



FALL 2023

Volume 16, Issue 1

Welcome *from the Editor*

With our final issue for the year, I think of change. Change is the one thing that is certain in life because change will always be part of our lives. Everything changes. Nothing stays the same. And within grief it is the same. We all experience *Life Changes while Grieving* which happens to be the title of my third book that will be released soon. This book on grieving contains an abbreviated version of my grief timeline highlighting three distinct life changes that made a difference in my life with observations of how I handled it. After the explanation of each life change, I include some of the past reflections from *Miss Your Forever* along with a few new ones that I wrote to provide perspective on what I was thinking about at times during my grief journey. Thank you for supporting my writing to help support others.

Social media posts concerning **sudSSpirit** are now on my personal facebook page: 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. **sudSSpirit** stands for "*Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph*"

We also have a list of resources for support inside that may be helpful to you. Additional grief resources as well as past issues of this newsletter can be found at www.dominicmurgido.com. You may also contact the editor/founder directly at 717-866-2401 orsudsspirit@gmail.com or dmurgido@gmail.com or www.dominicmurgido.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 **sudSSpirit** and yourself to help you in your time of grieving. *Together We Can Help Each Other Heal.*

Coming Soon!

*A new book from
Dominic Murgido*

*Life Changes while Grieving:
Three significant changes.
One ultimate outcome.*

Join Dominic as he shares some past reflections that he wrote and explores three life changes that made him realize there was another step to take on his own for the healthy continuation of living his best life. There were days that he struggled, moments that took him by surprise, and triggers that brought him to tears, but in the end, all became good because the author learned to live with loss.

*Expected Release
end of 2023
or early 2024*

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"Wishing will not return life to before. Before is forever gone. Accept that there is a new reality – the more we cling to the hope that these old lives might come back, the more we set ourselves up for unending discontent"

*Resilience,
Elizabeth Edwards*

Resources

- Editor

www.dominicmurgido.com

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

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

www.211.org

www.speakinggrief.org

www.grief.com (David Kessler)

www.opentohope.com



Christmas Change Up *by Dominic Murgido*

Editor note: this reflection was written in December, 2022.

I had my doubts as I assembled the three pieces that were to provide me with a six-foot artificial Christmas tree for the first time in sixteen years. I have been keeping with tradition all these years after her death with a live tree for the Christmas season. But this past Fall, I began to dread the thoughts of once again going for that tree alone, driving it home alone, decorating it alone, and then with providing fresh water for the next four weeks and that cleanup afterwards as I drag it to the curb for it to be recycled by the township.

I have often shared with others going through their own grief during the holidays that you should feel comfortable deciding what you want to do. And to do or not do what feels right. So, after sixteen years it was time to no longer get a live tree. My choice. My decision. And yet, I felt a little guilt knowing that Sue always liked a live tree as I did since we've been together. But I have honored that tradition for as long as I felt good doing it, so when things change about how I feel, it's ok to let go of some things. It's time to practice what I have preached for years to others and acknowledge, accept, and adapt to a new tradition for myself.

I decided to place the tree in a totally different spot than before. I made a pot of coffee, placed some cookies out on a plate, and put on a favorite CD of the sweet sounds of Christmas carols. As I trimmed the tree with ornaments that represent our life together that span a thirty-year relationship, memories of Christmas's past came to me and I smiled and wept at the same time. Some date back to the seventies when our love for one another was just beginning. Others were from some of the last adventures we were on together from a weekend in Chicago and a new years' day in St.

Louis to a spring celebration in the country of

Austria. I

have also

added some

over the years that

represent my dog Hal,

my residence in Vermont, and

my love of coffee. Our daughter is

well represented on the tree with ornaments

made by her in her childhood as well as her

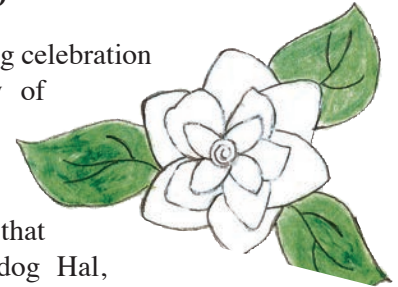
becoming a mother for the first time. All of what

I was putting on the tree tells a story. A story of

two lives joined by a love like no other.

I have come to realize that it doesn't matter that I went artificial and it hurts no one. It was time for a change and I did it. It's not like I'm not use to change, making decisions, or taking risks. I certainly have done many since Sue died to find meaning and purpose and to move forward in a healthy way. And I realized that what is more important to me than anything this time of year is reflecting on how lucky I am that I spent three decades with a woman I loved and have beautiful memories to cherish till the end of time.

Well, the tree is done. The coffee has been consumed and I ate way too many of those cookies. Christmas carols continue to play as the lights are aglow on my decorated tree. As if on cue, it begins to snow just outside of my window. I believe Sue is telling me something. I sit in my favorite chair and am in awe and wonder of this magical time and look forward to a new year to be starting real soon.



An Entry From My Journal

"No one, nothing, can fill the void that is experienced when you lose a loved one. I will get by. But getting by will be a challenge. Life will be different"

-Editor



Growing Through Grief: Acknowledgement *by Angela Clement*

When we lose our special someone, we start out in just plain disbelief and absolute shock. It is hard to describe the pain and yet anyone who has lost someone special knows it. The pain is intense and it doesn't just go away without some type of intervention on your part. Having your grief acknowledged is a huge part of your healing and yet often this is something that gets overlooked. We need to be understood and know that grief is a normal part of the healing process. We need the reassurance that it is okay to feel all the intense emotion that comes with grief. We in fact need to feel all of it without feeling guilty or ashamed in order to heal.

It is difficult for others to understand how intense grief can be. They can sympathize and even feel really awful about it but until they lose a special someone themselves, they will never be able to truly understand the pain of grief. It is incomprehensible. It is not something to minimize. Time alone does not heal the wounds. It takes more than that.

People around you want you to be happy again and so they say and do many things to try to help you to feel better. They tell you that you need to be strong and to move on because your loved one wouldn't want you to be sad. They tell you your loved one is in a better place and if you just get on with life and get busy you will feel better. They also usually have a preconceived amount of time after which you should be fine. Certainly, all of this is well meaning but not that helpful.

Only you will understand the uniqueness of your grief. Even siblings that have lost a parent will all have different grief journeys. Your relationship with your person was yours and because no one can know that intimacy no one can completely know your grief. The beautiful thing about this is that your relationship is very special indeed and it is a bond that only you and your loved one on the other side will know.

There is no cookie cutter recipe for grief. How long it takes to feel better, what you need to do to heal, what helps you and what doesn't is all individual. It is not just physically being left all alone that makes you feel alone, it is the actual healing journey that is lonely. You will need a lot of encouragement, patience and support to trust your own judgment when it comes to what you need moment to moment. You will need to carefully listen to your own body and intuition. Meanwhile, people often have their own lives to live and their support will wane long before you are okay. Even if you are one of those people that keeps communicating you are still needing support, often people will not know how to help you.

You will find that having your grief acknowledged is a big step toward healing. Having someone listen and validate your feelings is healing. My advice is this. If the acknowledgement and support doesn't happen anymore or maybe it never has, don't keep waiting for it and consequently become bitter when it doesn't. Don't allow this to be the reason to stay stuck in your grief. You need to find individuals who are doing the work, have taken positive steps to heal and understand and validate your pain from their own experience. Listening to others who have been through grief and now are living a renewed life of happiness will bring you the hope and inspiration you need to guide you in your journey. Allow them to guide you. You are not meant to do this alone.

I know sometimes finding a place to have your grief acknowledged can be difficult. Find out if there is a group in your church or in your community where you can go to find the people you need to meet. Also, I host a special get together on zoom to provide the very support I describe. You can find out more here: www.healingenergy.world.

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Book Review - Editor

The Sun Still Rises

by Shawn Doyle, CSP

From the heartbreak of his own sudden unexpected loss of his spouse, the author tells his story and helps guide and prepare the reader for what lies ahead of them with their own journey of grief. Providing hope and assurance, Shawn delves into an education on grief and walks you through decision making and responses to grief. A main focus is self-care and how important it is to not forget about how you feel and what you are going to do for yourself. As with any book related to grief, there may be some topics and opinions that just don't match with your individual feelings and beliefs, but for the most part, the information supplied and the number of resources provided at the end of the book are priceless.

Grief During the Holidays: How to navigate your feelings of loss

by Valerie Crabtree PhD and Erica Sirrine PhD

The “happy holidays” can be the least wonderful time of the year when we are mourning the death of a loved one. Many annual traditions are shared with those we love, making our grief reactions more pronounced.

Grief can also impact us following other losses, including divorce, infertility, unemployment, illness, or strained relationships. We may even mourn significant life changes or events, such as retirement or an empty nest.

Grief is a normal human response to loss and signals the end of something or someone important to us. While we often share common grief reactions, how we process our emotions differs. Our expressions of sorrow are unique to each person, and no two people experience a loss in the same way. Below are a few tips that may help you navigate your grief this holiday season.

Be patient with yourself and others. The grief process can be exhausting and overwhelming, especially while juggling the demands of the holidays. Simple tasks can require an extraordinary amount of energy and leave you feeling depleted. Be patient with yourself. It’s also important to extend that same compassion and understanding to family members and friends who might process their grief differently.

Openly communicate your preferences. There may be a holiday tradition you don’t want to continue this year or a new tradition (perhaps to honor your loved one) that you want to begin. Your family members, especially children or adolescents, may also have specific ideas about holiday rituals or how to spend the season, so an honest dialogue can help ensure everyone’s grief is acknowledged. Grant yourself permission to forgo sending holiday cards or decline an invitation if those things feel too taxing this year. Remember, just because you choose to do something different (or the same) this season does not mean you have to repeat it again next year.

Acknowledge your grief reactions. Families often avoid discussions about loss during the holidays. Yet, it can be helpful to acknowledge that this season may look or feel different because of the loss you’ve experienced. Give yourself permission to experience and express your emotions, including the inevitable waves of grief. You may feel sorrow, anxiety, exhaustion, frustration, loneliness, anger, or regret. However, you may also be surprised by moments of joy, love, or hope.

Remember your loss. If you experienced the death of

a loved one, consider a way to honor or memorialize them during the holiday season. You may want to light a special candle at the table, donate to a charity in your loved one’s memory, prepare their favorite meal, engage in an activity your loved one enjoyed, display a cherished photograph, or create a gift box filled with notes of holiday memories.

Ask for help. Do you need help decorating your house, buying gifts, or planning a meal? Would you benefit from speaking with a grief counselor or attending a support group? Humans were created for connection. Reaching out to others when life gets challenging, especially when we have experienced a significant loss, is essential.

Whether this is your first, fifth, or tenth holiday season without your loved one, it is important to openly acknowledge your loss and honor your grief at this time. Take time to remember your loved one, including reflecting on the value they brought into your life that you carry forward.

If you or someone you love is contemplating suicide, seek help immediately. For help 24/7 dial 988 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

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Mission Statement

- **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 that they are not alone with this problem and the group is available to provide infinite support.

For additional information
www.dominicmurgido.com

More than coincidence *by Kim Talbert*

I had come to dread my trips to Wal-Mart, but I didn't have a choice. I needed to buy some holiday things. I pushed my cart slowly down the aisles trying to stare straight ahead, not wanting to look at the basketballs, the model cars, the bicycles. *I use to buy those things for Dustin when he was little*, I thought. But that was before. Dustin was 18 years old now, in trouble with drugs. And all those things were just a reminder of the way it had been before I lost him to crystal meth.

Seeing all the toys brought on a pain so deep that my dark sunglasses could barely hide my teary eyes.

"Can I help you?" I looked up. Standing next to me was a young man, a store employee. Tall, lanky, with short blonde hair, neatly gelled. *Looks a lot like Justin before he was on drugs*, I thought.

"No, I'm just thinking right now," I replied, embarrassed. Quickly I excused myself and rushed away to the grocery section.

His favorite breakfast foods, those juice boxes he drank after school...the sadness hit me again and again. Somehow I managed to finish my shopping and wound my way back through the store toward the cashier. "Are you sure you don't need any help?" a voice behind me said.

I turned. There he was, the same young man from before. We'd crossed paths again.

This time, I couldn't hold back. "I have a son," I blurted out, "who's about your age. He's a crystal meth addict. Coming here and seeing all of the things I use to buy for him is just so painful. For some reason, today has just been very hard."

Suddenly, the boy leaned over and gave me a hug. Then he straightened up. "I know what you mean. Stuff in the store makes me sad too," he said. "I lost my mom a few years ago. All the holiday stuff in the store this week makes it hard. All day I've been trying to hide how sad I'm feeling. I didn't think anyone else would understand."

This time I gave *him* a hug. Someone certainly did understand.



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Editor note: Most of us never think about how many people we see and interact with each day that are struggling with grief and loss of a loved one. Strangers among us silently grieving in a world that at times can be too harsh. Let's all be kind.

Thoughts to Ponder

"As we grieve and go through the terrible pain associated with the loss of a loved one, our approach is unique and as individual as a fingerprint. There may be some commonalities but we all march to a different drum when it comes to healing"

"We can honor our dead more by the quality of our continued living than by our constantly referring to what we lost"

"It's the everyday things, the mundane things that you miss the most. Maybe that's what life really is, you just don't know it at the time."

-Editor



Check out these sites!

- modernloss.com
- speakinggrief.com
- opentohope.com
- grief.com
- mindfulnessandgrief.com

-Editor

sudSSpirit
Bereavement
Support Group
meets monthly.

Berks Chapter
Reading, PA.
4th Tues. of the month
6 PM

Exeter Community Library
4569 Prestwick Drive
Reading, PA 19606

sudsspirit@gmail.com

dmurgido@gmail.com

www.dominicmurgido.com
717-866-2401

Bennington Chapter
Bennington, VT

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com

dmurgido@gmail.com

www.dominicmurgido.com
717-866-2401

-Editor





Paying it forward in Grief *by Maria Kubitz*

There's a saying, "misery loves company".

While I don't really know the intended meaning, it sounds as if misery attracts more misery. Or maybe those who are miserable feel the need to share it with others? Whatever the intended meaning, I think it's actually a good description for those suffering after the death of a loved one. In my case, the death of my 4-year-old daughter over a decade ago.

One of the hardest aspects of intense grief is the sense of isolation that comes with it.

Long after the funeral is over and everyone goes back to their normal lives, those suffering profound loss are left alone to try to figure out how to pick up the pieces of our shattered lives. The idea that our loved one is at peace or an angel in heaven does not address the gaping hole left by the departure of someone who was an integral part of our life—and in many cases, our very being.

Often, family and friends try to help support us in our time of grief, but this support often comes with a time limit. Usually that time limit occurs within weeks or months after the death. Others might offer support longer, but eventually they too become emotionally fatigued trying to comfort someone whose grief timeline takes years versus weeks or months. Which is understandable. But it leaves grievers feeling alone and misunderstood by the ones who love them the most.

So what's a griever to do?

The reality is that people suffering after the loss of a significant loved one often crave company. That's because the feelings of isolation make grief more intense. If you think of grief as a huge boulder, it makes sense that others helping you hold it as you chip away at it is much better than trying to do it on your own. The likelihood of you getting crushed by your own grief is significantly higher without some form of support.

Unfortunately, grievers often find that despite their best efforts, family and friends cannot offer the level of support needed, simply because they haven't experienced and don't understand this level of loss and grief.

This is where the beauty and benefit of grief support groups come in.

Surrounded by a group of people who have suffered a similar loss is invaluable. The simple act of expressing yourself to those who have experienced the same level of loss as you can be the biggest source of easing the initial, overwhelming pain of loss.

You don't even have to say a single word in support groups to reap the benefits. Simply listening to others who

have survived this insurmountable pain provides a sense of understanding and community. It provides a feeling of hope for a future that doesn't feel like the pain of loss will crush you every single day. Surprisingly, support groups are not only healing for those who are newly bereaved, but provide a different benefit for those of us further along in our grief.

The single most powerful tool that helped me through this journey of grief is the act of "paying it forward".

The definition of paying it forward in grief can vary significantly. But it all comes down to one basic idea: you use what you've learned during your experience with grief to help others. It provides new meaning and purpose to your shattered life.

For me, sharing my experience and hard-won insights into the grief process has been an important tool in lessening the pain of losing my daughter. Writing about grief started out as a way for me to express my emotions and questions. Then I decided to put it on a public website for anyone who cared to read and follow my journey. I continually wrote about all the nooks and crannies I encountered on this journey of grief.

Writing allowed me to look at my grief from a different perspective. I was able to more clearly discover what helped me and what didn't. I could more easily spot potential pitfalls and how best to deal with them. The more I wrote, the more people found my website and followed my journey.

Knowing I was helping others feel less alone and more hopeful, I was able to turn the pain of grief into something positive and purposeful.

Of course, writing isn't for everyone. Other ways I've seen people paying it forward in grief include:

Volunteering your time in support groups or other community grief support organizations.

Honoring them by donating to or becoming involved in a social cause that was important to your loved one.

Creating a foundation or scholarship in their name and memory.

Educating the community about the way your loved one died in hopes to help awareness and/or prevention.

Not every form of paying it forward need be so much of an undertaking. It could be as simple as reaching out to someone. Whether it's family, a friend, or mere acquaintance who finds themselves in this community of profound loss, you can simply let them know you're available for them to talk with or just listen. Without judgment and without time limits.

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