

Intuitive Grief and Instrumental Grief

You grieve the way you do because of who *are*.
Your culture, individual temperament, age,
life experience, and gender all impact how grief is expressed.



Instrumental grievers tend to have tempered affect to a loss. While intuitive grievers are more likely to experience their grief as waves of affect, instrumental grievers are more likely to describe it in physical or cognitive terms. While intuitive grievers often need to express their feelings and seek the support of others, instrumental grievers are more likely to cognitively process or immerse themselves in activity.

Martin and Doka (1991), Men Don't Cry-Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief

INSTRUMENTAL GRIEVERS:

- Intellectualize their emotions
- Physical ways to express grief, action-oriented
- Reluctant to talk about feelings, may only express feelings in private
- Seeks solitude to reflect, independent
- Adapts to the loss through thinking and doing
- Have a need to know, seek information, cognitive
- Problem-solving, decision-making
- Future-oriented

WHAT IS HELPFUL:

Instrumental Grievers: “what were your reactions?” “what kind of thoughts were you thinking about after the death?” “what kinds of things did you immediately after the death?” NOT “how do you feel?” *lack of verbal expression does not indicate the lack of grief

INTUITIVE GRIEVERS:

- Openly expresses feelings, verbal
- Seeks support from others
- Yearn for comfort
- May become physically exhausted, anxious, problems concentrating
- Express more sorrow and depression

WHAT IS HELPFUL:

Intuitive Grievers: beneficial to facilitate a strong expression of feelings, allowing the person time to ventilate, validation of feelings, benefit more from support networks

**Your own unique blend of these two styles will help you cope and heal from your loss.
Different needs, wants, and expectations in grieving and in our relationships.
*Differences Not Deficiencies***

Areas of Exploration:

- Coping Styles & Support Systems
- Decisions about Child's Possessions
- Memorializing- Rituals & Traditions
- Surviving Children
- Future Children
- Faith
- Socializing
- Intimacy

Suggestions:

Ask what you need

Accept the differences

Be patient and gentle with each other

Develop your own support system

DANGERS:

- Incongruent Grieving- “out of synch” with each other
- Contrast between what is expected and what is observed.
- Large difference between the intent of spouses' behavior and the interpretation of that behavior by the other. Communication is essential.
- “Acceptable behavior”

Special Consideration:

Single Parents

Step-Parents

Grandparents & Extended Family Systems

How do we integrate the loss into their lives and keep living?

Dual Process Model:

Most individuals can expect to experience ongoing oscillation between a *loss orientation* (coping with loss through grief work, dealing with denial, and avoiding changes) and a *restoration orientation* (adjusting to the many changes triggered by loss, changing routines, and taking time off from grief). This reflects a movement between coping with loss and moving forward, but the extent to which one needs either of these dimensions differs for each individual.

(Schut and Stroebe, 1999)

“To find an enduring connection with the deceased in midst of embarking on a new life”

(J. William Worden, 2008)

“There is the beginning of grief, the middle of grief, and the rest of your life.”

The Stages of Grief by Candy Lightner (founder of MADD)