Helping Bereaved Men

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April 10, 2018 DoD Survivors Forum
Arlington, VA
OUTLINE

Introduction
Risk factors for Complicated Grief
Disenfranchised Grief
Intuitive vs Instrumental griever
Causes of Death
General Themes
Therapeutic Interventions
Resources
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:

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

2010 US Census
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

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 Grievers
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?

Frank, can we please stop and ask for directions

Are these innate differences?

Is this due to socialization?
“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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intuitive</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience of grief</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Cognitive, physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of grief</td>
<td>Outward mirroring of inner feelings</td>
<td>Tasks, projects &amp; activities. High physical arousal, anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategies</td>
<td>Take time to grieve; adjust slowly; share feelings</td>
<td>Re-adjust &amp; restore normal routines. Solve problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Martin and Doka 2000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Helps</th>
<th>Intuitive</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active listening; exploration &amp; expression of feelings; catharsis &amp; insight; connection and sharing with others</td>
<td>Practical info; exploration of changes/impact; Activities &amp; projects; Memorializing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Doka and Martin, 2010
A Continuum of Grieving Styles

Feeling

Intuitive

Blended

Instrumental

Thinking

How we want grief to work vs. 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
“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 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 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)

**Loss-oriented**
- Grief work
- Intrusion of grief
- Letting go—continuing—relocating bonds/ ties
- Denial/avoidance of restoration changes

**Restoration-oriented**
- Attending to life changes
- Doing new things
- Distraction from grief
- Denial/avoidance of grief
- New roles/identities/relationships

**Everyday life experience**

**Oscillation**
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

BRENDA

In the twilight glow I see her,
Blue eyes crying in the rain.
And when we kissed good-bye and parted,
I knew we’d never meet again.

Love is like a dying ember,
And only memories remain.
And through the ages I’ll remember,
Blue eyes crying in the rain.

Someday when we meet up yonder,
We’ll stroll hand in hand again,
In a land that knows no parting.
Blue eyes crying in the rain.
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.widowswearstilettos.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](https://www.mastersincounseling.org/loss-grief-bereavement.html)
- TAPS [https://www.taps.org/](https://www.taps.org/)
- Annotated reading list contact: [Sschachter@calvaryhospital.org](mailto:Sschachter@calvaryhospital.org)