

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Tables I & II**

**TABLE I**

Participant B: Ben (B)

<b>Natural Meaning Units</b>	Central Theme
<p>(1) The first time of letting go for B was from his previous job. This job had been a source of security in his life but was also a sort of a prison. He felt that he had to do it. He had to leave. He felt stuck. He was comfortable because of the securities such as salary and medical aid and pension fund, but it was not what he really wanted to do. B felt used and abused as part of window-dressing undertaken by his employers, but he was not allowed to be a psychologist and he could not find another job due to affirmative action etc.</p> <p>(2) During the time that he worked for Correctional Services, they had sort of demilitarised. Things like that started to prematurely free him on an emotional level. He was 45 years old, white and Afrikaans. He was also very liberal in comparison with other men like him, but that did not really count.</p> <p>(3) It was when B decided to emigrate to</p>	<p>(1) Letting go initially occurred within B's work context which provided him with security and comfort yet denied him freedom and contentment. He felt trapped, professionally rejected and believed that he was being exploited to maintain a façade. He wanted to leave.</p> <p>(2) The relaxing of rules at B's work institution liberated him emotionally at first. He became aware of who he was in the changed context and felt different.</p>

<p>the USA that he started letting go and saw other horizons. Through emigration, he was not limiting his job opportunity search to South Africa alone.</p>	<p>(3) With the decision to emigrate, B began to let go and became aware of an extended world beyond his familiar environment.</p>
<p>(4) To his applications however, B received a few negative replies but this was more because he was not yet a resident, and one of the conditions was that he had to be a resident to get a job there.</p>	<p>(4) Despite the initial rejection, B considered conditional acceptance as necessary for the greater opportunity he pursued.</p>
<p>(5) B has now had a tentative job offer in a private office as a psychologist and that will give him the opportunity to see what he can do.</p>	<p>(5) B has been offered temporary security (job offer), which will provide him with the chance to look at future possibilities.</p>
<p>(6) B feels that it is nice and exciting. It is making him feel needed again.</p>	<p>(6) B feels needed again and is excited.</p>
<p>(7) A does not see an eight-to-five salaried job as the only source of security that enables him to carry on and do what he feels called to do</p>	<p>(7) B no longer views his previous routine securities as necessary for him to practise his vocation.</p>
<p>(8) B acknowledges that he is taking a risk because there is always the possibility of things happening. B is even willing to do an entirely different job to what he has done and even one that is different from his previous training, but he is sure that he will be able at least to survive.</p>	<p>(8) B is willing to make a complete change vocationally and, although he is aware of entering the unknown he believes that he will continue to keep alive.</p>

<p>(9) B grew up with family around him. He has direct relatives. A lot of them have actually either died or are spread all over the country or all over the world. He does not have close relationships with them any longer, but he very often experiences sentiments regarding places and some people.</p> <p>(10) When he can, he uses the opportunities to go and say good-bye to people and places.</p> <p>(11) He had recently been to Darwin where he was born. He and his family enjoy cycling, but this time he went alone. Literally and figuratively, B rode along the roads he knew, and the roads that he was on as a child and during his youth. B had lived a part of his life in the area of Cape Town and Stellenbosch.</p> <p>(12) B really enjoyed the trip as a positive experience and still has memories of the places that perhaps, in time, he will be able to return to again. The trip was the last positive experience for him, positive in the sense that he could not find a better way to stay more permanently in the places which he loved, and which formed part of his past</p>	<p>(9) B's close contact with family and relatives has diminished, but has been replaced with meaningful attachments to certain people and places.</p> <p>(10) B uses the chances he has to bid farewell to the attachments (to places and people) that he has made.</p> <p>(11) On a personal journey, B returned to visit the town of his birth and cities in which he has lived. He retraced his steps along the familiar, earlier path he had taken in his life.</p> <p>(12) B found great pleasure in the visit, which was a positive experience for him, as he retains a permanent memory of special attachments (past places) to which he may return.</p>
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<p>experiences. Even though the weather in the Cape was not very friendly, he enjoyed the cycling and seeing all the places, roads and things.</p> <p>(13) It was quite meaningful and good to see that even his father's grave was still there. It is satisfying for him to know that although many things are changing and he and others are each going their own way, there are some foundations left. There are a lot of new things, buildings and places, but the old ones are still there.</p> <p>(14) The foundations to which he refers are basically memories and concrete places like the house where B grew up and that part of town that was familiar to him. Even the old cycle shop where he bought his first bicycle was still there. It looked a bit different, but it was still there.</p> <p>(15) Places are significant, not the place itself, but the memories that go with the place, the experiences. B says that he cannot really separate the places and the memories.</p> <p>(16) B believes that it was perhaps symbolic that he cycled from Darwin, where he had his childhood years, and then</p>	<p>(13) It was meaningful and reassuring for B to see that with the consistent diversity and changes in his life, the foundations and familiarity of past structures continued. It was comforting for him to see that the paternal grave remained.</p> <p>(14) There is a sense of permanence regarding specific places and memories from B's childhood.</p> <p>(15) Places are integral to the memories and experiences that are, significant to B.</p> <p>(16) B retraced the steps of his childhood and relived the journey of his earlier</p>
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<p>went on to Stellenbosch where he had studied later in life, and then back from there to Darwin. He “retook the same steps” of his early years. One of his first jobs was in Darwin, so he was very much on that side of the country.</p> <p>(17) Basically, B went back basically to go and say “good-bye”, to refresh his memory for the last time and just to still enjoy some of the places and some of the people that he knew. B uses the metaphor of putting a photo in the photo album of his memory. B needed to say goodbye.</p> <p>(18) One of his friends, who went to London, had a whole party and, before leaving, invited more than one hundred people. B does not see himself as an extrovert, or a party guy like that, but he had the opportunity to create the ritual that he has just described. It was also meaningful for him and made him feel that he said, “Goodbye”.</p> <p>(19) B started changing on a more spiritual level which was something of a precipitator, a trigger, or “kick in the butt”. B would have discussions and also read pieces of Scriptures. As a Christian, he was reminded of what the most important</p>	<p>years. He recognises the possible symbolic significance of the revisitation.</p> <p>(17) B’s need to return was to bid farewell, to capture and rekindle recollections of his past, in an attempt to retain the pleasure of attachments (places and people) he knew.</p> <p>(18) For B the process of saying goodbye had to be made meaningful through a personal rather than social ritual (farewell party).</p> <p>(19) As a Christian, B’s initial impetus towards change was spiritual (discussions and scripture reading). He was reminded of the significance of spiritual values over material concerns. For B, this meant</p>
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<p>things in life should be. He realised that the most important things in life are not the material things, but the value that he adds to other people's lives, as well as fulfilling his mission in life.</p> <p>(20) A friend gave B a book named in Afrikaans: "In Jesus se Voetspore" ("In the Footsteps of Jesus"). It reminded him that, as a spiritual person and as a Christian, if he wanted to be like Jesus, he would have to be able to let go of the material things that kept him going, such as, financial security and earning money.</p> <p>(21) Upon realising that financial security and money are not the most important things in life, B could relax. He did not feel a failure anymore because of the inability to succeed in everyday terms. B believes that he has to practise what he preaches and believes in.</p> <p>(22) Easter, which is a very significant time in a Christian's life was also meaningful for B. Easter reminded him of Jesus who gave up his whole life before he could be resurrected. B went to the church group early in the morning to see the sun rising on a hilltop. The group had planted a cross, which they lit. That ritual was very</p>	<p>accomplishing his vocational calling by contributing to the lives of others.</p> <p>(20) In the identification with Christ, B is reminded by a friend's gift (book) of his spiritual journey as a Christian, which involves being able to let go of material (monetary) aspects and follow in Christ's footsteps.</p> <p>(21) By committing himself to the primacy of his spiritual values and beliefs, B was able to relax and accept himself beyond his daily context and realise that he had not failed.</p> <p>(22) In his close identification with Christ, B found inspiration in the meaning of Easter, with its message that sacrifice and 'letting go' precede the experience of new life. B finds meaning in a religious ritual.</p>
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<p>meaningful to him and reminded him that, in order that he may experience new life, he had to offer a lot, and let go. That is what Jesus did.</p> <p>(23) B accepts that the only thing in life is to add significance to other people's lives and help people who are suffering. After he lets go of the things that are perhaps very difficult to let go of, like letting go of his old false securities such as his salary, B wants to refocus on his calling.</p> <p>(24) B admits that he is not literally letting go of material things, but is letting go of his salary. Fortunately, B and his family were able to keep some things but if they moved to the USA, they would obviously have to let go of just about everything. B nevertheless believes that security is based on other things.</p> <p>(25) B does not see himself as perfect, but he is trying to let himself be guided by spiritual Christian principles. He wishes to be of service to other people, to try and listen to what their mission is in terms of what God's will should be. It is basically to think a bit more before he does anything and not only to think about himself but also to think about others. That is why he</p>	<p>(23) B accepts his spiritual calling and, once he has relinquished the material (false) securities that appear difficult to 'let go' of, he intends to continue in his calling.</p> <p>(24) B retains an aspect of security and holds on to a few material attachments, which, in emigrating, he will have to relinquish (let go). He believes that security is based on other things.</p> <p>(25) In the absence of tangible securities, B is guided by his spiritual Christian values – to heed his calling to serve others in the will of God, and not to be self-centred or impulsive.</p>
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<p>became a psychologist, which he sees as his calling in life. He tries to relieve the suffering of others and add value to their lives.</p> <p>(26) When B says that he is longing to practise what he preaches, he is also hoping to help other people do the same – that is, to let go when it is necessary to let go. B believes that presently he is actually living the meaning of letting go. It is basically a learning experience, which though undertaken very rationally in the past, is now lived experience.</p> <p>(27) B believes that he has learned to let go of certain more materially-based things in his life in order to open up to new and more value - and spiritually - based avenues and paths. He has come closer to what he experiences as his purpose in life, to be able to add meaning to the lives of others and help comfort people who suffer.</p> <p>(28) Sometimes he has to hold onto certain things. B thinks that there is a time to hold on and a time to let go. He cannot just jump from one thing to another all the time. B has got to hold on and resist jumping into other things all the time.</p>	<p>(26) B desires to commit himself to his values and beliefs and also wishes to assist others ‘to let go when it is necessary to let go’, as the lived experience that he has discovered it to be, rather than in its rational meaning.</p> <p>(27) B discovered that by letting go of certain material aspects in his life, he became receptive to spiritual paths and draw closer to what he experiences as the purpose of his life (to serve others and relieve their pain).</p> <p>(28) B found that there is a time to hold on and a time to let go. Holding on is a necessary restraint, for repeated leaps (jumping) and continuous change have to be resisted.</p>
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<p>(29) Leaving work was the first major step for B. There was a lot of tension before he let go. He would ask himself whether he was doing the right thing and also wondered whether his decision to leave wasn't being very selfish.</p> <p>(30) Letting go is not easy. It is like jumping from a plane before the parachute opens!</p>	<p>(29) Prior to making the initial main move (leaving work), B was tense and uncertain. He would question himself regarding his decision, and wondered whether he was being self-centred.</p> <p>(30) Letting go is difficult for B, who relates the experience to a risky leap into the unknown (space). The step seems hazardous.</p>
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(Post emigration email)

<p>(31) Having emigrated, B has to deal with all the new things. As with many other things in his life, his current experience in the USA is seen as an attempt to find the balance between negative and positive sides of the same thing.</p> <p>(32) The negative side is the initiation, the thing that is stopped every year, forever, at schools and universities. Gate-control and initiation are very real, even after he went through a thirty-month screening period in South Africa.</p> <p>(33) B provides an example where banks do not want to open an account for him</p>	<p>(31) B adapts to the new environment and continues in his tendency to seek stability between positive and negative aspects of what he encounters.</p> <p>(32) Regarding the negative, B feels that he is still an outsider and dislikes having to continue with the initial lengthy process of conditional acceptance.</p> <p>(33) At institutions where acceptance is conditional, B has to validate his credibility</p>
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<p>because they cannot find him on their credit checking systems. B gets the same kind of attitude when he approaches organisations with employment enquiries.</p> <p>(34) Since his arrival, B has also had to prove to his wife and family that there is a better life there and that it is okay for them to follow.</p> <p>(35) B is surprised to find that the positive side still overwhelms the negative.</p> <p>(36) In his new environment, B is able to do what he was trained and called for – to help other people. In South Africa, B felt that the different context in which he found himself, did not allow him to continue doing what he was trained for, and he felt that he was a piece of window dressing.</p> <p>(37) When B parks his van and forgets to lock it, or when he leaves the house, the anxiety and fear he feels is much less than when he was in South Africa. He sees women and children walking in the street, playing without fear of being attacked.</p> <p>(38) There are good, warm and friendly people in his new environment and he already has a few new friends. His sister</p>	<p>as his integrity is being questioned.</p> <p>(34) B has to validate his credibility to his significant others regarding a more promising future.</p> <p>(35) With surprise, B realises that the positive aspects outweigh what is negative.</p> <p>(36) Unlike in his previous work context where he had to maintain a façade, B finds his new work meaningful, as his training and vocational calling are accepted and recognised.</p> <p>(37) In his new environment, B is more relaxed (less anxiety and fear) and feels a greater sense of freedom and security with himself and others.</p> <p>(38) Interpersonally, the new environment is amiable and affectionate. Familiar family attachments are within reach, and, when</p>
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<p>and her family are also an hour's drive away. They understand and support when necessary, in spite of still having their own battles to fight.</p> <p>(39) Ironically, B says, sometimes the gate-control mechanisms also give him a sense of security. The authorities do not allow crime or suspects. People's personal rights, their space, and quality of life are protected. Soon he may also be one of those people.</p> <p>40) Educational prospects are good and B believes that he can have a happy family life there. The prospects for his children are good.</p> <p>(41) B has found the winter there a bit longer and warmer than usual, but spring has just arrived, which B discovered when he arrived an hour late for church that morning. He had forgotten to set his alarm clock one hour ahead and had just not attended sufficiently to their ways of doing things.</p>	<p>needed, they are helpful and understanding.</p> <p>(39) B lives an ambiguity, for the negative, controlling aspects he perceives also provide him with a positive sense of security. He looks forward to belonging and sharing the potential protection that the other residents enjoy.</p> <p>(40) B believes that the new environment can positively accommodate the needs of his children and he envisages a happy family life in the new country.</p> <p>(41) B has to adapt to changes regarding weather, time and manner of doing things. He has to orientate himself, and believes that he is catching up.</p>
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TABLE II

Participant B: Ben (B)

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**Constituents of the Individual Situated Structure of Letting go**

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**A. Decision:** (1. 2. 29.)

Letting go initially occurred with B's *decision* to leave his work, which had provided him with security and comfort, but denied him freedom and contentment. He felt trapped and professionally rejected, and believed that he was being exploited to maintain a façade. At first the relaxing of rules at the institution where he worked liberated him emotionally. He reflected on who he was and felt different. B wanted to leave but, before taking the initial step to do so, there was tension and conflict and he doubted his *decision*. Through self-questioning and reflection, B wondered whether he was being self-centred and inconsiderate of others.

**B Future Horizons:** (3.4.5.6. 8.)

After leaving his work, B decided to leave the country of his birth. Letting go began with the decision to emigrate. He became aware of other *horizons* beyond his familiar world. Despite being initially rejected by the country to which he had decided to emigrate, B considered conditional acceptance as necessary for the greater opportunity he pursued. was offered the security of tentative employment which would provide him with the chance to look at other possibilities. He felt excited and needed again, but was willing to make a complete vocational change if necessary. However, although aware of the unknown challenges, B trusts that he would continue to keep alive.

**C. Return:** (11. 16. 17. 18.)

Before leaving his country of origin, B *returned* to visit the town of his birth and the cities in which he lived. Before leaving, B needed to return to the places and people he knows and found the opportunity to revisit and make final contact, to rekindle and capture the memories of significant early attachments (to places and people). He repeated

the familiar, earlier path that he had taken in his life and retraced the steps of his childhood, reliving the journey of his earlier years. The process of saying goodbye was meaningful through a personal rather than a social ritual, and he recognises the possible symbolic significance of the revisit.

**D. Memories:** (9. 10. 12. 15.)

Through revisiting, B was able to rekindle and retain permanent *memories* of the special attachments to which he could return to in the future. The close contact with family and relatives had diminished, but had been replaced with meaningful attachments to certain people and places. The memories and experiences he retained in his attachments were integral to the places of significance. The visit gave him great pleasure and was a positive and meaningful experience.

**E. Permanence:** (13.14.)

With B's decision to leave, it was reassuring for him to find a sense of *permanence* in his past. He realised that, despite the consistent diversity and changes in his life, the foundations and familiarity of past structures continued. It was comforting for him to see that the paternal grave remained and that specific places and memories of his childhood provided a permanent base for him to continue. In his departure, the aspect of permanence was significant.

**F. Identification:** (19. 20. 22.)

As a Christian, B's initial impetus towards change was spiritual, where scripture readings and discussions strengthened the greater significance of spiritual values over material issues. A religious ritual is meaningful and the spiritual values on which he was to rely were reinforced. Inspiration was found in the meaning of the message of Easter, where sacrifice and 'letting go' precede the experience of 'new life'. B found significance in his *identification* with Christ. He will let go of material attachments and follow in the footsteps of Christ. A friend's gift reminds him of the spiritual journey of being a Christian, which, for B, was to accomplish his vocational calling and to serve others by relieving their pain and adding value to their lives.

**G. Attachments:** (21. 23. 26. 27.)

In the process of leaving, B relinquished material *attachment*, which he considered to be ‘false securities’; yet nevertheless found this relinquishment difficult. However, once he has accomplished this, he plans to continue and will refocus on his vocational calling. He seeks to recommit (reattach) himself to the values and beliefs of assisting others. B would also like to help others ‘to let go when it is necessary to let go’; that is, letting go as the lived experience that he has discovered it to be, rather than in its rational meaning. By letting go of certain material attachments in his life, B found to be a transpersonal experience. He was receptive to spiritual paths which bring brought him closer to what he experienced as the purpose of his life – namely, to serve others and relieve their pain. In submitting to the primacy of his spiritual values and beliefs beyond his daily material context, B realises that he has not failed. The attachment to his spiritual beliefs and values allowed him to relax (let go) and he accepted himself in the process.

**H. Security** (7. 24. 25.)

In letting go, B retained some *security* by holding on to a few material aspects which though perceived as false, were necessary and difficult to let go of. However, B realises that with the emigration, he would have to relinquish (let go of) these attachments as well. Nevertheless, he trusted that security is based on alternative aspects and no longer viewed his previous secure routine attachment of employment as necessary to practise his vocation. In the absence of the tangible secure attachments he knew, B was guided by his strong spiritual Christian values, as he heeded the calling to serve others in the will of God, and not to be impulsive or self-centred. B considered others rather than himself.

**I. Holding on:** (28. 30.)

In the process, B found that there was a time to hold on and a time to let go. Holding on was a necessary attachment and restraint, as repeated leaps and continuous change had to be resisted. Letting go was difficult for B, who related the experiences to a risky and hazardous leap into the unknown vastness of space, “like jumping from a plane before the parachute opens”. With feelings of fear and anxiety, the experience appeared to be an apprehensive and unpredictable entry into the vast space of nothingness and the unknown.

**J. The New Environment:** (31.32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41.)

Following his arrival in the *new environment*, B attempted to adapt successfully to the changes he encountered. He orientated himself regarding new environmental aspects, which included the concept of time and general manner of doing things. In his quest for stability, B continues to seek a balance between the positive and negative aspects of the newness he encountered. With pleasure and relief, he became aware of the dominance of positive aspects. However, still being regarded as an outsider was a negative for he disliked having to continue with the process of conditional acceptance. In the new world, B's integrity is still being questioned, as he has to validate his credibility. Similarly, he has to validate his trustworthiness to the significant other, providing assurance of a positive future. His position appears precarious. With pleasure and relief, B acknowledges that positive aspects of the new environment outweigh what is negative. Unlike his previous work context with its imposed façade, B feels accepted and finds that his training and vocational calling are acknowledged.

In the new environment, B found that he is more relaxed and aware of a greater sense of freedom and security in others. Interpersonally, the new environment is amiable and affectionate. Familiar family attachments were within reach and, when needed, were helpful and understanding.

Upon arrival in the new environment, B lived the paradoxical experience of recognising both positive and negative aspects of what he encountered. There was ambiguity, for what he perceived as negatively controlling also provided him with a positive sense of security. He looks forward to belonging, and sharing the potential protection that other residents enjoy, and is optimistic about the future. B trusts that the country of his choice can positively accommodate the needs of his children. He continues seeking to resume and enjoy the oneness he knew in the familiar world order prior to his letting go, and he envisages a happy family life in the new world and country of his choice.



TABLE I

**Participant C: Penny (P)**

<b>Natural Meaning Units</b>	<b>Central Themes</b>
<p>(1) P does not think letting go means a heck of a lot at all. She views it as one of those modern jargon words and does not feel that she has a particular grip on the term. She does not know if she could ever use such terminology and say that she is now ‘letting go’ or that she has now ‘let go’. P acknowledges that she would not know at which point this is letting go and feels that it is typically one of those American type words. She does not have much respect for the word and refers to Oprah Winfrey and her talk show that will philosophise about a word like ‘spirit’, but that means zero to P. It is not that she feels that people should not look after their spirit, but she believes that each person does so in his or her own way.</p>	<p>(1) P is resistant to the term ‘letting go’, which she interprets as diffuse and general rather than applicable to personal experience.</p>
<p>(2) For P, letting go is more personalised. Each person lets go in his or her own way. If someone asks her whether she has let go, she may have to sit down and</p>	<p>(2) P believes that the experience of letting go is more personal than the term denotes. She rationally interprets the term as surpassing whatever has impeded mobility</p>

<p>think what they are you talking about, and perhaps go through her thoughts, and think that she has actually moved beyond a certain point, and has in actual fact let go. It is not a term that she would use. Her view is that a person must move on, beyond whatever has been “dragging”, put things behind, and get on with life.</p>	<p>(dragging) and moving on with life</p>
<p>(3) P sees no sense in living in the past. Once she has come to terms with what her situation is going to be, then she has to accept that and be in that phase, and move on.</p>	<p>(3) P rationally believes that she cannot live in the past but has to accept the present and move on.</p>
<p>(4) P believes that in some things there is letting go, but not in everything. With the house things certainly. Moving from the house was physical hard work, but letting go occurred before the time, making the decision and coming to the realisation that she had to leave her home.</p>	<p>(4) For P, letting go occurred with the cognitive decision and bringing to awareness that she would leave her home.</p>
<p>(5) In the house she would ask herself how people were going to take the move, and whether it was an entirely selfish decision and whether the move was only for her.</p>	<p>(5) P considered the impact of the decision on others and questioned herself as whether she was being self-centred (selfish) and considering her will above the will of others.</p>
<p>(6) But then afterwards, in the time that</p>	<p>(6) P believed that she was being self-</p>

<p>she put the house on the market, Rob, one of her boys, in actual fact said, with no provocation whatsoever, that he absolutely hated the house that they were in. It came as such a surprise to P. Jack, her husband, was shocked as well and later acknowledged that he could not believe that their son had actually said that. The expectation was that their child would have fond memories of his trip overseas or the crack on the wall. But Rob had had enough. One of the other kids that she spoke to said that it was fine, and that it was not a problem. It was Jack, her husband, whom she had to get past. She needed his approval. She felt very selfish</p> <p>(7) On a Friday, (in the absence of the noise), P would think that everything was fine and Saturday would pass. Sunday night she would start getting nervous, as she would think of Monday. On Monday, the noise would start all over again and P would change her mind because of the noise from the schools nearby. The noise of the neighbouring school drove her dilly. The neighbouring school had built the property and extended their school. The bells of the neighbouring school did not go at the same time as the Barclay</p>	<p>centred (selfish) in her decision to leave and had to secure the approval of her significant other. Her children were ready to make the move.</p> <p>(7) Depending on the level of intrusion (school noise), P vacillated from accepting to stay to wanting to leave. The intrusion became so devastating that P would scream and feel violently angry.</p>
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<p>School bell did. She knew Barclay's school bells: they were across the road from her and at a distance.. This school was right next-door, and it drove her mad. It drove her so mad that she wanted to scream, and often did. The noise itself included the noise of the kids. Sometimes they would come and knock their ball over. Then, P would throw her toys out of the cot and curse the kids. Sometimes P wanted one of those bazookas so that she could stand on the other side of the school and shoot them.</p>	
<p>(8) Their home was messed. That is the resentment. P resented that she had to get up and go because of the school next-door to her. It just was too much for her that she had to leave her house. It was not just the school across the road from her, but with everything together, the noise was terrible. Singly instances of disturbance she could handle.</p>	<p>(8) P felt resentful that because of the intrusion, she had to leave her home. The accumulative (noise) intrusion had become unbearable.</p>
<p>(9) The noise ruined her life. She went to court to put her case before them but she got nowhere. P was very ill at the time and she got nowhere. The noise was a huge intrusion.</p>	<p>(9) The (noise) intrusion was overwhelming and detrimental to P, who was ill at the time. She felt stuck, and her efforts to change the situation through legal action were futile.</p>
<p>(10) P was angry and aggravated by this</p>	<p>(10) P attempts to deny the anger and</p>

<p>whole thing, but then admits that actually was not so bad. Just talking about it, aggravates her. The family had fixed things in the home for themselves, for their needs and how they wanted the home to be and now finally, after all these years, when things were nice and neat and orderly, then she had to leave.</p> <p>(11) P misses her trees. When she came to her new home, they were big. She had lived there for almost thirty years. They were magnificent trees and P expresses sadness at having left them. She speaks of a “terrible, terrible, terrible sadness”.</p> <p>(12) P had certain criteria for finding another place. She looked and they bought a plot somewhere. For a while she thought that this was answer: to live out on a plot, in the quiet and have a view. She imagined that she would have new little ‘goggatjies’ (insects) in her grass, and believed that it would be wonderful.</p> <p>(13) Nothing like that happened. P realised after a time that Jack was not going to move anywhere there, and the boys would not have wanted to come out there either. P realised that the whole</p>	<p>resentment she continues to feel regarding the family having to leave the home which they had, over the years, organised to accommodate their needs.</p> <p>(11) P had lived a significant part of her life in her home and grieves having left a meaningful aspect (magnificent trees) behind. There is a sense of deep loss.</p> <p>(12) P had specific requirements for finding a new home and looked forward to living on an ideal plot they had bought, which seemed to be the solution for living in peace, with a view and the creatures of nature.</p> <p>(13) With time, P realised that the initial decision to move (to the plot) could not materialise, as it was not suitable to the rest of the family. With sadness, she cancelled the sale.</p>
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<p>thing and the safety aspect would not work. She realised that it wasn't going to work, so sadly, she cancelled buying the plot.</p> <p>(14) P then thought that she was doomed to noise for the rest of my life. She never thought she would get past Jack, her husband. P had to ask him and she did. She asked him over and over again, what he thought and whether it would be OK with him for them to move. P had to check with her husband.</p> <p>(15) P also took into consideration the fact that her husband works. She had to have his, not approval so much, but his backing her up because she thought it was a selfish decision. P also saw this as an expensive decision.</p> <p>(16) P acknowledges that she does not feel entirely selfish, and admits to thinking of herself a little, but justifies this by adding that, like all women, she sees herself as thinking first of everybody else and of herself last. She believes that she had put up with the situation long enough, and realised that it was time to go. Besides, they no longer had kids at the school, so in actual fact the reason</p>	<p>(14) P was stuck and began to feel that she was destined to remain in the unbearable (noisy) situation. In her decision to move, P needed her husband's support and commitment.</p> <p>(15) P resisted a move that was purely self-centred (selfish). She required the support and commitment of the significant other in her decision, and considered his needs.</p> <p>(16) P defends against being purely self-centred in her decision, and acknowledges her persistent tolerance. She gives reasons to justify the move as being necessary for her and the family. Their home was no longer suitable for the family as their needs had changed.</p>
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<p>why she was staying in the house was not the reason she had bought it in the first instance. The reason why she was staying in their new house now, was because it was a home, and it was comfortable, but a lot of those things had been taken away in their earlier home. The reason they had bought that house, in the first instance, was to be near the school because she had five children. P corrects herself for, in fact, she realises that she now has four children. For a moment P loses track of her thoughts but continues.</p> <p>(17) P became aware that she did not have to live in that house, but needed to go. She needed to leave for her own sanity. P recalls that she would stand watering her garden and have long conversations in her head about the school, asking herself what she was going to do and what was she going to say.</p> <p>(18) Often the bells from the school would go off over the weekends. Over the long weekends, the school authorities would forget to switch the school bell off. Just as everybody was restful, the school bells would start going off, or the alarms of the school would start going any hour</p>	<p>(17) P realised that there was no reason for her to stay in their original house and, in order to preserve her personal stability, she needed to leave. P reflected and considered her next step.</p> <p>(18) P's personal stability felt threatened (she felt that she was going insane), as the unpredictable intrusion became absolutely intolerable. With a personal sensitivity to noise, P's needs became paramount.</p>
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<p>of the night. P was driven berserk and just could not take it. Though it did not affect other people, she accepts that some people are more affected by noise than others. P admits that she is sensitive to noise.</p>	
<p>(19) Because P was ill for a very long time she spent a lot of time at home. P had to be home and could not be anywhere else as she was confined to bed. For a very long time, P had M.E. and spent two and a half years in bed with “depression and darkness” and then this noise was on top of her as well. It was all just too much for her.</p>	<p>(19) Due to a long-term illness, P experienced ‘depression and darkness’, which, with the additional intrusion, overwhelmed her.</p>
<p>(20) So then P decided to make the move. P considers the decision the biggest part of letting go. It was the part of getting to the point of saying: “Yes, I am going to go. I am leaving this home. I am actually going to sell this place and move”. That was the turning point. It was not the actual move but the decision to make the move.</p>	<p>(20) Rather than the physical move P’s cognitive decision to leave was the major step and the pivotal moment of letting go.</p>
<p>(21) In P’s own words: “ The decision was the move, not the physical move”. The physical move was physically bad, but there was mental anguish arriving at</p>	<p>(21) P considers the decision as the actual move, rather than the physical move itself. Although the actual move was physically unpleasant, there were agonising thoughts in</p>



<p>the decision.</p> <p>(22) It was anguish for P because she toyed with the idea to move. She does not know for how long. It was also possibly anguish because she was helpless against what was going on around her. She could not dictate to the authorities or the children or the school. She could not tell them to shut up. She could not do anything about it. If those kids jumped into the pool that was tough for her and though she could rant and rave on the other side, she could not do anything about it. It was frustrating, but she could not do anything about it. Then her thoughts would turn to murder and she would think: “I am going to bomb this place!”</p> <p>(23) Weekends were experienced on a visceral level. P could feel when it was a weekend and describes her experience where, on a Saturday morning when she would wake up and there was nobody there, she could feel their absence in the air. She finds it difficult to express, but the feeling was in the air, and she could feel it! The air was clearer. On Saturday, the air was clearer. On Sunday the air was okay, but Sunday night the air would</p>	<p>the process of making the decision.</p> <p>(22) P felt frustrated, anguished and violently angry, as she was unable to change or control the situation in which she found herself. She felt helpless. Conflicting thoughts as to whether or not to move, oscillated over time.</p> <p>(23) P felt the presence (noise) and absence (peace) of the intrusion, on a physical, experiential level. In the absence of the intrusion, the air was clear and easy to breathe whereas, with the approaching presence of the noise, the air became increasingly difficult to inhale.</p>
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<p>start getting really muggy because of Monday, which she expresses with a heavy sigh. P adds that holidays were fantastic blissfulness</p> <p>(24) P finds it difficult to adequately express the joy of having her own space, not only in terms of the noise, but also in coming home and not having “them” in her driveway all the time. She views herself as a private sort of person who needs her space and privacy.</p> <p>(25) P understands that perhaps her need for space is exaggerated. She believes that it is possibly because of so many people being around her that she feels the need to be private. P admits, however, that perhaps if she were completely on her own she would not feel that way but she does. She always has to have others around her. P has a big family and that means that the house is bouncing with constant activity. She just hopes that she can have space.</p> <p>(26) Space is important to P, to the point that she had to take a big decision to leave. P emphasises the magnitude of the</p>	<p>(24) As someone who needs to be alone, P experiences indescribable joy being on her own and defining her personal (auditory and physical) space and distance.</p> <p>(25) As P is constantly in the presence of others, there is a strong need to be alone (private) in her own space. Nevertheless, she resists total isolation.</p> <p>(26) P acknowledges that the move was a major decision for her, particularly in the need to define the significance of her space.</p>
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<p>decision for her.</p> <p>(27) As P saw it, the noise was not a one-day thing. It just went on and on and on for months, and then she would consider selling the house, but then the holidays would come and she would think that she had exaggerated her need to move. Then she would consent to selling the house and then the weekends would come and she would think that the weekends were brilliant and where else could she have such weekends. So, it was like that, going back and forth. P noticed that the same thing was happening to Jack. They would alternate about selling the house. On Monday she would start (complaining) and then by Friday when he would arrive, she would keep quiet about it. On Monday, then she was ready to sell again. Over a long time and long period, P saw that she was moving forward-backwards, forward-backwards. It was a long process of moving backwards and forwards.</p> <p>(28) Then, P started thinking in terms of where she would put her plants as she realised that she would not be there to watch her plants grow as she was going to move. It was at that point that she decided to do something that she believes</p>	<p>(27) Making the decision was gradual and took place over a lengthy period. Conflicted, P would vacillate in her thoughts and would repeatedly approach and avoid (forwards and backwards) the decision to sell, before committing herself to the ultimate step. She realised that the significant other was also going through the same lengthy to-and-fro process.</p> <p>(28) Once aware that she would leave, P sought continuity and avoided long-term commitments (planting trees), preferring something transitional (pot planting), which she could preserve and carry to her new destination.</p>
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<p>is relevant to letting go. She would tell herself that she is not going to do a massive thing at her home because she was not going to be going to be there. She decided to save and she did. P started putting little plants into pots to move and realised that she was getting ready for wherever she was going. She needs her plants and needs her trees. P continued making roots to keep up because she cannot live without her plants. When she had intentions to plant, she would start putting little plants out. She thought of the plot but nothing had come of that.</p> <p>(29) Actually, P did not need the plot so much, but quiet. P would go anywhere quiet and it would have been an absolute bonus if she could have a view. When she thought of moving, and she thought of the criteria regarding the nice things that she needed, she realised that she was not going to get them, because where in Pretoria (her home town) would she go to where there were no throughways and no traffic?</p> <p>(30) The only place near to where they lived would have been The Ridge, which she could not afford. The Ridge would have older houses and would have trees</p>	<p>(29) In search of a new home, P had certain requirements, with peace being a priority. She also desired a view, trees and spacious rooms and realised that she would have to move to a new area to find them.</p> <p>(30) Although the area close to P did meet some of her requirements, the area seemed unsuitable in other respects.</p>
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<p>and would have bigger rooms. Those were her criteria – no noise, trees, bigger rooms and an older house. That is what she wanted, but as she could not get it in the area close by, she started looking elsewhere for a house. It was there but she could not afford it. Besides, she says, the houses in the Ridge were old houses, “rambling places, far too big and needing far too much care”. She needed space, trees and peace, but the view was the other thing.</p> <p>(31) P did not have a view in her previous home as she would look up into the sky and there was a little bit of sky and that was her parameter, her border. She could not see the horizon, so she had to wait for the moon to come above the trees. That’s the stuff that is really important to her.</p> <p>(32) Jack, her husband, does not need that stuff (nature), but she does. P needs to see the sky. She needs to see the clouds. P needs it. She needs the trees and the animals. Her husband is not like that. He is more of a city-slicker. She is also a city-slicker for if she actually had to land up on a farm, she might say: “Oh no, this is never what I thought of”.</p>	<p>(31) P had no view at her previous home, yet did enjoy a meaningful and significant relationship to a natural environment.</p> <p>(32) P realises that she and the significant other differ, regarding their relationship to nature. Nevertheless, she is resistant to the thought of finding what she seeks without him.</p>
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<p>(33) In Barclay, her previous residential area, there were avenues of trees where the birds would come because they knew that they could come down a particular avenue of trees and down the following lane. So where there was an isolated spot of trees, she would have a lot of bird life. P fed the birds and that was all wonderful and she needed to have that again. She needed to hear natural sounds and not traffic.</p> <p>(34) P does not believe that she particularly wanted to be in her new area. Moré Park was never on her agenda. She always thought of living somewhere in area she knew. She wanted to be in her area and she is not and that is an adjustment for her. Although she is half Afrikaans, she feels that she is out of her area and surrounded by Afrikaners. P feels like a displaced person. She finds nothing wrong with the people (neighbours) but they are all Afrikaans. There's not a soul in her new area that is English speaking and she feels a bit of a foreigner. She feels a bit of an outsider.</p> <p>(35) P says that her neighbours are wonderful because they all like their</p>	<p>(33) In her previous area, P had enjoyed a meaningful relationship with nature and needed to continue this in her new home.</p> <p>(34) P had hoped to be in the area she knew but now she is in unfamiliar territory and has had to adapt to change. Despite a common aspect, P finds it difficult to identify with the new neighbours who are different, and she feels like a stranger who does not belong in the new environment.</p> <p>(35) P looks favourably upon the people in her new area. Although they are different to</p>
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<p>privacy, so they steer clear of her and she steers clear of them. But the neighbours all have each others phone numbers, which they never had in Barclay. P knows all these people and has met them. Some of them came to her house and left their phone numbers. P gave them her phone numbers. She thinks that it is probably fine, but finds it different.</p> <p>(36) The other thing for P is having to adjust to time, the traffic and distance. She still shops at the Barclay Mall, which was not even five minutes from her house. P says that she has not yet got it into her head yet, that she now has to travel for twenty minutes, and only then has she arrived. P may look at her watch and say that she has plenty of time and then she realises that she does not have plenty of time.</p> <p>(37) Then, a huge thing for P is to get out of her mind the people (prior residents) who used to live there (in her new home), out of her mind. The estate agent had told her some of the history of the previous residents and she feels that this was very unfair, because it was a miserable sort of history. P had met the ex-owner of the</p>	<p>what she has known, interpersonal links are maintained with a mutual respect for distance, where contact seems voluntary rather than intrusive.</p> <p>(36) To adapt to her new order in the new environment, P has also had to adapt to changes regarding time and space.</p> <p>(37) P's desire to familiarise and be at-one with her new home is impeded by thoughts of its previous residents, whose history she is regretfully aware of.</p>
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<p>house and had taken an immediate dislike to him and trusts that the feeling was mutual, as they did not have much to do with one another. Apparently, the previous owner had married a new wife and the agent had told P the history, which affected P, because the bedrooms were their bedrooms. Though she does not believe that their unhappiness affected her, she really did not need to know all she heard. P accepts it, however, reasoning that it is like that with everyone who moves into a new home.</p> <p>(38) P feels that the house still isn't hers, but it is slowly coming back. Like the kitchen, for instance, putting the rail on top, getting all the dreadful stuff out that was rotting. She now has her granite top and she has cleaned out the kitchen cupboards.</p> <p>(39) P notes that it is going to take a bit longer and although she puts in a full day's work, she does get so tired. She has major plans for the grounds and wants to make it more a people's garden. The garden has a steep gradient and runs down to the street. It is presently not a people's garden as one cannot run around</p>	<p>(38) P feels foreign in the new environment. Personalising her new home is gradual as she eclectically accepts and rejects items, creating personal meaning in her new space.</p> <p>(39) P realises that personalising her home environment is going to be a lengthy process. She intends making personal changes, yet is dependent on the significant other to do so.</p>
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<p>the garden because it is up and down a hill. P has major plans to level the garden for kids to play in for if they have to play outside, they will hurt themselves. She also has her dogs to consider as the dogs were sick running up and down. P would like the changes to happen faster, but she does not earn any money and has to depend on Jack, her husband, to do that. P finds it unfortunate that Jack does all the stuff that he wants to do first, and what she would like to do is not on the list of his priorities.</p> <p>(40) P refers to Jack having done a dreadful thing, She has told everyone about it. P speaks of when she had moved into the second bedroom, where the doors open into the garden. From her bedroom, she could sit on the stairs and look at the view. However, within a month of their move, Jack had blocked the view.</p> <p>(41) P screamed and went mad. It felt as if she was back in Barclay, immediately back in Barclay. P feels frustrated but cannot do anything about it. “Back to the Bazooka!” she says.</p> <p>(42) So P moved out of that room and that’s why she is upstairs. She refuses to</p>	<p>(40) Soon after their arrival, P feels distressed about the loss of the significant environmental aspect (view) that she had just gained and enjoyed. She blames the significant other for the loss.</p> <p>(41) P’s inability to change her situation, revived the earlier feelings of frustration, helplessness, violent anger and screaming behaviour, prior the move.</p> <p>(42) P resisted facing the loss of what she</p>
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<p>go back into that bedroom because she can't look at that wall blocking the view. Where she is, is not really a bedroom but she refuses to go to the bedroom. P has put her foot down. She used to sit on the bed and look at the lights in the distance and enjoyed the view. P finds it difficult to express how wonderful it was, but it has now gone.</p> <p>(43) One month after her arrival and with the loss, P felt that she was back in Barclay. The only way that her husband and the builder could fix it for her is if they could break the wall down. She wants them to break it all down. Jack blames the builder, and the builder blames Jack. P was the one who kept reminding them to watch her view.</p> <p>(44) P believes that her husband Jack does not know just how affected she is. She believes that he either chooses not to know or he deliberately passes over it. P cannot handle it and believes that he could have controlled it but did not.</p> <p>(45) P is very angry and very resentful about the loss. P has told her husband. She ranted and raved about it on the specific day and phoned her daughter in</p>	<p>had gained in the new world, and in defiance, physically withdraws (to another room) from the situation. She yearns to restore what (view) she had.</p> <p>(43) The experience of the loss (view) made P feel that she had gained nothing with the move. Despite her attempts to retain what (view) she had gained, her appeals were not being heeded.</p> <p>(44) She is angry towards the significant other, for although he could have prevented the loss and could restore what she had, she finds him oblivious to her feelings.</p> <p>(45) P feels intense anger and resentment towards the significant other for, although she has desperately tried to communicate</p>
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<p>Australia, who sent her father a fax. P dragged her bed up to the other room that same day. She screamed around. When her husband came in from work she knew what he was going to say to her and she knew that he was never going to fix it. P was hoping that he would say that they could remove the wall but he did not say that. P feels that he is never going to say it. She feels a great sense of loss regarding the view she had.</p> <p>(46) Jack, her husband, was very upset because, when he came home their daughter had sent him a fax. P knew that she was not going to get anything out of him anyway, particularly if he was aggravated. P asked whether he was going to join her and sleep upstairs, to which he provided a negative reply She then asked whether he was taking it personally, and when he acknowledged that he was, she asked him please not to. “Come along. There’s a lovely view, a lovely bedroom so come upstairs”. She invited him to join her.</p> <p>(47) P does not like a rift. She knows that there is a barrier between them, but does not know if he is aware of it.</p>	<p>the impact of her loss to him, she realises that he will not restore what she had. She views the loss as final.</p> <p>(46) Rather than estrange her annoyed and irritated significant other further, P attempts to restore their relationship and seeks a closer relationship with him. She feels threatened by the increasing distance between them.</p> <p>(47) P dislikes the separateness she experiences between her and the significant other. She is, however, unaware of his</p>
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<p>(48) P is very, very hurt and apart from the death of her son, she admits that she has never had such a massive thing happen in her life. P uses the expression that she is “dead affected” by it. She acknowledges that there is nothing, nothing that is as big as the death of her son, but outside of that, in the material sense of everyday things, she has never in her life been as upset about something as she was with that.</p> <p>(49) The death of her son and the loss of the view do not come together. There is no link between the two. The death is too bad.</p>	<p>perceptions in this regard.</p> <p>(48) With the loss (view) P feels intense pain, which, although not as devastating as the death of her son, bears the implications of death and is detrimental to her.</p> <p>(49) P denies a connection between the loss of a significant aspect in relation to her world (view), and the loss of a significant other (son), as the experience of interpersonal loss is intensely devastating.</p>
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TABLE II  
Participant C: Penny (P)

### Constituents of the Individual Situated Structure of Letting Go

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**A. The term** (1. 2. 3.)

P is resistant to *the term* letting go, which she finds diffuse and general rather than expressive of her personal experience. The term is rationally interpreted as moving beyond what impedes mobility and continuing with life. P logically believes that she cannot live in the past but has to accept the present and move on.

**B. Stuck:** (9. 14. 18. 19.)

The intrusion of the noise was overwhelming and detrimental to P who was ill at the time and, due to a long-term illness, experienced feelings of darkness and depression. Her efforts to change the situation were futile, and she felt *stuck* and helpless. She began to believe that she was destined to remain in the unbearable situation, but the intensity of the intrusion and its unpredictability became absolutely intolerable. With a personal sensitivity to noise, P's needs became paramount as her sense of self felt threatened and she believed that she would disintegrate. In her decision to move, however, P needed the support and commitment of the significant other.

**C. Ambivalence:** (7. 8. 10. 22. 23. 27.)

Depending on the extent of the intrusion, P would vacillate from accepting to stay to wanting to leave. There was *ambivalence* and conflict, with feelings of helplessness, as her thoughts would oscillate and her behaviour would vacillate. P moved 'forwards and backwards', backwards and forwards before finally committing herself to the ultimate step of leaving. Nevertheless, she realised that she was not alone, and that the significant other was also going through the same lengthy to-and-fro process. The presence (noise) and absence (peace) relating to the intrusion was felt on a physical-experiential level and reflected in the breathing pattern, as P on a physical experiential level accepted and rejected the situation she was in.

P attempted to deny the anger and resentment she felt regarding the move. The resentment and anger stemmed from the fact that because of the intrusion, she and the significant others had to leave their home, the home that they had over the years organised to accommodate their needs. Arriving at the final decisive point was gradual and took place over an indefinitely long period.

**D. Initial Decision:** (12. 13.)

With the *initial decision* to move, P first looked forward to living on an ideal plot that they had bought, which met her requirements of living in peace, with a view and the creatures of nature. P reflected and believed that she had found the solution. This decision to move (to the plot), however, did not materialise for she realised that the move was only a personal ideal and not suitable for the rest of the family. With sadness, P cancelled the sale.

**E. Consideration of Others:** (5. 6. 15. 16.)

In her decision to move, P *considered* the needs of *others*. She was aware of not being alone and considered the impact of her decision on the family and significant other. She resisted being purely self-centred and imposing her will upon the will of the family. Though the children are ready to make the move, P sought to secure the support, commitment and approval of the significant other and consider his needs. She was against making a purely self-centred decision, and though the decision was hers, she acknowledged her persistent tolerance and justified the move as necessary for the whole family as she believed that the home could no longer accommodate their needs.

**F. Committed Decision:** (4. 17. 20. 21.)

In order to preserve her personal stability and sense of self, which she felt was being threatened, P realised that there is no reason to remain there and she decided to leave. She reflected and considered her next step regarding the move. In the process of making the decision, conflicting thoughts oscillated. Though the visible move was physically unpleasant, arriving at the *decision* to leave was agonising as P finally committed herself to the decision. The conscious awareness was the significant move for P rather than the move itself. The decision was the major step and a pivotal moment in letting go.

**G. Quest :** (29. 30.)

In the *search* for a new home the desire was to find peace, a view, trees and spacious rooms. To meet her requirements, P realised that she would have to move to a new area for the more familiar areas were unsuitable.

**H. Old World Loss:** (11.)

Having lived a significant part of her life in the earlier home, P felt a sense of deep *loss* and grieves having left a meaningful aspect behind.

**I. Continuity:** (28. 31. 33.)

Once aware that she would leave, P sought *continuity* and avoided any new long-term commitments. She preferred to retain what was meaningful and, in a transitional manner carried it with her to the new destination. P sought to continue the meaningful relationship she has with nature.

**J. Significant Other:** (24. 25. 26. 32.)

In her decision to move, P needed the support and commitment of the *significant other*. Though she desired to continue the meaningful relationship she had with nature, P realised that the significant other differed to her in this regard, but she was resistant to finding what she is looking for without him. While constantly in the presence of others, P needed to be alone and expressed indescribable joy at the opportunity to define her personal (auditory and physical) space and distance. The move is a major decision. Paradoxically, although there was a profound need for personal (private) space, there was also a fear of isolation. She continued to retain a connectedness with the significant other.

**K. New Environment:** (34. 35. 36.)

In the *new environment*, feelings of ambivalence arose regarding the new interpersonal relationships. Though she felt favourable (positive) towards them, she found it difficult (negative) to identify with them. P enjoyed their manner of relating as interpersonal

contact was voluntary rather than intrusive and, while interpersonal links were maintained there was a mutual respect for distance. This was different to what she had known. Nevertheless, despite a common aspect, P felt like a stranger amongst her new neighbours. She felt that she did not belong there but attempted to become familiar with the new environment. In the process, P had to orientate herself regarding the newness of time and space encountered.

**L. Personalising the New Environment** (37. 38. 39.)

P's desire to familiarise and be at-one with the new home was impeded by thoughts of the presence of its previous residents, of whose history she was regretfully aware. Creating personal meaning in the new space was gradual, where what could not be accepted was eclectically removed and what could be identified with was allowed to remain. There is the awareness that *personalising* the new home is going to be a lengthy process and the intention to make personal changes appeared to be dependent on the significant other.

**M. New World Loss:** (40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 48.)

In the new environment, P enjoyed and appreciated a meaningful gain, in the form of an attractive view from her new home but, soon after their arrival, P was distressed by its *loss*. She resisted being reminded of the loss and withdrew physically from the situation. The experience of loss made her feel that she had gained nothing from the move. Once again, it is as if she returned to the past, as P felt stuck and unable to change the situation in which she found herself. This revived the earlier feelings of frustration, helplessness and violent anger she felt before the move. She resorted to the same behaviour she did then.

P yearned to restore what she had lost (the view) and realised that her attempts to hold on to what she had were futile. She blames the significant other for the loss of the meaningful aspect that she had gained in to the new environment. P felt frustrated and intensely angry towards him, for despite her desperate attempted to communicate the impact of the loss to him, he appeared oblivious to her feelings and he would not restore what she had enjoyed. She felt resentful. The loss elicited intense feelings of pain, which, while not as devastating her son's death, bore implications of death and detriment.



In the fear of suffering further interpersonal loss, P maintained a façade in the relationship with her significant other.

**N. Threat of Interpersonal Loss:** (46. 47. 49.)

P denied any connection between the loss or absence of a meaningful aspect to her environment and the *loss* and death of a significant other (son). However, the increasing distance between her and the significant other (spouse) in the new world was *threatening* to her. She was unaware of his perception of the barrier she felt between them. Rather than further estrange the significant other and increase the space between them, P attempted to restore their relationship and reduce the space. Separateness was experienced as threatening, and a re-establishment of closeness was desired in their relationship.

**TABLE II**

Participant D: John (J)

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**Constituents of the Individual Situated Structure of Letting Go**

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**A. Two Situations:** (1. 7. 27. 28. 29.)

J recalls and compares two different situated experiences of letting go. The one was letting go of his first business, while the other was letting go of his ex-fiancée. J believes that the decision preceding the separation from his ex-fiancée, determined the nature of letting go. While letting go of his business was easy, letting go of the relationship continues to be difficult. Both situations took place during the same period (ten years ago) in his life but he continues to hold on to the relationship. In his view of the future, at the time of the business and the premarital relationship, J saw himself in another business, but also married with children in a happy family. He considered letting go to be the same in both situations but has discovered that he had not let go of the relationship. Furthermore, he experienced a constructive continuity from the business as he could apply what he had learned and retained to his present business, but this was not the case regarding the knowledge and experience gained in the earlier relationship.

**B. Business:** (8. 24. 26. 39. 63. 64. 65. 67. 72. 86.)

For J, letting go of his first business was easy, as he had been convinced of his decision to leave. Remaining in a negative situation can lead to aggression. The excessive negative aspects of the business far exceeded what was positive and the anger he felt at the time pushed for the break, making it easier for him to leave. He had not held on to the business and knew that he had made the right decision.

Upon leaving the business, the pain and healing period was brief. In the stability and calm that followed, J soon felt relief at having let go. He could think clearly and allow for future opportunity, as well as move on and continue with his life. Leaving the

business was not a process, but was liberating and simple. He is happy in his present business.

**C. Decision** (4. 5.)

Feeling immobilised in a situation that he felt was going nowhere, J decided to take control and made a *decision* to leave the premarital relationship. He felt conflicted about leaving, for although rationally assured about the move, he was emotionally unhappy to do so. He experienced pain and conflict, and doubted his decision to leave. Despite his uncertainty about leaving, time and circumstance coerced him to move on and he believed that he had 'let go'.

**D. Emotional crisis:** (35. 36. 37. 38.)

The decision and commitment to leave the relationship gave rise to an *emotional crisis*, which led to a stormy mental struggle that created pain and instability (turbulence). In a later attempt to resolve the emotional crisis, J returned to review his earlier decision, but the uncertainty surrounding the decision led to a repeat of the process and extended the pain and instability (turbulence) further. J continues with the lived struggle and attempts to resolve the emotional crisis, pain and aspects related to the break.

**E. Holding on:** (13. 14. 15. 18. 25.)

In doubting his decision, J continued to *hold on to* the premarital relationship, which though sustaining, was also damaging and detrimental as it deterred progress and impeded healing. J admits that had he let go and not held on, he would have made the initial step towards healing, but this was not possible at the time. The holding on continued and gave rise to inner turmoil and emotional instability which needed to be resolved urgently. In the storm of emotional turmoil, doubt and conflict, there was a struggle for stability and survival.

**F. Stability vs Instability:** (61. 69. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78.)

In the conflict associated with the decision, J oscillated emotionally and vacillated in his thoughts. He doubted his decision and felt emotionally vulnerable. He realised that

leaving would be painful and he attempted to protect himself against the turmoil and pain of the break. In the experienced *instability* and turbulence, J had hoped that his decision would help him find stability. However, even after the decision was made, the doubt and turbulence continued as the negative aspects of the relationship had only slightly exceeded what was pleasant. His anger and irritation at the time provided the extra push for him to leave. However, once he had let go of the relationship, he held on to the positive aspects of the changed situation in which he found himself, and sought to protect himself against the pain. J sought *stability* by desperately holding onto the pleasant memories of the relationship. He also justified the change, feeling pleased that the negative frustrations of the relationship were no longer present. Though he felt relief at having left, there was a painful desire to resume the relationship. The turbulence continued, for though J had hoped to find stability, the intense desire following the decision created further instability. The process was repetitive and the instability and turbulence continued.

**G. Return:** (6. 9. 11. 52. 53. 54. 55. 60.)

J's doubtful initial decision gave rise to uncertainties in the present which led him to *return* (ten years later) to the earlier events preceding the decision. J reflected upon and returned to the past in order to question and re-evaluate the impulsive decision he had taken. Before he can finally let go, he has to reaffirm the fact that his initial decision was correct. He has to complete the process of letting go, which he finds difficult.

In returning to the past, J realised that he had to face the challenging confusion and adopt a different approach. He relived the painful unpleasant experiences, which had receded in memory and he returned to the deeper and darker levels of self, reliving the distress of the premarital relationship. J was familiar with the pain and realised that he had initially attempted to avoid the pain and confusion. J becomes aware that he had hastened the process in order to protect himself and come through unscathed. Finding nothing pleasant upon his return, J believes that he is finally confronting the matter in earnest.

**H. Significant Other:** (2. 3. 43. 44. 45. 84.)

Attempting to find a (quick) solution, J had attended to the surface aspects of the problem rather than the problem itself, and had moved on. He married hastily and had a child and, although he felt 'fine' and continued with his life, environmental aspects provoked the turmoil beneath the façade, and J realised that he had misinterpreted his recovery. He was unable to deal with the challenges of his present role as husband and father. It was in the relationship with the *significant other* (spouse) that J became aware that he had changed. He reflected on their relationship and realised that his reactions to minor incidents were exaggerated and aggressive. His emotional self continued to hold onto the earlier relationship with his ex-fiancée, and this impeded his marital relationship. J held on to the past relationship and was not committed to the present, even in the significant life-decision of his marriage. He was surprised at his own behaviour, perceiving it to be totally foreign.

**I. Continuity:** (30. 31. 32. 33. 34.)

Although the visible reality of the earlier relationship was absent in his interpersonal world, J continued to experience the conflict. He had gained from the experience but in the turbulence and instability that followed him leaving, J was unable constructively to apply what he had learned. J assumed that he would have applied the knowledge that he had gained from the relationship, but realised that such continuity was absent. He sought continuity in his life and made every effort simply to move on, committing himself to marriage and parenthood, rushed and confused roles that were hastily adopted. Nevertheless, he does believe that aspects from the earlier relationship have been retained, particularly regarding his choice of marital partner.

**J. Memories:** (10. 40. 41. 42. 56. 57. 58. 59. 81.)

After the break, J believed that he had discarded almost all memories of the relationship but still held onto the powerful pleasant *memories* on which he could continue to reflect. Pleasant memories remained on the surface and were meaningful. Those memories that he could easily recall soon after the break were now ten years later, vaguely present and,

like the relationship that no longer existed, the pain and emotional instability had receded in memory. Initially, the pleasant memories of the relationship outnumbered what were unpleasant, for the unpleasant memories had receded, and were hidden from awareness. With no ready recall of the unpleasant aspects, J misinterpreted the hidden memories as having healed and he continued with his life. He proudly believed that he had recovered, until the exaggerated outburst in the relationship with the significant other made him realise that he was not coping, but was still holding onto the earlier relationship. In the emerging turbulence, J needed to affirm that his initial decision had been correct. He had to return to the past and reveal the unpleasant thoughts and memories that had led to the initial decision. In retrospect, he realised that while the memories were not readily available for recall, the deeper (hidden) memories continued. J became aware of having deceived himself.

**K. Deception:** (46. 47. 48.)

*Deception* was a major complication, as J had misinterpreted his lack of immediate recall as meaning that he had successfully let go. He had falsely assumed that in the same manner that he had let go of his business and moved on with his life, so too, had he also let go of the relationship. Despite any retention in memory, J considered the visible absence of the relationship as being akin to the finality of death, and falsely assumed that the process of letting go would ‘naturally’ evolve over time.

**L. Façade:** (12. 22. 23. 80. 82. 83.)

With every effort, J convincingly portrayed a *façade* that the past was behind him and that he had let go and moved on. Though he appeared to be living, J did not feel alive. He continued to hold on tightly to the earlier relationship, and protected himself against the threatening instability and turmoil. To avoid confronting the issues that threatened, J continued to protect himself by increasing his activities and keeping busy by working and drinking. J’s efforts to let go and move on were merely appearances and superficial, as he desperately continued to hold on and continues to find it difficult to extricate himself completely.

**M. Integration:** (49. 50. 51.)

J had deceived himself, by perceiving his world in a manner that suited him. The reality he had perceived did not concur with the truth. His awareness of this made him realise that he had a problem. A divided sense of self emerged and J found it painful and difficult to *integrate* the self, define who he was, and find contentment. In order to do so, he had to return to the past, resume his holding-on position and face the truth. J gradually had to release holding on to the relationship, create space and finally move on.

**N. Gap:** (62. 66. 68. 71.)

For J, the ‘gap’ or area of vacillation was relevant to letting go. Mobility between what was positive and negative created the *gap*. The more excessive the negative aspects, the easier it was to leave but where the gap between the unpleasant and pleasant aspects of the relationship was marginal, then the decision to leave was doubtful and difficult. In his quest for stability, J sought an absolute. Despite his efforts to create a positive balance, the slightly negative factors appeared to justify him leaving.

**O. Retrospection:** (16. 17. 19. 20. 21. 35. 70.)

J continues with the lived struggle and attempts to resolve the emotional crisis, pain and aspects related to the break. *Retrospectively*, on reflection, he realises that he deceived himself, falsely believing that he had recovered. J realises, too, that had he resolved the emotional challenges sooner, he would have gained from the experience and prevented the negative effects that are now part of his present daily reality. Had he not held on to the earlier relationship, his life would have been different. By merely attending to the surface aspects of the problem and naively committing himself to marriage, he had created a new problem. J has learned from his experience and has become more aware of his present reality and his relationship to it. Facing the new conflict brings to awareness the choice and decision he has whether to face the challenge or repeat the earlier superficial behaviour. Personal responsibility is acknowledged with an acceptance of having to endure the consequences of the initial decision.

**P. The Clearing:** (87. 88. 89. 90.)

With the clearing of the turmoil and threatening disturbances, J views the ‘struggle’ as almost over and feels a sense of calm and stability approaching. He looks forward to the *light and tranquillity* that will soon enter his life but, in the anticipated calm, he foresees a problem on the new horizon. He is more aware of his reality, and realises that he is not alone but attached to present significant others (wife and child). J recognises his relatedness and attachment to the significant others and realises that his freedom is not absolute. He is aware that he is faced with additional responsibilities. The insight he gains facilitates his relation to the world. J believes that he can resolve the new challenges which face him

**Q. Process:** (79. 85.)

Because of the events that he has been through, J views letting go as a lengthy *process*, that has lasted ten years. The process is almost over.



**TABLE I**

Participant E: Karen (K)

Meaning Units	Central Theme
<p>(1) For K, letting go is a very broad term that makes her think of her children. K believes that the experience must be absolutely dreadful and devastating for parents who have lost their child. She finds it hard to cope with letting go when they are teenagers.</p>	<p>(1) In the parent-child relationship, K recognises letting go as pertaining to degrees of loss: from separation to death. While separating from her teenagers is difficult, their death would devastate her.</p>
<p>(2) What K found was that with Matt, her son, the first year of high school (age fourteen), was dreadful, because she felt absolutely rejected. Although as a child he was, and still is, very close to her, at parents' meetings he would make remarks and ask her to be quiet or not say anything. He would also ask her to drop him off away from where his friends would see them. K definitely had to realise her distance and how far she could go.</p>	<p>(2) Letting go during her son's early teen years was 'dreadful' for K, for, despite their closeness, she felt totally rejected by his comments and she became aware of a defined distance between them.</p>
<p>(3) After a while, Matt let K back in again. However, if they went out to parents' evening, he would ask her to behave and things like that. K was not really used to getting that sort of reprimand and being</p>	<p>(3) Though their closeness resumed, K continued to feel her son's disapproval. She realised that their relationship was changing; he was growing up and separating from her.</p>

<p>told how to behave. That is when she started to realise that he was growing up and moving away.</p> <p>(4) A psychologist friend explained to K that she could expect that sort of behaviour, which was part of the adolescents growing up and finding their feet. It was then easy for K to accept that.</p> <p>(5) K found it hurtful when her son would say little things about what embarrassed him about her. He would make her feel that she was ‘not cool’ or that she was overweight. It was also hurtful for K, not to react to what he had said but instead let go and let be.”</p> <p>(6) The next part of letting go was him going out to socials. K believed that she had to let her teenage son (and daughter) go. She had always thought that she could trust her children, but now she cannot trust the people out there. K is aware that from when she was a child, things have changed dramatically. When she was a teenager she could go on a bicycle, or on horseback, to places she would not even dream of letting her children go to today.</p>	<p>(4) A trusted professional opinion that her son’s behaviour was normal, made it easier for K to accept.</p> <p>(5) It was painful for K to experience her son’s disapproval and rejection of her, but also painful to contain and conceal her feelings (maintain a façade).</p> <p>(6) K rationally believes that she has to allow her adolescent son to enter the external environment, but emotionally she feels uncertain. K experiences conflict for although she trusts her children, she mistrusts the changing environment, which she finds threatening.</p>
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<p>(7) Letting go is also realising that her son Matt had attained his learner's licence and could start driving. The whole matric year K knew that he was learning to drive and doing well, while he was going for his driver's licence. He had not started driving but when he had obtained that licence, then he could go out and find his freedom. Once again she felt that feeling of wondering what was happening in the world out there. She knew that he could drive because he had his driver's licence. He had had the lessons and a lot of practice, but she still did not trust the people out there.</p> <p>(8) Letting go also occurred when Matt said that he was going to different places, like when he and his friends were going to meet in Hatfield. There are certain areas that K does feel are safer.</p> <p>(9) On the last day of school, Matt had a matric party. It was dreadful for K not saying something, and not being overprotective, but allowing him to experiment and hoping that he would come out on the other side, in one piece.</p> <p>(10) K knew that "boys will be boys".</p>	<p>(7) Despite evidence of her son's competence and legal permission (licence) to deal with the demands of the external environment, she continues to view that environment as threatening.</p> <p>(8) K believes that only certain areas of the external environment reduce the risk of threat to her son.</p> <p>(9) K found it most unpleasant having to maintain a façade to conceal her thoughts and feelings regarding her son's safety, while granting him freedom to explore.</p> <p>(10) In an effort to accept her son's</p>
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<p>Girls, she thinks, aren't as bad, although she has heard rumours that they also try alcohol. Teenagers go through a phase and test these things. Nikki, a colleague, had told her that her (Nikki's) husband believed that youth had to be allowed to get drunk and go overboard at some stage, before they were married. Hearing it from other young men who have been through that phase or are closer to that age, makes it a bit easier for K to accept.</p> <p>(11) In K's words: "But oh boy, it is a stressful time. Letting go, to me, is very stressful".</p> <p>(12) As a speech therapist, K can also see the stress of some of the mothers that come to her with their teenagers with stuttering problems. She has noticed that the parents and teenagers are at loggerheads, not with the stuttering problem, but with their interpersonal relationships, and not wanting to be an overprotective mother. K sees herself as protective but believes that she must not show too much and must let go.</p> <p>(13) Even the last year was quite a difficult year for K when suddenly she realised that Matt had a girlfriend. Matt and his girlfriend go out in a group and they go to a</p>	<p>behaviour, K attempts to understand the behavioural norm of youth and is receptive to the opinion of young adults whom she trusts.</p> <p>(11) K acknowledges that letting go is very stressful for her.</p> <p>(12) K is aware that that she is not the only mother who finds interpersonal tension in parenting adolescents. K rationally understands that she has to let go and must conceal her feelings regarding her son's safety.</p> <p>(13) The sudden realisation that her son had found a significant other, and that she could no longer rely on him as she used to, was difficult for K to accept.</p>
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<p>social but he never really had a girlfriend. Matt took a very nice girl to the matric dance, but she was just a friend. There was nothing serious, but then, suddenly, came the realisation that although K can ask Matt to do things, she has to accept that he cannot always do them for her because he has made prior arrangements with his girlfriend.</p> <p>(14) During matric or the first year at University, K was never driven to tears but in during the first year of high school, that letting go, that getting reprimanded and being put in her place and being a sort of a no-good person, in the eyes of her son, often reduced her to tears. That was really a tough and unhappy time for her.</p> <p>(15) K thinks that the concern that she feels for Matt is one of protection. She does not want anything to happen to him; it is that sort of thing. K really does not want anything to happen to Matt.</p> <p>(16) K sees so many times that it is the innocent person who drives along and is in a car crash and gets hurt. Often it is someone else who is drunk, and playing</p>	<p>(14) K found the initial letting go painful and difficult as she experienced rejection and disapproval. She would often cry and feel sad.</p> <p>(15) K fears that her son may come to harm and wants him to be safe. She feels protective of him.</p> <p>(16) K feels threatened by negligent and destructive aspects of the external environment that could harm her son.</p>
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<p>Russian roulette, is completely relaxed and survives everything.</p> <p>(17) K is aware that Matt has not had experience in driving and reacting to situations. That is what makes her anxious, as Matt does not have the wisdom. He is a young adult and although K feels that she has to respect him for that, she realises that he does not yet have the wisdom or the experience yet.</p> <p>(18) K looks back and realises that as a teenager or young person, she did things that were irresponsible. She did these things and does not want her child to do them, as she knows that it could lead to something. She feels that, luckily her irresponsible behaviour did not lead to something unfortunate, but it could have.</p> <p>(19) K admits to hanging on to the past. When she looks at old photographs, she often looks and sees that each phase is an interesting phase, and a nice phase to grow up with her child. When K looks at photographs, she recognises how fantastic that phase was, and sometimes wishes that she could have made time stand still for a little while.</p>	<p>(17) Though K respects her son as a 'young adult', she is aware that he still lacks experience (in driving) and wisdom (in life). This awareness makes her feel anxious.</p> <p>(18) K recalls her own adolescence and does not want her son to repeat the careless behaviour which could have dire consequences.</p> <p>(19) K treasures and holds on tightly to the past (earlier developmental phases shared with her son) as she desires to capture what she had and is reluctant to accept the passing of time.</p>
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<p>(20) K is not saying that the present is not a nice phase, not at all. It is a nice phase, with different and exciting things that come with it. As the phase of adolescence started, K often went through a lot of turmoil with a little bit of heartache at times.</p>	<p>(20) Despite the initial pain, turmoil and heartache, K recognises the pleasant aspects of the present phase (adolescence) with its diversity and excitement.</p>
<p>(21) K sees herself as a person who clings a bit to the past. She assumes that the difficulty with letting go is not looking to the past but looking forward and seeing positive things. She sometimes gets embroiled in the present and does not really see the things of the future. To K, that is the difficulty in letting go, that is what makes the letting go more difficult, not seeing the positive things ahead.</p>	<p>(21) K realises that her tight hold on the past, and her confused involvement in the present, obscures her vision of the future with its positive aspects, making letting go difficult.</p>
<p>(22) K does see positive things in the future, because when K looks at it, she looks forward to going to Matt's graduation and her daughter Alice's graduations. She believes that it will be fantastic. Another positive aspect is the thought that Matt has a job and is on his own. Although K can accept the positive aspects, sometimes when she is in the situation, it is difficult to accept things, like realising that Matt can have a girl-friend who takes priority over her – for example,</p>	<p>(22) K looks forward to the positive aspects of the future but finds it difficult to resolve conflicts in the present, like accepting that she is no longer the significant other in her son's life.</p>

<p>when Matt informs her that he cannot help her because he has a date – that sort of letting go.</p> <p>(23) K believes that she has sometimes taken things for granted as Matt had always been very close to her. Alice, her daughter sometimes shoves her away, but it was different with Matt. If K had asked him to help her with something he would do it whereas now he will refuse and say that he cannot help her because of some or other reason. K realises that she has to accept this because he has made an arrangement and cannot accommodate her. She believes that she has to respect this.</p> <p>(24) Sometimes, K gets home tired and realises that there is no one in the house to help. She realises that there is no use in her getting angry. She just has to think about it and acknowledge to herself that she is angry and frustrated because of things that have happened at work and that she cannot get it out on her children. That understanding is also letting go for K.</p> <p>(25) Alice, her daughter, is also getting older. K also thinks of the future and the empty nest syndrome and realises that her children are going out. She believes that</p>	<p>(23) K had falsely assumed that the close relationship with her son would always be there (taken for granted), but she has become aware of a distance between them, which she rationally believes she has to accept and respect.</p> <p>(24) In letting go, K rationally accepts that she has to be understanding. Rather than be self-centred, she has to conceal her true feelings (anger and aloneness) and consider her children's perspective above her own.</p> <p>(25) With the gradually increasing distance created by her younger daughter, who is also moving away, K is faced with a sense of aloneness and a changed</p>
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<p>she has to let her children go, and she is on her own now, and not doing family things any more.</p> <p>(26) They have always been a close-knit family. One of the things that has changed is not going on holiday together. Just accepting that, is letting go.</p> <p>(27) The first big thing was the matric holiday. K knew at the end of the year that Matt and his friends all wanted to go on holiday together. That was also letting go. K knew where they were going, and how they were going, but not whether they were going to get there and back safely. Just allowing them to go was a big step for K.</p> <p>(28) Matt's matric year was too terrible for K. The weeks before the December holidays Alice had water polo, as it was the nationals in Johannesburg. K and her husband wanted to fly Alice down on holiday to join them, but by the time Alice decided what she wanted to do, K could no longer get a cheaper ticket. So Alice went to water polo, and Matt stayed home to look after the house. K and her husband went away for the first time since K had been away with friends approximately</p>	<p>meaning of family, where the future is viewed as empty.</p> <p>(26) The family no longer shares a holiday together and K has to accept that their close-knit unit is changing.</p> <p>(27) Consenting to her son's holiday with his peers was a major move for K. Despite the knowledge she had regarding his trip, he was still entering the unknown and she was anxious about his safety.</p> <p>(28) Due to her children's individual activities, their family holiday had changed as K and her husband were separated from the children and, for the first time, left on holiday without them.</p>
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<p>twenty years ago.</p> <p>(29) In the weeks beforehand, there was much guilt about K leaving her children, as she felt that she was actually deserting them yet the children took it more easily easier. Alice missed her parents, and would have liked them to see some of the matches, but Alice was with her buddies and yet K still felt so guilty not being there with her.</p> <p>(30) Keith, her husband, took the separate holiday more easily, and K also saw this as letting go, where the children could have their own holidays and do their own thing while K and her husband could actually also do their own thing.</p> <p>(31) K thinks back on her relationship with her parents. They were also a close-knit family.</p> <p>(32) K also thinks of the future because both Matt and Alice have spoken about going overseas.</p> <p>(33) After being a student, K went overseas and often recalls having had a nice time. She enjoyed where she worked and was not sure whether she wanted to come back. She</p>	<p>(29) Although her children seemed to accept the separateness, K felt that she was being selfish and abandoning them.</p> <p>(30) The significant other's easier acceptance of the separation made K recognise the value of space and separateness.</p> <p>(31) K reflects on her own adolescence and recalls a similar closeness with her family of origin.</p> <p>(32) K looks to the future with its impending long-term and distant (overseas) separation from her children.</p> <p>(33) K recalls the joy of separateness (overseas) during her adolescence, her vacillating behaviour and difficult return. Despite her independence, K remained</p>
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<p>started to come back to visit because she would rather get German citizenship. With great difficulty, K returned, and even though she moved on and had her own flatet, she was still with the family and maintained contact with them.</p> <p>(34) Both Matt and Alice are talking about overseas. They would both like to go overseas. K hopes that they do go overseas. She wants them to go overseas and spread their wings. But she also has the feeling that they might not come back and that is the sort of scariness of being all alone.</p> <p>(35) K thinks that there are times she can cope because she finds activities to do, even when she is alone at home and there's nobody there. Johannes, the gardener comes twice a week and Alice is at school. K is alone with the dogs and has work to do, but it is the stillness of the house that is sort of eerie and uncomfortable. K is busy, her mind is busy but then she suddenly realises that everybody is out of the house. She imagines that she is at an age that she has retired and does not have her job anymore. There is only the stillness. K is very aware of all this because her dad is presently experiencing that loneliness.</p>	<p>attached to her family.</p> <p>(34) K (rationally) wants her children to fulfil their desire and create their distance (overseas), but (emotionally) fears that they may not return and that she will be left alone.</p> <p>(35) To avoid facing her sense of aloneness, K keeps busy, but in the unpleasant silence of her passivity, she is suddenly confronted with the reality of a future social seclusion and inactivity (retirement) which her father is presently experiencing.</p>
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<p>(36) K has seen her parents ageing and realises that it is a path that she has to travel as well. She has reached an age where she becomes aware of it, more aware of it, than if she were younger. Suddenly, ageing becomes a personal reality for K.</p> <p>(37) Regarding letting go, first of all there is a conflict. K knows that there is a conflict. She knows that she has to let go but she does not want to lose.</p> <p>(38) Letting go is, in a way losing – losing the person she shares with, the company and the understanding with her family. K has a different relationship with each member. There are certain things that she does not want to burden her children with, but there are certain things that she does discuss with them. In a way they are a sounding board for her. K sees letting go as a loss, a painful process that is not nice.</p> <p>(39) Erica, a colleague, recently commented that she had not seen Matt for a long time, and asked K whether it was his academic activities, or other activities besides the studies. K replied that it involved all his activities so she had to take second place K sees herself as not being</p>	<p>(36) K becomes aware of the ageing process as a personal reality and she realises that she will follow the same path as her parents.</p> <p>(37) K experiences conflicting thoughts and feelings. She rationally understands that she has to grant her children space, but is emotionally afraid of loss.</p> <p>(38) For K letting go is a painful and unpleasant process of loss, which means being deprived of the sense of oneness (company, sharing and understanding) that she enjoys with the family and its individual members.</p> <p>(39) The outside world verifies the presence of the distance between K and her son. She no longer feels significant to him but, rather than reveal the truth, K attempts to maintain a façade and grant him space.</p>
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<p>needed. She believes that she has got to take a step back but has to remind herself, to do it gracefully.</p> <p>(40) To K it was very difficult to accept that Matt could have a girlfriend, yet with a chuckle adds that she would rather he had a girlfriend than a boyfriend. K realises that he is no longer her little boy.</p> <p>(41) K admits that the girlfriend is a lovely girl and that she really has no complaints about her, but admits to having mixed feelings. The girlfriend attended the local Girls High School and is a bit younger than Matt. She finished school the year after Matt did.</p> <p>(42) Letting go is a painful process for K who feels empty, alone and discarded. With a giggle, K refers to herself as “this interfering old lady” who will possibly be told by her children to “keep out” of their lives. K admits that although these may be silly things, these are the feelings and emotions she has, and she is aware that this does happen.</p>	<p>(40) Being replaced as the significant other in her son’s life is difficult for K to accept, which she attempts to do through cognitive reasoning (regarding his sexual identity).</p> <p>(41) K acknowledges ambivalent feelings regarding the new significant other in her son’s life. K attempts to gain rational control and conceal her true feelings.</p> <p>(42) Letting go is a painful process for K, who experiences a sense of aloneness with feelings of emptiness, abandonment and rejection.</p>
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<p>(43) Discarding is there because K sees it happening with other people. With her dad being in the old age home, she can see how some old people never have families over to visit. Some families may be overseas and the old people may have a friend, a niece or somebody who occasionally comes around and calls on them. Some of them, however, are like an old shoe, just put in the cupboard, put in the drawer and that is it. K thinks of these things because she sees them.</p>	<p>(43) K is aware of abandoned old people, who are either distant from their significant others, or alone, with no meaningful relationships.</p>
<p>(44) K realises that perhaps somebody from a different background would not be as sensitive and critical of things as she is. She believes that her professional role as a speech therapist has influenced her.</p>	<p>(44) K realises that her paramedical experience has influenced her and made her more aware of abandonment.</p>
<p>(45) Furthermore, things that have happened to her have contributed to her attitude, like losing her mother and losing her brother, Adam. Perhaps this has made her want to hang onto things.</p>	<p>(45) The personal loss of significant others in her life has also influenced K in her need to hold on tightly to meaningful relationships.</p>
<p>(46) By hanging on, K means wanting things to still be around as she still misses her mother and brother. There are things that she wants to share with them and she thinks that it is that sort of sharing that she wants to sometimes just talk to them.</p>	<p>(46) Having experienced loss, K holds on tightly to retain what she has. She desires continuity of the oneness shared with the significant others.</p>

<p>(47) Even though K has not lost her child, his or her moving on means that she loses that sharing and that togetherness.</p> <p>(48) K summarises and describes the start of letting go as a painful process, after which her teenagers started telling her that they wanted to let go and wanted her to let go.</p> <p>(49) K does feel a certain amount of rejection. Because her children do not know that, they knock her sometimes and say unpleasant things. K, however, knows that she has to let go. She thinks ahead of what could happen, and the unpleasant negative things that should not happen.</p> <p>(50) The unpleasant, negative things of letting go are scary and painful. They make for the saddest times. K admits to seeing the sadder and more negative things instead of the positive things that are there as well. She realises that there are positive things but, as she is going through the process, the positive aspects are usually overshadowed by what is painful.</p>	<p>(47) As a parent, K feels a sense of loss in losing the shared oneness previously enjoyed.</p> <p>(48) For K, letting go began as a painful process, followed by the adolescents' request for a mutual creation of space and separation.</p> <p>(49) K feels rejected, but believes that her adolescent children are not aware of this. Her knowledge and understanding of the process equip her rationally to gain control and avoid negativity.</p> <p>(50) In the process of letting go, the unpleasant negative aspects (threat, pain, and intense sadness) obscure her perception of what is positive.</p>
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**TABLE II**

Participant D: John (J)

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**Constituents of the Individual Situated Structure of Letting Go**

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**A. Two Situations:** (1. 7. 27. 28. 29.)

J recalls and compares two different situated experiences of letting go. The one was letting go of his first business, while the other was letting go of his ex-fiancée. J believes that the decision preceding the separation from his ex-fiancée, determined the nature of letting go. While letting go of his business was easy, letting go of the relationship continues to be difficult. Both situations took place during the same period (ten years ago) in his life but he continues to hold on to the relationship. In his view of the future, at the time of the business and the premarital relationship, J saw himself in another business, but also married with children in a happy family. He considered letting go to be the same in both situations but has discovered that he had not let go of the relationship. Furthermore, he experienced a constructive continuity from the business as he could apply what he had learned and retained to his present business, but this was not the case regarding the knowledge and experience gained in the earlier relationship.

**B. Business:** (8. 24. 26. 39. 63. 64. 65. 67. 72. 86.)

For J, letting go of his first business was easy, as he had been convinced of his decision to leave. Remaining in a negative situation can lead to aggression. The excessive negative aspects of the business far exceeded what was positive and the anger he felt at the time pushed for the break, making it easier for him to leave. He had not held on to the business and knew that he had made the right decision.

Upon leaving the business, the pain and healing period was brief. In the stability and calm that followed, J soon felt relief at having let go. He could think clearly and allow for future opportunity, as well as move on and continue with his life. Leaving the



business was not a process, but was liberating and simple. He is happy in his present business.

**C. Decision** (4. 5.)

Feeling immobilised in a situation that he felt was going nowhere, J decided to take control and made a *decision* to leave the premarital relationship. He felt conflicted about leaving, for although rationally assured about the move, he was emotionally unhappy to do so. He experienced pain and conflict, and doubted his decision to leave. Despite his uncertainty about leaving, time and circumstance coerced him to move on and he believed that he had 'let go'.

**E. Emotional crisis:** (35. 36. 37. 38.)

The decision and commitment to leave the relationship gave rise to an *emotional crisis*, which led to a stormy mental struggle that created pain and instability (turbulence). In a later attempt to resolve the emotional crisis, J returned to review his earlier decision, but the uncertainty surrounding the decision led to a repeat of the process and extended the pain and instability (turbulence) further. J continues with the lived struggle and attempts to resolve the emotional crisis, pain and aspects related to the break.

**E. Holding on:** (13. 14. 15. 18. 25.)

In doubting his decision, J continued to *hold on to* the premarital relationship, which though sustaining, was also damaging and detrimental as it deterred progress and impeded healing. J admits that had he let go and not held on, he would have made the initial step towards healing, but this was not possible at the time. The holding on continued and gave rise to inner turmoil and emotional instability which needed to be resolved urgently. In the storm of emotional turmoil, doubt and conflict, there was a struggle for stability and survival.

**F. Stability vs Instability:** (61. 69. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78.)

In the conflict associated with the decision, J oscillated emotionally and vacillated in his thoughts. He doubted his decision and felt emotionally vulnerable. He realised that

leaving would be painful and he attempted to protect himself against the turmoil and pain of the break. In the experienced *instability* and turbulence, J had hoped that his decision would help him find stability. However, even after the decision was made, the doubt and turbulence continued as the negative aspects of the relationship had only slightly exceeded what was pleasant. His anger and irritation at the time provided the extra push for him to leave. However, once he had let go of the relationship, he held on to the positive aspects of the changed situation in which he found himself, and sought to protect himself against the pain. J sought *stability* by desperately holding onto the pleasant memories of the relationship. He also justified the change, feeling pleased that the negative frustrations of the relationship were no longer present. Though he felt relief at having left, there was a painful desire to resume the relationship. The turbulence continued, for though J had hoped to find stability, the intense desire following the decision created further instability. The process was repetitive and the instability and turbulence continued.

**G. Return:** (6. 9. 11. 52. 53. 54. 55. 60.)

J's doubtful initial decision gave rise to uncertainties in the present which led him to *return* (ten years later) to the earlier events preceding the decision. J reflected upon and returned to the past in order to question and re-evaluate the impulsive decision he had taken. Before he can finally let go, he has to reaffirm the fact that his initial decision was correct. He has to complete the process of letting go, which he finds difficult.

In returning to the past, J realised that he had to face the challenging confusion and adopt a different approach. He relived the painful unpleasant experiences, which had receded in memory and he returned to the deeper and darker levels of self, reliving the distress of the premarital relationship. J was familiar with the pain and realised that he had initially attempted to avoid the pain and confusion. J becomes aware that he had hastened the process in order to protect himself and come through unscathed. Finding nothing pleasant upon his return, J believes that he is finally confronting the matter in earnest.

**H. Significant Other:** (2. 3. 43. 44. 45. 84.)

Attempting to find a (quick) solution, J had attended to the surface aspects of the problem rather than the problem itself, and had moved on. He married hastily and had a child and, although he felt 'fine' and continued with his life, environmental aspects provoked the turmoil beneath the façade, and J realised that he had misinterpreted his recovery. He was unable to deal with the challenges of his present role as husband and father. It was in the relationship with the *significant other* (spouse) that J became aware that he had changed. He reflected on their relationship and realised that his reactions to minor incidents were exaggerated and aggressive. His emotional self continued to hold onto the earlier relationship with his ex-fiancée, and this impeded his marital relationship. J held on to the past relationship and was not committed to the present, even in the significant life-decision of his marriage. He was surprised at his own behaviour, perceiving it to be totally foreign.

**I. Continuity:** (30. 31. 32. 33. 34.)

Although the visible reality of the earlier relationship was absent in his interpersonal world, J continued to experience the conflict. He had gained from the experience but in the turbulence and instability that followed him leaving, J was unable constructively to apply what he had learned. J assumed that he would have applied the knowledge that he had gained from the relationship, but realised that such continuity was absent. He sought continuity in his life and made every effort simply to move on, committing himself to marriage and parenthood, rushed and confused roles that were hastily adopted. Nevertheless, he does believe that aspects from the earlier relationship have been retained, particularly regarding his choice of marital partner.

**J. Memories:** (10. 40. 41. 42. 56. 57. 58. 59. 81.)

After the break, J believed that he had discarded almost all memories of the relationship but still held onto the powerful pleasant *memories* on which he could continue to reflect. Pleasant memories remained on the surface and were meaningful. Those memories that he could easily recall soon after the break were now ten years later, vaguely present and,

like the relationship that no longer existed, the pain and emotional instability had receded in memory. Initially, the pleasant memories of the relationship outnumbered what were unpleasant, for the unpleasant memories had receded, and were hidden from awareness. With no ready recall of the unpleasant aspects, J misinterpreted the hidden memories as having healed and he continued with his life. He proudly believed that he had recovered, until the exaggerated outburst in the relationship with the significant other made him realise that he was not coping, but was still holding onto the earlier relationship. In the emerging turbulence, J needed to affirm that his initial decision had been correct. He had to return to the past and reveal the unpleasant thoughts and memories that had led to the initial decision. In retrospect, he realised that while the memories were not readily available for recall, the deeper (hidden) memories continued. J became aware of having deceived himself.

**K. Deception:** (46. 47. 48.)

*Deception* was a major complication, as J had misinterpreted his lack of immediate recall as meaning that he had successfully let go. He had falsely assumed that in the same manner that he had let go of his business and moved on with his life, so too, had he also let go of the relationship. Despite any retention in memory, J considered the visible absence of the relationship as being akin to the finality of death, and falsely assumed that the process of letting go would ‘naturally’ evolve over time.

**L. Façade:** (12. 22. 23. 80. 82. 83.)

With every effort, J convincingly portrayed a *façade* that the past was behind him and that he had let go and moved on. Though he appeared to be living, J did not feel alive. He continued to hold on tightly to the earlier relationship, and protected himself against the threatening instability and turmoil. To avoid confronting the issues that threatened, J continued to protect himself by increasing his activities and keeping busy by working and drinking. J’s efforts to let go and move on were merely appearances and superficial, as he desperately continued to hold on and continues to find it difficult to extricate himself completely.

**M. Integration:** (49. 50. 51.)

J had deceived himself, by perceiving his world in a manner that suited him. The reality he had perceived did not concur with the truth. His awareness of this made him realise that he had a problem. A divided sense of self emerged and J found it painful and difficult to *integrate* the self, define who he was, and find contentment. In order to do so, he had to return to the past, resume his holding-on position and face the truth. J gradually had to release holding on to the relationship, create space and finally move on.

**N. Gap:** (62. 66. 68. 71.)

For J, the 'gap' or area of vacillation was relevant to letting go. Mobility between what was positive and negative created the *gap*. The more excessive the negative aspects, the easier it was to leave but where the gap between the unpleasant and pleasant aspects of the relationship was marginal, then the decision to leave was doubtful and difficult. In his quest for stability, J sought an absolute. Despite his efforts to create a positive balance, the slightly negative factors appeared to justify him leaving.

**O. Retrospection:** (16. 17. 19. 20. 21. 35. 70.)

J continues with the lived struggle and attempts to resolve the emotional crisis, pain and aspects related to the break. *Retrospectively*, on reflection, he realises that he deceived himself, falsely believing that he had recovered. J realises, too, that had he resolved the emotional challenges sooner, he would have gained from the experience and prevented the negative effects that are now part of his present daily reality. Had he not held on to the earlier relationship, his life would have been different. By merely attending to the surface aspects of the problem and naively committing himself to marriage, he had created a new problem. J has learned from his experience and has become more aware of his present reality and his relationship to it. Facing the new conflict brings to awareness the choice and decision he has whether to face the challenge or repeat the earlier superficial behaviour. Personal responsibility is acknowledged with an acceptance of having to endure the consequences of the initial decision.

**P. The Clearing:** (87. 88. 89. 90.)

With the clearing of the turmoil and threatening disturbances, J views the ‘struggle’ as almost over and feels a sense of calm and stability approaching. He looks forward to the *light and tranquillity* that will soon enter his life but, in the anticipated calm, he foresees a problem on the new horizon. He is more aware of his reality, and realises that he is not alone but attached to present significant others (wife and child). J recognises his relatedness and attachment to the significant others and realises that his freedom is not absolute. He is aware that he is faced with additional responsibilities. The insight he gains facilitates his relation to the world. J believes that he can resolve the new challenges which face him

**Q. Process:** (79. 85.)

Because of the events that he has been through, J views letting go as a lengthy *process*, that has lasted ten years. The process is almost over.

**TABLE I**

Participant E: Karen (K)

Meaning Units	Central Theme
<p>(1) For K, letting go is a very broad term that makes her think of her children. K believes that the experience must be absolutely dreadful and devastating for parents who have lost their child. She finds it hard to cope with letting go when they are teenagers.</p>	<p>(3) In the parent-child relationship, K recognises letting go as pertaining to degrees of loss: from separation to death. While separating from her teenagers is difficult, their death would devastate her.</p>
<p>(2) What K found was that with Matt, her son, the first year of high school (age fourteen), was dreadful, because she felt absolutely rejected. Although as a child he was, and still is, very close to her, at parents' meetings he would make remarks and ask her to be quiet or not say anything. He would also ask her to drop him off away from where his friends would see them. K definitely had to realise her distance and how far she could go.</p>	<p>(4) Letting go during her son's early teen years was 'dreadful' for K, for, despite their closeness, she felt totally rejected by his comments and she became aware of a defined distance between them.</p>
<p>(3) After a while, Matt let K back in again. However, if they went out to parents' evening, he would ask her to behave and things like that. K was not really used to getting that sort of reprimand and being</p>	<p>(3) Though their closeness resumed, K continued to feel her son's disapproval. She realised that their relationship was changing; he was growing up and separating from her.</p>

<p>told how to behave. That is when she started to realise that he was growing up and moving away.</p> <p>(4) A psychologist friend explained to K that she could expect that sort of behaviour, which was part of the adolescents growing up and finding their feet. It was then easy for K to accept that.</p> <p>(5) K found it hurtful when her son would say little things about what embarrassed him about her. He would make her feel that she was ‘not cool’ or that she was overweight. It was also hurtful for K, not to react to what he had said but instead let go and let be.”</p> <p>(6) The next part of letting go was him going out to socials. K believed that she had to let her teenage son (and daughter) go. She had always thought that she could trust her children, but now she cannot trust the people out there. K is aware that from when she was a child, things have changed dramatically. When she was a teenager she could go on a bicycle, or on horseback, to places she would not even dream of letting her children go to today.</p>	<p>(5) A trusted professional opinion that her son’s behaviour was normal, made it easier for K to accept.</p> <p>(5) It was painful for K to experience her son’s disapproval and rejection of her, but also painful to contain and conceal her feelings (maintain a façade).</p> <p>(7) K rationally believes that she has to allow her adolescent son to enter the external environment, but emotionally she feels uncertain. K experiences conflict for although she trusts her children, she mistrusts the changing environment, which she finds threatening.</p>
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<p>(7) Letting go is also realising that her son Matt had attained his learner's licence and could start driving. The whole matric year K knew that he was learning to drive and doing well, while he was going for his driver's licence. He had not started driving but when he had obtained that licence, then he could go out and find his freedom. Once again she felt that feeling of wondering what was happening in the world out there. She knew that he could drive because he had his driver's licence. He had had the lessons and a lot of practice, but she still did not trust the people out there.</p> <p>(8) Letting go also occurred when Matt said that he was going to different places, like when he and his friends were going to meet in Hatfield. There are certain areas that K does feel are safer.</p> <p>(9) On the last day of school, Matt had a matric party. It was dreadful for K not saying something, and not being overprotective, but allowing him to experiment and hoping that he would come out on the other side, in one piece.</p> <p>(10) K knew that "boys will be boys".</p>	<p>(7) Despite evidence of her son's competence and legal permission (licence) to deal with the demands of the external environment, she continues to view that environment as threatening.</p> <p>(9) K believes that only certain areas of the external environment reduce the risk of threat to her son.</p> <p>(9) K found it most unpleasant having to maintain a façade to conceal her thoughts and feelings regarding her son's safety, while granting him freedom to explore.</p> <p>(10) In an effort to accept her son's</p>
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<p>Girls, she thinks, aren't as bad, although she has heard rumours that they also try alcohol. Teenagers go through a phase and test these things. Nikki, a colleague, had told her that her (Nikki's) husband believed that youth had to be allowed to get drunk and go overboard at some stage, before they were married. Hearing it from other young men who have been through that phase or are closer to that age, makes it a bit easier for K to accept.</p> <p>(11) In K's words: "But oh boy, it is a stressful time. Letting go, to me, is very stressful".</p> <p>(12) As a speech therapist, K can also see the stress of some of the mothers that come to her with their teenagers with stuttering problems. She has noticed that the parents and teenagers are at loggerheads, not with the stuttering problem, but with their interpersonal relationships, and not wanting to be an overprotective mother. K sees herself as protective but believes that she must not show too much and must let go.</p> <p>(13) Even the last year was quite a difficult year for K when suddenly she realised that Matt had a girlfriend. Matt and his girlfriend go out in a group and they go to a</p>	<p>behaviour, K attempts to understand the behavioural norm of youth and is receptive to the opinion of young adults whom she trusts.</p> <p>(11) K acknowledges that letting go is very stressful for her.</p> <p>(12) K is aware that that she is not the only mother who finds interpersonal tension in parenting adolescents. K rationally understands that she has to let go and must conceal her feelings regarding her son's safety.</p> <p>(13) The sudden realisation that her son had found a significant other, and that she could no longer rely on him as she used to, was difficult for K to accept.</p>
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<p>social but he never really had a girlfriend. Matt took a very nice girl to the matric dance, but she was just a friend. There was nothing serious, but then, suddenly, came the realisation that although K can ask Matt to do things, she has to accept that he cannot always do them for her because he has made prior arrangements with his girlfriend.</p>	
<p>(14) During matric or the first year at University, K was never driven to tears but in during the first year of high school, that letting go, that getting reprimanded and being put in her place and being a sort of a no-good person, in the eyes of her son, often reduced her to tears. That was really a tough and unhappy time for her.</p>	<p>(14) K found the initial letting go painful and difficult as she experienced rejection and disapproval. She would often cry and feel sad.</p>
<p>(15) K thinks that the concern that she feels for Matt is one of protection. She does not want anything to happen to him; it is that sort of thing. K really does not want anything to happen to Matt.</p>	<p>(15) K fears that her son may come to harm and wants him to be safe. She feels protective of him.</p>
<p>(16) K sees so many times that it is the innocent person who drives along and is in a car crash and gets hurt. Often it is someone else who is drunk, and playing</p>	<p>(16) K feels threatened by negligent and destructive aspects of the external environment that could harm her son.</p>

<p>Russian roulette, is completely relaxed and survives everything.</p> <p>(17) K is aware that Matt has not had experience in driving and reacting to situations. That is what makes her anxious, as Matt does not have the wisdom. He is a young adult and although K feels that she has to respect him for that, she realises that he does not yet have the wisdom or the experience yet.</p> <p>(18) K looks back and realises that as a teenager or young person, she did things that were irresponsible. She did these things and does not want her child to do them, as she knows that it could lead to something. She feels that, luckily her irresponsible behaviour did not lead to something unfortunate, but it could have.</p> <p>(19) K admits to hanging on to the past. When she looks at old photographs, she often looks and sees that each phase is an interesting phase, and a nice phase to grow up with her child. When K looks at photographs, she recognises how fantastic that phase was, and sometimes wishes that she could have made time stand still for a little while.</p>	<p>(17) Though K respects her son as a 'young adult', she is aware that he still lacks experience (in driving) and wisdom (in life). This awareness makes her feel anxious.</p> <p>(18) K recalls her own adolescence and does not want her son to repeat the careless behaviour which could have dire consequences.</p> <p>(19) K treasures and holds on tightly to the past (earlier developmental phases shared with her son) as she desires to capture what she had and is reluctant to accept the passing of time.</p>
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<p>(20) K is not saying that the present is not a nice phase, not at all. It is a nice phase, with different and exciting things that come with it. As the phase of adolescence started, K often went through a lot of turmoil with a little bit of heartache at times.</p>	<p>(20) Despite the initial pain, turmoil and heartache, K recognises the pleasant aspects of the present phase (adolescence) with its diversity and excitement.</p>
<p>(21) K sees herself as a person who clings a bit to the past. She assumes that the difficulty with letting go is not looking to the past but looking forward and seeing positive things. She sometimes gets embroiled in the present and does not really see the things of the future. To K, that is the difficulty in letting go, that is what makes the letting go more difficult, not seeing the positive things ahead.</p>	<p>(21) K realises that her tight hold on the past, and her confused involvement in the present, obscures her vision of the future with its positive aspects, making letting go difficult.</p>
<p>(22) K does see positive things in the future, because when K looks at it, she looks forward to going to Matt's graduation and her daughter Alice's graduations. She believes that it will be fantastic. Another positive aspect is the thought that Matt has a job and is on his own. Although K can accept the positive aspects, sometimes when she is in the situation, it is difficult to accept things, like realising that Matt can have a girl-friend who takes priority over her – for example,</p>	<p>(22) K looks forward to the positive aspects of the future but finds it difficult to resolve conflicts in the present, like accepting that she is no longer the significant other in her son's life.</p>

<p>when Matt informs her that he cannot help her because he has a date – that sort of letting go.</p>	
<p>(23) K believes that she has sometimes taken things for granted as Matt had always been very close to her. Alice, her daughter sometimes shoves her away, but it was different with Matt. If K had asked him to help her with something he would do it whereas now he will refuse and say that he cannot help her because of some or other reason. K realises that she has to accept this because he has made an arrangement and cannot accommodate her. She believes that she has to respect this.</p>	<p>(23) K had falsely assumed that the close relationship with her son would always be there (taken for granted), but she has become aware of a distance between them, which she rationally believes she has to accept and respect.</p>
<p>(24) Sometimes, K gets home tired and realises that there is no one in the house to help. She realises that there is no use in her getting angry. She just has to think about it and acknowledge to herself that she is angry and frustrated because of things that have happened at work and that she cannot get it out on her children. That understanding is also letting go for K.</p>	<p>(24) In letting go, K rationally accepts that she has to be understanding. Rather than be self-centred, she has to conceal her true feelings (anger and aloneness) and consider her children's perspective above her own.</p>
<p>(25) Alice, her daughter, is also getting older. K also thinks of the future and the empty nest syndrome and realises that her children are going out. She believes that</p>	<p>(25) With the gradually increasing distance created by her younger daughter, who is also moving away, K is faced with a sense of aloneness and a changed</p>

<p>she has to let her children go, and she is on her own now, and not doing family things any more.</p> <p>(26) They have always been a close-knit family. One of the things that has changed is not going on holiday together. Just accepting that, is letting go.</p> <p>(27) The first big thing was the matric holiday. K knew at the end of the year that Matt and his friends all wanted to go on holiday together. That was also letting go. K knew where they were going, and how they were going, but not whether they were going to get there and back safely. Just allowing them to go was a big step for K.</p> <p>(28) Matt's matric year was too terrible for K. The weeks before the December holidays Alice had water polo, as it was the nationals in Johannesburg. K and her husband wanted to fly Alice down on holiday to join them, but by the time Alice decided what she wanted to do, K could no longer get a cheaper ticket. So Alice went to water polo, and Matt stayed home to look after the house. K and her husband went away for the first time since K had been away with friends approximately</p>	<p>meaning of family, where the future is viewed as empty.</p> <p>(26) The family no longer shares a holiday together and K has to accept that their close-knit unit is changing.</p> <p>(27) Consenting to her son's holiday with his peers was a major move for K. Despite the knowledge she had regarding his trip, he was still entering the unknown and she was anxious about his safety.</p> <p>(28) Due to her children's individual activities, their family holiday had changed as K and her husband were separated from the children and, for the first time, left on holiday without them.</p>
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<p>twenty years ago.</p> <p>(29) In the weeks beforehand, there was much guilt about K leaving her children, as she felt that she was actually deserting them yet the children took it more easily easier. Alice missed her parents, and would have liked them to see some of the matches, but Alice was with her buddies and yet K still felt so guilty not being there with her.</p> <p>(30) Keith, her husband, took the separate holiday more easily, and K also saw this as letting go, where the children could have their own holidays and do their own thing while K and her husband could actually also do their own thing.</p> <p>(31) K thinks back on her relationship with her parents. They were also a close-knit family.</p> <p>(32) K also thinks of the future because both Matt and Alice have spoken about going overseas.</p> <p>(33) After being a student, K went overseas and often recalls having had a nice time. She enjoyed where she worked and was not sure whether she wanted to come back. She</p>	<p>(29) Although her children seemed to accept the separateness, K felt that she was being selfish and abandoning them.</p> <p>(30) The significant other's easier acceptance of the separation made K recognise the value of space and separateness.</p> <p>(31) K reflects on her own adolescence and recalls a similar closeness with her family of origin.</p> <p>(32) K looks to the future with its impending long-term and distant (overseas) separation from her children.</p> <p>(33) K recalls the joy of separateness (overseas) during her adolescence, her vacillating behaviour and difficult return. Despite her independence, K remained</p>
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<p>started to come back to visit because she would rather get German citizenship. With great difficulty, K returned, and even though she moved on and had her own flatet, she was still with the family and maintained contact with them.</p> <p>(34) Both Matt and Alice are talking about overseas. They would both like to go overseas. K hopes that they do go overseas. She wants them to go overseas and spread their wings. But she also has the feeling that they might not come back and that is the sort of scariness of being all alone.</p> <p>(35) K thinks that there are times she can cope because she finds activities to do, even when she is alone at home and there's nobody there. Johannes, the gardener comes twice a week and Alice is at school. K is alone with the dogs and has work to do, but it is the stillness of the house that is sort of eerie and uncomfortable. K is busy, her mind is busy but then she suddenly realises that everybody is out of the house. She imagines that she is at an age that she has retired and does not have her job anymore. There is only the stillness. K is very aware of all this because her dad is presently experiencing that loneliness.</p>	<p>attached to her family.</p> <p>(34) K (rationally) wants her children to fulfil their desire and create their distance (overseas), but (emotionally) fears that they may not return and that she will be left alone.</p> <p>(35) To avoid facing her sense of aloneness, K keeps busy, but in the unpleasant silence of her passivity, she is suddenly confronted with the reality of a future social seclusion and inactivity (retirement) which her father is presently experiencing.</p>
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<p>(36) K has seen her parents ageing and realises that it is a path that she has to travel as well. She has reached an age where she becomes aware of it, more aware of it, than if she were younger. Suddenly, ageing becomes a personal reality for K.</p> <p>(37) Regarding letting go, first of all there is a conflict. K knows that there is a conflict. She knows that she has to let go but she does not want to lose.</p> <p>(38) Letting go is, in a way losing – losing the person she shares with, the company and the understanding with her family. K has a different relationship with each member. There are certain things that she does not want to burden her children with, but there are certain things that she does discuss with them. In a way they are a sounding board for her. K sees letting go as a loss, a painful process that is not nice.</p> <p>(39) Erica, a colleague, recently commented that she had not seen Matt for a long time, and asked K whether it was his academic activities, or other activities besides the studies. K replied that it involved all his activities so she had to take second place K sees herself as not being</p>	<p>(36) K becomes aware of the ageing process as a personal reality and she realises that she will follow the same path as her parents.</p> <p>(37) K experiences conflicting thoughts and feelings. She rationally understands that she has to grant her children space, but is emotionally afraid of loss.</p> <p>(38) For K letting go is a painful and unpleasant process of loss, which means being deprived of the sense of oneness (company, sharing and understanding) that she enjoys with the family and its individual members.</p> <p>(39) The outside world verifies the presence of the distance between K and her son. She no longer feels significant to him but, rather than reveal the truth, K attempts to maintain a façade and grant him space.</p>
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<p>needed. She believes that she has got to take a step back but has to remind herself, to do it gracefully.</p>	
<p>(40) To K it was very difficult to accept that Matt could have a girlfriend, yet with a chuckle adds that she would rather he had a girlfriend than a boyfriend. K realises that he is no longer her little boy.</p>	<p>(40) Being replaced as the significant other in her son's life is difficult for K to accept, which she attempts to do through cognitive reasoning (regarding his sexual identity).</p>
<p>(41) K admits that the girlfriend is a lovely girl and that she really has no complaints about her, but admits to having mixed feelings. The girlfriend attended the local Girls High School and is a bit younger than Matt. She finished school the year after Matt did.</p>	<p>(41) K acknowledges ambivalent feelings regarding the new significant other in her son's life. K attempts to gain rational control and conceal her true feelings.</p>
<p>(42) Letting go is a painful process for K who feels empty, alone and discarded. With a giggle, K refers to herself as "this interfering old lady" who will possibly be told by her children to "keep out" of their lives. K admits that although these may be silly things, these are the feelings and emotions she has, and she is aware that this does happen.</p>	<p>(42) Letting go is a painful process for K, who experiences a sense of aloneness with feelings of emptiness, abandonment and rejection.</p>

<p>(43) Discarding is there because K sees it happening with other people. With her dad being in the old age home, she can see how some old people never have families over to visit. Some families may be overseas and the old people may have a friend, a niece or somebody who occasionally comes around and calls on them. Some of them, however, are like an old shoe, just put in the cupboard, put in the drawer and that is it. K thinks of these things because she sees them.</p>	<p>(43) K is aware of abandoned old people, who are either distant from their significant others, or alone, with no meaningful relationships.</p>
<p>(44) K realises that perhaps somebody from a different background would not be as sensitive and critical of things as she is. She believes that her professional role as a speech therapist has influenced her.</p>	<p>(44) K realises that her paramedical experience has influenced her and made her more aware of abandonment.</p>
<p>(45) Furthermore, things that have happened to her have contributed to her attitude, like losing her mother and losing her brother, Adam. Perhaps this has made her want to hang onto things.</p>	<p>(45) The personal loss of significant others in her life has also influenced K in her need to hold on tightly to meaningful relationships.</p>
<p>(46) By hanging on, K means wanting things to still be around as she still misses her mother and brother. There are things that she wants to share with them and she thinks that it is that sort of sharing that she wants to sometimes just talk to them.</p>	<p>(46) Having experienced loss, K holds on tightly to retain what she has. She desires continuity of the oneness shared with the significant others.</p>

<p>(47) Even though K has not lost her child, his or her moving on means that she loses that sharing and that togetherness.</p> <p>(48) K summarises and describes the start of letting go as a painful process, after which her teenagers started telling her that they wanted to let go and wanted her to let go.</p> <p>(49) K does feel a certain amount of rejection. Because her children do not know that, they knock her sometimes and say unpleasant things. K, however, knows that she has to let go. She thinks ahead of what could happen, and the unpleasant negative things that should not happen.</p> <p>(50) The unpleasant, negative things of letting go are scary and painful. They make for the saddest times. K admits to seeing the sadder and more negative things instead of the positive things that are there as well. She realises that there are positive things but, as she is going through the process, the positive aspects are usually overshadowed by what is painful.</p>	<p>(47) As a parent, K feels a sense of loss in losing the shared oneness previously enjoyed.</p> <p>(48) For K, letting go began as a painful process, followed by the adolescents' request for a mutual creation of space and separation.</p> <p>(49) K feels rejected, but believes that her adolescent children are not aware of this. Her knowledge and understanding of the process equip her rationally to gain control and avoid negativity.</p> <p>(50) In the process of letting go, the unpleasant negative aspects (threat, pain, and intense sadness) obscure her perception of what is positive.</p>
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**TABLE II**

Participant E: Karen (K)

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**Constituents of the Individual Situated Structure of Letting Go**

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**A. Stress and Conflict** (11. 37.)

Letting go was very *stressful* for K who experienced *conflicting thoughts* and feelings. While she rationally understood that she has to grant space to her adolescents, she was emotionally afraid of loss.

**B. Loss:** (1. 38. 45. 46. 47.)

For K, the situation of letting go occurred in the parent-child relationship and recognised as pertaining to degrees of *loss* from separation to death. The process of loss through separation is not easy for a parent during the teen years, though absolute loss through death would ultimately devastate them. The loss of significant and relevant others in her life had influenced K, who needed to hold on tightly and retain the meaningful relationships she had. K sought to retain continuity, but letting go implied the gradual loss of the relationship with her son, as well as a loss of the sense of oneness she enjoyed in the family, and found meaningful. As a parent of adolescents who were gradually maturing, there is a sense of slowly losing their previous closeness.

**C. Rejection:** (2. 3. 14. 49.)

The initial letting go associated with the early teen years was difficult for K, who experienced pain, *rejection* and disapproval. She would often cry and feel sad. Her son's comments hurt her and despite their initial close relationship, felt rejected by him and, became aware of a defined distance between them. Although their closeness did resume, she continued to feel his disapproval and realised that their relationship was changing, as she no longer was, and no longer is, the significant other in his life. Her knowledge and rational understanding of the process equipped her in preventing the pain and negativity which she anticipated.

**D. Norm:** (4. 10. 12.)

In an effort to accept her son's behaviour, K sought to understand the behavioural *norm* of adolescence and was receptive to the opinion of respected young adults. A trusted professional opinion that her son's behaviour was normal made it easier for her to accept. Furthermore, regarding the tension of parenting adolescents, K found solace in the fact that she was not the alone, as she recognised and identified with other mothers in the same plight. K rationally believed that she had to let go but concealed her feelings. Holding on to the familiar (norm) and knowledge of adolescence provided stability and facilitated the process.

**E. Façade:** (5. 9. 24.)

K believed that the presence of a *façade* was a necessary aspect of letting go. In the relationship with her adolescent son, K felt rejected, but evaded revealing her emotions (of pain, anger, aloneness). It was painful for her to acknowledge an awareness that she was no longer the significant other in her son's life, and K was anxious about his safety. Though she found it painful and unpleasant having to contain and conceal her true feelings, she avoided acknowledging the truth. K rationally accepted that she had to understand her son and grant him space and freedom to explore new horizons. With her decision to conceal the truth, K resisted being selfish and considers her son's (and daughter's) perspectives above her own.

**F. Spatiality** (23. 39. 48.)

Letting go began as a painful process, followed by the request for separation and a mutual creation of *space*. K had falsely assumed that the close relationship with her son would always be there but she became aware of a distance between them. The outside world verified the distance and she was painfully conscious that she was no longer the significant other in her son's life. K believed that, despite her feelings, the space had to be granted to her son.

**G. Separateness:** (26. 28. 29. 30.)

There was awareness of *separateness* unfolding as the originally close-knit family unit was changing. Due to the individuating activities of the adolescents, the joint family holiday has changed and for the first time, K was recently separated from their children (adolescents) when she and her husband left on holiday without them. Though the (adolescent) children seemed to accept the separateness, K felt that she was being selfish and abandoning them. However, the ease with which the significant other accepted the separation facilitated her recognition of the value of space and separateness.

**H. Significant Other:** (13. 40. 41.)

P painfully realised that she is being replaced as the *significant other* in her son Matt's life. K had to endure this, as well as the distance created and her son's disapproving comments. She suddenly realised that she could no longer rely on him as she used to. In her attempts to control what she felt and deny the truth, K sought a rational understanding and insight, yet acknowledged her ambivalence (confusion) regarding the significant other in her son's life.

**I. Threatening Environment:** (6. 7. 8. 15. 16.)

K experienced conflict and ambiguity and although she felt that the external environment was a threat to her son, she rationally believed that she had to allow him to enter it, so that he could explore new horizons. Despite evidence of her son's competence and legal permission to deal with environmental demands, she continued to view the environment as threatening due to potential negligent and destructive aspects that could harm him. K trusted only familiar aspects of the *threatening extended environment*. She felt protective and feared that her son could come to harm. She wanted him to be safe. She felt ambivalent for although she trusted her adolescents, she mistrusted the changing environment.



**J. Anxiety:** (17.18. 27.)

With the increasing space between K and her son, feelings of *anxiety* emerged. Consenting to his holiday with peers was a major step for K, who, despite the knowledge she had regarding his trip, was anxious about his safety as he was still entering a world that was unknown to her. Paradoxically, K respected her son as a 'young adult' yet felt anxious regarding his present lack of experience and wisdom in life. She viewed him as naïve and imagined what he could do. She did not want him to repeat the careless behaviour of her adolescence, behaviour which could have dire consequences.

**K. Memories** (31. 32. 33.)

In her view of the past, K reflected on the *memories* of her own adolescence, her quest for autonomy and the attachment to her family of origin. She recalled the joy of separateness (going overseas), the vacillating behaviour and the difficult return to the family. In her recall of the past, K attempted to gain insight for the future. She anticipated a repeat of her circumstances and recognised the imminent long-term and distant separation (overseas) from her (adolescent) children who sought to move away in their quest for autonomy. K accepted that the adolescents were close and, though she was willing to grant them the space, she fears that they might not return.

**L. Ageing:** (36)

In her view of the future, K became aware of the *ageing* process as a personal reality and realised that she would follow the same path as her parents.

**M. Abandonment:** (42. 43. 44.)

In the context of ageing, aloneness and emptiness there is fear of *abandonment* which, due to K's paramedical experience, she was acutely aware of. She realised that there were elderly people, who either had no significant other or who were alone with no meaningful relationship. Abandonment was a threatening reality and the process of letting go was

painful for K, who experienced a sense of loss with feelings of rejection and emptiness. She feared abandonment and aloneness.

**N. Aloneness:** (25. 34. 35)

A sense of *aloneness* threatened K for, although she rationally wanted her adolescents to fulfil their desire and create their own space she feared that they may not return and that she would be left alone. While familiarising herself to the distance between her and her son, K became aware of the gradually increasing distance between her and the younger daughter, who was also growing up and moving away. In her attempt to avoid facing the aloneness she feared, K kept busy, but, in the unpleasant silence of her passivity, she is suddenly faced with the unfolding reality of her future. K became aware of a changed meaning regarding the family. She was confronted with the impending aloneness and social seclusion – a contextual world and reality in which her father presently lives. K viewed her distant future as empty.

**O. Temporality:** (19. 20. 21. 22. 50.)

As K faced the future, she is reluctant to accept the passing of *time*. She treasures the past and held on tightly to the earlier developmental phases shared with her son, seeking to capture what she once had. Her tight hold on the past made it difficult for her to deal with the present, like accepting that she was no longer the significant other in her son's life. The unresolved obstacles impeded her mobility into the future. Her vision of the future and its positive aspects were obscured for in the process, she was more aware of the negativity (threat, pain, sadness) which made letting go (in the present) difficult. Despite the initial negativity (turmoil and heartache) experienced, K became aware of the positive aspects (diversity and excitement) to be enjoyed.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interviews**

*Participant A: Marlene (M)*

(Original Interview)

(Follow-up Interview)

**Marlene: Two years ago when I was fortunate to expect a baby, I fell pregnant. My husband and I were really looking forward to having this baby. I think that it is difficult when it comes to letting go because for seven and a half months it was just a thought. It was a baby and you could feel the child kicking, but it's a little human being that you have only seen on a sonar so there's nothing of a personal relationship yet except the physical attachment or the looking forward to the idea. So, when we did lose the baby, it was a matter of...I will never forget the first morning when I woke up in hospital. It was as if I was faced with this decision. My husband was sitting next to me, sleeping. It came in front of me, I had a choice. It was either going on sitting there in this corner and just die, or how am I going to face it? I knew that I had to make a decision especially when you look around you and you see your husband asleep and you know that he is also going through it – through the pain and everything. The first thing is that physically you are empty so you know that you have lost something. You know that you have lost something that, besides being an idea, is also a person. So actually the thought of having a child, seeing the child grow up, all of a sudden is gone. It's not just the physical emptiness. Christmas is not going to be the Christmas you thought you would have had for the first time. I knew there was a lot of nonsense lying ahead emotionally. Physically you are going to recover. You know that that is not a problem, but emotionally I knew that I was faced with a long path lying ahead. The thing is, I knew that I had to make a decision.**

Interviewer: What was this decision?

Marlene: First, I thought, "I am in control". I thought, "I must make a decision and sort it out". It's either a: dying or b: facing it. *Because there were positive things ahead* and decided that I am still able to have more children. So that was a positive choice, looking forward to having another baby. If I do go and sit in that corner, I will just die and I will just drag everybody that is supporting me, especially my husband, my parents, his parents. They would have been grandparents for the first time so it's not just myself but it's a lot of people around me as well. They also pretended to be strong to carry you. I

know that if I sit for too long you nurture this pain. *If I sat too long I would be stuck there. It, the pain and the feeling dead*, it will actually engulf you and everybody around you. I knew that it would be a dragging down of Larry (husband) as well. What helped me was that I knew that I could not approach it in selfish way. I couldn't go and sit and think it's just myself. There were a lot of other people who went through this as well; others who loose their children on a daily basis. You hear of people that suffer a loss like that. It was not as if you were the only person. It was a matter of really, "What am I going to get out of this experience if anything, if I am not getting what I thought I am going to get? The baby is not in my arms. *The physical pleasure of holding and seeing your baby; if I could not get that then I must get something positive. I was looking for an alternative to replace the baby.*

Interviewer: Do I understand you correctly, you had to make a decision after you were informed about the baby?

Marlene: Yes the next morning, after I was informed that my child was not alive anymore, I went in for a caesarean immediately the next morning.

Interviewer: So you were told that you would no longer have your baby and that your baby and that your baby had died in utero?

Marlene: Yes.

Interviewer: The decision was after you had had the caesarean.

Marlene: I even felt life after that, but when I told people (nurses) they said, "No, before you do the caesarean you think you feel that".

Interviewer: So you felt life?

Marlene: I thought I did, then after, they confirmed that there was no life. I think that it was hoping and still believing. Then suddenly you wake up and you are not pregnant anymore. It was seven and a half months, and I still had six weeks to go. I had the Caesar. It did feel as if you had had the baby but there was nothing. They give you a little card with the footprints on because it was a birth. Now you must go home two days later. Fortunately we did not start a baby room. We did not know whether it was going to be a boy or girl. We did not want to know. Just now you realise that you need to... As I said earlier, the Christmas, the planning. You already picture your child playing with your sister's children.

Interviewer: So the dreams you had...

Marlene: The dreams, the names you're going to give whether it's a boy or girl. Now suddenly. What now? What now? What now? *The names seemed irrelevant. There was a hopeless feeling of "Where are the answers?"*

Interviewer: Your future had suddenly changed.

Marlene: Yes. I think that's where... For the first month or two, I must be honest, I thought I was fine. I forced myself after three weeks to go back to work. I thought that it would be good. In a way it was because I would communicate with people. People do come in and say, "I'm sorry". Some don't; not meaning it in a bad way but they avoid the issue. One can understand it from their point of view, as well. I thought that by going back to work its fine and you can just carry on. Later I realised that...Larry (husband) and I avoided talking about our baby at home. I realised that I was starting to bottle it all up and then when we did talk it would be just "fine". It would be in a wrong way. Either you just let go completely or you try and bottle it up. *There was the two extremes.* It was about two months. I must admit I tried to keep my social schedule extremely busy. I did drink a lot of wine on some occasions and then I would talk a lot. Then it was easy to talk. I also realised then, that it was not the right way to solve it. It wasn't as if I was going on a booze cruise. I think that it was a way of letting all the inhibitions go so that you can talk. It was about two and a half to three months that I thought I must look at it from a different angle because I could feel that the one day I was upset, the other day aggressive towards Larry. I would pick a fight or be miserable at work or just don't feel like going to work. So I realised that I had to look at this from a different angle because what is going to happen a few years from now if I don't sort it out. *I did not want to have issues about the possibility with future children. I did not want it to drag into my life.* It suddenly came to me, it was actually amazing that my child never had a chance to live and the message was an awakening to life. *As a person that has been alive for thirty-three years, the death of my unborn child was a message of life. My child did not have the opportunity to live but gave me the message of life.* It wasn't a dream. *The experience was real for me and came to be while I was awake. I had this amazing experience.* It was clearly that I saw this. This actually opened up this window for me, to life that, "Who are we to actually plan the future?" It was you plan Christmas that was five months ahead. It was as if I got a gift out of the event. *Working out the meaning of life, which is to take out of everyday the special things. You look for it.* Maybe I was looking for it but I am glad that I have found it. It was for me, with our everyday rush and running around you are so missing today because there were so many special occasions when I was pregnant, when the baby would kick and I would sing in the shower, that I would sing a song, Larry would tickle my stomach. It was so special.

Interviewer: They were such precious moments.

Marlene: Yes definitely. There were such special moments on a daily basis that now the things that did not materialise in the future you actually cry and make the whole event negative. I approached it from that angle. Looking at how I felt when I was pregnant. I felt like the first mother on this planet. I felt beautiful and my child was beautiful. Everything was so perfect. My experience was what I could actually get out of this. *The awakening and the message I received.* It is that everyday is so fragile. The future is so fragile that it is not my place in life to take it for granted or to contain it. Suddenly it was a gift because I was one of those people that would stress about something that was happening two months from now. Or I would stress about tomorrow and I would forget

about today. Larry and myself today, we will talk about it. Our whole life changed when we realised this is our message from what happened is, “live for today”. When I started it slowly, and not with sudden outbursts. I started slowly to look at it from different angles. *Dealing with the loss was slow, and also trying a radically different approach, but first testing it slowly.* You have lost your child, you have lost all those dreams of what you were going to do together for the next few months. So you have lost an idea, and you also did lose a child. My way of letting go was the pain and the anger. I had a lot of anger. *I had to let go of the pain and the anger, to accept it. I was using the pain and the anger as a child before I actually started to move into the acceptance phase and start thinking of nice things.*

Interviewer: So what were you letting go of?

Marlene: The idea of being this mother’s child, och, this child’s mother. It was such a sure case that the first week in October, “I am going to be a mother”. I would look into other people’s prams and you start talking to them when they were pregnant and when is your baby due and when is my baby due. My first instinct when I saw mothers and their babies. I avoided the prams. That was not a natural thing for me to do. That’s when I starting realising that something is not right; that I am not facing it. I must face the idea that I am not going to be Luke’s mother. I am not going to be this baby’s mother now. I did not have the signals at first that something is wrong, because everybody thinks that you are fine. You think that you are fine because you are carrying on. *You are fooling yourself and you actually start to believe that.*

Interviewer: There were no signals, no warning.

Marlene: There was no warning about the pain; the pain that came later. As I said my social schedule was busy and we just carried on. We were carrying this pain. *It was there every day and night and you are aware of it. You try harder and lie to yourself. The heavier the pain, the greater the pretence.* I did not let go of the pain.

Interviewer: What do you mean that you did not let go of the pain?

Marlene: No, I did not let go of the pain immediately. It was as if nurturing the thoughts of your child was actually the pain. It wasn’t happy pain, a joyful fulfilling thing of during the time sitting and thinking of my child and looking at my little sonar photo’s. It was with pain, and I was angry. *I did not want to forget and I thought of my child quite often but it was sad.*

Interviewer: Is that how you were holding on by keeping the pain in?

Marlene: Yes. (Holding) onto what happened. I also think that it is such a big thing to actually have a child, that I saw that I was running around in circles, around the event that never took place. *I could not move on. It was part of the fooling game. Whatever I did would come back to the event. I could not get back. It was like a tornado sucking you back. It was big and overshadowed everything.* At some stage I realised that I was going

on like a robot. *To look as if you are fine. To smile, worked but it's false. You do what is expected of you. It is raw inside. Deep inside you are shattered. There was something wrong.* I did not want to let go of the event that was supposed to take place.

Interviewer: It was all so very real to you.

Marlene: It was very real as I was so looking forward to this child that when I did lose my baby it was as if everything that had happened...All the little things that had been bought, I did not want to put it away. I was still living off everything that had happened - the pain, the sad news, thinking about the time when we saw the sonar. *That is, the last sonar when they switched it off and the doctor said that there is no heartbeat and we were sent for a second opinion.*

Interviewer: By letting go would you have had to let go of all that?

Marlene: Yes. By really getting through it on the other side, to actually smile again and be able to look at someone's baby and be glad for them and not walk away there and think, "That could have been my child", or "Why were you so lucky to have your child?" I could actually turn the whole event into something beautiful, because it was beautiful. It took me nearly three months to get to that point, where I could look back and think that I was privileged for seven and a half months. Even if you had suffered this immense loss, there is still something beautiful that came out of it and you need to see that. You need to take it from day to day and not plan ahead and buy kiddie's gifts. But to get to that point I first had to let go of the negative energy (*the pain anger, misery and conflict*) that surrounded the whole event.

Interviewer: What do you mean by the negative energy?

Marlene: The sadness that surrounded the whole event. The sadness, the pain. The not thinking that it is not fair that someone else had, and their baby.

Interviewer: There was great sadness there.

Marlene: It was there. It was there. Also... When my mother...My mother and myself are actually very close but I actually in that time did not want my mother very close. It actually brought in a negative thing for the first time in our relationship. I don't know why, but I did not want her to share my pain. Maybe I actually protected her by not wanting to show her how much I was hurting.

Interviewer: Although you were hurting a great deal you did not want to reveal it.

Marlene: I was, I was hurting a great deal. Even today, You can let go of the sadness. For me it is an achievement that...Yes, you still think how would your child have looked today, would he have been naughty? You picture him and daddy walking away and going to the toyshop. It's fine to do that, and it's nice things to think of, because I know that we



will have children in the future. It's not looking around and looking at that whole year as a disaster anymore.

Interviewer: So you feel that something positive did come out of that?

Marlene: Yes. I was able to let go. As I said earlier, to go from another angle. I tested it. For the first three months I don't think that I was open for any other angle except my anger and disappointment in life and the feeling that you had been done in. Although happens to other people, you become selfish in your pain. You become like, "Why me? Why this?" My dad once said to me, with a previous incident he said, "Always ask, Why not me?" I forgot it at that stage. For three months...that was not a waste of time in my life. I made the pain...It went with me to bed and I woke up with it. I had forgot about the beautiful things, during that seven and a half months. If I could let go of the pain, I can see things and I can get a message out of it.

Interviewer: So once the pain was gone, you could see the beauty that was there?

Marlene: Yes.

Interviewer: How did you let go of that pain?

Marlene: As I said, I had a lot of anger. *The anger blinded me to the possibilities to making this work. The anger was the opposite of acceptance for me. Anger seemed the only direction. It engulfed me and I allowed it to.* About three to four weeks after I lost my baby, I directed my anger towards God. I have always been close to God. My religion has always been close to me and my family. You talk and you go to God with your problems, and also sometimes you go with your good news. You share everything. I was very angry verbally also, towards God. I realised when it started getting worse; when it started going to three months that maybe it is because I had all this anger towards God. I actually took my whole attitude back to religion. I wanted an answer. As I say the answer really came to me. It was not a dream or a vision *but a conscious insight.* I think that it was there all the time. It was all killed by my negative forces in me that I actually never saw it. That was how I saw this window opening up with the message that, "Never take life for granted".

Interviewer: You say that it was there all the time?

Marlene: Yes, it must have been. It must have been. I believe it must have been there. I also think I gave that to my religion, it also made it clear for me that there is positive things in everything that happens to you. There will never be an obstacle in front of you that you can't get over. The answer is to get over this to go on. I must find something positive out of it. It can't just be something bad. It can't just be a baby that must die. It can't be meaningless.

Interviewer: So it has been meaningful for you?

Marlene: Absolutely. When I was prepared to open myself up to it, then only I realised that for someone like me I forgot about living for today and I was rushing into tomorrow. It was like suddenly like “Wow! You have got this life and you take this life for granted.” You take everybody around you for granted. I actually started phoning my family more afterwards. I can’t go through a week without phoning my mom every second day. It became a constant message from what happened. It only came to me because of what had happened.

Interviewer: The experience showed you something?

Marlene: Something. It’s as if my baby gave me this special message to know, “It’s fine. Let go...It’s fine”. I must carry on. *With all the personal pain, I realised that my child died but I gave it meaning that with the death of my child, I approach life differently. You want to pour love into life and live life on behalf of your child. “If you can’t live then I will and I will make it meaningful”.* It’s not nice to have such a waste of your life. To ‘shlep’ on with all this pain and anger. I think that the people around me picked it up and I thought that I was so good. I would think that I’m fine, I’m strong, I will carry on. Later, afterwards when everybody could actually see that I’m back and being myself again, people- my parents - often came to me and said that they can see that I had this wall around me.

Interviewer: So your attitude changed when you let go?

Marlene: Definitely. It definitely did.

Interviewer: Are you referring to the anger that you let go of?

Marlene: Yes it was anger. I felt done in. I felt cheated. As I say it was so strong this feeling “Gee you have been done in. You were supposed to have this child. Why not?” that I felt about all the beautiful things...about being pregnant, about...No, it was like engulfing you, this dark shadow over you. *I did not allow myself to go to the beautiful things because it feels unfair because you can’t justify being happy. I just saw death and not the pregnancy. You have the sense that you must do something about it but I became passive to my pain. The happy things were a no, no. It was your right to carry this pain and be miserable. The pain becomes your baby and you feel guilty if you think of letting go.* Then in the next moment you wake up and you realise that you are still in the shadow and it’s fine, and everyone must stay away and you are OK It actually just gets worse because you are not prepared to go out for a little bit of sunlight. The moment I did try and I did say “O.K. I am going to try something else besides this anger” it just...it lifted. It was really like you could hear the angels sing! *Because of the insight; because really, it was like there was light and you were suddenly bombarded with the beautiful things. The intensity was sudden. I was aware but avoided it. The eventual realisation that you are going to be fine is slow, but the clarity is sudden. It really was like opening a gift slowly. You first pull the ribbon and then the paper...The stages that I had to go through to appreciate what there is, but I took it as a gift because of the intensity of the dark. But that I can only say today, by looking back that the pain and anger was in stages. At the*

*time it was just being miserable. I believe that from the pain something beautiful will come your way.*

Interviewer: The whole experience worked out for you, and you are different because of it.

Marlene: Yes. Yes. Definitely. I am also so grateful, not because of what happened but that I had the insight to go and look for something there. I don't believe anything just happens to us. If you open up to it, there is a message there, there is something. It takes time. I don't think that three months is such a long time. Other people do go through things much longer. I also think that the fact that we can look forward to having another child sometime and that is positive. It's definitely letting go of the anger. It changed me. It changed me from how I looked at things before being pregnant. It changed my outlook on life.

Interviewer: If I understand you correctly, you were tremendously angry when all this happened. You first turned your anger towards God and resented the fact that you were in that position. Gradually, as you viewed things differently, you were able to let go of that anger and pain and started to view things afresh.

Marlene: Yes. I also realised that because Larry and I have a fantastic relationship. But in those three months I started picking up signs that something is wrong (*in our relationship*), although I thought that I was fine. That I was avoiding the prams and turning your back when I would see couples coming with their little kids. Larry and myself, we started to quarrel quite often. It would usually come from my side. I just realised that something is wrong. It did not happen overnight that I went to look for an answer or a new angle. It did take a little while. It wanted to start and then you say, "no, tomorrow you will". *The acceptance wanted to start as you put your foot in the light. The shadow became a comfort zone. Facing it would be entering the next phase and that would be letting go of the pain and at that stage the pain became my baby.* It was like letting the water go out slowly instead of everything at one shot. *Everything at one shot would take you back to the early stages and fool myself again, like the angry outbursts were futile. I realised that it was going to be a slow process getting to where I wanted to be. Applying the new approach was slow because the old approach obviously did not work.*

Interviewer: What do you mean, Marlene, when you say that you wanted to face it anew?

Marlene: It was that now you would want to take time or want to be alone at home. Rather than go out shopping, you want to sit and think this through. I got to this point of rather going to play with the dogs outside then you are half avoiding it because you know that there is something that you must face.

Interviewer: So it was pulling you?

Marlene: Yes, what you say there is right. I knew that I had to do something about it. I knew that I had to do something about it. I knew I had to do something.

Interviewer: How did you know?

Marlene: I did not like myself anymore. It was easy to start picking fights. Where I know that I am someone who likes to communicate with people and laugh. I could see something change in me and I did not like it. I think in a sense I was missing the old me and I think that the people around me also did. As I say, I did not discuss it that often or you are very busy. It was something that I realised that I did not want to go on like that. Some people do. I could have gone on like that, but then I would lose more in the end – *even jeopardising my marriage and my friends.*

Interviewer: How do you see yourself now?

Marlene: I am happy. I am really happy. As I face the day to day things, it's not as if you are nonchalant about tomorrow. Not at all. It is just that I am more aware of relationships with people and what you say to someone. It is really. It is different. I feel richer. I really fell richer and that's why I say I can now look back and think, "My baby gave me this positive new outlook on life" and for me those first three months, I nearly missed out on seeing this little message that was left behind.

Interviewer: It sounds like you got a gift. Did you?

Marlene: Maybe it's my way of making peace with it but it was in finding that gift. I can honestly say that if I could not get a message like this out of it, I still would have been stuck in that negative angry attitude. It was like this little light that suddenly went up for me. *The light was for getting an answer that this gift worked for me. I can only describe the answer as a light, as you can see where you are going, and you are not stuck anymore.*

Interviewer: So you have moved on Marlene?

Marlene: Definitely. I have definitely moved on. Someone also said to me that a special answer will lie in the eyes of your last child because that would be the child that you never would have had if the first one was around. So it's the little things like that. There is meaning in everything that happens to you. I am actually excited now thinking, "Yes, I am going to get pregnant again".

Interviewer: So you have something to look forward to?

Marlene: Yes. I actually think that I grew up. It was a growing up experience as well.

Interviewer: In what way?

Marlene: It sounds like as if it is corny, but the value of life really begins and ends with a human being's life. Nothing else. I can't really put it in words. When it comes to a human being's life, there is nothing that you can take for granted. Things you say and things you do. If I now think back on the little movements I felt. It was so amazing. I experienced the ultimate of life and death in one year. It was so big. It was a bigger event for me to cope with. That is why I say it was for me a growing up process, in the sense of what life is about. *I have the tools to cope with life now.* Sometimes it's frightening for me to think that I could have missed out on that concept, if that did not happen. The price that I had to pay to get to this idea and in a sense it balances it out. So what I am saying is "It's OK".

Interviewer: You feel OK about it.

Marlene: Yes, and to let go because we had to name our child. It was a little boy and his name was Luke and I could say "good-bye" in the sense of he would always be there. Our future children will know about him. I just did not need to carry that pain to remember my child, which I did in the first three months. When I did think of my child, it was with a broken heart, sad thoughts, angry thoughts and now it's nice. I can think of my child and it's a beautiful idea.

Interviewer: Where initially it was a negative pain that you would associate with your child, it is now that has been converted into something positive.

Marlene: Absolutely. I could only get to this point by letting go; by really letting go. Literally that is what I had to do, otherwise I really don't know where I would have been.

Interviewer: So how would you describe the actual letting go experience?

Marlene: If I think you must put it in a physical term you can compare it to a bungee-jump. It's a free fall. It was from where I was to where I had to get to - to the extreme points. Mine was the opposite from a bungee-jump; its from a low to a high, but if you can reverse a bungee-jump.

Interviewer: A bungee-jump is sudden. Was your experience sudden?

Marlene: The process was there, but when the clarity was there, I did not have doubts. It was the right way. As I say, I sometimes I tried to avoid facing it. But the next day, I must start spending more time or thinking better. *There was dark and there was light.* It was a light going on. When it was switched on, it stayed on. In the beginning it was like playing with the light switch (on and off) - but when it suited me. Then suddenly you did not have an effect on this light switch it just stayed on. *As we go through it, I now realise that I had made a choice that first morning but I did not stick to my choice of the first morning. It was only after three months that I could go that way. I now realise that what I did was really take the darker side and only after three months did I enter the clarity of the positive side. To let go is also a guilt feeling because you are almost not allowed to face joy.*

Interviewer: So it was quite illuminating! Forgive the pun.

Marlene: Absolutely. If I think still of that feeling and today I'm still thriving on it. I'm still on that high and I hope that I am going to stay there. You will have your ups and downs sometimes, as things lie deeper. It's as if I can face anything coming my way now. To come through it with an answer like that, that you can take anything. I feel that I will be strong in life. You will be sad. Whatever comes your way. The future is not up to me. So I can't sit here and say I can face anything coming my way in the future. I still have to get there to see if I can. I think that I will be able to cope.

Interviewer: It seems as if you are saying that you feel stronger for this.

Marlene: Yes. I won't go the negative way in approaching something. I will first look.

Interviewer: It's as if you had to go through that to see what you are seeing now.

Marlene: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer: Do you think that you could have seen what you are seeing if you had not gone through this?

Marlene: Not at all. I think that it would have come out at a later stage or time. I would have broken down at some point in my life. I think that it would have been a denial thing if I did not go through the pain and the anger. I definitely went through stages; it was a process. *The process was the stages of pain and anger, active processes that really happened. You can't see it at that stage but can only be seen looking back. At that stage it was all "deurmekaar" (confused).* If I skipped any of those stages because I did think that I was fine. I told everybody that, "I am fine" and that "Life is beautiful". I even took out the movie and I cried with Larry and I thought, "I am fine, I am fine". But I wasn't, because if I think of things I did and just being miserable and being different. I did not want children. I did not even want to bring up the issue of having a child. Obviously I wasn't fine. Letting go for me was in stages. It was the little light switch thing that we mentioned. But when it happened, it was clear. It was definitely clear. I could feel it and it was great.

Interviewer: You felt good?

Marlene: Yes. I feel good about it. I am obviously overprotective now when I see a pregnant mother. I don't turn my back any more I actually want to tell them. You must take it easy and go to your doctor everyday. It's definitely an attitude change. It's as if it did not come just from within myself. As I feel it is a little gift. It definitely balances it out for me *because the answer is there and makes me understand it.* I can't say that it just came from myself.

Interviewer: Where do you believe that it has come from?

Marlene: Obviously I would love to say from my baby; you know. As I said earlier it was as if I could hear the angels (imitates chimes) when it happened. It definitely happened. I started looking around you and you seeing people, especially me in my kind of work, mothers who have lost their children in accidents. You realise that you are not alone. Looking around you as well. People in pain as well. You can't go and sit in the corner. It did cross my mind but no good would have come from it. Nothing. Zilch.

Interviewer: So your choice was to let go of this?

Marlene: I thought it was, but not immediately. As I said, I realised it three months later only. That's the thing that I said the first morning there was the choices, sitting in the corner dying or going on with this, facing this and letting go.

Interviewer: Is it by facing this that you went through the phases.

Marlene: Yes, through the stages, to get to the brighter side. I thought that morning when I made the decision I would be fine. But actually I came down. I realise that I came through on the other side and it's a gift and I am definitely stronger now.

Interviewer: It seems like you are feeling powerful through this gift of a different vision to what you had.

Marlene: Yes. Definitely.

Interviewer: Anything else Marlene that you would like to add to what we have said regarding your experience of letting go.

Marlene: You will need another session for this! (laughs) It's a different situation entirely. I don't know if you want me to carry on here or not.

Interviewer: Marlene, Thank you for sharing this letting go experience with me. We can deal with the other one separately.



**Research Participant B: Ben (B)**

(Original Interview)

*(Follow up Interview)*

Ben: Letting go for me. The first time was from my previous job. My previous job has been a source of security in my life but also a sort of a prison. I felt that I had to do it. *I felt stuck. I was comfortable because of securities such as salary and medical aid and pension fund, but it was not what I really wanted to do. I felt used, abused as window-dressing. I was not allowed to be psychologist and I could not find another job, due to affirmative action, etc.* During the time that I worked for them (Correctional Services) they had sort of demilitarised. Things like that started to prematurely free me on an emotional level. I was 42 years old, white and Afrikaans. I am also very liberal in comparison with other men like me, but that really did not really count, but it was with the emigration to the USA that I started letting go and saw other horizons. *Through emigration, I was not limiting my job or opportunity search to South Africa only.* With my applications however, I got a few negative replies, but it's more because I am not a resident yet, and one of the conditions is that you have to be a resident to get a job there. I now have a tentative job offer in a private office that will give me the opportunity to see what I can do.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Ben: It's nice and it's exciting. It is making me feel needed again. I don't see an eight to five salaried job as the only source of security, enabling me to carry on ...*(inaudible tape)...* and doing what I feel called to do.

**Interviewer: You spoke of risks. Do you feel that you are taking a risk?**

Ben: Yes (I do feel that I am taking a risk) because there is always the possibility of things happening. Yes, I am even willing to do an entirely different job to what I have done from my previous training. But I am sure that I will be able to at least survive. *At the worst scenario, I would see myself doing manual labour at a minimum wage.*

Interviewer: So you are willing to make changes?

Ben: Yes.

Interviewer: Something that is new to you?

**Ben: Yes**

Interviewer: You mentioned family (earlier).



Ben: I grew up with them, I have direct relatives. A lot of them have actually either died or are spread all over the country or all over the world. So I don't have close relationships with them anymore but I very often experience that of places, and of some people too. That's why when I have the opportunities, I use the opportunities to go and say goodbye to people and places. I've recently been to Darwin, where I was born. I'm also cycling. The whole family is cycling. But this time I went alone because my wife is on her trip to Canada at the moment. I went to do a bicycle race. Literally and figuratively along the roads that I knew, and was on, as a child and also later on in my life because I lived a part of my life in Cape Town and that environment, Stellenbosch and that area. I really enjoyed it. It was a positive experience. I feel that I still have memories of the places and perhaps in time, I will be able to return again. But it was the last positive experience. *Positive in the sense that I could not find a way to stay more permanently at the places that I loved from past experiences.*

Even though the weather in the Cape wasn't very friendly, I enjoyed the cycling and seeing all the places and roads and the things.

Interviewer: It was meaningful for you to go back.

Ben: It was quite meaningful. It was good to see that even my father's grave is still there. Just to know that, although many things are changing and we are going our own ways, there are also some foundations left. There are a lot of new things, buildings and places, but the old ones are still there.

Interviewer: You speak of foundations being left, what are you referring to?

Ben: Basically memories and concrete places as the house where I grew up. That part of town that was familiar to me. Ja, even the old cycle shop where I bought my first bicycle was still there. It looks a bit different, but it is still there.

Interviewer: The places, for you are significant. How come?

Ben: Yes, not the places itself but the memories that go with it, the experiences. You can't really separate the two.

Interviewer: You went back to visit and recalled the way things used to be.

Ben: Perhaps it was symbolic that I cycled from Darwin, where I had my childhood years, then to Stellenbosch, where I studied later in life and then back from there I went to Darwin.

Interviewer: So you retook the same steps that you had taken originally.

Ben: Yes that's right. One of my first jobs was also in Darwin. So I was very much on that side.

Interviewer: Darwin means a lot to you and you went there. How come?

Ben: I went back basically to go and say “Goodbye”, to refresh my memory for the last time just to still enjoy some of the places and some of that people that I knew. (*It was like putting a photo in the photo album of my memory*).

Interviewer: You needed to say goodbye before you go?

Ben: Yes. One of my friends, who went to London, had a whole party. He invited more than 100 people. I’m not an extrovert or a party guy like that, but I had the opportunity to create a ritual that I have just described. It is also meaningful for me and it makes me feel that I said “Goodbye”.

Interviewer: So where someone would have a party to say good-bye, you felt the need to go back to Darwin and say goodbye.

Ben: Yes.

Interviewer: That’s your way of saying goodbye.

Ben: Yes.

Interviewer: Anything else you would like to add regarding your letting go experience?

Ben: Maybe also something that made me start making changes and getting out of it was on a more spiritual level. *This was something of a precipitator or trigger or kick in the butt*. I just had discussions and read pieces of scripture, as a Christian that reminded me of what the most important things in life should be. The most important things in life are not the material things. It is the value that you add to other people’s lives and fulfilling your mission in life. A friend gave me a book named in Afrikaans: “In Jesus se voetspore” (“In the Footsteps of Jesus”). It just reminded me that as a spiritual person, and also a Christian, if I want to be like Jesus I have to be able to let go of material things that keep me on my own task and financial security and just being able to earn money. Things like that are not the most important things in life, so then I just relaxed. *I did not feel a failure any more because of the inability to succeed in everyday terms*. I have to practice what I believe in; what I preach. It also worked along Easter, which is a very significant time in a Christian’s life.

Interviewer: Do you see Easter related to the letting go experience?

Ben: Easter reminded me of Jesus who gave up his whole life before he could actually be resurrected and the whole experience. I went to the church group early in the morning to see the sun rising on a hilltop. We had a cross planted and we lighted the cross and that ritual was also very meaningful to me to remind us that you have to offer a lot and let go, to experience new life. That’s what Jesus did. Then the only thing in life is adding

significance to other people's lives. Helping people who are suffering and things like that and refocusing on that again, after I let go of the things maybe it's very difficult to let go of. *That is to let go of old false securities, such as salary.*

**Interviewer: Do you mean letting go of material things?**

Ben: Not very literally but yes, letting go of my salary. Fortunately we were able to keep some things, but if we move to the USA we obviously have to let go of just about everything. The security is based on other things.

Interviewer: Your being a Christian has been helpful.

Ben: That's right. Not that I see myself as perfect but I am trying to let myself be guided by spiritual Christian principles.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Ben: To be of service to other people; to try and listen to what our mission in terms of God's will should be. It's basically to think a bit more before you do anything and not only to think about yourself, but also to think about others.

Interviewer: Others play a significant role – to serve others?

Ben: That why I became a psychologist. I see it's my calling in life to try and relieve other people's suffering and not only to relieve suffering but to add value to other people's lives.

Interviewer: How do you feel that this is linked to your letting go?

Ben: When I say that I am longing to practice what I preach, I am also hoping to help other people to do the same. To let go when it is necessary to let go. I think that I actually live the meaning with it, now in our times.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Ben: It's basically a learning experience. It's just that it was very rational before, but I have lived it as an experience now.

Interviewer: Could you please rephrase what you are saying?

Ben: I think that I learned that I had to let go of certain more material things based things in my life in order to open up to new and more value based and spiritually based avenues and paths. And you come closer to what I experience as my purpose in life.

**To be able to add meaning to the lives of others and help comfort people who suffer.**

Interviewer: The more attached you were to the material things the less you gained?

Ben: Yes, but sometimes you have to hold onto certain things. I think that there is a time to hold on and a time to let go. You just can't jump from one thing to another, all the time. You have got to hold on and resist jumping onto other things all the time.

Interviewer: You are willing to attach and let go as the situation requires it is that what you mean?

Ben: Yes.

Interviewer: So, it all started with your leaving work.

Ben: That was the first major step. There was a lot of tension before I let go. *I would ask myself questions such as "Am I doing the right thing?", "Am I not fooling myself?", "Isn't it very self centred?"*

Interviewer: It wasn't easy to let go?

**Ben: No, Letting go is not easy. *It is like jumping from a plane before the parachute opens!***

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your letting go experience?

Ben: I think I have scanned over most of the experiences and I feel we have touched on the most important experiences.

Interviewer: Thank you.

**(ii) Post- emigration email:** (received four months subsequent to B's emigration).

I'm so busy dealing with all the new things. I think, like with many other things in life, my current experience in the USA can be seen as an attempt to find the balance between the negative and positive sides of the same thing.

The negative side is the "ontgroening" or initiation (just like the thing that is every year stopped forever at schools and universities). Gate control and initiation are very real up and going, even after you went through a thirty-month screening period in South Africa.

Banks do not even want to open an account for you because they cannot find you on their credit checking systems. You get the same kind of attitude when you approach organisations with employment enquiries. My current employer reduced the hourly rate that he offered me when I started working because "a probationary period is standard practice". I knew about the probationary period but nothing was said before about the reduced remuneration. During this period I also have to prove to my wife and family that there is a better life out here and it's OK for them to follow.

Enough of the negative side. Believe it or not, the positive side still overwhelms the negative. I am able to do what I am trained and called for – to help other people. In South Africa, I felt that the context did not allow me to do that any more. I was a piece of window dressing.

When I park my van, even when I forget to lock it or leave the house the anxiety and fear is much less. You see women and children walking in the street playing without being afraid of being attacked.

There are good, warm and friendly people here, and I already have a few new friends. My sister and her family are also an hour's drive away. They understand and support when necessary, in spite of still having their own battles to fight.

Ironically, sometimes the gate control mechanisms give me a sense of security. They do not allow crime or suspects here. People's personal rights and space and quality of life are protected. Soon I may be one of these people. Educational prospects are good. I believe I can have a happy family life here and prospects for my children are good.

The winter here is a bit longer and warmer than usual, but spring has arrived. I discovered that when I came an hour late for church this morning because I forgot to set my alarm clock one hour ahead. I just didn't attend to their ways of doing enough.  
How's the weather in South Africa?

### Research Participant C : Penny (P)

Penny: I don't think letting go means a heck of a lot to me at all. Like one of those modern jargon words. I don't have a particular grip on it. I don't know if I could ever use that terminology and say that I am now letting go or I have now let go. I wouldn't know at which point one makes the decision that this is letting go.

Interviewer: For you letting go is mere jargon; it's not something that you can identify with.

Penny: I feel that it's very much one of those American type words. I don't know. I don't know. I don't have much respect for the word. (laughs) I can't say that it's just that they can make fusses about stuff like that. Letting go and... I can't think of another example, but if you watch Oprah Winfrey, she will say a word like 'spirit'. She uses the word 'spirit', 'watching your spirit', or something like that, and they will philosophise about it and it means zero to me. I am..., not say that you should not look after your spirit but each person does it in their own way. I don't know. Just don't make a story of it.

Interviewer: You feel they generalise it

Penny: For me, it is more personalised. Each person does it in their own way. If someone asks you, "Have you let go?" you may have to sit down and think "What are you talking about? And perhaps go through these thoughts and think, "OK. I have actually moved beyond this point so, in actual fact I have let go. It's not a term that I will use. It doesn't work for me.

Interviewer: What does the term actually mean to you?

Penny: It's just that a person must move on beyond whatever it is that has been dragging you or as you say, putting things behind you and getting on with your life.

Interviewer: Is that how you see it? Your letting go experience is that you put things behind you and you get on with your life?

Penny: Well, there's no sense in living in the past, so once you have come to terms with what your situation is going to be then you have to accept that and be in that phase and move on now.

Interviewer: Is that where you feel you are at this point?

Penny: In some things, not in everything. With the house things, certainly. Moving from the house. It wasn't the actual move. That was physical hard work. It was before the time to make the decision and to come to the realisation that I have to leave here, you know. Then in the house, how are people going to take this. Is it an entirely selfish decision,

and is it only for me?...which it probably turns out, it is only for me. But then afterwards, in the time that I put the house on the market, one of the boys, Rob in actual fact, said, with no provocation whatsoever, he absolutely hates this house; the house that we were in. It came as such a surprise! (Laughs) Jack (husband) was shocked! He said afterwards, "I can't believe this kid actually said this". You'd think. Here's our house Your child has got fond memories of his trip overseas, the crack on the wall... the house, but he had enough. One of the kids that I spoke to, it was fine with them. It wasn't a problem. It was Jack actually, who I had to get past, as I needed his approval.

Interviewer: So you wanted to make the move but thought it was selfish and you had to get Jack's approval?

Penny: Yes, I felt very selfish. So on a Friday...on a Friday no, on a Friday, yes, On the Friday, I would think everything is fine and what not. Saturday goes away. Sunday night, I start getting nervous to think tomorrow, I'm going to start all over again. Then I change my mind, you know. The noise from the schools...The noise next door drove me dilly. There wasn't a school next door, and then they built the property, and extended the school. Their bells did not go at the same time as Barclay's does. Barclay's bells I knew, but they were across the road from me. It was removed. This is right next door. It drove me mad. It drove me so mad that I wanted to scream and I did, often. So the noise itself was all the kids. It was the kids. Sometimes they would come and knock their ball over. I would throw my toys I would curse the kids, you know. Sometimes, I wanted one of those bazookas to stand on the other side of the school, and shoot them.

Interviewer: So your home was suddenly not your home.

Penny. It was messed. That's the resentment. I resented it. I resented that I have to get up and go because of the school. You know, it just was too much. I had to leave my house!... because of this school next door to me, not the school across the road from me, so much. But together then, it was terrible! Singly I could handle it.

Interviewer: So you had to let go of your home.

Penny: It ruined my life. They ruined my life. I went to court to put my case before them and I got nowhere! I was very ill at the time but I got nowhere.

Interviewer: So you needed the area that was your home.

Penny: I think so. I mean everybody does.

Interviewer: Your home is your home.

Penny: It was a huge intrusion!

Interviewer: You seem angry about that.

Penny: I am. I am aggravated by this whole thing. But actually it's not so bad really, but just talking about it makes me a bit aggravated.

Interviewer: Ja, sure it does. Something that was yours, your home, that you are entitled to and that is intruded upon.

Penny: We fixed things all up for us, for our needs and how we wanted it and now finally after all these years when things are nice and neat and orderly and what not, then you have got to leave!...My trees! You know, I came here and they were big and I lived there for almost thirty years. They were magnificent trees!

Interviewer: You have left the trees.

Penny: I have left them.

Interviewer: There seems to be sadness.

Penny: Terrible, terrible, terrible that. But then I had certain criteria that if I found another place, and I thought I could never fulfil this. I looked, and we bought a plot out somewhere and I thought for a while, "This is my answer. I am going to live out there in the quiet and have a view I would have new little 'goggatjies' in your grass. It would be wonderful. Nothing like that happened. I realised after a time, Jack was not going to move anywhere there and the boys wouldn't have come out there. The whole thing, the safety wouldn't work. I realised that it wasn't going to work, so I cancelled the plot, which was also sadness. Then I thought to myself, I am doomed to noise for the rest of my life. I never thought I would get past Jack (husband). I had to ask him and I did. I asked him over and over again. "What do you think?", "Would it be OK with you? I had to check with him. You also take into consideration the fact that he is working. I had to have his... not approval so much, as...He had to back me up, because I think it's a selfish decision, so I need him to say this. Also it's an expensive decision.

Interviewer: You feel it was a selfish decision.

Penny: Not selfish... Entirely selfish. So what. So I think of myself a little. You know how woman are. Women think of everybody else and women last. I did think also that I had put up with it for long enough, and also, I did realise that it was time to go. We did not have kids at the school, so in actual fact, the reason why I am staying in the house is not why I bought it in the first instance. The reason why I am staying in my house now is because it's a home, its comfortable or whatever makes up that whole story, but a lot of those things had been take away. Now the fact was, why we had bought the house in the first instance was to be near the school because I had five children, four children in fact. So that was brilliant. Anyway, I don't know...eh what was I talking about?

Interviewer: You were moving in to a new phase. You did not need to be near the school any longer.



Penny: I didn't need to be there. I didn't need to be there and I needed to go, and I needed it for my own sanity, for my own sanity. I needed to go because if I tell you that I would stand watering my garden, having long conversations in my head about the school. "What am I going to do?" and "What am I going to say next to them?" Often the bells would go off over the weekends and over the long weekends. They would forget to switch the school bell off. So everybody is restful and the school bells start going or the alarms of the school would start going any hour of the night. I was driven berserk. I just couldn't take it. It did not affect other people. Some people are more affected by noise than others, and I am just one of them. That's all.

Interviewer: The noise affected you and you spent a lot of time at home.

Penny: I spent a lot of time at home because I was ill for a very long time and I had to be at home. I could not be anywhere else because I was in the bed.

Interviewer: You were not well for a while.

Penny: For a very long time, I had M.E. and for two and a half years of those years I spent in bed with depression and darkness and then this noise was on top of me.

Interviewer: It was terrible for you. You were at your weakest and this noise was on top of you.

Penny: It was just too much, too much.

Interviewer: So you decided to move.

Penny: So then I decided to make the move and that, that is actually the thing that, that, that was the...the biggest. If you want to talk about letting go, then that was the part getting to the point of yes I am going to go. I am leaving this home. I am going to actually sell this place and move. That was the turning-point; it was not the actual move. That was the move.

Interviewer: The decision was the move?

Penny: The decision was the move, not the physical move. Not that it wasn't difficult, but mentally that wasn't so bad. Not at all. That was physically bad but the mental anguish was there, to get to the decision.

Interviewer: It was anguish?

Penny: It was anguish. It was anguish because I toyed with the idea for I don't know how long. It was anguish probably because I'm helpless against what's going on around me. I cannot dictate to them. I can't tell them to shut up. Do you understand? I can't do anything about it, so if they go away, go boy! If those kids jump into the pool right next

door to me, ten at time screaming, that's tough for me. I can rant and rave on the other side, I can't do anything about it, you know.

Interviewer: So a total helplessness really.

Penny: Ja. It's a frustration but I can't do anything about it. Then my thoughts turn to murder (laughs). I am going to bomb this place! Weekends were...physically weekends, I could feel this is a weekend. In actual fact, I must tell you, on a Saturday morning if you woke up and you would not know this, when I woke up, you could feel, there's nobody there. It's like on air, I don't know how to tell you, It's many lives and many... leaving a person's activities. I think it's in the air. I could feel it!

Interviewer: It was as if the air was there for you to breathe!

Penny: Yes! (Joint laughter) The air was clearer. Saturday the air was clearer, Sunday the air was OK but Sunday night the air started getting really muggy because of Monday and Monday then ohh!! Then of course holidays were fantastic blissfulness.

Interviewer: The sense relief of having your own territory.

Penny: I can't tell you! I can't tell you the joy of having your own space! Not only from the noise but also coming home and not having them in your driveway all the time.

Interviewer: The intrusion.

Penny: I think that I am a private sort of person. I need my space and I need my privacy. Maybe it's exaggerated, because...because of so many people around that you feel more the need to be private. Maybe if you are completely on your own you would not feel like I do. Do you know what I'm saying its because I always have to have others around me.

Interviewer: Do you mean the school?

Penny: I mean the school, but also the family. I have a big family and that means that means the house is bouncing and going on all the time and you just hope that you can have space.

Interviewer. So space means a lot to you. You need a space that you can define as yours. So much that you were willing to fight for it.

Penny: Ja, to the point that I had to make a big decision; a big decision.

Interviewer: Leaving your home was a big decision.

Penny: It was a big, a big decision. I knew that it was a big decision anyway and then I suppose... You know, I would rather...It wasn't a one day thing,

it just went on and on and on, for months you know, and then I would think, “Yes I’m going to sell it” and then holidays would come and I would think that I have exaggerated and then I would say, “ Yes, I’m going to sell it” and then the weekends would come and I would think, “Gee, the weekends are brilliant, where am I going to have weekends like this?” So, it was like this, going back and forth, but the same thing was happening to Jack because then I would say, “I think we should sell this house, I can’t handle this any more”. Then he would shut up about it. On Monday I would start, and then Friday, when he would arrive, I would keep quiet about it. Monday then, I was ready to sell. So over along time and then over a long period, I was moving forward-backwards, forward-backwards.

Interviewer: So in the process of getting there it was moving backwards and forwards.

Penny: It was a long process of moving backwards and forwards. Then I started thinking in terms of why should I put this plant in here, I am not going to watch it grow, I am going to move. So that, if you also want regarding letting go. Prior to saying I am not going to do this massive thing over here because I am not going to be here, so I would rather save. So I did. I started putting little plants into pots to move and then I am getting ready for wherever I am going. I need my plants, I need my trees.

Interviewer: So you stopped making roots.

Penny: (Laughs) I did still you know, to keep up, because I can’t live without it but I mean I shouldn’t have intentions but I had intentions, and when you have intentions, you have got to start putting little plants out. I actually thought of the plot but then nothing came of that.

Interviewer: So you did not go to the plot that you wanted to go to.

Penny: Actually, not the plot so much, but quite. I would go to anywhere quite, and it would have been an absolute bonus if I could have a view. When I thought of moving and I thought of the criteria, nice things that I needed, I realised that I wasn’t going to get them because where in Pretoria, would I go to? Where there are no throughways and no traffic. The only place near to where we were would have been was The Ridge. I can’t afford The Ridge. They would have older houses, they would have trees, and they would have bigger rooms. Those were my criteria, no noise, trees, bigger rooms, older house. That is what I wanted, and I couldn’t get it there so when I started looking for a house. It is there but I could not afford it. Besides, the houses in The Ridge are old houses, rambling places, far too big and needing too much, too, too much care.

Interviewer: But you needed the trees, the large rooms and quiet.

Penny: I needed that, but the view was the other thing.

Interviewer: Did you have a view at your older house?

Penny: No. You would look up into the sky and there was a little bit of sky, and that was your parameter, your border. You couldn't see the horizon so you had to wait for the moon to come above the trees. That stuff that is really important to me. Jack doesn't need stuff like that. I need stuff like that. I need to see the sky; I need to see the clouds. I need it. I need the trees. I need the animals. I do. He's not like that. He is more a city slicker.

Interviewer: You are not a city slicker.

Penny: I am a city slicker. If I actually had to land up on a farm, I might say, "Oh no, this is never what I thought of". But I had a lot of stuff there because of my trees and in Barclay they have avenues of trees, so the birds come there because they know they can come down this avenue of trees and the next lane, where an isolated spot of trees are. So I had a lot of bird life there, and I fed the birds so that was all wonderful and I needed to have that again.

Interviewer: So you wanted to maintain birds and trees.

Penny: I need to hear natural sounds and not traffic. I don't think that I wanted to be here particularly. Moré Park was never on my agenda. I always thought, there in that area somewhere.

Interviewer: You wanted to be in your area.

Penny: Yes, and I am not, so that is an adjustment. For whatever reason, my background was half Afrikaans. I feel that I am surrounded by Dutchman. I am half Afrikaans but I felt like I am out of my area. Do you understand? I feel like a displaced person. There's nothing wrong with these people, but they are all Afrikaans. There's not a soul here that is English speaking and I feel a bit of a foreigner. Not wildly but I feel a bit of an outsider. But these people are wonderful, because they all like their privacy. So they steer clear of you, and I steer clear of them. But we have all their phone numbers, which we never had in Barclay. I know all these people. I have met them. They came to my house, some of them. They left their phone numbers, I gave my phone numbers and I think that is probably fine. It's different. The other adjusting thing is time, the traffic and distance. It hasn't got into my head yet. I shop at Barclay Mall. From my house that wasn't five minutes. I now, I haven't got it into my head yet, I travel twenty minutes and then only I am there. I look at my watch and say I have plenty of time and then I haven't got plenty of time.

Interviewer: So it's different and you have to adapt to the change.

Penny: Then a huge, huge thing is to get rid of the people that were here out of my head.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Penny: The agent told me some of the history. I feel it was very unfair to me, because it was a miserable sort of history. The ex-owner of the house, when I met him, I had an

immediate dislike and obviously the feeling was mutual so we did not have much to do with one another. He married a new wife and she came and told me the history, and I tell you, it affected me so because these bedrooms were their bedrooms. Which I think it's like that with everyone who moves feels that, but they had told me the history. I don't think their unhappiness affected me, but I really did not need to know all this.

Interviewer: So in a way the house felt foreign to you and not yours.

Penny: It still isn't but slowly it's coming back. As the stuff... like for instance the kitchen, putting the rail on top, getting all the dreadful stuff out that was rotting. That is my granite top. I have cleaned out the kitchen cupboards.

Interviewer: You want to make it your own.

Penny: It's going to take a bit longer. I put in a full day's work but I get so tired. I don't know. But the grounds, I have major plans to make it more a people's garden. It's a steep gradient and runs down to the street. It's not a people's garden. You can't run around the garden because you are up and down a hill. So I have major plans to level the garden for kids to play in. If they have to play outside, they will hurt themselves and I have my dogs to consider as well. The poor things were sick running up and down.

Interviewer: So you would like your home to accommodate your children, grandchildren, your dogs.

Penny. I would like to let it happen faster but I don't earn any money, so I have to depend on Jack to do that. He does unfortunately do the stuff that he wants to do first, and the stuff that I would like to do, is not on the list of priorities. He did a dreadful thing at the bottom of the garden. I told everybody. I moved into the second bedroom, and from the stairs, the doors that open there into the garden, and I could sit on the stairs and look at the view, and he blocked it, inside a month! I went mad!! I screamed. I was back in Barclay, immediately back in Barclay, frustrated and I can't do anything about it. Back to the bazooka! So, I moved out of that room and that's why I am upstairs. I refuse to go back into that room. I can't look at that wall. Where I am is not really a bedroom, but I refuse to go there. I have put my foot down. I sat on the bed and looked at the lights in the distance. I couldn't tell you how wonderful it was and its gone.

Interviewer: So something that was in your grasp disappeared.

Penny: One month and I was back in Barclay.

Interviewer: It was as if you had not moved.

Penny: The only way they could fix it for me is if they could break it down. Break it all down. Jack blames the builder and the builder blames Jack. I was the one that kept saying, "Fine build it, but just watch my view. How is it going? Just watch my view". Jack doesn't know just how affected I am. He either chooses not to know or he

deliberately passes over it. I don't know, but I can't handle it. I feel that he could have controlled it, and he didn't.

Interviewer: You are angry with him.

Penny: I am very angry. I am resentful, very resentful about it.

Interviewer: You say he doesn't know about it.

Penny: I did tell him. I ranted and raved about it on the specific day. I phoned my daughter in Australia. She sent her father a fax. I dragged my bed up that same day, that Saturday. I screamed around and when he came in from work I knew what he was going to say to me and I knew that I was never going to fix it. I was hoping. I was hoping that he would say, "Just break this thing down". He didn't say that. He is never going to say that.

Interviewer: And you have lost your view.

Penny: I've lost and I have lost that, I tell you.

Interviewer: There's sadness.

Penny: He was very upset because when he came home my daughter had sent him a fax, and then I knew that I am not going to get anything out of him anyway. I am not going to get anything out of him if he is aggravated. I said to him, "Are you coming upstairs to sleep with me?" and he said, "No" and I said, "Are you taking this personally?" and he said, "Yes" and I said, "Please don't take it personally" and I said, "Come along. There's a lovely view, a lovely bedroom so come upstairs".

Interviewer: You did not want a rift between the two of you.

Penny: No, I don't like that. No, I don't like that. But there is a barrier. As I say, I don't know if he is aware of it.

Interviewer: You are hurt.

Penny: I am very hurt, very, very hurt. Apart from the death, I have never had such a massive thing happen in my life that I am dead affected by it, as that.

Interviewer: You say a massive thing apart from the death. This is so big for you that it is almost as big as the death.

Penny: No, nothing is, nothing is as big as the death but outside of that, in the material sense of everyday things, I have never in my life been as upset about something as that. Those things do not come together. There is no link between the two (son's death and the absent view). The death is too bad.

(the following is not included with data analysis of 'letting go', yet illustrates the continuous mobility of the phenomenon and the difficulty of containing it in stasis)

Penny: (Cries bitterly)

Interviewer: There's still tremendous pain there.

Penny: I don't want to talk about Barry (deceased son).

Interviewer: You would rather not go there.

Penny: (Cries bitterly).

Interviewer: There's still tremendous sadness about him. Suddenly he wasn't there.

Penny: Interviewer....My mother, my father and my son died in one year!

Interviewer: Gosh.

Penny: And that was just too much. It was just too much.

Interviewer: So three significant people in your life left.

Penny: I don't even think about my parent's death. I just put it on one side. I can't deal with it.

Interviewer: When did Barry die?

Penny: Seven years ago. I can talk a little bit now about it but I can't. I don't want to talk about him, particularly as I did in the beginning. I had to talk about him in the beginning but then everyone was also so uncomfortable with it as well and I needed them not to be like he never lived.

Interviewer: He was part of you and part of your world.

Penny: Yes, but you know how it is with people. People do not know what to do, and people do not know what to say.

Interviewer: You understood that for them it wasn't easy but you had to deal with it.

Penny: They can't offer you anything. What comfort can they give you? They were just uncomfortable speaking about it, you know. I did speak about it. You know I needed to tell everybody that Barry had died and I did, but I don't know. If you talk about this letting go thing, this is the thing that people say you must let go of this and move on. You know, for every person it is so, so different. There can't be prescribed times – that

you have the acceptance stage, the resignation, the anger and those different stages but surely for each person it must be an entirely different thing you know and the same is with the death of someone. To say to a person, “Look after three years you should have reached this stage”. I don’t understand how someone can say that. Each person has to deal with what he has to deal with how best he can deal with it and in the time that he can deal with it.

Interviewer: This was told to you.

Penny: Someone once said that to me about my son. Everybody took it so badly. My son went into depression. I think that he is only just starting to come right – maybe and she said... “No it happened so long ago, you should be over it by now, so move on”.

Interviewer: This is what makes you angry with the expression letting go, which implies that things can be behind you and you feel that you can’t just put things behind you.

Penny. No I am not saying that Interviewer. I am just saying...I am just saying...I am not saying that at all. It’s not a question of putting things behind you but it’s getting on. Of course you have to get on. You as a psychologist have work, and you have to carry on with your work. It’s almost like your work is a saviour because you keep your mind busy. You have to carry on because you are in the land of the living people.

Interviewer: You carried on after Barry’s death.

Penny: I had to carry on. I had to carry on. I was no good at carrying on but I carried on anyway. You know, Jack says he thinks of Barry everyday. Maybe it’s different for him. I don’t like to say because some people say that it’s different for mothers.

Interviewer: You think of him daily.

Penny: Everyday. Everyday...Everyday.

Interviewer: So he is still part of your life.

Penny: Part of my thoughts. You know. I don’t know, part of my mind...I once followed a chap in Cape Town. His profile was like Barry’s. I was sitting somewhere and I was having tea or something. I don’t know and it was in my imagination. (Crying) I did everything to see him...(Crying) it was such a break...(Crying)

Interviewer: He was suddenly gone, suddenly.

Penny: I don’t think one can ever let go of anything like that. Really.

Interviewer: You haven’t let go. You always think of him.



Penny: I don't think anyone can. Maybe... I have got a friend and we talk... We sit and talk. I know I can speak to her because she knows. You know, you go on with your life and then sometimes you have a conflict and you keep the exterior for other people. They don't know what is going on inside of you. I don't think that I am spiritually into Barry. I mean I know that Barry has died and there's nothing. It's the memory. The biggest thing, the very biggest thing is the fact – the lack of life because he was only seventeen and it was the wrong way. It shouldn't have happened like that. The loss of life. He left early. It's wrong. It doesn't make sense. It's not the order of things. You shouldn't bury your children. I'm not saying that death is a natural thing. It's always unnatural to a person. That death is. Nobody wants death to happen...but the natural order of things.

Interviewer: You would be willing to accept the norm.

Penny: It wasn't natural because he would have had to outlive me. You are powerless, powerless and there's no goodbye. Afterwards you don't know how to deal with this stuff. Should you laugh? The first time: "Oh should I have laughed?" You know everything you do after Barry. It's like before and after Barry. I have kept a diary... all this time. I tell him what's happening...in the house...I just do it I don't know for what.

Interviewer: You communicate.

Penny: No, I don't know for what...for continuity. There's no goodbye. It's not like someone is in hospital and they are slowly dying of cancer and you are saying your goodbyes.

Interviewer: You trust that things will continue.

Penny: How do we keep going if we don't?

Interviewer: So continuity is important.

Penny: Maybe with the house. The death of child is not in the same league. There's nothing that's happened to me that has been as traumatic as Barry's death and everything after that...how we think has changed. My way of thinking changed. My way of thinking changed my relationships with the other children. My daughter would say, "But we are still here". I got angry with her and then not, because... I knew that what she was saying was that Barry is not the only child. By the same token I can't minimise his loss and carry on. I can't minimise this. I don't want to but I can't even try.

Interviewer: So it affected your life.

Penny: Absolutely. It changed a whole lot of things. I like music and I would always sing and I realise now that I don't sing any more. I have now started again because I always have a song in my head and now I slowly do... but I didn't for years. I didn't sing out loud.

Interviewer: So you are regaining what you knew.

Penny: Starting to regain. I would have been happy-go-lucky, I would have been frivolous but I am no longer frivolous. My sense of humour went down the shoot. Big changes. Big changes...I mean if you haven't got your family who have you got?

Interviewer: So you would say that these have been the two major letting go experiences in your life – the death of Barry and moving home.

Penny: Letting go what is letting go? You can't just sever the tie and boom!

Interviewer: Is that what letting means to you?

Penny: Yes, cut off – I mean cut the rope and off goes the boat. I don't think so. I think that it stays connected somehow.

Interviewer: So what you are saying is that you never let go?

Penny: Certainly not with the things that have a major importance in your life.

### **Research Participant D : John (J)**

John: Depending on the experience, leading up to this letting go determines how the letting go process will play itself out. In my particular situation there are two that we could actually discuss. They are very different. The one is my first business, where it was very important to me, and I let it go, and now ten years down the line it is not as if it bothers me. So it was an easy let go. The other one was the experience with Moira (ex-fiancée) where ten years down the line, I am still trying to finally get to grips with it, and yet, that was also a situation of letting go. You had to let go in those situations. Both of them are very similar in terms of, I had one business then, I have another business now. The first business does not bother me. I am happy with the second one. I had a relationship then, I have a relationship now. The new relationship bothers me, because one hasn't let go fully, of that first experience. Maybe for this purpose one should look at why is it that you let go of the one and it doesn't bother you, and you do similar things and it doesn't bother you and its fine, and the new venture does not get hampered by thoughts of the old one. This relationship situation which should be similar in principle, the old one that's finished, and the new one that has started, yet the new one is complicated because of the old one and that has got everything to do with letting go of the old one.

The way I experience it is, if one is not one hundred percent sure that it was the right thing to do, then letting go is going to become a problem. Because practically, maybe it was the right decision, yet in your heart, and in your emotions, you are not one hundred percent sure. So objectively speaking, non-emotionally speaking, by just looking at the facts, you could not have made any other choice. So one part of you says, "That was the right thing to do, so now, let it go". That other part of you, which is the emotional, deep down part of you, there's a "I don't really care what the facts are, whether or not it was the right or not the right thing to do, I don't really care". Emotionally, this practice or this thing that you had to do is now causing me pain and causing me issues, which boils down to again the decision that you are making: I now have to let go. If one is not one hundred percent sure of that decision, practically, you will still let go because circumstances will force you in that direction. You will have no choice because practically you can't go on with the situation, like I had with Moira. It was we now had to get married at some point. We had gone through all of the steps but we now had to finally put the stamp on the documents and finish this thing and practically there it broke down. And there was no way for me to continue in that situation. I had to leave the situation because I had no choice, yet ten years down the line, one is now thinking because you were not one hundred percent sure, you now have doubts. How could have done this? Could I have not done something differently? Could I have not have explored another avenue? Did I do everything possible before I let go? That is the only thing that made letting go difficult. So letting go was only an issue in terms of the decision that preceded it. If like with my business, before I let go I was a one hundred percent happy that it's fine, "We will have another opportunity. We will have another chance somewhere. We will never let go of this that we tried to achieve. So we will maintain that. We will try again another day.". And that's fine the decision was taken. The legal documentation was drawn. There were

no issues; there were no risks. There was nothing more and have a nice day! Ten years down the line, I now own a successful business, and I am coping. Whereas on the other side, after a lot of therapy, one has to reiterate to yourself, and actually go back to one stage before the letting go, and go and sort out that part. So that ten years later when memory has now faded and only the good memories have remained and the bad experiences and the practical situations that led to making this decision have now faded. That's human nature. We don't hold on to our thoughts, we let go of them as quickly as what we can. We cherish the good moments. The problem is that if you make the decision hastily or emotionally unstable and it wasn't a well thought through structured type of decision, then you have to go back to before that. Maybe remind yourself and confirm for yourself, ten years down the line that that was the right decision you made. So now ten years down the line for a change you can let go because you hadn't, in ten years, let go. You thought you did, maybe, again practically speaking, if you look at your life you would have convinced anyone that you have moved on. You had a couple of girlfriends, got married, had kids. So on the surface it looks OK and if you are not looking very deep and whoever may be observing, the letting go has happened. Meanwhile under the surface, there's a whole lot of unfinished business, which means, no you have not let go. If you don't let go you cannot progress. Holding on is in all respects detrimental. Permitting that it was the right decision to make, obviously. If after ten years one goes back and says, "It was the wrong decision to make", then you never have to let go. Then you must go back and go and hold on again but if you find out that it was the right decision, then only can you start to let go but whilst you haven't got there yet, this holding on is damaging. In all respects it's bad.

Interviewer: You say the holding on is bad?

John: One hundred percent. Letting go is the only means of starting to heal. Healing can't come if letting go hasn't come, in my opinion. As long as you are still holding on for fear of life, to whatever the experience was, you can't get to healing. If letting go hasn't happened, then you can't think about healing, it hasn't started.

Interviewer: You say holding on is damaging.

John: Tremendously.

Interviewer: How do you see this related to your experience with Moira?

John: Basically, For a start if I had let go properly, the time when the incident happened.

Interviewer: What incident?

John: When we broke up. When we cancelled our engagement and we went our separate ways. I think that if at that point, I had let go properly, my life today, ten years later would be very different. I would probably not be married to my kind of wife, I would probably not have my little one, I would probably have been happier because if I had let go earlier I could have controlled the damage. There's going to be damage. I mean these

big emotional situations. These big emotional traumas always leave scars. But I think that if I had worked through it better, earlier in other words, let go earlier, I could have healed earlier. I could have six years or eight years ago looked at my life and said, “What do I want? What is good for me? If its good for me to maybe look at six or ten different relationships before I commit again and make one hundred percent sure that when I commit again, it will be for all the right reasons, I would have done it. Conversely, or practically speaking, what happened is that holding on that has made you so emotionally unstable and created so much underlying turbulence, turmoil in your emotions that you become desperate for a solution. You are not solving the problem but you are desperate for a solution to the symptoms of the problem and the symptoms of the problem, in my particular case was, “I need to move on, I need something to convince myself that its OK. You have now moved on.”, which led me to hastily get married, hastily have a child and now for the rest of my life I can now decide what I want to do with this new problem. Do I want to manage this problem? Do I want leave this environment and create a new problem? What do I want to do? But the damage is done. There’s nothing we can do. We can’t go back now six or seven years and undo the damage. The scars are there. The practical day-to-day commitments are now there and that is as a direct result of non letting go.

Interviewer: You mean you did not let go?

John: Not at all, not at all. I was desperately holding on, yet practically on the surface, I was trying to move along. So I was trying to let go practically and trying, looking for opportunities, things to do in order to let these things happen.

Interviewer: So it almost as if it is on two levels.

John: Yes. Ja, on the surface there are pretty pictures and everything looks fine, everything is “lekker” (nice). Just underneath that, just under the surface there is actually the bubbling. That’s where the turmoil lies and it’s that turmoil that is directly related to not letting go because if you had let go, the waters would come. Like in my business. I had let go in my first business, got myself a job again, got stability back into my life again, got some income, settled some of my debts and just moved along and progressed in my career and worked hard and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. All with, in the back of my mind, always this thing of, I am going somewhere. Because the waters had calmed down and everything had settled down and now you get a chance to think clearly. There’s no threat, there’s nothing clouding your mind. Everything is normal. Everything is fine. Got a day job, every month there is a salary coming, you can pay your car and you can pay your house. You can live. And while you can live in these placid waters you can now look for opportunity, which because I did not let go of Moira emotionally, I could never do, because the waters emotionally never settle down. You know it was always stormy seas, fighting for survival, trying to keep the ship up straight. You know the ship is sailing the water is calm. So now, for a change, you can take a deep breath and say, “Whew, thank goodness, we got through that rough patch. Now there’s a little bit of calm seas ahead. Let’s look around and clearly thinking, look for new opportunity.” and as I say it’s got everything to do with holding on. If one can let go or rather if you could let

go why did you not let go? Why was it easy for me to let go of the business yet I could not let go of Moira? It was all in the same time period, by the way. So I was as old or as young or as mature or as immature in both situations. It was not as if the one happened when I was eighteen and the other when I was twenty-eight. All the same time and its all the same me yet the one you close off, it goes away. The lingering thought was, “ It wasn’t bad. Yes, maybe it was unpleasant. It was a good experience. I gained a lot of knowledge, which I will apply later when the opportunity arises. I could have done exactly the same with Moira. Maybe, I could have even made more use because I had so much longer with her. I had only had the business for a year. I had a relationship for seven years with Moira. I had so much more information, so much more knowledge in terms of me, of what I want, in terms of how does the ideal potential wife for me. How does she look? Who is she? What are her qualities what are her attributes? What are the things that I have to have? What are the things that I would like to have in a potential partner? Yet all of that information experience, which I could have applied so well in terms of making the decision, like with the business, I was never not going to have another business. I was always going to have another business. I am going to get there, exactly the same in a relationship. I don’t see myself as a bachelor until I am 60. I see myself as a married person. I see myself with kids. I see myself in a happy family so life was a business. There was this lingering thought that should say, “It was unpleasant so take what you could out of it, apply it to this new sort of opportunities that you have, and make sure that you have the right choices now”. It does not a happen. All of that knowledge, all of that information is somewhere but it is not readily available to use. The tools are there somewhere because you can’t have not experienced these things, you can’t have not have gained knowledge out of this exercise, yet you don’t apply it.

Interviewer: So it’s not easily accessible and not available to you?

John: Not all. It is there, somewhere. You know deep down in the back of your mind these tools are there. This information is there but you don’t know it. Many an attribute in Joan (wife), I think came from the experience with Moira. It wasn’t an objective decision from my side. It was like a roller coaster. I landed up in this relationship and we just went with the flow, kind of thing. But even selecting her as a potential partner, some very good qualities are there today. You know that she is a very good mom and she is extremely efficient in what she does. All of those things must have something to do with the relationship I had with Moira. Some of the tools that you get do come up but all of it not all of the knowledge, not all of the experience apply properly because the waters are too turbulent. The storm is raging too much around you for you to really be able to sit down and say, “OK so where are we?” To kind of get an opportunity to rethink.

Interviewer: Tell me about the turbulent storms. It seems like the turbulent storms and the holding on was the difficulty.

John: Very much so, because I think it’s a battle inside yourself. You can’t have this battle with whoever or whatever caused this problem, like with Moira. I can’t have the struggle with her. The struggle with her is finished. Practically we are not seeing each other any more. We are not dating any more. We are not... We are no more. Yet within

me, that's not finalised yet and I am still trying to work through all of this. I am still trying to get to grips with all of the emotional issues, all of the pain; all of the... everything that comes with this break, this emotional crisis. Maybe the turbulence that I am referring to is this battle that rages in your head, especially in the early stages after the emotional friction that causes the need to let go. You try to get to grips with all of this emotion that's going through you and maybe the letting go part again you have to get back to the decision because the decision to break up if it is the right decision and you are one hundred percent convinced. I think the turbulence period might be shorter. Any emotional crisis, as far as I am concerned, is followed by emotional turbulence, it must be otherwise it would not be a crisis and would just be an emotional event. So if it is a crisis, it has to be followed by turbulence or emotional instability. The struggle and the pain that you try to get to grips with. If the decision is right that period of emotional pain is not very long and you kind of get over it and you heal almost I want to say short term. There is a "groot eina" (great ouch) and then it heals, and then you can kind of get to grips with the long-term effects and move on. But again, if you are not sure that the decision was the right one, then this period of emotional instability and the pain stretches and stretches. Yes, it becomes less. It becomes less because of fading, rather than healing.

Interviewer: What do you feel is the difference?

John: One hundred percent. In my opinion, it's very hard to hold on that tight because practically you just don't have the stimulus anymore. You know you are not in that relationship any more. So from both sides, the good and the bad is gone. You don't have the good times any more. You don't have the romantic evenings anymore, but also you don't have the issues like with her mother or her brother, whatever could have caused the friction. So in terms of your everyday life, the stimulus is gone, then the memory starts to fade. Therefore you now perceive this fading as healing and it feels to you like you getting better. Meanwhile it's just your short-term memory that's failing you. You know there is nothing healing here. Your short-term memory is just failing and you "sommer gaan aan" (simply carry on). The stimuli start triggering the turmoil underneath, which is how I realised that I could not cope. I had already thought that everything was fine. I had taken the failing memory as healing until I got married and had children and had new issues, new problems and new things to deal with and my response to the stimuli was out of proportion. You know something small with Joan caused me to explode like it was the end of the world and later I said, "Hold on, maybe she is just the trigger".

Interviewer: So it wasn't appropriate to the context.

John: No, it was out of proportion. The stimulus was small and the reaction was big. The next morning, I would think and wonder to myself, "Why did I explode like that so aggressively and so exaggerated? It's such a small issue. You could have brushed the issue aside. Why? It's such a small issue. It would take you two minutes to resolve an issue like that. It's not a potential divorce". Then only did I realise that letting go was the problem, because I said, "You have not let go, You are still there. Your body is here and only a part of you mind is here. The rest is still there". Like I say maybe that is the



biggest problem with letting go. It's deceptive.

Interviewer: Deceptive?

John: Yes, it deceives you. It presents itself to you as if it has happened, and that is not true. It's like a hologram. A picture that you can see that has more to do with the fading Memory of the good and bad times than anything with letting go but it looks to you like everything is fine and you think that you are on the road to recovery and that you have moved on. You are OK. Meanwhile bottom line basics, you're not, because you have not let go. It's an instinctive thing that we instinctively know that we cannot hold on to the past and maybe it was the death of a grandparent. Things that influenced us in our lives which grandfather. Even if you loved the guy to bits and you are a ten year old and you don't understand these black dresses and tears, but somewhere something registers, this bloke has gone and we have to move on with our lives. Yes we can hold on to the memory and hold his pictures on the sideboard, but he has gone. He is no more. So your mind is almost anticipating this experience of letting go because it's a natural thing because you are ready for it. Now this fading memory comes and presents itself to you and if you are not careful you don't see the difference between, the practical side of a fading memory, and the practical side of having let go, because they look very similar. If you had let go, you would move on. You would have more relationships. You would have kids. If you have a failing memory you will have more relationships. You will have kids. They are so similar in their appearance. If you don't go digging then a day in your life comes that you realise that you have been deceiving yourself. Maybe you have not been true to yourself and maybe just been human. You had seen the practical things for what you had hoped they were and then one day you realise that they are not and then you have a problem. Then you have to go back and you say, "Oh this is where I am standing and this is where I am holding on". Lets slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly try and release the grip that we have on this experience and distance ourself and then move on.

Interviewer: So you had to go back?

John: I think so, because part of you is here and part of you is here (demonstrates), so this part must come back and there you have to fix and finished for the whole of you to emotionally to come back here. The holding on is here so the letting go must be here and that's a painful exercise.

Interviewer: Painful? In what way?

John: Just simply because of the fact that you are going deep, so deep and so dark down into yourself that you have to re-live all of these painful experiences. You have to go back there and go and do what you should have done in the first place and let go. So now you are experiencing the same pain twice. You have been through all the pain but maybe you hadn't worked through it, but you walked through it. You had tried to shield yourself as far as possible. You make the defence as strong as possible, so as few as possible bullets get through, and you walk through this jungle and you get out on the other side. But now you have to go back and say "You need to finish this off and the only way to



finish it off is to go back into the jungle, and let the defences down and work through it rather than just trying to get through it, as quickly as possible. So the pain lies in we living the bad experiences. Your fading memory lets the good times fade. I think it lets the bad times fade three times as quickly. The good times will linger probably until you die. Small parts: A week after we broke up, I could still tell you to the day and the date of things that happened in our lives. I could re-live experiences that were very there and very clear in your mind. Today, ten years down the line, the details are sketchy. It's not there anymore. With some effort I suppose you could work it out, it's gone, it's not there any more but in the same breath, the better times are even deeper, one experience maybe two at a push that you can remember the good memories. Sure there are not 100 anymore but there are still a few, six or seven really strong ones like the Comrade's Marathon they just held out. They are still there but they vastly outnumber the bad experiences, in terms of the really strong ones that have remained. Now if you go back these two bad ones that are here, plus another ten or twelve ones, or how many you can uncover in your search, but they all surface and all come back. Now you are not looking for any deep, good things and now there is a serious imbalance, so it's only the pain, only the bad times because you are basically just looking to reaffirm to yourself the decision that you have made. To look back and see what caused the decision and it's definitely not the good times that cause the decision. The bad things have caused it, so you are going to dig and you are going to search for the bad things and not for the good things. So maybe when it just happened at least you still have the balance of good to bad, because they are all current in your mind. Now when you go back you are looking but you are not digging. All the memoirs you trash, the good times must go. So I think that the pain lies in that that you have to experience the pain and re-live it again and secondly there is no good to look at. Maybe now you are genuinely confronting the issue. Initially you have this good and bad balance and the bad just, just outweighs the good otherwise you would not have made the split. I would not have taken my bags and gone my merry little way if the good did outweigh the bad heavily. So the bad just outweighs the good enough, and you are irritated enough, and annoyed enough, to make the decision, and the moment you have made the decision your mind goes "Are you sure?" It's a small difference it's not a grand difference. Maybe letting go has got to do with the gap between the good and the bad. The gap, like in my business; the good was good. It wasn't overwhelming. We were not coining it and we were not young millionaires in the making. The good was "lekker" (nice) but the bad outweighed it heavily. There were issues with my partner. You have to work until four o'clock in the morning. I have to carry all the burden. He just takes all of my money. It's what pushes you over the edge what makes you go to the point that you make a break. If that push is very strong then the letting go comes easily. If the push is marginal then the letting go will be difficult.

Interviewer: What do you mean by the push?

John: The issues; the bad things, which you perceive in your mind that this situation is not worthwhile anymore. Like someone pushing you. Like my partner not wanting to participate in the tough times. Selling door to door. I have never seen a happy salesman like that, because it's not a nice thing to do. You are intruding on people's time and people are rude. It's not nice. He took the nice things, the bad he never took so he was

pushing me with his actions and at one point, I had to evaluate my current situation. Am I happy with this situation? I would not be asking if I was. I am happy with some things and you take a back step and evaluate, and depending on how heavily the bad outweighs the good will make letting go easier or difficult. I don't think letting go can in its essence be an easy thing. It is a difficult thing it's just the grade of difficulty. Like easier and more difficult maths. I would have physically attacked the guy if I had not left if you can say this makes me so angry then its easy.

Interviewer: So in the business it was easy but not with Moira.

John: Not with Moira because with Moira it was genuinely marginal. It was just that little something that wasn't clicking. It was not as if we were fighting with each other all the time. We were happy. Everything was bliss, but there was this one. You still have to make a decision evaluate and say, "Nope, it's not going to work and I have to go" It was nice and lovely, and I enjoyed the next three months of my life incredibly because I looked up. I was free and gone with the business but with Moira it was, "Why is she not walking down the aisle? Why am I only making one cup of coffee at seven in the morning and not two? She is supposed to be here so that we can have coffee and I can then drop her off at work.. There's no getting around that if you take one step back and re-evaluate the situation and find that the bad outweighs the good. The discrepancy is too small, the margin is too small and I am going to live with this. I am going to stomach it and I will grit my teeth and live with it. Me on the other hand with my black and white type of personality: if its 51% bad and 49% good, then it's a bad thing. I tried to swing the balances but unfortunately the scales tipped in favour of bad and therefore I had to leave. That is, essentially you determine how difficult it is going to be. If you feel relief, then letting go is easy, and I don't think you were ever holding on.

Interviewer: Did you feel relief?

John: With the business yes, but not with Moira. No, but relief of the bad part. The fact that I did not have to see her mother any more. I did not have to listen to her mother's jabbering any more or look at her brother any more with the question of who is first going to pull the guns me, or you? So relief from that part, but the relief immediately balances off with a big part of heartache. There is a part of longing here. The relief is here but the heartache is also here. "Where are you? I'm missing you."

Interviewer: There was the missing and the longing.

John: One hundred percent. Like I said earlier it's the longing that lingers. The relief is lovely but if it's gone, it's gone. The frustration the issues have gone. That's gone... but what about my longing? That's the one that lingers. Like I said, it makes the real letting go so very different. You may try to balance, but it was a precarious balance when you make the decision, and once the decision has been made, it becomes ten times more difficult because your longing outweighs. You are emotionally so vulnerable, absolutely exposed. And you know that somewhere, somehow, there is going to be a lot of pain.

Interviewer: When?

John: When you make the break. Even while you are considering whether I go or not, you know there is pain coming my way. Now the moment you make the decision, and I am going to make the decision, and because you are on the defensive maybe you grasp at any good emotion that you have because of all the pain. Immediately the bad things are gone. That is 'mos' why you left the equation. Her mother, in my situation, of her mother yapping in my ear, that's not going to happen any more because I don't go there any more. I don't see them any more, so lekker (nice) but now the pain that I have. How the hell do I deal with this pain? By grasping onto the good things that I can find, because you are desperate, and you don't know when to go and when to leave. Now it's the good things you cling onto. The knuckles go white because you are holding on so bad and that is what you are not supposed to do. You must let go, maybe because of the precarious balance, the pain, the turmoil. All of that stuff makes you do exactly the opposite. You just hold on for dear life.

Interviewer: So as you are making the break you find that you are going back again.

John: Yes, and then starts the process. In my case it took ten years. Other people might take longer. Other people might take shorter but definitely the process is the same where you allow time to pass. You allow other things. You work harder. You drink more. You play; you do whatever you have to. You shield yourself off from all of these things. To do something else so that you don't have time to wonder about all of this stuff, which is so threatening. Then time starts running by and then the fading thing starts happening. The memories start to fade. Slowly but surely you get to the deception part where you mind was so desperate for a solution that it starts to tell itself. "Look at me. Just look at me. Am I not the perfect example of someone who is coping?"

Interviewer: You actually believe that?

John: One hundred percent. I'm not well yet or over her yet, but boy oh boy, just look at me. You believe that you are getting there but meanwhile back at the ranch you aren't getting there. You are living. You are going through the motions but you definitely are not alive again.

Interviewer: Not alive?

John: Emotionally you are very dead. There's a chunk of you that maybe in a 100 years, there is still a 'geraamtetjie' (little skeleton) that's hanging on. How could I marry my wife as a purely unemotional decision? That is ludicrous, that is crazy!

Interviewer: So the emotional part is not there.

John: And I perceive myself to be an emotional person! After business, the second most important decision in my life, I made unemotionally! Crazy! The only explanation I

could find is that part of you is there, the emotional guy is there, but he is hanging onto something there, he is not here. If he was there, maybe he would have contributed.

Interviewer: Where would you say that you are today?

John: Quite close to the point where one can actually say you are really there. You have really let go because letting go is a process. Maybe, because it was such a process to get here. In the business it was easy, it was clean cut. There is no process. I think with Moira, I am this close to actually having that peace of mind, that general sense of calm. The waters are settled. The wind has stopped howling. The sun is rising and it's clear. I can see the symptoms of the end of the storm. As you can see a storm building, in the same way I can see the storm almost nearing an end. Some of the clouds are subsiding and I know that instinctively, you are almost there where the sun will break through and then, if you look around, there is the calmness. Then everything will be cool, and then, you now have a problem because that letting go has got consequences. Getting to the calm, unlike with my business, you are not free to say, "Where to from here?" because you now have to say, "What to do with what I have got?" because there are passengers on this boat. All of a sudden, there's baggage, things, which have happened as a direct result of not letting go. Maybe it creates new issues. I don't know but you can get through it.

### **Research Participant E: Karen (K)**

Karen: To me, letting go is a very broad term but I really think that having children and letting go... If I think about parents who have lost their child, it must be absolutely dreadful and devastating. It is hard enough having to cope when they are teenagers. Like I found with Matt, specifically during standard six, was dreadful, because I felt absolutely rejected. Although he was close, and still is very close to me, as a child, he would make remarks to me at a parents' meeting, "Please be quiet" and "Don't you have something to say" or "Please you can drop me off over here". I definitely had to realise my distance how far I could go. After a while he sort of let me back in again, but like if we were on to parents evening, he would say to me, "Please behave", and things like that. I wasn't really used to getting this sort of, you can't really call it backchat, but being reprimanded and told how to behave. That is when I started realise that he is getting bigger and moving away. Once it was sort of put to me by a psychologist friend, who explained to me, "You can expect that. It's part of their growing up and finding their feet". It was then easy to accept that. But little things that they say or realise then making you feel that you are not cool, or that you are overweight, or little things that embarrasses them. You sometimes experience it as so hurtful too, and you know, not reacting to it and letting go and letting them be. The next part of it was going out, like to socials. Let him go, let him go to socials. You have got to let them go but you... I always think that I can trust my children but I can't trust the people out there. I think from when we were children things have changed dramatically. We could go on bicycles or on horseback to places you could not even dream of letting them go to now. Also, like realising that he now has his learner's license. Now he can start driving. The whole matric year and matric itself. You know that they are learning and they are doing well but also now they are going for their driver's licence. They haven't started driving and when they have got that licence, now they can go out, they have got that freedom. Once again that feeling of "What's happening out there?", "I know you can drive, you have got your driver's licence, you have had the lessons, you have the lessons and a lot of practice, but I still don't trust the people out there. Also when they say they are going to different places, like they are going to meet in Hatfield. There are certain areas that you feel are safer, and that type of thing. The matric party that they had, the last day of school, or the party that they had. Although it was still school time, it was dreadful. Not saying something, and not being overprotective, but allowing and letting them experiment and hoping they come out the other side in one piece. Like for example, I knew, that boys will be boys and girls, I think, aren't as bad, although I have heard rumours that they also do try alcohol. They go through a phase and they test these things. And you know, Nikki still said that her husband said that you have got to let them get drunk at some stage and let them go overboard so that they do it before they get married, you know. Hearing it from other young men, who have sort of been through that phase, or are closer to that age, it makes it a bit easier. But oh boy, it is a stressful time. That letting go, to me, is very stressful and I think. I can also see it with some of the mothers that come to me with their teenagers with stuttering problems. They are at loggerheads, not with the stuttering problem but with interpersonal relationships, and not being this overprotective mother. You are protective but you have not got to show too much and you have got to let go. Even last

year was quite a difficult year suddenly, also the realisation that Matt has a girlfriend. They go out in a group and they go to a social, but he never really had a girlfriend. He took a very nice girl to the matric dance, but she was just a friend, nothing serious but then suddenly the realisation that I can ask him to do things, but I must accept that he can't always do it for me, because he has made prior arrangements. You know, those little things. During matric or the first year I was never driven to tears but in the standard six; that letting go, that getting reprimanded and being put in my place and being a sort of a no good person - that often reduced me to tears. That was really a tough time.

Interviewer: It was an unhappy time for you?

Karen: It was an unhappy time.

Interviewer: You also speak of the concern. The greater the distance the more concerned you were, like with the going out to socials, taking a girlfriend.

Karen: You know I think the concern is one of protection. You don't want anything to happen, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: So were you anxious?

Karen: Yes, yes because I don't want anything to happen to him.

Interviewer: What could happen to him?

Karen: One sees so many times the innocent person driving along and being in a car crash and getting hurt. Often there is someone that is drunk out there because he has played roulette and he is completely relaxed and survives everything. That's the type of thing, and one also knows that they also, they haven't had experience in driving and reacting to situations. I suppose that is what makes one anxious. They don't have the wisdom. They are young adults. You have got to respect them for that but they haven't got the wisdom, or the experience yet. One looks back and one realises that even as a teenager the young person... I know that I did things that were irresponsible, and I suppose because you did things that were irresponsible, you don't want your child to do it because you know that it could have led to something. Luckily it did not lead to something unfortunate, but it could have, that type of thing.

Interviewer: It could lead to something. Do you mean that he could be irresponsible?

Karen: Yes it could.

Interviewer: So he is not the child you used to know?

Karen: I suppose yes. I suppose one hangs onto the past. If you look at old photographs, you often look and you see that each phase is an interesting phase and a nice phase to grow up with your child. If you look at photographs you sometimes think, "I wish I could

have made time to stand still for a little while during that phase. This is a fantastic period". I am not saying that now isn't a nice phase, not at all. It is a nice phase with different things that come with it. There are also exciting things that come with it. As a phase starts, you often go through a lot of turmoil. Sometimes, a little bit of heartache and things like that.

Interviewer: So you do look back at the past. Has the past become significant?

Karen: I don't know. Maybe I am just a person like that clings a bit to the past. You know, in that sense, it is significant.

Interviewer: Things aren't the way they used to be and you are anxious about the changes.

Karen: I would say yes.

Interviewer: Is this what you see as letting go?

Karen: I suppose this is the difficulty letting go - not looking to the past, but looking forward and not seeing the positive things. But sometimes one gets embroiled with the now, and then you don't really see the things of the future, and I think, that is the difficulty in letting go.

Interviewer: Is the difficulty in not seeing the positive things in the future?

Karen: Yes, and I think that is what makes the letting go more difficult, not seeing the positive things ahead.

Interviewer: So you do see positive things there?

Karen: Oh yes, there are positive things there because if I look at it, I am looking forward to going to Matt's graduation and the same with Alice's (daughter). I think that will be fantastic. Also, to think that he has got his job; he is on his own. You know I think that those are positive things but sometimes when one is in the situation it is difficult to realise that he can have a girlfriend and she can take priority over you (laughs). He is allowed to say, "You know I can't help you now because I have this date or whatever". You know, that sort of letting go.

Interviewer: You say she has priority over you. Do you feel that you are handing over?

Karen: No. I don't think that I am handing over. I just think that sometimes one takes things, maybe for granted. He has always been very close to me. Alice sometimes shoves me away, but that is another whole thing. But with Matt, if I say, "Can you help me with this", he would do it, whereas now he will say "No, I can't help you now, because....". I have to accept that because if he has made an appointment or an arrangement, I just respect that. Sometimes, I get home tired and you think that there is no one in the house



is helping me. There is no use getting angry you just have to think about it and you say, “ You know, I am angry and frustrated because of things that have happened at work. I can’t get it out on them and I think that sometimes, just also that letting go, that understanding of you have got to realise me...*(inaudible)*...Alice is also getting older. I also think of the future and the empty nest syndrome. You realise that they are going out. You have got to let them go and now you are on your own and you are not doing family things any more.

Interviewer: So family things have been important?

Karen: Yes and we have always been a close-knit family.

Interviewer: Is that changing?

Karen: Yes and one of the things that has changed is not going on holiday together. Just accepting that. The first big thing was the matric holiday. You know at the end of the year, when they all want to go together. Also just letting go. You know where they are going, and how they are going, but not whether they are going to get there safely, there and back. Just allowing them, and the fact that... When was it? In December; the actual year to me was too terrible. The weeks before that, Alice had water polo. It was the Nationals in Johannesburg and we wanted to fly her down to join us but by the time she decided what she wanted to do, I could not get a cheaper ticket anymore. So she went to water polo and Matt stayed home to look after the house, Kurt and I went away for the first time, since I went to Sun City with friends, approximately twenty years ago! The weeks beforehand, there was all that guilt as well.

Interviewer: Do you mean guilt before you left?

Karen: Yes, to leave these children, you know I am actually deserting them. They took it much easier. I am sure Alice missed me or missed both of us, and would have liked us to have seen some of the matches, but she was with her buddies, but I felt so guilty not being there. You know, Kurt took it much easier but that’s letting go, that they can let go and have their own holidays and do their own thing and we can actually also do our own thing.

Interviewer: You spoke of the empty nest.

Karen: You know I think back on my relationship with my parents. We were also a close-knit family. I suppose, one thinks also to the future, because both of them have spoken about going overseas. I went overseas after I was a student. I often, even now, I think I had a really nice time. I enjoyed where I worked and I was not sure whether I wanted to come back. I started to come back to visit and rather get German citizenship and stay and keep visiting. Really, it was very difficult but I came back and even though I moved on and I had my own flatlet, when I came back, I was always still with the family and maintained contact with the family. Both Matt and Alice are both talking about that they both would like to go overseas, and I hope that they do go overseas. I



want them to do that, to spread their wings. But it's also that feeling that they also might not come back and that is the sort of scariness of being all alone.

Interviewer: How do you feel about being alone?

Karen: I think there are times one can cope because you find activities to do. Even when I'm alone at home and there's nobody there and even Johannes (gardener) is in the garden. He comes twice a week. Alice is at school and I am alone with the dogs. I have work to do but it is the stillness of the house that is sort of eerie and uncomfortable. You are busy, your mind is busy but you still experience that sort of...I think that is when you suddenly realise that everybody is out the house you have got to an age that you have retired but you haven't got your job anymore. There is only the stillness. I suppose that I am very aware of it because my dad is experiencing that loneliness.

Interviewer: Do you see the relationship with your children similar to that with your parents?

Karen: As you see you parents ageing you realise that it is a path that you have to travel as well. You reach a certain age where you become aware of it, more aware of it than if you were younger. Old people, by just talking, because you experience it and live it. Suddenly, it becomes a reality that you realise, that it could be me. Interviewer: Are you saying that you realise that you are getting old as well?

Karen: Yes.

Interviewer: What do you feel this has got to do with your letting go of Matt and the initial separation there?

Karen: First of all there is a conflict. You know that there is a conflict. You know that you have to let go but you don't want to lose.

Interviewer: So is letting go losing?

Karen: It is in a way losing, yes.

Interviewer: Losing what?

Karen: Losing the person you share with, the company, the understanding with your family. You have a different relationship with each member. There are certain things that you don't want to burden your children with, but there are certain things that you discuss with them. In a way they are a sounding board and you know, I do see it as a loss. I suppose I can use the word, but I see it as a painful process.

Interviewer: There is pain?

Karen: There is that pain and it is not nice.

Interviewer: It seems unpleasant.

Karen: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: So it is not any easy process for you?

Karen: No, no, definitely not.

Interviewer: And yet earlier on you said that you were also looking forward to certain things like the graduation.

Karen: Yes. That is right.

Interviewer: Anything else you would like to add?

Karen: Well, all that I can say is and this is just an example and Erica (colleague) said to me the other day, "I haven't seen Matt for a long time". "So," she said "is it his academic activities or other activities besides the studies...and I said, "Its all activities, so the mom has to take second place". So you also see yourself as not needed. You have got to take a step back, and you have got to remind yourself to do it gracefully. You know, to me that was also very difficult that Matt can have a girlfriend although I'd rather he had a girlfriend than a boyfriend! (laughs) But still, this is not my little boy anymore...,that type of thing. I must say that I can't complain. She is a lovely girl There are mixed feelings. She is a bit younger than he is. She finished last year and she was also at Girl's High. I have no complaints.

Interviewer: So there is a distance created and you are not very comfortable with the potential aloneness and losing the meaningful togetherness that you have had.

Karen: Yes, it is a painful process. You have summed it up that sort of feeling that you are empty being alone. Discarded (laughs). Discarding this interfering old lady (laughs). "Just keep out of our lives". I suppose that they are silly things, but these are the feelings and emotions that one has, but I mean this does happen.

Interviewer: You see that it is there.

Karen: It is there because you see it happen with other people. With my dad being in the old age home, you know, and other people talk. You can see that how some old people never have families. Some families may be overseas and then may still have a friend, a niece or somebody who occasionally comes around and calls on them and some of them are like an old shoe, just put in the cupboard and put in the drawer and that is it. I think because one sees these things. Maybe somebody from a different background wouldn't be so sensitive and critical of things that could happen.

Interviewer: You feel that your background has influenced you.

Karen: Maybe yes. My professional (speech therapist) background, I think, has influenced me. Also, things that have happened to me have contributed. You know even like losing my mom and losing my brother Alan. So maybe this has made me want to hang onto things or...

Interviewer: What do you mean by hanging on?

Karen: By hanging on, I suppose wanting things to still be around. You still miss them because there are things that you want to share with them and I think that it is that sort of sharing, that you want to sometimes just talk to them. Even if you haven't lost your child, his or her moving on is that you lose that sharing and that togetherness.

Interviewer: So you enjoy and want to maintain the togetherness that you have now?

Karen: Yes.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Karen: I think that basically sums it up.

Interviewer: Would you like to sum it up? From what we have said how would you describe your experience of letting go?

Karen: I would say that as the process starts, it is a painful process. Then they (teenagers) start telling you that they want to let go and they want you to let go. You do feel a certain amount of rejection because they don't know that, so they knock you some times and say unpleasant things, and then knowing that you have to let go, you think ahead of what could happen, and what shouldn't happen. The unpleasant negative things, they are scary and they are painful. They make for the saddest times. So you see the sadder and more negative instead of the positive things that are there as well.

Interviewer: So there are positive things?

Karen: Yes there are positive things but we are going through a process that is usually overshadowed by the painful and hurtful things.

Interviewer: You find the painful things more dominant at the moment although you do see positive things as well.

Karen: That's right. I hope that all this has been helpful.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Forms**

**Form A:**

**Letter to Research Participant**

Date.....

Dear.....,

Thank you for your interest in my dissertation research on the experience of 'letting go'. I am intrigued by this phenomenon and delighted about your possible participation in my study. I truly value the unique contribution that you can make to the knowledge and structure regarding this phenomenon.

The purpose of this letter is to reiterate the points already discussed as well as to request that you sign the participation release form, enclosed herewith. Particulars regarding the time and place for the interview are included Confidentiality is ensured and will be maintained at all times. Any identifiable information will be disguised or removed.

I intend using a qualitative model in my search for comprehensive descriptions and depictions of your experience. From this, I hope to elucidate and answer my question "What is the experience of letting-go? The aim of this study is an attempt to understand the meaning and significance that this experience holds for you.

Through your participation with this study, I hope to understand the essence of letting go as it reveals itself through your experience. I am interested in specific situations, incidents and events that have occurred, linked to your experience of letting go. That is, how you thought, felt and behaved at the time, the meaning and significance it has for you. Perhaps you may still be anticipating this experience, as it confronts you. Whatever it is, I would like to hear about it. That is, I am looking for a comprehensive description of your experience of 'letting go'.

I appreciate your participation and thank you for your commitment, time and effort. Should there be any problem with the time and date of our meeting, or any further questions you would like to have answered before signing the release form, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached either at 012- 3477069 or 082-5744754.

With kind regards,

Denise Fourtounas

**Form B:**

## **Participant Release Agreement**

I agree to participate in the research study of “What is the experience of letting go?” My participation is voluntary and I understand the purpose and nature of the study. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing a PhD (Psychotherapy) degree including a dissertation and any other publication.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained at all times and that any identifiable information may be disguised or removed.

I agree to meet at.....(location) on the .....(date) at.....(time) for an initial interview (1-2 hrs.) I will be available at a mutually agreed upon time and place for any additional interviews (1-1 ½ hrs.), should it be necessary. I also grant permission for the interviews to be recorded on audio-tape.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Research Participant / Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Researcher / Date

**Form C:**

**Thank you letter to Co-Researcher**

Date.....

Dear.....,

Thank you for meeting with me in the extended interview and for sharing your experience of letting go. Your willingness to share your personal and unique feelings, thoughts and recollections is greatly appreciated. It is contributions such as yours that can expand psychological knowledge in the field.

I truly value your participation in this research. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the present study, then please do not hesitate to contact me. I may be reached at either (012) 3477069 or 082-5744754.

With kind regards

Denise Fourtounas.