

**NEEDS OF GRIEVING ADVENTITIOUSLY VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADULTS:  
FROM INSIGHT TO ABILITY**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

in the subject

**PSYCHOLOGY**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**JUNE 2004**

## SUMMARY

This thesis illuminates the phenomenon of the emergent needs post-grief experienced by Adventitiously Visually Impaired (AVI) adults following loss of sight. The research focuses on specific experiential areas related to the phenomenon; the perspectives the AVI adults have of their loss of sight; their experience of grief as a resolvable or chronic process; the emergent psychological, emotional and practical needs they experience; and the support from society, families and rehabilitation in meeting their needs. The influence of the length of time of the impairment on these experiences is also considered.

The literature survey indicates that most research on Adventitious Visual Impairment (VI) concentrates on the period before and immediately after rehabilitation, and emphasises practical, technological and technical needs and issues. This focus is limited in acquiring insight and understanding about the psychological and emotional reactions and needs of AVI adults throughout the time course of their impairments.

This study applies an adapted phenomenological research strategy using 10 case studies of adults, AVI within and beyond 6 years, to understand the researched phenomenon. Essential insight gained from the study is that loss of sight is an unique experience which is inextricably linked to the degree of vision loss, that many unique but also common psychological, emotional and practical needs are experienced, and that length of time of the VI has a profound impact on these needs and the experience of the grief process.

This research challenges the traditional resolvable grief theory and emphasises a chronic, recurrent and episodic grief process. These contrasting processes impact on experienced needs. The research challenges the linear and invariant notion of Maslow's (1987) Need Hierarchy, and emphasises both ascent and descent and simultaneous experiences of unsatisfied needs on different levels of the hierarchy. The research highlights the need for society to know and understand the complex real world of Adventitious VI with all its diverse implications, limitations and needs. As always, there are more questions than answers, but this research provides further insight into the complex real world of Adventitious VI.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt gratitude go to the following:

My Mom, for your love, encouragement, care and support. It was your unconditional help which got me through this thesis, my grateful thanks.

My niece Michelle and her husband, Aldon, for their support and for being the e-mail intermediaries of both good and bad news.

Dr Robert McKay, my promoter, who with your insight and profound knowledge has illumined my life and helped me make this thesis *beautiful*.

Prof Johan Nieuwoudt, my co-promoter, for your encouragement and enthusiasm about the study.

Riana Odendaal, for your continued friendship, support and for always being there.

Estelle Martinson, for your friendship, ready smile and your willing help with the frustrating computer.

Neil and Janet Crawford, and Desiree Carty for your continued encouragement and help.

To all other friends involved in the thesis, my grateful thanks.

My sincere thanks to Peter, Jane, Allan, Amanda, Susan, Gail, Annette, Chantal, Mary and Paul for sharing your experiences of loss of sight so intensely with me.

"When you walk through a storm hold your head up high and don't be afraid of the dark,

...Walk on through the wind, walk on through the rain, though your dreams be tossed and blown,

Walk on with hope in your heart and you'll never walk alone."

(Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein).

My thanks to UNISA for the honour of awarding me the Alma Mater Scholarship which has greatly assisted me financially.

Thanks to the volunteers at Tape-Aids for the Blind, to the South African Library for the Blind, and the Motswedi Information Centre on Blindness Prevention and Eye Health, for helping me with my needed journals and books.

Last but by no means least, to my Dad, Bob, and my Sister, Denise, so far away but always so near.

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