

Bereaved Parents of the USA
Tampa Bay Chapter
P.O. Box 3226
Tampa, FL 33601-3226
www.bpusatampabay.com



The Bereaved Parents of the USA, Tampa Bay Chapter would like you to know that we are truly sorry for your loss and this painful event in your life. We hope that we can help you take a major step in understanding your grief and willingness to “work” on your grief. We trust you will stay in contact with us and attend meetings in the hopes that we may be able to offer you comfort and support during this time. We understand the hurt and sorrow you are experiencing. Each of our members has experienced the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling and we depend upon each other to help us through this most difficult of times.

We are a self-help group for bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. We are here for you should you need someone to talk with or to be with. We have all been through what you are going through, and we seek the opportunity to help you in any way we can. We are non-judgmental and offer a listening ear, a caring heart, a hand to hold, a shoulder to cry on.

We each have experienced different circumstances in the death of our children. Our children were of different ages. Some were infants, toddlers, children, teens, young adults and adults. We do not judge how your child died or at what age. We have people attending our meetings as newly bereaved to those further down the road in their recovery. The people attending who are the more “seasoned” griever can be very helpful to you to understand some of the feelings and circumstances you are experiencing.

We gather for both day and evening meetings each month during which we share experiences and provide understanding and support to each other. Additionally, we publish a monthly Newsletter which announces our activities and includes articles written by our members and by bereaved parents from across the nation. Articles to help you understand the grief, the feelings, and other basic and necessary information are also included in the Newsletter. We invite you to attend meetings as needed and meet our many members. You may, of course, bring a relative or a friend with you. Please see the “Local Activities” page for dates, times, and locations.

We have also attached some information about us and about grief. Should you have any questions or request further information, please contact us.

Most sincerely,

Beverley A. Hurley, Chairman
Bereaved Parents of the USA, Tampa Bay Chapter



Our 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 Bereaved Parents of the USA to provide a haven where all bereaved families can meet and share our long and arduous grief journeys.

We attend monthly gatherings whenever we can and for as long as we believe necessary. We share our tears, confusion, 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, our color, our affluence, 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.*

Newly Bereaved

Notes from 1998 Bereaved Parents Gathering, Hope in the Heartland

Led by John and Carolyn Bryan

This is a new experience. It is a bad experience, but one we must now go through. Let each spouse take control of their own grief. Go away as needed either together or alone. Be supportive of each need. Simply put there are four T's of grief...Time, Touch, Talk and Tears. Time to grieve, the touch of another human being, someone to listen as we talk about our child, and it is necessary to cry the tears which come so easily and without warning. If we can give and get these we are helped along. Just realizing all 4 of these elements are part of what helps us to know what needs are involved. Learn to remember the love of our child, find strength in it and use it to move forward in the grief process. Celebrate our child's life, without dwelling on just the death. Find a purpose to go on. Reach out to others. The act of helping them helps you.

There are no answers to "why". It won't bring our child back and it does not stop the hurt. Life is a gift not a right. Death is sometimes described as a transition and in that transition we can still feel and touch the love from and to our child.

Grief is not a thing but a process that heals the heart. We can't "just get over it". As the process of healing after surgery, healing the heartache takes time too. Try to make it as easy on yourself as you can, and cope as best you can. Remember we will be hit again and again with the pain of grief suddenly and without warning! Don't let that be a surprise to you.

Grief comes in varying waves. It is reality! It hurts! Talk it out with an understanding person. We must learn to recognize that grief does come in stages and we will bounce between them for a long time.

GRIEF IS HARD WORK! Do it in the best way for you without interfering with other family member's grief. **NOTHING IS WRONG OR SILLY IF IT HELPS YOU!** Grief is a long time experience but it will ease somewhat.

Frequently we are afraid others will forget our child. Our children will live on as long as those who know and love them continue to live. Live our lives so that our child will be proud of us. Share our love with others in the same way we would have shared it with our child.

This is a time when we need as many friends and supporters as possible. A true friend can be pushed away but "won't go away". It is someone who will stay with you when they would like to be elsewhere, because they know how much you need them, even when you do not know how much you need them.

We all experience many of the same things! You are not "going crazy if:

You feel depressed or have that profound feeling of longing and emptiness.

Feel the need to know "why....", "if only I had or hadn't...", "I thought I was doing the right thing...", "He (She) should have known better...", "Why didn't God do as I prayed for..."

Have physical symptoms as chest pains, heaviness in the chest, tightness in your throat, aching or empty feeling in your arms if your child was a baby or small child, yawning, sighing, gasping, or even hyperventilating.

You may have altered habits such as not being able to sleep or wanting to sleep all the time, not being able to eat or eating ravenously.

You may not be able to go into crowded places, places your child went, or the place your child died or spent much time, as the hospital where they received treatment. Sirens and emergency vehicles cause anxiety. Just being anxious for unknown reasons.

Feeling that you are going crazy. I am the only one who seems to act or feel this way.

Thinking "I feel fine" and have gotten through this and the next time we are in the situation seem to be back in the midst of severe grief. That "bouncing" between coping and our different reactions to similar situation. Crying all the time, or at unexpected times.

You may think you see your child in a crowd, thinking they will be in usual places at usual times.

Become forgetful, unable to concentrate or complete normal tasks, wander around without purpose, misplace things, not wanting to be involved in previous activities.

You may feel this is not happening. They will be back and things will be normal again.

Need to repeatedly talk about your child. Retell details of their death. Fear they will be forgotten and that their life had no meaning.

Feel you can't go on. "I would rather be, or be better off, with my child."

Have the feeling of your child's presence, see them, hear their voice.

Feel anger and rage over the death and the situations surrounding the death. "I couldn't control this, make it better, or prevent this."

Become frustrated when we hear from others or we ourselves feel that it's been a month, 6 months, a year and I'm not over this. Feel societies' unrealistic expectations of grief put on this most severe loss. Try to meet the pressure to fit our grief into someone else's schedule or prescribed manner of grief.

No you are not the only one who has had these reactions. They are all typical and natural parts of grief. We can not ignore them but must work through these feelings and reactions. It will take longer to feel better if we try to deny these feelings. This is a slow process! How we choose to grieve or for how long, is normal as long as our grief is acknowledged, confronted, and you don't hurt yourself or anyone else in your path through the grief process. **IT IS A SLOW PROCESS!** The Bereaved Parents Of The U.S.A. believe the process is made a little easier by being there to listen to you, share with you, support you and help you to understand your grief and help you work through it. We have been where you are now. We have survived and will be there to help you in this as a self-help method of coping with and working through your grief.

For the Newly Bereaved

Most bereaved parents experience one or more of the following:

- Feel physically exhausted, have difficulty sleeping, do not want to go to sleep or get up
- Feel a tightness in the throat, heaviness in the chest, or a lump in the stomach like a rock.
- Have an empty feeling with appetite loss.
- Wander aimlessly, forget a thought in the middle of a sentence, neglect to finish tasks, feel restless, look for activity, but can't concentrate.
- Have respiratory reactions - excessive yawning, gasping, hyperventilating.
- Experience feelings of anxiety.
- Think they are losing their mind.
- Say to oneself, "If only I had..."
- Keep asking, "Why?"
- Feel they don't want to go on.
- Feel the loss isn't real. that the child will return.
- Sense the loved one's presence by expecting the child to walk in the door or phone at the usual time. Hear the voice or see the face.
- Look for the child in a crowd or see reminders unexpectedly.
- Need to tell and retell and remember things about the child and the experience of death.
- Cry at unexpected times.
- Feel able to cope and then fall back again - a see-saw type of reaction.
- Feel depressed.

All of these reactions are natural and normal. It is important not to deny one's feelings, but to learn to express them. Realizing that you are not alone in having these reactions is helpful. One's balance is regained slowly through understanding and working through the grief process.

It has been said that the bereaved underestimate their ability to survive. Many bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents are proof that the self-help process in a group such as BP/USA work.