FIGURE 9.2
A Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement.
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BOX 4.4
HELPING OTHERS COPE WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

1. Most important is to listen, listen, and listen! Be there. Be present.

2. Be an active listener—really attend to what the other person needs and wants to share about his/her feelings and thoughts. Make it clear by your facial expression, tone of voice, and body language that you care and that you are indeed listening. Ask "how are you?" "Is there anything I can do?" Several requests may be necessary for those who think they can "go it on their own."

3. Try to remember how you felt when you lost someone special—your emotions, behaviors, thoughts. What did someone say or do that made you feel more comfortable? Less alone? More accepting of your loss and the changes in your life? Even if their loss is different from yours, talking about your own experiences may make them realize that what they are feeling is not as odd or unusual as they think; this normalizes their feelings. In so doing, remember that everyone grieves differently.

4. Make a mental note of how healthy people appear to be. Do they appear to be taking care of themselves? Have they lost weight? Do they appear uncharacteristically unkempt or disheveled?

5. Do not offer advice unless it is asked for. Be very cautious in giving advice. What worked for you may not work for someone else.

6. Be accepting and uncritical of what people are saying or doing, unless it is clear that they are acting in a way that is harmful to themselves or to others. In such cases, find a professional helper to intervene: a teacher, priest/rabbi/minister, physician, or counselor. Go with them to the appointment if necessary.

7. Take the opportunity to go out of your way to support them—call or drop by. Most grieving persons' major difficulties are feeling lonely, feeling different from others, and being judged by them.

8. Make it clear that you are always available. It should be on their terms, not yours. Strike a balance between asking them what they need and what you can do. Try not to be a pest, but do not say "call me when you need me." Offer to do something with them that they would enjoy doing: a baseball game, having lunch, going to a movie, going for a walk.

9. Encourage them to be hopeful about the future and to be patient. Stress that coping with a loss is difficult but that things will get better with time.

10. Stress that persons will eventually come full circle. They will be whole again, but yet different from the way they were before.

11. Stress that there will be good days and bad days, ups and downs.

12. Keep your feelings separate from theirs. If being with them makes you aware of your need to talk, find someone who can listen.

13. Your opinions on what they "should" be doing or feeling are irrelevant.

14. Empathize with them. Be a friend—listen to what they have to say, even if they have said it many times.