

## Grief Therapy: Healing by Deepening Connection

### Part 1: Building on Connection: A New Way of Healing Grief

I am writing this blog series to explain a new and effective therapy for healing grief that I have found to be much more effective and significantly less painful than traditional therapy approaches. This technique is based upon Dr. Jon Connelly's innovative Rapid Resolution Therapy approach to helping people heal and thrive. Dr. Connelly wrote a book titled "Grief Is Not Sacred," which explains these concepts in significant detail on top of giving numerous transcripts of actual sessions where he helped his clients free themselves from the negative impact that grief was having in their life. I will begin by briefly explaining a bit about Rapid Resolution Therapy as well as provide new perspectives on understanding and defining what we refer to as grief.

I have found that while grief can be profoundly distressing, some individuals have had some conscious or unconscious resistance to eliminating that pain. It's almost as if the pain associated with grief is considered necessary and, sometimes in our culture, even honorable. Some people have been programmed to believe it would be morally wrong not to experience grief because they have been taught that it means that they didn't truly love the person. Many counselors advocate for addressing grief by intensely experiencing the negative emotions and expressing it painfully, emphasizing the need to deeply and fully "feel it to heal it." In contrast, Dr. Connelly and I propose an alternative approach that doesn't involve re-traumatizing individuals yet remains thorough and effective. The method we are referring to is called Rapid Resolution Therapy

My primary goal in therapy is to help alleviate human suffering by transforming how individuals process information in their minds. If an individual can process information differently in their minds, they can then experience different emotions and behaviors naturally. To help achieve this goal, I have found it helpful to be in alignment with my clients and for them to feel comfortable and empowered in the process. When these elements are in place, I have found that the deeper part of the client's mind becomes much more responsive towards healing and processing information in a healthier way. These are the parts of the mind that once were causing the grief, depression, anxiety, or other negative feelings.

In most instances, there is not an internal conflict when people are suffering. However, with certain emotional experiences, internal conflict can arise. For example, have you ever tried cheering someone up who was angry and then they got angry at you for trying to cheer them up? They don't want to feel negative feelings, but there may be a part of them that is not okay with being okay. I have found the same goes for grief and that there may be some

internal resistance particularly due to cultural programming about feeling better after a loved one has passed.

### Rapid Resolution Therapy: Seeing Through Another Lens

The RRT (Rapid Resolution Therapy) process stands apart from other psychological treatment methods. Traditional therapy modalities often emphasize that everyone is accountable for their own recovery. In these more conventional forms of therapy, therapists play a more supportive role, offering insights as patients share their pain and navigate their journey. In contrast, RRT highlights that the responsibility for the cure lies with the practitioner. RRT also emphasizes that this should be achieved swiftly and without causing undue discomfort. Many clients that I have worked with have reported that this approach, instead of being painful, proves to be fascinating and quite enjoyable. The outcomes are typically realized quickly, and if delays occur, it's not due to patient resistance but rather a reflection of the therapist's skill level. I find this perspective to be much more helpful for me to identify areas for professional growth, supporting me in becoming a more effective therapist and helping my clients heal and grow.

Most individuals believe that the cause of their suffering is events instead of how their mind perceives and processes information. Traditional schools of thought tend to back this way of thinking as well. This is a very disempowering approach due to the fact that, in many instances, the event is in the past and doesn't even exist anymore, which makes it impossible to change. In a revolutionary shift of perspective, RRT adopts a distinct stance by asserting that all emotional suffering in an individual is generated by their own mind. The mind, primarily out of conscious awareness and driven by the intention to ensure survival for the individual and their loved ones, triggers emotions, thoughts, sensations, impulses, and habits that align with this purpose of survival. Most of the time that we feel emotional pain is due to this part of the mind trying to motivate us to do something to increase that level of survival. When the issue isn't solved, then the mind will continue to create this pain to motivate us to connect with the person that has passed in a physical way. This continuation of causing pain to do the impossible is at the source of people's grief and suffering. Once this is shifted at a deeper level, the person's suffering is reduced and the person is able to sense more of an experience of connection with the person in a non-physical manner.

The primitive mind's primary mandate is the survival of the organism (i.e. you and me) and it does this through creating painful emotions and positive emotions to drive us in ways that

increase the individual's survival. However, this drive is outdated by thousands of years and evolved independent of the conscious more evolved mind. The primitive mind creates painful emotions to encourage behavior in the individual to increase the likelihood of survival, not to create suffering. However, if the mind is unable to get us to do behaviors to increase survival, then it continues to increase a sense of pain within the individual. Considering that most of our emotional pain is caused by the mind, it is imperative to remember that the individual's mind is the source of their suffering. It is also important to note that while the mind is the source of the dysfunction, it is also the solution. This dysfunction is quite normal within human beings but not in any other form of life. For instance, have you ever seen a suicidal giraffe or an obsessive-compulsive penguin? When I refer to dysfunction, I don't imply abnormality. The construction of the mind and the human nervous system, as they navigate the complexities of our modern culture, is frequently characterized by dysfunction. Therefore, our focus is on optimizing the mind rather than normalizing it. Bringing the mind out of this dysfunctional pattern is one of the main foundations of RRT. We tend to be happier, more at peace, and much more present in our worlds when our minds are free of this dysfunction. Furthermore, devoid of this dysfunction, our deeper, truer selves start to emerge.

Clients in substance recovery programs have the foundation that feelings in processing are intensely negative emotions. They oftentimes believe feeling shame and guilt while making amends for the past through guilt is an effective form of change and healing. In many cases, this tends to worsen and even deepen the person's distress, particularly regarding overcoming grief. Some may even be prompted to compose sentimental letters to departed individuals as a therapeutic approach to processing their grief. In some cases, effectiveness has been reported with this. However, this relief, more often than not, tends to be temporary, and most people have a propensity to not feel better in the long run. This approach is in alignment with the belief held by therapists in the mental health field that emotions must be deeply felt to be resolved, and the process of expressing them is required to be free of them. I must admit that I was also a proponent of this approach early in my career as a psychologist and often took pride at the end of the week at the amount of tear and snot-filled tissues in my waste basket. After aligning my practice more with this new approach of RRT, my wastebasket still has some tissues at the end of the week. However, the quantity is much less than before, as my practice now focuses more on helping the person move towards healing and relief instead of continuing to go over and over the pain.

Unfortunately, the belief that when a person experiences the loss of a loved one, they will always continue to feel that loss and pain still exists. People who experience the loss of a child are oftentimes assured by others that they will never be out of pain. The person

saying this is generally doing this to normalize the person's experience and give them comfort, but it also suggests to their deeper mind that they will always be suffering. This belief that the pain is stuck inside and needs to be felt and expressed to be released is frequently the kind of go-to philosophy among those industries that offer help in good faith. These counseling industries are encouraging people to feel bad and to relive painful experiences. However, I'm fairly certain that the person who has passed does not want their loved one's suffering. I'm also pretty confident they just want to feel connected whenever the thought of them comes to mind. By helping the person to reestablish and deepen this sense of connection, what I find is that the pain related to the grief begins to dissipate. When our brains are more focused on positive connections then they are much less likely to focus on the sense of loss.

In addition to this, people who are grieving are likely encouraged to go to groups by the therapists to fill and express their pain and loss together. One of the benefits of this is that people don't feel as alone in their pain, but it tends to normalize the belief that we must feel pain in grief after loss. It's common for an individual to get deep into his experience of pain and loss and describe it to others, which oftentimes pulls them deeper into their own pain and loss. This happens because people are trained to relate to other people through empathy and the responsibility for feeling another person's pain. We are conditioned to believe that if we don't feel their pain along with them, then there must be something wrong with us. Empathy happens as one looks within oneself for similar feelings and experiences. So, it's likely that people in a group of grieverers are not crying out of compassion for the individual who is speaking. Instead, they are triggered into a more profound experience of their own grief by hearing other people's stories. Even though groups are very helpful for people to help them not feel alone, they can prolong and even encourage the person remaining stuck in their pain. As a therapist, I am much more invested in helping the person move out of their pain and into a deeper sense of connection and appreciation for the loved one. Clients report that when their minds automatically do this, the grief dramatically decreases.

You can find Part 2 of the series [here](#). Part 2 discusses a way of looking at grief that gives a more powerful perspective and foundation of helping people feel less depressed.

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