OUT OF ORDER

I went to buy a soft drink from a vending machine, the other day, and found a note taped over the coin slot that read “Out of order.” I found that slightly amusing. As a bereaved parent I’ve come to understand that phrase to mean in the wrong sequence, i.e., no parent should outlive his child. After considering that thought for a few minutes I realized the meaning on the note was actually correct. After all, we are broken, aren’t we? Isn’t that what this out-of-order death has done to us? Has it not left us broken without much hope for repair? Like Humpty-Dumpty we knew instinctively it was going to take more, a lot more, than “all the kings’ horses and all the kings’ men” before we would ever feel even a glimmer of happiness again.

Somehow, though, it does happen. Sharing our story with others and letting them share their loss with us, reading as much as we can by those who have also buried a child, attending support group meetings, allowing ourselves to grieve, crying and being sad as often or as long as we need, finding a way to honor the memory of our precious child and remembering to take care of ourselves will eventually begin to put the pieces back together. Some of the pieces won’t fit the way they used to. And one piece of our hearts will remain missing. In time, however, we will emerge anew. When that time comes we will, once again, be able to embrace life.

My holiday wish for you is that time comes soon.

Editor

We cannot live in Wisconsin unless we learn how to drive in the snow. Six, twelve, twenty inches life goes on, work continues, churches meet, schools gather. Daily life just isn’t affected much. But just below the snow a thin coat of black ice can make life treacherous.

The funny thing is that every year, every single year, the first snow brings with it a rush of fender benders. People forget how to drive in the snow and four inches which won’t even slow us down in January devastates individual lives.

You and I are a lot like Wisconsinites learning to drive in the snow. In order to get through life we have to deal with our grief. We cannot hide from grief. Life continues whether we grieve or not.

It is that treacherous black ice which surprises us leading to a series of break downs on the path to healing. Maybe it is a song or a hallmark ad. We think we’re ok. We’ve driven through birthdays and holidays. We’re confident that we can handle all this snow.

Then we’re spinning out of control. Shocked we desper-ately grab for security. In Wisconsin we all pack blankets, food, water and a shovel. Bereaved parents need emergency supplies too. Friends, meetings, whatever it takes to get through this winter season. We need to slow down, adjust to the conditions, think ahead. We’ll make it; and people who live in the sunshine will wonder how we can. It just takes a little practice.

Keith Swett, Seymour, WI

BLACK ICE

ONE MORE DAY

by Diamond Rio

Last night I had a crazy dream
A wish was granted just for me.
It could be for anything.
I didn’t ask for money
Or a mansion in Malibu.
I simply asked for one more
day with you.

Frist thing I’d do, is pray for time to crawl.
Then I’d unplug the telephone
And keep the TV off.
We’re confident that we can handle all this snow.

Then we’re spinning out of control. Shocked we desper-ately grab for security. In Wisconsin we all pack blankets, food, water and a shovel. Bereaved parents need emergency supplies too. Friends, meetings, whatever it takes to get through this winter season. We need to slow down, adjust to the conditions, think ahead. We’ll make it; and people who live in the sunshine will wonder how we can. It just takes a little practice.

Keith Swett, Seymour, WI
What a Son Will Tell His Mother about Grieving the Death of His Sister

My son's only sibling, Maggie, his younger sister, my daughter, died almost four years ago, suddenly. She was twenty-two; he was twenty-seven. Perhaps because he is a man who does not easily talk about his feelings, we usually share our grief in oblique ways, but those moments are nonetheless intimate and meaningful.

However, this past summer, when I was visiting my son and his girlfriend, Jacqui, for a week, we had a chance to talk about his grieving more directly. He was relaxed, on vacation from his teaching job, and we puttered around his new house, making a garden, and enjoying being together. We spoke often of Maggie and slowly, as we worked side by side, we made our way around to talk of how it is now, this grieving his sister. Here's what he told me:

"I've had a broad reach about all the things that were going to be affected by Maggie's death right from the beginning. I thought about the immediate losses and into the future; maybe that's because he is a man who does not surprise me. Older grandparents may wonder why they are still here and a vital young person is dead.

It's important that you ask your parents for what you need, to give as much as possible when they are in need, and to be honest with each other about how you feel. Hugs and shared tears can become valuable family memories right now with both your parents and your other children. I thought how good it would be to just be able to 'go home' again, to lay my head in my mother's lap and cry like I used to do. This past Thanksgiving I did just that. She had been very quiet before and then she began to cry. We both came home.

Dad in Michigan

GRANDPARENTS: DOUBLE GRIEF

If your parents are still living, they may have a double grief right now. They've lost a grandchild. They hate seeing you so sad. They can't take you on their knee and tell you everything will be all right like they used to do. They have a sense of failure and all the other feelings of loss. Older grandparents may wonder why they are still here and a vital young person is dead.

The process of becoming an only child is a lot of things. Obviously, it's not always like that for everyone who loses a sibling, you might go from being four to being three, but for me, I'm the only child now. I always consulted with Maggie about stuff, family stuff and life stuff, and I miss that. No one else knew me like she did. The other part is thinking about my parents' getting older and being now the only potential caretaker and the prospect of doing that from a distance and alone is daunting. Having all the attention on me is weird and sometimes hard; it's not like everything got doubled when Maggie died, but just knowing that all family-oriented business and conversations are falling just to me is sometimes a lot. There's no divide and conquer going on when it comes to the kids and Mom and Dad.

Having someone who you were expecting to have through all the big life events not be there is really what gets me the most. Maggie won't get to come watch my soccer team play and she won't ever visit us here at the new house. She'll never know Jacqui. Jacqui is very receptive to Maggie still being a presence in our lives. It's really nice that she has dreams sometimes about Maggie and almost feels like she knows her. I do wish that they had known one another so that Maggie could be more of a person to Jacqui than just an idea.

Obviously Mom and Dad have been important in helping with processing the grieving, but a lot of my support has been in Mike, who has always been a surrogate brother but now he's really filling the role of the person who has known me the longest in a sibling kind of way. And I can really talk to him.

I find I have very little patience for drama and fighting, especially among family members. I just think: Get over yourselves. Family has always been important to me but now those relationships are more important than ever and the little problems and differences are not worth getting worked up about. We just have to love each other.”

It's hard living over five hundred miles from my son, but I make an effort to be with him often and for no specific reason other than that with this child, I can love him in person.

Meg Tipper
September 2012

Meg Tipper's book about the first year of grieving Maggie's death is entitled Standing at the Edge: A Year of Days After Sudden Death. [A review of Ms. Tipper's book may be found online in the Winter 2011 issue of this Newsletter] Editor

The name of your child who has died is a magic word. Did you know? At any given moment...whether busy or still...Stop. And think or say that name. Something will happen and whatever that something is, let it happen...even if it be tears. The name of your child is a magic word...to heal your heart.
DEAR BEREAVED FATHER

I am very sorry about the death of your child. When my son died, I remember thinking there are no words to describe the myriad of powerful feelings. I have also learned that there are no words I can share to take the pain away or give meaning to your sense of loss. The truth is, the future will be forever different and your grief....well.....will be with you forever, though I believe eventually you'll learn to live with it. And you will go on living.

What advice do I have? First attend to your grief. Someone wrote, "The pain that is unbearable cannot be healed." After my initial outpouring of grief, I felt that I needed to be strong for my wife. I buried my son in the ground and buried myself in busy-ness. I discovered much later that my wife concluded I didn't really care about my son. I did not listen to the chaplain's advice. He said, "Who said you have to be strong to be supportive? Go have a good cry on each other's shoulder."

I discovered that grief is one of those "pay me now or pay me later" realities. Let the tears flow. Seek a healthy outlet for your anger. Share your feelings of guilt. Give your sense of helplessness and depression time and space.

Mothers and fathers grieve differently. Her grief is not better or worse, just different. Her coping style is different. Be patient with her and yourself. Grief is a roller coaster of emotions. You will not ride the ups and downs at the same time. You cannot take her grief away, but you can share it. You cannot prevent her from suffering, but you can prevent her from suffering for the wrong reasons. Be a loving listener. Share your feelings. Hold each other tenderly and often.

Men often have trouble reaching out for support. Certainly many have trouble offering support to men. I got so tired of hearing, "How's your wife doing?" I rarely heard, "How are you doing?" I cannot stress how important I believe it is for you to find and use one or more support persons. No one can do your grieving for you; no one grieves well alone! I urge both of you to join a bereaved parent support group. Consider reading — together — a book about grief.

Your child has died. Your dreams and memories will never die. Death demands that you let go, though that is no easy process. Letting go is not forgetting. Letting go is ultimately forgiving this tragedy, experiencing acceptance along with sadness and having the courage to risk living and loving gain. I wish you a healthy journey through your grief — from another bereaved father.

Chaplain James Cunningham
TCF Victoria, Inc.

WINTERSUN
By Sascha

There are those days in winter
when your world is frozen
into a vision of eternal ice,
when earth and air are strangers to each other,
when sound and color seem forever gone.

There are those days in winter
when you feel like dying,
when life itself surrenders you to anguish,
to total mourning and to endless grief.

And then it happens: - from the bitter sky,
a timid sun strides to his silent battle
against the gray and hostile universe -
it changes ice to roses, sky to song.

And then it happens that your heart recalls
some distant joy, a gladness from the past,
a slender light at first, then larger, braver,
until your mind returns to hope and peace.

Let memories be beauty in your life,
like song and roses in the winter sun.

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Richard A. Berman, Editor
BP/USA Newsletter
5720 Reisterstown Rd.
Baltimore, MD 21215
newsletters@bereavedparentsusa.org

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For other information, contact:
Bereaved Parents of the USA
PO Box 22
ST. Peters, MO 63376
Phone 708-748-7866
Visit: www.bereavedparentsusa.org
Getting Through the First Anniversary of Your Loved One’s Death

You have gotten through one year of those "awful firsts." For example, your first birthday without your loved one being present, or the first Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day, your wedding anniversary, or some special day that was unique for both of you. Getting through the first year is hard, and each of these first occasions may bring up the sadness of living without your loved one. After these special days have passed, you may feel that the worst is behind you. But these feelings may continue to arise in future years on special days.

You cannot know what is in store for you during your grief journey. It is different for each of us. After making it through the "year of firsts," you begin to see and know that you will survive. You made it through the funeral or memorial service, read all the condolence notes, and took a flood of calls. Then the quiet times settled in, when the calls and the notes stop coming, and the visits from well-wishers are fewer and farther apart. You have faced some of the difficult milestones. You have gotten this far with courage and perseverance. Now you may be asking yourself, "Isn't this enough?"

Unfortunately, grief does not "turn off" after one year. Time does not erase the past, but it does provide the space to think about your loved one, heal from the loss, and find meaning. Anniversaries and other reminders, although painful at first, do become easier. These important dates can become opportunities to revisit the happy memories that made your loved one special, and to create memorial traditions.

It may be helpful to be prepared for the first anniversary of your loved one’s death. With the first anniversary of your loved one's death on the horizon, it may be helpful for you to keep in mind that your grief may return with intensity. There are no hard and fast rules regarding grieving, and it does not mean you have forgotten your loved one. A part of that person will remain within you always. Letting go means leaving behind the sorrow and pain of grief and choosing to go on. It means you can take with you only those memories and experiences that enhance your ability to grow and expand your capacity for happiness.

You can get through this anniversary, and heal from experiencing it. Being prepared for the anniversary, and being open to the feelings the event brings, can be a healing opportunity for both you and your family. Here are some suggestions for how to approach the first year anniversary experience:

- **Plan for the anniversary.** It may be helpful to know that many people find that the anticipation of the anniversary day can be worse than the actual day. As you anticipate the anniversary, you can bring comfort and healing into this day. Plan what you are going to do ahead of time, even if you plan to be alone, and set yourself up for a "good day." Let your friends and relatives know in advance what you need and how they may be able to help.

- **You can celebrate the life of your loved one.** The first anniversary of the death is a special day for recognizing your loss. You have not only lost the presence of your loved one, but all of their gifts: the laughter, the love, the shared past and qualities you treasured. Perhaps you are asking yourself how you can celebrate the life of your loved one on the death anniversary. One family took balloons to the high school track where their son had competed, and released them, each with a written personal message. One widow picnicked by the lake where she sprinkled her husband's ashes. Another family had an annual dinner in memory of their daughter. Creating a positive ritual, either alone or shared with others, can give support, healing and meaning to the death anniversary. (Refer to the article, "rituals, a way to heal and honor your loved one," which suggests further ideas.)

- **You can celebrate what you have accomplished together.** The death anniversary is also a day for acknowledging the living. This certainly includes you. The last 12 months have been demanding. You have handled your loss in the best way you could in order to survive. Take time to acknowledge the hard journey you’ve been on. Then look ahead to the new life you are creating for yourself. Do something special for yourself – perhaps schedule a massage, a special dinner or a trip to a nurturing place.

- **Handle your memories with care.** You can choose which parts of the life you shared that you wish to keep, and which parts you want to leave behind. The happiness you experienced with your loved one belongs to you forever. Hold on to those rich memories, and give thanks for the life of the person you’ve lost. It may be easier to cope with memories you consciously choose to keep, rather than to have them emerge when you are not prepared to cope with them. Perhaps you may decide to create a special place to honor your treasured memories, using photos, mementos and a candle. Journaling your memories will also help you in the healing process.

- **Letting go doesn’t mean forgetting.** Letting go of what used to be is not being disloyal, and it does not mean you have forgotten your loved one. A part of that person will remain within you always. Letting go means leaving behind the sorrow and pain of grief and choosing to go on. It means you can take with you only those memories and experiences that enhance your ability to grow and expand your capacity for happiness.

- **Plan for special support.** It may be helpful to join a support group before and after the death anniversary of your loved one. Your local hospice will have support groups that you are welcome to join. Also, if you are accustomed to the Internet, there are special support groups suited to your exact needs. You may feel that you will never be finished with grief after the loss of your loved one. Feelings of grief may resurface during many special days for the rest of your life. Each time you will face your sadness on new terms, but may notice that it doesn’t seem as intense or difficult. Hopefully, you will be able to affirm how much you have grown and healed in the ongoing journey of your grief.

Adapted from: "The Anniversary Dilemma" by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, "A Year Is a Relative Thing" by Ellen Zinner, "What to Expect At the First Anniversary of Loss" by Corinne O’Flynn, "Marking Holidays and Anniversaries" by American Hospice Foundation, and "Anniversary Provided by Gerard's House, a grief support center for children, teenagers and their families in Santa Fe, New Mexico. For more information please contact us at (505) 424-1800 or gerardshouse.org. This article was published in "The Grieving Heart," written and edited by Bob Dorsett, LLC, www.silentseas.net
THE NEW YEAR

The holidays are over and we bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents have survived. Now we have a new year ahead of us. How can we face a whole new year without our precious children? My answer to that is one minute at a time. In our situation, sometimes one day at a time seems too much to face. Further along on our journey through grief, we will be able to handle a day at a time. But, for now, one minute at a time, one second at a time, we can hang on. We can survive. There is something else that I would like to share, however.

It might help you during your journey; it has helped me several times.

One night my husband Jim and I were watching one of the many talk shows bombarding us on TV now. This one concerned children who had been murdered and one couple really impressed me. Of course they were devastated and felt the pain we all know so well, but they had a wonderful attitude. Their son, who had been murdered, was their only child. Their theory for their own lives was that they would never do anything that would make their child ashamed. They live their lives now in honor of their child. Isn’t that a wonderful philosophy?

Wouldn’t it be great to live your life with that attitude? I think about this couple’s philosophy often. Even though I do not always live up to that level of goodness, I do try. I do want my son Jesse to be proud of me, too. I do want to be worthy of being his mother. Because, even though he isn’t physically with me, I will always be his mother. We all want our children to be proud of us, don’t we? It’s up to us how we live our lives; how we survive. It’s not easy to overcome grief, to rebuild our lives and to learn to be productive citizens again. But we can do it – together.

By Brenda Hobbs
BP/USA Northern Texas Chapter
From “Where are all the Butterflies?”

Ringing in the New Year

The neighbors rang bells and tooted little tin horns and waved greetings to each other. The new year had arrived. They were celebrating the arrival of a new blank slate of days. All had hoped for a year of happiness and joy. But I didn’t. I stood, withdrawn, to the side, watching the revelers. The ringing bells were sad sounds for me. The only tin horn I saw hung from a fading Christmas tree, remnants from years past when Arthur was alive. The new year had arrived for me too, but I knew its blank slate would be filled with days of tears and sorrow.

I vividly remember that first New Year’s Eve after Arthur died. I was miserable. All I could think of was that my beautiful son was not in my life and would never be again. I didn’t think I could go on. But I did. I struggled, and grieved and hurt, and I got to the other side. There was a New Year for me. It just wasn’t that year. Other New Year’s Eve celebrations after the first one were difficult, too, but eventually, they weren’t difficult at all. I found new meaning in my life. I didn’t forget Arthur – I could never do that – but I began to find new people and things and celebrations that filled a new slate in my life. You can too.

It takes time and grief work and a commitment to find a new life for yourself. It isn’t easy and the new life you find will never be the same as life with your children, but it can be a good one. Be patient with yourself. Remember, you didn’t love for a few weeks, so don’t expect to resolve your grief after a few weeks either.

You loved. You lost. Now you’re hurt. Remember, love never goes away. It remains in your heart forever, and every New Year you can renew that love. And, someday, memories of your child will bring you warmth and joy again.

Margaret H. Garner

Reflections on a New Year

We begin a new year, one that many of us enter with reluctance. After all, it means another year away from our child and another year to be lived without the physical presence of the one we have lost. Apprehensive about any new challenges that we may be called upon to face in our broken condition, we call out, “Wait, I’m not ready yet!” The death of our child changed the course of our life; nothing will be the same again. But it also has shaped us into who we are today.

And it will continue to do so as we learn to incorporate this loss into who we are to become.

Have you found that you have already begun to live differently? Compassion toward others is more profound. Trivial things are no longer important. Appreciation for life, and those in our lives, is paramount. We’re living the same life—differently. Tragedies, disappointments, and heartaches combine with beauty, love, and joy to fashion our life. These are all a part of life, and our challenge is to incorporate them into our world. The difference that our child’s life has had upon the world continues through us. So, rather than being fearful of the challenges that lie ahead, perhaps a better question to consider at this time might be: What opportunities will present themselves in the coming year to honor this loss that is already a part of our life? Our child has become more integrally entwined into our being than ever before. We bring him or her to every situation that we encounter. How can we make that situation better because of this bond?

The start of a new calendar year is a good time to remember that we are in the midst of life. It is not perfect. Nor is it one that we might have chosen. But, our struggles do not put life “on hold.” Rather they are a part of life itself! Our life is ours to make the most of, with many gifts that we can share with others. There is no better time than the present to gather up the pieces and recognize the uniqueness that we each call “me”—a uniqueness made more wonderful because of our child’s presence in the life we choose to live.

Paula Staisiunas Schultz
Compassionate Friends Newsletter, December 2010

Remember, love never goes away. It remains in your heart forever, and every New Year you can renew that love. And, someday, memories of your child will bring you warmth and joy again.
Did You Know They Were Bereaved Parents?

“Will there be time for us, Rock?”
“We’ll have to make time, Maggie.”

This exchange between Patricia Neal and John Wayne in Otto Preminger’s World War II film, In Harm’s Way, points out how precious time is. No one, of course, understands that better than a bereaved parent. Two years before making the movie Neal and her husband, Roald Dahl, lost their seven year old daughter, Olivia, to a rare case of measles encephalitis.

Pat Neal had already achieved a level of success as an actress with performances in The Day the Earth Stood Still, Breakfast at Tiffany’s, The Hasty Heart (with Ronald Reagen) and as Gary Cooper’s co-star in The Fountainhead. After Olivia’s death Neal found working was the best way to deal with the unrelenting grief. Her ability to work through the pain gave us her riveting performance with Paul Newman in Hud for which she won an academy award. Besides staying active she found talking about her grief experience invaluable. “Over the years, I found that talking about Olivia helped immeasurably. Roald couldn’t say a word. It was locked inside him.”

She continued to work in movies and television and left a rich body of work for us to enjoy. Additionally, Ms. Neal honored her daughter’s short life by supporting theatre and arts programs aimed at helping youngsters achieve their dreams. Patricia Neal found a way to make her life meaningful and productive in spite of the sadness she carried in her heart. We are fortunate she did.

The Children's Christmas

by Rosemary J. Gwaltney

The children's Christmas is simple and bright
They sing the music, they laugh in the light,
Sparkling colors are a magical spell,
Their instant joy flows bubbling and well.

But round that tree I see a space,
Beside the table an empty place,
A voice is missing, a form of grace,
The sweetness of a little lost face.

A vacuum was left by the child who's gone;
Though all seems right, yet it's terribly wrong.
I'd give up my Christmas, and gaiety fine,
To clasp that small hand again in mine.

A DEATH HAS OCCURRED

by Paul Irion

A death has occurred and everything is changed.
We are painfully aware that life
Can never be the same again,
That yesterday is over,
That relationships once rich have ended.

But there is another way to look upon this truth.
If life now went on the same,
Without the presence of the one who died,
We could only conclude that the life we remember
Made no contribution, filled no space, meant nothing.

The fact that this person left behind a place
That cannot be filled
Is a high tribute to this individual.
Life can be the same after a trinket has been lost,
But never after the loss of a treasure.
**Men Do Cry**

**By Ken Falk, TCF Northwest CT Chapter**

I heard quite often “men don’t cry” Though no one ever told me why. So when I fell and skinned a knee No one came to comfort me. And when some bully boy at school Would pull a prank so mean and cruel I’d quickly learn to turn and quip “It doesn’t hurt,” and bite my lip.

So as I grew to reasoned years I learned to stifle any tears. Though “be a big boy” it began, Quite soon I learned to “be a man.” And I could play that stoic role While storm and tempest wracked my soul No pain or setback could there be Could wrest one single tear from me.

Then one long night I stood nearby And helplessly watched my son die, And quickly found to my surprise That all that tearless talk was lies. And I cry and have no shame I cannot play that “big boy” game, And openly without remorse I let my sorrow take it’s course.

So those of you who can’t abide A man you’ve seen who’s often cried, Reach out to him with all your heart As one whose life’s been torn apart.

For men do cry when they can see Their loss of immortality. And tears will come in endless streams When mindless fate destroys their dreams.

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**The Holidays Are Behind Us**

**by Marie Andrews  
TCF Southern Maryland**

It is the New Year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of each, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child’s place is there amongst all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with the memory, but also thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the great energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows.

We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb; a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard; our throats tight from the muscles pulled by tears, shed or unshed; our chests banded tightly by the muscles of a mourning heart.

If we are not now experiencing this, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet, as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we, too, in our searching, find places of warmth and change and love and growth, deep within.

Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved one, to talk about even the first time shape of new hope, or of new acceptance, or of new understanding, or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love of our child, forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deep way.

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

**A Broken Heart Still Beats**
Anne McCracken, Mary Semel Hazelden, 1998

Two bereaved mothers seek out the very best in grief writing from professional writers, many of whom are bereaved parents themselves. Their collection of these selected words is remarkable. Every page is loaded with passionate, beautifully expressed emotions that grip us (bereaved parents) because they convey, so well, our own thoughts. Carefully selected passages from scores of well known writers such as Mark Twain, Victor Hugo, Herman Melville, Margaret Mitchell, Winston Churchill, Isabel Allende, W.E.B. Du Bois and Anne Rice make this a wonderful book for both the rookies on this journey and the more seasoned veterans.

[Note: Although printed in 1998 this book is still available from Amazon.com, new and used]

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**I’ll Cry to Understand**
Karen E. Weis
www.lulu.com/spotlight/karenweis 2011

A useful book that explains the various emotions that bereaved parents experience. Ms. Weis does an admirable job of covering such topics as the difference between the way moms and dads grieve, handling regrets and guilt and dealing with holidays. She also delves into how God plays a part in parental grief from a Christian perspective and devotes a full chapter to ‘signs’ from the spiritual world.
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.