



July – August – September 2017

## A Journey Together: Chicagoland Chapter - Bereaved Parents of the USA [www.bpusachicagoland.org](http://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 (708-560-0393), Chapter Co-Leaders*

### The person inside

~ Christina Rasmussen  
[www.secondfirsts.com](http://www.secondfirsts.com)

After loss our ability to share how we feel is not as easy as it used to be....sharing our truth after a loss becomes an internal experience.

You are not aware of this at first, because you still externalize the loss to those around you as you are in a mourning period. But what is taking place is a new type of withholding. You start to withhold some of your emotions. The separation between your old life, the friends, everything you had, begins with this partial withholding of how distraught you feel.

You cry. You share. You tell them how horrible this feels but yet you know they don't really understand the magnitude of your pain. You start to keep things to yourself more and more after loss. Ultimately, within the first three months, when people ask you the very important question, "How are you doing?" you respond with "I'm doing okay I suppose" or "I'm hanging in there".

And that is when the biggest emotional separation sets in. When everything is different inside of you, but everything looks the same on the outside. You walk around holding onto two worlds, two different emotional states, two different facial expressions.

The months go by and you start to get used to operating with this duality. You have one person inside of you and another person on the outside. You learn how to process really difficult experiences on your own. You learn to rely on yourself more and more. You learn how not to share and how to get away with it. You learn the ultimate life alone experience. Where you are surrounded by people who only know the you they see, and not the you that was created after loss.

Last weekend I had two of my very good friends fly all the way to San Francisco from Colorado and New York to surprise me. We had an amazing 24 hours together and for the first time in many years I shared an experience I had held internally within my own emotional processing system. I just blurted it out. You can imagine how surprised I was. I was completely taken aback by this as I am the ultimate dual emotional experimenter.

### UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:

**REMINDER: We will not have a regular monthly meeting in July because the Butterfly Release Picnic is Sunday, July 9. Please RSVP by July 5.**

#### **Tuesday, August 1 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:**

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM - We will be setting up our "Wishing Pond" outside, near the north entrance (by tot lot).

School Supplies: We will be collecting donations of new school supplies for needy children.

#### **Tuesday, September 5 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:**

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM - Still time to donate school supplies.

#### **Tuesday, October 3 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:**

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM - Open discussion

Over the years I learned how to cope on my own. And I became too good at it.

As I think about that weekend I realize that maybe after a whole decade of processing on my own, maybe finally my two selves that operated throughout all these years are trying to integrate into one. Maybe I no longer need to process the big scary things on my own. But letting go of all the mechanisms that we've created to survive after loss is not as simple as it may sound. All the different pieces of us are trying to come back to life at different times and at a different pace. Some never make it back. And some make it back many years later in the midst of living life again. As we go forward slowly and very carefully, we need to find a way towards moments of vulnerability where once again we come to a single emotional experience and are able to rely on others when we are going through something difficult.

Even though I'm so proud of us for being able to process so much internally and survive the losses we have experienced, I would rather we found our way back to sharing our most difficult and scary moments with a friend.

*"A very deep healing can take place when we share with others, the type we cannot give to ourselves". 🌸*

## BP/USA Chicagoland Chapter Needs Volunteers

**Bereaved Parents of the USA** is a self-help support group which is run entirely by volunteers who are also bereaved parents. The volunteers are a little further down the road in their grief and can give back to the chapter by helping with the many jobs it takes to keep the chapter running.

If you feel that you are ready to give back to the Chapter and would like to volunteer your time and talent, please contact the Chapter Co-Leaders Eleanor or Sally.

Chapter Co-Leaders:  
Eleanor Byrne (708) 485-6160  
Sally Yarberry (708) 560-0393



## ♥ ♥ ♥ Love Gifts ♥ ♥ ♥

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, your address** 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 10<sup>th</sup>** of the month prior to the upcoming newsletter. **The newsletter is published quarterly.**

Mail your check to:

**Bereaved Parents of the 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 Sally at [psyrbrry@hotmail.com](mailto:psyrbrry@hotmail.com).

*Thank You!*



*In loving memory of*

*Our Son,  
**Rob Funston**  
August 22, 1955 until July 30, 1981*

*And*

*Our Grandson,  
**Robbie Funston**  
May 30, 1990 – June 22, 2008*

*Forever in our hearts.*

Robert & Frances Funston



*In loving memory of*

*Eric J. Munzenmay  
May 7, 1969 until June 28, 1981*

*12 years old.*

*I will never forget him.*

*Love you always,*

*Mom*

Lillian Munzenmay





### **Grief Is an Emotion**

*~ Bereaved Parents USA Cromwell CT  
Chapter Newsletter Jan / Feb 2011*

Grief is an emotion, not a disease.

There is no time table for recovery.

But there is also no getting around the pain.

Each of us has to experience the pain in order to recover  
from it...

Our hopes and dreams may no longer be possible.

We may feel hopeless and want to run away.

It takes time and effort to regain the ability to function.

We must express our feelings and be patient with  
ourselves.

Grief is a process.

Recovery is a decision.

Readjustment does not come overnight.

But each of us can resolve to survive - one moment at a  
time.



*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.*

**Adam Schar - 33**

Nov 23, 1976 - Jul 18, 2010  
Accidental Death  
Janet Schar

**Aidan Samuel Wood - 4**

Jul 17, 2003 - Nov 30, 2007  
House Fire  
Michelle & Ian Wood

**Amy Elizabeth Gales - 19**

Jul 18, 1975 - Mar 08, 1995  
Auto Accident  
Ron & Sandy Gales

**Anthony Neri – 21**

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

**Brendon Anderson – 22**

Jul 18, 1976 - Mar 16, 1998  
Murdered  
Rob Anderson

**Bryce Stack - 30**

Jan 26, 1979 - Jul 24, 2009  
Accidental Overdose  
Trish DeBauche

**Carl Alan Vuillaume – 16**

Mar 14, 1989 - Jul 21, 2005  
Accidental Drowning  
Rob & Charleen Vuillaume

**Elizabeth Nelson – 23**

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

**James G. Frale - 13**

Jul 11, 1967 - Sep 13, 1981  
Electrocution  
John & JoAnn Frale

**Jamie Lee Hoebble – 21**

Jul 26, 1983 - Sep 23, 2004  
Karen & John Pech

**Jennifer Erin Morris – 16**

Jul 15, 1982 - Aug 10, 1998  
Auto Accident  
Wendy & Dan Morris

**Katie Evans - 35**

Mar 24, 1978 - Jul 16, 2013  
Heroin Overdose  
Anne & Ed Evans

**Katie Satkamp – 7**

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

**Maria Elena Nudell – 14**

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

**Mariana Tunstall - 8**

Dec 29, 1999 - Jul 16, 2008  
E-Coli  
Keith & Kristena Tunstall

**Matthew Corrigan – 14**

Jul 04, 1977 - Aug 12, 1991  
Auto Accident  
Donna & Mike Corrigan

**Mia Lozano – 13**

Jul 04, 2002 - Mar 11, 2016  
Diabetes / Cardiac Arrest  
Augustine Lozano

**Nicholas Carl Pica - 21**

Dec 12, 1984 - Jul 13, 2006  
Sudden Cardiac Death  
Jane & Jerry Pica

**Nicholas Palumbo – 21**

Jul 10, 1981 - Mar 05, 2003  
Snowmobile Accident  
Debbie Palumbo

**Rob Funston – 25**

Aug 22, 1955 - Jul 30, 1981  
Pneumonia  
Bob & Fran Funston

**Ryan Paul - 15 1/2**

Jul 06, 1988 - Mar 09, 2004  
Hit by Car  
Roy & Melody Paul

**Sara Jane Melton – 27**

Mar 19, 1969 - Jul 09, 1996  
Anaplastic Thyroid Carcinoma  
Jack & Jane Larson

**Sarah Marie Fink – 3 ½ Months**

Jul 11, 1977 - Nov 02, 1977  
SIDS  
Sue & Garry Fink

**Scott Saville - 42**

Mar 29, 1969 - Jul 30, 2011  
Brain Aneurysm  
Mary Saville

**Tamaron "Tami" Racky – 21**

Jul 08, 1975 - Sep 12, 1996  
Accidental Drug Overdose  
John & Debbie Racky

**Thomas A Walsh Jr – 32**

Oct 16, 1970 - Jul 20, 2003  
Unknown  
Karen Richards

**Trudy Boskey - 47**

Jul 06, 1953 - Aug 03, 2000  
Cancer  
Rose Conway

*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.*

**Vincenza - 47**

Jul 30, 1966 - Mar 08, 2014

Cancer

Margherita Arrowsmith

**William Kavanaugh - 3**

May 24, 1992 - Jul 04, 1995

Hit by a Van

Maribeth Kavanaugh

**Zachary "Zach" Pfingston - 13**

Sep 20, 1996 - Jul 31, 2009

Seizure

Manjula &amp; Jack Pfingston

**Branden Martinez - 6 Weeks**

Jun 26, 2011 - Aug 08, 2011

Infection

Kyle Martinez &amp; Missy Babyar

**Brandon Hardy - 22**

Aug 13, 1980 - Dec 28, 2002

Auto Accident

Don &amp; Celeste Hardy

**Brian Sirotzke - 26**

Aug 03, 1982 - Sep 05, 2008

Anne Sirotzke

**Carole "Suzie" Pavett - 56**

Jun 03, 1953 - Aug 20, 2009

Heart Attack

Audrey Stolfi

**Casey Reiter - 25**

Aug 11, 1984 - Dec 15, 2009

Heart Attack

Sandy Tummillio

**Corinne Naumann - 23**

Aug 14, 1986 - Apr 14, 2010

Cheryl Naumann

**Dan Woods - 29**

Mar 12, 1978 - Aug 22, 2007

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

Mary Woods

**Danny Golden - 22**

Aug 26, 1975 - Aug 24, 1998

Suicide

Janet Mallo

**Frank Gianfortune Jr - 19**

Aug 01, 1968 - Dec 06, 1987

Auto Accident

Adel Gianfortune

**Gino Grandenitti - 20**

Aug 14, 1990 - May 30, 2011

Cancer

Vic Grandenitti

**Gregory Michael Humbert - 30**

Aug 31, 1961 - Oct 31, 1991

Struck by Van

Mary (Marge) Humbert

**Jason Matthew Bill - 13**

Aug 17, 1981 - Jun 14, 1995

Water Sport Accident

Nancy Stein

**Michael Patrick Gordon - 30**

Feb 20, 1974 - Aug 08, 2004

Killed by Drunk Driver

Robert &amp; Carol Gordon

**Kimberly Ann Olson - 15**

Feb 14, 1983 - Aug 20, 1998

Histicytic Disorder

Larry &amp; Danita Olson

**Mark Thomas Fornek - 6**

May 16, 1992 - Aug 04, 1998

Floodwater Drowning

Greg &amp; Wendy Fornek

**Patrick Vincent DeMauro - 19**

Jan 28, 1982 - Aug 29, 2001

Car Accident

Vincent &amp; Debbie DeMauro

**Megan Elizabeth Peters - 23**

Nov 26, 1980 - Aug 31, 2004

Drug Overdose

Kathleen Peters

**Michael Knorps - 51**

Aug 17, 1957 - May 30, 2009

Mary Ann Knorps

**Ron Buccieri - 42**

Mar 22, 1961 - Aug 31, 2003

Unknown

Carol Polich

**Patrick Dore - 12**

Aug 08, 1990 - Aug 25, 2002

Meningitis

Lois McDonald

**Patrick Dore - 12**

Aug 08, 1990 - Aug 25, 2002

Meningitis

Phil &amp; Linda Dore

**Brian Eck - 39**

Sep 08, 1971 - Nov 08, 2010

Enlarged Heart

Kathy Eck

**Chris Marie Longo - 18**

Dec 21, 1951 - Sep 26, 1970

Brain Aneurysm

Anthony &amp; Margery Longo

**Daryle J. "DJ" Hall - 22**

Mar 10, 1984 - Sep 11, 2006

Accidental Drug Overdose

Bob and Sherry Hall

*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.*

**Christopher Kavanagh – 25**

Sep 23, 1984 - Nov 15, 2009  
Undetermined  
Sherri Kavanagh

**Daniel Meyer – 7**

Feb 21, 1977 - Sep 21, 1984  
Hit by Car  
Kenneth & Olivia Meyer

**Phillip G. Dore - 21**

Nov 11, 1988 – Sep 02, 2010  
Suicide  
Phil & Linda Dore

**Douglas McCallum – 19**

Sep 23, 1980 – Feb 21, 2000  
Accident  
Reg & Marcia McCallum

**Eric Byrne – 44**

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

**Frank P. Amelio – 27**

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

**Richie Chow – 27**

Dec 22, 1983 - Sep 30, 2011  
Unknown  
Joyce Chow

**Jamie Mitchell - 31**

Feb 28, 1978 - Sep 19, 2009  
Suicide  
Lance & Kristie Mitchell

**Jennifer Lynn Kirwan – 17**

Mar 10, 1981 - Sep 20, 1998  
Auto Accident  
Linda Kelley

**Jill Kathleen Ebert – 6**

Jun 24, 1984 - Sep 03, 1990  
Brain Tumor  
Michael P Ebert

**Jimmy Lekas - 18**

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

**Johnny Hurley – 28**

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

**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

**Kerri L. Gartner – 22**

Sep 09, 1981 - Oct 24, 2003  
Auto Accident  
Ervin & Kathleen Gartner

**Laura Ryeczyk -**

Sep 03, 1965 - Sep 03, 1965  
Cord Strangulation  
Jack & Karen Ryeczyk

**Lily C. Domagala - 16 Mon**

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

**Marty Sobanski (Brother) – 28**

Dec 08, 1961 - Sep 05, 1990  
Seizure Disorder  
Helen Sobanski-Hennessey

**Michael Atella – 60**

Oct 11, 1949 - Sep 12, 2008  
Heart Attack  
Edna Atella

**Mike Seaney - 44**

Feb 24, 1951 - Sep 23, 1995  
Medical Misdiagnosis  
Vernadene Tolman

**Nancy R. Lyell (Sue's Sister) – 35**

Feb 14, 1961 - Sep 10, 1996  
Cancer  
Sue & Garry Fink

**Rachel Krueger – 21**

Dec 29, 1986 - Sep 23, 2008  
Pulmonary Embolism  
Jim Krueger & Rose Martino-Krueger

**William E. Barth – 20 ½**

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



**TO THE GRIEVING ONE** ~ written by Lexi Behrndt, <http://www.scribblesandcrumbs.com>

I am so, so sorry you are here.

I know this is your worst nightmare realized. I know this wasn't plan A, B, C, or Z. I know the weight of it all is suffocating, soul-crushing, devastating, and earth-shattering in every way possible. I know you would give anything for just for one more second.

I know your heart is broken. How I wish I could make you feel at home again. How I wish I could take away the pain. How I wish I could place them back in your arms. I know you would savor every moment. I know you would breathe them in till you no longer had any breath in you. I know you would give every ounce of you to save every ounce of them, one thousand times over.

I know you miss them. I know you wish you could just smell them one more time, see their face one more time, kiss them and then freeze that moment so it would last forever. There are losses in this life that can never be replaced, and having them with you is at the top of the list.

I know. If I could "fix" this, I would move mountains. I would in a heartbeat.

You need to know this.

*On the days when it's all you can do just to function, that's okay.*

*On the days when you try your hardest to pull yourself together, and somehow things just don't work out, give yourself grace. Give yourself room to breathe.*

*On the days when no one but you mentions their name, I am so, so sorry. Say their name bravely. Know that they are still real, they were still here, and they are still yours.*

*On the days when you feel like you could burst from anger and pain, go somewhere alone, cry it out, curse at the sky— there's nothing worse than having to fake it. Just don't. Please, let yourself feel it. You've been through too much to put on a face, and healing doesn't come when we are living under a facade.*

*On the days when the world tells you to "heal" and "move on", friend, healing from loss doesn't look like healing from an injury. They were not a broken bone, they are a piece of our hearts, and now a piece of our hearts is gone. Friend, you will heal, just not in the way the world wants you to. You will breathe easier. You will ache maybe a little less, but I've heard from those much, much further down the road than I, the longing will never, ever, ever leave. That's the beauty and the fierceness and the strength of your love.*

You are irrevocably changed, in the sweetest, head-over-heels, all-in, never-stopping way. Your love is strong. That's the promise you made when you swore to love them for the rest of time, no matter what the cost was on your heart. Nothing on this earth has shown me unconditional love more than the love possessed in the heart of the grieving one. I see the power of it. It's stronger than any amount of pain, than a sea of tears, than even the grasp of death.

I know, because of that love, you would brave every ounce of pain one thousand times over just for them.

Even when you don't feel it... Look, here you are... You're still breathing. You're still standing. You are so brave.

Sweet friend, I am so sorry you are here.

Know that where there is great pain, there is even greater love.

So much love to you,

A Friend Who Knows 🌿



## ANNUAL SCHOOL SUPPLIES DRIVE

This time of year, seeing the stores bursting with school supplies triggers long-ago and bittersweet memories of shopping with my daughter, wanting her to have the proper tools to start off the new school year in the right way. Shopping with her for new crayons and notebooks was my way of demonstrating the importance of school, and my wish that she put forth her best effort. At the same time, I remember wondering how to stretch the budget to afford fresh school supplies, her various school fees, and maybe a new outfit for the first day. So every year I look forward to our school supplies drive to honor the memory of my very smart little girl who could practically always get the better of me.

One of our bereaved parents, Suzi Scott (mother of Katherine Pranno), is an art teacher at an elementary school in Cicero. Many of her students are bused to school from the local horse race course because their parents work at the track. These families live in dorm style housing, one family to a room and minus cooking facilities, near the horse barns. Suzi has told us about the children who, when asked to “get out your notebook”, literally are worried about getting into trouble for not being able to produce a notebook. The teachers help Suzi make a list of which children do not have supplies, and then they sneak a bag of supplies into the children’s lockers. I like to imagine the reaction of the children when they discover these supplies. Who wouldn’t be inspired by fresh paper and pencils and an unopened box of crayons?

Here is a list of the most needed supplies:

Crayola Classic Markers  
Fiskars scissors 5”  
Zipper pencil pouches  
Pink erasers  
Plastic folders, 3-hole punched  
Hand sanitizer

Pencils #2 (not mechanical)  
Jumbo book covers  
Dry erase markers, thin  
Glue sticks  
Crayola crayons  
Baby wipes for hands & desk tops (no Clorox wipes)

If you would like to participate in this optional charitable project, please bring your donations to the August or September chapter meeting. 🌟

### **Bereaved Parents of the USA Credo**

We are the parents whose children have died. We are the grandparents who have buried grandchildren. We are the siblings whose brothers and sisters no longer walk with us through life. We come together as BP/USA to provide a haven where all bereaved families can meet and share our grief journeys. We attend monthly gatherings whenever we can and for as long as we believe necessary. We share our fears, confusions, anger, guilt, frustrations, emptiness and feelings of hopelessness so that hope can be found anew.

As we accept, support, comfort and encourage each other, we demonstrate to each other that survival is possible. Together we celebrate the lives of our children, share the joys and triumphs as well as the love that will never fade. Together we learn how little it matters where we live, what our color or our affluence is or what faith we uphold as we confront the tragedies of our children’s deaths. Together, strengthened by the bonds we forge at our gatherings, we offer what we have learned to each other and to every more recently bereaved family.

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



## Being There for Grieving Friends and Family: Support vs. Comfort

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/grief-support-vs-comfort/>

The first thing one must do before setting out to help a grieving friend or family member is look in the mirror and repeat the following phrase...*I am not a grief comforter, I am a grief supporter.* Say it again...*I am not a grief comforter, I am a grief supporter.* One more time...*I am not a...well, you get the idea.*

Bottom Line: It's better to offer grief support than grief comfort.

Although these two things may sound similar, in this context the ideas of 'comforting' and 'supporting' have two very different implications. Look at their definitions side by side:

**Comfort:** (*noun*) a state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint; (*verb*) make (someone) feel less unhappy; console.

**Support:** (*verb*) bear all of part of the weight of; hold up; (*verb*) give assistance to; (*noun*) the action of bearing the weight of something or someone or of being so supported; (*noun*) material assistance i.e. emotional help offered to someone in distress, approval and encouragement.

Do you see the differences? 'Comfort' implies a desire to free someone from their pain and make them feel less unhappy (good luck), while 'support' implies a desire to provide assistance and help.

When something sad, bad, or anxiety-producing happens in the life of someone we care about, our immediate instinct is to comfort. Of course it is – we're good people! And often this instinct is useful because comforting is exactly what the situation calls for; for example a child's bruised knee or a nervous first day on the job are both situations where a "there, there, you'll be okay" goes a long way.

Over the years we've gotten good at the comfort bit, so sometimes when we approach a griever our first inclination is to fall back on words of optimism. We really, really want to take their pain away so we find ourselves saying things that begin with "at least" or "you can always", but it's phrases like these that are most apt to fall on deaf (or irritated) ears. Although we all know these sentiments are well intentioned, they only minimize the gravity of their loss and the magnitude of what the griever is feeling.

Being a grief supporter may or may not be your natural inclination, but as someone who knows how to be a good friend or family member you probably already have the tools. One can be a good grief supporter through willingness to:

### Show genuine caring and compassion:

*No one knows the perfect thing to say, so stop stressing. Instead focus on treating the griever with caring and compassion. Sometimes this is as simple as asking how the person is doing and then actually listening to what they have to say.*

### Provide concrete assistance:

*It's tempting to ask the griever to let you know what they need, but it's far more useful to offer specific help. Consider a list of things you can do, hopefully you know the griever well enough to predict a few of their needs.*

### Actively listen:

*Talking to someone who will simply listen is often exactly what a griever needs. You may feel like you need to provide answers, but often just having the opportunity to talk things out can help someone organize their thoughts and feelings. Besides, the answers they find on their own are far more valuable than any given to them.*

### Be present:

*Without hovering, be available to the griever by letting them know they can call at any time and/or by casually check in once in a while. Don't push and don't pressure. If they don't want to talk and if they don't take you up on your offers, that's okay. Also, grievers will still be hurting months, even years after a death, well after the casseroles and messages of concern stop rolling in. For this reason, the check-in's that happen after they have essentially been left alone will send the message that you understand their pain is enduring, and reminds them you will be there for them in the long-term. Make it casual; send a card or an e-mail, that way they can choose not to respond if they don't feel like talking. Don't take it to heart if you don't get a response and follow their cues. If they don't engage with you it's probably wise to give them a little space.*

In the beginning phases of grief, there is very little you can say to take away a griever's pain and there is very little value in summing up the situation with a positive or inspiring platitude. So, next time you find yourself patting the back of a grieving friend or family member saying "God has a plan", we suggest you stop what you're doing and reframe your role immediately. Repeat after me....*I am not a grief comforter, I am a grief supporter.* 🌟





## The Greatest Grief

~ Peggy Gibson, TCF, Nashville, TN, Feb. 2015

A sudden accident killed your child. That terrible phone call changed your life with no warning—you didn't get to say goodbye—this has to be the most terrible loss of all.

Your child died by suicide—you feel you should have been able to prevent it. Your guilt is devastating. How can you live with such an incomprehensible tragedy?

You only had one child—now you have none and your focus in life is gone. What's the point of living? What could be more devastating?

When your baby died, your dreams died—you have few memories and you're too young to be suffering like this—this loss is the most unfair.

Someone murdered your child—an unbelievable violation— you're angry and your frustration with the legal system feeds your anger. This must be the very worst.

You're a single parent—your child has died and you have no one to lean on, no one to share your grief—surely your suffering is the most painful.

The unbelievable has happened—your adult child died—you had invested so much in that child—now who's going to care for you in your old age?

You had to watch your child suffer bravely through a long illness—you were helpless to ease his pain and to prevent his death—how do you erase those horrible images?—Yours must be the greatest grief.

The truth is that the death of any child is the greatest loss, regardless of the cause, regardless of the age. Our own experience is far more painful than we had ever previously envisioned, so how could we possibly comprehend what others have undergone? To make comparisons between our own suffering and the pain of others is an exercise in futility. It accomplishes nothing and sometimes can be hurtful to others.

To say that one type of death produces a greater or deeper grief than another tends to place different values on the children who have died. Each child is worthy of 100% of our grief, each person's sorrow is 100%, and each loss is 100% because we love each child, those still living and those who have died, with 100% of our being. 🌿

## Middle Miles

~ Martha Whitmore Hickman, *Healing After Loss, Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief*

Hikers refer to them as "middle miles".

These are the most exhausting, challenging miles on the path, when the exhilaration of beginning the journey has evaporated into drudgery and the promise of the path's end has not yet given new energy for the stepping.

The journey through grief is very different from the climb up a heroic mountain. Yet there are stages of that ascent that remind us of our own climb out of the valley of despair.

In the early days and weeks of our grieving, we usually have much to help us -- the solicitude of friends, the gathering around of our religious community, the proffering of help.

Then we are in the long haul, when we are at least as sad but more on our own. We wonder whether we shall ever feel our old energy and hunger for life again. We observe that people who have been grieving do feel better.

We are told we will, too, and in our heads maybe we believe it. But the days and weeks drag on and we don't see any infusion of light and joy.

Like the climbers in the "middle miles", we must keep going, knowing that one day we will get on top of our lives again.

Looking back, we'll marvel at how far we've come.

I believe in the top of the mountain even when I can't see it. 🌿



When the tears come  
Don't ask me what the matter is  
Or if I'm okay  
Just hold my hand and  
Remind me  
That you miss them too

[www.thegriefworkshop.com](http://www.thegriefworkshop.com)



## Easier than what?: A mother looks at life without

By Alice Wisler, <http://writingtheheartache.blogspot.com/2015/03/easier-than-what-mother-looks-at-life.html>

There's a part of me that died that winter's night.

Illusions. Myths. Platitudes. An old way of looking at faith and life. My future as I'd anticipated it. The ability to be "normal".

A part of me died when my child breathed his last.

I suppose that a part lived, too.

The hope that life can be okay again. That by treasuring my son and the memories of who he was, I can be his memory keeper. I share him and because of this, the world can be a brighter place.

Oh, I have learned the value of so many things. Yes, I can still see the glass half full. My Daniel lived; he loved. I keep all that in my heart.

But every so often this extroverted person I once was just wants to retreat and be alone with her pen and paper. Talk to God. Walk alone on the beach. Not have to play nice or join in the conversations about other people's children. Or other people's small problems that they get so worked up about.

Sometimes so much gets bottled up inside me and I have to let go.

I cry over simple things. Or just feel overwhelming sadness. Over the years, I don't struggle to "feel better". I know how to let these emotions run their course. It's okay to be sad. It's all right to step away from the crowd. And if I grow frustrated that I can't always participate like others can, that's fine, too.

I channel my frustration by writing. I write from the turmoil and as I do, I've been able to produce some beautiful things.

So the question is raised: Does it get any easier?

Easier than being woken to tapes in your mind that replay the horror of watching a four-year-old die and you are helpless to save him? Easier than aching for his hand in yours? Easier than shopping for everyone else and not being able to surprise him with a toy?

You can't erase love. Love remains just as strong and passionate as it was when he was with me on earth.

It's not easy to love for the rest of your life someone you can't see and can only feel in your dreams and memories.

Life does go on. Problems continue to find you. The other children you have have bad days and your mother's heart aches. Life ain't for wimps.

But you know that. It's chiseled in your core. You know a child can die.

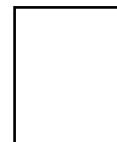
And that when he is gone, it means forever on this earth. No more picnics. No more smiles. No more watching all your children grow up together.

Does it get any easier? Yes. No.

It depends on the day of the week, the time of the year. Some days you think you're strong. While other days, especially those insignificant days, you feel like a puddle.

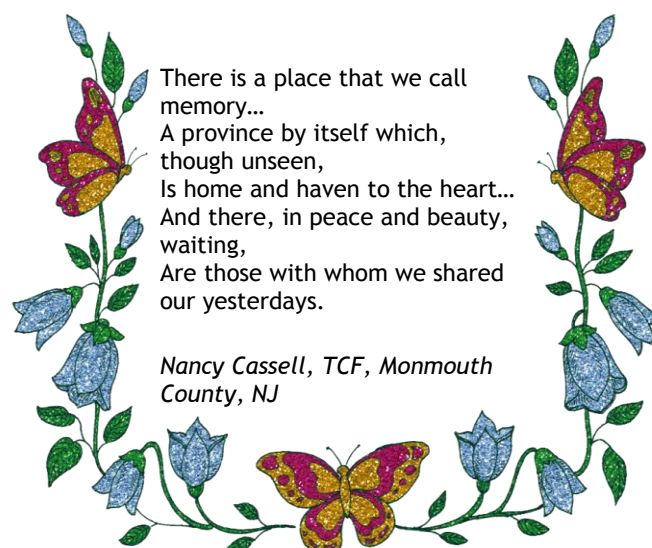
It's all about adapting. Adjusting. Knowing when to bring the tissues. Perhaps that's what becomes easier. Our ability to cope. Not our ability to live without. Just cope with the without. 🙏

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



July - August - September 2017

CALENDAR OF EVENTS	
July	
July 9	<b>Butterfly Release Picnic:</b> Katherine Legge Memorial Park - 12:00 noon.
August	
August 1	<b>Monthly Chapter Meeting:</b> 7:00 PM - "Wishing Pond" and Annual School Supplies Drive.
September	
Sept. 5	<b>Monthly Chapter Meeting:</b> 7:00 PM - Still time to donate school supplies.
October / November	
Oct. 3	<b>Monthly Chapter Meeting:</b> 7:00 PM - Open Discussion.
Nov. 7	<b>Monthly Chapter Meeting &amp; Pot Luck Dinner:</b> 7:00 PM - Guest Speaker



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