

Chapter 23

Solidarity in Times of Existential Crises in a Quantum World: Mapping Concepts and Weaving Field Narratives of Tragic Loss to Guide Those Left Behind

Kathryn Gow

Preamble

Weine (2013) stresses the importance of the use of narrative if we are to reach some sort of solidarity¹ in trauma work with patients, especially where severe trauma such as disasters or mass violence is involved. He believes that narrative approaches help us “to better understand how it is to live in those difficult spots associated with mass disaster and violence and use that understanding to try to develop and deliver innovative care and support that works in real-world contexts” (p. 304).

Narratives: Never to Be Forgotten Stories of Unresolved Tragic Loss

In Grade 2 at a small seaside primary school, a head teacher walked along the glass-louvered veranda outside my classroom. Our teacher called to a little girl to go outside to talk to the Head Nun. Right there, visible through the glass windows, the 7-year-old child was told that her mother had been killed by a train and that she would need to go home now. Some days later, my own mother told me the truth that the troubled Mrs. N (mother of 7 children from a very poor family with an alcoholic husband) had laid down on the railway line and a train had run over her. That was my first personal experience of suicide although it was called “Taking One’s Life” in that era.

¹Chapter author’s word used to encapsulate what Weine has alluded to.

K. Gow (✉)
Bond University, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia
e-mail: kathryngow@bigpond.com

Many years passed and at our Catholic high school, there was Christine who had two friends, one of them being myself; each had different backgrounds and each went on to marry in their early 20s. One day Christine rang me to advise me that Patricia's daughter had committed suicide by overdosing 2 months before, and now because she was visiting our State from the other side of Australia, she asked if I would go and visit Patricia with her. I was shocked that no one had told me, especially as my husband had known Patricia's husband (but no one spoke about suicide in those days). In the Catholic church, you could not be buried in the same burial grounds as people who had died normal deaths, if you had taken your own life. Not that it mattered to the deceased, but it certainly was critical for those left behind; something like a final kick in the face after the biggest kick in the gut (a "full body blow" as many bereaved describe it) that one could possibly imagine.

The three old school friends chatted soberly and caught up on our lives to date. Kathryn divorced young, Patricia who had lost her 18-year-old daughter to suicide and Christine still married with four grown up children.

Five months later, Christine phoned Kathryn at 10 o'clock one night and said that her son aged 26 had shot himself dead. Shocked, Kathryn listened to her old school friend try to explain what had happened, but who was still in a state of trauma and grief—this was very shocking news.

At 11 p.m. that same night, straight after the call had ended, Kathryn phoned her three children individually who lived in different parts of the country to check on them. From then on, she kept in contact with her children on a regular basis and offered unqualified support.

Kathryn had met Maria at her third academic job placement and had come to know her whole family. Five years later, Maria had phoned Kathryn, a psychologist, to say that she had found a suicide note in her son's desk drawer. What should she do? While hospitalizations followed for a few years, the young man later settled into a seemingly happy normal married life.

Unexpectedly 10 years later, Maria phoned Kathryn sobbing that her eldest son had killed himself. The big unsolved tragedy is that he was in a psychiatric section of a hospital when he asked if he could take a walk. Now knowing the history and meaning of a city is critical, especially when many of the hospital staff consists of newly arrived doctors and nurses from other countries. "I am just going for a walk up to The Story Bridge". No one battered an eyelid, as the man I had known since he was a small boy walked to a symbolic death: he would jump off the Story Bridge as hundreds of other people had done over the past century. He would end his ongoing suffering. Now if the medical/paramedical person he had made the comment to had been a local person, he would have known what the Bridge walk meant and would have raised a red flag and thus he would have been refused leave, they would have booked him into see the psychiatrist, and called for urgent assistance straight away.

Sadly, Maria was eventually admitted into a private hospital overcome with grief and severe trauma and depression. The father "beat his head against a brick wall" as he tried to ascertain why his son had been let out of a locked ward on an "involuntary admission" to go for a walk at night on his own. There was no legal satisfaction, and the matter was set aside.

Around the same time, I was an Assistant Dean at the university where I worked across three campuses and one day I was called to the city campus where a media professional, who was well respected in the Australian media for his work, had been taking a tutorial class with journalism students on the previous day.

At one point in the tutorial, he had excused himself and left the room. Unbeknown to anyone, he walked to the end of the corridor and jumped out of a six-storey window to his death. Some people outside the building saw him fall physically to his death; but it was some time before the students in his tutorial class found out where he had gone. The traumatic sequelae were widespread reaching throughout the university, students' lives, the personal family and friends of the deceased, the wider media and the community.

It took weeks for the counselling systems to work through the initial traumas, and the Head of the School and I worked on the idea of a carefully designed memorial service to be held in the university grounds. Staff, students and media personnel who attended report the service and shared experience as being highly spiritual and healing, giving most of them some nuance of closure. While family and friends also attended, it is not known if this recognition helped in some way at some level to ease their tragic loss even a little.

Between the accidental death of one friend's son and then the son of another friend's suicide, a call from a male health professional revealed that his son had symbolically taken his life on Australia Day in a country thousands of miles away from his own. He had apparently left the celebrations to take his life, although there was not 100% proof of that fact. The family disintegrated into blame and fractured (a not uncommon outcome of a suicide).

The area I live in has one of the highest suicide rates in Australia.² One incident involved an older man in a nursing home two years ago, who 2 years previously, had tried and failed to take his life. Then one year later, he left the nursing home during the early hours of the morning and drowned himself at the local pond, having left his walker and shoes neatly positioned on the bank of the pond. The local medicos reeled from this, as he was one of three suicides that week in their community.

Around the same time, a well-known local community member, who had contributed significantly to our region for 20 plus years, saw me at the local supermarket checkout counter and haltingly told me about how his son had killed himself in the previous month; this caring, generous, strong man died of a broken heart and a brain shutdown within the following two years.

In my work in the drought stricken Queensland Darling Downs between 2006 and 2008, I was called to assist with pre- and post-psychological support for farmers, as too many were being found hanging from trees or overhead shed beams, or shot through the head sadly with their loyal, but dead, cattle dog beside them.

The ages of these people spread across the lifespan. Had I not believed in some sort of afterlife, I am not sure I could have helped the survivors. However, there was

²Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, data cube Table 11.6.

something else I had come to understand. Somewhere in my mid 20s, I learned about solidarity while living in England. It is something that I came to understand more and more as my life progressed and I met people who had survived the wars in Europe.

Solidarity is critical in situations like this, whether it be with friends, family, neighbours, patients, farmers, rural communities, work places, young people, emergency service workers, church groups or schools. I could have told myself: “There is nothing I can do to help here”, but I stood or sat beside them, sometimes in silence and sometimes with words of support or the comfort of spiritual and philosophical ideas to those who had suicidal thoughts, or who were on a path to annihilation, or to those left behind—bereaved of suicide.

Introduction

What happens in a person’s life/psyche for them to let go of this life and choose non-existence? “The decision to end one’s own life is perhaps the most important determination a person can make; however, suicidal thoughts often are held privately and are not detectable by others or even by oneself, creating a deep epistemological quandary” (Nock et al., 2010, p. 515).

Nock et al. (2010, p. 515) conclude that something else must account for why some people cope and receive help, whereas others choose suicidal behaviour as a means of escape. However, they then dispute this likelihood as well. They also rule out (but with not with high certainty) that it is due to a predisposition after being involved in prior suicide attempts.

Can a person in a suicidal state ever clearly choose suicidal behaviour as a means to escape? Yes, those persons at the end of their life, or those in too much pain to continue or those whose body are too damaged to continue under duress, may openly choose euthanasia in countries that permit this process. However, the act of suicide is not open. For many victims, it is an escape from existential hell, and many other researchers and practitioners have labelled it as such.

So back to other forces in motion, we will need to call on physics, mineralogy, religion, philosophy, semiotics and quantum theories. We do not really know what goes on with many people who let go of life; we know some factors that are gleaned from medical and hospital records based on those people who have revealed suicidal ideation at some stage. There is no doubt that long-term follow-up is required, and that funding is insufficient to permit this kind of research.

We need to acknowledge that enormous work has been done on delineating some of the causes and symptoms involved in suicidal ideation attempts and final acts. However, that question “But why?” keened by those left behind remains unanswered in many incidents. New research approaches will assist the survivors, as well as those persons on the brink of suicide.

New ideas and approaches are welcome. For example, Kwiatkowska and Kielan (2013) summarized the difficulties in isolating front and backstage variables

contributing to a workable outcome and provide a framework based on fuzzy logic and semiotic methods which they have determined and can model imprecision and context dependency in medical concepts which they have applied to clinical depression. Their article demonstrates how their modelling framework uses continuous and contextual interpretation and the dimensional nature of the symptoms. So this is a very innovative step forward in terms of applications, especially if can be applied to depressed patients to check for suicidal “black hole” states of mind and spirit.

In the meantime, we also need to focus more on those bereaved of suicide—the “traumatized survivors”—to check their complex, soul-wrenching reactions as they remain alive with a black hole waiting on the sidelines; waiting to suck them into the void and destroy the remainder of their lives or their actual life, if they cannot move forward finally.

The Black Hole

Physics can be applied to our decision-making and the impact of life on a human entity. The well-publicized theory of existence of the black hole in time and space by cosmologist Stephen Hawking has applications outside the field of physics.

An article on the Internet referred to a black hole with respect to bullying online. There is no doubt that bullying face-to-face and via cyber attacks is indicated in suicide statistics of young people in the USA, Australia and New Zealand.³

In the ABC TV series called “Luther”, a highly intelligent young female psychopath killer explains to Luther what a black hole is with reference to living and dying: “It consumes matter; it sucks it in and crushes it beyond existence”. So whether or not that is what the aforementioned web page meant, it fits perfectly in our exploration not only of bullying effects on people, but also many other impacts that can lead people to think of opting out of life. With the bullying events, we have psychopaths in training trying to slowly and painfully pull apart other human beings by targeting them online emotionally, mentally and spiritually with the intent of causing pain, and some are only satisfied when the victim is destroyed. They have “sucked them into the game” and won by devious means quickly and inexorably.

The frustration is in not knowing how to intervene and stop the out of control rise of cyber attacks (in this case on people’s lives apparently indirectly but “with intent”). Laws will need to be changed quickly and appropriate action taken to divert this “black hole” on the Internet.

The contagion effects of publicity in the media about the suicides of well-known entertainers, and famous actors and persons have yet to be determined, as have the effects of a person known to others who takes his/her life and the infection this spreads to others who were linked to them in a significant way including those

³<https://nobullying.com/suicide-statistics/>.

outside the family and their inner friendship network. We see this in rural towns where the person who takes his life can be a very well-known farmer or grazier, or a young man with a smile and his whole life still ahead of him.

In the section on drought and farmer suicide, we will return to the concept of the black hole with semantically different terminology.

Solidarity: Standing by Their Side in Times of Existential Crises of Tragic Loss

In my introduction to the book “Mass Trauma: *Impact and recovery issues*” (Gow, in Gow & Celinski, 2013), I included a section in the Introduction called “The Glass Has Shattered: I Am Here” and I quote here from it.

Witnessing and Solidarity

The essence of solidarity, a term made famous by the Polish trade union formed in 1980, and actually observed through the standing side by side of workers to fight for better things for people against great odds, is defined by the Collins Dictionary of Sociology (p. 621) as “the integration, and degree and type of integration, shown by a society or group with people and their neighbours”, that is, the ties that bind people together within a society. (p. 14)

In spiritual terms, when there is nothing you can say to a person in real trauma or massive grief, when you have no answers, there is still the presence of solidarity - sticking in there, being there as solid as a rock where your presence is sensed as stable, strong and sincere, and continuing through the moment in crisis and not letting go till the rescuers come, or the next stage of therapy is reached, or the person goes to hospital, or someone takes him home or to another place, or you return another day or night (p. 14).

In my chapter (Chap. 20) in *Individual trauma: Recovering from deep wounds and exploring the potential for renewal* (Gow & Celinski, 2012), on Cambodia (having conducted trauma training for health and welfare staff in Phnom Penh in the late 1990s), I spoke about the need to “be there” for those who have survived the genocide: “In terms of solidarity, we have to be with the other in hell and know beyond doubt, that there is a way out, or if not, then that we are prepared to stay with the person in their hell, till they know we will not desert them. But being prepared to descend into hell is critical” (p. 369).

On the 23 April 2011, the television stations ran a story of the Japanese Prime Minister visiting some of the Japanese earthquake survivors, and whereas we would shake their hand or take their hand, he and his emissaries, lowered themselves to their knees and bowed low to the ground as a mark of absolute respect with the highest regard. That is solidarity.

Natural Disasters, Drought and Suicide

As Indicated at the beginning of the chapter, droughts are rarely considered as a natural disaster and are often left out of studies on the consequences of disasters on the mental health of those persons affected by severe natural disasters (see Gow, 2009a, b, c). However, suicides in droughts in Australia were notable in the first decade of this century. “It’s all gone”. “We have lost it all”. “We will never get it back”. “What’s the use?” The farmer did not get to this point of no return quickly or easily. The concept of the “black dog” is different from the “black hole”, although metaphorically the black dog takes the farmer into the black hole. Where before the icon of the cattle dog (blue, black, brown or red cattle dog) was the farmer’s best friend who never left his side and was his faithful companion, now the black dog⁴ “dogs” (stalks) him into negativity, depression, acute anomie and despair. A very special emotional and even spiritual/psychic bond is normally formed between the farmer and his dog (see the movie “Red Dog⁵” for the role of the cattle dog in Australian rural life and mythology to fully appreciate the role a cattle dog can play in the rural man’s life and the wider community).

Generally, the connection to the land and the farm and animals and way of life goes back many generations and while a counsellor or friend or bank manager may point out to the farmer, who has now borrowed more than he can ever repay to the bank, that it is time to sell up the family farm and move to a large town or city, the farmer cannot let go as he can see no future other than what he was born into. The love of the land has seeped into his psyche and while the experience is akin to that of the indigenous people who have an intimate connection to the land of Australia, the former exacts from it while the latter traditionally lets it be. Both have a similar high rate of suicide for different reasons, but both love the land of this vast country.

In the meantime, the farmer’s children have been sent to boarding schools far away (if they are not already there because of the vast distances and transport costs required to travel to educational and medical facilities), and the wife may have moved to a town to obtain employment to help pay the bills.

Families would separate in long droughts, and then the relationship might cease being what it had been as the farmer was left on his own. That may have made it an easier decision or oppositionally a more logical reason for the farmer to “end his life”. But overall, too often and rarely publicized, the farmer was found with a rope around his neck hanging from some beam or tree branch high up and out of sight generally, or lying dead beside his cattle dog that he had shot first, so that his faithful friend did not starve slowly to death after the farmer had gone.

These rural people are proud and independent people. In the Long Drought in Queensland (16 years in some parts), when I worked in the mid-west areas of Southern Queensland, we were told to take cake and biscuits with us on our home

⁴See the Black Dog Institute.

⁵The Red Dog movie film is based on a book “Red Dog” written by Louis de Bernières. Film Released 2011.

visits, as the farmer or farmer's wife⁶ would be embarrassed when they could not offer the normal Country hospitality to a visitor.

We knew that the farmers and communities were in trouble whenever a particular large rural real estate company put up a "For Sale" sign; the property would be sold up for what they could get to pay out the bank loan and other creditors. While the deaths by suicide were hushed up, the bush telegraph spread the news and this only reinforced the hopelessness of the farmer's plight in Australia where no rain fell for a long, long time.

Again in this job, it was about showing Solidarity. On one visit, I stood in the hot sun for 2.5 hours while the farmer talked back and forward about the family and business issues. Then after tolerating the biting ants crawling up my trouser for over 2 hours, I asked him if we could go inside for some water. But before we did that I asked him to summarize where he thought he was now after our discussion (counselling session in code).

To my surprise, he spatially stepped out the issues and logically nominated the main problems and what had to be done about them. I was stunned and extremely impressed by the intelligence in action played out on dirt ground deprived of rain for over 10 years.

Farmers could cope with the interference or government or short-term contract helpers, but I would take with me a copy of the poem "The Suit" to show them I understood that the great divide was more than the range of high mountains that separate the large cities from the vast grazing and cropping lands west of the divide. Tautologically, the great divide was just that; on one side, the city folk and on the other, the farmers and graziers and the businesses that helped them survive.

The empathic, easy going, experienced counsellor contracted to work with primary industries who had been given the seemingly joyful task of taking Christmas hampers to these struggling families, soon learned that a normal approach was not going to work; "No mate, thanks for the kind thoughts, but we can't take those hampers; there are worse off people just down the road a kilometre or so who need them more". So he learned to wait until he knew no one would be home and drove around to the back of the farmhouse and dropped the hampers safely out of reach of farm animals and guard dogs and "snuck" away quietly.

People across the world who work in rural and country areas understand the difference between working with clients in non-city conditions. "It's a whole other way of working" announced Sarah Lutkin at the Rural and Remote Interest Group presentation as part of the Australian Psychology Congress in September 2016.

The following poem became famous in Australia following periods of extended drought which did not impact on 80% of the population until they too lost their water or serious water restrictions were placed on them. Here I quote only two stanzas of a poem by Murray Hartin (2007):

⁶Many more women have become independent farmers across Australia in the following years after the long drought broke.

Rain from Nowhere

His cattle didn't get a bid, they were fairly bloody poor,
 What was he going to do? He couldn't feed them anymore,
 The dams were all but dry, hay was thirteen bucks a bale,
 Last month's talk of rain was just a fairytale,
 His credit had run out, no chance to pay what's owed,
 Bad thoughts ran through his head as he drove down Gully Road.
 "Geez, great grandad bought the place back in 1898,
 "Now I'm such a useless bastard, I'll have to shut the gate.
 "Can't support my wife and kids, not like dad and those before,
 "Crikey, Grandma kept it going while Pop fought in the war."
 With depression now his master, he abandoned what was right,
 There's no place in life for failures, he'd end it all tonight.

Many researchers have conducted studies on suicide rates following natural disasters, but not necessarily for extended periods of time. Olson (2016 online) reports that, after the June 2013 catastrophic flash flood in Alberta, Canada, apart from property damage, there was also serious emotional and psychological damage evident among the victims. They checked for suicidal problems, but it was not until "two and a half months after the flood that suicide-related issues began to comprise a major percentage of crisis calls". He concluded that it was too early to determine the long-term effects in that case, but other countries have recorded discrepant findings. For example, Matsubayashi, Sawada, and Ueda (2013, p. 127) posit that when a disaster is extremely large, what we would call a mega disaster, suicide rates tend to increase immediately after the disaster and possibly for several years later. This does not necessarily concur with other research outcomes, however.

Moreover, he further states that "social connectedness alone will not offset the long-term outcomes of a severe disaster, and that the negative psychological effects might not emerge until years after it occurs". Indeed interestingly, there was an inverse relationship between non-fatal suicidal behaviours immediately after the disaster, labelled as the honeymoon phase (Zunin & Myers, 2000), but an increase in suicidal behaviours later such as with the victims of the 2008 Victorian bushfires⁷ where it was some years later when some of the victims rallied to assist the survivors of the disastrous Grantham flood (Queensland)—and later allegedly three of those Victorian bushfire survivors carried out a suicide pact. This might be explained by the horror of the deluge wiping out the town of Grantham which was also portrayed over and over again for some years on television.

The heroic—honeymoon—disillusionment phenomena (see Zunin & Myers, 2000) are now being used in practice and research to gauge a better overall view of trauma and adaption following natural disasters. Madianos and Evi (2010) confirm

⁷See Gow (2009c) for the author's observations of the aftermath of those bushfires.

that the honeymoon phenomena mask the trauma impact in the short term, and note a drop in suicide rates in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, consistent with the theory and practical knowledge. Gordon (1997) applied this theory to assist disaster workers and survivors plus modifications in the twenty-first century disasters in Australia including the Victorian bushfires and mega floods in various States.

This century has been beset by supra-natural disasters of destructive impacts not witnessed so often or so widely in the past century. The frequency and ferocity continues this year across the world. More people are talking about “End Days” and prophecies when counting up the range of foretold events which appear to have happened already. Indeed, a decade ago, Psychologist Elizabeth Tindle (who had lived on Galapagos Island for three years from 1976 to 1979, with her scientist research husband Dr. Robert Tindle) asked me to co-chair a workshop of psychologists and other persons concerned about the impact of climate change and other overwhelming scientific projections for what would happen in our country and especially in our State where cities had severe water restrictions. The aim of the workshop was to interrupt the projectile thinking that life was no longer worth living if we were all going to die anyway; some people were refusing to bring children into a world of war, pestilence, drought, man-made and natural disasters and a world where the heat would be so intense that by the mid-to-late twenty-first century that all the land in Queensland and possibly other States in Australia would be burned by bushfires, and left with no water except for a small section of South East Queensland and Northern New South Wales. These were valid scientific research projections, not just doomsday prophecies.

Please note the workshop was held before the impact of the mega disasters that beset Australia from 2008 onwards and continue at the time of finalizing this chapter, when an unprecedented supra-storm struck South Australia⁸ severely damaging parts of the State of South Australia and took out the whole power grid across that State. This was one of many types of different weather events (e.g. super cell storms) now being demonstrated in Australia similar to those that strike the USA.

Because we have had so many natural disasters in the past 8 years, governments and insurance companies have toughened their stance and reduced or removed disaster assistance payouts to disaster victims and cancelled insurance policies or quadrupled the insurance cover fees for those people whose properties may still be risk at some time in the future. These actions immediately cause stress and depression among the already financially stretched victims, of which there are now many tens of thousands of people affected. These numbers are a very high proportion of the population as while Australia has a very large land area, it has only 24 million people who live mainly near its coastlines as the inland areas are dry or desert.

Multiple disasters lead to high stress, uncertainty, loss of faith in the future and depression and, from observations, a major increase in fears for the future and the futility of living as people adjust to a different future as occurred in the USA after

⁸Cyclones in Australia have only impacted on Northern Australia to date.

the 2008 financial collapse. Major educational programs need to be instigated in first worlds where people do live with unreal dreams of wealth and that life does have much to offer in other realms of experience. The World Health Organisation (2008) has continually called for action to be taken in terms of the impact of disasters on people's mental health across the world, and the Australian Federal Government published an action report following extensive visits to rural areas across Australia during the long drought (Mental Health and Drought, in Drought Review Expert Social Panel, 2008).

Spiritual and Existential Quandaries

Causation. The biggest question asked after a suicide is “Why, Why, Why???” In addressing this question, we need to leave aside the media reports of failed business people jumping out of high-rise buildings or shooting themselves in the head or overdosing, because everything they owned or thought they owned has just dissipated in a day (akin to the impact of natural disasters).

In normal everyday living, where there is no visible major external impact on their lives, “survivors” of suicide (those bereaved of suicide) ask why did he/she take his/her life? Did they not care about me/us anymore? Surely, they must have known how this would damage us! No, in most situations, the person has gone beyond the pale and into a dark zone where nothing can get through to their rational mind or will to live.

For those with a history of hospitalization or visits to medical doctors or lifeline services or other help services, there are some answers; we at least have some knowledge about what led the person to “let go of life”. Those left behind search for answers for many years, until they gently close the door in peace or exhaustion to the inaccessible and unknowable. Answers can aid in making meaning out of what has happened; survivors need to make sense of the unbelievable madness of suicide. Olson (2014) reports on Leenaars' (1996) idiographic (specific) and nomothetic (general) elements in suicide analyses. In his multidimensional model, both intrapsychic and interpersonal features are included.

The church talks about the sanctity of life being preserved at all costs. Nevertheless, this is not the lived experience of people in agony, whether it is short-lived trauma or long-lived anomie. It is so different from a natural death and even from a sudden death.

However, for those with no known history of reporting to any medical or hospital system or other base, we often have no idea. The emergency service workers can ask questions: “But Mrs. Jones was your son upset? Was there a relationship break-up, gambling alcohol, or drug dependence, loss of job, injury, bullying at school or online? Others wonder was there a sudden incurable illness, age weary, serious illness from which he/she could not recover.

The priest, minister, rabbi, mullah or monk may console the family or friends that she is safe now from torture and illness. Many people keep these fears and failures, shame and to themselves for years and decades. “It was not your fault!”

The counsellors at Lifeline Australia and other agencies assist those bereaved of suicide over many months and years. The time varies from person to person as to when they can move to a stage where they can make some new meaning out of what has happened or are able to let it rest for a while; there is no room following a sudden death for inexperienced people to talk here about post-traumatic growth; that is insulting and unkind and lacking in any kind of emotional or spiritual sensitivity.

Those bereaved of suicide are not only suffering from shock, but also they have moved across a plane of existence bordering on an existential void. Thrown out into the black hole of nothingness and then when feeling returns, they are beset by a barrage of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual pain and agony.

Many people lose their faith over this tragic loss and yet others find new meaning, but all of these movements happen at different trajectories of speed and light. Their world has been shaken from under them, and they have been cut loose in the universe.

Gall, Henneberry, and Eyre (2015) speak about the importance of reconciliation when it comes to the spiritual struggles that survivors endure and they can lead people to understand that even though a person may experience a loss of faith, in the end it is really an “abandonment of a specific religious belief” that is put aside in favour of “a move towards a more personally defined spirituality” (p. 98). Professor David Spiegel from Stanford University would emphasize, at the correct moment in the healing process, that while the person they love may have died, the relationship they had with them lives on. Again, Gall et al. (2015) proffer that “beliefs in an afterlife and continued bonds with loved ones hold promise in terms of helping bereaved individuals to find meaning in the suicide” (p. 98).

Researchers can distance themselves from the pain and the anomie, but practitioners cannot (see Jordan, 2008). However, researchers can provide answers for practitioners and the bereaved because meaning making helps those bereaved of suicide or “Survivors” as some call those left behind.

We can draw on systems theory and the disaster experience to reflect further on the concept of, and the projected ability to, bounce forward. However, the Bounce Forward concept is difficult to comprehend when speaking about those left behind after a suicide.

It is much easier to focus on the counsellors, emergency services workers (ambulance, police, fire and rescue, land sea rescue), medical and paramedical staff, church helpers, community workers and suicide prevention groups such as Lifeline Australia, Beyond Blue, The Black Dog Institute and other suicide prevention groups when considering this concept.

Why is it not as applicable to family, relatives, friends, children, neighbours, and group members’ etcetera? Because it is much harder for them to bounce forward as their investment is higher—much, much higher. The bounce back concept is based on linear models of movement across life. Such an assumption about linear moves

forward may have been more suited to non-personal matters where life is well structured and proceeds along a typical well-patterned, unchanging routine and lifestyle.

Nobody bounces back after suicide and frankly nor can they bounce forward. So why introduce this concept in the serious matter of suicide bereavement? Because it is precisely a crossing over to a plane of peace/healing—a type of quantum leap but more gentle—to understand and know that there is something else out there. Some survivors/those bereaved of suicide talk about an experience which they label as spiritual or psychic or other worldly (see Fosha, 2006).

Obviously, some people will feel the absence of the missing person more than others. When they get “bogged down” 5 years after the death (passing over) of the person, others around them may get impatient and feel drained; why won't they just on with life while they can still do something practical. Guilt remains and it depends on how successful the individual will be in moving forward finally (tentatively at times and then occasionally the person may indeed make a quantum leap to a new life).

This concept has been referred to recently in the post-disaster literature under the banner of bounce forward. The actual association Manyena, O'Brien, O'Keefe, and Rose (2011) posited was in relation to recovering from disasters; however, the term also came from quantum theory sources. In this setting, it is about reaching a point or a place where every avenue has been explored in terms of assisting the survivors to get on with their lives without the “treasured” valued person being present in their lives.

This author believes that Quantum physics has presented us with challenging and uplifting ideas, the utilization of which may help in healing and recovery and provide the ability to jolt us, if necessary, into a different plane of being, in order to move on with life, albeit it be on a different trajectory than that which we may have been unconsciously programmed for.

The term adaptive capacity (embedded in ecological systems) can also be conceived as the social resilience of someone who finds the capacity for positive adaptation despite adversity (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). In the book *Mass trauma: Impact and recovery issues*, Gow and Mohay (2013) explain more in depth about the effect of the eco-resilience and social resilience, especially in relation to droughts and natural disasters.

It is easier to conceive of the idea that a community could bounce forward after a natural disaster than a person. Following the annihilation of Christchurch (South Island of New Zealand) after the massive earthquake in February 2011, Vallance (2012) links the concepts of the adaptive capacity of a socio-ecological system to recovery; that is, its “ability to cope with change by observing, learning and then modifying the way it interacts with the world, over different geographic and temporal scales” (see Folke et al., 2002).

We know that it takes a major destination and trajectory change for an individual's internal and external forces for the real bounce forward to occur. Bouncing back should not be confused with bouncing forward or recovering when one's system goes back to homeostasis.

However, it is possible that by receiving such a catastrophic jolt via a natural disaster that new directions can now be envisioned; that is, it is not just the imperative to change that opens the possibilities, it is also some crossing of a plane or time zone or space (Is it possible that there is a cleavage between the two states after a quantum change occurs that may be tangential?).

In geology and mineralogy, the term cleavage is well known. There is a recognized difference between crystal parting and cleavage. “Cleavage is the tendency of a mineral to break along smooth planes parallel to zones of weak bonding” (Wikipedia, 2016) and is thus expected by those who know what is going on. But crystal parting occurs when minerals break along planes of structural weakness due to external stress or along twin composition planes. Parting breaks are very similar in appearance to cleavage, but only occur due to stress. Thus, if a person/system is not aware of external stress on the object/item/animal/human being, then safety issues arise as cracks weaken the entity. If we specifically consider a human being as the rock or mineral/metal, and there is a chink in the chain or some major stress is applied to it, and then a sudden heavy push or pull occurs, then depending on the condition of the object/person, it is not unusual for it to break or chip and weaken further, and then fracture may well occur.

Conclusion

Perfect timing, great empathy, patience, care, sensitivity and judging how many years of mourning need to have passed is required not only for the immediate persons affected by the severing of the relationship of the departed, but also for all professionals and researchers involved in this field so that they too may not burnout or become ill or just give up.

So utilizing the idea of bouncing forward, it is possible that we can move out of a projected trajectory of grief and annihilation following loss; this applies to all those involved with tragic loss, whether they be survivors of suicide or disasters. It applies to the helpers, as equally to the loved ones suffering the loss of a person/s to suicide or disaster.

On the way to the bounce forward preparation, there is normally a timeline in the bereavement process that can be aided by attending programs such as those offered by Lifeline Community Care Brisbane in Australia. Groos’ (2012) chapter is well worth reading for those who are actively involved in helping those persons bereaved of suicide.

We are human and while we may want to travel to new worlds or live on Mars, we also need to acknowledge, as many spiritual leaders in the world have pointed out: You are not alone, even if there is only one set of footprints in the sand at some stages of your life.⁹

⁹The poem *The Footprints* (anonymous) is famous in some western spiritual environments.

References

- Bullying and Suicide Statistics in US, Australia and New Zealand. Modified: September 01, 2016. Retrieved from <https://nobullying.com/suicide-statistics/>.
- De Leo, D. (2016). *Natural disasters and suicidal behaviours: A systematic literature review*. OSC Asia Pacific Conference, 27.
- Drought Policy Review Expert Social Panel. (2008). *It's about people: Changing perspective. A Report to government by an expert social panel on dryness*. Report to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, September.
- Folke, C., Carpenter, C., Elmqvist, T., Gunderson, L., Holling, C., & Walker, B. (2002). Resilience and sustainable development: Building adaptive capacity in a world of transformations. *AMBIO*, 3, 437–440.
- Fosha, D. (2006). Quantum transformation in trauma and treatment: Traversing the crisis of healing change. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(5), 569–583.
- Gall, T. L., Henneberry, J., & Eyre, M. (2015). Spiritual beliefs and meaning-making within the context of suicide bereavement. *Journal for the Study of Spirituality*, 5(2), 98–112.
- Gordon, R. (1997). Theory and practice of early interventions in trauma and disaster. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 3(2), 44–51.
- Gow, K. (2009a). Can we anticipate more heatwaves, wildfires, droughts and deluges? In K. Gow (Ed.), *Meltdown: Climate change, natural disasters & other catastrophes—Fears and concerns of the future* (pp. 157–174). New York: Nova Science Publications.
- Gow, K. (2009b). Drought in rural areas: Not just the absence of water. In K. Gow (Ed.), *Meltdown: Climate change, natural disasters & other catastrophes—Fears and concerns of the future* (pp. 269–286). New York: Nova Science Publications.
- Gow, K. (2009c). *The long road home*. ABC News pages 1–2. Posted Tue Feb 10, 2009 9.38 am AEDT. Retrieved from <http://abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/02/10/2486966.htm> on the Victorian bushfires.
- Gow, K., & Celinski, M. (2012). *Individual trauma: Recovering from deep wounds and exploring the potential for renewal*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Gow, K. (2013). Overview: Mass trauma affects whole communities. In K. Gow & M. Celinski (Eds.), *Mass trauma: Impact and recovery issues*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Gow, K., & Mohay, H. (2013). When community resilience breaks down after natural disasters. In K. Gow & W. Celinski (Eds.), *Mass trauma: Impact and recovery issues* (pp. 257–280). New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Groos, A. D. (2012). Trauma, grief and guilt in suicide bereavement. In K. Gow & M. Celinski (Eds.), *Individual trauma: Recovering from deep wounds and exploring the potential for renewal* (pp. 83–100). New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Hartin, M. (2007). Australian poem, Murray Hartin, Rain from Nowhere. Friday, 09/03/2007. *Australian storyteller*. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/content/2007/s1867794.htm>.
- Jordan, J. (2008). Bereavement after suicide. *Psychiatric Annals*, 38(10), 1–6.
- Kwiatkowska, M., & Kielan, K. (2013). Fuzzy logic and semiotic methods in modelling of medical concepts. *Fuzzy Sets and Systems*, 214, 35–50.
- Leenaars, A., Kolves, K., & Kolves, K.E. (1996). Suicide: A multidimensional malaise. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour*, 26(3), 221–236.
- Luthar, S. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2000). The construct of resilience: implications for interventions and social policies. *Development and Psychopathology*, 12(4), 857–885.
- Madianos, M., & Evi, K. (2010). Trauma and natural disasters: The case of earthquakes in Greece. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 15, 138–150.
- Manyena, S., O'Brien, G., O'Keefe, P., & Rose, J. (2011). Disaster resilience: Abounce back or bounce forward ability? *Local Environment*, 16(5), 417–424.
- Matsubayashi, T., Sawada, Y., & Ueda, M. (2013). Natural disasters and suicide: Evidence from Japan. *Social Science and Medicine*, 82, 126–133.

- Mental Health and Drought in Rural and Remote Queensland. (2008). Service mapping report of the centre for rural & remote mental health Queensland. November 2008. <http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=407159ee-548f-4098-875e....>
- Nock, M. K., Park, J. M., Finn, C. T., Deliberto, T. L., Dour, H. J., & Banaji, M. R. (2010). Measuring the suicidal mind: Implicit cognition predicts suicidal behavior. *Psychological Science*, 21(4), 511–517.
- Olson, R. (2014). *Why do people kill themselves?*. Info Exchange: Centre for Suicide Prevention. 17.
- Olsen, R. (2016). *Natural disasters and rates of suicide: A connection? Centre for suicide prevention*. Retrieved from <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/resource/naturaldisastersandsuicide/>.
- Vallance, S. (2012). *Urban resilience: Bouncing back, coping, thriving*. Paper presented at EARTH: FIRE AND RAIN Australian & New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference, Brisbane, 16–18 April, 2012.
- Weine, S. (2013). Towards dialogic trauma work. In K. Gow & M. Celinski (Eds.), *Mass trauma: Impact and recovery issues* (pp. 300–311). New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- World Health Organisation. (2008). *WHO urges more investments, services for mental health*. Retrieved October 2, 2008 from http://www.who.int/mental_health/en/.
- Wikipedia, 2016. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleavage_\(crystal\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleavage_(crystal))
- Zunin L. M., & Myers, D. (2000). *Training manual for human service workers in major disasters* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: DHHS Publication No. ADM 90–538. Retrieved September 01, 2016 from <http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/ADM90-538/tmsection1.asp>.