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The Self That Loss Leaves Behind

Working Somatically with Grief, Identity and the Body After Life-Altering Loss

An online training over two evenings with
Jacquie Compton

Zoom Webinar
17 & 18 February 2027, Wednesday & Thursday
Times:
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm, London UK
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, New York, USA

CPD hours: 6

Location: Online streaming only
(all our webinar tickets now include complimentary access to a video recorded version for 1 year or 3 years, depending on the ticket type)

He still gets up at 5.40, showers, makes the coffee and checks his phone for a message that will not come.

His wife died eleven months ago. He tells his therapist he is managing: back at work, sleeping, eating, seeing friends. What he cannot say is that he no longer recognises the person doing any of it. He moves through his own life the way you might house-sit someone else's: careful, competent and entirely unmoored from any sense of owning it.

He is not avoiding his grief. He has become unfamiliar to himself, and he does not yet have language for what has changed — only for what he has lost.

This is the territory Jacquie Compton's two-evening training addresses directly. Not the stages of grief, not “moving forward”, but the harder clinical question underneath both:

Who does the client become when loss alters not only their circumstances, but their embodied sense of identity?

For many clients, the former self no longer holds, and the next one has not yet arrived. This liminal territory can carry disorientation, shame, rage, despair and longing. It is not something to resolve quickly or reframe away.

Grief may contain information about attachment, identity, need and what has mattered - not because the loss was beneficial, but because attending to grief carefully can help clients recognise what has been altered and what now requires care.

This is not a training in which somatic exercises are simply added to a conventional model of grief. Jacquie asks us to understand grief itself as embodied: organised through posture, movement, sensation, breath, attention, relational expectation and action.

Drawing on more than 18 years of trauma practice and her work as an art therapist, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy trainer and consultant, Jacquie brings sustained clinical authority to this territory.

Nor is this a claim that loss is secretly good for people, or that transformation is owed to anyone who suffers enough.

For clients whose losses were traumatic, unjust or unacknowledged, language about growth can land as a demand rather than a comfort. The training makes room for grief that never resolves into anything redemptive, alongside grief that does eventually open into new meaning — and helps therapists work with whichever is actually present.

Jacquie draws on Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, trauma-informed art-based practice and anti-oppressive perspectives to offer a framework for:

- the client who describes their loss fluently but feels almost nothing in the telling;
- the client who functions compulsively because stopping would expose how much has changed;
- the person who feels estranged from their body, routines or relationships;
- the client who experiences pleasure, steadiness or renewed desire as betrayal;
- the person grieving not only what has happened, but the future self who will now never exist.

Across the two evenings, teaching moves between clinical formulation and experiential practice: grounding, centring, containment, boundaries and orienting; nervous-system modulation; work with missing experience; the patterned "*shapings and unshapings*" that loss leaves in the body; and accessible somatic and art-based practices that participants will be invited to experience for themselves.

These resources are not offered as generic calming strategies, nor as ways of regulating grief out of existence. They help clients remain in contact with grief without losing choice, orientation or a sufficient sense of bodily stability.

The aim is a training that is therapeutically usable on Monday morning, not only intellectually satisfying on the night.

Evening One: When Loss Disorganises the Self

The first evening stays with disorganisation before moving towards repair.

Loss does not only remove a person, role or capacity. It may remove a future the client was expecting to inhabit: the parent they assumed they would become, the life partner who expected to grow old alongside someone, or the self organised around familiar capacities, access and independence.

Jacquie will explore how this can appear procedurally:

- collapse or heaviness;
- bracing and muscular holding;
- numbness or absence of sensation;
- agitation and hyperarousal;
- compulsive functioning;
- withdrawal and loss of orientation;
- a body that continues performing familiar routines while feeling as though it belongs to somebody else.

These patterns are not secondary symptoms beneath the "real" grief. They are part of how the grief is being lived.

Central to the evening is organicity: the Sensorimotor Psychotherapy principle that the client's system already carries impulses towards protection, connection, expression and reorganisation, even when those impulses are obscured by shutdown, overfunctioning or defensive rigidity.

Rather than positioning the therapist as the person who must manufacture recovery, organicity directs attention towards what the client's body may already be attempting to do: turn towards or away, reach out, create distance, brace, soften, speak, move, rest or complete an interrupted action.

Such patterns may explain why one client narrates the loss in precise, level detail while feeling almost nothing, while another experiences moments of relief as a form of disloyalty. Both may represent adaptations rather than failures of feeling.

Topics include:

- How major loss alters identity, embodiment and belonging
- The overlap between grief-related embodiment and trauma-driven defensive responses
- Organicity: supporting the client's existing impulses towards protection, expression, connection and reorganisation
- Procedural patterns including collapse, compulsive functioning, withdrawal, bracing and disconnection
- Grieving an anticipated identity or future, not only a person or past attachment
- Somatic assessment and stabilisation that do not treat grief itself as dysregulation to be removed
- Using orienting, grounding, centring, containment and boundaries to expand capacity while preserving choice

Evening Two: Living with the Self That Remains — and the Self That Is Emerging

The second evening turns towards what becomes possible afterwards — without requiring the client to return to who they were.

Participants will explore missing experiences: the protection, recognition, expression, completion or relational response that was needed but did not occur. This may include the conversation that never happened, the goodbye that was not possible, the apology that did not come, or the version of a relationship that loss has made permanently unavailable.

These experiences cannot simply be recreated. But they may sometimes be acknowledged, represented and approached through movement, image, gesture, imagination and the therapeutic relationship.

The evening will also consider what the client's social context does to their permission to grieve.

A miscarriage that nobody names as a loss. A partnership that was never publicly recognised. A life altered not only by what has happened, but by the barriers, exclusions and assumptions imposed by others.

Whose grief is recognised — and whose is minimised, politicised or pathologised — changes the clinical work. Social expectations influence which losses are considered legitimate, which expressions appear acceptable, and which clients are expected to demonstrate resilience before their experience has been sufficiently witnessed.

Drawing on anti-oppressive and disability-justice perspectives, Jacquie will help participants avoid reducing socially shaped suffering to an individual nervous-system problem.

Particular attention will be given to the client who believes that recovering would constitute betrayal: that feeling steady, interested or alive again would mean abandoning what — or whom — they lost.

Therapists may unintentionally reinforce this belief if they position grief and continuing life as opposites. Equally, challenging it too quickly may sound like pressure to relinquish loyalty.

The therapeutic task is to help the client discover whether connection to what was lost can be carried differently, rather than preserved only through ongoing suffering.

Through art-based and somatic practice, participants will explore how clients can honour what mattered while gradually developing a viable continuing life — without enforcing “moving on” or freezing the client in permanent mourning.

Topics include:

- Honouring continuity with the self that was without demanding its return
- Working with missing, unfinished and permanently unavailable experiences
- Supporting clients who experience healing, pleasure or change as betrayal
- How culture, oppression and social recognition shape who is permitted to grieve, and how
- Creative and art-based approaches to identity continuity, disruption and emergence
- Working with meaning without demanding growth or redemption

Learning Objectives

By attending this training, participants will be able to:

- Describe how life-altering loss reorganises bodily experience, identity, relational roles and assumptions about the future
- Distinguish grief-related embodiment from trauma-driven defensive responses while recognising how the two may overlap
- Assess how loss has altered a client's bodily identity, belonging, relationships and anticipated future

- Identify procedural patterns including collapse, compulsive functioning, withdrawal, bracing and disconnection
- Apply the principle of organicity by identifying and supporting the client's existing impulses towards protection, expression, connection and reorganisation
- Use orienting, containment, centring, movement, imagery and art-based practice without overwhelming the client or forcing expression
- Help clients grieve an anticipated identity or future, not only a person, relationship or past attachment
- Work with missing experiences, unfinished relational responses and endings that can no longer occur
- Support identity reorganisation without implying that clients must become stronger, wiser or "better" because of what they have lost
- Recognise how culture, oppression, disability and social recognition shape a client's permission to grieve
- Help clients remain connected to what was lost while developing a viable relationship with the life that continues

Who This Is For

This training is for practising psychotherapists, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, art therapists, somatic practitioners and other mental health professionals working with clients for whom loss has become entangled with who they are, not only what has happened to them.

It will be especially valuable for practitioners who recognise this presentation in the therapy room but want a more precise framework for understanding and responding to it.

The training introduces selected principles from Sensorimotor Psychotherapy alongside accessible art-based practices for working with grief, embodiment and identity disruption. These approaches will be presented in ways that can inform practice across therapeutic modalities.

Loss can take more than a person, role or capacity. It can take the self a client knew how to be.

This training does not offer a route back to who they were before. It offers a way of working with what remains, what has been irrevocably altered and what is still becoming.

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