

# Introduction to Complicated Grief Treatment (CGT)

Preconference meeting at the XXVII World Congress of the International Association for Suicide prevention, September 24.-28. 2013 in Oslo

**Date:** September 24<sup>th</sup> 2013

**Registration:** Delegates need to register for this preconference at [www.iasp2013.org](http://www.iasp2013.org)

**Complicated grief** is an intense and long-lasting form of grief that takes over a person's life. It is natural to experience acute grief after someone close dies, but complicated grief is different. Complicated grief is a form of grief that takes hold of a person's mind and won't let go. People with complicated grief often say that they feel "stuck." Many of those who have been bereaved through suicide will recognize some or all of the typical features of complicated grief.

The term "complicated" refers to factors that interfere with the natural healing process. These factors might be related to characteristics of the bereaved person, to the nature of the relationship with the deceased person, the circumstances of the death, or to things that occurred after the death. People with complicated grief know their loved one is gone, but they still can't believe it. They say that time is moving on but they are not. They often have strong feelings of yearning or longing for the person who died that don't seem to lessen as time goes on. Thoughts, memories, or images of the deceased person frequently fill their mind, capturing their attention. They might have strong feelings of bitterness or anger related to the death. They find it hard to imagine that life without the deceased person has purpose or meaning. It can seem like joy and satisfaction are gone forever.

## **Workshop overview:**

### **Goals**

- To present a model of grief and mourning to guide in recognition and treatment of complicated grief (CG)
- To show how this model was used in constructing an efficacy-tested treatment for CG
- To explain, demonstrate and practice treatment techniques used in complicated grief treatment

### **Recognizing and understanding complicated grief**

- Basic assumptions about grief and mourning
- Symptoms of complicated grief and how they arise
- Similarities and differences between CG, major depression and PTSD

### **Constructing CGT**

- The principles derived from the model
- Strategies and procedures used to implement the principles
- Structure of the treatment

### **Strategies and key procedures**

- Describe key procedures: grief monitoring, personal goals work, revisiting exercises, imaginal conversation
- Demonstrate and discuss imaginal revisiting and imaginal conversation

## **About the lecturers:**

**Dr. Katherine Shear** is professor of psychiatry at Columbia University School of Social Work and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, and is the developer of Complicated Grief Treatment (CGT). She is the director of the Bereavement and Grief Program and the director of the Complicated Grief Research and Training Program at Columbia University School of Social Work as well as the director of the Complicated Grief Treatment Program at the New York State Psychiatric Institute.

**Dr. Lars Mehlum** is professor of psychiatry and suicidology at the Institute for Clinical Medicine, University of Oslo, Norway. He is also the founding director of the National Center for Suicide Research and Prevention, University of

Oslo, the editor of the journal *Suicidologi*, the director of the Dialectical Behavior Therapy education program and the director of the center's Master's degree program in suicide prevention.