

- Gender Differences

Grieving is solitary and so lack of communication between bereaved parents is common. Grief may be differently expressed by men and women, partly because of societal conditioning and partly because of gender differences. Grief is individual, and the stress of grief causes many couples to break up. The more usual gender differences are outlined below:

Women – Loss Orientated

- Focus on loss and its emotions
- Frequent crying
- Constantly recall memories and share them with others
- Everything is put on hold whilst they grieve
- Have no interest in daily life

Men – Restoration Orientated

- Suppress feelings (as society demands)
- May not want to talk / see no value in talking
- May be very angry and feel they have 'failed' to protect their child
- Try and function normally and 'be strong'
- Have difficulty accessing their emotional tears
- Want things to return to 'normal' as soon as possible

Problems can occur when a couple does not understand these differences. For instance a woman may see her partner as unfeeling, while a man may fear his wife is becoming obsessed. This can be a source of argument.

Lack of communication can be the result when partners try to spare each other pain by avoiding talking about their child. This can create a 'grief void' between two people who share a special relationship with each other and with their child.

However, if partners are able to share their feelings, then they can learn from each other. Men can explore their pain, whilst women can be encouraged to look to future restoration. The journey of grief can be a shared one.