

# Beyond Gender: Understanding the Ways Men and Women Grieve

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# Three Major Goals

- To Discuss and Differentiate Grieving Styles (Martin & Doka)
- To Apply the Concept of Grieving Styles to Family Systems
- To Explore Implications for Counselors

# Biography of a Concept I

- Father's Death
- CPE
- Dennis Ryan's chapter in *Disenfranchised Grief*

# The Myth of Men and Grief

- Emotionally Unexpressive
- Unable to Relate

# The Far Side

By Gary Larson



Larson 4-29

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"I'm starting to feel dependent."

# THE EMERGENCE OF LANGUAGE

WE NEED TO TALK.

UH-OH.





"Arthur, why must you become so defensive  
when I ask you how you're feeling?"

I'm glad to see you're finally beginning to open up!!



CALLAHAN

# POP'S PLACE

by Srows



TO GET MY ACT TOGETHER AND SHED SOME OF THE ANGER I WAS CARRYING AROUND I EVEN CHANGED MY NAME FROM MUD VOLT



Simply put there is only one way to grieve. That way is to go through the emotional core of grief. Only by exploring the necessary emotional effects of your loved one's death, can you eventually resolve grief

Staudacher, Men and Grief

# The Myth of Men and Grief

Not supported in theory, clinical  
practice or research

# Biography of a Concept II

- Martin & Doka – ADEC Paper “Take It Like a Man”
- Nichols
- Masculine Vs. Feminine/Conventional

# Advantages of Masculine

- Theoretical Value
- Related to Gender
- Challenge Concept that Men Were Ineffectual Grievors

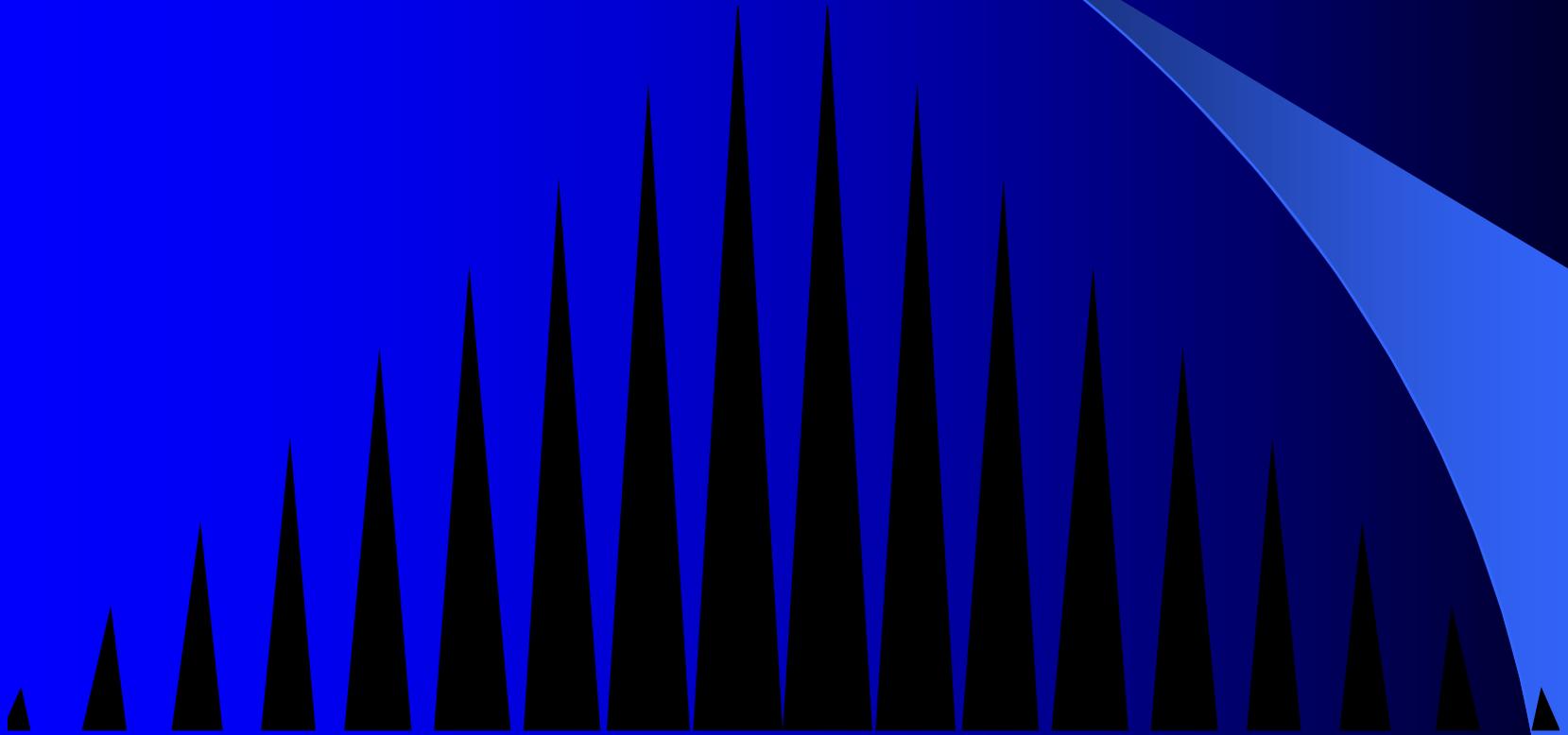
# Disadvantages of Masculine

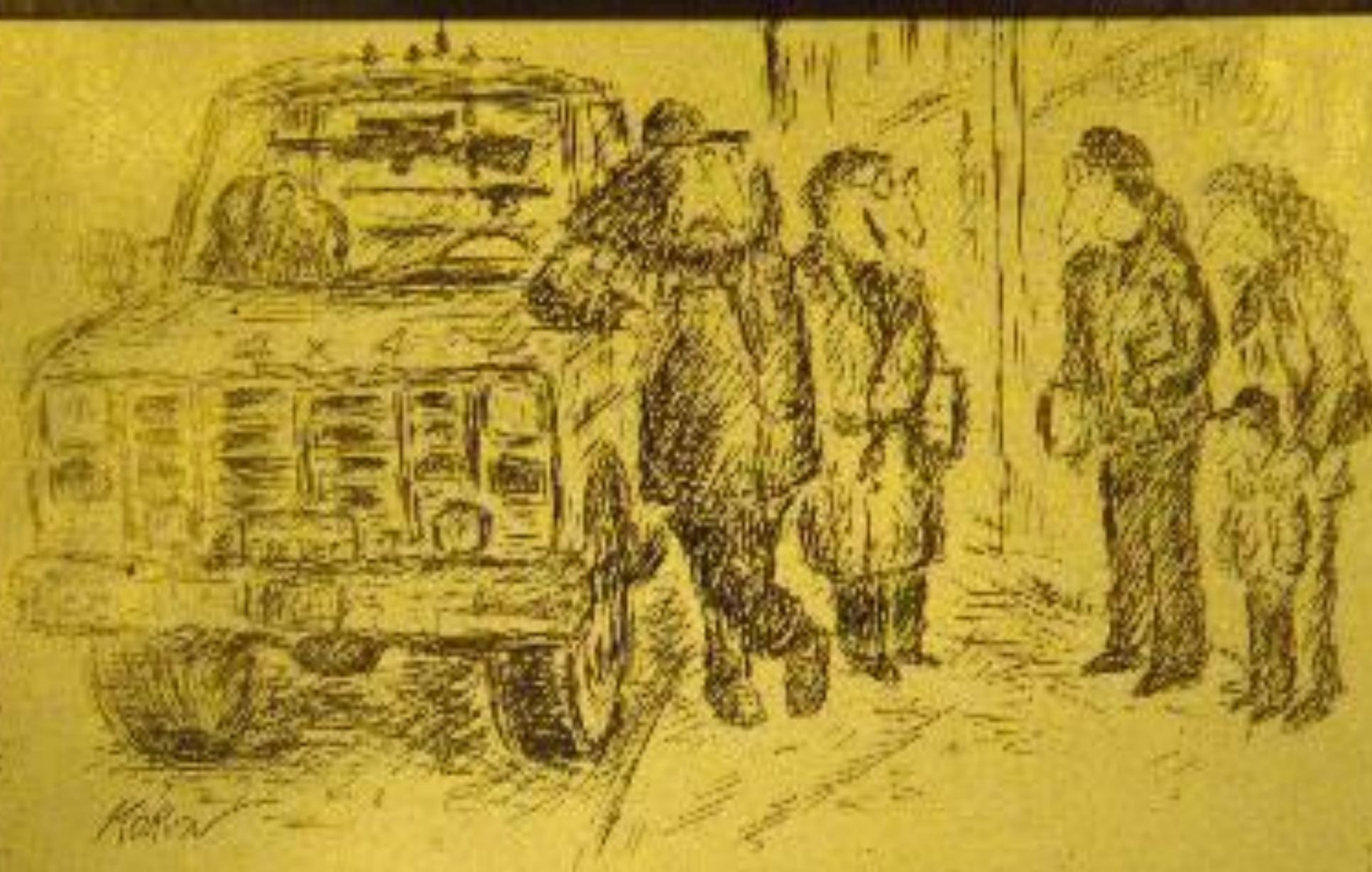
- Confusion with Gender
- Perpetuates Stereotypes
- Difficulties of Gender Based Terminology

# Intuitive vs. Instrumental

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# Grieving Styles Exist along a Continuum

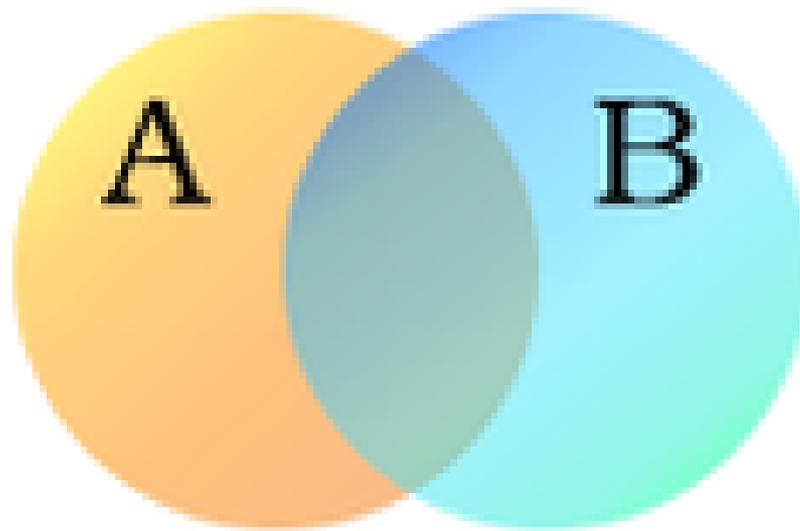




Karen

*"Howard is my most male friend."*

# Grieving Styles: An Alternate Visualization



# Intuitive Grief

- Experiences Strong Affective Reactions
- Expression Mirrors Inner Feelings
- Adaptation Involves Expression and Exploration of Feelings

# Instrumental Grief

- Experience of Grief Is Primarily Cognitive or Physical
- Grief Often Is Expressed Cognitively or Behaviorally
- Adaptation Generally Involves Thinking and Doing

# Instrumental Grief



- “Most contemporary Western philosophies with the possible exception of empiricism, can be understood as instrumental ways to encounter death, loss, and grief” D. Klass

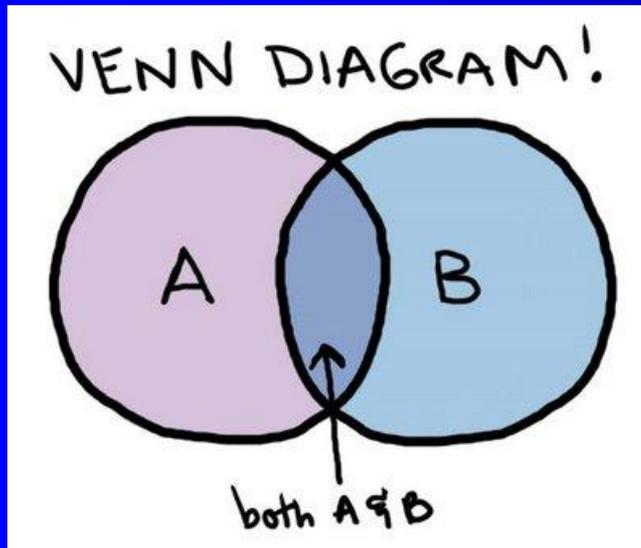
# A Question

*When instrumental grieverers are “doing” their grief, how conscious does the connection to the deceased need to be?*

- We believe that the connection does not have to be fully conscious though there often is a connection
- It should be accessible and consistent with the way the energy generated in grief is experienced by the person involved



# Blended Grievers



- Share experiences, expressions and adaptation strategies of both intuitive and instrumental grievers
- Will often have varied experiences and use strategies depending on the relationship to the deceased, the situation experienced, and the time since the loss

# Dissonant Grief

Discontinuity in Experience vs.  
Expression

# Oregon Center for Applied Science

## *Ways of Portraying Model*

- Heart Grievers
- Head Grievers
- Head + Heart
- Head vs. Heart

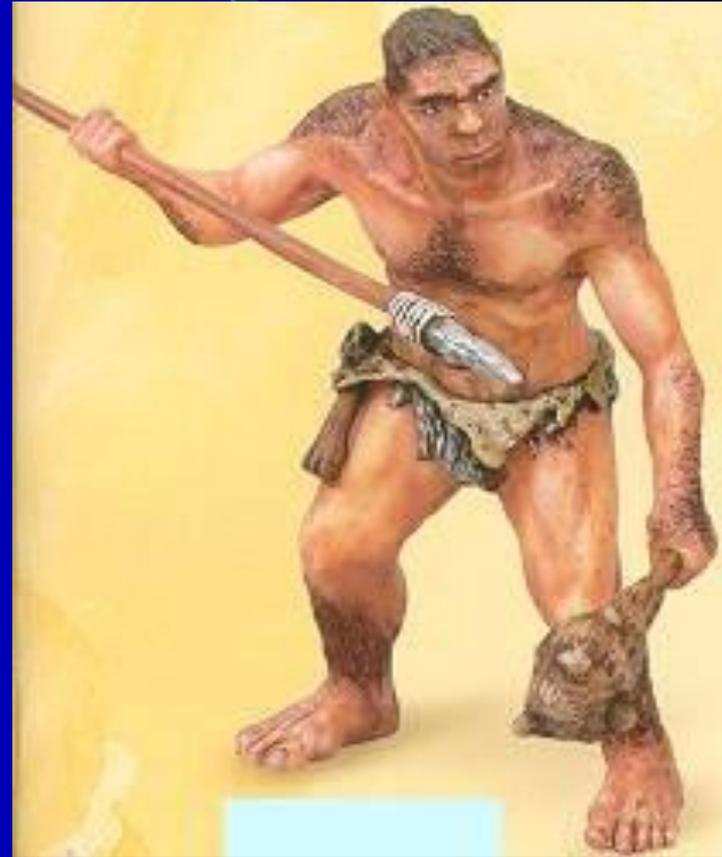




*"I've been thinking — it might be good for Andrew  
if he could see you cry once in a while."*

# Grieving Styles Are Influenced By

- Gender
  - Biological?
  - Cultural?
  - Affected by change in gender roles
- Culture
- Temperament
- Cohort Differences
- Other



# Grieving Styles in the Life Cycle

- While there is likely to be consistency in a grieving styles, they can change
- During the life cycle some movement toward the poles in adolescence and toward the center in later life is not unusual



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Differences – Not Deficiencies

These Styles Exist as General  
Adaptive Patterns and Can Be  
Seen in Other Circumstances  
including the Illness  
Experience



Longel

*"Your doctor wants to marry me  
if you don't make it."*

Each Style Has Its Own  
Advantages and  
Disadvantages

# Grieving Styles and Anticipatory Grief/Mourning



- A brief review of the concept

## *Grieving Styles*

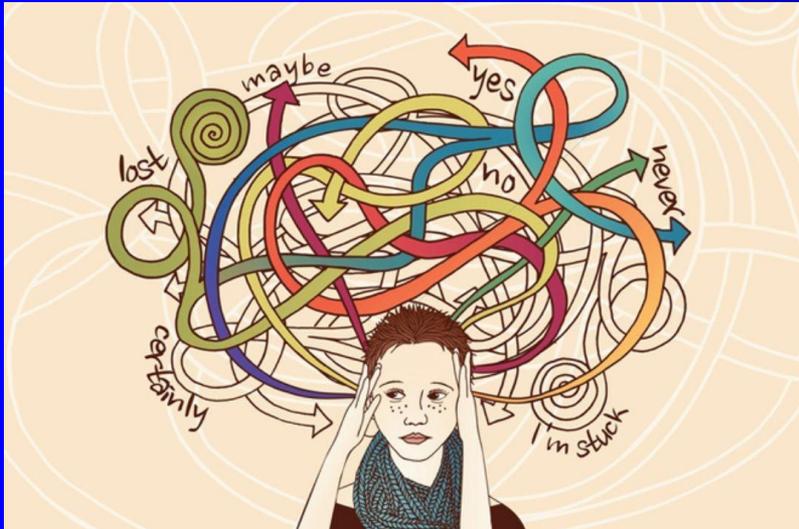
- Intuitive
- Instrumental
  - Gerber *anticipatory bereavement*
- Dissonant
  - Brett

# Grieving Styles

- With Intuitive – the problem of overwhelming potential support
- The Paradox of Support
- Widowers with strong social support fared well (Silverman & Campbell)
- With Instrumental – the problem of premature problem-solving
- Alcohol and substance abuse – the different reasons persons abuse substances



# Rumination



- Any grieving style can lead to rumination – a process that can complicate grief
- Here the differences can be subtle
- With intuitive grievers the focus is often on painful feelings
- With instrumental grievers, the process is more cognitive – *could I have done more? Were there different choices I should have made?*

# What about androgynous approaches?

- Schut's research supports the idea that:
  - Men valued from affective approaches
  - Women valued from more cognitive approaches

# Disadvantages of Androgyny

- Research was based on gender
- Double burden of androgyny
- Crisis is a poor time to teach new adaptive skills

# Support for Grieving Styles

- Theory
  - Grief Reactions and Adaptation
  - Coping Literature
  - Emotion Regulation
- Research
  - Gender (Law of Social Physics)
  - Bonanno, Nolan-Hoeksema
  - Rosenblatt – Cross-Cultural Research
- Clinical Practice
  - Rando
  - Stillion & McDowell

# Research

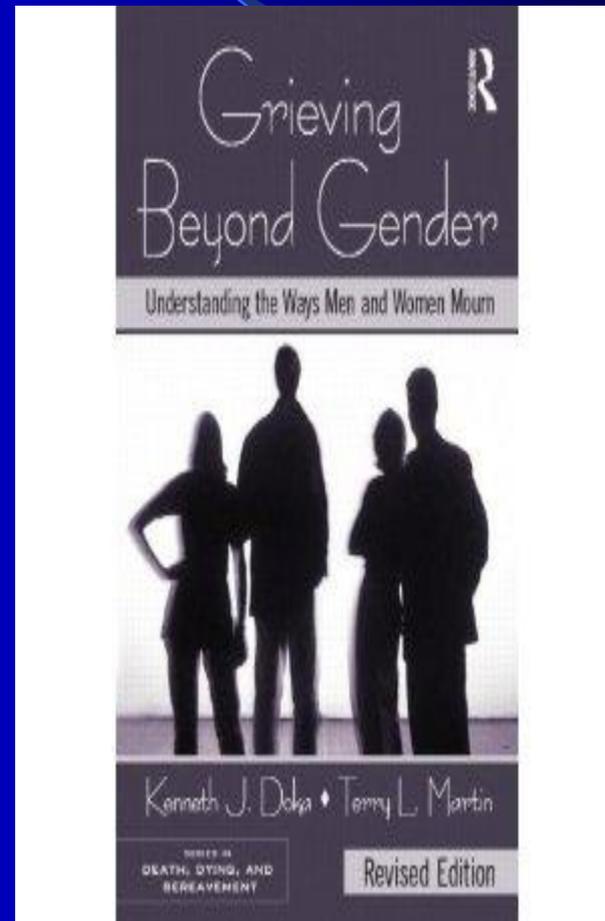
## *Gender Differences in Morbidity and Mortality in Widowhood*

- A meta-analysis by Stroebe, Stroebe, and Schut (2001) indicated that while evidence is mixed, they determined that men have higher rates of morbidity (including mental health) and mortality in widowhood
- See some explanation in *buffering hypothesis* – women are more open to social support and note, as yet unsupported idea that emotional coping assists
- Suggest that factor may be that gender constraints can inhibit individuals in dealing with the dual processes of bereavement



# Adaptive Grieving Styles

- Doughty (2009) in a Delphi study of experts found that there was consensus among experts on the major premises of the model
- Humphrey (2009) in a book published by the ACA highlighted the model as a valued one for counselors



# Intuitive and Instrumental Grief: A Study of Reliability and Validity

Gamino, Hogan, Sewell & Prosser-Dodds (2018)

- They found the GPI (Grief Pattern Inventory) to have, with minor omission of two items, acceptable reliability
- The evidence supported the underlying conceptual framework
- Hogan “Met the Gold Standard” for the relationship between theory and research



# Warning!

## The Use of Models

- Models are a tool to understand reality – they should not be confused with reality
- Use models to the extent that they assist you or your client in understanding and responding to a problem
- When they do not – use other models
- “The Chicken George Principle” – *When your plan does not work – get another plan!*



# Grieving Styles

## *Family Implications*

- Tensions can result in families as they cope with loss
- While likely to result when styles differ, this can still occur when styles are similar
- Assessing the family dimension



# Family Implications

Four Dimensions

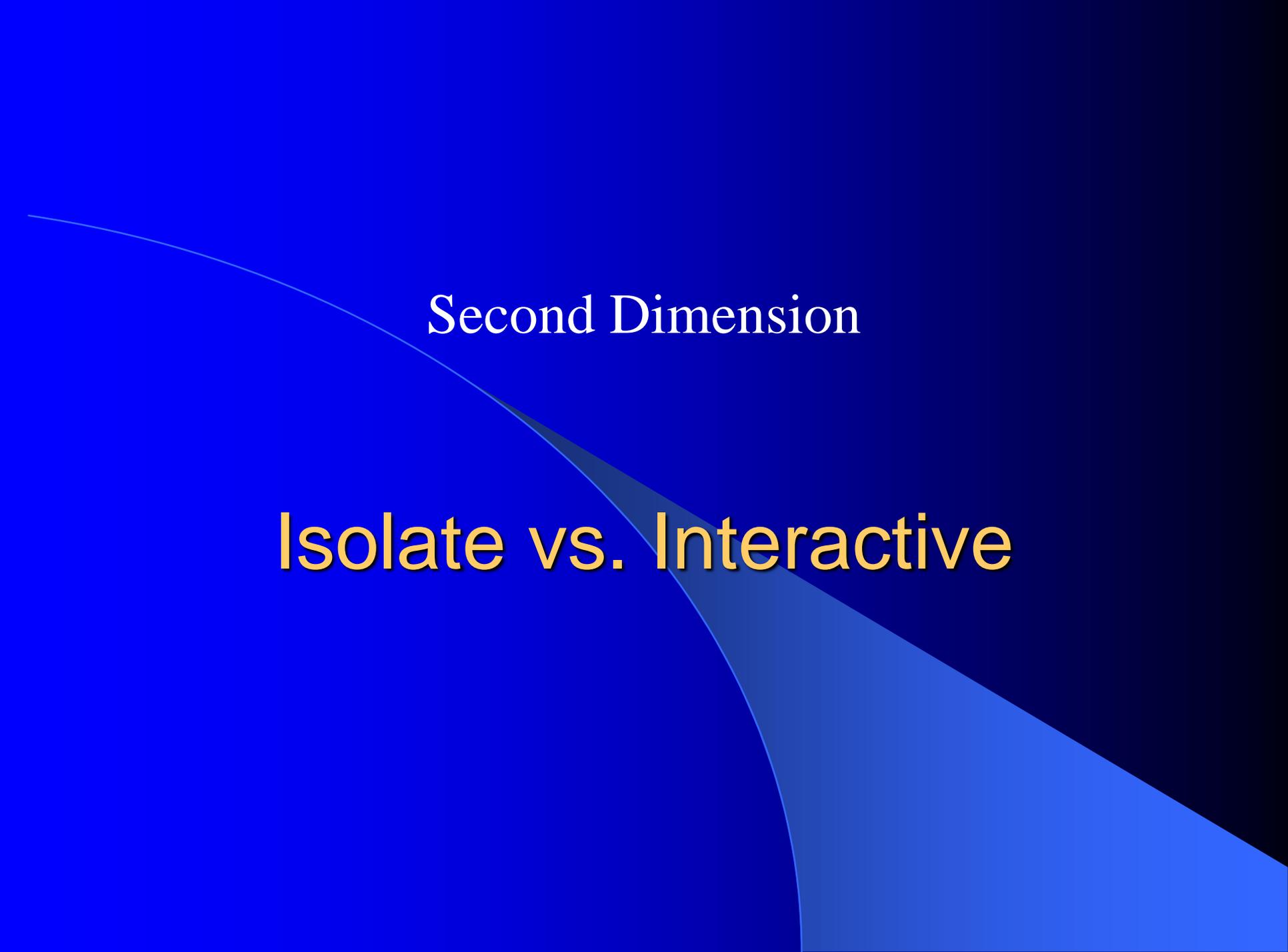
First Dimension

Complementary Vs.  
Symmetrical

MARRIAGE  
COUNSELOR



*"Of course we share the chores. I cook and he eats."*



Second Dimension

**Isolate vs. Interactive**

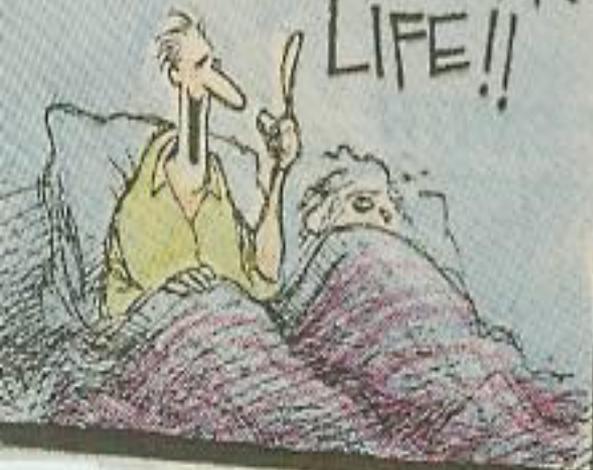
Third Dimension

Respectful Vs. Conflicting

RISE AND SHINE!



TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY  
OF THE REST OF YOUR  
LIFE!!



WIEY

JUSTIFIABLE  
HOMICIDE...  
CASE  
DISMISSED.



Differences in the Ways  
Family Members Grieve Are  
Not Differences in Love!



Thou Shall Respect Different  
Grieving Styles!

# Fourth Dimension

Typical Vs. Atypical  
(Culture and Gender)

# Working With Families

- Carefully assess styles and dimensions
- Interview family members individually
- Persons may appear instrumental as they seek to protect other family members
- In effect, they are doing a balancing act – trying to balance their needs with the perception of other's needs



# Working With Families



- Challenge families to acknowledge differences – as differences
  - Illustrate effective models
  - Differences in coping and attraction
  - Challenge inappropriate judgments
  - Take responsibility to meet own needs

# How Can Counselors Help?

# Begin with Self

- Acknowledge Different Grieving Styles
- Recognize the Culture of Counseling (Sue & Sue)

# Validate Grieving Styles

- Instrumental Grievers (especially early in the grief process)
- Intuitive Grievers (later in the grief process)
- Male Intuitive Grievers
- Female Instrumental Grievers (the most disenfranchised)

# Assess – Do Not Assume

- Consistency in history of coping
- Comfort in discussing loss
- Sense of movement in grief
- Assessment instruments



# Counseling Approaches

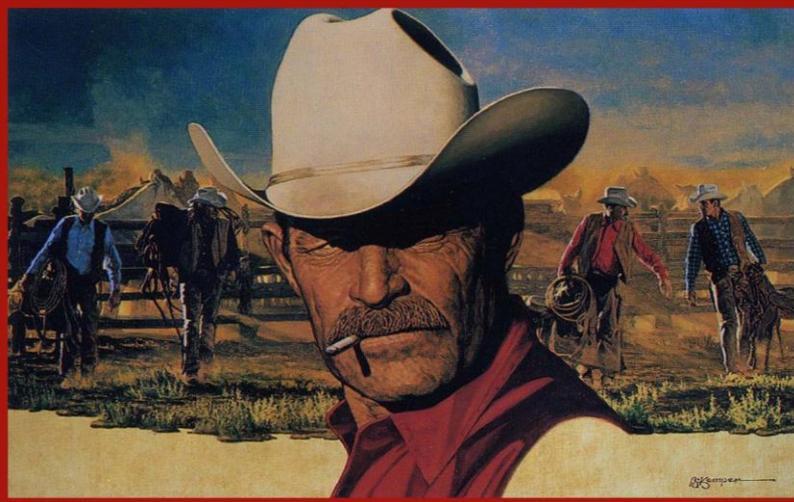
- Avoid the “F” Word
- Use Eclectic Methods – including Expressive Approaches (intentionally)

# Counseling Intuitive Grievers

- Traditional Approaches Work Well
- Individual Counseling Can Focus on Expressing and Exploring Affect (within a holistic framework)
- Traditional Support Groups Can Help (within a holistic framework)
- a holistic framework)



# Dissonant Grievors



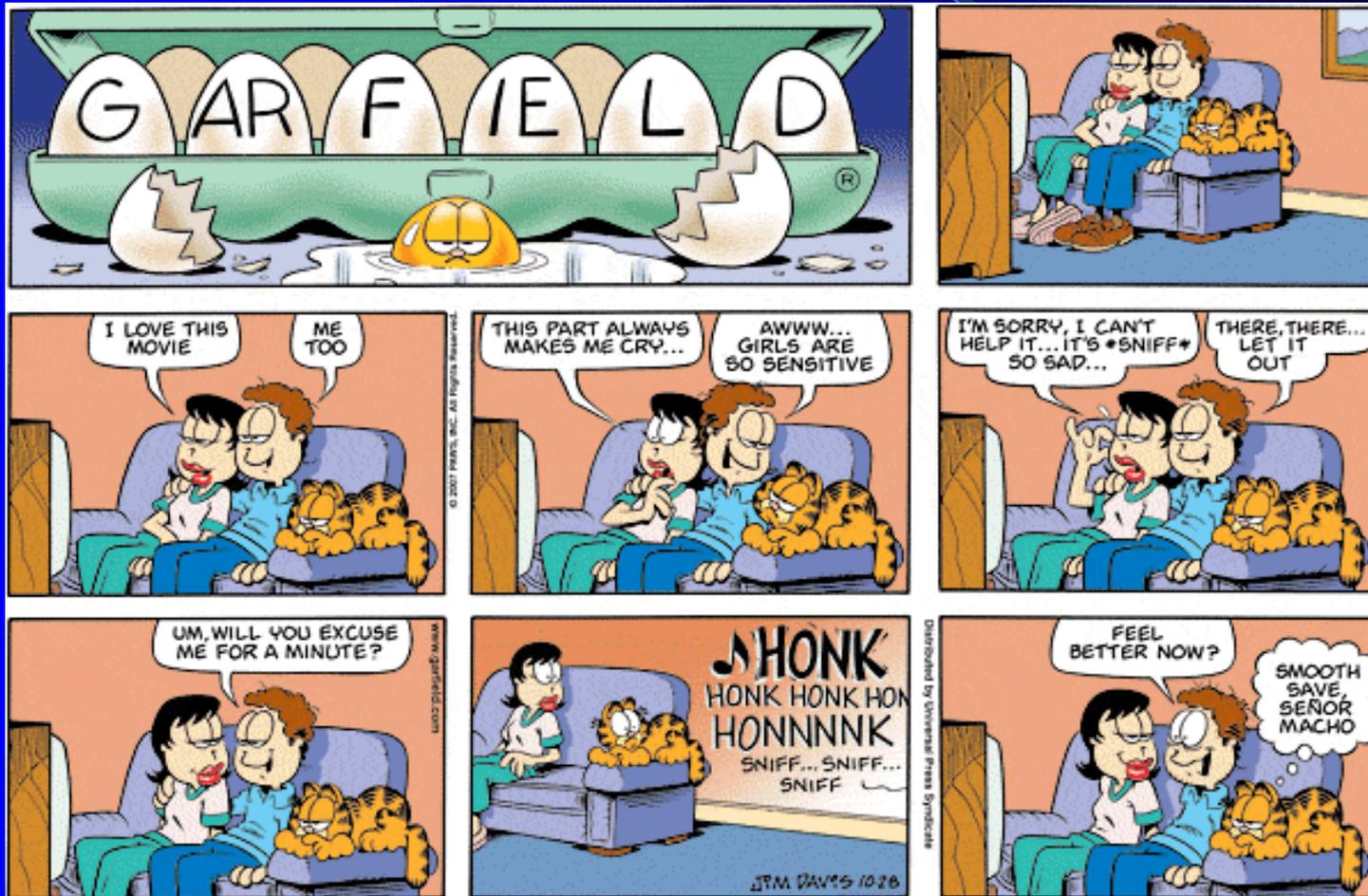
- Some men can be prone to dissonant patterns of grief
- Dominant male ideology
  - “No sissy stuff” – avoid feminine behaviors
  - “Big wheel” – success and achievement valued
  - “Sturdy oak” – do not show weakness
  - “Give ‘em hell” – seek adventure and risk
- Failure to adhere to these norms can create gender role strain (Levant)

# Counseling Dissonant Grievers



- Assess Pattern Carefully
- Explore Factors Inhibiting Emotional Expression
- Create a Safe Environment for Expressing Emotion
- Carefully Led and Structured Support Group Can Work especially men's groups

# Dosing and Private Expressions



# Counseling Dissonant Male Grievers

- Assess developmental experiences and socialization experiences in family of origin that inhibited emotional awareness and expression
- Create a safe, connected, equalitarian environment
- Use self-disclosure and model emotional expression
- Use action modalities – body movement, writing etc.
- Strategies may include dosing and private expressions of grief

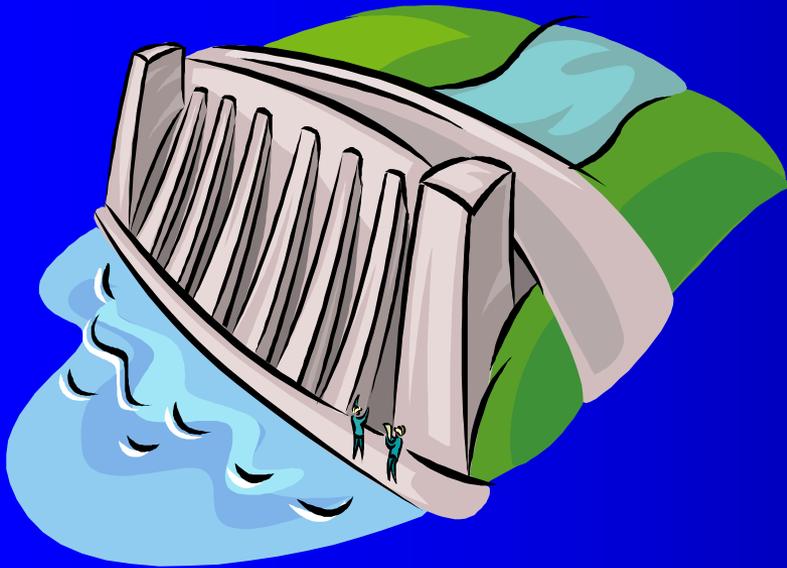


# Counseling Dissonant Female Grievers



- Assess developmental and socialization experiences that might inhibit emotional expression – could be protecting others such as children
- Create a safe environment
- Teach strategies of dosing

# Dissonant Grief: Case



- Mark, normally a male who copes in a very affective way, now works excessively after his daughter's death. He refuses to discuss his grief or daughter and claims it does no good to "wallow in the past".
- In counseling he expresses the fear that if he encounters his emotion, "the dam will burst"
- In counseling addressed the idea that perhaps the dam has an overflow valve – the value of dosing

# Counseling Instrumental Grievers

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# Counseling Instrumental Grievers

## *Motivating Instrumental Grievers*



- *Whose needs are being met?*
- An altruistic frame
- A competitive frame

# Counseling with Male Instrumental Griefers

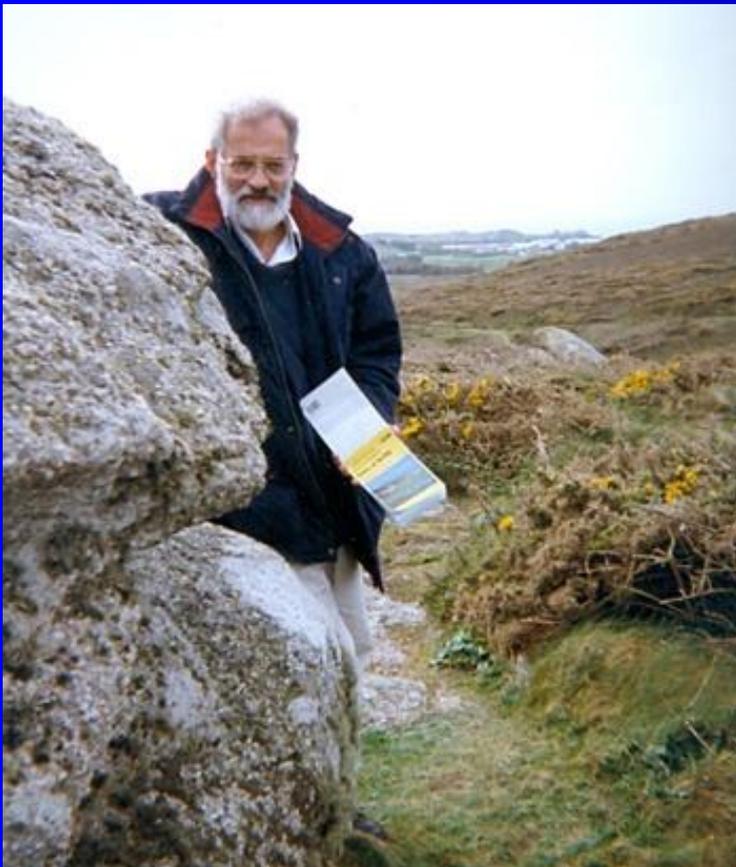
## *Strategies*

- Rituals have had an important cultural and historical role with men – such as rites of initiation
- Rituals draw on the need to “do” and offer elements of symbolic control
- For example, building a coffin for a dead cat with one’s son



# Counseling with Male Instrumental Grievers

## Strategies



- Reframing strengths
- For example, men take pride in coping with hardship
- *“It might be tough to sit with your wife as she expresses pain – but that could be a helpful sacrifice”*

# Counseling Male Clients



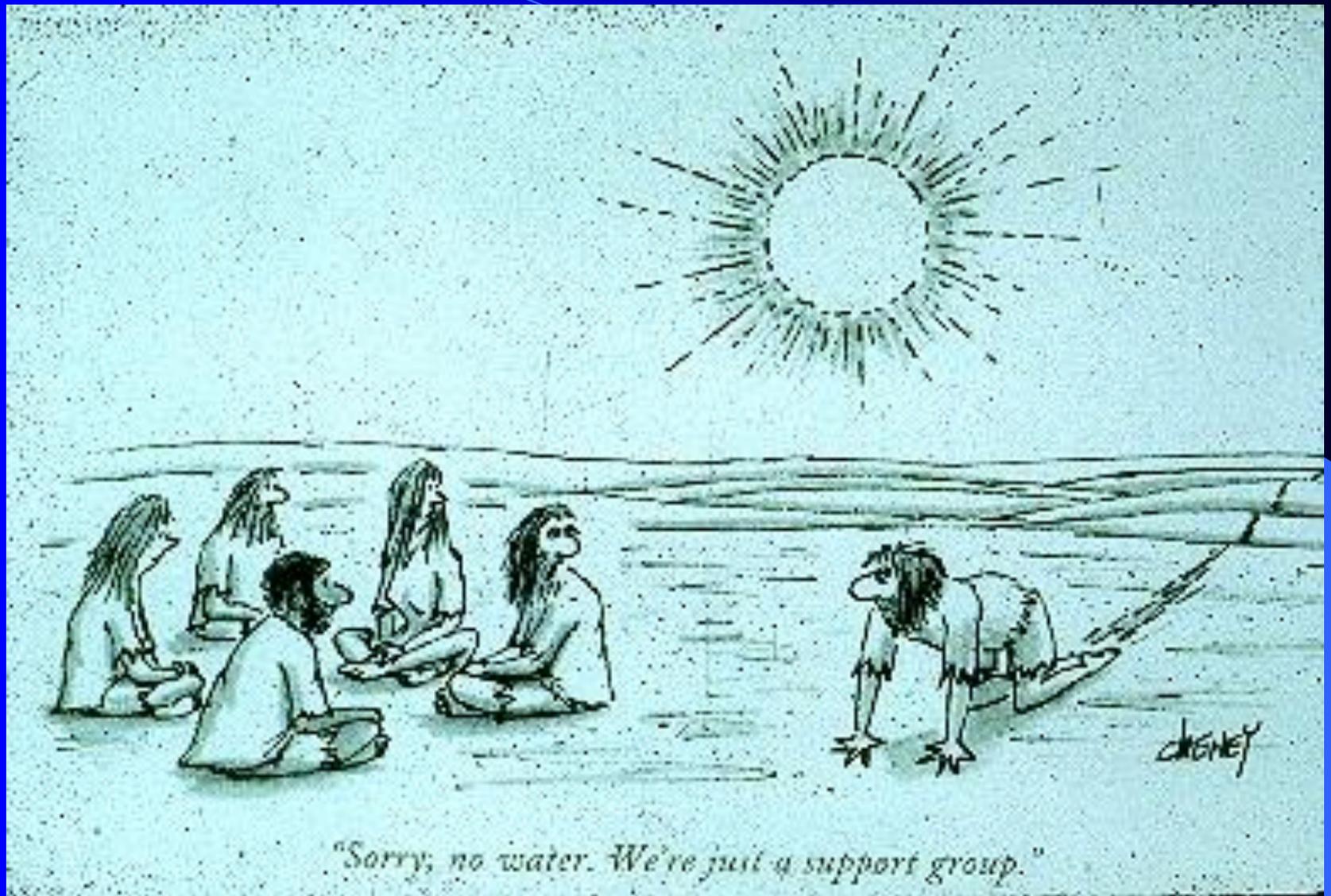
- Build on strengths
- Case: Widower focuses on work to the detriment of children.
  - Commend him on ability to care for family in this difficult time
  - Assist him to assess the effect of his work on his children so that he can decide whether he needs to bring in more balance.

Troyer, *Counseling Widowers*

# Counseling Female Instrumental Grievers

- Validation
- Explore Roots of Pattern (Note Research)
- Active and Cognitive Strategies





# Illustration: Support Groups

- Validation
- Ventilation
- Respite and Support
- Learn Coping Techniques
- Hope

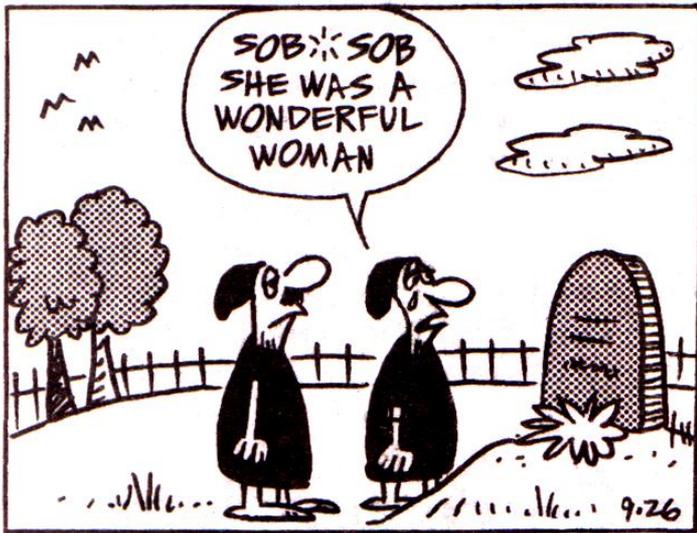
# Developing Groups for Instrumental Grievers

- Whose needs are being met?
- The importance of needs assessment



# THE WIZARD OF ID

by Brant Parker and Johnny Hart



# Traditional Models May Not Meet the Needs of Instrumental Grievers

- Adventure-Based Groups
- Discussion and Reading Groups
- Educational Seminars
- Informal Groups (Sharing Wives' Recipes)
- Problem-Solving Groups (Parents without Partners)
- Expressive Art Groups

# Innovative Ideas

- *Grief at the Bar*
- Chris Hall runs a men's bereavement group that meets at a pub over pizza and beer



# Men's Groups

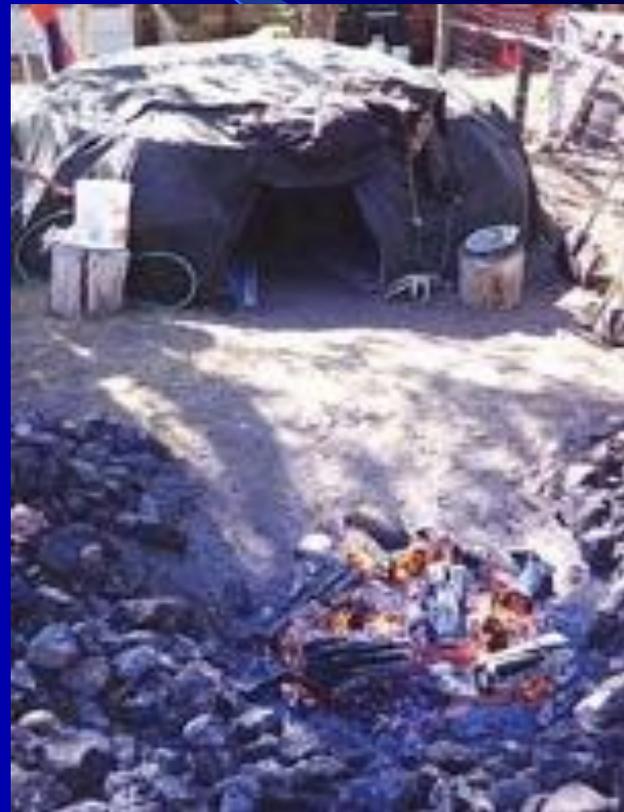
- The Harvard Bereavement study suggested that fathers were best served by offering a group on how to be good single parents – rather than offering emotional support (Worden, 2008)



# Innovative Ideas

## *A Native-American Men's Support Group in a Sweat Lodge*

- In a trip to Alaska, the Inupiat – a Native-American Group held a men's grief support group in a sweat-lodge
- Linking the activity with a traditional way that men found healing and support



# The Power of Ritual

- Meaning to moment
- Liminal
- Bridge to spirituality and culture
- Application for individual, family, or group

# Making Funeral Rituals Meaningful

- Personalize
- Participatory
- Translation (inc. Cultural, Spiritual)
- Speak to Multi-faceted Identities
- Widen the Circle



# Conclusion



- We grieve because we love
- We grieve as we live
- We cannot expect someone to grieve differently
- But we can support them in their own ways of grieving – however they do so