

When the Story Breaks

A narrative framework for understanding grief at the margins

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"Everyone keeps asking me what I need. **Nobody has asked me who I am.**"

From a teaching scenario in the course

AIM

This work aims to give bereaved people, and the staff who support them, a plain-language way to understand grief as a broken story. It helps staff recognise and receive grief stories that are hidden, contested or incomplete. It builds on the idea that we hold our identity together through story (Ricoeur).

METHODS

The project synthesised narrative theory and bereavement literature into four plain-language questions. They form the spine of an eight-week blended course for spiritual and pastoral carers, and of a short open-access module.

THE SYSTEM ASKS

What do you need?

- ☒ Bereavement leaflet given
- ☒ Follow-up call booked
- ☒ Grief stage assessed
- ☒ Case closed at six months

Necessary work. Bruner's logical mode: is it true, is it done?

NARRATIVE CARE ASKS

Who are you?

- 1 What story was I living?
- 2 What has broken?
- 3 What kind of story am I telling now?
- 4 Who is there to hear it?

Bruner's narrative mode: what does this mean?

OUTCOMES

26

participants. Gains in all five learning outcomes.

Applying narrative-informed listening



Integrating narrative into practice



CONCLUSIONS

A story with no one to receive it stays broken.

Narrative listening helps bereaved people recognise, tell, understand and own their story, in their own time. It gives staff a shared, non-clinical language for grief, so a new path can take shape beyond the break. It needs no new service, only someone there to hear.