

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE  
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



# sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Paul Kemper  
Michael Ruppert  
George Cline  
John Bistline  
Barry Kinkade

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## Welcome *from the Editor*

As this last issue of 2013 goes to press, I reflect on many things that have changed for me over the years. Change can be frightening and difficult but in the end it allows all of us to become better than what we were and to see life in a different perspective.

Change can make us grow. Change can bring new meaning. Change is good.

Thank you for taking the time to pick up this issue and explore what it offers. Please feel free to pass it along to someone else who can benefit from the writings on these pages. You can make someone's day a little bit better by sharing this with them in their time of need.

I would like to Welcome Kim Gile as the facilitator of our Bennington, VT sudSSpirit group. Kim's compassion and interest in helping others through our support group program will be an asset to the community and those that reach out to us to share in their grief journey. For information about our Bennington, VT group, please call 802-441-5562 or email [sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit.vt@gmail.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 or their spouse or significant other. Meetings are held monthly in Reading, PA, Etters, PA, Dover, PA and Bennington, VT. Additional information is within this newsletter. **sudSSpirit** stands for "Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph"

### ***In this issue:***

Our Fall issue covers the holidays and with that an article about Grief at the holidays provides ten ways to cope while the editor reflects about the Christmas tree. Change seems to be in the air with the opening paragraph of the welcome message and it continues with an article by Chris Mulligan about *Changing your thoughts; Change your Life*. John Kreiser's "Change of Plan" is provided this quarter and the editor shares a moment when he re-discovered something from the past that brought back some warm memories. Our standard offerings are also included; quarterly quote, thoughts to ponder, an entry from my journal, and book review.

**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.

This newsletter is available to anyone anywhere regardless of their specific loss so if you know of someone that can benefit from these pages, please contact us with their email or address information and we will make sure that they become part of our mailing list for future publications. [sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com) or 717-866-2401 or facebook.

## 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.

## An Entry From My Journal

"It's much easier to let go of material things, and only three years ago, I couldn't do that. Sometimes it takes a big change, like moving, to make you realize how much you have grown in a short time"

-Editor



Dominic Murgido - Editor

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## Quarterly Quote

- Editor

**"Life is short,  
Love is rare,  
and the only  
certainty is  
change"**

**-Judith Reitman**

**Together we can help each other heal**

**Like us on  
Facebook / [sudsspirit](http://sudsspirit)**

## Resources

- Editor

GRMHA (Greater Reading  
Mental Health Alliance)  
www.grmha.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

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

Pathways Center for Grief & Loss  
www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org  
800-924-7610



## Stumbling on the Past Brings Warm Memories to the Present

by Dominic Murgido



They were just there, right there, in front of me. I have seen them there many times over the years and never really thought about them or paused like I was doing right now. But now I did. I paused and stared at them. I am not really sure what I was thinking but I stopped what I was doing to take in their sight and just froze in my tracks. I picked them all up, still in their original boxes from the times they were purchased. That's how I am, I always seem to want to and actually do save original boxes of things, not big things, but things that I feel are important to save because they are special and these are special. At least that is what I am thinking right now, as I hold them in my hands. But I guess they have always been special throughout the many years we had them. We cherished them, loved them, and respected them. We honored what they represented and knew what was behind their meaning and existence.

I stumbled upon them while I was looking in a drawer for something else and I knew they were there but never really thought about them until now, at this moment.

There were three small boxes. I opened all of them one at a time to look at the treasure before me; a treasure that was once worn by both of us. The first box contained the engagement ring that I worked two summer jobs to pay for back in the 70's. The second box held her wedding band that was custom made with three diamonds that would match up to how the engagement ring was designed. This box also contained an Eternity ring with five diamonds. I bought this for her on our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The third box was my wedding band. All of the pieces in gold and all appeared lifeless in their respective containers. Picking them up and really looking at them brought back such wonderful memories of a life that we were blessed to share with one another.

Details around how I proposed as well as our wedding day and the adventure of life that we were on together all came back to me. It was a warm and comfortable feeling and memories of a wonderful woman, wife, and Mother.

Then I had the strangest desire to have them cleaned. It was something that had to be done and right now. Something that I would have considered silly years ago, was now an objective. I took the rings into a local jeweler and had them cleaned. When I picked them up, they possessed a sparkle that I have never seen before even after they were cleaned countless other times. I am not sure why they appeared that way to me, but they did. I had to do this. Get them cleaned. I had to go down that pathway of the past and bring that up again for me and I am glad that I did. I felt at ease. I felt peace.

These rings are an important part of me, of us, still. I am not sure if they are something I will ever part with, at least not for now. But life continues to move forward as do I.

Maybe there will be another time in the future when I will be looking for something and I come across them again, and then I guess we will see how I react to that. One never knows why we react and do things and feel things the way we do, we just do and we have to accept and not question why. Do what feels right on your journey, on your timeline and no one else's. This is your journey. This is your new life without them. Take hold of life with both hands and know that you are not alone and you can do this, you are a survivor and nothing can stop you. Maybe my wife wanted me to savor the moment of the re-discovery of the rings we both loved to wear. Who knows? It made my day and I am glad for it. Sometimes, we never know what may be around the corner for us to encounter on this journey of ours. We must maintain faith and hope for a brighter tomorrow.



### Book Review - Editor

## When Children Grieve

by John W. James and Russell Friedman  
with Dr. Leslie Landon Matthews

In order to understand and help guide our children to grieve, we have to first examine and understand our own grieving methods. After all, we are the example that children look up to.

From the authors of *The Grief Recovery Handbook* comes a great book concerning the losses a child can face from pet loss, to divorce, and even moving. The book is divided into six parts categorizing myths, exploring incomplete grief, discovering components that involve forgiveness and apologies, searching for the path to completion, and discussing other losses.

Providing guidance as you search your own soul with regards to your feeling and emotions concerning loss, the book takes you on a journey that allows self discovery while learning to help a child deal with loss. Children's education with grieving will help them with a healthy reaction to loss within their lifetime. I highly recommend this book.

## Change of Plan

by John Kreiser

Sometimes, I just sit and ponder  
 Focus free, my thoughts do wander  
 To happier times in the past  
 When I believed that things  
 would last  
 Unchanged by time or circumstance  
 Forever locked in love's sweet  
 trance  
 Looking forward to tomorrow  
 Denying any would be sorrow  
 Convinced that love could  
 conquer all  
 Completely sound, no chance to fall  
 Contented in my mindless bliss  
 Protected, safe from all of this  
 A future that once seemed so bright  
 Now ghastly dark, devoid of light  
 The secret slate that held life's plans  
 Has been erased by unseen hands  
 Agenda gone without a clue  
 Unfinished life bereft of you  
 No longer traveling side by side  
 No one to love nor to confide  
 Nor share an unknown destiny  
 Just empty days ahead for me  
 Resolved to better understand  
 This unexpected change of plan  
 I'm left to journey all alone  
 Until the good Lord calls me home  
 Reflecting on your memory  
 With shadows of what was to be

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from the author*

## Oh Christmas Tree by Dominic Murgido



There it stands so tall and proud and decorated so festively in any home. The symbol of a time of love, family, friends, peace and in some ways a representation of faith, hope and all good things in the world.

The Christmas season is a delicate one for those of us that have lost a loved one. Christmas is so rich with tradition and full of memories and the way things are done and celebrated. We act accordingly to what we are known for doing during that season and we very rarely stray from the tradition of what we always do.

So when something tragic occurs to us and things are now very different and the holiday season comes around we are placed in a position that is not very familiar to us. What we once had is no longer possible because a crucial part of the traditional plan and celebration is missing, our loved one.

What to do?

There is no right answer to this. You have to be guided by you and your feelings. There are countless articles, guides, suggestions out there for you to review and help you decide what is best for you. Please read them and keep an open mind for your situation.

What about the tree? What do you do with that thought?

This is where a dilemma could be for you. For some of us, we just couldn't think about that the first time around and without much thought, we put the tree up as usual, whether it be an artificial or a real tree. Depending on timing of your loved one's death, this can also be a factor on what you do or not do. Those that lose a loved one in late Fall are confronted with the holidays a lot sooner than those that suffer the loss earlier in the year.

You may just go through the motions and try to do things just as they use to be to just get through the holidays and think that next year you will see where it takes you. And that is ok. Some of us may have an agenda already planned and decide that putting a tree up is too painful and it just won't happen this year. And that is ok. Others may decide to replace all the ornaments with new ones and make it totally different than it ever was, while some will maintain the ornaments and allow the tree to represent the past with wonderful memories. Some people have ornaments that reflect their lives with their loved ones and with Hallmark celebrating occasions with their ornaments they can be very special to hold on too. And that is ok.

Bottom line is that what you decide to do with Christmas and the Christmas tree is entirely up to you, no one else. You have to be comfortable with how you feel at the time and what you feel like doing or not doing. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Be prepared for your feelings to change as Christmas comes every year because it can change how you look at things from year to year. What you decide against one year might be a great idea next year. You may not put a tree up at all, then decide the next year you want the grandest tree you could find. Please know that it is up to you and it is ok to feel and do what is best for you. Take care of you and don't worry about anyone else.

This season is a delicate one for those of us grieving the loss of a loved one and it doesn't matter how many years it has been. There can still be a feeling of emptiness there that we must deal with. Please know that you are not alone in this feeling because there are many others that share this with you. Look forward to making this season the best it can be for you whether or not it includes a Christmas tree. *It is what it is and what's best for you is what counts the most.*

Happy Holidays to you and yours.



## Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

"Faith is to believe what we do not see; and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe"  
-St. Augustine

"It matters not how long we live, but how"  
-Bailey-Festus

"Grief dares us to love once more"

-Terry Tempest Williams

**sudSSpirit**  
Bereavement Support Group  
currently meets monthly in  
**four** locations:

**Berks Chapter**, Reading, PA.  
4<sup>th</sup> Wed. of the month 6 PM  
Exeter Library

**Cumberland Chapter**,  
Etters, PA.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs. of the month 7PM  
Fishing Creek  
Salem U.M. Church

**York Chapter**,  
Dover, PA.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs. of the month 7PM  
St. David's E.C. Church

**Bennington Chapter**,  
Bennington, VT  
4<sup>th</sup> Tues. of the month 6 PM  
Bennington Library

For additional information,  
please check our  
facebook page or email:

[sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com)  
- Reading, PA

[lmurray2@comcast.net](mailto:lmurray2@comcast.net)  
- Etters, PA

[yorksudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:yorksudsspirit@gmail.com)  
- Dover, PA

[sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com)  
- Bennington, VT

or phone:

717-866-2401 - Reading, PA

610-777-4181 - Reading, PA

717-938-1928 (ext 241)  
- Etters, PA

717-764-0033 - Dover, PA

802-441-5562

- Bennington, VT

- Editor



## Grief at the Holidays: 10 Ways to Cope with Loss This Season

by Kate Bratskeir



The holidays are often a trigger for the bereaved and this year, for many families, Christmas may be worse than ever. There's a strange kind of paradox: "The absence of a loved one is noted and highlighted by what is supposed to be a time of celebration," says psychologist [Dr. Velleda Ceccoli](#). And, "there are associations and memories that remind the bereaved of the absence of the person they love," grief counselor [Rob Zucker](#) told The Huffington Post.

While we wish there were a simple remedy for heartache, the coping process differs from person to person. This year, our nation is trying to process the unthinkable act that took too many lives. "The loss of a child is a most devastating one," Dr. Ceccoli says. "It affects both parents and siblings, and each will deal differently with their loss." There are countless emotions that accompany grief: Ceccoli mentions denial, anger, regret and sadness.

What we experience while grieving may depend on the details of our loss. If the loss is recent, the bereaved is likely experiencing symptoms of acute grief. "The survivors are likely coping with trauma of the loss, they are still grieving," says Dr. Velleda. Alternatively, "If the loss of a loved one comes about after a long illness, the survivors have had time to interact with their loved one and adjust to a degree to the fact that they will pass on," she says.

There is no "right" prescription for coping with loss, but there are some things you can do to make the process more manageable. Below are 10 things that may help you and your family experience the grieving process.

### Be Direct

If you're not in the holiday spirit, that's OK. It's important to communicate those thoughts directly, so others know what they can expect from you.

### Make A New Tradition

Creating a new tradition to remember your loved one. Making a conscious decision to spend some part of the day talking about this person will enable others to feel like they have permission to talk about him or her, too.

### Let Someone In

While you may feel weary of being perceived as a "downer," it's important to have at least one person who knows that your insides don't match the cheerful decor of the season.

### Have An Exit Strategy

Driving your own car to the event you are attending. If it's possible, have your own mode

of transportation (even if this means having the number for a taxi): It will give you control over where you are and how long you have to stay.

### Find A Grief Group

"Finding a supportive network can be very helpful," Dr. Ceccoli says. Seeking out others who will possibly better understand your feelings may help you feel less alone over the holidays.

### Know That It's OK To Cry

In fact, your tears may help others access their own emotions. Many are compelled to dull their sadness because they fear bringing down the mood, but crying -- and expressing your emotions -- can actually pave the way for others to do the same. It takes the pressure off "holding it together."

### Carry Out A Ritual

Carrying out a kind of ritual your loved one may have performed over the holiday. Did he go on a Christmas Eve walk? Did she make a

point to sit in a particular pew? Carrying out your loved one's ritual, whatever it may be, is enriching and shows your respect. "It could be very healing."

### Dedicate Your Gift

You may have thought about what you would have bought your loved one for the season. Or, you may have some gifts that could remain unopened. This year, consider buying the gift and giving it to someone else.

### Give Back

Find a way to volunteer your time this year, whether at a shelter, soup kitchen or children's hospital. "Service is a very powerful healer,"

### Practice Self-Care

Practicing self-care over the holidays is a good idea for everyone. For the bereaved, self-care is particularly important because your energy levels are drained. "Get enough sleep, watch the alcohol intake, eat well and exercise,"

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## Change Your Thoughts; Change Your Life by Chris Mulligan

We can watch the news on television; we can listen to our radio or read it on our computers. All the news about the negativity of our world is thrown at us all day, every day. We are exposed to bombings, terrorists, murders, flashbacks to other traumas and tragedies, revisiting past traumatic news stories, fear, violence, gun control and death statistics. And what do we do?

We can choose whether we watch television or read the newspapers.

We can choose to refuse to admit, watch or listen to the negativity. (but this ultimately gives it power over you so that is another story and another post!)

- We can choose to empathize with the victims and feel compassion.
- We can choose to allow our passion to move us.
- We can choose to let love and light guide us.
- We can choose how we are going to react.
- We can choose to trust our faith
- We can choose to move ourselves to operate from our higher self.

We clearly have choices. There are different perspectives and we can choose ours. How?

You can choose what you want to give your focus to. Choose. Choose what you CAN do. *Honor and care for each other... Smile... Say thank you... Let the person ahead of you in line... Hold the door for someone... Help the elderly with a task... Give a compliment... Be courteous and polite... Say hello... Offer help to others... Be a good listener... Start a conversation with someone... Give someone an unexpected gift... to name a few...*

I realize this post sounds quite repetitious but in grief we tend to lose our focus, feel out of control and feel an inability to decide anything. In life (not just grief) you can look from a different perspective. You can choose love where, when and with whom you want to share it. You can focus on love and not the negativity and fear that abounds in our world.

Do you want to feed the reactive emotions or create positive ones? Do you want to let go of the negativity?

We each have the wisdom, passion, love and light inside of us to adopt a different focus. We each have the ability to choose love.

I don't believe negativity will be abolished in my lifetime and with improving technology we will continue to be bombarded with disturbing world events and shocking news. So it is up to us to determine if we want to continue the loop of the familiar (fear) reaction or be a part of the creation of change in our world.

By being aware and changing your focus, you will be a part of the goodness in the world. Also, while you are learning to face your own challenges, you will be demonstrating goodness, love, and hope and healing to others.

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