

A Journey Together: Chicagoland Chapter - Bereaved Parents of the USA www.bpusachicagoland.org

Bereaved Parents of the USA Mission:

We, as bereaved parents, help grieving parents and families rebuild their lives following the death of a child.

Meetings are generally held the first Tuesday of every month, 7:00 – 8:30 PM. Doors open at 6:30 PM for greeting and fellowship.

First Congregational Church of Western Springs, 1106 Chestnut Street, Western Springs, Illinois

Eleanor Byrne (708-485-6160) and Sally Yarberry (708-738-0396; psyrbrry@hotmail.com), Chapter Co-Leaders

SHADOWCHILD

By Donna Corrigan, BP/USA Chicagoland Chapter

In his book, "Shadowchild: A Meditation on Love and Loss", P. F. Thomese says, "Missing word. A woman who lives longer than her husband is called a widow, a man without his wife, a widower. A child without parents is an orphan. But what do you call the father and mother of a child who has died?"

What a horrible question to answer! As we walk thru this life, without our child, we continue to find answers to all of our new questions. What do we call ourselves? How do we make it through another day, let alone another month or season or year?

Daily we are confronted with issues we never expected to be part of our lives. Can we make changes to their room? What do we do with their belongings? How many children do we have? And one of the most hurtful questions, "Are you getting better?" with some comments about closure following close behind.

Those on the outside will never fully understand us, how could they? It really isn't fair to expect them to realize the depth of our pain: we are often paralyzed by the intensity of the waves ourselves. It is truly worse than we could have ever imagined!

And yet we survive. We go on to live another day, to laugh and find joy in the surviving world around us. It isn't easy and sometimes we do wonder if we will make it. We find hope.

The world around us may not have a catchy name for us, but we know, we are parents, we are Bereaved Parents.



UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at the First Congregational Church of Western Springs, 1106 Chestnut Street, in the Education Building, on the 2nd floor in the Seim Room. Please enter the building through the north doors by the playground.

Tuesday, April 3 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM – General Discussion

<u>Tuesday</u>, <u>May 1 – Monthly Chapter Meeting:</u>

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM – Topic to be determined

Tuesday, June 5 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM – General Discussion

<u>Sunday, July 15 – Butterfly Release Picnic: Katherine</u> <u>Legge Memorial Park, South Pavilion:</u> 12:00 noon (see RSVP form in this newsletter)

and you exist
between every word I write,
in the spaces
I leave between breaths,
in the pauses
between the beats of my heart,
and in each tear that falls....

~ Matthew Spenser





In loving memory of

Michael Walter Schulman

April 21, 1978 until November 28, 2006

Michael, we miss you more than words can tell.

The Schulmans



♥ ♥ Love Gift ♥



In loving remembrance of

Michael Seaney

February 24, 1951 until September 23, 1995

Mike, Thinking about you always. Love, Mom

Vernadene Tolman





A Love Gift is a donation to the chapter in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling. A financial contribution in any amount is appreciated. All Love Gifts are gratefully acknowledged in the newsletter accompanied by wording exactly as the donor submits. BP / USA is a national non-profit organization; therefore all donations to the chapter are tax deductible as allowed by law.

When mailing in a love gift, please include your child's name, and any other info you would like in your love gift message. Make your check payable to: BP / USA Chicagoland and mail it to arrive by the 10th of the month prior to the upcoming newsletter. The newsletter is published quarterly.

Mail your check to:

BP/USA Chicagoland Chapter P.O. Box 320, Western Springs, IL 60558

It is also recommended that you email your love gift message to the newsletter editor and chapter coleader, Sally Yarberry, at psyrbrryhotmail.com.



Take a moment to read the new, revised Bereaved Parents of the USA Credo:

WELCOME

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren.

We come together as Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a safe space where grieving families can connect, share our stories, and learn to rebuild our lives.

We attend meetings whenever we can and for as long as we find helpful. We share our fears, confusion, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness, and feelings of hopelessness, knowing these emotions will be met with compassion and understanding. As we support, comfort and encourage one another, we offer hope and healing. As we confront the deaths of our loved ones, our shared grief brings us to a common ground that transcends differences, building mutual understanding across the boundaries of culture, race, faith, values, abilities, and lifestyle.

Together we celebrate the lives of our children, siblings, and grandchildren, sharing the joys and the heartbreaks as well as the love that will never fade. Together, strengthened by the bonds we create, we offer what we have learned from one another to every bereaved family, no matter how recent or long ago the death.

We are the Bereaved Parents of the USA. We welcome you. ##

"If you know someone who has lost a child, and you're afraid to mention them because you think you might make them sad by reminding them that they died – you're not reminding them.

They didn't forget they died.

What you're reminding them of is that you remembered that they lived, and that is a great gift."

~ Elizabeth Edwards

Welcome

Bereaved Parents Chicagoland Chapter extends a warm welcome to the new attendees at our recent meetings. We know it is difficult to come to your first meeting.

New attendees:

- ♥ John Meiszner, father of Mia Bella
- ◆ Shirley Reardon, mother of Tom
- ▼ Kathy Tylka, mother of Paulina

We are very sorry for the reason you are here, but we are glad that you found us.



THE SEASONS OF GRIEF: WINTER TO SPRING, by Kristen Lamb, BP/USA Northern VA Chapter

There are daffodils in the yard.

How did spring sneak in so stealthily? I'm not ready. Winter fit my mood, my grief. Now there are flowers in the yard and a garden to tend. Things are growing. Life marches forward, even when we aren't ready. Spring reminds me of this.

When grief hits it's like a winter of the soul. Parts of us freeze in time. Not dead, but dormant. Pain blankets our emotional landscape like a fresh snow. It smothers greenery and muffles sound. Parts of us peek out, foraging to survive. It's a state of emotional survival. Oddly, at some point, there is comfort in not having to grow, expand, or reach for the sun.

The expectations of myself were few in that season. But now there are flowers in the yard....

I don't feel ready, but it's time to step into the sun. I'm not fully healed. Actually, I'm not certain that's possible. But it's been long enough and life is moving forward. My kids are growing older, friends need me....I need me. It's time to plan for the future again, not just survive the day. Within me are gifts and talents to share and give back to the world. By stepping back out into the sun I'll be able to fulfill my mission, purpose and dreams.

Love means wanting the best for each other. Whether it's your child, parent, grandparents, sibling, husband, or wife, we seek to lift up our beloved and give them happiness. That's simply the nature of true, healthy, love. If something were to happen to you, wouldn't you want your loved ones to live a life of fulfillment and joy? Our lost loved ones want that for us too. They want us to be happy and even find new love. We honor them by rejoining life and growing again.

Life is a cycle. It doesn't reach a set point and stop, even when something horrible happens. New day's dawn and seasons pass, both on the calendar and in our soul. As they do, healing continues, but in a new way, one that includes personal growth and respecting the wishes our loved ones had for us.

Looking out at the bright day and daffodils I know it's time to accept spring. My winter of grief served its purpose. Stepping outside I lift my face to the sun and feel both warmth and tears.

Page 4 A Journey Together: Chicagoland Chapter Bereaved Parents of the USA

Our Children, Loved, Missed and Remembered (continued) – Anniversaries and birthdays are difficult for bereaved parents and families. In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and send our prayers, love and support to their parents and families

Aaron Rush - 30

Jun 14, 1985 - Apr 06, 2016 Accidental Overdose Carrie Rush

Cameron L. Chana - 22

Apr 02, 1987 - May 30, 2009 Bus Accident Lori & Rob Chana

Corinne Naumann - 23

Aug 14, 1986 - Apr 14, 2010 Cheryl Naumann

Dennis Rich - 37

Feb 11, 1971 - Apr 01, 2008 Cancer Karen Rich

Keya Sansquiri - 5

Apr 07, 2010 - Feb 13, 2016 Cardiac Arrest Nella Sansquiri

Jacob Silver - 22

Oct 05, 1990 - Apr 11, 2013 Suicide Laureen Dunne

Maria Elena Nudell - 14

Apr 17, 1981 - Jul 07, 1995 Horseback Riding Accident Marilyn Cocogliato

Paul Anthony Schneider - 17

Jun 18, 1965 - Apr 11, 1983 Paul & Dolly Schneider

Patrick McNaughton - 2

Mar 27, 2014 - Apr 28, 2016 Viral Meningitis Sheila & Ryan McNaughton

Amanda Aadson - 20

Apr 08, 1981 - Nov 25, 2001 Car Accident Mary Jo Sullivan

Celeste Tomasello - 17

Apr 20, 1982 - Nov 05, 1999 Accidental Fall Linda & Angelo Tomasello

Dana Samuel - 32

Apr 07, 1970 - Jan 23, 2003 Asphyxiation Lana Samuel

Evan Holmes - 20

Feb 09, 1990 - Apr 02, 2010 Unknown Irene Gangemi Mason Holmes

Hudson Colwell - 1

Mar 28, 2014 - Apr 24, 2015 Virus Megan & Chris Colwell

Johnny Hurley - 28

Apr 15, 1977 - Sep 11, 2005 Motorcycle Accident John & Pat Hurley

Michael Walter Schulman - 28

Apr 21, 1978 - Nov 28, 2006 Traffic Accident Jerry, Mary, Melissa, Jonathon, & Katie Schulman

Nancy Inamine - 47

Apr 15, 1967 - Feb 07, 2015 Cancer Joyce Connolly

Riley McBride - 30

Nov 06, 1984 - Apr 22, 2014 Overdose Mary & Jim McBride

Caitrin Paige Gadomski - 6

Apr 16, 2007 - Nov 17, 2013 Cancer Joe & Becky Gadomski

Challing LeBlanc - 4

Apr 11, 1997 - Jun 02, 2001 Boating Accident Liz & Stephen LeBlanc

Daniel M. Schedler - 23

Dec 16, 1969 - Apr 06, 1993 Auto Accident Tom & Judeen Schedler

Frank P. Amelio - 27

Apr 25, 1980 - Sep 13, 2007 Drug Overdose Helen Amelio

Jacob Kowalik - 10

Feb 26, 2004 - Apr 15, 2014 Heart Attack Mike & Jennifer Kowalik

Kevin Jon Ryeczyk - 8

Mar 29, 1972 - Apr 15, 1980 Lung Ailment Jack & Karen Ryeczyk

Melissa Renee Wolfram - 30

May 18, 1971 - Apr 26, 2002 Pulmonary Embolism Earl & E. Renee Bailey

Nicholas Martino-Krueger - 10

Jun 23, 1995 - Apr 15, 2006 Hit by Train Jim Krueger & Rose Martino-Krueger

Susan G. Gabrielsen - 31

Apr 18, 1963 - Oct 14, 1994 Breast Cancer Patricia Jacobi **Our Children, Loved, Missed and Remembered (continued)** - Anniversaries and birthdays are difficult for bereaved parents and families. In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and send our prayers, love and support to their parents and families

Scott Wesolowski - 18

Dec 13, 1984 - Apr 08, 2003 Drug Overdose Sue Berger

Andre Piegat - 28
May 30, 1988 - Dec 26, 2016
Accidental Drug Toxicity
Barbara Piegat

Alyssa Dabrowski - 22

May 20, 1979 - Feb 03, 2002 Car Accident - Hit & Run Allen & Rosemary Dabrowski

David A. Schreck - 21

- May 30, 2014 Overdose Josie & Mark Schreck

Eric J. Munzenmay - 12

May 07, 1969 - Jun 28, 1981 Pneumonia Lillian Munzenmay

Jeffrey Anderson - 17

Jan 28, 1981 - May 25, 1998 Asphyxiation Irene Anderson

Kate Pranno - 24

May 19, 1977 - Feb 22, 2002 Liver Failure from Drugs & Alcohol Suzi Scott

Ken Putnam - 28

May 11, 1967 - May 23, 1995 Auto Accident Karen Putnam

Lt Adam Philip Kass - 25

May 29, 1977 - Jun 25, 2002 Motorcycle Accident on Military Duty Cindy & Dave Kass

Tony Jurkas Jr. - 23

Feb 26, 1983 - Apr 16, 2006 Suicide Laurie Jurkas

Cole Exner – 22

Jun 09, 1983 - May 21, 2006 Automobile Accident Scott & Janie Exner

Amanda Coughlin - 10

May 11, 1991 - Mar 15, 2002 Cathy Coughlin

Elizabeth Nelson - 23

Jul 27, 1980 - May 31, 2004 Car Accident Tom & Kathy Nelson

Gino Grandenitti - 20

Aug 14, 1990 - May 30, 2011 Cancer Vic Grandenitti

Jeffrey Scott Caccavari - 34

Jan 16, 1967 - May 10, 2001 Unknown Dominic & Karen Caccavari

Katie Satkamp - 7

Jul 12, 1974 - May 12, 1982 School Bus Accident Ronda & Steve Satkamp

Kevin O'Malley - 25

Mar 04, 1990 - May 30, 2015 Murder Brian & Sharon O'Malley

Mark Thomas Fornek - 6

May 16, 1992 - Aug 04, 1998 Floodwater Drowning Greg & Wendy Fornek

Todd J. Smith - 23

May 12, 1983 – Apr 26, 2007 Cancer Marie Smith

Colt Grabowski - 20

Feb 21, 1993 – May 16, 2013 Car Accident Meg Iorfida

Athena Marie Myers - 11 Months

Jun 03, 2001 - May 27, 2002 Car Accident Polly Myers

Eric Byrne - 44

Sep 04, 1960 - May 09, 2005 Pulmonary Embolism Eleanor & Joe Byrne

Ian McDonald-Shumaker - 17

Feb 06, 1989 - May 11, 2006 Suicide Stacia McDonald-Shumaker

Joshua Burkett - 27

Sep 14, 1982 - May 04, 2010 Car Accident Dan Burkett

Kelly Ann Meicrotto - 23

May 25, 1980 - Sep 01, 2003 Lenore Robinson

Lily Domagala - 16 Months

May 11, 2002 - Sep 12, 2003 Heart & Lung Defects Lisa Domagala

Matthew Gavin - 32

Jan 22, 1981 - May 17, 2013 Cancer Mary Ellen & Glenn Gavin

Page 6 A Journey Together: Chicagoland Chapter Bereaved Parents of the USA

Our Children, Loved, Missed and Remembered (continued) - Anniversaries and birthdays are difficult for bereaved parents and families. In the days ahead, may we lovingly remember these children and send our prayers, love and support to their parents and families

Melissa Juergensen - 19

Feb 24, 1989 - May 03, 2008 Auto Accident Ruth Juergensen

Robbie Funston - 18

May 30, 1990 - Jun 22, 2008 Accidental Drowning Ric Funston

Ryan A. Minor - 30

May 04, 1980 - Jun 19, 2010 Overdose Betsy Minor

Anthony Neri - 21

Jul 03, 1973 - Jun 24, 1995 Accidental Drug Overdose Diane Neri

Anna Trent - 4

Jun 12, 2012 – Jun 19, 2016 Drowned Katie Trent

Emily Rose Snyder - 23

Jun 16, 1994 – Jul 08, 2017 Traffic Accident Debra Garozzo & Lloyd Snyder

Eric Robisch - 22

Jun 28, 1970 - Feb 08, 1993 Sue and Lou Robisch

Elizabeth Anne Barrett - 15 1/2

Dec 29, 1976 - Jun 29, 1992 Hit by Van Kay & Phil Barrett

Jimmy Lekas - 18

Sep 10, 1969 - Jun 14, 1988 Cancer Stephanie Lekas

Michael Knorps - 51

Aug 17, 1957 - May 30, 2009 Mary Ann Knorps

Robert Conway - 15

May 12, 1975 - Oct 22, 1990 Hit by Van while Bike Riding Rose Conway

William Kavanaugh - 3

May 24, 1992 - Jul 04, 1995 Hit by Van Maribeth Kavanaugh

Shawn Lighty - 37

May 05, 1972 - May 23, 2007 Accidental Drug Overdose Jan Lighty

Branden Martinez – 6 weeks

Jun 26, 2011 – Aug 08, 2011 Infection Kyle Martinez & Missy Babyar

Carole "Suzie" Pavett - 56

Jun 03, 1953 - Aug 20, 2009 Heart Attack Audrey Stolfa

Daniel Stoothoff - 34

Jun 03, 1970 - Dec 07, 2004 Car Crash Sally Stoothoff

Jason Matthew Bill - 13

Aug 17, 1981 - Jun 14, 1995 Water Sport Accident Nancy Stein

Joseph Ross - 23

Jun 09, 1985 - Feb 05, 2009 Asthma Pat Ross

Nadia Chowdhury - 20

May 14, 1983 - Feb 21, 2004 Hit & Killed by Drunk Driver Nasrin & Shamsul Chowdhury

Phillip Butler - 30

Dec 29, 1982 - May 13, 2013 Atherosclerotic Heart Disease Nancy Butler

Robert J. Gentilini, Jr. - 25

Mar 20, 1964 - May 18, 1989 Brain Infection Bob & Mary Gentilini

Stevie Brow - 8

Dec 13, 1964 – May 18, 1973 Gunshot Roberta Brow

Brian Schrader - 13

Feb 18, 2003 – Jun 03, 2016 Traffic Accident Melissa Schrader

Dominic Cairo - 8

Oct 14, 2002 - Jun 26, 2011 ALL/CNS Cancer Anna Cairo

Eric Fitzpatrick Bucholz - 19

Jun 26, 1974 - Dec 24, 1993 Electrocution Sue Bucholz

Jill Kathleen Ebert - 6

Jun 24, 1984 - Sep 03, 1990 BrainTumor Michael P. Ebert

Paul Moore - 11

Nov 04, 1982 - Jun 08, 1994 Drunk Driver Don & Julie Moore

Our Children Remembered (continued)

Mark Susong - 21

Jun 05, 1990 - Feb 10, 2012 Drug Overdose Jill Susong

Noah James Farley -

Jun 07, 2006 - Jun 08, 2006 Prenatal Fetal Anomalies Kelly Farley



Matthew Davis - 33

Dec 28, 1976 - Jun 10, 2010 Unknown Gloria Smolek

Noah Michael Cichorski - 2 1/2

Jun 24, 2001 - Dec 16, 2003 Head Injury (Cause Unknown) Jeannine Cichorski

William E. Barth - 20 1/2

Sep 23, 1965 - Jun 05, 1986 Suicide Karen Barth

Michael Kosinski - 26

Dec 17, 1986 - Jun 12, 2013 Sudden Cardiac Arrest Marge & Bill Kosinski

Russel Witek - 14

Jun 16, 1994 – Mar 29, 2009 Leukemia/Brain Tumor Dan & Helen Dennett





Join us in Memphis, TN for the BP/USA National Gathering Whispering Woods Hotel & Conference Center 7300 Hacks Cross Road, Olive Branch, MS (866) 851-0393 / http://www.wwconferencecenter.com

Start planning now, information is on the national website at http://bereavedparentsusa.org/gathering/

Page 8 A Journey Together: Chicagoland Chapter Bereaved Parents of the USA

What They Meant to Say: Looking Beyond Hurtful Comments in Grief

https://whatsyourgrief.com/hurtful-comments-in-grief/

I want to be upfront with you. This post is about giving the benefit of the doubt to people who have said the wrong thing(s) to you in your grief. I feel the need to preface this because I know many of our readers have been treated poorly by friends and family since the death of their loved one. If this is you, I assure you I don't want to minimize your experience. I know people can be mean, selfish, and hurtful and I know some people have bad intentions. However, I also know that sometimes well-intentioned people say the wrong thing.

We all respond differently to difficult situations. Some people are consistently amazing. They always know the right thing to say, the perfect gift to bring, and the exact moment to step in and lend a hand. On the other end of the spectrum, some people are consistently terrible. They carelessly say and do stupid things without giving their behavior a second thought.

Most people lie somewhere in the middle of the amazing/terrible continuum. Unlike those on the ends of the spectrum, people in this mid-zone can move freely between being great in a crisis and being terrible. Sometimes they say the right thing and sometimes they slip up and stick their size 10 foot fully in their mouths. Usually, they are fine, if not slightly awkward, and most of the time their hearts are in the right place.

When someone says something hurtful, insulting, or minimizing to you in your grief, it's tempting to assume the worst for a number of reasons. For starters, you may be harboring a lot of indiscriminate anger about your loved one's death and it feels nice to have somewhere to direct it. Also, when you are worn down and vulnerable, it's protective and adaptive to separate yourself from people who you believe could cause you additional pain.

Finally, research has shown that humans are more likely to attribute a person's mistakes to personal defects and poor character than they are to factor in the influences, pressures, and demands of the situation. This is called the <u>fundamental attribution error</u> and explains why you may think "She is a moron," instead of "She was uncomfortable with this situation," after someone lobs an insensitive comment at you.

Regardless, you have your reasons to be skeptical of those who hurt you in your grief. However, you also need your support system now more than ever. So, even though you'd maybe rather not, for the duration of this article I'm asking you to (1) think of those you have written off in your grief (2) ask yourself – "Am I certain this person is terrible?" and (3) if the answer is "no", consider these alternative hypotheses.

Hypothesis #1: The person wanted to comfort you

When someone is in pain, the first instinct of caring friends and family is often to try and provide comfort. Comfort, which implies a desire to take away someone's pain, is the source of so many obnoxious platitudes and 'at least' phrases.

Many people don't understand that it's misguided and futile to try and comfort a person after the death of a loved one. There isn't a darn thing anyone could say or do to take away the person's pain, so it's best to allow the hurt to exist. We suggest that instead of offering comfort, caring friends and family members should offer support.

Hypothesis # 2: The person was utilizing "troubles talk"

People often say things like "I know how you feel" or "I went through the same thing" to those who have experienced a loss. Although these statements are sometimes helpful, more often than not they come off as self-focused and minimizing.

<u>Deborah Tannen</u>, professor of linguistics at Georgetown University and author of several books on interpersonal communication, notes that statements like these may not be entirely selfish and may actually reflect what she calls 'troubles talk'. People, most often women, commonly use 'troubles talk' to help establish closeness and rapport in a number of different scenarios. Tannen explained the phenomena on a recent episode of <u>NPR's 1A</u>.

"You talk about a problem. The other person says that they have a similar problem. You feel connected. You feel less alone."

When a friend or family member wants to offer support to someone who is grieving, it makes sense that they would fall back on tried and true interpersonal skills. Once again, though, grief is a scenario unlike other. Unfortunately, in this instance 'troubles talk' can inadvertently convey, "I don't want to understand your specific situation" or "I want to talk about myself," when what the person wanted to communicate was "I'm okay to talk to." and "You're not completely alone."

One more note on this topic, Tannen also explains that men and women commonly view the purpose of 'troubles talk' differently. Specifically, men may assume a woman who engages in troubles talk is looking for advice. So remember this the next time you feel frustrated because someone has offered you well-intentioned but unwanted feedback.

Hypothesis #3: The person cares about you, but they aren't comfortable with grief

Finally, we have to consider the reality that some people simply aren't comfortable with grief. Many of our readers tell us that their family and friends seem to keep their distance because they don't want to be around grief.

It's sad, but true that many of your family and friends aren't comfortable with death, grief, and emotion. This doesn't make them terrible people; it just means they're unqualified to support you in your grief. Those who are there for you in your grief must be okay with your tears, occasional silence, and the darkness of loss. If a person can't handle these things, then they aren't the right support person for you at this time.

Facing Mother's Day after the death of a child By Jacqueline Dooley, <u>healingana.com</u>

I don't feel much like celebrating Mother's Day this year. My 15-year-old daughter died 51 days ago, after being plagued by a rare, relentless form of cancer for five years. I'm not sure what the celebration is supposed to look like when I failed at my main task as a mother: Seeing my child safely to adulthood.

I realize that attributing the death of my child to my own failure is irrational. I understand that guilt and blame won't bring her back, that we tried valiantly to cure her with treatments that ranged from a liver transplant to chemotherapy to radiation. I know cancer kills children every day. But she wasn't a statistic. She was my child, and I couldn't save her.

I couldn't save her.

I know other mothers who've lost children, and they've tried to prepare me for how unbearable this Hallmark holiday can be, how your very identity as a mother is shaken and upended when your child dies. We're a dismal, heartbroken club of kindred spirits. We share the pain of empty, quiet rooms that hold the remnants of our children's lives — keepsakes that remain long after our dear ones have gone.

How can I celebrate this day? How can I celebrate myself? Every day I open the door to my daughter's room, sit on her tidy bed and wonder how any of this is real. How is it possible that all I have left is her collection of albums, stones and crystals, and her closet full of untouched clothes? How long will they serve as proof that she was here on this Earth, that she was real?

As the days go by, my daughter's proximity to me fades; the reality of her absence becomes more concrete. This would be okay if it were because she had graduated high school, gone off to college and started her life, but that's not what happened. She stopped existing at 15. She stopped.

I don't know how to celebrate Mother's Day without the consolation prize given all mothers — that our babies are gone, but we have laughing toddlers in exchange, that our toddlers are gone, but we have curious, bright-eyed preschoolers in their place, that the messy, carefree days of preschool meld into the primary years, when interests and personalities emerge and blossom, giving us teenagers who are whole, unique people. The fact that our kids grow up into actual people distracts us from the pain of their fading childhood. Except, of course, if they don't grow up.

I am two mothers now — the mother you see walking beside my remaining daughter in the all-too-real world of chores and homework and trivial things and the mother you don't see — the mother bereft, imagining that my daughter is two steps behind me, just out of sight. I look whole and normal, but deep inside there's an emptiness where my heart used to be. I can't walk with my surviving daughter without imagining the shadow of her sister right beside us, rolling her eyes, glancing at her phone.

There are too many mothers like me, rushing here and there, pretending we're fully in one world when, really, we're in two.

I wish I could go back to when my kids were 9 and 6, when Mother's Day was about hand-drawn cards and breakfast in bed. I can almost smell the burned toast, taste the mint tea. Dwelling on the past is the only thing that allows me to feel something other than numbness and despair. The others who walk this path of intense grief tell me it gets better. Eventually, I'll start feeling what I'm supposed to feel. I'll move more fully into the world of living children. Until then, I'm as much a part of my dead daughter's world as I am my living daughter's.

But what if I don't want that to happen? What if time erases the only thing I have left of my daughter, dulling the edges of her face in my mind's eye like a faded photograph? Living this quiet pain is how I feel closest to her right now.

Two years ago each of my girls bought me a tree for Mother's Day — a magnolia and a dogwood. It's the only Mother's Day gift I remember clearly. The trees are small but thriving. Each year they grow a little bigger, acting as living reminders that I had two daughters, not one.

Page 10 A Journey Together: Chicagoland Chapter Bereaved Parents of the USA

I guess Mother's Day is just a day, not unlike the day that came before it or the day that follows. Realizing this somehow makes it okay that I can't celebrate this year. The holidays we cherish are as real as we make them, just like our lives, just like the titles we give ourselves. My daughter isn't here anymore, but that doesn't make me any less her mother. Since she's died, I've been afraid of losing that, losing the last little bit of her that I've been clinging to.

There will be more painful days to come — her birthday, Father's Day, Christmas, a first day of school she won't get to attend and on and on. I'll need to reconcile her absence on these days so I can be present for my remaining child. Somehow, I must figure out how to forge a new connection with my daughter now that she's no longer here.

The mothers that walk with me in grief tell me it's hard to face all of these milestones in the first year, but it's even harder in the second. That's when the reality of my child's absence will finally feel real. I believe them because I can sense it's coming. I dread the full weight of time and distance that will inevitably make her absence a solid thing, final and irreversible. Even so, I hope I can find my joy on Mother's Day again, if not this year, then next.

Grieving on Father's Day

By Carol A Ranney, http://honoringourangels.blogspot.com/2011/06/grieving-on-fathers-day.html

Fathers are often referred to as the hidden grievers. When a child dies, thoughts generally go to the mothers—the agony they most certainly are suffering, their loneliness, emptiness, now that someone who was once a part of them is gone. Women tend to grieve outwardly, talking to their friends, crying, seeking out supportive groups and friends to be with and with whom to share their burden of sorrow.

Men, on the other hand, have a much more inward grieving style. Men are usually more factual than emotional. They accept more readily that nothing they say or do will reverse the situation; their child is irrecoverably gone from this earth. They may weep at times, but that is not their primary mode of mourning. A man may throw himself into his job with fervor, perhaps to help alleviate the feeling that as the "family protector," he has failed to keep each member safe. He may begin or continue a project, or start a new activity, in memory of his loved one, to whom he dedicates his efforts.

Men are more concrete in their thinking, but that does not mean they grieve less. What it often does mean is that they get less emotional support; people see them return to work, keep busy at home, and assume "they're over it." Little do others realize that men agonize through their grief and mourning fully as much as women, and appreciate just as much the caring word, the hug, a recalled memory, a shared moment of silence.

Perhaps the best gift you could ever give a grieving father on Father's Day is the recognition of his loss, and affirming him as a father in mourning. A book especially for men in grief; a card recognizing that he is missing one of those who made him a father, yet he is still a father; a gift in memory of his child; or simply a hug, an arm around the shoulder, or a compassionate word will assure him that although he does not grieve outwardly much, those who truly care about him have not forgotten.



To My Husband

Author Unknown – BP/USA AA County June 2008 Newsletter

Your tears flow within your heart, mine flow down my cheeks.

Your anger lies with thoughts and movements, mine gallops for all to see.

Your despair shows in your now dull eyes, mine shows in line after written line.

You grieve over the death of your son; I grieve over the death of my baby.

But we're still the same, still one, only we grieve at different times,

over different memories, and at different lengths.

Yet we both realize the death of our child.



Annual Butterfly Release & Family Picnic

Sunday, July 15, 2018; 12:00 noon Katherine Legge Memorial Park – South Pavilion 60th and County Line Road, Hinsdale

Donations \$12.00 per adult, or \$20.00 per couple, plus \$5.00 per child 1 butterfly included with adult donations Extra butterflies: \$12.00 each

To safeguard the butterflies, they have to be released at 12:15 p.m.....don't be late!

Chicken, beverages and utensils will be provided by BP/USA

Please bring a dish to share: A-H Bring a side dish to share (serving 12) I-Z Bring a dessert to share (serving 12)

Please RSVP with donation by Wednesday, July 11, 2018:

Sally Yarberry
Cell: 708-738-0396
Hm: 708-560-0393
psyrbrry@hotmail.com
BP/USA Chicagoland Chapter
P.O. Box 320
Western Springs, IL 60558

Name:	
No. of People (total):	No. of Children Included:
No. of Butterflies:	Amount Enclosed:

Bereaved Parents of the USA Chicagoland Chapter P.O. Box 320 Western Springs, IL 60558



April - May - June 2018

CALENDAR OF EVENTS	
April	
April 3	Monthly Chapter Meeting: 7:00 PM – General Discussion
May	
May 1	<u>Monthly Chapter Meeting</u> : 7:00 PM – General Discussion
June	
June 5	Monthly Chapter Meeting: 7:00 PM – General Discussion
July	
July 15	Butterfly Release Picnic: 12:00 noon - Katherine Legge Memorial Park, South Pavilion

BP/USA Chicagoland on the Web: http://www.bpusachicagoland.org/index.html

Like us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Bereaved-Parents-ofthe-USA-Chicagoland-Chapter-706510502840344/

