

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE®

International Ministry Center
1657 Commerce Drive, Ste. 2B
South Bend, Indiana 46628-1542
United States of America

Fact Sheet



www.beginningexperience.org

Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. helps separated, divorced and widowed persons and their children resolve the grief that results from the loss of a marriage.

The situation:

- New widows and widowers number 800,000 annually
- The loss of a spouse is one of the most profound losses we ever know
- Half of U.S. marriages continue to end in divorce
- For every divorce, two adults grieve
- Over 1.1 million children are affected annually by divorce

The Beginning Experience® ministry:

- **Vision:** A grieving people, healed, transformed and free again to love themselves, others and God.
- **Mission:** The purpose of the Beginning Experience® ministry is to facilitate the grief resolution process for adults and children who have suffered loss through death, divorce or separation, thereby enabling them to again love themselves, others and God. We accomplish the purpose by offering quality, copyrighted, grief resolution programs presented by trained peer ministers. These programs are designed to move grieving people through a transformational process to a new beginning in their lives.

We believe that:

- Through resolving the grief of significant loss, individuals participate in the death and resurrection of Christ as he lives in the world today;
- Those working through this experience can effectively walk with others for whom the experience is new and hard
- The invitation to recover offers an opportunity for transforming one's life, and for freeing individuals to love self, others and God in new and deeper ways.

Origin:

Developed in 1974 in Fort Worth, Texas by Sister Josephine Stewart, SSMN, a family therapist and Jo Lamia, a divorced woman and educator.

Structure:

- Governed by an International Board of Directors:
 - 7 to 11 member board chosen from U.S. and Canadian team membership
 - Responsible for policy and planning for the long-range needs of the organization.
 - Hires an executive director to staff an International Ministry Center and administer day-to-day services to teams
 - Provides training, technical and material support to teams in local communities, monitors the integrity of the programs and the quality of team service, and implements board policies and plans
 - Certifies local teams to present the programs
 - Holds the federal tax exempt status for all teams in the United States
 - General operations funded by fees for service, stewardship from teams, and gifts.
 - Annual operating budget of approximately \$200,000
- Services provided by Local Teams:
 - Composed of trained volunteers selected from program participants
 - Responsible for delivery of the ministry's programs to a given area
 - Affiliated in a reporting capacity to the local Catholic diocese or, in limited instances, other denominational affiliation
 - Funded through participant program fees, gifts, product sales and special events
 - Governed by a board chosen from the membership

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Core values:

- Respect and appreciation for the indissolubility of sacramental marriage
- Realization that with the death of a spouse, the marriage ends
- Realization that for others, despite marriage preparation ministries, ministries to enhance and strengthen marriage, and ministries to help troubled marriages, many end in divorce
- It is an expression of Christ's compassion to reach out to those grieving the end of a marriage whether from death or divorce.

Statistics:

- 70 adult teams in the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore; 5 teams offer programs for children, youth and young adults
- In the U.S., served over 2,000 adults in the weekend program alone in 2011; many more served through pre- and post-weekend programs
- Adult participants:
 - 24% male; 76% female
 - 52% Catholic; 31% other faith; 17% unknown
 - 50% divorced; 22% separated; 23% widowed
 - Approximately 50% age 44 or below; 50% age 45 or above
 - 90% Caucasian; 6% Hispanic; 2% Asian or of African descent

Participants report these results:

- Leads to healthier family relationships
- Increases emotional health and self-respect, deepens faith
- Verifies that feelings of denial, anger, etc., after the death or divorce are “normal”
- Provides tools to deal with the pain of the loss
- Enhances contribution to employer, church and community

What adult participants say...

“I was nervous about going to the weekend, but I'm glad I did. I feel more alive than I have in years.”

“I found people all around who accepted me without judgment and cared for me.”

“It was a time just for me, to explore where I've been in my life and where I'm going.”

“I have so much more energy now for my children and my job.”

“It was the best gift I ever gave myself.”

What the children say...

“I see that there are other kids out there going through the same things I am. I see that I'm not the only one struggling through life.”

“Beginning Experience® helped me deal with the pain and hurt.”

“I am not the only one with problems. There are a lot more people who care than I thought.”

“I learned that many other kids experience the same feelings I do.”

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The Story...



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Every marriage ends.....some through death; others through divorce. For many couples, the vows they take in the Sacrament of Matrimony to stay together until death end all too soon, and the surviving spouse is left to grieve. For other couples, despite preparation for this vocation and efforts to resolve fundamental problems in the relationship from the church, counselors and the couple themselves, the marriage ends in divorce and two people grieve.

Whatever the cause, the loss of a spouse is one of the greatest catastrophes a person can know. Hopes and plans for the future, friends, financial security, even an important part of a person's self-image, are often swept away in the deluge.

The ripples of this profound loss reach to every corner of the community. Contributions to family, church and employer are crippled while the grieving person attempts to find order and purpose in life. Caring family and friends struggle to know how to help their loved ones deal with this special grief.

This grave loss creates emotional problems that are often manifested in low self-esteem, substance abuse, promiscuity, and mental health problems. The stress is compounded as single parenthood adds to the emotional stress and economic problems. A large number of young people are put at risk when a family experiences death or divorce.

Grief resolution.....Beginning Experience® is a grief resolution peer ministry for the widowed, separated and divorced and for children of these losses. The weekend program provides comfort and support, an opportunity to evaluate one's self and the loss, and is unique among peer ministries and ministries to the single-again. Developed by respected professionals in ministry, grief psychology, and education, the programs are psychologically and spiritually sound.

Theological foundation....A ministry of the Catholic Church rooted in the dying and rising of Jesus, with Reconciliation an essential and pivotal part of the program, Beginning Experience® peer ministers reach out in Christian compassion to others who are suffering the pain of loss. In specific instances, teams have been given permission to form in the Anglican or Episcopal traditions.

Our purpose.....Our purpose is to help divorced, separated and widowed men and women—and children of divorce, parental separation and death—heal and free them to love themselves, others and God by working through their grief. These individuals, in turn, offer a better quality of life to all those with whom they come in contact.

Wounded healers.....Research has shown that the Beginning Experience® process, an invitation to self-encounter within a supportive community, is considerably more effective than the support or informational groups usually provided for the single-again. The lay ministers in the ministry are “wounded healers” - specially trained men and women who are themselves widowed, separated or divorced, but further along in the grieving process.

This approach to ministry has an extraordinary power. At one level, “having been there” offers a credibility and capacity for empathy that is truly valued by those who are newly hurting. At a second level, training and service as a peer minister is highly therapeutic and provides an opportunity for even greater personal growth and healing. As Beginning Experience® ministers are themselves healed and move on, they take into the larger community exemplary training and effective life and leadership skills.

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The Situation



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Sooner or later, every marriage ends, either through death or divorce.

- New widows and widowers number 800,000 annually (National Mental Health Association, USA)
- Half of U.S. marriages continue to end in divorce
- For every divorce, two adults grieve
- Over 1.1 million children are affected annually by divorce (U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families)
 - Divorce is the leading cause of childhood depression and suicide
 - Rates of drug abuse and teen pregnancy are higher for children of the divorced
 - Children under age 15 number 54,757,000; 27% live with a single parent; 90% of these with the mother

Participants testify that the Beginning Experience® weekend is a transforming experience, providing renewed energy to:

- Be more effective parents
- Return to church
- Advance their education in order to improve their socioeconomic level

What the program does for participants:

- Leads to healthier family relationships
- Strengthens spiritual life
- Increases emotional health and self respect
- Verifies that feelings of denial, anger, etc., after the death or divorce are “normal”
- Provides tools to deal with the pain of the loss
- Enhances the ability to contribute to employer, church and community

Adult participants are:

- 24% male; 76% female
- 52% Catholic; 31% other faith; 17% unknown
- 50% divorced; 22% separated; 23% widowed
- Approximately 50% age 44 or below; 50% age 45 or above
- 90% Caucasian; 6% Hispanic; 2% Asian or African descent

Independent research published in the *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* shows that the impact of the Beginning Experience® weekend is more profound and longer lasting than that of support and informational groups for the single-again.

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Vision, Mission & History



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The Beginning Experience® Vision

A hurting people who are healed, transformed, and free again to love themselves, others and God.

The Beginning Experience® Mission

The purpose of the Beginning Experience® ministry is to facilitate the grief resolution process for adults and children who have suffered a loss through death, divorce or separation, thereby enabling them to again love themselves, others and God.

We accomplish the purpose by offering quality, copyrighted, grief resolution programs presented by trained peer ministers. These programs are designed to move grieving people through a transformational process to a new beginning in their lives.

We believe:

- That through resolving the grief of a significant loss, individuals participate in the death and resurrection of Christ as he lives in the world today
- That those working through this experience can effectively walk with others for whom the experience is new and hard; and
- That the invitation to recover offers an opportunity for transforming one's life, and for freeing individuals to love self, others and God in new and deeper ways.

History

In 1973, Sister Josephine Stewart, a family counselor at the Catholic Renewal Center in Fort Worth, Texas and a divorced friend, Jo Lamia, attended a Marriage Encounter weekend with the intention of developing a program for engaged couples. In the course of the weekend, Ms. Lamia adapted the Marriage Encounter process to face issues and concerns in her own life that had never been addressed. At the close of the weekend, Sister Josephine saw a profound change occur in her friend.

Sister Josephine and other professionals in grief resolution, counseling, psychology, education and spiritual renewal, adapted Ms. Lamia's writings to outline the process for the Beginning Experience® weekend.

The program was soon in motion throughout United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, England, Scotland and Ireland. Today, 97 certified teams of peer ministers present the programs in local communities in these countries.

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What People Say...

What adult participants say...

"I was nervous about going to the Beginning Experience weekend, but I'm glad I did. I feel more alive than I have in years."

"...my first step out of grief and self pity. I took a fresh look at the choices I have now to make my life a good one."

"I found people all around who accepted me without judgment and cared for me."

"It was a time just for me, to explore where I've been in my life and where I'm going."

"I have so much more energy now for my children and my job."

"It was the best gift I ever gave myself."

What the children say...

"Now I see that there are other kids out there going through the same things I am. I saw that I wasn't the only one struggling through life."

"My weekend helped me look at my life and deal with the pain and hurt."

"I found out that I'm not the only one with problems. There are a lot more people who care than I thought."

"I learned that feelings are neither good nor bad, but they just are. I also learned that many other kids experience the same feelings I do."

"I learned that I really do need other people to live. I found out I had stopped growing and needed to start."



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Governance



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Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. is recognized as a ministry of the Catholic Church and is listed in the *Official Catholic Directory*.

The Most Reverend Patrick Zurek, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Amarillo, Texas, serves as the liaison for Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The goal of the Beginning Experience® ministry is a collaborative relationship with each Diocese in which it serves:

- Providing a resource for the Church through programs to help grieving people
- Requesting clergy support for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist

The Beginning Experience® ministry is governed by an International Board of Directors responsible for maintaining program integrity; the ministry's financial health, growth and development; and overseeing its legal and ethical responsibilities.

The International Board maintains an International Ministry Center staffed with an Executive Director charged with day-to-day operation of the ministry:

- Monitors program integrity, trademark and copyright compliance
- Establishes and certifies local teams to present the ministry's programs
- Provides training, technical and material support to teams in local communities
- Monitors the quality of local team service
- Holds the U.S. federal tax exempt status for the entire organization
- Maintains registration of the ministry's trademarks and copyrights
- Connects with the Church and other ministries and organizations at the national/international level
- Funded through team stewardship and participant fees, gifts, product sales and special events
- Operates with an annual budget of approximately \$200,000

Each local team is:

- Composed of trained volunteers selected from program participants
- Affiliated with the International Ministry Center
- Certified by the International Ministry Center to present the programs
- Responsible for delivery of the ministry's programs to a given area
- Affiliated in a reporting capacity with the local Catholic diocese or, in certain instances and with express permission, another denomination in which it has been formed
- Funded through program fees, gifts, product sales and special events
- Governed by a board chosen from the membership and charged with maintaining local program integrity and operating the local ministry within the guidelines and policies established by the International Board

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Accounting Manager, M&O Industries

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Former teacher, spiritual director and pastor

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Former teacher and principal; family counselor

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Spiritual director, counselor

Margaret Poynton, RN, Wellington, New Zealand, Asia Pacific Regional Board President
Social services agency manager

Past Executive Directors

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Vicaress and General Councillor, Adrian Dominicans

Sr. Cynthia Hruby, SSND
Rev. E. Guy Gau, OSB, MSW, (deceased)

Liaison to United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Most Reverend Patrick Zurek, D.D., Bishop, Diocese of Amarillo, Texas

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Our Founders



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Sister Josephine Stewart, SSMN

Born October 12, 1931 in El Paso, Texas, Sister Josephine Stewart was raised in Oklahoma City, Fort Worth and Lafayette, Louisiana. At the age of 22, she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur. She returned to Dallas to teach at Our Lady of Good Council High School. In 1961, she became the Superior of Our Lady of Victory Convent and then earned her master's degree in education from St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri.

In 1970, Sister Josephine attended "The Happening," a program of encounter with self, others and God, which had a profound impact on her spirituality and future ministries.

In her ministry with St. John the Apostle Catholic Church in Fort Worth, she worked on Marriage Tribunal cases and did counseling, learning of the stress and grief of divorced Catholics. Along with Jo Lamia, a divorced friend, she wrote and developed the Beginning Experience® program; the initial weekend was presented Oct. 18-20, 1974.

By 1977, Sister Josephine was devoted to the Beginning Experience® ministry full time, a ministry that had grown to 13 teams in the United States. In 1981, after the ministry spread to Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand, as well as additional American states, Sister Josephine stepped aside, leaving the ministry in the capable hands of Fr. Guy Gau.

Sister Josephine has since spent her time traveling, working with abused children and people with developmental disabilities, and has written a book, *We Are All Connected*. She currently lives in Wichita Falls, Texas where she continues as a counselor.

Jo Lamia

Born in Ohio in 1924, Ann Maria ("Jo") Lamia joined the Navy as a WAVE during WWII and became a lab technician. It was there that she met and married her husband, Peter. After the war, Jo and Peter moved to Dallas when he became the manager for the precious jewels department at Neiman Marcus. They had two sons, Mark and Kevin.

During her marriage, Jo hid her frustration and sadness, only letting Peter see her happy side. Peter never knew how many times she was upset with him and went to the bathroom to cry. His infidelity led to a separation of 13 years and then divorce. After Peter left, Jo stayed at home and smoked, drank coffee and watched TV.

Noticing Jo's depression, Sister Benita Frances, principal at the school Jo's sons attended, asked Jo to fill in for the 6th grade teacher on maternity leave. Jo agreed and finished out the school year, beginning a 27-year teaching career. When her sons enrolled Bishop Dunne Catholic High School, Jo served on the school board. There she met Assistant Principal Sister Josephine Stewart.

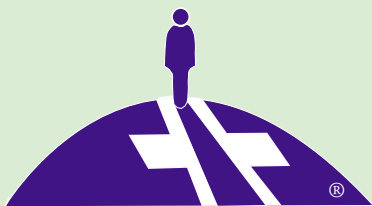
She and Sister Josephine joined the "Happening Team," presenting retreats for teens and adults consisting of team presentations and small group dialogue. Jo's joyful personality was nurtured there. When Sister Josephine's pastor, Fr. Robert Wilson, asked her to create a weekend encounter for engaged couples, she agreed on condition that Jo be part of it. Josephine believed that Jo would have a lot to say to engaged couples about what to look for when blinded by love. In 1973, Jo and Sister Josephine attended a National Marriage Encounter weekend at Fort Worth's Catholic Renewal Center in order to write the program for engaged couples. During this weekend, Jo wrote out all the unfinished grief and anger from her divorce, coming to a peaceful closure on the end of her marriage. Her notebook became the seed and the process of the Beginning Experience® ministry. She and Sister Josephine worked for the next year writing Engaged Encounter and the initial Beginning Experience® program. Jo continued to work with the ministry until her death in 1987.

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Peer Ministry Teams



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UNITED STATES

Alabama

Birmingham
Huntsville

Arizona

Phoenix

California

Los Angeles
Sacramento
San Diego
San Jose

Connecticut

Connecticut

Hawaii

Hawaii

Iowa

Des Moines
Northwest Iowa

Kansas

Greater Kansas City
Wichita
Wichita YABE

Louisiana

Alexandria
New Orleans
Lake Charles

Michigan

Detroit
Grand Rapids

Minnesota

Central Minnesota
Marshall/SW Minnesota
Rochester

Missouri

Greater Kansas City
Springfield

Nebraska

Omaha

New Mexico

Las Cruces/El Paso, TX

New York

Hudson Valley
Long Island
Rochester
Rochester YABE

North Dakota

Eastern North Dakota
Western North Dakota
Western North Dakota
CBE

Ohio

Cincinnati

Oklahoma

Oklahoma City
Tulsa

Oregon

Oregon

Pennsylvania

Harrisburg
Pittsburgh

South Carolina

Lowcountry South Carolina

South Dakota

Eastern South Dakota

Texas

Dallas/Ft. Worth
Houston
San Angelo
San Antonio

Washington

Spokane
Tacoma

Wyoming

Wyoming

CANADA

Manitoba

Winnipeg
Winnipeg YABE

Ontario

Sarnia

ASIA PACIFIC REGION

Australia

Adelaide
Brisbane
Broken Bay/Sydney
Lismore

New Zealand

Auckland
Wellington

Republic of Singapore

Singapore

GREAT BRITAIN &

IRELAND REGION

England

Hexham/Newcastle
Hexham/Newcastle YPBE
Kent
Liverpool
London
Northampton
Plymouth

Northern Ireland

Belfast

Scotland

West of Scotland
Scotland YPBE

Republic of Ireland

Cork
Dublin
Dundalk
West of Ireland

CBE=Children's Beginning
Experience

YPBE=Young People's
Beginning Experience

YABE=Young Adult
Beginning Experience

June 2013

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Who we are...



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Who is Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.?

The Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. helps widowed, divorced and separated people and children of these losses move through the grief of losing their marriage and/or the family they knew to find healing and hope for the future.

Sister Josephine Stewart, SSMN, a family counselor in North Texas, and her divorced friend, Jo Lamia, began the ministry in 1974. It has since spread across North America and to the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Teams of peer volunteers selected from among program participants are trained to present the structured weekend programs.

This peer ministry approach is profound in its impact not only for program participants who feel understood by their peers, but for the continued healing experienced by the peer ministers themselves.

In addition to the weekend programs for adults, children and young adults, weekly support programs for each of these groups have been developed. This offers a continuum of program to help those affected by these losses address their feelings and find healthy approaches to express those feelings in order to move into a happier, more hope-filled future.

Grief experience for adults

The loss of a spouse is one of the greatest catastrophes a person can know. Hopes and plans for the future, friends, financial security, even an important part of a person's self-image are often swept away in the deluge.

This grave loss creates emotional problems that are often manifested in low self-esteem, substance abuse, promiscuity, and mental health problems. The stress is compounded as single parenthood adds to the emotional stress and economic problems. A large number of young people are put at risk when a family experiences death or divorce.

Childhood grief

When a child or teenager loses his or her intact family, the grief experience has the potential to impact the child's entire life. The grief is often expressed in explosive bursts of emotion and through negative, regressive and often self-destructive behaviors. Beginning Experience programs help children and young adults cope with their feelings, resolve their grief and put them on the road to happier, more productive lives.

The need is great

- In the United States, eight million people suffer the death of someone in their immediate family; 800,000 new widows and widowers; 400,000 people under 25 suffered from the death of a loved one (National Mental Health Association)
- 1.9 million youngsters under age 18 (or more than 2 percent of American children) have lost one or both parents. (U. S. Social Security Administration)
- Over 1.1 million children are affected annually by divorce (U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families)
 - Divorce is the leading cause of childhood depression and suicide
 - Rates of drug abuse and teen pregnancy are higher for children of the divorced
- One out of five children have a learning, emotional, or behavioral problem due to the family system changing. (National Center for Health Statistics)
- Nine million American children face risk factors that may hinder their ability to become healthy and productive adults. One in seven children deals with at least four of the risk factors, which include growing up in a single-parent household. The survey also indicated that children confronting several risk factors are more likely to experience problems with concentration, communication, and health. (1999 Kids Count Survey - Annie E. Casey Foundation)

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Overview

The ministry currently operates in the United States, Canada, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. In the past year, these locations reported serving 4,689 program participants. Those who have attended the adult ministry programs report:

- Increased emotional health and self respect
- New skills to deal with the pain of loss
- Healthier family relationships
- Renewed energy to be more effective parents, return to their church, and improve the standard of living for themselves and their families.

Beginning Experience teams, incorporated as affiliates of Beginning Experience International Ministry Inc., operate in a reporting capacity to the organizational structure of their local faith affiliation. Nearly all teams are associated with the local Catholic diocese; one with the local Episcopal diocese, one with the local Anglican diocese, and one with the local Presbyterian church. Regardless of the faith affiliation, each team and all programs serve those of all faiths.

Background checks are standard for all youth program volunteers over 18, as is safe environment training, usually offered through the local diocese. All volunteers receive training in program presentation, local administration, and small group facilitation skills. Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. takes special precautions to maintain safety and confidentiality for youth and their families who go through the programs.

A board of directors selected from its peer ministry teams governs the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. The board of directors hires an executive director to implement board decisions and provide day-to-day administration of the ministry's programs and services.

Programs for adults include:

- The *Beginning Experience* weekend
- Coping with Life Alone, a 6-10 week support program for the newly grieving
- Support programs to follow the weekend experience
- Beyond Beginning Experience™ for those who have completed the grieving process and wish to address issues of life as persons who are single again

These programs are staffed by trained peer ministers, selected from among those who have participated in the program, along with others experienced in grief ministry.

Programs for children include:

- Who Am I Now?, a weekly support program for ages 4-7, 8-12 and 13-17
- Children's Beginning Experience weekend for ages 8-12
- Young People's Beginning Experience for ages 13-18
- Young Adult Beginning Experience for ages 18-25+

These programs are staffed by trained adults and youth peer ministers, selected from among those who have participated in the program, along with others experienced in grief ministry.

What is Who Am I Now?

Who Am I Now? is a support program for children who have lost their intact family through the death of a parent or through their parents' divorce. It was developed for and offered through Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

The program was developed by Robert Allers, a child psychologist with the Grand Rapids, Michigan school system, with additional material developed by the Office of Family Life in the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska.

The Who Am I Now? program is designed for three age levels:

--Level 1: ages 4-6

--Level 2: ages 8-13

--Level 3: ages 13-17

The material provides basic information about childhood responses to grief at varied age levels, helpful suggestions for adult leaders who facilitate the groups at each age level, and a structured outline and resources needed for the 10-week program. Sample brochures, registration forms, and handouts for reproduction are provided with the material.

The program has also been condensed to a six week program if less time is available.

What youth have to say...

“Now I see that there are other kids out there going through the same things I am. I saw that I wasn’t the only one struggling through life.”

“It helped me look at my life and deal with the pain and hurt.”

“I am not the only one with problems. There are a lot more people who care than I thought.”

“I learned that feelings are neither good nor bad, but they just are. I also learned that many other kids experience the same feelings I do.”

“ I learned that I really do need other people to live. I found out I had stopped growing and needed to start.”

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Council of Advisors



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Bloomington, IN
Retired school superintendent, principal and pastor

Anthony O'Connor, CFP
Binghamton, NY
Certified Financial Planner

The Honorable James Scott, JD
Rock Valley, IA
Judge, Iowa 5th District Court

Timothy Bauer, CPA
Fairbanks, Alaska
Retired university auditor and business manager

Sister Tarianne DeYonker, OP, MSW
Adrian, Michigan
Vicaress and General Councillor, Adrian Dominicans
Former executive director, school president, family counselor

Steven Hanchuk
Winnipeg, Manitoba
CANADA
Retired human resources manager

Steven Oldham, JD
Sacramento, California
Attorney, California Department of Health Services
Previous practice in franchise law

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Serving with the Church



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Every marriage ends...and the loss of a spouse is one of the greatest catastrophes a person can know. For many couples, death ends the marriage, and the remaining partner is left to grieve. For others, despite preparation for this important vocation, the vows they exchange, and significant effort—their own, those of the Church and the community—to resolve fundamental problems in their relationship, the marriage ends in divorce, and two people grieve.

With this loss, hopes and plans for the future, friends, financial security—even an important part of a person's self-image—are often swept away. The ripples of this loss reach every corner of the community as contributions to family, church and employer are crippled while the grieving person tries to find order and purpose in life. Caring family and friends struggle to know how to help.

Christian compassion...is the focus of the *Beginning Experience* ministry. Its peer ministers are wounded healers—men and women who are themselves widowed, separated or divorced. They follow the example of Christ in reaching out to others who are suffering this pain. As instruments of the Holy Spirit, they share their own losses, and listen with compassion as they walk with those who are beginning this difficult journey. Rooted in the Paschal Mystery, and with Reconciliation as a pivotal part of the program, the *Beginning Experience* ministry offers a resource for the diocese, working with the Church to help heal its grieving people.

Grief resolution.....The *Beginning Experience* weekend and the ministry's other programs provide an opportunity for each participant to reflect on and evaluate his or her life, and the loss experience, and to share that experience within a supportive community. Developed by respected professionals in ministry, grief psychology, and education, the programs are psychologically and spiritually sound. Research has shown that the Beginning Experience® invitational process is considerably more effective than the support or informational groups often provided for the single-again.

Ministering with the Church...Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc. is recognized as an official ministry of the Catholic Church. In the United States, it is listed in the *Official Catholic Directory* and in the *Directory of Lay Movements, Organizations and Professional Associations* published by United States Catholic Bishops Conference Secretariate for Family, Laity, Women and Youth. The Most Reverend Patrick Zurek, Bishop of Amarillo, Texas, serves as the ministry's liaison to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The ministry's goal is a collaborative relationship with each (Arch)Diocese in which it serves:

- Providing a resource for the Church through programs to help grieving people
- Requesting clergy support for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist

The Beginning Experience® ministry is governed by an International Board of Directors responsible for maintaining program integrity; the ministry's financial health, growth and development; and overseeing its legal and ethical responsibilities. It is funded by team stewardship and participant fees, gifts, and special events. It has established an International Ministry Center, staffed by an executive director, to administer day-to-day operations and connections with affiliate teams. Certain administrative responsibilities for the ministry in other areas of the world are delegated to a Regional Board of Great Britain and Ireland, and to an Asia Pacific Regional Board.

Beginning Experience® is a registered trademark of Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.

Alabama	North Dakota
Birmingham, Diocese of Birmingham	Eastern North Dakota, Diocese of Fargo
Huntsville, Diocese of Birmingham	Western North Dakota, Diocese of Bismarck
Arizona	Western North Dakota CBE, Diocese of Bismarck
Phoenix, Diocese of Phoenix	Ohio
California	Cincinnati, Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Los Angeles, Archdiocese of Los Angeles	Oklahoma
Sacramento, Diocese of Sacramento	Oklahoma City, Archdiocese of Oklahoma City
San Diego, Diocese of San Diego	Tulsa, Diocese of Tulsa
San Jose, Diocese of San Jose	Oregon
Hawaii	Oregon, Archdiocese of Portland
Hawaii, Diocese of Honolulu	Pennsylvania
Iowa	Harrisburg, Diocese of Harrisburg
Des Moines, Diocese of Des Moines	Pittsburgh, Diocese of Pittsburgh
Northwest Iowa, Diocese of Sioux City	South Carolina
Kansas	Lowcountry South Carolina, Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina
Greater Kansas City, Archdiocese of Kansas City	South Dakota
Wichita, Diocese of Wichita	Eastern South Dakota, Diocese of Sioux Falls
Wichita YABE, Diocese of Wichita	Texas
Louisiana	Dallas/Ft. Worth, Diocese of Fort Worth
Alexandria, Diocese of Alexandria	Houston, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
New Orleans, Archdiocese of New Orleans	San Angelo, Diocese of San Angelo
Lake Charles, Diocese of Lake Charles	San Antonio, Archdiocese of San Antonio
Michigan	Washington
Detroit, Archdiocese of Detroit	Spokane, Diocese of Spokane
Grand Rapids, Diocese of Grand Rapids	Tacoma, Archdiocese of Seattle
Minnesota	Wyoming
St. Cloud/Central Minnesota, Diocese of St. Cloud	Wyoming, Diocese of Cheyenne
Marshall/SW Minnesota, Diocese of New Ulm	Manitoba, Canada
Rochester, Diocese of Winona	Winnipeg, Archdiocese of St. Boniface
Missouri	Winnipeg YABE, Archdiocese of St. Boniface
Springfield, Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau	Ontario, Canada
Nebraska	Sarnia, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Omaha, Archdiocese of Omaha	
New Mexico	
Las Cruces/El Paso, TX, Diocese of Las Cruces & Diocese of El Paso	
New York	
Hudson Valley, Archdiocese of New York	
Long Island, Diocese of Rockville Centre	
Rochester, Diocese of Rochester	
Rochester YABE, Diocese of Rochester	