



sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

*Marlin Stoltzfus
Stuart A. Wounderly
Michael J. Lotz*

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Dominic Murgido - Editor

Welcome *from the Editor*

I am blessed that I continue to receive notes of encouragement and kindness concerning my efforts to help others through providing this newsletter to anyone whom it can be of service towards their grief journey. Those that are struggling find comfort in the articles and other offerings knowing that they are never alone in what they are experiencing. There is help and support out there through our monthly meetings as well as additional resources that can be provided to them. Our information and support is free and those that know me know they can call or email anytime for additional support.

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. We also have a facebook page should you want to check that out.

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.***

Enduring Love

by John Kreiser

Each day, I wake alone in bed
Inches from where she laid her head
And though she's absent from this life
She'll always be both soulmate, wife
She never truly went away
I feel her presence every day
Upon my thoughts her visage treads
To gain brief respite from the dead
A tender memory from afar
Exuding warmth, a twinkling star
Disrupting sense of time and space
Removes me gently from this place
To archives deep within my mind
Where love's preserved for all of time
Evoking smiles of joys held dear
Or quaking sobs of anguished tears
Her body rests within the ground
Yet lively memories still abound
The pall of death has failed to thwart
The love that's sheltered in my heart

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An Entry From My Journal

"This grief journey that I am on has forced me to consider that all the lives around us are so often taken for granted, but each one is burdened with its own troubles and heartache"

- Editor



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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"What I learned from Grief is that I am not in charge, Love and Grief are a package deal, and Ritual soothes and heals more than I ever imagined"

*-Elaine Mansfield,
TED talks*

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



Life Experiences *by Dominic Murgido*

The experiences of life that we go through are as diverse as our individuality. Some things some of us never experience or are limited to what we do experience depending on our paths of life that we chose or were chosen for us. Some of us experience many things for the same reasons.

But no matter where you fall into this spectrum of life, whatever you experience, makes you the person you are. Add to that the people around you while you are experiencing it, and that changes it up a little. Add the location that it is happening in as well as your age and that increases the meaning behind it as well.

Life changing situations can be either planned or unexpected. They can be hoped for, wished, dreamed about, think they will never happen, or pray that they never come to be. We can not control them as we can not control life and our destiny.

So we think of those milestone in one's life and reflect; birthdays, birthdays that have more meaning (16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50) youth sports leagues, first job, clubs in high school, dating, honors, awards, high school graduation, college life, dean's list, honors, awards, falling in love, college graduation, first job out of college, career decisions, getting married, having children, moving / relocating, changing jobs, divorce / separation, losing jobs, death of a friend, death of loved ones (parents, spouse, children)

These milestones, life experiences, happenings, life phases, or whatever you want to label them changes us in a small or large way. However this affects us, it does make a difference in our lives. A difference that is never really noticed at the time it is happening, but it is there and it is making us different than we were before.

Any one of them can be a pivotal point in our life that enables us to change our outlook, attitude and outcome for the present time and at times for the future.

As I reflect about one of my life changing experiences, the one that changed everything, the sudden unexpected death of my wife, I can see how my world as I knew it ceased to exist and another one took its place. I did not have a choice. It came fast and out of the blue and I was right in the middle of it before I knew what really happened.

Everything changed. My attitude, opinions, thoughts, feelings, ambitions, desires, needs, wants, challenges, goals, what I thought about

life, friends, family, colleagues, work, money, success, happiness, love, heartache, sex, friendship, charities, strangers. What

was once important was no longer, and what was never thought about, was always on my mind.

The changes in me as an individual did not happen all at once nor were they seen by others right away. But they were there and they were making me become someone I never was before. This new person I became was good and bad for me. When you are experiencing many changes in your being, you begin to have much self doubt and uncertainty about your life and your future. Eventually you lose friends that were close to you and your spouse, people at work treat you differently, and new people that you meet are cautious about what to say and don't really know who you are. You are one and you are alone. And one really is a lonely number, as the song implies.

It becomes a balancing act. You're on a high wire and there is no net below to save you. It's up to you to pursue and keep moving forward one baby step at a time with no regrets.

This is also a new beginning for you, one that you have to create and do something with your new found feelings and attitude about life and your future. I started to appreciate the little things more. I began to take no one for granted. I realized who the most important people in my life were. I finally knew what mattered and what was important about living and life. I began to take chances, take risks. Each day is a gift as well as a risk. I shared my feelings more with people I liked and respected. I reached out to those I have not seen or heard from in a while. I searched for ways to contribute my talents and skills to causes and others in need. In a way, I kind of re invented myself. As much as I liked the old me and did not want to leave who I once was, I knew that person left with the death of my wife, Sue, and there was no going back.

It may take years for you to realize all that I just said here or perhaps you already have experienced some of this. Whatever the situation, please know that you are not alone in this. There are countless others going through the same thing. Life threw us a curve ball and we are trying to hit one out of the park towards a brighter future.





The Route To Feeling Alive *By: Michele Dwyer*

Long before my husband's death, he and I would walk a pleasant 3 miles around town, a path which took us along a river near our home. Sometimes we'd hold hands, sometimes (most times) he had a cigarette in the other.

About a year before his death, I was walking that same route alone, my iPod in my ears, contemplating many things, trucking along at a quicker pace than he and I would do. Then, on October 22, 2012, my husband got into his car and drove it 3.54 miles from our home to a sewage treatment plant. There, he filled his car up with carbon monoxide and started breathing until he stopped breathing forever.

I did not walk, or move, for 30 days, save for putting one foot in front of the other in our home, room to room, doing details, taking care of kids, sitting, lying down. I did not pick up a weight, or stretch, or walk. I took baths. Lots of them. My body felt heavy, even though I dropped 10 pounds in what seemed like 24 hours of learning I was a widow and that my children were fatherless. I ate food just so that I wouldn't die.

Before winter really set in, I finally ventured outside and started walking. I found myself walking the route he took to kill himself. It was cold, I was hungry but didn't feel like eating, and I walked. It would be the first time I came upon the site. I don't know when it will be my last ... I've been doing this for several months and I still go. But now I run. I run the whole way. And I run back home, twice what I used to walk, and quicker. I think back on that first day I walked it – after 30 days of no exercise, or motion, or using my body, I was exhausted by the time I got back home that day. Tired. Sad. Heavy. But I had walked. And I slept that night. And I ate food and tasted it. It slowly got better from there.

Now I run this route to feel alive, not to just follow his last path. I think of him breathing in poison, and I run faster so that I can breathe in air, fill my lungs with pureness. I feel my legs pulling and pushing, and I revel in their movement. I marvel at my capacity to run until it feels like I'm dancing.

I can't believe that I'm running and sometimes forget that I am. I keep running, and when I haven't run or miss a day, my body starts itching to go. I feel it wanting to work. In the early stages of my running journey, I imagined that I was running to get to my husband before he got into the car to die. It was all about not accepting that he was dead. Now, I run imagining that I am going to catch up

to his spirit, to wherever he is. I imagine if I really run, I might see him before he gets to the other side.

I accept now that he's gone. I don't run to save him anymore; I run to take care of me. That is how my grief has progressed on my running journey of 8 months. I don't cry as much when I'm running like I did in the beginning. I actually feel joy, listening to the birds, feeling my body be strong, being ALIVE.

Running is getting to be about me now, and less about him. It has helped me in ways I could never have imagined. I used to run from the hurt, run to try and fix something. Now I run to stay strong, healthy; I run to breathe big. I like to see my legs strong, my pulse slower, my blood pressure that of a woman half my age.

I'm thinking a marathon is in my future

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Book Review - Editor *On Death* by Timothy J. Keller

The author was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Bucknell University, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and Westminster Theological Seminary.

On Death is book 3 in the How to find God series following *On Birth* and *On Marriage*. In the "Foreword" Kathy Keller, Tim's wife, writes that the foundation of the book is a sermon the author preached at her sister's funeral in 2018.

The book begins with how to face our own death without fear. It then addresses facing the death of loved ones. He tells us that we are to grieve at death, rather than take the stoic approach. The author tells us that while people have many reactions to being in the presence of death, there are two opposite mistakes we can make: One is to despair too much; the other is to shrug it off and not learn what we should from it.

A practical "Appendix" offers helpful advice and scripture verses for each day of the week if you are facing your own possible death or you are facing the death of a loved one. Throughout this helpful introduction to the subject of death, the author shares quotes from other books by authors including C. S. Lewis and Jonathan Edwards.

sudSSpirit Bereavement Support Group

meets monthly in the following locations:

Berks Chapter

Reading, PA.
4th Wed. of the month
6 PM

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

Bennington Chapter

Bennington, VT
4th 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
-Berks, Pennsylvania

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com
-Bennington, VT

or phone:

717- 866- 2401
-Berks, Pennsylvania

802- 441- 5562
-Bennington, VT

- Editor





Explosive *By: Dr. Alan Wolfelt*

Heavy Grief – Again? *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

I've been a widow for ten years. Early in this decade I was often distracted, foggy, lonely, sad. But recently I thought I'd become my "old self" again, no longer struggling to live creatively, joyfully, even happily.

Then I began to experience a grief that I hadn't felt since my beloved husband died. I wasn't just sad now, I was confused. Why was I having more of this heavy grief? And why now? I didn't begin to understand what was happening, and how long it would continue. I wasn't just sad and confused, I was worried.

For the past decade I had done all the right things. Grieved well. Avoided denial. Paid attention to my own needs in the grieving process (because I understood that grieving differently was quite OK). So why was this new grief happening, and why was it so strong?

It wasn't really about Roy, I soon decided. I can still think happily about our wonderful 43 years together. That hadn't changed. And I can still imagine his almost being present with me now. He might be giving me a compliment: "Good job, Lovey." Or reminding me of a similar experience of his. Or giving me an encouragement I needed. His messages are brief, but very direct, very warm. In every case, he is with me – not actually, but almost.

And then, I think, I began to understand. I was experiencing a new grief entirely. It wasn't about Roy. No, this grief was about friends, near and far. I've only been close to them in a few ways – different for each person – but losing them is a major loss, bigger than any previous loss of friends.

Some of these friends haven't died yet but are definitely on the way. I've been helping Tom, a Vietnam veteran, to write deeply about his wartime experiences. He got one story published in a magazine, and I was hoping he'd want to put the others into a book. After he was diagnosed with a serious cancer, though, his reduced energies have gone into "putting his things in order," as his wife tells me. Those "things" haven't included his writing.

Another of these people was a dear friend of mine from college. While many of our fellow students were either smart or nice, Almie was both. We studied some of the same subjects at Smith – architecture and design – before we each went on to graduate school. Later, we connected mostly at college reunions, but we also found ways to report our successes excitedly (and frequently) to each other. Now, though – so difficult to accept – she's gone.

Still another person was the friend of Roy's who added banjo, mandolin, dobro, and harmonica to Roy's voice and guitar on the two LPs they made together. They loved this folk music, and everyone loved these records. A year ago, Tim was facing what seemed like Alzheimer's so maybe his death was welcomed by some. For me, however, I've only been sad.

I doubt that I'm alone in all of this. Others have surely been excessively bothered by the recent deaths of friends. Perhaps you're one of these.

Perhaps, too, you know what's behind this unexpected grieving. Is it possibly returning us to our earlier heavy grieving as a way to keep our beloved spouse with us a bit longer? Or is it forcing us to think about our own mortality as we get older? Or is it something else entirely?

I wish I could talk with Roy about this. He would understand. He knew a lot about grief himself, being saddened by his own demise, as I was, watching him decline. He managed, though, often saying proudly in those last days that he had lived 49 years after his first cancer. He even used his last weeks to give me strength. So I managed, too, and I'm sure will continue to do so even if my friends are dying in record numbers. Grief is indeed manageable.

Anger, hate, blame, terror resentment, rage and jealousy are explosive emotions that may be a volatile yet natural part of your grief journey. It helps to understand that all of these feelings are, at bottom, a form of protest. Think of a toddler whose favorite toy is yanked out of his hands. This toddler wants the toy; when it's taken, his instinctive reaction may be to scream or cry or hit. When someone loved is taken from you, your instinct reaction may be much the same.

Explosive emotions may surface at any time when someone you have loved dies. You cry out in anguish, "How could this happen? This isn't fair! I hate this!" You may direct these emotions at the person who died, at friends and family members, at doctors, at people who haven't experienced loss, at God.

Unfortunately, our society doesn't understand how normal and necessary these feelings can be to "keep it together." When you're raging or terrified, others may get upset. The intensity of your own emotions may even upset you. Still, you must give yourself permission to feel what-ever you feel and to express those feelings. If you collaborate with the well-intentioned but misinformed people around you, your body, mind and spirit will probably be damaged in the process.

Some people may tell you that explosive emotions are not logical. "Anger won't bring him back," they might say. "He didn't mean to die, so don't be mad at him." Watch out. You might find yourself buying into this rational thinking. "That's just the problem-thinking is logical; feeling is not.

Another problem is that people oversimplify explosive emotions by talking only about anger. Actually, you may experience a whole range of intense feelings such as those listed above. Underneath these emotions are usually feelings of pain, helplessness, fear and hurt.

If explosive emotions are part of your journey (and they aren't for everyone), be aware that you have two avenues for expression-outward or inward. The outward avenue leads to healing; the inward avenue does not. Keeping your explosive emotions inside leads to low self-esteem, depression, guilt, physical complaints and sometimes even persistent thoughts of suicide.

Experiencing explosive emotions is normal. They should, however, change in intensity and duration as you do the work of mourning. Again, I want to emphasize that the key is finding someone who will help you understand what you are feeling and allow you to embrace your grief. Remember-you can't go around your grief, or over it, or under it, you must go through it. I hope that as you journey through grief you will be surrounded by people who understand, support and love you and will help you explore your explosive emotions without trying to stifle you.

Self Care Guidelines

Explosive emotions must be expressed, not repressed or worse yet, totally denied. Don't prescribe these feelings for yourself but do be alert for them. You will need a supportive listener who can tolerate, encourage and validate your explosive emotions without judging, retaliating, or arguing with you. The comforting presence of someone who cares about you will help you seek continued self-understanding of your grief experience.

Be aware, though, of the difference between the right to feel explosive emotions and the right to act out these emotions in harmful ways. It's okay, sometimes even necessary, to feel angry. But if you hurt others or yourself or destroy property, the people who care about you will need to set limits on your behavior. Also, remind yourself that explosive emotions can often indicate underlying feelings of pain, helplessness, frustration, fear and hurt. Listen to your explosive emotions and you may discover the need to embrace what's beneath.

Keep telling yourself that explosive emotions are not good or bad, right or wrong. They just are. They are your feelings and they are symptoms of an injury that needs nurturing, not judging. Paradoxically, the way to diminish explosive emotions is to experience them, even if they feel irrational to you.

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