

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*

As we enter another season it provides all of us with an opportunity of hope and faith towards becoming better at understanding ourselves. It is also a time of reflection and of giving thanks to those that helped you on your journey so far.

As I reflect, I am so grateful to my daughter for her love and support to me over these many years without my wife / her mother. I am also thankful to my sister for her never ending encouragement, love, and guidance. I would like to thank the many friends from many locations that provided the kind word, hug, email, phone call, or just the silent company to allow me to heal. I would be at a loss if it were not for the professional bereavement support groups that I attended over the years as well as the one on one therapy sessions that allowed me to take steps towards a new life. Thank you to all.

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, 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 five chapters. We also have a list of other resources on page two in the left margin that may be helpful to you. A Face book page is also available, please check that out. 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. You may also contact the editor/founder directly at 717-866-2401 or sudspirit@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, and a Book Review of a past reading of mine. But that's not all. Our editor writes about a *Community of Hope* as well as reflection on *Silent Pain* that we know about but seldom discuss. Additional articles include; *Looking out, In a positive way, and Reconciling your past, present, and future after Loss*. We also include two poems; *If Only Heaven had a Looking Glass* and *Heavenly Reunion*.

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter and if you want to pass it along to others, please do via email or regular mail. If someone passed this along to you and you want your own copy going forward, please contact us to be included on our email / mailing list. Wishing you a Spring season filled with comfort, warmth, and gratitude.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"We may imagine our deep hurts not merely as wounds to be healed but as salt mines from which we gain a precious essence and without which the soul cannot live"

-James Hillman

Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor



"No one really understands the grief or joy of another"
- Franz Schubert

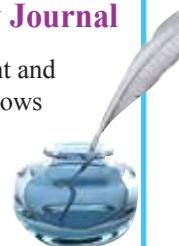
"Faith is the force of life"
- Tolstoy

"He who is firm in will molds the world to himself"
- Goethe

An Entry From My Journal

"I am one of many silent and alone widowers and widows who struggle each day without the one we truly love" 4-23-09

-Editor



Together we can help each other heal



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Facebook / sudsspirit

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

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



Community of Hope by Dominic Murgido



A loss is a loss is a loss is a loss...there are no comparisons of one loss of a loved one to another's loss of a loved one. Any loss, any how, any where is sad, hurtful, and difficult to cope with and accept as happening to us. It can be a spouse, significant other, partner, child, Mother, Father, Aunts, Uncles, Grandparents, friends, colleagues, and pets.

And unfortunately, at times, there can be multiple losses in a short period of time.

Any survivor of such a loss has something in common with everyone else that is struggling with losing someone or something you love. Each one's journey is different but there are similarities. We share the hardship of the moment and the lack of future events that will not take place. We share the sadness and at times the guilt and anger that we experience.

The "We" becomes more so when we become part of a bereavement support group. It is here that we can be ourselves among others that understand. We can say things without fear of repercussions or receiving odd looks and insensitive remarks. We can open up and cry about our feelings and

our search for a better day to come for ourselves. We are not judged here. We feel a level of comfort within the group and being part of this experience allows us to realize that we are not alone with this problem. We are members of an exclusive club that no one wants to be part of, a club of grievers that are trying to make sense of our feelings and our roller coaster ride of emotions. We are all trying to move forward one step at a time after the unthinkable has happened to us.

We become one with each other. We get it. We can be there for each other. And we can become a little bit better each and every day. Sometimes we don't even realize that we are making progress, but we are. Other group members see it better than we do ourselves. We look towards tomorrow with faith and hope. We seek encouragement and the renewal of ourselves to eventually become a reality.

Bereavement support groups. They can make a difference in your life becoming your own once again and they are a community of *hope* for each other.

If Only Heaven Had a Looking Glass

by Fara Gibson

I will not lay in bed and weep for you
You never liked to see me cry
And Though We had to say farewell for now
We do not have to say goodbye
If only Heaven had a looking glass
That I could use to peek at you
I'd see how beautiful the Angels are
Oh how I would enjoy the view
I'd see you're Happy watching down on me
You would be filled with love and light
I know you'd let me know that you're okay
I'd get to see you take to flight
You left your love so deep within my heart
Your soul is intertwined with mine
I will not grieve for you since you've moved on
You speak to me through Heaven's signs
You are in Heaven now with God I Know
You are surrounded by God's love
For now I'll speak of you in all I do
Until I meet you up above

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Book Review - Editor

God Never Blinks

50 Lessons for Life's Little Detours

by Regina Brett

A self-help collection of inspirational essays that offers humor, good advice, poems, prayers, and observation gained from the author's own life experiences. Brett's reflection on common sense issues strikes a common chord that we all can identify with and too often don't give it much thought till someone else talks or writes about it. Some topics include: Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of now; Believe in Miracles; No matter how good or bad a situation is, it will change; What other people think of you is none of your business; Life isn't fair, but it's still good. At times as we are on our grief journey, we need to seek out writings of inspiration and direction. This is one of those books that helps anyone that has been through tough times. You can visit her website at www.reginabrett.com.

Looking Out, In a Positive Way *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

Many things need rethinking, when a spouse dies. What to cook. Where to go for a brief time away. What furniture to keep. Even what stays on the walls.

A year after my beloved husband died, I moved to an "independent cottage" in a nearby retirement community. We had lived in our house for 38 years, enlarging it four times. Now, for me alone, it was too big, too subject to power outages, too far from town, and too dangerous when our dirt road was muddy, snowy, icy. But the cottage -- otherwise carefree -- had every wall waiting to be adorned.

My Dad, always optimistic, believed that how one looked out at the world was crucial. I believe this myself. Whenever I'm asked how I've coped, how I've kept a positive attitude during these five years since Roy died, I think about my father and his good spirit. I also think about my walls!

With far too much to hang on my new walls, I began weeding out the less appealing images. Then an unexpected thought hit me. Why not have only landscapes, in my bedroom? At least twice daily, I'd be looking out at a positive world, a special world created by me.

So the following images now get me up every morning and send me to sleep every night. They're not the same as the smile from my dear husband, but they do help me. You'll see why.

1 A fascinating collage, by my mother, of cork pieces that create a skyline all their own. She never sufficiently valued her artistic works. But she treasured me.

2 A large and inviting painting by a local artist, bought by us because it so beautifully depicted the Vermont woods we loved, and because it so reminded us of the day we decided to buy the land that became our home for almost four decades.

3 A colorful painting of a house and meadow by a woman whose own house was designed by my father. Her home was near my parents' house, and whenever I walked past it with Dad, his dementia made him tell me, again and again, about working with this artist. I loved hearing those stories, again and again.

4 A beautiful storm -- or perhaps a beautiful night-time -- done in crayon by artist Lynda Wright, the year she died, only 50. "Call It Late" was her title, and maybe, some day, I'll understand this title. In the meantime, another message of hers is clear: it's not how many years you live, but how well you live them.

5 Three wonderful watercolors of the rural Midwest by artist Ralph Follard Evans, purchased by us when our hotel at Mayo Clinic was

bought by a national chain that no longer wanted them. We loved these paintings, seeing them often in Rochester, Minnesota. They'll always remind me of our first trip there, after a local doctor had dismissed Roy with "Go home, you're thinking about yourself too much." Mayo, of course, examined Roy fiercely, finding his thyroid cancer and giving him an additional 29 years of life.

6 Not least, a cartoon-like drawing (ordered by Roy) of two cats savoring a mountain view just like ours. One cat is saying, "I can't imagine -- in all the world -- a better friend than you." Roy adored this. I did too. Still do.

My walls have a bit more. But I'll stop the list here. Undoubtedly, Roy would've made different decisions for the walls, but I know he's with me in wanting my new home to boost me, comfort me, inspire me -- and make me smile in a hundred different ways.

You can do this yourself. Take down whatever doesn't suit you. Put up whatever reaches you. Yes, I know it's crazy, but walls do have real power in our lives. Use this power to help you look out at your own world, and your own life, in a positive way, a way special to you.

Heavenly Reunion

by John Kreiser

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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from the author*

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Bereavement Support Group
currently meets monthly in
five 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

York Chapter,
Dover, PA.
2nd Mon. of the month 6 PM
Dover Area Community
Library

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

Lebanon Chapter,
Annville, PA
3rd Tues. of the month 6 PM
Annville Free Library

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

sudsspirit@gmail.com

- Reading, Lebanon
and York, PA

lmurray2@comcast.net

- Etters, PA

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com

- Bennington, VT

or phone:

717-866-2401 - Reading,
Lebanon and York, PA

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

802-441-5562

- Bennington, VT

- Editor



Silent Pain *by Dominic Murgido*

We walk among you, unknown and not noticed, hiding behind the mask that we wear more often than not to the rest of the world. We are people that you are in contact with occasionally or perhaps daily within your circle of life. You may know our name and a little bit about us, but you really don't know us or what kind of pain we carry within our hearts.

Our pain is silent to you and only loud to ourselves. We are your neighbors, co-workers, or even the person you see walking past your house every now and then. We are the cashier at the convenience store, or the delivery driver, or perhaps your mail man. We can be the clerk at the front desk of the hotel you stayed at or the maid who cleaned your room. We can be your doctor or dentist, perhaps the last flight attendant you were in contact with.

Silent pain lives in silent homes; maybe a home with a pet or two. In our neighborhood's we wave or nod to you when we see you and you return the gesture. Both of us are afraid about starting that conversation between us. And both of us wonder about the other. Early mornings and late nights, we find solace in the sound of the television or radio.

We lost a loved one and although it was very painful in the beginning, things have improved for us to better handle things after some time but the pain is still there and at times, it comes to the surface very easily for us. We feel marked and we keep silent because we don't want to hear the response you are going to give us when you first hear, nor do we want your sympathy. We actually feel bad when you feel bad for us. So we are silent.

Communicating among us happens in support groups if we have the courage to attend one. It is the one place we feel better about ourselves. We feel safe and understood. No judgments. And we can reveal our pain and shed the silence we keep among others that don't understand with those that do. "The very familiarity of one's intimacy with grief heightens its poignancy for others." (*The Catch*/Mayor) We become sensitive to people that probe us with questions and don't have the decency to let us be and allow us to grieve in our own way and at our own pace.

If we don't have the courage for a group experience, talking with someone who understands can help ease the pain such as another person who also lost a loved one or a professional therapist or counselor. Another big step to take but it does help you along your way after some time. You begin to self evaluate and realize that all of life is not lost.

When tragedy strikes us, we see things

differently from that point on. Any tragedy puts us in a different place. Our perspective and attitude changes, goals get re-assigned, and priorities change. There is so much more out there that you can contribute to and to help others while helping yourself. Life is for the living and you must learn to live again and free yourself from the **silent pain** that has been keeping you hidden from other people.

Reconciling Your Past, Present and Future After Loss *By Ellen Gerst*

When you're mourning the loss of a loved one, it's very natural and easy to get trapped in your memories of the past and how things used to be. Let's take a moment to examine your past, as well as the present and the future, and how this exercise can help you to better understand the grief process.

If you will, imagine your past, present and future like three pieces of paper all tied together with a string running through the middle of each. If you were to pick up one end of the string and dangle it in the air, the papers would not fly away for they are inextricably connected – one leading to the next.

Although they each have an impact on the other, Marcel Pagnol states, "*The reason people find it so hard to be happy is that they always see the past better than it was, the present worse than it is and the future less resolved than it will be.*"

When you remember the PAST, it's easy to block out the negatives and recall only a rosy picture. Although, it's great to remember your past glowingly, try not to romanticize it so much that the present pales in comparison to it.

In the PRESENT, with so much to do and so little time, it's very easy to get caught up in the minutia of your life. You can become vulnerable to a sense of being overwhelmed, or you may not be able to see the forest for the trees.

Keep in mind that you will encounter ups and down in every era of your life. At times, it's important to step back and put current difficulties in perspective so you can figure out the best way to move through them.

And then there is the FUTURE. If you're always worrying about the future – and this leads to chronic indecision and subsequent procrastination – you can freeze in place and end up avoiding any forward moving action. This, in turn, can lead to more worry.

In essence, you've created a vicious circle that is of no benefit to you. So, although procrastination has its place (for example, when you pause to digest new lessons before tackling your next obstacle), you also have to learn to temper it and find the right balance between it and total inaction.

While it's a very good idea to always keep an "eye" on the future and move forward towards your goals, it's equally important to live in and enjoy the present moment before it speeds by – never to be recaptured again.

While still mourning your loved one, make sure to also cherish all the small moments of joy you can find with the family and friends who *still* surround you. As you have learned through your loss, the only time that is promised to you and them is now.

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