



TAPS
Institute for Hope and Healing

Double Whammy: Coping with the Death of a Spouse While Parenting a Grieving Child


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Moderated by Tina Barrett, EdD
Executive Director, Tamarack Grief Resource Center


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Presented by Boeing 




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**You must go on.
I can't go on.
I'll go on.**

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As a widowed parent,
the challenges
you face may be
Overwhelming

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As a widowed parent,
the challenges
you face may be
Exhausting

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As a widowed parent,
the challenges
you face may be
Relentless

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As a widowed parent,
the challenges
you face may be
Isolating

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As a widowed parent,
the challenges
you face may be
Unique

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As a widowed parent,
the challenges
you face may be
Disorienting

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Understanding Your Grief




<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyOVKLR2pEs#action=share>

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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner




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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner
2. Helping your children grieve




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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner
2. Helping your children grieve
3. Being both Mom and Dad



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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner
2. Helping your children grieve
3. Being both Mom and Dad

All present on Day One

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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner
2. Helping your children grieve
3. Being both Mom and Dad
4. Moving forward

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Meeting The Challenges

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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner
2. Helping your children grieve
3. Being both Mom and Dad
4. Moving forward with



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Grieving your spouse/partner

- All consuming at times
- Range of emotions, thoughts, behaviors
 - Avoid thinking of these as being "wrong"
- Looking back:
 - Memories of the time leading up to death or the death itself
 - Regrets / what ifs

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Grieving your spouse/partner


- Marriage / relationship ended prematurely
- Search for meaning or fairness
- Constant reminders: wedding ring, pictures, closets, kids
- No timetable
- Grief bursts – these are normal

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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner
2. Helping your children grieve
3. Being both Mom and Dad
4. Moving forward with



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Helping Your Children Grieve


- You don't have to be perfect
 - (chances are, you weren't perfect before)
- There is no expectation that you'll get this *just right*
- You do have the greatest influence
 - (This is good news, by the way)

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Helping Your Children Grieve

- Familiarize yourself with developmental norms
 - Infants & Toddlers
 - Pre-school age
 - School-age
 - Teenagers
 - Young adults




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Helping Your Children Grieve

- Two main things:
 1. Consistency at home




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Helping your Children Grieve

- Two main things:
 1. Consistency at home
 2. Emotionally available




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Helping Your Children Grieve

- Consistency at home
 - Establish and maintain routines
 - (ha!)
 - Keep discipline consistent
 - (ha, again!)




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Helping Your Children Grieve

- Emotionally available
 - Communicate, communicate, communicate
 - Avoid conspiracy of silence
 - Be honest
 - Talk about Mom or Dad
 - Happy-Mad-Glad-Sad game




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Helping Your Children Grieve

- Emotionally available
 - Nurture continued bonds
 - Holidays, anniversaries
 - Enlist friends and family
 - Shared struggle




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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner
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Being both Mom and Dad

- It's. All. On. You.
- "The relentless fatigue of being an 'only' parent"
- Filling new roles/responsibilities
 - The "fun" parent, the "strict" parent, the "___" parent
 - *"But Dad would have let me do it!"*

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Being both Mom and Dad

- Even in good times, parenting is a humbling endeavor...
- Be fair with yourself
 - Again, you don't have to be perfect
- The "Good Enough Parent"

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The Challenges

1. Grieving the death of your spouse/partner
2. Helping your children to grieve
3. Being both Mom and Dad
4. Moving forward with 

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Moving Forward With


- You will move **forward with**
- You do not need to move **on from**
- In-laws (still in-laws?)
- Reminders: wedding ring; pictures; closets
- Clarify your priorities → live accordingly

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Moving Forward With

- You don't always have to be "last in line"
- Balance your needs with your children's
- Embrace personal growth
- Reimagine new trajectories
- Be patient and fair with yourself



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Moving Forward With


- Dating
 - *“As it turns out, my desires didn't die with my wife”*
 - Doesn't mean that you're "over" your loss
 - Date when you are ready
 - Jigsaw puzzle vs. Rubik's cube

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Moving Forward With

- Seek out support
 - Find someone to talk with
 - Other mothers/fathers
 - School counselors
 - Professional counseling



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Resources

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Resources

- Books and websites
- Grief camps
- Bereavement organizations
- Widowed Parent podcast (Jenny Lisk)

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widowed parent




resources | support | research

www.widowedparent.org

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The Group
Seven Widowed Fathers Reimagine Life



- Blend of narrative and the latest findings in bereavement
- For any person coping with loss
- All of our proceeds go back to the Widowed Parent Program

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Thank you

- TAPS
- Tina Barrett
- Our team at UNC (Don Rosenstein, Leeza Park)
- The hundreds of mothers and fathers who have chosen to participate in our studies

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Thank you



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Questions?

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About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®

Launched in March 2018 through an alliance with HFA, the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public.



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Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

- June 20-21 — *Helping Individuals and Families Coping with Grief: Best Practices for Bereavement Professionals*
Presenter: **Kenneth J. Doka**, PhD, MDiv
- July 30 — *Spouses and Suicide: Finding Hope When the Unthinkable Happens*
Presenter: **Shauna Springer**, PhD
Moderator: **Kim Ruocco**, MSW

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