

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

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Welcome *from the Editor*

Did you know that **sudSSpirit** has a facebook page? Check it out and like us on Facebook and become a friend. Facebook / **sudsspirit**.

Another season is upon us and as seasons change, we reflect. The next two seasons are favorites of mine and bring back some wonderful memories that I shared with my wife over the years. The change of the seasons can be difficult for some as are some holidays that will soon be coming. It's ok and know that your feelings are commonly shared by many who are on this same journey.

In addition to John Kreiser being a partner to our **sudSSpirit** group in Reading, Pa., we would like to welcome Charlene Hafer as a Facilitator for the Berks Chapter. Thank you to both for continuing the support and dedication in helping **sudSSpirit** become an integral part of the community and helping those in need.

We also would like to take this time to recognize and thank Linda Wrightstone, Facilitator of the Cumberland / York Chapter of **sudSSpirit**. It is through Linda's dedication and compassion that has enabled this chapter to excel in their community and provide a place of comfort to those that need support on their grief journey.

This newsletter is available to anyone anywhere so if you know of someone that can benefit from these pages, please contact us with their email or mail information and we will make sure that they become part of our mailing list for future publications. sudsspirit@gmail.com or 802-440-8100.

sudSSpirit was founded to help provide a place of comfort, compassion, and hope for those that have experienced a sudden unexpected death or their spouse or significant other. Meetings are held monthly in Reading, PA, Etters, PA, and Bennington, VT. Please see the margin in the third page of this newsletter for contact information. **sudSSpirit** stands for "*Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph*"

In this issue:

A labyrinth is used as a metaphor for walking the journey of grief while the moonlight one night leads to reflections. Dogs are not only man's best friend but they could also be a friend to one that grieves. Hugging your loved ones in your heart is explored and another beautiful poem is shared by John Kreiser as he writes about the *Angel of My Dreams*.

This issue also includes our regular features; book review, thoughts to ponder, quarterly quote, an entry from my journal, and resources.

An Entry From My Journal

"I am allowing myself to be more 'real' to me; this is all new, feelings that I have power over the present of who I am. I just want to 'be' and slowly build myself up again to what-ever feels right"

-Editor



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. Don't give up until you find one that you are comfortable with and you feel that it is helping you cope.

For a brochure with more information about our Reading, PA group, please call 610-777-4181 or Email longlivepigheaven@yahoo.com. You can also call 610-582-0444 or Email bluemorpho316@gmail.com. For a brochure with more information about our Etters, PA group, please call 717-938-1928 (ext 241) or Email lmurry2@comcast.net. For a brochure or the current newsletter with more information about our Bennington, VT group, please call 802-440-8100 or Email sudsspirit@gmail.com. You can also reach us at Facebook / **sudsspirit**.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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- Editor

"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these"

-George
Washington Carver

Together we can help each other heal

Like us on
Facebook / **sudsspirit**

Resources

- Editor

GRMHA (Greater Reading
Mental Health Alliance)
www.grmha.org
610-775-3000

Berks Counseling Center
www.berkscscc.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

Circle of Life Coalition
www.circleoflifecoalition.org
610-372-3638

www.griefshare.org

Diakon Family Life Services
www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp
610-682-1337

VNA & Hospice of Southwestern
Vermont Health Care
www.svhealthcare.org
802-442-5502

Bayada Hospice Services
www.bayada.com
855-696-2072



Dogs Can Be a Griever's Friend *by Dominic Murgido*

So much has been written about dogs and the role they play in our lives. Many people that I have known had a dog at one time in their life. Many more always had a dog and continue to have a dog that shares their life with them and their family.

Man's best friend; a child's playmate, a companion to you. Their role and function to us is countless. And that role is one that is unconditional love and loyalty. They can't speak, but they know and realize all that is happening around them and in their own ways are able to provide comfort and a sense of peace to us when we need them too.

I had a dog growing up that was shared with my sister. After college and then marriage, a dog was destined to be part of my family. My wife always had a dog growing up and loved dogs as much as I did. When I look back at all the dogs we had in our home, they all played a significant role in that part of our lives that we were experiencing at the time.

Dogs were part of our marriage and the development of our family. Upon the arrival of our daughter, dogs continued to be part of our lives and hers. Children look at dogs so much differently than us adults but they have their own place for them in their hearts.

Dogs love to be a part of whatever it is you are doing whether you like that or not. They are loving, caring and love to have your attention and be talked too. They seem to know when we are happy or sad and act accordingly to celebrate with us or help us.

There is a special dog in my life. This dog is one that my wife selected and we became owners of a Blue Merle Sheltie as a four month old puppy. My wife named him HAL. His birthday is on Halloween. HAL is adorable and very intelligent.

My wife and HAL became inseparable and this dog did everything, went everywhere, and was always thought about in anything that was planned. My wife spent as much of her time with this dog as she could in many areas of adventure and experiences. HAL was put through many classes of instruction being awarded with one completion certificate after another including Therapy Dog Training.

HAL seemed to really excel in Therapy Dog Training and my wife loved to take him to visit those less fortunate in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Sometimes I wasn't sure who enjoyed bringing smiles to faces more, her or the dog. They were indeed a team in this venue and provided an extra dose of happiness to an otherwise drab day to the people in these elder care settings.

My wife's time with HAL was cut short when she died in a vehicle accident. She was only 48; the dog was only 3 at the time. The hardest thing I ever had to deal with was the death of my wife, the second hardest was telling my daughter. The third was



breaking the news to HAL. I remember walking into the house that day and being happily greeted by the dog, as usual. I dropped to the floor and hugged HAL while sobbing for what seemed like hours.

He waited at the kitchen door that night for her to come home. HAL seemed depressed and sad and wasn't eating and spent most of his time in a corner.

He needed closure and my daughter and I had a thought. We called the funeral home and took HAL there to see my wife, his master. I would not believe it if I didn't see it, but after seeing her lifeless body laying there and no voice, movement or touch was coming from her, HAL then realized that she wasn't coming home. It was a sight I shall never forget.

Dogs' emotions are no different than ours; he was saddened by the loss of his master and was in mourning for a while. We mourned together. We spent a lot of time next to each other. We cried and helped to provide comfort to one another.

Ironically, HAL became *my* Therapy Dog. I was now the one that he was helping with his charm and personality, his presence and kindness, his gentleness and kisses. He was helping me through the most difficult period of my life.

Life's challenges and changes can destroy us. Man's best friend has been there to help me and provide a comfort level that is indescribable. HAL has been a true friend and has helped me through my slow recovery from a life altering situation.

HAL has helped me decide to retire from a 30 year career and adjust to the new me that I didn't even know yet. He has helped me deal with my sadness and adjust to the loneliness over the years. HAL has helped me through all the "firsts" without her and the changing seasons with memories. And he is always up for "what's next" in our life together just like my wife once was. HAL is always there supporting, encouraging, and loving unconditionally.

I am really not sure how I would have fared out in all of this "life" stuff had it not been for HAL. There has never been a dog like him before in my life and I don't know if there ever will be again. He maintains a special place in my heart.

HAL is getting older and signs of age are showing. I have to come to terms with the fact that he will leave me at one point to join his master who left both of us many years ago. When that day comes, another life altering situation will happen to me. We must recognize that the sun sets and rises daily, time moves on, life continues. We move forward and take steps towards a better and brighter tomorrow.

I love my dog, HAL. He is responsible for helping me "make it" through my grief journey. I am grateful for his love, devotion, compassion, and presence in my life. Never underestimate the comfort of dogs.



Moonlight Feels Right

By Dominic Murgido



It was the night before the final day of July and as I was closing the patio door for the night I noticed the soft glow of light bouncing off the deck. I went outside onto the deck to discover a beautiful moon that was producing such moonlight.

My present world at the moment stopped while I took in this sight. I settled onto the chaise lounge and watched in awe of this spectacle before me. I seemed to be in some kind of trance taken by the beauty that was in the cloudless sky. The stars were bright and plentiful this evening which added to the magic I was experiencing.

As I sat there admiring the sight, I heard sounds from around me; rattling dishware from a nearby neighbor, a phone ringing in the distance, a passing car on the street behind me, a few crickets chirping, and the sound of my own TV in the background coming from my open window.

I reflected about my life. Where it has been, with whom, and how it came to be where it is today, at this very moment. Life is not perfect and it is

not easy. It is full of happy and sad times, mountains of success and valleys of stress and there are no guarantees or sure bets about anything that is happening anywhere or anytime.

When it really comes down to it, Life, and how we live it is *all about attitude*.

How we react to life is what makes us who we are and how we come to

be. We all have choices. We have the opportunity to determine what we want to be when something bad happens to us. Our reaction is dependent on our attitude and how we are going to handle things, accept things, learn from things. No one can do this for us. We must decide to do this on our own and we must want to do this with conviction.

Charles Swindoll once said:

"Words can never adequately convey the incredible impact of our attitudes toward life.... Attitude keeps me going or cripples my progress. It alone fuels my fire or assaults my hope. When my attitudes are right, there is no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, and no challenge too great for me... Life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it."

Looking at the moon tonight made me think of all of this. The moon is like a beacon in the sky guiding us, helping us cope with our problems, dealing with the loss of a loved one, understanding our new normal, and trying to become a better person with a *new* attitude about our *new* life.

Noticing the moon tonight was a sign for me; a sign of encouragement, reflection, thinking of past memories and preparing for the next step on my journey into my future.

I actually thought of a song from the 70's called "Moonlight Feels Right" by Starbuck.

One of many songs from that era that I enjoyed on a University campus with the woman that was to become my wife someday. These memories brought tears to my eyes about everything I was feeling at the moment.

My one wish tonight would be: that my wife was with me enjoying the moonlight as we have done many times as we took evening walks together.

As I was wishing on this bright moon tonight, I believe my wish came true because I felt her spirit in my heart. The moonlight sure does feel right.



Book Review - Editor

Shortcuts to Inner Peace, 70 simple paths to everyday serenity

by Ashley Davis Bush, L.C.S.W

This book is a must read for anyone seeking a better quality of life. The author describes techniques that are simple yet effective to use throughout your day that will help you to deal with the stresses and strains of everyday living. These practices can be done anywhere at anytime. I meditate regularly but feel that this book has allowed me to go further in practicing stress relieving techniques that will enhance my sense of peace. I highly recommend this book.

sudSSpirit
Bereavement
Support Group
currently meets monthly
in three locations:
Berks Chapter in
Reading, PA.
Cumberland/York
Chapter in Etters, PA.
Bennington Chapter in
Bennington, VT

For meeting locations,
dates, and times,
please check our
facebook page

or email:

longlivepigheaven@
yahoo.com
- Reading, PA

bluemorpho316@
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- Reading, PA

lmurray2@comcast.net
- Etters, PA

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- Reading, PA

610-582-0444
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717-938-1928 (ext 241)
- Etters, PA

802-440-8100
- Bennington, VT



The Labyrinth of Grief *by Mary Friedel-Hunt, MA, LCSW*

A **labyrinth** is a single path that twists and turns back upon itself in an elaborate circular pattern. Unlike a **maze**, which is meant to be a challenge and a puzzle to be solved, the path of a labyrinth is designed to guide the walker from entrance to center. It can be used in many different ways, but primarily the labyrinth is intended to induce contemplation and thought as visitors slowly make their way along its winding path...

The author uses the labyrinth as a metaphor for walking the journey of grief.

It is a labyrinth.

Those who grieve, walk its path
as it winds back and forth,
in and out, day after day,
winding back upon itself and out around its edge
then back to where the path began.

How long does it take to get to the heart of it?
How many times do we turn and feel as
if we are back where we began
or that we walked through these feelings once
before?

And what is it that is in the center?
Just where am I on this long circuitous path?
So difficult to know.

This labyrinth so often feels like a maze
with dead ends that trap me,

seemingly leaving only one recourse-
to go back, to retrace my steps.
But there is no turning back.

I must draw on my wisdom,
that inner voice reminding me that
what seems familiar is just an illusion.

I must honor the wisdom that says...
you can keep going, that is not a wall, this is not a
dead end.

How much pain can one soul handle?
What am I to learn from this teacher (grief)
that invaded my life?

Where am I going? Who am I?
How broken I am! How lost. How empty. How sad.
As I walk this labyrinth of grief.

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Hugging Them In Your Heart *by Maureen Hunter*

Our missing can hurt so very much...sometimes every minute of every day. We hurt just to feel their touch and feel their hug. Oh what an indescribable feeling of joy it would be to be able to do that wherever and whenever.

We dream about it, we yearn for it. We'd love to turn back the clock for just a tiny moment in time. We'd love to wake up in the morning and find it was all a huge mistake and everything was as it once was. If only we could. If only there was one more hug, one more hello, one more "I love you".

There can be no changing what has happened. There can be no going back, but there are ways we can keep them close, near us, by us. We never have to let them go. We keep them in our lives in the ways and moments that are beyond their physical presence alone. In those moments we surround ourselves with their essence, their memory, and their love. And for a moment in time we are hugging them again.

These are the moments that will come to us. These are the moments we will cherish and these are the moments we will clasp tight to our

hearts and never let go of. Those moments that will bring a little of them into our lives once more.

Moments of Smell

Smell has the incredible power to transport us back to a happy memory, or to remember with love.

Buy their favorite fragrance, dab it on and feel the essence of them surround you once more. They are there in that moment, with you.

Cook their special recipes, the favorite meals you shared and inhale the smells of memory and connection.

Moments of Closeness

Wear their favorite shirt.

Hug their pillow.

Stitch their clothes into a memory quilt and wrap yourself in them every night.

Frame their forever t-shirt.

Make a photo collage of your special memories – see it, trace it, touch it as often as you want.

Moments of Communicating

Say your hello each and every day to their beautiful face.

Speak out loud and tell them what you always wanted them to hear.

Write your "I love you" to them

in a beautiful notepad or special journal.

Caption their photos with the words they would be saying just for you right now.

Play their songs.

If you have a recording of their voice, listen to it, and hear their words.

Begin to notice the wonderful ways they come to you – in your remembering, in your sleep and in the signs that float into your life.

Your loved ones may have gone physically from your life but they remain always with you. As the days pass, as your emotions change as you begin to have moments where you are not thinking of them immediately know they are with you. As they always will be. You will never have to let them go. They are part of you as you are part of them.

Your loved ones stay cherished and forever loved in the sacred spaces of your heart and in the sanctuary of your mind. It is in those places where you can reach in and hug them always.

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ANGEL OF MY DREAMS

by John Kreiser

She visited my dreams last night
I begged for her to stay
We laughed and talked like
nothing's wrong

But then she went away
I didn't have to search for her
She showed up willingly
And even though it was a dream
It meant the world to me
So often I have longed for her
With aching in my heart

I never seem to comprehend
The reason we're apart
Then on some rare occasion when
I'm in my deepest slumber
A mystical connection will
Unite us unencumbered
By all that had transpired
Within the life we shared

And once again, we two are one
Our laughter fills the air
My mind is full of memories
These thoughts will last forever
Of days gone by, when she and I
Spent countless hours together
When you have someone in your life
That means the world to you
You think that things will always be
But sometimes, that's not true
She visited my dreams last night
I wished for her to stay
I'm thankful for the time we had
Before she went away

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from the author*

Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"I know nothing with any certainty but the sight of stars makes me dream"

-Vincent Van Gogh

"Do a little more each day than you think you possibly can" *-Lowell Thomas*



"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower"

-Albert Camus