



From Trauma, Grief, to Rehabilitation

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Siu Ching's hand was cut by the sharp metal lid accidentally when she attempted to open the can yesterday. Although bleeding had been stopped, it was still painful due to the loss of a bit of flesh at the fingertip.

Siu Ching: "Doctor, will the new flesh grow? How long do I need to wait? Will there be any scarring?"

Doctor: "Skin and flesh can regrow, but it takes time as the cut is quite deep. I'm afraid that leaving a scar is possible."

Even such a minor trauma on the fingertip causes excruciating pain, it is not difficult to imagine the suffering of Hong Kongers caused by the post-traumatic stress as a result of social unrest since June 2019.

Apart from biological factor, the fact that pain persists after trauma is probably due to a sense of grief. Grief is not limited to bereavement, but refers to the deep sorrow as a result from loss of anything considered to be important. For instance, when a sporty middle-aged man is diagnosed to have chronic illness and has to take life-long medicine, he may mourn his good old days as a young and fit guy. When a couple has to divorce, they may lament the loss of their previous commitment to each other. Regarding the social unrest in Hong Kong, people feel angry, anxious, depressed, as well as grieving the loss of their familiar homeland.

According to traditional medical textbook, there are five stages of grief, namely denial (This isn't happening, can't be happening!), anger (why me?), bargaining (I can do anything if this doesn't happen!), depression (immersed in deep sorrow and lack of motivation to living) and acceptance (finally admit the loss and resume normal living). However, everybody is unique. The textbook theory is just for reference. When I do bereavement counseling, I seldom ask people to let go or look forward, as I feel these kind of general advice uncaring and merciless. For those who had experienced the true agony of grief, they will understand how intense the suffering can be. Just like a piece of flesh is being cut away from the body, it is a real and ongoing loss, how to let it go? If there are still some questions unanswered, how to forget about the past and look forward to the future? Narrative therapists, by using post-modern theories, have their own unique approach in supporting clients suffering from grief. Instead of looking forward, they encourage looking back, to explore the value or the meaning behind the loss. Most Hong Kongers are grieving now, but their losses can be different. While some are mourning their economic loss, some are lamenting the past family harmony and the social justice that have perished.





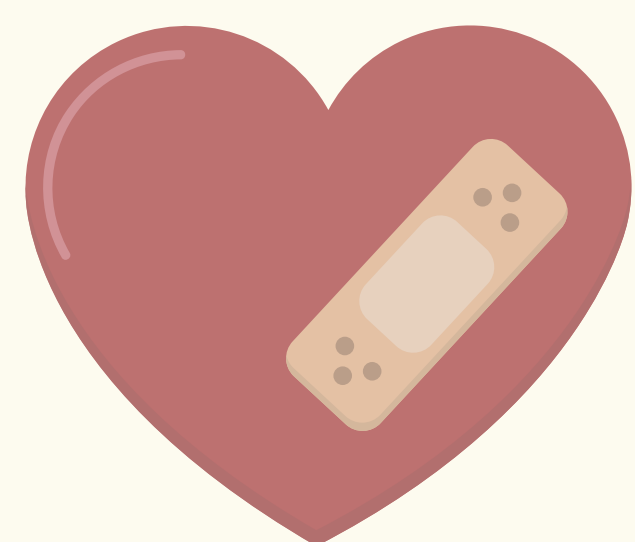
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Perhaps, we are not magicians and do not exhibit the power to re-write the past. However, if we understand clearly what is the cherished thing that we have lost, it is possible for us to put this back into our future. It is undeniable that the sporty middle-aged man with newly diagnosed chronic illness can no longer participate in vigorous soccer match. However, with satisfactory disease control by medical treatment, he can continue jogging and swimming if he is unwilling to lose his interest in sports. The divorced couple can no longer live together beyond doubt, but the love and care that was gone could come from other family members, friends and possibly a partner in the future. No matter the losses of Hong Kongers are their wealth, family harmony, or social justice, I'm sure one day when they reappear, they will be more cherished. It is because through the long journey from trauma, grief to rehabilitation, we have been present and stayed together.

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For those would like to seek for mental health advice from our doctors, please make appointment with our Mental Wellness Service by phone booking at 2766 5433.

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「從創傷、哀傷，到療傷」

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小菁昨天開罐頭時，不慎被鋒利的鐵蓋剝走了指頭上的一小片皮肉。雖然已經止血，但畢竟丟了一塊肉，仍然疼痛無比。

小菁：「醫生，新肉還會不會長出來？要等多久？會不會留疤痕？」

醫生：「皮肉會重生，但這次傷口深，需要較長的時間，也有機會留疤痕。」

被罐頭剝損的小創傷，都足以痛入心扉，何況是我們的家園 – 香港？

創傷之後，疼痛仍然揮之不去，除了生理因素之外，心裡哀悼所失去的，也是痛苦的原因。提及哀悼，這不局限於喪親，而是包括因失去任何重要的人與物而引發的哀傷與悼念。一位熱愛運動的中年人被確診患上不能根治的長期病，從此要終身服藥了，會哀悼逝去的青春和體能；一對夫妻走到緣份的盡頭要離婚了，會哀悼不復再的海誓山盟；自去年六月之後，香港社會動盪，我們憤怒、焦慮、抑鬱、失眠，同時間也在哀悼我們熱愛的家園。

根據傳統醫書記載，哀悼過程分為五個階段，包括早期的否認（這不可能發生吧？）、憤怒（為什麼選中我？）、討價還價（只要這一切從沒發生，要我做什麼也可以的！），中期的漫長沮喪（如行屍走肉的悲哀，喪失日常生活的動力），以及後期最終接受事情發生了，生活重回正軌。然而，每個人也是獨一無二的，醫書理論只供參考。我處理過不少哀傷輔導，甚少勸人放下、向前看之類，我總覺得這是多冰冷的「離地」劇本對白！真正經歷過哀傷的朋友就會知道，這種錐心之痛，猶如割走了一塊肉，如何放下？有些疑團仍未解開，如何扮失憶向前看呢？後現代學派敘事治療對哀傷輔導有其獨特的看法，就是鼓勵重新認識所失去的一切。面對現在的香港，大家也會感到悲傷，但悲傷的原因卻未必一樣。有人在哀悼經濟損失，有人在不捨過去的家庭和睦，也有人在悼念社會公義的淪亡。

我們不是魔術師，無法變走已發生的事。但是如果我們了解自己，知道哀傷源自喪失了什麼東西，就可以有望將這件東西添置在未發生的將來。那位確診長期病的中年人，的確無法再參與劇烈的足球比賽了，但如果他鍾愛的是運動，只要接受治療令病情受控，仍然可以閒時跑步、游泳；那對離婚夫妻確實無法繼續一起生活了，但若果不捨得的是一份噓寒問暖及互相關心的愛，這可以來自親友或將來未出現的伴侶，並且因為得來不易而加倍珍惜。我相信，無論損失的是財富、家庭和睦，還是社會公義，當再次重臨香港的時候，必會更加矜貴，因為從創傷、哀傷，到療傷的漫長過程，有你，有我。

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<https://www.polyu.edu.hk/uhs/en/>

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