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Two Styles of Grieving: Intuitive and Instrumental

HELP

May 7, 2012 • By [Melissa Wright, MA, LPC, RPT, NCC](#), [Adjusting to Change/Life Transitions](#) Topic Expert Contributor

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independently rather than rely on others.

Women typically need more support and are expressive with their emotions, which is behavior we tend to associate with grief and loss. However, there is no cookie cutter approach to mourning. In recent years, experts like Kenneth Doka, PhD, have recategorized these types as intuitive and instrumental grief.

Intuitive grief can be associated with our generalizations of the way that women grieve, which includes the following:

- Strong, affective reactions (waves of powerful emotions)
- Expressions that mirror feelings (more like an open book)

Moving forward involves exploring and expressing feelings, progressing through the pain in order to heal.

Instrumental grief can be associated with the masculine way of grieving, which includes the following:

- More thinking than feeling (an inward, quiet process, less expression of emotions)
- Being physical, expressing grief through doing something (I could not fix my son, but I can fix this broken fence)

So how do you help someone who doesn't want to talk or ask for help?

- Use logical analysis—figuring out problems by breaking them down into manageable steps (to be

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Instrumental grievers would benefit more from groups that focus on a how-to (like being a single parent), adventure based, informal or educational, than a traditional support group.

Like any other model for grief, there are several tools you can use with variations for each person. There are always ways to help. You can start by figuring out which support is needed and offer it. And if you need help, ask for what you need. Just know that there is never a wrong way to grieve.

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Mena

May 7th, 2012 at 12:16 PM

Know what really bugs me? When someone puts you into this type of box that your grieving either has to be like this or like that. But everyone is different! There of course are some patterns that some people will follow, but everything does not have to go by the book. There are so many different emotions that a person can go through, and to judge them that they are not grieving enough or too much is so closed minded. Let someone process their grief and their emotions in their own way- you worry about you.

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Theodora Sutton

May 7th, 2012 at 1:37 PM

Grief is ver much an individulal thing. I had a friend once who instead of crying at funerals she said she always had to supress the need to giggle, because that was how her emotions came out. It would have been seen as terribly wrong for her to do this so she always tried to hide it, but sometimes you know it is hard to keep that in. That's why