

# Bereavement news for people living with grief



May 2024

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[henryford.com](http://henryford.com)

## How we mourn: understanding our differences

Excerpts and Wisdom taken from Kenneth J. Doka, PHD, Terri Martin, and Doris Zagdanski, BA DipEd

*"Ultimately it is the identification, validation, and exploration of their pattern of grief or adaptive grieving styles that grieving individuals will find empowering and that will allow them to deal with their loss on their own terms, with their own unique strengths." ~ Kenneth J. Doka, PhD*

We talk about how healthy grief moves. Today we are not confined to the 5 stages of grief because we have learned that instead of learning to let go our loved ones and come to acceptance, we are to continue the bonds we share with them. We learn to adjust to a new life without our loved one's physical presence. The truth is we all grieve differently based many factors, thus how we express our grief will be different. There is no one size fits all or most with grief. We will respond to grief in a number of ways: with emotions, with our thoughts, with our behaviors, with our physical reactions, and with our spiritual orientations as well. So, let's reflect on the styles of grievers to promote understanding, withdraw judgement, and experience a greater understanding of how we individually may move through our grief.

**Intuitive grievers:** These individuals experience a full range of emotions in response to grief. They are comfortable with strong emotions and tears. They are sensitive to their own feelings and to the feelings of others as well. When you talk with an **intuitive** griever they will often talk about the waves of their affect and emotion. "I kind of felt like this. I cried. I screamed. I shouted." There is congruence between their expression of grief and their inner experience with grief. It is like a "mirror". **Intuitive** grievers will talk about what is helpful for them during their grieving process: finding a person or place; a confidante or support group, through journaling, or an internal process by which they are able to explore their feelings.

**Instrumental grievers:** These individuals will have a very different experience with their grief. When you speak with an **instrumental** griever they will often talk about their grief in physical or cognitive ways. "I just kept thinking about the person. I kept running over it in my mind. I felt I was kicked in the stomach. I felt someone punch me." Their first response may be "I guess I didn't express

much grief", but if you sit with them, they say, "I did talk about that person a lot" or "I was active in setting up a scholarship fund." These tend to be the "take care of business grievers." They may not always recognize that as an expression of grief. What helps them is "doing".

**Dissonant grievers:** These individuals 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 incongruence may be the result of family upbringing, roles played in family "the strong, put together one", culture, or social traditions. Although their grief may be complicated and profound, they struggle to keep their emotions hidden in order to preserve the image and expectation they wish to project to the public. On the other hand, these grievers may also be the ones who carry a burden of guilt for not feeling whatever they think is expected of them to feel.

In Western culture, men are often caught in the crossfire of grief by sex stereotypes. Real men are tough, confident, rational, and in control of not only themselves, but also charged with rescuing their family from devastating situations. They don't cry, that's weakness. Counterintuitively, if a man's grief doesn't show or he doesn't express thoughts and feelings the same way a woman ordinarily does, then he must not be grieving at all. There is truth that men typically put their feelings into action by being goal-oriented, which activates thinking, doing, and acting-instrumentally. As an **instrumental** griever he may plant a memorial garden, write a poem, or a eulogy, giving him a sense of accomplishment and purpose. With the conclusion of the project, the task is done, and he has a better grasp on his grief. In conversation with close friends about his loss, he will likely be participating in a sporting event or playing cards. A man may let

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# How to survive mother's day when you're grieving

Excerpts from [Sophie Hull, Journalist for the Guardian](#)

Mothers give us life and love. They have a hard job; they deserve to be celebrated. It's just difficult to celebrate when your mum has gone and it feels like your guts have been ripped out while your life has been simultaneously turned upside down and shaken all over the floor. When reminders of this well-marketed holiday pops up in my day, mostly I want to hit something.

Grief is a response to loss that most of us have faced, or will face soon enough. But like many aspects of mental health, it's something we don't seem that good at talking about. Everyone responds to grief differently, and your own response can change on a day-by-day basis. It can be a numb or raw, a staid or sobbing pain that settles in your bones, without the schedule or process you expected.

**Let it out:** It's OK if you're not "fine". Find some space and time to be alone, to process and be sad in your own way.

**Talk:** When you're ready, find someone who understands your pain. It might be a colleague or neighbor who's also experienced grief, one of your mum's friends, or it might be a support group, or psychologist. Grief can feel isolating but reach out to the ones you love too: talking is hard but it helps.

**Honor her memory:** Do something nice for yourself or your mum. Some people may find it comforting to create a new routine or ritual – to buy themselves some flowers, to visit their mum's favorite restaurant, to talk to your kids or friends about her.

**Be good to yourself:** Now's not the time to reach for numbing substances like alcohol or drugs. If you can summon the energy, nurture yourself with healthy food, sleep, hydration and exercise.

**Show gratitude:** It can feel like life has let you down but at the same time, you are lucky that you had your mom in your life for the time you did. "Don't count the days, make the days full of memories count"

Think about your mother's personality qualities and be grateful to have the mum you had as she was picked out just for you.

Take a moment to thank the world, or your mum, for everything she was and did for you. Then take a moment to think about the other people in your life, and be grateful they are still here.

*A mother's love is like a circle. It has no beginning and no ending.*

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## A few notes about birthdays...

Excerpts from [beyondthedash.com](#)

Birthdays are a recurring memorial for sharing memories. Allow yourself the time and space to celebrate in your own way. Our deceased loved one stays with us as we live, learn and grow. Changes within yourself means changes in perspective. Remember that moving through your grief is a life-long process. If it doesn't make sense to you don't go out of your way to make something happen. Birthdays can be simple a time for loved ones visit and reminisce.

**Here are a few suggestions if you choose to celebrate your loved one:**

- Donate to a charity in your loved one's name.
- Visit the gravesite; release eco-friendly balloons or place your loved one's favorite flower.
- Cook and remember your loved one's favorite meal or dessert.
- Purchase a piece of keepsake jewelry engraved with your loved one's handwriting.
- Light a memorial candle.
- Perform 30 random acts of kindness during your loved one's birthday month.
- Create a digital memorial, tell your loved one's story beyond the dash, and invite others to share their favorite memories and stories of your loved one.

- Invite friends and family over for the evening to honor the date of your loved one's birthday to encourage the legacy to live on.
- Take up your loved one's hobby (even if you have take a class to learn!)

**Things you may consider saying to a bereaved on her/his birthday:**

- "I'm thinking of you today and sending you lots of birthday love."
- "I know this birthday may be a difficult one for you and I wanted you to know that I was thinking of you today" You can follow up with, "Would you be okay with me dropping off a gift for you today or any other time this week?"
- "Thinking of you on your birthday." "I love you so much." "I am here for you."
- "I know this past year has been difficult for you." "I want you to know you're an amazing friend and deserve to be celebrated today. I would love to drop off some dinner or take you out to eat if you're up to it."

Re: It's neither healthy or unhealthy to remember your deceased loved one's birthday. Pay tribute in a way that honors your relationship. Don't feel compelled to start a new memorial tradition. Choosing to pause and remember may be a sign you are moving through your grief.

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himself cry when he is alone, or possibly in a group where he is free to express his vulnerability to love deeply without judgement.

Women tend to be **intuitive** grievers. They are 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 judgement. However, these grievers may get criticized for being too sentimental or overly sensitive even though our culture encourages and accepts women as expressive.

Let's pause for a moment and look at the truth about grief and the way we mourn. Our grief journey is an individual as we are. Our own unconscious gender biases may influence how we "read" other people's grief. Women may be more instrumental and men more intuitive, or conflicted. Our personality, bonds with our loved ones, our age and wisdom may dictate the way we choose to grieve. Failure to understand and accept these different ways of grieving can lead to hurt feelings and conflict between partners and among family members. Let's work to dispel those implications and judgements that may not favor our "true"self and **be ourselves!**

Griever's tasks of mourning are these: to acknowledge, endure, and work through the effects of the death of their loved ones so they can grieve the loss successfully. Grief must be expressed and released in order to be reconciled. All individuals need encouragement to identify and release emotions, to talk about and share their thoughts along this heart-breaking journey, and to accept help and support of others.

### A mother's poem

*Your mother is always with you. She's the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street. She's the smell of certain foods you remember, flowers you pick, and the fragrance of life itself. She is the cool hand on your brow when you are not feeling well. She's your breath in the air on a cool winter's day. She is the sound of rain that lulls you to sleep, the colors of a rainbow, she is Christmas morning. Your mother lives inside your laughter. She is the place you come from, your first home and the first map you follow with every step you take. She is your first love, your first friend, even your first enemy, but nothing on earth can separate you. Not time, not space, not even death.*

Author unknown

## Tips for continuing bonds with people we've lost

**Talk to them:** Talking to a loved one who died is something grievers do, and it can bring a lot of comfort during the moments when you miss them the most. Be it out loud or in your head, this is a common way to continue a relationship with your loved one.

**Write letters to the person you lost:** This is something you can do in a journal, on the computer or in actual letters. You can do it weekly, monthly, annually, whatever works for you. Use physical letters in creative ways; tear 'em up, collage them, or paint over them with art. No matter where you write them or what you do with them, these letters keep you connected to your loved one in the present.

**Talk about them with new people, who never got to know your loved one.** There will often be new and important people in your life who did not know your loved one. It may be new friends, a significant other, or children, who never had the opportunity to meet your loved one when they were alive. Share stories and photos. This way your loved one's legacy continues and you continue to keep them in your life as you move forward.

**Finish a project they were working on.** Be it a project around the house, a piece of artwork, a team they coached, or a volunteer project they were involved in, consider picking up where they left off. This can help you learn new things about your loved one, continue your connection with them in the present, and continue their legacy.

**Live your life in a way you know they would be proud of.** Be it a spouse, a parent, grandparent, child or friend, we often struggle with knowing our loved one won't be there for accomplishments and milestones. Taking time to recognize that your loved one would be proud of you for a specific accomplishment can be comforting and remind us how we continue to be connected to our loved one.

**Imagine what advice they would give you when Making tough decisions.** Big decisions are often overwhelming and when you've lost the person who you would have talked it over with, it can be especially hard. Imagine having a conversation with them, what would they have said. Thinking of what advice they may have given you can help you feel connected and also make life choices a little easier.

# 2024 Bereavement Support Groups

## January - June In Person Support Groups

### 2nd Wednesday of the month

10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

**Location:**

Henry Ford Macomb Hospital  
Medical Pavilion – 4th Floor Meeting Room #5  
16151 19 Mile Road  
Clinton Township, MI 48038

Monthly: 1/10, 2/14, 3/13, 6/12

Spring six week series: 4/10, 4/17, 4/24, 5/1, 5/8, 5/15

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### 3rd Tuesday of the month

1 – 2:30 p.m.

**Location:**

24445 Northwestern Highway, Suite 107  
Southfield, MI 48075  
*The group is held in the basement.*

Monthly: 1/16, 2/20, 3/19, 6/18

Spring six week series: 4/16, 4/23, 4/30, 5/7, 5/14, 5/21

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### 4th Friday of the month

10 – 11:30 a.m.

**Location:**

17333 Federal Drive, Suite 260  
Allen Park, MI 48101

Monthly: 1/26, 2/23, 3/22, 6/28

Spring six week series: 4/26, 5/3, 5/10, 5/17, 5/24, 5/31

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### SandCastles Children's Grief Support Program

Preregistration is required. To register call : 313.771.7005

Locations: St. Clair Shores, Livonia, Clinton Twp., Rochester, Detroit, Southfield & West Bloomfield



Registration is required  
for all support groups  
and space is limited.

To register, call:  
586.276.9570

*Note: Six week series are a  
day and time commitment of  
six consecutive weeks.*

You will need to provide your  
name, contact number, and  
email address so we may  
forward the invitation and  
provide further instructions.

For information regarding any  
of the listed support groups or  
bereavement services offered  
by Henry Ford Hospice, please  
call the Henry Ford Hospice  
bereavement team  
at 586.276.9570.

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interpreters and other aids and  
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hearing at no cost.

To request assistance, call Henry  
Ford Bereavement Services at  
586.276.9570.

If possible, please notify us three  
days in advance of the event.