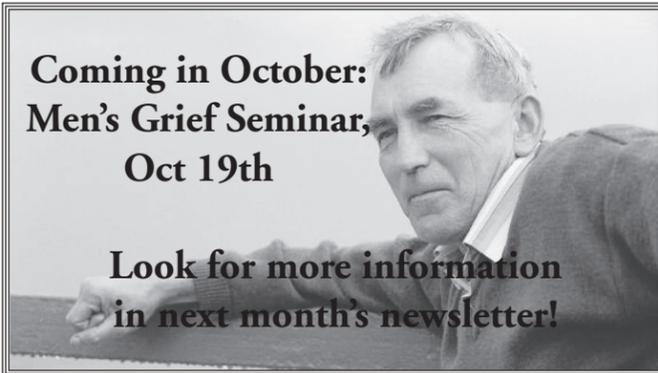


*"There are only two ways to live your life.  
One is as though nothing is a miracle.  
The other is as if everything is."  
—Albert Einstein*



**Coming in October:  
Men's Grief Seminar,  
Oct 19th**

**Look for more information  
in next month's newsletter!**

BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER is a publication of Hospice of the Prairie, Inc., 200 Fourth Circle., Dodge City, KS 67801, (620) 227-7209, www.hospiceoftheprairie.com. Please help us keep our printing and mailing costs down by notifying us if your address has changed or you no longer wish to be on our newsletter list.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

- Sept. 9 Thursday Night Grief Support Group, 6:30 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie Meeting Room; Jerry Hodges, facilitator
- Sept 13 Chapter Two Grief Support Group, 6:30 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie Meeting Room; Jerry Hodges, facilitator
- Sept. 13 Compassionate Friends Support Group- for families who have experienced the death of a child, 7 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie; Nancy Renner, facilitator
- Sept. 15 Bereavement Luncheon, 12 noon, Inn Pancake House, 1610 W. Wyatt Earp, Dodge City; Dick Robbins, host
- Sept. 23 Thursday Night Grief Support Group, 6:30 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie Meeting Room; Jerry Hodges, facilitator



# Bereavement Newsletter

September 2010

200 Fourth Circle • Dodge City, KS

Tel: (620) 227-7209 • Fax: (620) 227-7429

## Understanding Different Mourning Patterns in Your Family

Grief is a family affair. When one member of a family dies, the entire family is affected. It's as if an important link in the family chain is suddenly broken and lost, and everyone is locked in a struggle to find the missing link, to repair the broken chain. Everyone is mourning their own personal loss in their own unique way. Roles and responsibilities shift; relationships change; communication and mutual support among members may suffer. Over time, the family must identify what the roles and functions of the lost member were, decide whose job it will be to execute those duties now, and learn how to compensate for their absence.

Further complicating the situation is the fact that men, women and children are very different from each other, not just in personality patterns that affect how they think, feel and behave, but also in how they mourn. When someone dies, they will not experience or express their reactions in the same way. Failure to understand and accept these different ways of mourning can result in hurt feelings and conflict between partners and among family members during a very difficult time. Although there is grief work to be done, behaviors can be misinterpreted, needs may be misunderstood, and expectations may not be met. Children and adults are all very different, one from another, with their own unique needs for expression and support.

Differing personality patterns among family members will affect how each one individually expresses, experiences and deals with grief. While we all have the capacity to react to loss in a variety of ways, personality research shows that there are three basic styles or patterns of mourning: instrumental, intuitive and dissonant. Typically a person trusts and prefers one pattern of response over the other two, and will

behave accordingly.

Instrumental mourners experience and speak of their grief intellectually and physically. They are most comfortable with seeking accurate information, analyzing facts, making informed decisions and taking action to solve problems. Remaining strong, dispassionate and detached in the face of powerful emotions, they may speak of their grief in an intellectual way, thus appearing to others as cold, uncaring and without feeling.

Intuitive mourners experience a full, rich range of emotions in response to grief. Comfortable with strong emotions and tears, they are sensitive to their own feelings and to the feelings of others as well. Since they feel strong emotions so deeply, they're less able to rationalize and intellectualize the pain of grief, and more likely to appear overwhelmed and devastated by it.

Dissonant mourners encounter a conflict between the way they experience their grief internally and the way they express it outwardly, which produces a persistent discomfort and lack of harmony. The "dissonance" or

conflict may be due to family, cultural or social traditions. Although their grief may be profound and strongly felt, they struggle to hide their true feelings in order to preserve the image they wish to project to the public. Others may condemn themselves and feel very guilty for not feeling whatever they think is expected of them to feel.

Like everyone else in our Western culture, men are saddled with certain stereotypes. Real men are supposed to be tough, confident, rational and in control, not only of themselves but of situations as well. Real men don't cry, aren't afraid of anything and would never be caught asking for directions, let alone for help. Real men know exactly what



**(continued on reverse)**

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# Understanding Different Mourning Patterns in Your Family

(continued from page 1)

to do in a crisis, and they're strong enough to support the rest of the family, too. If they cry or otherwise express their emotions, such behaviors are considered to be signs of weakness. Add to these sex role stereotypes the assumption that, if a man's grief doesn't show or he doesn't express thoughts and feelings of grief the same way a woman ordinarily does (by crying or by openly sharing with others, for example), then he must not be grieving at all.

In general, men are more often instrumental mourners. When men suffer the loss of a loved one they tend to put their feelings into action, experiencing their grief physically rather than emotionally. They deal with their loss by focusing on goal-oriented activities which activate thinking, doing and acting. Rather than endlessly talking about or crying over the person who died, for example, a man may throw himself into time-limited tasks such as planting a memorial garden or writing a poem or a eulogy. Such activities give a man not only a sense of potency and accomplishment as he enters his grief, but also a means of escaping it when the task is done. If a man relates the details of his loss to his closest male friends, it's likely to be around activities like hunting, fishing, sporting events and card games. Although a man may let himself cry in his grief, he'll usually do it alone, in secret or in the dark.

Women, on the other hand, tend to be intuitive mourners. They have been socialized to be more open with their feelings. They may feel a greater need to talk with others who are comfortable with strong emotions and willing to listen without judgment. Unfortunately, while it may be more acceptable for women in our culture to be expressive and emotional, all too often in grief they're criticized for being too sentimental or overly sensitive.

Children and adolescents grieve just as deeply as adults, but depending on their cognitive and emotional development, they will experience and express their grief differently from the grownups around them. Moving in and out of grief is natural for youngsters, and the symptoms of grief may come and go, varying in intensity. Their responses will depend on the knowledge and skills available

to them at the time of the loss. Having had less prior experience with crisis and its consequences, their repertoire of coping skills is simpler, their capacity to confront the reality of loss more limited, and their ability to find meaning in life's crises less mature. If surprised or embarrassed by the intensity of their grief, they may try to hide it or disguise it. Parents, relatives, teachers and friends are wise to watch and to tune in to their children and adolescents, to listen to them, to be there for them, and if unsure what's going on, to ask! More than anything else, children need their parents and the other adults in their world to be honest with them. They need accurate, factual information; freedom to ask questions and express their feelings; inclusion in decisions, discussions and family commemorative rituals; stable, consistent attention from their caretakers; and time to explore and come to terms with the meaning of their loss.

The way we mourn is as individual as we are, and our own gender biases may influence how we "read" another gender's mourning. Some females may be instrumental in pattern and

style, and will mourn in traditionally "masculine" ways, and some males may be more intuitive by nature, and therefore will express their grief in traditionally "feminine" ways. Regardless of differences in personality, gender and age, the pressures of grief are still present for all family members, and the tasks of mourning are the same: to confront, endure and work through the many effects of the death so the loss can be dealt with successfully. Grief must be expressed and released in order to be resolved, and all family members need encouragement to identify and release emotions, to talk about and share their thoughts, and to accept help and support from others.

Watch for Part 2 of "Understanding Different Mourning Patterns in Your Family" in next month's newsletter.

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Grief Healing Discussion Group: <http://www.hovforum.upbhost.com>

*"When it's dark,  
look to the stars,  
and when it's too dark  
to see the stars,  
prepare to greet the  
dawn."  
—Charles Beard*

## Lonely Sailor....

*David Ensz, an accountant in the Cimarron area, has very generously allowed Hospice of the Prairie to print some of his writings about his wife, Mary Ann's illness and his life since her death. In the next few months, some of his writings will appear in this newsletter in hopes of reaching out to others like David and his family, who are walking that hard road of grief. Hospice of the Prairie would like to express sincere appreciation to David Ensz for sharing his deeply personal and honest writings. This series is dedicated in Memory of Mary Ann Ensz.*

Why am I still talking about grieving? This article written by Jennifer Hansen and shared with me by a fellow sailor explains it better than I ever will.

Recently, two acquaintances were discussing a man whose wife died a few months ago. It was time he gave away her things, they said. It was time he got over it. I listened, silent, but started writing this column in my mind.

Dear friends, we have such a small understanding of grief and so little patience with the bereaved. It's time to find more of both.

Grief has no schedule. It would be so much easier on all of us if the pain of bereavement ended after three months, but it just doesn't work that way.

Sometimes after three months the reality of the loss is just beginning to sink in.

Grief is neither a sickness that can be cured nor a stage one can outgrow. Like any other milestone, it's a permanent addition to our self-definition. After the loss of

someone we love, please don't expect us to snap out of it and be who we were before. Our old self and our old life died with our loved ones. However prepared we might have been, when they died we stepped through a door that has forever closed behind us. We can't go back.

Sometimes we feel like we're just going through the motions for the first year after a loss. Each holiday, anniversary and birthday looms like a tidal wave and hits us about that hard. The weeks or months in between are simply recovery from or preparation for the next unbearable event.

We have to get through all these significant dates at least once before we can understand how we'll get through the rest of our lives. It takes a full year to go through all of them, and then we still face the worst one of all, the first anniversary of the death.

Everyone grieves differently. Sleep, often elusive, is at least oblivion. Waking is dreaded. We may be clingy, we may have nightmares, we may be remote, we may cry often, we may never cry again.

We're often told time will heal us, but time is the enemy. We want to turn back the clock, but it goes forward. It slows down in the worst parts and speeds up through the easy parts. Some days are excruciating. Some seasons are endless.

Eventually, things do change. But each person's grief takes its own good time. While a one-month-old grief is unbearable and a one-year-old grief is still raw, a 10-year-old grief is different.

Even after much time has passed, gently and caringly asking about a loss can be a kindness, especially when well-meaning friends have de-

cidated it's a taboo subject. One of the hardest parts of losing someone you love is the fear that he will be forgotten. So many times, the people who recognize our need to talk are those who've been where we are.

There's a strange kinship among the bereaved. We have lifetime memberships in a club no one wants to belong to. More than once, I've initiated conversations with near-strangers about subjects so private and painful others might have been shocked. But we understood each other. We recognized each other because we spoke the language of tragedy.

Everyone reacts differently to a loss. Some of us do things we'd never do otherwise. Please, be gentle in your opinions and understanding in your expectations. If you haven't gone through what someone else is experiencing, then trust me, no matter how compassionate you are, you don't know what it's like.

People speak of grief as if it were a tide that's come in and will soon recede. But grief is not the tide. Grief is what's left when the unimaginable occurs. It's the residue of horror, the aftermath of heartache, the uninvited guest who will not leave. It lingers, it hovers, it smothers. It's unrelenting.

Bereavement puts us on a small boat in a great ocean. Time, faith, love, friends and our own inner strength are the tides that can carry us to shore. But grief is the ocean, vast and overwhelming.

Once you've seen the ocean, you never see the world the same.

—David