



Love After Loss

(for bereaved, intimate female partners)

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Please note: The information provided on this program is intended for educational purposes only.

If you or a loved one needs professional support, please contact TAPS 24/7 at 800-959-TAPS (8277).



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Learning Objectives

Upon the conclusion of this presentation, it is intended that participants will be able to:

- Discuss the topic of intimacy and love after the death of an intimate partner
- Explore if one is ready for new relationships
- Become familiar with some of the common questions and concerns faced by bereaved partners who are considering new relationships after their loss
- Gain an understanding on integrating new partners into the family system
- Increase the ability to support oneself and one's children, as well as those who love someone who is bereaved

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Introductions

Susan Starnes



Carla Stumpf Patton



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Love After Loss (for bereaved, intimate female partners)

Finding love again after the death of an intimate partner can be a joyous experience for those who are ready, but can elicit mixed emotions, such as how to honor the memory and continue the bond with the person who has died while moving forward with one's life

This type of life transition can raise issues around trust, intimacy, and communication

It can also present unique challenges for those with children or when considering blending families



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An Individual Decision

This session is for women who are:

- curious about the concept
- ready to explore dating
- already dating
- considering a committed relationship
- already remarried



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An Individual Decision

- ✓ No right or wrong answer
- ✓ No absolute timelines
- ✓ No perfect scenario
- ✓ No concrete "rules" (other than upholding safety and well-being for that of self and/or children)



How Do You Know When You Are Ready?

Have you...

- Stabilized the major issues surrounding the death of your loved one?
- Given yourself adequate time and space to work through the grieving process?
- Been able to process any unresolved issues from the former relationship?

Are you...

- At the phase in your grief where you focus more so about the life of your loved one, rather than the details of the death?
- At a point in your grief journey where you have found healing and growth, and perhaps considering a new, hopeful future?

Mixed and Conflicting Emotions

- Fear vs. emotional security
- Loneliness vs. companionship
- Judgment vs. acceptance
- Doubt vs. confidence
- Confusion vs. clarity
- Guilt vs. excitement
- Hesitation vs. empowerment
- Hopelessness vs. hopefulness
- Past vs. future



Unique Concerns

- Safety (emotional and physical)
- Giving yourself permission
- No "correct" way to grieve
- Do what works for you
- Communication and sharing details
- Going public
- Legal, financial, and benefits issues



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Considerations With New Partners

- Being secure and loved in the current relationship
- Adapting to the grieving family system
- Understanding the impact of trauma associated with the death
- Balancing past memories with future possibilities
- Treated fairly and respectfully by others
- Living in the shadow of the person who has died
- Setting and maintaining healthy boundaries
- Willingness to be involved in support systems
- **Honest, open communication**



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Considerations With Children

- Discussing concept of new friendships, relationships, dating
- Consider timing of how and when to introduce new partner
- Changes in the family system
- Respecting individual needs
- Roles and boundaries
- Blending families
- Family counseling



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Suggestions from Peers

- "It was helpful to have someone who had empathy and who was understanding"
- *"Don't rush into things. You have to be okay with yourself and your situation"*
- "Sometimes they don't know how to react to our situation and that can lead to misunderstandings"
- *"It helped that they were willing to be involved in TAPS and were accepting of my situation"*
- *"I had to set healthy boundaries with the other people I had in my life that were not supporting my choices"*



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Insights and Common Themes

"My late husband is a part of my story and will always be a part of my life, therefore my new partner has to be understanding of that"

"When my husband passed away, I lost my trust in everything around me. What I thought was safe and secure (my marriage and our life together) could no longer be counted on. This made me question the foundation which I had built my whole life on. When I was opened to dating again, it was like starting from the ground up. Brick by brick, I had to learn to trust myself, trust my feelings and trust the person that I was dating"

"It helped knowing that my new husband was accepting of me honoring my late husband. He honors him in his words of appreciation for his service and his actions when he supports my children and our family as we go through our grief journey. That support with our open communication has made it possible for me to continue to hold that space of honor for my late husband and still move forward in my life"



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Seeking Additional Support

- Family and friends
- Bereaved peers
- Online communities for bereaved spouses/partners
- Bereavement support groups
- Individual, couples/conjoint, and family therapy
- Clergy and faith community
- Organizations such as TAPS, local hospice, Dougy Center (and other grief centers for children)

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Presenter Information



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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

- March 10** **Love After Loss (for men)**
Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET
With **Justin Yopp**, PhD, University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill
And **Warren Pellegrin**, USMC Veteran
- March 31** **How Could They Say That? Coping with Well-Intentioned but Hurtful Comments While Grieving**
Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET
With **Rev. Paul A Metzler**, DMin, Clergy Member, Therapist and Grief Counselor
- April 7** **Grieving as a Grandparent: Coping with Generational Loss**
Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET
With **Kenneth J. Doka**, PhD, MDiv, TAPS Advisory Board Member
And **Dana and Linda O'Brien**, TAPS Peer Mentors

Visit taps.org/institute to learn more and RSVP!

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