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SUMMER 2017

Volume 9, Issue 4

## Welcome *from the Editor*

Happy Summer Everyone!

Our newsletter comes out four times a year and is represented by season and we do that intentionally. We know that as seasons change, so does our grief. It can change temporarily or even permanently as we continue on with life without our loved ones. Strive to take on the new day, embrace the season with confidence and courage to move forward with your life.

**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 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](mailto: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 entitled “Together We Grow” as well as “Grief is Love”. The editor shares his thoughts on “Memories”

and that “We All Have a Story”. Marty Tousley explores “Dreading the Anniversary Date of a Loved One’s Death.”

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.***

## 30<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary

*by John Kresier*

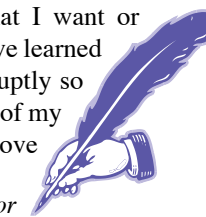
Now thirty years have come to pass  
Since we avowed our love would last  
A chance encounter in our teens  
Matured into a love supreme  
When nineteen eighty-four came 'round  
We gathered in my old hometown  
Before our families and best friends  
We vowed our love would never end  
It weathered storms both great and small  
Yet, triumphed and endured through all  
And though you've found forever peace  
Warm thoughts of you will never cease  
Three decades on, though we're apart  
Fond memories occupy my heart  
For one thing's true beyond a doubt  
Love's persevered and has throughout  
The years we shared and those beyond  
A promise kept - eternal bond

***Reprinted with permission from author***

## An Entry From My Journal

“I wonder if what I am doing now in this stage of my life is what I want or need to do right now. I've learned how life can end so abruptly so I want to make the most of my time doing the things I love to do.”

*-Editor*



Dominic Murgido - Editor

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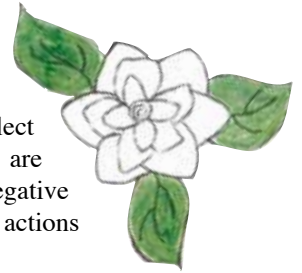
### Quarterly Quote

*- Editor*

**“Teach me how to know death and go on with life.  
Teach me how to love life and not fear death”**

**-Judith Viorst**

***Necessary Losses***



## 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



## We All Have a Story

by *Dominic Murgido*

Losing a loved one can make us feel all alone. We feel like it has happened to us and only us and that no one else out there understands what we are going through. Some of our friends stop calling and at times it seems they are trying to avoid us when we really need them to be there for us. Not everyone handles the grief of another in the way we would like them too. And it is not their fault. Our society has trouble understanding and acknowledging grief and all that it encompasses.

Your personal story of tragedy is yours alone but one must realize that "we all have a story". Knowing that there are others that have stories of the loss of a loved one allows us to realize that we are not alone. Although everyone's story is different in many ways, the true similarities come forward when they are being shared among the attendees of a bereavement support group.

People with similar losses will have similar feelings and will be able to identify with each other with their feelings. A bond amongst them will be created and it is at that moment that you realize in a very small way that you have something in common within the grief process that is happening among you.

Seeing a therapist or counselor one on one or in a group is also very helpful during the bereavement process. Telling one's story is what it's all about. During appointments with trained professionals what you express allows the listener to comment and pose questions to you that allow you to search your own being and reflect on what is happening within you at the time. After some

time, you begin to reflect on your own and are able to turn your negative feelings into positive actions of moving forward.

Telling our story helps us. Each time it is told whether in detail or a short summary allows us to express and hear our own words in our voice tell how it is. This provides acknowledgement and comfort to us. This empowers us. This telling of our story becomes easier with time and we recognize how helpful it is over time.

It may be difficult to share with others, especially the others that are strangers to you in a group setting. Trust me. The strangers that are gathered hurting from a loss like you are will become friends that come together to share thoughts and feelings. Together, you will be there for each other and together you can help each other heal.

*We all have a story...share yours today.*



### Book Review - Editor

## I Can't Stop Crying: Grief and Recovery, A Compassionate Guide

by *John D. Martin*

For anyone who has experienced a significant loss, this informative and accessible book is a guide to understanding and overcoming grief.

The death of someone close -- a family member, spouse, or partner -- can result in feelings of overwhelming grief. At the same time, society unrealistically expects people to recover from grief as quickly as possible. *I Can't Stop Crying* looks at grieving as a painful but necessary process. The author emphasizes the importance of giving permission to grieve and suggest steps for rebuilding life without the one who is gone. They also look at how such a loss affects relationships with family and friends, as well as lifestyle, work habits, and hopes for the future. The book includes an appendix with bereavement groups, resources, and other self-help organizations for grievers.

## 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"

*-from the diary of a grieving widow*

"The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time"

*-Abraham Lincoln*

"Life would be easier if we could take one small, happy moment and have it always – instead of the ups and downs we now experience"

*-Joseph More*



## In Grief: Dreading the Anniversary Date of a Loved One's Death

by Marty Tousley (Editor's note: article edited for space)

It may help to know that many people find death-date anniversaries difficult, since they serve as such potent reminders of all that we have lost. Keep in mind, however, that in many ways, this day will be no more (or less) difficult to get through than any other day you've had to face since your spouse died. Anniversary dates are really no more than dates on a calendar, and they hold no more power over us than we are willing to give them. More often than not, many people find that the anticipation of the day is far worse than the actual day itself.

Like everything else in grief, you can choose to deal with what you're dreading by avoiding it all together, or by facing it head-on, holding the firm belief that you've made it through this far, and you will make it through this, too. Some mourners decide to think of this first-year-anniversary date as an "expected event" that can be understood as a rite of passage, a turning point, or a marker for a change in attitude, setting you free from that very difficult first year.

I happen to think that the worst thing you can do is to let this day sneak up on you without planning for it ahead of time. I encourage you to develop some sort of strategy that includes a Plan A and a Plan B. Whatever you plan to do with the day is completely up to you (even if you plan intentionally to do nothing at all – but at least that is your plan).

I want to share with you some lovely ideas offered by Harold Ivan Smith, a dear man, prolific author, teacher, storyteller, grief counselor and teacher, who is often featured as the keynote speaker at national grief conferences and workshops. The following ideas come from one of his wonderful presentations I was privileged to attend in Phoenix, Arizona a few years ago.

You can borrow from a Jewish tradition called a Yahrzeit (pronounced yard-site) ceremony, which is a ceremonial way of acknowledging the anniversary of a death. Some Jews go to a synagogue or temple to recite a prayer, but in addition, they remind themselves of the loved one who has died by burning a 24-hour-candle in the hours leading up to the anniversary. (Yahrzeit memorial candles are sold in Jewish religious supply stores, but you can also find them in the Kosher section of the grocery store. They're encased in metal, they cost less than a dollar, and they burn for 26 hours. If you're concerned about leaving a candle burning overnight or when you're not in the room, Harold Ivan suggests that you place the candle in water in the kitchen sink.)

You can write a letter to your beloved, beginning with how you've been doing since their death.

Take the letter you write to your loved one's grave site (or some other special place) to be read aloud, then burn it in your fireplace or BBQ grill.

Then, write a letter from your loved one back to you. Ask yourself: How would they answer you? When finished, fold her letter into a small enough size that when you put it into a box it will rattle. Then wrap it as a gift and, when you need it, simply rattle it – so you'll know it's a gift from your beloved.

Arrange for Jews to say the mourner's Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead. (Say Kaddish is an online service that arranges Kaddish to be said, according to tradition, on behalf of whomever you choose).

Light a candle for hope and remembrance.

*Reprinted with permission: Grief Healing Blog*

### Grief is love

What is grief in relation to love? Quite often I think they're the same thing.

When people think of love they often think of hearts, romance, and warm-fuzzies, but love is far more complicated.

Love is positive and amazing, yes, but it can also cause the worst kind of pain.

Perhaps the most painful kind of love is called grief, which happens when the *object* of a person's love is taken away with no hope for return.

Grief is love and the confusion caused by not knowing how to love someone who is gone. Grief is love's frustration, bitterness, anger, and resentment at death's destruction. Grief is love realizing, if it wants to thrive, it has to be creative and find new ways to connect and be fulfilled. Grief is love's unwillingness to give up. It's stretching bonds and redefining limits in order to create a space where you can love someone in their eternal absence.

I know you may not believe me, because right now grief seems like a nightmare. I'll admit that some days I don't believe myself, but then one of our readers says something tender or shares a loving memory or does something supportive for a fellow reader and I'm reminded that underneath it all, grief is love.

Some of you reading this may be feeling alienated, isolated, sad, and alone. We want to remind you, though, that underneath the stress, frustration, anger, disappointment, despair, guilt, loneliness, and sorrow, quite often there is love. It may take you a little while to find it, but it's there.

*Reprinted with permission: What'syourgrief.com*

### sudSSpirit Bereavement Support Group

meets monthly in the following locations:

#### Berks Chapter

Reading, PA.

4<sup>th</sup> Wed. of the month  
6 PM

Exeter Community Library  
4569 Prestwick Drive  
Reading, PA 19606  
610-406-9431

#### Bennington Chapter

Bennington, VT

4<sup>th</sup> Tues. of the month  
6 PM

Bennington Free Library  
101 Silver Street  
Bennington, VT 05201  
802-442-9051

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

[sudspirit@gmail.com](mailto:sudspirit@gmail.com)  
-Berks, Pennsylvania

[sudspirit.vt@gmail.com](mailto:sudspirit.vt@gmail.com)  
-Bennington, VT

or phone:

**717- 866- 2401**  
-Berks, Pennsylvania

**802- 441- 5562**  
-Bennington, VT

- Editor





## Together We Grow *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

We all grieve differently, we're told (too often). But this doesn't mean that we must all grieve privately. In fact, grieving together has real benefits, short-term and long-term.

Before I go further, I should make clear where I'm coming from. Like the journalist who confesses at the outset that she/he holds the same beliefs as X, or donates money to Y, or is a long-time friend of Z, let me "confess" that I've been in a fine grief group for more than four years.

Grief groups aren't always fine. I've had conversations with a friend of mine, who lives far away, about a dreadful group she attended briefly. It was conducted by a professional person who apparently didn't know how to bring people into the conversation. Some folks just sat there, not talking, perhaps not even listening. My friend grew angry that this social worker also didn't know how to keep things moving and instead kept returning to the statement that "everyone grieves differently." (Sorry, there it is again.) The professional person gave this tired conclusion so often that my friend felt like throwing something at her. Another problem: this group leader never mentioned any grieving of her own, so it was rather like the sixth-grade class we've all experienced, where the grim teacher says little of interest, doesn't connect with us on any level, and simply keeps us there until the bell rings. My friend was glad to leave her dismal "class" that was not at all helping people cope with their grief.

But some folks – like me – stay in their grief group for years. Soon after my husband died in 2009, I was invited to attend a meeting of the local **sudSSpirit** group and I'm still with them. Everyone else in this group is struggling through the "sudden and unexpected death of a spouse," but Roy and I had two months' notice, before his death, that his salivary-gland cancer – which we thought was cured – had gone to his bones. (Actually, the precise moment of death, I've come to think, is always "sudden," whether we've expected it or not.)

Now, thinking of my experience with this support group, I see what I've gained from the group.

ONE: I've helped others. They've helped me. I sense only gratitude as we talk, listen, smile, and hug each other goodbye.

TWO: I've felt stronger, between our meetings, especially about anything I've been brave enough to share.

THREE: I've understood that I'm not alone, in my thoughts and feelings. And I'm not abnormal. This has comforted me enormously.

FOUR: I've been allowed to speak of my beloved husband – my joys with him, and my difficulties without him. For whatever reasons, some of my friends (not in any support group) won't talk with me about Roy. They knew him, but they immediately change the subject if I mention him.

We all know people who'd never sign on with a support group, and never consider opening themselves up to others. So be it. One example was emailed to me by another far-away friend. A friend of hers had died suddenly a few nights after returning home from the hospital, where she'd had minor surgery. Her husband never talks about her death, I was told, or about what it has meant to him. Perhaps he has no feelings, or perhaps he just doesn't wish to access them. His contact with everyone, my friend tells me, is poor. I feel sorry for this man, of course. But would he have found assistance in a grief group? I don't know, because "everyone grieves differently." (Sorry. But that's the last time, I promise.)

Handling our grief by ourselves is certainly possible. Keep a journal, read about grieving, talk with close friends, and focus on trying to live well.

Being in a bereavement group, however, can be very supportive. These are people who know and respect our loss, as we know and respect theirs. The experience can be comforting, encouraging, helpful – and even fun!



## Memories *by Dominic Murgido*

Even without triggers we like to recall past events and make them be present with us. We like to look at pictures, handle an item or two, remember a scent, a look, a smile, the way a voice sounded. It can even be how the wind blows on certain days that make us remember or the warmth of a sunset or sunrise that brings on a memory. Being among nature can have many effects on us too. Sounds of wind blowing through a forest or a brook flowing against rocks. Sounds of the ocean or birds singing. Everyday noises that are usually distractions can also be a gateway into a world full of past memorable moments.

Just the past weekend, I came across two obscure happenings; old songs and t-shirts. I came across a cassette of old songs that we shared a love for and I played it and it happened to me. The memories came flowing back; beautiful loving memories of times past. So vivid they were I could actually envision us ( my wife and I ) together. It was wonderful. I also was going through dresser drawers and came across t-shirts. T-shirts that were significant of a time and a place, where we were or what we were attending, a souvenir of a past event that brought back those memories like it was yesterday. Some of these were mine and others were hers that I had to keep and still love having. I wear them to this day and it makes me smile when I see them and wear them knowing what they represent for both of us and especially why they mean more to me than ever before.

It doesn't matter how you come across memories. It matters that you continue to have them and use them to your advantage of remembering a happy time when you were together. Be thankful for building those memories with your loved one and still celebrating them to this day.