

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter

ON THIS FOURTH ANNIVERSARY
OF HER PASSING, THIS ISSUE IS
DEDICATED IN LOVING MEMORY
OF MY WIFE AND BEST FRIEND:

Susan J. Murgido

WINTER 2010

Volume 2, Issue 2

Welcome *from the Editor*

Happy New Year. As another year begins, let's reflect on how far we have come as individuals as we process our grief in its various stages. It's a good time to take stock of ourselves and try to chart a course for where we would like to be in the near and distant future. We all have elements of the need for freedom in our lives. Freedom from crying, fear, loneliness, depression, and despair. We also have choices. Choices to make a change and to try to become whole again. With faith, hope, and spending time with those that know what we are going through, anything is possible for us to achieve.

Please refer to our Resource section where an additional resource has been added; *Pinnacle Health Hospice*. Also in this issue we explore

Myths and Facts about grief as well as Coping with reminders of loss.

Our monthly meetings will continue to be the 4th Monday of the month at 6:15 pm at the Exeter Community Library for the new year.

The **sudSSpirit** Quarterly Newsletter is a companion to the bereavement support group of the same name that meets monthly. **sudSSpirit** stands for "*Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph*".

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. If you want more information about our bereavement support group, please email sudsspirit@gmail.com or call 610-779-6809.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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The Still of the House

by *Dominic Murgido*

I miss the human side of how the morning comes and the day begins. The house is so still without her.

No more touch on the shoulder or voice saying I love you, Good Morning, or How did you sleep? There is no more two way conversation that fills the house. I miss that. I still speak to her at times, but the silence of the house is evident.

Through the shades and the curtains, nature provides the bright sun or raindrops on the window to announce the day and awaken me.

Usually the first sound heard in the morning are the birds singing outside my window or some times it is the lone Mourning Dove on the window ledge with his early greeting.

I am dwarfed by a Queen Size bed that at one time was too small on some nights for both of us. How I long to experience being crowded one more time.

The hearty bark of Hal, my dog, greets me as my feet hit the floor of my bedroom which is above where he sleeps in the family room. I am so thankful for Hal and all that he has meant to me as the only other border in the house.

The only voices I hear are those from the electronic medium of our world; TV, radio, and those

that are from songs we enjoyed together or those that I now enjoy alone that make me think of her.

The only footsteps heard are my own. The only lights that are on are for me. The dishwasher runs less, trash is hardly anything, and the washing machine whirls fewer times these days.

The kitchen is still. Nothing is stirring, not even a wooden spoon in a mixing bowl, for her talents in cooking and baking are no more and dust settles on pots and pans that were once brimming with delicious recipes and baked goods.

I miss the scents of home cooked meals, the smell of her hair, and the perfume of her choice.

I miss the sounds of her presence; the running of the sewing or embroidery machine, the whistling tea kettle, her calling the dog, her voice on the phone, her playful laugh,

The lack of it all contributes to the stillness I experience.

Even though I experience the "still of the house", I am able to appreciate the memories that made it at one time full of life. I will always have love within my heart and soul for my wife.

When I fell in love with her it was forever.

"Grieving is one of the most universal of all human experiences . . . although we all must encounter grief eventually, talking about it, ironically, is still one of our greatest taboos."

- *Ashley Davis Prend, Transcending Loss*

Together we can help each other heal.

Resources

MHARBC (Mental Health Assn of Reading and Berks County)
www.mharbc.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



Grief: Coping with Reminders After a Loss

When a loved one dies, you may be faced with grief over your loss again and again, sometimes even years later. Feelings of grief may return annually on the anniversary of your loved one's death and on special days throughout the year, such as a birthday or religious holiday. Even memorial celebrations for strangers who died in catastrophes, conflicts or disasters can trigger the familiar pain and sadness of your own loss.

The return of these feelings of grief isn't necessarily a setback in the grieving process. It's a reflection that the lives of others were important to you and that you grieve their loss and still miss them. Learning more about what to expect and how to cope with reminders of your loss can help make the grieving process a healthy, healing one.

The memories and emotions of a lost loved one that are reawakened through reminders are often called anniversary reactions. These reactions, which can last for days or weeks at a time, can raise a host of emotions and physical problems similar to the ones you faced when you were first bereaved.

Anniversary reactions can also evoke powerful emotional memories — experiences in which you vividly recall the feelings and events surrounding your loved one's death. You might remember in great detail where you were and what you were doing, for instance, when your loved one died.

Reminders aren't just tied to the calendar, though. They can be anywhere — in sights, sounds and smells, in the news or on television programs. And they can ambush you, suddenly flooding you with emotions when you drive by the restaurant your wife loved or when you hear a song your son liked so much. Another death, even that of a stranger, can leave you reliving your own grief.

Even years after a loss, you may continue to feel sadness and pain when you're confronted with such reminders. Although some people may tell you that grieving should last a year or less, grieve at your own pace — not on someone else's expected timeline.

Time itself can lessen the intensity of your grief. You can also take measures to cope with anniversaries, special days and other reminders of your loss so that you can continue the heal-

ing process, including:

- **Be reassured.** Remember that anniversary reactions are common and normal and that the pain fades as the years pass — although it may never go away completely.
- **Prepare for episodes of grief.** Knowing that you're likely to experience anniversary reactions can help you understand them and even turn them into opportunities for healing.
- **Look for healing opportunities.** You might find yourself dreading upcoming special days, fearful of being overwhelmed by painful memories and emotions. In some cases, the anticipation can be worse than the reality. In fact, you may find that you work through some of your grief as you cope with the stress and anxiety of approaching reminders.
- **Reminisce about the relationship you had with the person who died.** Try to focus on the good things about the relationship and the time you had together, rather than the loss.
- **Plan a distraction.** Take a weekend away or plan a visit with friends or relatives.
- **Start a new tradition in your loved one's memory.** For example, make a donation to a charitable organization in the person's name on birthdays or holidays, or plant a tree in honor of your loved one.
- **Tune out.** Limit your exposure to news reports about tragic events if you become more anxious, sad or distressed.
- **Connect with others.** Draw family members and friends close to you, rather than avoiding them. Find someone who encourages you to talk about your loss. Stay connected to your usual support systems, such as spiritual leaders and social groups. Consider joining a bereavement support group.
- **Allow yourself to feel sadness and a sense of loss.** But also allow yourself to experience joy and happiness as you celebrate special times. In fact, you might find yourself both laughing and crying.
- **Attend a memorial.** You may find it healing to attend a public memorial service or ceremony that marks the anniversary of tragedies,

disasters and other events that claimed lives. These kinds of ceremonies can help draw people together and allow you to share experiences with others who feel similarly.

Normal grief symptoms gradually start to fade within six months or so. In some cases, though, your grief experience may be much more complicated, painful and debilitating. Or your grief may get worse over time instead of better, or it may last for years.

If your grief interferes with your ability to function in your daily life, see your doctor, primary care provider or mental health provider for evaluation and possible treatment.

Excerpts from: Grief: Coping with reminders after a loss. Reprinted with permission. Mayo Clinic.com

Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor



“Time elapses differently for the bereaved. It creeps. Every minute had been so fraught, so filled with emotions, events and high drama, that each day had passed like a week.” — Richard Meryman

“What is there to do when people die – people so dear and rare—but bring them back by remembering.” — May Sarton

“Be reverent before the dawning day. Do not think of what will be in a year, or ten years. Think of today.” — Romain Rolland

Stage Five of the Grief Cycle: Acceptance



Acceptance is the final stage in the grief cycle, when a person who is grieving the death of a loved one or coming to terms with other losses – whether divorce, leaving a job or selling a home, etc. – is ready to move forward in his or her life.

When you reach acceptance, you may notice you feel more peaceful. Acceptance of any situation is not the same as approval. You don’t have to like or want what is occurring in order to accept it. Acceptance is that stage of grieving when you are in alignment with the reality of your situation.

You may find it easier to cope with new responsibilities or make changes to your life once you’ve reached acceptance. Acceptance, generally, is accompanied by a lessening of anxiety and an increase in the ability to make healthy choices.

If you are dealing with a terminal illness, acceptance is the stage where you are able to prepare for your death by getting your affairs in order.

The grief cycle is not necessarily linear. Nor does it have a definitive beginning, middle and end. You may move in and out of the various phases – denial, bargaining, anger, depression and acceptance – or even experience the phases as overlapping.

Accepting loss is rarely easy. It’s important to be gentle with yourself and to continue to rely on people who support you emotionally throughout the grieving process. Acceptance doesn’t mean you are done grieving. It means you are beginning to explore the possibilities of life without your loved one or without your job or home.

Acceptance is that part of the process where you are willing to hold two realities at once; you have experienced loss and you must go on with your life.

Reprinted with Permission. Life Advice April, 2007



Bereavement Support Group meets monthly on the 4th Monday at 6:15 p.m. at Exeter Community Library.

For more information, call 610- 779- 6809 or Email: sudsspirit@gmail.com



Book Review - Editor

Healing Moments

by Mary J. Nowyj

This collection of thirty - three inspiring reflections after the death of a spouse is from an author who has experienced the loss of her husband. Mary shares thoughts of isolation, holidays, triggers, faith, and memories. As one who knows, the author connects to the reader searching for validation of their own feelings and emotions.

I found reading this seventy-one page book very helpful to me. I identified with her moments concerning my own loss. To quote from the back cover: "giving meaning to the experience of grief becomes necessary if we are to continue our connection with others"

If interested in obtaining a copy of this book, please see www.centering.org

An Entry from My Journal

- Editor

" It feels like it's been a lot more time than the four years since that day she was taken away from me. Time moving on without her is like a marathon of sadness. I hope and pray for a better day and the strength to endure, the power to heal, and the wisdom to learn."

Myths and Facts about Grief

Myth: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.

Fact: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

Myth: It's important to be "be strong" in the face of loss.

Fact: Feeling sad, frightened or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

Myth: If you don't cry, it means you are not sorry about the loss.

Fact: Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

Myth: Grief should last about a year.

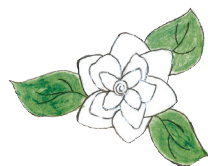
Fact: There is no right or wrong time frame for grieving. How long it takes can differ from person to person

Myth: Moving on with your life means you're forgetting the one you lost.

Fact: Moving on means you've accepted your loved one's death. That is not the same as forgetting. You can create a new life and still keep your loved one's memory a part of you.

Myth: Friends can help by not bringing up the subject.

Fact: People who are grieving usually want and need to talk about their loss. Bringing up the subject can make it easier to talk about.

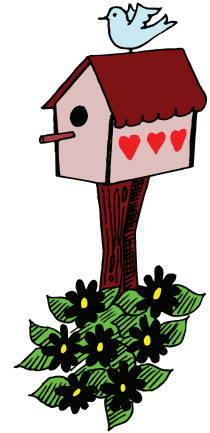


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We Miss Our Friend

by

Dominic Murgido



Our friend loved us and we loved them. Our friend was kind, considerate, and compassionate. Our friend respected us, admired us, and was proud of us. Our friend loved to talk about us. Our friend was patient with us. Our friend was always there when we needed them. Our friend never hesitated to comfort us, be with us. Our friend walked with us, touched us, and hugged us. Our friend loved to shop and always shopped for us. Our friend was a companion and someone we learned so much from. Our friend spent time with us, laughed with us, enjoyed quiet times with us. Our friend was friends with so many others and always considered others before themselves.

We shared a friend that we loved and who was special to each of us in totally different ways and our friend loved all of us unconditionally.

Our friend was Sue and she was taken away from us. We were saddened by the loss of our friend but were fortunate and blessed to have spent time with her.

We are Dom, her husband; Mandy, her daughter; and Hal, her dog and . . . We Miss Our Friend.