

Men and Grief Following the Death of a Child



- Men may feel inhibited in expressing emotion, particularly through tears
- They may feel that their partner cries too often, or feel that there is something wrong in themselves that they do not cry
- Male bonding tends to be around practicalities rather than around feelings. Boys will play football together rather than talk as girls do, for example. Men may therefore find it hard to share emotions with their peers
- The typical male role in society is seen as being strong. Boys are rewarded for being brave rather than for expressing emotion. This tradition is hard to break
- Healing tears are denied for the male in society, but they play a vital role in grief work. Sorrow may be channelled as anger or irritability
- Anger can be released safely in vigorous activity
- A father may feel very guilty that he has 'failed' to protect his child as society demands
- Sometimes men return to work early following bereavement as a way of bringing routine and 'normality' to the chaos around them. Men often try to cope through action rather than words
- Working and grieving will be doubly exhausting, as will returning home to the family's sorrow
- Often the father's grief is under-estimated as it can be less obvious than that of the mother. The mother may feel that the father has soon forgotten the child or does not care as much as she does
- A lifetime of beliefs will be questioned
- Fathers especially need to recognise that grieving is necessary for healing to take place and that during this time they need to be acceptant of themselves

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