



sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

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Welcome *from the Editor*

The readers of our newsletter can be divided among four groups; those that have experienced the loss of a spouse or significant other, those that have experienced any kind of loss of a loved one, those that are in professions or volunteer to help those that are grieving, and those that know someone who could use our newsletter as a source of comfort and validation and pass it on to them. You don't have to be part of a group to read this newsletter, we're just glad you found out about us and continue to read, save, copy, mail, email or share with others. Our goal is to help others; and you the reader can help us achieve that goal. Thank you.

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, 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 "Spring Cleaning" by Colleen Kristula and "The Strength To Go It Alone" is presented by Ellen Perry Berkeley. We share an announcement by Facebook and the editor talks about how cutting the grass became a more difficult chore for him. "I Could See it in Your Eyes" reflects the bond one has with a pet and the loss they share.

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.***

Thank God for Easter

by John Kreiser

The winter has ended
The springtime's begun
The snow has been melted
By the warmth of the sun
The birds are returning
The air's fresh and clean
The sunshine and raindrops
Make nature pristine
The red-breasted robins
Are seen all around
While flowers of Easter
Brightly blanket the ground
The Savior has risen!
His promise fulfilled
The rebirth has started
As our Father has willed
The Lord is my Master
He taught me to love
The earth's a mere garden
Next to Heaven above

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An Entry From My Journal

"I miss her. I miss the blueness of her eyes, her laugh, the scent of her hair. I miss sharing life with her because now life has another meaning – foreign in many ways – so different, so complicated, so uncertain"

-Editor



Dominic Murgido - Editor

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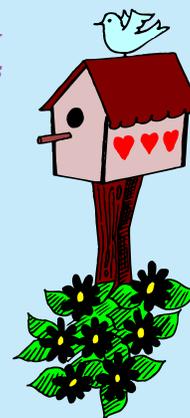
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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

***"Live all you can;
it's a mistake not to.
It doesn't so much
matter what you do
in particular, so long
as you have had your
life. If you haven't
had that, what have
you had?"***

*-Henry
James*



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



I Could See it in Your Eyes by Dominic Murgido

Today was her birthday. She would have been 59. Her last birthday we celebrated was followed by her untimely death three days later. Everyone who knew her knows the impact her death had on them and remembers her departure from this earth as being so sudden, unexpected, and devastating.

I can't avoid being sad on this day and the days that follow. And it's not just me that experiences this low point. Her friends, family, former co-workers, and even *you* are feeling the pain that goes along with the sadness.

You had very little time with her before she died, HAL. The time you did have with her made a huge impact on her and it is clear that your love for her was unmeasurable.

They say a dog's eyes are so human like and at times one thinks they really understand your moods and feelings and respond to your needs with a comforting paw, a tilt of the head, or the look in their eyes.

I could see it in your eyes today, HAL. *You* are giving me a look that speaks volumes that you miss her as much as I do. You sense my sadness and in turn validate your own loss of her companionship and love.

I got down on the carpet with you and we consoled each other just like we did on the night of her death, you and me, alone, missing the one person that we loved so much.

After her death, your life changed as did mine. She was such a part of our lives and being without her these many years still hurts like it just happened.

You know what this day is, you know



Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

"Each day should be passed, as though it were our last"

-Publilius Syrus (ca. 50 BC)

"The mere sense of living is joy enough"

-Emily Dickinson

"Be glad of life because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look up at the stars"

-Henry Van Dyke



that three days later she died and neither of us could believe that this was for real. We've been through this year after year on the anniversary of her birthday followed by the anniversary of her death.

This year you and I really connected, HAL. *You* truly do understand and grieve as I do and miss her and love her. It's been the two of us continuing on with each others support. But I must admit that what you offer me is far more than what I offer you. Since I'm the talker I pour out my soul to you through words, tears and hugs. And although you can't say a word back, I know you understand, support, and love me. I can see it in your eyes.

Man's best friend is more than just a pet. They are more than a friend; they are part of a family, your family. They are there for all that you experience, happy or sad, and ask nothing in return. Their unconditional support and love is never ending. Their loyalty and trust unmatched. Their presence in your home welcomes you, comforts you, and provides peace to you.

Of all the dogs that were part of my life, HAL, you are one of a kind; a companion to me for the last eleven years. You fall into the category of "one in a million" just like she did. And there will never be another *you*.



Book Review - Editor

Angel Catcher: A Journal of Loss and Remembrance Diary

by Kathy Eldon
and Amy Eldon Turteltaub

The authors have created a self help guide to journaling in a way that is most comfortable. *Angel Catcher* allows you to write about all feelings and situations. It helps you to express and in return to find peace and have a better understanding of your own feelings.

The greatest thing about this journal is the open ended questions and statements for you to fill in with whatever you're feeling and your thoughts right then. And it leaves enough room for you to come back later and write more - it gives you a look over time of how you were feeling versus how you are feeling.

It provides an invaluable way to help you remember your loved one and to put into words all of the little things that were so much a part of your relationship.



The Strength To Go It Alone

by Ellen Perry Berkeley

Adversity builds strength, my father always said. Thinking back to my early years, I don't recall living through much adversity. Daddy was always complimenting me, however, on finding the strength to deal with whatever difficulties I was facing.

My parents went through the 1930s Depression, so they definitely knew adversity. They also knew strength. In fact, they almost seemed to welcome difficulty – perhaps, I've thought, because they were confident they'd come out on top. But a question nags at me: Did they gain their strength by struggling against new challenges, or did they have their strength already, bringing only courage and confidence to new problems?

This only raises more questions: When we suffer the devastating loss of a spouse, we feel anything but strong. To manage our new lives, must we already be strong? Or can we gain new strength? Let's explore this.

Many folks seem always to be strong. Many others don't. I've thought that this difference could be from our genes. Or from our earliest learning. But I've also thought that our strength can continue growing, over the years, from the advice and example of helpful persons all around us.

Strength comes from other sources, too. Some people believe that death doesn't end a relationship – that they'll be reunited with their beloved when both have left this earth. Other people lack such assurance. In either case, though, the one who is still on this earth needs considerable strength now.

In the early days of grieving, for example, we must do many things new to us. All the legal matters, for starters. And all the spouse's belongings – deciding what to keep, or give away, or sell, or toss. Most of these chores must be done by ourselves alone. We must find the time – and spirit – to tend to these matters even while our strength is needed for much else. Like taking good care of ourselves. And dealing with any difficult friends and relatives. And keeping up with our work. And managing our loneliness. And moving into our new life with some degree of “spunk.”

And managing our household. If our spouse always did X, Y, and Z, what's the plan now? Do we learn to do these things ourselves? Or find someone else to do them? Or remove them fully from our lives (no longer taping TV programs, maybe, or giving memorable parties)? Or do we even relocate to a facility where the staff will

respond to our every need?

Let's know, however, that we can gain new strength. We CAN manage – physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually. We WILL manage. Despite the many tears we've shed, and the many doubts we've had, a new life awaits us, and it has promise. Let's move into this new life with grace. With gratitude, for any encouragement from others. And without guilt, when we find ourselves enjoying any aspect of the journey.

Let's also give our support generously to others who are grieving. Together we can share so much – our troubles, our sorrows, our concerns, our triumphs – and this makes all of us stronger.

Finally, let's understand that when we begin to enjoy life by ourselves, we aren't denying the beauty of the relationship that no longer exists. Most of us can honestly say that we did well in our life with our spouse, handling our chores diligently, resolving our differences easily, looking out at the world comfortably, and enjoying our pleasures fiercely. Let's cherish our lovely memories (and let's drop the memories that aren't lovely).

And let's believe that the caring companion no longer with us would surely want us to make a good new life for ourselves. Very importantly, this gives us pride in our abilities. It honors the strength we either have, or can soon find.

Ultimately, then, whatever we experienced when grieving first hit us – whether we felt strong enough already, or whether we hoped, somehow, to stumble upon new strength – let's believe that we can indeed be strong, facing our loss.

Wonder of wonders, this belief can bring us additional strength!

Facebook expands Bereavement Policy

Facebook says it is extending its bereavement policies. The Menlo Park, Calif. Company said that its employees will now get 20 days paid leave to grieve for an immediate family member and up to 10 days to grieve for an extended family member.

In a Facebook post announcing these changes, Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg said the company is also introducing paid family sick time.

Excerpt from: News Bytes, Reading Eagle 2-12-17

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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

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

sudsspirit@gmail.com

- Berks and Cumberland
Pennsylvania

sudsspirit.vt@gmail.com

- Bennington, VT

or phone:

717-866-2401

- Berks and Cumberland
Pennsylvania

802-441-5562

- Bennington, VT

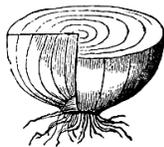
- Editor



Spring Cleaning

by Colleen Kristula, D.Min.BCC, Chaplain.

My favorite image of the journey of healing we call grief is that of an onion. Just when we think we are done “peeling” our grief, there’s another layer. And, of course, when peeling those layers, we cry a lot. The psalmist David once wrote: “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? (Psalm 13:1-2a, *ESV*)



When we’re in the midst of peeling the onion, we can hardly wait until we’re done. But grief isn’t measured by time, it’s measured by task. And in a sense, it never fully ends, for we are reminded day to day both of our loved one’s absence and of their presence with us in new ways. At the same time, there’s often a point that comes and goes almost without notice, when we are able to reinvest in our lives: we begin to go out more with friends, sleep and appetite improve, and our energy begins to return. We have not forgotten our loss, but our grief no longer overtakes our lives. We have worked through the important tasks of grieving: accepting and deeply feeling our loss, figuring out how to adjust to life without our loved one, and re-entering that life without them.

This time of year is the time that many people engage in “Spring Cleaning.” I don’t know about you, but this time of year when I face my closet, I often consider what to keep and what to give away. I haven’t worn that dress in years because I outgrew it, but I love it, and I *am* trying to lose weight, so I think I’ll hold on to it one more year. Perhaps I’ll finally get around to planting a vegetable garden this summer, so the canning jars stay on the shelf. But my now-grown children’s stuffed animals are going to be given to a child who can enjoy them, and that ‘70s fondue pot...well, you get the picture.



There’s a spring cleaning to grief, I think, when we begin to inventory the things that we have accumulated together with our loved one, and we experience a thaw from our grief, our numbness, and our pain. That’s the time when a favorite item can be gifted to a family member, the local library, our church or his/her favorite charity to honor our loved one’s memory. We find the things and the feelings that, this year, we are ready to let go of, and somehow, the grace and strength to do so. At the same time, we choose the things and feelings we are not yet ready to give up, and hold them for another time. The coming of spring to our hearts, no matter what the season is outside, is when we are ready to let go of our grief and celebrate our life: past, present, and future.

Things you might do this Spring on your grief journey:

Create a memory box or memory book for others in the family or friends, with mementos that represent your loved one’s life. Don’t forget the photographs! To make it even more meaningful, create it together with each family member participating.

Plant something lasting—a butterfly garden, a tree—in a public place where others can enjoy it and you can go to remember.

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Together we can help each other heal

It’s Time to cut the Grass

by Dominic Murgido

One of the first signs of Spring is the grass getting greener. When that happens it usually is accompanied by the grass growing as well. This prompts what most people dislike starting which is cutting the grass.



Once you start, you must keep performing this weekly ritual throughout the Spring and into the Summer and even early Fall. This task just about covers parts of three seasons. No wonder it is so grueling and disliked by many.

I have never really liked cutting the grass and really admire those that do this task for a living every day all day long sometimes seven days a week.

I like to be the last person to partake of the first cut of the season, at least in the neighborhood, and in most cases I do become the “last man standing”. It’s silly, but it makes it fun for me.

There is more to this story than grass cutting and my dislike of doing it. As Paul Harvey used to say; “here’s the rest of the story”.

From the first blade of grass I cut till I was finished with the lawn, I always looked forward to coming into the house and seeing my wife there. There would be small talk and maybe a glance out the window by her with a comment about how good the grass looked since it was cut. I would make a comment how hot it was or it went faster this time than usual, or even some difficulties that I had with the lawn mower this time around. It was just chatter between us and it happened every time I cut the grass over the many years no matter where we lived at the time. It was something between us that was as common as breathing is, you just don’t realize you’re doing it, but it is done. It was that chatter that made my grass cutting worthwhile and it made it fun for me; just like being the last man standing. I’d like to think that it was fun for my wife Sue as well or she did it because she knew it pleased me. As other married couples can attest to, we did things to please each other knowing we are making the other one smile.

The small talk is no more and hasn’t been for many years since my wife died. I miss the chatter and that common ground we shared after I completed such a mundane task of cutting the grass. As some people say, sometimes you don’t miss something until it is no longer there.

The first time I cut the grass after her death was very difficult for me. When I finished, I did not want to go into the house right away knowing the silence that awaited me. I puttered around the yard and re arranged the shed. I even began cleaning up the shrubbery beds which is a task I detest. I eventually got enough courage and walked in and dealt with the heartache I knew was coming. I cried while sitting in my favorite chair until there were no more tears to shed.

Each year became a little easier to deal with this but it is difficult to not think about it even to this day. Sometimes it’s those little things that mean nothing to no one else but you and your spouse that you remember the most with the fondest of memories.

I smile now after I come into the house after cutting the grass almost hearing her voice and our exchange of small talk. It’s silly, but it makes it fun for me.