showing movies which are heavily loaded with grief experiences, or by simply discussing the six levels of grief and suggesting that someone in the group may identify with one or more of them in relationship to his own grief experience.

A very useful approach is to have the patients do a fingerpainting; in the group discussion of each individual painting, archetypal symbols revealing depression resulting from unfinished grief work may emerge and be extremely helpful. Frequently, one finds pictures with dark, dreary, or desolate colors which are symbols of depression. At times a patient will produce a solid black picture, sharply indicating depression so intense that the patient is suicidal. One will almost always find that the depression is the result of a significant loss or separation.

In therapy at Fort Logan Mental Health Center, a male patient who did not appear to be outwardly suffering from grief or depression made an austere painting of a lake at the top of a mountain with no foliage whatsoever. According to Jungian interpretation of symbols, large bodies of water are often symbolic of female figures, because they can hold life as can a female. Consequently, the therapist remarked, “Your picture gives me a feeling of loneliness. I wonder if you aren’t lonely and depressed, and if in fact it is related to a woman.”

Immediately, the man broke down and wept bitterly. When he regained his composure, he stated that his mother had died a year ago, and within two weeks his wife had expired unexpectedly. He said he sank into a deep depression and started drinking heavily to drown his sorrows, only to find himself completely unable to stop drinking. This patient was immediately assigned to a grief work group, and within three weeks he began to relinquish his longing for the loved ones whom he had lost. No longer feeling the need for alcohol, he developed new relationships to replace his wife and mother. He is still sober after five years.

Another male patient came to the division for treatment following a long drinking episode which was triggered by the deaths of his wife and teenage son, only a few days apart. His depression was obvious; he verbalized his loss fluently. At first there was no evidence of feelings of anger causing his guilt, for he was apparently “locked in” with repressed hostility, showing no evidence of any attempt at reconstruction. When confronted in therapy about the absence of anger in his external mourning, he immediately denied any such submerged feelings. This gave a clear indication that anger was the missing link in the chain of grief work yet to be accomplished.

It was not long until the “if” syndrome began to emerge in such statements as “If I hadn’t taken that extra job I would have had more time with them. If I had taken my son to the doctor sooner, he wouldn’t