
Abstract

Mourning work and rebuilding relationships through dream telling

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This study examined how bereaved families rebuild their relationships with the deceased through mourning work and how dream telling helps rebuild those relationships. Interviews were conducted with a junior high school student who experienced the death of his mother. The client initiated mourning work by discussing his experiences of bereavement and dreams. Later, while engaging in reality-focused tasks such as studying for entrance exams, he successfully rebuilt his relationship with his mother. Dream telling was significant in that process because dreams provide an excellent outlet for emotional expression; dreams transcend time and space constraints, and talking about dreams makes it possible to transform a realistic loss into a symbolic loss. Bereaved families may be confronted with the challenge of symbolizing and positioning in their minds the “non-existence” of their loved one who is “dead and no longer a part of the world.” The client positioned his deceased mother in a space of non-existence he created while discussing his dreams. By achieving the internalization of non-existence, he successfully rebuilt his relationship with his deceased mother.

Keywords: mourning work, bereavement, dream telling, absence, non-existence
