



Children's National™

Chaplaincy Services



**WOMEN'S
WAYS**

When Women Grieve

Your child has died and nothing will ever be the same...

Parents grieve differently.

Mothers and fathers have different relationships with their children.

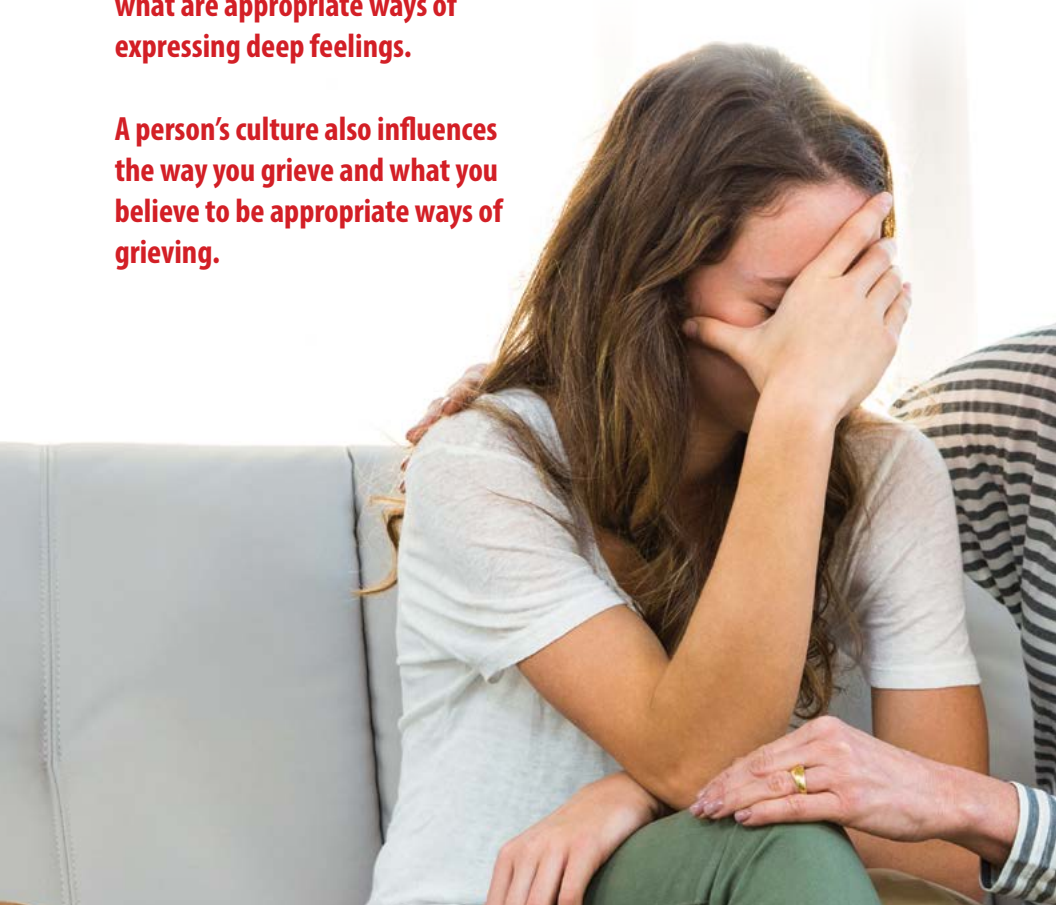
Women and men have been taught differently from the time of their own childhoods about what are appropriate ways of expressing deep feelings.

A person's culture also influences the way you grieve and what you believe to be appropriate ways of grieving.

Grief is truly solitary - even when others around you are grieving each of you can feel alone. It's hard to express what you are experiencing to your partner.

But the process of grieving is very important. It's the way we put our world back together when it has been shattered.

It's also important for mothers and fathers to understand why she grieves the way she does - and why he grieves the way he does.



This is a brochure that highlights some of the ways women grieve differently from men. We are also giving you a brochure on how men grieve differently from women.

Read them and share them with your partner so that you can each have some information about how to understand what may be happening to you while you grieve the death of your child.

When a child dies, most people think immediately of the mother. You will very likely become the central figure of concern for your family and friends.

People may call you or stop by to visit, offers of help with other children or household duties will be made, touching, hugging, comforting, protecting are immediate and natural.

This is a socially acceptable way for women who are sad and grieving to be together especially in western cultures.

You will be more concerned with expressing your feelings; your partner/husband may be more concerned with taking care of things and fixing what he can fix.

Both are normal and appropriate ways of coping with a terrible loss.

Women tend to be less structured than men about when and where they grieve. If you are reminded of your child who died, you are more likely than your husband/partner to react spontaneously and emotionally.

A man may want to "schedule" time to be in touch with his feelings, to allow the grief to come to the surface. They might avoid times when they are worried that a sudden reminder may trigger their grief.

THESE ARE GENERAL WAYS IN WHICH WOMEN AND MEN DIFFER IN THEIR GRIEF...

EACH INDIVIDUAL PERSON FINDS THEIR OWN WAY.



A WOMAN - you - will more frequently cry for longer periods of time and more often... You may want to talk about what happened with your child with many different people... You may want to participate in a support group or become more active in church, synagogue or religious community... You may want to visit the cemetery regularly or keep your child's ashes at home... You may want to change the way you work or how you live, take some longer time to make decisions about what comes next...

A MAN - your husband or partner - may become quiet and like to spend time alone... He may not want to talk about what happened and may want to get back to work or a routine more quickly... He may do more things that distract him from remembering and feeling his sadness - involvement with work, or a hobby, for instance.

You may spend much more time at home, where the reminders of your child are more visible and therefore your grief more present to you every day - every hour of every day.

Your partner/husband may return to work soon; he will be surrounded by people who may express sympathy but who do not share his experience, and

because he is not in the home for such long periods of time he is reminded less often of your child on a daily basis.

But the evenings and weekends are times when you will be together at home -

You will both be tired from the day's activities. You may want to talk; your husband/partner may need to be quiet or find time to be alone.

There are difficult adjustments to be made...

It can be very important simply to NAME your understanding that each of you needs different ways and opportunities to grieve.

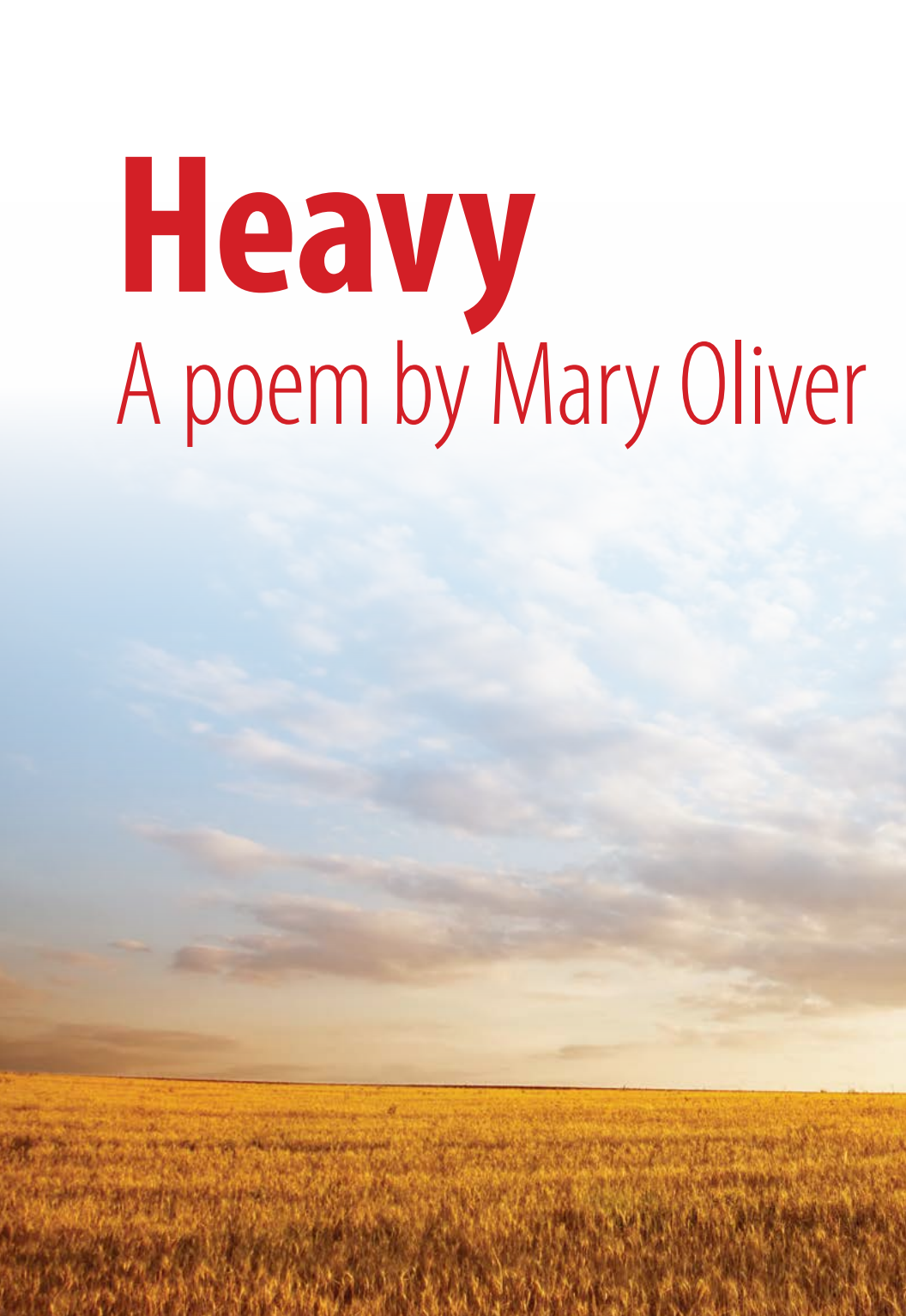
Give one another "permission" to find the ways to express and work through the grief as each experiences it.

Be intentional about making time together to grieve together - even if it's doing different things in the same room...

Be respectful of one another's process.

Heavy

A poem by Mary Oliver



That time
I thought I could not
go any closer to grief
without dying

I went closer,
and I did not die.
Surely God
had His hand in this,

As well as friends.
Still, I was bent,
and my laughter,
as the poet said,

Was nowhere to be found.
Then said my friend Daniel
(brave even among lions),

"It's not the weight you carry
but how you carry it -
books, bricks, grief -
it's all in the way

You embrace it, balance it, carry
when you cannot, and would
not, put it down."
So I went practicing.
Have you noticed?

Have you heard
the laughter
that comes, now and again,
out of my startled mouth?

How I linger
to admire, admire, admire
the things of this world
that are kind, and maybe

Also troubled -
roses in the wind,
the sea geese on the steep waves
a love to which there is no reply?



**For more information, contact
Bereavement Coordinator
Children's National Medical Center
Washington, DC
202-476-3321
www.childrensnational.org**

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