

HOW WOMEN CHANGED SINCE THE DEATH OF THEIR HUSBANDS

What is different?

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Self care articles for the bereaved

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In my doctoral dissertation titled, *Perceptions of the Widow's Bereavement Process by Her Adult Child*, I asked the 59 widowed women in the study the following question:

**How do you feel you've changed since your spouse died?
List 3 of the most significant ways (if any) that indicate
how you are different.**

Here is what they said:

- ✓ A better business person because I have had to be
- ✓ A healthier person
- ✓ Able to make decisions.
- ✓ Acceptance of total responsibility for self, house, life, etc.
- ✓ Adaptable
- ✓ Afraid to "speak my mind" openly
- ✓ Alone, without spouse
- ✓ Although I'm relatively financially secure, I'm afraid to spend money.
- ✓ Anxious, uncertain, suspicious, take nothing for granted.
- ✓ As a perfectionist, I feel I am spread too thin.
- ✓ Aware of having to take care of myself
- ✓ Become more concerned about my physical condition.
- ✓ Become self-supporting
- ✓ Better understanding of financial affairs
- ✓ Bitter
- ✓ Can't sleep



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- ✓ Close to my sisters even more than before
 - ✓ Closer to God and my church
 - ✓ Concerned about money management
 - ✓ Deeper spiritual life
 - ✓ Developed more friends of mine rather than ours
 - ✓ Don't eat like I should
 - ✓ Empathy
 - ✓ Empty and hopeless feelings
 - ✓ Even more concerned about children than before
 - ✓ Excellent gardener
 - ✓ Express my feelings more
 - ✓ Feel less adequate to me decisions
 - ✓ Feel more able to interact with people outside the home
 - ✓ Finally, acceptance
 - ✓ Free thinking in matters of religion
 - ✓ Gained confidence
 - ✓ Going places by myself
 - ✓ Greater faith in God
 - ✓ Grew to meet my problems
 - ✓ Guilt over not caring for grandchildren
 - ✓ Had to be self-reliant (completely)
 - ✓ Happier
 - ✓ Have more confidence in myself
 - ✓ Helpful to others
 - ✓ I am a career woman.
 - ✓ I am depressed more.
 - ✓ I am extremely depressed, unhappy, and lonely.
 - ✓ I am frightened by the uncertainty of my future.
 - ✓ I am less trusting of others than I need to be
 - ✓ I am more self-sufficient, stronger.
 - ✓ I am quieter.
 - ✓ I am stronger.
 - ✓ I come to understand myself better, who I am, and what I want.
 - ✓ I cry too much when alone.
 - ✓ I devote more time to work than family.
 - ✓ I don't have the interest to go on trying.
 - ✓ I don't laugh often.
 - ✓ I don't take what I have for granted anymore.
 - ✓ I feel different about my work since I have to work.
 - ✓ I feel for people more.
 - ✓ I feel more inhibited in my actions or speech.
 - ✓ I get discouraged trying to live alone.
 - ✓ I have a void in my life that's hard to fill
 - ✓ I have become belligerent if someone tries to tell me how to run my life.
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- I have become more independent.**
 (This was, by far, the most popular response.)
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- ✓ I have become more self-sufficient.
 - ✓ I have become spoiled (living alone)
 - ✓ I have learned to be a "person" on my own.
 - ✓ I have less purpose in life.
 - ✓ I have moods of depression.
 - ✓ I haven't been able to "trust" that another person could care for me as my husband did.
 - ✓ I live each day more fully rather than saving everything for the future.
 - ✓ I love my new husband very much.
 - ✓ I must go on and live as he would want me to.
 - ✓ I stay at home more.
 - ✓ I take charge of my own business.
 - ✓ I talk more in a group.

- ✓ I think I am not different.
- ✓ I try harder not to worry about my new husband.
- ✓ I work less in my house.
- ✓ I'm not as cheerful or happy
- ✓ I'm not as sure of myself as I was while he was with me.
- ✓ I've become more aware of other people feelings.
- ✓ I've been forced to manage money, house, alone.
- ✓ I've finally realized that life isn't a game, I don't think I'll ever be as carefree as I was before becoming responsible (entirely) for the children. I've not quite yet learned to live with the knowledge that I do it alone.
- ✓ I've learned I have to be responsible for myself.
- ✓ I've matured because I've had to do new things.
- ✓ I've tried to live as I did when he was with me hoping someday that I'll see him again.
- ✓ It seems as though everything has gotten much harder to deal with and sometimes I just sort of "cave in."
- ✓ It's hard to love someone; scared they might die.
- ✓ Kinder to myself
- ✓ Knowledge I can enjoy companionship of friends
- ✓ Learned how to make decisions
- ✓ Learned that happiness is a choice
- ✓ Learned to accept living alone (but not to like it)
- ✓ Learned to accept people for what they are. You cannot change them.
- ✓ Learned to ask for help and accept it gratefully
- ✓ Learned to be myself not worrying about others opinions.
- ✓ Learned to do things (mechanically) that I had never done before.
- ✓ Learned to make decisions on my own
- ✓ Learning too slowly to going alone, but feel if and when I accept the fact, "this is the way it is," I will be a stronger person.
- ✓ Less angry
- ✓ Less anxiety about being out at parties
- ✓ Less bothered with housework
- ✓ Less concerned about my own death
- ✓ Less concerned about outside opinion.
- ✓ Less judgmental of others
- ✓ Life has grown in different directions.
- ✓ Life is more purposeless.
- ✓ Lonely even if other people are around
- ✓ Lonely
- ✓ Low esteem
- ✓ More aggressive
- ✓ More aware of the hurt that others suffer.
- ✓ More calm
- ✓ More cautious with spending
- ✓ More comfortable with my own mortality
- ✓ More compassionate
- ✓ More concerned about practical affairs, finances, etc.
- ✓ More confidence, worry less (because of turning to more faith in God)
- ✓ More confident in myself regarding my ability to work things out.



- ✓ More content
- ✓ More cynical
- ✓ More dependent on God for help and guidance
- ✓ More dependent upon friends
- ✓ More difficult to "do business" with
- ✓ More easygoing, less critical of others
- ✓ More fun
- ✓ More handy around house
- ✓ More inclined to spend money and spoil children
- ✓ More knowledgeable of finances
- ✓ More lazy
- ✓ More lonely
- ✓ More of a loner
- ✓ More outgoing
- ✓ More positive
- ✓ More reliant on my own decisions
- ✓ More religious
- ✓ More reverent in my thinking

**More self-sufficient,
more self-confident**

- ✓ More thoughtful
- ✓ More tolerant
- ✓ More women as friends. Most are alone too
- ✓ Much more emotional and sentimental
- ✓ Much more mature, but a little hardened
- ✓ My life requires an extremely imposed discipline of work/companionship, etc.
- ✓ Not as cheerful (or more irritable).
- ✓ Not as outgoing
- ✓ Not a first-class citizen

- ✓ Not quite as patient with people
- ✓ Not trustful of men
- ✓ Nothing to live for, no one needs me
- ✓ People tell me I appear to be more serious.
- ✓ Politically much more liberal
- ✓ Probably more selfish
- ✓ Resentful of others happiness and togetherness
- ✓ Resignation
- ✓ Responsible for all finances
- ✓ Sad all the time
- ✓ Scared
- ✓ Seek company of interesting female companions
- ✓ Self-confidence.
- ✓ Skilled repair woman
- ✓ Still learning to be alone, but not lonely
- ✓ Stronger emotionally and psychologically
- ✓ Stronger, don't need absolute control.
- ✓ Take life more easy
- ✓ Tend to love and appreciate others more
- ✓ Tolerant
- ✓ Travel more, keep moving and involved
- ✓ Try to be understanding of other people's problems.
- ✓ Try to live each day more fully.
- ✓ Understanding to others
- ✓ Unwanted

Wiser

- ✓ Withdrawn from life
- ✓ Work a little more than right before he died
- ✓ Worry more about the future