The unspoken grief in an ivory tower: Examining transition issues among international students using a 'grief tasks model'

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ABSTRACT

Grief is a universal human experience but not everyone is given a license to grieve, and certainly no one can be exempted from experiencing the pain of losing someone special or something significant. This experience is particularly evident for traditionally-aged university students (18–23 years old) who have experienced non-death losses such as transition to university, the end of a friendship and/or a romantic relationship, leaving home, separation from loved ones, or academic failure. Research suggests that these non-death losses seem to evoke similar physical and psychological distress to death losses. However, these non-death losses are often not appropriately acknowledged or supported, and therefore can be viewed as disenfranchised grief. Traditionally-aged university students also tend to be less experienced with death and loss, and are more challenged by the intensity of grief due to their developmental stage and the non-conducive university environment to grieving. This whole grieving experience is further exacerbated for international students who are often going through the transition of adjusting and adapting to a new culture, a new education system, new expectations, new friends, and new living experiences.

This paper will review the developmental challenges for university students who are grieving, discuss the impacts of grief especially in non-death losses for international students with specific focus on transition issues, and examine the 'grief tasks model' in the adjustment to grief. I will also provide some clinical observations about working with grieving

students, and suggest strategies for university wide engagement in helping and supporting students who are grieving.

INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) once said, "Nothing in this world is certain but death and taxes." But as certain as it is, for thousands of years people have been striving to cheat death or find different ways to prolong life. Just like today many are still trying to pay less tax or even to avoid tax. With tax, certainly there is some success; but when it comes to death, immortality is still a castle in the air. Along the way these two grand efforts have created unnecessary worries, anxiety and fear because people are attempting to avoid the unavoidable. Only until we learn to embrace the inevitable, such as death, pain, grief, and loss, we will always be haunted by our own phantom of tenacious desires for paradise on earth.

Nevertheless, embracing the inevitable does not mean passively enduring the pain, or deliberately denying our gifts of intellectuality, creativity, and compassion in alleviating pain and suffering. For the last 50 years there has been an abundance of literature and research relating to the issues on death, dying, bereavement, and various ways to manage these losses. In contrast little research is conducted on bereavement among university students despite 20 years of research statistics consistently supporting a need for intervention in this area (Floerchinger, 1991). Even less literature and research exists on non-death loss events in the traditionally-aged university population (18–23 years old).

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES FOR TRADITIONALLY-AGED UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Researchers have argued that the grief and loss experience is a very challenging time for traditionally-aged university students because of three main reasons: their developmental stage, the university environment, and societal expectations (Balk, 1995; Fowler, 1991; Sklar & Hartly, 1990; LaGrand, 1985).

Developmental stage

Traditionally-aged university students are often in a stage of their lives when they are confronted with a wide range of loss experiences and life transitions, such as forming autonomous lives, developing a clear sense of direction, entering into lasting, intimate relationships, and forming a stable, focused identity (Balk, 1995; Fowler, 1991). According to Erikson's (1963) theory of development, the typical university student is faced with the developmental task of intimacy versus isolation. University students are struggling with breaking away from their families of origin and developing independent identities. It can be especially difficult for these young adults to cope with the loss when they are separated from their loved ones while at the same time they are attempting to become autonomous individuals. As a result, they have difficulty establishing a clear and healthy identity as they begin to question seriously their own competence and self-worth. Scanlon, Louise & Weber (2007) suggest a loss of identity continuity as students leave behind their familiar living and learning contexts and relationships as they make the transition to university. Janowiak, Mei-Tal, and Drapkin (1995) also claim that the separation from their family of origin has posed a challenge to form their individual identities, and to establish a healthy relationship with others.

To further complicate these developmental challenges, traditionally-aged university students also tend to be less experienced with death and loss, and are more vulnerable to additional stressors due to their maturational stage and the environment in which they are left to grieve. As a consequence, they may experience a significant loss – whether it is death or non-death related with a heightened sense of isolation and hopelessness, especially when they experience the intensity of grief for the first time.

University environment

The literature on bereaved university students suggests that the university environment is often an isolating and lonely place for grieving undergraduates (Balk, 2001), and the environment can also be unfriendly to the tasks of grieving (Balk & Vesta, 1998; Sklar & Hartly, 1990; Toth, 1997). This is because the university campus is an 'ivory tower' that tends to strive for success, growth, and excellence. Therefore, when one experiences significant loss, it leaves little prospect for students to get the

support and understanding they need to make it through the grieving process. As Silverman (1987) noted, "The college community, on the whole, mirror[s] the attitudes and values of the larger community in its inability to deal with grief" (p. 393).

Societal expectations

The general public also tends to consider youth, especially university-age youth to be always engaging in adventurous activities, having lots of fun and being immune to pain, trauma, and the unexpected. In reality, young adults experience losses that can be as crippling, and as staggering as those experienced at any age level. Very often they are the forgotten grievers (LaGrand, 1985). All these challenges have significant implications and impacts for first year students as they go through the transition to university, especially for first year international students (FYIS) who are confronted with a broad range of transition associated losses, which are predominantly non-death related.

TRANSITION ASSOCIATED LOSSES

In order to understand the losses that accompany this first year transition, one needs to define what transition is. According to the Transition and Orientation Programs website by the Melbourne University (2006):

"Transition is the process of moving from one set of circumstances into another, and refers to the range of issues and emotions that students face during various new stages of their university career".

When an international student arrives in a new country for the first time, they are confronted by different challenges in adjusting to living and learning in a new environment. In general, transition issues can be summarized into six main categories (Senel & Kamini, 2007; Melbourne university Transition and Orientation Program website, 2007). Each transition area can trigger three types of losses, namely the loss of familiarity, the loss of stability, and the loss of security (see Table 1).

Table 1. *The categories and losses that are associated with first year transition*

Category of transition	**Type of losses**	**Example**
Academic	Familiar academic culture and expectations The choice to use own native language	FYIS need to relearn the academic culture and expectations, which include how to interact with faculty and other students, different styles of teaching, and conscious use of English in their studies, if English is not their first language. English language proficiency is positively correlated to first year academic performance (Stoynoff, 1997). They also need to become familiar with teaching and curriculum differences, new study techniques, test taking, and oral communication.
Interpersonal	Stable and secure support networks	Making new friends and developing a new social support system is one of the primary needs for FYIS (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988). It is also an antidote to homesickness. Loss and lack of social support have been found to lead to lower academic achievement and negative psychological experiences such as tension, confusion, and depression (Hayes & Lin, 1994, Hovey, 2000; Pederson, 1991).
Geographic	Familiar environment	FYIS need to become oriented to a completely new city and travel arrangements, including the population, density, structures, architecture, systems, and the whole dynamic of Western urbanization.

Administrative	Familiar ways of doing things and getting things done	FYIS often find the university a confusing institution. Many students are expected to sort out their own timetable and enrolment, keep track of information and due dates, register for classes and orientation activities, and keep updated with the 'what's new' or 'who is in charge' in the university/department/ faculty/ program.
Practical	Familiar and stable routines	Some important and urgent matters include finding accommodation, obtaining food and other essential items for daily life, getting appropriate documentation for their stay (e.g. tax file number, driving license, health care card), and looking for part-time jobs.
Spiritual/ religious beliefs/ personal values	A sense of security or opportunity to nurture their spiritual needs	FYIS who find their spiritual beliefs or personal values that are "at odds' with the host country can feel isolated, marginalized or even discriminated against. Finding appropriate places to worship, relevant materials to perform religious rituals, empathic understanding from others to observe religious days can be at times difficult. Sometimes some international students also find their personal values "clash" with mainstream values (e.g. sexuality, politics, and family).

All these losses continue to create a wide variety of challenges as FYIS go through the transition to university. These challenges can result in a 'lack

of connectedness and involvement' (Perry & Allard, 2003), 'unhappiness and dissatisfaction' (Yorke, 2000), 'loneliness' (Pargetter, 2000), 'isolation' (Lawrence, 2001), 'disequilibrium' (Jackson, 2003) and 'alienation' (Mann, 2001), which in turn adversely impact the academic success and psychological well being of first year students. If one examines these challenges closely, they are also loss-oriented and predominantly non-death related, as support by LaGrand's (1986) classic research on identifying the major losses of university students.

LaGrand (1986) conducted a large scale survey with over 3,500 university students over a period of 6 years with the aim of identifying the major losses of university students. He found that 28% of the losses were death-related and 72% of the losses were non-death related (see Table 2). Of all the losses, interpersonal loss is the most prevalent one. Nearly 75% of students in the survey reported a loss of a significant other due to some type of separation or end of a relationship.

Table 2. *Major losses of college-university students*

Type of loss	Percentage
Death of a loved one	**27.7**
Interpersonal losses	**45.6**
- end of a love relationship	24.5
- end of a friendship	10.1
- separation from loved ones	9.7
- divorce	1.3
Other losses	**26.7**
- academic failure	7.3
- loss of a cherished ideal	3.0
- loss of self-respect	2.6
- etc	13.8

Adapted from LaGrand L.E. (1985). College student loss and response. *New Directions for Student Services*, vol. 31, pp. 15-28.

Interpersonal loss also seems to cause the highest degree of disruption in students' lives (Toth, Stockton, Browne, 2000). This notion is further reinforced by LaGrand (1985) who indicates that death is not always the most traumatic loss for some people. The breakup of a love relationship can result in grief responses that are as intense as those associated with death. In other words, some significant non-death losses have the potential to trigger intense physical and psychological symptoms similar to the grief that is experienced with death loss events. This is particularly evident for traditionally-aged FYIS, who are moving from adolescence to adulthood with increased responsibilities, independence and freedom, and who often go through major transitions at this stage of their lives. Cohen (1996) suggested these students may experience psychological distress associated with the changes and losses triggered by their transition from the home to university environment. She also postulated that they may exhibit psychological symptoms such as shock, anxiety, sadness, depression, isolation from others, an intense preoccupation with home, guilt, anger, tension, sleep and appetite disturbance (Collins & Sedlacek, 1973; LaGrand, 1983). These are symptoms which have been described in the professional literature as grief (Clayton, Halikas, & Maurice, 1971; Freese, 1977; Lindemann, 1944; Parkes, 1971).

There seems to be a parallel or similarity between symptoms exhibited by international students transitioning to university to a bereaved individual who grieves the death of a significant other. In fact, studies indicate that these loss events have the potential to evoke very strong psychological and physical reactions for university students that may have serious and even life threatening implications (Collins, 1972; Kaczmarek, Backlund & Biemer, 1990; La Grand, 1985, 1988). Having said that, many of these non-death losses or transition associated losses can be viewed as insignificant by others, and are not acknowledged or treated. Doka (1989) describes this phenomenon as disenfranchised grief – a loss that cannot be socially sanctioned, openly acknowledged or publicly mourned. In this scenario, FYIS may not believe that their losses warrant assistance, and subsequently, may not seek informal support or formal counselling for the psychological and physical distress accompanying this grief. This may, in turn, adversely impact on both their academic achievement and psychological well-being (Cohen, 1996).

I will discuss in a later section how the university as a whole can help and support FYIS within a grief and loss context. In the next section, I will

examine closely how the academic and professional staff in the university can assist these students using William Worden's grief tasks model (1991).

GRIEF TASKS MODEL

In the grief tasks model, William Worden (1991) has identified four grieving tasks with death which he believes the bereaved need to complete in order for them to successfully move on from their grief: (1) accept the reality of the loss, (2) experience the pain of grief, (3) adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing, and (4) emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life. For Worden, the first task for the bereaved is to accept the totality and finality of the death. In other words, the deceased will never return to life in a physical form here on earth. Next it is important for the bereaved to experience, express and work through the pain of grief, which includes a wide range of emotional responses such as sadness, anger, shock, fear, and guilt. Once the bereaved has worked through the pain, it is time to adjust to living without the deceased by learning new skills. Finally, the bereaved also need to reinvest their emotional energy from the deceased to other people, which is forming new relationships with others, and to remember the deceased in their own ways.

I have revised and modified this model and suggest we can use the same principles to help our international students adjust to their transition associated grief. Here are the revised four grieving tasks: (1) to accept the fact that you are now in a new country or environment and many things will be different, (2) to experience and express your homesickness in constructive ways, (3) to adapt and adjust to an environment where your family and friends are not here physically to help you, and (4) to remember your family and friends back home while at the same time to re-establish new friendships with other people.

Task 1: To accept the fact that you are now in a new country or environment and many things are done differently

The first task is to accept the newness and differences when you are in a new country or environment. In general, the greater the differences between the home and host country, the harder is the transition, and in

turn, the more losses the students will experience. FYIS who often highlight and exaggerate these differences, such as culture, food, and lifestyle will find themselves more discontent, depressed, and frustrated. Unlike in a death situation where bereaved sometimes finds it hard to accept the death, most students are quick to learn that they are living in a new country because of the constant bombardment of newness and strangeness. For some students, there is an inner resistance to these changes, and as a result they try very hard to relive the "good old days" in a new country, which often can be unpractical and unrealistic. Other students may hold on very strongly to certain unwritten rules of doing things from their home countries, which again can be offensive to the host or vice versa. For example, in certain cultures spitting is common but it is considered as unhygienic and rude in Australia. Another example is some students find it humiliating and offensive when they are asked to present their bags for checking at a shopping counter while this practice is virtually uncommon in their home countries. To them, this causes the "loss of face" (dignity) because it has violated the basic trust between the shop owner and the consumer. Though it is easier for students to accept that they are living in a new country, it is harder for them to accept the different ways of doing things in a host country. We can help students achieve this task by:

- organizing trips to explore places of significance to understand the history and development of the host culture
- encouraging them to discuss their new and strange experiences with their family and friends back home
- educating them about both the written and unwritten rules and expectations of the host country
- helping them to look for similarities between their home cultures and the host culture
- facilitating open discussion between students and staff.

Task 2: To experience and express your homesickness in constructive ways

Most FYIS are really excited when they first arrive in a new country. But when reality begins to sink in, most will feel a certain degree of homesickness – a sense of deep longing for home that often is

accompanied by anxiety and depression. We can help students cope with homesickness by:

- educating them about homesickness
- normalizing their experience of homesickness
- encouraging them to express their feelings of sadness, longing, fear, uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety in constructive ways – either through talking to someone, journaling, drawing, painting, sculpting, exercising, or even playing computer games.

Task 3: To adapt and adjust to an environment where your family and friends are not here physically to help you

FYIS come to a new country with different levels of day-to-day practical skills and emotional management skills. Some are competent in looking after themselves while others will require a lot more help – from cooking to washing to changing a light bulb. We can help students master this task by:

- teaching them relevant practical living skills through workshops, group work, and connect them to community classes/ groups such as cooking or house maintenance classes
- teaching them decision making and problem solving skills
- encouraging them to do some familiar activities, especially the things they are good at
- promoting the support services at the University in which they can utilize.

Task 4: To remember your family and friends back home while at the same time to re-establish new friendships with others

One of the keys to thriving in transition to university is to maintain a healthy and continuous relationship between FYIS and their friends and family back home. Similarly, Worden (1991) talks about the importance of remembering the deceased while reinvesting time and energy on building relationships with other people. Therefore, we can help students complete this task by:

- encouraging them to keep in touch with family and friends by writing emails, letters or talking on the phone, or by going through their family photo albums with new found friends
- facilitating opportunities to make new friends via orientation activities, university clubs and societies, outdoor trips, sport carnivals, class room activities, and various community interest groups.

This revised model is not a stage-based model where students must go through linear stages and complete each task in an orderly fashion. This model is activity-oriented in which it encourages students to do different things to meet their needs at specific times. It also helps students to adjust successfully to a whole range of transition associated losses. **Clinical observations**

In this section, I will share some of my clinical observations working with grieving international students, especially examining the context of applying for deferred exams and special consideration, with specific reference to students from the University of South Australia (UniSA). I will also outline a GRIEF approach that I find useful in counselling grieving students.

DEFERRED EXAMS/ SPECIAL CONSIDERATION STATISTICS 2005–2007

At UniSA, counsellors are given the authority to approve the application for deferred exams, and play an important role in supporting the application for special consideration, which is

"an application of a variation to marking or assessment due to unexpected circumstances believed by a Course Coordinator to impact on a student's capacity to perform in a particular assessment. This may include, but is not limited to, accidents, unexpected illness or bereavement."
(Glossary of University Terms, Student and Academic Services, UniSA, 2007).

The UniSA counselling statistics from 2005–2007 consistently showed that the counsellors received the highest number of these two applications in the months of June and July (which is exam season). In other words,

the main presenting issue from the students to the counsellor in these two months is the applications for deferred exams and special consideration. Based on our counseling statistics from 2005–2007, the most common reasons for these two applications are grief and loss. The most common losses leading to the applications of deferred exams and special consideration are:

- loss of grandparents through death
- loss of significant relationships, such as romantic relationships or friendships
- loss of physical health due to medical conditions or accidents
- loss of mental health, such as severe depression and acute anxiety
- loss of a sense of stability and security, such as being victim of crime.

These losses can trigger a wide range of biopsychosocial grieving responses, which have the potential to adversely affect both the academic performance and psychological well-being of students, if not addressed in an effective and timely manner.

Having said that, most of the students I work with prefer not to address the impacts of their losses immediately, at least not until they know their applications have been approved. Once they know they have more time to study for their exams, they will then be more open to attend to their losses. At UniSA, we focus on a short-term solution oriented counselling approach with a strong emphasis on assessment and referral rather than the long-term therapeutic counselling approach (e.g. the traditional one hour weekly session). As a result, we are able to see a large number of students with minimal waiting lists. This same principle applies to my working with a large number of grieving students before and during the exam season in June and July, using a quick and effective approach that I have developed – the GRIEF acronym:

- G — Gather relevant information
- R — Reassure normality of grief
- I — Intervene timely and appropriately
- E — Evaluate intervention plan
- F — Follow up

Gather relevant information

An effective grief assessment depends on specific questions being asked to paint a clear picture for both counsellor and client. These may include (a) the relationship and level of attachment of the griever to the deceased/object, (b) the manner in which the loss occurred, (c) the suddenness of the loss, (d) the lapse of time since the loss, (e) the responses of the family culture to grief and loss, (f) the gender of the griever, (g) the locus of control for the griever, and (h) the level of social support for the griever (Banyard & Cantor, 2004; Fleming & Balmer, 1996). Once the relevant details are gathered, we can then decide the specific needs of the student and begin to formulate an intervention plan. Having said that, it is paramount that the assessment process will only take place in the climate of a positive counsellor-client relationship (e.g. rapport building, trust, and therapeutic alliance).

Reassure normality of grief

Very often the grieving students may encounter a death or a significant loss for the very first time, and therefore, their lack of experience and understanding in grief and loss may foster many myths around grief, and in turn create an unrealistic expectation of how one should manage grief. One of the most common concerns of my students is "Am I going crazy?" It is important to acknowledge we all grieve differently but yet there is also a degree of similarity of our grieving responses. By normalizing these responses, we can offer hope and strength to our students without negating the impacts of grief or pathologizing the grief responses.

Intervene timely and appropriately

The many different intervention plans are beyond this scope of discussion, but I often find it helpful to reframe the needs of my students within the context in their studies. At times this is a good motivating force for them to actively seek help and support because most students do want to perform well in their studies. For example, instead of expecting them to share their grief with someone, I explain to them how talking about their grief to someone they trust can help to clarify their minds, and hence create more mental space in their studies. I also use two online resources that I have developed with the counselling team as a tool to identify immediate and specific academic needs, to generate discussion, to

formulate action plans, and to refer students to appropriate community resources. The two online resources are 'Grief and your study' (a brief webpage outlining how grief can impact on study, and how the counsellor can help in choosing the best study options), and 'Grieving journey' (an online workshop that covers grief myths, different grieving styles, common grieving responses, complicated grief, community resources, practical activities in managing grief and study, and a discussion board).

Evaluate intervention plan

This is a joint consultation between counsellor and student, and sometimes may involve academic staff too. The purpose of evaluating the plan is to find out where the student is in relation to his/her grief, e.g. How is the student doing in his/her study? How is the student coping with his/her grief? Is the student connected to some sort of support system? Is the student at risk of complicated grief? Does the student have adequate short-term resources to manage the grief? These are just a few pointers that can help us to evaluate the effectiveness and timeliness of the plan.

Follow up

Because of the nature of our counselling approach at UniSA, in most instances I can only see students for 2-4 sessions, with half-an-hour each session. After these sessions, I will follow up by emails or brief phone calls within a span of one month, six months, and a year. Most of my students do appreciate this short follow up. In fact, many are surprised that I still remember them, especially during the death anniversary. The follow up has further built the bridge between us and created future possibilities for them to come back to see me should they want to.

UNIVERSITY WIDE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Grief and loss are more than a personal affair of our students. To take academic study as an example, when students are not able to cope with a grief or sudden loss, most likely they will (i) miss the lecturers or tutorials, (ii) produce poor quality academic work, (iii) ask for extensions to complete assignments, (iv) apply for deferred assessment or special consideration, (v) apply for leave of absence, or (vi) withdraw from their

programs/ quit university. In other words, if appropriate and adequate help are not available in a timely and sensitive manner, the university may not be able to retain these students, which in turn can incur financial and intellectual losses. Therefore, a university has the responsibility to care and support those who are confronted with the pain of grief. As Balk (2001, p. 74) states:

"The purpose of the university is to discover new knowledge, to integrate scholarship, to extend knowledge through teaching, and to apply knowledge to help persons and others in need. Thus, universities are scholarly communities. But universities are more than institutions devoted to scholarship alone. Universities are also communities that are obligated to offer care and compassion."

In the following section, I will briefly outline how the university as a whole can help and support students who are experiencing transition associated losses and other significant losses.

Design and focus of orientation programs

UniSA has developed a series of "First 6 weeks" websites as part of orientation programs for our new students. The main objective of these websites is to provide appropriate and timely information one week at a time without overloading new students with too many details. These websites address some of the main transition associated losses that I have discussed earlier, namely academic, interpersonal, geographic, administrative, practical, and spiritual losses. In addition, we can also incorporate a life-cycle approach in designing orientation workshops. This life-cycle approach is based on a developmental model, which covers common aspects of transition associated losses in the first twelve months (or first semester) in the university (see Figure 1). Some of the suggested topics include:

- Identifying and managing changes and losses
- Dealing with homesickness and cultural shock
- Stress and time management
- Managing insomnia
- Managing difficult emotions
- Managing exam anxiety

- Making friendships last

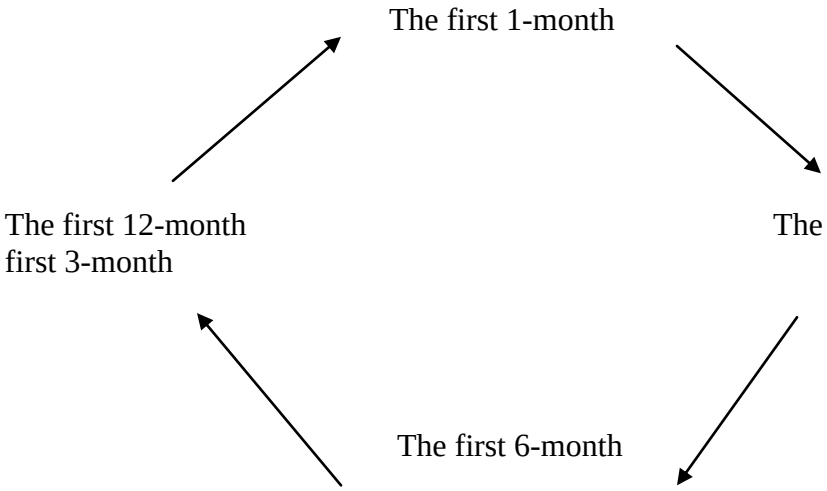


Figure 1. Twelve-month life-cycle of first year transition

Policy making

The engagement strategies will have limited impact unless there is a university wide policy acknowledging and supporting grieving students. These policies can be included in both the assessment policy and course information handbook /homepage. Currently most of the bereavement policy is death related, and it needs to expand to other significant non-death related losses such as divorce or relationships break up. It is also proposed that students can develop a confidential access plan with the counsellors should there be any significant losses. The access plan will document information about the impact of grief on students' studies, and the variation to assessment arrangements which have been agreed. The plan will also help students in negotiating 'reasonable adjustments' with University staff.

Education and training

According to Knox (2007), the most effective and efficient bereavement approach is through both academic classes and student services. Therefore, the university plays an important role in educating both

academic and student services professional staff in addressing the impact of grief and loss on students' capacity to fulfil social and academic tasks (Backels & Wheeler, 2001). Ideally, all university staff interacting with students on an interpersonal level should be familiar with the broad scope of the grief reactions they may encounter. Furthermore, the university could also offer a first year elective course on either grief and loss or death and bereavement as part of the general curriculum. Such courses can be very informative and at times therapeutic in demystifying grief, reducing stigmas, and facilitating growth through grief and loss experience.

Student advocacy and support

Most university counselling centres play an active role in helping and advocating for grieving students. Counsellors often help students understand their options by reorganizing their study workload, such as applying for extensions for assignments, applying for deferred exams, special consideration, or even taking leave from their studies. Sometimes counsellors also act as a liaison person between student and appropriate staff. For example, they can write a letter to relevant university personnel explaining the student's situation, or organize a meeting between staff and student.

University-based bereavement centre

Balk (2001) proposed the set up of a university-based bereavement centre with four key objectives:

1. Train non-bereaved students to provide peer support
2. Provide structured interventions to bereaved university students
3. Raise awareness on university campus
4. Conduct research into various bereavement populations and bereavement topics.

In Australia, the main bereavement centre with similar functions is the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, Victoria, in which its services are not limited to university students but to the general public as well. Obviously not all universities will have the resources to prioritise and establish a bereavement centre on campus. Thus, it is important that

university counselling centres have an effective referral service to the community bereavement centres.

Online and printed resources

Because there are so many myths and confusion around grief and loss, it is vital that counselling centres, health services, or other service departments provide booklets, brochures, and other free educational materials that students can collect at their discretion. Besides that, we can take advantage of modern technology to reach out to a large quantity of students through, for example, developing online resources, discussion board, using You Tube or "In a nutshell" (a multimedia teaching and learning tool developed by University of South Australia to provide executive summary for various topics of interest).

Religious/ spiritual services

Religion or spirituality is still considered a highly sensitive and at times a taboo discussion in university service delivery. However, for some students, religion or spirituality provides a principal source of strength, hope, and comfort during seasons of
significant losses. Hence, counsellors and student services personnel need to have the sensitivity and skills to assess the values of the grieving students so that they can make a referral to a minister or religiously oriented counsellor (Floerchinger, 1991), where appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The famous Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu (BC 600) once said:

"Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success. Always be on the lookout for ways to turn a problem into an opportunity for success. Always be on the lookout for ways to nurture your dream."

Most FYIS begin their journey with dreams. They dream of success, achievement, and honouring their family. Although sometimes they feel fearful and worried about their future, most of them will hold on strongly

to their dreams and persist with their studies until they have reached the stars. In contrast, some international students will feel like giving up their dreams as they are being challenged by the transition associated losses. Their worries and fears begin to shatter their dreams into pieces. As counsellors and student service affairs personnel, we are in a strategic position to help them nurture their dreams into reality, to turn their losses into gains, and to transform their challenges into growth through our skills, experiences, and compassion.

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