

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE  
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER 2011

Volume 3, Issue 4

## Welcome *from the Editor*

Summertime: a time for sun, fun, and time with your family and friends. It is also filled with holidays that some of you may be dealing with for the first time without your loved one. Be patient with yourself and don't expect more than what you can handle.

I am pleased to announce that the third chapter of **sudSSpirit** has begun in Bennington, VT. Our first meeting was held in April and monthly meetings continue on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at 6 pm at *It's All about the Bean* coffee shop in Bennington.

I would also like to announce that **sudSSpirit** has a facebook page. It is a work in progress and we hope that it will become a tool for those of us seeking comfort with our grief journeys, connect with one another along the way, share experiences, and provide the support we all need.

This **sudSSpirit** Quarterly Newsletter is a companion to the bereavement support group of the same name that meets monthly in Reading, PA, Etters, PA, and Bennington, VT. **sudSSpirit** stands for "Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph" It was founded in April, 2008 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.

In this issue, Gabriele Hysong reflects on her experience with the passing of her husband in the article entitled "In Sickness & in Health." The difference between grief and depression is noted in an article while a beautiful poem is shared entitled "Seasons of Love". The editor reflects on his memories of a Sunday breakfast and how helpful bereavement support groups have been to him and many others. This issue also includes our regular features; book review, thoughts to ponder, quarterly quote, an entry from my journal, and resources.

**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.

**sudSSpirit** is here to help you throughout your grief journey and our meetings will never end. Our structure is designed to provide continuous monthly meetings. We want to be there for you to provide the support and validation that you need to move forward with your life.

If you would like a brochure with more information about our Reading, PA group, please call 484-336-5097. Email [kaizan2@gmail.com](mailto:kaizan2@gmail.com). If you would like a brochure with more information about our Etters, PA group, please call 717-938-1928 ( ext 241) Email [lmurry2@comcast.net](mailto:lmurry2@comcast.net). If you would like a brochure with more information about our Bennington, VT group, please call 802-440-8100 or Email [sudsspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudsspirit@gmail.com).

## Links - Editor

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

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

*Steven Hessler*

*Pete Keiser*

*Tom Wrightstone*

Dominic Murgido - Editor

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome

Links

Quarterly Quote

Resources

What Can Help Me While I Grieve

An Entry From My Journal

In Sickness & In Health

Seasons of Love

Book Review

Thoughts to Ponder

Breakfast for One

The Difference Between Grief  
and Depression

Mission Statement

## Quarterly Quote

- Editor

*"Tears have a wisdom  
all their own. They  
come when a person  
has relaxed enough  
to let go and to work  
through his sorrow."*

- Alexander Magoun

*Together we can help each other heal*

## 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

**Pinnacle Health Hospice**

800-222-5236

**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



## What Can Help Me While I Grieve? *by Dominic Murgido*

Talking with family and friends; finding something new to be part of or crying. Speaking with your minister or priest; and perhaps journaling. Reading about the grieving process in books, magazines, and online. Seeing a counselor or therapist; being patient with you. Allow time to heal your heart. All of the above can be helpful to you.

One other avenue to explore is Bereavement Support Groups. Not enough good things can be said about them. I am a huge fan of these groups. They have helped me grow and still do to this day. I enrolled in my first bereavement support group about a month after my wife passed. It met weekly for six weeks. It was about ten people as confused as I was all dealing with the same difficult issues that life has dropped on our doorstep. We were a collection of souls searching for an answer to a question: Why Me?

Each time we met we had an opportunity to be part of an experience that made us feel validated about our thoughts, feelings and emotions. Words from others provided strength and knowledge in where we are and how to improve. Strangers to each other, but a bond developed among us for the reason of our attendance. Only those that have walked in the same shoes can understand and relate to you during this journey. The message is loud and clear. You are not alone.

Once that was done, I did feel better, but needed more. And if you are one that feels that same way, don't stop there. Look for another bereavement support group that you can be part of and contribute too. I found one that meets monthly and is ongoing. The group was very accepting of me and I still try to attend this monthly gathering as my schedule permits. I've noticed that when I can not attend, I am missing something within me.

Bereavement support groups teach us all about ourselves through the discussions and emotions of others. We see ourselves through each other's grief journeys. We can recognize where we have been and hear about where we have yet to be and want to be.

We receive hope and faith through the process of this kind of gathering and it provides a necessary pick me up that at times we so desperately need. We can talk about our feelings in a nonjudgmental atmosphere and feel comfortable with each other in that what we say is confidential. We also feel safe in this kind of place, because we can vent, cry, be sad, and know that others in that room are ok with that.

People at their basic level don't want to admit to needing help and feel that they are weak to need something or even weak to ask for help.

With grieving, most things that we should do take time for us to initiate to do it. We lack ambition, courage, and spontaneity. We lack support to get support at times. Nothing compares or comes close to (one to one) or (one to group) interaction.

Sometimes, those of us with many friends and family members think it unnecessary to be part of one because of the extra people in our lives. We fail to realize that at times it is easier to talk to strangers about deep feelings and emotions than it is to talk with family and friends.

Online groups and websites can be helpful. Reading and expressing yourself on provided internet bulletin boards can be healthy.

In your time of need, it is the only "group" that will help you and be there for you and you will be glad that you belong to it.

You may stop going to it at one point, but your membership is forever and you'll never forget those that were part of it and helped you.

"Our community is dotted with shared experiences that can heal only when validated by another who has been there and who can ease the pain by truly understanding it."

*Living with Grief,*  
Kenneth Doka / Joyce Davidson

### An Entry From My Journal

"The hardest thing to accept is that your old life is gone and not coming back...ever. It takes years to come to terms with that, and even when you do, it's still tough to accept it."

-Editor





## In Sickness & In Health *By Gabriele D. Hysong*

“To love and to cherish, in sickness and in health, ‘til death do us part.” When I repeated that vow as a romantic eighteen year old bride with the world at my feet, I didn’t fully understand the significance of those words. Now I do.

John and I exchanged our marriage vows on a cold January days after a whirlwind courtship. A hopeless romantic, madly in love, I said yes to his proposal of marriage only six weeks after we had met. It just seemed like the natural thing to do. I couldn’t imagine spending my life without him. And so, a traditional wedding inaugurated our marriage. John was 20 years older than me. We were going to spend years of wedded bliss together.

There were new worlds to explore and experience. John taught me to appreciate the “Big Band” sound and I showed him the finer points of rock ‘n roll. A stroll through the park, a candlelight dinner, a drive in the country – these were small delights that reinforced my conviction that I had been right about marriage.

John was kind and generous, strong and wise. He had all the qualities I lacked. Because my dear husband was someone whom I depended on dearly, I knew that he would shelter and protect me just as my parents had when I was a child. I gladly deferred all major decisions to him.

After several contended years, though, my idealized

romantic world came crashing down around me. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a devastating respiratory illness, took its place.

My world was now filled with hospitals, intensive care units, oxygen tanks, potent medications with destructive side effects, and most of all, John’s total dependence on me. I spent agonizing hours in emergency waiting rooms hoping for some word from a doctor who would tell me that my husband would be strong and healthy again. But no such word came. John was very seriously ill. The pillar of strength, on whom I had leaned for so long, now crumbled.

John, his once strong and muscular body now emaciated, was a prisoner to his bed and oxygen tanks. I tried to continue working full time to keep ahead of the medical and oxygen expenses, but it was a losing battle. Without any care during the day, John’s condition grew worse.

So I made the decision to leave my job and care for him. Unsympathetic social workers told me to place my husband in a nursing home, but I steadfastly refused. The vows I had repeated years ago came rushing back to me, and I knew I was not going to abandon the man who had taken care of me. I now committed my life to the total care of the man I loved.

In the beginning, it was very difficult to provide for John’s care. I had crash courses in nursing, pharmacology, and respiratory therapy – all without the benefits of teachers.

I learned and struggled and cried as I went along. There were no second and third shifts to relieve me. I got up at 2:00 am and 6:00 am to administer medication. I wrestled and changed 100 lb oxygen tanks, often at night, winding and unwinding tubing so John could sit in his wheelchair for a few hours during the day.

It was a bittersweet relationship – subordinating my own life to give dignity to a man, now confined to a wheelchair, who had once trained as an Olympic runner. The hard work, the tears, the nights without any sleep, the desperate calls for an ambulance were suddenly an integral part of my life.

But now I understand fully what I promised almost thirteen years ago in a marriage ceremony – “to love and cherish, in sickness and in health, ‘till death do us part.” Holding these memories dear, I now live for today.

*P.S. John died in the spring of 1988 after a courageous three year battle. He died the way he wanted – I climbed into his hospital bed and held him as he took his last breath. I miss him very much.*

*Reprinted with permission from Hopeline Newsletter of Hope for Bereaved, Inc. through Bereavement Magazine, 12/92*

## Seasons of Love

*by John Kreiser  
5/30/1996*



*Sunlight streaming through the trees  
Scent of lilac on the breeze  
Days grow warmer by degrees  
As do my thoughts of you*

*Renewal is the current theme  
In fields and forest, lakes and streams  
Within ourselves, our hopes and dreams  
And too, my love for you*

*Ahead lie many pleasant days  
Of summer storms and muggy haze  
Moonlit skies and starward gaze  
As I spend time with you*

*And far off in a distant place  
Where autumn ends with quiet grace  
When life retires from the race  
I’ll still be loving you*

*Reprinted with permission from the author*

*Berks Chapter  
meets monthly on  
the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday at  
6:15 pm at Exeter  
Community Library,  
Reading, PA.  
For information  
call 484-336-5097  
or Email  
kaizan2@gmail.com.*



*Cumberland / York  
Chapter meets  
monthly on the  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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*



*Bennington, VT  
Chapter meets  
monthly on the  
4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the  
month at 6 pm at  
It’s All About The  
Bean coffee shop,  
Bennington, VT. For  
information call 802-  
440-8100 or Email  
sudsspirit@gmail.com*



## Book Review - Editor

### On Grief and Grieving by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler

A well written book by Kubler-Ross and Kessler, it takes on the five stages of grief and applies them to various feelings in our new life without our loved ones. The book includes sections on holidays, finances, and closure. The book also speaks of specifics that include disasters, multiple losses, and sudden death. I found this book very helpful for me. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross is a master, as usual, and combined with the talents of David Kessler, this one is a winner that you may want to read and re-read.

## Thoughts to Ponder - Editor

"I did not know how hard it would be to say good-bye. Yet it was harder still, when I refused to say it."

- A grieving widow

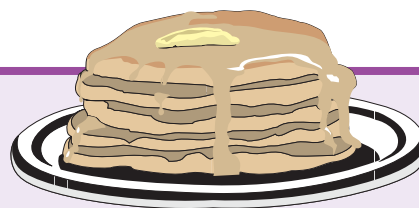


"Grief is the rope burns left behind when what we have held to most dearly is pulled out of reach, beyond our grasp."

- Stephen Levin

"You can't rebuild your life in an instant, but you can take a small step or two at a time."

- Carol Luebering



## Breakfast for One by Dominic Murgido

Sunday morning breakfasts were something to look forward to. Whether we went out for breakfast or stayed home, spending time with each other and having breakfast on this non work day was a treat.

As much as I enjoyed going out like anyone else, there was nothing quite like having a Sunday morning breakfast at home with my wife. It could be pancakes and bacon or Belgian waffles and sometimes for fun we had Mickey Mouse waffles made from a waffle iron obtained at a yard sale.

They were extra good with powdered sugar and syrup.

I miss those Sunday mornings; mornings with a purpose and drive and a special time to share with one another.

I don't go out for breakfast anymore, not alone. I usually do have something special at home on a Sunday morning but the place setting is for one. And as I enjoy breakfast, I think of all of those Sundays past when it was the two of us and I smile at those wonderful memories.

## The Difference Between Grief and Depression

Distinguishing between grief and clinical depression isn't always easy, since they share many symptoms. However, there are ways to tell the difference. Remember, grief can be a roller coaster. It involves a wide variety of emotions and a mix of good and bad days. Even when you're in the middle of the grieving process, you will have moments of pleasure or happiness. With depression, on the other hand, the feelings of emptiness and despair are constant.

Other symptoms that suggest depression, not just grief:

- Intense, pervasive sense of guilt.
- Thoughts of suicide or a preoccupation with dying.
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.
- Slow speech and body movements
- Inability to function at work, home, and/or school.
- Seeing or hearing things that aren't there.

Reprinted with permission: [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)

## 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.

