

# Workshops

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

## **A-1 Alive Alone Meet & Greet**

The purpose of this workshop is to meet other parents with no surviving children. There will be time to share your stories and some of the unique issues that come with no living heirs. We want you to know that you are not alone at this conference and after. We'll explore some of the options that are offered from Alive Alone, Inc.

## **A-2 What Does it Mean to be A Surviving Sibling**

*Maya Roffler*

TBD

## **A-3 A Charming Healthy and Empathetic Approach to Grief** *Bridget Bagley & Hogan Hilling*

How the making and passing of Preston's Charm has cultivated a new, healthier, and productive grief culture. One that keeps a Loved One's spirit and legacy alive, replaces some of the pain and sadness with happiness and joy; despair with hope and also helps people manage their grief and move forward with their life healthily and productively.

## **A-4 Sailing uncharted waters: Navigating loss and what comes after** *Diane Bergeron, PhD*

Grief can change you, and the trajectory of your life, in unexpected ways. In this presentation, Diane shares ten 'lessons learned' about grief and grieving in the context of how her life changed after the death of her son (and years before, the death of her brother). In doing so, she discusses how grief involves oscillating between activities related to the loss and activities related to living. There will be time for Q&A with attendees.

## **A-5 Never Give Up - Getting from "What's Me Doing" (sic) to "You Go, Mom!"** *Carolyn Kirsch*

After a brief introduction which will include my specific experience as a bereaved parent, participants will begin with some self-awareness reflection time using printed handouts. I will use the analogy of navigating a car journey with green, red and yellow lights guiding one on a safe path as guidelines for helping one to walk the grief journey. Part of the presentation will focus on specific scenarios we experience as bereaved parents with accompanying suggestions for handling them.

# Friday, July 26, 2024

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## **A-6 Resilience in Grief** *Brenda Daly*

This workshop will discuss various tools to help you in your grief journey to discover your own resilience and practices for resilient grieving. This workshop is recommended for griever who have some time in their grief journey. Participants in the early stages of grief may not be ready for this topic.

## **B-1 Living With a Terminally Ill Child** *Lela Denny*

The workshop will discuss the heartbreak a parent feels when their child is given a terminal diagnosis. We will discuss the reconciliation of accepting the diagnosis and how it changes your life and life plans as well as your child's. We will share our experiences and struggles and accomplishments and what we learned on our journey. The need for respite, the support or lack of support from family and friends, and how to prepare your child for the inevitable as well as preparing yourself. Also mention of the unkind words often heard from strangers and friends.

## **B-2 Siblings Are Special** *Judy Lipson*

Siblings are often the forgotten mourners. Our grief takes a backseat to care for other family members, not allowing the time or compassion for ourselves or our lost sibling(s). The sibling bond is special no matter how close or complicated the relationship is. You are important, your sibling(s) are important. Together we will discuss the impact of grief, tools to live with the grief on our journeys to our lives that are forever changed.

“So long as we live, they too shall live:  
For they are now a part of us,  
As we remember them.”

## **B-3 What We Learned in Grief** *Dr. Doug and BJ Jensen*

From being overwhelmed to overcoming, bereaved parents Dr. Doug and BJ Jensen have learned attitudes, behaviors and choices that produced hope, help, and healing when walking the road of grief. The more you know about grief, the more you will be equipped for the journey. Some of the issues the Jensen's will address include differences in our grieving styles; length of grieving; attitudes that help or hinder; what to do with overwhelming feelings; the importance of self-care; support groups; forgiveness; legacy; love and other healing choices.

## **B-4 A Grief Equation: An Engineer Looks at this Grief Journey** *Paul Balasic*

Can we derive an equation that defines our grief journey and assign values to it?? The presenter, a retired engineer, believes we can. Using his own experience after losing his 15-year-old daughter in a car crash he will discuss an analytical approach to the grief journey and identify factors that helped and hurt him along the way. The workshop will also include a discussion of ways to use the approach to better understand our individual grief journey. There will be a little bit of Math presented but not to worry - there will not be a Test!!

# Workshops

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## **B-5 Turning A Tragedy into A Teachable Moment**

*Michelle Johnson and Pam Ondash*

Turning Tragedy into A Teachable Moment, Taking steps to share your personal story. Join us to learn reasons why you may choose to share your personal story and learn how to craft a story that can make an impact and give a voice to your loved one.

## **B-6 Ying & Yang of Seasonal Landscapes and Nesting Syndrome** *Cynthia Eyer*

My presentation is on the Ecopsychology of external seasonal landscape transitions between the Spring and Summer seasons and the ying and yang of each and how they may show up in internal landscapes with body, heart, mind, and emotional connections for both parents as “nesting syndrome” appears around their child’s Earthly Birthdate.

## **C-1, D-1 Bereaved Parent from the Legal Perspective Includes Aging Alone as a Childless Parent Part 1**

*Bernard Faller*

The presentation focuses on the basic legal documents everyone should have. I will explain in detail what they are, how they work and key points of each document. The material is useful for everyone, but I discuss how each document should be constructed for couples or individuals with no surviving children. My presentation is open to questions as I go.

The documents I cover are Powers of Attorney, Living Wills, DNR’s, Polsts, Health Care Surrogates, Wills, Revocable (Living) Trusts and Special Needs Trusts. I touch on Medicare and Medicaid and living arrangements as one grows old.

## **C-2 When A Sibling Dies: Inside the Mind of the Youngest Grievers** *Michele Benyo*

When a child dies, siblings grieve, too, though their grief is often unseen and unacknowledged next to parental grief. Even very young children grieve deeply, but they lack the experience and vocabulary to express their grief as grownups do. Well-meaning adults may think a child who doesn’t appear to be grieving is “doing fine” and that it’s best to protect them from the pain of grief. In this session, learn about the significance of the sibling bond, why it’s important to acknowledge the young sibling’s grief, how to recognize it, and simple, impactful ways to support young grieving siblings.

# Friday, July 26, 2024

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## **C-3 Addressing Guilt, Regret, Blame, Shame and Anger**

*Dr. Doug and BJ Jensen*

Many bereaved parents deal with powerful negative feelings after the death of a child. All bereaved parents have regret and many have guilty feelings, caught in the web of what they think they could have done differently. Blame and shame compound and complicate our grief. Anger at others, self and God is debilitating and requires forgiveness to heal. Bereaved parents Dr. Doug and BJ offer practical suggestions that can help us break out of the prison of negative thinking as we examine attitudes, thoughts, and feelings that hinder healing. A positive focus brings light to dark areas of our lives.

## **C-4 Ink Alchemy ~ Sacred Conversations/Connecting to Our Children in Spirit Through Writing** *Raina Irene Love*

I will be sharing about writing and being able to connect to your child in Spirit through this process. I will be using my son's flute music in the meditation. The meditation goes through each chakra and then I guide you down a path through the translucent doorway in the tree of life and love. There you are met by your child to and to a bench where I give you time to write to them and then I have you allow them to write to you through you. There is no right or wrong in the way you experience the process. After we share our hearts and what came through. I have been doing this for over 2 years online and what has come through each parent has been quite amazing

## **C-5 Co-Existing with Our Children in Grief & Spirit** *Panel*

A workshop about Love and commitment, with our children in Spirit, which takes us to a beautiful level of Spiritual love and understanding. Grief may push us, or even force us, to seek out answers to questions we may barely understand. We begin to sense a new relationship with our children becoming a reality that we can trust. Love that brings us together in ways that we could have only imagined. Our children have joined us on this journey of grief into an awareness and spiritual relationship. This panel of parents will share their own experiences and growth as they moved into a place of co-existing with their children, and how that has enhanced and changed their lives and healing journey. This interactive workshop is for those searching for greater understanding of a continuing spiritual relationship as they navigate through their grief. This workshop will have references to after death communication.

## **C-6 Navigating the Exhaustion of Grief: Practical Approaches for Renewal** *Natasha Smith*

In times of grief, exhaustion can become an overwhelming companion, draining both physical and emotional energy. In this workshop, we explore practical strategies and empowering techniques to navigate and cope with the exhaustion that accompanies grief. Through guided discussions, mindfulness practices, and interactive exercises, participants will discover ways to renew their spirit, reclaim vitality, and find strength amidst weariness.

# Workshops Fri., July 26, 2024

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## **D-2 Your Story is Important** *Judy Lipson*

I will share my journey as a writer and offer and encourage various venues for others in the group to share their writing i.e. blogs, websites, journals, and a book. We will also discuss what is the goal of your writing. The floor will then be open for questions and discussion.

## **D-3 Sacred Sound Journey, Reiki and Breathwork** *Panel*

Begin with the science behind healing sounds, reiki and vibration as it applies to anxiety, tension and stress with loss and the grieving heart. Choice of sitting in a chair, or lying on the back with legs over the seat of the chair for a sound bath - where the tones, vibrations and sound frequency "bathes" over your body. This guided journey will use Himalayan sound bowls, chimes, ocean drum, soothing voice and the healing energy of reiki.

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## **D-5 Guided Meditation into the Heavenly Realm**

*Deborah Finley*

A short talk on the afterlife, aka Heavenly Realm, including the healing effects through Mediumship and meditation. Discussion will include answers to questions like; What happens when we pass on? Did my loved suffer, are they okay? Do they know how much I love them? Can they still see or hear me? What are they doing now in Heaven? Do they send me signs? This workshop includes a Guided Meditation designed as a way to connect the participants with their loved ones in the heavenly realm. Participants may want to bring a journal to write about their experience. This workshop will conclude with a Q&A

## **D-6 Apart from Us, but Always a Part of Us** *Dave & Lora Krum*

Even before they were born and throughout their time in this world with us, our children were and are a part of everything we are! As our personal journey through the grief of both of our sons continues, we continue to learn and share the evolution and transformations of the life we now live, and how we stay intentional about keeping them included in each new season of life as we continue to grow in our grief. We hope to empower others to discover their own relevant ways to love and remember.)

# Workshops Sat., July 27, 2024

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## **E-1 Coping with Grief: Personality-Powered Resilience**

*Brigette Jackson*

In Coping with Grief: Personality-Powered Resilience, we'll discuss the diverse ways people may handle and process grief. We'll introduce you to the DISC assessment, a tool for understanding personality styles or behavior preferences. We all possess different behavior habits, some people, like D-types, may find solace in staying busy, while others, like I-types, may seek comfort in sharing memories with friends. S-types may prefer to process emotions privately, whereas C-types may turn to research and introspection for understanding. Together, we'll navigate the secret sauce of your personality while understanding yourself and how others may uniquely deal with grief.

## **E-2 How to Move Forward without Closure as a Surviving Sibling** *Maya Roffler*

TBD

## **E-3 Anger and Grief** *Paul Balasic*

Anger is a common reaction to the loss of a child. Our anger is directed at a host of people, organizations, and/or entities. Living with and dealing with our grief is a very difficult and challenging part of the grief process. The presenter will review and discuss his experience with "Anger!!!". It was one of his biggest stumbling blocks to finding "peace" after the death of his daughter. He will review activities that helped him manage and control his Anger and share recommendations from other to do the same. Workshop participants will be invited/encouraged to share their experiences with Anger issues.

## **E-4 Mindfulness and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Skills for Bereaved Parents** *Arielle Jordan*

'From Grief to Growth: Mindfulness and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) Skills for Bereaved Parents,' an interactive session designed to help bereaved parents navigate their grief journey with resilience. Explore practical techniques rooted in mindfulness and DBT to manage emotions, foster self-compassion, and find hope in your healing journey. This workshop offers a supportive space for sharing and learning together.

## **E-5 When Will I Laugh Again?** *Sam Timbrook*

When Will I Laugh Again? In our bereavement journey laughter can be a two-edged sword. It can trigger a grief episode or bring a welcome relief. This workshop will address questions such as, will I ever laugh again, is laughter disrespectful to my child, does laughter mean I am okay or done with grieving, why can others laugh but I find it so difficult, can I force laughter or will it "sneak up on me", is laughter just denying my pain?

# Workshops

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## **E-6 How to See the Hope in the Midst of Grief.** *Hope Reger*

Hope will provide how to live with Grief 2 Hope by utilizing the acronyms of GRIEF 2 HOPE. She takes each main topic and discusses the feelings, emotions, and with transparency how these each can teach us how to build hope, positivity, and inspire us to start living while honoring our loved one. She will provide encouragement to truly live again and begin to dream, hope, and believe in ourselves even with our tragedies. It is possible.

## **F-1 What to do With Your Child's Possessions**

*Kathleen Grapski*

When you are ready to go through your child's possessions it can be a daunting task. Our daughter's things were important to her, and I wanted to be able to share them with family and friends who loved her. In this workshop we will discuss how to preserve items and decide what to keep, display, store, and/or give away. You may not be ready to do this now, but the workshop will offer many suggestions to you for when that time comes. You are welcome and encouraged to bring ideas and samples of what you have done with your child's possessions. There will be time for questions and audience participation.

## **F-2 Supporting Bereaved Siblings through Child Loss**

*Sara Schneider*

We understand how isolating the loss of a child can be. As parents, we oftentimes struggle with how to support and guide our children through it. After the loss of her third son, author and Bowen Walker Foundation's founder, Sara Schneider, quickly began to realize the major lack of resources offered for bereaved siblings. Join Sara, as well as child grief therapist Daniele Fleming, as they dive into trauma and grief responses in children, supporting your child through the loss of their sibling, and healthy ways for families to walk through their grief journey together.

## **F-3 Keeping the Memory Alive** *Mandy Eaton*

After the loss of a loved one, many people experience a desire to keep the memory of their loved one alive. This is often a very personal journey and not a one size fits all approach. In this session, I will provide attendees with the memory activities we used to cope with the loss of our daughter and engage the participants in an exercise to share their own memory activities with other participants and create a worksheet for new memory activities learned from the session.

## **F-4 Men in Grief, sharing your story** *Bobby Morton*

Bobby will begin with a brief story of one we all share, how the death of his beloved child completely shattered his life. Material presented will show how societal pressures and its expectations of men and how they should grieve are different than for women. This social conditioning can have a psychological effect and may be the root cause of the appearance that men grieve differently. It is inherent that we all experience grief in this lifetime. Regardless of gender, we all grieve differently, working through it in our own way. This will be a very interactive workshop and attendees will be encouraged to ask questions and or share their experiences.



# Saturday, July 27, 2024

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## **F-5 Signs Sent from Above** *Deborah Finley*

If you have ever wondered if your loved ones can orchestrate and send a sign from above, please consider joining this heart centered workshop. This presentation/workshop will consist of examples of what types of signs our loved ones use and how to distinguish the difference between a sign versus a coincidence. This workshop will include some examples of why they send us these signs and ways to stay open to receiving those signs. This workshop will conclude with sharing of experiences and Q & A from participants.

## **F-6 How Grief Changes; How Grief Changes You** *Lela Denny*

The workshop will discuss how we are affected by grief from the onset and how both we and grief changes over time. I will discuss flashbacks and triggers that send grief spiraling, coping mechanisms, and learning to live and accept that grief is forever. The realization that changes occur and the acceptance that change does not mean we miss them less or love them less, will be addressed. Different ways of grieving will be discussed. I will mention all the steps of grief although not in any order and not as the focus. I will talk about how change can affect personal growth, relationships, job performance, health, and attitudes. I will encourage, but not pressure people to express and share changes they have experienced.

## **G-1 Navigating Grief: An Online Chatbot for Bereavement Resources** *Audree Kropen*

Last year, I gave a talk about this project when it was merely a concept. This year, I will demo version 1 of Mora - a Mourning Online Resource Assistant, powered by artificial intelligence. I will be demoing this initial version and soliciting feedback. You will be the first group who will see it. We will discuss how it works, how it can be improved and why it is such an important project.

There are a lot of online resources to support various types of grief, but they are hard (or near impossible) to find. This workshop will show my solution to this problem and highlight why this will be a game-changer for those who need these resources.

See <https://onlineresources.org/mora.html> for the official introduction.

## **G-2, H-2 Into the Light Part 1 & 2** *Paige Lee*

You are bigger than your story of pain and loss. This workshop will teach you how to lean into your grief healing with grace, understanding and compassion. You will learn how to release the suffering associated with your grief, which does NOT mean releasing your loved one! To the contrary, when you release your suffering, then your connection with your loved one in Spirit is stronger than ever before. It is a critical step toward communicating with them.

You will learn tools to help lift you out of grief consciousness and into self-empowerment. For example, shame to acceptance, frustration to curiosity, resentful to compassionate, bitter to caring, anxious to calm, self-criticism to self-love. These tools are powerful, easy to understand and easy to practice, allowing you to release as much as you will allow to be released.



# Workshops

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## **G-3 Navigating Self-Sabotage in Grief** *Brooke Carlock*

Are you feeling stuck in your grief journey? Do you feel guilty about moving forward after the loss of your child? This workshop invites participants to confront and understand the ways in which they might be unknowingly hindering their own grief process. The workshop aims to provide a safe space for introspection and growth, encouraging participants to embrace their grief journey with honesty and courage. We'll discuss how love and loss are intertwined, and that navigating forward is part of honoring the profound love we have for our child. You'll learn strategies to help you get unstuck, grow, and continue your love-filled journey in the wake of grief.

## **G-4 Zentangle - another coping method** *Carolyn Zahnow*

Zentangle is a wonderful way to escape grief or worry you may be experiencing after the death of a loved one. Art skills are not required. If you can doodle, then you can zentangle!

## **G-5 Grief, Grace and Gratitude** *Beth D'Angelo*

Discover what our grief has to do with grace and gratitude as we continue looking for answers for questions on why us. You will hear ways to hold loss differently, tenderly and with reverence of wherever you are on this path. We will pose healing thoughts and concepts that may bring a sense of peace and balance, blending what we thought life would be like and what actually is. Educational, supportive and inspirational in nature, this will offer a balance to conflicting loss ideology.

## **G-6 Regaining our Ground** *Elizabeth Mintun, MA, MSW, LISW-S*

This workshop will focus on the value of simple mindfulness and grounding practices to offer soothing as well as centering. This workshop will attend to the depletion, exhaustion, and overwhelm that accompanies the experience of grieving and offer manageable and simple exercises of self-care. This workshop will begin with a didactic explanation of how mindful and grounding self-care practices can be valuable coping and attending resources during difficult times. This workshop will then shift to offering practices such as a short and gentle meditative movement practice (qigong), breathing techniques, stabilizing techniques using the senses, and a mini guided meditation.

## **H-1 Alive Alone Roundtable**

Workshop Description: Our goal with this session is to look at the workshops provided in the Alive Alone track, did they meet attendees' expectations, and discuss what topics might be of interest to members in future sessions. It is also a forum for attendees to ask questions of other Alive Alone members on aspects of the loss of an only child or all their children.

# Saturday, July 27, 2024

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## **H-3 The Space In-Between: Navigating Familial Homicide, Loss, and Forgiveness** *Jacqueline Greely*

When a death occurs at the hands of a familial bond, it is one that leave a trail of unanswered questions, breath-taking anger, and an overwhelming feeling of sadness that the things will never be the same again. There are oftentimes a number of people that are affected in a variety of ways. This workshop explores, through the presenters own personal experience, processing the loss of the deceased simultaneously with the loss with the perpetrator; including navigating through various legal proceedings, relying on a support system, and embracing forgiveness.

This workshop will provide a basic overview of grief types, tips for self-care during legal proceedings, and strategies on how to heal through issues of anger, pain, and forgiveness. There will be brief references to spirituality.

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This workshop will provide a basic overview of grief types, tips for self-care during legal proceedings, and strategies on how to heal through issues of anger, pain, and forgiveness. There will be brief references to spirituality.

## **H-5 Helpful Tools for Grieving Child Loss** *Alisha Reginal*

This workshop provides an overview of key tools for coping with grief, particularly in the early months after losing a child, though also relevant and ongoing. Attendees will hear interesting insights on how we applied these tools after losing Travis Jr. and have an opportunity to discuss personal experiences using these and other coping tools (discussion is not mandatory if you prefer to simply listen in). Attendees will leave the workshop having had the opportunity to develop a personal action plan with tools to navigate the grief journey.

## **H-6 Living Through the Pain** *Cecily Shelton*

Living Through the Pain will give you the tools you need to heal your broken heart and feel complete again with intentional actions each day.

# Presenter Bios

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## **Bridget Bagley**

Bridget Jill White Bagley is the co-author of a book Simon and Schuster will debut in March/April 2024 “Preston’s Charm: A Charming, Healthy and Empathetic Approach to Grief.” She is also the co-owner of Preston’s Charm Empathy Kit. ([www.prestonscharm.com](http://www.prestonscharm.com).) She was born in Brawley, California. Her family moved to Arizona when she was in kindergarten. She works at a mini storage business and is a member of the Winslow Elks Lodge #536 in Winslow, Arizona. Bridget lives with her husband Bill Bagley, whom she married in 2012. Bridget and Bill have a blended family that includes 9 children and 9 grandkids.

## **Paul Balasic**

My name is Paul Balasic. I am a bereaved parent. I lost my youngest child and only daughter in a car crash on April 5, 1996, my birthday. I have been a member of the Anne Arundel County MD Chapter since that time. I consider it the resource that saved me and my wife’s life after the loss. I have been a Core Group member of the Chapter for approximately the last 20 years and have worked on the National Gathering Committee for approximately the last 10 years. I believe in the concept of “Healing by Helping!”.

## **Michele Benyo**

Michele Benyo is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist®, early childhood parent coach, and founder of Good Grief Parenting. After her 6-year-old son died of cancer, her 3-year-old daughter said, “Mommy, half of me is gone.” This heartbreaking statement defined Michele’s life purpose. Her mission is to help parents through the unimaginable challenges of parenting while grieving the death of a child, and to equip adults to meet the unique needs of a child who has lost a sibling in the early childhood years. Michele’s heart’s desire is to see families live forward after child loss toward a future bright with possibilities. She recently published her first book, *How Am I Supposed to Do This?! Hope and Healing After Child Loss*.

## **Diane Bergeron, PhD**

Diane Bergeron, PhD is a social-organizational psychologist. A former university professor, she now studies bereaved employees and how organizations can best support them. She is a Senior Research Scientist at The Center for Creative Leadership. When she was 17, her younger brother died. In 2007, her son, Caleb, was stillborn. Doctors revived him after 20 minutes; he died 3 days later (survived by his identical twin brother Joshua). These experiences changed the trajectory of her life. In 2013, she put her career on hold to embark on a two-year family sailing adventure (she has no natural sailing ability) and blogged about it at [www.SailingUnchartedWaters.com](http://www.SailingUnchartedWaters.com). She has been a keynote speaker at BP-USA, a panelist at the City Club, and has made over 30 presentations on workplace-related issues.

## **Liz Boenig**

Liz Boenig is the mother of her only child, Miles Wilson. After his overdose death in 2004, she continued teaching elementary school because Miles loved little children. When she retired, she volunteered for the local children’s grief center/summer camp to honor Miles’s caring heart. His adventurous spirit inspired Liz to try something new, which would add a deeper purpose to her life. She served on the Board of Directors of BPUSA as secretary and president (2017 – 2023), enabling her to help many grieving families in his memory.

# 2024

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## Brooke Carlock

In a span of a year and a half, Brooke lost her dad, stepmom, mom, and her beautiful 10-year-old daughter Libby, who died when her 18-year-old brother accidentally ran a stop sign, and their car was hit by a truck. Despite her unimaginable losses, she keeps getting back up and hopes to inspire others to do the same with honest, raw, and sometimes irreverent talk about grief. Now a Certified Grief Educator, Brooke is the creator of the Brooke Carlock Grief Education YouTube channel, host of the Mourning Coffee video podcast, and author of the upcoming book, *Grief Sucks, But Your Life Doesn't Have To*. You can find her blog, videos, and grief resources at [BrookeCarlock.org](http://BrookeCarlock.org).

## Beth D'Angelo

Beth D'Angelo works one on one, in small group settings and is a guest speaker on the topic of living with adversity, loss, and life's unexpected events. She has spent her adult life in the fitness industry as a professional teaching Pilates, Yoga, personal training, Holistic Healing, Sound Vibration, meditation and breath work as well as the creative arts. She is the mother of Christopher, (Sean) and Jovani. "My son guided me to the discovery that I have the courage, strength and resiliency to live with anything Life would hand me. I hold this as a Sacred Assignment".

## Brenda Daly

My son, Kevin, died unexpectedly 5 years ago. Tragically, 11 years prior to his death, he had suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury. I have been on a long grief journey from the ambiguous loss as a result of the changes after a TBI to a sudden, tragic loss when I found my son dead on October 21, 2018. As a licensed clinical social worker, I sought out resources to help me with my loss. I have multiple certifications in grief therapy including 2 from the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition and a certificate from David Kessler's program for grief educators. I have also written a book on my grief journey due out this summer. I have found educating myself on grief and sharing what I have learned with others as helped me the most in my grief.

## Lela Denny

I am Lela Denny from Springfield, IL. I believe in a way grief for my son started on some level when my he was diagnosed with a terminal illness although the grief that came after he lost his battle was severe and is long lasting. Grieving was not accepted well in my circle of friends and co-workers. I felt I had to "fight" for the right to grieve. I became a "member" of Bereaved Parents in 1994 and am now Chapter Leader. I do not have a book published as yet, although many people encourage me to finish mine. I went to several colleges in pursuit of a Masters. I am doing 2 courses and a thesis away. I have been on the Board of Directors for National Cystic Fibrosis Research Chapter, established a chapter for fund raising and public awareness, participated in multiple fundraising events, been President of 2 local CF Chapters and done public speaking for various groups. I believe I would present an effective workshop for parents who have lived with a terminally ill child. My Granddaughter, who passed away in 2023, lived with me for the last five years of her life and off and on before. While her death was unexpected, she too lived with health "issues" of a different nature. My grief journey has included the loss of 3 siblings, my parents, the father of my children and others. No grief compares to the loss of your child or grandchild.

# Presenter Bios

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## **Mandy Eaton**

Mandy Eaton, Cone Health's chief operating officer, remembers when her six-year-old daughter left for school one day fully dressed except for one detail: shoelaces. Adrienne had noticed a classmate with shoes too big and no laces, and she knew just how to remedy the situation.

"She was always looking out for the underdog," Mandy recalls. "She was the most loving child, and if she loved you, you knew it."

Years later, after a routine dental surgery in her late teens, Adrienne struggled with addiction. Adrienne spent many years facing her addiction head on. Then she celebrated 12 months of sobriety.

A few weeks later, the family planned to gather at the lake for the Fourth of July. Later that same day, a detective phoned with devastating news. Adrienne was gone. On July 2, 2017, at just 26 years of age, she had died from a drug overdose, opioid laced with fentanyl.

After they lost their daughter, Mandy and her husband, Michael, spent a lot of time sitting with the grief and thinking through how to channel it into something positive. They established Adrienne's Fund, with Mandy and Michael committing \$100,000 over the first few years. A social media campaign subsequently brought in more than \$30,000 from friends and family members.

For those who've lost loved ones to mental illness and addiction, having hopes and dreams is a forever-altered experience. Mandy can envision something powerful, however, with Adrienne's Fund being the catalyst.

"My grand vision is that more people become interested in serving in mental health, more people conduct research, and are driven to find cures because they see what's possible," Mandy says.

"My greatest hope is that people impacted by addiction personally get involved and help us make Adrienne's Fund a movement for our community," Mandy adds. "The collective power of those who are impacted will be extraordinary."

## **Cynthia Eyer**

I am an Author and Writer of "Living-Death to Honored-Life: Season of Transitions for Parents of Ascended Children." I am 33-year Retired US Army. BA in Gen Psychology and MA in Ecopsychology. I write a monthly blog at Spiriteus.blog, Facebook group for parents and website at CynthiaEyer.com I am a Single Parent of an Only Child who was Navy and ascended in 2003 at the age of 23. My purpose now is to share info on the seasonal transitions all parents of ascended children will experience within their grief. We transition from our Living-Death to our Honored-Life that transcends our child's physical death. In this we honor our child's life through our own.

## **Bernard Faller**

My only child, thirteen-year-old son Robert and I were passengers on a sightseeing helicopter that crashed into New York harbor in 1990. He died and I was disabled for many years. In 1996 my wife and I moved to Louisville, KY. In 1998 I enrolled into law school, graduating in 2001 at age 56. I opened Kentucky Elder Law in early 2002 and retired in 2013. It was, and still is, the largest elder law firm in Kentucky. I am the lead author of Elder law in Kentucky, a 700-page book for lawyers and was an Adjunct Professor at the Brandeis School of Law, part of the University of Louisville, for five years.

# 2024

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## **Deborah Finley**

Deborah Finley is a practicing Evidential Spiritual Medium, who has over two and a half decades of experience providing readings for individuals professionally.

Deborah is like many other women you may know; married since 1981 she is a mother, grandmother, daughter, sister, friend and career woman. She is a multifaceted compassionate individual who has had many life experiences including becoming a published bestselling author.

Deborah's life work includes mentoring/coaching, public speaking along with providing evidential spiritual mediumship sessions professionally. It is her hope that by providing proof of the survival of the soul through the practice of mediumship she brings a sense of peace to those she reads for.

For more information about Deborah Finley visit: [Angel-Energy.org](http://Angel-Energy.org)

## **Kathleen Grapski**

Kathleen and Ed's only child, Lauryn, 20, was on her way home from college when she died in an auto accident, November 17, 2000. Since that time Kathleen has been involved with Frederick, Maryland, Chapter of TCF, and a member of a subgroup of the Potomac Chapter of In Loving Memory, for parents who are now childless. Kathleen has attended and given workshops at BPUSA, In Loving Memory Conference and TCF. She reaches out to many parents in her area whose child has died, trying to help them through the first few months and years. She is the leader of her church's HOPE Ministry (Healing Opportunities Peace Encouragement), which assists at funerals and reaches out to the families throughout the first year. Kathy is one of the Alive Alone board members who manages updating the mailing/membership list.

## **Jacqueline Greely**

Jacqueline Greely is a bereaved child that is guided to help herself and others heal and navigate through life with loss. In 2012, her father was unalived by her brother, his son while he was experiencing a manic episode. The dual loss of her father physically and her brother, physically and emotionally, really was the catalyst preparing in serving the grief community. While working specifically in grief support is relatively recent, Jacquie's personal and professional experience has led her to this point. With a background in human services, she is a postpartum doula with a focus on pregnancy loss; a certified clinical sexuality coach; and an energy worker with training in yoga, Reiki, herbs, and other healing modalities. Jacquie uses all tools in her toolbox to be a compassionate, empathic, loving guide to those experiencing any transition of life.

# Presenter Bios

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## **Raina Irene Love**

Raina Irene Love is a Heart, Soul, Spirit Practitioner, A Sacred Mommaz and the Author of *Because of Josiah, A Mother's Unending Bond with her Son in Spirit*.

She holds multiple certificates in Holistic Health, Spiritual and Emotional Healing, Plant Medicine, Reiki, Angels, and The Spirit World.

With her Son-in-Spirit serving as her teacher, she has learned to recognize, interpret, and respond to the messages we receive from the Ones We Love in Spirit.

Raina now works with mothers (Sacred Mommaz) who have Children-In-Spirit, helping them to understand that communication with their child is not only possible but happening all the time.

She holds Healing through Writing, Sacred Conversation, and Healing Circles with an emphasis on Inner Wisdom and Understanding this Sacred Journey.

[www.rainairene.love](http://www.rainairene.love)

## **Brigette Jackson**

Brigette Brown Jackson, Ed. S, Behavior Wealth Strategist, founder of Exponential EduVentures LLC, with 30 years of leadership experience and 17 years leading multi-million-dollar school organizations, offers deep insights into human behavior. She is an Extreme Execution Coach and certified DISC trainer. Despite enduring the profound loss of her sister and brother at young ages, and most recently, her 26-year-old son to gun violence, she uses personal leadership skills to guide her through grief. Her infectious personality, fueled by compassionate wisdom, resonates with audiences nationwide. As a speaker, author, and consultant, she empowers individuals and organizations through transformative strategies. Passionate about empowering people, Brigette inspires thousands, fostering positive change.

## **Dr. Doug and BJ Jensen**

Dr. Doug and BJ Jensen are bereaved parents of baby daughter Jodi Joy, and adult son John JAY. They are International Speakers, Song Signing Artists, Dramatists, Sketch Writers, Song Writers and the Authors of 18 books including *FINDING HOPE After the Devastating Loss of Beloved Children*; *FAMOUS LOVERS IN THE BIBLE*; and *TINY PAGES WITH ENORMOUS POSSIBILITIES* booklet series. The Jensen's are the founders of *LOVE IN MOTION* International Traveling Signing Choir that helps songs come alive visually, and *HEALING HALLELUJAH MINISTRIES* that offers hope, help, and healing to hurting hearts. Doug earned his Ph.D. in Biblical Studies and Counseling, BJ served as choir director of *LOVE IN MOTION* for 32 years, and both have served at bereavement conferences since 2000. They approach life with love, humor and good grace because of a great God that has never left their side.



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## **Michelle Johnson**

Michelle Johnson is an affected mother, speaker, and teen driver safety advocate. Michelle lost her oldest son Connor in a car crash caused by a reckless and distracted driver. She felt the need to share Connor's story to save lives and prevent others from experiencing preventable tragedies such as hers. Michelle formed a foundation in Connor's memory, partnering with Impact Teen Drivers (ITD), KDKA Taking the Lead: Ford Driving Skills for Life, the PA Coalition for Teen Safe Driving, and local law enforcement to reach community members.

## **Arielle Jordan**

A dedicated mental health therapist with a strong academic background, holding a bachelor's degree in psychology, a Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health, and currently pursuing my Ph.D. in Counselor Education. My personal journey has been marked by significant challenges, including the loss of my daughter and father in 2014 and navigating through a divorce. These experiences have deeply shaped my understanding of grief and resilience. Through my practice, Mindset Quality LLC, I am committed to helping individuals overcome adversity and develop the tools they need to lead fulfilling lives.

## **Carolyn Kirsch**

My name is Carolyn Kirsch; I am Jonathan's mom. He died suddenly on August 11, 2016, at the age of 37 due to hereditary heart problems and some drug usage, mostly marijuana and cocaine. After being called to the hospital, I stood by as life support was ended. My journey in grief began then and continues. Jonathan was adopted; he joined our family when he was four days old; he was my only child. When he was five and half years old, his father was hit by a drunk driver, sustaining severe head injuries. He never returned home; the rest of his life was spent in a nursing home. Then I became a single parent raising a five-year old son; I also had a husband in a nursing home. Since Jonathan died almost seven years ago now, my journey has had some peaks of lightness and acceptance and valleys of despair and darkness. During the past year there has been a change in the journey bringing a new level of purpose, meaning and peace. I want to share that change and help others know that it can happen. My goal is to provide hope for others who may be in despair and provide them with some suggestions for getting on a better path in the journey.

Carolyn Kirsch, B.A. English, Ms. Ed Counseling Psychology

## **Audree Kropen**

I have been a surviving sibling for 56 years and a surviving grandmother for 3.5 years. After the death of my grandson in 2020, I stepped away from my consulting business to start Sibs Forever, a non-profit company. I am a techie and wrote the flagship application at sibsforever.org, a memory book for surviving siblings to memorialize their sibling relationship through photos, videos and words (stories, diary entries, etc.). I'm releasing my second application, which will be hosted at onlineresources.org which is a chatbot for discovering online grief-related resources.

I have recorded three episodes for the <https://www.thesurvivingsiblings.com/> podcast.

# Presenter Bios

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## **Dave & Lora Krum**

Lora and Dave Krum are the parents of Dylan (1995-2010) and Gavin (1998-2012) and continue to step into each new day of survival without their children by living for them and intentionally remembering them. TCF continues to be an integral part of their journey and service to others. They are also co-presidents of a 501(c)3, "Dylan and Gavin's Rainbow," to reach out to others in their sons' memory.)

## **Paige Lee**

Paige Lee is an author, grief educator, spiritual teacher, healer, and the co-founder of Transcending Grief. Her life was forever changed by grief and loss. Her 23-year-old son Bryan transitioned to Spirit in 2008, but he did not die in vain. He left behind him a legacy of love and compassion that continues to touch the lives of millions around the world. Paige and Bryan work together now, with him in spirit and her in physical, to help others transcend the pain of their grief.

Paige is passionate about helping grieving people move forward with hope and peace. She has an exceptional gift for assisting others to find their path and passion in life and is committed to teaching them how to move to the other side of their pain, where they can create a life filled with love, joy, abundance, and happiness.

## **Judy Lipson**

Judy Lipson is the author of Celebration of Celebration of Sisters: It Is Never Too Late To Grieve, winner of Literary Titan's 2021 Silver Award. The sole survivor of three sisters, Judy founded Celebration of Sisters, an annual ice-skating fundraiser to commemorate the lives and memories of her beloved sisters Margie and Jane to benefit Massachusetts General Hospital. Judy was the keynote speaker at The Bereaved Parents USA Conference in 2023, presented at The Compassionate Friends National Conference, appeared on The Open to Hope cable television, and is a ForGrief speaker. Her passion for figure skating secured the recipient of U.S. Figure Skating Association 2020 Get Up Award.

For a complete list of podcast interviews, published articles, events and photos, please visit [www.judylipson.org](http://www.judylipson.org)

## **Elizabeth Mintun**

Elizabeth Mintun, MA, MSW, LISW-S is a licensed psychotherapist and mindfulness and centering coach. Elizabeth also is certified as a qigong teacher and forest bathing guide. Elizabeth has extensive experience both in the community mental health setting as well as in private practice with assisting individuals, couples, and families with navigating grief and loss, as well as traumatic grief. Elizabeth received postgraduate training and a certificate in trauma informed treatment from the Trauma Center in Boston under Bessel Van der Kolk. Elizabeth currently has a private psychotherapy practice in Columbus, Ohio and runs an online membership offering to help women around the world move from feeling overwhelmed, depleted, and exhausted to feeling confident, inspired, and energized. Elizabeth is also the creator and host of The Calming Ground podcast.

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## **Roger Moroney**

BIO: My only child, Kyle Mathias Moroney, was born on the first day of spring in 1994, at St John's Mercy Hospital in St Louis, MO. Kyle died in a car accident late on June 3, 2017.

My initial attempts at understanding grief were by reading books especially those for fathers. I did not find many. Early on I learned that there are a lot of bereaved parents out there and was fortunate in that some stepped forward to offer support in those early months. A colleague of my wife's offered to take us to a local chapter of the Compassionate Friends meeting. The following year my wife and I attended our first grief conference, the BPUSA Gathering near Memphis. Just being around other bereaved parents was helpful by itself, but I learned even more at the workshops. In 2019 I was on an Alive Alone panel discussion called "Ask it Basket".

Kay and Rodney asked Gwen Rice and I to take over participation, on behalf of Alive Alone, in the planning for the 2021 Gathering as they were no longer able to travel. I assisted in developing a set of workshops for bereaved parents with no surviving children and gave a workshop myself. My first one was titled "Managing Your Child's Online Presence". Since then, I have continued to participate on the planning committee to develop offerings for bereaved parents with no surviving children. In 2023 my wife and I gave a workshop on "Finding Purpose in Our Lives Following the Death of our Only Child".

Locally I have presented to a support group for bereaved mothers and supported newly bereaved parents and grandparents at my workplace. I have been on the board of Alive Alone since 2021 and have taken over as webmaster since 2022. As a board member I proposed an outreach program to State and National Funeral Director programs, to be accomplished jointly with BPUSA, that was approved by the board. I have also managed a project to revamp the website and expand online resources for members that is nearing completion.

On a professional level I have retired from a 25-year career in radiation protection, with nearly all of that in the manufacturing of radiopharmaceuticals. In 2022 I retired from Siemens to pursue running a bed & breakfast full time. I have been able to draw from my experiences of being an inquisitive traveler to become a host and concierge for guests, and to care for them as my son cared for his family and friends. This is my chosen mission to honor Kyle.

## **Bobby Morton**

Bobby Morton's beloved son, Jared, lost his battle with the disease of addiction in October 2014, at the age of 24. He is co-founder and director of Healing through Hope U, a non-profit organization that supports 2 monthly open discussion online meetings, for anyone that has experienced the Trauma of loss ([www.HealingThroughHope.net](http://www.HealingThroughHope.net)). He previously served 3 years as leader of the Lower Cape Cod Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. He has been presenting at National Conferences for 5 years and a Keynote Speaker for BPUSA. Bobby has had a transformation of awareness and a renewed spiritual awakening since Jared's passing. With Jared forever by his side, it is a mission of Love for them to cultivate Hope for others; to find that grief and the joy of life co-exist in the human heart and helping to define the beauty of Post Traumatic Growth.

# Presenter Bios

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## **Pam Ondash**

Pam Ondash - Retired Registered Nurse. For the past 10 years I have been a volunteer with MADD. I am currently a Volunteer Victim Advocate for Mothers Against Drunk Driving, I am also an advocate for changes in DUI laws and have lobbied in Harrisburg to gain support for change.

## **Hope Reger**

Hope Reger, creator and founder of Grief 2 Hope, a nonprofit organization that she created in honor of her son, Justin who she lost to murder in 2016 at age 19. Her devastation to determination is to build a community of support, hope, and inspiration to all that are grieving by providing a safe space to be open, transparent, and encouraged to share their story and be inspired by others who understand. Her goal is no one grieves alone and has the opportunity to be a part of a family where hope lives.

## **Alisha Reginal**

Alisha Reginal is the mother of two boys. Her first son, Travis Jr., was stillborn on July 1, 2022. After losing Travis Jr., Alisha and her husband, Travis, started an organization called Remembering My Child to help bereaved parents grieve, heal, and cherish their children's memories. They want bereaved parents to know that it is possible to grieve with hope. Learn more about their story and check out their blog and other resources at [www.rememberingmychild.com](http://www.rememberingmychild.com).

## **Gwen Rice**

I lost my beloved son, Sean, at the age of 5 from falling tree limbs in May 2004. I am a single Mom with no other surviving children. I am employed as a high school teacher. I currently serve on the Alive Alone Board and am responsible for coordinating the Zoom support groups. I have been active in numerous other bereavement groups. I can be reached at [gwen@alivealone.org](mailto:gwen@alivealone.org).

## **Maya Roffler**

I'm Maya Roffler, the founder and host of The Surviving Siblings Podcast, and I lost my brother, Andreas, to a homicide in November of 2016. When I lost my brother, it was the worst experience imaginable, and it took several years for me to even share the full story. However, five years into my grief journey something hit me, and I realized that I wanted to give back. I wanted to share his story and my story. I started looking for resources, books, groups, and anything that would help support me. I didn't find much, but luckily today, there are many of us changing that narrative. So, as a podcaster already, I decided to come to the mic and tell my story and my brother's story. I decided to tell the story of you, the forgotten mourner, the surviving sibling, the bereaved sibling... and now, I share stories of other bereaved siblings on subsequent seasons of the show.

# 2024

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## **Becky Russell MSN, MA, RN**

Becky Russell MSN, MA, RN holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and two master's degrees in health care administration and education. She is experienced in Intensive care nursing, nursing education and professional development and retired in 2022 as the director of the Center of Learning and Professional Development from the largest health care system in Arkansas. As a Registered Nurse, Becky had experience in assisting others in the grieving process. As a teacher, she taught the grieving process. On March 18, 2004, she became a participant in the grieving process, when Jae Lynn, her oldest daughter, and two of Jae Lynn's friends were killed in a car accident. Becky is the BPUSA chapter leader in North Central Arkansas, has been a local and national speaker for BPUSA, an accomplished educator and leader in Arkansas healthcare and is the creator of a 30-minute visual presentation entitled "The 10 things I did not know about Grief". She currently authors the Facebook blog entitled "Weepyseeds". Becky Russell lives in Jacksonville, Arkansas and is married to Ralph and mom to Jae Lynn's surviving sisters Casey and Abby.

## **Sara Schneider**

Sara Schneider is a 3x NICU mom, nonprofit founder, and author. Her third son, Bowen, was born at 23w5d and passed away at 12 days old due to multiple recurring pneumothorax's. After his death, she began to realize the lack of support available for his two older brothers. This led to the birth of her nonprofit, the Bowen Walker Foundation. The Bowen Walker Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit serving bereaved parents and siblings who are experiencing child loss through pregnancy, stillbirth, infancy, or adolescence by providing personal and community-wide education, support, and resources. Sara is passionate about changing the stigma surrounding child loss and bereaved parenting. She aims to create a sense of community and support for families in similar circumstances.

## **Cecily Shelton**

I lost my baby girl, Kayla, 20 years ago on 10/12/03. I recently published a book to provide tools for living through pain. I still grieve (my only child), yet I am no longer just existing. I am LIVING THROUGH THE PAIN.

Living Through the Pain is a personal testimony of my battle with grief and depression, sharing how I finally opened my heart to turn the pain into a journey of blessing others.

## **Natasha Smith**

Natasha Smith is a Grief Advocate, speaker, and podcast host. She shares from a place of 30-plus years of lived grief experience, research, and biblical study. Her work has appeared in Guideposts, Propel Women, Influence Magazine, HerBible, and elsewhere. She and her husband, Clinton, have four children and live outside of Raleigh, NC. Her new book *Can You Just Sit with Me? Healthy Grieving for the Losses of Life* is now available wherever books are sold. Connect with her at [imnatashasmith.com](http://imnatashasmith.com).

# Presenter Bios 2024

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## **Sam Timbrook**

After years of “grieving the living” due to my wife and son having muscular dystrophy, death took my wife in 2013 and my son in 2018. As a Pastor and life coach, I walked with many during the deaths of their loved one(s). After my wife/son’s deaths, I felt I should apologize to those who I had “walked with”, thinking I knew what they experienced. I formed a 501(c)3 program providing grief ministry, trauma and mediation Life Coaching. I hold a Master’s in Counseling and D.Min. in Conflict Resolution and am a Board-Certified Master Mental Health Life Coach. [www.samtimbrook.com](http://www.samtimbrook.com)

## **Carolyn Zahnow**

I lost my only child Cameron to depression and meth addiction via suicide in 2005 while living in North Texas. I was in a fog for a year. My husband, the smart one, gave me the task of picking out items that would go in the house we were having built in NC, my home state. We had decided to return to NC after Cameron had graduated from high school. (Another regret and possible reason he chose death over life.)

After the move, I went to some Survivors of Suicide loss grief groups which were extremely helpful. Eventually I decided to start one in my area. From there I founded a nonprofit, The Shore Grief Center. We provided SOS groups as well as grief groups for children, teens, and grief by any loss. I “retired” from the center but left it in capable hands. I learned in the following years that being creative helped with my grief and started soap making. I founded Shore Soap as a fundraiser for the Center but have kept creating ever since! I have now been “soaping” for 8 years and it is my passion as well as a business. I enjoy teaching others the easy method of creating beautiful soap.