

## It's Complicated! The Overbearing Weight of Guilt in Grief

An online workshop with  
Peter Cartwright

Zoom Webinar

**22 January 2025, Wednesday**

**Times:**

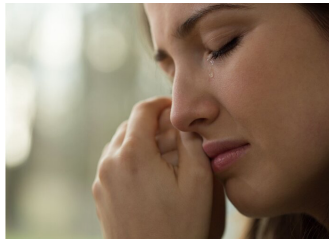
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm, London UK

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, New York, USA

CPD hours: 3 / CE credits: 3

Limited number of early bird tickets at £62 only

Regular price: £72



Location: Online streaming only

(all our webinar tickets now include complimentary access to a video recorded version for 1 year)

*'They whose guilt within their bosom lies, imagine every eye beholds their blame.'*

*William Shakespeare*

Feelings of guilt are common and normal in bereavement, and often these seem to naturally subside as the bereaved person grieves.

However, sometimes guilty feelings during bereavement are intense and endure. It adds great anguish to what is already a distressing, painful and stressful time. Whilst these guilty feelings potentially occur in any bereavement; intense and enduring guilt is common (*Cartwright 2019; Parkes & Prigerson 2010*):

- When a loved-one who died was a child (of any age)
- A loved-one died in a way that is perceived as preventable, such as by suicide or through drug/alcohol use, or
- Where there was deep ambivalence in the relationship with the loved-one

**Overwhelming guilty feelings can often seem unwarranted to those of us who work with bereaved people - but to them - their guilty feelings are stubbornly resistant to reason, self-empathy and self-forgiveness, and potentially endure indefinitely.**



These unresolved guilty feelings can significantly complicate the grieving process, leading to prolonged grief, depression, and trauma (*Wagner, Hofmann & Grafiadeli 2021*). Guilt is a powerful determinant of grief-specific difficulties following the loss of a loved one (*Stroebe et al 2014*). Put another way, those grappling intense and enduring guilt after bereavement are the very people who seek counselling and need help to work through, resolve as far as possible, and if needs be, find a way to live with any residual guilty feelings.

Guilt has received very little attention in bereavement research, leaving many unanswered questions (*Duncan & Cacciatore 2015*). Similarly, how to counsel these bereaved people to work through their guilty feelings has received little detailed attention in the therapeutic literature. In this online webinar, Peter Cartwright will **guide participants through a nuanced exploration of the various manifestations of guilt in bereavement and how they occur, as well as present practical ideas for working through these feelings.**

The workshop will address both healthy, normal guilt that often occurs in early bereavement; various more complex guilty feelings that are seemingly unwarranted; and the guilt felt by parents and carers for the loss of a loved one they feel responsible for.

Peter will offer practical guidance on how to facilitate clients to work through their guilt in a therapeutic setting. By exploring case studies based on typical real-world clients and clinical insights, participants will learn approaches to help clients navigate this complex and challenging emotion, with a focus on working through, resolving as far as possible and, if necessary, find a way to live with any residual guilt, as well as considering forgiveness.

This webinar is designed for practitioners who work with bereaved clients or those who work with any clients and wish to enhance their understanding of this neglected emotion. By the end of the session, participants will feel more equipped to recognize and address bereavement guilt in its various forms.

Specifically, the workshop will:

- Explain the nature of guilt and how it may occur in bereavement: Participants will explore **what constitutes normal, healthy guilt, why it arises during bereavement, as well as other ways that unwarranted and unhealthy guilty feelings can occur** in bereavement, and how they can complicate the grieving process.
- Discuss the importance of working through guilty feelings for healthy grieving: Explain **why addressing guilt is essential to prevent it from contributing to prolonged grief, depression, or trauma**, and how this resolution is necessary for healthy grieving.
- Identify different types of guilty feelings in bereavement: This includes normal guilt in early bereavement, parent or caregiver guilt, and **various manifestations of unwarranted guilt**. Practitioners will learn how to recognize these emotions and differentiate between them in clients.
- **Apply practical approaches for working through guilt:** Participants will gain guidance on facilitating clients through their feelings of guilt, including when a client's guilt is seemingly unwarranted.
- Discuss the role of forgiveness in resolving guilt: **Explain how forgiveness—particularly self-forgiveness—can play a role in helping bereaved individuals work through their guilt** and thereby grieve more effectively, to thereby become more at peace with what happened to their loved one.

**Learning Objectives:**



- Explain **why addressing guilt is essential to prevent it from contributing to prolonged grief, depression, or trauma**, and how this resolution is necessary for healthy grieving.
- Identify different types of guilty feelings in bereavement, including normal guilt in early bereavement, parent or caregiver guilt, and **various manifestations of unwarranted guilt**.
- **Apply practical approaches for working through guilt**

#### About the speaker

**Peter Cartwright** is a Counsellor, Author, Trainer and Researcher, with a specialism in counselling people bereaved through a drug- or alcohol-related death. His work includes being the lead author and editor of the first book internationally to address how to counsel these people, *Supporting people bereaved through a drug- or alcohol-related death*, that includes a chapter on working through guilt. He undertook the first research into the helpfulness of counselling for this client group: *How helpful is counselling for people bereaved through a substance-related death?*, and he used this research to inform the writing of the book. Also, he was the chair and lead author for the UK working group that produced the first guidance for any professional, worker or volunteer: *Bereaved through substance use: Guidelines for those whose work brings them into contact with adults after a drug or alcohol-related death*; that was the third and final part of the first large-scale research internationally into the nature of these bereavements.

#### References:

- Cartwright, P. (2019). 'How helpful is counselling for people bereaved through a substance-related death?' *Bereavement Care* 38, 1, 23–32.
- Duncan, C. & Cacciatore, J. (2015). A Systematic Review of the Peer-Reviewed Literature on Self-Blame, Guilt, and Shame. *OMEGA—Journal of Death and Dying*. 0(0) 1–31.
- Parkes, C.M. & Prigerson, H.G. (2010). *Bereavement: Studies of grief in adult life*, Fourth edition. London: Penguin Books.
- Stroebe, M., Stroebe, W., van de Schoot, R., Schut, H., Abakoumkin, G. & Li, J. (2014). Guilt in Bereavement: The Role of Self-Blame and Regret in Coping with Loss. *PLoS ONE* 9(5): e96606.
- Wagner, B., Hofmann, L., & Grafiadeli, R. (2021). The relationship between guilt, depression, prolonged grief, and posttraumatic stress symptoms after suicide bereavement. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 77:2545–2558.

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