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Welcome *from the Editor*

Where did this year go? We are now into the Fall season and another transition in time and place for us internally as well as the happenings all around us. Don't panic! You can all do this and reap the rewards with a new outlook, comfort, and maybe a little peace. It was great to see some of the past attendees of our support group as well as meet new friends at some of the author meet and greet events I attended late summer promoting my new book, *Miss Your FOREVER*. Thank you for your kind words and support.

Meeting days have recently changed for our groups located in Reading, PA and Bennington, VT. Please check the margin of the fifth page with updates.

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 or any agency, support group, church, funeral home, or organization anywhere FREE of charge via regular mail or email 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. and dmurgido@gmail.com We also have a facebook page.

Miss Your FOREVER, Reflections After the Death of a Spouse. On sale now from wherever books are sold or directly from me in person \$16.95 or through the mail \$20 including S&H. Phone and email contact listed above.

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 grief. ***Together We Can Help Each Other Heal.***

Book Announcement

- Editor

A manuscript by sudSSpirit Founder Dominic Murgido has been accepted for publication by Christian Faith Publishing.

This second published work will follow his grief time line that includes more than a decade of detailed accounts of his thoughts, observations, and memories after the sudden unexpected death of his wife. The book details the companionship and support of his wife's dog, Hal, that comforted and consoled him throughout his life without her. This second book will also include additional entries from his personal journal while experiencing the grieving process.

Other topics covered in this new book include Choices, Regrets, Risks, Triggers, Signs, and Resilience. Expected release for publication is the first quarter of 2022. The author's first book, *Miss Your FOREVER*, was released in January, 2021 and is available through the author or wherever books are sold.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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**"Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.**

**Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow."**

**-Langston Hughes
(1902-1967)**

American poet, playwright



Resources

- Editor

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

Amedisys /Compassionate
Care Hospice
1-800-777-5109 / 717-944-4466

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

Promedica / Heartland Home
Health Care and Hospice
www.heartlandhospice.com
610-373-6898 or 866-380-5874

www.grasp.org (grief recovery
after a substance passing)

Circle of Life Coalition
www.circleoflifecoalition.org

www.save.org (suicide loss)

www.griefshare.org

Diakon / Lutheran Home at
Topton
www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp
610-682-1337 / 877-342-5667

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

Bayada Hospice Services
888-790-3025 610-367-1608

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

Spiritrust Lutheran Home Care &
Hospice Mission Care
800-840-9081

www.211.com United Way

www.speakinggrief.org



An Unexpected Find *by Dominic Murgido*

Life has a way of surprising all of us from time to time. A bill we were expecting is lower than we thought; a surprise and welcome visit from a friend or family member; the funny noise our car was making turned out to be nothing costly; having a good time at an event we thought we would be bored; or finding something that brings back a warm heartfelt memory without even trying.

Many times it is those things that make us feel better about life around us and puts us at ease with some of life's situations that are part of our daily lives. It further proves that we need to have faith and hope in our daily dealings and to maintain a positive outlook and always believe because believing is the key to happiness.

It was a Friday night in June and I was attending a church sponsored festival with my sister and brother in law. I have come to these before and they are fun with all kinds of delicious food, a band, games, bingo, and a flea market. Due to the remnants of Covid 19, the carnival this year was down sized; not as many food choices, no band or bingo. But it still was good and I enjoyed being there among family and even some new friends made. At least the church tried to have something in this familiar time slot since last year they couldn't do it at all.

After talking, people watching, listening to piped in music under a tent, and of course eating delicious food that included cheese steaks, turkey bar-b-q, funnel cake, and pierogies, we decided to take a stroll through the flea market.

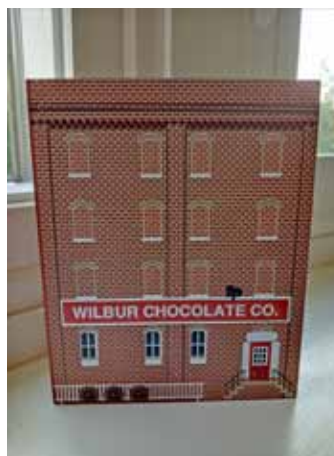
Inside this massive room and connecting hallways was a sight to be seen. There probably wasn't a thing anyone could think of that *wasn't* here for sale. Rows and rows of tables that were overflowing with everything imaginable. I was told there was an entire building elsewhere on the grounds that contained furniture but that was not open on this first evening of the carnival.

As I was walking along with countless others checking out all that is on display and for sale I came to the end of a row where there was another aisle separating a smaller section with shorter tables that were overflowing like all the other ones. There was so much to see. I wasn't

looking for anything in particular and I certainly wasn't analyzing anything like a collector or a person on a mission to find a specific item. I was simply browsing.

I turned the corner and glanced at a shorter table and in my field of view right before my eyes was a *Cat's Meow* piece of the Wilbur Chocolate Factory in Lititz, Pennsylvania. I froze in my tracks and felt like the piece was practically jumping off the table for me to see. The hair on my arms stood above the goosebumps I was experiencing. My emotions peaked and this sensory experience was amazing. This small wooden replication of my wife's favorite candy company was there for me to find and experience knowing that she is surrounding me with love right at this moment.

Let me explain: *Hometowne Collectibles* and *The Cat's Meow* are two of the companies that produce these small wooden replications of landmarks, historical buildings, and businesses. My wife would buy them when seen and on occasion as a souvenir or reminder of trips taken and places that meant something to us or that we experienced. She never had the opportunity to find this one or we would own it with others that she purchased. Three days before her death, on what would become her final birthday, Sue and I toured the factory for the first time that makes Wilbur Buds, her favorite dark chocolate candy.



I walked over to the table and picked it up in my hand, which shook from a little anxiety, and felt a presence come over me. I marveled at it being here among thousands of items in a huge room and for whatever reason I stumbled on this when it was more than likely for me not to see it had I selected a different row of tables to go down and then at the intersection of aisles to turn the one way (and not the other) at the corner where I discovered this find. What an incredible sign from beyond. No doubt in my mind it was a message from my wife.

There are no coincidences. It was meant to be. I purchased it. And I still have those that were purchased in the past by us. I will add this to those and treasure it for what it represents as well as how this was discovered in a most unusual way. We all must be open to our surroundings and allow signs of all kinds to come to us to acknowledge, make us smile, and continue to believe.

How To Acknowledge Their “Deathversary” *by Krista Brenner*

Many people refer to the date of their loved one’s death as an anniversary. I can’t bring myself to do it. It actually makes me cringe every time I try to say it or explain what October 9th means to me. The word “anniversary” has an intended association with joy, celebration, and happiness, so why would I want to acknowledge the loss of my beloved Zach with this word?

None of us ever imagined having to say good-bye so soon, so suddenly, so tragically to the ones we love, which leads me to believe that none of us are feeling particularly celebratory as the date draws near. We all have that one day. A day filled with dread and loaded with dismal realizations; our own person D-Day. No, I can’t bring myself to call it an anniversary so “deathversary” it is. Sounds a bit morbid, I know. But how else can I honestly begin to approach this day?

October 9, 2012 marks the one year deathversary of my fiancé, Zach. It is unimaginable that he has been gone that long. I have alternated so many times over the last year between feeling like he was just here a minute ago and feeling like he has already been gone for four lifetimes that I think I have given myself whiplash. Life has continued to go on while I feel frozen in place. Days have come and gone, and yet I feel like nothing has changed. Over the last year my friends have gotten married, had babies, gotten new jobs, found new boyfriends, and bought houses. My crowning accomplishment is that I woke up every day and went to work or school. I got out of bed. Seriously? That is my accomplishment? That is all I have achieved? Is that really all I am capable of doing now, without Zach? I guess I should see it as surviving, but I have a sneaking suspicion that my aspirations should be higher than just getting by.

Whether I like it or not, the first year has passed. One whole year without the person who gave my life meaning and filled my heart with unimaginable amount of love. So how am I supposed to acknowledge this day? How are any of us, the unwilling members of “Club Grief,” supposed to recognize this day for what it stands for? For most of us this day signifies one of the absolute worst days of our entire lives, filled with loss and devastation, questions that can never truly be answered. So how should this day be spent? I wish I had the answer, any answer, but I think every single one of us must slowly live our way into our own answers.

I truly believe that even among those grieving the loss of the same person, there will be differing opinions about how to approach this day. Some members of the family may want to do something to commemorate the day while others adamantly refuse. Throughout grief we are forced to constantly make decisions like: what to do with their belongings, how to celebrate the holidays, what traditions to continue on with. These difficult decisions are ones that family and friends may agree with or firmly disagree with. The deathversary is just another one of those decisions and one I am currently faced with.

As October 9th has slowly crept closer I have been questioning what his family and I should do. My initial plan was to organize a fundraising event in his memory and donate the money to the school Zach had been working at. He had recently switched from teaching to being the Parent/Teacher Liaison, a Social Worker

of sorts, for a county with tremendous struggles and needs. The resource center he created during his time there was renamed the “Zach Zone” after we lost him. The teachers have continued his work and tried to fill the gaping void he left behind, but there are still many community needs such as food, clothing, and school supplies. I thought organizing an event for this would be the perfect way to honor his memory, his life, and his work while giving something to the community he did so much for.

But as this day got closer and closer, my plan started to lose its appeal. I didn’t think I had it in me to coordinate an event like this and his parents agreed it’s just too soon. It’s something we would like to do in the future, but for right now it’s simply too daunting of a task. Our grief is too fresh and too painful to take on something like that right now. So now what? I am back to the original question of how to acknowledge this day.

Should I ignore the day and just go to work and school like normal and hope it will be distracting? Should I take the day off and spend it hiding under the covers? Should I go spend the day with family and rely on each other for support? Should I visit his grave? Should we have some kind of organized service? Should our family go visit the family of his best friend, who was killed in the same car accident? Should this day be no different than any other day?

I think it comes down to this; whatever ends up being the final decision it will never be enough or give me any sense of comfort. He is still gone and the excruciating pain will still be there.

So how will you acknowledge your loved ones deathversary? How will you honor their memory? Have found yourself ignoring the day in the past but feel ready to honor their life now? The answer to the question of how to acknowledge this dreaded day only lies within each and every one of us, and it is my hope that we will all one day manage to feel some semblance of peace.

Reprinted with permission: HOPELine Newsletter, May 2013

Grieving the Loss of Dreams

If you are blessed enough to grow old, there's a strong chance you will suffer many losses--loved ones, pets, relationships, jobs, aspects of your own health. Another loss that many of us face as we age is the loss of our dreams.

Most of us will face a time in our lives when we realize a cherished dream or goal is beyond our grasp. When you reach that point, take the time to grieve, to allow yourself to feel the sadness and disappointment and the void that comes with giving up an idea you've had for a long time.

Once you've let go of a dream you may find yourself reluctant to make other plans. But this doesn't have to be the case. When you let go of a dream that you know will no longer work for you, you have the opportunity to dream up something better.

Reprinted with permission: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution 4-9-10

Using your Grief to Help Others – and Heal Yourself

By Jan DeBlieu, Contributor

I have an odd kind of superpower. I can look at people who are suffering and feel immediate empathy for them. I'm not bragging here; it's true. It's because I've been through my own brand of hell.

Six years ago we lost our 16-year-old son, our only child, in a car accident. When I tell someone this -- and I avoid telling people, believe me -- the most frequent response is, "I can't imagine."

This is shorthand for, "I can't imagine the depth of your pain. I can't imagine the bleakness of your life. How empty your house must seem. How endless each and every day."

They're right; they can't. Fortunately, time is indeed the great healer. My pain, bleakness, and emptiness have mostly receded. They may come swimming right back to the surface, though, if I see someone else in pain.

The question then becomes how I respond. Do I allow these feelings to overwhelm me, and retreat into the dark sorrow I know so well? Sometimes, yes, I do. But more often--I've been working hard on this -- I try to stand silently for a moment, letting myself feel the other person's pain. I ask myself if there's something I can do to help. Often the best thing I can do for the person is simply to listen to his story. To ask questions like I'm really interested, which I am. To stay with her until my heart tells me it's okay to leave. All this can be a powerful balm for someone who's having a terrible moment, or a terrible day. I know from experience. And when I comfort others, simply by being present for them, it's also a powerful balm for me.

I'm like everyone else, though, when it comes to having too much to do. Often I'll see a person in need and speed right by. The world is full of pain. I can't take it all on. No one is asking that I try.

It's my belief that I'm simply being asked to pay attention to suffering, and to step in when I sense an opportunity. I might well have taken a different approach. People tell me I'm a strong woman, and after Reid's death my first impulse was to declare war on my grief. For a time I tried pushing through, powering on with my life despite all. But there was one sentiment I couldn't wrestle to the ground: My life had lost its meaning.

Gradually I realized that I might be able to find meaning and purpose again if I set out to help people make it through their own empty moments. To my amazement, I found that simple acts of kindness and compassion helped me rekindle the light that lives deep inside me. I've often wondered why comforting others makes me feel so much more alive. Recently I've realized that having walked through the fire, I may be specially equipped to help others make the passage, and survive.

Grief has taught me that I can reach out, if only I dare. This is the source of my "superpower": The willingness to look at suffering full on, without flinching. We'd rather not be confronted by deep pain in this culture. We'd rather keep it hidden, and hide

it within ourselves. But by hiding it, we imprison ourselves in the loneliest kind of solitary confinement. Breaking out, taking a chance and extending a hand to others, has been for me both a lifesaver and a way to honor Reid.

It would be an exaggeration to say that I keep my eyes peeled for people in pain or trouble. I simply try to stay aware of my surroundings, and to be open to engagement with those around me. This is the complete opposite of how I moved through my world right after Reid's death, hooding my eyes, struggling just to carry the stone that had become my heart. It feels liberating now to be open to possibility, to lightness, and to wielding the immensely healing - for me - power that lies within three simple words: Can I help?

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Book Review - Editor

The Art of Losing: Poems of Grief and Healing

Edited by Kevin Young

"Young offers an original and personal analysis of the modern elegy, and uses his own experience with the cycle of mourning to structure the book in sections titled 'Reckoning,' 'Regret,' 'Remembrance,' 'Ritual,' 'Recovery,' and 'Redemption.' And the poems are as diverse and universal as the emotions of loss." - Donna Seaman, *Booklist*

After the sudden death of his father, the poet looked for a collection of poems that might speak to his sense of loss. To his surprise, he couldn't find such a collection, so he began to compile one.

Poetry is able to capture a moment, a feeling, perhaps a fleeting feeling, and even make music out of it.

In a few lines, maybe just a few words, some poems contain feelings that can overwhelm those that have suffered a loss.

While these poems won't offer easy answers to grief, they will keep the kind of company that only poetry can, because only poetry can convincingly say, as Ruth Stone does in the last poem of this book, 'All things come to an end. / No, they go on forever.' - *Publishers Weekly*

As grief comes in many forms, so do the poems in *The Art of Losing*, which takes its title from the Elizabeth Bishop poem "One Art" ("The art of losing isn't hard to master...") Kevin Young includes poems on subjects from the unexpected to careful preparation.

Soon I Will be Gone Forever, but That's Okay as Long as Someone Reads This *By My Last Tie*

I am only 24 years old, yet I have actually already chosen my last tie. It's the one that I will wear on my funeral a few months from now. It may not match my suit, but I think it's perfect for the occasion.

The cancer diagnosis came too late to give me at least a tenuous hope for a long life, but I realized that the most important thing about death is to ensure that you leave this world a little better than it was before you existed with your contributions. The way I've lived my life so far, my existence or more precisely the loss of it, will not matter because I have lived without doing anything impactful.

Before, there were so many things that occupied my mind. When I learned how much time I had left, however, it became clear which things are really important. So, I am writing to you for a selfish reason. I want to give meaning to my life by sharing with you what I have realized:

- Don't waste your time on work that you don't enjoy. It is obvious that you cannot succeed in something that you don't like. Patience, passion, and dedication come easily only when you love what you do.
- It's stupid to be afraid of others' opinions. Fear weakens and paralyzes you. If you let it, it can grow worse and worse every day until there is nothing left of you, but a shell of yourself. Listen to your inner voice and go with it. Some people may call you crazy, but some may even think you're a legend.
- Take control of your life. Take full responsibility for the things that happen to you. Limit bad habits and try to lead a healthier life. Find a sport that makes you happy. Most of all, don't procrastinate. **Let your life be shaped by decisions you made, not by the ones you didn't.**
- Appreciate the people around you. Your friends and relatives will always be an infinite source of strength and love. That is why you shouldn't take them for granted.

It is difficult for me to fully express my feelings about the importance of these simple realizations, but I hope that you will listen to someone who has experienced how valuable time is.

I'm not upset because I understand that the last days of my life have become meaningful. I only regret that I will not be able to see a lot of cool stuff that should happen soon like the creation of AI, or Elon Musk's next awesome project. I also hope that the war(s) in Syria and Ukraine will end soon.

We care so much about the health and integrity of our body that until death, we don't notice that the body is nothing more than a box – a parcel for delivering our personality, thoughts, beliefs and intentions to this world. If there is nothing in this box that can change the world, then it doesn't matter if it disappears. I believe that we all have potential, but it also takes a lot of courage to realize it.

You can float through a life created by circumstances, missing day after day, hour after hour. Or, you can fight for what you believe in and write the great story of your life. I hope you will make the right choice. Leave a mark in this world. Have a meaningful life, whatever definition it has for you. Go towards it.

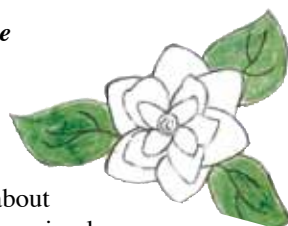
The place we are leaving is a beautiful playground, where everything is possible. Yet, we are not here forever. Our life is a short spark in this beautiful little planet that flies with incredible speed to the endless darkness of the unknown universe. So, enjoy your time here with passion. Make it interesting. Make it count!

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An Entry From My Journal

"Does life and death contribute to our destiny, our lives, our decisions, our wants, our mind changes? Will we ever know what causes life to happen or not to happen?"

-Editor



sudSSpirit Bereavement Support Group

meets monthly in the following locations:

Berks Chapter

Reading, PA
4th Tues. of the month
6 PM
Exeter Community
Library
4569 Prestwick Drive
Reading, PA 19606
610-406-9431

Bennington Chapter

Bennington, VT
3rd Tues. of the month
6 PM
Bennington Free Library
101 Silver Street
Bennington, VT 05201
802-442-9051

For additional
information,
Please check our
facebook page or email:
sudsspirit@gmail.com
dmurgido@gmail.com

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-Bennington, VT

-Editor



The Art of Losing by Deborah Morris Coryell



In our culture the worst thing you can say about someone is that he is a “loser.” But aren’t we all losers? Isn’t life about chronic loss?

The process of life is about endings and beginnings. We are losing all the time. As a matter of a fact, we begin our earthly existence by “losing” time, moment by moment. We usually don’t think in these terms, but perhaps we should.

We breathe in, a beginning; we breathe out, an ending. Life is all about letting go. If we can’t “let go” well, then we can’t live well. It’s all in how we see what we see: We can choose to see it as morbid (defined as having to do with disease), or we can choose to see it as the rhythm of life. By holding on too tightly, we become disconnected from the rhythmic ebb and flow of the world around us. We turn night into day with the flip of a switch and seek to defeat forces of decay and destruction. Loss becomes an affront: This “shouldn’t” have happened.

It is our decision as to how we live “the losing” in each moment. Possessions are lost or broken or otherwise disappear. People and relationships change, move on, or die. Pets grow old as we do. Places we loved once are no longer what they were to us. Dreams we once had we might never accomplish, or we might change our minds about our desire to realize them.

The ability to “change our mind” is a powerful skill and one we need to spend a great deal of time with in the face of loss. The power to “change our mind” lies in our ability to think about something differently, to think about what loss is and what it means to be a loser. There is an art to living, yes? There is an art to dying, we believe. What about an art to losing, to grieving? We are told, as children, not to be “sore losers” but did anyone teach us how to be “good losers”?

Take a deep breath. Reflect on this for a moment. Losing well is freedom — freedom from the pain and confusion and fear attached to loss. We are as surely attached to our pain and fear and confusion around loss as we once were attached to that which we feel we’ve lost. Perhaps we have substituted our attachment one for the other: the pain for the love. Breathe into the emptiness; breathe into the pain created by loss. Stay for a moment. We love. We give our love to someone or something or someplace. We are attached through that love. And suddenly (or slowly) that object is

gone from our sight. Where do we put the love then? We have this love with no place to put it. Grief becomes our experience of not having our love received, of not having anywhere to put our love.

Healing our grief means continuing to love in the face of loss. The face of loss — what we see — is that someone or something is gone. The heart of loss teaches us that nothing — no thing — we have ever known can be lost. What we have known we have taken into ourselves in such a way that it has become part of the very fabric of our being. It is part of who we are, and as long as we are alive we have the capacity to continue to love even that which is no longer a part of our daily reality. This means that we will need to “change our minds” about many notions that we have had about loss: That what we can no longer “see” is gone. That what we can no longer touch doesn’t continue to live. That if there is no response, the relationship is over.

Close your eyes and see that which you can no longer touch, that which is gone from your presence. Reach inside of you to the feeling of touching, hearing, smelling; being with your experience of what you believed was lost.

Remember.

We are haunted by societal fears that we should not continue to stay connected with what is gone, what is past, what has been lost. We are warned that there is a pitfall here, a caveat, symbolized by Dickens’ Miss Havisham: be wary of that part of us that might want to live in the past. The challenge is to bring the past along with us in such a way that we haven’t lost anything. We don’t ignore the challenge because of the pitfall. Truth to tell, we could not forget our past if we wanted to. What we choose to leave in the past, we can. What we choose to continue loving, we can. We are being asked to give new form to what was contained in an earlier relationship. Our grief becomes the container for what we feel we have lost, and in the process of grieving we come into some new wholeness. We create a way to incorporate, literally to take into our bodies, that which has become formless. Like the caterpillar, we go into a cocoon to a safe place so that the old self can dissolve and a new self can be created.

Like the art of losing, this metamorphosis is not automatic. It does not happen simply in the course of time. Rather, it is a self-conscious act. Grieving is a path to self-realization because in the process of grieving we acknowledge that which we choose not to lose. In the art of losing we can choose who we will be. We break but we break open so that we can include more of life, more of love. We get bigger in order to carry with us what we choose to continue loving.

Excerpted from:

Good Grief: Healing Through the Shadow of Loss
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