

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE  
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



# sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

*those that have  
lost their lives to  
COVID-19*

FALL 2020

Volume 13, Issue 1

Dominic Murgido - Editor

## Welcome *from the Editor*

As we approach the final quarter of 2020 there are many things that have happened this year that has changed us in many ways. We must remember that we have something in common in that we are all human beings sharing this planet and must be united to come together to help one another with regard to our health and welfare, safety in our communities, fairness in our opinions, and respect for one another for our values and beliefs. Fall is not only a time of reflection but a time to move forward with the ideals that we will overcome our difficulties in life and in this world we all share.

**sudSSpirit** was founded in 2008 to help provide a place of comfort, compassion, and hope for those that have experienced a sudden unexpected death of their spouse or significant other. Meetings are held monthly in Reading, PA and Bennington, VT. All meetings are Free and No registration is required. Additional information is within this newsletter. **sudSSpirit** stands for "Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph"

If this is the first time you have heard about us and are in need of some help through our support group chapters, please see page three in the right margin for additional information about our chapters. We also have a list of other resources on page two in the left margin that may be helpful to you. This newsletter is available to anyone anywhere regardless of their specific loss so if you know of someone that can benefit from these pages, please share this with them and have them contact us with their email or address information and we will make sure that they become part of our mailing list for future publications. You may also contact the editor/founder

directly at **717-866-2401** or [sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com). We also have a facebook page.

Thank you to those that have been long time supporters of our group and thanks to all of those that we have helped along the way for believing in yourself and us to help you in your time of need. ***Together We Can Help Each Other Heal.***

### Age vs Time *by John Kreiser*

When we were young, time seemed to move  
Along at turtle's pace  
We didn't think of daily life  
As any kind of race  
But now, we are much older and  
No longer is this true  
It seems one day the month begins  
And then the next, it's through  
I think the answer lies in math  
That when you're only four  
One year is equal to one fourth  
Of all you've lived before  
So as your age begins to climb  
Percentages go down  
The ratio grows greater for  
Each year that you're around  
Just think of what it must be like  
To live to be four score  
By then, one year's an eightieth  
Of all the years before  
So that is why time seems to fly  
The older that we are  
Each year is just a smaller part  
Of what we've lived so far

*Reprinted with permission from Author*

### An Entry From My Journal

"I've been finding peaceful moments on the deck at night sitting alone looking at the light show the stars provide; relax, reflect, inspired"

- Editor



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### Quarterly Quote

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"People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within".

*Elisabeth Kubler-Ross*

*Together we can help each other heal*



717-866-2401 / [sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com)

## Resources

- Editor

GRMHA (Greater Reading  
Mental Health Alliance)  
www.grmha.org  
610-775-3000

St Joseph's Spiritual Care  
www.thefutureofhealthcare.org  
610-378-2297

Compassionate Care Hospice  
1-800-777-5109

Family Guidance Center  
www.familyguidancecenter.com  
610-374-4963

Heartland Home Health Care  
and Hospice  
610-373-6898 or 888-800-0224

Circle of Life Coalition  
www.circleoflifecoalition.org  
www.griefshare.org

Diakon Family Life Services  
www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp  
610-682-1337

Bennington Area VNA & Hospice  
www.bavnah.org  
802-442-5502

Bayada Hospice Services  
www.bayada.com  
855-696-2072  
610-367-1608

Pathways Center for Grief & Loss  
www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org  
800-924-7610

Spiritrust Lutheran Home Care &  
Hospice  
800-840-9081



## Even Now *by Dominic Murgido*

Even now,  
You will smile at moments of recollection.

Even now,  
You remember how they helped you in a  
difficult time.

Even now,  
You remember their laugh, their voice,  
their touch.

Even now,  
You remember the way they looked at  
you when you knew they weren't happy.

Even now,  
You remember their sadness and their  
own worry.

Even now,  
You remember events, occasions, places  
you went together.

Even now,  
You remember raising children together.

Even now,  
You remember the quiet moments you  
shared.

Even now,  
You remember walking in a park  
exploring nature together.

Even now,  
You remember planting a tree together.

Even now,  
You remember making breakfast or  
dinner together.

Even now,  
You remember riding bikes together.

Even now,  
You remember being on a lake kayaking  
together.

Even now,  
You remember picnics together.

Even now,  
There will never be a time you're not  
sad by their absence.

Even now,  
There will never be a time that you  
don't remember them.

Even now,  
They will always be part of your life.

## Adapting to the loss of a loved one: Three Tips on how to cope *by Wendy Bridger*

Have you ever sat down and played a piano where one of the keys wasn't working? Or made cookies and left out an ingredient? Perhaps you've started listening to a favorite CD, and just when it gets to your favorite part of your favorite song, you realize that there is a scratch in it.

In some ways, losing a loved one is similar. Here you are going easily through life, and then, BAM, they are gone and life will never be the same. That piano piece sounds different because the middle C is broken, the cookies just aren't the same, and at times, we are frustrated like we are when our CD gets scratched. Unfortunately, with the loss of a loved one, it is more difficult to fix than the piano or the batch of cookies, and your loved one was irreplaceable, unlike the CD. Short and simple, this is what grieving is: learning to cope with the loss of someone who was apart of what made us what we are. So, what do we do? How do we go on after they are gone? I have a few suggestions that might help you through.

First of all, just as each of us has different personalities, each of us grieves in a different way. There is no right or wrong way to feel or act, as long as you are not endangering yourself or others. Some of us cry. Others of us bury ourselves in work or hobbies. If the person is still living and only the relationship has changed, it is very easy for us to do all we can to change things back to how they used to be. At times, it may take a while to truly even admit that they are gone. We just might feel numb. Some of us might even feel guilty if we don't feel sad enough! So, take your feelings and actions for what they are and be patient with yourself. After all, you have just lost a part of what makes you who you are.

Also, find a way to transition your loved one into your new life<sup>1</sup>. My father in law lost his dad last year and he hung a picture of him up in the living room to remember him. Others write goodbye letters to their loved one, giving themselves a chance to tell them things that they never got to say. Some of us keep a little box full of pictures and memories only to be taken out when we want to remember them, because remembering them all the time would be too overwhelming. I had a friend who's little brother died. She got married on his

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## This Too Shall Pass *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

If you've just returned to elementary school from Easter vacation, your grandmother having died on April 3rd after two days struggling with pneumonia, you probably couldn't grieve easily and recover well.

Kids in those days, and I was one, were shielded from what the adults went through. We weren't allowed to attend the funeral. And as the adults later discussed, we didn't see the body of the beloved, dressed beautifully and lying in a handsome casket. We weren't permitted to touch her arm, or kiss her cold fingers. We weren't able to talk about our feelings, or hear others talk about theirs.

We had to choke it down, and that's what I did when my lovely Grandma died a month before my eighth birthday. Several years afterward, with penicillin newly available, Grandma could have lived another 20 years, well into her eighties.

My Mom was shocked by the sudden death of her 68-year-old mother, but she didn't want to share this with me. "You haven't been crying, have you?" she asked me. (My mother's questions often suggested the answers she wanted to hear.) "No," I lied.

So while it looked as though Mom and I were each handling this tragedy well, quite the opposite was true. We weren't revealing our true feelings to anyone. We weren't being comforted by anyone.

We didn't know it at the time, but we needed to grieve. We needed to know that life has both Ups and Downs in it. To believe that life has only the marvelous things -- the Ups -- can't give us the help we need when we're hit with the death of someone near and dear to us.

And with such difficulties, we need to know that although things are difficult now, "this too shall pass." In the years ahead -- few or many -- we need to know how to handle the death of people who have been precious to us.

The pain does ease. My Mom could have told me this. She could have hugged me, instead of just leaving the room. And why did she seem to disapprove of my crying? I had adored Grandma. And she adored me, writing to me almost every week, and inviting me to stay with her (and Grandpa) when my parents needed

some "time off." I actually believed I was her favorite grandchild. Perhaps some of my many cousins, and my brother too, each thought they were her favorite. She was that kind of Grandma.

If my mother had acted differently, it would have been so helpful, showing me that I needn't be dishonest about what I was going through. Also, that I needn't feel alone. This could have provided the opportunity, too, to talk about recovering from what we were experiencing. I do like the words "this too shall pass." They are soothing. Also true.

It has been 11 years since my beloved husband died, and I can truthfully say that I'm no longer grieving. On occasion, I miss him deeply, but never to the extent where I'd want to cease living my new life as best I can. I tell myself that this new life is what he wanted for me -- that I would go on to live as many good years as I could. I haven't found a replacement for him, haven't even looked for one, perhaps because I was loved so beautifully during our 43 years together. I was fully loved (unbelievable)

even during his last two months before he slipped away, painlessly, of his seventh cancer.

And I must say that being 89 and living alone has its pleasures. I can eat leftover oatmeal for dinner. I can watch whatever I want on television, or even leave the TV on and stop watching. What makes me happy each day, though, is that I can think about Roy, and almost talk with him as I connect with my many good memories. I feel so lucky to have had those 43 years with him.

At any age, we'd want to know that "this too shall pass." Grieving can always ease, with time and with an optimistic outlook. This doesn't mean that we forget the person who has died. Not at all. As our grieving becomes less devastating, less intrusive, less taking over our entire lives, we can follow the good wishes of the husbands who have died. -- and the wives also, of course. They definitely wanted us to laugh, to grow, to live, and to enjoy what is (as well as what was).

*Ellen is an award - winning writer, attendee, and long - time supporter of sudSSpirit in our Bennington, VT chapter.*



### **sudSSpirit Bereavement Support Group**

meets monthly in the following locations:

#### **Berks Chapter**

Reading, PA.

4<sup>th</sup> Wed. of the month  
6 PM

Exeter Community Library  
4569 Prestwick Drive  
Reading, PA 19606  
610-406-9431

#### **Bennington Chapter**

Bennington, VT

4<sup>th</sup> Tues. of the month  
6 PM

Bennington Free Library  
101 Silver Street  
Bennington, VT 05201  
802-442-9051

Due to COVID-19,  
please email or call  
contacts below  
to confirm time and  
place of meeting

For additional  
information,  
Please check our  
facebook page or email:

[sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com)

-Berks, Pennsylvania

[sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com)

-Bennington, VT

or phone:

**717-866-2401**

-Berks, Pennsylvania

**802-441-5562**

-Bennington, VT

- Editor





## Grief Insights from Gloria Vanderbilt

By: Victor Parachin

Though Gloria Vanderbilt was heir to the Vanderbilt fortune and although she enjoyed great success as a fashion designer, her life has not been immune to a variety of tragedies. One of the most painful took place in 1988 when her 23 year old son, Carter, ended his life by suicide. Gloria's other son, who was a college student at the time, is television journalist Anderson Cooper. Together she and Anderson recently published, *The Rainbow Comes and Goes: A Mother and Son on Life, Love, and Loss*. In it she writes about the death of Carter offering these insights about loss.

The loss of a child leaves a very deep wound. While the death of any loved one is profoundly painful, the death of a child combined with the act of suicide is even more agonizing. "I have heard it said the greatest loss a human being can experience is the loss of a child. That is true," she says. "The person you were before, you will never be again; it doesn't just change you, it demolishes you. The rest of your life is spent on another level, the level of those who have lost a child." \* One learns to live with the pain. Vanderbilt didn't feel that her pain lessened but became "different" saying "it's not something that goes away or fades into the landscape. It is there forever and even, inescapable. I have learned to live with it."

\* There are recurring dreams about her son. The times when Carter appears in a dream are bitter sweet. On the one hand they are appreciated encounters. On the other, they are reminders of what is missing. "Carter is not here. He has no brilliant career. No loving wife he is crazy about. No son...no daughter. He exists only in memory."

\* Talking about her son is desirable. A friend said she was hesitant to bring up Carter's name and speak of him. However, Vanderbilt said it made her happy to talk about him. "It brings him to me. He is not forgotten."

\* Holidays were 'celebrated' differently. After Carter's death neither she nor her remaining son Anderson Cooper, had any desire to observe Thanksgiving or Christmas in any traditional way. She and Anderson came together and always went to a movie. For several years they managed their way through the holidays by being together in silence in a darkened movie theater permitting themselves to be distracted by entertainment for a few hours.

\* No one escapes suffering. "We are not meant always to be happy, and who would want to be?" she asks. "Happiness would become meaningless if it were a constant state. If you accept that, then you will not be surprised when something bad occurs, you will not gnash your teeth and ask 'Why me? Why has this happened to me?' It has happened to you because that is the nature of things. No one escapes."

\* Joy is always possible. Though she lost her son, Vanderbilt still feels "there is so much to be joyful about." Joy is something she has trained herself to see and experience. "Know friendship; being able to really talk with someone who has a problem and say something that will help; waking up in the morning, looking out and seeing a tree has suddenly blossomed – what joy that brings."

\* Hope is present despite loss. Quoting British poet William Wordsworth - "The rainbow comes and goes..." - Vanderbilt cherishes the symbol of the rainbow as one of hope. "I find it reassuring knowing that the rainbow comes and goes. It helps me accept the way things often are. In every life, you have moments of blinding beauty and happiness and then you land in a dark cave and there is no color, no sky. Then the rainbow returns."

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birthday as a way to include him at her wedding. Once again, it depends on you and your relationship with the one you loved. For instance, burning every picture you had of an ex-boyfriend might be the perfect way to transition.

Another thing, you usually don't ever "get over it." Your loved one is gone. If you no longer have an ingredient to make cookies, it's easy to realize that replacing it with a different ingredient would not make the cookies start tasting like they used to. To expect that you will be able to replace your loved one is also unrealistic. This reality may sound even more depressing. Frankly, I love chocolate chip cookies, and the idea of not ever having one again is quite upsetting! But in time, if I had to, I could grow to love other sweets, like banana bread, sweet potato pie, or brownies. So, even if you aren't going to get over it, in time, you will adapt to the loss and find fulfillment through other experiences and relationships.

So, be patient with yourself. Losing someone isn't easy. It turns your life upside down. Naturally, it's going to take a while to pick up the pieces and transition to life without your loved one. Remember, Beethoven composed some beautiful music after losing his hearing, and you will find happiness and fulfillment again in your life after losing your loved one.

<sup>1</sup>Wordern, J.W. (1991). *Grief Counseling & Grief Therapy: A guidebook for the Mental Health Practitioner*. Springer Publishing

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