GRIEF WORK
IN ALCOHOLISM TREATMENT
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In alcoholism treatment at the Fort Logan Mental Health Center, Denver, Colo., a primary concern is to help clients do "grief work"—the process of passing through the necessary stages of grief over a loss in order to come to terms with that loss and then transcend it. A 1971 study at Fort Logan showed that at least 20 percent of all clients admitted for alcoholism started heavy drinking at the time they suffered a major loss or separation in their lives. Rather than go through the normal phases of grief work, they have generally stopped at the depression stage or skipped some of the cycle and allowed alcohol to take over, leaving them seriously in need of resolving their grief. Further evidence indicates that all alcoholic persons are in a chronic state of grief, for if a separation was not the original cause of their heavy drinking, they have incurred significant losses in the course of becoming alcoholic.

LOSSES

The need to do grief work is not limited to one who has lost a loved one. It is indicated at the time of any important loss or separation. There are four kinds of losses: (1) material loss—of any object of value; (2) physical loss, involving part of one's body, or developmental losses suffered as one passes through the stages of life; (3) psychological loss—of self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence, or the like; and (4) loss of a significant figure in one's life, either through death or through separation.

One may call the work of normal grief the illness that heals itself; it is pain with a purpose, for grief work could never be accomplished without pain. Most authorities list at least six different components of grief in one order or another. The first is the loss itself. This is followed by shock on the part of the bereaved, after which depression ensues. Underlying the depression is always hostility or anger, which, if re-

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