

3:00-4:30 pm:

## USING THE EMPTY CHAIR TECHNIQUE WITH BEREAVED PARENTS: A CASE STUDY – (CONTINUED)



Louis Gamino, PhD, ABPP, FT  
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Past President (2018-2019), Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC)

**Level of Instruction:** Advanced

**Presentation Summary:** Chair work with bereaved parents creates a unique therapeutic space in which a deeply-desired dialogue between surviving parent and deceased child can be simulated. Drawing on concepts and methods used in Gestalt therapy, psychodrama, and several evidence-based grief treatment protocols, practitioners can facilitate a life-like exchange between the two parties in which questions can be asked and answered, unfinished business addressed, and love and caring expressed. The presenter will briefly review theory and principles informing chair work, then present videotape excerpts from an actual therapy session where a bereaved parent addressed his deceased son. Discussion will follow.

**Objectives:** *Upon completion of this lecture, the participant should be able to:*

- Define principles of self-multiplicity, information exchange, and transformation which underlie effective chair work.
- Describe a three-step process for therapeutic chair work based on psychodramatic techniques: warm-up, action, reflection.
- Discuss potential application of chair work with bereaved parents seeking to re-connect” with their deceased child.

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### References:

- Neimeyer, R.A., Pitcho-Prelorentzos, S., & Mahat-Shamir, M. (2021). "If only ... ": Counterfactual thinking in bereavement. *Death Studies*, 45(9), 692–701. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2019.1679959>
- Pugh, M., Dixon, A., & Bell, T. (2023). Chairwork and the therapeutic relationship: Can the cart join the horse? *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 79, 1615-1626. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23473>
- Rynearson, E. K. (2018). Disabling reenactment imagery after violent dying. *Death Studies*, 42(1), 4–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2017.1370411>