



SUMMER 2018

Volume 10, Issue 4

Welcome *from the Editor*

Have you heard? We're ten years old! Last issue, Spring 2018, celebrated our Tenth Anniversary being a bereavement support group with an additional two pages in our quarterly newsletter. If you missed the issue and would like a copy, let us know. We can send it by email.

Summer, like the other seasons, brings challenges for us as we reflect about our lives without those we love. Although difficult at times we turn to those that truly understand what we are going through for encouragement and support.

Our friend, long time supporter, and resident poet John Kreiser provides us with a poem entitled "sudSSpirit; A Pathway to Healing and Hope" in honor and recognition of what we have been doing these past ten years. Thank you John!

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.

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.***

sudSSpirit; A Pathway to Healing and Hope

by John Kreiser

There's nothing like a life well-shared
With someone that you love
That special one beyond compare
A gift from high above
But, even in the best of lives
Things sometimes go awry
And when that tragic day arrives
You're left alone to cry
'Though many offer sympathy
Kind words as gentle as rain
They lack the proper empathy
To comprehend your pain
An unexpected loss of spouse
Disastrous and unique
Casts dismal gloom upon your house
And leaves you feeling bleak
sudSSpirit's ready to relieve
Your overburdened heart
By offering a place to grieve
And make you feel a part
Of something larger than yourself
Where others share your grief
For having lost a spouse themselves
They too, desire relief
We share in one another's loss
Inviting deep reflection
True understanding comes across
Creating a connection
Recalling those no longer here
Expressing full emotion
Both laughter and unbridled tears
Applying a healing lotion
sudSSpirit is a place to find
A forward path to grow
By nurturing your peace of mind
It helps you to let go
Of much of what is weighing down
Your broken heart and soul
As we move onward, breaking ground
Advancing towards the goal
Of life beyond the one we knew
Before that somber day
Enabling us to start anew
And help us on our way.

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Dominic Murgido - Editor

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- Editor

"We can't push the pause button on our lives. Every day counts. But even if we could call a time out when life is at its worst, would we really want to? The only thing we truly have is time. Better to live every moment than to lose that time forever"

-Simone De Beauvoir

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



Letters to Heaven *by Dominic Murgido*

I've been writing letters to heaven for a long time. My basic method is through journaling, plain and simple. But it doesn't have to be actual writing or writing in a journal. It could be through thoughts, wishes, hopes, even prayer. Whatever method, it's communication from you to whomever you are addressing your feelings too.

Communication through music and / or poetry can't be forgotten either. Many have written songs and expressed feelings through poems about the experiences they had with their loved ones or the experiences they have had since their parting. It's all good, healthy, and helpful.

This means provides an opportunity to say something you want to share about now or perhaps to say something you never got too say but you need to now. I like to share events that are happening in my life at the moment knowing that the one I lost is also experiencing it but in a different way. Events that they are not a part of physically like they once were. I also use this time to ask questions about future decisions or seek guidance and acceptance; even direction or help with a problem.

Feedback will not be vocalized, but I know I have received answers and direction in other ways. You have to believe and you must be open to it.

There are times when my writing has turned into a diary of sorts but that is ok because you are sharing thoughts and expressing feelings about your day without them and it allows you to vent about life in writing. It provides a needed outlet for you where you are not judged and only you know what you have written since you control the privacy of your letters to heaven.

Writings can be all over the map with regard to context and emotion. Sometimes they are sad while other times they are happy and carefree. No matter how you feel, it should be reduced to writing and expressing in communication of your thoughts and feelings. There is no pressure, no deadline, no rules when you pen a letter to heaven. It's you and your deciding what to write, when to write, and to whom to write too.

And it is up to you to decide to keep what you wrote or discard it; share it or keep it to yourself; look back to what you wrote before or never return to what you once wrote. You have total control. Control is definitely something that helps you to realize that there are things that you are capable of controlling. Knowing that you have control over something helps you feel better

about life since most times you are not in control of your own destiny or the destiny of others you love.

So put pen to paper or type in a tablet. Create a poem or write a song. It really does make you feel better. I've been journaling for twelve plus years and have filled dozens of journals with my thoughts and feelings. *Letters to Heaven* are always welcome.



Book Review - Editor

Resilient Greiving

by Lucy Hone, PhD

Resilient Greiving is a first book of its kind to include positive psychology with bereavement research. Who better to begin such a project than the author who has a master's degree in applied psychology and has experienced her own loss when her 12 year old daughter was killed in a vehicle accident.

The author provides an alternative to the Kubler-Ross 5 stages model. Hone doesn't try to dismiss Kubler-Ross's "Bible of grieving", but provides a more updated view and expansion of ideas from Kuibler-Ross's *On Grief and Grieving*. One can compare both works as the Old and New Testament on a topic that will touch all of us sometime; both profound works.

Some key points: "successful grieving requires successful energy management", "Gratitude. Focus on what we have rather than what we have lost", and "Don't lose what you have to what you have lost."

Hone gives concrete "puzzle pieces" to participate in grieving and come out resilient from the experience. She points out that we have three directions, according to research, not one when trauma has been experienced. You can endure PTSD or suffer symptoms for months and return to your previous state or you can experience Post Traumatic Growth. We can choose by the actions we take during grieving to some extent of how it will go.

The author's own "resilient grieving model" isn't a series of stages to move through or a cycle to complete, but rather a collage of jigsaw puzzle pieces. This book is an attempt to put these pieces together to make sense of your shattered world.

Who Needs This? *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

Even some of our memories from happier days – when our spouse was with us – can be hurtful. To comfort ourselves, though, we can focus on the many good memories from those days.

But how about the hurtful experiences that some folks are dumping on us now – months and years after our spouse has died? How can we handle these things both in our thoughts and in our responses?

What sorts of things, you may ask. I'll be explicit about some that I've experienced. They may well be familiar to you, too, and together we could probably cite many more.

ONE: From several long-time friends who once hugged me, there's now no reaching out to me physically. Not a hug. Not a touch to my cheek. Not a pat to my arm. Not any of the cheek-to-cheek contact that is itself a withdrawal from the hello-and-goodbye kisses now totally avoided by these "friends."

TWO: Again from old friends, no response to anything from me mentioning my loved one. Perhaps I'm recalling a favorite food that my dear person always ordered when we ate out, or a favorite TV that we watched faithfully, or a favorite place that we revisited often. Some of these long-time friends don't smile, don't respond, and in fact do their best to change the subject. Or someone says, "Come on, you gotta get past those days." Really? That's not what I gotta do. Among all else, I gotta hold onto my lovely memories.

THREE: Even from relatives. From one relative of mine, who also lost her husband (some years back), nothing from her about the experience we now share. But she never spoke to me earlier about her own experience.

FOUR: And from several couples who became our friends through me (or so we thought, at the time), no contact nowadays. The fabulous dinners we four once ate together, the delightful events we attended, all now gone. Only one couple has kept me in their thoughts, and on their calendars.

Let's now think of what we can do, in response to these hurtful words and actions. We expected better. Shouldn't we say so?

And can't we try bringing things back to what they once were? Sure, you reply. But how? OK, we can force a hug. We can keep mentioning our loved one. We can try for a response from a clenched relative. We can continue to suggest dinners out.

If none of this is productive, what then?

OK, we can give up on these people who seem bothered by any reminder of death. We are not anyone's psychologist. We don't know why these people act as they do. However, let's know that this almost certainly has nothing to do with us as individuals. (Ah! One more thing not to feel guilty about!)

Or we can try to remedy things, maybe asking tough questions: "Do you realize you aren't doing whatever with me, these days?" Or: "Do you miss not doing whatever with me, ever since my dear one died?" Or: "Are you surprised that you've changed toward me, since I'm alone?" These questions could possibly lead to unpleasant discussions, but some of the answers could actually make everything more pleasant.

Let's surely keep enjoying the friends and relatives who don't dump anything hurtful on us. Some people have stayed close to us, respecting the new situation while also honoring our previous lives. These people will sometimes recall a good experience with our dear departed, or a good trait, or a good laugh, showing us that these memories will remain with them forever. Let's treasure these true friendships.

As we move into our new lives, though, let's make new friends and create entirely new relationships. If these new people can accept us for the folks we are, in the situations we're in, we can surely say goodbye to the people who have problems with us. And haven't we had enough trouble in our lives recently without any further trouble from the people who suddenly aren't comfortable with us?

An Entry From My Journal

"The length of time that has passed doesn't change your thinking of them daily. It strengthens your desire to keep them remembered and honored. Always loved, never to be forgotten"

-Editor



Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"Tomorrow is the most important thing in life...it puts itself in our hands and hopes we've learnt something from yesterday"

-John Wayne

"Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens"

-Jimi Hendrix

"There are only two ways to live your life: One is as though nothing is a miracle, the other is as if everything is"

-Albert Einstein



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

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

How to Recognize Signs from your Loved Ones *by Danyelle Simone*

How do you know if you are receiving signs from heaven?

No matter how far you feel from your deceased loved ones, they are watching over you. The space between life and death is much thinner than we think it is. I believe that our loved ones on the “other side” send us signs, and if we listen closely, we can communicate with them. Here are a few examples of how you can recognize messages from your loved ones on the other side:

DREAMS. A “visitation” occurs when a deceased loved one’s soul visits you in a dream. People are usually much more receptive to spiritual messages while they are dreaming. Departed loved ones can view dream-time as an opportunity to get across messages to you.

FEELINGS. You may simply feel the person’s soul is around you. They may pop into your thoughts randomly, or you may simply just “know” they are there. Sometimes this feeling is accompanied by goosebumps, warmth, wind, or tingling sensations in your body.

OBJECTS, SYMBOLS, & SHAPES. After someone passes away, you may notice specific objects, symbols, or shapes everywhere. Signs are not limited to typical things like feathers, hearts, or pennies; they can also be something personally significant to you and the deceased person. For example, if your loved one had a four leaf clover tattoo, that could be an example of a sign.

NUMBERS. You may keep seeing important numbers, such as the deceased loved one’s birthday or an important anniversary. The numbers may appear on clocks, odometers, tickets, and basically, anywhere else you could find a series of numbers.

MUSIC. Music can be a sign if you ask for a sign and turn on the radio, and the song on the radio just happens to be a special song you shared with a deceased person. If the song reminds you of that person, it can also be a sign from them.

PEOPLE. Sometimes people you meet in your everyday life can bring you messages or be sent to you by your loved ones in spirit. It could be someone at the bus stop, a friendly helper, a friend, or even a soulmate. People follow nudges of inspiration, and sometimes that inspiration can be heaven sent. People may receive nudges from your deceased loved ones and subsequently enter your life.

If you’re still wondering about whether or not something is a sign, ask yourself the following questions:

Was it likely? Signs are often seemingly impossible or extraordinary. For example, someone’s watch stopping at their exact time of death or the radio playing an obscure song that answers your prayers.

Was it specific? Signs specifically relate to you and your loved one on the other side. For example, a specific date, song, object, or phrase.

Was it accompanied by a strong feeling? Signs are usually accompanied by a strong feeling of knowing or a strong emotional reaction. For example, you may feel overwhelmed by your loved one’s presence or you may feel relieved.

If you don’t feel like you’ve received signs, be patient and think more subtly. The signs aren’t always out-of-this-world extraordinary, they can be as simple as a light feeling of your loved one’s presence.

How to ask for a sign or talk to your loved ones in spirit: You don’t have to do anything special! Just talk out loud or in your mind. You can even write to them in a journal. Your thoughts, words, and feelings have a vibration that your departed loved ones can “hear.”

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Note: Edited for length

Speaking of Love *by Sharon Randall*

Here’s a little mystery I can’t figure out: Why are we quick to say things we’ll wish we could take back, and slow to say what we’ll wish we had said sooner, before it was too late?

What if, instead, we were slow to speak in haste, and quick to speak in love? What difference might that make to our lives and our loved ones and our world?

I often hear from readers who are grieving the loss of someone they never wanted to lose. Some of them describe wonderful, lifelong relationships with not one cause for regret.

But many of them wish they had tried harder to say things they truly meant to say — “thank you” and “I’m sorry” and “you mean the world to me” — while there was still time.

Have you ever listened to a eulogy at a funeral and wished the departed could hear it, too? It’s enough to make me want to host my own funeral while I’m alive and can still dress myself.

Most of us want to know what we mean to those who mean everything to us. How will we know if we don’t tell each other?

Actions might speak louder than words. But words don’t need to shout to be heard. We carve them in stone and whisper them in the dark. We tattoo them on our skin and hold them sacred in our hearts. We memorize and reprint and treasure them forever. Why are they sometimes so hard to say?

I often think of things I wish I had told my mother. I spent the last few days of her life at her bedside in the hospital and tried to tell her what I wanted her to know: She was a good mother. She had done her best. I was proud to be her daughter. She was heavily sedated. I don’t know if she heard me. I’d had a lifetime to tell her all those things. Why did I wait?

My dad was a man of few words, but he meant what he said, and said what he meant. I was a wife, a mother and a newspaper reporter, but I was always his “girl.” We lived on opposite coasts but phoned often. The last time we spoke, we ended the call as always:



“Love you, Dad.”
“Love you, Girl.”

Those were the words I would cling to when I learned he had taken his life. I had all sorts of questions I couldn’t answer. But I did not doubt his love.

When my first husband was diagnosed with cancer, he was told he had six months to live. That wasn’t enough, he said, to do all he wanted: To teach and coach and help me get our three kids

through college. So thanks to chemo, an army of prayer warriors and the grace of God, he lived four more good years.

Part of what kept him going was simple: People began to tell him how much he meant to them — his students, kids on his team, fellow teachers, family and friends. He basked in that love. It was good medicine. He died at peace, having said and heard all that he needed.

Years later, I remarried and inherited two teenage stepsons. Our combined five kids are now grown. Three are married and have given us six grandchildren. Seems we’re forever telling them how much they mean to us. They might get sick of it. Too bad. We won’t stop. We need to say it and they need to hear it.

From late December to mid-February, we celebrate eleven birthdays in our big blended family. It gets a little crazy. Last week we phoned my husband’s firstborn to wish him happy birthday. I listened as my husband told his son how proud he is of the man and husband and father that he’s become, and what a pleasure it has been watching him grow up.

He ended the call, as always, with “I love you, buddy.”

And I yelled, “Me, too!” I hope the boy heard me.

When we tell someone what they mean to us, we don’t need to be articulate or profound or poetic or even smart. We just need to mean it, and to make sure they hear it. And we need to do it now, while we can, yes, while there’s time.

The best time to say “I love you” is always now.

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