Case Study – Jack

We will use Jack to look at the theories of transition and Grief.

Jack had been married for 22 years when Margaret unexpectedly died of a heart attack. They had been very close. When Jack was first told about the death he showed little reaction.

Friends had to persuade Jack not to go to work the next day. Jack had said it would give him something to do and take his mind of things. Later, at the funeral Jack said that he felt frozen inside and that he did not want to eat.

Some weeks later Jack said he felt better because he could talk to Margaret, sitting in the chair late at night; Jack said he never saw her but just felt her presence.

As time went on, Jack felt he could have done more to prevent the heart attack – if only he had noticed some signs, if only they hadn’t smoked. Jack felt angry with their GP, Margaret had seen the GP about something else a few days before she died. Surely if the doctor was any good they would have spotted something! On occasions, Jack just became angry and bitter about how everything had gone; perhaps he was to blame?

Months later Jack explained that he had sorted his life out a bit. Whereas Margaret used to organise things he had now learned to cope alone. He explained that he spent time with a close friend who was ‘a shoulder to cry on’ as he put it.

After 18 months Jack still misses Margaret but he says the experience has made him stronger. ‘It’s as if I understand more about life now. I feel if I can cope with this loss- well I can cope with anything. Jack has now become involved with a group that supports people who are bereaved. He says helping people has helped him, ‘It’s given me a purpose in life – things are meant to happen to you. I had a good life with Margaret and now I’ve got a new life to lead’.