



dominicismurgido.com

# sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Craig J. Hayden  
Matthew C. Meyer  
Joseph J. Bickleman Jr.

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## Welcome *from the Editor*

I love the Fall and the Winter seasons. Two seasons that were also the favorites of my wife, Sue. There was a time when these seasons came around, I would feel sad but as I have been living with loss this many years, I am now reminded of beautiful memories that we shared during this time of the year and I am so grateful that I got to spend them with her. Some of those memories are shared throughout my two published books. For more information about them please check out [dominicismurgido.com](http://dominicismurgido.com) I am now scheduling book talks / meet the author events for the fall after a summer of doing some of these for private groups, associations, libraries, and churches.

Recently finished *The Grieving Brain* by Mary-Frances O'Connor. My review of this book is inside

Social media posts concerning **sudSSpirit** are now on my personal face book page:

[www.facebook.com/dominic.murgido](https://www.facebook.com/dominic.murgido).

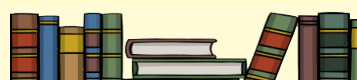
**sudSSpirit** was founded in 2008 to help provide a place of comfort, compassion, and hope for those that have experienced a sudden unexpected death of their spouse or significant other. Meetings are held monthly in Reading, PA. All meetings are Free and No registration is required. Additional information 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 [dominicismurgido.com](http://dominicismurgido.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 [dominicismurgido.com](http://dominicismurgido.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](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com) / [dmurgido@gmail.com](mailto:dmurgido@gmail.com) / [dominicismurgido.com](http://dominicismurgido.com)

You may also access copies of this newsletter through the Circle of Life Coalition website at [circleoflife.org](http://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 provide education, information and resources about all facets of end of life care.

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.*



### Book Review - Editor

#### The Grieving Brain: The surprising science of how we learn from love and loss

by Mary-Frances O'Connor, PhD

A fascinating book from first time author, Mary-Frances O'Connor, that actually explains how our brain reacts to grief and why it feels like it feels when we are going through such an experience. The book is divided into two parts; the painful feeling of loss followed by restoration. The author provides insight through her own research and the research of others as she delves into the neuroscience and psychology of our grief journeys. Don't be hesitant about this being too "over your head" as I was when I began to read it. I was pleasantly surprised at how well it was written for us lay people wanting to learn more about the grieving process and how we can find additional ways we understand what we are going through and why.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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### Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"The key to accepting is about noticing how it feels at the moment, letting your tears come, and then letting them go. Knowing that the moment of grief will overwhelm you, feeling its familiar lump in your throat and knot in your stomach, and knowing that it will eventually go away."

Mary-Frances O'Connor, PhD,  
*The Grieving Brain*

## Resources

- Editor

[www.dominicmurgido.com](http://www.dominicmurgido.com)

St Joseph's Spiritual Care  
[www.thefutureofhealthcare.org](http://www.thefutureofhealthcare.org)  
 610-378-2297

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

Family Guidance Center  
[www.familyguidancecenter.com](http://www.familyguidancecenter.com)  
 610-374-4963

Clear Water Wellness  
[www.cwwellness.com](http://www.cwwellness.com)  
 610-750-9096

Promedica / Heartland Home  
 Health Care and Hospice  
[www.heartlandhospice.com](http://www.heartlandhospice.com)  
 610-373-6898 or 866-380-5874

[www.grasp.org](http://www.grasp.org) (grief recovery  
 after a substance passing)

Circle of Life Coalition  
[www.circleoflifecoalition.org](http://www.circleoflifecoalition.org)

[www.save.org](http://www.save.org) (suicide loss)

[www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org)

Diakon / Lutheran Home at Topton  
[www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp](http://www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp)  
 610-682-1337 / 877-342-5667

Bennington Area VNA & Hospice  
[www.bavnah.org](http://www.bavnah.org) 802-442-5502

Bayada Hospice Services  
[www.bayada.com](http://www.bayada.com) 888-790-3025  
 610-367-1608

Pathways Center for Grief & Loss  
[www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org](http://www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org)  
 800-924-7610

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

[www.211.com](http://www.211.com) (United Way)

[www.speakinggrief.org](http://www.speakinggrief.org)

[www.grief.com](http://www.grief.com) (David Kessler)

[www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com)



## Cars come and go and then we reflect *by Dominic Murgido*

It's been with me for as many years as my wife hasn't – sixteen. When purchased it became a new comfort zone for me to get used to and be comfortable with and it has been working out very well until recently. My 2006 vehicle closing in on 240,000 miles is in need of expensive repairs and based on the age of the car and the mileage I feel that spending more on it at this point will become a common occurrence. I sense a decision is about to be made and a change is about to happen. Why so sentimental? It's only a car, an object, a mode of transportation. But to me it is far more than that.

This car was purchased three months after my wife was killed in an accident and our car was totaled. This was the first time I bought a car without her. This is the only car I've had since she died. It became part of the journey I was on trying to heal from the incomprehensible loss of her life and how my life was trying to stabilize. This car became a new mode of transportation for Hal, my dog, to be transported in for our walks together and he really liked riding in the back for twelve years until his death in 2017. The loss of Hal was very difficult for me. I did not clean the nose prints of Hal on the inside of the rear glass of this car until a year and a half later. I would drive along without him and when looking into the rearview mirror and the sun hitting the glass just right, you would see the marks once left by him.

This car was with me during significant changes that happened along this journey including being parked at three addresses in two states over the course of four years. This car helped my daughter move twice after her college years and did the same for my moving twice. This car was a safe haven for a lot of thinking while on long drives or an occasional meditation at the end of a long work day before driving home. This car provided coolness in the summer and warmth in the winter and handled any driving challenges the weather provided. So many memories. Some sad and some happy. But all needed and necessary. And when looking back, really looking back, I can almost see how much I improved with my struggles with the loss of Sue over the years when driving this car. It's almost like the car has been a barometer of the progress of my life through the years that I have owned it.

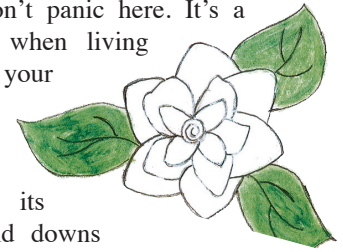
This new car that I'm about to purchase will be my last car. Looking at my own age and how I kept this car for sixteen years makes me

believe that there will not be another one in my future. Alright, don't panic here. It's a thought one has when living with loss about your own mortality at times.

This lifelong grief journey has its proverbial ups and downs and you think of things in certain ways. But it is just thoughts, no action. On a lighter note, a new car will bring a positive change out of an old comfort zone into another space to become new again. Renew. Rebirth. Growth.

I believe it is necessary to recognize that a change is needed and be absorbed in the process knowing that the change, whatever it may be, will change you. It will change your attitude, perspective, wants, outlook, and perception. When changes happen and it is not noticed or thought about you become less involved in the knowledge of how important the change was for you. Philosophical me says the lack of recognition of the change that changed your world at that moment is lost in a sea of mindless actions and reactions that are part of life. That loss provides less motivation for your gain and moving forward.

So change it will be. Why not? There have been so many changes for me over the years but you know; each one makes me stronger, better, and more knowledgeable about what is best for me. Accept change. You'll be glad you did.



**Grief**, after the initial  
 shock of loss, comes in waves...

When you're driving  
 alone in your car...

While you're doing the dishes...

While you're getting ready for work...

All of a sudden it hits you, how  
 so very much you miss someone...

Your breath catches...

Your tears flow...

The sadness is so great that  
 it's physically painful.

*Nicole Gaber*

*Reprinted with permission: HOPELine  
 newsletter, March 2021*

## Can You Grieve a Death Almost 30 Years Later? How time impacts grief and loss *by Elana Premack Sandler*

"We expect to see a mourner in pain in the immediate aftermath of the death of a loved one. After that, grief persists invisibly. Others can't see it, but it never goes away. Instead, you learn to live with it, to move through your days and years accommodating your new reality.

But the true tragedy of losing someone you love unfolds over time. There's the loss itself, the empty space that used to be filled by that person ... And then there's the fact that the sorrow you feel changes you, so that you are no longer the person he once knew.

My father's death set in motion a series of changes in me such that I wonder whether he would recognize the person I've become. As the years pass, he is more and more lost to me. He died too soon to experience many important moments in my life. He wasn't there when I graduated from college. He never met the man I married. He died long before I had children ... He never knew my strength."

When I read these words by writer Michal Lemberger earlier this year, I literally tore them out of the magazine. I had to keep them. Though our stories are quite different, the way she wrote about loss and grief resonated with me, especially in this 29th—yes, 29th—year after my father died by suicide.

Each year around the anniversary of his death, I write a post about what it means to me to be a survivor of suicide loss, where I am with this particular loss, and, often, a little about my dad. The year usually feels like it goes by quickly and I typically feel like I have a lot to say.

This year, I felt like I was anticipating this August post each month. As each month passed, I wondered what I would say. I found myself thinking that I have less and less to say, that I have said a lot, especially this past year, and that perhaps there isn't much left.

And then, finally, August arrived, first the anniversary date on the regular calendar, then the anniversary date on the Hebrew calendar. (As a Jewish person, I observe the tradition of saying a prayer for the dead on the Hebrew anniversary.) I still felt like I wasn't sure what to write. Lemberger's essay felt like it was burning a hole in my laptop bag.

She said so much of what I might offer: That grief is invisible, that it changes you, that the relationships you could have had with those

you have lost are forever altered because of their absence. That your life moves on and their lives do not. That you no longer know them and they no longer know you.

As I inch closer to the age my father was when he died, I feel both closer and farther away. Now I know what it's like to be an overwhelmed parent of small children, to feel the pressure to do well in all parts of life, to want to be exceptional, and to settle for mediocre. My father's experience of adulthood wasn't something I could know before I was an adult, (not that I truly can now), but these aspects I name I know to be true at least in part. And yet, as I live as an overwhelmed parent of small children, as I struggle to perform up against the pressure, as I work a balance between exceptional and mediocre, I do so without him as a witness or a source of support. This grief is the grief that persists invisibly. This life, especially the one I live now, so many years later, is me moving through my days and years continuing to accommodate my new reality.

The Center for Complicated Grief at the Columbia University School of Social Work posits that grief is a form of love.

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Editor note: article edited for length.*

### Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"True vision – the ability to see with more than our eyes – is one of life's finest gifts. True vision is a never-failing belief in better days to come"

*Sharon Randall, columnist*

"Faith and hope are foundations of resilience. They both provide a compass to guide us through adversity and allow us to imagine something different and better for ourselves"

*Dominic Murgido, editor*

"Failure seldom stops you. What stops you is the fear of failure"

*Jack Lemmon, financial analyst*



**sudSSpirit  
Bereavement  
Support Group  
meets monthly.**

**Berks Chapter  
Reading, PA.**

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

Exeter Community Library  
4569 Prestwick Drive  
Reading, PA 19606

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*-Editor*







## It's Time to Build Your Self-Care Routine *by Rebecca Soffer*

Self-care. It's become a buzzworthy term throughout social media over the last few years. You know this, too, from the hundreds of thousands of Instagram accounts and bloggers who promote it, as well as articles across all media underscoring its importance. It feels like wherever you turn these days there's a mandate to Sleep! Hydrate! Breathe! Exercise! Ohm!

I don't know about you, but for me these blaring reminders can sometimes become stressful and overwhelming, because I feel like I'm supposed to do all of these things, all the time. And of course, those feelings result in the complete opposite of self-care.

And yet...they're onto something. Self-care is important. Especially in grief, that sneaky monster that so frequently yanks you emotionally and physically in any direction it pleases. Grief — especially early grief — gives us such little control over ourselves, and so it's vital to control what we actually can by consistently giving ourselves what we need.

So, then, what is self-care? It's taking a moment to listen to your body and mind and give it what it needs. Good self-care can consistently lead to a better mood, reduced anxiety, and better health. And it doesn't always have to look like a calm moment of meditation (truth be told, I'm terrible at that). As your ever-present cyber friend who really wants you to look out for your grieving self, and in the throes of a global pandemic at that, I'm not going to try to ram the idea down your throat (who likes that?!) but will tell you a few things that work for me:

Getting out into nature. Daily calendar reminders encourage me to take a walk, go for a bike ride, hike, or even just get outside to look at the sky for a few minutes each day. Studies show that being in nature, or even viewing scenes of it, reduces anger, fear, and stress and increases pleasant feelings. Trust me: Nature never fails.

Snuggling with furry things. Frequently, snuggling with or petting Ziggy, my 30 lb. labradoodle, provides me with a calm and comfort that no human can achieve. Experts have long said dogs know when people are dying or grieving, through body language cues, smells only they can detect, and other ways not yet known. There's a reason therapy dogs are sent to grief organizations (and funeral homes too!).

Writing. I happen to really enjoy writing. Not everyone does, mostly because they feel pressured to write something good, or at least coherent. But the writing I'm talking about encompasses anything: short journal entries, brain dumps about whatever I'm holding in and need to let go of, things that come to mind at 2 a.m. when I can't sleep, or memories about my people that I don't want to forget. In one swift move, my pen (or keyboard) becomes my therapist, and I feel an immediate sense of relief.

Boundaries. I've worked hard to remind myself that it's ok to sleep on things and not feel pressured by others to make a big decision immediately — especially when you are in the throes of grief. Whether that be about what to do with a loved one's belongings, how to plan a funeral, or even spend time around people who aren't making you feel as supported as you need. Very few things are as urgent as others make them out to be. If you need to take a step back and mull over how you'd like to proceed, do it.

Humor. You know when you don't know whether to laugh or cry, and you could honestly go either way, as long as you achieve

a release? Whenever I have control over it (which isn't always the case), I opt for the laughter. I've made a file with all my go-to shows, SNL skits and late-night bits that are guaranteed to bring levity. Works (nearly) every time.

It took me a really long time after my parents' deaths to develop the above routine. I'd so badly wished I could start with a primer in those early days of grief. A couple weeks ago, I received Remembering A Life's Self-Care Box, which I quickly realized would have served that purpose for me.

The items were carefully selected to help the user relax, reflect and remember. And what I really like about it was the suggestion of activities, not a mandate. You can make of it what you want, with your own sensibility, and on your own timeline.

The contents contain a variety of items; just enough for you to get neither bored nor overwhelmed. Here are some of my favorites:

Grief journal: Before you get scared off, there's no pressure here! This sweet little book has a terrific assortment of guided prompts, creative ideas for how to use it beyond the written word (think doodling, painting), and (non-cheesy) quotes about grief that really resonate.

Memory jar: Frequently in my early grief I found myself pushing even the happy memories below the surface. My visceral reaction was that it would be painful to have them front and center. The thing is, though, that when I do allow myself to pull out items that remind me of my parents — favorite photos, a silky scarf, — I just end up feeling comforted. I really love that this kit provides a beautiful glass and wood container for me to do that in a nice display (and large enough to contain my mom's favorite glycerine bar of soap...the one that screams a certain profanity).

Aromatherapy candle and essential oil: What was nice about finding these is that they aren't items I would specifically purchase for myself, and now that I have them, I think they smell really, really good (pear and redwood? Yes, please) and spark instant calm.

A reusable box: I realize this may not sound as exciting to you as it does to me, but I am one of those people who really appreciates a high-quality box.

The Self-Care Box is one of many resources and tools found on Remembering A Life's website that helps individuals and families beautifully memorialize a life well-lived, whether a death has just occurred or an individual and their family wishes to plan in advance. The site also offers guidance on where to begin the planning process, the kinds of decisions that loved ones will make and the many options available to make a tribute personal and meaningful.

*Reprinted with permission: modernloss.com*

### An Entry From My Journal

"At times I leave my house because I feel too alone, especially on weekends. I take a drive and go places where there are people around. It makes me feel better most times; however, there are times I feel more alone outside of my house with people around me than when I am home alone."

*-Editor*

