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Ecological Grief and the Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

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Abstract: The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement (DPM, by Stroebe and Schut) is a well-known framework in contemporary grief research and counselling. It depicts how mourners oscillate between various tasks and reactions. There is a need to engage more with the intense feelings of loss (Loss-Oriented tasks), but also with other things in life and other parts of the adjustment process after a loss (Restoration-Oriented tasks). This interdisciplinary article applies the framework to ecological grief and extends it to collective levels. While the DPM has been broadened to family dynamics, many subjects of grief are even more collective and require mourning from whole communities or societies. Religious communities can play an important role in this. This article provides a new application called the DPM-EcoSocial and discusses the various tasks named in it, which are ultimately based on the grief researcher Worden's work. The particularities of ecological grief are discussed, such as the complications caused by guilt dynamics, climate change denial, attribution differences about climate disasters, and nonfinite losses. Grief and grievance are intimately connected in ecological grief, and (religious) communities have important tasks for remembrance, mourning, and witness. The collective processes can lead to meaning reconstruction, transilience, and adversarial growth.

Keywords: environmental grief; eco-anxiety; solastalgia; climate grief; bereavement; sociopolitical grief; disaster; religion and ecology; meaning reconstruction; grievance

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1. Introduction

The anthropogenic ecological crisis is causing many kinds of loss and damage, which can evoke various kinds of sadness and grief. This is currently studied most often under the framework of ecological grief (Barnett 2022; Cunsolo and Ellis 2018), while other formulations include environmental grief (Kevorkian 2004, 2020) and Albrecht's neologism solastalgia (Albrecht et al. 2007; Galway et al. 2019). Recent scholarship has aimed to clarify the various kinds of losses and grief that may be present in ecological grief (Pihkala 2024e). These range from tangible to intangible loss (Tschakert et al. 2019), from evident losses to ambiguous loss (Boss 2022), and from one-time losses to continuous, nonfinite losses (Pihkala 2024e). Ecological grief can be related to many temporalities (Randall 2009; Stanley 2023). Furthermore, it is often socially contested or, at least, not well supported, leading to disenfranchised grief (Pihkala 2024e).

The scholarship on ecological grief is now growing fast, but for a long time it was an under-studied phenomenon (Benham and Hoerst 2024; for reviews of the scholarship, see Pihkala 2024e). Both local and global environmental changes can evoke ecological grief. A major part of all of this is climate grief, which means sorrow about various negative impacts of anthropogenic climate change (Comtesse et al. 2021; Pihkala 2024b). Many phenomena

can be evaluated by using various terms and frameworks, such as disasters that have been at least partially made worse by climate change: relevant frameworks include disaster studies, trauma research, grief and bereavement research, and research on community resilience and adaptation (see e.g., Chen et al. 2020; Doppelt 2023).

Researchers and counselors have only recently started to apply traditional research on grief and bereavement more extensively to ecological grief. Several frameworks have been drawn from, such as Worden's tasks of mourning framework (Randall 2009; Worden 2018) and Kübler-Ross's stages of grief model (Jones et al. 2021; Kübler-Ross and Kessler 2005). One of the influential frameworks in contemporary grief research is the Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement (DPM) (Stroebe and Schut 1999, 2001, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2021), and this article seeks to apply it to ecological grief. There is not much earlier research on the DPM and ecological grief (see, however, Pihkala 2022b; Bailey and Gerrish 2024), and several central features of the DPM seem important in relation to ecological grief. As will be discussed below in more detail, the DPM distinguishes between Loss-Oriented (LO) tasks and Restoration-Oriented (RO) tasks, and it emphasizes the importance of oscillation between the two. There are some existing applications of the DPM to societal matters, but not many, and the basic models of the DPM currently only extend to family-level interactions.

This article engages with applications of grief theory to social spheres (Harris 2022, 2025) and extends the DPM into an eco-social context. Ecological grief is not characterized merely as an individual phenomenon: its intimate connections with social and structural factors are emphasized (see also Walter 2024). As described by Harris, grief itself is seen as "a broad, interdimensional experience that can be both generated and experienced at micro, mezzo, and macro levels" (Harris 2022, p. 573). It is pointed out that issues of culpability, guilt, and responsibility greatly complicate engagement with ecological grief on all levels (Jensen 2019; see Menning 2017), and the relationship between this and the DPM is discussed. This article emphasizes that grief and grievance are intimately connected in the context of ecological grief (Pihkala 2024e; Ranjan 2024).

In addition to grief and bereavement research, this article draws from interdisciplinary research about ecological grief and other eco-emotions, as well as scholarship on religion and ecology. The method is philosophical in the sense of analyzing various lines of thought and justifying the rationale for a new application of the DPM: the DPM-EcoSocial. A special theme is the interconnection of religion with the topic. Religious and spiritual communities have many possibilities for engaging with ecological grief (Hessel-Robinson 2012; Menning 2017; Pihkala 2024f), and this is explored in relation to dynamics of the DPM, such as Loss-Oriented and Restoration-Oriented tasks.

The main research questions are as follows:

- How has the DPM been applied to social and ecological grief in earlier research? (Section 3).
- What further needs may be observed for this application, considering the special features of ecological grief? (Section 4).
- What would a new, integrated model of the DPM and ecological grief look like? (Section 5).
- What kind of Loss-Oriented tasks and dynamics can be observed in such an approach? (Section 6).
- What kind of Restoration-Oriented tasks and dynamics can be observed in such an approach? (Section 7).
- What kind of further dynamics merit attention? (Section 8).
- What are some of the important interconnections between religion and the DPM-EcoSocial? (a cross-cutting theme with special emphasis in Section 8).

Another option would have been to write two separate articles: one focusing on the DPM-EcoSocial, and another focusing on its interconnections with religion. However, it is hoped here that this integrated approach will benefit both a more general audience and those especially interested in the role of religion.

2. The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

The DPM was created in the late 1990s by the experienced grief scholars Stroebe and Schut because of several perceived needs. In those times, there was still much emphasis in many grief approaches on "the grief work hypothesis": roughly, the idea that grief is about confronting the loss. This was sometimes connected to the old idea that grief is about removing emotional bonds to that which has been lost (Bonanno et al. 2002; Parkes and Prigerson 2013; for discussions, see, e.g., Worden 2018). During the last decades, the framework of continuing bonds has strongly replaced this idea (Root and Exline 2014). Stroebe and Schut wanted to create a model where the other impacts of bereavement on life were also taken into account: secondary stressors and various things that need attention in the aftermath of a loss. The need of mourners to sometimes distance themselves from grieving was also integrated, and it was pointed out that avoidance is not always maladaptive (Stroebe and Schut 1999, 2010).

Central features of the DPM are (1) separation between two kinds of engagement—Loss-Oriented (LO) and Restoration-Oriented (RO)—and (2) oscillation between them. The two categories point to differences in emphasis. Loss-Orientation means that sometimes the mourner engages more directly with the loss and feelings related to it.[1] Restoration-Orientation means that sometimes the mourner focuses on what needs to be done because of the loss: for example, practical reorganization of daily life, or learning new roles and identities because of the needs generated by the loss. The naming of Restoration-Orientation has produced some confusion, because people can interpret that it is geared towards restoration in the sense of recovery and adjustment after loss. However, Stroebe and Schut explicitly argue that this is not the case: restoration in the name of RO is not "an outcome variable" (Stroebe and Schut 1999, p. 214). Both LO and RO tasks are needed for adjustment.

Oscillation means movement between the two categories of tasks, either consciously or as driven by various internal or external forces. Stroebe and Schut (1999, 2010) argue that oscillation not only happens but *should* happen in grief processes, so that people can cope and adjust better. What was classically called "grief work" is needed, but it is too heavy for people to stay with the often painful feelings constantly, and daily life demands attention regardless.[2] Thus, one part of oscillation happens between engagement and disengagement with the loss. However, people can also learn skills of actively focusing on different kinds of coping tasks, such as between active commemoration (an LO task) and active reworking of one's daily life (an RO task). Engagement with one task can support engagement with another one as well. For example, engaging with strong emotions of sadness can liberate energy afterwards to reorganize daily living, and engagement with learning new required skills can bring feelings of efficacy, which also increase one's capacity to engage with losses (Larsen et al. 2024; e.g., Stroebe and Schut 2010).

A practical aim is to build balance between the various tasks and one's responses to them. Although people are different and grieve differently, Stroebe and Schut (1999, 2010, 2016) argue that it is problematic if there is no movement between LO and RO. People suffer if they are stuck in heavy grieving for too long without respite. However, people's adjustment also suffers if they do not face any of the hard feelings and only practice RO. Social and cultural factors influence people's capabilities and motivations to engage with either category of task. There can be gendered emotional norms and socialization here.

Stroebe and Schut (1999, pp. 218–19) point out that women tend to show more emphasis on LO, while men tend to focus on RO, at least in industrialized societies.

By their categorization of RO tasks, Stroebe and Schut were able to bring more nuance to grief and bereavement research. The DPM quickly became a much-discussed theory in grief and bereavement research (Fiore 2021; Stroebe and Schut 2010). Its major feature of oscillation also evoked much attention, but it was found to be a difficult phenomenon to study in practice, because the relationship between LO and RO activities can be quite nuanced and complicated. Critical discussion on the DPM has explored these complex issues (Carr 2010; Shear 2010). A recent empirical study observed that, for its participants, the tasks were more entangled in the first, acute phase of bereavement, and they became further differentiated over time (Larsen et al. 2024).

The first version of the DPM used general terms to describe the major contents in LO and RO tasks, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. First version of the DPM (Stroebe and Schut 1999). Used with permission.

In later work, Stroebe and Schut explicitly integrated Worden's famous model of tasks of mourning (the latest version is Worden 2018) into the DPM. The LO category now included Worden's literal formulations, and the RO category included certain adaptations or chosen specifications of them. Furthermore, in 2015, Stroebe and Schut extended the DPM to include family-level dynamics. There can be family-level ways of coping, as well as specific stressors on that level. Furthermore, the different levels influence each other: individual coping affects family coping, and vice versa. The revised version, The DPM-R, is shown in Figure 2.

The later version is important in integrating Worden's research into the DPM, and Worden's work itself is based on the integration of many kinds of earlier research. However, the new wordings of tasks have replaced the older ones, and some of those old ones can be helpful in observing what the DPM is about. For example, in Loss-Orientation, there can be "Intrusion of grief": something reminds the mourner of the loss, and feelings of grief take over. Meanwhile, in Restoration-Orientation, there is "denial/avoidance of grief" and "distraction from grief" (Stroebe and Schut 1999).

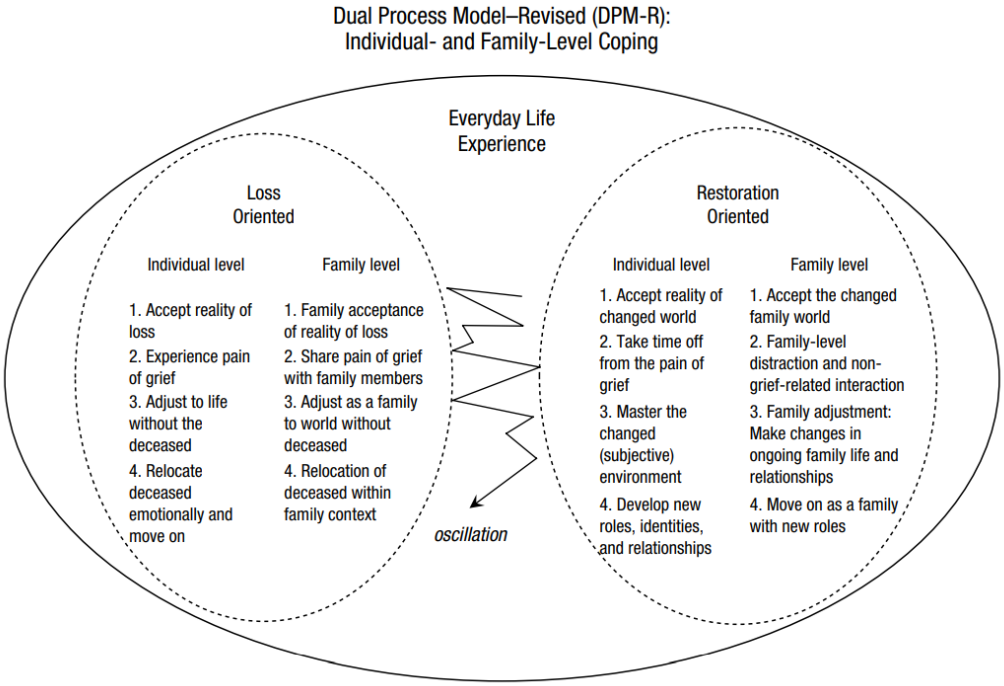


Figure 2. Later version of the DPM: The DPM-R (Stroebe and Schut 2015). Used with permission.

The DPM was influential in bringing more attention to the need to distract oneself, "to take time off from the pain of grief".[3] Some scholars have further conceptualized this as an orientation of its own (Pihkala 2022a; Ratcliffe 2022, pp. 209–10).[4] Of course, this need for distancing is fundamentally a consequence of the loss; thus, it is understandable that Stroebe and Schut place it under the category of "what needs to be engaged with", but as an emphasis and orientation, it is quite different from, e.g., actively learning new skills. Pihkala's (2022a) Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Grief reflects this by building on a three-fold dynamic: action, grieving, and distancing. The more nuanced relationship between these models will be discussed later.

Overall, an important question for further research and discussion is the level of nuance and granularity in naming the tasks and contents of LO and RO. For example, there is a lot of possible content in a category such as "Developing new roles, identities, and relationships". This will be discussed more in the later parts of this article.

The DPM has continued to evoke much interest, and both its creators and other scholars have developed or applied it further. Stroebe and Schut (2010) evaluated the first ten years of research around the framework, and Fiore (2021) provided a wider review. In addition to the 2015 revisions where family dynamics were added (Stroebe and Schut 2015), Stroebe and Schut published a paper in 2016 that focuses on the issue of overload and its relationship with the framework (Stroebe and Schut 2016). Larsen et al. (2024) offered an application of the DPM as a process visualization where the acute and more intense phase of grief is separated from later developments.

3. Previous Research About Extending the DPM into Societal Issues and Ecological Grief

Since the 2010s, several scholars have probed the applicability of the DPM for societal-level mourning. Robben (2014) studied sociocultural mourning of government atrocities in Chile and Argentina, using the DPM as an analytical tool. He was clear about the challenges of applying the model to such wide dynamics, but he pointed out that the separation between LO and RO tasks can be very helpful in analyzing societal responses

to national losses. He found differences between the "politics of oscillation" in these two countries, with many kinds of impacts. In Argentina, LO tasks were given more attention in addition to RO procedures, while in Chile, the governmental focus was heavily on RO tasks. As a result, in Chile, the victims and their close ones felt that recognition was missing, and the generalization of memorialization felt unfair: both perpetrators and victims were put in the same category. Robben pointed out that both LO and RO tasks need attention, and in these kinds of cases, RO tasks include the hard work for reconciliation between perpetrators and victims.

McManus et al. (2018) provided an important discussion of the DPM in relation to natural disasters, and since they mentioned climate change, their research comes very close to ecological grief. They used two cases of online memorialization as examples of various dynamics in relation to LO and RO emphases. The disasters studied happened in New Zealand in 2010–11. The authors observed differences between cases where there was mainly loss of human lives as compared to cases where the damage was mostly to infrastructure. They noted that, in the first case of "'nonmaterial' disasters", memorialization tends to be geared towards LO tasks, while in the latter, the emphasis is on RO tasks and reconstruction after material damage. They made insightful observations about disaster responses in general, noting how governments and other institutions may take various roles in the management of RO tasks. The authors recommended that LO tasks should be given more attention in disaster studies, while RO tasks need more attention in grief and bereavement studies about community/societal responses.

The DPM has also been applied to the COVID-19 pandemic. In their 2021 article, Stroebe and Schut analyzed many previous studies on coping with COVID-19-related bereavement. They made a distinction between LO/RO stressors and perceived reactions to them (Stroebe and Schut 2021, especially Table 1), which is highly useful and provides a model for similar analysis in relation to other subjects, such as ecological grief.

The only previous in-depth applications of the DPM to ecological grief, to the best of the author's knowledge, have been made by Pihkala (2022a) and Bailey and Gerrish (2024). Pihkala discussed the dynamics of the DPM and integrated many of them into his Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Grief, where oscillation is a key feature. However, Pihkala conceptualizes "Coping and Changing" into three, not two dimensions: action, grieving, and distancing. Thus, the content in the RO category in the DPM is split into two and broadened. The character of eco-anxiety, as related to ethical issues, brings additional focus on action, namely, pro-environmental behavior of various kinds.

Bailey and Gerrish (2024) demonstrated an insightful application of the DPM to ecological grief. They focused on the possibilities of social or eco-social work in addressing it. A key feature of their application was a characterization of two major aspects of ecological grief: "unprecedented" and "unacknowledged". These were linked with LO and RO, respectively, and special characteristics of both aspects were discussed on the basis of earlier research and literature. The authors argued that "[t]hese two orientations can coalesce in ways that create enormous barriers to coping and therefore action" (p. 5). Since the authors had a practical focus, they renamed restoration in RO as "transformation", and oscillation as "transition". The key idea, well supported by research, is that communities and individuals need profound transformation because of the socio-ecological crisis. Their article is given special attention here because it is so close to the research task at hand.

The decisions made by Bailey and Gerrish mean that they moved slightly away from the original focus of the DPM as describing various foci of engagement. Their model, inspired by the DPM, is more of a model of transformation. The two key terms, "unprecedented" and "unacknowledged" ecological grief, are clearly elemental aspects of ecological grief, but they are not exactly the same as LO and RO: they are qualities

of psychosocial phenomena that affect how LO and RO tasks are encountered (or not encountered). Thus, in the following text, the many insights provided by Bailey and Gerrish are drawn from, but the focus is on a slightly more traditional application of the DPM in the sense of various coping tasks and dynamics. For some reason, Bailey and Gerrish did not refer to the revised version (the DPM-R), and the naming of the LO and RO tasks in that version is used in the following analysis.

The main connotation of ecological grief for Bailey and Gerrish was its global form, and in this sense it was argued to be "unprecedented". They distilled six major aspects of this kind of ecological grief (see their Figure 2): existential scale; the fact that environmental loss could have been prevented (for this "preventability", see also Pihkala 2024e); "culpability", meaning the prominence of guilt dynamics; the commonality of disenfranchised grief in relation to ecological grief; possible elements of ambiguous loss; and dimensions of anticipatory loss (pp. 6–8). Thus, these are attributes/features/dynamics that affect engagement with loss, but they operate on a different level compared to the wording of LO tasks by Stroebe and Schut.

Similarly, Bailey and Gerrish distilled six major aspects related to "unacknowledged grief". These are types of losses that help to understand why it is so difficult for many people to engage with the topic: loss of a way of life; of identity, power, and privilege; of predictability and certainty; of meaning and purpose; and of cultural narratives (pp. 8–10). Their summary in Figure 5 (p. 14) links the contents together and names various tasks for collectives, such as "grief support" (LO task) and "create spaces of resistance" (RO task). However, they mostly made the RO side of the figure—now called transformation—into an outcome variable: "Transition" is needed from the loss side to the restoration side. Thus, their insightful schema operates differently than the original DPM, and it has a strong ethical dimension.[5] It points to large-scale RO tasks in the sense of societal transformation of industrial societies. These are a kind of extended RO task: not just something that needs to be done because there have been losses, but also deeper efforts to change societal structures so that fewer socio-ecological losses will be generated in the future. This is in line with in-depth theorizing on the topic (e.g., Head 2016; Verlie 2022). However, their powerful application could be clearer about the continuing need to engage with losses and LO tasks even in the midst of the desired transformation. There will also be a need for oscillation in the midst of nonfinite losses (Boyd 2023; see also Johnson 2023; Pihkala 2024e; Schmidt et al. 2023).

Thus, there is a clear need to further study the application of the DPM to ecological grief, and there is a lack of research discussing the role of religion and spirituality in relation to this subject area.

4. Dynamics of Ecological Grief That Shape the New Application of the DPM

The following are major dynamics of ecological grief that affect the new application of the DPM in this article. They were selected and categorized from earlier scholarship on ecological grief and sociocultural mourning.

4.1. Local and Global Ecological Grief

Since there are many kinds of manifestations of ecological loss and grief, it seems important that the applications of the DPM would include engagement with them. Sometimes ecological grief is more explicitly born out of local changes, but often these have regional and global dimensions (e.g., Brugger et al. 2013; Cunsolo Willox et al. 2013). Mourning local ecological loss is different from mourning global ecological loss, since local losses have more particularity (see also the discussions around solastalgia in Galway et al. 2019; Pihkala 2024e).

However, it is important to note that the local and the global dimensions of ecological loss and grief can resonate strongly in people's lifeworlds. There are many possible dynamics here. For some people, local environmental damage functions as an awakening to wider environmental problems, loss, and sorrow (Chawla 1998). For others, it is the other way around: they learn about the universal dynamics of environmental problems, and then they are able to see their local manifestations, which cause sorrow (e.g., Ray 2018). Sometimes, people have to engage in overlapping processes of local ecological grief and global ecological grief: they are trying to deal with local loss and with a growing awareness of global ecological loss (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018; see also the discussions of "anticipatory solastalgia", e.g., Stanley 2023). This can lead to various results. Sometimes, people become more aware and engaged, and sometimes people distance themselves. For example, research among climate disaster survivors shows that people may not want to think about the global dimension, or they may feel unable to do so with the coping resources that they have (see also Marshall 2015; Ogunbode et al. 2019).

4.2. Various Levels: Individual, Family, Peer Group, Community, Society

In the DPM-R, Stroebe and Schut extended the model to the family level and pointed out that the individual and family dynamics of grieving and coping impact each other. It is possible, and indeed important, to analyze ecological grief on both of these levels, and to explore how they interact (Cooke et al. 2024). However, ecological grief is also very relevant for the wider levels of peer groups, communities, and societies, and this article extends the DPM to those levels as well.

All of the aforementioned levels may interact with each other, and usually they do so, especially from the top down (Crandon et al. 2022). Societal dynamics of grieving affect community dynamics (Benham and Hoerst 2024). These both affect family and peer group dynamics, which may naturally have flavors of their own too, and all of these affect individual dynamics of grieving. Individuals may be able to influence the wider dynamics, and this is most evident for the family and peer group levels. Community-level innovation also happens relatively often, such as in the case of ecological grief rituals spearheaded by a few committed individuals (e.g., Adams 2020). Society-level or even regional influencing is more challenging but by no means impossible (Holthaus 2023). Religion and spirituality can affect these various dimensions, and religious communities have been observed to be important for various kinds of grieving (e.g., Klass 2014).

In the DPM-R, Stroebe and Schut (2015) spend considerable time on the issue of differences among family members in grieving. They also refer to temporality: even while members grieve the same thing, they may differ in when they need to grieve more intensively or when they wish to be more socially open to joint mourning. This "desynchronization" (p. 877) provides a practical task and challenge, especially at the community level.

At least two consequences emerge for ecological mourning: First, there should be times and places for more intense and open ecological mourning. This is important both in relation to mourners and ethically as an act of witness to what has been lost (Cunsolo and Landman 2017). Second, those people who feel more intense ecological grief should accept that both family members and community members may have different ways of grieving. However, this is different from giving a license to bypass ecological grief altogether.

4.3. Grief and Grievance

By definition, ecological grief is about human-caused damage to ecosystems (Barnett 2022; Cunsolo and Ellis 2018).[6] There are major differences in cases here. Sometimes environmental damage is the result of very direct human action, and sometimes it is a

more ambient or indirect consequence thereof: for example, carbon emissions. Ecological grief is thus bound up with questions about culpability and responsibility, which lead to discussions of guilt, blame, injustice, and justice. This has been noted by a great number of scholars of ecological grief (Bailey and Gerrish 2024; Jensen 2019; e.g., Menning 2017).

A simple way to express this is that grief and *grievance* are interconnected in ecological grief. It is interesting that the research traditions with respect to each term are quite disconnected from the other term, but recent proposals have been made to bring these closer to each other (Ranjan 2024; for another context, people of color, see Wilson and O'Connor 2022). Grievances evoke anger in many forms, including empathic anger and moral outrage (for discussions, see Batson et al. 2007; Kauppinen 2018), and this major theme is related to discussions about grief and political action. Grief and anger can be channeled into determined political action, and this aspect of ecological grief has been emphasized by many scholars (see further Bergman 2023; e.g., Kretz 2017). This has been argued to be a challenge for many religious communities, such as Christian congregations, since there is often a lack of constructive engagement with anger in them (Pihkala 2024f; Grau 2025).

In their application of the DPM to societal matters, this time disasters, McManus et al. (2018) pointed out, in accordance with Holst-Warhaft, that "from ancient Greece to the present day, grief's potential to mobilize anger has troubled those with established power who therefore attempt to suppress the pain of grief" (p. 8). They connected this with the policies of authorities, noting that "Focusing on restoration rather than loss or trauma may serve their interests well" (p. 8). Emphases between LO and RO tasks may have conscious or unconscious political purposes, and the dynamics of anger and guilt are prominent here (Gregersen et al. 2023; for discussions of various dynamics, see Pihkala 2024f).

The tasks of the DPM in relation to ecological grief are thus intimately connected with discussions about justice and responsibility, including guilt and culpability. Effects related to anger and guilt can be strongly present, and these are also generally common emotions in grief processes (Li et al. 2014; Worden 2018). There are many ways in which perceived injustices and grievances can hinder engagement with both LO and RO tasks, including oscillation between them, and this has implications at all levels, from the individual to the societal.

4.4. Social Difficulties, Anxiety, and Denial

There are many reasons why ecological grief can be difficult. For collective-level applications of the DPM, social contradictions and difficulties around ecological grief seem particularly impactful (for discussions, see Neckel and Hasenfratz 2021; Varutti 2023). Ecological grief has often been disenfranchised grief (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018; Kevorkian 2004). Pihkala (2024e) provides a discussion of various dynamics in this, as shown in Figure 3.

The various reasons why ecological grief often is socially contradictory are deep and manifold, and these are intimately connected with eco-anxiety/eco-distress (for these concepts, see Pihkala 2020, 2024c). Many scholars have noted the links between ecological grief and anxiety (for a review, see Ojala et al. 2021). Local ecological changes and losses may also evoke anxiety and distress, but these emotions—or mental states, depending on their character—are very prominent in relation to global ecological losses and threats.

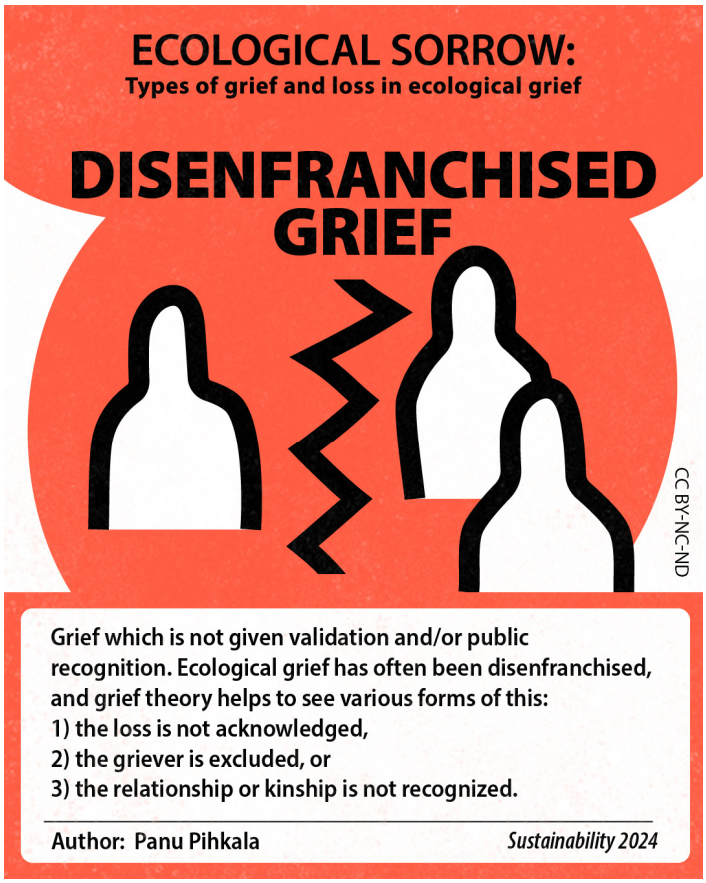


Figure 3. Disenfranchised ecological grief (Source: Pihkala 2024e; drawn by Santtu Oja).

The global ecological crisis often evokes both threat-related emotions, such as anxiety, fear, and worry, and loss-related emotions, such as sadness and grief (Marczak et al. 2023; Pihkala 2022b). People's reactions to this reality can be widely different. Some people become activated in environmental matters (Kurth and Pihkala 2022), but as Bailey and Gerrish (2024) emphasized, there is often denial and distancing of the losses and threats (see also Weintrobe 2013b). It is a tricky question whether people who practice strong denial already feel, in a suppressed or repressed form, "a deep grief", as Bailey and Gerrish (2024) argue, or whether they are only *approaching* the acceptance of the loss and resist grief (for perspectives, see Lertzman 2015). Be that as it may, the evident result is that there are conflicting reactions and behaviors in societies, communities, and often also in families, and this makes ecological grief (and anxiety) much more difficult to cope with. Religious communities can either support people in ecological grief or participate in disenfranchised ecological grief, and the latter can cause additional "eco-spiritual grief": sorrow about felt conflicts with the religious community (Pihkala 2024d).

Thus, social contradictions and tensions affect all levels of ecological grief, from the individual to the societal, and they can impact both LO and RO dynamics, as well as oscillation. The DPM allows these various impacts to be pinpointed by exploring what exactly they hinder in a given situation. For example, it may be that a community socially supports RO tasks but not LO tasks. In another case, it may be that there has initially been a focus on LO, but there is then social pressure for closure, and there is social discouragement of oscillation into LO tasks even while they are still needed.

5. The DPM-EcoSocial

Figure 4 shows the new application of the DPM-R to ecological grief and collective levels. The name of the new version is DPM-EcoSocial, and there are several reasons for this selection. This name emphasizes the close connections between ecological and social factors, which are discussed in eco-social philosophy (e.g., Pulkki et al. 2021) and in socio-ecological modeling of eco-emotional dynamics (e.g., Crandon et al. 2022). The name is also reminiscent of how powerful social dynamics are for ecological grief. The DPM-EcoSocial can be applied to both local and ecological grief (Section 4.1 above), as well as for various levels, from the individual to the community and society (Section 4.2 above).

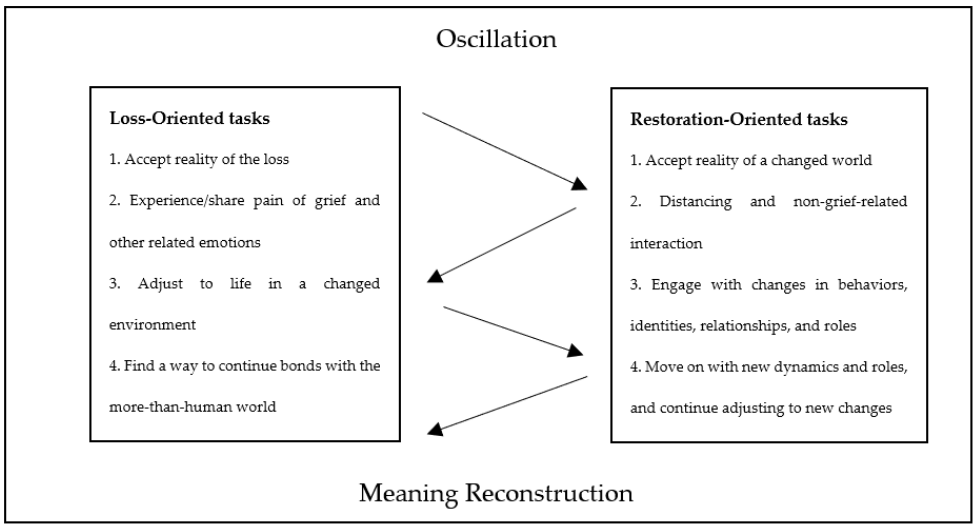


Figure 4. The DPM-EcoSocial.

The content of the tasks will be discussed in the following sections, but their naming and certain modifications from the DPM-R are elaborated here. As can be seen in the figure, the wordings of the tasks have been kept almost the same, but naturally, the context of ecological grief causes the need to make certain changes. In selecting terms, other grief theories were also kept in mind, especially Worden's evolving formulations; the DPM-R used Worden's previous wordings.

Task 3 in both the LO and RO categories has been renamed because the original formulation referred to "the deceased" (person). The new wording of the LO task follows Worden's new formulation but interprets it ecologically: Adjust to life in a changed environment. Environment refers here to the physical and possibly also social environment. The original individual RO task spoke of mastery: "Master the changed (subjective) environment". Mastery is problematic as a goal, since human efforts at mastery of "nature" have caused massive environmental problems, and because environments will keep on changing (for a critique of mastery in the context of ambiguous loss, see Boss et al. 2011). The original family-level task was characterized as adjustment and making changes in ongoing (family) life and relationships. The new formulation in the DPM-EcoSocial is "Engage with changes in behaviors, relationships, and roles": this refers to efficacy (think of "mastery" in the original), adjustment, and relationality.

Task 4 in both LO and RO has also been modified. The original wording of the DPM-R in LO, "Relocate deceased emotionally and move on", was based on Worden's effort to integrate the idea of continuing bonds and the idea of being able to move on in life (Worden 2009). This "move on" aspect is also reminiscent of the classic idea in grief research of "reinvesting emotional energy", as Worden delineated the task in the 1980s (Worden 1982). In 2009, Worden modified the wording to emphasize the connection to continuing bonds even more explicitly:

"To find an enduring connection with the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life" (Worden 2009). In 2018, this was changed to "To find a way to remember the deceased while embarking on the rest of one's journey through life" (Worden 2018).

The individual-level RO Task 4 in the DPM-R is "Develop new roles, identities, and relationships", and the family-level task is "Move on as family with new roles". Thus, the key ideas are about adjusting, moving on, and new roles and relationships. The new formulations in the DPM-EcoSocial are the following: in LO, "Find a way to continue bonds with the more-than-human world", and in RO, "Move on with new dynamics and roles, and continue adjusting to new changes". The latter part of continuing to adjust pays tribute to the character of ongoing, sometimes nonfinite ecological losses. It is notable that one of the main developers of the continuing bonds approach, Klass, emphasizes the social and cultural dynamics within it (Klass 2023), and these are a major part of the DPM-EcoSocial.

The DPM-EcoSocial can also easily be used in relation to other community-level and society-level losses: only the fourth LO task needs to be renamed as "Find a way to integrate what has been lost into the fabric of life".

The following discussion describes the tasks in the DPM-EcoSocial and, thus, discusses some major aspects of coping with LO and RO tasks amidst ecological grief. It should be noted that there could also be other ways of naming and describing important dynamics and tasks, such as the wordings in the original DPM.

6. Loss-Oriented Tasks

6.1. Accept Reality of the Loss

As was discussed above in connection to the work of Bailey and Gerrish (2024), this is a major challenge in relation to global ecological grief. People need lots of containment and psychosocial resources to take in potentially traumatic information (Doherty et al. 2024; Lewis et al. 2020). Even gradual advances in this acceptance can be argued to be important; full acknowledgement of the severity of the ecological crisis is psychologically very tough.[7]

In relation to local or regional ecological losses, accepting them can be psychosocially easier because they are more particular and less threatening than global demise, but there are often various views of what counts as a loss and how significant those losses are (e.g., Barnett et al. 2016; van der Linden 2017). Furthermore, there can be local losses so severe that it is difficult to accept their finality (e.g., Amoak et al. 2023).

6.2. Experience/Share Pain of Grief and Other Related Emotions

This task refers to the need to actually feel one's feelings and to share them with trusted others. Families and other in-groups can be highly important in this, but naturally, this is challenging if people have very different reactions to ecological issues and grief. People long not only for emotional support but for validation and recognition, and too often ecological mourners have felt isolated (e.g., Kretz 2017). The discussion by Cooke and colleagues about what they call "ecological grief literacy" (2024) also includes recommendations for constructive engagement with ecological grief at the organizational and family levels.

It is well known that many emotions often take place in grief processes, such as anger, fear, despair, and guilt (e.g., Worden 2018). This is also evident in relation to ecological grief and anxiety: The ecological crisis evokes many kinds of emotions in people (Albrecht 2019; Hickman et al. 2021; Pihkala 2022b). These need to be felt and engaged with; for example, issues around guilt can complicate grieving if they are not faced (e.g., Jones et al. 2020; Prade-Weiss 2021). Peer groups and facilitated sessions can be a highly useful means for this (Hamilton 2020) in relation to both local and global ecological grief.[8] Some methods include focus on different eco-emotions in different thematic sessions (e.g., Macy

and Brown 2014), which can be seen as important LO work. This kind of work can take place in religious communities (Pihkala 2024f).

6.3. Adjust to Life in a Changed Environment

This task emphasizes emotional adjustment; other kinds of adjustment are more RO tasks, but it is evident that many practical actions here can serve both LO and RO tasks. In the DPM-R, this task means learning to cope with situations where people are reminded that the deceased is missing. In relation to ecological grief, there can be various kinds of triggers that remind people of the loss and grief, depending on what is mourned and whether it includes local and/or global aspects. Mourners face the task of learning to somehow deal with those triggers and the emotions that they evoke.

Relevant strands of research include coping theory and emotion regulation theory (for an overview, see Ibrahim 2024). People can use, and learn to use, various methods, such as the following: They can practice situation selection, trying to either avoid or be in situations where certain emotions are evoked (Gross and Ford 2024). They can use cognitive reframing and/or somatic methods; for example, when difficult emotions arise, such as strong sadness, they can use cognition to tell themselves that they are able to withstand these emotions and that the strongest emotions will pass, and/or they can use deep breathing to calm themselves down (e.g., Doherty et al. 2024; Wright 2024). They can make spaces for emotions to flow, such as performing a grief ritual when sadness arises and allowing themselves to cry (e.g., Johnson 2018; Sapara Barton 2024); religion and spirituality offer many resources for this (e.g., Pihkala 2024f). Many psychologists and experts by experience have offered various tips for emotion regulation and coping in relation to ecological grief and distress (Davenport 2017; Doppelt 2016; Macy and Johnstone 2022; Weber 2020).

6.4. Find a Way to Continue Bonds with the More-Than-Human World

Grief theorists emphasize that people need to find ways to integrate the loss into their lives. Sometimes this manifests as continuing emotional bonds with what has been lost (Klass 2023). This task is closely connected with acceptance and adjustment, in the sense of reaching a state where the painful feelings related to the loss do not take control—at least, not as easily as before—and perhaps some of their edge is gone (e.g., Kübler-Ross and Kessler 2005; Worden 2018). There may be elements of moving on in life and rejuvenated life energy, although nonfinite losses affect these dynamics. The losses may continue to manifest, and there is then cyclicity in the processes (Roos 2018).

In the DPM, the ultimate goal of adjustment is connected to both LO and RO tasks. In the LO part, this task is fundamentally about emotions and continuing bonds. A longer name for the task would be "Find a way to continue bonds with the more-than-human world while embarking on the rest of one's journey through life".

Continuing bonds are often manifested via memory objects, memorial places, rituals, and other spiritual practices. In relation to lost humans and more-than-human creatures such as companion animals, people often use memorial photos at home and visit memorial sites outdoors. In relation to various kinds of ecological grief, the following are examples of different ways to practice remembrance and continuing bonds:

- Annual remembrance days, such as the Remembrance Day for Lost Species on 30th November (de Massol de Rebetz 2020; Wray 2022, pp. 203–15) and annual days where former climate disasters are remembered.
- Public and stable memorials, such as the Monument to the Passenger Pigeon (Barnett 2022), the Monument to the Ok Glacier in Iceland (Árnason and Hafsteinsson 2020), or plaques remembering intensive weather events and catastrophes (Hall 2017).

- Movable/portable memorials, such as thematic altars of extinction (Gomes 2009) or art projects that engage with ecological grief (e.g., Barr 2017).
- Public rituals (Mihai and Thaler 2023; Pike 2017).
- More private, sometimes spontaneous rituals and/or memorial places (e.g., Johnson 2017).

These kinds of activities are not only psychologically important but also ethical practices of bearing witness and remembering (Barnett 2022; e.g., Cunsolo 2017). The emerging literature and scholarship provides insights for this. Social scientists Mihai and Thaler (2023) pointed out that various practical and ethical aspects need attention when organizing forms of public ecological mourning, and they provided insightful guidelines for what they call environmental commemoration. Religious scholar Menning (2017) analyzed elements in certain traditional mourning practices by various religious communities and provided fascinating reflections on how these could be applied for ecological grief. Ecological theologians such as Hessel-Robinson and Malcolm (Hessel-Robinson 2012; Malcolm 2020a) have applied the ancient practice of lament into ecological mourning.

This is a good place to remember that the tasks can be overlapping. For example, a public ritual of ecological mourning can advance all four of the LO tasks named above: it can help bystanders to move towards accepting the reality of the loss, it offers an opportunity to share and experience the pain of ecological grief, it provides methods of emotional engagement and emotion regulation, and it is connected to the tasks of continuing bonds, witnessing, and moving on in life.

7. Restoration-Oriented Tasks

As mentioned above, Restoration-Oriented tasks are things that need attention because of the loss that has happened. These may be stressors or ways to deal with stress; Stroebe and Schut (2016, p. 98) called them "perceived concerns/preoccupations". This category can easily become very wide-ranging in the case of ecological grief, because it is so holistic (an example is Bailey and Gerrish 2024). In particular, global ecological grief is related to a whole changing world, but local and regional sources of ecological grief can also give rise to profound needs for change. For example, massive droughts can impact the whole lifeworlds of communities, such as the farmers studied in a research article about Ghana (Amoak et al. 2023). As Stroebe and Schut (2016, p. 99) formulated, "Many aspects of one's daily life may need to be rethought and planned afresh". These impacts affect also religious communities, and at best, they may play a constructive role in supporting people with these tasks.

7.1. Accept Reality of a Changed World

When Stroebe and Schut divided Worden's first task into two parts, an LO one and an RO one, the latter gained an emphasis on how the world is changed because of the loss. Depending on what kind of ecological loss one focuses on, this task can become complex. Global ecological loss and severe local ecological loss change the world in profound ways, both physically and socially.

A distinction between world and lifeworld can sometimes bring clarity to focus. Lifeworlds are lived realities that orient around important things and relations in a life (see e.g., Fairtlough 1991). Environmental change and damage can destroy whole lifeworlds, such as those of farmers, fishers, or seal hunters; Pihkala (2024e) used the term "lifeworld loss" to describe this. Figure 5 depicts multilayered lifeworlds, and family lifeworlds could be named there between the cultural and the individual.

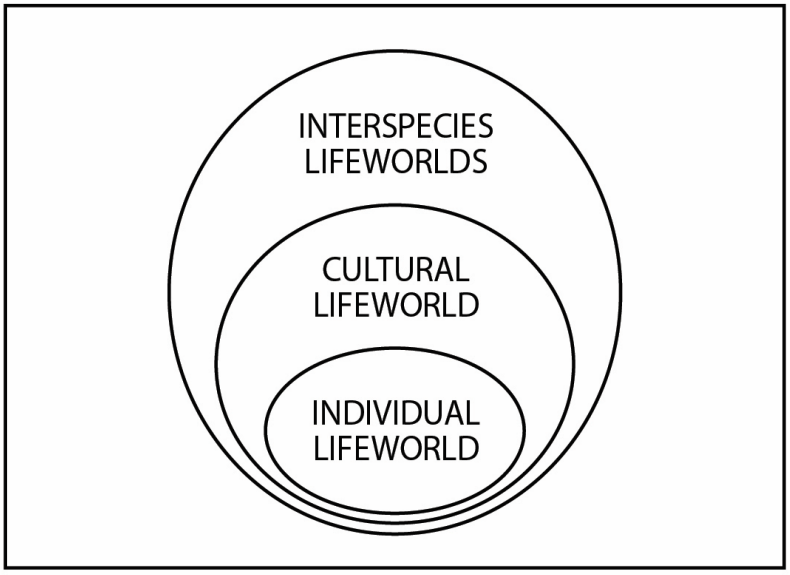


Figure 5. Lifeworld losses: Multilayered aspects of lifeworlds, now under change (Pihkala 2024e, drawn by Santtu Oja).

Originally, key concepts in relation to RO in the DPM included "doing new things" and "attending to life changes" (Stroebe and Schut 1999). As Stroebe and Schut (2015, p. 877) wrote, "New tasks and secondary stressors (changes) due to the loss—add to coping difficulties; undertaking them promotes adjustment and acceptance of the changed world". Now that the DPM-R uses wordings from Worden, the first and third RO tasks come very close to each other.

The wider levels of family, peer group, community, and society affect how changed (life)worlds are accepted or not accepted, and the various levels interact with each other (see Section 4.4 above). There can also be additional stressors on particular levels. What Stroebe and Schut (2015, p. 877) wrote in relation to family dynamics can be applied to ecological grief and the even wider levels of peer groups, communities, and societies: "Additional family-level stressors resulting from the loss (conflicts, legal/financial battles, poverty) add to difficulties and lack of acceptance of the changed family world". Social support would be essential in the difficult but elementary task of accepting how the world has changed in so many ways: ecologically, socially, culturally, and politically. These changes also extend to religions and worldviews (e.g., Haberman 2021; Malcolm 2020b).

7.2. Distancing and Non-Grief-Related Interaction

This task is discussed in Pihkala's (2022a) Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Grief as "Distancing (including both self-care and avoidance)". Stroebe and Schut used the wordings "distraction", "take time of the pain of grief", and "non-grief-related interaction". Distancing can be argued to be wider than just distraction, even though both point in the same direction.

Especially in relation to severe losses and nonfinite losses, people need skills and opportunities to regularly distance themselves from heavy engagement with the losses and sorrows. In relation to eco-emotions, this is often discussed by psychologists in the case of eco-anxiety/distress and the need to calm down one's nervous system (e.g., Haase and Hudson 2024; Ibrahim 2024). The chances for distancing are naturally shaped by socio-ecological factors, and people suffering from many kinds of hardships and injustices face more challenges here. That being said, some people, under very difficult conditions, have found creative ways to practice non-grief-related interaction: for example, storytelling, dancing, or singing (Uchendu and Haase 2024; Wray 2022).

The founder of Good Grief Network, LaUra Schmidt, provides an insightful discussion of taking care of oneself amidst ecological grief and crisis (Schmidt et al. 2023, pp. 183–204). She notes how the concept of self-care, which is sometimes criticized today because of possible individualistic associations, was emphasized in an inter-relational way by black feminist activists in the late 1960s and 1970s. Self-care, which often happens in the community and is intimately connected with various relationships (including the more-than-human), is also elementary for political and ethical purposes: it enables people to keep on fighting for a better world (see also, e.g., Boyd 2023, p. 219; Sapara Barton 2024).

In the context of ecological grief, distancing and non-grief-related interaction need to take place in social groups as well. Sometimes this happens naturally, but conscious efforts can be made to ensure this. For in-groups and communities, developing a weekly or monthly rhythm of both engaging with loss (LO tasks) and taking time off from it (RO) can be a supporting structure. Religious communities can utilize their traditions for this (Pihkala 2024f), since they already often invite their members to engage with suffering and sorrow, while also offering spaces for fun and celebration (for an example, see Abercrombie 1994).

7.3. Engage with Changes in Behaviors, Identities, Relationships, and Roles

As mentioned above, this task is intimately connected with the first RO task. Accepting the changed world leads to motivation to rework behaviors and relationships, which, in turn, may help people to accept changes in their (life)world.

In addition to the words mentioned in the heading, practices could be named as well. There is a need to learn new things and to change because of the loss. Some of these changes are direct requirements caused by the loss, while some are more indirect consequences or opportunities caused by it.

In classic cases of bereavement, mourners may need to make changes to their living arrangements now that a close one is gone. They may have to learn new skills and practice new roles. For example, the deceased may have taken care of certain family duties, and now someone else needs to do that, which may require learning. Sometimes this dynamic also takes place in ecological loss. For example, loss of pollinators has already pushed people to try to pollinate plants in some regions of the world (Darnaud 2016).

Ecological losses can be diverse in character, and different levels of them cause different needs. Global ecological loss causes a deep need for adjustment and transformation (Bailey and Gerrish 2024; Pihkala 2022a). Local or regional ecological losses may also cause holistic needs for change, such as in the case of lost possibilities for agriculture (Amoak et al. 2023). There are also losses that cause rapid needs only for a portion of local people, or which may even pass unnoticed by many. As a result, it is often only a part of the people of a larger community who engage in transformative change. The development of more ethical and sustainable community dynamics is then hindered because of differences in reactions. These differences may also be seen in religious communities (Pihkala 2024d).

There are numerous possible changes that may be needed because of ecological losses and the resulting grief. Bailey and Gerrish (2024) named many of these. Some authors, such as Andreotti and colleagues (De Oliveira Andreotti et al. 2023; Stein et al. 2022), have taken the depth of required changes even further. Some differences between these changes can be discerned by differentiating between more traditional ideas of resilience and deeper conceptualizations of "transformational resilience" (Doppelt 2016, 2023) or "transilience" (Lozano Nasi et al. 2023, 2024). To begin with, ecological losses may require changes so that daily life can continue to function at all. For example, significant sources of food/water or income may be lost, and work may be needed to reorganize the fulfillment of those needs. This would be resilience: being able to return to the previous state of functioning. However,

this is not always easy to do in the case of profound environmental change and damage, such as droughts and other dire impacts of climate change (e.g., Boafo and Yeboah 2024).

Transformational resilience, or transilience, points to the need to grow beyond the original state of things. This can, and many ethicists say should, take many forms. There is physical transformational resilience in the sense of reworking the material lifeways of communities and societies. There is ethical transilience in the sense of developing new, more sustainable values, which guide actions, and there is psychological transilience: increased flexibility and capability in coping with hardship (for discussions on various aspects of this, see Doppelt 2016; Pihkala 2022a; Verlie 2022).

Engaging with this RO task in the case of ecological loss and grief is thus a profound ethical and practical need, with strong psychological implications. Communities and societies, I argue together with many other thinkers, should not be satisfied with surface-level restoration but should aim at the same time for deeper transformation and transilience (see also the discussion around Bendell 2023; Moser 2019; Walter 2024). The DPM supports the idea that this deeper aim is probably not achievable without enough attention to LO tasks. This is in line with Robben's (2014) arguments about LO and RO tasks in national mourning and reconciliation, and also with the points made by McManus et al. (2018) about responding to natural disasters. However, there can be a vicious circle here. Because deeper grieving is so often resisted in industrialized societies (Horwitz and Wakefield 2007; e.g., Weller 2015), there is a tendency to avoid LO tasks, and this also restricts deeper engagement with RO tasks in the sense of more profound transformation.

7.4. Move on with New Dynamics and Roles, and Continue Adjusting to New Changes

This task refers both to a continuation of the third task and the element of moving on in life (see Section 6.4 above). In practice, this is intimately connected with growth via grief and crises. That is often called post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi et al. 2018), with some scholars suggesting that adversarial growth would be a more neutral common name (Blackie et al. 2023). People will need to continue transforming and growing amidst various socio-ecological crises. Scholars have started to explore the dynamics of adversarial/post-traumatic growth in relation to ecological issues (Doppelt 2016; Kamenetz 2023; Pihkala 2024a).

8. Discussion: Dynamics of the DPM and Ecological Grief

In this section, certain important dynamics of the DPM and ecological grief are discussed further.

8.1. Oscillation

As mentioned, the creators of the DPM, Stroebe and Schut, pointed out not only that oscillation happens in grief processes, but that it should happen. Both kinds of tasks, LO and RO, need engaging with, and it is problematic if people are overly stuck with only one of these orientations.

In ecological grief, the need for oscillation is strengthened by many factors, such as the following:

- Ongoing character of ecological losses, especially in global ecological grief. Oscillation is needed amidst nonfinite loss and chronic sorrow.
- The common social disputes around ecological grief. Ecological mourners often need to regulate their responses because of outer, social needs.
- The existential weight of the global ecological crisis and the grief that it causes. So much is being destroyed that there will be "intrusion of grief" (Stroebe and Schut 1999) and a need to oscillate to LO tasks. On the other hand, there will be a need to find relief from the pain of grief via RO tasks and distancing.

The importance of learning skills of oscillating more consciously has been mentioned several times above. In Pihkala's (2022a) Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Grief, oscillation is characterized as happening via three dimensions of coping and changing: action, grieving (including other emotional engagement), and distancing (including self-care and avoidance). Furthermore, a more flexible state of being able to better control oscillation is described under the heading Living with the Ecological Crisis. There, the titles and subtitles of two dimensions have switched places to describe this element of control: emotional engagement (including grieving), and self-care (including avoidance). Figure 6 shows the model.

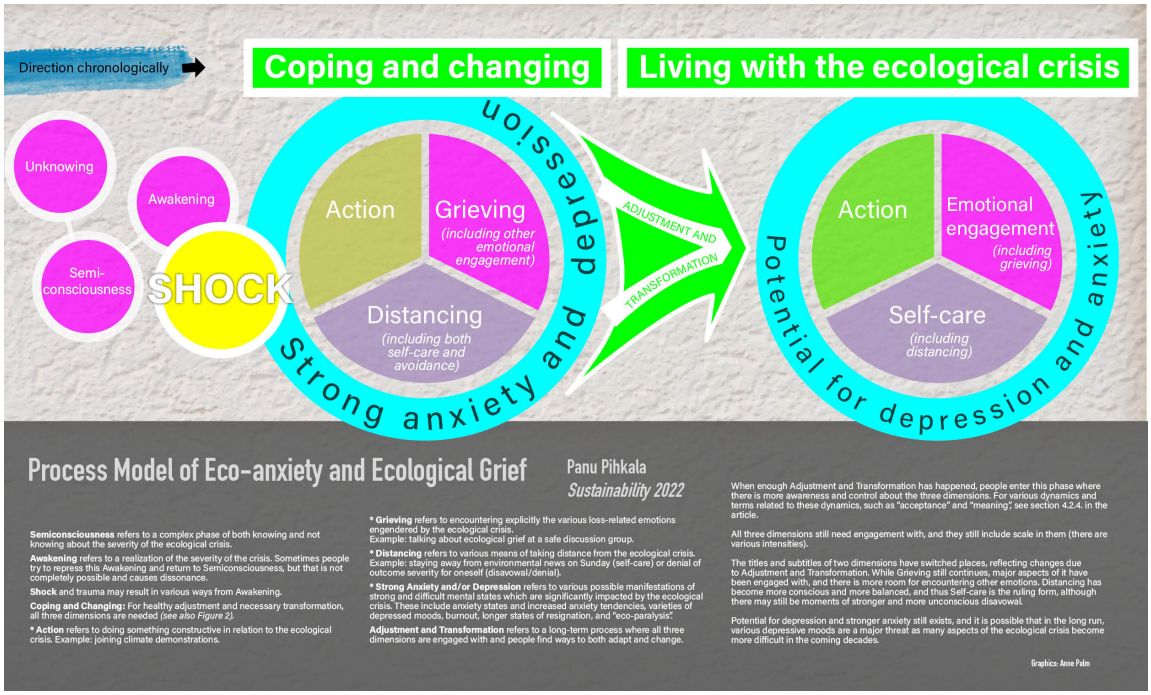


Figure 6. Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Grief (Pihkala 2022a).

What is not depicted visually in the model is the potential cyclicity in processes of more acute grief and distress. Events may take place, both external and internal, that cause a need for people to engage again with grieving and distancing more intensively—and perhaps less consciously. New tasks of adjustment and transformation may present themselves, sometimes along with new opportunities for growth (if people are lucky). By using terms from the DPM, this could be described as more intense engagement with LO tasks and new kinds of RO tasks.[9]

8.2. Overload

In a 2016 article, Stroebe and Schut integrated the concept of overload into the DPM: "having more to cope with than one feels one can manage" (Stroebe and Schut 2016, p. 97). The structure of the DPM allowed them to think of various options for this overload:

- Overload (mainly) because of too many LO stressors;
- Overload (mainly) because of too many RO stressors;
- Overload because of too many of both LO and RO stressors at a given time;
- Overload (mainly) because of too many non-grief-related stressors in life (Stroebe and Schut 2016, pp. 101–2).

Stroebe and Schut pointed out that mere oscillation may not be enough in situations of overload, and that instead the number and weight of stressors need to be limited (2016,

pp. 102–3). They also noted the problems caused if there is significant trauma included: "Traumatic bereavements may cause difficulties in alternating smoothly (less balanced or controlled or coherent) between the LOs and ROs (and in taking time off)". (Stroebe and Schut 2016, p. 100).

Sometimes, overload can result from the need to make difficult decisions about what stressor(s) to deal with: "bereaved persons . . . may actually experience a sense of conflict between dealing with stressors (i.e., the feeling that one should be dealing with something else" (Stroebe and Schut 2016, p. 101).

In relation to ecological grief, all of this is significant and can help to make sense of difficulties in coping with it. Using the DPM, it is possible to analyze what kinds of dynamics cause overload. For example, sometimes there may simply be too many ecological losses: simultaneous, cumulative, and/or cascading losses (Cunsolo et al. 2020). In other cases, the demands for RO tasks can be so immense that people feel overwhelmed. However, the overload in ecological grief and anxiety may often result simply from having too many stressors in life in general.

The felt conflict between stressors, the feeling that perhaps one should be dealing with something else, seems to be an important dynamic in ecological grief and anxiety. Anxiety itself is strengthened by feeling overwhelmed or having to choose between many options amidst stress (Barlow 2004; Epstein 1972; Kurth 2018; LeDoux 2016). It can be a manifestation of adaptive, practical anxiety (Kurth and Pihkala 2022) to think about what exactly one should do in a given situation, but it is easy to see how this may become too intense, especially when feeling grief and in the midst of everything that needs changing in contemporary societies.

Communities and counselors could advise people to focus on one LO or RO stressor at a time, which can help to avoid overload and anxiety (Doherty et al. 2024; Ibrahim 2024). If things go well, this can bring feelings of efficacy, which then buffer against distress and feelings of helplessness.

8.3. Meaning Reconstruction

In addition to the DPM, one of the most influential approaches in grief theory and counseling in the 2000s has been the meaning reconstruction approach proposed by Neimeyer and colleagues (Harris 2020; Neimeyer 2019; for its influences, see, e.g., Worden 2018). This integrative approach emphasizes the need for mourners to work through changes in meanings in life, perhaps after shattered assumptions, or at least due to a need to "relearn the world" (Attig 2015) after grief. In practice, narrative methods are often used in this approach, helping people to tell the story of the loss, spend time on the background story that led to it, and engage in telling a forward-looking story of their life (e.g., Neimeyer 2023). There is much literature on this approach (e.g., Neimeyer 2016, 2022), and Pihkala (2024e) has applied it to ecological grief.

Stroebe and Schut have linked the DPM intimately with meaning reconstruction, but their most explicit discussion of this is from 2001 and is already somewhat outdated, since the meaning reconstruction approach has been developed further since then. In addition, the application of "positive" and "negative" meaning reconstruction in their article is arguably not nuanced enough for losses such as ecological losses (Stroebe and Schut 2001). Stroebe and Schut have continued to refer to the importance of the meaning reconstruction approach and to the need to combine various approaches (Stroebe and Schut 2021, p. 517).

The process of meaning reconstruction and re-telling of life narratives is so holistic that it is related to both LO and RO tasks. It can be framed as an overarching theme in the whole model.

In practice, the materials and methods published by grief scholars and counselors who use meaning reconstruction offer many ideas for engaging with ecological grief. These methods allow for explicit LO and/or RO engagement, in addition to holistic work on changing meanings in life. A prime example of this is narrative methods. Telling the story of the loss is important for Task 1 in both LO and RO: trying to accept the loss and the changed world that it has caused. Telling the background story brings more understanding, and telling the forward-looking new story of who people are in light of the loss is closely connected with Tasks 3 and 4 in both LO and RO. Some facilitators of eco-emotional engagement (e.g., Graugaard 2024) have already worked with changing narratives and their multifaceted character—e.g., including both suffering and necessary growth—and this kind of work could be brought into more explicit discussion with meaning reconstruction approaches. Since religion deals with issues related to meaning in/of life, the topic of meaning reconstruction is highly appropriate for religious communities (Pihkala 2024d).

8.4. Sociopolitical Grief, Ecological Grief, and Weltschmerz

The grief researcher Harris (2025) wrote how ecological grief can be one part of what she calls sociopolitical grief: grief because of unjust actions by decision-makers, possibly even linked to shattered assumptions about the world (Harris 2022; for shattered assumptions, see Janoff-Bulman 1992). Many decision-makers have made sociopolitical choices that damage both humans and the more-than-human world. This is related to what the ethicist Hogue (2024) calls structural grief: he argues that, in many cases, "grief has become structural, a response to socio-cultural, ecological, and political forces in the world".

I want to offer two observations on these matters: First, for some people, ecological grief is not only part of sociopolitical grief but is itself related to shattered or faltering assumptions about the world. Pihkala (2024e) has written about this and the related needs for meaning reconstruction, and earlier psychologists such as Lifton (2017) and Nicholsen (2002) have raised attention to similar dynamics. The world of nature can be a hugely important source of safety and stability, either in the background or via life practices such as spending time outdoors or practicing eco-psychology. Realizing that many ecosystems and planetary boundaries are seriously threatened can disrupt people's "ontological security", to use Giddens's term (for discussions, see Adams 2016; Norgaard 2011). This affects the difficulty of the first LO task in DPM-EcoSocial and also has implications for other tasks.

Second, many people feel a holistic sorrow, outrage, and often powerlessness about the unjust state of the world in general. Sources for this include structural injustices in world trade and legacies of colonialism, wars, poverty, racism, misogyny, sociopolitical troubles, and ecological losses (e.g., Sapara Barton 2024; Verlie 2024). A glance at the global news in early 2025 quickly reveals a plethora of these kinds of issues. It seems inadequate to call this "world-grief" simply environmental grief or sociopolitical grief. I think that it is important to be able to name crucial aspects of this world-grief, such as ecological grief and sociopolitical grief, but it would also be important to find ways to speak of its totality. The old wording by Joanna Macy and colleagues, "pain for the world" (e.g., Macy and Brown 2014), is a descriptive one; the German word Weltschmerz could be used literally to refer to this; and indigenous writers have used several terms to describe this (Meloche 2018; e.g., Whyte 2017), to name a few examples. Bailey and Gerrish (2024) offer many guidelines for the transformation that is required in relation to such holistic grief (and outrage). The DPM can be used to discern various aspects of this, but it is also clear that other wordings and models will be needed to address such wide issues.[10]

8.5. Disasters, Ecological Grief, and the DPM

Stroebe and Schut (2016) noted the rather common dynamic where people try to avoid LO tasks by over-focusing on RO tasks and "staying busy". In general, a culture of busyness has actually been discussed as a psychosocial defense against ecological awareness and anxiety (Weintrobe 2013a). Similarly, McManus et al. (2018) pointed out how common it is to over-focus on RO in post-disaster actions.

"Natural" disasters are a complex topic in relation to ecological grief. Many of them are currently affected by global warming, and sometimes also by other environmental issues (for an overview, see Hore et al. 2018). Many of them produce damage to both humans and the more-than-human world, sparking ecological grief in addition to post-traumatic stress, possible bereavement, and other impacts (e.g., Ranjan 2024). But not all people feel ecological grief when disasters happen, and some are resistant to attributing natural disasters to climate change, for various reasons. The politics and practicalities of attributing extreme weather events to climate change are complex, since various political purposes may be included in them. Scholars have called for an integrated understanding of both sociopolitical and ecological dynamics in crises: for example, it is too easy for leaders who have neglected community resilience-building to just blame climate change for the damage (e.g., Lahsen and Ribot 2022).

As a result of all of this, coping with ecological grief's dimensions in relation to disasters is usually complicated, and in any case, the various impacts of disasters often make grieving difficult. The following is a categorization of options in relation to LO and RO tasks in post-disaster activities where ecological grief would be relevant:

- There is very little if any focus on LO tasks in general (see also McManus et al. 2018), and this in itself means that there is no place for ecological grief.
- There is some focus on LO tasks, but ecological grief is not acknowledged.
- Both general LO tasks and ecological grief are acknowledged.

Ecological mourners are burdened with additional stressors and social pressures if there is no public acknowledgement of ecological grief in relation to climate disasters (see also Ramsay and Manderson 2011).[11] Furthermore, it is ethically problematic if there is no witness of damage to the more-than-human world (e.g., Barnett 2021).

A case example is currently ongoing. As I write this, unprecedented wildfires, intensified by global warming, are raging in Los Angeles, and societal responses are indeed conflicted. Scientists are writing about the connections between climate change and the fires, while the newly re-elected president of the country is not acknowledging them (McGrath 2025; Milman 2025). Engaging with LO tasks and the ecological grief dimensions of the crisis is left to small groups, such as climate-aware psychologists organizing climate cafés. This may be a recurring issue amidst many future disasters: the need for civil society to pay attention to LO tasks and both the grief and grievance dimensions, if political leaders are not up to the task. This work can combine mourning past disasters and engaging with "anticipatory disaster rituals" (van der Beek 2021).

8.6. Religious Communities and LO Tasks

Above, several dynamics related to religious communities have been mentioned. Overall, religious communities seem to have particularly important possibilities for keeping up engagement with LO tasks and, thus, serving the whole grieving process. As Stroebe and Schut (1999) pointed out, engagement with each category of tasks serve each other. In the lifeworlds of communities, religious communities—e.g., congregations—are often places of remembrance and gathering places amidst collective grief. Frameworks and keywords for the topic include disaster rituals (Hoondert et al. 2021), community commemoration (Eyre),

consolation offered by religious communities in grief (Klass 2014), and the ethical task of witness for grief and grievance (e.g., Malcolm 2023).

This topic of religious communities and LO tasks—not to mention all of the tasks of the DPM-EcoSocial—is too big to be discussed here in depth, and most explorations must be left for future research. However, I raise the following questions for reflection:

- In relation to disasters, religious communities have sometimes also produced creative ways to practice remembrance afterwards, such as in the case of disaster rituals by Norwegian Christians (Danbolt and Stifoss-Hanssen 2017). How could these kinds of practices of be developed for ecological loss and grief, and in ways that manifest "vigilant mourning" (Barnett 2021) and "resistant mourning" (Mark and Di Battista 2017)?
- How could the leaders of religious communities work towards community acknowledgement of the large anthropogenic ecological changes that produce ecological loss and grief (Burton-Christie 2011)? How can they negotiate situations where some of the members of the community frame events as "acts of God" (Malcolm 2020b; Pihkala 2024d)?
- How could religious communities support engagement with ecological guilt and shame as part of "penitent mourning" (Adams 2020; Jones et al. 2020) and help their members to also direct their emotional energy to moral outrage in order to work against injustices (Grau 2025; Pihkala 2024f)?
- In environmental commemoration, a crucial LO task, how could religious communities practice the ethical guidelines delineated by the scholars Mihai and Thaler (2023): multispecies justice, responsibility, pluralism, dynamism, and anticlosure?
- What kinds of LO tasks and RO tasks do the religious communities themselves encounter, and how could these be engaged with constructively? For example, there may be "spiritual losses" (see also Pargament et al. 2005), such as the loss of spiritually important places and relations (see also Conradie 2021); loss of community cohesion because of disputes about climate politics; and loss of some young members of the community because their "eco-spiritual grief" was not encountered (Pihkala 2024d). What kinds of changed roles, identities, dynamics, and possibly beliefs are needed?

8.7. Limitations and Topics for Further Research

Limitations in this article include the consequences of a very wide topic. Despite the length of this article, it is clear that many subjects need further discussion and research. There are also many intriguing opportunities for future research. It would be highly interesting to conduct empirical research about communities who experience ecological grief by using the DPM-EcoSocial to explore various dynamics. In relation to COVID-19, Stroebe and Schut (2021), the creators of the DPM, provided a fascinating table detailing various stressors—both LO and RO—and the dynamics and reactions related to them, gathered from existing research. This kind of mapping of ecological grief (and anxiety) stressors, dynamics, and reactions would shed more light on community engagement with ecological losses and threats. For example, it would be important to study how much attention is given to LO tasks amidst the growing number of climate disasters.

9. Concluding Words

> Does the DPM adequately capture the nature of coping with loss in all its complexity? We would be the first to admit that—like the earlier models—it has limitations, and some shortcomings have been identified by others too.
>
> (Stroebe and Schut 2016, p. 97)

Ecological loss and coping with it are so complex that no single model can name all of the relevant dynamics. However, the DPM was found in this article to be helpful in observing many dynamics of ecological grieving. The DPM was extended to include

not only the individual and family levels but also social levels such as the peer group, community, and society. All of these levels can interact with each other in mourning. The role of religion and religious communities in these dynamics was discussed throughout.

The wordings of the DPM were applied and partially modified to the context of ecological grief, and this new application was called the DPM-EcoSocial (see Figure 4). This collective formulation may serve other applications of the DPM to community and societal matters. The earlier application of the DPM to ecological grief by Bailey and Gerrish (2024) was discussed in nuance.

Particularities of ecological grief, which affect the dynamics of grieving and coping, were discussed. The intimate connections between grief and grievance were emphasized. Social difficulties and climate denial were shown to often complicate ecological grieving.

It was pointed out that the distinction between Loss-Oriented (LO) and Restoration-Oriented (RO) tasks can help to discern special needs on various levels, from the individual to the community. These tasks, which in the DPM-R (family-level version) are based on the grief researcher Worden's famous model, were discussed in relation to ecological grief. Dynamics related to religious communities were given attention, and it was observed that they have special possibilities for keeping engagement with LO tasks alive in communities. There are also challenges in negotiating between different religious interpretations of ecological losses, such as climate disasters, because some religious people interpret these as "acts of God": this can be linked with moving away from the need for structural change in societies, which would be elementary in relation to climate change.

This article also discussed another key feature of the DPM, namely, oscillation between various tasks of grief, and between grieving and distancing. In this, the DPM was discussed in relation to Pihkala's Process Model of Eco-Anxiety and Grief, which proposes a three-fold scheme—action, grieving, and distancing—instead of two. The possibility of overload, a relatively recent addition to the DPM, was analyzed in relation to ecological grief and anxiety. There is great potential for overload in ecological grief and anxiety, due to the severity of the losses, social contradictions in environmental politics, and the difficulty in choosing between various tasks.

This article situates ecological grief in the context of holistic "pain for the world" and discusses the relationship of ecological grief with the grief scholar Harris's concepts of political and sociopolitical grief. For some people, ecological grief is a major dynamic in disruptions to their sense of ontological security. The importance and challenge of meaning reconstruction and re-telling of life stories was dwelled upon, and this holistic task was named in the DPM-EcoSocial.

In the 21st century, humanity lives with various kinds of structural grief. Finding ways to engage with both losses and community transformation is essential, and the DPM helps to see how "non-grief-related interaction" is also very important. Communities, including religious ones, can be places for both sorrow and joy, but this requires determination to engage with changing reality and resistant mourning.

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Abbreviations

DPM	Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement
DPM-R	Revised, family-level model of the DPM
LO	Loss-Oriented tasks, part of the DPM
RO	Restoration-Oriented tasks, part of the DPM

Notes

1 Stroebe and Schut (2010) define LO as "the bereaved person's concentration on, appraising and processing of some aspect of the loss experience itself" and RO as "focus on secondary stressors that are also consequences of bereavement, reflecting a struggle to reorient oneself in a changed world without the deceased person" (p. 277).

2 Stroebe and Schut (2016, p. 99) provide a summary of what they mean by oscillation: "Oscillation is a dynamic, regulatory coping process, based on the principle, indicated earlier, that the bereaved person will at times (have to—in order to come to terms with the bereavement) confront aspects of loss (deal with LO stressors), while at other times he or she will (have to) avoid them. The same applies to restoration (RO) tasks: At times, these need to be attended to (at which times LO coping cannot take place) and this goes hand-in-hand with avoidance of RO at other times too. But one cannot cope the whole time, it is exhausting to do so a lot of the time; time off is needed, where non-bereavement-related activities are followed or when the person simply relaxes and recuperates".

3 In their empirical study, Larsen et al. (2024) observed that the participants found it very difficult to distance themselves from their grief; thus, they questioned the relevance of this dynamic. However, there seems to be a misunderstanding here. "Taking time off grief" does not necessarily mean that the grievers would totally forget about the grief, but there is often an impulse, a need, a desire to move away from intense engagement with grieving (Stroebe and Schut 1999). The participants in the study by Larsen et al. actually did seem to manifest this desire too, but they did not see all its connections with "time off from grief".

4 Ratcliffe (2022, p. 209) argued that "loss and restoration can at least be construed as different—although interrelated—emphases that our coping activities have at different times. But there are also times when we disengage from both, by participating in familiar or new activities in ways that do not relate to the bereavement or its implications. So, it should be added that, as well as oscillating between loss- and restoration-focused activities, we oscillate between coping per se and respite from it".

5 The following quote explains their rationale: "we have adapted and developed the DPM to emphasise that coping with ecological grief requires a consideration of the following: (1) an emphasis on the importance of acknowledging and responding to the enormity of *unprecedented* grief (loss orientation); (2) a focus on the importance of the *transition* (*oscillation*) through the development of change processes informed by an ethics of care and that prioritise collective processes; and (3) taking action to cope with *unacknowledged* grief (restoration, now transformation, orientation) through prefiguring new ways of living well within our ecosystem. We have renamed this orientation from restoration to transformation in recognition that radical social change is required". (Bailey and Gerrish 2024, p. 15, italics in original)

6 There is a rich and ongoing philosophical discussion on ecological grief (e.g., Beran 2024; and many articles in Beran et al. 2025; Fernandez Velasco 2024).

7 For people's testimonies about these difficult processes, see Boyd (2023); Sherrell (2021); Jamail (2019).

8 Examples include climate cafés (Broad 2024), Good Grief Network groups (Schmidt et al. 2023), Living with Climate Change groups (Randall et al. 2023), and various groups facilitated after severe local environmental damage.

9 It is interesting to think about the relationship between oscillation and the psychological methods around distress that build on movement between two things, such as titrating and toggling. In these methods, attention is to be directed to a source of resources and a source of distress, trying to increase capacity by moving between the two when distress starts to become overly intense. For applications of these kinds of methods to ecological distress, see Davenport (2017); Weber (2020).

10 Some grief researchers have explored the use of the term "total grief", drawing from scholarship on "total pain". These concepts refer to the wide-ranging character of the phenomena (see Guldin and Leget 2024). It is debatable whether total grief would be a good term to be used in connection with "world-grief" and/or ecological grief.

11 Ramsay and Manderson (2011) wrote that "In the rapidly changing and highly politicized landscape of climate change, there have been significant shifts from belief in 'natural disasters' and 'acts of God' beyond human volition, to a growing understanding of the human contribution to climate change. However, shifts in understandings of risk, causality and responsibility to include governments, individuals, industry and coalitions, make it difficult to apportion blame and so understand the logic, (in)justice, and consequent restoration, reparations and preventive action. This lack of clear understanding adds a new layer of trauma to disasters caused by climate change".

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