

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE  
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



**sudS Spirit**  
Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

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## Welcome *from the Editor*

As the Fall approaches, many holidays are coming up for all of us to deal with. Some of us may be experiencing the “first” holiday without our loved one while others have a few under our belts. Some suggestions are offered in this issue.

Please refer to our Resource section where an additional resource has been added; Heartland Home Health Care and Hospice. The mission of **sudS Spirit** is also included in this issue as is a new reference to links that may be of interest to you.

Our monthly meetings for the last three months of the year will **not** be the standard 4th Monday of the month. Please refer to

the list of meeting dates inside this issue.

The **sudS Spirit** Quarterly Newsletter is a companion to the monthly meeting that we have at 6:15 pm at the Exeter Community Library. **sudS Spirit** stands for “Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph”.

Any bereavement support group is there to help you in your time of need as you process the loss of a loved one. We encourage you to seek out and become part of one. If you want more information about our bereavement support group, please email [sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com) or call 610-779-6809.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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## My Eyes are Open but No One is Home *by Dominic Murgido*

I still have my bad days. Those days that it takes all I have within me to get through the day functioning semi-normally to those around me. Those days that you just can't stop thinking of the loved one you lost way before their time and why it happened to them and to you.

It doesn't matter how long ago it happened, we all have bad days. We have those days that only we can identify with, days that our eyes are open but no one is home. We are going through the motions of living for the day, surviving the time of the day at home, at work, or with our family and friends. And although they think we are doing fine and we are with them and being part of the day's events, our mind is somewhere else. Somewhere in the distant past with our memories of our loved one and wonderful times we shared.

We relive our last time together, the last day, the last moments. We wish we could have had more time regardless of the circumstances and we cry. We cry inside and to ourselves but to those around us we appear ok and doing fine. It's very difficult to go through a day like this for us, but we do it, we make it, and we hope that the next day isn't one of those bad days for us. We hope and pray that these bad days come few and far between for us. We don't like experiencing them and hiding them from those that don't understand us and what we are going through.

We begin to understand that these bad days we experience are part of our healing process. We actually begin to respect that we have them and accept those days as being ok for us to go through. We allow ourselves to experience them without getting angry about it and try to not allow our personal inside feelings to affect the people around us. This is how we function during these bad days with our eyes open to the outside world but in reality no one is home inside to reflect us being all together with the present reality.

So we put on that “mask” to those around us and everything appears fine to them while we are hurting inside from the thoughts and reflections that we are experiencing. The day will pass and we will become better with time and these bad days will slowly decrease in frequency and we will become whole again and at peace with ourselves.

***“The question  
is not:  
why did this  
happen or where  
is it going to  
lead you,  
or what is  
the price you  
have to pay.  
It is simply:  
how are you  
making use of it.”***

***- Dag Hammarskjold***

***Together we can help each other heal.***

## Resources

MHARBC (Mental Health Assn of Reading and Berks County)  
www.mharbc.org 610-775-3000

Berks Counseling Center  
www.berksc.org 610-373-4281

Caron Counseling Services  
1-800-678-2332

Berks Visiting Nurses  
www.berksvna.org  
610-378-0481

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

Reading Hospital  
www.readinghospital.org  
610-988-8070

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



## The Holidays Are Here

*Excerpts from: Helping Yourself Heal During the Holiday Season by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.*

Holidays are difficult for anyone who has experienced the death of someone loved.



Rather than being times of family togetherness, sharing and thanksgiving, holidays can bring feelings of sadness, loss and emptiness.

Since love does not end with death, holidays may result in a renewed sense of personal grief – a feeling of loss unlike that experienced in the routine of daily living. Society encourages you to join in the holiday spirit, but all around you the sounds, sights and smells trigger memories of the one you love has died. No simple guidelines exist that will take away the hurt you are feeling. By being tolerant and compassionate with yourself, you will continue to heal.

Don't be afraid to talk about and express your feelings of grief. Find caring friends and relatives who will listen without judging you. They will help make you feel understood.

Feelings of loss will probably leave you fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Lower your own expectations about being at your peak during the holiday season.

You may already feel stressed, so don't over-extend yourself. Avoid isolating yourself, but be sure to recognize the need to have special time for yourself. Realize also that "keeping busy" won't distract you from your grief, but may actually increase stress and postpone the need to talk out thoughts and feelings related to your grief.

Talk about the person who has died. Include the person's name in conversation during the holidays.

Decide which family traditions you want to continue and which new ones you would like to begin. Structure your holiday time. This will help you anticipate activities, rather than just reacting to whatever happens.

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. And holidays always make you think about times past. Keep in mind that memories are tinged with both happiness and sadness. Memories that were made in love – no one can ever take them away from you.

Spend time thinking about the meaning and purpose of your life. The combination of a holiday and a loss naturally results in looking inward and assessing your individual situation. Make the best use of this time to define the positive things in life that surround you.

During the holidays, you may find a renewed sense of faith or discover a new set of beliefs. Associate with people who understand and respect your need to talk about these beliefs. If your faith is important, you may want to attend a holiday service or special religious ceremony. Grief is both a necessity and a privilege. It comes as a result of giving and receiving love. Don't let anyone take your grief away. Love yourself. Be patient with yourself. And allow yourself to be surrounded by loving, caring people.

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## An Entry from My Journal

- Editor

"I think I realized the separation between your heart and your mind. As much as your mind knows you have to be better, survive your loss, your tragedy; your heart has a different take on it. Your heart is with your soul and what you believe in, what you long for, what you miss the most."

## The Risks of Social Isolation

Feeling lonely is something that many people are uncomfortable admitting. Yet studies indicate that Americans are growing lonelier by the decade.

Findings from the General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago found that people reported having fewer intimate friends in 2004 than they had in 1985.

Researchers insist that the human brain was wired to need social interaction. However, dating back to the Industrial Revolution, people are spending less and less in community.

Studies show that people who are lonely experience more sleep disturbances than those who have strong social connections. Lonely people also report more stress, which can lead to health concerns such as cardiovascular disease and immune system disorders.

The societal stigma that accompanies loneliness can make it difficult to admit to feeling lonely. If you're feeling lonely, instead of suffering in silence, consider reaching out and joining in. Community organizations, places of worship, volunteerism and various classes can give you the social contacts that help sustain you.

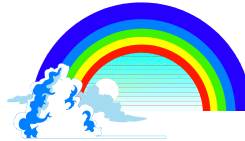
It's interesting to note that researchers believe online communities are not adequate substitutes for face to face contact. However, if you're housebound, connecting online may be a godsend.

For those who recently lost a loved one, grief support groups can provide solace and help you interact with people who understand what you're going through.

*Excerpts from San Francisco Chronicle 3-2-09. Reprinted with permission.*

## There can be No Rainbow Without a Cloud and a Storm

Which is easier? Sudden Death vs. the Expected...It is pointless to compare suffering. Who would want to weigh pain on a scale to see whose loss is "greater"? Indeed there can be no scale, no form of measurement to compare each person's experience of grief at the death of a loved one. Yet the circumstances of the death can pose specific problems depending upon the manner in which death occurred. When death comes without warning, the shock is overwhelming. The first wave of shock is physical; we feel nauseous, shaky, and cold. That first blow is crushing, like being hit with a massive weight to the chest. You fight the truth; you cling to unsupported bits of encouragement. When evidence verifies the awful reality you may give into uncontrollable sobbing.



There is so much unfinished business, unresolved issues, unsaid good-byes. You face the future and the past with equal anxiety. All those loose ends will never be tied, the vast future ahead with its frightening, uncharted waters to travel alone. Each succeeding day, the reality of the death gives you the time to ponder what happened, what will happen next. The initial shock lessens and grief commences. Some say that when death is instant the journey of grief may be prolonged.

If your loved one has died due to a lingering illness or injury, your grief may be complicated by emotional and physical exhaustion. Time spent at the sickbed may have drained you of your own health and energy. Seeing your loved one in pain is a terrible burden to bear. You may have already begun to grieve once the death was declared inevitable, although often a glimmer of hope remains. When your loved one finally does die you may feel a measure of relief. You did not wish their life to end, you wished for their pain to end. Guilt over this relief is common, but once again edged out by the other facets of grief. We cling to memories of better days, we focus there instead of on the final ordeal.

Regardless of which way your loved one dies, it may be helpful for you to sort out your feelings by having a "conversation" with your loved one. Ask forgiveness, pray to them for help and guidance. You'll feel their presence, and imagining what they would say to you can give you a sense of peace. Your loved one wants you to be happy, they would want you to make peace with yourself.

*Reprinted with Permission: Hope For Bereaved Understanding, Coping and Growing Through Grief, 2007, Syracuse, NY.*

**sudSSpirit  
meeting dates for the  
remaining months  
of the year have  
changed.**

**Please Note:**

**October meeting will  
be held Wednesday  
10-28-09**

**November meeting  
will be held Monday  
11-30-09**

**December meeting  
will be held Monday  
12-21-09**

**Reminders of these  
meeting dates will be  
sent out as usual.**

**For more  
information,  
call 610-779-6809  
or Email:  
sudsspirit@gmail.  
com**



## Book Review - Editor

### With Those Who Grieve by Kay Soder-Alderfer

A collection of stories from people who have survived the grief process awaits you in this book. The author puts together this variety of emotions and feelings through the stories of loss, pain, and hope.

Each grief process is different as is reflected in the courage of those willing to share their stories in this collection. The telling of their stories is the healing for them and all of us as we proceed through this bereavement process.

I personally found these stories very heartwarming and moving. I was touched by so many of their thoughts and feelings that I was able to gain validation for some of my own feelings.

### Our Mission

*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.

## 60 Seconds More

by Dominic Murgido

All I want is 60 seconds more. 60 seconds to tell her how much I love her and miss her and to hold her and hug her. I want to walk with her and talk to her. I want to hear her voice just one more time. I want to look into her blue eyes. I want to hear her laugh and see her smile. I want to touch her hair and feel her breath.



One more day would be great but I would settle for 60 seconds. A lot can be done in that time. Enough to allow me some closure and to say that good-bye I never had a chance to do. I would be satisfied with that and accepting with it knowing that she has to go back.

Her death approximately 45 months ago was sudden and unexpected. No chance to have that "60 seconds more". No preparation, no advance warning, just shock and the trauma associated with seeing her car pushed into a building by a tractor trailer who was speeding and ran a red light. She never made it to work or home that evening. Her life ended as did some of mine.

I think of her all the time and hope that she is at peace in a beautiful place. I think of what more I would want to say to her and how best I can spend that 60 seconds with her. I know her spirit lives within me and at times I feel her presence guiding me and watching over me. I am very comforted with that. She was truly the best thing that ever happened to me and I am so fortunate to have known her, fell in love with her, and married her.

Our last words together were that morning when I left for work and she was getting ready to walk the dog. None of us really know that those last words we speak to one another may be the "last" words. I didn't.

Each day is a gift. Respect it, Love it, Cherish it with your family and friends.



## Links

[www.groww.org](http://www.groww.org) (on line grief recovery with helpful information)

[www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org) (a nationwide grief support group network with local ties to meetings)

[www.memory-of.com](http://www.memory-of.com) (a way to celebrate your loved one's life and legacy)

[www.healthboards.com](http://www.healthboards.com) (a place to ask questions, review boards of topics being discussed to gain on line support)

[www.memorybearsinc.com](http://www.memorybearsinc.com) (a unique way to remember your loved one or anything)

## Thoughts to Ponder

"The eager fate which carried thee took the largest part of me: for this losing is true dying. — Ralph Waldo Emerson



"Grief is a matter of relativity; the sorrow should be estimated by its proportion to the sorrowed; a gash is as painful to one as an amputation is to another." — Percy Bysshe Shelley

"It is sweet to mingle tears with tears; griefs, when they wound in solitude, wound more deeply." — Seneca