

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

The last season for 2016 is upon us as is the last issue of our newsletter for this year. Fall is one of those seasons that consist of multiple holidays that occur very close together; Holidays that bear reflection and understanding of how different they are for those of us that grieve the loss of our loved one.

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, Etters, PA, Lebanon, PA and Bennington, VT. 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 page three in the right margin for additional information about our chapters. We also have a list of other resources on page two in the left margin that may be helpful to you. A Facebook page is also available, please find and Like us on Facebook. 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 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. You may also contact the editor/founder directly at 717-866-2401 or sudsspirit@gmail.com.

In this issue: You will always find the Quarterly Quote, Thoughts to Ponder, A Real Entry from my own Personal Journal along the way, a Book Review of a past reading of mine, our Dedication corner, and a poem. But that's not all. This issue includes an article about reflection from a "We" to an "I" as well as another that asks "When is grieving over?" We round off our articles with Sorting.

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 yourself and us to help you in your time of need. ***Together We Can Help Each other Heal.***

Heavenly Reunion

by John Kresier

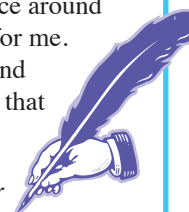
Someday, I'll move on from this life
This world so filled with bitter strife
And leave behind the ones I love
To reunite with those above
I hope the former do not mind
When I eclipse that hidden line
And pray the latter will await
To lead me on past Heaven's gate
The cast of both change constantly
The older that we live to be
The more we're torn to pick a side
Among the living or those that died
I love them all with all my heart
I'm glad to stay or to depart
But thankfully, it's not my call
For God above decides it all
What matters most is that I'm set
To leave this world without regret
With confidence that those I love
Will follow me to Heav'n above

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An Entry From My Journal

"There is still a daily presence around me of her love and support for me. I am so blessed to feel this and acknowledge it and to know that her spirit lives within me."

-Editor



Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start.

**-Nido Qubein
President of
High Point
University**



Together we can help each other heal



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Resources

- Editor

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

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

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

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
www.griefshare.org

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

Bennington Area VNA & Hospice
www.bavnah.org
802-442-5502

Bayada Hospice Services
www.bayada.com
855-696-2072
610-367-1608

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

Lutheran Home Care & Hospice
www.lutheranhomecare.org
610-320-7979



From the Way We Were to the Who I Am

by Dominic Murgido

Webster's dictionary defines *transition* as "a passing from one condition, place, etc. to another". Most transitions eventually can be defined as a transformation – change the form or condition of. That is kind of what happens when a transition from We to I occurs.

I am one of many who experienced a transition in their life when my wife died suddenly and unexpectedly many years ago. The transformation was sudden and unexpected as well and I certainly wasn't looking forward to what was about to become a reality. It was frightening. It was uncertain. It was a transformation I wasn't ready for. But who could be?

In those early days of the tragedy, I wasn't sure how I would survive day to day let alone months or years later. So many thoughts and emotions and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness occupied most of my time and I could not control it or stop it from happening to me. I was transformed into a world I knew nothing about; a world without the love of my life who had been there for me for some thirty years.

I began to journal my thoughts. I sought out and attended a bereavement support group. I went to a therapist for one on one counseling. I applied forgiveness. And all of that helped me understand where I was and provided me with searching my own soul to determine where I needed to be and how I needed to get there.

I was blessed with resources that most people don't have to take huge risks and big moves to help my journey of rediscovery. Through leaps and bounds that brought me through some low valleys, I survived when it was all said and done. I learned from my adventure and grew as an individual and became someone that I would have never recognized before the journey began.

I can only speak for myself but offer to you that in order to move forward with one's life after a tragedy, you have to be willing to take chances, make choices, and forgive. And even if they don't work to your satisfaction, it may have taken you to a place that will help you later in life. You may not know that at the time, but it will become apparent in the future.

It is amazing what the human spirit, a good

attitude, and a positive outlook can do for you. It may feel like the world came crashing down upon you and there are cloudy skies with a storm brewing but you have to go through all of that in order to see the sun again and if you are lucky, a rainbow too.

You can't stay in a place of sorrow. You must make the transition from *the way we were to the who I am* and accept the new transformation of the new you; a person who wants to live, laugh, and love again and become the best that you can be for you and the friends and family around you. I am a survivor. Shouldn't you be one too?



Book Review - Editor

Beyond the Broken Heart: Daily Devotions for Your Grief Journey

By Julie Yarbrough

Daily Devotions for Your Grief Journey provides comforting and encouraging devotions for the first year of the grief journey. Each month begins with a short personal reflection by the author related to the month's theme, followed by a Preparation Scripture and meditation that set the stage for the next four weeks.

Julie Yarbrough chronicles her personal experience combined with a deep love of Scripture and years of leading grief support groups to create an authentic and deeply personal exploration of the grief journey. "With wisdom informed by her own experience and a warm regard for those who grieve, Julie Yarbrough guides the brokenhearted on an honest journey toward acceptance and hope. A refreshingly excellent resource for grief support."

-Stephan Bauman, Senior Minister, Christ Church New York City



When Is Grieving Over?

by *Ellen Perry Berkeley*

How do we know when we've grieved enough? Everyone grieves differently, as we've heard many times. There are no rules. But are there any rules for ending our grieving?

I've wondered recently whether I've reached a point where my heavy grieving could be considered a part of the past. You too, perhaps. I can't claim to have absolutely reached this point, because every so often when I'm enjoying something in my new life, I'm whammed with a new grief. It's not a "new" grief, though – it's thoroughly familiar. Possibly, then, our grieving never completely departs.

I experienced an extraordinary "new" grief, for instance, almost 60 years after the death of my grandmother (the first person I knew, outside of a fairy tale, who died). I was teaching a memoir-writing workshop and I had brought an adorable little box of golden metal strips, a box originally owned by Grandma, to show how a precious object can trigger memories. Packing my notes to go home, I couldn't find this tiny box. "It's gone, it's gone," I wailed to myself, just as I must have cried, at eight years of age, learning that Grandma herself was "gone." I finally found the box on the carpet, but only after I suffered a sense of loss that I had thought, prior to this, was thoroughly gone itself.

I felt something similar after a jazz concert, recently, when the songs brought me back to intimate times with Roy. These pangs of grief hadn't hit me so fiercely for months.

Grief, therefore, may never end. But where it was formerly a big part of our days, yelling at us, grabbing at us, it is now barely whispering to us, barely touching us – except, of course, for times like those above.

Roy, my wonderful husband, died in 2009. I knew he was special on the day we met, but I had no idea how deeply we would open to each other, during the next 43 years, and how unconditionally we would love each other.

My first year without him was foggy. Friends spent time with me, or called me for long conversations, but I was often too sad to be fully present with them.

Several years later, getting back into life, I was surprised to feel no guilt at all when I was enjoying myself without Roy by my side. I realized, then, that Roy would have wanted me to live as happily as possible without him. I suddenly felt relieved. I also felt strong.

He always admired my strength. "Good for you, Lovey," he'd say, smiling, and I hear these words now as if he's still here.

I've valued other encouragement. My father repeatedly said that "adversity only makes us stronger." He believed this from having lived through the Depression (and more). Today, having lived through the loss of my beloved, I know that tough times can indeed increase our strength.

Here's something else raising my spirits. I just heard someone say, rather casually, "Yes, they live on, those who have died." Roy does live on, in my memories of those 43 wonderful years, and in my gratitude for all that he built in me. He lives on in other ways, too – in his writing, his teaching, his music, his friendships, and much more.

Our heaviest grieving can certainly lessen, considerably. As we wonder when (and how) it might do so, we should remember what we learned when our grief first hit us. We were told that we were unique individuals – "everyone is different" – and we needed to honor our unique selves, weeping when we must, laughing when we must. Now, today, I believe we need to continue going into our unique selves – into our skills, our spirits, our strengths – to move past the early grief that seemed so overwhelming, so entrenched. Little by little, we can do it, reducing that weighty grief. I know no firm rules for this. But one thing I surely know. We can do it.

Ellen is an award-winning writer, attendee, and long-time supporter of sudSSpirit in our Bennington, VT chapter.



Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

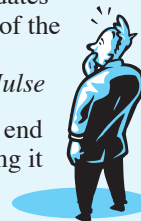
"Never let your fear decide your future"
-via@ThisInspiresUs on twitter

"Your Life is made of two dates and a dash. Make the most of the dash"

-Nadine Hulse

"Hope is seeing light at the end of a tunnel; Faith is believing it is not a train."

-Debbie Geno



sudSSpirit

Bereavement Support Group meets monthly in the following locations:

Berks Chapter,
Reading, PA.

4th Wed. of the month 6 PM
Exeter Library

Cumberland Chapter,
Etters, PA.

2nd Thurs. of the month 7 PM
Fishing Creek
Salem U.M. Church

Bennington Chapter,
Bennington, VT

4th Tues. of the month 6 PM
Bennington Library

Lebanon Chapter,
Richland, PA

3rd Tues. of the month 6 PM
Richland Library

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

sudsspirit@gmail.com
- Berks, Cumberland, and Lebanon, PA

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com
- Bennington, VT

or phone:
717- 866- 2401
- Berks, Cumberland, and Lebanon, PA

802- 441- 5562
- Bennington, VT

- Editor



Sorting The Belongings Of A Loved One Who Has Died

by Anne Jennings

Before you begin sorting, remember that your life has been turned upside down, so it is important to give yourself time to grieve first. Going through your loved one's belongings is emotionally demanding. After the loss of a loved one and while you are grieving, you may need to have around you the belongings, smell and clothes of the person. Everyday tasks can remind you they are gone. The focus when sorting belongings is on only keeping the items that recall happy events, and getting rid of items that remind you of unhappy events. Some people go to bereavement therapy but if they return home to the same house filled with the old life and unpleasant memories, as soon as they walk over the threshold, they slide back into depression. Living in a 'swamp' of old relationships, drowning in past events, hanging onto 'stuff', is psychological scarcity. You may worry that if you sell or donate these things, you will be left with nothing. In fact, it is the opposite: by getting rid of the baggage, you enable new things, new people and new experiences into your life.

Your connection with the deceased

The relationship you had with the deceased will make a difference to your outlook during the next days and weeks. Recall the marvelous activities you did together: trips in the car, the birth of a child. This can be a time to review the connection you had with this person, and to heal old wounds. Consider using this time to analyze their life. If this was a difficult relationship, understand the decisions they had to make that influenced your life, as in the cliché 'walking in their shoes for a mile'. If they bequeathed you something you don't want, you could give it to someone who would appreciate the gift, or sell it, or give it to charity. Even when it is valuable it is not worth keeping if it makes you uncomfortable. The following suggestions may apply to sorting items listed in your loved one's Will, or to sorting through the house years after their passing because you have not previously felt ready to do so.

Grounding exercise

When you begin sorting belongings, you are going from your everyday reality to the sacred job of sorting through someone else's life story. The short exercise that follows will help you plan the day in your mind and give you the strength for the task ahead. When you are upset, your energy is split. You may trip over, feel faint or lightheaded, or sick in the stomach. Understand that touching a book they read, for instance, will bring up strong emotions.

Before you start sorting, get into the habit of 'grounding' yourself. It will help you stay calm.

Imagine your feet with roots going into the earth, grounding you. Take a few moments and sit quietly on a chair.

Take three deep breaths in through your nose and breathe out through your mouth. Place your feet on the floor. Bring to mind a moment when you felt strong and confident.

General tips for sorting

- Purchase boxes of various sizes, including pretty gift boxes for items that are to be bequeathed or given away, and strong plastic bags – try colored bags. Organize packing tape, a sharp pair of scissors, pen and paper, permanent marker pens, and colored tissue paper for wrapping delicate items.
- Allow a start, middle and tidy-up time for each session. You may decide to allocate one hour, three hours, or a whole day of sorting for each session.
- Arrange a day and time with one or more friends that you feel comfortable with to assist you. Join them at the coffee shop, and return together to the home feeling refreshed.
- Arranging an altar or other sacred space with a photo of your loved one, beautiful flowers in a vase and an attractive candle may help to give you a sense of peace. This also helps to 'ground' you by using the physical and mental concentration required to do this activity.
- Keeping healthy and avoiding excessive alcohol is important.
- If you find it difficult to eat a good breakfast, consider a protein shake or smoothie.
- Pre-cooked frozen meals plans can be purchased for few weeks when you don't have time to cook for yourself.
- Have petty cash to buy morning tea and lunch, and consider ordering takeaway pizza for the helper's dinner so they don't have to cook.
- Have delicious snacks, both sweet and salty, on hand. Ensure there is plenty of fresh water.
- Pay for fuel used to transport everyone to and from the building and for the time helpers have given up, if you feel this is appropriate.
- Arrange a bedroom or area to rest or chill out if you or any of the helpers become overwhelmed.
- To pace your self during the day, sit and give directions to others. This is like observing a movie in 3D. You can see and hear everything, but you are a small distance away from touching the items that may bring back upsetting memories. Your body will experience different reactions from what your friends who are helping on the day experience, as they are not emotionally attached to the situation.
- Everyone will appreciate regular meal breaks and rest. Go outside for a walk, water the garden and enjoy some fresh air. Play a game of checkers or a few moves on the chessboard at lunch time to switch the brain into another mode for an hour.
- Start with a small area, or just one drawer, and categorize things into boxes in that area.
 - Take a moment to breathe deeply and collect your thoughts.
 - Light a stick of incense and walk from room to room, opening doors and windows to symbolically let out stale air.
 - Visualize your day going smoothly, accomplishing with ease everything that you have planned. Imagine everyone being calm, polite, and caring.
 - Visualize yourself finishing the day feeling healthy and balanced and enjoying a good night's sleep.

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