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sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

*Brett Swanger
Lt. William Lebo
Eric K. Holm
Mike Wright
Jim Beck*

SUMMER 2022

Volume 14, Issue 4

Welcome *from the Editor*

Summer is here! A change of the season that is often recognized by those of us that are planning vacations and spending some time outdoors for fun in the sun. The summer can also be a time that you are having difficulty should this time of year recognize a birthday, anniversary, or deathversary of a loved one. We wish you peace and comfort as you cope through those times and it becomes a bit easier with time as you learn to live with the loss.

Social media posts concerning **sudSSpirit** are now on my personal face book page: www.facebook.com/dominic.murgido.

In case you haven't heard there is a website now with information about **sudSSpirit**. Please check it out at **dominicumurgido.com**

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. Additional resources and books for suggested reading on the grieving process can also be found at **dominicumurgido.com**. 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. Current issue is also available at **dominicumurgido.com** as well as past issues that have been archived. You may also contact the editor/founder directly at 717-866-2401 or sudsspirit@gmail.com / dmurgido@gmail.com / **dominicumurgido.com**

You may also access copies of this newsletter through the Circle of Life Coalition website at **circleoflife.org**. 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 and continuing with their mission to educate the community and professionals on all aspects of end of life.

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.**

An Entry From My Journal

"The loss of a loved one makes you miss the future. The future of possibilities of life events with that person. The potential happiness that will never be shared among each other. You will no longer be able to make *more* memories with each other. I miss her forever.

-Editor



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- Editor

"We think there is always tomorrow, so why expose our feelings today? Why risk being vulnerable? Why take the chance? Because today, what we love, what we feel, what is real, is what we have. Tomorrow, it may all change."

*Small Miracles:
Extraordinary Coincidences
from Everyday Life*

*Yitta Halberstam,
Judith Leventhal*

Resources

- Editor

www.dominicmurgido.com

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



Opening a box of memories *by Dominic Murgido*

“For whatever reason I opened one of two memory boxes re packed by both of us in 1997. I cried, remembered and smiled. It’s nice to know that they are there for whenever I need them to be” – *an entry from my journal. July, 2018*

I remember the re packing of the memory boxes like it was yesterday. My wife and I had moved into this house about four years prior and never really had time to go through all that we brought with us from the former house. We were thinking of a yard sale and decided to rummage through things to see what we didn’t want or need anymore.

We came across a variety of saved items as well as dozens of handwritten letters from our days of dating in college and engagement and they were in multiple boxes so as we discovered them, we gathered them to place all together in two boxes and marked them *memories* and taped them shut.

Looking back, when we were married and combining possessions, we both realized that we saved things that the other gave us such as cards, small souvenirs, movie stubs, play programs. It didn’t surprise me that Sue saved all the letters I wrote to her. What surprised Sue (and myself) was that I saved all of her letters to me.

I personally never looked at any of the saved items or letters over the years. I can’t say the same for Sue. At the time of the repacking in two labeled boxes in 1997 and taped closed, these boxes were never opened by either of us until I opened one of them in 2018. I thought I may be ready to strut down memory lane at this point of my grief journey. I wasn’t. I acknowledged their presence and thought another time I’ll be ready. I retaped the box and forgot about it.

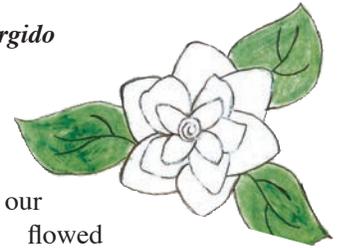
Fast forward four years to 2022 and on a random weekend I was ready to open the box of memories. As what happened four years ago, I cried just looking at the contents before me. Then I smiled as I began to touch and sort through items as I remembered milestones of a relationship that was just beginning in the seventies. I was ready this time but I knew I had to pace myself knowing there will be moments when I will say enough for now, I’ll

stop and come back later.

The past memories of our beginning just flowed through me. It was like opening a time capsule of our young love for each other. Seeing my late teen / early twenty handwriting on letters and cards felt strange but reminiscent. Besides what all of the contents of these memory boxes represent of a college couple in love, I treasure the handwriting of my dear Sue as well as the content of the letters that we so earnestly written and mailed to one another.

Photographs and items saved from our humble honeymoon many years ago represent two in love with not much money but a future rich in the desire to be together for eternity. When you reflect like this and there are memories in your hands touched by your hands and those of your partner long ago, it almost transcends time and for a brief moment you are there - back there with the feeling of invincibility and nothing will stand in your way of achieving great things with each other having the other’s back. What a feeling that was at the time.

This was not something that can be done at anytime after the loss of your loved one. You must be ready for it with a box of tissues and be aware of the vulnerability it will put you through. And if it takes sixteen years like it did for me or *longer*, that’s ok. Some of us may never have the courage to go back and look, touch, smell, read, remember, and that’s ok too. We are all different in how we process our grief and how we decide to react to it. Wishing you all peace and comfort and however you deal with your memories.

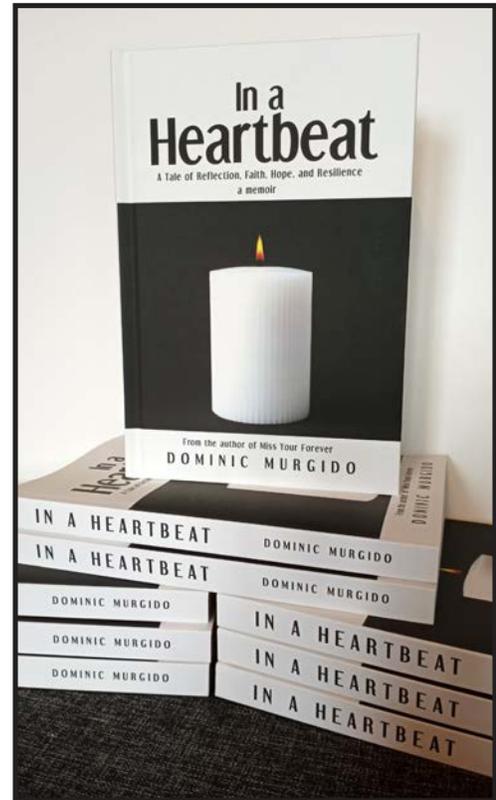
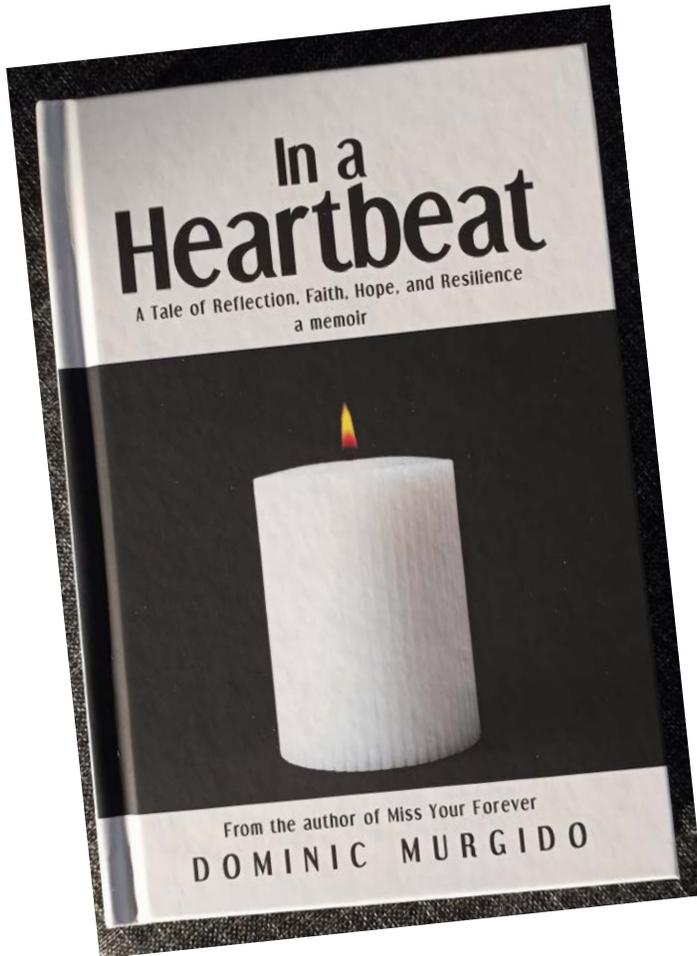


Thoughts from Anne Frank

“Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness”

“Where there’s hope, there’s life. It fills us with fresh courage and makes us strong again”

Editor



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IN A HEARTBEAT documents a tale of a grief journey like no other. Follow the author's path of uncertainty as he begins to cope with the loss of his soul mate through time and ask questions that there are no answers to with the companionship and support of his wife's dog, Hal, that comforted and consoled him throughout his life without her.

IN A HEARTBEAT explains the adversity one man faced after losing the love of his life while providing insight through the sharing of actual entries from his personal journals while experiencing the grieving process. While praying and hoping for a positive life change, the author searches for comfort, peace, and grace in his new beginning of life's journey and realizes that the only way to move forward was through prayer, forgiveness, and helping others.

IN A HEARTBEAT, everything can change.





For Sale: Madness, Memories, and Maybes *by Nan Zastrow*

A rummage sale can be defined as a collection of madness, memories and maybes - all “for sale.” It’s a time for restrained grief and grateful hallelujahs. Restraint meaning, “I hate to see it go; I’ll miss it.” But a rejoicing hallelujah that there is now room on the shelf for something more purposeful. It takes days (maybe weeks) to go through the accumulated clutter and decide what you are willing to part with. For Gary and me, it was even more eventful because it was the climax to moving into a smaller home with less storage and my personal vow to de-clutter my life.

Grief is defined as “the loss of something valued.” We don’t often get a choice about grief, but this was a grief I was ready and able to handle. It should be easy, I thought. There should be no emotions to get in the way. I was “giving up” by choice and convenience. What was being taken away had served its purpose. This was not a reaction to crisis, but was voluntary and uneventful. I could do this without tears, without fears and without reservations. After all, it was just “stuff.”

As I began to assemble the potpourri of items, I was enthused because the first mountain of “stuff” was purely madness. It was composed of tablecloths, silk flower arrangements and home décor of every color in the rainbow (depending on which decorating scheme I was emphasizing at the time). As prospective treasure seekers looked through the items ranging in values from variety store to very nice interior design, I could easily recite the story about the item and the pleasure it gave to me and my home. Each of these items, with their stories, confirmed a purpose in my life.

Kitchen tools and dishware, long crammed into tight storage shelves and drawers, once fueled my obsession with dishes for all seasons and all reasons. The gadgets that make life easier were soon forgotten because I recognized that as a rule, like life, you still had to figure it out for yourself and pick what works best for you.

Young Mennonite women dressed in cotton frocks with white aprons happily scooped up some of these items for their homes. One proclaimed it was her first wedding gift, and since my husband couldn’t find a price sticker, he told her to just take the item. Small nudges of emotion began to pester me, as I soon realized that every treasure on those tables could be labeled for a particular period of our lives. Selling them was beyond just “stuff” - each one had a story. Each was blanketed with vivid memories. All emotion could not be avoided, it was attached with fine sensitivity to the role these “things” once played in our lives. I didn’t expect that. Rummage sales weren’t about emotion. One shouldn’t grieve the voluntary departure of something once treasured.

I bagged the framed, hand quilted blocks crafted by my grandmother along with the matching pillows. Someone quickly claimed the white hand-croqueted quilt that weighed a ton. Both were irreplaceable items shouting out a legacy of craftsmanship, but now seldom seen.

A selection of Chad’s toys brought sweeping waves of emotion. They reminded me of my loss of dreams. I watched toddlers leaning against an adult with a supportive hand attempting to sit on the floor and play. Young adults (the age

of my Chad) picked up the items that brought back a reflection of many happy playtime with memories of their own. The John Deere tractors, the Fisher Price farmyard set that still moored, Sesame Street finger puppets, and Tinker Toys had been coveted items in years past and most were over thirty years old. There were items a grandchild might have enjoyed.

A tattooed young woman spied Chad’s slicked-up, highly polished, like -new army tanker boots. Managing her telephone camera, she sent pictures to someone describing the unique strapping and “like new” qualities. She wanted approval before she spent \$10 on a \$200 pair of boots that she was shipping to California to her biker boyfriend. I knew Chad would approve - and chuckle at their destination.

Finally, all the items that sold in the classification of “maybes.” “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure,” so aptly defined the items once used that now could bring all kinds of possibilities into someone else’s life. I parted with small furniture, lamps, quilts, wall sconce, rugs, framed artwork and curtains. A prospective buyer would pick up the item, turn it around and envision the perfect spot for the abandoned piece.

This gave me a glimpse of hope about a new beginning the item would see. There was a tingling feel of joy that someone else desired an item that I, too, once treasured. My eclectic array of treasures was moving on, given new purpose, new life and new possibilities.

In a world of sadness and grief, hope is the spark of sanity that allows us to look at something differently and imagine the bright spot. Hope allows us to believe that a small change can bring about a miraculous makeover, worthy of the time or few dollars spent. Rummage sales are therapeutic for this.

Rummage sales don’t just weed out the unwanted. They open the closet door to the forgotten, the discarded. They persuade us to unclutter our lives, live more simply, and be grateful for the treasures of the past. They allow us to grieve what we have lost, choose to remember what was important, and commit to valuing what we have left.

- Don’t grieve and rummage sales then have similar intrinsic values?
- To discard your regrets.
- To confirm that you have lived.
- To savor what you have loved.
- To have enjoyed and to have shared.
- To have brightened lives with cherished memories.
- To ultimately give meaning and purpose to someone else because of your experience.

If parting with personal items and treasures is an act of grief, this was, by far, the easiest moment of grief I’ve ever experienced. It was a perfect rummage sale; one with great rewards; one that will be welcomed again next year, as I continue to walk my path of letting go and living on. A holistic experience of its own kind.

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The Highway of Life: Get Back on the Bus! *by Maureen Hunter*

The bus stopped for you at GRIEF, and as you stepped off, you sank into an abyss of pain and sorrow, like nothing you had experienced before. You don't have to stay forever in this inhospitable place.

Get back on the bus now!

When we experience the loss of a loved one, we can feel totally powerless as the feelings associated with grief wreak havoc in our lives. In the short term, we may have little control over our life and go through the motions in survival mode only. We wonder if we will ever feel some degree of peace again. Stepping back onto the bus and getting onto the highway of life takes courage, but more than that, it takes a commitment to you.

Are you ready?

You must decide if you want life to be more than it is at the moment. Do you want to have meaning in your life again? Do you want to truly live again? Only you can decide. Many may think, of course: What a stupid question! Of course I want to truly live, but getting back on that bus takes a lot of hard work. It will require that resolve, that commitment to you. It will underpin your actions, as you adapt to grief and gradually make a new course for yourself in the strangely altered life you now find yourself in.

Let me share something with you. About three months after my son died, I was with a friend. The emotional pain I found myself in was crippling me. Through my tears, I made a commitment to myself that night. I made a conscious decision that my son's death would not define my life for ever, not in this way. It would not mean I was destined to live in this extreme emotional pain forever. It would not mean I would never enjoy moments of peace again. If I succumbed to this forever, I would be dead whilst alive, something I couldn't do to myself or to Stuart. I thought of the pain he must be in watching ME and unable to help ME.

I had to get through this somehow!

Making that decision didn't mean I could magically appear in a new life and start afresh. It meant I had to take steps to integrate that loss and get to a new destination. It meant there were tough times. It meant I had to find new ways of doing, being and feeling, that wouldn't come easy.

To get where I am now has been the most difficult thing I have ever done. There were many times when I couldn't get back on the bus. When the days were especially tough I would think back to that night and that decision I made to myself. That is what kept me going when I wanted to give up. I decided NO! I do want different. I'm getting back on the bus!

Here are some things to remember:

- You are in charge of you – you have control over you.
- It takes courage to step into the unknown – it takes a leap of faith.
- Look ahead to what you want.
- You are stronger than you know – you can do this. Be the strength you need for you.
- Remind yourself every day of your commitment – I am back on the bus

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Compassionate Friends Newsletter*

Grief *by Gwen Flowers*

I had my own notion of grief.
I thought it was the sad time
That followed the death of
Someone you love.
And you had to push through it
To get to the other side.
But I'm learning there is no other side.
There is no pushing through.
But rather,
There is Absorption.
Adjustment.
Acceptance.
And grief is not something you complete,
but rather, you endure.
Grief is not a task to finish
And move on,
But an element of yourself.
An alteration of your being.
A new way of seeing.
A new definition of self.

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Newsletter, June, 2022*

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:

sudsspirit@gmail.com
dmurgido@gmail.com

717-866-2401

-Berks, Pennsylvania

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com
-Bennington, Vermont

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-Editor





Post Loss Regret: The “Mistakes” We Make After Loss *by Karyn Arnold*

We always talk about the regret a griever may have led up to their loss – did I do enough, did I love enough, could I or should I have done more?

But plenty of grievers struggle just as much with the decisions they make after their loss. And let’s face it, without their loved one there to help with these choices, and as a person already facing the mental deficits (inability to concentrate or focus) that grief brings – “mistakes” are going to happen. Some big, some small.

The good news is there are answers in these “mistakes”. And you’ll notice that I’ll continually put the word mistakes in quotes as I believe the things we regret and wish we could change will tell us more about what we are searching for and what we really need than we may realize. At a time when we’re looking for answers of what do to, maybe it’s our “mistakes” that will hold the answers.

But first, some of the things we may regret after loss:

1. Moving: this isn’t always a choice of course. But for some, the house may feel too big, too quiet, too sad. And so moving away from a home once shared with the deceased feels like a way of moving forward...until it doesn’t. Because once the dust settles and the boxes are unpacked, there the griever sits in a house that may still feel too big, too quiet and too sad.
2. Relationships: those who have lost a partner may decide to venture into dating at some point. The search for someone to spend time with is no easy thing and for any number of reasons, it just may not work out, leaving the griever to regret having tried it at all. Also worth considering are the times a griever ends a relationship they already had (either with a friend or romantic partner) because they feel this person wasn’t supportive enough as they coped.
3. Changing Jobs: working is not optional for everyone, that goes without saying, but a particular job held during and following loss may suddenly feel too demanding. Maybe the work no longer seems to matter, or the petty office politics grate and irritate the griever in a way they no longer have the patience for. While neither of these would be a bad reason to leave a place of work, there can be a reality that follows. New work can be hard to find, or a new job may not be much better. Or perhaps the quiet of being at home all the time will only to the loneliness and solitude that so often accompanies grief.
4. Pets: our pets can provide great comfort in loss. For some grievers, they are the reason to get up and get dressed in the morning, or the one thing to look forward to when coming home. But for someone who has recently had a loss, acquiring a new pet may be something they later regret. A new animal in the home takes a time, energy and attention that a lot of grievers may not feel they have to give, and some may be left to wonder if they got a pet too soon.
5. Miscellaneous: Okay, so I’m not trying to be a lazy writer here, but isn’t there just a million other things to regret

after loss? Cleaning out our loved one’s stuff, too much, too soon? Or maybe having sold their car? Perhaps we regret the funeral or memorial, wishing we had done things differently to honor our loved one? Maybe there was a choice to skip a holiday or a trip or an outing with a friend, and we regret not having gone instead? The griever is already swirling with the “should’s” and the second-guessing leading up to their loss, so it makes perfect sense that every decision after could later be questioned too.

What’s important to realize is that when grieving a loss, it’s hard to find any place that feels right. Most grievers don’t feel “right” in their own skin after loss, so it only stands to reason that the house, the job, the relationship, the new pet, or just about any other decision, may not feel right either.

Perhaps these “mistakes” are actually just a reflection of the searching a griever will do as they try to move forward. As they try to see where they now fit, and to see what, if anything, feels “right” in the days following loss. The problem can be, in an effort to shed this grieving skin it’s possible to be almost impulsive. To do too much too soon...to change too much of the familiar at a time already filled with so much change.

I always say that loss is loss, but loss is also change. This new life is so much to get used to and, in an effort, to feel better, a griever may inadvertently add to that more change than they can handle.

Rather than feeling regret, or spending more time second guessing any choices that have been made, we would be better served to recognize how every messy thing that has happened since our loss is just a part of the process...that making these “mistakes” is actually a sign of our growth, and our progress. There will be missteps along the way, but recognize that at a time where so many grievers are feeling defeated, deflated, and disheartened, your “mistakes” are a symbol of your strength, your courage, and your perseverance.

If we wonder what it is we’re really looking for in these decisions, these mistakes, this regret...it’s simple. You are simply trying to move forward, and to figure out who to be, and what to do next. Just as your loved one would have wanted for you. And just remember, mistakes only come from effort. And effort always comes from hope

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Grief Support

My Books & Coffee

visit:

dominicmurgido.com