

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

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The letters *BP* in *BP/USA* stand for Bereaved Parents (Bereaved Parents of the USA); but in my mind, the letters *BP* also stand for Beautiful People. During the last 14 years, I have met many beautiful people, most of whom are also bereaved parents, bereaved siblings, or bereaved grandparents. All these people are beautiful because they have not only survived their children's, siblings' or grandchildren's deaths, but because they also have persevered until they created new lives for themselves after their children's deaths and then have reached out to other bereaved families to help them recover as well.

The first such beautiful people I met were an inspiration to me after my daughter's death in a bizarre traffic accident. Those beautiful people ministered to me with gentle love, kindness, understanding, and acceptance. They gave me hope because they were living examples of survival at a time when I gravely doubted I *could* survive—and when I did not even want to live. Since that time, I have met many more such beautiful people from many parts of the world.

I learned from all these beautiful people that life was different than I had formerly supposed it to be. Reality took on new dimensions that frightened me, but they were reassuring and hopeful. From my very first encounter with these beautiful people, I learned that they had once confronted what I was experiencing: shock, denial, anger, guilt, hopelessness, physical pain, emotional exhaustion and great agony of spirit. I recognized that they spoke with honest convictions—with a confidence born of wading through their devastating losses and emerging renewed themselves.

That's what I needed to learn; and these beautiful people assured me I could find my way, too. They promised to help me, if I would permit them. Gradually, over the period of many years, and with their help, I learned to find my way. I rebuilt my life. My life is different now than it was before my daughter's death on 2 May 1986. But the rebuilt lives of all of us newly beautiful people are as meaningful and productive as they once were—perhaps even more so.

We beautiful people have faced and conquered many demons, and we know it. We have learned compassion in the process and are more appreciative of surviving family members and friends, more thankful for our souls' growth, more open to the total human experience. You, too, can become one of these beautiful people in spite of your loss - or rather should I say, *because* of it. Let us continue to help each other so that no one travels grief's dreadful pathway alone.

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