

Loss Is Not Nothing

The Multi-Resolution Relational Adaptation Framework (MRRAF):

A Human-Grounded Framework for Loss, Sadness, Grief-Load, Nostalgia, Love, Care, and Adaptive Change

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Abstract

Loss is frequently described as absence: something existed, circumstances changed, and what existed before is no longer available in its previous form. This apparently simple description conceals several different processes. The **Multi-Resolution Relational Adaptation Framework (MRRAF)** proposes a working distinction between loss, sadness, grief-load, nostalgia, love, care, and adaptation.

Within MRRAF, **loss** is a significant change in access to a previously expected or valued relationship, resource, role, state, pattern, or configuration. **Sadness** is an affective state that may signal or accompany recognition of such loss. **Grief-load** is a proposed term for the wider regulatory stress, resource contention, prediction error, behavioural disruption, and adaptive burden generated while a person reorganises around the changed condition. **Nostalgia** retrieves or reconstructs meaningful prior configurations and may provide continuity, social connection, and meaning, while under other conditions contributing to rumination, unrealistic comparison, behavioural misdirection, or financial vulnerability. **Love**, in the framework's provisional terminology, describes motivational prioritisation of something represented as valuable. **Care** describes the regulated and context-sensitive allocation of attention, resources, support, and intervention toward that valued target.

MRRAF does not propose these operational definitions as replacements for conventional psychological terminology. In mainstream psychology, grief has a broader meaning than MRRAF's narrower construct of grief-load. Instead, the framework uses **semantic relativity** as a methodological principle: different disciplines and observers may describe the same or related processes using different vocabularies and resolutions. The appropriate question is therefore not merely whether two descriptions use identical words, but whether independently observed relationships remain similar after translation.

The framework is contextualised using research on grief as learning, Conservation of Resources theory, Social Baseline Theory, the Dual Process Model of bereavement, meaning maintenance, continuing bonds, self-concept disruption, nostalgia, psychological distance, relational cognition, persuasion, caregiving, and social support.

Across these literatures, a recurring relational pattern emerges: humans construct expectations around people, resources, and environments; significant disruption produces discrepancy and regulatory demand; memory and behaviour attempt to preserve continuity; and adaptation requires updating rather than exact restoration.

MRRAF proposes that healthy adaptation does not require forgetting the past. Instead, it may involve recognising which qualities and functions made a previous configuration important, distinguishing those qualities from the exact historical form in which they occurred, and learning how they relate to the changed present.

Keywords: loss, grief, sadness, nostalgia, adaptation, resource loss, caregiving, meaning, psychological distance, relational cognition, consumer behaviour, semantic relativity, MRRAF

1. Introduction

Human beings continuously construct working models of reality.

These models include expectations about:

- who will be present,
- what resources will remain available,
- what roles people perform,
- what places feel familiar,
- what behaviour produces particular outcomes,
- what relationships mean,
- and what tomorrow will probably resemble.

These expectations are not necessarily conscious.

They may be embedded in routines, bodily regulation, attachment, memory, economic arrangements, social identity, language, and behaviour.

A significant loss changes the environment faster than every part of the person can necessarily update.

The world may have changed immediately.

The person's internal relationships with that world may change at different rates.

MRRAF begins with that discrepancy.

Its central proposition is:

**Loss changes a previously learned relationship between a person and the world.
Adaptation is the multi-level process through which that relationship is
reorganised.**

This proposition does not reduce grief to information processing, nor does it claim that human beings operate like digital computers. Rather, it provides a relational structure capable of being examined at biological, psychological, interpersonal, social, economic, temporal, and semantic resolutions.

2. Epistemic Position: A Model Must Know That It Is a Model

MRRAF is deliberately presented as a **working conceptual framework** rather than a final explanation of grief, consciousness, love, or life.

This is not merely caution.

It is part of the framework itself.

A model becomes less capable of learning when preserving its existing explanation becomes more important than receiving contradictory information.

The starting position is therefore:

I do not possess the complete picture.

That does not mean nothing can be known.

It means knowledge can carry different levels of confidence.

MRRAF distinguishes between:

Observed: directly detected or measured.

Corroborated: supported independently by more than one observation or source.

Inferred: a conclusion supported by evidence but not directly observed.

Hypothesised: a proposed explanation that remains open to testing.

Unknown: insufficiently resolved.

This permits investigation without forcing every question prematurely into **true/false** or **right/wrong** categories.

Being wrong is not the opposite of learning.

Recognising error is one of the mechanisms by which learning occurs.

A useful epistemic sequence is therefore:

Question → observation → interpretation → alternatives → testing → comparison → revision → provisional conclusion

The process repeats when new information appears.

3. Resolution Before Conclusion

Reality contains more information than a human explanation can preserve.

Every description is therefore a form of compression.

Consider the sentence:

“A person is grieving.”

At low resolution, it may be adequate.

Increase the resolution and the same condition may involve:

- sadness,
- memory,
- yearning,
- prediction,
- attachment,
- disrupted routines,
- sleep,
- appetite,
- stress physiology,
- identity,
- household labour,
- income,
- social networks,
- cultural expectations,
- future plans,
- physical environment,
- financial decisions,
- and changes occurring over time.

The low-resolution statement was not necessarily false.

It was incomplete for questions requiring greater resolution.

MRRAF therefore applies a principle of **minimum sufficient resolution**:

Use the simplest representation capable of answering the current question reliably, and increase resolution when contradiction, uncertainty, complexity, or consequences require it.

Figure 1

The MRRAF Resolution Principle

Low resolution

Loss
↓
Distress
↓
Adaptation

Higher resolution

Changed relationship/resource configuration
↓
Recognition of discrepancy
↓
Affective response
↓
Prediction conflict
↓
Resource reallocation
↓
Behavioural searching / withdrawal / restoration
↓
Memory and nostalgic retrieval
↓
Social and economic consequences
↓
Repeated experiential feedback
↓
Reorganisation of expectations and identity
↓
Changed but increasingly coherent configuration

Note. Higher resolution does not automatically mean greater truth. Resolution should be appropriate to the question.

4. Semantic Relativity

Different fields can describe similar relational structures using different terminology.

A bereaved person may say:

“Part of my world has disappeared.”

An attachment researcher may examine separation distress.

A stress researcher may examine resource loss.

A neuroscientist may investigate learning, prediction, reward, or regulation.

A sociologist may examine role disruption.

An economist may observe changes in labour, consumption, or household resources.

These descriptions cannot simply be declared identical.

But neither should differences in vocabulary prevent comparison.

MRRAF uses the term **semantic relativity** for a methodological procedure:

Translate terminology while attempting to preserve the underlying relation being described.

This is an MRRAF term, not an established psychological construct.

It has useful conceptual neighbours.

Relational Frame Theory emphasises that human psychological functions depend substantially upon learned relations between events and concepts rather than only their isolated properties (Gross & Fox, 2009).

Construal-Level Theory demonstrates that human representations change systematically with temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical distance. The same object or event may therefore be represented at different levels of abstraction depending upon the observer's psychological position (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

MRRAF extends this into a methodological question:

What remains relationally invariant when vocabulary or resolution changes?

Where genuinely independent perspectives converge upon a similar relationship, confidence may increase.

This is called **cross-resolution convergence** within MRRAF.

It is not the same as majority opinion.

Ten sources repeating one source are not ten independent observations.

Alignment becomes more informative when different methods, disciplines, cultures, or evidence streams independently cross at approximately the same relational point.

5. Human Evidence and Substrate-Neutral Description

MRRAF deliberately uses abstract terms such as:

- system,
- resource,
- relation,
- state,
- signal,
- regulation,
- feedback,
- adaptation,
- configuration,
- and transformation.

This permits conceptual translation beyond specifically human language.

However, the empirical evidence reviewed in this paper is principally **human psychological and behavioural evidence**.

It would be unjustified to assume that a plant, bacterium, artificial system, animal, ecosystem, or other form of life necessarily experiences human sadness, grief, nostalgia, or love.

The framework therefore separates:

relational portability

from

subjective equivalence.

Many systems encounter changing resources and conditions.

That does not establish that every system experiences those changes consciously or emotionally.

The abstraction is intended to aid comparison, not erase meaningful differences between forms of existence.

6. Operational Definitions

Table 1

MRRAF Operational Vocabulary

Construct	MRRAF working definition	Status
Loss	Significant change reducing or ending access to a previously expected or valued relationship, resource, role, state, pattern, or configuration in its former form.	Compatible with established loss literature
Sadness	An affective state that may accompany recognition or representation of loss. Loss is not proposed as its only possible cause.	Established emotion; MRRAF specifies loss-related use
Grief	Conventional psychological term covering broad emotional, cognitive, behavioural, social, and physiological responses to loss.	Established terminology
Grief-load	Total adaptive and regulatory burden generated while a person operates under conditions that differ significantly from a previously learned relational/resource configuration.	MRRAF proposed construct
Grieving	Ongoing adaptation and learning through which expectations, behaviour, identity, relationships, and resource allocation adjust following loss.	Strong conceptual convergence with existing research
Nostalgia	Emotionally meaningful retrieval or reconstruction of prior configurations associated with self, relationships, and continuity.	Established research construct
Love	Provisional MRRAF term for motivational prioritisation of something represented as valuable, including tendencies to protect or allocate resources toward it.	MRRAF construct; not a complete scientific definition of love
Care	Regulated, context-sensitive attention and resource allocation intended to support another without unnecessary interference or system-wide harm.	MRRAF construct with parallels in caregiving/support research
Adaptation	Revision of expectations, allocation, behaviour, relationships, identity, or meaning in response to changed conditions.	Established broad principle
Semantic relativity	Translation between vocabularies or perspectives while examining whether underlying relational structure is preserved.	MRRAF methodological construct

Construct	MRRAF working definition	Status
Cross-resolution convergence	Increased confidence where genuinely independent evidence streams examined at differing resolutions converge upon compatible relational structure.	MRRAF methodological construct

7. The Resource Analogy: From 48 GB to 24 GB

Consider a computer operating with 48 GB of available memory.

Applications, services, and background processes have been configured under that condition.

Now imagine that half of the available memory suddenly disappears.

The remaining system may still function.

However, processes that learned or were configured around the previous capacity continue requesting resources.

Competition increases.

Tasks are delayed.

Some processes may attempt to protect their own allocation.

Others may be terminated.

The operating system may repeatedly redistribute resources simply to maintain essential functioning.

The important feature of the analogy is not the computer.

It is the **relationship between expected capacity and current capacity**.

Within MRRAF:

Loss

= the resource configuration changes.

Sadness

= emotional recognition associated with the changed condition.

Grief-load

= system-wide regulatory burden produced while functions, expectations, and behaviours continue operating in relation to the previous configuration.

Love

= motivational pressure to protect something considered important.

Care

= regulation of that pressure so that assistance to one component does not unnecessarily destabilise the whole.

Human minds are not computers with RAM modules.

The analogy therefore makes no claim of mechanical identity.

Its value is relational.

And several independent areas of psychological research show patterns that resemble parts of this structure.

8. Resource Loss as Stress

Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources theory proposes that people seek to retain, protect, and build resources, and that threatened or actual loss of valued resources is a major source of stress (Hobfoll, 1989).

This is one of the clearest established parallels to MRRAF.

Importantly, resource loss may have consequences beyond the original missing resource.

Resources may need to be spent protecting what remains or recovering from previous losses.

This can create escalating cycles of loss.

A relationship, for example, is rarely one resource.

A partner may simultaneously contribute:

- emotional support,
- income,
- domestic labour,
- childcare,
- transportation,
- social connection,
- physical affection,
- memory,
- decision support,
- identity,
- routine,
- perceived safety,
- and expectations concerning the future.

The loss of one person can therefore alter many functional relations simultaneously.

This provides one possible explanation for why the observable magnitude of a loss cannot always be inferred from the number of entities lost.

One relational loss may remove many distributed functions.

9. Social Relationships as Shared Regulatory Capacity

Social Baseline Theory offers a particularly close empirical neighbour to MRRAF.

Coan and Sbarra (2015) propose that the human brain normally assumes access to social relationships that reduce risk and effort. Social proximity can therefore alter the resources required to regulate threat and pursue goals.

This matters because the loss of a close relationship is not merely the disappearance of an external object.

Functions previously distributed across a relationship may suddenly need to be carried differently.

The person may now have to perform alone tasks that previously belonged to a two-person or larger relational system.

MRRAF interprets this as **relational resource redistribution**.

Relationship loss may also disturb the representation of self.

Slotter et al. (2010) found that romantic breakup was associated with reduced self-concept clarity and that this disruption was related to emotional distress.

The implication is important:

A person can become incorporated into how another person represents their own functioning and identity.

When that relationship changes, adaptation therefore involves not only learning that another person is absent but also discovering:

Who am I, and how does this system operate now?

10. Grieving as Learning

O'Connor and Seeley (2022) provide one of the strongest points of convergence with MRRAF.

Their account conceptualises grieving partly as a form of learning.

Attachment relationships create durable expectations concerning the existence and availability of important others. After death, established relational knowledge may conflict with episodic knowledge that the person has died.

Repeated experience is required for those predictions to update.

This helps explain an otherwise puzzling human experience.

Someone may completely understand the fact:

“They died.”

Yet automatically think:

“I must tell them about this.”

They may reach for a telephone.

Expect a familiar sound.

Look toward the chair where the person normally sat.

Prepare food for two.

The intellectual proposition may already have changed.

Other learned systems have not necessarily updated at the same rate.

MRRAF calls the regulatory consequences of this asynchronous updating part of **grief-load**.

The mismatch is repeatedly encountered:

expected world

versus

currently encountered world.

Experience gradually alters the expectation.

Time matters because the updating process is distributed across many contexts.

A person does not encounter the absence once.

They encounter it across mornings, meals, anniversaries, rooms, decisions, conversations, problems, celebrations, and future plans.

11. Oscillation Rather Than a Straight Line

The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement distinguishes between loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping and proposes oscillation between them (Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

A later systematic review concluded that the model provides a useful representation of bereavement experience while also identifying areas requiring further empirical development (Fiore, 2021).

This is closely compatible with MRRAF.

Adaptive change is unlikely to consist entirely of looking backward or entirely of looking forward.

Attention oscillates between:

what was

and

what now needs to be done.

Remembering can support integration.

Temporary distraction can support functioning.

Restoration activities can construct new capacity.

Returning to the loss can update another part of the relational model.

This suggests that recovery should not necessarily be judged by whether sadness reappears.

A recurring emotion may represent another context in which an older expectation has encountered new information.

12. Searching, Yearning, and Repeated Resource Expenditure

Loss may produce searching.

This is understandable.

Attachment relationships ordinarily make searching adaptive when separation might be temporary.

The problem changes when exact reunion is no longer physically available.

Research on prolonged grief disorder has identified possible involvement of reward and appetitive processes associated with persistent longing and reunion-seeking, although this neuroscience remains immature and findings require caution because of methodological limitations and relatively small samples (Bryant et al., 2026).

MRRAF therefore does **not** claim that ordinary grief is pathological searching.

Instead it proposes a broader question:

How much regulatory resource is being repeatedly allocated toward recovering a configuration that cannot be recovered in its original form?

Repeated searching can occur cognitively as well as behaviourally.

A person may continually ask:

- Where did it go?
- Why is this not the same?
- Who can replace them?
- How can I get the old world back?
- What did I do wrong?
- Could I have stopped it?
- What if I buy, preserve, rebuild, or repeat this?

Each attempt may recreate contact with the discrepancy.

That accumulated effort is part of what MRRAF means by **grief-load**.

13. Continuing Bonds: Adaptation Is Not Erasure

Loss does not necessarily require psychological deletion.

Research on continuing bonds has challenged simplistic assumptions that successful adaptation requires complete detachment from deceased people.

A systematic review by Hewson et al. (2024) found that continuing bonds may relate to comfort, distress, relational identity, meaning reconstruction, spirituality, and transformation of the relationship. Their consequences depend on form and context rather than following a universal beneficial-or-harmful rule.

MRRAF therefore rejects two extremes:

“The person must remain exactly as before.”

and

“The person must be erased in order to recover.”

Instead:

The relationship changes state.

A deceased parent may no longer provide present-day physical assistance.

Yet the child may retain:

- remembered advice,
- language,
- behavioural patterns,
- values,
- humour,
- skills,
- genetic inheritance,
- social connections,
- objects,
- consequences of previous actions,
- and an internal representation of the relationship.

None of these is identical to the original living relationship.

Nor are they nothing.

14. Supplementation Without Replacement

An exact historical configuration cannot normally be recreated.

Even if an apparently identical object returned, time and context would have changed.

MRRAF therefore distinguishes:

replacement

from

functional or relational supplementation.

Imagine that someone valued a lost friend because that relationship contained:

- humour,
- honesty,
- safety,
- curiosity,
- companionship,
- and shared history.

No new person can become the original friend.

But these qualities may subsequently be encountered in different configurations:

humour in one person,

patience in another,

shared curiosity in a community,

safety in a place,

and perhaps some of the lost person's learned behaviour within oneself.

The question changes from:

“Where is the replacement?”

to:

“What exactly mattered within that relationship, and where can those qualities now be encountered?”

This reduces the demand that new people or situations impersonate the past.

The new remains genuinely new.

15. Nostalgia as Relational Retrieval

Nostalgia provides access to meaningful prior configurations.

Research increasingly characterises nostalgia as a socially connected, self-relevant, bittersweet emotion rather than merely a symptom of maladaptation.

Zhou et al. (2008) found that loneliness could increase nostalgia and that nostalgia, in turn, increased perceived social support.

Cross-cultural work by Hepper et al. (2024) found important nostalgic functions—including social connectedness, self-continuity, and meaning—across a large multinational sample, while also identifying cultural variation.

More recently, Weingarten et al. (2026) conducted large meta-analytic tests of experimental nostalgia research. Their results supported the propositions that psychological threat can trigger nostalgia and that nostalgia can produce social, existential, motivational, consumption-related, moral, and well-being effects, with outcomes also depending on person-by-activity fit.

Within MRRAF:

Nostalgia can function as retrieval of a previously coherent relational configuration when the current configuration feels uncertain or depleted.

A person cannot physically return to childhood by remembering it.

But a memory can temporarily reactivate:

- belonging,
- familiarity,
- relational security,
- identity,
- meaning,
- or perceived continuity.

In that limited sense:

Nostalgia may borrow regulatory stability from remembered experience.

16. The Double Edge of Nostalgia

Nostalgia is therefore not classified by MRRAF as either good or bad.

Its consequences depend on how it interacts with present adaptation.

Figure 2

The Nostalgia Branch

Loss / uncertainty / loneliness / threat

↓

Nostalgic retrieval

↙ **Integrative route** ↘ **Constraining route**

"This mattered." "This must return exactly."

↓ ↓

Meaning and continuity Idealisation / comparison

↓ ↓

Recognition of valued qualities Repetitive searching

↓ ↓

New relational possibilities Present judged against reconstructed past

↓ ↓

Adaptation Potential rumination / vulnerability

Research supports caution concerning the second route.

Garrido (2018), studying nostalgia and coping, found that rumination predicted more negative outcomes from nostalgic musical experiences.

Memory is reconstructive.

It does not necessarily restore every inconvenience, conflict, fear, uncertainty, or ordinary detail of the previous period with equal emotional weighting.

This can create an asymmetric comparison:

selected emotionally meaningful features of the past

versus

the complete complexity of the present.

The present is then being evaluated against a compressed reconstruction.

That is not a fair comparison.

17. Nostalgia and Financial Behaviour

The financial dimension of nostalgia deserves particular attention.

Lasaleta et al. (2014) conducted six experiments examining nostalgia and attitudes toward money.

Nostalgia reduced the subjective importance assigned to money across several measures. In one experiment, nostalgic participants were willing to pay more for products, and across the research they were more willing to part with money.

This finding does not mean that buying nostalgic products is inherently harmful.

A person may rationally decide:

“This record reminds me of my father, and that experience is worth £20 to me.”

The potential vulnerability emerges when the transaction is misidentified.

A person may consciously believe:

“I need this object.”

while part of the underlying motivational structure is seeking:

"I want my father."

"I want belonging."

"I want youth."

"I want safety."

"I want the period when the future seemed predictable."

The product may evoke those relationships.

It cannot restore the historical state that produced them.

The distinction matters because commercial persuasion can attach an action to an existing emotional need.

18. Fear, Guilt, Shame, and Misdirection

Fear, guilt, and shame should not be collapsed into one category.

They have different psychological relationships and behavioural consequences.

A large meta-analysis found that fear appeals can influence attitudes, intentions, and behaviours, with outcomes depending upon characteristics of both the message and audience (Tannenbaum et al., 2015).

A later meta-analysis found that guilt appeals also have persuasive effects, moderated by factors including responsibility, controllability, relationships, and opportunities for reparative action (Peng et al., 2023).

Shame behaves differently again. Leach and Cidam's (2015) meta-analysis found that shame could relate to constructive approach when a failure appeared repairable, but to avoidance where repair seemed less possible.

MRRAF therefore proposes that emotional manipulation should be analysed relationally:

What emotion is active?

What caused it?

What meaning has been assigned to it?

What action is being proposed?

Does that action actually address the originating condition?

19. A Proposed Nostalgia-Vulnerability Pathway

The following complete causal chain has **not** been demonstrated as a single established psychological mechanism.

It is an MRRAF hypothesis assembled from independently supported relationships.

Figure 3

Proposed MRRAF Loss–Nostalgia–Action Pathway

Significant loss
↓
Recognition of changed state
↓
Sadness and other affective responses
↓
Increased grief-load / reduced available regulatory capacity
↓
Search for continuity
↓
Nostalgic retrieval
↓
Heightened relevance of cues associated with restoration
↓
Possible emotional framing:

Fear: “You are going to lose even more.”

Guilt: “You failed to protect what mattered.”

Shame: “The loss says something defective about you.”

↓
External proposed solution:

Purchase
Donation
Political behaviour
Group conformity
Relationship behaviour
Status consumption
Withdrawal
Aggression
Preservation behaviour

↓

Outcome may or may not address the original loss.

The key proposed vulnerability is therefore **misdirection**.

The emotion itself need not be false.

The sadness may be real.

The fear may be real.

The longing may be real.

What may be incorrect is the interpretation:

"Because I feel this, I must perform the action being offered to me."

20. Meaning Maintenance and Cross-Domain Compensation

Heine et al.'s (2006) Meaning Maintenance Model provides another useful comparison.

The model proposes that people depend upon expected relations through which experience becomes coherent. When meaning is threatened, people can reaffirm meaning in another domain—a process termed fluid compensation.

MRRAF interprets this as evidence that a system need not restore the exact missing object in order to reduce discrepancy.

A loss in one domain may result in searching elsewhere.

That may produce:

Constructive compensation

- learning,
- new relationships,
- community involvement,
- creativity,
- helping others,
- new routines,
- changed identity,
- exploration.

Or:

Potentially harmful compensation

- compulsive consumption,
- rigid identity,
- destructive conformity,
- scapegoating,
- substance misuse,
- excessive risk,
- endless recreation of unavailable circumstances.

The need for regulation becomes clear.

The fact that an action reduces distress does not establish that it correctly addresses the cause of distress.

21. Love and Care as Different Levels of Regulation

The word **love** has many biological, cultural, philosophical, interpersonal, and spiritual meanings.

MRRAF therefore makes no claim to provide a complete scientific definition of love.

It proposes one particular functional perspective:

Love can be modelled as motivational prioritisation of something represented as valuable.

In the resource analogy, a process detects that something important is struggling and attempts to redirect resources toward it.

This resembles aspects of the caregiving literature without being identical to them.

Attachment research describes a caregiving behavioural system involved in recognising and responding to another person's distress (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Reviews of adult caregiving similarly emphasise responsiveness to another's needs (Collins & Ford, 2010).

Research on social support also distinguishes forms of support that help people cope with adversity while preserving opportunities for growth and exploration (Feeney & Collins, 2015).

MRRAF calls the higher-resolution regulation of protective motivation **care**.

Love may say:

"This matters. Help it."

Care asks:

“What help is actually required?”

This distinction matters because protective motivation can become dysregulated.

If every subsystem independently concludes:

“I must take whatever resources are available to save what I value,”

then attempted protection can create additional resource conflict.

Care therefore requires:

- attention,
- context,
- proportionality,
- responsiveness,
- awareness of available resources,
- respect for autonomy where possible,
- and intervention when capacity is genuinely exceeded.

In condensed form:

Love supplies motivational direction. Care regulates its implementation.

22. Care Is Neither Control nor Neglect

Three conditions should be distinguished.

Control

“I know what your experience should become, so I will make it happen.”

Neglect

“Your experience is entirely your responsibility regardless of capacity or danger.”

Care

“I am paying sufficient attention to understand your state, will preserve your autonomy where reasonably possible, and will assist when need, danger, or overload exceeds your available capacity.”

This is particularly important when considering children.

Children require opportunities to explore, become frustrated, make errors, practise patience, and acquire independent capability.

Constant intervention can remove opportunities for learning.

But children cannot always identify danger, regulate overwhelming states, or formulate an explicit request for assistance.

Care therefore requires dynamic resolution.

Sometimes the correct action is intervention.

Sometimes it is waiting.

The deciding variable is not simply the caregiver's discomfort.

It is the relationship between:

need + capacity + risk + autonomy + available support.

23. Children, Generations, and the Future

Every generation inherits information from conditions that no longer exist exactly as they did.

This creates an important social form of nostalgia.

Adults can transmit:

- knowledge,
- memory,
- language,
- skills,
- warnings,
- values,
- cultural experience,
- and consequences of previous mistakes.

But problems emerge when transmission becomes reproduction.

There is a difference between:

“This is what we learned.”

and:

“Your world must look like ours.”

Children will inhabit environmental, technological, cultural, economic, and social conditions that previous generations cannot completely predict.

The purpose of experience should therefore not necessarily be to dictate the future.

It can instead increase the future's available resolution.

The past becomes:

reference material

rather than

an compulsory blueprint.

At the relational level:

Preserve **care**, not necessarily every historical institution associated with care.

Preserve **learning**, not every historical explanation.

Preserve **belonging**, not every previous social arrangement.

Preserve **fairness**, while remaining capable of discovering better mechanisms for producing it.

Nostalgia becomes dangerous when love for the past prevents sufficient attention to the new conditions being encountered by the next generation.

24. Transformation and the Limits of the Claim

MRRAF takes seriously the proposition that apparent disappearance can look different at different resolutions.

At one resolution:

a structure has ended.

At another:

its components have been redistributed.

At another:

its causal consequences continue.

At another:

information or memory concerning it remains within other systems.

This has parallels with transformations observed throughout physics, chemistry, biology, and social systems.

However, MRRAF deliberately stops before making a metaphysical claim that science cannot currently support.

It does **not** establish:

- survival of individual consciousness after death,
- recoverability of all information,
- existence in another dimension,
- continuity through antimatter,
- or the proposition that nothing can ever be destroyed in every possible meaning of the word.

Instead it proposes an epistemic discipline:

Do not infer absolute nothingness merely from inability to access the previous configuration.

Ask separately:

What ended?

What changed?

What remains?

What was redistributed?

What consequences continue?

What can presently be measured?

What is inferred?

What remains unknown?

This avoids replacing one unsupported certainty with another.

25. Ego as a Provisional Self-World Model

The term **ego** is used here in a broad functional and philosophical sense, not as a strict Freudian construct.

MRRAF treats ego as part of a provisional self-world model attempting to determine:

- Where am I?
- What am I?
- What is happening?
- What matters?
- What resources are available?
- What should I expect?
- What should I do?

The safest form of this model remains corrigible.

It can say:

“This is what I currently think is happening.”

rather than:

“This is what reality must be.”

Fear of being wrong can therefore create a serious epistemic problem.

If being wrong is interpreted as:

- loss of status,
- loss of identity,
- humiliation,
- loss of control,
- or personal failure,

then contradictory information becomes emotionally threatening.

The person may begin protecting the model instead of improving it.

MRRAF therefore treats the statement:

“I may be wrong.”

as a functional opening for additional information.

Not weakness.

Not defeat.

An information channel.

26. From What and How Toward Why

MRRAF uses the expression:

What + How → a better-resolved Why

as a heuristic, not a mathematical identity.

What?

What has actually been observed?

How?

What sequence, mechanism, relationship, or condition could plausibly have generated the observation?

Why?

What causal or functional explanation remains plausible after the first two questions have been constrained?

The order matters.

Jumping directly to *why* invites narrative completion.

Humans are capable of creating coherent explanations from incomplete information.

Coherence alone is not verification.

The process should therefore continue:

Do I know what happened?

Do I know how it happened?

What else could have produced the same observation?

What information would distinguish those possibilities?

27. Multi-Resolution Analysis

Table 2

Example Resolution Matrix for Human Loss

Resolution	Primary question	Example variables
Physical	What changed materially?	Place, possessions, environment, bodily presence
Biological	What is happening within the organism?	Sleep, appetite, autonomic state, fatigue, stress physiology
Affective	What emotional states are present?	Sadness, fear, anger, guilt, shame, relief, loneliness
Cognitive	What expectations and interpretations are active?	Prediction, attention, memory, rumination, causal attribution
Identity	What changed in the model of self?	Roles, self-concept, belonging, purpose

Resolution	Primary question	Example variables
Relational	What functions were distributed through relationships?	Support, regulation, intimacy, care, companionship
Behavioural	What is the person doing in response?	Searching, avoiding, purchasing, contacting, withdrawing
Economic	What material consequences followed?	Income, expenditure, debt, replacement costs, vulnerability
Social	What changed in group relationships?	Community, family, institutions, norms
Cultural	How is the loss interpreted collectively?	Ritual, tradition, narrative, religious meaning
Temporal	How is the response changing?	Immediate response, anniversaries, adaptation, recurrence
Semantic	How does terminology affect interpretation?	Grief, stress, pain, attachment, loss, transformation
Epistemic	What confidence is justified?	Observation, inference, corroboration, uncertainty

A sensible conclusion should not automatically combine every resolution.

The task determines which are necessary.

28. Research Alignment

Table 3

Relationship Between MRRAF and Existing Research

MRRAF proposition	Nearest established research	Relationship
Valued resource loss increases stress	Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989)	Direct conceptual support
Social partners reduce regulatory effort and function partly as shared resources	Social Baseline Theory (Coan & Sbarra, 2015)	Strong relational convergence
Loss can disrupt representation of self	Slotter et al. (2010)	Empirical convergence
Grieving requires updating learned relational predictions	O'Connor & Seeley (2022)	Very strong convergence

MRRAF proposition	Nearest established research	Relationship
Adaptation oscillates between loss and restoration	Stroebe & Schut (1999); Fiore (2021)	Established bereavement framework
Meaning disruption can produce compensation elsewhere	Heine et al. (2006)	Strong conceptual convergence
Bonds may persist in transformed form	Hewson et al. (2024)	Strong convergence
Nostalgia can restore social connection	Zhou et al. (2008)	Experimental support
Nostalgia has substantial cross-cultural functions	Hepper et al. (2024)	Cross-cultural support
Threat can trigger nostalgia and nostalgia can provide multiple benefits	Weingarten et al. (2026)	Meta-analytic support
Rumination can alter nostalgic outcomes	Garrido (2018)	Supporting evidence
Nostalgia can influence willingness to part with money	Lasaleta et al. (2014)	Experimental financial evidence
Fear appeals can alter behaviour	Tannenbaum et al. (2015)	Meta-analytic evidence
Guilt appeals can alter behaviour	Peng et al. (2023)	Meta-analytic evidence
Shame can produce approach or avoidance depending upon reparability	Leach & Cidam (2015)	Meta-analytic evidence
Attachment security supports compassion/caregiving	Mikulincer & Shaver (2005)	Conceptual and empirical support
Effective caregiving involves responsiveness to actual need	Collins & Ford (2010); Feeney & Collins (2015)	Strong relational convergence
Grief-load as one unified construct	No exact established equivalent	MRRAF hypothesis
Love as resource-prioritisation signal	Partial parallels in attachment/caregiving	MRRAF hypothesis
Care as higher-resolution regulation of love	Partial parallels in responsive caregiving	MRRAF synthesis
Complete loss → nostalgia → emotional persuasion → social/financial harm pathway	Individual links supported separately	MRRAF testable hypothesis
Semantic relativity / cross-resolution convergence	RFT and CLT provide conceptual neighbours	MRRAF methodology

29. Testable Predictions

A useful conceptual framework should expose itself to possible failure.

MRRAF therefore generates testable propositions.

Hypothesis 1: Functional-load hypothesis

Post-loss adaptation burden should be predicted partly by the **number, importance, and substitutability of functions disrupted by a loss**, not merely by category of loss.

Hypothesis 2: Social-resource hypothesis

Where a relationship carried a high proportion of practical, emotional, identity, or regulatory functions, its loss should generate greater grief-load than relationships carrying fewer such functions, other factors being comparable.

Hypothesis 3: Nostalgic integration hypothesis

Nostalgia should be more adaptive where it helps identify **transferable values, qualities, and functions** and less adaptive where it strengthens demand for exact historical restoration.

Hypothesis 4: Resource-contention hypothesis

Greater grief-load should predict increased conflict between everyday regulatory demands where available social, financial, cognitive, or practical resources are constrained.

Hypothesis 5: Persuasion vulnerability hypothesis

Messages linking a proposed action to a function made salient by recent loss should exert greater influence than emotionally similar messages unrelated to the disrupted function.

Hypothesis 6: Emotional-decoupling hypothesis

Teaching individuals to distinguish:

emotion

from

interpretation

from

proposed action

should reduce inappropriate behavioural compliance without necessarily reducing the original emotional state.

Hypothesis 7: Supplementation hypothesis

Interventions helping people identify specific functions and qualities associated with what was lost may support restoration while allowing continuing bonds to remain intact.

Hypothesis 8: Care-regulation hypothesis

Support should produce better outcomes when responsive to the recipient's actual need and capacity than when driven primarily by the helper's urgency to eliminate visible distress.

Hypothesis 9: Cross-resolution convergence hypothesis

Explanations supported independently across behavioural, relational, physiological, and longitudinal evidence streams should prove more robust than explanations supported by repeated observations within only one evidence class.

Each prediction can fail.

If evidence contradicts it, MRRAF should change.

That is part of its intended operation.

30. Practical Loss-Resolution Protocol

MRRAF can be reduced to a human decision sequence.

Step 1: Identify the change

What exactly changed?

Avoid beginning with interpretation.

Step 2: Identify the affected relations

What did the lost person, object, place, role, or state actually provide?

Examples:

- companionship,
- safety,
- money,
- routine,
- identity,
- familiarity,
- validation,
- physical help,

- meaning.
-

Step 3: Separate emotion from explanation

What am I feeling?

Sadness?

Fear?

Anger?

Guilt?

Shame?

Loneliness?

Relief?

Exhaustion?

The feeling is evidence concerning the person's state.

Its first interpretation is not automatically evidence concerning external causation.

Step 4: Identify the search

What am I repeatedly trying to recover?

The object itself?

A function?

A feeling?

A relationship?

A previous identity?

Predictability?

Step 5: Test replaceability

Can the original configuration actually return?

If not:

Which properties remain obtainable in other configurations?

Step 6: Examine nostalgia

Ask:

Is this memory helping me understand what mattered?

or:

Is this memory requiring the present to reproduce the past?

Step 7: Inspect proposed solutions

If someone is asking for:

- money,
- loyalty,
- conformity,
- political support,
- immediate action,
- or abandonment of alternatives,

ask:

How does this action relate to the actual loss?

Step 8: Change resolution

If the answer remains unclear:

look closer,

or farther away.

Examine another domain.

Step 9: Seek independent convergence

What do:

- personal observation,

- measurement,
- independent witnesses,
- established research,
- longitudinal evidence,
- and competing explanations

indicate?

Step 10: Retain uncertainty

Conclude at the level justified by the evidence.

Possible.

Plausible.

Supported.

Strongly supported.

Demonstrated within defined conditions.

Do not manufacture certainty merely because uncertainty is uncomfortable.

31. Implications for Social and Financial Harm

MRRAF suggests that some apparently irrational behaviour following loss may be better understood as **misdirected adaptation**.

A person attempting to reduce grief-load may:

- overspend,
- preserve objects beyond their practical value,
- return repeatedly to harmful relationships,
- accept exploitative offers,
- join groups promising restoration,
- become vulnerable to “golden age” narratives,
- make decisions under scarcity,
- or attack perceived causes of change.

These behaviours may appear unrelated when examined individually.

At a different resolution, they may represent attempts to restore:

- continuity,
- belonging,
- identity,

- safety,
- control,
- or familiar structure.

This does not excuse harmful behaviour.

Understanding a mechanism and approving an outcome are different questions.

The purpose is prevention.

If the underlying function can be identified, safer ways of satisfying it may become visible.

32. Implications for Communication

Communication concerning loss should avoid unnecessary activation of fear, guilt, shame, and urgency.

This is particularly important in:

- healthcare,
- bereavement services,
- advertising,
- fundraising,
- politics,
- financial advice,
- family disputes,
- institutional communication,
- and care relationships.

A useful communication discipline is:

Do not exploit grief-load to force resolution faster than the person's evidence and adaptive capacity permit.

Careful communication can instead help distinguish:

what happened

from

what it means

from

what should happen next.

This creates cognitive space between emotion and action.

33. Limitations

MRRAF currently has substantial limitations.

First, it is a conceptual synthesis.

No experiment has tested MRRAF as one complete model.

Second, grief-load is newly proposed terminology.

It should not be confused with the conventional psychological definition of grief.

Third, analogy is not mechanism.

Computer-resource analogies illuminate relationships but do not establish neurological equivalence.

Fourth, semantic translation can create false equivalence.

Two disciplines may use similar relational structures while describing fundamentally different mechanisms.

Cross-resolution convergence therefore requires careful examination rather than superficial word matching.

Fifth, subjective states cannot automatically be generalised across life forms.

The framework's relational vocabulary is intentionally portable.

Evidence of shared relational structure does not establish identical consciousness or emotional experience.

Sixth, nostalgia is heterogeneous.

Research demonstrates both useful psychological functions and contexts associated with less favourable outcomes.

MRRAF should therefore avoid describing nostalgia as intrinsically harmful.

Seventh, grief varies enormously.

Culture, developmental history, relationship type, traumatic circumstances, social support, material resources, health, identity, and individual difference can all alter adaptation.

Eighth, prolonged grief disorder should not be conflated with ordinary grief.

Neuroscientific findings concerning prolonged grief disorder describe a particular clinical population and cannot automatically be generalised to all bereavement.

Ninth, transformation has epistemic limits.

Persistence of matter, effects, memory, or relational consequences does not establish persistence of every aspect of a previous configuration.

Tenth, the framework must remain revisable.

A theory arguing that error is essential for learning would contradict itself if it became resistant to correction.

34. Conclusion

Loss is not necessarily equivalent to nothing.

It is a change in relationship.

At one resolution, something may have ended.

At another, its material components continue in different arrangements.

At another, its consequences continue.

At another, its memory remains.

At another, its functions must now be supplied differently.

At another, qualities once encountered in one person or place may be encountered in new relationships and experiences.

MRRAF proposes that human adaptation following loss can be understood partly through these changing relations.

Within the framework:

loss changes the configuration.

sadness can register the significance of that change.

grief-load describes the wider stress of functioning while expectations, resources, identity, and behaviour reorganise.

nostalgia retrieves previous configurations.

love prioritises what is valued.

care regulates how protective resources are allocated.

learning allows the system to revise itself.

The objective is not to forget.

Nor is it necessarily to restore.

The exact historical configuration may no longer be available.

But the person can ask:

What did it contain that mattered?

What has genuinely ended?

What remains?

What has transformed?

What am I searching for?

Where else might the qualities I valued now exist?

Am I responding to the actual condition, or to my interpretation of the emotional signal?

Is someone directing that emotion toward an action that benefits them rather than resolving the underlying need?

What evidence do I actually have?

What remains unknown?

And, before all of them:

Am I sure I understand the question I am trying to answer?

That is resolution.

The past provides information.

The present provides new evidence.

The future remains open to learning.

Healthy adaptation therefore need not choose between remembering and changing.

It can remember **in order to change with greater understanding.**

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