

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



sudS Spirit



Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

*Roy Berkeley
David P. Face
Andy Wolgemuth*

SUMMER 2020

Volume 12, Issue 4

Dominic Murgido - Editor

Welcome *from the Editor*

Our world has changed since our last edition. COVID 19 arrived in full strength interrupting everyone's lives and placing common everyday happenings on hold. Many people have died from this disease leaving family members having to deal with a new way of grieving and funeral services adapting to CDC guidelines. Our last **sudSSpirit** meeting was held in February and since then we have not been able to meet. A virtual Zoom meeting was held for May followed by an additional Zoom meeting in June. We were able to meet at a local park at our regularly scheduled date and time in June. Practicing social distancing and with our chairs in a circle, we came together as one to unite, share, and help each other. Outdoor meetings are planned for the near future.

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.

If you are reading this and hearing about us for the first time and want more information, please call or email for more information as to meeting places during this COVID 19 crises.

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.***

Rebirth *by John Kreiser*

Daffodils cheerily wave their hellos
Dancing in unison as the wind blows
Miniature sunbeams complete with a smile
Beckoning springtime to stay for awhile
Hyacinths, crocuses, violets and more
Colliding calliope of colors galore
Yellow forsythia, lawns luscious green
High in the heavens, clouds cotton ball clean
Nest-building birds back from winter vacation
Surveying each site for the perfect location
Chipmunks and squirrels, ground moles and rabbits
Skittishly scurry renewing old habits
Groundhogs emerge from their quiet abode
To dine absent - mindedly alongside the road
This season of miracles enlivens our senses
Refreshed, let's rejoice as the rebirth commences

Reprinted with permission from Author

An Entry From My Journal

"There is a part of my being where there is pain and heartache that I'll never reveal to anyone. I own it and no one else does."

- Editor



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome

Rebirth

An Entry From My Journal

Quarterly Quote

The House Comes Alive Again

Book Review

Remembering, If We Can

Processing Grief during the COVID-19 Pandemic



Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"When you are sorrowful, look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight"

-Kahlil Gibran

Together we can help each other heal



717-866-2401 / 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



The House Comes Alive Again *by Dominic Murgido*

When the unimaginable occurs and you lose your spouse or significant other the home and its environs takes on a whole new meaning. The presence of your loved one is missing and not just temporarily. A void is present. Silence is deafening. Your purpose is misguided. There is no doubt that much has changed and you could not avoid it.

You may be fortunate to have family members still residing with you and that helps but it is not the same. You may be lucky to have a pet or pets that require your attention and love while they help you cope with the missing person in your life. Sharing your place of residence is helpful to you but again it does not take the place of the terrible loss of your partner.

Some of us aren't as lucky and have neither family, friend nor pet to share space with after the death of our loved one. This can be challenging and very quiet. The place you call home takes on a new feeling and sense of serenity. Serenity can be good but too much of it during a weak moment can make the best of us feel awful and takes us in a downward spiral of despair temporarily. The still of the house and the quiet associated with it can indeed be disturbing at times making one want to go out and be surrounded by sounds and other people to just maintain our sanity. You experience this and get used to it and find ways to cope with it.

That is where I've been at until a summer weekend visit from my daughter and her family. The House came alive again! My daughter lives in New England and we don't get to see each other to often during the course of a year. So when she found some time to visit, I was very excited. The talk and banter among adults and the sights and sounds of an almost five year old along with their baby sister just lit up my world for the weekend. What a great feeling of love, belonging, and togetherness. Once moments of silence and serenity turned into laughter, games, and silly songs. Just being in their presence was the therapy needed to bring such joy into my heart.

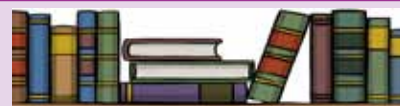
I reflected for a moment the loss of their experience with their Grandmother (my wife) whom they never met but I did not remain in that mindset too long. I knew that in some spiritual way she was present through my heart and was sharing in their visit.

Seeing my grandchildren enjoy themselves at the playground nearby and being part of

their explorations of life took me to a happy place I have longed for these many years. A day full of fun at an amusement park followed by a trip to the pool enhanced the time together. Watching a Disney DVD together and just plain being silly created memories to cherish. What a way to uplift your mood and attitude.

The weekend ended and so did their stay. Packed up and headed home. But not without hugs and happy memories. The house returns to its stillness and serenity but the feeling I experienced will last me a long time knowing that there will be another return trip from them. I am looking forward to when I will take a road trip to see them and the fun and laughter will continue.

Editor's note: *This is a reflection from Summer 2019*



Book Review - Editor

Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief *by David Kessler*

David Kessler, coauthor with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross of the iconic *On Grief and Grieving* --journeys beyond the classic five stages to discover a sixth stage: Meaning. In 1969, Elisabeth Kubler Ross first identified the stages of dying in her transformative book *On Death and Dying*. Decades later, she and David Kessler wrote the classic *On Grief and Grieving*, introducing the stages of grief with the same transformative pragmatism and compassion.

The author introduces a critical sixth stage. Many people look for "closure" after a loss. Kessler argues that it's finding meaning beyond the stages of grief most of us are familiar with. Kessler's insight is both professional and intensely personal. His journey with grief began when, as a child, he witnessed a mass shooting at the same time his mother was dying.

For most of his life, Kessler taught health care professionals and first responders about end of life, trauma, and grief. Despite his knowledge, his life was upended by the sudden death of his twenty-one-year-old son. How does the grief expert handle such a tragic loss? In *Finding Meaning*, the author shares the insights, collective wisdom, and powerful tools that will help those experiencing loss.

Remembering, If We Can by Ellen Perry Berkeley

During our early grieving, it can be helpful to recall the wonderful things about our beloved, What made that person so special, and our time together so marvelous? What do we hope never to forget?

I'll never forget our two honeymoons -- yes, two -- both without sex (who could forget that?). On honeymoon #1, Roy had a urinary infection. On honeymoon #2, we were guests of a friend in London who offered the floor of his living room to our sleeping bags.

The first honeymoon was a long weekend in a cottage on NY State's beautiful Lake George. My family (with several others -- friends) had camped on a state-owned island there for a few weeks every summer when I was growing up.

Roy's gift to me, taking me back to Lake George and to those days, was one of his many gifts to me during our 43 years together. But he never mentioned that we played ping-pong frequently at our motel and I had won most (or was it all?) of our games. "Was that OK?" I asked him. "Absolutely," he replied, "we both had fun."

On honeymoon #2, we were close to our friend Tom Paley, a musical buddy of Roy's. They had often done gigs together before Tom left for London, and with a third person had made a wonderful LP ("The Old Reliable String Band," 1963, Folkways Records).

In England, Roy and I visited the fabulous Berkeley Castle (in or near Wales -- I forget). We later exchanged words that I'm delighted still to have. We had learned that centuries ago a Berkeley family member was imprisoned in the castle's moldy basement, without food, to die. Roy had laughed. "Would you like to reconsider joining this family?" I laughed too. "I think he probably deserved it, so would you like to reconsider my joining this family?" We had fun with this forever.

But we never considered "reconsidering" our marriage. We disagreed occasionally but never fought, just sat down quickly and told how we had acquired our view. It always worked. We soon stood up, hugged, and either agreed to disagree, or vowed to explore our spouse's view.

Some memories are gone, though, or going, as we get older. Next year I'll be 90, and already can't recall the first name of my mother-in-law during the seven years I was married to my first husband.

Memories are never fully recovered, I've read. We change them as we wish, or they change themselves as we don't wish. But what about memories we'd like to keep fully and unchanged?

Here's one: how I met Roy. I had been reading an excellent book, The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Man-Hunting. Its advice: go where the men are and ask any man some questions, even tacky ones. So on a Saturday morning, February 26, 1966, I joined a backstage tour of the Metropolitan Opera House before they tore it down and moved to Lincoln Center. I instantly saw Roy. Handsome. Wearing a blazer. Aware of his surroundings. I moved near him and said (straight from the book) "I know you from somewhere, don't I?" His answer: "No, I don't think so," but he was keen to talk further.

I don't recall whose suggestions rounded out our day, but we were together for hours. A second breakfast at a nearby cafeteria, a visit to several apartments in Greenwich Village (because my apartment on the Upper East Side was being reclaimed by its owner), and a late afternoon coffee at Howard Johnson's in the Village.

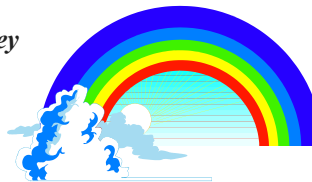
Roy lived in the Village and knew it well, but I could see that while he was paying good attention to several apartments we saw, he was also watching my every move and providing information I could surely use: "a ground floor encourages burglars," for instance, and "this part of the Village isn't highly recommended."

I recall a goodbye hug, maybe true, maybe not, It had been a great day for us both, and after he called, some days later, we were immediately inseparable. "We might as well be married," he soon said. We were married six months after we met.

My words on paper will help me save this memory, and keep Roy with me forever. I'm trying this method with many more recollections.

Anyone could. You don't need to be a writer. We can all think. We can all make notes, And we can all remember -- but for how long?

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.

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

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

-Berks, Pennsylvania

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com

-Bennington, VT

or phone:

717- 866- 2401

-Berks, Pennsylvania

802- 441- 5562

-Bennington, VT

- Editor



Processing Grief during the COVID-19 Pandemic by Elizabeth A. Carter, Erwin Tan, and Jennifer Peed

Grief is the normal and natural reaction to a loss of all kinds, including job loss, illness, or death. COVID-19, however, has made grieving much more difficult. Times of mourning and grieving are often isolating and distressing. However, the isolation resulting from physical distancing can heighten that distress and prolong the grieving process. Here are some things to keep in mind as well as suggestions for coping with a loss—whether you know someone in that situation or you yourself are the one experiencing the loss.

COVID-19 complicates grieving. First, know that regardless of the current crisis, we all experience and express grief in different ways, especially during a disaster. You may feel angry, sorrowful, numb, empty, or even unable to feel certain emotions. You may also experience physical reactions, such as nausea, trembling, weakness, or trouble eating and sleeping. Typically, when people are able to express their grief reactions, they begin to heal and notice positive changes. According to Dr. Patti Anwalt, PhD, Director of the Pathways Center for Grief & Loss at Hospice & Community Care in Lancaster, PA, “How much we grieve is individualized based on our personality, previous experiences with loss, and our environment.” Given the current crisis, with daily routines upended and physical isolation often required, the grieving process can be disrupted and prolonged. Give yourself, or someone grieving, the added time, support, and compassion this unique circumstance calls for. If you are a couple, sharing sadness and providing mutual support could contribute to a sense of togetherness that bring out the best in each other during a crisis.

Bereavement with physical distancing can be harder. Bereavement, the grief and mourning due to the loss of a loved one, is made more complicated by the necessary constraints placed on us by COVID-19. Many typical coping mechanisms are unavailable during these times, making processing grief much more difficult. Traditional memorial services are not an option, nor is hugging a friend, sharing a meal, or even saying goodbye to your loved one in person.

Pandemic’s universal stressors can exacerbate grief. It’s easy to imagine how grief may be compounded by sorrow and anger from the loss of a job, social network, and routine, as well as anxiety about one’s own health and financial security. Meeting the immediate needs of sheltering in place and making ends meet may compete with grieving the loss of life. Keep in mind that all such factors can delay, prolong, and complicate the grieving process for you or someone you know.

Here are some suggestions to help the grieving process move forward in spite of constraints brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The physically distanced griever can still reach out. You need not be alone in your grief. Call, text, and video chat with friends, family, religious leaders, or anyone else you can confide in. During this time of crisis, your network of support may also be grieving themselves, and commiserating can be helpful. When connecting with people, be specific about your need in the moment—whether it’s a listening ear in the middle of the night or just someone to share funny stories with. Some people keep open video connections, even as they take care of daily tasks, including long periods of silence, to create that sense of connectedness. You can also reach out to the helplines and local support groups.

The physically distanced friend can still be a steady presence. If you know someone grieving, offering a steady presence is a good way to support the person, and it’s still possible during these days of physical distancing. If a traditional memorial services is not an option, support your friend in creating a private or virtual ritual. You can regularly check in with your friends and loved ones; ask whether they prefer a phone, text, or video call (technology permitting). Talking can be one of the most helpful things after a death, so just let them share how they’re feeling and anything about their deceased loved one. Checking back in weeks or months after a loss, when the condolences have quieted, can be particularly meaningful.

Even though we are physically distancing, you and those you care about do not need to grieve alone. Many resources are available with people ready to help.

Helplines

- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline: Free hotline provides immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. To connect with a trained crisis counselor 24/7, call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255); TTY: 800-799-4TTY (800-799-4889), available 24/7

Support Groups

- Hospice Foundation of America Support Groups (Note many are open to people who did not use hospice services)
- Connect with your local faith community

Grief Resources

- Hospice Foundation of America provides extensive grief resources including videos, articles, and websites
- Pathways Center for Grief & Loss offers online grief education and support, and other resources

Self-care

- Tips for Survivors: Coping with Grief after a Traumatic Event
- Exercises you can do at home

Finally, for more information and resources, see another blog, COVID-19 Demands Attention to Mental Health, Too.

Reprinted with permission: aarp.org