

1) Grief & Loss Across The Lifespan (ch. 8): This week's reading hit home, as we looked at Middle Adulthood (ages 45-65), for (to quote a friend of mine), "I am one." In fact, at 61 I am at the upper end of this bracket, looking back on the scenarios discussed. From a high-level perspective, this week was an exercise in countertransference. It began with reading about biological development. There were times I could sense my mind getting bored as I thought, "Tell me something I don't know." Other times, especially in discussing Social Development, I was thinking, "You understand me!" But the greatest impact was in the case studies, toward the end. As I read the various scenarios, I found myself having a visceral response to the text. At times I felt a surge of compassion and care, as "Delicate Flower" struggled with cancer (we visit my wife's oncologist later today, as I write this). Another time I was drawn in with understanding, as with the Parkinson's case (I have a dear friend in the same condition). While in the latter case, where the client is overwhelmed with death all around him, I just wanted to stop reading altogether (as I see this in my future, and I just don't want to deal with it). This week's reading was an emotional roller-coaster ride to remind me of my own frail humanity as a therapist, the importance of self-awareness, supervision, and the strengths and weaknesses I bring to each session with a client.

2) Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy (149-154): This section on diagnosing complicated mourning is helpful, as I can imagine how an emotional cloud of tension can create ambiguity. The clearly itemized list of clues will help me see through that ambiguity, for tangible evidence to the degree of complication in a client's mourning. (204-209) Once again, the spectre of countertransference was strong in this section on anticipatory grief, as my wife and I are currently experiencing her recent diagnosis of renal carcinoma, and a high stage of kidney disease. Hope and discouragement are each powerful forces, and the relational confusion of what I'll simply bundle as "head-trip" can be quite challenging to navigate, as we each struggle with the actual diagnosis and the potential future outcome.

3) The Myth of Closure (ch. 6): Pauline Boss's insights on both/and thinking are another clear and practical benefit of this valuable book. As we instinctively strain to simplify the complications of our lives, we unknowingly try to force situations into either/or scenarios, and our clients will too; however, there are times this not only is not realistic, but our attempts to simplify what we are dealing with can actually force complication, by not acknowledging the situation for what it is. Ambiguity that is acknowledged and accepted for what it is can be much easier to deal with than trying to force a single solution.