



Bereavement Newsletter

October 2016

200 Fourth Circle • Dodge City, KS

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Understanding Different Mourning Patterns in Your Family Part 2— Suggestions for Coping with Different Mourning Patterns

This article is continued from the September 2016 issue.

If the Mourner is an Adult:

Understand that our own personality and gender biases may influence how we “read” another person’s mourning. What looks like inappropriate behavior may be an instrumental mourner’s way of avoiding feelings or displaying emotions publicly. People should not be judged for how they are mourning.

Instrumental mourners often appear to be further along in the grieving process than they actually are. Even if a person appears to be all right, it is unwise to make assumptions about what he or she is experiencing. When in doubt, ask!

Those who turn to drugs or alcohol in an effort to numb their pain or break down their inhibitions need to know that, because alcohol is a depressant, it can add to the sadness they’re already feeling. Distracting from the pain only delays the mourning process.

Although men, women, adolescents and children mourn differently from one another, none of those ways is inappropriate.

The way we mourn is as individual as we are: some males mourn in intuitive, feeling, or more traditionally “feminine” ways and some females mourn in instrumental, thinking, or more traditionally “masculine” ways.

If someone seems more angry than sad at the death of a loved one, the individual may be angry at the situation — and anger may be the only way the person knows to express grief. It’s useful in such cases not to take such anger personally, or to react defensively against it.

Men are less likely to seek the support of others (either individually or in a group) in order to express (think, talk, cry, or write about) their feelings, especially if they don’t feel respected, or if they find certain aspects of grief to be embarrassing. A man needs encouragement to share his reactions and emotions, to explore what his loved one’s death means to him, and to acknowledge how the loss affects his life.

If the Mourner is a Child:

Recognize that death and loss are natural parts of living; shielding children from grief is futile and gives them no role models to learn healthy, normal coping behaviors.

Be open and meticulously honest. Children know when adults are shading the truth. If children discover that you’ve distorted the truth or lied to them, they’ll have a great deal of

trouble trusting you again.

First find out what the children already know or think they know about dying and death. Validate feelings and encourage children to share their thoughts, fears and observations about what has happened.

Offer explanations that are age appropriate and at the child’s level of understanding. A child under age five needs comfort and support rather than detailed explanations, whereas a child over age five needs information that is simple, accurate, plain and direct.

Explain that in the circle of life all living things will die someday, and that death causes changes in a living thing. Help children understand what “dead” means (that the body stops working and won’t work anymore) and that death is not the same as sleeping (that the sleeping body is still working, but just resting).

Don’t use confusing or misleading euphemisms such as “passed away,” “lost,” or “gone on.” Such phrases imply the one who died is on a trip and will return, leave children feeling rejected or abandoned, or encourage them to go searching for the individual or hold out hope for his or her return.

Explain how we might feel when someone dies: sad, mad, or confused — and we may cry sometimes. Let your children know that laughing and playing are still okay, too, and that you respect their need to be children at this sad and difficult time.

Relieve the child of any feelings of responsibility for the death; magical thinking may lead a child to conclude that something s/he did, wished or imagined somehow caused the death.

Avoid telling children that the dead person was so good or so special that God wants him or her to be with Him in heaven. Children may become angry with God or fear that they (or you) will be chosen next.

Respect and encourage your children’s needs to express and share feelings of sadness. When you bring up the subject, you’re showing your own willingness to talk about it. When in doubt about your children’s thoughts and feelings, ask.

Don’t feel as if you must have all the answers; sometimes just listening is enough. Expect that young children will ask and need answers to the same questions over and over again.

Find and read some of the many wonderful stories and books written especially for children to help them better un-

(continued on page 3)

Men and Grief—

Why Men Grieve Differently Than Women

Current scientific research on the brain indicates that men are functionally different from women. These distinctions account for many of the differences between how men and women process information and the feelings that they have. Coping with grief and loss are no exception. While men and women experience the same grief, they will likely process and express it in very different ways.

THINGS MEN SHOULD KEEP IN MIND WHEN GRIEVING

Because many of society's stereotypes of how a grieving person should behave are based on the way women grieve, there are some things that men should keep in mind.

- You will grieve in your own way
- There is no how-to guide for how you should grieve
- Your grief process will be influenced by who you are, how you were raised, and your life experiences
- You may not want to talk about it as often as those around you. You may use action instead of talking to work through

your feelings

- Working side by side may be an easier way to process grief than to communicate face to face

- You may prefer to do your healing on your own and through your own inner strength

- You may prefer to take on the role of caretaker of those around you in order to help you process your own grief. It takes strength and courage to experience and express grief

- Grief is a process that will make you stronger. All people have a combination of both 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics that will influence their style of mourning.

SUPPORTS GROUPS

For many men it helps to talk with other men about their grief. This may be in a support group setting or in some type of community work group. Sometimes an activity that provides a common goal will help men to open to those around them.

LEARNING TO OPEN UP

Many men have been conditioned by society to keep their feelings hidden. The fact that, after a loss, it is more likely that a community will acknowledge a woman's loss than a man's reinforces the sense that they should keep their emotions inside. Men who learn to open up and share their grief will have many benefits to their emotional and physical health, as well as for their relationships and marriage. They will also feel more energy and happiness.

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT

What is most important is that each person finds a safe way to express their grief. While some may be most comfortable in a support group setting, others may be more comfortable working through their grief on their own, or with the help of educational books or websites. Some use music, art or writing as tools to help them grieve. Some rely on ceremonies or rituals to bring them comfort. As time goes by, the methods used to cope with grief may vary. www.griefwatch.com



FOR MEN OF ALL AGES

Join us for a tasty meal
and learn how to
tackle the challenges of life
after the loss of a loved one.

Tuesday, Oct 25, 2016

7:00 p.m.

Hospice of the Prairie
200 Fourth Circle
Dodge City

Jerry Hodges, Grief Coach,
will lead the discussion

Please call 227-7209 if you plan to attend

Suggestions for Coping (continued from page 1)

derstand death and grief.

Don't cut off their feelings by noting how well your children are handling their grief or how brave or strong they are. Let them see you upset and crying, which implies that it's all right to cry for those we love and lose.

Children and adolescents may be reluctant to express their thoughts and feelings verbally. Encourage them to express their grief and preserve their memories in a variety of ways, including art, music, journal writing, story-telling and picture collecting.

Let children and adolescents plan and participate in commemorative family rituals.

If the Mourner is an Adolescent:

Recognize that teens are already struggling with the enormous physical and psychological changes and pressures of adolescence. No longer children, but not yet mature adults, they still need adult supervision, guidance, and consistent, compassionate support.

Don't deprive teens of their own need to mourn by pressuring them to "be strong" in support of a surviving parent, younger siblings or other family members.

Understand that teens don't like to stand out and feel different from their friends; they want to belong, and normally turn to one another for support. But if a teen's friends have never experienced the death of a loved one, it's unlikely that they can fully understand what the bereaved adolescent is feeling or experiencing. Grieving teens do best when they're helped to connect with other teens who've also experienced a death.

Assure adolescents that conflict in relationships between teens and adults is a normal part of growing up, and offer them every opportunity to vent their feelings about their relationship with the person who died. Teens striving to separate from authority figures and find their own identity normally feel somewhat alienated from parents, siblings, and other family members, and if a loved one dies during this turbulent time, they can be left with

feelings of guilt and unfinished business.

Give teenagers permission not to be grieving all the time. If they've expressed their feelings and talked about the loss with others (family, friends, teachers and other helpers) it may not be useful for them to focus further on their loss. It's not disloyal of them to want to put their grief aside and enjoy life again.

Be on the alert for signs that a teen may need extra help (depression; drastic changes in sleeping or eating habits; falling grades; substance abuse; sexual acting out; deteriorating relationships with family and friends).

Children and adolescents will cope only as well as the adults around them; helping yourself will help your children.

Alert significant adults in your child or adolescent's life (family doctor, teachers,

school counselor, caregivers, neighbors, relatives, friends) about the death in your family. Ask their help in keeping a watchful eye on your youngster, and ask for their additional support and understanding during this difficult time.

Consider enrolling your child or adolescent in one of the children/family bereavement support groups offered by your local hospice or by other agencies in the community.

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Mail to: touselym@aol.com

Grief Healing Web Site: <http://www.griefhealing.com>

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

Wounds of the spirit... are most gently soothed
and made whole by the passing years.

Under the old scars flows again
the calm, healthful tide of life....

Under a great loss the heart impetuously cries
that it can never be happy again,
and perhaps in its desperation says
that it wishes never to be comforted.

But though angels do not fly down
to open the grave and restore the lost,
the days and months come as angels
with healing in their wings.

Under their touch aching regret passes into tender memory;
into hands that were empty new joys are softly pressed;
and the heart that was like the trees stripped of its leaves
and beaten by winter's tempests
is clothed again with the green of spring.

-George S. Merriam



Hospice of the Prairie & Prairie Home Health has a Facebook page!



"Like" us on Facebook to find updates on the latest events and programs at Hospice of the Prairie & Prairie Home Health as well as links to great stories and other resources.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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| Oct. 10 | Compassionate Friends Support Group, for families who have lost a child, 7 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie |
| Oct. 13 | Grief Support Group (English), 6:30 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie Meeting Room; Jerry Hodges, facilitator |
| Oct. 18 | Grief Support Group (Spanish), 6:30 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie meeting room, Yadira Deana, facilitator. |
| Oct. 19 | Bereavement Luncheon, 12 noon, The Dodge House, 2408 W. Wyatt Earp, Dodge City; Nancy Renner, host |
| Oct. 25 | Men's Tailgate Supper, 7 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie meeting room, Jerry Hodges, facilitator |
| Oct. 27 | Grief Support Group (English), 6:30 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie Meeting Room; Jerry Hodges, facilitator |

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.



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