



# sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

**Joan E. Brady  
Ann Maccarone**

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Dominic Murgido - Editor

## Welcome *from the Editor*

Feel the warmth of the sunshine on your face. Spring is in the air. A time of renewal, rebirth, celebration of faith and hope for the season. A time to look at yourself in the mirror and say *I can do this*. Because you can. It is all about attitude and positive thinking that transforms our thoughts into something better for us. Moving forward helps fuel the desires to become better at being who we are. And we do this to become better for ourselves and those loved ones around us. As we welcome this season of spring, reach out to a long lost friend to say hello. If an address is known, do it the old fashioned way and write a letter or send a card. Emails, texts, and facebook are also avenues of communication. And you know what else, that phone that is attached to you can also make a call to them. Be a friend and remember them.

**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"

I am hopeful that by the time our next quarterly newsletter is published we will be back at our regular meeting place – Exeter Community Library.

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](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com). and [dmurgido@gmail.com](mailto:dmurgido@gmail.com) We also have a facebook page.

**Enclosed in this edition is also an announcement of my recently published book entitled *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 Review - Editor

### Don't Let Death Ruin Your Life

by Jill Brooke

Coping with any loss is painful; however, the author takes an approach that something positive can come out of a sad situation by focusing on memories and drawing comfort from those that have passed.

In this book, Brooke covers all the bases with walking us through the grieving process from rituals to therapy. Insight and suggestions are offered on a variety of topics including possessions, writings, and leaving a legacy. The grieving process can actually help us heal and move forward with personal growth and allow us to become survivors in our new world and reclaim happiness.

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## Quarterly Quote

- Editor

**"Be kind to yourself. You are human and grieving. Anger is one color on the griever's palette."**

**-Harold Ivan Smith**

*Due to COVID-19 and any restrictions in place please email or call contact phone numbers listed to confirm time and place of meeting. In the event a meeting place can not be established, a virtual meeting will take place via zoom.*



## 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



## Out of Touch by Dominic Murgido

The hug is a very comforting and communicative type of touch.

When a friend or family member is dealing with something painful or unpleasant in their lives, give them a hug. Scientists say that giving another person support through touch can reduce the stress of the person being comforted. It can even reduce the stress of the person doing the comforting.

A hug can indicate support, comfort, and consolation, particularly where words are insufficient. A hug usually demonstrates affection and emotional warmth, sometimes arising from joy or happiness when reunited with someone or seeing someone absent after a long time. In other situations, a hug can indicate familiarity, brotherhood or sympathy.

"Hugs are good medicine for whatever ails us. They can be lifesavers when we are struggling with grief" - Dr. Leo Buscaglia

An unexpected hug can be regarded as an invasion of a person's personal space but if it is reciprocated it is an indication that it is welcome. Not everyone likes hugs and one must be cautious not to overstep one's bounds and create an uncomfortable moment especially with people who dislike hugging. After the loss of a spouse or significant other, we also lose touch. We are not touched as much nor do we touch, hug, embrace as much. Yes, we lose another something. We may continue to touch, hug, but it will be few and far between and certainly not with an intimacy as it once was with our loved one. The touch of another human being counts more when you have experienced a major loss than any other time in your life.

Being out of touch sort of speak for extended periods of time can be very isolating, lonely, depressing. When was the last time someone touched your arm, shoulder, shook your hand, sat close to you or provided a hug to you? Touch can be as vital to our well being as prayer.

Hugging has been proven to have health benefits. One study has shown that hugs increase levels of oxytocin and reduce blood pressure.

Oxytocin is a chemical in our bodies that scientists sometimes call the "cuddle hormone." This is because its levels rise

when we hug, touch, or sit close to someone else. Oxytocin is associated with happiness and less stress.

The stress-reducing effects of hugging might also work to keep you healthier.

In a study of over 400 adults, researchers found that hugging may reduce the chance a person will get sick. The participants with a greater support system were less likely to get sick. And those with the greater support system who did get sick had less severe symptoms than those with little or no support system.

A group hug has been found to be a useful tool in group therapy to cement a sense of cohesion among the participants after a session, although it may cause discomfort for group members who shy away from physical contact. Please be cautious and respectful of others wishes.

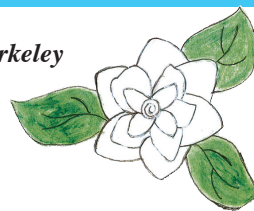
Scientists have found that touch can reduce anxiety in people with low self-esteem. Touch can also keep people from isolating themselves when reminded of their mortality. Unfortunately, some people today are touch-deprived. Many people live solitary or busy lives with reduced social interaction and touching. Our modern social conventions often push people not to touch others who aren't directly related to them. However, it seems people could benefit a lot from touching others a bit more.

Touch can also include the touching of a pet like a dog or cat. Many studies have proven the positive results that animals in our lives can bring to us in our time of need. I can personally support this with how my dog HAL got me through the many tough times after my wife Sue died. They also found that even touching an inanimate object — such as a teddy bear — helped reduce people's fears and anxiety.

Don't allow being "out of touch" get the best of you. If you feel nervous about seeking out more hugs, start by asking for them from friends and family members closest to you first.

**Editor Note:** *This article was written prior to Covid-19 and the hug is very much missed among many of us. Hopefully as we become more in control of this pandemic and vaccinations prove to be effective and an answer to our prayers, the hug will return as a needed gesture of compassion, love, and support.*

## A Surprise That Still Surprises *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*



Well into my eighties, I've had quite a few surprises in my life, several of them related to my spouse's death -- and some still surprising me.

Roy died in 2009 of salivary-gland cancer. No surprise there. It was his seventh cancer, and thus we had imagined his death various times from earlier cancers. This new one, diagnosed in 2008, led to a ten-hour surgery at Dartmouth-Hitchcock, after which the surgeons said they had "managed everything -- there's nothing to worry about." Not true. A few weeks later, they told us they'd left a bit of cancer in place ("only a bit") to avoid nicking the optic nerve and causing blindness. They hadn't mentioned this possibility to us before the surgery. Why not, we wondered. I couldn't be absolutely sure, but I thought that Roy would have opted for blindness over death, if given the choice.

The first surprise came eight months later, when we learned that the cancer had spread to his bones. After telling us this, the doctor left the room for a few minutes. Roy began crying quietly. (It was only the second time I had seen him cry -- the first was when one of our formerly-feral cats, a loving part of our family, had died.) In our moments alone in the doctor's office, we hugged, and I remember saying to him "we'll manage," perhaps addressing him, as I often did, as "My Precious."

Two months later, he did die. But we weren't surprised. And we did manage. The process had great help from Roy, who spent much of each day telling me how strong I was and helping both of us to feel gratitude for our 43 wonderful years together.

This was helpful to Roy, surely. Also to me. And I realized that because he loved me so much, he didn't want me to feel overwhelmingly unhappy after his death. I did feel a great sadness, of course, but I had good memories I could turn to, and they prevented me from sitting in the corner and weeping all day.

Friends seemed startled that I wasn't weeping when I spoke about Roy, and I did enjoy speaking about him -- something he had done well, or cared about, or just enjoyed as a favorite dish.

Now here's the big surprise. I had expected my grieving to go on forever.

Nobody told me otherwise. But I soon found myself spending happy times with friends or by myself, even going to places that Roy and I had been delighted to visit, and giving me new experiences at those places to go with the lovely memories.

Within several years, I sensed that my real grieving had left me. My many memories have never left me, but when I have a sudden "senior moment" forgetting something, I worry about whether these memories will also fade.

So the real surprise was seeing that my grieving -- feeling sad, lonely, even abandoned -- wasn't going to stay with me forever. I've felt a bit of guilt occasionally, sensing that I was having fun and enjoying life. But I know that Roy would have wanted me to return to my usual self. He celebrated my optimism, my smiles, my good spirits.

It was a major surprise when my grieving was beginning to vanish. I know that I did experience grieving, and I know that I'm not experiencing it still, or at least not in the same way.

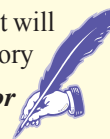
Perhaps some of you have felt this. Let me encourage you not to feel guilty, or to think of your mood as betraying your beloved. Your wanting to live is strong, certainly in part because of the years spent with this vibrant spouse. So let us live. This does not mean forgetting the spouse. Not at all. It honors him. Yes, I'll always miss him, but I've felt so grateful to have had life with him for 43 years. There are those good spirits shining through.

I am so glad to feel happy just remembering being happy.

### An Entry From My Journal

"While looking for a pen in the center console of my car I came across a small leather change holder that was hers. She had bought it at the Vermont Country store on one of our vacations and she loved it. She was the last person to touch the coins it contains. It was recovered from her car after the accident and has been in my car ever since. It will always be a part of me and a memory of her."

-Editor



### 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.

If a meeting can not  
be held, we will meet  
virtually via zoom.

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



## THE DASH by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak at a funeral of a friend.  
He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning... to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears,  
but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time they spent alive on earth  
and now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, the cars... the house... the cash.  
What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change?  
For you never know how much time is left that still can be rearranged.

To be less quick to anger and show appreciation more  
and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile...  
remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash,  
would you be proud of the things they say about how you lived your dash?

*Reprinted with permission: Inspirekindness, the dashpoem.com 2020 Linda Ellis*

## Our Mission

**sudSSpirit** wants to provide you with a supplemental group experience in addition to professional therapy and / or counseling sessions that are currently happening in the lives of those interested.

**sudSSpirit** does not take the place of professional guidance and we encourage you to seek therapy as required.

**sudSSpirit** wants to provide a comfortable setting with a sense of community among those in attendance. People should feel free to communicate and share feelings as it pertains to their journey through the grieving process.

**sudSSpirit** wants those in attendance to realize they are not alone with this problem and the group is available to provide infinite support.

*-Editor*

## Memories From a Loved One Live On: Last Ravioli Left in a Pan on the Stove Reminded Me of My Husband

*by Andrea Hylan*

Our loved ones live on in so many ways. Five years ago after the death of my husband, I still think of him daily. Moments appear that bring waves of sadness and joy and the most important experience of all; a knowing that he is always near.

I woke up this morning and walked into the kitchen to make breakfast. Last night, I left a pan of dinner on the stove for my daughter who would be returning from work after the rest of us were in bed. As I picked up the pan to wash it with a few other dishes, I saw it. One ravioli and one carrot. She had eaten everything except for one ravioli and one carrot.

Standing in the kitchen, staring at the ravioli, I had a wave of remembrance. A slow smile parted my lips and I wondered if this was in her DNA. She was only 12 years old when her father died. I don't think she could have remembered this habit of his. It had to be encoded in her DNA.

My husband had been a great leftover eater. He was self-employed with a used car lot and auto mechanic shop less than one mile from our home. He worked a variety of hours. He would go to work early in the morning to open the shop, or late at night to complete a car sale or work on a car. Hurley, my husband, would pop home in the afternoon for a bite to eat, standing in front of the refrigerator looking for the oldest leftovers. I would guide him to the plastic containers of different shapes and sizes. He would grab a fork from the drawer to mix casseroles and side dishes and stand there eating the food cold. Standing in the kitchen, he would tell me the latest stories from work, laughing between forkfuls of food.

On the nights when he worked late and the rest of us were already tucked in bed, he would eat the leftovers and always leave a few bites in the containers. A few bites of lasagna, a piece of cake, one ravioli, one carrot. I asked about that curious habit one day and he replied that he left it for me. As he ate the food, he thought I might have gone to bed with thoughts of eating the food the next day. It was an act of kindness. He thought I might have wanted the last piece of cake and didn't want me to be disappointed when I looked in the refrigerator and it was gone.

Today as I stood in the kitchen and, out of habit, I ate the last piece of ravioli and the last carrot, as if it had been saved for me. I thought about the little moments of kindness and it reminded me to pay attention. It is the simple moments of love and kindness that we remember. A touch of the hand, a kind word, a smile, and one ravioli left in a pan.

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