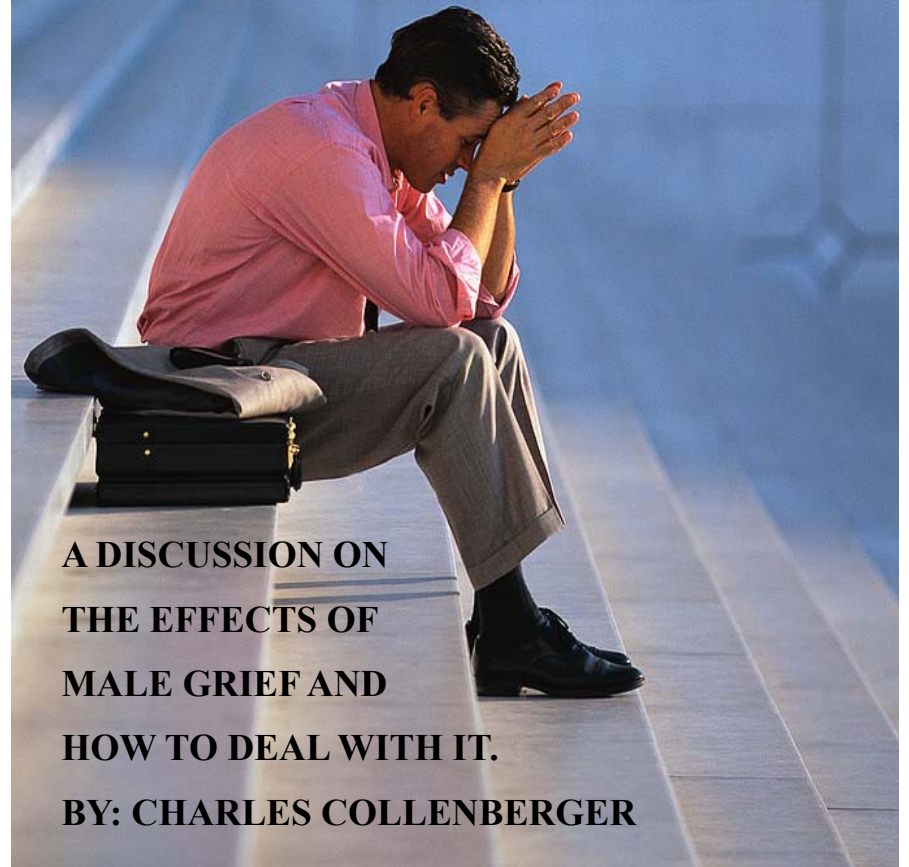


UNDER- STANDING MALE GRIEF



**A DISCUSSION ON
THE EFFECTS OF
MALE GRIEF AND
HOW TO DEAL WITH IT.**

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Understanding Male Grief

Your family has gone through a violent tragedy. The male of the family has taken charge, making most of the arrangements. He is fulfilling the role that has been assigned him by training and society. Yet sometimes, this role is too much for the male to fulfill.

Now you enter into a period of mourning and grieving that will last as long as you will personally need. As you are recovering from your grief, most of the time you will find you are alone in your healing.

Your male-protector, provider, disciplinarian, figure head, rock in a storm— is standing aside, almost unfeeling, quiet, unmoved, withdrawn. It appears that he is grieving in a completely different way. Sometimes it looks like he even doesn't care what happened.

Don't let this confuse you. Don't fall for the myth that males grieve less because they appear to grieve differently.

The Problem of Training

Because of his upbringing, he is caught in a limbo where he cannot grieve, cannot show he is feeling, cannot ask for help, cannot heal the grief that is tearing apart his life, his marriage, his whole being!

Many men are raised with the deep impressions that "men don't cry". Down deep in his mind, he believes this. He will deny it, but watch how he is reacting to the tragedy, the outside world and the demands of family life.

Most of all, he has to let the emotions out! He must learn to cry! He must allow himself to cry long and loud, until he begins to recover and whenever he feels the need again, forever. It won't be easy—years of crippling training have to be undone. It takes tremendous courage, tremendous strength to cry. All the strength and courage he thought he was showing before.

Showing emotions, crying and asking for help have been ingrained into his psyche as weakness and failure. He has already, he feels, failed as a provider, protector and father/husband when he "allowed" this tragedy to happen to his family.

He has to be convinced of the courage and bravery needed to reach out, to cry, to show the emotions necessary to start the process of healing.

A Lasting Thought: If you have not been able to reach him, you might have considered the decision to break up the relationship. Before you do, take a good long hard look at this man you have been sharing your life with. See if you can recognize some of the outward symptoms that have been outlined. Ask him outright, you might catch him at the right level, and listen—don't talk. It might surprise you how deeply he feels.

Whatever happens, do not go away thinking he doesn't care, that he is unfeeling, that he doesn't grieve, or that there is truth in the myth that men grieve less than women.

to handle these problems. All we can do is gently make him aware of the problem. Be careful-too much pressure could just force him further into abuse.

Anger is best dealt with by giving it an outlet that is not destructive to you, him, or your relationship. Screaming in a quiet place where it can't be heard, works...so does tearing down something that needs to be; breaking something up-concrete, dishes bought in a swap meet- all of these help curb anger and calm the feelings for revenge.

Guilt, denial, avoidance can be taken care of only when the basic problem of inability to show tender emotions is resolved. You have to work against the training that he has received over the years. You have to get him to open up, to express the feelings he is experiencing. You have to convince him that he is the only one who can break down this impassable, invisible wall that he has put up around himself.

Barriers He Must Overcome

He must:

- Forget "men don't cry"
- Forget to hide his emotions
- Reach out for help
- Find someone to listen to how he feels

Clergy, therapist, doctor, wife, or someone who has been through it like him. Perhaps someone from the group you have joined. Someone who has spoken out and is healing, healed enough to accept the pain of others and help their healing to begin..

Things to watch for

- Unable to talk of death of tragedy
- Avoidance of mate
- Explosive anger over nothing
- Avoidance of others in family
- Overwork (overtime, extra, etc.)
- Excessive time with the "boys" away from home and the family
- Sexual encounters
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug abuse

All males will have some of these problems but they will most likely resolve themselves in time. Some men, however, need extensive help to rise above them. Unfortunately some will never be able to freely grieve and start the healing process.

These problems appear, to varying degrees, in a male, not only with a violent death, but can arise with "normal" setbacks in life-job loss, a forced move, divorce, violence done to the family and more. Any and all will be crippling to a male who cannot freely express his feelings.

Helping the Male

The processes of helping are as many and varied as there are men and their problems. You have to deal with the outward problems first-anger, guilt, denial and avoidance are all easy to deal with if you give them a little at a time. The greatest problem is his personal feeling of failure and weakness.

Alcohol, drug and substance abuse are best let to experts. We do not have the experience or patience