



sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:
Tom Wrightstone
Barbara Lee Fifer
Glenn (Hymie) Binkley
Gerald H. Iezzi
Ronald G. Dierolf
Cyndi Cargen
Pete Keiser
Jim (Jimbo) Bowman

SPRING 2010

Volume 2, Issue 3

Welcome *from the Editor*

The **sudSSpirit** Quarterly Newsletter is a companion to the bereavement support group of the same name that meets monthly. **sudSSpirit** stands for "*Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph.*"

This Spring edition of our newsletter marks our second anniversary of being a support group for the greater Berks County, PA area. It also marks the addition of a chapter of **sudSSpirit** that will be holding its first meeting in April in the Cumberland / York area. We welcome Linda Wrightstone as the facilitator of our new chapter which will be called **sudSSpirit – Cumberland / York Chapter**. Thank you Linda for showing the interest and willingness to begin a **sudSSpirit** group in your area. May you and those that attend have success in helping each other through their grief journey.

In this issue, we present a prayer as well as a passage called "A Cut Finger". We also explore how trauma affects the grieving process. Judy Tatelbaum shares her thoughts on facing sudden loss while the editor shares his thoughts on silence. This issue wraps up with our standard contents that include thoughts to ponder, an entry from my journal, a book review, quarterly quote, and resources.

Silence *by Dominic Murgido*

Silence is part of our lives. There are many places where we have to be silent or allow minimal sound such as a library, a place of worship, a hospital, or a museum. Some people like it to be silent in their homes or in their cars while they drive.

We like the presence of silence after a full day with children or grandchildren or even a tough day at work. We look forward to silence at bedtime or when we are reading an interesting book. It seems much more silent after a fresh snow fall. Early

The monthly meetings for **sudSSpirit – Berks Chapter** will continue to be the 4th Monday of the month at 6:15 pm at the Exeter Community Library, Reading, PA. 19606. Please support your local libraries if you can, they are a vital resource for our communities.

The monthly meetings for **sudSSpirit – Cumberland / York Chapter** will be the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Fishing Creek Salem United Methodist Church located in Etters, PA. 17319

Additional meeting information for both locations and contact information is located on page three of this newsletter in the right margin.

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.

If you would like a brochure with more information about our group, please call 610-779-6809 or email sudsspirit@gmail.com. **sudSSpirit** looks forward to being part of your healing process as you move forward.

in the morning when taking a walk, it is more silent to us with less traffic in our neighborhood or on a trail in a wooded setting.

Silence can also be deafening and not liked by some of us.

When we have lost a spouse, silence is very prominent in our lives. There are no more conversations with them and just the lost sound of their voice is disturbing to us. We long to hear them talk again even though there were many

Dominic Murgido - Editor

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome
Silence
Quarterly Quote
Resources
A Cut Finger
Prayer
How Trauma Affects the Grieving Process
Thoughts to Ponder
Book Review
Facing Sudden Loss
An Entry From My Journal

Quarterly Quote

"It's a risk to attempt new beginnings... Yet the greater risk is for you to risk nothing. For there will be no further possibilities of learning and changing, of traveling upon the journey of life... You were strong to hold on. You will be stronger to go forward to new beginnings."

— Earl Holliman
Time Remembered

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.berkscc.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

Pinnacle Health Hospice
 800-222-5236

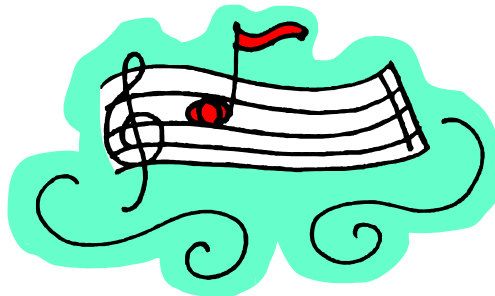


Silence (cont'd) by Dominic Murgido

times in the past we wanted them to stop talking. Now, we'd love to hear them just one more time.

Sometimes, not having someone else in the house or the apt. is too silent. The sound of silence with no movement by another person or knowing that no one else is with you where you live can be troubling. Silence dominates our lives where we no longer have anyone to share the daily mail with or the opinions we formed about the news of the day. We lack a partner to eat with, to go out with, and to nap with. In many respects we have lost a social connection to the "outside". Social silence can be difficult to deal with.

We have a choice to "break the silence". We have the ability to make our lives become whole again in some small way. It will never be the way it was, but it can become better than how it is for you now.



One suggestion to break the silence can be music. Music can make you feel better about situations. I listen to many songs during the course of a day that make me smile, recall an event, a happy moment in my past, a feeling that I am thankful to have had my wife be part of my life. Watching a favorite movie that we shared together also helps me. Volunteering for a cause and helping others can be beneficial to break the silence while communicating with others in a role that will bring you a sense of peace.

Being part of a club or organization that has weekly or monthly meetings will allow less silence and more sharing of thoughts and ideas with others. Reaching out to family members and friends to have dinner with or attend an event with are also ways to "break the silence" for us.

Silence isn't always a bad thing for us. There is a place for it. I find silence comforting at times to reflect and write. Silence helps me clear my head of thoughts and concerns and allows me to let go of sadness through methods of meditation. There are times I look forward to a little silence to feel the presence of the love I still have for my wife.

You must be able to be the one in control of silence in your life. Whether you want it or not, it should be a choice, not a sentence. You must encourage yourself to **break** the silence when you need to or **cherish** the silence when you want too.

A Cut Finger

A cut finger
 is numb before it bleeds,
 it bleeds before it hurts,
 it hurts until it begins to heal,
 it forms a scab and itches
 until finally, the scab is gone
 and a small scar is left
 where once there was a wound.

Grief is the deepest wound
 you ever had.
 Like a cut finger,
 it goes through stages,
 and leaves a scar.

Source unknown





How Trauma Affects the Grieving Process

Grief tends to be mixed with Trauma when a loss is sudden and unexpected - a fatal heart attack, an accident, a murder - or it's perceived as being outside the normal cycle of life, as in the death of a child. For example, someone who nurses a spouse through a long illness will grieve when the spouse is gone, but the person who witnesses the sudden death of a spouse in a car crash will likely be traumatized as well. A sudden loss can be even more difficult to deal with if you don't have a socially recognized outlet for mourning, as may be the case with a miscarriage or stillbirth.

While trauma always incorporates grief, the two states are very different in how you experience them and what effect they can have on you. Grief is a normal reaction to loss, with its symptoms diminishing over time. On the other hand, trauma is a disabling reaction that can block the grieving process, disrupt your life, and leave you psychologically vulnerable. If you are coping with a traumatic loss, you may want to think about turning to a counselor or other professional for help.

*Reprinted with
Permission
HOPELine
Newsletter, Hope
for Bereaved, Inc.
Syracuse, NY*

GRIEF vs. TRAUMA

The Effects of Grief

- Sadness is dominant
- Grief feels real
- Talking about Grief can help
- Pain is related to the loss
- Anger is nonviolent
- Guilt involves emotions with deceased
- Self image generally is intact
- You dream of the person you lost
- Symptoms lessen over time

The Effects of Trauma

- Terror is dominant
- Trauma feels unreal
- Talking about trauma is difficult
- Pain involves terror, helplessness
- Anger involves violence towards self and others
- Guilt involves self blame
- Self image is distorted
- You dream of yourself in danger
- Symptoms, untreated may get worse

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, during your earthly life you showed compassion to those who had lost a loved one.

Turn your compassionate eyes on me in my sorrow over the loss of my life's partner. Fill this emptiness until we are together again in your heavenly kingdom as a reward for our earthly service.

Help me to cope with my loss by relying on you even more than before. Teach me to adapt to the new conditions of my life and to continue doing your will.

Enable me to avoid withdrawing from life and make me give myself to others more readily so that I may continue to live in your grace and to do the task that you have laid out for me.

Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"You don't think you'll live past it and you don't really. The person you were is gone. But the half of you that's still alive wakes up one day and takes over again." — Barbara Kingsolver

"Honest listening is one of the best medicines we can offer the dying and the bereaved."
— Jean Cameron

"When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pains, but that we can mobilize them into a common search for life, those very pains are transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope."
— Henry Nouwen



**sudSSpirit
Bereavement Support
Group -
Cumberland / York
Chapter meets
monthly on the 2nd
Thursday at 7 pm at
Fishing Creek Salem
United Methodist
Church, Etters, PA.**

**For information
call 717-938-1928
(ext 241) or email
lmurry2@comcast.net**



Book Review - Editor

Life After Loss

by Bob Deits

Bob Deits describes Life After Loss when dealing with death, divorce, job change, and relocation. Losses in our lives come from a variety of areas and similar feelings do occur to some extent. His book provides insights and wisdom in facing our fears and emotions allowing us to have faith in life again. The author provides exercises to help you through various stages as well as appendices that include Nutrition in grief recovery and Words that describe feelings. I found it very helpful and useful and regard it as a great book of reference that teaches the skills you need to move forward.

An Entry from My Journal



- Editor

"Life around me looks different. People are different. I look at them through some kind of filter. Hard to explain but they (all people) appear different to me than before – before I came to be one and no longer part of a couple"....

"So much is faith with all that we do and all that we are."

Facing Sudden Loss by Judy Tatelbaum, MSW

Of all the experiences we confront in life, the toughest to face is the sudden, unexpected loss of someone we love. Loss in itself is painful enough, but sudden loss is shocking. The shock doubles our pain and intensifies our grief.

Even if on some level we understand that no one lives forever, actually losing people we love is unimaginable. When we know someone we love has a fatal disease or when we have nursed a loved one who is very ill, we have a chance to begin to prepare for their loss -- at least a little. However, the unexpected death of a loved one - regardless of how that loved one dies - can leave us stunned, lost, and overwhelmed with pain. We may not know where to begin to cope.

Sudden loss gives us no chance to prepare. It is not unusual that we feel cheated by a sudden death, cheated of a chance to say the last words we would have liked to say or to do some last act that would have had meaning to us-like a hug, a kiss, a walk hand in hand. Missing out from having a way of saying some kind of good-bye can leave us feeling especially bereft for weeks or even months. Feeling cheated in this way can add to our grief, anguish and despair.

Besides our feeling cheated by it, sudden loss can make the world feel shaky or less safe. This is a natural response to any unexpected and traumatic event. When we feel as if someone we love is suddenly "yanked" out of our lives, we are left feeling that the world isn't a safe place. We may then become fearful and uncertain, or angry and frustrated. This loss can negatively color our view of life, but hopefully only temporarily.

When we face a sudden loss, all at once we have three overwhelming tasks to deal with: Our grief over the loss of our loved one, the absence of this special person from our daily lives, and the changes in our lives that are caused by this loss. Each is a big task to take on, and each will become a part of our mourning and healing process.

Although it may be hard to imagine at the moment, we must remember that people do recover from sudden losses, and that we too can ultimately move through this terrible pain and begin to heal. It helps to bear in mind that emotional pain isn't constant, and that we don't have to

grieve forever. We will love forever, whether our loved ones are with us in body or not, but we do not need to grieve to honor that love. We can just love.

In talking to many people who have suffered sudden loss, I have learned that there are several important, possibly universal, ways to help yourself heal:

Love yourself and take special care of yourself through your grief.

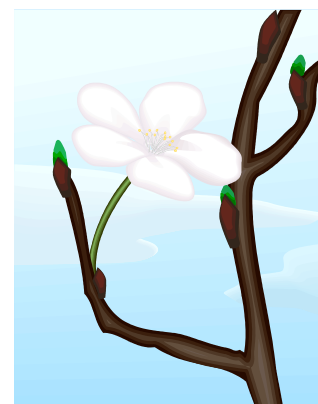
Do your mourning now. Being strong and brave is important, but I always tell those I counsel to never miss an opportunity to cry. That is not self-indulgent, but simply sensible and honest in dealing with your emotions.

Expressing your feelings will help you heal, as feelings expressed disappear. Feelings repressed don't. So give vent to your feelings.

Get support from other people-counselors and support groups like widow's groups, bereavement groups, compassionate friends, or suicide survivors. You may find them through a hospice, your church, or a community or social service agency.

You will not only help yourself, but you may also help another and that can be a great source of strength, joy and recovery.

And, most of all, trust that the person you loved and lost would want you to recover from losing them, and would want you to remember and honor them by living a fulfilling life.



This article originally appeared in the April 1996 issue of Journeys, HFA's bereavement newsletter. Reprinted with permission: Hospicefoundation.org