

<b>EXPERIENCE OF WIDOW/WIDOWER</b>	<b>EXPERIENCE OF ABANDONED SPOUSE</b>
<p>1. Loss of beloved spouse is deeply sad, but death was not a matter of personal rejection. Grief is over loss of other's presence and closeness. Still usually have the comfort of knowing one was deeply loved.</p>	<p>1. Loss of self-esteem, feels personal due to extreme rejection. Grief is not just over the loss of partner, but loss of being valued and cared for by the one who previously vowed to love and cherish until death.</p>
<p>2. Loss of physical presence. Memories of devotion from the deceased remain.</p>	<p>2. Loss of commitment, shared presence, &amp; love. Past devotion by partner retracted.</p>
<p>3. Friendships change, but are not divided. No loyalty conflicts. Friends are not lost, even though widow often feels like a third wheel with couple friends. Loss of partner felt by all. Awkward moments but no hostility involved.</p>	<p>3. Loss of friendships – friends often feel like they must “choose” between divided partners. Seldom still have shared alliances. Feelings of hostility, judgments, and shame abound. Silent avoidance among formerly shared friends.</p>
<p>4. No need for family members to choose sides. Everyone is safe to care for and be close to surviving spouse.</p>	<p>4. Family loyalty conflicts – children torn between their parents; in-laws usually take side of biological partner &amp; distance from divorcee.</p>
<p>5. Widow/widower is revered by friends and family. People have respect, awe and empathy for the surviving spouse.</p>	<p>5. Stigma attached to loss thru divorce. Shame, sense of failure, societal disapproval. Feel marginalized and inferior in status to others.</p>
<p>6. While much grief is experienced alone, there are numerous public displays of support and acknowledgment of the loss – Memorial service, burial rites, cards, letters, flowers, &amp; hugs. No public shame associated with loss unless grieve longer than socially acceptable.</p>	<p>6. Suffer losses in isolation – lack of public rituals, acknowledgement, or expressions of supportive sorrow. Little public permission to grieve. Only “rituals” are legal and private. Urged to “get over it” and “move on”.</p>
<p>7. Widow/widower experiences deep, pervasive grief. The person is dead. Some form of closure is possible, over time, although not easy. Reminders through the kids are fond but sad.</p>	<p>7. Deep grief, hurt and wounding continues – the person is “gone” from the relationship but still alive and a source of torment. Difficult to find closure. Wounds reopened thru unavoidable contact. “Information” thru the kids is painful.</p>
<p>8. While may lose house, emotional home is still “home” for the surviving family members. Kids have a unified place to come home to for holidays.</p>	<p>8. Kids don't have an intact home to return to at holidays. Must navigate between estranged and disconnected or hostile parents, stepparents.</p>

Experience of Widow/widower continued	Experience of Abandoned Spouse continued
<p>9. Mementos are usually cherished. Photos and sentimental items are treasured reminders of the one who died and the love shared. Pain over regrets and loss of person.</p>	<p>9. Mementos are painful reminders of love destroyed and tend to “mock” the deserted spouse. Photos are taken down, sentimental items hidden or thrown away.</p>
<p>10. The shared history of the marriage remains intact. Loss of future dreams.</p>	<p>10. History of marriage rewritten, twisted. Feel crazy, invalidated. Loss of future dreams.</p>
<p>11. While one stream of income may be lost, shared assets remain (and debts?). Surviving spouse still has possession of financial assets once shared with the other (retirement, house, cars, other property, furniture, etc...).</p>	<p>11. Assets are divided and lost. Legal costs of divorce and division of property are often devastating; significantly lower standard of living for divorcee.</p>
<p>12. Task of recovery involves thorough grieving and making peace with the loss. Sadness must be expressed before one can let go. Important to honor and grieve each aspect of the loss. Allowed moments of grief with family.</p>	<p>12. Task of recovery involves making sense of the breakdown of the marriage. Blame and responsibility need to be appropriately sorted so one can grow and not repeat the past. Generally grieve shame and losses in private.</p>
<p>13. Must find a way to let go of anger over the loss, regrets, and sadness. No opportunity to resolve what was unresolved in relationship.</p>	<p>13. Must find a way to let go of anger over rejection, betrayal, lies, regrets, shame, &amp; ex’s lack of remorse. No transactional resolution.</p>
<p>14. Must find a way to reorganize life without spouse and eventually say “goodbye” to deceased and feelings of injustice in order to move forward. Adjust to being alone.</p>	<p>14. Find a way to unilaterally forgive ex, self, &amp; betrayals by friends &amp; family. Eventually say goodbye to old life &amp; obsessions w/ injustice. Build new friendships. Adjust to being alone.</p>
<p>15. Rebuild sense of self identity, integrating past experience with new experiences. Build upon previous feelings of being loved by deceased, with new and/or adjusted relationships.</p>	<p>15. Rebuild sense of self worth in order to see oneself as lovable, worthy of devotion. Stop beating self up with old accusations of the past (esp. from ex.). Create a new, positive identity.</p>
<p>16. Find a way to dream new dreams. Humanize the deceased so he/she is no longer idealized or enshrined. Expand social connections; allow room for new love.</p>	<p>16. Get over mistrust of opposite sex or institution of marriage. Find a way to dream new dreams and look forward. Expand social network. Let go of final regrets &amp; unhealthy coping strategies to allow room for new love.</p>