

Helping Bereaved Men

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**NATIONAL
WIDOWERS
ORGANIZATION**



OUTLINE



Introduction

Risk factors for Complicated Grief

Disenfranchised Grief

Intuitive vs Instrumental grievers

Causes of Death

General Themes

Therapeutic Interventions

Resources



National Widowers Organization

11/9/2008: Gretchen, Sam
Feldman's wife died.

Sam attended a bereavement group.



Eventually Sam connected with another widower in Martha's Vineyard. Sam realized that he could more easily share his feelings, thoughts and emotions by connecting with other bereaved men.

2011 – National Widowers Organization

Widowers – A Growing Population:

Year	All Widowed	Men	% of Widowed Population	Women	% of Widowed Population
1970	11,800,00	2,100,00	18%	9,700,000	82%
1980	12,700,00	2,000,00	16%	10,800,000	85%
1990	13,800,00	2,300,00	17%	11,500,000	83%
2000	13,700,00	2,600,00	19%	11,100,000	81%
2010	14,332,00	2,968,00	21%	11,364,000	79%

Bereavement Outcomes Therese Rando PhD

1. Characteristics of Death “death surround”

II. Characteristics of Mourner



Bereavement Outcomes

III. Characteristics of Relationship

roles occupied

unfinished business

close, ambivalent, conflictual



Bereavement Outcomes

IV. Social Factors

perception of supports

multiple deaths

culture, religion, spirituality

socioeconomic

V. Physiological Factors

alcohol, drugs, addictions

nutrition, sleep, physical health

Disenfranchised Grief

Grief that is experienced when a loss is not or cannot be:

- Openly acknowledged
- Publicly mourned
- Socially supported

Doka (1989). Disenfranchised Grief: Recognizing hidden sorrow.

Disenfranchised Grief

(1) the relationship not recognized

(2) the loss is not acknowledged

(3) the griever is excluded



Disenfranchised Grief

The relationship is not recognized

Friends, Neighbors

In-laws

Non traditional relationships:

Extramarital affairs

Monday Morning Grievors



[REDACTED]—Richard. I am saddened by the sudden death of Richard [REDACTED] a giant in the electronics industry. He was a very good friend and my lunch partner for 40 years. Dick, I'll miss you.
[REDACTED]

Disenfranchised Grief

The griever is excluded; not recognized:

young children

developmentally disabled

the elderly

health care clinicians



Disenfranchised Grief

The loss is not acknowledged

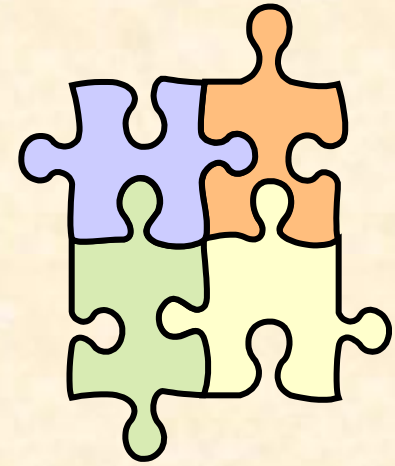
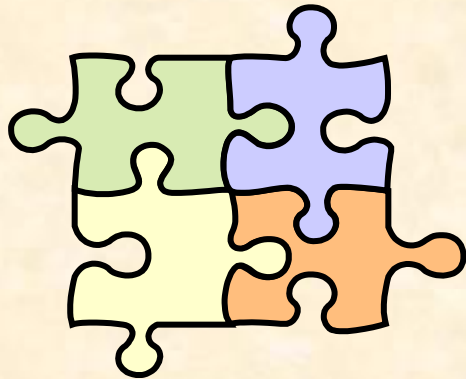
Companion animals



A PUZZLE

Are there intrinsic differences in the way men and women react?

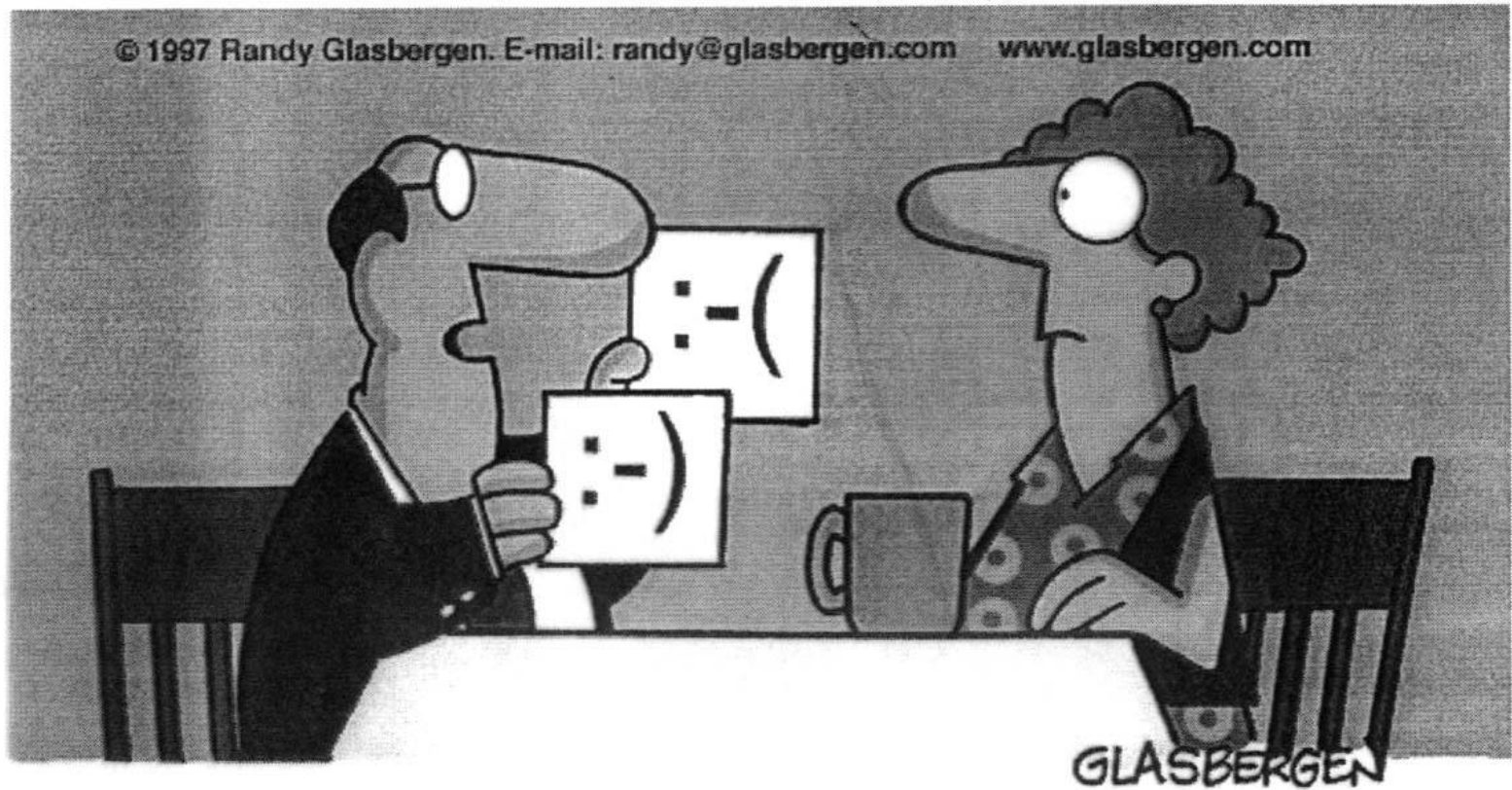
Why study these differences?



Are these innate differences?

Is this due to socialization?

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“You always complain that I don’t know how to show my emotions, so I made these signs.”

Intuitive Grief

Doka and Martin 2010

- Experiences strong affective reactions
- Adaptation involves expression and exploration of feelings
- Expression mirrors inner feelings

Instrumental Grief

Doka and Martin 2010

- Expression of grief - primarily cognitive or physical
- Adaptation generally involves thinking and doing

	Intuitive	Instrumental
Experience of grief	Emotional	Cognitive, physical
Expression of grief	Outward mirroring of inner feelings	Tasks, projects & activities. High physical arousal, anxiety
Coping strategies	Take time to grieve; adjust slowly; share feelings	Re-adjust & restore normal routines. Solve problems

	Intuitive	Instrumental
What Helps	Active listening; exploration & expression of feelings; catharsis & insight; connection and sharing with others	Practical info; exploration of changes/impact; Activities & projects; Memorializing

Doka and Martin, 2010



A Continuum of Grieving Styles



Feeling



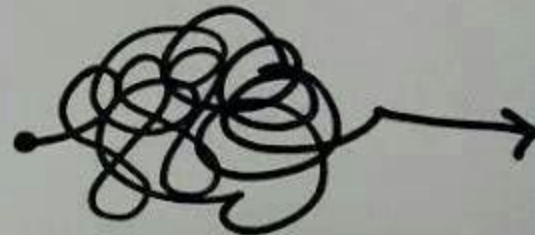
Thinking



HOW WE
WANT
GRIEF TO
WORK



HOW GRIEF
ACTUALLY
WORKS



“Why aren’t I grieving?” “What’s wrong with me?”

He’d ask these questions repeatedly as he worked in his workshop sculpting a memorial stone for his son; pounding his hammer on a chisel.

Martin & Doka, 2000



Themes: Alone, Lonely and Lonesome

“I always went on business trips without my wife; I’m used to being alone. But this is different. Now the thought of going away is just too much. I don’t even want to travel to see my children. It’s different since she died”

Themes: Companionship

- A 1991 study (Yalom & Lieberman) of surviving spouses of deceased cancer patients found women engaged in a psychological moratorium - i.e. they experienced more loneliness & were less prone to seek heterosexual relationships.
- In contrast, the majority of bereaved widowers could not tolerate aloneness. Instead of a psychological moratorium they leapt into a new heterosexual relationship.

Themes: Decisions and Adjustments

- “I ‘m selling my house. I’ve always done all the work except for the gardening. But I don’t feel like doing it anymore. I’ve always wanted to live where the weather is nice enough for me to go fishing and golfing all year round. I want to move but my children don’t want me to sell the house where they grew up in, even though they now have their own homes.”
- “I never appreciated how much my wife did around the house. How do I do the laundry? What do I do about cooking? It’s ridiculous. It took me an hour last night just to make a salad. I never did any of this before.

Themes: Loss of Identity

- “I stopped working when my wife was diagnosed. I focused on taking care of her. It was the most important job I ever did, now I don’t know what to do with myself. What’s my purpose? I miss the guys at work and I’d like to go back to work but someone else now has my job.”

Themes: Changes In Roles

- “My wife always made our social plans. She would make the calls for Saturday night. I don’t do that.”
- “My son says I’m too frail. He wants to take over my finances; pay the bills and manage my money. He says I should give him power of attorney.”
- “My daughter is smothering me. I can’t figure out if she’s acting like my mother or my wife.”

Rituals

Ken Doka PhD, 2003

- rituals allow people to “do something”
- ritual reaffirms community
- ritual shows solitary with the victims
- can be secular or non-secular
- can be done once or frequently



**Joe's tree
Planting
Ceremony
Jackson
Heights, NY
2003**



Roadside, Pennsylvania



Field of Empty Chairs,
Oklahoma City

BUMBLE'S BENCH

CHRISTOPHER LAURISTON HARDIN
APRIL 9, 1981 - DECEMBER 5, 2001
OUR BEAUTIFUL BOY



In Flanders Field

In Flanders fields the poppies
blow
Between the crosses, row on
row,
That mark our place: and in the
sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns
below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset
glow,
Loved and were loved, and now
we lie
In Flanders fields.



Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

by John McCrae

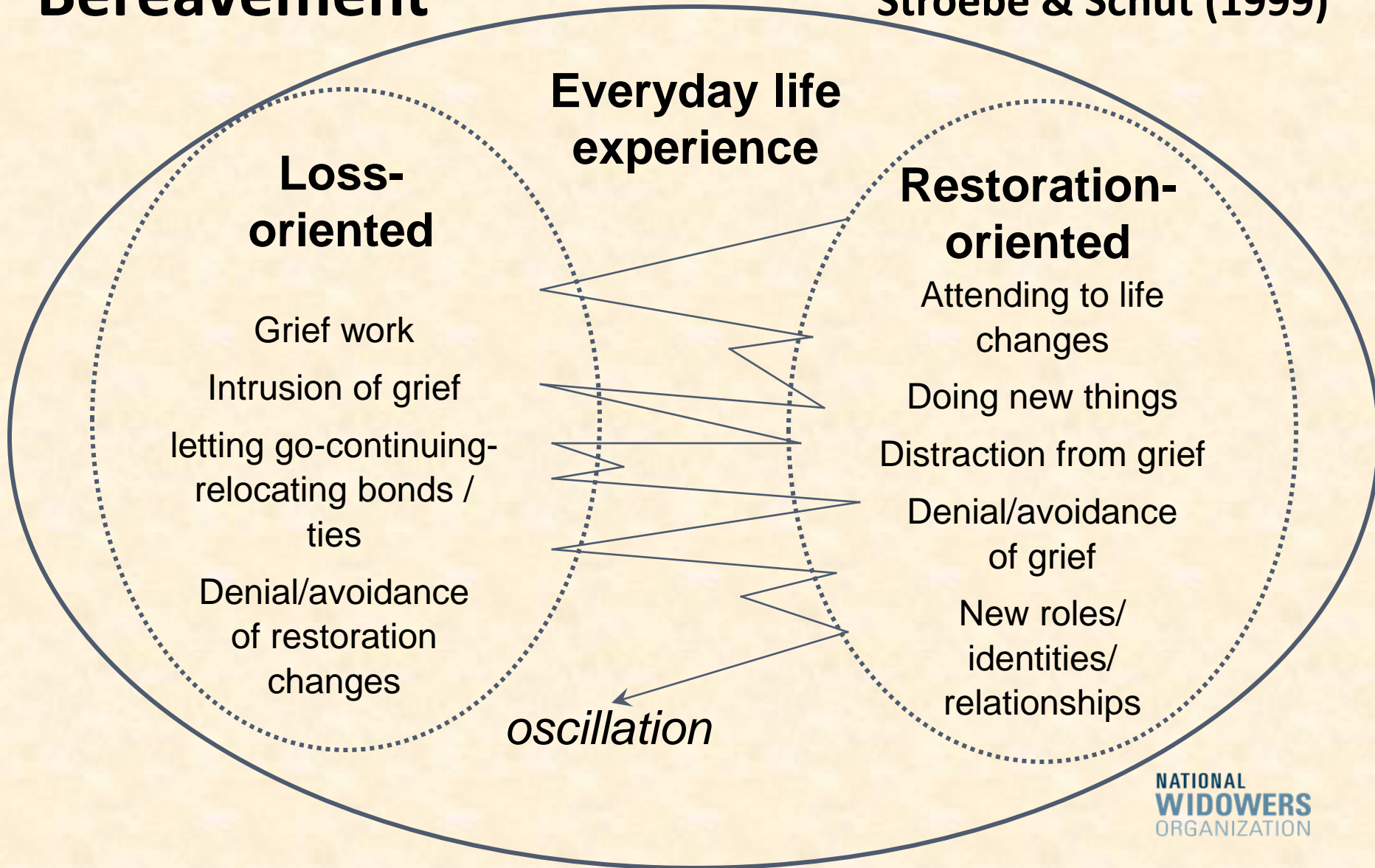
“Shattered Assumptions”

Ronnie Janoff-Bulman (1992)

1. The world is benevolent
2. The world is meaningful
3. The self is worthy

The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement

Stroebe & Schut (1999)



Clinical Implications

Help families to understand:

The way we express grief has little
to do with love

Interventions Intuitive Grievers

Traditional approaches work well

Individual counseling can focus on
expressing and exploring affect

Traditional support group helpful

Interventions Instrumental Grievers

Assess

Traditional approaches may not work well

Cognitive therapies

Active approaches

Therapeutic metaphors

Psycho-educational approaches

Interventions Instrumental Grievers

Men's discussion groups: reading groups;
adventure based groups; movies

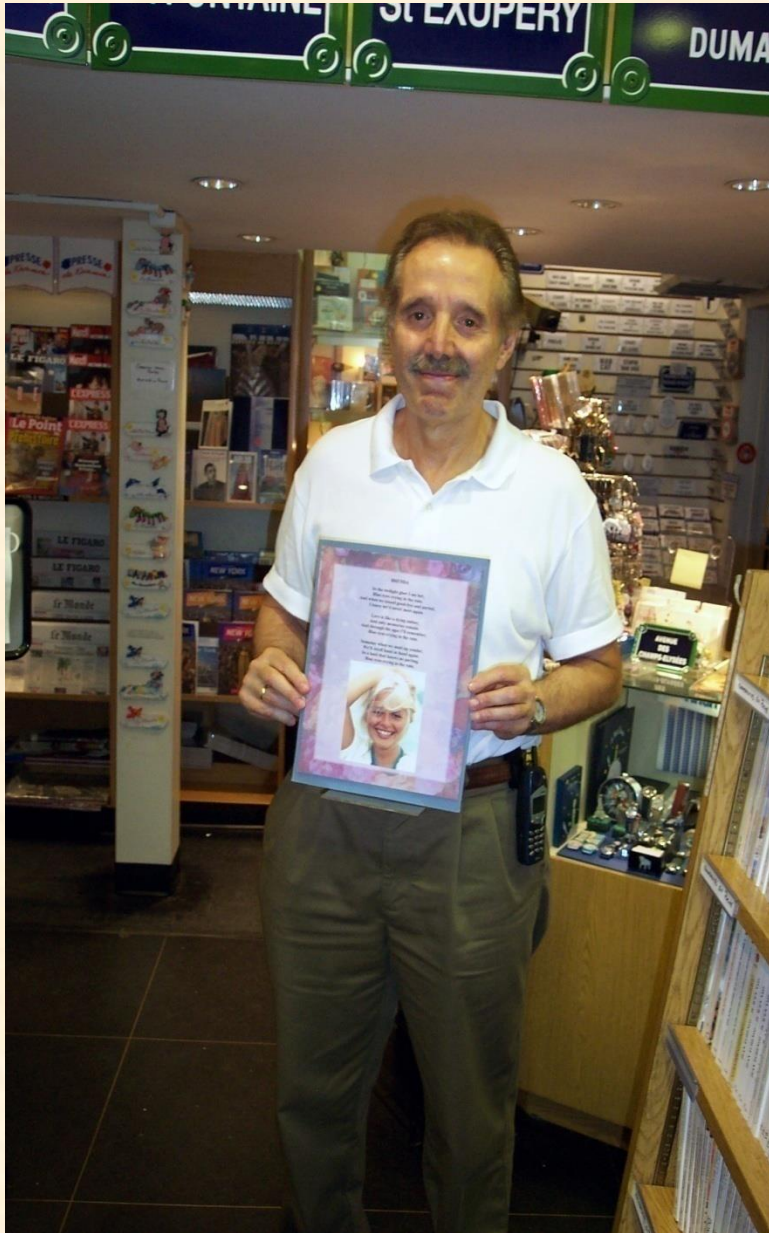
Educational seminars

Information seeking and Problem solving

Humor

Restructuring – creating a new narrative

Memorial Tribute “To Brenda”; NYC 2003 Rockefeller Plaza



Ethical Wills

Biblical origins

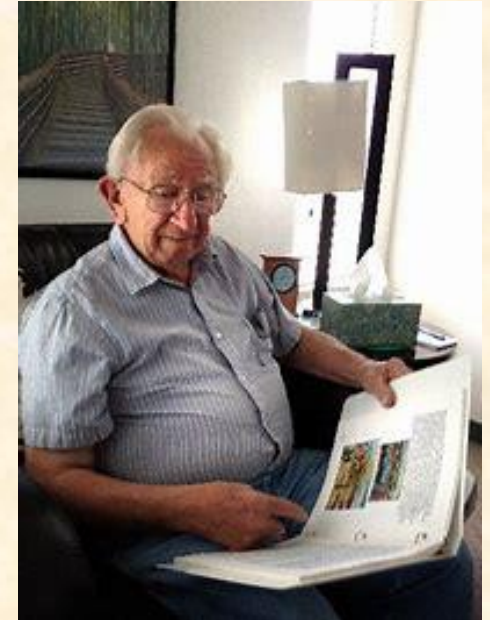
Resurgence today

Describe early life

Memories of childhood

Share values; what's important

What you hope your life represents



Life Reviews: Structured Activities

Oral history: Interviews
Story telling

Journaling
Genogram



- Educational Programs
- Bibliotherapy
- Discussion Groups
- Friday Matinee
- Breakfast Club



Resources

National Widowers' Organization – helpful site focusing on how men grieve. The site contains resources for books, blogs, articles by experts and other resources. The Widower to Widower: peer support program connects bereaved widowers to other widowers.

<https://nationalwidowers.org/>

Resources

- The W Connection <http://www.widowsconnection.org/>
- Widows Wear Stilettos
<http://www.widowswearestilettos.com/>
- Grief watch
<https://griefwatch.com/men-and-grief/?SID=8h94pfdfpul9hg5g3o6uiuj6q0>
- Men's Resource Center
<https://menscenter.org/counseling-services/mens-support-groups/>

Resources

- <https://www.mastersincounseling.org/loss-grief-bereavement.html>
- TAPS <https://www.taps.org/>
- Annotated reading list contact:
Sschachter@calvaryhospital.org