

THE FOUR TASKS OF MOURNING

(WILLIAM WORDEN 1992)

TASK 1: To Accept the Reality of the Loss

This is the starting point for grief, the intellectual and emotional recognition of the loss by the loved one. Intellectual understanding of the loss tends to come first, and in normal grief quite quickly, the emotional acceptance being worked through alongside the next tasks.

TASK 2: To Work Through the Pain of Grief

Once the reality of the loss has been intellectually recognised, the pain of the grief begins to be felt. This normally involves a sometimes bewildering confusion of difficult emotions, which need to be “allowed” to be recognised and experienced fully.

TASK 3: Adjust to an Environment in Which the Deceased is Missing

Change is inevitable when a loss is suffered. The nature and degree of change will vary depending on the nature and closeness of the loss, but the task is always to accept the necessary changes and to find appropriate ways of successfully achieving them.

TASK 4: To Emotionally Relocate the Deceased and Move on With Life

This is the hard task of saying goodbye, of releasing the lost person or object and the emotional ties with them, so that life, activities, relationships and interests can go on. It is not necessary to forget, or to stop loving, but to let go and move on.