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Welcome *from the Editor*

Can you believe we are in the middle of the Summer Season already? It seems like I was just writing on these pages with a snowman displayed for our Winter Issue in January. Time doesn't stop for any of us and it is that "time" that helps us move forward; sometimes with leaps and bounds and sometimes a few baby steps. But whatever speed it is, it is still movement towards a day that you will feel a little bit better about your journey.

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, Eters, 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 Facebook page is also available, please check that out 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.

Memories of Summer

by John Kreiser

The sky is ablaze with the summer sun
The farmers in fields, their work never done
The children at pools for swimming and fun
Ducks on the pond and rabbits on the run
A hot air balloon drifts lazily past
The kids in the yard play tag, running fast
Cows in the pasture recline on the grass
Fisherman vie for the elusive bass
Mothers outside to hang out the laundry
Brown-freckled boys try climbing the tall tree
Skydivers learning to jump and fall free
Long afternoons that feel moist and sultry
Pigtails and bows in the little girls' hair
Soft drinks and ice cream are typical fare
Bicyclists speeding down hills part the air
Fathers asleep in their favorite chair
Memories of summer are often unique
Fireflies lighting their way to roof peak
Crickets in chorus, frogs trying to speak
Winter, by contrast, appears very bleak

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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, and a poem. But that's not all. Our editor contributes an article entitled "After You". Other articles appearing in this issue include "A New Friendship", "Mourning Option A", "This I believe: Love is Stronger than Death", "Store Credit", and "15 Things I wish I'd known about Grief".

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 wonderful Summer season filled with comfort and peace.

An Entry From My Journal

"My life has taken such a different course since the loss of my wife; I often wonder what it would have been like if it never happened?"

-Editor



Dominic Murgido - Editor

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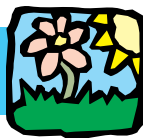
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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"You have the capacity to choose what you think about. If you choose to think about past hurts, you will continue to feel bad. While it is true you can't change the effect of the past influences had on you once, you can change the effect they have on you now."

-Gary McKay Ph.D.



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



After You by Dominic Murgido

I never dreamed that there would be an "after you". There was a "before you" and I remember that well because my life was missing something. Then you came along and it became "we". Both of us like the "we" that was created and neither one of us thought of the possibility that the "we" would ever *not* be a "we".

No one thinks that. No one that is involved in a loving relationship thinks that or believes that it can happen. It is just *not* something to be thought of. Life happens and time passes and all the joys that you both share continue and become part of your lives and your memories together.

It happened to me as it did for so many people before me and so many more people yet to be. I lost a loved one. My wife died way too soon and this tragedy was very difficult to deal with for many years and I had to deal with "after you".

What was now going to happen to me *after you*? What would my future be *after you*? How will I live again *after you*? How different will my life be *after you*? What am I going to do *after you*? Where will my life lead *after you*? Who am I now *after you*? Can I survive *after you*?

These are a few of the questions I pondered that needed answers. And you just can't consult a family member, a friend, a book, a website, or social media to find the answers. The answers to these questions about your destiny are within you. It will take time, patience, and reflection to find them.

There *is* life after the death of a loved one. It

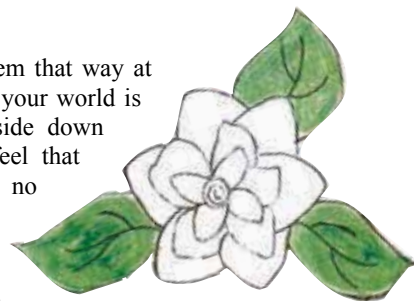
doesn't seem that way at first when your world is turned upside down and you feel that there is no hope for you.

Seeking help for you is an important step in the healing process. Many of us don't think we need this but in reality, we all do. Look in the newspaper, search online, ask a friend, call a hospital, library, funeral home and inquire about a bereavement support group or a therapist or counselor to help you help yourself through this grief journey ahead of you.

Just talking out loud about what you are going through and hearing your own words will make you feel better and allow those listening to know where you are in your journey and provide the comfort you need as you move forward.

Eventually, one step at a time, you will know what is going to happen to you. You will know your future and feel good about it. You will live again. You will understand the change in your life for yourself and those around you. You will see a new direction that your life will lead you too. You will become a *new* you using the inspiration, love, and encouragement that you gained from your loved one to move forward with your life and feel a new sense of purpose. You will be a survivor of this loss and in time will look back and reflect how far you have come.

I have been able to acknowledge, adapt, and accept what has happened to me *after you*. ***Because of you, life matters after you.***



Book Review - Editor

Honoring Grief

Creating a Space to Let Yourself Heal
by Alexandra Kennedy

This book offers simple and effective tips and exercises that are ideal for anyone suffering the emotional and physical effects of grief. The author supplies a comforting and helpful guide with profound inspiration and practical information to help you heal and achieve personal growth and renewal. Alexandra Kennedy offers wisdom, kindness and empathy and sends a message that "we are not alone". This is a recent book of many that the author has written about Loss and how to handle the Grief that results from it.

Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

"Once you choose Hope, anything's possible"
-Christopher Reeve

"Without faith a man can do nothing; with it all things are possible"
-Sir William Osler

"So it's true, when all is said and done, grief is the price we pay for love."
- E.A. Bucchianeri,
Brushstrokes of a Gadfl





Mourning Option A by Sheryl Sandberg

Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg's intimate portrait of the thirty days following her husband's sudden death -- and determination to make the best of what's next.

Today is the end of sheloshim for my beloved husband—the first thirty days. Judaism calls for a period of intense mourning known as shiva that lasts seven days after a loved one is buried. After shiva, most normal activities can be resumed, but it is the end of sheloshim that marks the completion of religious mourning for a spouse.

A childhood friend of mine who is now a rabbi recently told me that the most powerful one-line prayer he has ever read is: “Let me not die while I am still alive.” I would have never understood that prayer before losing Dave. Now I do.

I think when tragedy occurs, it presents a choice. You can give in to the void, the emptiness that fills your heart, your lungs, constricts your ability to think or even breathe. Or you can try to find meaning. These past thirty days, I have spent many of my moments lost in that void. And I know that many future moments will be consumed by the vast emptiness as well.

But when I can, I want to choose life and meaning.

And this is why I am writing: To mark the end of sheloshim and to give back some of what others have given to me. While the experience of grief is profoundly personal, the bravery of those who have shared their own experiences has helped pull me through. Some who opened their hearts were my closest friends. Others were total strangers who have shared wisdom and advice publicly. So I am sharing what I have learned in the hope that it helps someone else. In the hope that there can be some meaning from this tragedy.

I have lived thirty years in these thirty days. I am thirty years sadder. I feel like I am thirty years wiser.

I have gained a more profound understanding of what it is to be a mother, both through the depth of the agony I feel when my children scream and cry and from the connection my mother has to my pain. She has tried to fill the empty space in my bed, holding me each night until I cry myself to sleep. She has fought to hold back her own tears to make room for mine. She has explained to me that the anguish I am feeling is both my own and my children's, and I understood that she was right as I saw the pain in her own eyes.

I have learned that I never really knew what to say to others in need. I think I got this all wrong before; I tried to assure people that it would be okay, thinking that hope was the most comforting thing I could offer. A friend of mine with late-stage cancer told me that the worst thing people could say to him was “It is going to be okay.” That voice in his head would scream, How do you know it is going to be okay? Do you not understand that I might die? I learned this past month what he was trying to teach me. Real empathy is sometimes not insisting that it will be okay but acknowledging that it is not. When people say to me, “You and your children will find happiness again,” my heart tells me, Yes, I believe that, but I know I will never feel pure joy again. Those who have said, “You will find a new normal, but it will never be as good” comfort me more because they know and speak the truth. Even a simple “How are you?”—

almost always asked with the best of intentions—is better replaced with “How are you today?” When I am asked “How are you?” I stop myself from shouting, My husband died a month ago, how do you think I am? When I hear “How are you today?” I realize the person knows that the best I can do right now is to get through each day.

I have learned some practical stuff that matters. Although we now know that Dave died immediately, I didn't know that in the ambulance. The trip to the hospital was unbearably slow. I still hate every car that did not move to the side, every person who cared more about arriving at their destination a few minutes earlier than making room for us to pass. I have noticed this while driving in many countries and cities. Let's all move out of the way. Someone's parent or partner or child might depend on it.

I have learned how ephemeral everything can feel—and maybe everything is. That whatever rug you are standing on can be pulled right out from under you with absolutely no warning. In the last thirty days, I have heard from too many women who lost a spouse and then had multiple rugs pulled out from under them. Some lack support networks and struggle alone as they face emotional distress and financial insecurity. It seems so wrong to me that we abandon these women and their families when they are in greatest need.

I have learned to ask for help—and I have learned how much help I need. Until now, I have been the older sister, the COO, the doer and the planner. I did not plan this, and when it happened, I was not capable of doing much of anything. Those closest to me took over. They planned. They arranged. They told me where to sit and reminded me to eat. They are still doing so much to support me and my children.

I have learned that resilience can be learned. Adam M. Grant taught me that three things are critical to resilience and that I can work on all three. Personalization—realizing it is not my fault. He told me to ban the word “sorry.” To tell myself over and over, This is not my fault. permanence—remembering that I won't feel like this forever. This will get better. Pervasiveness—this does not have to affect every area of my life; the ability to compartmentalize is healthy.

For me, starting the transition back to work has been a savior, a chance to feel useful and connected. But I quickly discovered that even those connections had changed. Many of my co-workers had a look of fear in their eyes as I approached. I knew why—they wanted to help but weren't sure how. Should I mention it? Should I not mention it? If I mention it, what the hell do I say? I realized that to restore that closeness with my colleagues that has always been so important to me, I needed to let them in. And that meant being more open and vulnerable than I ever wanted to be. I told those I work with most closely that they could ask me their honest questions and I would answer. I also said it was okay for them to talk about how they felt. One colleague admitted she'd been driving by my house frequently, not sure if she should come in. Another said he was paralyzed when I was around, worried he might say the wrong thing. Speaking openly replaced the fear of doing and saying the wrong thing. One of my favorite cartoons of all time has an elephant in a room answering the phone, saying, “It's the elephant.” Once I





Mourning Option A *continued*

addressed the elephant, we were able to kick him out of the room.

At the same time, there are moments when I can't let people in. I went to Portfolio Night at school where kids show their parents around the classroom to look at their work hung on the walls. So many of the parents—all of whom have been so kind—tried to make eye contact or say something they thought would be comforting. I looked down the entire time so no one could catch my eye for fear of breaking down. I hope they understood.

I have learned gratitude. Real gratitude for the things I took for granted before—like life. As heartbroken as I am, I look at my children each day and rejoice that they are alive. I appreciate every smile, every hug. I no longer take each day for granted. When a friend told me that he hates birthdays and so he was not celebrating his, I looked at him and said through tears, "Celebrate your birthday, goddammit. You are lucky to have each one." My next birthday will be depressing as hell, but I am determined to celebrate it in my heart more than I have ever celebrated a birthday before.

I am truly grateful to the many who have offered their sympathy. A colleague told me that his wife, whom I have never met, decided to show her support by going back to school to get her degree—something she had been putting off for years. Yes! When the circumstances allow, I believe as much as ever in leaning in. And so many men—from those

I know well to those I will likely never know—are honoring Dave's life by spending more time with their families.

I can't even express the gratitude I feel to my family and friends who have done so much and reassured me that they will continue to be there. In the brutal moments when I am overtaken by the void, when the months and years stretch out in front of me endless and empty, only their faces pull me out of the isolation and fear. My appreciation for them knows no bounds.

I was talking to one of these friends about a father-child activity that Dave is not here to do. We came up with a plan to fill in for Dave. I cried to him, "But I want Dave. I want option A." He put his arm around me and said, "Option A is not available. So let's just kick the shit out of option B."

Dave, to honor your memory and raise your children as they deserve to be raised, I promise to do all I can to kick the shit out of option B. And even though sheloshim has ended, I still mourn for option A. I will always mourn for option A. As Bono sang, "There is no end to grief . . . and there is no end to love." I love you, Dave.

Sheryl Sandberg is the Chief Operating Officer at Facebook, and the author of Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead. A version of this piece was originally posted by Sandberg on her Facebook page.

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This I Believe: Love is Stronger Than Death *by Opal Ruth Prater*

I found the shirt hanging on the back of a chair in the cook shed when we came home from the funeral. It had been a beautiful day when he last wore it. We had cut the last of the corn, gathered pumpkins, and picked the last of the green beans. Then he took the kids down the ridge to pick apples, and the warmth of the day combined with the heat from his labor forced him to remove it. There it hung on that old, straight-back chair, mocking me with its emptiness.

With a cry, I snatched it up. It smelled of sunshine and fresh air, that wonderful outdoorsy scent of my husband emanating from this final source. I buried my head in it and cried, as I had been unable to cry before. My children gathered around me, their small hands patting, trying to comfort me. These four beautiful children were now my only reason to go on, and from them I drew the strength to dry my tears.

My husband, Dusty, had had a heart condition, one that could be controlled with medication, the doctors told us. "He should live to be an old man." When he lay down in the yard that lovely fall day, he was only forty-one years old.

Our idyllic mountain home became a

lonely, haunted place. Days passed slowly without Dusty there to laugh with me, read to me while I cooked supper, and rub my back until I fell asleep at night. When things got really rough, I would slip out to the cook shed, bury my face in his shirt, and cry out my sorrow and frustration. That was as close as I could get to the lost half of me.

Then the day came when we had to go out for groceries. It stormed while we were out and delayed our trip home, so we went to bed right after our return. The next morning, I went out to the cook shed for a few moments of meditation before the children woke up. Some of our goats and sheep had taken shelter in the shed from the previous day's storm, and they had knocked Dusty's shirt off the chair and trampled it underfoot. I grabbed it up, but its wonderful, comforting smell was gone.

Fifteen years have passed since my husband's death. My children are grown, and I have to admit that they turned out pretty well. I still catch myself thinking, "We didn't do half bad, did we, Honey?" I heard someone say of a departed husband, "I loved him." How do you get to the point

where you can speak of that love in the past tense? If that love is past, why does the memory still have such power to invoke both happiness and sadness? I believe that as long as I am alive, Dusty's memory will live in me. I see his eyes peeking out at me from my grandson's face. I find something of his spirit in each of our children.

My husband's death affected our family greatly, but his life impacted it more. He will live as long as one of us is alive to remember and to love him. And sometimes on a warm fall day, I catch that outdoorsy scent of fresh air and sunshine, and my face is buried in Dusty's shirt once more. Although I know he sleeps, I hear his shout of laughter somewhere just ahead, and I think he waits for me. I believe that love is stronger than death.

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Store Credit by Lisa Schamess

In the aftermath of my husband's death, my friends bought me potted plants. I promptly returned them — unable to contemplate caring for another living thing. Fourteen years on, what would it mean to use my credit at the florist?

At a mom-and-pop florist a half hour from my house, an unwanted store credit awaited my redemption ... for 14 years.

I dimly remember the visit I made there years earlier, during the coldest winter of my life. I shoved an elaborate arrangement of condolence plants across the counter for return as my sister stood nearby. Both she and the clerk who helped me seemed eager to make things right. Store credit or none, nothing could be nothing right that day, nothing for years.

I happened to walk past that florist a few weeks ago. It was the first time I'd been on foot at that corner since the day I brought back the plants all those years ago. The modest white brick building was the same as I remembered, its green sign still bragging: *Since 1947*. The store credit slip, long since lost or thrown away, reconfigured itself in memory. I pressed my fingertips together as if I still held it, as if the clerk had just handed it to me.

What the hell, I thought now. Why not go in and treat myself, to a bouquet or even the exact same arrangement? Why not give myself the credit I'd earned?

I will tell you why the universe still owes me a potted plant. My husband Gil and I were proud parents of a new baby in December 1998. By the end of the following January, he was dead. We had a half-year of normal new parenthood, and a half-year of slow agony watching our life boil away in the glare of tests, diagnosis, chemotherapy, and eventually hospice. Through it all we tried to be parents; we brought the baby with us to hospital visits, and our families and friends brought us meals and washed our floors and took our child to the zoo or playground while we dealt with the rude intrusion of dying into our home. The baby's first birthday party was at the hospital where Gil received his final care, the same hospital she'd been born in the year before.

After Gil died in our living room, on the newlywed sofa we hadn't yet paid for, our friends did what young mourners do: they filled our house with raucous presence and fellowship. A group of them sent me a huge basket of assorted living plants a gift from Bell Flowers. The gesture was tenderly optimistic, and completely beyond my capacity. I was numb and nursing a baby. I'd gone through six nearly sleepless months tending cancer, and before that six months with an infant. I couldn't care for another living thing. I couldn't think of any more needs, not even the needs of a plant.

"Take it back," my sister said. "Get what you want."

But there was nothing I wanted that I could get there.

She bundled me into my car. She stood by me as I went to the counter. "We'd like to return this arrangement," she said. Her warm hand stayed on my arm.

The woman at the counter asked what I wanted to replace it with.

"Nothing."

"No? No fresh flowers?"

"No."

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing. I don't want this. I don't want anything. I want nothing."

She was silent for just a moment, and then wrote out a small ticket.

"If you lose this, don't worry," she said. "Come back when you want, if you want. You can have whatever you want. If you want?"

I did not go back.

Now here I was, standing outside Bell's glass door. Through an obstinate combination of will, luck, and sometimes barely sufficient judgment, I had rebuilt my life and could now make room for a plant or two. But when I pulled on the door at Bell Flowers, it didn't open. Behind the glass, I glimpsed empty shelves. I went to the building next door. The shop owner told me Bell had closed the store.

"They're still in business, though," she told me. "Just online."

That's how I found myself a few nights later, looking at a bright screen of the Sympathy arrangements at Bell Flowers. There, labeled *Large Basket Garden*, was the exact same arrangement I'd once held in my hands: *Croton, ivy, pothos dieffenbachia, schefflera, and syngonium arrive together in a wicker basket with handle.*

Reader, I didn't order it. I am not so sentimental that I have to recover the very living arrangement I once gave up. It can't be gotten from a website, in any case, just as it couldn't have been gotten from the store. I don't believe in replacements or redemptions. I don't believe you can give up what you loved and receive a fair exchange. But I do believe in memory. I do believe in experiences remaining intact for good, deep underground for a fallow time, and springing back to life.

Lisa Schamess is an essayist and fiction writer based in Washington, D.C. Her work on grief and memory have appeared in Beliefnet, Creative Nonfiction, and TOSKA magazine.

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sudSSpirit

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





Harold and Trish visited us often from the D.C. area. Harold and my husband were close, usually beginning their phone calls with “Hello, Comrade” to joke about their Far-Left leanings of long ago. (Harold had been a Communist Party member in his teens, and Roy had called himself “the Traveling Trotskyist Troubadour” in his folk-singing twenties.) The four of us met only a decade ago, introduced by a mutual friend who knew that the two men would be instant buddies.

When both men died, I imagined that Trish and I would have no further contact. But I couldn’t have been more wrong, and I can’t wait to tell what happened.

On the visits that Harold and Trish made to us, the men talked non-stop. Each was usually writing something – for different readerships but similarly about politics and history. As part of the foursome, Trish and I stayed mostly in the background, chiming in occasionally but usually just listening. As a twosome, she and I worked well together, preparing food or tidying up, although hardly exchanging a word beyond what pertained to the task at hand. She was a pleasant guest, but we barely knew each other. And then the men died, Roy from his seventh cancer since he was 24, and Harold from a

series of strokes. Trish and I had watched our men decline. With Roy’s salivary gland cancer moving into his bones, he could no longer walk without falling, and with Harold’s several strokes, he could no longer talk or remember. He’d had a fabulous memory, and could instantly retrieve a fact from his decades of research and government work – or immediately grab an item from the storage units that filled their garage.

Not having experienced the “sudden, unexpected death of a spouse,” I was nevertheless urged to join Bennington’s sudSSpirit bereavement group. For several years I’ve comforted others in our group, and been comforted by them, opening up about things that nobody outside the group seemed able to talk about with me.

And then Trish called. She’d be traveling near me. I invited her to visit, and she accepted eagerly.

I don’t know what I expected, but I was stunned that Trish and I were talking non-stop from the moment she arrived. We talked about our early lives, and our lives with our good husbands, and our lives alone. We shared intimate details of meeting our husbands, marrying them within six months, working with them in various ways, and creating long-term marriages that many people envied. Neither of us shared these things with just anyone. During Trish’s three-day visit, we attended a few outside events, and enjoyed a few outside meals. Nothing special.

But the ways in which we ate breakfast in our bathrobes, or grabbed our afternoon snacks, spoke of a long and comfortable friendship.

“I’m leaving with a brand-new spirit,” Trish told me as she departed. She attributed our good connection to me. Hearing this, I suddenly realized that I, too, had a brand-new spirit.

And I’m grateful to my support group in a brand-new way. It has given me the experience of sharing my inner thoughts about something as difficult as the death of a beloved life-partner. I didn’t know that this building of trust and openness would transfer to people outside the group. But I’m quite sure that the extraordinary new connection with Trish has come largely from what I’ve experienced with my bereavement group. I can only wonder what future connections any of us might have that could also be traced to our sudSSpirit group.

On the other hand, I know folks who’ve lost someone dear to them and aren’t comfortable sharing either their heartache or their path to recovery; they don’t know how to give or receive support and, perhaps therefore, they don’t believe in support groups for anyone. Trish never had access to a support group herself. But she could open to me.

And I could open to her. Thank you, sudSSpirit! *Ellen is an attendee and long time supporter of sudSSpirit in our Bennington, VT chapter.*

A New Friendship by Ellen Perry Berkeley

15 Things I Wish I’d Known About Grief by Teryn O’Brien

After a year of grief, I’ve learned a lot. I’ve also made some mistakes along the way. Today, I jotted down 15 things I wish I’d known about grief when I started my own process.

I pass this onto anyone on the journey.

1. You will feel like the world has ended. I promise, it hasn’t. Life *will* go on, slowly. A new normal will come, slowly.
2. No matter how bad a day feels, it is *only* a day. When you go to sleep crying, you will wake up to a new day.
3. Grief comes in waves. You might be okay one hour, not okay the next. Okay one day, not okay the next day. Okay one month, not okay the next. Learn to go with the flow of what your heart and mind are feeling.
4. It’s okay to cry. Do it often. But it’s okay to laugh, too. Don’t feel guilty for feeling positive emotions even when dealing with loss.
5. Take care of yourself, even if you don’t feel like it. Eat healthily. Work out. Do the things you love. Remember that *you* are still living.

6. Don’t shut people out. Don’t cut yourself off from relationships. You will hurt yourself and others.
7. No one will respond perfectly to your grief. People—even people you love—will let you down. Friends you thought would be there won’t be there, and people you hardly know will reach out. Be prepared to give others grace. Be prepared to work through hurt and forgiveness at others’ reactions.
8. God *will* be there for you perfectly. He will never, ever let you down. He will let you scream, cry, and question. Throw all your emotions at Him. He is near to the brokenhearted.
9. Take time to truly remember the person you lost. Write about him or her, go back to all your memories with them, truly soak in all the good times you had with that person. It will help.
10. Facing the grief is better than running. Don’t hide from the pain. If you do, it will fester and grow and consume you.
11. You will ask “Why?” more times than you thought possible, but you may never get

an answer. What helps is asking, “How? How can I live life more fully to honor my loved one? How can I love better, how can I embrace others, how can I change and grow because of this?”

12. You will try to escape grief by getting busy, busy, busy. You will think that if you *don’t* think about it, it’ll just go away. This isn’t really true. Take time to process and heal.
13. Liquor, sex, drugs, hobbies, work, relationships, etc., will not take the pain away. If you are using anything to try and numb the pain, it will make things worse in the long run. Seek help if you’re dealing with the sorrow in unhealthy ways.
14. It’s okay to ask for help. It’s okay to need people. It’s okay, it’s okay, it’s okay.
15. Grief can be beautiful and deep and profound. Don’t be afraid of it. Walk alongside it. You may be surprised at what grief can teach you.

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