

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Sibyl F. Lundy for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Theology

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Title: Working Through Loss and Grief: Modalities for Healing in Corporations in Transition

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Loretta Schaff, O.S.F., D. Min., Faculty Advisor

This thesis focuses on the transition issues and opportunities for healing for workers in changing American corporations. Current mental health models of loss, grief and bereavement counseling are combined with corporate change management strategies for the purpose of mitigating the damaging effects of layoffs and restructuring on workers and their managers.

In order to offer modalities for healing, Buddhist principles regarding suffering, impermanence and meditation are applied in a bereavement group setting to encourage emotional healing and restore wholeness. The scope of work examined includes the work of grief and bereavement experts who help clients acknowledge and recover from loss. It includes the work of business consultants who are experts in change management, and also encompasses Buddhist psychological principles and counseling techniques.

The combination of information and techniques from Buddhism, bereavement counseling and corporate change management results in a series of workshops. The intention of the workshop series is to help workers and their managers address and grieve the losses inherent in transition, and return to the workforce with wholeness and vitality restored to their lives. The scope of participants in the suggested workshop is limited to

layoff survivors in corporations in the midst of massive transition, although the modalities for healing can be applied in many different settings.

The responses from a sample of participants in the application workshop series implies that a Buddhist-influenced model of an educational and experiential workshop series can be a valuable venue for workers to grieve and finally adapt to their new worklife conditions. Workshop participants can return to the workplace with their spiritual and emotional health and wholeness restored.

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Working Through Loss and Grief: Modalities for Healing in Corporations in Transition

by

Sibyl F. Lundy

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APPROVED:

Faculty Advisor

Chair, Department of Religious Studies

I understand that my Project/Thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Marylhurst University. My signature below authorizes release of my Project/Thesis to any reader upon request.

Sibyl F. Lundy

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGY	4
Approach of This Study	6
Historical, Cultural and Social Context	12
Theological Lens	15
Application of My Thesis Statement	17
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	19
Loss, Grief and Bereavement	19
The Changing American Workplace	24
The Psychology of Corporations in Transition	28
Foundational Principles of Buddhism, Psychology and Theology	31
Conclusion	39
CHAPTER THREE: APPLICATION	44
Week 1: Getting to Know Each Other, Establishing Trust	46
Week 2: Current Theories About Transition, Loss and How We Process Grief	53
Week 3: Beginning the Process	53
Week 4: Adding a Spiritual Component to Your Life	54
Week 5: Creating a New Identity	61
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND OUTCOMES	62
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	68
APPENDIX A	71
Week 2: Current Theories About Transition, Loss and the Ways We Process Grief	71
APPENDIX B	76
Week 3: Beginning the Process	76
APPENDIX C	83
Week 5: Creating a New Identity	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY	88

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Kokan Genjo Marinello, Osho-san, teacher and therapist.
Without his help at a critical time in my life, none of this work would have been possible.

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Introduction

After twenty years of participation in various American corporate institutions, I currently find myself in the midst of one of the biggest transitions in corporate history. After the downturn in worldwide travel caused by the terrorist incidents of 9/11/01, many American industries have been spiraling downward, along with the stock prices. To compensate for lower stock values and dramatically decreased demand for products, corporations have been laying off workers at an alarming rate. One large firm in the Northwest started with a peak of 80,000 employees in the state of Washington on September 11, 2001 (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 5/29/2003). As of February 2004, 27,000 employees had been laid off, leaving the Washington workforce at 53,000 (Boeing Employment Numbers website). With no end to layoffs in sight, this is a company trying desperately to reinvent itself, as are most American corporations today (Bowermaster and Gates).

As I observe the emotional condition of my co-workers and the people in the community around me, I can see that my skills as a bereavement counselor and hospital chaplain are very much in demand in the corporate world. More than once, I have been asked to help those around me try to cope with layoffs, reorganization and a rapidly evolving technological workplace. As a Buddhist, I find myself interested in the drama of human suffering unfolding around me and I wonder how I can help to ease the suffering. Can basic loss and bereavement interventions such as story telling in a safe place and receiving support as one works through the grief cycle be combined with corporate change management strategies to create a compassionate and mindful intervention for helping workers cope with massive transition? This thesis/project examines current mental health models of loss, grief

and bereavement counseling, corporate change management strategies, and Buddhist principles regarding suffering and impermanence. It uses those models and principles to propose a model for emotional healing and restoring wholeness to workers in corporate workplaces in transition.

First, I will examine the basic principles and interventions embraced by experts in the field of loss, grief and bereavement, such as Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. According to her student William Worden, Dr. Kubler-Ross first mapped the states of mind a dying person experiences in 1969 and listed them as the five stages of dying: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Soon after, her stages were also applied to the field of loss, grief and bereavement. (Worden 18) In the ensuing years, much research has been done about the grief cycle that begins at the time any loss is experienced by a human being.

The grief cycle is most often applied to thanatological situations of death, dying and bereavement, but it has been found that a major corporate worklife change such as layoff and reorganization include elements of loss that set off a cycle of grieving in the same way a death in the family does. With proper intervention, workers can grieve, heal and finally adapt to their new worklife conditions. Survivors of layoff who suffer from survivor guilt and post traumatic symptoms can regain their trust in the organization, and go on to become engaged members of the workplace again (Noer 71-83).

Second, I will look at the literature concerning corporate change, change management and ways current mental health models for healing are used in the workplace to encourage healing and wholeness. Next, I will examine the Truth of Suffering, the First Noble Truth, which is one of the foundational teachings of Buddhism. I will cite some examples of ways Buddhist psychologists use this teaching to help their clients (Epstein, *Thoughts* 45-102).

Finally, I will propose a model for healing that employs a Buddhist perspective to encourage personal integration of transition. The healing modality I offer at the end of this thesis is a series of workshops to help corporate managers, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) specialists, and workers understand the basics of workplace change, the loss that results from it, and the grieving process that is triggered by the loss. I will combine the work of grief and bereavement experts who help clients acknowledge and recover from loss with the work of business consultants who are experts in change management, and include activities to allow participants to begin integrating their transitions into their new lives. The result of this combination is a Buddhist-influenced model of an educational and experiential workshop series that can help restore spiritual and emotional health and wholeness to a workplace fragmented by loss.

Chapter One: Methodology

I have been a participant in American corporate culture virtually all my adult life. As a college student in my 20's, I was introduced to the emerging field of data processing in my part-time job; then as a young professional I learned the ropes in my field of technical writing; and later as a corporate communication consultant, I worked in such large companies as Microsoft, Safeco Insurance, and Arco Oil. Now, after nearly 30 years in the corporate culture, I enter my fifties contemplating the possibility of retirement from the corporate world to pursue bereavement counseling in corporations as a second career. It seems no mistake that I find myself in the midst of one of the biggest transitions in corporate history.

Currently, I am an employee in a large American aircraft manufacturer that has laid off thousands of workers. I join thousands of other corporate survivors of wave after wave of layoffs. We find ourselves feeling shell-shocked and raw. I am realizing that we are in the midst of a major cultural shift in the way American workers work. An example of this shift is the changing belief that each worker needs ownership of an office or cubicle workspace. Personal workspace becomes an outmoded and overly expensive model as thousands of workers who have had their own office space for years are now asked to pack up their books, laptops and coffee mugs and set up "virtual offices" in their homes. The United States Office of Personnel Management has an entire website devoted to the topic of telecommuting (or "telework") (US Office of Personnel Management website). It is estimated that 28 million Americans (1 in 5 American workers) now work at home, with the numbers growing monthly (Belkin). Large companies such as Boeing, Oracle and various state and federal government agencies support telecommuting as a way to save money,

receive tax benefits, and minimize the environmental impact of traditional commuting. But how are workers coping with these major changes to their work lives?

Far from the support of managers and co-workers, virtual employees now work in isolation except for occasional visits to touch-down areas and conference rooms that can be reserved online. Managers are expected to keep tabs on their employees, keep them motivated, and review their performance in the same ways they always have, but they must do this using electronic means such as email, teleconference or web conference more often than the traditional face-to-face interactions. It seems an impossible task to many.

As a participating member of this corporate shift of consciousness, I look around at the faces of my co-workers. I see fear, confusion, uncertainty. Due to the emotional condition of my co-workers and the people in the community around me, my skills as a bereavement counselor and hospital chaplain have been very much in demand. Many of my co-workers know that I have worked part time as a hospital chaplain, and that I have done group and individual bereavement counseling for the past five years. Often, I am asked to help those around me try to cope with layoffs, reorganization and a rapidly evolving technological workplace. I write articles about change, loss and coping for online newsletters. I sit down to have a quiet word with those who are frightened and confused, trying to remind them that there is a Higher Power they can turn to, whatever that looks like for them. I assist whenever I can with workshops designed to help workers cope with change, and to help managers and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) professionals recognize serious emotional trouble in their employees. But this is all in an unofficial capacity. I am still under pressure to spend 100% of my time in activities that are directly billable to my department's internal customers.

There has to be a better way to help workers address their feelings of loss, fear and sadness, while maintaining mental health and well-being in the face of massive changes. In an attempt to find a better way, this thesis examines current mental health models of loss, grief and bereavement counseling, theories of corporate transition facilitation, and Buddhist principles regarding suffering and impermanence. It uses these models, theories and principles to propose a model for emotional healing and restoring wholeness to workers in corporate workplaces in transition.

As a Buddhist, I find myself interested in the drama of human suffering unfolding around me and I wonder how I can help to ease the suffering. The Buddha taught about suffering, and the causes of suffering. For me, Buddhism has been a fifteen year study of the human mind (mine specifically), and how one can use the mind as a tool to increase or alleviate one's own discomfort and the discomfort of those around us. These days, I look for ways I can apply my knowledge and practice of Buddhism to the corporate situation around me.

Approach of This Study

The purpose of this thesis is to find ways to alleviate the emotional and mental suffering I see around me in a workplace in massive transition. This thesis examines current mental health models of loss, grief and bereavement counseling. It looks at corporate change and mental health issues. It then examines Buddhist principles regarding ways the human mind can be directed to increase or alleviate suffering, and how suffering is increased by a misunderstanding of the impermanent nature of the physical world. I will use information from these disciplines to propose a model for emotional healing and restoring wholeness to workers in corporate workplaces in transition. As a concrete example of my model, I will

include a sample series of workshops that allows workers, their managers, and EAP professionals to learn about and work with their transitions. The workshops include activities and experiential elements that invite participants to apply the information provided to their own personal process of transition. They will also use beginning techniques of Buddhist sitting meditation to help calm the mind to find clarity and a quiet center in any stressful situation. The intention of the workshop series is to educate employees, managers, and EAP professionals about workplace loss issues, and help them acknowledge, process and resolve specific losses they are currently experiencing. The intention is to provide participants with tools to maintain calm and peace in the midst of personal and professional crisis, leaving them with a renewed and clearer outlook on their lives after processing their grief issues.

It is generally accepted that all change includes an element of loss. Voluntary changes are much easier to come to terms with than those we do not choose. Yet, it is also true that we grow through change. As we grow through changes by acknowledging our losses and working through the resulting bereavement cycle, we can gain a resolution of the loss that results in wholeness, balance, and improved productivity (Bozarth 132-138).

Much research has been done about the grief cycle that begins at the time a loss is experienced by a human being. In 1969, Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross first mapped the stages of loss in the context of how humans cope with dying. The stages she mapped were:

- Denial, “Not me!”
- Anger, “Why me?”
- Bargaining, “Yes me, but...”
- Depression, reactive (responding to past and present losses), then preparatory (anticipating and responding to losses yet to come)

- Acceptance, described as a stage almost devoid of feelings (Corr, Nabe and Corr 137).

Soon afterwards, her stages were applied to the field of loss, grief and bereavement by Dr. William Worden, one of Dr. Kubler-Ross's original students, and a leading contributor to the field of thanatology (the study of death, dying and bereavement). A contemporary of Dr. Worden's, Dr. Therese Rando, is another pioneer in thanatology, further refining our understanding of how grief is experienced and processed. I will use Dr. Worden's book Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner, and Dr. Rando's book Grief, Dying and Death: Clinical Interventions for Caregivers as my main resources on general grief theory and intervention. These two writers use similar models for the grief cycle; however Dr. Worden adds a more active perspective by defining the tasks griever must accomplish to successfully resolve their losses.

Terry Martin and Kenneth Doka are two psychologists who have specialized in examining gender-based differences in grief. Because so much of corporate culture is based on a male model of being, their book Men Don't Cry, Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief will be one of my resources for understanding the different ways people grieve. I will use their work that goes *beyond* gender stereotypes to describe what they have defined as intuitive vs. instrumental grief patterns. But because of the predominantly male organizational model used in most corporations, I pay special attention to the ways that many men grieve, and the interventions that work best for *instrumental* (as opposed to *intuitive*) grievers.

Second, in order to establish an understanding of the massive transition currently underway in many American corporations, I survey some works that explain the forces driving this transition, and that offer visions of a future workplace after the transition has

been accomplished. To help me understand the new paradigms arising in the world of work, I will use primarily the works of futurist Jeremy Rifkin, liberation theologian Matthew Fox, and corporate consultant William Bridges. Jeremy Rifkin's book The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era is an examination of the ways technology is completely transforming the traditional workplace, propelling us towards a "workerless future" where millions are losing their jobs due to advances in technology. Matthew Fox's book the Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time uses the concept of "work as call or vocation" to present a new vision of how we earn our livelihood. He uses his model of the Cosmic Christ to show how God is present in all facets of life, including the workplace of the post-machine era, helping us connect our inner work with our outer work for the first time since before the industrial revolution. William Bridges' book JobShift: How to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs is a resource for understanding the "post job organization", and the psychological impacts of working without a defined job. He examines workers' expectations in the new workplace, and how they can manage change successfully. He also studies ways people can define themselves in a workplace without jobs.

To bridge the two worlds of bereavement support and business, I use a group of resources that apply psychological models to workplace transition, especially to traumatic transitions. The work I will use to support my statements about the connection between the two worlds of business and bereavement is David Noer's Healing the Wounds: Overcoming the Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalizing Downsized Organizations. Noer is a psychologist turned business consultant who combines his understanding of the layoff environment of the business world with his knowledge of trauma, loss and grief, and family dynamics. While the grief cycle is most often applied to situations of death, dying and bereavement, Noer

finds that major worklife changes such as layoff and reorganization include the elements of loss that set off a cycle of grieving and awkward family dynamics in the same way a death in the family does. His work shows that, with proper intervention, workers can grieve, heal and finally adapt to their new worklife conditions, emerging into the new work conditions revitalized and whole (Noer 72). Noer also offers some helpful insights into corporate codependency that include ways that workers can detach from an immature relationship to a corporation. By releasing the expectation that a company can fulfill all their needs, workers grow into the role of mature adults who accept responsibility for their own mental and physical health and future development.

Finally, examining the foundational teachings of Buddhism, I will suggest a Buddhist perspective to my proposed model for healing. The First Noble Truth of Buddhism is the Truth of Suffering. The Buddha found that *dhukka* (“suffering” or more precisely for most modern Buddhists, “unsatisfactoriness”) is the common experience of physical reality for incarnate beings. Contained in the First Noble Truth is the understanding that, in Buddhist thought, impermanence is an inescapable property of physicality (Wolfe and Gudorf 289). Whether it is an apple, a cat or a human being, anything in the physical world begins the march towards death the moment *after* it reaches maturity. Because nothing in the physical world is permanent, if we hold onto anything, we are *assured* that it will pass away and we will suffer. Thus, suffering grows out of impermanence, and our failure to acknowledge it. Meditation on change is a common way Buddhists come to terms with impermanence. Ultimately, Buddhists believe that each of us must make peace with the fact that everything changes if we are to be happy (Irish and Lundquist 130).

The Dalai Lama’s book [The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living](#) addresses the problems of *dhukka*, and defines the search for happiness as the very purpose of life. His

Holiness presents us with a book that uses traditional Buddhist concepts and practices to provide a resource for our modern world that directly confronts suffering in order to pass through it into the realms of happiness. He also suggests ways we can open to one another's suffering in order to generate compassion for ourselves and others, and ways we can remain calm and centered when all around us is in turmoil.

To tie the First Noble Truth into my workshop model, it is necessary to remind layoff survivors and victims alike that although they would like to believe it's not true, *everything* ultimately changes. The biggest issue in the fast-moving business world today is change, and the biggest issue for workers is change management. Even the once-unchanging reality that American companies employ American workers in America has now changed. Outsourcing American jobs to other countries where labor and production costs are cheaper has become widespread. Work is done in the location that can offer the lowest production costs. With this new reality, workers have to be willing to go anywhere in the world to accommodate the second millennium vision of their company. Workers who aren't willing to let go of their preconceived notions about their company and their work will be subject to increasing levels of *dhukka*, as the company continues to change and they continue to refuse.

To help me in my examination of Buddhist psychology, I also use two books by Buddhist psychotherapist Dr. Mark Epstein, Thoughts Without a Thinker: Psychotherapy From a Buddhist Perspective and Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart: A Buddhist Perspective on Wholeness. Dr. Epstein uses the psychodynamics of Buddhist meditation to promote emotional integration, stability and healing by showing readers how to surrender to the moment in true Buddhist fashion, embracing the unassailable but unpopular fact that *everything* changes.

At the end of this thesis, I propose a series of workshops for use in corporations in transition. I use my Buddhist perspective on principles regarding suffering and impermanence to propose a model for emotional healing and restoring wholeness to workers caught up in corporate transition. This Buddhist perspective is supported by writings on Buddhist psychology and on ways to create a happy life, and includes mindfulness practices that encourage practitioners to be present to their emotions and states of being in order to experience and process them fully. In my work as a hospital chaplain, helping patients find meaning in crisis is a large part of my work. For that reason, I am interested in incorporating into my model a spiritual presence for helping workers cope with changes in the workplace. Finding meaning in work includes paying attention to what nurtures workers, and what allows them to express their spiritual component, as opposed to work that is done for purely economic reasons.

Historical, Cultural and Social Context

The social and cultural context for this study is one of tremendous transition. As if to confirm the First Noble Truth of Suffering, suffering caused by our relationship to change, I read in one business publication after another that the one constant in 21st century business is change. Change is the given. But the question is, what is causing this mass transition? Transition from what, to what?

Thanks to advances in computer and communication technologies, futurists like Jeremy Rifkin, William Bridges and Matthew Fox tell us that we are now in the midst of what they call a third great world industrial revolution. We have left the Industrial Age, and the Information Age has dawned. Technology has replaced humans in so many areas that global unemployment has reached the highest level since the Great Depression of the 1930's.

As we transition into the post-machine or post-market era, workers have to adapt to life in a “workless world” where technology frees us from the tedium of previous eras, but also leaves us in a world of massive unemployment. A person’s worth used to be based on the value of their labor (Rifkin xv-xviii), but in a world without jobs for many, the value system is changing. A “third sector” of volunteers and independent workers is emerging as millions are laid off from their corporate jobs. As governments continue to cut back services, the third sector will be asked to provide basic social and community services (Rifkin 249-250), many of them finally getting to do their “heart work”, work they feel *called* to do instead of corporate tasks that have no personal meaning for them.

This time of economic and social transition calls all of our former beliefs and values into question, leaving workers in a place of personal crisis. For those left in the workplace, the question becomes, “What is missing at work? How can I find meaning and wholeness in what I must do every day?” For those now out of the workforce, the questions become, “How can I do the work I’m called to, and still make a living? Who am I now that my job identity is gone?” As so often occurs in times of social upheaval and chaos, an opening appears in the accepted pattern of beliefs. Workers who are awake and aware can make the choice to seize the opportunity and turn to Spirit and their higher natures for answers.

It is my belief that, if the questioning is done from our highest and best selves, new and wonderful paradigms in corporate culture can be the result. A recent article in progressive business journal Fast Company Magazine includes an article by Tim Sanders, a senior executive for Yahoo.com. It is entitled “Love is the Killer App”, using techie language (“killer computer software application”) to indicate that love is really the best tool for corporate success. As a young and very successful business leader, Sanders’ embrace of love, compassion and generosity as the road to success is nothing short of amazing (Sanders).

Considering that the Wall Street Journal or similar mainstream business publications would include an article on love and compassion, we must consider this article a huge leap in business theory. The fact that it comes from a leader in the “dot com” world that has been reeling from massive layoffs, business failures and stock price debacles in the past few years shows us what positive effect adversity can have on the soul of business.

Couple this sign of a new, young business ethic with the fact that there are now business books being written on “emotional intelligence” (Goleman 19). We can see that after massive pain and destruction, there is finally an opening to bring emotional healing into corporate consciousness. As women have become more visible and vocal in the workplace, emotional issues have become as important as traditional “male” concerns of productivity and growth strategies. Emotional balance and personal satisfaction are gaining credence as ways of increasing productivity and return on investment (ROI). Even that most male of job domains, computer programming, is embracing a kinder, gentler form of practice called ‘extreme programming’ (XP). XP is increasing productivity and job satisfaction as its adherents pair up with programming partners, voluntarily give up their former lives of loneliness and isolation, and cut their 80-hour weeks to 40 hours. Happier, healthier XP programmers are creating better software products faster for leading companies such as Hewlett Packard, IBM and Symantec. XP successfully uses a more female model based on relationships, working together instead of *against* each other, helping each other, and minimizing overtime to promote a more balanced and sustainable lifestyle (Baer 125-129).

An article by Julie Connelly in the New York Times called “Youthful Attitudes, Sobering Realities” comments about the attitudes of America’s newest additions to the labor force, workers in their 20’s and 30’s, recently out of college. These workers currently make up about a third of the workforce (Connelly 1). Not surprisingly, given the recent failure of

corporations to care for their workers, these younger workers have “a sense of free agency, [expecting] to create lifetime careers not with one or two companies, but as independent contractors, selling their services on a project basis to many employers” (Connelly 2). One of the main demands of these young, self-sufficient workers is a healthy “balance between work and private life, ... a sophisticated response to a workplace that operates without the myth of job security.” (Connelly 2). I see this as another trend towards a healthy work life.

I believe that the outcome of these evolutionary changes to the corporate mindset will be a workplace and corporate leadership that are open to emotional health and psychological wholeness and healing. If corporate workers can be supported in their efforts to come to terms with and integrate loss and change into their psyches, after the dust of layoffs and restructuring clears, corporations will be rewarded with emotionally intelligent and healthy workers that are more motivated and productive than the old workers who used to sit staring at the clock, waiting for their shift to end. What this new workplace will require is more education and caregiving to cause a widespread shift in corporate consciousness towards mental and emotional health.

Theological Lens

My theological foundation for my approach to this thesis for spiritual caregiving flows from my belief that at the very basis of our being, we are all One. Just as I no longer believe there should be a separation between work life, home life and spiritual life, I also no longer believe in the separation between myself and my client in the corporate world. This belief comes directly from my study of Buddhism.

Thirteenth century Zen master Dogen Zenji describes Buddhist study this way:

To study the Way is to study the self.

To study the self is to forget the self.

To forget the self is to erase the separation between self and other. (Katagiri Roshi 135)

My theological approach to caregiving is to endeavor to leave my ego at the door in order to be fully and completely present for the client, in the same way Zen practitioners are asked to be fully and completely present on the cushion as we do our *zazen* (sitting meditation) – fully engaged in the current moment as it arises. My hope is that as a spiritual caregiver I can engage with the moment, the client, and my own feelings going on in the background.

While suffering is the First Noble Truth of Buddhism, compassion is at the very heart of all of Buddhism. The Buddha taught that suffering is a normal and natural experience of human life. “Suffering means that human life is limited by conditions such as economic, ...political conditions, [and] personal circumstances... These conditions are not something bad. Conditions themselves are empty [neutral]. That your life is *limited* by conditions is suffering” (Katagiri Roshi 21). As I develop an awareness of my own suffering in life, I become aware of and attentive to the suffering of those to whom I give spiritual care. From my own experience of suffering I gain a sense of compassion for others. I can strive to be totally present with them in their pain, no matter how bad it is, and in their joy, no matter how wonderful it becomes.

The Zen master Katagiri Roshi tells us this about compassion:

[a student]...realizes how precious it is to be born, so very naturally [s]he cannot think of his life only. [Her] life is completely the same as another's life. He always puts himself in the other's place and then considers everything in the world. This is a very compassionate attitude. This compassion is not a sense of kindness and friendliness that occurs from time to time under certain circumstances...[the Buddhist] is living this compassion under all circumstances; it never changes, without flinching, no matter how hard and heartrending it is to live. (Katagiri Roshi 4)

In whatever situation I find myself, my purpose is to provide a safe place for those around me to come to peace with the changes life brings them. I use the Buddhist theological lens of suffering, compassion and an enlightened mind that seeks to alleviate suffering in others as the way to structure the workshop series I present at the end of this thesis. I also feel it is important to include a spirit of interfaith understanding and perspective in any modality for healing offered in the workplace. As a presenter, I cannot make assumptions about a workshop participant's faith or belief system, or even assume that participants have thought about their own spiritual natures. My task as a spiritual caregiver is to broach the topic of spirituality, and to offer spirituality as a possible source of inspiration and comfort, without proselytizing for a specific faith tradition or image of the Higher Power.

Application of My Thesis Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine current mental health models of loss, grief and bereavement counseling, corporate trends in facilitating transition and mental health, and Buddhist principles regarding suffering and impermanence in order to propose a model for emotional healing and restoration of wholeness to workers in corporate workplaces in transition. Workers experience the pain of loss as the corporate world changes around them. My solution to alleviate this suffering, and the application of the findings of my study, is a series of workshops that present healing modalities. Corporate managers, EAP professionals, and workers can use the workshop experience to understand the basics of workplace change, the loss that results from it, and the grieving process that is triggered by the loss. The workshop series is designed to help participants find meaning in the losses they experience, integrate the losses, and restore spiritual and emotional health and wholeness to their lives.

Using the works of business consultants who are experts in change management, and the works of grief and bereavement experts who help clients acknowledge and recover from loss, I will show how classic grief and bereavement theory can be applied to the workplace. Then, drawing upon the works of psychotherapists who practice and teach Buddhist techniques, I will provide practices to help workshop participants remain present to the painful emotions that arise around a loss. These practices can also help them resolve and understand their reactions to loss from a Buddhist perspective.

My expectation is that this workshop will help employees name the losses currently affecting their lives. It will present a model of the grief cycle and the tasks we must each accomplish to resolve any loss. With this information, workers will be able to address and resolve their own emotional reactions to change and loss in the workplace, and better manage change while maintaining a busy work schedule. With a knowledge of Buddhist techniques of mindfulness, calm and meditation, participants will be encouraged in subsequent months to remain present to their losses and the emotions engendered by them to aid them in the ongoing integration of these painful emotions.

My hope is that more widespread use of workshops like the one I have designed and proposed will result in corporations full of workers and managers who are emotionally healthy and intelligent, and who become more resilient to change as their emotional health increases. My vision is for a vibrant, relationship-based workplace that values cooperation, health and positive change rather than productivity at any cost.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The literature I have chosen to support the ideas offered in this paper falls into several different categories: loss, grief and bereavement literature, the changing American workplace, consultations by psychologists in corporations in transition, and foundational Buddhist principles regarding suffering and impermanence applied to psychotherapy.

Loss, Grief and Bereavement

The common denominator in all corporations in transition is change. Each change, whether it is the company that provides cafeteria services, the name and style of the CEO, or the transition to a virtual telework environment, involves a loss of some kind. Loss includes the disappearance of familiar people from workers' lives, changes in daily surroundings, and in the case of layoffs, the disintegration of personal self-image, safety and financial support. To recover from any loss, humans need to integrate the loss into their psyches by grieving, to find a personal meaning in the loss, and ideally to reframe their new lives in a positive way despite specific losses. Bereavement counseling can help people grieve successfully and more completely, especially in cases where loss is ongoing or would otherwise go unacknowledged.

Because of this connection between change, loss and grief, I use two of the classic works on loss, grief and bereavement counseling to define the current mental health models of bereavement theory that can also be applied to corporate situations. Dr. William Worden's Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner begins by defining attachment theory, and the impact the loss of things we are attached to has on humans. Animals, as well as humans, exhibit grief behavior at the loss of something or someone they are attached to. Worden distinguishes between normal and

complicated (or abnormal) grief, and lists the manifestations of a normal grieving process (Worden 7-22).

Normal (or uncomplicated) grief includes feelings, sensations and behaviors that are common after a loss (Worden 10). Those who are grieving normally can complete the mourning process by themselves or with the support of a grief counselor (Worden 101). Normal manifestations of grief include feelings of sadness, anger, guilt and loneliness; physical sensations such as tightness in the chest, weakness or lack of energy; and behavioral disturbances such as inability to sleep, absentmindedness, and excessive crying (Worden 11-20). Abnormal or complicated grief includes chronic, delayed or absent grief reactions that require the help of a grief therapist to identify and resolve issues that prevent the normal completion of the grief process (Worden 89-94).

In my opinion, Dr. Worden's major contribution to the field of grief and loss counseling is his definition of necessary mourning activities, his Four Tasks of Mourning. According to Dr. Worden, the tasks a mourner must accomplish are:

- to accept the reality of the loss
- to fully experience the pain of the loss
- to adjust to an environment without the loved one
- to relocate and memorialize the loved one (Worden 47)

The end goal of these tasks is to allow the bereaved to come to terms with a loss. They need to emotionally relocate the lost loved one so that they can move on with life as it is now, after a loss has taken place (Worden 27-37). Worden also helps counselors assess how successfully a client will be able to process a loss based on his Seven Mediators of Mourning. Mediators include the nature of the client's relationship and attachment to the

deceased, how the deceased died, personal and social variables surrounding the loss, and other stresses occurring at the same time the loss takes place (Worden 37-45).

Dr. Therese Rando's book Grief, Dying and Death: Clinical Interventions for Caregivers starts with definitions of the basic terms, tasks and phases for the resolution of grief (Rando 15-41). She defines *grief* as the process of psychological, social and somatic reactions a person experiences as a reaction to a perceived loss. She calls *mourning* the array of conscious and unconscious processes prompted by the loss. Mourning can also be considered the cultural response to grief. Rando defines bereavement as the state of having suffered a loss (Rando 15-16). Her list of the tasks of grief is similar to Worden's. It includes: emancipation from the bondage of the deceased, readjustment to the environment from which the deceased is missing, and the formation of new relationships (Rando 18). Rando's greatest contribution to the field of thanatology is her list of the psychological phases that the bereaved pass through as they process grief. She suggests that there is an avoidance phase in which we struggle to avoid the pain of the loss, a confrontation phase which can include fear, panic, anger, guilt and sadness, depression and despair, and a reestablishment phase in which the bereaved learns to live and love again without the deceased (Rando 28-35). Rando cautions us, however, that reactions to a loss can be very individual based on the unique characteristics and state of mind of the bereaved, and that grievers can move back and forth among the phases at their own rates (Rando 29).

Another of her important contributions is the list of psychological, social and physiological factors to help counselors tailor interventions that are similar to Worden's Mediators of Mourning (Rando 43-57). She also presents several useful therapeutic interventions that I believe can prove useful when applied to the victims of workplace loss (Rando 75-117). The first of these is decathexis, or emotional detachment from the person

or situation that has been lost. This is an inner adaptation that allows an individual to integrate an external loss into his or her inner, emotional world by withdrawing emotional energy from what is lost so that a new relationship can later be established (Rando, 75-78). Next, the griever must develop a new relationship with the person or thing that was lost. The old relationship does not end, but is modified in a way that allows the griever to maintain a bond with what is lost while still looking towards the future (Rando 78). Finally, the griever must establish a new identity for herself that is consistent with what does remain in her reality. The griever's identity must shift from what she was before the loss to what she is now, after the loss has taken place (Rando 78-79).

David Noer's book Healing the Wounds : Overcoming the Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalizing Downsized Organizations (discussed in more detail in the following section) is the work of a corporate consultant trained in psychology who draws parallels between workplace relationships and family dynamics. Since these dynamics are similar in many cases, Dr. Worden also provides useful information for this study with his insights into how a loss affects the balance of a family system (Worden 149-170). Because grief that arises from repeated losses in the workplace is so seldom addressed, Dr. Rando's information on types of unresolved grief, symptoms of this type of grief, and reasons that it appears are also very useful for this corporate application of grief therapy (Rando 59-70). For example, employees who endeavor to maintain "a stiff upper lip" to appear to be "good workers" may never talk about or actively process the loss of coworkers or a familiar work environment. These employees become victims of unresolved grief, and can develop symptoms that interfere with their ability to be passionate, engaged, vital employees. Unresolved grief can manifest as the development of psychosomatic illness, alteration in relationships with family and coworkers, hostility towards those responsible for the loss, and symptoms of depression.

These can seriously affect a worker by inducing stress, feelings of worthlessness, and bitter self-accusation (Rando 62-63).

However, because most of their work is based on a single incidence of loss, the works of Rando and Worden have their limitations in this context. Grieving corporate loss becomes more complicated as wave after wave of layoffs and massive change assaults workers. Because there is seldom time to grieve properly between incidents of loss, multiple losses are more difficult to from recover from, and take special consideration and attention from counselors as healing is addressed.

Another book on basic bereavement theory is Dr. Alla Renee Bozarth's Life is Goodbye Life is Hello: Grieving Well Through All Kinds of Loss. Dr. Bozarth speaks to the ways that we, as adults, are taught that ignoring the pain of loss and stifling our emotions is the "professional" way to be. But the real cost of that professionalism is a deadening of our spirits and loss of joy (Bozarth 8-10). She has some very wise words about ways that one person's courage to surrender to grief can help them *and* those around them in important ways. She assures us that she has learned from personal experience and from observation that it is necessary to allow oneself to "fall apart" and surrender to the grief process in order to be able to come back together as a better person. Invoking the image of a black hole, Dr. Bozarth describes how one can feel consumed and annihilated by the grief of a loss, but can also experience the transformation of completing the grief process and being pushed out into the universe on the other side of the black hole, a new being in a new world (Bozarth 18-20).

Due to the predominantly male organizational model used in most corporations, it is important in this study to understand the different ways people grieve. While older texts discuss masculine forms of grief expression vs. feminine forms (with the feminine form of a

show of emotionalism and telling of stories being preferred as 'more healthy'), recent research by specialists in men's grief Terry L. Martin and Kenneth J. Doka go beyond gender. Their book Men Don't Cry, Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief decouples gender and grief patterns, and describes three basic ways the energy of grief manifests itself, regardless of the gender of the griever. *Intuitive* grievers heal by sharing their experiences of grief (especially emotional experiences) with others (Martin and Doka 35-40), while *instrumental* grievers get more relief from problem-solving activities related to the loss (Martin and Doka 40-51). Martin and Doka also introduce the concept of a *blended* griever, who expresses and experiences grief via both types of activities (Martin and Doka 51-53). An article by Neil Chethik, "Reaching Bereaved Men Requires Innovation" in The Forum, the journal for the Association for Death Education and Counseling, uses Martin and Doka's model along with studies he has done with intuitive grievers (mostly men) to suggest some ways to increase active participation to encourage healing. He has had success with groups that encourage mutual story-telling, with helping grievers find their own successful strategies by relating what has worked for them in the past, and by offering multiple models for grievers to choose from (Chethik 4-5).

The Changing American Workplace

The smaller changes we are seeing in individual lives and in corporations add up to a widespread change across American culture. As millions of workers in all sectors of the economy lose their jobs, American society itself is far different than it was ten years ago. The American sense of hope, trust in the corporate structure, and belief that we will be taken care of as individual citizens is beginning to erode as people who desperately want to be contributing members of society are continually denied the work they seek. Those lucky

enough to have fulfilling work are afraid to relax and trust that the work and their sense of security will last.

To help me understand the transition currently under way in many American corporations, I surveyed some works that explain the forces driving this transition. Some of these works also offer visions of a future workplace after the transition has been accomplished.

Jeremy Rifkin's book The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era looks at the currently rising levels of global unemployment, the highest since the great depression of the 1930's, and ties these rising levels to the Information Age. He refers to this era as the Third Industrial Revolution, a new phase in human history where fewer and fewer workers are needed to produce goods and services for the global population. In all three areas of the economy, agriculture, manufacturing and services, technological advances are lowering the numbers of workers required. At the same time, a fourth area of the economy is emerging, knowledge workers. Knowledge workers are highly trained scientists, technicians and computing people. The emergence of this area has created jobs, but because of the highly technical nature of the work, there are not nearly enough jobs to provide work for the millions displaced from the first three areas of the economy.

Based on these changes, Jeremy Rifkin describes a new world culture where a person's worth is no longer defined by the market value of their labor (Rifkin, xv-xviii). He suggests a new social contract where the first two sectors of the economy, the private sector and the public sector, are joined by a third sector. The third sector he imagines is made up by those who have been freed from the other two sectors to devote themselves to community service in the volunteer and non-profit organizations that must fill in the gaps in

human services left by the cutbacks in government funding (Rifkin 236-248). Rifkin also has some interesting ideas about changing the traditional relationship between work and income by offering a guaranteed annual income. He suggests that the legions of unemployed people perform social and community service as part of the third sector, receiving social wages for that work to replace the unemployment and welfare payments they currently receive, in the same way the Work Projects Administration (WPA) functioned during the Great Depression in the United States (Rifkin 258-267). Additionally, an interview with Rifkin in What Is Enlightenment? magazine further describes these three great industrial revolutions, and their impacts on human civilization. He adds that physics and chemistry dominated the first two industrial revolutions in the 19th and 20th centuries, while biology dominates the third industrial revolution in the 21st century. Biologically, we can now manipulate life at the level of cells, genes and proteins. Another social contract we must make defines our new relationship to other species based on our obligations to the planet and our ability to manipulate life genetically (Rifkin, What is Enlightenment? 17-19).

In his book JobShift: How to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs, William Bridges reminds us that the concept of a job is a recent one. Most societies throughout history have functioned quite successfully without jobs. It is only since the industrial revolution of the early nineteenth century that our concept of 'a job' has emerged (Bridges 30-34). Much of the transition we now see in corporate America is another shift *away* from a job-based culture. Bridges' contribution to this conversation has to do with the psychological impact of a world without jobs. How do people define themselves without jobs? How do they form relationships, structure their time, and derive satisfaction from what they do? He describes some simple steps for defining ourselves, managing change, and creating frames of meaning within which we can feel stable and safe in the midst of turmoil (Bridges 118-140).

Although Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's work is over 30 years old, William Bridges invokes her work, ignoring newer models and more recent advances in bereavement theory. Luckily, much of her work is still applicable since he uses her stages of mourning to explain major workplace change and the human reactions to it. Bridges' most famous contribution to the body of knowledge about how humans handle transition has been his description of the "neutral zone", the place in a transition that must be navigated after a change takes place, but before the new action or condition can take root in a person's life. In the neutral zone, one must make sense of a loss, completely incorporate it into his or her thinking, and wait "in neutral" until the next necessary actions become clear. This waiting and inactivity is anathema to American culture, but necessary for successful navigation of transitional times. Bridges' many books apply the neutral zone concept to various aspects of life. In JobShift: to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs, he describes the neutral zone, its place in corporate transition, and how workers can use it to create a new future for themselves (Bridges 200-208).

Two young authors, Tim Sanders in "Love is the Killer App" for FastCompany Magazine (Sanders) and Martha Baer in "The New X-Men" for Wired Magazine (Baer 126), show us how some of the changes predicted in the 1990's by Rifkin and Bridges now affect the wired corporate world of post-millennial, post-9/11 America. They report on a new workplace ethic of love and cooperation that is making work meaningful again for some of the disconnected, disenchanted knowledge workers that make up Rifkin's predicted fourth area. I maintain that this new workplace ethic is a reaction to the wild upswing in technical companies in the 1990's, followed by the "dot-com bust". Young would-be millionaire knowledge workers now find themselves unemployed or under employed. More and more American technology workers find themselves losing trust in the corporations that once

promised to support and care for them during their work lives and after. The corporate and government structures that promised my parents full employment for as long as they could work, and benefits and health care after they retired no longer exist. It now appears that an ethic of love and cooperation has in some cases taken the place of cutthroat competition in the name of corporate advancement, probably because it turns out there *are* no guarantees for the American worker, and no quality of life except for that which we create ourselves. Another young author, Julie Connelly in “Youthful Attitudes, Sobering Realities” in The New York Times confirms that workers in their 20’s and 30’s have seen from their parents’ lives that corporations have not been kind to workers. They have seen little reward for loyalty in a work world where corporate officers break the promise of even considering the lives and rights of workers as they build lavish life styles for themselves. “A lack of trust in the corporation is a perfectly rational response to that” (Connelly, 1).

The Psychology of Corporations in Transition

To bridge the two worlds of bereavement support and businesses in transitions, I use a group of resources that apply psychological models to the successful management of workplace transition, especially in sudden and traumatic loss situations. David Noer’s book Healing the Wounds: Overcoming the Trauma of Layoffs and Revitalizing Downsized Organizations is the work of a corporate consultant trained in psychology. Noer sees workers as “layoff victims” and “survivors of a traumatic event.” He examines the symptoms of survivors of repeated workplace loss and suggests that they are the symptoms of post traumatic stress syndrome. He suggests various types of group and individual counseling work within the organization to help the managers and workers in shattered organizations. He had the spirit of trust and collaboration that is lost when massive layoffs

are necessary return as corporations he works with rebuild and revitalize themselves (Noer 3-15).

From first-hand experiences as a business consultant with workers who have survived layoffs, Noer describes the effects of long-term survivor sickness such as numbness, cynicism and lack of vitality (Noer, 71-83). He offers interventions that allow the necessary grieving to take place. He has found that employees who successfully complete the grief process have a much better chance of returning to the workplace and its relationships in a healthy and motivated state of mind (Noer 118-132). Another topic Noer addresses is codependent behavior by the employees of corporations. When workers exhibit this type of behavior, they expect the corporation that employs them to fulfill their social and emotional needs, as well as their professional and economic needs. After Noer's suggested interventions, workers become more conscious of their unrealistic expectations, and learn to adopt more adult, independent strategies for becoming responsible for fulfilling their own needs (Noer 136-154). In my proposed workshop, I will also use some of Noer's ideas for helping workers break through codependent behavior.

Noer's ideas match my observations in the corporate workplaces to which I have belonged. Workers who expect "the company" to provide for their every need and motivation are the ones who complain most bitterly and fail to have fulfilling lives. At the same time, the self-sustaining, independent workers are the ones who succeed and thrive. I have certainly seen the victims of layoff and the survivors of layoff first hand, and have engaged both populations in the bereavement processing strategies described later in this paper. Both groups have found the intervention to be valuable, so I would have to concur that Noer's assessment of the psychological effects of layoff is correct.

An article by Barbara Barski-Carrow in The Forum: Association for Death Education and Counseling, “Losing a Normal Support System: How Managers Can Show Care After a Traumatic Experience” offers ways for managers and coworkers to allow their fellow survivors to grieve safely in the workplace. Whether from the death of a coworker, an accident in the workplace, or a series of layoffs, informed managers can create a safe place for workers to tell their stories. However, what Barski-Carrow suggests is the creation of “study circles” within the workplace to offer an adult learning format to teach workers and their managers about grief. She is very clear that her study circles are *not* a venue for group therapy to heal from the loss (Barski-Carrow 6-8).

I can understand Barski-Carrow’s wish to keep grief at a safe distance by studying it and teaching about it. Grieving is a messy, uncomfortable, and unsettling process. But it is also unavoidable. I maintain that the real healing comes only from *engaging* in the grieving process. Barski-Carrow’s intellectually-based study circles differ substantially from my model, which provides a safe place, much like a hospital bereavement therapy group, where workers can actually do the work of processing the emotions connected with their workplace losses in order to aid healing and resolution. In my workshops, participants are encouraged to name and experience their emotions, both in the workshop environment and later at home while completing homework assignments, so that actual processing and integration can occur.

Abby Ellin, in an article in The New York Times entitled “Personal Business: Traumatized Workers Look for Healing on the Job”, offers a model that more closely resembles what I envision for my workshop. Ellin acknowledges that today’s unaddressed anxieties arising from workplace trauma can result in long-term repercussions. She found that companies actually save money in future worker compensation claims if they educate

their managers and provide individual and group counseling for their workers. In the years since 9/11/01, she confirms that workers who had never considered any kind of therapy are now consulting their company EAP departments in unprecedented numbers because they have come realize that talking about their anxieties with a trained professional counselor helps alleviate them (Ellin 1-3).

In an article by Dr. Howard Stone entitled “Pastoral Counseling and the Changing Times” in The Journal of Pastoral Care, I find the reassuring message that short-term counseling is just as effective as long-term therapy. This is good news for corporations, especially those in layoff mode where money and resources are in short supply. Workplace transition counseling does not need to be lengthy and expensive to be effective, and even short-term intervention can make positive changes in the quality of one’s worklife and associated productivity (Stone 31-45).

Foundational Principles of Buddhism, Psychology and Theology

This thesis is written from my perspective as a Buddhist who accepts certain principles and beliefs regarding suffering and impermanence. Buddhist psychology differs from Western psychology primarily in its view of the nature of human personality. Part of the Buddhist understanding of the First Noble Truth (the Truth of Suffering) is the acknowledgement that impermanence is an inescapable property of physicality (Wolfe and Gudorf 289). Every person, animal or thing in the physical world is constantly changing, and inexorably heading towards its death. Unless we understand deeply that nothing in the physical world is permanent, we are *assured* of experiencing suffering as we hold onto things in their present form. Just as letting go of our fantasy of permanence allows us to escape

unnecessary suffering, our failure to acknowledge impermanence creates suffering in our lives and in our relationships.

Our human identities and personalities are included in the list of impermanent “objects”. Buddhists believe that if we are to be happy, each of us must make peace with the fact that everything, including who we *think* we are, changes (Irish and Lundquist 130). Western psychology views the personality and ego as solid, discrete, and *real* entities, while Buddhist psychology views them as ever-changing ideas about who we are. When a Buddhist understanding of impermanence is applied to my apparent identity or ego definition, the reality of who I *think* I am is reduced to a mere concept. From that perspective, I will propose a model for emotional healing and restoration of wholeness to workers in corporate workplaces in transition. My perspective is supported by writings on Buddhist psychology and ways to create a happy life using techniques taught in Buddhism but applicable to people of all faith traditions.

A classic work on Buddhist psychology by psychotherapist Mark Epstein is Thoughts Without a Thinker: Psychotherapy From a Buddhist Perspective. Dr. Epstein shows how the Four Noble Truths discovered by the Buddha are a vision of reality that contains a practical blueprint for psychological relief, including implications for therapy for all people. Dr. Epstein briefly discusses the Truth of Suffering, the Origination of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering, and the Eightfold Path that leads to the cessation of suffering. (Epstein *Thoughts* 45-102). Most useful to this discussion is the First Noble Truth, the Truth of Suffering. The Buddha discovered that “suffering,” or more precisely for most modern Buddhists, “unsatisfactoriness” is the common experience of physical reality for incarnate beings. Contained in the First Noble Truth is the understanding that, in Buddhist thought, impermanence is an inescapable property of physicality (Wolfe and Gudorf 29).

Epstein writes about “imposed coherence” or a false definition of who we really are. Although we think of ourselves as unchanging, ego-defined beings, our personalities are much more fluid and changeable than that, being strongly affected by our *thoughts about* who we are. This idea of impermanence is especially useful in working with both victims and survivors of layoffs who have just lost their identity and self-definition as workers in a particular corporate environment (Epstein, *Thoughts* 53-57). Epstein’s Buddhist meditation techniques can be used for the purposes of integration, stability and self-awareness, and are particularly useful for the workshop that will accompany this study (Epstein, *Thoughts* 129-155).

In his second book, *Going to Pieces Without Falling Apart: A Buddhist Perspective on Wholeness*, Dr. Epstein goes deeper into the topic of surrendering into emptiness, and shows how that practice can result in wholeness (Epstein, *Going to Pieces* 9-48). Emptiness is a Buddhist concept that is defined by ancient Buddhist teacher Nagarjuna as “the relinquishment of views” (Epstein, *Going to Pieces* 2). It is a state of simply resting in what is, without projecting thoughts or opinions onto a situation. Emptiness can be very uncomfortable for the ego which wants a meaning and an explanation for (and has an opinion about) everything. It can be experienced as a feeling of insufficiency, unreality, or a lack of meaning in the physical world. But in Buddhism an experience of emptiness is considered to be positive (Epstein, *Going to Pieces* 4-6).

Emptiness is the background or the screen onto which everything that happens to us is projected. Emptiness is the reality while what we project onto it is the illusion of what we call our lives. Dr. Epstein’s techniques for relaxing into the reality of the current situation and trusting it can be of immense relief for those facing workplace transitions and the fear and helplessness they engender. Also useful for my model workshop are his comments

about how both meditation and grief therapy for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike can be useful tools for increasing awareness of the opinions one holds about a situation. Once awareness is increased, we can reappraise situation and our feelings about them, and relax into a deeper part of ourselves in response to change and the unexpected (Epstein, *Going to Pieces* 73-181).

Another Buddhist psychotherapist, Miriam Greenspan, has written an article entitled “Healing Through the Dark Emotions” in Shambhala Sun magazine. Her article has useful information about a pervasive cultural conditions she calls “chronic despair”, which can also be applied to the corporate world. She shows how to attend to, befriend and surrender to loss and grief in ways that are useful for a corporate transition workshop. She also shows how to emerge from the grief process with a more resilient faith in life (Greenspan 57-61).

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, one of the world’s most beloved religious leaders, has stated over and over that the purpose of life is to be happy (Epstein, *Thoughts* ix). In his book The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living he offers suggestions for how to stop resisting change, and on ways of shifting our perspective of any event so that we can take a direct and compassionate look at our pain in everyday life (Dalai Lama and Culter 162-171).

One of the tools he gives us to help us get through desperate situations is the use of meditation to develop a supple and pliable mind. Relaxing the mind during meditation allows us to expand to see a larger picture of the events that surround us. We can get bigger than the painful situations our small mind sees (Dalai Lama and Culter 172-195). This relaxation and expansion is a useful skill for workers as they try to regain a sense of happiness and trust in the world in the midst of chaos and massive change.

One of the most valued skills of hospital chaplains and other spiritual caregivers is to help those in crisis find meaning in the painful situation in which they find themselves. As a

hospital chaplain, I have found that suffering for the sake of something definable is highly preferable, and much easier for patients and their families to cope with, than seemingly random suffering. One of the works with useful suggestions for helping displaced and disoriented workers find meaning in the suffering displacement brings to their lives is Matthew Fox's The Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time. Fox envisions a new workplace where the basic interconnectedness of all things (also a Buddhist concept) is acknowledged (Fox 87-90). For example, as Fox explains, until a new workplace manifests in corporate America, workers can be encouraged to view the unending succession of changes they are asked to absorb as part of their connection to the evolving corporate whole. They can be encouraged to seek joy and delight in their work as another inalienable workers' right, simply by finding the sacred dimension of everything they do during the day (Fox 94-106).

David Larson's article in The Journal of Psychology and Theology, "Spirituality's Potential Relevance to Physical and Emotional Health: A Brief Review of Quantitative Research," cites information useful to this paper about studies that link coping skills and recovery from depression with spiritual and religious factors. One study showed that a strong faith in a higher power makes it easier for workers to find meaning in traumatic situations, and makes it less likely that they will fall into clinical depression (Larson 37-51).

Another article, "Spirit Matters: Using Contemplative Disciplines in Work and Organizational Life," by Christopher Schaefer and Jeri Darling of the High Tor Alliance Journal, discusses the findings of their study of workers who have added a spiritual component to their work lives. Their findings confirm that workers they interviewed who used meditation or contemplation, conscious listening, silence and prayer daily in the workplace see their work lives as an outgrowth of their spiritual practice or ministry, and

find more positive meaning and satisfaction at work. These workers have better relationships with coworkers, and more effectiveness as leaders thanks to their incorporation of spiritual values in the workplace (Schaefer and Darling 1-9). Schaefer and Darling's conclusions come around full circle to Jeremy Rifkin's vision of a new social contract in which the first two sectors of the economy, the private sector and the public sector, are joined by a third sector made up of those who have been freed to devote themselves to community services to which they feel called. They cite humanitarian Willis Hartman's description of a new paradigm and vision where "society's new central project is employment that exists primarily for self development, and is secondarily concerned with the production of goods and services (Schaefer and Darling 1-9)."

The resources that I found least helpful in supporting my thesis were two books on grief from a Christian theological viewpoint. Life After Loss: A Journey into Wholeness was written by Dorn Wheatley, a woman whose husband's death at an early age began a string of tragedies that left her in a state that a bereavement counselor would call "complicated grief." In her situation, her grief was intensified to the point that she felt overwhelmed. She resorted to maladaptive and destructive behavior, and failed to progress towards the resolution of her grief process (Worden 89-90). Instead of seeking counseling during several years of pain and brokenness, the author became a born-again Christian. She finally found relief in giving her burden of pain and grief to God. After her conversion experience, her explanation for the losses in her life became, "God is putting us through lessons of humility in order to produce a Christ-like quality in us (Wheatley 45)." She saw her grief process as a period of emotional instability and self-pity (Wheatley 75) and only felt healed from her grief when she accepted Christ and found that her cares were all gone (Wheatley 54). While this may be a valid belief for those who choose this path, from my experience this may not be a

helpful way to look at loss and grief. I believe that this explanation of loss actually *prevents* the process of active grieving that allows one to heal from loss.

From my perspective as a grief counselor, the author of this book has not fully resolved her grief, but continues to avoid the painful experiences of the grieving process in the name of her new religion. I find the fact that she has written a book advising others in similar situations of loss to also give their pain over to God and thus be magically delivered from it to be even more unhealthy and unrealistic. Dorn Wheatley's approach to resolving a loss through avoidance is of concern to me.

Another book by a Christian minister named C. David Matthews, Crashing Without Burning: Life After Failure, has a similar promise of an abbreviated grief process. While the author agrees the natural response to the loss of something we love is grief, he asserts that grief always works in partnership with guilt. He intertwines the experience of loss with shame, regret and guilt, and comes to the conclusion that the only antidote for this complicated set of emotions is God's forgiveness. The extent of this author's practical advice for living through the guilt-grief complex is to trust in God, and remember that what is lost is being kept by the One who created it in the first place (Matthews 18-25). From my work with those in grief, I have found that healing from loss and grief is not quite that simple. While I believe it is important to trust the grief process, giving clients the unrealistic expectation that all they need to do to heal from loss is to trust in God can result in even more shame and guilt when they find they can't live up to that expectation. As a result of my observations, I would recommend caution in adopting this author's viewpoint.

In Charism and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Conversion author Donald Gelpi offers a different viewpoint on religious conversion. Authentic religious conversion, he says, does not exist in a vacuum, but in a holistic framework that includes affective, moral

and intellectual conversion as well. Affective conversion results in one taking responsibility for *feelings* and the beliefs about them. Moral conversion results in responsible *action*. Intellectual conversion results in one taking personal responsibility for the consequences of one's *beliefs*. Religious conversion results in personal responsibility for *religious attitudes, beliefs and decisions*. Authentic religious conversion, then, affects these four dimensions of the human personality so that, instead of expecting a magical easing of the pains of grief, one can more realistically expect to be more willing to take responsibility for grieving, feelings of loss and other psychological states that we associate with loss, transition and grief (Gelpi 15-20). This understanding of conversion does not rule out professional counseling, and at the same time encourages individuals to find other appropriate tools and healthy resources to help them through the grief process. While some of these resources may use multiple modalities or cross-cultural perspectives and may not always involve traditional professional counseling, by definition, they will still be responsible and healthy ways of engaging the grieving process with the whole self.

In a similar holistic model in Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad, Buddhist theologian Ken Wilber maps the quadrants of consciousness: interior-individual (intentional), exterior-individual (behavioral), interior-collective (cultural), and exterior-collective (social), also pointing to a fuller model of human consciousness which includes the multiple dimensions of conversion experience. In Wilbur's integral theory of consciousness, professional counseling fits within the schema as one approach within a larger series that encompasses eleven other approaches to healing (Wilbur 9-36, 270-272).

In his book Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology, psychiatrist and spiritual director Gerald May describes a psychological and spiritual approach to human experience similar to Ken Wilbur's quadrants of consciousness. May's contemplative psychology model

maintains that wisdom depends upon a full cooperation among all the ways of knowing (processes of conversion), which include observation, logical inference, behavioral learning, and intuition. While May's work acknowledges that intuition is the purest form of knowledge, and seeks to expand the innate human capacity for intuitive perception, it also states that a contemplative psychology cannot be seen as a simple addition of new facts to existing psychological knowledge. Rather, it calls into question any endeavor that seeks to assert the individual self over the larger mysteries of life, thus helping to change the roots of science as we know it (May 26-27).

While I believe that strong faith and spirituality aid in the grieving process, I also believe that it is important to take the mental health aspects of the grief process seriously. One must work through severe or complicated grief with a competent professional human being or risk serious psychological symptoms, while at the same time turning to one's Higher Power to find meaning and comfort. This is an important issue that will receive more attention in the conclusion this section.

Conclusion

After reviewing the literature on loss, grief and bereavement, corporate transition, and Buddhist and theological approaches to psychotherapy and happiness, it is my conclusion that current loss, grief and bereavement theory as described by Dr. Therese Rando and Dr. William Worden can indeed be applied to a workplace situation of great transition. All changes involve loss, and to the degree that a *surviving* worker's professional life is organized on the same pattern as family life, loss of coworkers mirrors loss of family members. A *laid-off* worker's loss of identity, income and self-definition must also be grieved as major loss. Because well-known business consultants David Noer and William Bridges

specifically mention the grief cycle and its application in the workplace, I feel comfortable applying it to my examples of corporate loss in this paper.

The modalities I offer for processing corporate loss make sense for the corporation, as well as for the individual worker. Abby Ellin, in her New York Times article about traumatized workers, acknowledges that today's unaddressed anxieties arising from workplace trauma can result in long-term repercussions. She asserts that companies save money in future workers compensation claims when they educate their managers and workers about loss and grief, and provide counseling opportunities for them. This assertion supports my reasons for wanting to offer the workshop series presented in this paper in the workplace. Another support for the cost effectiveness of grief counseling offered to workers comes from Howard Stone, when he writes that beliefs in the professional counseling world are changing about short-term counseling. Recent studies have shown that short-term counseling is just as effective, and as valued by clients, as long-term therapy. Expensive, long-term care is not necessary.

My compassionate reasons for wanting to help workers who are suffering through the changes around them are supported by Mark Epstein's Buddhist meditation techniques that can be used for the purposes of reintegration, stability and self-awareness. A workshop that teaches his techniques for relaxing into and trusting the current situation can be of immense relief for those facing workplace transitions and the fear and helplessness they engender. Also supportive of my model workshop series are his statements that both meditation and grief therapy can be useful tools for helping us reappraise a situation and relax into a deeper part of ourselves in response to change and the unexpected. Dr. Epstein's ideas are compatible with those of the Dalai Lama, who writes that not resisting change and enlarging our perspective of the situation can help us get through crises by expanding our

awareness to a larger picture of the events that surround us. Matthew Fox, David Larson, and Christopher Schaefer and Jeri Darling all offer models that incorporate spiritual values in the workplace. These models support Jeremy Rifkin's vision of a new social contract where employment exists primarily for self development, and only secondarily for the production of goods and services. All of these ideas can help displaced workers find meaning in their losses as they regain a sense of happiness and trust in the world in the midst of chaos.

While I understand the opposite position of Barbara Barski-Carrow, who suggests the creation of "study circles" within the workplace to offer an adult learning format to *teach* workers and their managers about grief without offering a venue for group therapy to *heal* from workplace loss, her approach differs substantially from my model. I believe it is necessary to provide a safe place where workers can feel free to process the emotions connected with their losses in order to resolve them.

I also understand the wish to give the pain and uncertainty of grief over to a Higher Power as the simplest means to achieving a cure. However, I find it unrealistic to expect that a religious conversion can adequately replace competent bereavement counseling and other modalities for healing, as suggested by Dorn Wheatley and C. David Matthews. There are more complex models for conversion and healing that include multiple dimensions of human understanding for a more complete healing experience.

Donald Gelpi offers a perspective of religious conversion that includes affective, moral and intellectual conversion while asserting that authentic religious conversion happens on many levels and results in one's taking responsibility for finding healthy ways of evolving. Professional counseling is not ruled out in this model, nor is a healing on the spiritual level. However, resources that use multiple modalities, cross-cultural perspectives or non-

traditional means of healing are preferred as responsible and healthy ways of engaging the grieving process.

Buddhist Ken Wilber's quadrants of consciousness also offer a fuller model of the human conversion experience. In his model, professional counseling is one approach within a larger series of approaches to healing. In a similar way, psychiatrist and spiritual director Gerald May describes a contemplative view of psychology that includes the notion of full cooperation among all the ways humans come to know the Divine, including observation, logical inference, and behavioral learning, as well as intuition. May's contemplative psychology calls into question any endeavor that ignores the larger mystery of faith, but it still balances the religious aspects of the conversion process with logic and scientific observation.

In light of these various definitions of conversion, I have come to believe that the strong faith and spirituality engendered by a conversion experience can indeed help an individual navigate and find meaning in the grieving process. Whether the griever is Buddhist, Christian, or any other faith, I also maintain the position throughout this paper that it is important to take the grief process seriously. Severe or complicated grief must be addressed with a competent professional counselor, while at the same time turning to one's Higher Power to find meaning and comfort.

My hope is that my work will help solve the problem of addressing the unaddressed workplace issues of change, loss and bereavement, and contribute to the academic conversation by offering a concrete application of current bereavement theory that can be used in a workplace beset by great transition. Because I now understand the problem better thanks to the experts who have created the literature cited in this review, I can suggest a solution. By adding Buddhist meditation techniques to a basic bereavement group therapy

environment, I hope to encourage reintegration, stability and self-awareness in those facing workplace loss. Buddhist techniques for relaxing into and trusting 'what is' can offer relief for those feeling overwhelmed by fear and helplessness. By encouraging a balanced spiritual orientation in displaced and disoriented workers who are so inclined, I hope also to help them find meaning in their losses as they regain a sense of excitement and trust as their new lives unfold.

Chapter Three: Application

The following is an application of the ideas presented in this thesis/project. In an effort to encourage a spiritual orientation in displaced and disoriented workers as they endeavor to find meaning in their transitions, I offer a model workshop for healing. It is a five-week series of classes that are designed to educate participants about change and transition, to create a safe place for them to experience the emotions associated with change, loss and grief, to connect with their own spirituality; and to help them create a new vision of themselves as part of the resolution process. As participants examine and understand their losses, they will regain a sense of excitement and trust as their new lives as they unfold.

Each of the five class meetings in the series has a similar format.

Objectives are listed first, then a summary of the information to be covered is shown. The body of information about transition, loss, grief and recovery is presented. Next, action and involvement is requested of the workshop participants. For example, some in-class activities that involve both intuitive (emotional) and instrumental (action-oriented) grievers are described. Next, topics for class discussion are listed. Finally, a homework assignment is included to encourage participants to continue their grief process throughout the week, and talk about their experiences when they return to the next workshop in the series.

Due to the detailed nature of the class descriptions, a sample of the full content is shown only for weeks 1 and 4 in this chapter. I chose to include details for week 1 because this session gives the reader a good overview of transition, loss and grief in the workplace. I chose to include week 4 here because this session shows how Buddhist theories and practices can serve as an illustration of a way for participants to add a spiritual component to

their lives as an aid to the grief process. Detailed content for the remaining weeks in the series is contained in the appendices.

Working Through Loss: Workshop Series Description

All change includes an element of loss. Voluntary changes are much easier to come to terms with than those we don't choose. Resolution of loss brings wholeness, balance, and improved productivity. The intention of this series of five one-day workshops is to educate employees, managers and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) professionals about workplace transition and loss issues. It is also designed to help them acknowledge, process and resolve specific losses they or their employees are currently experiencing.

Target Audience

This workshop is appropriate for the following populations:

- Employees who have been laid off, or received a low retention rating
- Survivors of lay-offs who need help coping with their emotional reactions to change.
- Managers who want more information about how to help their employees cope with personal and professional change
- EAP professionals who must assess and refer employees who are exhibiting emotional stress or job impairment due to an inability to cope with personal or professional transition, uncertainty or loss

Objectives

The final objectives of this workshop series are to help participants:

- Understand the change/loss/grief cycle

- Address and resolve their own emotional reactions to change and loss using various tools techniques
- Create a new identity for themselves that reflects the current reality, after changes have taken place

Assumptions

The following assumptions are made about this workshop and its participants:

- The effectiveness of the workshop is based on consistent participation
- Workshop sessions will be held weekly
- Participants will complete homework assignments in between weekly sessions
- The same group of participants will meet every week

Week 1: Getting to Know Each Other, Establishing Trust

Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- See the connection between transition, loss and grief
- Understand how American workers are asked to stifle emotional reactions
- Understand the ramifications of unresolved grief
- Name the personal and professional losses that have brought them to the class
- Hear the stories of other participants in the class as a step towards feeling comfortable to begin addressing their losses in the group

Information:

- Instructor Information
- Introductory Remarks
- Transition, Loss and Grief

- What is Grief?
- Why Should we Grieve (Rando)
- What Happens When We Don't Grieve (Bozarth)

Instructor Information

Sibyl Lundy has spent over ten years acquiring knowledge and practice in facilitating the resolution of major life changes. She is currently doing graduate level work in workplace loss and grief resolution for a Master's thesis in progress. In addition to her work in corporate communication, she works as an interfaith hospital chaplain, facilitating bereavement groups where people from all ages and walks of life come together to work through major life changes including death, divorce and job loss.

Sibyl has studied Buddhism since the mid 1980's, meditating with both Tibetan Buddhist and Zen Buddhist teachers, attending many week-long meditation retreats over the years. She has been active in the interfaith and Buddhist communities in Seattle, given talks and lectures on Buddhist teachings, and currently co-leads an East/West meditation and study group.

Her certifications include:

- Certification by the Association of Death Education and Counseling as a Thanatologist CT, (thanatology is the study of death, dying and bereavement)
- Certification by the American Academy of Bereavement as a Certified Bereavement Facilitator (CBF)
- Endorsement by the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) as a lay spiritual caregiver
- Certification by the International Critical Stress Foundation (ICSF) as a Level One Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) facilitator

Introductory Remarks

All transition includes an element of loss. Stress and grief can result from loss, especially if losses remain unaddressed and unresolved, or if there are multiple unaddressed losses. The best way to resolve a loss is to allow the grief process to take its course so there can be a resolution of the loss. Grieving is a normal, healthy, healing activity. It is something we all encounter as part of our human experience on this planet. We must all learn to work through our losses in order to survive life changes and remain emotionally healthy and engaged.

In the working world, men and women are told that an emotional response to transition has no place in their professional lives. Deeply felt losses and fears related to change therefore go unacknowledged and unprocessed. As a result, workers can become victims of depression and loss of feelings in their personal lives as well. The burden to suppress emotions and to function only on a mental level is an especially heavy one for men, and for women in traditionally male jobs such as technical work. Even when their lives are falling apart, career people are expected to preserve their on-the-job image of being totally together. But we cannot outrun the grief response to loss, no matter how determined we are to do so. Those who deny themselves the necessary grieving time merely put off the process, which can emerge years later in the form of physical ailments, sleep disturbances, neurosis, or even psychosis.

Grieving our losses and embracing the results of transition are the only way back to a normal life. *How* we deal with loss determines our capacity to be present to life after loss. The strategies we adopt to protect ourselves from loss are also the ways we distance ourselves from life. It's a common belief that to remain happy, we should ignore our own suffering and the suffering of other people, hoping that if we ignore it, it will go away.

Ironically, the way to maintain happiness and experience joy in life is actually to acknowledge and fully experience our suffering. Pretending that our suffering does not exist will not make us happy because the part of us that feels suffering is the same as the part that feels joys. If we suppress one, we suppress the other.

Transition, Loss and Grief

A *transition* is a change in a relationship, position or condition in your life. All transitions include an element of *loss* – we must all say goodbye to the old before embracing the new.

Examples of transitions:

- Work and financial changes – layoffs, retiring or changing jobs; changes in the corporate environment; increase or decrease in income; taking on new financial obligations; finding out that a career path is blocked
- Loss of relationships – ranging from a spouse's death to a friend moving away, marital separations, children leaving home, the alienation of a former friend, death of a pet, loss of a hero, or anything else that changes the nature of a relationship
- Changes in home life – getting married; having a child; a spouse who retires, gets ill or recovers; returning to work or to school; changing jobs; moving or remodeling a home
- Personal changes – getting sick or well again; a notable success or failure; changing life-style or appearance, sleep-patterns or even eating habits
- Inner changes – psychological, spiritual or religious insights; changes in self-image, purpose or values; abandonment of a dream or important life goal

It's easy to see how big events like divorce, death, aging, illness, job loss, and other obviously painful changes can cause loss and grief. Events like marriage, promotion, sudden success, and moving to a wonderful new home are considered 'good events', but are transitions just the same. They also involve a loss, and require us to grieve the loss of a current condition or position. Some are even more difficult because they result in loss of a *future* condition or position.

What is Grief?

Grieving is a normal, healthy response to loss. Grief includes a predictable series of feelings, sensations and behaviors that are common to people that have experienced loss. Grief is a complex emotion that is not only sadness. Those who are grieving can also experience forgetfulness, inability to focus, anger, frustration, guilt, relief, loss of faith, an inability to relate to others emotionally, change in sleep or eating patterns, and restlessness as well as an overwhelming sense of sadness and loss.

Grief as a response to loss is something we all encounter as part of our human experience. If we can learn to work through our losses and the resulting grief, we can successfully survive life's transitions, and remain emotionally healthy and engaged contributors.

Why Should We Grieve?

If losses remain unaddressed and unresolved, especially if there are multiple unaddressed losses, stress and burnout can be the result. Unresolved grief can manifest as the development of psychosomatic illness, alteration in relationships with family and coworkers, hostility towards those responsible for the loss, and symptoms of depression. These can

seriously affect a worker by inducing stress, feelings of worthlessness, and bitter self-accusation (Rando 62-63).

What Happens When We Don't Grieve?

How can we give ourselves permission to grieve? As professional adults, we are taught that ignoring the pain of loss and stifling our emotions is the “professional” way to be. In reality, the cost of that professionalism is a deadening of our spirits and loss of joy (Bozarth 8-10). Conversely, when we can summon the courage to surrender to grief, we help ourselves, *and* those around us in the workplace in important ways. From personal experience and from observation of the clients I work with, I've learned that it's necessary to allow oneself to “fall apart” and surrender to the grief process in order to be able to come back together as a better person. It is only by allowing ourselves to be consumed and annihilated by the grief of a loss that we can experience the transformation of completing the grief process.

Of course, there are lots of good reasons NOT to grieve. We've been taught by our culture, parents, acquaintances and employers that it's uncomfortable for them, and inappropriate for us to exhibit the signs of grieving. There's the fear that once you start letting those emotions out, you'll never be able to stop the flow.

Employees who endeavor to maintain “a stiff upper lip” to appear to be “good workers” may never talk about or actively process the loss of coworkers or a familiar work environment. However, these employees become victims of unresolved grief, and can develop symptoms that interfere with their ability to be passionate, engaged, vital employees. The purpose of this series of workshops is to create a safe place for you to tell your story of transition and loss; to offer tools and techniques for processing grief; and to offer you

alternatives to old, outmoded social contracts with the corporations that employ us that we as employees have agreed to consciously or unconsciously.

Activities:

1. Loss really is a big part of life. Loss can include illnesses like cancer, surgeries, loss of body parts, loss of functions as we get older. Even beating an addiction can cause you to lose your former lifestyle and your old friends when you recover. List everything you can think of that you've lost:
 - In the past week
 - In the past year.
 - Since you were 10.
2. List some of the transitions you've experienced in the last few years.
3. List ways you feel you have lost your zest for living and vitality in the workplace due to these transitions.

Class Discussion:

Share experiences of transition, change and loss. Discuss stress reactions that you noticed resulting from the loss. What successful strategies have you developed for coping with transition? What strategies have you adopted for avoiding grief? For example, working too much, eating too much, shopping, drinking, self-medication, or hoping that all these emotions will just go away if we ignore them.

Homework:

This week, spend some time doing the following:

- Clearly defining the loss or losses that have brought you to this workshop series.

- Name each of the personal and professional losses you are ready to grieve.
- Write a description of the loss and how it has affected you. Or, if you're more comfortable with pictures than with words, draw, paint, sculpt or make a collage to symbolize the loss and its effects on your life. Or, if you like to build things, construct something that symbolizes the loss to you.

Week 2: Current Theories About Transition, Loss and How We Process Grief

(See Appendix A for detailed description)

- Objectives
- Information
 - Warm up (ten minute free-write)
 - The Process of Integrating a Loss (Rando)
 - The Phases of Grief (Rando)
 - The Tasks of Mourning (Worden)
- Class discussion
- Homework

Week 3: Beginning the Process

(See Appendix B for detailed description)

- Objectives
- Information
 - Warm up (ten minute free-write)
 - Survivor sickness (Noer)
 - Chronic despair (Greenspan)
 - The 'neutral zone' and transitions (Bridges)
 - Intuitive vs. instrumental grievers (Martin and Doka)
 - Memorializing a loss
- Activity, 'letting go' ritual
- Class discussion
- Homework

Week 4: Adding a Spiritual Component to Your Life

Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- Explore the deeper reasons and meanings in their transition.
- Identify spiritual components that may enhance their coping skills.
- Begin to understand the Buddhist idea of unsatisfactoriness and impermanence.
- Begin to identify the 'imposed coherence' they use to define themselves.
- Experience meditation as a way to surrender into a situation.
- Experience meditation as a way to shift perspective.
- Begin to use meditation for reintegration, stability and self-awareness, if desired.

Warm-up:

Spend ten minutes free-writing about what happened to you and your grieving process since the last session. Share these issues with the others in the group.

Information:

- Finding meaning in transition (Fox)
- Adding spiritual components to enhance coping skills (Larson)
- The Buddhist Truth of Suffering: unsatisfactoriness and impermanence (Epstein)
- 'Imposed coherence' and how we use it to define ourselves (Epstein)
- Surrendering into emptiness (Epstein)
- Shifting perspective (Dalai Lama)
- Meditation to enhance reintegration, stability and self-awareness (Epstein)

Finding Meaning in Transition

A practice that is useful in integrating a transition is to find some sort of meaning in the painful situation in which you find yourself. Suffering for the sake of something definable is much easier to cope with than seemingly random suffering. If you can find a spiritual or philosophical component in a major change, you can often find meaning in the transition.

For example, a worker with an affinity towards Buddhism who finds herself displaced and disoriented can be encouraged to view the unending succession of changes she is asked to absorb as part of her connection to the evolving Corporate Whole. In Buddhism, there is perceived to be a basic interconnectedness of all things. If she can acknowledge her connection to the Whole, and the rightness of her situation as part of the Whole, she can add a larger dimension and an element of higher purpose to difficult events (Fox 87-90). Being able to see the sacred in all facets of reality is another way to do this. Many people find joy and delight in their work when they can find the sacred dimension and acknowledge the presence of God or a Higher Power in everything they do during the day (Fox 94-106).

Adding a Spiritual Component to Your Life

The dictionary defines spirituality as being concerned with matters of spirit, those that affect the soul and our relation to the sacred. Spirituality is different from religion in that it is a more personal matter, not necessarily related to an organized church or religion. For some people, spirituality is their religion. An important step towards adding a spiritual component to your life is to determine what spirituality means to you.

A recent study has shown that workers who have added a spiritual component to their work lives are happier and more effective. Those who use meditation or contemplation, conscious listening, silence and prayer daily in the workplace tend to see their work lives as

an outgrowth of their spiritual practice or ministry. Whatever their specific beliefs, as long as they have a spiritual or religious belief, they find more positive meaning and satisfaction at work. These workers have better relationships with coworkers, and show more effectiveness as leaders as they incorporate spiritual values into their work lives (Schaefer and Darling 1-9).

Another study links coping skills and recovery from depression with spiritual and religious factors. A strong faith in a Higher Power of some sort makes it easier for workers to find meaning in traumatic situations, and makes it less likely that they will fall into clinical depression when difficult situations arise (Larson 37-51).

The Buddhist Truth of Suffering: Unsatisfactoriness and Impermanence

Buddhism is one of the spiritual paths that offers a vision of reality that contains a practical blueprint for psychological relief from the pain and suffering of transition. Buddhist teachings include the concept of the Buddha's First Noble Truth, the Truth of Suffering. The Buddha also taught about the origins of suffering, the idea that there can be a cessation of suffering, and the Eightfold Path that includes ways of living that can minimize our experience of suffering. (Epstein, *Thoughts* 45-102).

Perhaps most useful to workers processing the pain that accompanies the loss of transition is the Buddha's discovery about suffering (or more precisely for most modern Buddhists, "unsatisfactoriness"). The first thing he realized as part of his enlightenment experience is that suffering is the common experience of physical reality for all incarnate beings. Contained in this First Noble Truth is the understanding that impermanence is an inescapable property of physicality (Wolfe and Gudorf 29). Very simply, everything changes. Every person, object and situation in our physical work is subject to transition. It is our unrealistic insistence on believing that things will remain the same that causes us pain.

This is especially true when it comes to who we *think* we are. The truth of impermanence, when applied to my apparent identity or ego definition, reduces the reality of who I *think* I am to a mere concept.

'Imposed Coherence' and Self Definition

Buddhist psychologist Mark Epstein writes about “imposed coherence” or a false definition we impose on who we really are. Although we like to think of ourselves as unchanging, ego-defined beings, our personalities are much more fluid and changeable than that. Who we are is strongly affected by our *thoughts about* who we are. The idea of impermanence can actually be comforting if you are a victim or a survivor of layoff who has just lost their identity and self-definition as a worker in a particular corporate environment. You now have the option of changing the way you think about who you were and who you are now. Just as you used your mind to create the definition of the former you, you can now use your mind again to create a new and better definition of who you are now (Epstein, *Thoughts* 53-57).

Mark Epstein has also shown that Buddhist meditation techniques can be used for the purposes of gaining integration, stability and self-awareness as we process the loss of a transition (Epstein, *Thoughts* 129-155).

Surrendering into Emptiness

If you practice it consistently while you pass through the various phases of integrating transition, the Buddhist meditation technique of surrendering into emptiness can result in wholeness and an easier integration of your new conditions (Epstein, *Going to Pieces* 9-48). During Buddhist sitting meditation, you can practice sitting still, breathing, and relaxing into the current situation with an attitude of trust in the inherent rightness of the

situation. This technique can offer relief if you are facing workplace transitions, and the fear and helplessness they engender. Meditation can help Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike calmly reappraise a situation, and relax into a deeper part of themselves in response to change and the unexpected (Epstein, *Going to Pieces* 173-181).

Shifting Perspective

The Dalai Lama writes that not resisting change and shifting our perspective can help us get through difficult situations by expanding our awareness to a larger picture of the events that surround us. He also suggests using meditation to enhance reintegration, stability and self-awareness.

Again addressing the concept of impermanence and the idea that our resistance to change is what causes us to suffer, the Dalai Lama gives us a way to alleviate our pain. He advises us to try shifting our perspective to take a direct and compassionate look at our pain about a situation in everyday life. Sitting quietly and feeling compassion for ourselves as we experience our pain can help us get through the situation (Dalai Lama and Culter 162-171). To be able to do this, we can work to develop a supple and pliable mind that can expand to see a larger picture of the events that surround us. By getting bigger than the painful situations our small mind sees, and taking a higher perspective of all the other people and situations affected, we take the focus off ourselves, and consider also the suffering of others involved. (Dalai Lama and Culter 172-195). Shifting perspective can be a useful skill for workers as they try to regain a sense of happiness and trust in the world in the midst of chaos and massive change.

For example, here's a Buddhist meditation technique that can be used for the purposes of reintegration, stability and self-awareness. If you were to find that you and

several other workers have been laid off from your jobs, you will most likely experience several intensely unpleasant emotions as a reaction to this large change in your life. They might include fear, anger, sadness and hatred towards the person that has laid you off. To practice shifting your perspective, you might first sit quietly and feel compassion for yourself as you let these emotions wash over you. You'll probably want to get up and run away, but if you breathe into the area of your heart, and let yourself experience the emotions fully, you may notice that they lose some of their intensity after a while. If you can expand your awareness of the situation, you may be able to take the focus off your own pain and bring it around towards some of the other workers that have been laid off at the same time you were. Some may have larger families, more bills, less chance of finding other work. They may be suffering much more than you are because of this change. You may also include in your perspective the manager that had to make the decision to lay the group of workers off. He or she may have spent weeks agonizing over which workers to lay off, and many sleepless nights imagining how uncomfortable it would be to talk to you all, and ask you to leave one by one. The manager may suffer from guilt and sadness for weeks after you and your coworkers have left the company.

Once you have shifted your perspective from your own exclusive suffering to the suffering of the others involved in the situation, you may be able to better see the interconnectedness of all of you. You may also be able to open your heart slightly and feel more compassion for yourself, for your coworkers and for your manager, thus alleviating a bit of the pain of this loss. Each time you try this practice, your heart opens a little bit more, and your pain dissipates a bit. You may be able to relax more and more into the situation until you can accept the change and go on to work with the new reality from a new perspective.

Activity:

Meditation

- Sit quietly. Become aware of your breath. As your mind slows down and you feel the rhythm of your breathing, focus on your heart and the emotions that you find there. Allow whatever emotions are present to arise. Don't judge them; don't try to explain them away. Feel compassion for yourself as you let these emotions wash over you. Let yourself experience the emotions fully as you continue to breathe.
- As the emotions begin to lose some of their intensity, you can try to shift your awareness by taking the focus off your own pain. While keeping your attention on breathing into your heart, try expanding your awareness of the situation by becoming aware of the pain that must be felt by some of the other people involved in the same situation that is causing you distress. Feel compassion for their suffering, too. Feel how you are all connected in this situation.

Class discussion:

What was your experience as you tried this meditation? Did the intensity of emotions actually diminish as you let them wash over you? Were you able to generate compassion for others involved in the situation? What would you think of doing this meditation at home once a day between now and the next workshop session?

Homework:

This week, try to define what spirituality means to you. Is it connected to or separate from religion? Identify spiritual components in your life that can help you get through this and other transitions. Write about or use an art project to describe the following. Alternately, if you're an instrumental griever, you can construct something to symbolize:

- Spiritual components in your life that enhance their coping skills. What do these tell you about the deeper reasons and meanings for this transition?
- How your definition of who you are is shifting because of this current transition.

Use the meditation we tried in class to practice:

- Relaxing and surrendering into the current transition situation
- Shifting your perspective about the loss and the people involved

Week 5: Creating a New Identity

(See Appendix C for detailed description)

- Objectives
- Information
 - Warm up (ten minute free-write)
 - Overcoming codependent behavior in the corporate environment (Noer)
 - Changing our thoughts about who we are (Epstein)
 - Life without jobs (Bridges)
 - Developing a new social contract (Rifkin)
 - Forming a support system
- Activity, artwork
- Class discussion
- Homework

Chapter Four: Results and Outcomes

I was able to present the information in the Application section of this thesis once as an abbreviated version of this workshop in a corporate environment, and once as a consultant giving a presentation to clients of an outplacement firm. I have not yet had the opportunity to present the five full-day sessions of the complete workshop.

The format of the abbreviated workshop was five weekly sessions, each two and a half hours in length. The workshop series was attended by five non-management level and one management level employees of a corporation that had experienced multiple incidences of layoffs since 9/11/2001. The management level participant only attended two of the five sessions, while the other participants missed only one session each.

The feedback I received from all participants in the workshop series was positive. Two participants in particular said told me that they found the information and experiences from the workshop “life changing.” Both those participants have continued to maintain contact with me by email, and have arranged a lunch with the three of us on two occasions. My interpretation of this behavior is that they find it useful to continue to talk about their ongoing experiences of transition, and are willing to take the time to do so.

I made another attempt to present this workshop series to the management team of a writing and editing group at the same large corporation, but that series never took place. Because of some information that I received from participants at the first series, I shared some of my findings with the manager of an employee who attended. She was very interested in the content and results of the series, and shared with me how hard it is for managers also to remain healthy during layoffs. She told me that “employees don’t

understand what managers go through when there are layoff exercises. There are times I've been afraid for my physical safety. And at the same time, I feel terrible about having to lay someone off." At the time of our discussion, she felt that she and other managers in the group would find the workshop series valuable.

Her comments prompted me to offer a series tailored to the needs of managers who are at the same time victims *and* survivors of layoff. Everyone on the management team of that particular group seemed politely interested in the information, and encouraged me to offer the workshop just for them. However, when it came time to actually arrange a concrete time and schedule the sessions, only one of the managers was able to attend. We tried shortening the session time commitment, and scheduling it at lunch time rather than during the busy work day, but still none of the managers could actually commit the time to attending. Consequently, we abandoned the effort.

After some discussion with the other managers in the group, I have come to the conclusion that, at least in the corporation where I attempted to present the material, managers see it as their job to manage their employees' attendance, training, salary reviews, and make sure they are informed about corporation-wide issues. They view the maintenance of employee mental health and motivation as the task of EAP. Consequently, I've included EAP professionals as population interested in the workshop series, especially those that evaluate employees for referral to counselors and other mental health professionals due to poor job performance or other symptoms of depression or burnout that show up on the job.

I originally believed that corporate first- and second-level managers would be interested in helping their employees remain mentally healthy, energized and engaged in their work after a series of lay offs. My personal belief is that productivity and employee attitude are enhanced as employees process their losses. Since management is typically interested in

productivity, this subject matter seemed like it would be of interest to them. I also believed that managers might be interested in the workshop content to help themselves integrate their own losses in a corporation in transition. I now believe, however, that managers don't perceive the maintenance of the emotional health of their employees to be part of their job description. I have retained managers as part of the audience in the hopes that in other situations, first- and second-level managers would be more interested in participating in the workshop series.

The one-hour presentation for the clients of the outplacement firm was attended by five former managers and directors of sales from software companies, all men in their 50's who had been laid off from highly paid positions. The format of the presentation was a 45 minute talk, with handouts listing the main points of Weeks 1 and 2: the connection between transition, loss and grief; the ramifications of unresolved grief; and the tasks and phases of integrating loss. I also added an article from a professional publication about an employee who had pursued a part time job as mental health counselor while he was employed. After he was laid off from his full time job, he was looking forward to the opportunity of pursuing his dream job as counselor.

Because the outplacement firm gives each of their clients a copy of William Bridges' book Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes, the participants knew about transition, loss, and the neutral zone (Bridges *Transitions* 111-112). The information that seemed to most interest these participants was the idea that losses that are not grieved do not go away. The emotions of anger, fear, guilt and resentment associated with being laid off stays with people until they process those emotions fully. From our discussion after my presentation, it was clear that their main motivation for processing loss was to ensure that they arrived at their next interview with a positive, professional attitude, not the unconscious angry

demeanor that they had all seen some job applicants unknowingly bring to a job interview situation.

Interestingly, none of the participants wanted to talk much about the man in the article who was changing careers. While I can understand that they wanted to remain optimistic about finding new jobs with similarly high salaries in their former areas of employment, the reality of the high tech job situation in Washington state is such that software sales professionals in their 50's will face some difficulties finding jobs comparable to the ones they recently lost. My hope is that they may look at the copy of the article in the future, and add the pursuit of a new career to their list of possibilities.

Another significant occurrence took place after the presentation. One of the participants called me over to talk with him. He said that I failed to mention something very important in my presentation – spirituality. He told me he was a Muslim who had moved here from Iran many years ago. He has faced many set backs, challenges and misunderstandings about his ethnicity and his religion, especially since 9/11/2001. But he said that what always gets him through it all is his belief that it is all the will of Allah. And that Allah won't leave him alone in the situation. He thought I should have talked more about religion so that it could help others as it had helped him.

Although I had briefly mentioned in the presentation that connecting with one's faith tradition can help when faced with a crisis situation, I didn't do an in-depth discussion of spirituality in this short presentation. In a corporate situation, unless one of the participants broaches the subject of spirituality, it seems appropriate to me to mention it, but not to discuss spirituality in detail. I found this man's comments to be a valuable confirmation that corporate people *do* want to talk about spirituality. At the same time, I find it difficult to know how much discussion about spirituality is appropriate, and how much

could be offensive. I am still inclined to let the participants take the lead. My regret was that he waited until after the presentation to mention how much his faith tradition helped him. It could have opened up an interesting avenue of discussion, and the possibility of another resource for the other participants.

Summary of Outcomes

For me, the personal outcome of this thesis work has been a strong desire to present the full five-session weekly workshop to a group of five or more participants. The workshop series included in this thesis has been refined and expanded since it I presented it to a small group, and now includes five full days of information, experiences and focused activity to help participants understand and experience the integration process. It also includes homework assignments to allow continued processing and integration between class sessions. Although my presentations so far have been on a small scale, the feedback I have received confirms for me that the full experience of this series can indeed use the techniques and theories of classic loss and bereavement intervention, combined with corporate change management strategies, to provide a compassionate and mindful environment for workers to cope with massive transition.

Although my presentations so far have been limited to a smaller scale than I would like, the feedback I have received from participants confirms for me that the full experience of this series can indeed be useful. The continuing desire of some workshop participants to meet and address their issues of transition and loss tells me that they are deriving some benefit from the practice. The techniques and theories of classic loss and bereavement intervention can indeed be combined with corporate change management strategies to provide a compassionate and mindful environment for workers to cope with massive

transition. It is still my conviction that those who are willing to invest the time and effort to work through the information, discussions, activities and homework offered in the workshop contents will be rewarded with continuing emotional healing and a restoration to wholeness.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

My hope is that the work presented in this thesis will add to the academic conversation by helping to solve the problem of the seldom-addressed workplace issues of change, loss and bereavement. I have attempted to offer a concrete application as a solution: an educational and experiential workshop series that can be used in the corporate workplaces of a society in transition. By adding the element of Buddhist meditation techniques to the workshop environment, I have also tried to model the addition of a spiritual component to aid in the integration of loss and the healing that integration brings.

As a Buddhist, I have tried to find ways to help ease the suffering of those in transition around me. The question I asked was, “can basic loss and bereavement interventions such as story telling in a safe place and emotional support as one works through the grief cycle be combined with corporate change management strategies?” My answer was a resounding yes. By adding various Buddhist ideas and practices, I concluded by creating a workshop that includes compassionate and mindful interventions for workers coping with the grief of massive transition. Participants in a sample workshop indeed began to integrate their transitions into their new lives.

I have learned from this research that it is not only the workers who have lost their jobs who are living through a time of tumultuous transition. Those who have been allowed to remain in corporate jobs are also being asked to stay engaged, effective and integrated with their work at a time when many of the trusted institutions and support systems of our era are crumbling and changing. Almost daily, we see in the news stories of the indictment and sentencing of the top leaders in some of the most powerful and well-known corporations in America. Greed and deception at the highest levels of corporate leadership

are causing the average American worker to grieve the loss of innocence and trust we have placed in our leaders.

Perhaps this era of massive transition is a wake up call to all American workers to become more adult in our expectations of what the corporations in America can do for us. Thanks to technological advances, fewer and fewer American workers are needed to produce goods and services, and there simply aren't enough jobs to keep all Americans employed. Since the current administration took office less than four years ago, over 2.7 million manufacturing jobs have been lost, only a few of which have been replaced by low-paying fast food industry jobs. The era in which a person's worth is defined by the market value of their labor has ended. As America shifts away from a job-based culture, we are called upon to reinvent how we define ourselves without jobs, how we structure our time, and how we find satisfaction in life. As the old institutions crumble, we now have the opportunity to create a new social contract. But what will take the place of those structures?

Instead of living like codependent children, American workers must now act like adults. We must take responsibility for remaining relevant and valuable in our workplaces, and must see to it that we get the continuing training to remain so. As the old paradigms break apart, we can seize the opportunity to reinvent ourselves and the places we work, but we must also take responsibility for remaining mentally healthy and vitally engaged in the midst of wave after wave of change. One of the most important ways to be healthy and engaged is to maintain balance among the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of life.

The biggest challenge for me has been finding sensitive and acceptable ways of including a spiritual dimension into a workshop series designed to be held in a corporate environment. Without favoring one religion over another, it has been difficult to find a way

to broach the topic of how participants receive spiritual support. Some of the feedback I received after one of my workshops underscored the importance of the spiritual dimension in workers' lives when one of the participants told me after the session that he wished I had included the topic. He confirmed for me the importance of spirituality when we find ourselves in a crisis situation. My solution to this problem has been to advocate the addition of spirituality to one's life as an aid to balance, wholeness and healing. As an example of a way to make this addition, I included in the workshop series an honest and personal analysis of some facets of Buddhist spirituality as applied to psychology. I offer my Buddhist interpretation of events to participants as one possible way to help them understand and heal from loss. This information appears in the workshop material for week 4 as an example of a way to add the spiritual dimension to a participants arsenal of coping skill without advocating one spiritual path while excluding others.

My hope is that the information and workshop activities I offer in this thesis help workers remain mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy and engaged in their ever-changing work lives. They encourage others to acknowledge the losses that change brings by giving them the tools for doing the necessary grief work. Successful completion of the grief process brings reintegration, stability and self-awareness into situations of transition. I see this work as the only way to avoid the overwhelming fear and helplessness that transition can bring. By maintaining a spiritual orientation and a higher view of our changing reality, we can find meaning in our losses, and regain a sense of excitement and trust as our new lives unfold.

May all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. May all beings find happiness and the causes of happiness.

Appendix A

Week 2: Current Theories About Transition, Loss and the Ways We Process Grief

Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- Understand the integration of an external loss into the internal reality
- Name the phases of grief
- Name the tasks of grieving
- Relate these phases and tasks to their own situations

Information:

- The Process of Integrating a Loss (Rando)
- The Phases of Grief (Rando)
- The Tasks of Mourning (Worden)

Warm-up:

Spend ten minutes free-writing about what happened to you and your grieving process since the last session. How are you doing with your grief? *What* are you doing with it? Sharing these issues with the others in the group can help us build a supportive and sympathetic community.

The Process of Integrating a Loss

Bereavement expert Therese Rando has written about the specific transition process we must work through to integrate an external loss into our internal reality. Her process has three steps:

1. Emotionally detach from the person or situation that has been lost. This is an inner adaptation that allows you to integrate an external loss into your inner, emotional world. First, you must successfully withdraw emotional energy from what is lost. Only then will you have the emotional energy to use for establishing a new relationship with it later (Rando 75-78).
2. Develop a new relationship with the person or thing that you lost. The old relationship does not end, but is modified in a way that allows you to maintain a bond with it while still looking towards the future (Rando 78).
3. Establish a new identity for yourself that is consistent with what does remain in your reality. Your identity must shift from who you were *before* the loss to who you are *now* that the loss has taken place (Rando 78-79).

For example, if you receive a demotion in response to a restructuring in your company, you could find yourself transitioning from the position of manager, to the position of engineer. The external reality is that, although you have retained a job, you're no longer a part of the management team. Using Rando's process to create an inner adaptation to the new external reality, you must first detach emotionally from your position as manager. To do so, you must allow yourself to experience all the emotions associated with losing your identity as manager: anger at those who made the decision, guilt for whatever you did to be selected for the demotion, resentment towards the other managers that remain, fear that you may no longer be able to do the job of engineer after years in management, shame about what your co-workers may be thinking or saying about this event. You may also experience relief at being let loose from the yoke of management, amusement at the ironies of the situation, or elation that you'll now be able to spend more time with your family. Once you

have expended all the emotional associated with the event by crying, laughing, getting angry or talking about it, you will have more energy available to engage in the new reality.

As a second step in the process, you must develop a new relationship with the position of manager, one that is free from anger, resentment, guilt, etc. It is no longer your reality, but until you have neutralized your feelings about managers and management by experiencing them fully, you won't be free to move to the next step of the process.

Finally, you can establish your new identity as engineer, and engage with the new position fully. If you have fully worked through the emotions associated with the transition and perceived losses, you can now see yourself in a positive and vital light as a former manager who is now once again an engineer, older and even more valuable thanks to the experience and wisdom you gained in your time on the management team.

The Phases of Grief

We can learn even more about the process of integrating a loss by looking at the phases of grief. Although grief is different for every person, and the length and exact order of the phases tends to be unique for each individual, most griever experience the following phases:

- Avoidance phase in which you refuse to believe that the change has actually taken place. This can take the form of forgetting about the change, pretending to yourself and others that it never happened, refusing to talk about it, or avoiding all those connected with the change in some way.
- Confrontation phase in which you can no longer pretend that the loss didn't happen. Once you confront the loss, you may experience fear, panic, anger, guilt, sadness, depression and despair.

Reestablishment phase after you have fully experienced all emotions in the confrontation phase. In this phase, you learn to live with the way life is now, and you learn to love yourself again in your new identity (Rando 28-35).

The Tasks of Mourning

Another model of how we integrate external transition has a more active aspect to it in that it actually provides a list of tasks to be accomplished. William Worden, another expert on loss and bereavement, has mapped the tasks you must complete as part of the process of coming to terms with a loss. The tasks are:

- Accept the reality of the loss
- Fully experience the pain of the loss
- Adjust to an environment without the lost person or condition
- Relocate and memorialize the lost person or condition

As with Rando's model, the end goal of these tasks is to allow you to come to terms with a loss by emotionally relocating the past situation so you can move on with life as it is now, after the loss has taken place (Worden 27-37).

Activities:

1. List a situation of external transition that you have been able to integrate successfully.
2. List any of the phases of grief or tasks of grieving we've talked about that played a part in your integration process.

3. Write about how you feel about the idea of giving yourself permission to grieve.

What do you think would happen if you gave yourself permission to fully experience all the emotions (negative *and* positive) that you feel as part of the process?

Class discussion: Do these phases and tasks make sense to you? Have you experienced any of them in your own integration process? Can you tell from the models we've talked about where you might be in your current grief process? How do you feel about the idea of fully experiencing the emotions that come up for you in this process? Are there other ways you process grief other than through emotions? Some people find it more effective to make something, build something, or do some activity rather than talking about their emotions.

Homework:

This week, spend some time thinking about what your life would look like when you are done with the following tasks of grief:

- Emotionally detaching from the person or situation you've lost in order to integrate the external loss into your inner reality.
- Developing a new relationship with the person or thing that was lost – one that lets you to maintain a bond while still looking towards the future.
- Establishing a new identity for yourself that has shifted from who you were before the loss to who you are now, after the loss has taken place.

Write a description of your new life at these three points in your grief process. Or draw, paint, sculpt or make a collage to symbolize these three phases in your own life. Or, if you like to build things, construct something that symbolizes these phases to you.

Appendix B

Week 3: Beginning the Process

Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- Understand the concepts of survivor sickness and chronic despair
- Relate the concept of 'neutral zone' to their own transitions (Bridges)
- Determine their own grieving style (Martin and Doka)
- Learn ways to memorialize a loss

Information:

- Survivor sickness (Noer)
- Chronic despair (Greenspan)
- The 'neutral zone' and transitions (Bridges)
- Intuitive vs. instrumental grievers (Martin and Doka)
- Memorializing a loss

Warm-up:

Spend ten minutes free-writing about what happened to you and your grieving process since the last session. How are you doing with your grief? *What* are you doing with it? Share these issues with the others in the group.

Survivor Sickness

Of course, a *laid-off* worker's loss of identity, income and self-definition must be grieved as major loss. However, workers who have *survived* wave after wave of layoff and reorganization can also find themselves needing to cope with multiple losses. Remaining

workers who fail to properly process the loss of colleagues, former positions and familiar working conditions can find themselves in the grip of long-term survivor sickness which has many of the same characteristics of grief (Noer, 71). The result of this failure to let ourselves experience and process our losses is that we become depressed, anxious and emotionally numb.

Part of the problem is that for many workers who spend almost as much time at work as at home, their colleagues become a second family. The relationships formed in the workplace often take on a structure similar to the family structure, so that interpersonal workplace dynamics between management and workers can resemble family dynamics in many ways. To the degree that a surviving worker's professional life is organized on the same pattern as family life, loss of coworkers mirrors loss of family members, and must be grieved in similar ways. Most workplace losses go un-acknowledged in order to keep a "stiff upper lip." But the loss of co-workers has emotional effects that are similar to the loss of siblings. When a co-worker is laid off, those remaining can suffer from "survivor guilt". When layoffs and reorganizations are repeated, losses never get resolved. You can become deadened to your emotions, fail to find joy and motivation in your work, and find yourself afraid to venture out into new career territory because you're waiting for the next loss to take place.

However, it has been shown in many corporate situations that if you are willing to address your losses directly and grieve them as necessary, you can regain trust in the organization, and go on to become an engaged member of the workplace again (Noer 71-83). One of the purposes of this workshop is to allow you an opportunity to grieve, heal and finally adapt to your new worklife conditions.

Chronic Despair

Buddhist psychologist Miriam Greenspan has identified a pervasive cultural condition she calls “emotion phobia,” a widespread avoidance of difficult emotions in ourselves and others. It is this emotion phobia that keeps those of us facing transition from properly grieving our losses. The result of this failure to let ourselves experience and process our darker emotions is that we become depressed, anxious and emotionally numb, the same symptoms that appear in survivor sickness. If you are exposed to loss after loss due to the transitions in life, but you continue to live as if nothing has happened, you can find yourself in the grip of what Greenspan calls “chronic despair, which can be related to a loss of meaning in your life.

In order to process the emotions associated with grief and pull ourselves out of our chronic despair, we need to attend to and befriend the emotions that make us uncomfortable, and give ourselves permission to surrender to our losses and our grief. Whether we are experiencing sadness, fear, anger, guilt or despair, we have the option of taking the time to sit still, acknowledge the emotions, and allow ourselves to truly and fully feel them, despite the discomfort involved. If you’re willing to jump into the flow of the emotions of grief you’ll find that the emotional energy you experience becomes transforming. You can emerge from the grief process with a more compassion for others and their transitions, and with a more resilient faith in your own life (Greenspan 57-61).

One of the things you can do to process emotions associated with a loss is to talk about them. Our tendency is to avoid talking about a loss because of social taboos that tell us to talk about happy things and accentuate the positive. When someone asks us how we are, we seldom actually tell them, especially if it’s anything less than happy. But talking about

it is actually very healthy. Seek out friends, family, coworkers, a therapist or minister who is willing to let you talk to them about the way you feel about the transition you're enduring.

The 'Neutral Zone' in Transitions

William Bridges is a corporate consultant whose many books apply a concept called the "neutral zone" to various aspects of life. The neutral zone is a phase of transition that you must navigate *after* a change takes place, but *before* the new action or condition can take root in your life. In the neutral zone, you must make sense of a loss, completely incorporate it into your thinking, and wait "in neutral" until the next necessary actions become clear to you. Depending on the circumstances, it can be weeks or months before your passage through the neutral zone is completed, so few people in transition are willing to work through this very important phase of their integration. The waiting and inactivity is an anathema to American culture, but very necessary for successful navigation of transitional times.

Much like the steps in Therese Rando's process of integrating a loss that we talked about in Week 1, in Bridges' model, you can create the vision of a new future for yourself, but only after you have been able to make sense of a loss, completely incorporate it into your thinking, and wait "in neutral" until your next steps become clear (Bridges 200-208). You will then have the required passion and energy to move into the next phase of life that takes shape after you have integrated the reality of the transition.

Patterns for Grieving

Before you begin the grief process, it can be helpful to understand your own unique grieving pattern. Although it is generally believed to be easier for women to acknowledge and experience their emotions, and easier for men to use some sort of activity as a reflection

of their grief, some recent work by psychologists Terry Martin and Ken Doka decouples gender and grief patterns. Martin and Doka describe three basic ways the energy of grief can manifest, regardless of the gender of the griever:

- *Intuitive* grievers heal by sharing their experiences of grief (especially emotional experiences) with others.
- *Instrumental* grievers get more relief from problem-solving activities related to the loss.
- *Blended* grievers express and experience grief via both types of activities (Martin and Doka 35-53).

For example, if you are an intuitive griever, you might find some sort of group process helpful. You may like to sit down with other people who have similar transition situations, talk to them about your own emotional process, and maybe even let yourself experience some of your sadness, anger or fear in the group. You will also benefit from hearing about and assisting others as they express their emotions with you.

If you're an instrumental griever, you would be more inclined to do something active to help you feel better about the loss. You might choose to go fishing with friends and tell stories about people you all used to work with. You might want to build, sew, paint or sculpt something to commemorate a loss. Helping to move office furniture to a new site, and cleaning up the old site might help you feel better about a change of work space than sitting around and talking about how sad or angry you are about the move.

If you're a blended griever, you would find both types of activities helpful at different times as you process and integrate the transition into your life.

Memorializing A Loss

As we've discussed, a major loss can signify the end of a specific phase of life, for example leaving college to take a job, leaving the workforce to have children, losing one's parents, or retiring. Part of the grief you experience is related to the loss of your image of "you" before the loss. One of your tasks for integrating the loss is to establish a new identity for yourself that is consistent with what *does* remain in your reality. Your identity must shift from who you were before the loss to who you are now, after the loss has taken place.

When you honor your grief, acknowledge it and mark it as a special occasion with a ritual, your grief can become a rite of passage that ushers you into a new phase of life. A ritual can help the new reality become more concrete for you. Rituals can work for both instrumental and intuitive grievers by letting instrumental grievers actively create something, and by giving intuitive grievers an opportunity to experience and share their emotions.

Rituals don't have to be elaborate or complicated. The basic elements of a ritual are intention (why are you doing this?), symbols to represent the loss, and a way to set off the block of time of the ritual as a 'special time' out of ordinary daily life. You may already have rituals in your life such as a morning walk, or a reading time or other activity before going to bed to help you wind down.

Ways of ritualizing a loss can be very simple, and might include:

- Lighting candles
- Making a scrap book
- Making a pilgrimage
- Writing down emotions or actions you wish to leave behind and burning them

- Making a physical object to represent the loss, such as a poem, an art object, a garment, a quilt

Activity:

Letting go ritual

Remember that you don't necessarily have to let go of *all* of a person or event. You may not want to let go of the entire relationship you have with someone, but you can let go of the parts of it that no longer serve you. You may want to let go of the anger and frustration you feel about a change in your life, but hold on to the excitement you feel about starting something new.

- Write down on a piece of paper the parts of an event or person you wish you could leave behind.
- Guided meditation to connect with that event or person, and say goodbye.
Visualization for the future without the person or event.
- Class ritual to tear up or burn the papers and let the events and people go.

Class discussion:

What did you think about the ritual? What do you think your grieving pattern is? Does the neutral zone idea make sense to you? Have you ever experienced it as part of a transition?

Homework:

This week, spend some time thinking about:

- The neutral zone and how it has affected your own transition. Write or do an art project about your experience of the neutral zone in grieving this loss.
- Your grieving style. What is it? How do you know?
- Create a ritual to memorialize the loss you are processing.

Appendix C

Week 5: Creating a New Identity

Objective:

Participants will be able to:

- Identify their own codependent behavior in their corporate environment.
- Change their thoughts about who they are.
- Develop a new social contract that allows for employment to coexist with self development.

Information:

- Overcoming codependent behavior in the corporate environment (Noer)
- Changing our thoughts about who we are (Epstein)
- Life without jobs (Bridges)
- Developing a new social contract (Rifkin)

Warm-up:

Spend ten minutes free-writing about what happened to you and your grieving process since the last session. Share these issues with the others in the group.

Codependent Behavior in the Corporate Environment

A codependent relationship is one in which a person becomes psychologically dependent on another person or entity in an unhealthy way. Corporate workers can develop codependent behaviors in which they unrealistically expect their workplace organization to provide for all their emotional, social and economic needs (Noer 136-154). Hopefully, this series of workshops has helped you to develop more adult, independent strategies for

integrating transition and creating a new vision for yourself, instead of counting on the corporation to create that definition of self for you.

Remember Therese Rando's phases of integrating change from Week 1? They are:

- Avoidance phase in which you refuse to believe that the change has actually taken place. This can take the form of forgetting about the change, pretending to yourself and others that it never happened, refusal to talk about it, or avoiding those connected with the change in some way.
- Confrontation phase in which you can no longer pretend that the loss never happened. Once you confront the loss, you may experience fear, panic, anger, guilt and sadness, depression and despair.
- Reestablishment phase after you have fully experience all emotions in the confrontation phase. In this phase, you learn to live with the way life is now, and you learn to love yourself again in your new identity (Rando 28-35).

This series of workshops was designed to help you work through phases one and two in the past few weeks. Now we can address phase three, the establishment of a new identity that you can love.

Changing Your Thoughts About Who You Are

In week 4, we talked about Epstein's ideas about "imposed coherence," or the false definition we superimpose on who we really are. We would like to think of ourselves as solid, unchanging beings, when really, our personalities are fluid and changeable based on outward conditions and on our *thoughts about* who we are. As you have become more comfortable with the idea of impermanence, have you also been able to change you thoughts about who you are? How?

Life Without Jobs

According to William Bridges, the same corporate consultant who wrote about the neutral zone, the concept of a job is a recent one. Most societies throughout history have functioned quite successfully without jobs. It is only since the industrial revolution of the early nineteenth century that our concept of 'a job' has emerged (Bridges 30-34). Those of us in corporate America find ourselves in the midst of a transition that includes a shift *away* from a job-based culture. To maintain a healthy sense of self in the midst of constant transition, we must make an internal shift away from defining ourselves by what we *do* towards defining ourselves by who we *are*.

What we do and what we are called within the corporation changes so fast these days that we can feel a distinct psychological impact unless we can develop a self-definition that provides us a place of peace and stability. To be able to function in our life situations the way they are now, we must be able to define ourselves, and create a frame of meaning within which we can feel stable and safe in the midst of turmoil (Bridges 118-140). In order to maintain our sanity, we must answer for ourselves the question of who we *are*, what we stand for, and what defines us, instead of using the ever-changing jobs we *do* as the definition. We must learn to form relationships, structure our time, and derive satisfaction from our work based on the ground of who we define ourselves to be.

Developing a New Social Contract

Based on the way American corporations now treat workers as expendable commodities, we must assume that the old social contract in which a company takes care of and thinks about the welfare of its workers is obsolete. The millions of displaced American workers must become adults. We all have to be willing to take on the responsibility of finding

meaning in our losses, recreating our own lives, and regaining a sense of happiness and trust in the world in the midst of chaos. Corporations will not perform that function for us.

We have the opportunity to shift our perspective and create a new social contract where our employment exists primarily for our own development and as a response to the spiritual call we receive to engage in important work. Based on our new perspective, employment is only secondarily for the production of goods and services. But to implement this new contract, we must become adults who accept the responsibility of defining who we are, what we need from our jobs, and what we are willing to give in return. We must be responsible for getting the continuing training we need to compete in the workplace, and to remain valuable to employers.

Activity:

Using the materials provided, create an artwork of how you see yourself today. Show the new vision of yourself and what you perceive as your mission in the workplace.

Class discussion:

What are some of your own codependent behaviors and expectations you have of your employer? How have your thoughts changed about who you are as a result of this series of classes? How can you create a new social contract that allows your employment and your self development to support each other?

Would you like to create an ongoing support group or partner to help you continue your grieving and integration process in the face of resistance to these processes in the corporate environment? We could send out an email list to allow you to stay in touch with each other after the workshop ends, or we could set up a support system now that you can call on later.

Homework:

Write up a new contract between yourself and your current or future employers. Make sure that the new contract allows for your own ongoing personal and professional development to be a component of your employment. Include the ways this contract benefits the employer.

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