

The death of a child, sibling, or grandchild – at any age, from any circumstance – is indeed one of the cruelest blows that life has to offer. The journey through this grief is long and difficult. In the early moments, we may find ourselves in an all-consuming pain beyond description. It can be tough to live our everyday lives, challenging to think about anything other than our loss. Even happy memories may bring us pain for a time.

People do not “get over” the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild, nor “snap out of it” as the outside world often thinks we should. This loss is not an illness from which we recover. It is a life-altering change that forces us to build a new life for ourselves and our families, in a world that no longer includes our loved one.

***Newly bereaved: You will experience a wide and often frightening variety of emotions after this loss. These feelings and experiences are natural and normal. Here are some you may encounter:***

- Profound sadness.
- Crying all the time or at unexpected times.
- Extreme physical exhaustion, or a manic energy.
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping all the time.
- Lack of appetite, or overeating, often accompanied by weight loss or weight gain.
- Anxiety, often manifested in overprotective behavior toward surviving family members.

- Denial of the loss.
- Inability to concentrate, frequently misplacing items and forgetting things.
- A deep longing and emptiness, feeling that nothing has meaning.
- Intense questioning: “Why??” “If only I had...?” “Why didn’t I...?”
- Looking for blame and blaming yourself or others.
- Anger with yourself, family members, medical personnel, God, even the deceased.
- Fearing that you are mentally ill or unstable.
- Physical symptoms such as heaviness in your chest, difficulty breathing, tightness in your throat, yawning, sighing, gasping or even hyperventilating (do not hesitate to see a doctor for symptoms that concern you).
- Inability to function at work.
- Increased intensity of, or sudden loss of, religious faith.
- Wanting to die (a feeling that usually subsides over time as you realize the value of staying present for other loved ones).
- Needing to tell and retell the story of your loved one’s death.
- Sensing the presence of your loved one in an odor or touch.
- Difficulty in everyday tasks that remind you of your loved one, such as seeing his or her favorite foods on the shelves when grocery shopping.
- Anger with yourself if you smile or laugh and wondering how you can feel happy when your loved one is dead.
- Feeling as though your spouse or other family members don’t understand your grief or are not grieving as you think they should.
- Losing old friends who don’t seem to understand your pain and grief.

- Making new connections with people who have also experienced the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild.
- Feeling “stuck” in an aspect of grief such as denial or anger.
- Feeling as though your work through grief is “one step forward, two steps back” or proceeding in a completely random way.
- Frustration with others who expect you to be “over this” in a specific time frame – perhaps even frustration with yourself if you feel you should have “moved on.”

*Hold these three important ideas in your mind as you walk this unfamiliar and challenging path:*

***There are no timetables for grief.***

The bereaved do not process through “stages” in an orderly and predictable fashion. No one will be “done” with grief; by contrast, you will process the grief individually and at your own pace, folding it into your life in a way that becomes more manageable over time.

***Grief must be addressed.***

This grief cannot be avoided, ignored, or put away. You must go through it in order to emerge on the other side. As much as you may not be able to believe it now, your grief will shift and become less all-consuming as time goes by, and you will smile and find joy again. But right now, you must follow your instincts and allow your heart, mind, and body to grieve.

***Grieving requires patience and acceptance.***

Grief work from the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild is a slow process. Be gentle and patient with yourself and your family. Allow yourself to cry, to grieve, and to retell stories as often as needed and for as long as you need to. You will never forget your loved one; he or she will be with you in your heart and memories for as long as you live.

*Remember that you are not the only one who has gone through this profound loss and grief. **Bereaved Parents of the USA** believes the grieving process can be made a little easier with support. We stand with you to listen to you, share with you, support you, increase your understanding of this grief, and help you as you work through it. We have been where you are today. We are surviving, and we are ready to help you.*



***Written by Sarah Kravits  
in memory of Frank T. Lyman, III***

Bereaved Parents of the USA is a non-profit, self-help organization that offers friendship, support and understanding to bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents after the death of a child, brother, sister or grandchild regardless of the age or the cause of death. Individuals differ but are alike in seeking ways to overcome their grief. Grieving people can learn to adapt and, gradually, life can have meaning again.



*where grief meets hope & healing...*

To locate a chapter in your area; find information about our Annual Gathering Conference; subscribe to our newsletter or read 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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**BEREAVED PARENTS  
OF THE USA**

***FOR THE NEWLY  
BEREAVED***



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