



# Bereaved Parents USA

Virtual Gathering ♥ August 6-8, 2020

## WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

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

### **A-1 STRUGGLING TO RECLAIM MY FAITH**

**Dennis Apple**

When Dennis discovered his eighteen-year old son, Denny, had died during the night on February 6, 1991, he screamed, "Oh God, this isn't supposed to happen to me." For years Dennis served as pastor and prayed every day for his family. He lived under the assumption he was divinely protected from disasters experienced by others. After the shock of losing his precious son, he struggled over ten years trying to find a path to faith once again. This workshop will focus on the many ways the loss of a child affects a bereaved parent's faith. Anyone, regardless of faith, belief, or spiritual practice is invited to share their journey as we seek to learn from and support one another.

### **A-2 BRIGHT FUTURES**

**Sadija Smiley**

You might have heard or read something recently about emotional wellness. Emotional well means you feel good about yourself, your relationships, and your purpose in life. Everyone has feelings of anger, sadness and confusion from time to time. However, if you are emotionally well, you will have fewer lows and will be able to bounce back from sad times faster.

**A-3 MEN IN GRIEF****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 help you understand how societal pressures create expectations that men do and should grieve differently than women. This social conditioning can have a psychological effect and may be the root cause of the appearance that men grieve differently. Many of these expectations may start out as outward appearances, but can manifest into deeper issues over time. It is inherent that we all experience grief in this lifetime. Regardless of gender, each individual grieves differently, working through it in their own way. Bobby will try to make this as interactive as possible. Attendees will be encouraged to ask questions and/or share their experience. Both men and women are invited to attend.

**A-4 NAVIGATING LIFE AFTER LOSS****Jay, Kelly Kovaleski & Family**

Re-framing yourself and your life with hope after the loss of a child, grandchild or sibling is a personal journey, but can be accomplished alongside others doing the same. Using cardinal directions as our guide we can navigate this new life after loss while continuing to embrace our loved one and their memory. The goal of Navigating Life after Loss is to help others find healing, hope and purpose. Life is a journey and you are not alone.

**A-5 WHO AM I NOW?****Sara Ruble**

The chaos of life and death and love creates a place of great unknowns for those whose child or children have died. So much confusion. Who am I now? A question we may ask almost daily as we journey through the enormity of grief. Being able to see who we are now with greater clarity and understanding can help balance and strengthen us as well. Sara Ruble, Scott's mom, will help navigate through the many questions that arise about our changing identity and the confusion that can create. This is an interactive workshop and will allow participants to discover more about themselves and who they are now. (This workshop will have references to after-death communication with your loved one.)

**B-1 HOW PERSONALITY MAY AFFECT GRIEVING AND MOURNING****Sam Timbrook**

This workshop will assist us in understanding how our personality may affect our grieving and mourning. After taking a simple, non-threatening personality assessment known as DISC, each person will receive information about "grieving and mourning personalities" and the possible strengths and weaknesses of each. Open discussion and Q and A to follow.

**B-2 COPING STRATEGIES FOR GRIEF & LOSS****Anne Moss Rogers**

This is a practical workshop with interactive strategies on managing the pain of losing a child facilitated by a mother who lost a son to suicide. Have paper/pen available. • Learn coping strategies in a safe and supportive environment to help you manage the pain of losing a child. • Learn how others have moved through grief in a healthy and productive way. • Learn how to reframe and answer insensitive comments from others.

**B-3 FINDING PEACE THROUGH THE PAGE****Crystal Webster**

Grief sucks, and child loss is its own unique kind of suck. One wants to talk about it and it's hard to work through your feelings without getting them out of your head. Call it what you want, journaling is one of the best ways to express your thoughts. If a blank sheet of paper intimidates you more than going another day without your child, join us for tips, tricks, and conversation to get your thoughts out of your head and onto the page.

**B-4 GRIEF AND HOPE INSIDE THE OPIOID CRISIS****Ellen Krohne & Diana Cuddeback**

Grief and Hope Inside the Opioid Crisis will explore the opioid crisis from a parent's perspective. In the workshop we will delve into the opioid crisis, the unique aspects of substance-use loss and grief and provide specific support techniques for dealing with the trauma of addiction and addiction loss. Actions we can all take to help to reduce stigma, prevent drug misuse and addiction in our children and specific ways to help stem the opioid crisis will be tackled.

**B-5 BEYOND SIGNS: LIVING AND GROWING WITH AND WITHOUT YOUR LOVED ONE** **Chris Mulligan**

Signs: you feel excitement seeing a butterfly, a bird, a coin or a number sequence. Your loved one is “sending you a sign.” You receive a sign and want more of them because they bring you comfort and solace. You want that feeling again and again. But what if you realized that your sign is just the first layer of your continuing relationship with your child? That sign is just your telephone ringing. Are you going to answer that telephone call? Do you want to find out how? You can. Everyone can. Let’s move beyond just seeing our loved one’s signs and talking about receiving and answering your telephone and building your new relationship with them. Let’s learn how to move beyond just seeing the signs.

**C-1 A GRIEF EQUATION – AN ENGINEER LOOKS AT GRIEF** **Paul Balasic**

A “Rational” look at the “Grief Journey” and factors that affect our “Grief Level”. A general discussion of mathematical models is presented and a mathematical model of Paul’s “grief journey” is developed. An equation is developed with which our grief can be quantified. Ways of increasing and decreasing grief are identified and discussed. The presentation finishes up with a group discussion of the model and its usefulness and applicability to other bereaved parents’ experiences.

**C-2 JOURNEY INTO THE LOOKING GLASS: FINDING HOPE - POWER OF POSITIVITY** **Dr. Mary Welsh**

This interactive program provides the participants with tools to address the Four Aspects of Positive Reflection during the grieving process: Remember, Reflect, Recreate your "new normal", and Relate taking care of yourself, supporting others, and the community. Dr. Mary shares techniques she has utilized with others to address those Moments, the What ifs, and how to embrace life again. Take this interactive session to positively impact your grief journey. She aids participants in finding a way to channel their beliefs, feelings, and aspirations to aid them on their journey. She reinforces their loved ones had a purpose in this life, as do they. Being able to share their stories, thoughts, anxieties, and stories of life and loss, these enable them to come to terms with their new existence, their new normal. Dr. Mary used her grief journey to lay the framework to aid others through her nonprofit Susie Q's Kids and her books: *Journey into the Looking Glass: Finding Hope after the Loss of Loved Ones*, *The Four Aspects of Positive Reflection Journal*, *Susie Q's Kids Positive Reflection* children's book *My Special Angel* and *Good Characteristics Coloring Book*.

**C-3 10 HEALTHY WAYS TO FEEL BETTER DURING GRIEF** **Dr. Doug & BJ Jensen**

One of the hardest emotions we will ever experience is grief. It takes a toll on our mind, body, and spirit. We can offer choices of ways to release the endorphins that can help you feel better.

**C-4 PHANTOM LIMB: LIVING WITH THE LOSS OF A SIBLING** **Sarah Kravits**

Since my only sibling died, I have lived with the sense that I have a “phantom limb.” We will discuss this metaphor for sibling loss as an introduction. We will then talk about the distinctive experience of sibling loss, including (but not limited to) how others perceive this loss; supporting one’s parents (especially when becoming an only child or acting as an only child); change in family structure; caring for sibling’s family members; effect on identity and self-esteem; feelings about the status of the sibling relationship at the time of the loss; and more. Everyone’s experience is authentic, valued, and welcome in the discussion. Attendees will connect with other bereaved siblings, share experiences, and build coping strategies.

**C-5 THE WARRIOR WITHIN: LIVING INSIDE YOUR STORY WITH GRACE** **Beth D’Angelo**

We will begin with a welcome, a very short grounding meditation and then speak about what it is to access your “Warrior Within” and live inside your story with compassion. We will address being off center and off balance after the trauma of losing a child and how that can manifest in the physical body. We will bring in various life tools to create an experience of connection to ourselves and the knowing of what is solid while stepping into the unknown and the unfamiliar. We will tap into the wisdom of contrast, vulnerability, and the power of your personal intuition that you are safe, grounded and have the tools to move forward. This workshop is about movement, breath and sound to release pain that can get stuck in our physical bodies.

**D-1 REFLECTING ON PURPOSE AFTER LOSS: ART THERAPY FOR THE ARTISTICALLY CHALLENGED Vickie Lundy**

Acrylic pour painting is a fun and interesting art technique that creates beautiful, unique, and one-of-a-kind paintings. It is based on acrylic paint, which can be brought into a liquid, pourable consistency with the addition of a pouring medium. This liquefied paint is then poured into each other or tilted onto a surface of your choice. (Canvas, wood, stone) and distributed by tilting the painting surface. Depending on the choice of the color, the medium and the additives, different effects are created. **Supplies you will need: (Dollar stores are a good source of these materials)** 1.) Small bottles of acrylic paint in colors of your choice. 2.) Elmer's Glue All -- pouring medium 3.) Empty squeeze bottle. 4) wood craft sticks 5.) Aluminum tray or drop cloth to catch the paint 6.) Small food service containers or plastic cups 7.) empty metal cans to elevate the surface 8.) apron and disposable gloves 9.) Small spritz bottle of rubbing alcohol 10.) painter's tape (optional) and finally 11.) a "pour painting" surface -- choose from the following ideas: • Wood Panels - any size or type - sealed and primed. • "Ampersand Gessobord" Panels – already primed. • Stretched canvases - found in art supply stores. • Paving stone or steppingstone from a home improvement or landscape retailer.

**D-2 GRIEF TSUNAMI: How Child Loss Impacts Everything (and What You Can Do in Response) Gary Roe**

When we lose a child, everything changes. A tsunami of grief hits and carries us along in its powerful wake. In this workshop, we'll talk about how child loss impacts us in every possible way- emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. This loss changes also changes our relationships and the future we had anticipated. Amid all the pain, how do we ride this tsunami in healthy ways that honor our child and also express love for those around us?

**D3 A MOTHER STILL? LIFE YEARS AFTER THE DEATH OF AN ONLY CHILD/ALL CHILDREN Dr. Susan M. Bartel**

All child loss is horrific, but research is limited in understanding the longer-term experiences of mothers whose only child, or all children, have died. This presentation shares results from Dr. Bartel's recent research on the experiences of bereaved mothers and the secondary losses as they continue to adapt several years after the death of their only child/all children. The participant's advice and wisdom on managing isolation, fear of the future, and rebuilding purpose may help others facing a similar journey.

**D-4 ROCK ON: MINING FOR JOY IN THE DEEP RIVER OF SIBLING GRIEF Susan Casey**

I will be talking with bereaved parents about sibling loss and the impact it has on the surviving siblings. For my book, I interviewed 27 people from all over the world who lost one or more siblings. I will share my own grief journey and other stories on how these siblings felt their grief was minimized. I will be covering topics on losing anger, letting go of guilt, blessings that arrived through the grieving process, finding beauty in the pain, messages from the other side, and honoring our deceased siblings.

**D-5 FOLLOWING THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD: OUR PERSONAL ODYSSEY THROUGH GRIEF PANEL Bobby Morton, Beth D'Angelo & Debbie Byron**

In the story, Dorothy (and Toto) landed in a strange place called OZ, perhaps similar to where we find ourselves after child loss. She follows the Yellow Brick Road and gathers friends along the way to the Emerald City, all of them in search of something that collectively they already have, but don't yet see it in themselves. Metaphorically speaking, isn't that what we do on our 'Grief Journey'... we find a similar loss community, all in search of Hope, Hope that will lead us to Healing! We feel lost and travel this journey with no map, no guidance, we can only trust and follow our instinct (our Yellow Brick road), in search of a place where we had once felt normal. Join us on a Journey of Discovery & Hope!

**E1 FINDING YOURSELF WITHIN THE GRIEF Julie Blackburn**

This workshop will help you rediscover your purpose and connect to yourself using creative exploration. Learn three different ways of self-discovery to better understand yourself and your focus in life. During grief we can feel all sorts of discomforts and disconnects. When we see and make small changes in our lives, it can improve our days, relationships and health.

**E-2 WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES: REBUILDING YOUR LIFE WITH HOPE AND HEALING****Laura Diehl**

When our child dies, our life comes crashing down around us. How do we rebuild our lives? Is it even possible? Laura likens rebuilding our lives to rebuilding a house, and she will take you through the various rooms like the Kitchen of Usefulness, the Bedroom of Rest, the Garage of Tears, Looking Out the Window of Fear, Putting on the Roof of Hope, the Support Beam of Grace, etc. Within the workshop, Laura will also talk about how learning to live without our child is like learning to live with an amputation, because a very part of your being has been cut off from you. It can be done, and Laura will share about her front row seat to watching her daughter learn how to live a full life after having her little leg amputated at three years old. Note: Laura's personal belief is a faith in Jesus Christ, and will be referencing that occasionally in the workshop, along with singing a couple of songs that are based on that belief as well.

**E-3 APART FROM US, BUT ALWAYS A PART OF US****Dave & Lora Krum**

From 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 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 and experience we encounter. We hope to encourage other grieving parents to discover meaningful and relevant ways in which they too can keep the loving memory of their children present in their own lives through sharing our own examples as well as the experiences of others we know. The discussion of how we begin finding ways to carry both joy and sorrow as we grow in our grief, the best part of us (our children) can continue to live on through us!

**E-4 THE THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF WRITING THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS****Susan Casey**

I will help the participants to understand how the art of writing can be applied as a therapeutic tool to facilitate emotional healing. There are numerous studies, which document the benefits of writing stories that focus on traumatic experiences. There are others that have emerged out of the Positive Psychology movement that support writing about more strengths-based questions increases overall well-being. Embracing this perspective, this workshop will provide participants with both the research on the benefits of this writing approach and the therapeutic directed-writing activities to do during the workshop.

**E5 DEATH TEACHES ~ FINDING NEW MEANING****Sara Ruble**

The death of our children forces us to learn. We cannot stay in the same place we were from year to year or even month to month. We learn by doing...and then we learn what not to do, what works better, what hurts or feeds our soul. Every day can teach us as we search for meaning in the hardest, the beautiful, the most unexpected, the intentional and unintentional moments life brings. Death can create possibilities we would never have seen or experienced as we use the power of pain and new awareness to open the doors to a deeply meaningful life. Is it a new relationship with our child and children? A purpose-filled life we could never have seen? New friendships that feel like family? A 5K? Let's talk about all this and more. This will be an interactive workshop as discussion is encouraged and welcomed. (This workshop will have references to after-death communication with your loved one.)

**F-1 HEALING HEARTS MEDITATION****Ann Irr Dagle**

There are times in our lives when our world is filled with uncertainty, fear, and grief as we struggle to try and make sense of good vs evil. All of this can be overwhelming. How do we manage the millions of thoughts that are rummaging through our heads? What tools can we grab from our depleted toolbox? This simple, short loving kindness meditation will heal your heart by sending loving kindness to yourself and to those out in the world.

**F-2 WHAT TO DO WITH GUILT, SHAME, AND REGRET****Dr. Doug & BJ Jensen**

Do all bereaved parents deal with guilt, shame, and regret? Here are practical ways to break out of the prison of guilt, shame, and regret that holds us hostage.

**F-3 YOUR FUTURE: 6 ESTATE PLANNING MUST HAVES****Melissa Leavy**

Planning for your future can be very complex. Decisions about how to pass your assets at death, who will take charge of those assets and potential tax outcomes can be complicated. Learn about the 6 must-haves that appear in all estate plans, whether simple or complex: 1) Role of a General Durable Power of Attorney; 2) Role of a Healthcare Power of Attorney and Living Will (Advance Directive); 3) The means of distribution your estate upon death (trust, will, nonprobate transfers, contract); 4) Selecting trusted agents; 5) Instructions for, and communicating to, your designated agents; 6) Meaningful client participation in the process.

**F-4 NAVIGATING LIFE AFTER LOSING A SIBLING****Jay & Kelly Kovaleski and Family**

Re-framing yourself and your life with hope after the loss of a sibling is a personal journey, but can be accomplished alongside others doing the same. Using cardinal directions as our guide we can navigate this new life after loss while continuing to embrace our loved one and their memory. The goal of Navigating Life after Loss is to help others find healing, hope and purpose. Life is a journey and you are not alone.

**F-5 HOW DO I LIVE WITHOUT YOU?****Cindy Magee**

This workshop will discuss the grief following child loss, tools for healing, and re-entry into a life with hope. We will discuss ways to be our own grief coach. I will share strategies for how we as bereaved parents can live in a way that honors our children and discover what they came to teach us.

**G-1 THE GIFT OF MUSIC THROUGH GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT****Vanessa Pentz**

Music is one of the most healing contributors for grief and bereavement. Music brings us closer to our loved ones, and music heals and comforts us with its melodious and lyrical reminders, transcending us to soothing places of inner solitude and positive reflection. This workshop will explore a variety of different musical genres to help deal with the overwhelming task of healing and moving forward with hope after the loss of a loved one.

**G-2 HOW DO I SURVIVE? 7 STEPS TO LIVING AFTER CHILD LOSS****Pat Sheveland**

You're riding an emotional rollercoaster that takes your breath away. You find yourself going from happy to sad to mad in a heartbeat. Your relationships with family, friends, and co-workers feel strained or uncomfortable, and your energy is so low that it's hard to get out of bed and keep moving throughout the day. *How Do I Survive?* is for grieving moms who are tired of struggling to get through each day. Author and grief coach Patricia Sheveland shows you the steps to: 1) Get out of bed, get dressed, and get your "to-do" list done each day; 2) Find ways to get your physical energy back; 3) Even out your emotions when you feel out of control; 4) Plan stress-free time with your family and friends; 5) Honor your child's memory and name on a regular basis. It's time to create a life worth living by honoring your child's memory and rediscovering your purpose.

**G-3 HE SAID, SHE SAID: HOW PEOPLE RESPOND DIFFERENTLY TO LOSS****Susan & Darrell Carr**

The aftermath of losing a child is tough no matter if you are the mother or the father, the grandma or the grandpa or the sister or the brother. Everyone grieves and responds to a loss in their unique way. Learn views and responses of why it's okay for your thoughts to be a world apart from your spouse, sibling, parents' other people who are close to you. Learn why it's okay to live in parallel, at intersections or orbit around in different directions and still survive even--though he said, she said.

**G-4 PARENTS AND SIBLINGS IDEA EXCHANGE****Sarah Kravits & Susan Casey**

Bereaved parents and bereaved siblings are invited to join this workshop and learn from one another. It can be tough for bereaved parents and surviving siblings to understand one another and give one another the kind of support that is needed. However, the dialogue can flow more easily when parents ask questions of siblings from other families, and when siblings do the same with parents who are not theirs. The conversation may even inspire new levels of sharing among parents and children from the same family who attend the workshop together. We will talk about ways to build communication, respect one another's needs and space, and support one another.

**G-5 CO-EXISTING WITH OUR CHILDREN IN GRIEF & SPIRIT PANEL****Sara Ruble, Bobby Morton,  
& Beth D'Angelo**

A workshop about Love and commitment with our children that takes us to a beautiful level of spiritual love. Our grief will push us, or even force us to seek out answers to questions we can hardly express. As we sense a new relationship with our child or children becoming more of a reality, can we trust it is our mutual love bringing us together in ways we could not have imagined? Are our children joining us on this journey of grief into awareness ~ into a 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 grief. This interactive workshop is for those searching for greater understanding of a continuing spiritual relationship as they navigate through grief. (This workshop will have references to after-death communication with your loved one.)

**H-1 GRIEF YOGA®****Cat Guthrie**

Grief Yoga® uses yoga, movement, breath and sound to release pain and suffering and to reconnect back to love. This practice is not as much about physical flexibility as it is about emotional liberation. Exercises and flowing meditations help us process grief and use it as fuel for transformative healing. No yoga experience necessary. Have a yoga mat or towel to sit on, and a private place to practice.

**H-2 THE MANY FACETS OF FORGIVENESS****Laura Diehl**

Un-forgiveness can be a huge issue with bereaved parents. There are so many people we can be angry at, including anyone who had something to do with our child's death (directly or indirectly), ourselves, our child, people around us who don't understand, and for some of us, God. First, we need to comprehend how un-forgiveness keeps us in our pain and allows us to continue being dragged through the emotional mud by remaining attached to those we need to forgive. Second, we need to realize forgiveness is a process, not based on our feelings. Third, we need a plan of action to help us to let go of the anger and forgive. The workshop will address these three issues.

**H-3 FINDING PEACE AND JOY AFTER CHILD LOSS: HELPFUL TIPS FOR BEREAVED PARENTS** **Dr. Alycia Marshall**

This workshop presents several key tips for bereaved parents who are struggling to find peace and hope after dealing with the unimaginable loss of a child. The information provided will be presented from the perspective of a bereaved parent who lost her only child and provides suggestions for moving forward despite child loss. Information presented includes helping bereaved parents to find adequate support for their grief, how to deal with how your life has changed, how to embrace hope and all that you still have and how to move forward in your life with a purpose. The presentation also includes some insight into the life of the presenter's only son and their unique and loving relationship which provides her the strength and courage to move forward.

**H-4 YOU-NIQUE FOOTPRINTS: TAKING INDIVIDUALITY BY STORM****Michayla (and Jay) Kovalski**

Are you ready to fully embrace YOU and your individuality? Losing your beloved sister or brother is a contributing factor to the uniqueness of you; however, you do not identify only as a bereaved sibling. Do not lose sight of who you truly are. You are allowed to dream and aspire to accomplish your heart's desires. We honor the memory of our siblings by living full and happy lives. We must acknowledge and communicate our YOU-niqueness in a world that may not always understand who we are because of our grief journey. Through active discussion we can use our sib's community to build each other up and become who we were made to be.

**H-5 EXPLORING THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE OF GRIEF; A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY PANEL****Debbie Byron,  
Beth D'Angelo, Chris Mulligan & Bobby Morton**

What's going on inside me? Have you had a lot of physical and psyche problems/issues since the passing of your child? This workshop is an in-depth study on how the trauma of Grief effects our physical, emotional, and spiritual nature of being human. Experiencing Grief entirely shocks our energy flow, which in turn affects us mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually, quite often throughout our entire body. Please join us and find out why!