

## Effects on Marriage

The differences between men and women and how they grieve.

## She Cries - He Sighs

### Male/Female Relationships

Most relationships are intrinsically difficult

HE: "Big Picture"

HE: "Thinks"

HE: "Logical"

HE: "Copes Internally"

HE "Sighs"

SHE: "Details"

SHE: "Feels"

SHE: "Intuitive"

SHE: "Copes Externally"

SHE "Cries"

### Potential Relationship Problems

1. **SHE** needs to talk about the event. She goes over it time and again trying to gather every possible detail to explain why and how.

**HE** feels uncomfortable dealing on such a "feeling" level and finds excuses to avoid such confrontations.

2. **SHE** takes comfort in her faith. "God's will" may be the only explanation that gives any meaning to the event (true in most other types of grieving, but not for survivors of homicide)

**HE** is angry with God, feeling that the event invalidates his religion.

3. **SHE** often wants to visit the grave.

**HE** feels an aversion to visiting the cemetery.

4. **SHE** withdraws, reads books on grief, and writes as a means of expressing her pain.

**HE** throws himself into his work, hobby, or other activities to keep busy and avoid the pain.

5. **SHE** expects him to grieve and behave the same as she does and thinks he doesn't care when he does.

**HE** needs space to grieve in his own way and resents her for imposing her feelings on him.

6. **SHE** seeks support groups as an outlet for her expression.

**HE** wants to avoid showing his pain in front of other people, particularly strangers.

7. **SHE** has no interest in sex and resents his desire for it at this time.

**HE** wants to make love for the comfort and reassurance that comes through intimacy.

8. **SHE** knows that her life is irrevocably changed and will never be the same again.

**HE** wants her and their life back the way it was before the event.

9. **THEY** can sometimes compete with each other to see who is grieving the hardest.

10. **THEY** seek to escape the event by taking a vacation, moving, changing jobs, etc.

11. **THEY** seek to numb their pain through alcohol, drugs, shopping, extramarital affairs, etc.

12. **THEY** are angry with doctors or with other authority figures (law enforcement, judges, etc.) involved with the murder and have, more than once, discussed legal action.

13. **THEY** feel betrayed by their family and friends through their perceived lack of understanding and caring.

14. **THEY** are both so caught up in their own grief that there is no recognition or understanding of the grief experienced by their children or extended family members.

*"Relationships after tragedy are the hardest to keep. After our youngest son Andrew died, my husband, surviving son and I started seeing a counselor. She told us it would be very hard to keep our family together and we had to focus on it. Each person handles grief so differently that it is hard to keep your own life together in addition to worrying about someone else. I have felt myself draw more into myself. It is very difficult to do family things without Andrew. It is hard to laugh, feel romantic or joyful. And, if those things ever happen, then comes guilt. We have fought very hard to hold on. I can't imagine our relationships will ever be the same - no matter if it is family or friends. We can't expect to have the relationships we had before, but we can try to pull together and start again."*

~Donna

### **Suggest that may help**

1. Recognize that this tragedy has had an impact on all of your relationships and that your marital relationship may become strained.
2. It is important to recognize each others needs and allow each other to express your grief in your own way and own time.
3. Attend a support group, individually and together, where you can find others who will share their experiences. You don't have to actively participate, observing can be very helpful, too.
4. Hold off on important decision making for at least a year.
5. Make time to cry together. Encourage children to express and discuss their grief openly and honestly.
6. Make time to talk. Set aside specific time periods during each week where family members can express and share their feelings.
7. Make time to love. Set aside specific time for intimacy and closeness where the loss is not discussed.
8. Make time to play. Set aside specific time periods for family activities.
9. Make time to remember. Create activities such as sharing a meal of your loved ones favorite food, looking at family photos or videos and talking and remembering them.
10. Make time for you. Each of us needs our own time, to cry, to think, to remember, to heal.