

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE  
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



# sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

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**Patricia Marks**  
**Bill Berk**  
**Norman R. Havlish**

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Dominic Murgido - Editor

## Welcome *from the Editor*

Happy New Year! Let's all hope and pray that this new year will be much better than the last and we will all be able to enjoy happy and healthy lives. This April will mark the 13<sup>th</sup> year of providing a safe and non judgmental place of support and resources for the hundreds of survivors of the sudden unexpected death of a spouse or significant other that this support group has helped.. Our Mission has always been to provide you with a supplemental group experience as you find your way on your personal grief journey.

**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"

*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.*

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). We also have a facebook page.

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.***



### Book Review - Editor **Coping When Your Spouse Dies** by Medard Laz

This book helps readers realize that, while you can't bring back a spouse who died, you can face your grief in a series of stages which lead toward personal healing.

When your spouse dies your sense of helplessness combined with your grief often proves to be an overpowering blend of emotions. While many people grieving the death of a spouse believe there is no end in sight to their suffering, the key to putting their pain behind them - acknowledging the loss as a new life. The advice is simple, but effective. You will learn not to bury your feelings, but rather, to go through the pain of the death and to look ahead to the life God has provided.

The author was ordained a Catholic priest for the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1969 where he served in parishes until 1999. Since 1999 he has lived in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and has served on weekends in several parishes in Ft. Lauderdale. Father Laz has also founded Joyful Again!, a weekend program for widows and widowers that is held throughout the country. Father Laz is the author of nine books.

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### Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"A sign that you are on a path of being healed is when you would like to be a part of helping someone else get their healing and freedom. It's at that point when we embrace and accept that we will always be a wounded healer, traveling through that circle of hurting, healing, and helping"

**Jeff Billingsley –  
My Second Chance**



## 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



## Nothing Stays the Same *by Dominic Murgido*

Change is something that we love and hate. Many of us need change and need it often. We're not satisfied with the way things are for too long and must make a change to something else, something different, something newer, something easier. That's our choice. Some of us like the way things are and hope change doesn't happen. We want it to be the same and don't invite change. We're satisfied and happy with what we are, what we have, who we're with, and where we live. That's our choice.

There are those of us that are a little of both. We like the way things are but are not afraid or reluctant to a change here and there. Our thoughts are that change is good, sometimes. When something remains the same, life becomes stale, stagnant, boring. Some of us require change more often and dislike when things stay the same too long. Desiring change often makes life interesting, exciting, adventurous and challenges our souls to keep up with ourselves, our drive.

When examining our life and taking the time to reflect on where we have been and where we are now, it will become clear that *nothing stays the same*.

In spite of ourselves and our willingness to be the master of our destiny, it doesn't matter. Change is inevitable. Change will happen. Change is part of life. It's difficult for us to accept something that we have no control over like the changes in our lives that happen suddenly and unexpectedly. This kind of change is not our choice.

My wife Sue died suddenly and unexpectedly and believe me, everything changed. Life as I once knew it stopped. And it took years for a re-start. The new beginning for me was just that. All new. I never had to think about life without her since I met her in college some thirty years ago. Change was happening and it was noticeable and at times uncontrollable. None of us in a loving and healthy relationship think it's ever going to end even though we all know that death is the final act of life.

Nothing stays the same for any of us during what we call normal times because life happens and choices are made. When tragedy strikes, it's all hands on deck. Death changes everything. Each baby step you take puts you in another place and a different state of mind; less of who you once were, and more

of somebody you don't even know yet. What you do, where you work, how you live, who you talk to, what you believe, how you feel, why you hurt, how you express yourself can all change.

Most times these changes are happening so fast and being driven by uncertainty, emotion, fear of the unknown, and the desire to feel better than you do right at that moment. You're in shock. And you will be for some time. It's tough to be grounded at all. I remember saying to myself and at times repeatedly out loud to those around me "I don't know what to do". And I didn't. I was clueless.

There are things that have to be dealt with in a timely manner and they come first and you are reminded of them by those that require you to do them. That is priority. Everything else is secondary and later, much later. As time passes and you begin to feel some sense of togetherness, you slowly begin to function in a basic fundamental way. This is where the changes come in and hopefully you will be able to think about them with some sense of clarity.

Change will project you into a future of unknown, a future of who you will now be. You are no longer the person you once were - when you had your spouse with you. Some of us will wait at least a year or more before making any real big changes while others are ready way before then. It is really up to the individual and most times it is encouraged, when in doubt, to seek advice from a trusted friend, family member or professional.

I don't know of anyone that has been through losing a spouse that hasn't changed the way they look at life. Many changed their lives through re-locations, career changes, retirement, volunteering, faith, hope, prayer, journaling, helping others, peace, exploration and attitude. Whatever changed for you, beware. Another change may be coming because *nothing stays the same*.

### Five Links to Know

[www.whatsyourgrief.com](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com)  
[www.mindfulnessandgrief.com](http://www.mindfulnessandgrief.com)  
[www.refugeingrief.com](http://www.refugeingrief.com)  
[www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com)  
[www.modernloss.com](http://www.modernloss.com)

-Editor



## YES, WRITE! *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

I'm a writer, with a stack of published articles and an armful of published books. My advice to anyone who has lost a spouse is this: write about your spouse.

But we're not writers, you'll argue. I'll argue back: but you know how to use words. On your computer, you've sent thousands of e-mails. With other people present, you've stated your views on hundreds of subjects. Alone, you've yelled at the TV dozens of times. I urge you to write. It could be an important part of your grieving. How so, you ask.

- Because it'll keep that person with you a good bit longer while you're writing.
- Because you'll mention things that you might forget in the years ahead.
- Because you'll have something to give to people who'll now see your spouse, and you, in a far richer way. Or you'll have something wonderful to keep, if you decide not to distribute it.

OK, you say, but how do I do it? How do I start?

ONE: Keep a notepad at your bedside. Brains work hard when we're asleep (think dreams), but we can grab these thoughts before we awaken fully to the world crashing in on us.

TWO: Take a notepad with you, for the 20 minutes -- at least -- that you'll spend in an appropriately-named "waiting room."

THREE: Keep empty pages in your handbag, briefcase, or lunch box, to jot down ideas about what to include, and who to contact for details.

FOUR: Write freely, as if sending an e-mail to a friend. You'll edit later. Editing is often considered what's done after we write. No, editing is a crucial part of the writing itself.

FIVE: Keep early drafts. You never know when you'll want to restore what you earlier dropped.

Here's my experience. When a friend suggested that I write about my husband soon after he died, I wasn't eager to do so. Then I woke up one morning, thinking about something I wanted folks to know. I was soon writing daily, an hour or two.

My bio of Roy came to 52 pages. I copied these pages at a local printing shop, and put the pages into one side of the folders I bought at Walmart. Several photos -- also copied inexpensively -- went into the other side of the 120 folders I then delivered personally or mailed.

The response to "Roy Gellen Berkeley: His Life" was superb. People enjoyed knowing how he overcame the abuse from his mother, how he ran off to NYC while still in high school, how he delighted in the full-tuition scholarship he arranged for his four years at Columbia, how he then worked at the NYPost, how he met me when he was 31 years old, and how we loved each other in so many ways during our more than four decades together.

I was important to him, as he was to me. I was tickled to mention his winning big money on "Jeopardy!" -- I had encouraged him to approach the program. I was also tickled to mention the fabulous reviews of his book, A SPY'S LONDON -- I had deleted 10,000 words from his manuscript when he was too exhausted from one of his seven cancers to do it himself. (He loved my editing! And we met the publisher's deadline!) There was much more in our lives together, as we always worked to make the other one HAPPY. No fighting. No jealousy. No griping. No nagging.

Over the years, I've helped many people, near and far, to write. I hope I've helped you, readers near and far, to think of writing about someone you've lost, and about yourself.

You'll be glad you wrote this, whether it's delivered to your spouse's friends, colleagues, and relatives, or whether it's only for you. Either way, this writing can be very helpful during your intense grieving. Try it. You'll see. You'll weep, you'll laugh. You'll be regretful, you'll be proud. You'll be sad, you'll be optimistic. Altogether, you'll face your grief straight on, and that's excellent.

### **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





## Make the Most of Every Moment

I had a very special teacher in high school many years ago whose husband unexpectedly died of a heart attack. About a week after his death, she shared some of her insight with a classroom of students.

As the late afternoon sunlight came streaming in through the classroom windows when the class was nearly over, she moved a few things aside on the edge of her desk and sat down there. With a gentle look of reflection on her face, she paused and said, "Before class is over, I would like to share with all of you a thought that is unrelated to class, but which I feel is very important. Each of us is put here on earth to learn, share love, appreciate, and give of ourselves. None of us know when this fantastic experience will end. It can be taken away at any moment. Perhaps this is God's way of telling us that we must make the most of every single day."

Her eyes beginning to water, she went on, "So I would like you all to make me a promise. From now on, on your way to school, or on your way home, find something beautiful to notice. It doesn't have to be something you physically see. It could be a scent – perhaps of freshly baked bread wafting out of someone's house; or it could be the sound of the breeze slightly rustling the leaves in the trees; or the way the morning light catches an autumn leaf as it falls gently to the ground." Please look for these things and cherish them. For, although it may sound trite to some, these things are the *stuff* of life. The little things we are put here on earth to enjoy. The things we often take for granted. We must make it important to notice them, for at anytime...it can all be taken away.

The class was completely quiet. We all picked up our books and filed out of the room silently. That afternoon I noticed more things on my way home from school than I had that whole semester. Every once in a while I think of that teacher and remember what an impression she made on all of us, and I try to appreciate all of those things that sometimes we all overlook.

Take notice of something special you see on your lunch hour today. Go barefoot or walk on the beach at sunset. Stop off on the way home tonight to get a double dip ice cream cone. For as we get older, it is not the things we did that we often regret, but the things we didn't do.

*Reprinted with permission:  
The Fishwrapper, October 20, 2020*

## Entries From My Journal

"It is a wonderful and astonishing comfort to rediscover my lost love through thoughts, memory, and prayer."

"None of us will ever be *right* again. No matter how better we feel or how different we choose to live our lives - when this happened to us – everything changes and it took a part of us with it."

"I struggle with moments but my struggle gives me confidence and perseverance."



*-Editor*

## When an Animal Companion Dies

*Kenneth J. Doka, Editor*

Grief is not just about human relationships. Grief is about attachments, and those attachments include animal companions.

For many individuals an animal companion can be an important part of their daily lives. Animal companions can fill many rolls – serving as dear friends, protectors, a source of caring and stimulation, and an impetus for exercise and conversation. And sometimes, the loss of an animal companion can be a link to earlier losses or poignant life experiences.

Unfortunately, because many people do not understand relationships that individuals have with animal companions, grief and extreme sadness associated with the death of a beloved animal companion may be minimized or worse, even ridiculed.

There are three keys to dealing with the loss of an animal companion. The first is to recognize what has been lost. Think about the role that the animal played in your life. Sharing memories and understanding through remembering what has been lost is an important part of any grief. Second, cope with the present and acknowledge your right to mourn. Like any other loss, the grief may come in waves. You may want to reach out to others who can support your loss. You may want to have a quiet ritual – a memorial service or burial – either alone or with family and friends.

Finally, look to the future. You may need to decide whether you want future animal companionship. Well-meaning others can sometimes push you to obtain another animal companion quickly as a way to end your grief. Remember that you can no more replace an animal relationship than a human one.

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## 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*