

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

5th Anniversary Edition

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Mike Miller

David P. Face

SPRING 2013

Volume 5, Issue 3

Welcome *from the Editor*

This quarterly edition of the **sudSSpirit** Newsletter marks our fifth year of helping survivors of the sudden unexpected death of their spouse or significant other. **We will mark this occasion with this extended version of our newsletter.**

It is also my pleasure to announce that we have grown into another chapter.

The York Chapter has been established in Dover, PA and will be meeting on the third Thursday of every month at 7 PM at St. David's E.C. Church in Dover, PA. Our facilitator is Ann Senft and we welcome Ann and thank her for her interest and support in providing **sudSSpirit** to the community. Our growth tells us there is a need to have this kind of support group available to any community. We will continue to expand and establish our presence in the future.

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, 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:

Cathy Burns provides tips on "How to Love Life Again" while the editor brings a message about the fragility of Life itself. Another beautiful poem is shared by John Kresier and an article about writing down your thoughts can provide an outlet as well as comfort. The editor shares a story about "My Favorite Chair" while Russell Friedman talks about the Trap in Rightness. We welcome some thoughts about Spring from a sudSSpirit attendee, Anne Landefeld and the editor shares memories about blue eyes. We complete our article round up with one entitled "Stay Beautiful: Maintain who you are always". Our traditional offerings are included such as our book review, thoughts to ponder, quarterly quote, and an entry from my journal.

Feedback is encouraged and welcome and should there be a topic that anyone feels should be explored and presented on these pages, please contact us via email (sudspirit@gmail.com) phone (802-440-8100) or facebook.

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 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 more information about our Etters, PA group, please call 717-938-1928 (ext 241) or Email lmurry2@comcast.net. For more information about our Dover, PA group, please call 717-764-0033 or Email yorksudsspirit@gmail.com. For 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**.

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 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 or facebook.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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- Editor

*"Hope is the thing
with feathers
That perches in the
soul
And sings the tune
without the words
And never stops at
all."*

- Emily Dickinson

An Entry From My Journal

"I miss my old life with Sue,
at times it seems that it never
happened – and my past
life is what I am today.
And I really know that
it isn't so, but it can be
so believable at
times"

- Editor



Together we can help each other heal

Like us on Facebook/[sudsspirit](https://www.facebook.com/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

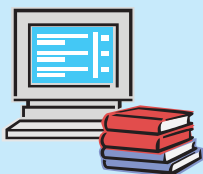
www.griefshare.org

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

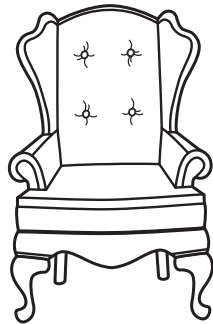
VNA & Hospice of Southwestern
Vermont Health Care
www.svhealthcare.org
802-442-5502

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

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



My Favorite Chair *by Dominic Murgido*



there at sunset, I was able to watch the sun slowly go down in between the branches of the trees in my back yard with my dog, HAL, at my feet. I enjoy the feeling of this chair and now with its new look, it felt even better. Sitting on this chair has always provided me with comfort and peace.

Let me tell you about this chair.

My wife and I bought this chair on sale at a family owned furniture store near our home at the time. We both liked the chair which was a Flexsteel brand known for its durability and oak frame. It was comfortable and well made and it seemed to “fit” you just right as you sat down into its soft embrace with firm arm supports.

Through the years, furniture was bought and sold but this chair stayed part of the family perhaps more so by my own desire to hold onto it, not sure how much attachment my wife had to it over the years. The dogs we owned also liked the chair to my dismay.

Throughout the years since my wife died, I have been through many life changes and challenges, some I instituted while others just happened. We all go through life’s journey in different ways and experience the triumphs and tragedies. With my relocation, many things that were possessed did not make the cut to come with me and some of the things that did come eventually found a new home elsewhere with someone else. My favorite chair remained and I thought it would be time to give it a new look.

I found a local upholsterer who said that he could do it and it would be less expensive if I found material he had in stock that I liked. I wanted to find a blue pattern for the chair and his selection for blues was limited to one, but this blue pattern was a winner in my book. In fact, the only blue he had was the same kind of material that was currently on my chair. It was material used for

Flexsteel furniture products but instead of the tan pattern it now had, it was done in a blue and had a flower design that almost matched the current pattern. What are the odds of not only picking this upholsterer but him having only one blue color that I liked and it being the same fabric used on this kind of chair from the manufacturer? I guess things happen for a reason. He did the chair in two days for a great price. My wife would be proud of me getting such a great deal.

I began to reflect about the chair as I sat in it as the sun was setting. Do I like the chair for its never ending comfort or as I now realize, do I like the chair because it is the last piece of upholstered furniture I own that I bought with my wife? Or is there something else that draws me to the significance of this chair?

The chair was purchased at that family owned furniture store I mentioned earlier. The location of that furniture store is the same location of the intersection where my wife died in a fatal vehicle accident just over seven years ago. Inside that furniture store is where I learned of the life changing news and collapsed in anguish to the floor in the midst of police and first responders.

Many years ago I was standing in this store on a happy occasion purchasing a chair with my wife and now I am in a heap of crumbled humanity trying to make sense of an unexpected death of my soul mate. What are the odds of this store location being the common denominator of two events in my life (one happy, one tragic) separated by many years. I never thought about this chair in that regard until now. I guess things do happen for a reason.

Giving the chair a facelift allowed me to give my life new meaning, new direction, moving forward but retaining the comfort and peace of a life once past; a life that was shared by two that bought a chair together and now a chair enjoyed by one.

The chair is more than a piece of furniture. It tells a story and brings back some nice memories and in an important way connects to life’s triumphs and tragedies and remains a meaningful presence in my new world.

I will always keep this chair. It was once a part of us and now is part of me. The chair symbolizes a safe place to be, to relax, to read, to nap, to meditate, and to watch a sunset on any evening anywhere I live.

Right or Happy ... Pick One - *The Trap in Rightness* by Russell Friedman

What we believe usually dictates how we feel. Our attitudes about people and events will generate our emotional responses to them. We all think our beliefs are always right, otherwise we would believe something else. Since we have practiced our beliefs over a lifetime, we are very loyal to them.

It is very common to get stuck on our rightness and lose sight of our real human objective which is to be happy. Many people believe that being right IS being happy. Most of us eventually learn that our rightness may be limiting or restricting our happiness. Our rightness about effective recovery from significant emotional losses often limits our ability to complete relationships that have ended or changed. Many of the ideas and beliefs that we were taught about dealing with our losses are incorrect and unhelpful, but after practicing them for a lifetime, they can seem to be very RIGHT.

For example, we were all taught that time heals all wounds. But time does not complete anything that is emotionally incomplete in our relationship with someone who died. If we believe, with tremendous rightness, that time is going to heal our emotional wound, we are destined to wait forever.

Time does not heal. Time goes by. It is the actions that you take within time that can help you grieve and complete relationships

that have ended or changed. It is essential to take a new position of rightness about which actions are most helpful to achieve effective long-term grief recovery.

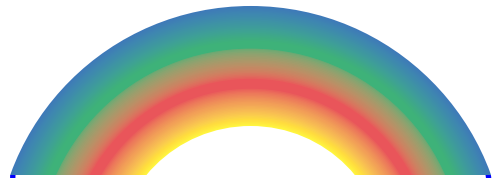
Another example of a belief that you may have learned and practiced is keeping busy. As a response to the conflicting feelings caused by loss, keeping busy can be a dangerous short-term distraction. At the end of a busy day your heart is still broken, and the relationship may still be incomplete. Keeping busy does not complete relationships. People are often as right about keeping busy as they are about time healing wounds.

In our article, on Familiarity, we said, "Familiar is not necessarily good, it is only familiar." By the same token, Right is not necessarily good, it is only right. We tend to develop a ferocious loyalty to our rightness even though it often leads us to horrible squabbles with our mates and friends. If you think about most of the fights you've had, you will realize that both sides clung fiercely to the rightness of their position. Even in the aftermath, either party may have stayed on a position of rightness and refused to apologize, and thereby extended the fray.

It may be time for you to examine some of your beliefs and attitudes about recovery from significant emotional loss. How you

process the conflicting feelings caused by loss is dictated by what you believe. You must ensure that you have effective beliefs that can lead you towards happiness, rather than stuck in rightness.

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Heaven's Gift Returned

by John Kreiser

Once I was a younger man
 Who went through life without a plan
 It seemed each day was like the next
 Devoid of any real context
 But then I met my one true love
 My soulmate sent from God above
 And over time we made a life
 Our love grew strong as man and wife
 We bought a house and called it home
 A special place, our very own
 Things were great, so it seemed, for
 We had found the American dream
 But one day life changed for the worse
 A tragic fall caused this reverse
 My precious love lost all desire
 Her will to live snuffed out like fire
 She set about to end her pain
 Our earthly loss was Heaven's gain
 We laid her down, her body still
 Up upon that silent hill
 Recalling her I shed some tears
 Yet grateful for the many years
 We shared our lives as man and wife
 Of love and laughter, joy and strife
 Regardless how we parted ways
 She gave true meaning to my days
 My love for her will ne'er depart
 It fills the vastness of my heart

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 from the author*

Life is Fragile by Dominic Murgido

It seems that all of us are in a race everyday of our lives and are so caught up in the moment of trying to do more, be more, and get more that we forget about the most basic of virtues of being a good person to our fellow man.

We do not value life as much as our forefathers have, we do not even think about the chance that life can be over, finished, done, in an instant. The near misses in life are all too frequent and most of us move on from those misses without learning anything from them. Life as we know it can change in the blink of an eye and if we don't use our time wisely with our loved ones, friends, and taking time for us, we will regret what

we never did, never said or where we never went.

If we would only realize the fragility of life for ourselves and those we love, we all would be so kind and appreciative of everyone we come in contact with. My outlook on this life of mine has changed since the death of my wife and I do my best to realize that in any instant of time, it can all go away. I live for the moment, for the experience, for the enjoyment of what life can bring me and the love for those around me.

Treasure the time with your loved ones and friends, it's the little things in life that means the most to all of us.

I Miss Her Blue Eyes *by Dominic Murgido*

My wife, Sue, was killed in a vehicle accident in the Winter of 2006. Her sudden unexpected death was three days after her 48th birthday.

My wife, my soul mate, had many wonderful qualities and traits. She had the prettiest blue eyes and I would love to look into her eyes and be in such awe at the beautiful person she was within. She always looked good in anything blue and when she wore blue; her eyes were a natural accent. When I look at pictures of my wife, her blue eyes are so defined and prominent that you almost feel like she can talk to you. I bought a blue topaz necklace along with matching earrings for her birthday one time. She always looked stunning whenever she wore them.

As the last week of May approached a few years after her death, I had many reflections of our life together. We have known each other for about 30 years and were married for 26 and a half of those. I remembered that I proposed to my wife the last week of May a year before we were married. The last week of May would also be the due date of our daughter four years later. Our daughter was two weeks late and was born in June, the same

month as our wedding anniversary.

I can not explain what had drawn me to a jewelry counter during the last week of May, but something did. In the case on display was a blue topaz men's ring. I was drawn to this and asked to see it. It was the only one they had and it was in my size. Better yet, it was also on sale, something that my wife always looked for, a sale. I had to buy it.

I decided to wear it on June 1st, the beginning of the month, the month that celebrates our daughter's birthday and our wedding anniversary. Wearing this ring for the first time gave me a sense of empowerment. I felt confident, at peace, and in a way I felt my wife's presence within me.

It was incredible how this ring made me feel. I am glad I bought this ring. I like to wear this ring occasionally along with another ring that she purchased for me many years ago. When I look at and feel this blue topaz ring on my finger, I think of Sue and her beautiful blue eyes and it makes me smile. It is all about remembering and reflecting and continuing to move forward with our lives.



Book Review - Editor

Twenty-Eight Snow Angels

A Widow's Story of Love, Loss, and Renewal

By Diane Dettmann

Twenty-Eight Snow Angels provides a personal story of a personal tragedy that the author experienced; the death of her husband. Spending much of one's life with your spouse and being soul mates and best friends does not prepare you for the unthinkable. Diane Dettmann reaches down within her and provides a detailed account of her life in ruins after the sudden death of her husband and what she experienced trying to move forward. Her accounts of emotions and feelings can be easily identified by anyone who lost their spouse, this writer included. The author provides a validation to those of us that are still on that journey of grief in some way and allows us to know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and we must have faith and hope as we build a new future for ourselves and enjoy life once again.

Love Letters

What would you say to your spouse if you could tell him or her anything? We all think it, whisper it, and lay awake at night muttering into the darkness lost words meant for them.

It's been over two years now, and if there is one thing I have learned, it's that there is real beauty in the written word. When those silent prayers to our loved ones aren't enough, putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboards) can be a soothing balm for the soul.

I often write to my husband. Sometimes these letters are long, poetic, as perfectly constructed as a term paper for school. Other times they are hastily written notes I jot down in anger or frustration or sheer wonder on the back of a napkin or sticky note. I have nowhere to send them, so I keep them. They are concrete and solid, and in a world turned

upside down where so very little makes sense to me, they are reassuringly real. Somewhere in the back of my mind it feels like I am saving up these letters for him. Should he ever descend from the heavens to read them, he'll be well caught up on everything he has missed.

What do I put in these letters?

Well, whatever I want.

I write them as though we are talking, as though he is in the room. It is like having our home-from-work conversations in the kitchen where I'd prattle on about my day and he'd listen, bemused, nodding at all the right spots and laughing when he thought it was safe to do so.

I encourage all grievers to get out pen and paper and write to their missing loved one.



To tell them the things you want to say, pour your heart out, and share those jokes that only the two of you will understand. Burn them, save them, publish them to your blog – whatever feels right.

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How to Love Again By Cathy F. Burns

When change happens, we do not always know how to deal with it. That is especially true with death. Losing someone or something we love, e.g. a spouse, a child, a friend, a pet, or perhaps even your job can be very difficult. Life changes in ways we may never have contemplated. When this happens, and it will happen to everybody sometime in their lives, how do we deal with all the emotions? How do we move on with our own lives? How do we begin to love life again?

Below are five steps to begin that process.

STEP 1: You Can Do It

The first step is to acknowledge the possibility that you can make it through whatever difficulties you face. While grief consists of five distinct stages, very few people will go through those stages one after the other. You might experience them one by one or several at the same time. People process grief in their own time and in their own way. What does this mean for you? Well, it means that you may acknowledge you can make

it through moment by moment over and over again.

STEP 2: Feel Your Emotions

Really feel them, then reach for the emotion that is just one step lighter than what you are feeling now, e.g. one step lighter than fear, grief, depression, despair, and powerlessness are insecurity, guilt, and unworthiness. Now that may not seem any better and yet step by step you will begin to feel a little bit better. This does not occur overnight, but it does happen.

STEP 3: Find the Music

Make room in your life to include music that feeds your soul. Include music that lets you express your anger, your depression, your giddiness, or whatever emotion you are feeling at the moment. Especially good is laughter. You know the kind: the cheek hurting, belly aching bellow of laughter, the kind that brings tears to your eyes. When it is over, it is a relief just to stop laughing! Ahhh....

STEP 4: Go for the Support

Reach out to someone who will support you. This may not be who you expect. You just might find a very special friend by venturing out to others. Go out for lunch or dinner. Spend hours on the phone talking about all kinds of things. Find someone who will let you talk as much as you need, someone who will really listen. Another form of support to consider is Hospice. Look them up in your local phone book. They have an incredible amount of knowledge and support available.

STEP 5: Dare to dream.

Imagine your world the way you would like it to be in the future and write it down. Then take one action every day towards that dream. On some days the action you take may be as simple as reading your dreams over and over again. And, remember, it is okay if your dreams keep changing. If the step you take today does not feel right, well, then change directions and take just one more step. What is most important is that you do take one action step toward the future that you choose.

These five steps are really very simple, but I will guarantee you that they are not always easy. I will also guarantee that you are worth every beautiful step you take towards your dream.

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www.ezinearticles.com*

sudSSpirit

Bereavement Support Group
currently meets monthly in
four locations:

Berks Chapter, Reading, PA.
4th Wed. of the month 6 PM
Exeter Library

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

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

Bennington Chapter,
Bennington, VT
4th Tues. of the month 6 PM
Bennington Library

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

[longlivepigheaven@
yahoo.com](mailto:longlivepigheaven@yahoo.com) - Reading, PA
bluemorpho316@gmail.com
- Reading, PA

lmurray2@comcast.net
- Etters, PA
yorksudsspirit@gmail.com
- Dover, PA

sudsspirit@gmail.com
- Bennington, VT

or phone:
610-777-4181 - Reading, PA
610-582-0444 - Reading, PA
717-938-1928 (ext 241)
- Etters, PA
717-764-0033 - Dover, PA
802-440-8100
- Bennington, VT

- Editor



And Then There Was Spring

By Anne Landefeld

I felt it today, that familiar anxiety of spring, as the world was in mid-thaw, snow droplets dripping into gutters. Buds are fighting to burst out of tree branches. The boots that felt essential yesterday felt incongruent today. Everyone was drinking iced coffee, even though it was still only 30-something degrees. I remember the spring when I myself had to thaw. I remember seeing blossoms and realizing the depths of my grief. I remember another spring so full of questions that I could not yet answer and so full of terror at the uncertainty. Spring bursts out of trees and emerges from under layers of clothing with a speed that finds me unprepared each time. There is a bird chirping outside my window while the snow melts, and I find myself begging for a bit more time under the heavy covers to reflect, to put the pieces in order, to stave off the grief, uncertainty, loss, or fear of the above, to be ready for spring, just-this-once. Therein lays my discomfort: There is something disquieting about feeling like your emotional state is out of step with that of your universe....

Reprinted with permission from the author

Stay Beautiful: Maintain Who You Are Always *by WidowntheCity, Tonya O.*

In the hardest darkest of your pain it is up to us to push ourselves forward. Through the toughest of times I kept myself up. I kept myself doing my hair, doing my make-up, dressing, all things that made me feel good. Understanding while reading this your saying “yea easier said than done” no actually I’ve been there; I’m living the grieving journey as I type. Through my experiences that I’ve been through I send them out to all of you. So you can use what I have done to your knowledge. So you too can see that if I been there, done it, then you as well can to, I’m no more special than any of you. If we strive to make it through, WE MAKE IT.

My days are not always good, I still have the tears as well as pain, and I’m not here to say I’m fully through it. I’m here to share to all of what I’ve taken in to reach out to all of you and your hearts.

Things that helped me while juggling pain, tears, darkness, tremendous aching of my heart: making yourself feel good radiates from within yourself out. Do the hair, the make-up, do the nails, get dressed even though not going nowhere, this still helps you from within yourself out. While doing all of this our mind eases up, letting us focus on something else other than the pain. You

also start to notice if you can do this other small tasks to the biggest of tasks can be done, baby step, by baby step.

DO NOT let others relate victim to widow, you are not a victim of any circumstances; you are the HERO to all of your stories. We widows need others to see that being a widow is not of our choosing, that being a widow does not mean we are neither bitter nor emotionless.

I ask of all of you to ask yourself what it is that makes you feel the littlest of happy. Think of what it was that gave you that tickle in your belly. From that one little feeling you feel while thinking of it, use it to push you forward, use it to help you motivate. Soon enough you will start to see that you can do it, you can make it through the days. Widows need to show the world we too got our DIVA SWAGGER, that being a widow doesn’t mean we gave up, it means we are building to a new improved new life.

There are so many things that progress on our path of grieving but it’s in all of us as well as up to us to see the light from a far. Through the starting a new you find things you thought were never there, this builds to a new, strong confidence. So maybe in the start of it all none of this is recognized. Soon enough as you start making it day by

day things start to appear, your eyes start to open to all of the beauty that surrounds you. What I’m trying to say is in the beginning you’re so consumed of pain that your hopes get smothered by the pain, but your hopes are still there, they never leave you. Allow yourself to understand that although right now you feel hopeless that in time your pain can no longer out do your hopes.

For me I always made myself go for a walk, to prove to myself there is still a world out there, that it did not stop for me, that people were still living their life that maybe the one person getting into their car to run errands could very well possibly be grieving to. So if they kept on with their life, I could do it as well. However all walking with grief should walk with ease, be gentle as well as taking the time to be present.

Do not ever get frustrated if you have not completed what you were supposed to because by the end of the day you should be proud of the fact that you have made it through yet another day of grieving. If you have gotten up, did yourself up as well as got dressed then you have conquered more than you know.

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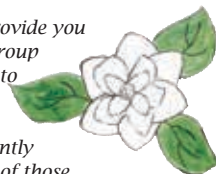


Links - Editor

- www.groww.org
(on line grief recovery with helpful information)
- www.griefshare.org
(a nationwide grief support group network with local ties to meetings)
- www.memory-of.com
(a way to celebrate your loved one’s life and legacy)
- www.healthboards.com
(a place to ask questions, review boards of topics being discussed to gain on line support)
- www.memorybearsinc.com
(a unique way to remember your loved one or anything)

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.

- Editor

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

“In the end, it’s not the years in your life that count; it’s the life in your years”

-Abraham Lincoln



“What soap is for the body, tears are for the soul”

-Jewish proverb