



**BEREAVED
PARENTS
of the USA**

A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA



Volume XVIII No. 3
Summer 2013

We, as bereaved parents, help grieving parents and families rebuild their lives following the death of a child.

SECONDARY LOSSES

Recently, a member of our “club” called to tell me she was only able to open up the first page of *A Journey Together*. When she tried to read it online none of the following pages would appear. Frances went on, “If my son was still living,” she said, “he would have been able to solve my computer faux-pas.” If her son (and only child) was still living, of course, she would not have been reading this newsletter. That brings up an interesting fact: The many, many secondary losses parents experience when our son or daughter dies only become clear as we encounter events or circumstances where our child’s help would have been invaluable.

As we age these losses become more apparent: Loss of a care giver in our older years. Loss of a helper to assist us with making appointments and seeing we get to them. Loss of someone to help around

the house and yard. Loss of a companion. Loss of an heir to pass on the family photos, possessions and memories. Loss of a trusted child to help with finances. Loss of an adviser on lots of matters, technical and otherwise. Possibly loss of our connection to community. And yes, Frances, loss of that patient, caring offspring to show us, for the umpteenth time, how to download and print an article from an online source.

Once we have regained a foothold on life, one of these secondary losses, coming at us so unexpectedly, can throw us for a loop. Often, we don’t encounter these until years after our child died. Ten, fifteen, twenty years and suddenly we wish our child was sitting next to us as the doctor explains our options. We talk about letting the happy memories from our child’s life (no matter how short) fill the hole in our hearts. But even after we’ve reached a point



of acceptance, there are times when our child’s absence reminds us how enormous our loss really was and still is.

Perhaps these moments, when our loss is underscored so vividly even after so many years, is nature’s way of reminding us how much we loved our precious child and how much we continue to miss him or her. And all we can do is sigh, whisper their name, and hope they are watching over us.

R&D, Maryland
BP/USA

I Am A Father



I am a father. We are parents always and forever. Greg may have died, but my love for him lives on. Father’s Day along with many other holidays, were very painful in the beginning. The raw emotion was nearly unbearable. I had a very hard time finding the reason to continue with this journey. Thinking of Greg and his death was so painful that I thought I would go insane. The one thing I kept doing during this time was to talk about my feelings and release them. I kept very little inside. Yes, we all harbor a few secrets, but letting them out is better. Time has passed and my wounded heart is better, but it didn’t do that on its own. My medicine was BP support and talking with people about

being a bereaved father. Like any major illness, lifelong attention to it is needed. That therapy is now helping others. Helping them along on their grief journey. Holding a hand, giving a hug and lending an ear. It is not an easy journey but it has many rewards. I now dwell on Greg’s life, not his death. I share my passions with others and my love for life has returned. I wish you a peaceful Father’s Day filled with sweet memories of your child.

Daryl Hutson
BP/USA Crawfordsville, IN



Summer's Dream



It is summer and the neighborhood rings with the laughter and excitement of children enjoying their freedom. Their joy is a two edged sword. The lazy afternoons spent on the jungle gyms in the park are a great source of both joy and comfort. A fielder watching a butterfly instead of the game brings back memories worth more than gold.

How often did the days fly by as we swam and picnicked at the lake? But today Matt does not play ball, swim or climb the monkey bars. Ten years is a long time to wait to see your son. Neighbor kids come home from college, stop and talk, laugh and remember incidents from English class. Matt does not. Matt does not, but I do.

My body remembers first. The feel, the sound, the smell, the taste combine to capture the day now so long gone. But it is the heart that saves me. Love cannot bring back Matt's body, but in all other ways he is here. To deny the laughter of children is to die to the world. The world did not die. Neither did I. Really, really, neither did Matt. So instead of hiding from the laughter and excitement I will embrace it. I'm coming Matt. I am just a little slower than I was. Don't worry about that limp. Hold my hand. The lake is just over the hill.

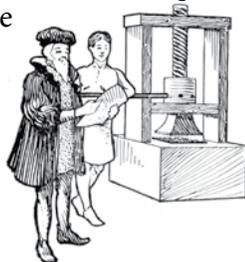
Keith Swett,
BP/USA Seymour, WI

Grief changes us. It's not a matter of being changed for the better or worse...it just changes us. The beauty in life is always there. We just have to look up to find it.

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The Cherry Tree

Dad cut down the old cherry tree today
'It needs to come down,' I had to say
So he would notice it was true,
Diseased and riddled with bugs too.

Later that night, I started to cry...
I didn't quite understand why.
Tears spun like a tornado to my core
Leaving me crying an hour, two, then more.

Now there's an empty place in our yard
Where the cherry tree once stood guard.
But if I close my eyes I can still see
The four of you picking cherries from that tree.

Those were happier days...they went by so fast.
I always knew they couldn't last...
For the four of you grew much like the tree.
So beautiful...you mean the world to me.

Now, my lovely son, four years dead —
Thoughts of you always fill my head.
Your short lifetime...only eighteen years.
Not long enough say my endless tears.

You are so deeply mourned by your sisters and brother,
But I can't know their grief...only that of a mother.
A grief so unrelenting I can't move on —
So instead, I cry when a cherry tree's gone.

Diane Royer
In memory of Aaron S. Royer
BP/USA Annapolis, Maryland

**Don't allow others to rush you through your grief.
You have a lifetime to heal and it's a lifelong
journey. Travel at your own speed.**

BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

A Journey Together is a national newsletter published quarterly by Bereaved Parents of the USA. You may subscribe or unsubscribe to this newsletter by going to www.bereavedparentsusa.org, and clicking on *National Newsletter* on the menu on the first page. You will find the proper forms through that site. You will also find articles, locations of chapters, and links to other organizations on that web site.

For other information, contact:

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Bereaved Parents of the USA 2013 National Gathering



Lions Gate Hotel & Conference Center
Sacramento, California
July 26-28, 2013

To register visit www.bereavedparentsusa.org/gathering
To reserve your lodging call 916-643-6222 Ext. 0

For additional information visit www.sspcc.org
Email to The2013Gathering@gmail.com
or call 916-768-3891 or 916-367-7865

Bringing Golden Nuggets of Hope to families grieving the death of a child.

Join us Thursday evening for a California Welcome & Bar-B-Q by the Pool

Experience a California-style meet and greet while enjoying a fabulous BBQ dinner and the piano stylings of talented local musician, Warren Davis.

* * * * *

Additional Venues & Activities

Bookstore featuring books by our featured speakers and workshop presenters.

Wings of Hope Boutique with a unique selection of gifts and memorial items.

California Café where you can enjoy a casual snack and an opportunity to visit with friends.

Silent Auction and Raffle with a wide variety of items you'll want to take home with you.

Meals prepared just for us by the Lions Gate Chef and enjoyed with new friends from across the nation.

* * * * *

A Mom Reflects on Attending Her First Bereaved Parent National Gathering

My first Bereaved Parents gathering changed my life! Being around others whose children had died felt completely comfortable. The stories of other parents validated my own feelings, and I began to believe that I was going to be OK again.

When I am feeling down, I remember the 200+ bereaved parents that were there, and I don't feel so alone. Knowing other bereaved parents has added joy to my life and helped me feel that life is worth living again! ~Liz Boenig, "Miles' Mom," College Station, TX

Featured Speakers & Events

Friday Morning Opening Session Featuring
Keynote Speaker Dr. Darcie Sims!

Friday Mid-Day Q&A with our Panel of Professionals:
Dr. Gloria Horsley, Dr. Heidi Horsley, Dr. Doug Jensen,
Dr. Bob Baugher, & Dr. Darcie Sims.

Additional featured speakers include
Mitch Carmody, Susan Levy, Daryl Hutson,
and Kris Munsch of The Birdhouse Project.

Candle Lighting Ceremony with
Music by Alan Pedersen

Inspirational & Heartwarming Music by the dynamic
Love in Motion Signing Choir

Teen Sibling Program

* * * * *

60+ workshops on these topics and many more

Guilt & Regrets • Anger • Suicide Loss • Sudden Death • Traumatic Loss • Faith & Grief • How to live with a broken heart, • Loss of an infant • How child loss affects family dynamics • Differences in grieving styles, • How a child's death affects grandparents • Issues that complicate our grieving process • Proactive grieving • Finding grief support on the Internet, • Identity crisis after a child's death • When your only child dies • Grief support burnout • Preserving our memories • The Birdhouse Project with Kris Munch • Plus many, many more topics that will interest you!



Practical Advice

How not to say the wrong thing

It works in all kinds of crises – medical, legal, even existential. It's the 'Ring Theory' of kvetching. The first rule is comfort in, dump out

Susan Silk and Barry Goldman
Los Angeles Times April 7, 2013

When Susan had breast cancer, we heard a lot of lame remarks, but our favorite came from one of Susan's colleagues. She wanted, she needed, to visit Susan after the surgery, but Susan didn't feel like having visitors, and she said so. Her colleague's response? "This isn't just about you."

"It's not?" Susan wondered. "My breast cancer is not about me? It's about you?"

The same theme came up again when our friend Katie had a brain aneurysm. She was in intensive care for a long time and finally got out and into a step-down unit. She was no longer covered with tubes and lines and monitors, but she was still in rough shape. A friend came and saw her and then stepped into the hall with Katie's husband, Pat. "I wasn't prepared for this," she told him. "I don't know if I can handle it."

This woman loves Katie, and she said what she did because the sight of Katie in this condition moved her so deeply. But it was the wrong thing to say. And it was wrong in the same way Susan's colleague's remark was wrong.

Susan has since developed a simple technique to help people avoid this mistake. It works for all kinds of crises: medical, legal, financial, romantic, even existential. She calls it the *Ring Theory*.

Draw a circle. This is the center ring. In it, put the name of the person at the center of the current trauma. For Katie's aneurysm, that's Katie. Now draw a larger circle around the first one. In that ring put the name of the person next closest to the trauma. In the case of Katie's aneurysm, that was Katie's husband, Pat. Repeat the process as many times as you

need to. In each larger ring put the next closest people. Parents and children before more distant relatives. Intimate friends in smaller rings, less intimate friends in larger ones. When you are done you have a Kvetching Order. One of Susan's patients found it useful to tape it to her refrigerator.

Here are the rules.

The person in the center ring can say anything she wants to anyone, anywhere. She can kvetch and complain and whine and moan and curse the heavens and say, "Life is unfair" and "Why me?" That's the one payoff for being in the center ring.

Everyone else can say those things too, but only to people in larger rings.

When you are talking to a person in a ring smaller than yours, someone closer to the center of the crisis, the goal is to help. Listening is often more helpful than talking. But if you're going to open your mouth, ask yourself if what you are about to say is likely to provide comfort and support. If it isn't, don't say it. Don't, for example, give advice. People who are suffering from trauma don't need advice. They need comfort and support. So say, "I'm sorry" or "This must really be hard for you" or "Can I bring you a pot roast?" Don't say, "You should hear what happened to me" or "Here's what I would do if I were you." And don't say, "This is really bringing me down."

If you want to scream or cry or complain, if you want to tell someone how shocked you are or how icky you feel, or

whine about how it reminds you of all the terrible things that have happened to you lately, that's fine. It's a perfectly normal response. Just do it to someone in a bigger ring.

Comfort IN, dump OUT.

There was nothing wrong with Katie's friend saying she was not prepared for how horrible Katie looked, or even that she didn't think she could handle it. The mistake was that she said those things to Pat. She dumped IN.

Complaining to someone in a smaller ring than yours doesn't do either of you any good. On the other hand, being supportive to her principal caregiver may be the best thing you can do for the patient.

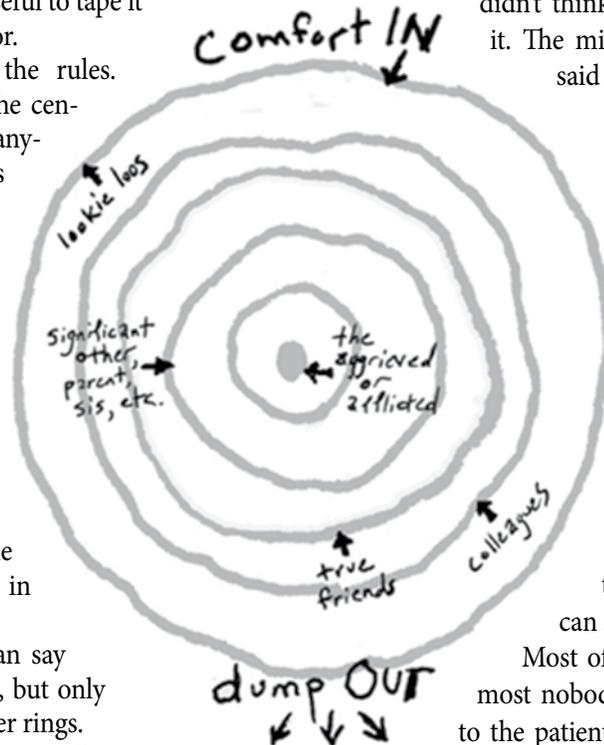
Most of us know this. Almost nobody would complain to the patient about how rotten she looks. Almost no one would

say that looking at her makes them think of the fragility of life and their own closeness to death. In other words, we know enough not to dump into the center ring. Ring Theory merely expands that intuition and makes it more concrete: Don't just avoid dumping into the center ring, avoid dumping into any ring smaller than your own.

Remember, you can say whatever you want if you just wait until you're talking to someone in a larger ring than yours.

And don't worry. You'll get your turn in the center ring. You can count on that.

Susan Silk is a clinical psychologist. Barry Goldman is an arbitrator and mediator and the author of "The Science of Settlement: Ideas for Negotiators."



I DRIVE YOUR TRUCK

by Lee Brice

LEE BRICE, IN HIS LATEST HIT GIVES VOICE TO THE DEEP FEELINGS MANY PEOPLE HAVE AFTER SOMEONE CLOSE TO THEM DIES. IN "I DRIVE YOUR TRUCK" MR. BRICE, BY TRYING TO EXPLAIN WHY HE DRIVES THE TRUCK OF HIS DEPARTED BROTHER BRINGS TO FORE THE DIFFICULTY OF EXPRESSING EMOTIONS BROUGHT ON BY SUCH A LOSS, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS A YOUNG MAN TRYING TO SORT OUT THESE "NON-MASCULINE" FEELINGS.

EIGHTY-NINE CENTS IN THE ASH TRAY

HALF EMPTY BOTTLE OF GATORADE ROLLING IN THE FLOORBOARD

THAT DIRTY BRAVES CAP ON THE DASH

DOG TAGS HANGING FROM THE REAR VIEW

OLD SKOAL CAN, AND COWBOY BOOTS AND A GO ARMY SHIRT

FOLDED IN THE BACK

THIS THING BURNS GAS LIKE CRAZY, BUT THAT'S ALRIGHT

PEOPLE GOT THEIR WAYS OF COPING

OH, AND I'VE GOT MINE

CLEARLY HE NEEDS "ALONE TIME" WHERE HE CAN LET HIS FEELINGS BUBBLE UP AND OVERFLOW WITHOUT RIDICULE OR EMBARRASSMENT.

AND YOU'D PROBABLY PUNCH MY ARM RIGHT NOW

IF YOU SAW THIS TEAR ROLLING DOWN ON MY FACE

HEY, MAN I'M TRYING TO BE TOUGH

AND MOMMA ASKED ME THIS MORNING, IF I'D BEEN BY YOUR GRAVE

BUT THAT FLAG AND STONE AIN'T WHERE I FEEL YOU ANYWAY

LIKE SO MANY OF US HE RANTS AGAINST THE UNFAIRNESS.

I'VE CURSED, I'VE PRAYED, I'VE SAID GOODBYE

SHOOK MY FIST AND ASKED GOD WHY

THESE DAYS WHEN I'M MISSING YOU THIS MUCH

I DRIVE YOUR TRUCK

AND FINALLY, HE SPEAKS TO HIS BROTHER. IS HE ASKING IF IT WILL BE OK TO START LIVING AGAIN?

I ROLL EVERY WINDOW DOWN

AND I BURN UP

EVERY BACK ROAD IN THIS TOWN

I FIND A FIELD, I TEAR IT UP

TILL ALL THE PAIN'S A CLOUD OF DUST, YEAH SOMETIMES,

BROTHER SOMETIMES, I DRIVE YOUR TRUCK

I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND, I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND

I drive your truck



Be aware that this will be a long and difficult journey. Just when things begin to look better, the calendar slaps us with another reminder of our loss. Sometimes the pain will flare up and be as deep five, ten even twenty years after the loss as it was in those early days. As the Chinese proverb says, "We can't stop the birds from flying over our heads, but we can stop them from nesting in our hair." We must not shut ourselves down from the pain. The feelings we bury will not go away. They will hide below the surface for years to come, but sooner or later, they will erupt without warning, in ways that can affect our physical and mental health. Grief itself is not a feeling. It is a process, a slow journey toward inner peace.



On Jack's Angel Day

I'm not sure what happened to the last 6 years, but they've managed to sneak away. 6 years sounds unreal. I can remember thinking, "I am not sure if I can make 1-2 years. How will I ever be able to make it 6 years? Or 10?"

Those questions I also asked myself on a daily basis in the beginning of this hell. I remember the feeling of living second by second and then moving to minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. Early in my grief, the thought of surviving a year seemed unlikely, but here I am, 6 years surviving the horrifying experience of losing my child. Understandably, it is still with me after 6 years, but the intense pain has somewhat diminished. I made a conscience choice at some point along the way that I was not going to run and hide from this day, because it is impossible. I knew I was going to find a way to commend Jack's life the best way I could. So the first year anniversary I spent contemplating his life and what my life has become because he existed and where I wanted my life to go on in a way to honor his.

Looking back over the last 6 years, I have seen the evolution from the person I use to be to the person I have become today. I use to be so tightly wound and impatient with others, but I have now found a way to become a person that tries to help others the best way I can.



Am I unsuccessful at this from time to time? Absolutely, but I would say this new direction in my life is one positive thing that has happened to me. Would I change it all to have Jack with me here today? YES! I know that's not a possibility, so I know I have to continue with what I have control over and that's how I want to be known as a person. I am a person that is and always will be "Jack's Mama."

The positive changes I made in my life are a consequence of losing my son Jack. Jack gave me the gift of uncondition-

al love, kindheartedness and understanding. He gave me peace within my own heart.

While I know there is a list of thousands of negative things that have happened to me after Jack's death, I try asking myself what things have changed in my life that I would consider positive. It is difficult at times, but it helps me put things in perspective, it keeps my head above water.

Evie Robison,
BP/USA
Cenla, LA

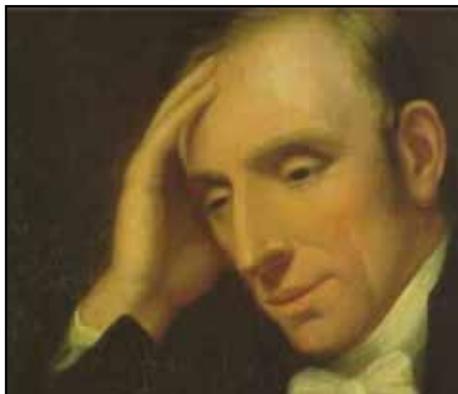
Did You Know They Were Bereaved Parents?

William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth was an early leader of romanticism (a literary movement that celebrated nature and concentrated on human emotions) in English poetry and ranks as one of the greatest lyric poets in the history of English literature.

He showed great sympathy for common people and his belief in political freedom. With his friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he published *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth challenged unnecessarily flashy and foolish wording of many modern writers. Most of his poems in this collection centered on the simple yet deeply human feelings of ordinary people, phrased in their own language.

He understood that there was still beauty to be found in life, even after a great loss. When his daughter died he acted as



though the "celestial light" had vanished. The "common sight" of "meadow, grove and stream, however" was still a potent source of delight and solace. He was able to work through his grief, find that beauty, and give us some of the finest poetry in the English language.

Surprised By Joy

by William Wordsworth

*Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, long buried in the silent Tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee?—Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss!—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.*



My Journey So Far

Lee Ann Hutson, President BP/USA

Our son, Greg, age 13, died by suicide in September of 2005. The following May, I was online looking for grief information. I found the Bereaved Parents of the USA website, I read about the National Gathering being held in St Louis the following July. I shared the information with my husband and in no time we were signed up. Little did we know what that weekend would bring to us.

We had no idea what we were walking into. There were so many people. They had on shirts and buttons with pictures of their kids and they were laughing. We had to be in the wrong place.

We registered at the Bereaved Parents table, got a welcome bag and headed to our room. We spent the evening reading through the Program Guide. WOW. Are they going to answer all of our questions? So many workshops were being offered, how were we to choose which ones to go to, there was not the time to go to all of them. We knew we would attend all of the suicide workshops.

The next morning we put on our nametags, pinned on our buttons with Greg's picture and headed downstairs to the dining room for breakfast. As we approached the dining room there was a long line. I don't remember Daryl and I even speaking to each other, just looking in amazement, so many people. I thought to myself, all of these parents have had children die. We found a couple of seats at a table that already had six people sitting at it. I sit looking at each of their nametags and pictures. To this day, I truly believe we were put at that table for a reason. Every couple at the table had a child die within the last 12 months. We all immediately felt connected.

Stories of our children were shared. We were sitting in a room with 400 other people who knew exactly how I felt. It was a huge relief; this lonely burden had been lifted off our shoulders. We could feel what we needed to feel and not have to explain ourselves. These people get it.

During the four hour drive home, we reflected on everything we had learned, with the most important being, you do not have to do this alone. Sharing, talking and listening had helped in our healing. We knew we had to bring something to our rural community, for other bereaved parents.

We held our first BP/USA support group meeting the following October. Not knowing what to expect, we had a full room. As we watched the bereaved parents come into the room, we could see the sadness on their



faces and the tired in their eyes. They each looked at us, hoping we had the answers. They had come with heart in hand. Their eyes were saying "Can you mend it? Can you make the hurt go away?" By the end of the evening, those tired eyes were glistening with twinkles of hope.

Never in a million years would I have thought I could have survived this long without seeing Greg. I remember thinking on Sept 19th 2005, just how was I going to make it to the 20th. Then it was a week, then a month. Next thing you know it had been a year. With the help of our family, friends and other bereaved parents, we heal. Attending National Gatherings and beginning our BP group, we continue to heal and now help others do the same.

During the first year after Greg's death, I would have never dreamed I would have been able to start a support group for others, be a part of the BP/USA BOD and still be helping other bereaved families eight years later.

So here I am on my journey. What to do next? It is a daily question. I find it humbling when people say thank you for doing what I am doing to help others. All I am doing is listening. I share the sadness. I share kind words. I am just there. I grieve with them.

Let this 2013 National Gathering be your glisten of hope, just as the 2006 was mine.

Wave

Sonali Deraniyagal
Alfred A. Knopf, 2013



BOOK REVIEW

Ms. Deraniyagal is a survivor of the Sri Lanka Tsunami. The only survivor in her family. The great wave claimed her husband, their two small sons, and her parents. She spends no time preparing her reader with what we know is coming, but rather, hits us on page one, unprepared, much as she and her family vacationing in a beach front hotel were hit with the onslaught of the mighty Indian Ocean.

In the ensuing six years we journey with her as she progresses through the grief, constantly looking back at the happy life so violently wrenched from her grip. Our author tells us about her life before, in remembrances, that are as hard to read, as all bereaved parents will understand, as they must have been to write. She tries to imagine what her boys would be doing today. "When the girls speak, my heart

listens in fear of being blown apart by the knowledge of what would have been. When I project on my own what the boys would be doing now, my thoughts can be as nebulous as I want them to be. Not so with the girls' chatter, no fog to veil what they say." She rails at life continuing: "And everywhere, on bare ground and between cracks in the floors [where the hotel had stood], tiny pink and white flowers that flourish along the seashore forced their way up. Mini mal, or graveyard flowers, they are called. I resented this renewal. How dare you heal."

It will be clear, if you are a veteran on this journey, that Ms. Deraniyagal has not yet reached a place of inner peace. But we marvel at how far she has come and hope she finds it.

To "go through" grief is also to "grow through" grief.

Bob Deits



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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 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 fears, 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, 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.