



MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Newsletter

together we remember... together we heal...

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.mhbpusa.com

JULY/AUGUST 2017



Please join us for our next meetings

Thursday, July 6th -- Topic: "Meet Me; Meet My Child"

Thursday, August 3rd -- Topic: "Ask it Basket"

7:00 at The Children's Home of Poughkeepsie, 10 Children's Way, Poughkeepsie, NY

Call Kathy (845) 462-2825 for information

AUGUST 4 - 6 – NATIONAL GATHERING CONFERENCE – WASHINGTON. DC



A WARM WELCOME TO NEWCOMERS

We understand how difficult it is to attend your first meeting. Feelings can be overwhelming; we have all experienced them and know how important it is to take that first step. Our stories may be different but we are alike in that we all hurt deeply. We cannot take your pain away but we can offer friendship and support. Bring a friend or relative to lean on if you wish.

ENDLESSLY – I SEARCH FOR YOU by Jessi Snapp

Sweet child,

Since you left my arms – I haven't stopped searching for you. A part of me knows I will spend the rest of my life searching for you. Living for you. Breathing for you. Even though I know I will never find your physical presence here. I will still search high and low for the moments that bring me closer to you. For the sweet reminders of your love and your life. For the things that make this life still worth living for. I hold onto the hope that I'll find you. Even if it's just a glimpse of you.

I will search for pieces of your sweet spirit here on earth. From now until the end of time – I will look for you. Until we are reunited. Until we are fused back together. Until I can wrap my arms around you and know that I will never have to let you go. Until I know I will never have to say goodbye to you – ever again.

I will search for you beyond the pain. Beyond the heartache. Beyond the endless amount of tears. I will search for you long after I stop hearing your name. Long after the world has continued to spin and those around me have carried on. As days turn into weeks and weeks turn into years.

I will search for you in the beauty that has been left behind in this relentless world.

I will search for you in the moments of joy and laughter.

I will search for you in the rising and setting of the sun. In the blooming of flowers. In the falling of rain.

I will search for you in the sky above. In the flight of birds and swaying of trees. In the color of rainbows and in the crisp breeze.

I will search for you in the dead of winter and the rebirth of summer.

I will search for you in wonder.

I will search for you in the shining stars that fill the midnight sky.

I will search for you in the moments where you should be. Moments where I wished you still were.

I search for you, your light, and your everlasting spirit. I search for signs of your love. I search because I know you aren't entirely gone. Because you left pieces of yourself here – for me. Most of them tucked deep within my heart. But these moments are filled with pieces of you. Pieces I thought I had lost forever.

Still, I search for you. Because I never wanted to lose you. And I will find you. Somewhere. Somehow. I will find you in these moments. And these moments will carry me from one day to the next. They will keep me going. And they will sustain my soul until the day I see you again. My search for you is boundless. It is infinite.

it is being honest
about
my pain
that
makes me invincible

NAYYIRAH WAHEED

The cure for anything is salt water
sweat
tears
or the sea

Peace is the result of
retraining your mind to
process life as it is, rather than
as you think it should be.

~ Dr. Wayne W. Dyer

At any
given moment
You have the
POWER
to say:
This is
NOT
how the story
is going to
END

My love for you is deeper than any
ocean, higher than any mountain,
and shines brighter than any star.

"COMPLICATED GRIEF?"

By Tom Zuba (Tom will be a speaker and workshop presenter at 2017 National Gathering Conference in August. See flyer at the end of this newsletter for more information.)

What if I told you that the appropriate, natural, healthy and even healing response when someone you love dearly dies is to kick, scream, roll around on the floor, and foam at the mouth? Until you no longer have a need to do that.

Well, it is.

But instead of the kicking and screaming, the rolling and foaming, your doctor will now encourage you to take a pill to "take the edge off of it." "No need to feel the pain," he or she will say, when there's a little pill for that.

And instead of honoring all the ways that grief expresses itself, many of us have bought into the mythical, iconic images of a graceful, dignified, and somehow-through-her-black-veil, still beautiful Jackie Kennedy navigating her husband's funeral and burial. Images that travelled round the world and continue to hold power over us. By doing so, we've unknowingly and unconsciously set ourselves up to create pain on top of pain. It's now become the American way of doing grief. Pretending. Denying. Repressing. Numbing. Staying strong. And sucking it all up. I call it the old way of doing grief. Trust me. It doesn't work. I tried it. My 18-month-old daughter Erin died suddenly in 1990. My 43-year-old wife Trici died equally as suddenly in 1999, and my 13-year-old son Rory died of brain cancer in 2005. Along the way, I discovered a new way to do grief. A way rooted in hope with the promise of a full, joy-filled life.

We've forgotten that death is a normal part of life. We spend millions and millions of dollars because we're so desperate to prolong life, regardless of the quality of life our beloved experiences during their last few days, or weeks, or months or even years. We call this love. It is not.

We've told ourselves over and over again that the death of a child is unnatural. Our mantra is now "No parent should have to bury their child." We've conveniently forgotten that up until the beginning of the last century, due to advances in medicine, almost every family buried two or three or even four of their children before the kids reached the age of five. Half of all children born, died before they were 12-years-old.

In our attempt to get back to "the way things were" as quickly as possible, we've shortened the rituals surrounding death. We now need to wrap it up and tie it with a bow in three days or less, because most of us have to be back at work. A two or three day visitation and funeral where immediate family was supported by extended family, friends and neighbors has conveniently morphed into a quick and easy one-stop, no muss no fuss, sign the book so they know you were there; walk past the dead body or better yet, the ashes in a pretty urn; shake a hand with a bumbled "my deepest condolences;" and you're back home in 15 minutes or so, if you timed it right. We will do anything and everything possible to make sure we never have to feel a feeling or express an emotion.

And now we've decided that grief is the enemy. A sickness. A disease. We need to label it and dissect it and give a time period - 365 days - before it becomes "complicated." We're being told that women have a harder time, and are more susceptible to "catching" complicated grief. Same scenario if the death of your beloved was sudden, or by suicide, or your beloved was a child, or God forbid, you've had multiple losses.

Grief is the automatic, internal response to loss. If you are human and you attach to people, places or things ~ a beloved, your job, your house, your car, your health, your youth, etc. ~ and you lose that something, you will grieve. Everyone grieves. All the time. And grief expresses itself in countless number of confusing and surprising ways, such as sadness, and anger, and guilt, and numbness and confusion. Grief expresses itself through overeating or losing your appetite, through heart palpitations and dizziness. Through loss of memory, and a strong desire to stay in bed, or work all the time or sit in a chair and stare. This is all grief. Most of us don't know much about it. How would we? We pretend it doesn't exist. We never talk about it, until it is our turn to navigate the journey.

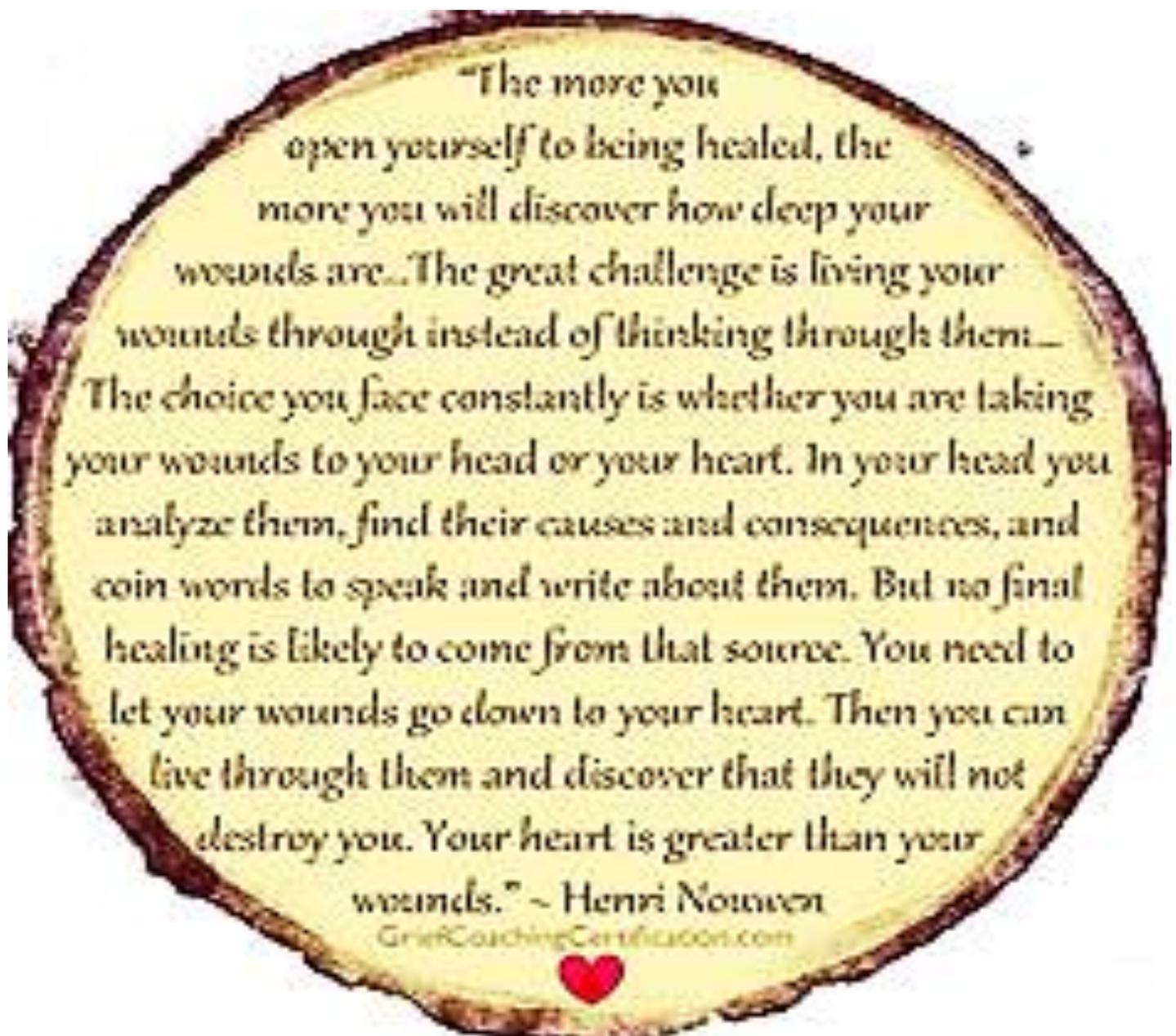
Although, the very nature of grief is wild, and unpredictable, and nonlinear, and yes, cruelly complicated, grief is not the enemy. Grief is not to be avoided at all costs. Grief can be the great teacher, when we let it.

We heal from all the losses we experience when we mourn; when we identify what is occurring on the inside and push it up and out. This is the new way to do grief. We mourn when we externalize the internal. The problem

is, however, that most of us are given 3-5 days to mourn and then it's back to work and back to "normal." It's the message we get over and over from our boss, our family members, our friends and our colleagues. They don't know any better, and won't until it is their turn. They are innocent and ignorant.

When someone we dearly love dies, a part of us dies too. The part dies that was wrapped up in the plans and wishes and dreams we had for our life with our beloved, be that a child, a spouse or partner, a parent, or a dear family member or friend. Life will never go back to the way it was. The challenge, and the opportunity is to create a new life. A life that is richer because we are capable of loving, deeply. A life that is more compassionate, and kinder, and more gentle. A life filled with gratitude for what is.

Healing occurs when we mourn in a safe, sacred space where we get to feel every feeling and emotion that arises. A space where we feel loved and lovable, and where we are seen, heard and honored. Sadly, we no longer create this space for ourselves and we certainly don't create that space for each other. Therefore, most of us no longer mourn. And that's why our grief journey may get complicated. It's not the grief that's complicated. Grief is natural and normal. It's the lack of understanding, love, compassion, kindness, gentleness and the willingness to accompany another person on their journey that complicates the journey. We can do better.



IS IT POSSIBLE TO TAKE A BREAK FROM GRIEF?



Is it possible to take a break from grief? Stick with me for a moment and let me explain. Please! I think it's not only possible at times, but necessary, to take a break from grief.

I will say, without a doubt, that grief is one of the most difficult experiences any of us will face in life. The idea of taking a break from grief does not in any way minimize or make light of its intense pain, effects, or significance. I recognize the deep and complex impact of grief that follows loss. In fact, its fierce and powerful characteristics are exactly why we need to take a break from grief.

Stop and think. The grieving process is not quick. Its pain is piercing and invades all parts of your life. How long can anyone stand this kind of intensity and penetrating focus without a break?

We all need moments, activities, and experiences to break away and recharge, refresh, restore, revive, and renew ourselves for the journey ahead. Taking a break from grief helps you regain physical strength, emotional courage and determination, and the necessary hope so you can 'keep on keeping on' through your grief journey. Taking a break from grief will surely mean different things to different people. Taking a break is one of the most respectful things you can do for yourself and your journey. You're actually equipping yourself to carry on and not give up before your grief work is done. Hello Grief posted an article called "[Finding a Balance: Self Care Quiz](#)" that helps grievers realize how important it is to take care of themselves while they're grieving—and gauge how they're doing. I don't think self-care and maintaining a positive balance are ideas grievers typically consider.

I know you can't just turn grief on and off like flipping a switch—but, *in time*, you can step back from its full force and allow yourself to focus on a diversion. When you're grieving, grief affects everything around you, but I think that's the key to taking a break. Push grief from center stage to the background for a time.

Taking a break may mean a change of scenery, a 'vacation' away from home. It may mean losing yourself in a book, a movie, or a play. It may mean an enjoyable time with a friend. It may mean an escape into a hobby that consumes your attention and creativity. It may mean spending time and getting caught up in the laughter and wonder of a child or grandchild. It may mean a long-needed rest for your weary mind and body, getting a massage, or visiting a spa retreat.

Whatever you decide, take a break from grief that is meaningful and tailored just for you! Think about what you need and how a particular break will serve you best. ~ Judy Brizendine

..there are times when we stop.
We sit still...We listen and
breezes from a whole other
world begin to whisper.

~ James Carroll

ORGANIZING YOUR GRIEFCASE

By Ron Kelly (Ron serves on the BPUSA Board of Directors and will be at the National Gathering Conference in August. See flyer at the end of this newsletter for more information.)

Time can often be an immeasurable concept in grief. Case in point, our profound loss always seems like it happened yesterday, irrespective of taking place months, years, or even decades before. When my dear son's precious heart failed after a relatively simple medical procedure, he was taken from this world in what seemed like the snap of a finger. In reality, however, an army sized cadre of skilled doctors, nurses and technicians spent exhaustive amounts of time and effort in trying to revive my Jonathan that fateful morning.

When thinking back, as I often do at the uncontrollable whim of my memory, it seems as if one moment I was planning the eventual trip home from the hospital with my child, and the next I was handed my very own Griefcase. It was given to me by the doctor who tried in vain to revive my child. She was certainly compassionate, if not emotional herself, but I wonder if fully aware of what she gave me? After all, only one who has experienced the loss of a loved one knows that there is no "getting over it." There is no normal any longer, and what was once an unquestioned certainty is no longer even a possibility. Was that doctor, a stranger just a short time before, aware of exactly what was within the Griefcase she issued to me?

What is this Griefcase I am referring to? Please allow me to point towards the keyword, "grief." It is a word that we bereaved souls hear almost ad nauseam once we become a member in this unwanted club. Yet, the word grief is not an emotion, is it? It is not really what we are feeling after our loss. If asked how we feel, we truthfully respond that we feel sad, or angry at the loss. We might feel confused or lonely at the moment, or any combination of feelings that repeatedly pound at us in unending waves. However, rarely, if ever, would we respond to the question by saying we feel "grieved." No. Grief is not an emotion.

Those emotions, at first so overwhelming, if not somewhat debilitating, are handed to us totally against our will. We certainly did not ask for them, and in many losses, such as mine, are given to us by a total stranger. We will carry those emotions with us on some level until we join our loved one again. We carry them within the word grief. Grief is the case that holds our emotions from the loss, and therefore, a Griefcase.

Now, if you will allow me a stretch of the imagination, I ask that you think of the old spy movies, where a briefcase was physically handcuffed to the secret agent. Somewhat like that spy's attaché, our Griefcase becomes a permanent part of who we are. However, unlike that spy, ours can never be removed. There simply is no lock and key to be found here on Earth.

Early in our journey, those individual emotions inside our Griefcase are like separate manila folders found in any ordinary briefcase, each tab labeled with the contents inside. Yet, the folders are at first jumbled, overstuffed, and so very confusing. Nothing seems to make sense, and the whole thing is overwhelmingly burdensome, and so very heavy early in loss. Because of that, we sometimes refrain from any actions, as the thought of the emotional weight serves to anchor us in place. If we do carry on with it regardless of painful effort, it will get in the way at first, as we find ourselves stumbling over it as we try to move forward.

Occasionally, we might even forget for a moment it is even there. We laugh, or begin to enjoy an outing, when suddenly we are stopped in our tracks, as the chain which secures the Griefcase to our wrist has gone taut. It simply cannot be left behind and forgotten.

The Griefcase certainly does not have to remain a heavy burden on our journey to a life of peace and purpose. Although it starts out disorganized, confusing and oftentimes frightening, we can face each emotion and begin to organize what is inside. We open the case, and then each folder, working through the confusion and removing such things as false anger and false guilt. We discover aspects within one emotion that actually belong in the file of another, or are possibly redundant. We can simply ball those up and toss them out. Then, by addressing each folder, and not allowing any to remain unattended, we slowly begin to lighten the load. While it certainly will not be easy, and it will be a lifelong task, your Griefcase will slowly become less of a burden in your journey.

Take heart, fellow grievers. Although we never wanted the Griefcase, it will actually be a wonderful part of who we are to become. To realize this, we must be aware that we could never completely empty any of the emotional folders found inside, even if we tried. Yet, we must always strive to discard all that which are false, harmful or unnecessary. What remains will be the experiences that touched our soul, regardless of how agonizing. These are the foundational building blocks of becoming an amazingly compassionate supporter, with honest empathy, and a true desire to be there for others on the same journey. This is one of the blessed gifts our loved ones left for us.

However, if you should find yourself having difficulties working through the folders within your Griefcase, I want to bring one folder in particular to your attention. Every one of us will have this folder, and it can always be found in that pocket inside the lid. It is boldly labeled, "Unconditional Love." It is already well organized and contains all it should, and actually has room to add more over time. If ever you find yourself feeling the overbearing weight of the Griefcase, and despondency seems to be the norm, reach up and pull out that file. Allow the unconditional love you feel for the one you lost to lift you up, so you may face the other dark files in the case, and continue your journey forward.

On a final note, as you remove all the confusing emotions from your Griefcase, not only will it be lighter and far less a burden in your daily life, but it will also have some available space inside. That space belongs to you. Why not give yourself a break and toss in some sunscreen and flip flops? You deserve some peace.

Visit Ron's website: www.grievingmen.com/

YOU JUST DON'T KNOW UNTIL YOU'VE BEEN THERE

By Kristine at <http://stillstandingmag.com/>

A few weeks after my daughter died, a friend called, which was actually a rare occasion after I lost my daughter. He apprehensively asked how I was. He then proceeded to tell me he'd been waiting for the call in the middle of the night where I'd turned to the bottle and was at rock bottom. He'd been waiting for me to come to him at the end of my rope.

I was never a huge drinker, so it's not like that was even a normal coping skill for me. He told me that's what he'd do. I tried to explain to him that it probably wasn't what he'd do.

I've had some dark moments since my daughter died. I've cried lots. I've barely gotten out of bed, but I haven't been drunk since she died.

Sometimes people tell me that if they were in my shoes they just wouldn't be able to go on or something along those lines. I understand that losing a child is the worst possible fear for most parents. I get that they think they wouldn't be able to go on, but they would. It makes me feel bad, like they think I'm not sad enough or freaking out enough.

Other times the opposite happens, I once got word that at a party I wasn't at, among people I actually barely knew, the conversation turned to me and why I wasn't over it. This was within a year of my daughter's death. They all gossiped about how I should be "moving on."

I don't use the word hate that much, but I hate that phrase. Moving on. My daughter died. I didn't get dumped by a boyfriend or lose a job.

I got a bit angry when I heard a report of their conversation, but now I realize, they just don't get it. You can't understand what it's like to lose a child until you've been here. I don't wish this on anyone, so I'm glad they're so clueless. I don't care how other people think I'm coping. All that matters is that I'm okay with how I'm coping, and I am.

I have had my moments. Just last month I was in some serious mental health trouble.

As sad and awful as this is, my daughter's life was beautiful. My daughter was beautiful. I cling to that.

While it's a natural reaction to try to put yourself in the other person's shoes when you hear about something, in this case, you can't even begin to.

No, I didn't have some late night crisis spinning out of control with a bottle of booze at my side, but yes, it's still three years later and I'm not moving on.

But you know what? I am still standing.

Meet our keynote speakers Kelly Buckley, Dr. Doug and BJ Jensen, Ron Kelly, Sarah Kravits, Anna Whiston-Donaldson, Gareth Williams and Tom Zuba.



2017
BPUSA
National
Gathering
Conference

August 4 - 6
Washington, DC

www.bereavedparentsusa.org

WHY WOULD I WANT TO ATTEND THE BPUSA GATHERING?? By Kathy Corrigan

The BPUSA Annual Gathering Conference usually attracts between 200 - 300 attendees from across the United States. It's an amazing chance for bereaved families (who often feel isolated in their grief) to connect and create lasting bonds with each other and it's a safe place to remember and speak openly about our children, siblings and grandchildren and to show our true grief emotions.

At every meal throughout the weekend, a speaker who is also a bereaved parent or sibling, will engage us in their inspirational journey and their extraordinary efforts to minister to the needs of bereaved families across the country. They will relate how their mission has been a healing journey for them. On Saturday evening, we end our meal with a moving Candle Lighting Ceremony and a memorial slide presentation of all the children whose parents are in attendance at the Gathering. It is, perhaps, the most touching and emotional part of the weekend.

During the day on Friday and Saturday, we offer approximately 30 workshops divided into 4 different time slots with topics including gender issues pertaining to grief, bereaved siblings-only topics, spirituality, loss of an only child (or all children), signs and dreams from our loved ones, grief journaling or blogging, forgiveness and healing and many more! This year Yoga and meditation sessions will be offered during the weekend.

Throughout the hotel, you will find a quiet Reflection Room, an Arts and Crafts room and a large Hospitality Room with free refreshments and seating for conversation. We also offer a Bookstore and "Butterfly Boutique" as well as a large Silent Auction and Raffle opportunity -- who can resist a little retail therapy??

Please consider bringing your surviving siblings with you. This year we are offering a track of sibling-specific workshops, a hospitality room set aside for siblings, supervised activities for siblings ages 8-13 during workshop hours, a Friday pizza-lunch gathering and sibling sharing sessions on Friday and Saturday nights.

You will have the opportunity to meet many amazing grief survivors like yourself who will impart wisdom about the grieving process and survival under the most devastating of circumstances. You will be inspired and uplifted by the courage, perseverance and grace of so many who have made the choice to get up every morning and do what needs to be done despite every fiber of their being wanting to do the opposite; all incredible role models of grief and mourning and of hope and healing.

I hope to see you at the Gathering!

Learn more about the conference at our website: <https://bereavedparentsusa.org/gathering-home/>