



Sub-module 4.3 - Worden's Tasks of Mourning Theory

The Tasks of Mourning theory, developed by psychologist William Worden, offers a structured framework for understanding and accompanying the bereavement process. According to Worden, mourning involves the accomplishment of four essential tasks, which allow the grieving person to gradually adapt to the loss and to reinvest his or her life in a meaningful way. These tasks do not necessarily follow a linear order and can be revisited at different times during the grieving process.

The first task identified by Worden is accepting the reality of the loss. This task involves fully recognizing that the person has died and that this loss is irreversible. It is a process that is both intellectual and emotional, which can take time and meet with resistance. For instance, a person who has lost their child may continue to hope that it is a mistake, struggle to use the past tense when referring to them, or avoid situations that confirm the reality of the loss, such as funerals. The GRIEF COACH can help the grieving person gradually accept this reality, by encouraging him or her to talk about the loss, to participate in mourning rituals, and to express their emotions.

The second task is to experience the pain of grief. Worden places emphasis on the importance of experiencing and expressing the emotions related to the loss, whether it is sadness, anger, guilt, or loneliness. This is a natural and necessary process, which helps make sense of the loss and to gradually adapt to the absence. For example, a person who has lost their spouse may need to cry, to talk about their memories, to express their anger at the injustice of the loss or to share their loneliness. The GRIEF COACH can provide a safe and caring space for accepting these emotions, normalizing their expression, and help the person to find healthy ways to cope with them.

The third task involves adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is absent. This task involves both external adjustments, such as the reorganization of roles and responsibilities within the family or dealing with practical aspects of the estate, and internal adjustments, such as redefining one's identity and beliefs. It is a process of gradual rebuilding, which can trigger feelings of insecurity, loss of bearings, and self-questioning. For example, a person who has lost their mother may have to learn how to manage household tasks on her own, redefine her role in the family, and readjust her future plans. The GRIEF COACH can help the grieving person identify the necessary changes, develop new skills, and find new markers.

The fourth task is to find an enduring connection with the deceased while reinvesting in one's life. This involves developing a new relationship with the departed person, based on memories, values, and emotional heritage while allowing oneself to create new emotional ties and engage in new projects. This task involves finding a balance between maintaining a symbolic link to the departed and investing in the present and the future. For instance, a person who has lost their childhood friend may choose to engage in a cause they both cared about, share their memories with their own children, or create a symbolic ritual to honor their memory. The GRIEF COACH can assist the grieving person in exploring meaningful ways to keep a connection with the deceased while encouraging them to embrace new possibilities.

It is important to note that these tasks are not steps to be completed in a linear order but are dynamic processes that intertwine and revisited throughout the grieving process. Each person will carry them out at their own pace and in their own way, based on their history, personality, and life context. The role of the GRIEF COACH is to accompany the grieving person in the accomplishment of these tasks, while respecting their unique journey and offering customized support to meet their needs.

Worden's Tasks of Mourning theory provides a structuring framework for understanding the bereavement process while acknowledging its complexity and non-linearity. It invites the GRIEF COACH to adopt both an empathetic and proactive approach, by assisting grieving individuals in accepting the reality of the loss, experiencing their emotions, adjusting to changes, and finding a new balance. By supporting individuals in accomplishing these tasks, the GRIEF COACH can facilitate a more harmonious and meaningful healing process.

Key points:

- Worden's Tasks of Mourning theory provides a framework for understanding and accompanying the bereavement process through four essential tasks.
- The first task is to accept the reality of the loss, an intellectual and emotional process that

can take time.

- The second task is to experience and express the pain of grief, a natural and necessary process to make sense of the loss.
- The third task involves adjusting to an environment where the deceased is absent, by reorganizing roles, responsibilities and redefining one's identity.
- The fourth task is to find a lasting connection with the deceased while reinvesting in one's life, maintaining a symbolic link while opening up to new possibilities.
- These tasks do not follow a linear order and can be revisited at various points in the grieving process, each person accomplishing them at their own pace and in their own way.
- The role of the GRIEF COACH is to accompany the grieving person in achieving these tasks, respecting their unique journey and offering support tailored to their needs.