From Caregiving to Bereavement:
Weaving the Strands of Identity

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“From caregiving to bereavement: Weaving the strands of identity”

Abstract

“In what ways does the experience of caregiving for a terminally ill family member affect the experience and process of bereavement?”

The identity of family caregivers in palliative care has been ambiguous: caregivers are often unaware they fit the description of ‘carer’. Previous research describes two contrasting constructs that shape the identity of the caregiver: burden and privilege. Research, including this study, suggests that the emergence of identity as a carer impacts on the course and experience of bereavement. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with a small number of caregiving family members: during the caregiving role and in their subsequent bereavement. This exploratory study used phenomenological research to examine the experiences of those caregivers interviewed. The data were examined using the existential themes uncovered in analysis. This paper reports on those themes.
Acknowledgments

A book, thesis, or piece of writing is not merely a compilation of thoughts, but the reflective narrative of a certain period in a life. And because no single life is ever lived in entire isolation, every author is dependent on others for their support and input. It gives me much pleasure to acknowledge those others who have assisted me:

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The heart has its own comfort for grief

Janet Frame
Rain on the Roof. 1967