

## **Bereaved Parents of the USA**

Bereaved Parents of the USA (BPUSA) is a national non-profit self-help group that offers support, understanding, compassion and hope to bereaved parents, siblings or grandparents struggling to rebuild their lives after the death of their loved one.

There are no dues or fees to become a member of BPUSA and there are no paid salaries within the organization. All work on both the national and chapter level is done by volunteers with a strong desire to help other families survive the death of their loved one just as they were helped when they were newly bereaved.

### **BPUSA Goals**

- Offer support, understanding, encouragement and hope to bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents.
- Aid and support those who are suffering the loss of a child, brother, sister or grandchild regardless of race, creed or financial status.
- Educate families about the grief process in all its complexities pertaining to the death of a child, sibling or grandchild at any age and from any cause.
- Provide telephone numbers and email addresses of other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who are able to offer support to other more newly bereaved families.
- Help organize new chapters of BPUSA that may offer assistance to their local bereaved families.
- Hold monthly chapter meetings where sharing, support and encouragement can be provided.
- Maintain lending libraries at chapter meetings with helpful books on grief and rebuilding one's life.

- Provide a National Newsletter and individual chapter newsletters to aid with grief work.
- Host an Annual Conference where inspirational speakers, informative workshops and heartfelt memorial events will offer hope and healing to all attendees.
- Inform and educate professionals, friends, employers, co-workers, clergy and others on the nature and duration of parental, sibling and grandparent grief.

### **Funding**

There are no dues charged to belong to BPUSA. Donations are greatly appreciated and may be made to either the parent organization and/or the local chapters to help with expenses. All gifts are tax deductible.

### **BPUSA is Non-denominational**

BPUSA espouses no religion but supports each member in his or her grief journey regardless of religious practice or belief.

### **How BPUSA Works**

Attendance at chapter meetings brings together the newly bereaved with those who are further along in their grief and have worked through many of their grief-related issues.

In the beginning, bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents often feel isolated. Being part of a group helps them to understand they haven't been singled out for this unspeakable hurt. The most important thing our meetings have to offer are fellow bereaved who are able to listen with true empathy. They listen as a newly bereaved member shares the uniqueness of the child (or sibling, or grandchild) who has died, the events that surrounded the death itself, the emptiness, bitterness and loneliness that remain and the disappointment over anticipated support that may not have materialized.

*Hearing "I know" and "I felt that way too" is reassuring. However, each chapter member learns that their grief experience is unique to them. They soon come to know that there is no right or wrong way to grieve, nor is there a timetable in grief.*

BPUSA recognizes that not all bereaved families will need the help and support this organization offers. Some families are well supported by family and friends as they move through the grief process. Others, however, who do not have the understanding and support of the people who surround them, will find our chapter meetings to be a warm, safe, understanding and comfortable place to be.

Chapter meetings provide the opportunity to be with other families who have also experienced the death of their loved one and can share what has helped them in coping with their grief. There is no claim that these meetings are therapy groups. Members come to recognize that healing comes gradually through the sharing and support of others with like circumstances that understand. It is recommended that you try at least two or three meetings before deciding if this type of support is for you.

Some members, after benefiting from what BPUSA offers, choose to continue attending the meetings to help the chapter in any way that they are needed. Some stay on, listening, reading, facilitating, attending conferences and learning. They have seen a lot of pain and a lot of healing. These invaluable members have received much more than they have given and we call them "wounded healers" or "seasoned grievers".

## For the Newly Bereaved

Most bereaved parents, siblings or grandparents experience one of more of the following:

- Feel physically exhausted, have difficulty sleeping, do not want to go to sleep or get up.
- Feel 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, and sighing.
- Experience feelings of anxiety.
- Think you are losing their mind
- Say to oneself: "If only I had . . ."
- Keep asking: "Why?"
- Feel you don't want to go on.
- Feel the loss isn't real, that the child, sibling or grandchild will return.
- Sense the loved one's presence by expecting him or her to walk in the door or phone at the usual time. Hear the voice or see the face.
- Look for him or her in a crowd or see reminders unexpectedly.
- Need to tell and retell and remember things about him or her and the experience of the death.
- Cry at unexpected times.
- Feel able to cope and then fall back again - a see-saw or roller coaster 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 BPUSA works.

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Written in memory of Jack Cleckley



*This brochure is sponsored by  
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To locate a chapter in your area; find information about our Annual Gathering Conference; read our current and past newsletters or grief-related articles, poems and other brochures like this one, please visit our website:

**[www.bereavedparentsusa.org](http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org)**



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## *ABOUT BPUSA...*



*Helping grieving parents and families  
rebuild their lives following the  
death of a child.*