

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

SPRING 2014



Volume 6, Issue 3

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

*The lost loved ones on
Malaysia Flight 370
and in the
Landslide in
Washington State.*
- March, 2014

Welcome *from the Editor*

Spring has arrived and we welcome what it has to offer to all of us.

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. 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 four 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 check that out. You may also contact the editor directly at 717-866-2401 or sudsspirit@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 of their spouse or significant other. Meetings are held monthly in Reading, PA, Etters, PA, Dover, 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."

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

*"When persons
are born, we
rejoice. When
they are married,
we celebrate.
When they die, we
pretend nothing
happened."*

- Margaret Mead

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Facebook / sudsspirit

In this issue:

We feature a few articles by the editor entitled "As Time Goes By" and "The Change of the Season". Patricia Ward speaks of Hope in this new season we call Spring. Heidi Stevens' article shares a young widow's dealing with the sudden death of her husband and another beautiful poem from our friend, John Kresier, is looking for "Spring's Messenger."

Our standard offerings are also included; quarterly quote, thoughts to ponder, an entry from my journal, and book review.

We also included our mission statement in this issue for any first time readers of our newsletter. We hope that you become a regular subscriber to our quarterly newsletter and it is at no cost to you whether you prefer it by email or through the mail. We also have a brochure about our group that we can send you.

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 or 717-866-2401 or Facebook.



Spring's Messenger

By John Kreiser

Oh, robin red-breast, where are you?
Old messenger of Spring
Please fly on home, we need you
And the weather that you bring
Some people think that groundhogs
Tell us when the Winter's through
But some of us know better and
We watch for signs of you
We listen for your songs of joy
To permeate the air
The sun above, decides it's time
To linger longer there
Then right on cue, the ground thaws out
New buds appear on trees
Spring flower bulbs begin to sprout
Coaxed by the gentle breeze
Yes robin, please return here now
To build your sturdy nest
And entertain us with your songs
Of Spring from your red breast

Reprinted with permission from Author

Together we can help each other heal



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

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

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



As Time Goes By *by Dominic Murgido*

I have had many birthdays since she died. The first few after her death were the hardest for me but as each passes I still have this realization that she is not with me to celebrate another year of me getting older. She will forever be 48 to me, her last birthday that was celebrated three days before her death. We were to grow old together, or so the desire was as a happily married couple, but she didn't keep her part of the bargain, she left this world far too soon. I was the same age as her when she died but for only four more months and then that first birthday would come and I would advance a year by myself for the first time in 30 years of us being together.

The aloneness one experiences on a birthday for one after your better half dies can not be described in writing. The sadness is overwhelming. Those of you that know that feeling understand this.

I listen to the songs that we shared; I watch the movies that we liked; I remember all the places we have traveled; I cherish all the time we spent raising our daughter; and now I am alone at a milestone and it hurts more than those birthdays without her.

Our daughter is getting married and only one of us is here in person to experience it. It's not supposed to happen that way. No daughter should be without her Mother on her wedding day. No Father should be without his wife on their child's wedding day. And yet it happens, not just to me, to many people out there and it is sad and it hurts your soul. I know my wife will be with us, in spirit, on our daughter's wedding day.

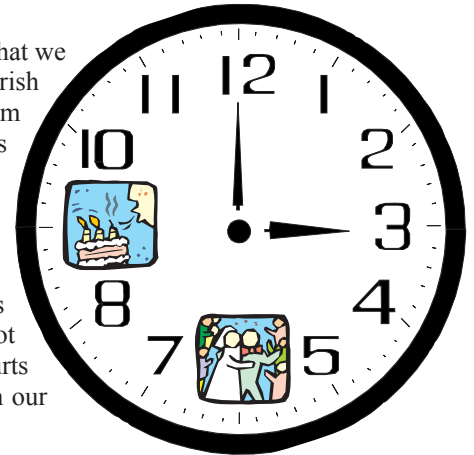
It takes many years to heal after the death of your spouse and in many ways, although you feel better about yourself and the new life you have re defined for yourself, there is still so much emotion that is part of your being that every now and then when the timing is right and life is happening, it comes to the surface and it makes you cry.

That part of grief stays with you and will always be with you. The good thing is that it is not always present in that way and it shouldn't be. If it is there after many years of grieving, you need to seek more help with your journey and I encourage you to do so. Call someone, seek out a therapist or support group. There are so many others out there that know your pain and are there to validate your feelings.

Another birthday is a few months away for me as I write these words and I am better with it coming and going after these many years. As I continue to get older without her, the meaning of life is changing for me. And as life is lived daily and time goes by with life events concerning you and those around you as friends and family, one has to learn to acknowledge and accept those changes in experiences however hurtful they may be.

Everyone's life changes after the death of a loved one. Some changes are minor while others are more prominent, but there is change. Change is inevitable in life's journey. You have to embrace it and accept it in order to continue to move forward with faith and hope becoming your guiding light in your being....**as time goes by.**

Note: This article was written two weeks before my daughter's wedding. Amanda became a beautiful bride and was wed on 2-22-14 to the man of her dreams. Next to my own wedding day and Amanda's birth, it was the happiest moment of my life....so far.



Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

"Recovery is not a process we can will, but consists of experiencing many small deaths, the passing of significant anniversaries, until our identity is solid and natural in the pronoun "I".

- Mary Jane Moffat

"Weeping is perhaps the most human and universal of all relief measures." - Dr. Karl Menninger

"Regret is an appalling waste of energy. You can't build on it. It is only for wallowing in."

- Katherine Mansfield



Coming to Terms with Grief Starts By Accepting Detours

by Heidi Stevens | *Balancing Act*

Catherine Tidd was 31 when she lost her Air Force officer husband in a motorcycle accident. Their kids were 5, 3 and 18 months.

The moment she heard, “He’s not going to make it,” changed her life forever. Of course it did.

“But the change into the person I became didn’t happen in that moment,” she writes in her new book “Confessions of a Mediocre Widow” (Sourcebooks). “It didn’t happen as I was riding in the passenger seat of my mother’s minivan on the way home from the hospital. And it didn’t happen at the funeral.”

The gigantic, terrifying changes — forever a widow, suddenly a single mom — happened immediately. But equally gigantic changes took a more gradual pace.

Her transformation, for example, into a person who can go off script — whose “script” was, in essence, torn into bits and stomped all over — and still find moments of joy. Her tossing aside of pretense, and her open-armed embrace of candor.

“Not one of us is living the life we expected to when we were young,” Tidd told me during a recent interview. “Once you realize that, I think the question becomes what you do with that and how you choose to grow from it.”

Bradley, Tidd’s husband, died in 2007. (He was 34.) She spent the initial months in stunned disbelief. She struggled to find her footing, even as she worried she wasn’t acting “widow enough.” Did she look sufficiently grief-stricken? Did she donate his clothes too

soon? Were pedicures the best use of her time and money? Should she send out Christmas cards?

“I wish someone had told me from the beginning there’s no right way to do this,” she said. “The five stages of grief don’t happen in order, and they happen over and over again. But you feel like you’re being judged on how you’re coping and what you’re doing, and you constantly think you’re failing.”

Which is partly why she wrote the book.

“I wanted to be as raw and honest as I could,” she said. “I wanted people to read it and say, ‘Yes, that’s me! I’m not crazy! I’m not alone!’”

She wrote it for anyone who has grieved the loss of a cherished soul, and for anyone who has borne witness to a loved one’s grief.

“I also wanted to bring awareness to what the people who are trying to support us go through,” she said. “Sometimes we can’t see past our own grief to the intentions of others, and we don’t always let others know what we’re feeling. When my dad read the book for the first time, he said, ‘I had no idea what you were going through.’ And I talk to him every day. He just didn’t know the depths.”

There’s a world of beauty packed inside Tidd’s book.

Her humor: “I spent my 11th wedding anniversary planning my husband’s funeral. If I could figure out how to make that rhyme, it would be the beginning of a great country song.”

Her honesty: That funeral veered spectacularly off course and ended with her doubled over in laughter at “the Pennsylvania preacher who missed his chance on ‘American Idol.’”

Her wisdom: “It takes a lot more time and effort to deny yourself the grief you feel than it does to work to accept the life — including the grief — that is now yours.”

Her mettle: She pours the past seven years onto pages for all of us to read and learn from, particularly her “Tips for widow(er)s and those who support them.” Her take-down of the empty platitudes we mutter to people who are suffering (“He’s in a better place.” “Everything happens for a reason.”) should be required reading for all humankind.

Through it all, she gently reminds us that our lives will take us places we never meant to go and feel unprepared for. She keeps a card on display that reads, “A truly happy person is the one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.”

“Since I don’t know of a bigger detour in life than widowhood,” she writes, “I’m doing my best to enjoy the scenery along the way to wherever it is that I’m going.”

We’d all do well to follow her lead.

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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:

sudsspirit@gmail.com
- Reading, PA

lmurray2@comcast.net
- Etters, PA

yorksudsspirit@gmail.com
- Dover, PA

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com
- Bennington, VT

or phone:

717-866-2401 - Reading, PA

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

717-764-0033 - Dover, PA

802-441-5562
- Bennington, VT

- Editor



Book Review - Editor

Don't Let Death Ruin Your Life

by Jill Brooke

Coping with any loss is painful; however, the author takes an approach that something positive can come out of a sad situation by focusing on memories and drawing comfort from those that have passed.

In this book, Jill Brooke covers all the bases with walking us through the grieving process from rituals to therapy. Insight and suggestions are offered on a variety of topics including possessions, writings, and leaving a legacy.

The grieving process can actually help us heal and move forward with personal growth and allow us to become survivors in our new world and reclaim happiness. Highly recommended.



Spring – Hope’s Own Season

by Patricia Ward

It’s easier to feel hopeful when Spring is near. The cold, dark, short days of winter give way gradually to light, warmth, and new growth. It is this growth that is most important for those of us who have known loss.

For we all must go through the winter of sadness, guilt, and grief. It must come. There is no detour. If we try to rush or ignore what we feel, it will remain with us, clouding our lives. It is scary to give in to those emotions, though. We don’t want to be unhappy, and nobody wants an unhappy person around for very long – especially when they can’t understand exactly what’s causing it. It would be easier, we think, to simply refuse to acknowledge the emptiness and just go on with life as usual. It certainly seems as if this is exactly what is expected by those around us in a very short time.

I can tell you from experience that it does not work! The best way, the only way out of grief is through it. Just as we must experience January to appreciate March, so we must experience loss to be able to grasp the hope of healing. Spring can not come before Winter. Slowly, pleasant memories and laughter replace sadness and tears, as new leaves appear on the trees. We have not really lost our loved one, for their presence and influence remains with us; not as a sad reminder, but as a color in our personal rainbow. Just as the crocus blooms bravely each year at the same time, sometimes surrounded by snow, so healing replaces grief. It will come, as long as we acknowledge the grief and work through it. Then, in time, as tulips stretch toward the sun, we can reach to joy!

May this season of new growth and sunshine help us all in our journey towards healing.

Patricia Ward is a freelance writer from East Syracuse, NY. Reprinted with permission from Hope for Bereaved Inc., Syracuse, NY.

An Entry From My Journal

“There are things I need to do and things that I want to become...it’s all about choices and allowing ourselves to make them without fear and regret”

-Editor



The Change of the Season *by Dominic Murgido*

As the first day of Spring came, I am reminded of all the “firsts” we experience in our lives.

Our entire life is built upon firsts. From infancy we celebrate firsts in our lives and the lives of our family and friends. First steps, first birthday, first tooth, first day of school, graduation, first car, first job, marriage, first child, first house, first grandchild, and it goes on and on.

We celebrate firsts with those that we love. We share firsts with those that we love. We build a life of firsts with those that we love.

As the firsts happen and we continue with our lives, it’s taken for granted and becomes part of our lives that all of these kinds of things will happen with a companion, a partner, a wife or husband. That is the beauty of life itself that we are able to share events and happenings with those that we love and the sharing is what makes it all so special.

When we lose someone very close to us, the firsts of life as they continue without our loved one, are looked upon differently. It becomes difficult to be part of a first time event or situation alone. You may have friends and family with you during these firsts, but it is not the same without your partner. You feel it and it makes you very sad. At times this can become overwhelming to you that you put off these firsts because you just can’t do it yet. That’s ok. You will know when you are ready to tackle the challenge of dealing with something for the first time without your loved one.

Being ready will not mean that it will be easy. The first time you go to an ap-

pointment alone may even be difficult and something that you avoid for a while. The first time you go grocery shopping alone or to a movie alone may be difficult. The first time you come home to an empty house will have its own impact on you. The first time you are out with others and there are more couples than those that are there alone will bother you.

The calendar year will play its role with you as well. All of those first holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries without your loved one will be a struggle for you because you are use to sharing those moments with them. Sometimes, the second, third, and fourth years may be difficult too. The day of the week and the date of their passing may affect you.

These are struggles that we have in common; struggles that are unknown by those that aren’t experiencing this. You will eventually be able to handle all of these; some easier than others, but you will handle them. There are some things I have yet to do, go through, let go, become, visit, and talk about. But these things in my own time frame will be completed some day.

The *Change of the Season* provides us with a new outlook, especially Spring time; new growth, new birth, new beginnings. It is up to us to either dwell on another season as it changes and stay trapped in negative thoughts and feelings, or to embrace it, be positive, and make it the best that we can as we move forward one season at a time.

Reprinted from a previous edition of our newsletter - Editor

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.

