



MID HUDSON NEW YORK CHAPTER

Bereaved Parents of the USA

Newsletter

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

Kathy Corrigan Chapter Leader

www.mhbpusa.com



Please join us for our next meetings

Thursday, September 5th -- **Grief Journaling**

Thursday, October 3rd -- **Fear & Courage**

7:00 at The Children's Home of Poughkeepsie

10 Children's Way, Poughkeepsie, NY

Call Kathy (845) 462-2825 for information

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019



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.

The following are articles/essays written by speakers and workshop presenters who spoke at the BPUSA 2019 Gathering Conference. We are forever grateful to them for sharing their unique perspectives on grief and we are honored to share their writings here:

PAULA STEPHENS

When you listen to those who've lost a loved one it doesn't take long before you begin to hear the sad retelling of friendships lost or damaged and complaints of feeling isolated by family members. The unfortunate result, for the person who is grieving, is a deepening sadness and bewilderment wondering...

Why are the people I thought would always be there for me unable to stand by me?

One Word Answer: Vulnerability

Your loss, of a child, spouse, parent or friend, makes other people feel weak, defenseless & helpless. It challenges their sense of control and makes them face their own greatest fears of losing a loved one. For them to stand with your pain, they must touch a place in themselves they don't want to go to.

You were most likely this same person prior to your loss. I know I was and I'm sure I didn't show up in the best way possible for friends who needed me. Because back then, like your friends now, I had a choice. But now, like you, I don't get to choose the amount of vulnerability I expose myself to – death of a loved one mandates that we step into vulnerability. And I'm not talking putting our toe in the water – it's a cannon ball type of immersion into vulnerability!

There lies the difference between you and them – **They get to choose** to walk away from those feelings, protect themselves and take shelter from the raw, vulnerable, burn of an unexpected death. They get to slather up with



Vulnerability Protection Factor 50 (VPF50) and go on with their lives. Appropriately protected from the damaging effects of feeling too deeply.

You don't/didn't get to choose and you can no longer slather yourself in VPF50 and pretend that the universal laws of life and death don't apply to you. You, my friend, are raw and opened up to all of life's most scary realities... and it burns hotter when we reach out for support and don't get what we need.

Brene Brown (my girl crush) has the best [TED talk on vulnerability](#) and it will change the way you see the healing potential of embracing this tough emotion.

It's Not Personal & It's Not Intentional

Most of our friends and family mean well and are doing the best they know how with the skills they have. The skills we have at any given moment are a culmination of our lives' experiences. Let go of wondering why they can't just say and do the perfect thing, they might not have the experiences you need them to have to do that.

One reason we lose friends after a loved one dies is that we expect them to know what we need using our life experience as the reference point. The perfect example of using our own life to scale others experiences is the comment, "I know how you feel, I lost my: dog, cat, goldfish, great-aunt, teddy bear(fill in the blank with something you perceive to be less than your loss here)." The person is trying to connect with you based on his/her own experience and that's the best they can do... whether you like it or not.

Just as you wouldn't go to your dentist to deliver a baby, be realistic about what your friends' strengths are and how they can support you. Perhaps you have a dear friend who sucks at hearing your stories of sadness, but she is great at bringing home baked cookies unannounced. She is showing up in the best way she can, honor that in her and don't make her the bad guy when she can't do what she doesn't know/can't do.

How do I make my friends get it?

You don't.

Your job is to continue to do the hard work of healing fully and reap the benefits of doing the work.

Your job is NOT to make your grief journey about what or how other people respond to you. If you want to make it about how other people are reacting, then do that by your own actions. Your authenticity and truth about what heals you and owning your journey will make people take notice – in a positive, cultural paradigm shifting way.

Being angry, resentful, bitter and complaining that people don't act the way you want does two things: It prevents you from healing. It perpetuates the exact problem you are complaining about.

Demonstrate how vulnerability can create deeper empathy for others suffering by embracing your healing. As Mahatma Ghandi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world". Your journey isn't about changing other people, it's about changing yourself for the better. Working to become a better, more compassionate citizen of the world because of your loss.

Yours is a sacred journey, not a Disneyland vacation. Choose your companions wisely.

You could go to Disneyland with just about anyone and everything would be ponies & rainbows. The sacred journey of deep healing decrees that we carefully select our cohorts. For these types of journeys it's better to have a small group of fierce healing warriors in the arena with you than a thousand fans cheering you on from the stands. (truth is we need both)

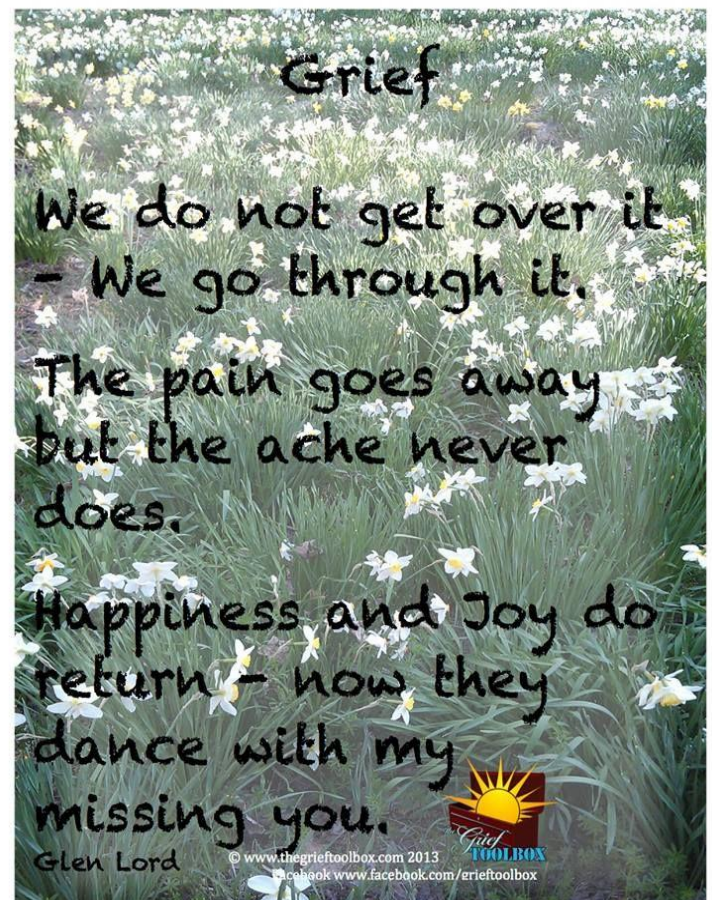
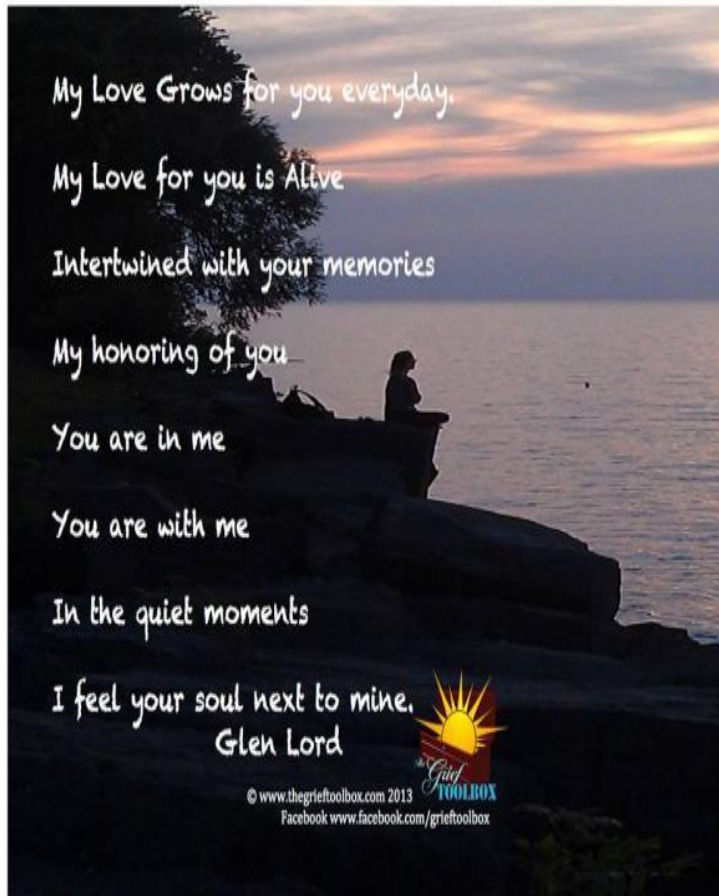
I am not suggesting that you 'unfriend' people who aren't able to stand in the fire with you. Rather cast the characters in your life story in the roles they can best play. We need all types of people in our world!

Most importantly, seek to surround yourself with those who can stand in the fire with you. Join a support group, an online community, attend a retreat or whatever you need to do to cast the other roles that your current friends and family can't fill.

GLEN LORD

www.thegriefftoolbox.com/

On June 14th, 1999 my son Noah Thomas Emory Lord age 4 and a half died following complications of a tonsillectomy. That first day it was impossible to imagine taking my next breath much less taking the first steps on what was going to be a continuous walk through grief. On this journey I have cried an ocean of tears, screamed myself hoarse and felt pain so intense that it seemed unbearable. There are no magic words or process that take will take away the pain of grief. Calendars and clocks have no place in the grieving processes, what we all need are a set of tools that we can pick up and decide how and when to use them to re-build our lives. It was this realization that inspired The Grief Toolbox. The Grief Toolbox is both a resource and community for those who grieve and those who work to help them.



GARETH WILLIAMS

www.fly-hope-dream.org/

WE ARE STUCK WITH WHAT WAS INSTEAD OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN...SO HOW WILL WE RESPOND?

February 22nd and Fly-Hope-Dream are inextricably linked. Timothy Daniel Williams was born on March 2nd, 1996 and died on February 22nd, 2008, just a few days before his 12th birthday. Three and half years of a debilitating heart and lung disease had ravaged his body, and finally his heart could take no more. Fly-Hope-Dream was founded in Timmy's honor, and to provide a legacy of hope.

On this day every year, I take time out to reflect. Time to remember a very special son. Time to celebrate a short life well lived. Inevitably my mind turns to what might have been. What might he have studied at college? Might he have a girlfriend or even be married already? What car might he be driving?

Those of us who have lost children are all too familiar with questions like these. And painfully aware of the milestones that seem to come relentlessly year-on-year. But the pain of loss doesn't *have* to consume and destroy us. Celebrating the life that was lived is just as important – perhaps more so – as mourning the one lost. Common questions from those newly bereaved are, “Does it ever get better?” and “Will the pain ever go away?”

Today, eight years from my own loss (how can it be that long?), I returned to an excellent book called ***A Grace Disguised – How the Soul Grows Through Loss***, by Jerry Sitter.

He answers these questions far more eloquently than I ever could, so below I've included a few excerpts that I hope you will find encouraging, however far you are into your grief journey.

Gareth Williams,
Founder and President, Fly-Hope-Dream

"We can run from the darkness, or we can enter into the darkness and face the pain of loss. We can indulge ourselves in self-pity, or we can empathize with others and embrace their pain as our own. We can run away from sorrow and drown it in addictions, or we can learn to live with sorrow. We can nurse wounds of having been cheated in life, or we can be grateful and joyful, even though there seems to be little reason for it."

"Is it possible to feel sorrow for the rest of our lives and yet to find joy at the same time? Is it possible to enter the darkness and still to live an ordinary, productive life? Loss requires that we live in a delicate tension. We must mourn, but we must go on living. We might feel that the world has stopped, though it never does. Grass keeps growing, bills continue to mount, houses get dirty, children need raising, jobs must be done, people must be cared for."

"The pain of loss is severe because the pleasure of life is so great; it demonstrates the supreme value of what is lost. The screaming pain I feel at the loss...reflects the pure pleasure I felt in knowing them. I cannot have one without the other, for both show what the soul is capable of feeling, sometimes simultaneously."

"We recover from broken limbs, not amputations. Catastrophic loss by definition precludes "recovery". It will transform us or destroy us, but will never leave us the same. There is no going back to the past, which is gone forever, only going ahead to the future, which has yet to be discovered. Whatever that future is, it will, and must, include the pain of the past with it. Sorrow never entirely leaves the soul of those who have suffered a severe loss."

"Deep sorrow often has the effect of stripping life of pretense, vanity and waste. It forces us to ask basic questions about what is most important in life. Suffering can lead to a simpler life, less cluttered with nonessentials. It is wonderfully clarifying. That is why many people who suffer sudden and severe loss often become different people."

"If I want transformation, I must let go of my regrets over what could have been and pursue what can be. But what I cannot have is the best of both worlds: the growth that has transformed my life as a result of the tragedy and the people whose death engendered that growth. There is a bitter irony here that cannot be avoided, however much we grow through loss. The people whose death enabled me to change for the better are the very people with whom I would most like to share these changes. Their death has forced me to grow; I wish now that they could benefit from the growth that has resulted from their death."

CHRISTINE DUMINIAK

<http://www.christineduminiak.com/>

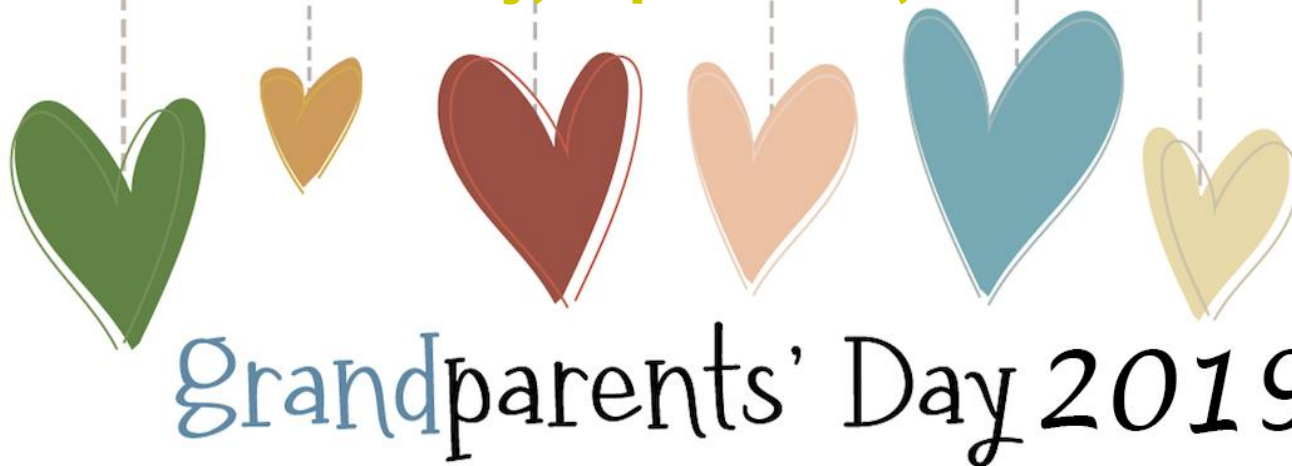
From Christine's book: **[After-Death Communications: God's Gift of Love](#)**



20 Common Afterlife signs:

- Dreams ([Dream Visit Tips](#))
- Visions
- Pets
- Audio & Music
- God-incidences
- Telepathic Thoughts
- Scents
- Touches
- Presence
- Electrical Manipulations
- Computers
- Phone Calls, Text Messages., Answering Machines, Caller IDs
- Photos
- Objects
- Gifts
- Coins
- Butterflies, Dragonflies, Birds, Animals, Insects
- Rainbows
- Numbers, license plates
- Candles

Sunday, September 8, 2019



Helping a Grandparent Who Is Grieving

by [Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.](#) -- [Center for Loss](#)

“When a grandchild dies, grandparents grieve twice. They mourn the loss of the child and they feel the pain of their own child’s suffering. Sometimes we forget about the grandparents when a child dies. You can help by not forgetting, by offering the grandparents your love, support and presence in the weeks and months to come.”

~ ~ ~

A child or young adult has died. Everyone who loved the child is now faced with mourning this tragic, untimely death. The child’s parents are heartbroken. But what about the grandparents? How might they be feeling? How can you help them with their unique grief?

Realize that a grandparent’s grief is unique

When a grandchild dies, the grandparent often mourns the death on many levels. The grandparent probably loved the child dearly and may have been very close to him or her. The death has created a hole in the grandparent’s life that cannot be filled by anyone else. Grandparents who were not close to the child who died, perhaps because they lived far away, may instead mourn the loss of a relationship they never had.

Grieving grandparents are also faced with witnessing their child—the parent of the child who died—mourn the death. A parent’s love for a child is perhaps the strongest of all human bonds. For the parents of the child who died, the pain of grief may seem intolerable. For the grandparents, watching their own child suffer so and feeling powerless to take away the hurt can feel almost as intolerable.

Acknowledge the grandparent’s search for meaning

When someone loved dies, we all ponder the meaning of life and death. When a child or young adult dies, this search for meaning can be especially painful. Young people aren’t supposed to die. The death violates the natural order of life and seems terribly unfair.

For grandparents, who may have lived long, rich lives already, the struggle to understand the death may bring about feelings of guilt. “Why didn’t God take me, instead?” the grandparent may ask himself. “Why couldn’t it have been me?”

Such feelings are both normal and necessary. You can help by encouraging the grandparent to talk about them.

Respect faith and spirituality

Many people develop strong commitments to faith and spirituality as they get older. If you allow them, grieving grandparents will “teach you” about the role of faith and spirituality in their lives. Encourage them to express their faith if doing so helps them heal in grief.

Sometimes, however, faith can naturally complicate healing. The grandparent may feel angry at God for “taking” the grandchild. He then may feel guilty about his anger, because, he may reason, God is not to be questioned. Or the grandparent may struggle with feelings of doubt about God’s plan or the afterlife.

Talking with a pastor may help the grandparent, as long as the pastor allows the grandparent to honestly express her feelings of anger, guilt and sadness. No one should tell a grandparent that she shouldn’t grieve because the child has gone to heaven; mourning and having faith are not mutually exclusive.

Listen with your heart

You can begin to help by simply listening. Your physical presence and desire to listen without judging are critical helping tools. Don’t worry so much about what you will say. Just concentrate on the words that are being shared with you.

The grieving grandparent may want to share the same story about the death over and over again. It’s as if talking about the death makes it a little more bearable each time. Listen attentively. Realize that this repetition is part of the grandparent’s healing process. Simply listen and try to understand.

Sometimes grandparents, especially grandfathers, don’t want to talk about the death. They may have been raised to believe that talking about feelings is frivolous or selfish or unmanly. It’s OK; they don’t have to talk. Simply spending time with them demonstrates your love and concern.

Be compassionate

Give the grandparent permission to express her feelings without fear of criticism. Learn from the grandparent; don’t instruct or set expectations about she should respond. Never say, “I know just how you feel.” You don’t. Think about your helper role as someone who “walks with” not “behind” or “in front of” the grieving grandparent.

Allow the grandparent to experience all the hurt, sorrow and pain that he is feeling at the time. Enter into his feelings, but never try to take them away. And recognize that tears are a natural and appropriate expression of the pain associated with the death.

Avoid clichés

Words, particularly clichés, can be extremely painful for a grieving grandparent. Clichés are trite comments often intended to provide simple solutions to difficult realities. Grandparents are often told, “God needed another angel in heaven” or “Don’t worry, John and Susie (can) have another child” or “You have to be strong for your child.” Comments like these are not constructive. Instead, they hurt because they diminish the very real and very painful loss of a unique child.

Offer practical help

Preparing food, washing clothes, and cleaning the house are just a few of the practical ways of showing you care. And, just as with your presence, this support is needed at the time of the death as well as in the weeks and months ahead.

Write a personal note

Sympathy cards express your concern, but there is no substitute for your personal written words. What do you say? Share a favorite memory of the child who died. Relate the special qualities that you valued in him or her. These words will be a loving gift to the grandparent, words that will be reread and remembered always.

Use the name of the child who died in your personal note and in talking to the grandparent. Hearing that name can be comforting, and it confirms that you have not forgotten this important child whom the grandparent loved and misses so much.

Be aware of holidays and other significant days

The grandparent may have a difficult time during special occasions like holidays and other significant days, such as the child’s birthday and the anniversary of the child’s death. These events emphasize the child’s absence. Respect this pain as a natural extension of the grief process.

These are appropriate times to visit the grandparents or write a note or simply give them a quick phone call. Your ongoing support will be appreciated and healing.

GRIEF MASKS

by Andrea Gambill

October makes me think of Halloween, and Halloween makes me think of masks, and masks remind me that sometimes when we're grieving, we wear masks without even realizing it. We may never stop to think about how other people perceive our appearances, our images and our behaviors. Over time, we may gradually drift into a pattern of "being" that is so familiar to us we never realize that others might be seeing us in a totally different way.

Our pain may have caused us to have an outwardly distorted appearance, even when inwardly we may actually feel we are reconciling to our losses. Some people appear to be continually angry and bitter, when in fact it is only a reflection of their sadness. Even though their inward hostilities have begun to soften and resolve, on the outside they have kept their protective masks of fierceness. In reality, they are starved for love and companionship, but they are afraid to let their true feelings show. What if they were ridiculed, violated or abandoned and therefore hurt anew?

On the other hand, there are those who have adopted a perpetually "sunny" countenance that covers an internal sorrow. Their hearts and minds and faith may be splintered, but they are determined that the people around them will never guess their secret. They may believe that showing sorrow is a weakness that will drive away the people they think they need.

It would appear that masks are psychological props that seem to protect us from something we fear. For some people, self-disclosure is as repulsive as public nudity! It seems safer for mask-wearers to endure the lack of support and attention they so sorely need rather than to honestly reveal their innermost feelings.

I wonder what would happen if we all let down our guards and allowed our families, friends, neighbors and co-workers to discover our real pain. Would our revelations really make us any more weak or vulnerable? Would we really be at any more emotional risk? Could we be hurt any more than we've already been?

Naturally, if we take the chance of disclosing our true selves, revealing where we are weak or frightened or hurt, there is always the possibility that we might become prey for the predators. The vultures seem always to be circling. But there is also the chance that we will provide an opportunity for the intelligent, strong and compassionate of our peers to offer their support. Where there is evil, there is also good. Where there is pain, there is also healing. Nature teaches us that in life, there is balance.

Precisely because we have suffered the ultimate wound -- the death of one who was truly loved -- perhaps eventually we can afford to take more risks. It's a tough issue: Dare we risk the pain of being hurt again if we disclose? Or have we become strong enough and brave enough to take a chance on the rediscovery of love and the richness of new attachments? Is it true that what does not kill us makes us stronger?

Perhaps it becomes a question of giving ourselves enough time to form scar tissue. We may need to proceed cautiously, taking baby-step risks at first, trusting our most private thoughts, feelings and needs to only one or two close and dependable friends. We may need to test the formation of delicate new bondings -- even in old relationships!

Gradually, we may be able to uncover enough of our hidden courage to feel safe in abandoning our protective masks and revealing our true feelings -- not only to the world at large, but more importantly, to ourselves.



2020 ANNUAL GATHERING CONFERENCE

25th Anniversary Year

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

August 7–9, 2020 ☘ St. Louis Missouri



Please join us as we commemorate 25 years of helping grieving parents and families rebuild their lives after the death of a child.

Our Gathering theme “25 Years of Hope” says it all. BPUSA has been a beacon of hope for grieving families since its beginning in January 1995.

The Gathering Conference will be a three-day event with keynote speakers, workshops, meals, entertainment and memorial ceremonies all designed to help bereaved parents and their families understand that they are not alone in their grief. Our annual Gatherings have been praised as wonderfully meaningful experiences, life-changing in many ways. Participants come away feeling refreshed and revitalized, better informed about the grieving process, more aware of hope and promise and affirmed by meeting new friends who travel the same path. This year, our closing ceremony on Sunday morning will include a short bus trip to visit the [Angel of Hope Memorial](#) in Blanchett Park, St. Charles, MO.

The Marriott-branded Sheraton Clayton Plaza Hotel is now undergoing a multi-million-dollar renovation that will be extensive. Inside, all 259 guest rooms will be renovated along with meeting spaces, public areas and the lobby. The renovation will also include a re-concepted three-meal restaurant, a state-of-the-art fitness center and an outdoor entertainment area featuring a large swimming pool. BPUSA is looking forward to hosting our Gathering in this brand-new setting. The hotel will, again, be offering special room rates to Gathering attendees.

The hotel is located close to St. Louis' acclaimed Forest Park and Washington University, and just 10 minutes from the city's downtown via the Metrolink. Known for its iconic arch, a must-see attraction, St. Louis is a vacation destination of national prominence, with many sightseeing adventures to enjoy. Plan a family vacation in conjunction with the Gathering. Spend some time remembering your child and then explore life on the Mississippi in this bustling, modern “Gateway to the West.” [CLICK HERE](#) for more St. Louis attractions!

It's never too early to start making plans to attend the 2020 BPUSA Gathering Conference. Hope to see you in St. Louis in 2020!!

What others are saying about the 2019 Gathering Conference:

CHALLENGE! Describe your Gathering experience in 6 words...

Cindy – encouraging, supporting, and loving each other

Melanie – Spirit of Love Rocked St. Louis!

Bobby – Hope, Healing, Friendship, Bonding, Holding Space!

Sarah – Grateful to travel with understanding friends

Gale – Sharing stories of love and loss

Kathy – Friends bonded by tears, love, laughter

Glen – Love, hope, compassion, tears, understanding, friends

Cari – amazing, healing, safe, learning, acceptance, LOVE

Lori – Friends coming together celebrating our children

Kay – New friends, more knowledge, renewed hope

Sheila – Friends that became family, tears, laughter

Liz – I experienced the power of love

BPUSA – where grief meets hope and healing