

# Bereaved Parents of the USA



*A support group for parents, grandparents and siblings who have suffered the death of a child, grandchild or sibling.*

## **When a Child Dies by Homicide**

The unexpected happens, and our world is turned upside down. Suddenly our child is taken from us, and nothing makes sense. It is a crumbling, humbling experience. We are helpless. Although it may not seem so now, nor for a long time, there is hope that things will get better.

We may have had the opportunity to say good-bye at the hospital .....or not. Either way, it is not enough, and it is not fair that our child has been killed because of the choices made by another person. But right, wrong, fair, or unfair .....it is what it is. So we begin to walk this path without our precious son or daughter to walk beside us. Our hearts have been shattered, but we continue to live on. Our child is gone, and we are left to fight the legal battle in our child's memory.

A sickness grows in the pit of our stomachs as more details become evident. We may find ourselves not able to catch our breath, not able to eat, not able to sleep. When we finally do fall asleep, we often awake with sobs ..... the deep kind that remind us of this tragic reality.

We ask a lot of questions - some out loud, some only to ourselves. Most questions start with why or how. We want to get to the bottom of the story ..... what really happened. We are tortured with our child's last moments. Information may not be forthcoming from the Sheriff's Office, Police Department, or State Attorney General's Office, and that alone is enough to drive us quite mad. We wonder if they have even investigated.

The autopsy report may take several months in order to prove our child's death was actually a homicide. Sometimes we do not get the result we expect. If it is determined the death was not caused by another person, we are pretty much left on our own. Our

child's death becomes a civil issue instead of a criminal one. Even when the autopsy yields the homicide verdict, we might feel we are still on our own in finding justice for our child.

We want to scream, and this might be a good time to let those screams out. We cling to sane parts of life: family, faith, work, for fear of slipping over the edge. We don't care if we shower, eat, or get our hair cut. Others who have not gone through this will not understand, even though they may offer all kinds of advice .....like "snap out of it."

Hearing news on the radio and television every day drives us crazy too. Violence is everywhere, and we wonder how this could possibly have happened to our child and to our family.

Even though our child's death is labeled a homicide, we may not hear from the State Attorney General's office nor the defendant's attorney. We call to ask how the investigation is going only to find we will not be privy to this information because believe it or not, the person responsible for our child's death has rights, and those rights are protected by law.

Before we know any details, the attorneys may ask us to sum up the worth of our child's life in a dollar amount. They may have already decided how they will proceed, but they may ask us to think about what kind of punishment or restitution the defendant should have. Of course in the end the judge will decide, unless there is a trial. These may seem like the coldest people on the face of the earth, once these conversations start taking place. They do not seem to understand our pain nor our concerns.

We might have others help by writing letters to the State Attorney General's office. Otherwise, our child might go unnoticed, like many other victims who have been assigned a number, then moved from the State Attorney's desk to the courtroom until the case is closed.

But for us, the case is never closed. Anxiously, we mark our calendar and faithfully attend every hearing, thinking this is the day justice will come. It is a slow dance between the attorneys and the judge. We say what we'd like ..... they may accept or reject it. We may get phone calls from the newspaper or the defendant's attorney. These can be traps, and we must be cautious. We may want to hire our own attorney just to know we have done everything legally possible.

Finally, the day comes when justice will be served, and we have a chance to give an impact statement to the court. By now, several months or years may have passed since our child's death, and as much as we want to do this, we may not be able to. Justice may not seem like justice at all, and nothing will return life to our child. Whatever is decided that day, we will have to live with for the rest of our lives.

We may deal with nightmares, but we can hope for a good dream the next time. We may not be able to forgive God, the defendant, or the judicial system. We may consider counseling, a small group, or a bereavement support group. We may listen to music and write in journals. As long as we are living, we have a purpose. We may think of that horrible day a thousand times, but one day, we realize we have a thousand good memories stored for recall. We have to carry on without our child with a different plan to persevere.

Our child may have left children. We are their historians. We can make memories with them and share stories of the Mom or Dad they no longer have. Perhaps, there are no grandchildren. We can help alleviate our pain by volunteering at an orphanage when we are ready. Because of the love we have for our child, random acts of kindness keep their memory alive. We can reach out to others in need and make a difference in the lives of the living. We must nourish our spirits, our bodies, our minds, and be good to ourselves. Our precious child would want the best for us.

***“Have joy for the birdsong each morning. Have peace in a star lit night. “***

Written by Theresa Farmer, Tampa, Florida,  
in loving memory of her son,  
Ty Kristan Robertson

July 2007

### **Additional Information**

BP/USA has a website with chapter locations, brochures, articles, and the newsletter along with contact numbers for BP/USA and similar groups.

BP/USA publishes a national newsletter, *A Journey Together*, which contains articles of interest to bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents on grief. It also has book reviews each month to help you select books that will be helpful to you in your grief. Other support groups and upcoming Grief Gatherings and Conferences are also included with information and other opportunities for bereaved parents to meet together.

For further Information contact:

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