

THE YOUNG WIDOW

While the grieving process is similar to those experiencing any loss, the content and prescription for reconciliation of young widows requires an emphasis on a number of special activities.

For many young widows, this is the first time there has been a major loss—of any kind. Until now, life was normal and predictable, filled with school, perhaps college, idyllic romance, a home, children, developing careers, and more.

- In one moment, my life, my hopes, my dreams turned upside-down so completely.
- After years of preparation for life together with a man I admire, respect and love, I find myself overwhelmed with responsibilities and aloneness.
- I find myself with so many unsatisfied needs—physical needs, emotional needs, intellectual needs, and spiritual needs.
- I really don't know how to be a single parent. I'm scared.

ALONENESS

There've always been people around. Father, mother, sisters and brothers, college roommates, the old high school gang, hanging out with friends, my special boyfriend, fiancée, lover, husband, and perhaps children. Now it is me alone or me and my kid(s).

No adult to talk to, to listen to me, to touch me, to take care of me, to sleep with me, for me to listen to, care about and take care of.

The world is organized for couples and I'm not part of that anymore. It is all gone, and I am alone with myself or kid(s) who are demanding of my nonexistent energy.

They had everything according to the American dream and expectation—ever onward and upward, each year better than the last.

Of course, there was nothing to prepare them to deal with major and often sudden reversal.

The statements below represent many of the feelings and concerns of women who are widowed early in their married life.

PARTNER DEPENDENCY

Can I be a fulfilled woman without intimacy in my life? My social modeling has always been centered around being with a partner.

All my physical, emotional and social needs require the close presence of a partner in my life. Am I capable of attracting someone else now that I'm older and perhaps have kids?

Am I going to change my attitudes about the need for companionship?

How am I going to find someone else, anyone else?

LONELINESS

This is separate from aloneness. Aloneness is being alone and perhaps missing the adult activity I once enjoyed. But this overwhelming feeling of loneliness is separate and apart from being alone.

It is my wave of depression which may be present even when I'm at work or around others. I can feel lonely even when I'm not alone. It's just different and I'm not certain I want to go on living this way.

My loneliness really stems from my feelings of worthlessness. I've needed the company and admiration of others to feel valuable. I have lost what I had, and I am lonely.

RESPONSIBILITY

I am a responsible person, but I never had this degree of responsibility thrust upon me before and don't know how to handle it. I'm really scared.

There is the financial concern of how I'm going to support myself and perhaps my kid(s). Just being alone and raising the children alone in this day and age is frightening.

How am I going to provide? How am I going to take care of all these possessions? How am I going to ensure proper childcare when I go back to work?

THE UNKNOWN

What will become of me?

Will I ever love again?

Will I live the rest of my life feeling the way I do right now? If so, is it all worth it?

This decision, that decision, am I doing it correctly?

What would my partner have done?