

## The Plan

**I**t seems to me that women handle grief better than men do. Perhaps women are more community-minded; they have a wider circle of friends and are willing to speak more openly about their emotions. Unfortunately, when pain descends upon us men, we react as we've been taught: keep emotions in check and solve the problem.

Take the pain of childbirth as an example. Women live through it, experience every agonizing moment, talk about it with friends, and get on with the joy of family. But if men had to bear the pain of childbirth, I fear many lineages would soon die out. All too quickly, we'd seize on a solution to the pain: no more births! We would just not tolerate distortion of our bodies or labor pains. That's our answer—eliminate the problem.

To men, bereavement may seem to be just another of life's problems; we need to devise a solution—the sooner the better—and end the pain. And so the solution for many men appears to be finding another woman to replace the lost loved one. (I'm convinced there are men who use the memorial service for their spouse as a screening tool for potential candidates.) Simply find another wife, re-create a life that has been lost, and problem solved. Grief gone.

But stoicism and all our problem-solving skills cannot bring real recovery from grief. Until and unless we live through and understand