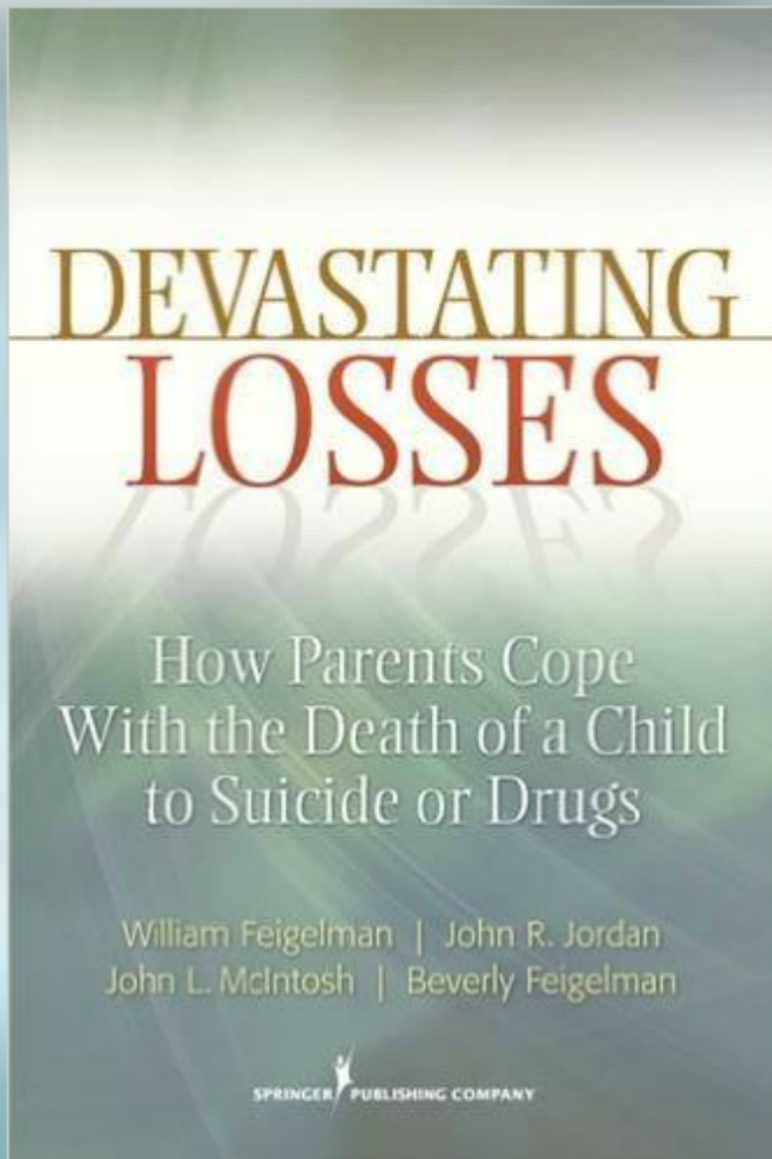
Most common behaviors reported from support systems that impacted feelings of stigmatization:

- Avoidance
- Absence of caring interest
- Unempathetic spiritual explanations
- Blaming the child.
- Blaming the parent
- Other: "at least he didn't kill someone else", "he could have shot himself-that would have been worse"

Feigelman et al 2012

# Recommended Clinical Interventions to Address Stigmatization

Feigelman et al 2012



- 1) assess support system, including indications of stigmatizing behaviors from close and distant friends/family
- 2) assist clients in evaluating relationships to determine which are worth preserving and which need to be temporarily avoided or discontinued.
- 3) offer guidance on how grievors can "teach" those close to them to be better supports.
- 4) directly involve close members of the griever's network (spouse, parents, etc) in treatment to assist the griever in taking the lead role in guiding their network.



# Self-Stigmatization

(Dunn & Morrish-Vinders 1987, 1988)

- assumptions about others
- behaviors that contribute to avoidance



# Shame

**step 1:** exploring the relationship between shame, guilt, stigma, disenfranchisement, and blame

**step 2:** explore source of shame  
- internal vs external.

**step 3:** understand and explore both definitions of shame.

# Blame

(Feigelman  
et al 2012)

## Parents Grieving OD Death:

- 23% of parents reported others blaming them.
- 29% reported others blaming their child.
- High rates of blame btw ex-spouses.
- No specific research on blaming by other family/friend relationship.





# Clinical Implications

## BEING BLAMED

- reality test
- assess support system
- psychoeducation
- explore guilt v shame

## BEING BLAMED & BLAMING

## BLAMING

- shattered world psychoeducation
- forgiveness work
- SUD psychoeducation
- couples/family work
- ACT

# Isolation

greater risk with stigmatized losses (Doka 2002)

clinical implications

- Support groups
- Psychoeducation
- Support system assessment
- Behavioral Activation

**broken**  
**NO MORE**

TIME TO  
**REMEMBER.**  
TIME TO **ACT.**

31 AUGUST

—  
INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE  
AWARENESS DAY

**GRASP<sup>®</sup>**

Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing

**GRASP** was founded to help provide sources of help, compassion and most of all, understanding, for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction.



Thank You!

[www.whatsyourgrief.com/overdoseCEU](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/overdoseCEU)

[whatsyourgrief@gmail.com](mailto:whatsyourgrief@gmail.com)

---

## About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®

Launched in March 2018 through an alliance with HFA, the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public.



*Presented by Boeing*



---

## Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

- December 13— *Compassion Meditation for Meaning Making & Posttraumatic Growth*  
Presenter: **Heather Stang**, MA, C-IAYT
- January 8— *Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Bereaved Military Families*  
Presenter: **M. Katherine Shear**, MD and **Stephen J. Cozza**, MD
- January 17— *Meditation for Coping with Difficult Emotions*  
Presenter: **Heather Stang**, MA, C-IAYT
- January 30— *Loss, Grief, and the Quest for Meaning*  
Presenter: **Robert Neimeyer**, PhD

Visit [taps.org/institute](https://taps.org/institute) to learn more and RSVP!