

MELISSA LUNARDINI, PhD, MA, MBA, FT  
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Creative, innovative leader with 20 years of experience in grief and loss, specializing in childhood bereavement and trauma. Proficient at developing new offerings, scaling existing programs, cultivating community partnerships, and managing high-performing teams. I am the Chief Clinical Officer for Help Texts, a global SAAS company delivering mental health and bereavement support via text message. I'm also the Founder of Radical Grief, a consulting organization that helps organizations enhance their understanding of grief, loss, and trauma, scale or develop programming, establish curriculum, and provide evidence-based interventions. Sought-after national presenter on childhood bereavement and trauma.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

HELP TEXTS 2020 – present  
*Chief Clinical Officer*

Responsible for ensuring that bereavement practices are carefully evaluated and implemented across the company.

### Subscriber Support

- Hire, train & manage a team of subscriber support specialists who will monitor the experience of all Grief Coach subscribers

### Client Care

- Manage our team of Client Care Managers, ensuring that all clients are onboarded quickly and are hitting targets and deadlines.

### Research

- Conduct research initiatives
- Contribute to both user research and academic research
- Secure funding for research initiatives

### Content

- Ensure that all content (text messages) is reviewed through a mental-health and thanatological- lens and rooted in evidence-based practices and theory

RADICAL GRIEF CONSULTING, San Diego, CA 2020 – present  
*Founder and Chief Executive Officer*

Radical Grief Consulting provides grief, loss, and trauma training to healthcare, mental health, academia, and NGOs. Programs are designed to enhance leaders' understanding of the foundational aspects of childhood grief, loss, and trauma and provide evidence-based interventions to reduce maladaptive behaviors in bereaved youth. Clients include Rady Children's Hospital, Los Angeles County Office of Education, San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency, San Diego Youth Services, Boys and Girls Club of America, International Doula Life Movement, and Olive Crest.

- Created a series of grief and loss learning modules that train and educate to end of life Doulas
- Designed and delivered training for Rady Children's Hospital, Los Angeles County Office of Education, San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency, and San Diego Youth Services to address the impacts of grief and trauma on bereaved children and teens
- Developed a comprehensive grief-focused resource guide and intervention package for schools in San Diego Unified School District

THE ELIZABETH HOSPICE, San Diego, CA

2015 – 2020

*Children's Bereavement Manager*

Oversaw the most comprehensive offering of free grief support services for over 1,000 children, teens, and families in San Diego County and Southwest Riverside County. Managed a team of two professionals, 250 volunteers, and 10 interns.

- Conceived, developed, and managed two Children's Bereavement Centers, dedicated spaces that provide free, peer-based support groups for grieving youth and their families, ages 3 to 17
- Designed and directed Camp Spero, a proprietary summer weekend grief camp program, serving first-time campers and return campers, combining traditional camp fun with grief-related activities
- Established partnerships with 25 school districts for in-school support groups that served 800 students annually and designed an evidence-informed school-based curriculum
- Provided community grief education and crisis intervention for students and faculty in schools throughout San Diego and Southwest Riverside Counties
- Conducted CEU-based training programs on thanatology, the study of death and its impact on children and families, for approximately 150-200 physicians, psychologists, social workers, school counselors, and other health professionals and educators annually

VNA CALIFORNIA (MORNING STAR CENTER), Palm Springs, CA

2007 – 2014

*Children's Bereavement Program Director*

Directed children's bereavement services for the Palm Springs community, including peer-based support groups, school-based support groups, summer grief camp, crisis intervention, and professional training

- Grew enrollment in children's bereavement services averaging over 63% year after year
- Wrote and secured grant funding, generating \$150,000 for children's grief support services
- Established a partnership with Betty Ford Center for referrals
- Served as a hospice bereavement coordinator, following families for 13 months after a death to address bereavement needs

## EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

Ph.D., International Psychology & Trauma –The Chicago School

Fellow in Thanatology – Association for Death Education & Counseling

MBA – California State University San Bernadino, CA

MA, Psychology Marriage and Family Therapy- Chapman University, CA

BA, Psychology – California State University San Bernardino, CA

## PUBLICATIONS

Linder, L., Lunardini, M., & Zimmerman, H. (2022). Supporting Childhood Bereavement Through School-Based Grief Group. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228221082756>

Levesque, D., Lunardini, M., Payne, E., & Callison-Burch, V. (2023). Grief in the workplace: Challenges and solutions. *American Journal of Health Promotion*.

Levesque, D., Lunardini, M., Payne, E., & Callison-Burch, V. (2023). Grief Coach, a text-based grief support intervention: Acceptability among hospice family members. *OMEGA- Journal of Death and Dying*.

Levesque, D., Lunardini, M., Adams, S., Neumann, B. (2024). Grief Coach: Feasibility and Acceptability of a Text Message Program for Bereavement Support Among Grievers in the United Kingdom. *Death Studies*.

Lunardini, M. (2024). Comparing Grief-Informed Texts to Other Types of Bereavement Support in the United

## MEMBERSHIPS, LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Association for Death Education & Counseling  
National Alliance on Children's Grief  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Former Board Member  
American Psychological Association  
Coalition to Transform Advanced Care  
Boys and Girls Club of America, Former National Training Consultant

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS SAMPLES

- *"Improving Adult Bereavement Care, Support & Services,"* Healthcare Conference UK, 2023
- *"A New Text-Based Approach to Delivering Quality Bereavement Care."* Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC), Columbus, OH 2023; The Social Work Hospice & Palliative Care Network (SWHPN), Denver, CO 2023; CDAS Conference, Bath, UK 2023; & International Death, Grief, and Bereavement Conference, La Crosse, WI 2023
- *"Best Practices for Supporting Grieving Teens, According to Grieving Teens,"* National Alliance for Children's Grief, Pittsburgh, PA 2023
- *"Everything You Need to Start a Successful School-based Program in Your Community,"* National Alliance for Grieving Children Symposium, 2021
- *"Strategies for Managing Anxiety and Fear for You and Your Children."* Webinar for National Alliance for Grieving Children, 2020
- *"The Silent Stories Behind Suicide Loss,"* Meeting of the Minds Conference, San Diego, 2020
- *"Disenfranchised Grief Recognizing and Supporting Stigmatized Grief:"* Presented at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Minds Conference, San Diego, CA 2020
- *"School-Based Programming in Your Communities."* Webinar for National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, 2019
- *"What Bereaved Children Can Teach Us,"* Critical Issues in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Conference, 2019
- *"Trauma-Informed Practices and Emotional Safety,"* Boys and Girls Club of America Conference, 2019
- *"Supporting Children and Teens When a Loved One Dies,"* American Academy of Pediatrics, San Diego, 2019
- *"Anticipatory Grief,"* National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, 2019
- *"Grieving a Drug or Alcohol Related Death: Five Factors to Consider When Supporting Children and Teens"* Presented at the 21st Annual Meeting of the Minds Conference, San Diego, CA 2018
- *"Truth Be Told: Tell the Truth: Talking with Children about Suicide and Violent Death"* Presented at the 14th Annual Childhood Grief and Traumatic Loss Conference, Los Angeles, CA 2018