



Submodule 4.2 - The dual process model by Stroebe and Schut

The dual process model, developed by psychologists Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut, offers a dynamic and flexible perspective on the grieving process. Unlike linear models that conceive grief as a succession of stages, the dual process model proposes that the bereaved oscillate between two types of adaptive strategies: loss orientation and restoration orientation. This back-and-forth between confronting pain and needing to adapt to a new reality allows grieving individuals to find balance in their journey towards healing.

Loss orientation refers to the moments when the bereaved person focuses on the loss itself and the associated emotions. It may include thoughts and memories related to the deceased person, expression of sadness and longing, as well as questioning about the meaning of life and death. For example, someone who has lost their spouse might spend hours looking at photos of them, crying while remembering their shared life, and experiencing immense emptiness. This loss orientation is vital in integrating the reality of the loss and giving it meaning.

Restoration orientation, on the other hand, refers to the moments when the bereaved person focuses on the practical and emotional changes required to adapt to life without the departed person. It may comprise concrete tasks like managing financial and legal aspects of succession, reorganising daily life, or developing new skills. It also involves emotional work, such as redefining one's identity, creating new emotional bonds, and finding meaning in life after the loss. For instance, a person who has lost a child may invest in a support group for bereaved parents, reconnect with friends, or take on new personal projects.

According to Stroebe and Schut, the bereaved naturally navigate between these two

orientations, depending on their needs and personal pace. There is no ideal proportion between loss orientation and restoration orientation, and each person will find their own balance. Some may spend more time in loss orientation in the early stages of grief, then gradually turn towards restoration, while others might alternate between the two orientations more frequently.

The dual process model also underscores the importance of cultural and social factors in the grieving process. Societal norms and expectations can influence how the bereaved express their grief and adapt to the loss. For example, in some cultures, it might be expected for widows to wear black for a specific period, whereas in others, it might be encouraged to quickly return to work and "move on". The GRIEF COACH needs to be mindful of these cultural influences and help the bereaved find a balance that respects both their individual needs and environment expectations.

Drawing on the dual process model, the GRIEF COACH can aid the bereaved in navigating between loss and restoration orientations. They can encourage them to express their emotions and honor their grief, while assisting them in devising concrete strategies to adjust to the new reality. For example, the GRIEF COACH might suggest writing exercises to explore memories and emotions tied to the loss, while also helping the person organize meaningful activities and strengthen social ties. The aim is to foster a smooth and personalized grieving process that respects the pace and unique needs of each individual.

The dual process model provides a nuanced and realistic view of grief, taking into account the complexity and non-linearity of this experience. It invites the GRIEF COACH to warmly welcome the emotional swings of the bereaved and to accompany them in their journey towards gradually adapting to the loss. By helping individuals strike a balance between facing pain and rebuilding their lives, the GRIEF COACH can foster a more harmonious and lasting healing process.

Key takeaways:

1. The dual process model by Stroebe and Schut offers a dynamic and flexible approach to grief, wherein the bereaved oscillate between loss orientation and restoration orientation.
2. Loss orientation focuses on the emotions and thoughts related to the deceased individual, while restoration orientation revolves around practical and emotional adaptation to life after the loss.
3. There is no ideal proportion between the two orientations, and each person strikes their own balance according to their needs and personal rhythm.
4. Societal norms and expectations can affect how the bereaved express their grief and adjust to the loss.

5. The GRIEF COACH should be aware of cultural influences and help the bereaved find a balance between their individual needs and environment expectations.

6. Leveraging the dual process model, the GRIEF COACH can suggest exercises to explore emotions connected to the loss and assist the person in hashing out concrete strategies to adjust to the new reality.

7. The goal is to encourage a smooth and personalized grieving process that respects the pace and unique needs of each bereaved individual.