



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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UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT GRIEVING PATTERNS IN YOUR FAMILY *(continued)*

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.

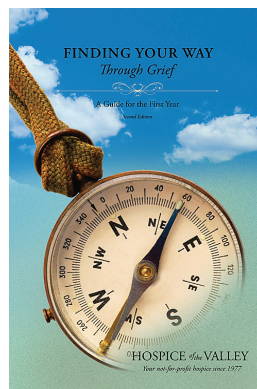
Women, on the other hand, tend to be intuitive grievers. They have been socialized to be more open with their feelings. They may feel a greater need to talk with others who are comfortable with strong emotions and willing to listen without judgment. Unfortunately, while it may be more acceptable for 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



Healing from Loss

Hospice of the Valley provides compassionate support to people who are grieving the loss of a loved one. We provide extensive resources to help families as they work toward healing.

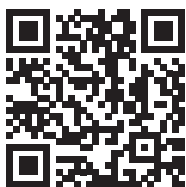
Grief support resources

Helpful videos, handouts and information about bereavement events.

Grief support groups

In-person and virtual group sessions are offered Valleywide at no cost.

For the latest information, visit hov.org/our-care/grief-support or call (602) 530-6970



New Song Center

For family grief support that is tailored to parents, young adults, teens and children.

Visit:

hov.org/our-care/grief-support/new-song-center-for-grieving-children





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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 in office, telephonic or virtual grief counseling support are available. Information can be found at hov.org/grief-support-groups, or by calling (602) 530-6970.

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 in person for all age groups in Peoria, Gilbert, Scottsdale, and Central and North Phoenix, at no cost to participants.

“Enduring Ties” is an evening support group for families who have experienced the death of a minor child.

“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.

New Song Center provides one-on-one counseling for brothers and sisters grieving the death of a sibling and additional counseling resources.

For more information, call (480) 951-8985 or (602) 776-6789 (Spanish), email info@newsongcenter.org or view newsongcenter.org.