



IN TOUCH

Bereavement Newsletter

Bereavement Department (602) 530-6970 or hov.org

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UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT GRIEVING PATTERNS IN YOUR FAMILY

Grief is a family affair

When one member of a family dies, the entire family is affected, as each person grieves in his or her unique way. Roles and responsibilities shift, relationships change, communication and mutual support among family 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.

Differences in personality

Differing personality styles and 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, recent personality research shows that there are three basic styles or patterns of grieving: instrumental, intuitive and dissonant. Typically, a person trusts and prefers one pattern of response over the other two and will behave accordingly.

Instrumental grievers 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, possibly appearing cold and uncaring to others.

Intuitive grievers 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. 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 grievers 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.

Gender differences

Men are more often instrumental grievers. 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 that 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 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

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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 they hold in common. Although a man may let himself cry in his grief, he will usually do so alone, in secret, or in the dark, which may lead some to conclude that he must not be grieving at all.

Women, on the other hand, tend to be intuitive grievers. 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 are criticized for being too sentimental or overly sensitive.

Grieving in children

Children grieve just as deeply, but depending on their cognitive and emotional development, they will experience and express their grief differently from the grown-ups around them. Their response will depend on the knowledge and skills available to them at the time of the loss. More than anything else, children need their parents 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 caregivers; and time to explore and come to terms with the meaning of their loss.

Allowing for individual differences

The way we grieve is as individual as we are, and our own gender biases may influence how we “read” another gender’s grieving. Some females may be instrumental in pattern and style, and grieve in traditionally “masculine” ways, and some males may be more intuitive by nature, and therefore, will grieve 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 emotional 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.



This is an excerpt from the book, *Finding Your Way through Grief: A Guide for the First Year*, Second Edition, by Marty Tousley, CNSBC, FT, DCC.

If you would like to purchase a copy of this book (\$12), visit <https://hov.org/news/> and click on the “Online Store” link at the bottom of the page.



When all is said, when all is done, I will remember you with love.

When all is said, when all is done, you will be in my heart forever.

You're the thread that weaves my soul when the fire turns to ember and the grass has turned to gold.

When all is said, when all is done, I will remember you...remember you with love.

—Paul Alexander Music, 1992

ADULT GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

At the time of printing, we are making plans to reopen some of our groups for in-person participation. Please watch for updates at hov.org or call our Bereavement Dept.: (602) 530-6970.

If you are in need of crisis support, please call the **Maricopa County Crisis Response Network**: (602) 222-9444 or **Non-Crisis Warm Line**: (602) 347-1100.

FINDING COMFORT IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

People who are grieving can be especially vulnerable to outside stressors such as uncertainty caused by COVID-19. Here are some ideas to successfully move through these changing times:

- **Stay calm.** Focus on the positive. Remind yourself this is a temporary situation and do what you can to assist others in a safe way.
- **Have a daily plan.** Whether you are working from home or not working during this outbreak, organize your time and keep your schedules as normal as possible, so life can still feel manageable.
- **Maintain your environment.** Keeping things orderly in your personal world counters feeling of helplessness. Do things that give you a sense of control. Clean a cupboard. Make your lunch and eat it on schedule.
- **Manage anxiety as it occurs.** Thought stopping can be an effective technique to prevent our imaginations from spiraling out of control.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** This is very important. Empty calories do not give you the healthy fuel you need to feel good. They can bog down your system and weaken your emotional immunity. Be aware that alcohol significantly lowers physical immunity. Find alternative ways of relaxing.
- **Breathe.** To stay calm and centered, breathe in short bursts through your nose for a count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 6, and slowly release for a count of 8. Do this hourly for a few minutes or whenever you're anxious.
- **Exercise.** Exercise is a must to help manage stress, depression or anxiety. Your body's natural serotonin is one of nature's most important mood stabilizers. Research shows even a short brisk walk can effectively manage depression.
- **Listen to uplifting music.** Whatever genre you enjoy, play music, sing along and dance a little. It's a great way to fit in a little exercise and lift your spirits.
- **Find your positive voice.** Watch your narrative. Our thoughts tend to be more negative when we are hurt and grieving. Connect with positive people. Read, watch programs and find uplifting stories to engage your mind.
- **Don't isolate.** Isolation is a huge trigger when grieving. Call, text or email at least two people daily to avoid negativity and maintain social connections. Everyone benefits.
- **Embrace the extra time you gain through social distancing.** Choose to be creative. Enjoy your current hobby or create a new one. Take advantage of YouTube or other social media to learn something new. Spend time with pets and pamper yourself.
- **Limit how much you talk about the virus.** Set limits on news watching. Stay informed but do normal activities.
- **Don't collapse.** To center yourself, create a schedule, put things on paper, engage in a project, organize a meal or a family activity.
- **Do a spiritual reset.** Instead of getting lost in uncertainty, realize that all we really know about is today. Challenge yourself to appreciate "living in the moment." Practice mindfulness or short meditations to help you focus on the present. hov.org/our-care/mindfulness



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bereavement services

Hospice of the Valley provides bereavement support for up to 13 months following the death of your loved one. Virtual support groups and telephonic or virtual grief counseling support are available. Information can be found at hov.org/grief-support-groups, or by calling (602) 530-6970. In-person groups and counseling sessions will be returning over the coming months.

“Gone from our Sight, Never from Our Hearts”

If you have recently suffered the death of a loved one and would benefit from sharing with other adults who are also newly bereaved (3–6 months), this might be the right group for you.

This group is 80% psychosocial education with the goal of providing greater understanding of the grief journey; the tasks of mourning; and how to grow forward to a meaningful life without the physical presence of our loved one.

For more information or to pre-register for this virtual group, call (602) 636-5390.

New Song Center for Grieving Children

New Song Center for Grieving Children, a program of Hospice of the Valley, provides grief support groups for children, youth, young adults and adults. Support groups are currently being offered for all age groups virtually, at no cost to participants. We will update you as soon as we can safely return to in-person groups.

“*Enduring Ties*” is an evening support group for families that have experienced the death of a minor child. There is also a support group for grandparents grieving the death of a grandchild.

“*Luz del Corazón*” is a support group program for families whose first language is Spanish and who have experienced any type of loss through death.

For more information, call (480) 951-8985 or view newsongcenter.org.

Additional resources are available at
<https://hov.org/our-care/grief-support/>