



Helping grieving parents and families rebuild their lives after the death of a child

www.bereavedparentsusa.org July – August – September 2018

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

WHY ME? – THE UNANSWERABLE QUESTION

By Polly More, TCF Nashville, TN, July 2018

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity." He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?"

They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grieverers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself. ❀❀



UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:

REMINDER: Butterfly Release Picnic is Sunday, July 15.
Please RSVP by July 11.

Tuesday, August 7 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:

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

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

Tuesday, September 4 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:

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

Tuesday, October 2 - Monthly Chapter Meeting:

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

One Year Less

By Cheryl McDonald, March 2010,

www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/one-year-less

There is no word, no label, no identifying moniker,
I am not a widow, not an orphan, not childless,
But one child less.

One less open laugh and little boy giggle,
One less challenging tete-a-tete;
One less artful, winking manipulation,
One less word of comfort, one less grateful hug.
One less chance to embrace a daughter;
One less new life to carry your eyes, your chin, your grin, your name.

No one word for the pain, the longing, the brevity
Of a life meant for living; an old soul meant to grow older than mine;
Would there be any one price too high, any sacrifice too great,
For one more moment, one more breath, one more warm touch;

I grasp desperately and sense the closeness -
the ONE just at the fingertips of my heart and mind,
Only to realize again and again and again,
There is no "One" - you are gone and I am - less. ❀❀

BP/USA Chicagoland Chapter Really, Really 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 talents, please contact the Chapter Co-Leaders Eleanor or Sally.

Chapter Co-Leaders:

Eleanor Byrne (708) 485-6160

Sally Yarberry (708) 560-0393



School Supplies

For the last several years our chapter has donated school supplies to needy children at a local public school, in memory of our children.

Here is a list of needed supplies (brand names last much longer than generic!):

- Crayola Classic 8 Color Magic Markers
- Fiskars scissors
- Elmers glue sticks
- Pencils #2
- Pink erasers
- Dri-erase markers
- Post-it notes
- Kleenex (they use a lot of boxes)

If you would like to participate in this optional charitable project, please bring your donation to the August or September meetings.

♥ ♥ ♥ 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**, 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:

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

Please email the wording of your love gift message to the newsletter editor Sally at psyrbrry@hotmail.com.

Thank You!



In loving memory of

Matthew Corrigan

July 4, 1977 until August 12, 1991

It's hard to believe you've been gone so long. Our lives have moved forward but we can always stop and smile and just remember that special guy who was in our lives. We love you!

Love, Mom & Dad
 And Christy and Beth and Erin and Meghan and Annie

Donna & Mike Corrigan





NURTURE YOURSELF

By Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D., "Understanding Your Grief", www.griefdigest.org

"There is nothing in nature that can't be taken as a sign of both mortality and invigoration."Gretel Ehrlich

I remind you that the word "bereaved" which to our modern-day ears can sound like an old-fashioned term that only a funeral director might use, means "to be torn apart" and "to have special needs". So despite its obsolescence, the word is still accurate and useful. Perhaps your most important "special need" right now is to be compassionate with yourself. In fact, the word "compassion" means "with passion". Caring for and about yourself with passion is self-compassion.

This article is a gentle reminder to be kind to yourself as you journey through the wilderness of your grief. If you were embarking on a hike of many days through the rugged mountains of Colorado, would you dress scantily, carry little water, and push yourself until you dropped? Of course not. You would prepare carefully and proceed cautiously. You would take care of yourself because if you didn't, you could die. The consequences of not taking care of yourself in grief can be equally devastating.

Over many years of walking with people in grief, I have discovered that most of us are hard on ourselves when we are in mourning. We judge ourselves and we shame ourselves and we take care of ourselves last. But good self-care is essential to your survival. To practice good self-care doesn't mean you are feeling sorry for yourself. Or being self-indulgent; rather, it means you are creating conditions that allow you to integrate the death of someone loved into your heart and soul.

I believe that in nurturing ourselves, in allowing ourselves the time and loving attention we need to journey safely and deeply through grief, we find meaning in our continued living. We have all heard the scripture "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted". To this I might add, "Blessed are those who learn self-compassion during times of grief, for they shall go on to discover continued meaning in life, living and loving".

Remember, self-care fortifies your long and challenging grief journey, a journey that leaves you profoundly affected and deeply changed. To be self-nurturing is to have the courage to pay attention to your needs. Above all, self-nurturing is about self-acceptance. When we recognize that self-care begins with ourselves, we no longer think of those around us as being totally responsible for our well-being. Health self-care forces us to mourn in ways that help us heal, and that is nurturing indeed.

I also believe that self-nurturing is about celebration, about taking time to enjoy the moment, to find hidden treasures everywhere – in a child's smile, a beautiful sunrise, a flower in bloom, a friend's gentle touch. Grief teaches us the importance of living fully in the present, remembering our past, and embracing our future.

Walt Whitman wrote, "I celebrate myself". In caring for yourself "with passion", you are celebrating life as a human being who has been touched by grief and come to realize that the preciousness of life is a superb opportunity for celebration. 🌸



Our Children, Loved, Missed and Remembered - 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

Emily Rose Snyder - 23

Jun 16, 1994 - Jul 08, 2017

Traffic Accident

Debra Garozzo & Lloyd Snyder

Jamie Lee Hoeble - 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

James G. Frale - 13

Jul 11, 1978 - Jul 16, 2013

Electrocution

John & JoAnn Frale

Katie Satkamp - 7

Jul 12, 1974 - May 12, 1982

School Bus Accident

Ronda & Steve Satkamp

Katie Evans - 35

Mar 24, 1978 - Jul 16, 2013

Heroin Overdose

Anne & Ed Evans

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

Maria Elena Nudell - 14

Apr 17, 1981 - Jul 07, 1995

Horseback Riding Accident

Marilyn Cocogliato

Nicholas Palumbo - 21

Jul 10, 1981 - Mar 05, 2003

Snowmobile Accident

Debbie Palumbo

Nicholas Carl Pica - 21

Dec 12, 1984 - Jul 13, 2006

Sudden Cardiac Death

Jane & Jerry Pica

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

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

Vincenza - 47

Jul 30, 1966 - Mar 08, 2014

Cancer

Margherita Arrowsmith (sister)

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 & Jack Pfingston

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.

Branden Martinez - 6 Weeks

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

Brandon Hardy – 22

Aug 13, 1980 - Dec 28, 2002
Auto Accident
Don & Celeste Hardy

Brian Sirotzke - 26

Aug 03, 1982 - Sep 05, 2008
Anne Sirotzke

Carol "Suzie" Pavett – 56

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

Casey Reiter – 25

Aug 11, 1984 - Dec 15, 2009
Heart Attack
Sandy Tumillo

Corinne Naumann - 23

Aug 14, 1986 - Apr 14, 2010
Cheryl Nauman

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 Sports Accident
Nancy Stein

Michael Patrick Gordon – 30

Feb 20, 1974 - Aug 08, 2004
Killed by Drunk Driver
Robert & Carol Gordon

Kimberly Ann Olson – 15

Feb 14, 1983 - Aug 20, 1998
Histicytic Disorder
Larry & Danita Olson

Mark Thomas Fornek - 6

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

Patrick Vincent DeMauro – 19

Jan 28, 1982 - Aug 29, 2001
Car Accident
Vincent & 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 & 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 & Margery Longo

Daryle J. "DJ" Hall – 22

Mar 10, 1984 - Sep 11, 2006
Accidental Drug Overdose
Bob and Sherry Hall

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

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.

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

Mia Bella Meiszner – 9

Sep 15, 2008 – Dec 04, 2017
Organ Failure
John Meiszner

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

**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.

GRIEF: MEMOIR OF A BEREAVED PARENT

By Mary O'Grady, Michael's Mom, reprinted from A Journey Together, Summer 2018

Parental grief knows no closure. Grief is a silent, lonely thing. Grief is painful. Grief upsets everything in your life. Grief is a bottomless pit. Grief has taken up a permanent place in my heart and at times feels like a dagger through my heart.

Grief, for a bereaved parent, enters your life suddenly, violently and for many of us, inexplicably. It is an unwanted constant companion. Grief entered my life on February 20, 2017. My beloved son was only 24 years 5 ½ months old. Not only was he my youngest child, he was my good friend. What a profound loss that there are no words for. He was much too young to leave this world. A life cut short for no valid reason. A sweet, kind person taken away. It's just so tragic. I now know how fragile life can be and that it can end in an instant.

The bereaved parent experiences tremendous and never-ending grief. Compared with our grief, everything else can seem frivolous and mundane. There is no escape from this black cloud called grief. My son's passing is the first thing I think of when I wake up in the morning. Moments of busyness at work places it in the background at times, only to have it come raging back with full force. Grief never takes a day off.

While it is difficult to describe the intensity of my grief, I have come to realize that the more you love someone, the stronger your grief and that the level of grief is certainly affected by our relationship with the deceased. My son was kind, sweet, funny, smart . . . just a nice guy. I struggle to understand why God would take my beautiful child from me. Why did he need to be removed from my life, causing me such excruciating and unrelenting grief? Why? That is the question for which there is no answer. Why me? Why my child? Why my family? I imagine all bereaved parents cycle through those same questions in their minds.

Dodging grief, however temporary, is the ultimate challenge. I escape and visit the cemetery several times a week, I find some solace there. I plant, feed and water Michael's garden. Sometimes I sit quietly at the grave, sometimes I speak to Michael, and sometimes I cry uncontrollably. I never really know which emotion will surface until after I arrive at his spot.

Milestone dates are always particularly challenging. On Christmas, instead of buying my son a gift, I purchase a wreath for his grave site. On his birthday, instead of buying him a birthday gift and cake, I buy flowers and a small balloon for his grave site. It just all seems so unfair.

As the weeks and months go by, you realize just how much your child is missing. Their age is frozen in time while the rest of the world continues moving on. With life there is hope . . . a future to look forward to. Death is so final, it removes all element of hope for the parent and for the future of their child. Adventures and experiences that we should look forward too will no longer happen. This is difficult to come to terms with, as any parent or sibling who has lost a child, brother, or sister, will attest. After sixty-five weeks, I can only admit that it does not get easier. The first year was so terribly difficult, but unfortunately, I imagine that all the years to come will be just as difficult.

The weight of sorrow is enormous and unyielding, my heart is broken. I look forward to the day when my Michael and I are reunited in heaven, it will be a joyous occasion. At that point the albatross of grief will be removed from my heart at long last.

Rest in peace my dear Michael, I love you and miss you so. 🌸





How Long Will The Pain Last?

By Martha White,

<http://www.iskandar.com/waleed911/poemhowlong.html>

How long will the pain last?"
a broken hearted mourner asked me.
"All the rest of your life."
I have to answer truthfully.
We never quite forget.

No matter how many years pass, we remember.
The loss of a loved one is like a major operation.
Part of us is removed,
and we have a scar for the rest of our lives.
As years go by, we manage.
There are things to do, people to care for,
tasks that call for full attention. But the pain is still
there,
not far below the surface.

We see a face that looks familiar,
hear a voice that echoes,
see a photograph in someone's album,
see a landscape that once we saw together,
and it seems as though a knife were in the wound
again.
But not so painfully.
And mixed with joy, too.
Because remembering a happy time is not all sorrow,
it brings back happiness with it.

How long will the pain last?
All the rest of your life.
But the things to remember is that not only the pain
will last,
but the blessed memories as well.
Tears are proof of life.
The more love, the more tears.
If this be true,
then how could we ever ask that the pain cease
altogether.
For then the memory of love would go with it.

The pain of grief is the price we pay for love. 🙏



IT'S NOT ABOUT FORGETTING

by Lexi Behrndt, October 6, 2016

<http://www.scribblesandcrumbs.com/2016/10/06/its-not-about-forgetting/>

It's not about forgetting,
Or acting like the scars aren't there,
Or trying not to remember your face.
Or the curve of your smile.

It's not about avoiding
The pain and ache,
The memories I'll never hold,
The space between us.

It's about the light in your smile
Finding its way into mine,
And the fire in your eyes
Setting aflame my soul.

With love.
With compassion.
With goodness.
With hope.

It's about you
Your legacy, your light
Your name, your memory,
And love that never dies.

You left me better.
You left me braver.
You left me kinder.
You left me with the best parts of you. 🙏

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:

♥ Michael & Cheryl Bartik, parents of Stephanie

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

EASY FOR YOU TO SAY

By Angela Miller, *A Bed for My Heart*, November 13, 2017

A few years ago— in the early years of grief— after having one too many clichés flung in my face, through a mess of tears, I wrote this. Then I daydreamed about the next time someone clichés all over me— instead of nodding and smiling while crying inside, or kindly educating them about a more comforting and helpful way to talk to a bereaved parent— I'd have enough grit and grace to recite this instead.

Easy for you to say *God needed another angel*—
since God didn't ask you for yours.

Easy for you to say *God has a plan*—
if all of God's plans for you have precisely tailgated your own like a lovely fairy tale.

Easy for you to say *everything happens for a reason*—
please tell me one good reason my son is forever buried deep underground?

Easy for you to say *trust God*—
if you've never felt betrayed by the heavens themselves.

Easy for you to say *hang on to hope*—if you can still find your rope.

Easy for you to say *time heals all wounds*—
if time has already made perfect heart-shaped scabs of yours.

Easy for you to say *be thankful for what you have*—
would you like to switch places with me and feel how little I have left?

Easy for you to say *God needed another flower for his garden*—
if none of your 'flowers' have ever been plucked before their time.

Easy for you to say *find peace and move on*—
if you haven't had to hold your dead child's hand inside the curves of your living one.

Easy for you to say *he's in a better place*—
if you still get to hold your child in the best place there is.

Easy for you to say *you're young, you can have more*—
would you be willing to exchange your living child for those you might someday have?

Easy for you to say *every cloud has a silver lining*—
if you haven't been asked to walk through this never-ending storm of mine.

Easy for you to say *it was God's will*—
if the plan you got currently includes all of your children rambunctiously romping around your living room.

Often phrases that are intended to comfort grieving parents can unfortunately bring more pain to an already aching heart. Clichés can sting and further isolate. Walking the road of child loss is painfully lonely. Instead of trite clichés, try offering a hug instead, say their child's name, or ask about their favorite memory of their precious child. Ask what they miss the most. Ask a question where they can talk about their child's beautiful life, not their death. Most of all, grieving parents want to know their child is *remembered*. They want others to remember they *lived*. Child loss cannot be prettied up or watered down. Be compassionate and acknowledge the truth of what *is*. It will go a long way in offering true comfort to a grieving parent.



SIBLINGS AND GRIEF: 10 THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

By Dr. Christina Hibbert, www.drchristinahibbert.com

I'm an expert on siblings and grief. Not because I'm a psychologist who specializes in grief. No. I am an expert because I have lost two of my sisters.

As I write, it is twenty years to the day that my youngest sister, McLean, or Miki as we called her, died. She died of cancer of the kidneys. She was eight years old. I was eighteen. On October 17, 2007, my closest sister, Shannon, died. Just sixteen months apart, we'd grown up together; we knew each other intimately, we were best friends.

Losing Shannon was even harder for me than losing Miki, and not just because we were closer. For one, I was older when she died—I understood loss better—but even more, because her husband had died just two months prior and she left behind two young sons. My husband and I would raise her sons as our own.

Tragic as it was—hard as it was to suddenly inherit two sons, and as much as I missed her—I still felt sorrier for my parents, for her children, for her close friends, for everyone but me. *I'm just the sibling*, I thought. How wrong I was. *How wrong so many of us are about siblings and grief*.

These two experiences have given me unique insight into sibling grief. I've experienced how the death of two different siblings, at two different times of my life, and in two unique sets of circumstances has impacted my family and me. These two death experiences were completely different. My understanding and the impact these deaths, based on my age when they died, was completely different. But, both of my sisters' deaths had a profound impact on my life.

There are many things people need to learn about siblings and grief. Here are ten I would like everyone to know.

- 1) **Sibling grief is often misunderstood**—by parents, families, friends, and counselors, even by the siblings themselves. So much focus is given to the parents of the lost child, to the children of the lost parent, to the spouse of the lost adult sibling. And, rightly so. But, what about the siblings? What about the ones who, like me, have grown up with the deceased? Who believed they would have a lifetime with their sister or brother? Who now face that lifetime alone?
- 2) **Sibling grief “has been almost entirely overlooked in the literature on bereavement”**. It's no wonder, therefore, that even mental health providers misunderstand sibling grief. How are families supposed to know how to help siblings through grief if even the research on the subject is lacking?
- 3) **Common emotions siblings may feel when a brother or sister dies include:**
 - Guilt
 - Abandonment
 - Loss of Innocence
 - Fallout from the family
 - Somatic symptoms
 - Fears and anxiety
- 4) **Siblings may feel “trumped” by the grief of other family members**. I sure felt this way, and it's common, since the focus is usually on the parents if a young sibling dies and on the surviving spouse or children if an older sibling dies. This may lead to minimizing a sibling's own loss.
- 5) **Young siblings lose innocence when a brother or sister dies, which may lead to fears and anxiety**. “Survivor guilt” is also common. Experiencing death as a child becomes a lifelong experience of processing and understanding the loss. Children grow up with grief, understanding more as they get older. Fear of death or dying is common. Anxiety or worry about getting sick may become prevalent. In young siblings, guilt for provocative behavior or for unacceptable feelings (jealousy) is common. Young children may think, before the death, “I wish my brother were dead!” then believe they somehow caused it to happen. Older siblings may wonder, “Why them and not me?” Because siblings are usually similar in age, it can bring up many questions about the sibling's own life and death, and guilt along with it.

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6) Surviving children do, unfortunately, end up taking the fallout from parents', siblings', or other family members' mistakes, emotional blowups, or neglect. In many ways, siblings often experience a double loss: the loss of their sister or brother, and the loss of their parents (at least for a time, but sometimes, permanently). I know this from experience. Though my parents did the best they could, after my youngest sister died, our entire family was different. My mom retreated into her own grief, staying in her room, depressed and sick for years. My dad retreated into work and anything to take his mind from his pain. Luckily, I was already on my own, in college, at the time; my younger siblings weren't so lucky. At 9, 11, 14, and 17 years old, they grew up with a completely different set of parents than I had. I tried to step in as a "parent" figure over the years, but the separation from my parents in their time of need profoundly influenced their lives. It profoundly influenced *my* life. It profoundly changed our family.

7) Siblings may manifest somatic symptoms of grief, including symptoms that mimic the deceased sibling's symptoms. Especially in young children, symptoms like stomachaches, headaches, nightmares, body pain, digestive symptoms, and trouble sleeping are common. These should be seen as symptoms of grief, and hopefully, an adult in the family can help siblings work through their feelings and show them how to grieve.

8) Having someone explain the loss to younger siblings, to be there for them and help them grieve, is ideal. Little children don't comprehend death in the same way adults do. It is therefore important to have somebody who can walk them through the loss and the grief process, to explain it wasn't their fault, to validate what they feel. If parents aren't able to do so, another family member or friend may, and hopefully will, step in.

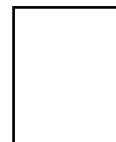
9) Even adult siblings will feel the loss deeply. The pain isn't less simply because you're older. In fact, in many ways, it's harder. You understand more. You know what it means to die, and you will feel the pain of the loss in a different way than young children, who still haven't developed abstract thinking and understanding, will. Grieve your loss.

10) My best advice for siblings in grief: feel the loss as long as you need to, and give yourself time to heal. Because sibling loss is so misunderstood, you may receive messages that make you feel like you should be "over it by now." They don't know sibling loss. Now, you do. It takes time. Lots of time. It's not about "getting over" the loss of a sibling. You don't get over it. You create your life and move on, when you're ready. But you will always remember your brother or sister—the missing piece of your life.

I once heard someone say, "When a parent dies, you lose the past. When a child dies, you lose the future. When a sibling dies, you lose the past *and* the future." That is the grief of a sibling—grief for what was past, and grief for what should have been the future. Just remember these things, my friends. Remember to be there for siblings in grief. You can be the difference in helping them create a bright future, even if they now must do so without their beloved sibling. 🌿



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



July - August - September 2018

CALENDAR OF EVENTS	
July	
July 15	Butterfly Release Picnic: Katherine Legge Memorial Park - 12:00 noon.
August	
August 7	Monthly Chapter Meeting: 7:00 PM - "Wishing Pond" and Annual School Supplies Drive.
September	
Sept. 4	Monthly Chapter Meeting: 7:00 PM - Still time to donate school supplies.
October / November	
Oct. 2	Monthly Chapter Meeting: 7:00 PM - Open Discussion.
Nov. 6	Monthly Chapter Meeting & Pot Luck Dinner: 7:00 PM - Guest Speaker

"Memories saturate my heart, and the story
of you spills from my eyes."

*Grace Andren, Speaking in Tears:
The Poetry in Grief*



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