

# Grief Dreams in Traumatic Grief Counseling and Attachment Informed Grief Therapy

Kondo Masaki\*

Graduate School of Human Science, Ritsumeikan University, Japan

\*Corresponding author: masakic@fc.ritsumei.ac.jp

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## Abstract

Bereavement and grief, particularly following natural disasters, can evoke a variety of painful emotions, including sadness and guilt. For some, particularly after a traumatic loss, the grieving process can become complicated, leading to significant distress. This paper explores the therapeutic function of grief dreams—dreams in which the deceased appears—as a tool for processing loss. Using a pragmatic case study approach, this article analyzes dream reports through Grief Counseling, and Attachment Informed Grief Therapy on 3 cases, five perspectives that allow us to sincerely mourn the death of the deceased and hold it in our mind, rather than stirring up anxiety, fear, and despair about our own death. 1. Dreams as a Venue for Symbolic Reunion. 2. Dreams as a Reflection of Acceptance 3. Dreams as a Means of Re-experiencing Trauma 4. The Resolution of Grief Dreams as a Marker of Progress 5. Sadness is a bond with the deceased.

*Keywords:* Greif dreams, bereavement, Grief Counseling, Attachment-Informed Greif Therapy, Case Study

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Grief is a natural response to the loss of a loved one. For many people, the symptoms of grief subside over time. However, for some, grief persists and becomes a barrier to living. There has been a long-running debate about whether grief is a mental illness, and if so, what the symptoms are, and how to determine the diagnostic criteria. The reaction of grief following the death of a loved one has been known since ancient times, but it has only recently become a subject of medical treatment. In the ICD-11 (2019), prolonged grief disorder (PDG) was classified under the category of “stress-related disorders” before the DSM. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has been revised, and “Prolonged grief disorder (PGD)” has been added as a new diagnostic name for the first time. Thus, when grief persists with a certain degree of intensity over a long period of time, it has come to be regarded as a medical condition (Kondo, 2024).

Grief therapy is a concentrated form of empathically attuned and skillfully applied social support in which the therapist helps the bereaved person reregulate after a significant loss by serving as a transitional attachment figure. This includes addressing deficits in affect regulation and mentalizing related to both the loss at hand and early neglect or trauma, as needed. In an environment that encourages exploration and growth, the bereavement therapist supports the bereaved in experiencing and tolerating feelings relating to grief, integrating new information and skills and developing a new self-narrative that incorporates the impact of the loss. The goal of grief therapy is integration of the loss on a psychological and neurological level. Successful grief therapy encourages a state of flexible attention to the loss, and to the relationships, roles and experiences that are still available to the bereaved individual, in order that they may re-engage in life, without relinquishing their attachment to the deceased (Kosminsky & Jordan, 2016).

Dreams in which a deceased individual appears to a bereaved person are called “Grief Dreams”. (Wray et al, 2005; Yamamoto, 2013). On the otherhand, the definition of Greif Therapy was described by Kosminsky & Jordan. Grief therapy is a concentrated form of empathically attuned and skillfully applied social support in which the therapist helps the bereaved person reregulate after a significant loss by serving as a transitional attachment figure (Kosminsky & Jordan, 2016).

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Diagnorsis has been changed. Although the grief response to bereavement has long been known, it is only in recent years that it has come to be considered a medically viable and treatable mental illness. Worden (2018) differentiated the various approaches called grief care into grief counseling and grief therapy. Grief counseling is a technique that can be initiated after a bereavement, before the normal grieving process becomes complicated or prolonged. On the other hand, grief therapy is a treatment technique for chronic grief that lasts for a long

period of time, known as PGD. Complicated grief treatment and attachment-informed grief therapy are considered to be effective psychological therapies (Kondo, 2024).

Attachment-focused psychotherapy is a therapeutic approach that emphasizes the importance of attachment experiences in shaping an individual's emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and coping mechanisms. This modality becomes particularly relevant when working with complex trauma especially in cases where trauma from multiple loss experiences, such as repeated bereavements, separation, and grief. Individuals who have endured multiple loss experiences may develop profound disruptions in their sense of safety, trust, and emotional connection with others. These repeated loss experiences can impair the development of internal attachment models, leading to symptoms such as emotional dysregulation, avoidance, dissociation, or difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships.

Attachment-focused psychotherapy aims to:

- Provide a secure therapeutic relationship that fosters trust and emotional safety
- Support the processing of grief and trauma in an integrated way
- Help the client develop healthier relational strategies and internal resources

This approach is particularly suitable for clients who have experienced early or repeated relational losses, as it allows for both the acknowledgment of grief and the rebuilding of attachment capacities that may have been compromised by trauma.

### ■3.0 OBJECTIVES

Grief counseling conducted through narratives about grief dreams identified five perspectives for sincerely mourning the death of the dead and holding the death of the dead in one's heart, rather than stirring up anxiety, fear, and despair about one's own death.

In this paper, I will introduce the grief dreams discussed in grief counseling and present five perspectives for sincerely mourning, which was discussed through an examination of the mourning process. Next, in the initial dream of Attachment-focused psychotherapy for complex trauma caused by multiple loss experiences, the patient confronts past attachments and reconnects with them through reports of grief dreams. Finally, it will be discussed the function of grief dreams on morning based on these cases.

### ■4.0 METHODOLOGY

[Pragmatic case study]

This research method is a type of case study research method that examines how a particular treatment plan or intervention approach has resulted in psychotherapy outcomes. It also reveals how the therapist adapted and modified the treatment approach to meet the patient's needs. The primary objective of this practice-oriented case study is to present in detail how a particular treatment modality was deployed with a particular patient. Although similar to a traditional case study, it differs from a traditional case study in that it requires the researcher to present a wide range of information about the case and to conduct the study in a consistent manner.

#### 4.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, pragmatic case study design. This approach is particularly well-suited for psychotherapy research as it focuses on understanding a complex phenomenon—in this case, the function of grief dreams—within its real-life clinical context. The goal is not to produce statistically generalizable findings, but to provide a detailed, in-depth, and holistic account of the therapeutic process and outcomes in specific cases. This design allows for a close examination of how interventions are adapted to meet individual patient needs and how meaning is co-constructed within the therapeutic relationship.

#### 4.2 Participants And Collection

The cases presented were selected from the author's clinical practice. Participants were chosen based on the richness and relevance of their experiences with grief dreams in the context of their therapy for traumatic loss and attachment issues.

Data were collected over the course of long-term psychotherapy and consist of detailed clinical case notes. This "data" includes:

- Case History: Comprehensive background information gathered during initial assessments.
- Process Notes: Detailed records of therapy sessions.
- Verbatim Dream Reports and Associations: Transcriptions of the patients' descriptions of their dreams and their immediate thoughts and feelings associated with the dream content, recorded as accurately as possible during sessions.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of the case material was interpretive and hermeneutic, drawing primarily on psychodynamic and attachment-informed theories of grief and trauma. The analytical process involved several steps:

- 1.Immersion in the Data: A thorough review of all case notes for each participant to gain a holistic understanding of their history and therapeutic journey.
- 2.Thematic Identification: Identifying recurring themes, symbols, and emotional patterns within the dream narratives (e.g., the changing face of the mother in Alice's dreams, the theme of shelter in Betty's dream).

- 3.Contextual Interpretation: Connecting the identified dream themes to the patient's life history, presenting problems, and in-session behaviors. The analysis focused on understanding the symbolic meaning of the dreams as a communication about the patient's internal state and their progress in processing grief.
- 4.Synthesis: Integrating the interpretations into a coherent narrative that explains the function of the grief dreams within the patient's unique therapeutic process.

### 4.3 Ethical Considerations

Case 1 depicts some typical cases of post-disaster trauma, which have been edited to prevent individuals from being identified. Case 2 and Case 3 provided informed consent for their anonymized case material to be used for research. To ensure confidentiality, all names and potentially identifying biographical details have been altered.

## ■5.0 CASE ILLUSTRATION 1: GRIEF COUNSELING FOR TRAUMATIC BEREAVEMENT

Case: A junior high school girl whose classmate died in a heavy rain disaster.

Presenting Issue: The patient did not witness her friend's death, but the image of the river from the disaster was intertwined with the memory of her deceased classmate. She reported that when she closed her eyes, a realistic image of her friend being swept away by a muddy stream would appear, accompanied by audio. Her dreams included scenes of being caught in a war where she was almost killed or had killed someone.

Therapeutic Process: Through discussing her dreams, the patient realized she felt left out because she had not been contacted about her friend's farewell ceremony and was unable to mourn with her classmates. She recognized feelings of self-blame, expressing thoughts like, "It would have been better if I had died with her".

The trauma of a sudden loss can cause memories to become "static," trapping the individual in the past. Attempting to access these memories can trigger flashbacks and pull the individual back to the time of the trauma. Furthermore, the experience can activate normally unconscious anxieties about one's own death. By listening to the messages conveyed in grief dreams, it is possible to access and transform these static memories, facilitating the grieving process.

### 5.1 Case Illustration 2: Grief Dreams In Psychotherapy

Patient: "Alice" case in psychosomatic clinic that she is a woman in 30's who exhibits conversion and dissociative symptoms.

Chief Complaints: Alice would scream, yell at, and hit her husband. After episodes of shock, she would sometimes lose her voice for a night. She also experienced periods of dissociation where she would wander the streets, unable to go home.

Background: When Alice was 21 years old, she found out that his father had gambling debts. It was difficult to discuss the debt and divorce at family meetings and meetings with relatives. She was studying law at university at the time, and managed to pay off the debt by applying to a judicial scrivener (Solicitor) for a procedure of debt waiver on her father's behalf. At the time, She was dating a man who played a popular sport in the sciences at a well-known university. She had been dating him for six years and was even engaged to him, but they eventually broke up. Then, she "gets over that person" and marries her current husband. Despite the fact that she had told him about his father's gambling and debts before they married, it was discovered that he had heavy dept in gambling. Before they were married, her husband promised her he would not borrow money and smoke, but he lied to her. She no longer believed her husband because he gambled, borrowed a lot of money, and smoked cigarettes even when he told her he would quit. She yelled at him about the debt, but when she found out he had lied and smoked cigarettes, she lost her voice and her symptoms became worse. she visited our clinic in August X and started psychotherapy in December X+1.

Appearance/impression: She is younger than her age, giving the impression of being in her mid-twenties, with light makeup and shoulder-length black hair. She speaks politely on topics in a logical and calm tone, and occasionally tears up.

Diagnosis/current symptoms: Depression, Conversion disorder, Dissociative disorder

Assessment: Alice has overcome her father's gambling debts and a broken engagement, but now presents with depressive and somatoform symptoms due to her married husband's gambling and debts. She is still depressed and dissociated from her husband, although the debt problem itself has been resolved and her condition is more stable than in the acute phase.

Psychological test: SDS:51, Rorschach-test:

Emotional control is compressive and suppressive, with high index of anxiety, and difficult to control. Sensitive to stimuli from the environment, both egocentricity and dependence on others are observed. Dissociation from the illustration, confusion is seen, and the tendency is to be swept away by the environment and to become dependent when feelings are relaxed. From subjective F, confusion of inner feelings

is seen, and in real-life situations, confusion between the former lover and the present husband is thought to occur. The emphasis on failure indicates a sense of inadequacy, and there is a tendency to try to adapt through devaluation.

Psychotherapy structure: Face-to-face, Once every two weeks for 50 minutes.

In therapy, Alice discussed a series of dreams she had following the sudden death of her mother from pneumonia caused by a misdiagnosis.

[Dream1]

There is a building that looks like a redeveloped restaurant in a seaside area of a city. I'm there with my friends (mixed male and female). From the restaurant, I could see the apartment I was thinking of buying over there. Even in my dream, I knew that my mother was dead, but there was a living mother in that apartment. But from the beginning, my mother was someone else. In the dream setting, my father and mother are divorced, and my mother has remarried another man. My mother works at a department store. My mother's husband (not my father) is working on an event on the 22nd floor of a department store, and he follows his subordinates, who look like they're arrogant, and say, "Hey!" I will also make my older sister and sister follow my mother. My mother has two other children, ages 6 and 8.

[Association]

When she was in her early 20s, she found out that her father had borrowed money from gambling, and her family and relatives talked about it, and there was talk of divorce.

A was enrolled in the Faculty of Law at the time, managed to borrow money by doing some research on his own, completing the debt waiver procedures, and asking a judicial scrivener. Around that time, she even got engaged to the man she was dating, but the relationship ended. She then "gets over that person" and marries her current husband. However, even though she had talked about her father's debts before they got married, she found out that her husband also had pachinko debts. When she first found out, she paid off her debt and promised not to smoke, but later on, the debt amounted to several million yen, and even though she said she would stop smoking, she continued to smoke, so she could no longer trust her husband. My depression and dissociative symptoms became severe and I visited the hospital.

[Dream2]

The screen changes and the apartment I just saw is now the apartment where my mother is. A woman steals an object from the storage room. It seems that the object was something that my mother did not want others to see, so she kills the woman. (From the beginning of the dream, my mother had become someone else's face.) Then, the woman is dropped (or beaten) from the stairs. I run away because I am scared. Mother of another face had a great shape, and the blood on the corpse was red. (The killing method was) probably bludgeoning. She was killed with a single blow.

[Association]

I didn't realize that my mother was dead. Just when I thought, "My mother is alive," she killed someone. How shall I tell my sister and younger sister? In reality, my father spent tens of millions of dollars on gambling. My mother had her own job and had some coming in, so she had loose control. My father is really an idiot, a fool. When shall I tell my sisters about my father's debt?

[Dream3]

My mother comes out with a kind face. I am wearing a kimono I bought myself. My mother gave me a kimono obi (sash)\*. I put on that kimono and obi and went out, but I didn't wear this or that.

\*obi(sash): A kimono obi is a long, thin piece of cloth that is tied around the waist. Kimonos and obis are used in combination and passed down from parent to child from generation to generation.

[Association]

I think I have convinced myself. Until now, I had a kimono license myself, but I had my mother dress me. I think, "I must tie the obi myself from now on." After I woke up, I thought, "That kimono and that obi... The kimono has a prestige, and the obi has also a prestige, so I thought it had a different prestige. The kimono is of high quality and the obi is not so extravagant. I looked up "obi" in a dream book and found that it means "connection. I wondered if I wanted to be connected with my mother.

[Dream4]

The screen changes and the apartment I just saw is now the apartment where my mother is. A woman steals an object from the storage room. It seems that the object was something that my mother did not want others to see, so she kills the woman. (From the beginning of the dream, my mother had become someone else's face.) Then, the woman is dropped (or beaten) from the stairs. I run away because I am scared. Mother of another face had a great shape, and the blood on the corpse was red. (The killing method was) probably bludgeoning. She was killed with a single blow. (association) I didn't realize that my mother was dead. Just when I thought, "My mother is alive," she killed someone. How shall I tell my sister and younger sister? In reality, my father spent tens of millions of dollars on gambling. My mother had her own job and had some coming in, so she had loose control. My father is really an idiot, a fool. When shall I tell my sisters about my father's debt?

[Association]

This is the first time I have seen my mother's face clearly. Until now, when I dreamt of her, it was a different face. Rather than being sad, I wanted her to hang in there and live a little. Once again I dreamed of the same situation, but I don't remember the next dream.

[Dream5]

I am riding alone on a bus. The bus arrives at a dark place, a land reclaimed by the residents from the sea. My mother comes out of a four-story apartment building. It is a neighborhood of two houses and one residence, and the residents do not look very happy. After catching up with my mother, I join my father, sister, and sister. My father is very hard on my mother.

I'm so angry because My father has set my mother on the concrete ground under the half-basement that I sits where she sits and she sits where I sits. My father replaces a boy of about middle and high school age. I can't forgive him and flip the whole chair over. My sister stops me with her terrible arm strength. The boy has a cutter and is wired. I thought he was going to cut someone, but he adds the cutter to his mouth and jumps on the car. I tell my mother and sister to come live with me.

## 5.2 Dream Analysis In Therapy

In Dream1 and Dream2, the future location of her future dwelling are replaced by an apartment building where his mother, who is a dead person, is located. In that future dwelling, the mother murders a woman. Here the mother looks like a different person because "she does not realize that her mother is dead. The fact that the mother here associates the thought "my mother is alive" with the thought "my mother killed a murderer" is probably a paradoxical expression of the thought that the mother killed a person because of medical malpractice. This is because, since the mother's death is not realized on the conscious mind, it can be seen as a dream condensation (compression) taking place in the subconscious and appearing in the dream as a murder committed by the mother with another face.

The shock brought about by the drop from the moment he thought his mother was alive in Dream1 to the moment she killed a person is a testament to the considerable shock he felt when he learned of her death.

In addition, because the murder was done by the brutal method of bludgeoning to death, and because "the mother's face had an amazing expression," the viewer feels a deep sense of hatred toward her. The stronger this hatred is, the harder it is for the woman to accept her mother's death because of the repression that prevents her from bringing this emotion to her consciousness.

First, although Alice "did not realize her mother's death," it reflects her own feelings of having been touched by the experience of her mother's death, a second-person death. Second, the experience of her mother's death reflects her awareness, however unconsciously, of first-person death, her own death, as the experience of death is reoriented toward the self.

In this situation, she is afraid and chooses to run away. This choice is an inversion of the reality that, while she is afraid and wants to run away in the real situation, she is forced to confront the problems of her family as the center of the family and is the only one who escapes from such suffering through dissociative symptoms.

Hence, from Dream2 emerges the image of her having the urge to turn her back on her family problems and her genealogy and run away from them. Here, this woman's family problem is one of the subjects from the beginning of the interview, the problem of her cumulative ancestry, that is, the historical problem she has carried with her.

In Dream3, the deceased mother appears with a kind face. Seeing that face, this woman wonders if she has made sense to me. It could be because she feels relief that she has saved her mother's face by holding her accountable for her medical malpractice, or it could be because the self-guilt she feels for her mother's death has been erased by her acting as a proxy for her mother's vengeance.

The kimono I bought for myself is different in rank from the obi given to me by my mother, and is considered to be the self I wear, which I made to look "terribly luxurious," a "false self," so to speak. The obi that my mother gave me, on the other hand, is of "different rank," and the self that I am pretending to be is not well connected to her own self. This dream is caused by the conflict between the self that she shows to the outside world and her true self. In this light, the association "I have to tie my own obi from now on," suggests her determination to change her self-worth, which is displayed in a very luxurious way, and to live her life by incorporating her late mother's image of a kind mother into her own self.

Her mother is also dead in Dream4, but when she and her sister cuddle up to her, her mother comes back to life. The dry ice that is no longer cold and has been replaced can be seen as the memory of her mother frozen within her own memory. In this light, with the help of her sister, the frozen memory of her mother dissolves and appears for the first time as her mother in her dreams. The time taken for the ritual to do this was double the normal time because it was a "friending" ceremony. This must be her own experiential sense of time. And when her mother is revived, the earnest wish of "all the family members" to "hang in there and live a little bit" is unanimously directed toward her. If we take another viewpoint, we could point out that "my mother coming back to life" is a fulfillment of her unconscious wish and that she has not accepted her mother's death, but here it is important to note that in her dream, her mother appeared with her mother's face for the first time.

Her association in Dream4 to "the first time I saw my mother's face clearly" suggests that she has begun to accept her mother's death not as the death of an unspecified other, but as the death of her beloved mother, with her mother's face. In her dreams, this "mother's face" is an important element.

In Dream5, the bus arrived at a "dark" place on "land reclaimed by the residents. The words "reclaimed" and "dark" remind me of Hades, and the "four-story apartment building" built on this land seems to be the gravestone of this mother. On the other hand, the woman feels that the area where her mother lives is "two houses in a row" and that "the residents do not seem very happy," a sentiment that seems to reflect the woman's own psychological state. The fact that this scene was expressed may also reflect the fact that the woman feels guilty about her mother's death, as she herself is responsible for it. In addition, there is a scene in the dream in which the father makes the mother sit on the "half-underground concrete floor. This scene suggests that the woman's rebellious feelings toward her father, who wants to accept her mother's death, are at work within her.

The "half-underground concrete" is reminiscent of a coffin or morgue where the bodies of the dead are buried. The switching of the "place where my mother sits" and the "place where I sit" is a spatial continuity, as if the temporal continuity between my mother and myself in Dream3 was switched between my mother and herself in this dream, with the kimono as the medium. In this scene, we can read the woman's determination, accompanied by anger, to become the dead instead of her mother. This determination is developed into a decision to live with her mother and sister at the end of this dream.

In addition, the father's attitude became "harsh toward my mother" probably because he feels that his father in reality is cold toward his deceased mother. Next, we see that Ms. A regards her father, who is cold toward her late mother, as an immature man "about the size of a

middle or high school student. He then sees his father as possessing only a "cutter" level of aggression, resulting in a devaluing of his father, "I can't forgive my father and I'm going to flip his whole chair.

Even if he commits a hostile act against his father, this father will eventually leave the scene of the dream, as if he had "jumped in the car". At the end of this dream, after the father's escape, as mentioned earlier, "I tell my mother and sister to come live with me," which seemed to symbolize her desire to live with her mother, who is dead.

Grief counseling conducted through narratives about grief dreams identified five perspectives for sincerely mourning the death of the dead and holding the death of the dead in one's heart, rather than stirring up anxiety, fear, and despair about one's own death.

### 5.3 Discussion 1: The Role Of Grief Dreams In Mourning

The dreams reported in these cases illustrate how the unconscious mind processes loss and trauma. Alice's dream series, in particular, provides a rich narrative of the journey through complicated grief, from denial and rage to acceptance and integration. Based on these clinical data, we can elaborate on five key perspectives on mourning that emerged in therapy.

1. The Persistence of Sadness Is Not Failure: Alice's journey shows that recovery is not the erasure of sadness. Even in her final reported dream, the setting is a "dark place" and residents are "not very happy", indicating that sorrow remains. The goal of therapy was not to eliminate her pain but to help her integrate the loss and continue to live. The disappearance of sadness is not the goal; transforming its quality is.

2. Mourning Requires Expression, Not Suppression: The junior high school student's initial inability to mourn with her classmates led to traumatic flashbacks and self-blame. Her dreams of war and death were a symbolic expression of this suppressed grief and guilt. Similarly, Alice's initial dreams of a murderous mother with a different face represent a distorted expression of her anger regarding the medical malpractice. Allowing these difficult feelings to be expressed and analyzed in therapy was crucial for both patients to move forward. The dreams provided a "safe" venue for these otherwise overwhelming emotions to surface.<sup>3</sup> Sadness is painful, and thinking about a loved one who has passed away can sometimes be unbearably painful, but this suffering and pain is the very thing that comforts and cares for the deceased. Therefore, even those who have lost a loved one may not want the pain to go away.

3. The Pain of Grief Honors the Deceased: In Dream 5, Alice's anger at her father for his "harsh" treatment of her mother and his attempt to place her in a "half-basement" concrete space is a defense of her mother's memory. She chooses to sit in her mother's place, symbolically taking on the pain of death herself. This act suggests a profound, albeit unconscious, belief that to feel the pain of loss is to stay connected to and honor her mother. She does not want the memory to be concretized and buried; she wants it to remain a living, albeit painful, presence.

4. Sadness as a Bond to the Deceased: The evolution of the mother's face in Alice's dreams is central to this point. Initially, the mother has a different face, indicating a failure to accept the reality of the loss. When she finally dreams of her mother with her own, kind face, it marks a pivotal moment. The sadness is now attached to the real person, creating a meaningful bond rather than a defense against a traumatic event. Her association with the obi as a "connection" to her mother further reinforces this idea of grief as a continuing bond.

5. Living with the Deceased after Death: The final resolution in Alice's dream series is not to say goodbye, but to invite her mother and sister to "come live with me". This beautifully illustrates the modern understanding of grief, which emphasizes continuing bonds rather than detachment. Having processed her anger (by confronting the father-figure) and accepted the reality of the death (by seeing her mother's true face), Alice is now able to integrate her mother's memory into her ongoing life. She will continue to live with her mother, carrying her internally. While mourning the eternal separation from the deceased, we continue to live with even after their death.

## ■6.0 CASE ILLUSTRATION 3: ATTACHMENT-FOCUSED PSYCHOTHERAPY

Patient: "Betty," an artistically gifted woman who sought therapy to "rebuild herself from the ground up".

The psychological process was carried out in a verbal therapy, dealing with the narration of dreams and the creation of artwork. The therapeutic structure was face-to-face, once a week, for 50 minutes.

Diagnosis: Depressive Disorder, Complex PTSD, history of substance overdose.

Chief complaint: Depression (repetitive depression), feelings of desolation, feelings toward women

Past Medical History/Current symptoms: Difficulty in interpersonal relationships, insomnia/nightmares, depressed mood, depressive symptoms, domestic violence, eating problems, suicide attempts. About family: No financial sense (all)

Infancy era: She only saw my mother once a week. She was raised by an old man. She thought her grandfather was her biological father.

Childhood Incidents: Betty had a traumatic childhood marked by emotional neglect, domestic violence, and her father's suspicious death. She was raised by her grandparents and only saw her mother intermittently.

Initial Dream: Betty reported an "initial dream" of being on a train platform where a man in a beige coat pushed her onto the tracks. However, she felt she would be safe because she "thought there was a shelter on the tracks and that he would be saved if he escaped".

[association]



Th: Do you have any associations with the man in that coat?

B : Middle-aged male is commuting to work, wearing coat or formal attire.

Th: Because it is a monochrome dream, is the coat black?

B : The color of the coat is beige because it is sepia rather than monochrome.

Th: What do you think of the image from this man?

B : Thinking of it as a symbol, I tried to look into my father, my own father. A middle-aged man in terms of his clothes and his height. From there, I associated him with my own father.

Th: What is the view around you like then?

B : The man in the coat remained unrecognizable, the rest were people waiting for the train.

B : The reason I had the dream was that when I was little, I thought of my grandfather as my father and my grandmother as my mother, and what I analyzed when I was going through Freud's dream analysis as an adult was that what I imagined from this man was my father, my own father.

Th: I had the impression that this dream was an expression of my desire to find my father.

B : Yes, I know. I knew from the first fold that my current stepfather was a stranger. I had a younger brother when I was in the second grade of elementary school, which changed the way he treated his child, but even though my adoptive father's attitude had completely changed, I thought that was just the way it was.

## 6.1 Discussion 2

Betty compared this psychotherapy to her own “dismantling process” and defined it as “the linguistic excavation of one's own unconscious. On the other hand, she remained withdrawn (withdrawal) in her mind and seemed to refuse to express her feelings (Kondo, 2012). As this case proceeded, She reported two “initial dreams”. Regarding the first dream, she said, “I associate it with the symbolism of *destordor* (desire for death). The content of the dream suggested that she had grown up in a home where she was not allowed to talk about her father's absence from childhood, and that she had come alone with the symbolic death of her father; in the dream, she was pushed off a platform waiting for a train by a man, who “thought there was a shelter on the tracks and that he would be saved if he escaped.” Associated.

This dream report was reminiscent of Steiner's (2011) development of the theory of narcissistic and defensive organization articulated by Rosenfeldt, who conceptualized this organized structure as “psychic refuges.” The goal of analysis, according to Steiner, is not to remove the patient's defenses, but to understand them, and, aided by this understanding, to help the patient gradually become aware of his or her new possibilities and abilities.

Associated with the first dream report was the idea that, since childhood, Betty may have had for herself a “mental place of refuge” to protect himself from danger. It was suggested that this mental place functioned as an internal safe place for her.

In Betty's “initial dream”, the image of her absent father was symbolically described. Although the first dream can be seen as a traumatic dream at first, it is thought that in the dream, Betty turned her attention to its function as a refuge for her mind, and from there, she began to confront her inner self. In addition, through the creative activity of making artwork, the “creative field” was activated, and it is thought that Betty gradually came to accept the idea of living in a real situation.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION: INTERPRETIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The qualitative analysis of these case studies, grounded in the patients' own words and dream narratives, suggests several key functions of grief dreams in the therapeutic process of mourning. Rather than offering universal conclusions, these findings represent interpretations of the phenomena observed within these specific clinical contexts.

1. Dreams as a Venue for Symbolic Reunion: The cases suggest that dreams of reuniting with the deceased can serve a powerful function in facilitating the grieving process. For Alice, seeing her mother again, even in distorted forms, allowed for a continued relationship that evolved as her grief work progressed. This symbolic reunion appears to help the bereaved keep the deceased “in one's mind”.
2. Dreams as a Reflection of Acceptance: The visual representation of the deceased in a dream appears to correlate with the dreamer's level of acceptance. The analysis of Alice's dreams supports this interpretation: her inability to see her mother's true face coincided with her denial and unprocessed anger. The first appearance of her mother's actual face marked a significant therapeutic turning point toward accepting the death.
3. Dreams as a Means of Re-experiencing Trauma: For individuals experiencing traumatic loss, dreams can serve as a mechanism for re-experiencing and processing the shock. When a loved one dies or is killed in a dream, as with the student's dreams of war or Alice's dream of her mother as a murderer, it appears to be part of the difficult process of confronting the brutal reality of the death.
4. The Resolution of Grief Dreams as a Marker of Progress: The paper suggests that repeated, static grief dreams signify the presence of unresolved traumatic memories. The cessation or evolution of these dreams, as seen in Alice's case, can be a clinical indicator that the underlying trauma has been sufficiently processed and integrated.
5. Sadness is a bond with the deceased: Feeling of sadness are proof that the deceased lived in this world, and are a bond that connects the deceased and those who mourn the death. The paper posits that feelings of sadness following a loss are not merely painful

emotions to be overcome; instead, they serve as tangible proof of the deceased's life and act as a continuing bond connecting the mourner to the person they lost.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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