



# sudS Spirit



Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

*Brandon W. Ritchie*

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## Welcome *from the Editor*

Happy New Year! As another year begins, let's reflect on how far we have come as individuals as we process our grief in its various stages. It's a good time to take stock of ourselves and try to chart a course for where we would like to be in the near and distant future. We all have elements of the need for freedom in our lives. Freedom from crying, fear, loneliness, depression, and despair. We also have choices. Choices to make a change and to try to become whole again. With faith, hope, and spending time with those that know what we are going through, anything is possible for us to achieve.

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

If this is the first time you have heard about us and are in need of some help through our support group chapters, please see page three in the right margin for additional information about our chapters. We also have a list of other resources on page two in the left margin that may be helpful to you. This newsletter is available to anyone anywhere regardless of their specific loss so if you know of someone that can benefit from these pages, please share this with them and have them contact us with their email or address information and we will make sure that they become part of our mailing list for future publications. You may also contact the editor/founder directly at 717-866-2401 or [sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com).

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

## Age vs. Time

*by John Kreiser*

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

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## Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"If you want to conquer the anxiety of life, live in the moment, live in the breath"

*-Amit Ray*

"I celebrate myself, and sing myself"

*-Walt Whitman*

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home"

*-Dame Edith Sitwell*



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## Quarterly Quote

*- Editor*

"Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them"

*-Leo Tolstoy*

## Resources

- Editor

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

Berks Visiting Nurses  
www.berksvna.org  
610-378-0481

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



# One year ends; Another begins

by Dominic Murgido

It happens all too quickly, doesn't it. We begin a new year trying to keep resolutions, break bad habits, become a better person, and live life better than last year. We think we have an entire year to do it and we do but time gets away from us without us even realizing it. Before we know it seasons change numerous times, birthdays come and go and the year is half over only for us to say "where did the time go?" We concentrate on the second half of the year and time keeps ticking away leading us into the last quarter of the year with seasons changing and the holidays. Then *one year ends; another begins*.

Time is one of those things that when gone, you can never get it back. Just like losing a loved one; once they depart from our world, they will not be physically seen again here.

As I write these thoughts, it's December and I am going through some containers of Christmas decorations. Most of which have a story of when purchased by who and where and how we, (my wife and I) enjoyed sharing in the joy that they bring. I discover a few programs from Christmas plays that we attended; last one being her last Christmas, 2005. We loved to attend plays at local theaters and five years prior Sue heard about this one theater group in Harrisburg. We decided to go to their Christmas play every December after that first one we attended. They were all good and well done and it became a tradition. The next day after the play that December, I purchased tickets in advance for the next Christmas performance in 2006. I got front row seats and was going to surprise her when the time came. The time came but I attended the play alone since her death happened approximately three weeks after that last Christmas play we saw together. I sat in the front row with an empty seat to my left and in some way, felt her presence next to me.

I have Christmas songs playing as I go through these Christmas decorations and then realized that the CD I was playing was the CD that we always listened to in the car on our way to the Christmas play every year. Did I randomly select that one or was I helped ?

Most of my days in December come and go without any sadness. It is at certain times and certain events and rituals that a somber moment

is experienced but quickly dissipates with the wonder of the season and what it represents to all of us. I think of her daily and always will for the rest of my years.



I didn't get the tree as I write this, but next weekend that will happen. A real tree is a must that is adorned with many ornaments that we have accumulated over thirty years of a lifetime together. And each one has a story that I recollect as I place each one on every bough. This is a happy time for me as I think of how fortunate of a man I am that I met her, fell in love with her, married her, had a child with her, and spent the best years of my life with her. Sue left our world too soon but I am grateful that she was part of my life and made my life what it became to be.

So the year is winding down and into history it will go. We look forward to a new year whatever it may hold. We remember this past year that we have improved a bit in our daily lives along the way. We project faith and hope to guide us in the next twelve months. We won't take "time" for granted and we'll use it as wisely as we can to improve ourselves and well being, health, friendship, and new adventures. Then before we know it, *one year ends; another begins*.

We may have experienced the **S**udden **U**nexpected **D**eath of our **S**pouse or significant other, but

We are **S**urvivors in **P**articipation to **I**nform, **R**enew, **I**mprove, and **T**riumph over what life has dealt us.

Happy New Year!

### An Entry From My Journal

"Each year adds to the new memory column of AD (after death) as opposed to those cherished past memories of BD (before death) with my wife"

-Editor



## Comfort Without Words

by Ellen Perry Berkeley

Many of us could empathize with Dominic, founder of **sudSSpirit** and editor of this newsletter, when he wrote recently about the death of Hal, his cherished dog. During these 12 years since an accident took Sue's life (she was both Dom's wife and Hal's "Master"), this dog constantly comforted Dom, reassured him, loved him. The devotion went both ways, certainly, but Dom was the only one who could express his gratitude in words.

How lucky he'd been, he wrote, for this caring attention from a creature he'd always considered Sue's. I've had my own experience with a beloved four-footed friend. I'm delighted to tell this story, even though it returns me to a serious grieving.

First, though, a bit about my "critters." All were cats – feral cats. We fed them carefully, outdoors. But over the years a few tamed themselves and came indoors. We never knew about their earlier days, except for the single cat we'd seen as a kitten. Had any others been feral from birth? Perhaps as pets they ran off after being abused by violent people, were "dumped" by heartless owners, were carried off while investigating delivery trucks, were escaping the restrictive households of their humans.

Roscoe (the Rascal), one of the feral cats who became part of our family, had earlier greeted us whenever we drove up the driveway. One day, he came into the house after he saw a cat inside, snoozing on a rug. Roy had opened the door to retrieve Roscoe's bowl, and Roscoe darted past Roy into the kitchen and onto my lap. He never went outside again!

He became Roy's cat, following Roy everywhere and snuggling into him whenever Roy sat down or stretched out. When we were ready for sleep, Roscoe would stretch out himself, on Roy's chest. He allowed me to pet him, throughout the day, but I was rather like a disciplinary mother, telling him how to behave and, of course, providing much of his food. Only when Roy and I were ready to sleep, would Roscoe briefly nose into my armpit and munch on my

nightgown. He never rested on top of me.



Then came the phone call from my cousin Joan, one of my dearest friends, saying she had barely two months to live. She had just been diagnosed with lung cancer, having finally sought advice for what she thought was a lingering bronchitis. After the call, Roy and I comforted each other until I said, "I'm wrecked, I need to lie down." I went upstairs to bed – to stare at the ceiling and wince at the news. And then Roscoe appeared. He jumped from the floor onto the bed, and headed immediately onto my chest. His head was near mine for an hour, as we breathed at each other, sometimes even "spoke" to each other. Soon I experienced a miracle. My sadness was replaced by joy. A joy that dear Roscoe had recognized my need for comfort (and knew exactly how to deliver this comfort). A joy, too, that Joan had been my true friend for decades.



Amazingly, Roscoe never again put his full weight on my body. Never again! During our hour together, I wasn't bothered by his weight. And he didn't want to relieve me of his weight. But it was this one time only. I guess the comfort we were getting, or giving, was

what really mattered.

And this taught me about human-to-human contact. It doesn't need to be verbal. It can just be holding people close, making sounds indicating sympathy (and gratitude for this closeness), and sending good thoughts to those who are grieving. Thank you, beautiful Roscoe. Did I mention that he had a gorgeous black coat, with white bib and socks and a single white whisker above one eye? I guess his looks didn't matter as much as his sensitivity to my grieving, his determination to help me, his wish to show me his love. Another lesson for us humans.

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

### **sudSSpirit Bereavement Support Group**

meets monthly in the following locations:

#### **Berks Chapter**

Reading, PA.

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

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

#### **Bennington Chapter**

Bennington, VT

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

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

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

## Life is Fragile *By Dominic Murgido*

It seems that all of us are in a race everyday of our lives and are so caught up in the moment of trying to do more, be more, and get more that we forget about the most basic of virtues of being a good person to our fellow man.

We do not value life as much as our forefathers have, we do not even think about the chance that life can be over, finished, done, in an instant. The near misses in life are all too frequent and most of us move on from those misses without learning anything from them. Life as we know it can change in the blink of an eye and if we don't use our time wisely with our loved ones, friends, and taking time for us, we will regret what we never did, never said or where we never went.

If we would only realize the fragility of life for ourselves and those we love, we all would be so kind and appreciative of everyone we come in contact with. My outlook on this life of mine has changed since the death of my wife and I do my best to realize that in any instant of time, it can all go away. I live for the moment, for the experience, for the enjoyment of what life can bring me and the love for those around me.

Treasure the time with your loved ones and friends, it's the little things in life that means the most to all of us.



## Our Mission

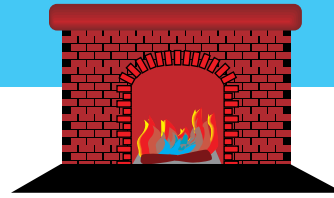
*sudSSpirit* wants to provide you with a supplemental group experience in addition to professional therapy and / or counseling sessions that are currently happening in the lives of those interested.

*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*

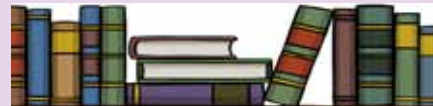


## Bill of Rights for the Bereaved

*by June Cerza Kolf*

1. Do not make me do anything I do not want to do.
2. Let me cry.
3. Allow me to talk about the deceased.
4. Do not force me to make quick decisions.
5. Let me act strange sometimes.
6. Let me see that you are grieving too.
7. When I am angry, do not discount it!
8. Do not speak to me in platitudes.
9. Listen to me, please!
10. Forgive me my trespasses, my rudeness, my thoughtlessness.

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## Book Review - Editor

### When Will I Stop Hurting? Dealing with a Recent Death

*by June Cerza Kolf*

A very good and brief glance at grieving. The examples of grief, experiences, and quotations were in perfect quantity to accentuate the points made by the author. It was also particularly valuable to me that there was not a focus on turning to religion or spirituality- it was touched upon but it was not preaching.

The first half of the book didn't really present any "new" information, but it was well organized and straight-forward. The second half of the book is structured like a workbook. The questions seemed well-thought out, and if I was dealing with the death of someone I was close with, I could see how the questions might help. It also provided some additional insight into where some might be in their thinking/processing.

This small but powerful book has been a boon to many wounded souls. Readers have found in Kolf a gentle guide to lead them through the stages of grief and eventually the healing process. This new edition of her book is revised and updated and includes a study guide ideal for bereavement groups.