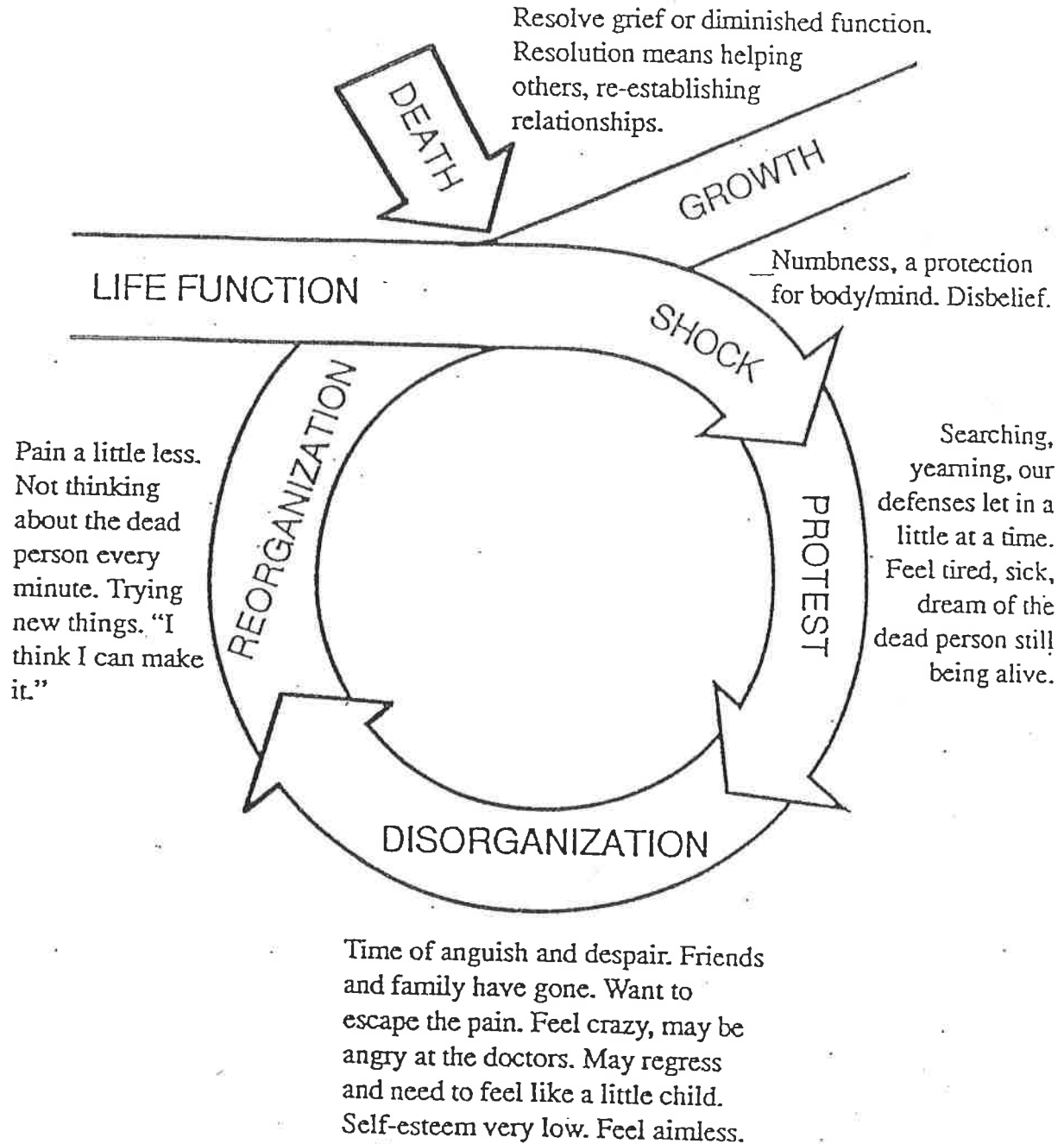


# The Grief Wheel



## The Grief Wheel (continued)

- Death precipitates a series of crises known as bereavement. Crisis theory shows that it is inevitable that a person in crisis regresses to a lower level of functioning than ordinary. The path shown on the diagram heads downward, leaving the earlier direction and showing that existence is radically changed for the individual. At times, the socially prescribed activities carry him/her along through the period of shock and numbness.
- As the reality of the loss penetrates, the individual enters the stage of yearning and searching or protest. During this period, his/her “center of being” revolves around the loss. As the wheel shows, the person moves even farther away from normal functioning.
- Then the person moves into the stage of disorganization. He/she has recognized that the loss is final and that a new life needs to be created. This new life, new roles, and new identity mean that all that has been usual and customary is changed. Thus, the path of the diagram is farthest from the old and usual way of functioning.
- As the person then decides to remake the life, he/she enters the period of the reorganization, moving, as the wheel suggests, back toward the old levels of functioning, but in a different direction. Optimal completion of the grief process means that the person leaves the cycle functioning as a higher level than before death.

*(Bereavement Support Group Manual, The Grief Institute, p. 17)*

“The states of grief are not clear cut, like the steps on a ladder. The lengths of the stages vary. Persons vacillate between stages. Persons regress and “move backward” around the wheel. An individual may be far along in the process — maybe even in the reorganization stage — when another crisis forces him/her into a “mini grief cycle”. . . In the mini-cycle, the person regresses to an earlier stage — or maybe even to the beginning stage of shock. Fortunately, however, these mini-cycles are exactly that, shortened and less intense experiences from the original cycle.”

*(Ibid, p. 17)*

When the balance of stressors and resources is favorable, the person emerges from the grief process living at a higher level of functioning than before the loss. The converse is also true. Time alone does not heal all wounds. An active involvement is necessary for resolution and growth. The “work” of grief is just that.

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