

Dear Wife,

As someone that has spent several years helping survivors heal after a death by suicide, I am writing to you in an attempt to bring more understanding to the subject of grieving within marriages.

A death by suicide affects most of the griever's relationships because it takes much longer to work through the suicide than it does other types of death. Unless you have personally experienced this kind of death, you can't understand it. It's not fair to expect non-survivors to understand. We didn't either until we were thrust into this.

Please know that men and women heal in different ways, so be careful that it doesn't build walls between you. God made men and woman different. Science has proven that our brains don't work the same. We are different in our emotions, thoughts, and the way we respond to things.

Often men make statements about women "dwelling" on the suicide, etc. Women often feel pressured and frustrated, and say, "How can he be in such a hurry to forget him/her?" or "The way he's acting I wonder if he loves him/her like I do." "He won't even talk about (deceased)" And, "He just doesn't *get* it!"

The truth is, he *doesn't* get it. Men are "fixers." They usually 'deal' with grief by pushing themselves to stay busy so they won't allow themselves to think about it. They try to press forward in whatever way they can. They don't want to talk about it because it's not something that can be 'fixed', so they feel it's pointless to linger in the valley of pain. But don't assume he isn't hurting as bad as you. He just deals with it different than you do.

Most men feel very uncomfortable discussing feelings, especially in a group, so they don't see benefit in support groups, and can't understand why you need one. This is not something personal that only *your* husband does. It is very common. And, although it may be hard to see right now, he does it because he cares about you and doesn't want you to hurt. Men feel like they are the responsible ones and need to take care of their loved ones. Men often feel lost and helpless because they can't help you with this, and they don't understand how talking about it with a group of strangers can possibly help you.

At a time of great loss like this, we seem to go into *survival mode*, and some days it's all we can do just to survive the day. We have nothing left to give to others. I couldn't stand to watch my girls hurt so badly, but I had nothing left in me to reach out to them. I think this may be the way husbands feel at times also. Please don't take it personal and assume he doesn't care.

"The 'never ending, but ever changing' aspect of grief may be one of the least understood aspects of grieving. Most people are anxious for survivors to have closure and "put the death behind them" so that they can go on. But death leaves a vacuum in the lives of those left behind. Life is never the same again. This does not mean that life can never be joyful again, or that the experience of loss cannot be transformed into something positive. But grief does not have a magical closure. People report pangs of grief 40, 50, even 60 years after a death. Grief is not a disease that can be cured, but a process we learn to incorporate into our lives." (* *Dougy Center Guidebook Series* The Dougy Center, 503-775-5683 www.dougy.org)

It is my hope that in times of loss, Survivors Road2healing can bring more understanding to families and help reduce stress. This is a time when families need to draw closer together and heal, not build walls to lock each other out. Please allow each other to heal in their own way, in their own time. What *you* need, and what works for *you* may not work for your spouse. Communication and allowing each to have their individual needs is the key to working through the issues and remaining together as a family.

If we can help in any way, Survivors Road2healing is here for you. Please let us know.

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