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Welcome from the Editor

Happy New Year!

And so it goes. The calendar changes and we process the thoughts of another new year upon us. A time of reflection and a time to look forward with what lies ahead of us. Whether you believe in resolutions or not, the new year brings the thoughts of new beginnings, a fresh start, a change in attitude, self care, believing in yourself, acknowledging, accepting and adapting.

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 additional information inside about our chapters. We also have a list of resources for support inside that may be helpful to you. This newsletter is available to anyone anywhere or any social service agency, hospice, support group, church, funeral home, medical office, library, hospital, clinic or organization anywhere FREE of charge via regular mail or email. 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 and dmurgido@gmail.com

You may also access copies of this newsletter through the Circle of Life Coalition website at www.circleoflife.org under resources. They have the current issue as well as past issues. Special thanks to the Circle of Life Coalition for hosting our newsletters on their website as well as information about my book, *Miss Your Forever*, and continuing on their mission to help others.

Miss Your FOREVER, Reflections After the Death of a Spouse. On sale now from wherever books are sold or directly from the author in person \$16.95 or through the mail \$20 including S&H. Phone and email contact listed above.

FOUND is the title of a 4 part series for those who are grieving or who want to support someone who is grieving. It is hosted by Pam Washington and Dom Murgido. It airs on Berks Community Television. BCTV. **FOUND** involves Grief, hOnor Understand, Nurture, eDucate.

The mission of **FOUND** is to create a platform to build more community awareness around *grief*, to *honor* the process, to better *understand* it, to *nurture* those who are grieving, and to *educate* everyone about grief.

Parts 1 & 2 have been completed and can be viewed on www.bctv.org and their youtube channel. Parts 3 & 4 to be completed in 2022.

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 **sudSSpirit** and yourself to help you in your time of need. *Together We Can Help Each Other Heal.*

Coming Soon

In a Heartbeat

A Tale of

Reflection, Faith, Hope, and Resilience

By

DOMINIC MURGIDO

IN A HEARTBEAT documents a tale of a grief journey like no other concerning the fatal vehicular accident that took the life of a mother and wife while she was on her way to work to the horror, challenges, and thoughts experienced by her husband as he navigated through his new life without her.

This sudden unexpected death of his spouse caused by a distracted driver shocked family, friends, and the community to the core. Follow his path of uncertainty as the author begins to cope with the loss of his soul mate through time and ask questions that there are no answers to.

Spring 2022

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"Through my example of living with diversity I was able to positively affect someone else's life. When I visit the past now, it is for wisdom and experience, not for regret or shame."

Michael J. Fox,
*No Time Like the Future:
An Optimist Considers
Mortality*



Resources

- Editor

St Joseph's Spiritual Care
www.thefutureofhealthcare.org
610-378-2297

Amedisys/Compassionate Care Hospice
1-800-777-5109 / 717-944-4466

Family Guidance Center
www.familyguidancecenter.com
610-374-4963

Clear Water Wellness
www.cwwellness.com
610-750-9096

Promedica / Heartland Home Health Care and Hospice
www.heartlandhospice.com
610-373-6898 or 866-380-5874

www.grasp.org (grief recovery after a substance passing)

Circle of Life Coalition
www.circleoflifecoalition.org

www.save.org (suicide loss)

www.griefshare.org

Diakon / Lutheran Home at Topton
www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp
610-682-1337 / 877-342-5667

Bennington Area VNA & Hospice
www.bavnah.org 802-442-5502

Bayada Hospice Services
www.bayada.com 888-790-3025
610-367-1608

Pathways Center for Grief & Loss
www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org
800-924-7610

Spiritrust Lutheran Home Care & Hospice Mission Care
800-840-9081

www.211.com (United Way)

www.speakinggrief.org

www.grief.com (David Kessler)

www.opentohope.com



Through the Years by Dominic Murgido

It's been more than a decade and a half since she died. That length of time is troublesome to me. I think of it as being far too long of time to be without her. And then I think with that much time since her death, was there an actual time I was with her? It's not like I am forgetting our life together but time has a way of changing perspective in your mind and making you feel less at ease with your situation.

I knew her for thirty years, married for twenty-six and a half of those. Our marriage was a great partnership where our friendship preceded the time we fell in love and were united as one. It wasn't a perfect marriage, none are. We had our arguments and disagreements that led to the no talking for a day or one of us in a room in solitude with the door closed. But we were always quick to respond to the foolishness and the reason for the disruption and resolved our conflict in a compassionate way. We were fortunate that conflicts did not happen that often and most of our time together was happy and joyful.

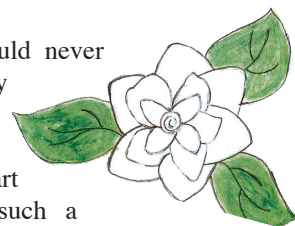
I don't believe that any one that has lost a loved one can say that their life has continued on uninterrupted from how it was since their death. It becomes different. Everything changes. Nothing stays the same. Even if you are fortunate enough to start another relationship or even remarry, your life is still different in many ways since the death of your beloved.

Grief will stay with you through the years. I'm not talking the gut wrenching raw emotion that occurred in the first few days, weeks, or months of the loss you experienced. As time passes the worst grief is softened and will eventually end up in the background of your life possibly in your sub conscious. It will come to the surface at times ever so gently as a reminder.

You will experience happiness again. You will smile and laugh again. And you will lead another life again but not with them. You will always remember them and love them as you make choices for your future. Making choices always comes with risks and there is that possibility of regrets at times. Don't let that discourage you. Everyday life is a risk and without risk there is no life to be had.

We all have stuff we like, collect, cherish and through the years you may be holding onto things that they loved and kept because you wanted to and it seemed the right thing to do. Don't be surprised as years pass, the items you

once thought you would never part with because they liked them, you will decide it is time to let go and part company. But until such a time crosses your path, hold onto them and don't let anyone convince you otherwise.



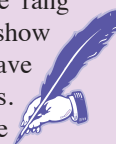
Firsts will continue to happen way beyond the first year of your grief journey and as long as you are open to them, you will recognize and acknowledge them. That is the one thing I wish I *wasn't* open to. I notice all the things that I do or experience for the first time without her till this day. Some survivors on their grief journey are fortunate and don't see firsts after a certain time period. I envy them for that. After what seems like a huge amount of firsts we all go through, it's nice that the firsts are not noticed as happening even if they are. It's one less thing that troubles you.

Triggers will continue to happen to you through the years. I look at triggers being either negative or positive. Positive triggers bring joy and allow you to smile when something comes to your attention. Negative triggers bring anxiety and makes you feel stressed and sad. All triggers are sensory and emotional. The good news is that through the years you will eventually have more positive joy triggers than negative anxiety triggers.

Ultimately it is entirely up to you to feel better about the life ahead of you. Yes, you are in control even though you think you are not. In the beginning of this grief journey we are all *out of control* without any compass. Eventually it comes down to your *will* and *believing*. Your will to heal and love is stronger than anything or anyone or any situation that you are currently involved in. Along with faith and hope you are responsible for your well being and you will succeed in this life you are now dealt with.

An Entry From My Journal

"The feeling of happiness has been replaced with getting by. My happiness ended on that day in January when my phone rang and I was told my wife didn't show up for work. I was fortunate to have been with her for thirty years. Some people have far less time with their spouse."



-Editor



On Not Giving Up *by Eleen Perry Berkelry*

I'm in a new place in my life. Still a widow and still grieving, but less every year. Less able too, to hike Mount Kilimanjaro, near or far.

Physically too, I'm in a new place. After I fell (no injuries) in my "independent cottage" which is an excellent retirement community, I was moved into the main part of the building for better supervision. The good part is that I now get three fully cooked meals every single day with easy access to the pleasantly decorated dining room and to other residents. The not so good part is that my companions here are often people that have given up on life. Totally given up, in spite of the fabulous care by nurses, the frequent visits from relatives, and a calendar filled with tempting activities.

I have **not** given up. I have attended many of the activities, I have eaten all of the meals, and I have signed on for the occasional out of facility day trips and restaurant meals. What keeps me "hanging in there"? I've been asking myself this and several other residents have also asked me how I keep my spirits up.

It's not hard, I replied.

I think of my father, who went through plenty of tough times and never lost his optimism. He was very helpful to me with that outlook. But I don't still have my Dad and some of you have never had anyone similar.

So let me give some thoughts to those of you who need to explore this path yourself. How, indeed, can you stay in good spirits when difficult things are happening to others around you – and to you.

1. Know that you can change even a tough situation into something you can manage. Many folks do this.
2. Read any writers who've figured out a response that has worked for them. But know that just because it has worked for them doesn't mean it will work for everyone.
3. Explore all possibilities, perhaps even for those with physical disabilities or financial problems-and especially for those with a history of never managing their lives themselves.
4. Limit your time with negative people. They will not miss you once they realize where you want to be, and you surely won't miss them.
5. Believe in yourself, even if those around you are not helping you to do so.
6. Pour your heart out to people who indicate they'd be a positive "ear". Look for positive people-those who have achieved something in their struggles and are eager to pass along their stories.

7. Learn from your own thoughts. Maybe keep a journal. This can be immensely helpful, showing you what has been useful and what has not. Write honestly. Perhaps write only for yourself to read.

8. Exert your privilege to decide what to try, what to keep doing, what to drop. Deciding this too early can be unproductive, so stay on a particular path long enough to begin seeing its benefits, its problems.

9. We probably grew up not expecting major problems in our lives. So think of the people in your life who overcame their difficulties and who smiled at being able to pat themselves on the back. Be one of those people yourself. And seek them out as friends.

10. Join with others who are also struggling. You are not alone. If there's already a support group, ask to join it. If there isn't a group, start one yourself - gathering in a public place that also gives some privacy.

Know that there are ways to work on all of this. Keep working. Your spouse would be delighted to see you doing so. Feel his (or her) encouragement.

It isn't disrespectful to your spouse who has died that you are often having fun these days, exploring new places or groups, experiencing new friends, or even (just by yourself) enjoying life. Your spouse wouldn't want you to give up on your life.

The author is an award winning writer, attendee, and long time supporter of sudSSpirit in our Bennington, VT chapter.



Book Review - Editor **A Time To Grieve:** **Meditations for Healing after** **the Death of a Loved One**

by Carol Staudacher

A book that can be read at your own pace. There are quotes from survivors at the top of every page that allows you to validate some of your own feelings. The author divides the book into three phases: Retreating, Working Through, and Resolving. All three phases overlap and are discussed broadly. The writing provides comfort and wisdom and allows you to explore your own journey using the book as an aid to your personal discovery.

Other books by the author include *Beyond Grief* and *Men and Grief*.

sudSSpirit **Bereavement** **Support Group**

meets monthly in the following locations:

Berks Chapter

Reading, PA
4th Tues. of the month
6 PM
Exeter Community
Library
4569 Prestwick Drive
Reading, PA 19606
610-406-9431

Bennington Chapter

Bennington, VT
3rd Tues. of the month
6 PM
Bennington Free Library
101 Silver Street
Bennington, VT 05201
802-442-9051

For additional
information,
Please email or phone:

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-Editor





Closure – A Misnomer *by Mary Cleckley*

In the past few years, the non-bereaved seem to have won the battle, it all came about as the result of someone discovering there is a word in the dictionary called “closure.” What battle, you say? Those of us who have suffered the death of someone vital to our lives recognized the need for such a word. (Not our word, surely, but the need for the non-bereaved, for, as Shakespeare once said, “Everyone can master grief but he who has it.”)

It is difficult to have a day go by that someone doesn’t insinuate, with seeming great authority, that those of us who grieve and can’t seem to put it all behind us, simply haven’t put their hearts into achieving “closure.” Bear in mind now, that’s the same heart that has been broken, maybe many times over. (Do these people who casually demand “closure” of us not realize that, like Humpty-Dumpty, “All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put all the pieces together again?”)

Some people have been fortunate enough not to know that particular pain, but maybe those of us who do know that pain are more finely attuned to life’s realities. The reality that says grief is NOT a simple set of stages, once accomplished, each stage goes away. Instead, some particular stages may visit you time and again. There is some truth in the old saying, “Time heals all wounds,” but there is more truth in the simple knowledge that, with time, life does go on for those who grieve. The reality is life’s cadence is never the same, for grief has a tempo of its own.

Understanding that the ones who haven’t a clue, as the modern saying goes, are really more comfortable believing that closure is possible and that loss isn’t really so bad. (How can they know how it feels to have part of you amputated without the benefit of anesthesia? If I didn’t know how it feels, I too would wish for it not to be so bad and would shy away from reality.) My dictionary says closure is defined, in part, as a “finish; end.” In the twenty years since my son died I know that closure is not possible. Instead, his death has become part of the fiber of my life. It is more accurate to say that I have learned to live with my loss more comfortably, but “finished, ended?” That’s truly a misnomer.

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My friend just died. I don’t know what to do. *by G. Snow*

Alright, here goes. I’m old. What that means is that I’ve survived (so far) and a lot of people I’ve known and loved did not.

I’ve lost friends, best friends, acquaintances, co-workers, grandparents, mom, relatives, teachers, mentors, students, neighbors, and a host of other folks. I have no children, and I can’t imagine the pain it must be to lose a child. But here’s my two cents.

I wish I could say you get used to people dying. I never did. I don’t want to. It tears a hole through me whenever somebody I love dies, no matter the circumstances. But I don’t want it to “not matter”. I don’t want it to be something that just passes.

My scars are a testament to the love and the relationship that I had for and with that person. And if the scar is deep, so was the love. So be it. Scars are a testament to life. Scars are a testament that I can love deeply and live deeply and be cut, or even gouged, and that I can heal and continue to live and continue to love. And the scar tissue is stronger than the original flesh ever was. Scars are a testament to life. Scars are only ugly to people who can’t see.

As for grief, you’ll find it comes in waves. When the ship is first wrecked, you’re drowning, with wreckage all around you. Everything floating around you reminds you of the beauty and the magnificence of the ship that was, and is no more. And all you can do is float. You find some piece of the wreckage and you hang on for a while. Maybe it’s some physical thing. Maybe it’s a happy memory or a photograph. Maybe it’s a person who is also floating. For a while, all you can do is float. Stay alive.

In the beginning, the waves are 100 feet tall and crash over you without mercy. They come 10 seconds apart and don’t even give you time to catch your breath. All you can do is hang on and float. After a while, maybe weeks, maybe months, you’ll find the waves are still 100 feet tall, but they come further apart. When they come, they still crash all over you and wipe you out. But in between, you can breathe, you can function.

You never know what’s going to trigger the grief. It might be a song, a picture, a street intersection, the smell of a cup of coffee. It can be just about anything...and the wave comes crashing. But in between waves, there is life.

Somewhere down the line, and it’s different for everybody, you find that the waves are only 80 feet tall. Or 50 feet tall. And while they still come, they come further apart. You can see them coming. An anniversary, a birthday, or Christmas, or landing at O’Hare. You can see it coming, for the most part, and prepare yourself. And when it washes over you, you know that somehow you will, again, come out the other side. Soaking wet, sputtering, still hanging on to some tiny piece of the wreckage, but you’ll come out.

Take it from an old guy. The waves never stop coming, and somehow you don’t really want them to. But you learn that you’ll survive them. And other waves will come. And you’ll survive them too. If you’re lucky, you’ll have lots of scars from lots of loves. And lots of shipwrecks.

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