

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER 2013



Volume 5, Issue 4

Welcome *from the Editor*

The Summer is here. Another change of season brings us an opportunity to make this one better than the last. We must try to move forward a little bit more than we have done in the past. When I think of seasons changing, I think of life changing for each one of us. Sometimes it goes un-noticed, but it is happening.

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.

sudSSpirit was founded in 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. 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:

So much is written about that first year of grief but Marty Tousley reflects on *Grief in the Second Year*. Reflections on a good day in the life of a widower are made while the editor talks about a cup of tea. An entertaining yet thought provoking tale about carrots, eggs, and coffee is shared and Tabitha Jayne comments on *What To Do When You've Had Enough Grief*. Another beautiful poem by John Kresier graces our pages while the editor talks about *The Next Best Thing To Them Being There*. Our traditional offerings include our book review, thoughts to ponder, quarterly quote, and an entry from my journal.

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 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.

Grief In the Second Year: Finding Your Way *by Marty Tousley*

If you find yourself (or someone you know) struggling with new waves of grief after having reached the one year mark, you are not alone.

A woman whose husband died 15 months ago described her experience this way:

*Now it's just me and the dog. I was never very social -- my family was enough for me. If I were to become more social now, I'd basically have to change my personality -- and I just don't have the energy. People have been telling me to get a hobby or get active in some way -- but after I get home from work and walk the dog, I spend the rest of my time doing nothing at all. I feel paralyzed by grief. I know that our grief journey is a roller coaster -- but this roller coaster has been hurtling downward for quite some time. Is this what's called **complicated grief**? Am I depressed? I can't seem to get a grip on this and the future seems hopeless.*

Most people expect to feel better after that first year of bereavement, as if they've reached some sort of significant milestone in their grief journey. Unfortunately, this is another of those **myths about grief** that simply does not hold true. If you assume that grief will ease as the second year begins, you may soon discover that in many ways it seems much harder now than it did

before. You may find yourself feeling even worse ~ and that can seem very unsettling.

But think about it: For anyone grieving a significant loss, particularly when that was a spouse or life partner, the first year is a time of adjusting and learning to survive. Then comes the second year and, if you're like many mourners, it is even harder than the first, as this is when you are grappling with the harsh reality that your loved one is physically gone forever, along with all the **secondary losses** that accompany this death, including greatly diminished social support, financial instability or loss of **religious faith**.

If you take the time to explore some of the threads and read the posts in **Hospice of the Valley's** online **Grief Healing Discussion Groups**, you will notice that many of our members are still actively mourning, even though their losses occurred three, four and five years ago. Fortunately, this site is one place where the bereaved can come to be surrounded by others who will not hold them to some arbitrary timetable and won't judge them for not being "over it" yet. I strongly believe that is why this site continues to be one of the most powerful sources of support for the bereaved.

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Together we can help each other heal

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

*Jere Miller
Jim Evans
Gary E. Nell*

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have - life itself"

-Walter Anderson

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Facebook / 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



What To Do When You've Had Enough of Grief

by Tabitha Jayne

Grief takes time and it usually takes much longer than we think. This is not because the old adage of "Time Heals" is true but because we don't actually understand what we need to do to move beyond grief. If we look around we can find many people who are in the same place as us. While this comforts us and makes us feel less alone in our pain it doesn't necessarily help us move forward. The paradox is that those who have moved beyond their grief generally don't tend to spend time talking about it.

When people move forward from grieving they find that life and how they are living after loss becomes predominant. The brain supports this as it creates new neural pathways that are strengthened and deepened by a person's focus on this. The more time spent figuring out how to live after loss, the more these neural pathways work.

This also has an impact on how we grieve. The more time we spend in grief, going over what happened and how we feel, the more we are creating neural pathways in the brain to support this. Unwittingly we can be supporting ourselves to actually stay in grief.

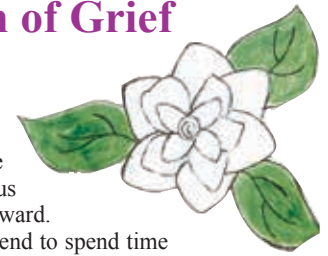
If you've had enough of grief then the first thing you need to do is to make a conscious decision to shift from looking at your grief to looking at what your life after loss will be. This requires that you stop identifying yourself as a griever. Too often in our society we can start to let our loss define us. There is nothing sadder for me to hear as a grief & growth coach that someone can't enjoy life because their loved one died. Sadly this is all too common, especially reading posts on the internet.

I know personally that not wanting my loss to define me was a motivating factor for me to move beyond my own grief. In my eyes there is no greater tribute to my brother than living life fully for the both of us. I still work in the field because I want others to experience to joy of life after loss.

It's an incredibly courageous thing to decide you've had enough of grief and want to move forward. Start by focusing on how you want your life to look. Think about everything that you've wanted to do but have never got around to doing before. Think about the things that you enjoy doing and want more of in your life. Think about the people that still make you happy and who you want to be a part of your life.

Yes there will be bumps on the way. There will still be days that are challenging. Remember though the more you focus on life after loss the more your brain will support this and the easier it will become.

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The Next Best Thing To Them Being There by Dominic Murgido

There are perhaps dozens if not hundreds of things that we miss about our spouses. So many things that were taken care of and just done without us even noticing or thanking them for doing it. Taking one for granted comes to mind and it is very difficult for anyone to **not** take a loved one for granted. It is just the way it is and we often are the ones (the survivors) that say after their death, "I should have not taken them for granted". This statement comes after the shock wears off and the realization comes of all the things that you now have to do, to become, and to decide alone.

Their physical presence is no longer among us and we realize how much the comfort from them is missing. We miss the kisses, hugs, and that often misunderstood but pleasing touch on the shoulder that provides that sense of comfort and peace knowing that we are in this together.

So where does that leave us? We must think about the next best thing to them being there and experience these small measures of magic that provides us with a memory and makes us smile.

It could be as simple as looking at photos of them with you or them doing something that makes you smile or laugh. Maybe you are fortunate enough to have them on a video or even have their voice recorded so that you can experience their movement and sound again. Hugging a pillow as you lay in bed and remembering their laugh or the way they sneezed provides us with

a memory as does the scent of their after shave or favorite fragrance

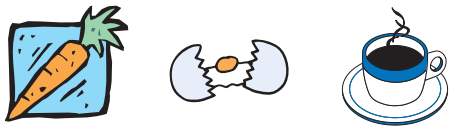
Sometimes we never realize that they always use to say something (a favorite saying) until we no longer hear that something anymore and miss them saying it. Remembering that can bring a smile to ourselves and sharing that with others can make us feel good about the memory and feeling their presence.

Souvenirs from places you have been, favorite books you shared, music that brings back a memory of where you both were when that song or group was popular, perhaps a concert or a play that you both liked and enjoyed.

Furniture that you purchased together as well as times at the fireplace that were memorable can stir the memories that you shared. Taking a walk on a favorite trail or visiting the place that you first met brings it all together and places you in the moment for remembrance. We all must learn to "live in the moment", the present; and know that they are with us, guiding us, and believing in us. It will provide us with a confidence level that will make our days fulfilling and be grateful for knowing and loving them. We will also realize how rich our life is because of them and their influences on our being.

Being open to this along with the memories will allow us to feel that ultimate feeling one gets which is... *the next best thing to them being there.*

Carrots, Eggs, or Coffee; “Which are you?” *by Anonymous*



A young woman went to her grandmother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved a new one arose.

Her grandmother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water. In the first, she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs and the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil without saying a word.

In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl. Turning to her granddaughter, she asked, “Tell me what do you see?”

“Carrots, eggs, and coffee,” she replied.

She brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they got soft. She then asked her to take an egg and break it.

After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg.

Finally, she asked her to sip the coffee. The granddaughter smiled, as she tasted its rich aroma. The granddaughter then asked. “What’s the point, grandmother?”

Her grandmother explained that each of these objects had faced the same adversity--boiling water--but each reacted differently.

The carrot went in strong, hard and unrelenting. However after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior. But, after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened.

The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After

they were in the boiling water they had changed the water.

“Which are you?” she asked her granddaughter.

“When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?”

Think of this: Which am I?

Am I the carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity, do I wilt and become soft and lose my strength?

Am I the egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Did I have a fluid spirit, but after a death, a breakup, a financial hardship or some other trial, have I become hardened and stiff?

Does my shell look the same, but on the inside am I bitter and tough with a stiff spirit and a hardened heart?

Or am I like the coffee bean? The bean actually changes the hot water, the very circumstance that brings the pain. When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavor. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you.

When the hours are the darkest and trials are their greatest do you elevate to another level?

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Book Review - Editor

Here If You Need Me

by Kate Braestrup

Kate Braestrup’s life changed in an instant one day when her husband was killed when an oncoming driver lost control. He was a Maine state trooper and was planning on becoming a minister once he retired. And so this true story begins following Kate with her four children to be on this journey.

The author finds comfort in pursuing her husband’s dream and realizes how helpful to her it was to help others. Her storytelling is one of the best I have encountered and she allows the reader into her new world with her challenges, understanding, and spiritual guidance to those she serves.

As the author puts it: “Death alters the reality of our lives; the death of an intimate changes it completely. No part of my life, from the most ethereal notions of God to the most mundane detail of tooth brushing, was the same after Drew died. Life consisted of one rending novelty after another, as anyone who has lost a spouse can attest.”

Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

“Loss makes artists of us all as we weave new patterns in the fabric of our lives”

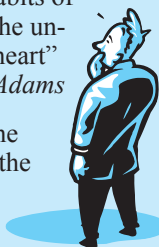
-Great W. Crosby

“Grief drives men into the habits of serious reflection, sharpens the understanding and softens the heart”

-John Adams

“Honest listening is one of the best medicines we can offer the dying and the bereaved”

-Jean Cameron



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



A Good Day in the Life of a Grieving Widower



by Dr. Pierre Milot

Strangely enough, today is a good day, it's been so long since I've had one.

All bundled up in my red checkered construction shirt, and discreetly trespassing on my neighbor's long country driveway, I'm taking my old dog Max out for his morning walk. Protected from the cool river wind by the bordering woods, I can feel the hot spring sun gently warming my face and shoulders, and can hear nothing else but the birds chirping, the familiar honking sound of the Canadian wild geese flying high in the clear blue sky happy to come back home, and the delightful crunching sound of gravel underneath my feet as I walk. With an uncertain smile I breathe in the fresh morning breeze, I feel good.

Strolling along, lost in thought, I marvel at our capacity to recover from what seems at times like the "unrecoverable". How can it be that today I can smile when only yesterday I was in the deepest of sorrows, with little hope for tomorrow. As I ponder on this, I reminisce, I think back on that dreadful November day, when, as I was holding my wife's cold dying hand and counting her last breaths, she left me in so much pain and loneliness. I remember that while I was putting on a brave front reassuring her that I would be OK, I was prompting her to go towards the "light" (as if she wasn't already there, for where else could such a kind and loving soul be, but in the arms of an angel).

Little did I know then that very soon I would be kneeling on the ground, bent over in gut-wrenching agony, sobbing like a child, and begging for her to come back. I would have done everything then, change my religion, give away all that I owned, even my life and soul to see and feel her, to be able to one last time delicately run my fingers through her soft silky hair, as I lovingly kiss her forehead while savoring her particular body scent that I've grown to love so much.

But, if the Divine in his infinite wisdom has granted us the gift of growth through sorrow and pain, he has also given us the necessary strength to overcome the same hardships. So, reaching inside the deepest confines of my being for that slippery strength, I managed to somehow make the pain more bearable, stand up and shakily face the day one more time.

Now, in an effort to heal my shattered life, I'm slowly learning to redefine my sense of self, my identity in this strange and scary new world without her, to think in terms of "I" instead of "We", while at the same time keep her memory alive in my heart.

I will make it, I will survive, I will somehow learn to be whole again but in a different way than before, and when the tough days comes back again, I will always have today, the comforting memory of this "Good Day" to fall back on.

Waking up from my reveries, I focus back on Max, my only daily companion these days, as he too, healing from his loss, enjoys the day. His inquisitive nose intrigued by the pungent odor of last fall's decaying leaves, he decides to investigate further and scratches the ground with an awkward paw to uncover the newly grown fresh tender grass shoots, a welcomed sign of the summer to come. The never ending circle of life.

Today is made of my yesterdays, and tomorrow is made of my today.

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An Entry From My Journal

"Sometimes I believe that my life will never be settled again...It was stable and complete for thirty years with Sue and then my life as I knew it ended... and it's been up in the air ever since" -Editor



Three Years Gone



By John Kreiser

Been three long years,
I've journeyed on
Without you by my side
This loneliness is hard to bear
It's quite a joyless ride
O'er thirty years, we shared
this life
Increasing love's sweet bond
I thought that it would always
be
Tomorrow and beyond
My life was blessed the day
we met
My soulmate had been found
Two halves made whole,
two dreams fulfilled
Two hearts forever bound
Your absence from my daily
life
Brings emptiness, despair
I never thought I'd be alone
Without you here to share
Reluctantly, with heavy heart
I face each coming day
My life was changed forever on
That day you went away
Fore'er apart in flesh and bone
This seems to be our fate
Yet love endures beyond the
grave
You'll always be my mate

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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)

A Cup of Tea by Dominic Murgido



I felt like having a cup of tea this afternoon. Did you ever get that feeling for a need for a cup of tea? Perhaps to make you feel warm inside or to relax or to enjoy a cup and just be.

I enjoy tea. I love coffee *more* but do like a good cup of tea. Having tea now reminds me of having tea with my wife who was a big tea lover. Sue loved tea and would enjoy a cup with a favorite cookie. She would look forward to her tea time.

I still have a small tea set that she bought and would display. We actually had tea with it once together

when she first bought it and to see her delight and enjoyment made me smile.

I can't share "tea time" with her anymore but it is nearly impossible to brew a cup of tea now without thinking of her. So maybe feeling like having a cup of tea this afternoon was the desire to remember and to think of her in a special way.

A cup of tea is one of many ways that I think of her and that she is still a part of my life. Memories of times past, reflections of a happy life together, and gratitude for having her be an important part of my life. She will always be my "cup of tea".