

MELISSA LUNARDINI, MA, MBA, FT

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[Radicalgrief.org](http://Radicalgrief.org)

760.485.5528



Creative, innovative leader with over 15 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. Founder of Radical Grief, an organization that enhances healthcare professional and educators' understanding of the foundational aspects of childhood grief, loss, and trauma and provides evidence-based interventions to reduce maladaptive behaviors in bereaved youth. Sought-after presenter on childhood bereavement and trauma.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

GRIEF COACH

2020 – present

*Director of Operations*

Responsible for overseeing daily business activities, implementing operational policies and procedures, working with HR to implement hiring procedures, improving company operations, identifying growth directives, and managing the following departments:

Subscriber Support

- Hire, train & manage a team of subscriber support specialists who will monitor the experience of all Grief Coach subscribers
- Review all new text messages that will be delivered to 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.
- Provide all launch and implementation training to new businesses

Research

- Work with Research Lead to direct research initiatives
- Contribute to both user research and academic research
- Support funding efforts as Grief Coach seeks funding for research initiatives

Human Resources

- Ensure that all employees and independent contractors are onboarded and evaluated

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 trainings 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 trainings

- 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 hospice bereavement coordinator, following families for 13 months after a death to address bereavement needs

## EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

PhD, International Psychology & Trauma –Chicago School of Professional Psychology, current student  
Fellow in Thanatology – Association for Death Education & Counseling

MBA – California State University San Bernadino, CA

MA, Psychology – 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>

## MEMBERSHIPS

Association for Death Education & Counseling

National Alliance for Grieving Children

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Psychological Association

## LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Boys and Girls Club of America, National Training Consultant, 2016 – present  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Board Member, 2007 – present  
National Alliance for Grieving Children Member, 2007 – present

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS SAMPLES

- *“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
- *“When Infants and Toddlers Grieve: Understanding and Supporting Young Children After a Death.”* Presented at the 9th Annual Early Childhood Mental Health Conference, San Diego, CA 2018
- *“Equipping School Administrators with a Bereavement Plan of Care.”* Presented at the 22nd Annual National Symposium on Children’s Grief Support (NAGC), San Antonio, TX, 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
- *“Creating a Chill but Safe Group Environment”* & *“After a Mass Shooting: Lessons Learned and Roles Revisited”* Presented at the 20th Annual National Symposium on Children’s Grief Support (NAGC), Indianapolis, Indiana, 2016
- *“Supporting Those Who Grieve, A Guide for Professionals”* Presented at the 6th Primary Care and Behavioral Health Integration Summit, San Diego, California, 2015