

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Gwen Winseman

Gregory Hafer

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Welcome *from the Editor*

Happy New Year!

As I write 2013, I am struck with an odd feeling. And not the usual feeling that most of us get when the year advances a digit and we struggle with remembering what to write for the first month or so. This April, when our next quarterly newsletter is published, will mark the 5th Anniversary of **sudS-Spirit**. To think that it all came about from a thought that I had as I was struggling with the death of my wife to a support group that is currently in two states that has helped hundreds of people so far.

I know I have grown since then as an individual and as a facilitator to help others along their journey with faith and hope. There are many who receive these newsletters that have been supporters of **sudSSpirit** from the beginning and I thank all of them for that. Please keep watching these pages for more news in the future as I intend to expand **sudSSpirit** to more places to help more people that are survivors of the sudden unexpected death of their spouse or significant other.

sudSSpirit was founded 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, and Bennington, VT. Please see the margin in the third page of this newsletter for contact information. **sudSSpirit** stands for "*Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph*"

In this issue:

The New Year brings reflections and resolutions as well as re-discovery as the editor reflects in our feature article. Darcie Sims looks at Grief and the Price we pay for Love while the editor shares thoughts he had while enjoying pasta on a Sunday. *Are We All Losers? Understanding Grief* is explored by Sandra Washington and a beautiful poem by John Kreiser graces our pages once again. Our traditional offerings are included such as our book review, thoughts to ponder, quarterly quote, and an entry from my journal.

Feedback is encouraged and welcome and should there be a topic that anyone feels should be explored and presented on these pages, please contact us via email (sudsspirit@gmail.com) phone (802-440-8100) or facebook.

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.

Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

"The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, not to worry about the future, or not to anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly" -*Buddha*

"The more faithfully you listen to the voices within you, the better you will hear what is sounding outside"

-*Dag Hammarskjold*



"It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome"

-*William James*

For a brochure with more information about our Reading, PA group, please call 610-777-4181 or Email longlivepigheaven@yahoo.com. You can also call 610-582-0444 or Email bluemorpho316@gmail.com. For a brochure with more information about our Etters, PA group, please call 717-938-1928 (ext 241) or Email lmurry2@comcast.net. For a brochure or the current newsletter with more information about our Bennington, VT group, please call 802-440-8100 or Email sudsspirit@gmail.com. You can also reach us at Facebook / **sudsspirit**.

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.

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"When illness, heartbreak and plain hard luck hit us, we moan these same words - "Why me?" - as if we believe someone else should roll the dice and come up short... You will find strength and a deeper spiritual connection if, when faced with a soul-testing adversity...you look for the open door before you. Walk through it. Put fear aside..."

- Constance C.R. White

Together we can help each other heal

Like us on
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



Re-discovering the New You *by Dominic Murgido*

Losing your spouse or significant other is painful, very painful. Any loss comes with much anxiety, sleeplessness, uncertainty, shock, trauma, and the realization that your world as you knew it ceases to exist. It is you, alone, and any reference to your better half or to you as being part of a couple is gone, long gone.

Friends and even family members look at you so much more differently than ever before. There is a sense of discomfort with you around. No one knows how to act or what to say around you, and it is ok, you didn't know how to act or what to say around those that you knew that lost some one close to them. Our society does not know how to deal with others who lose a loved one. It's not exactly something that is "gone over" in our development as people or in any education process. I believe we need to work on that.

All of the stages and phases of grief that have been talked about, written about, researched about are all clear and defined. We read about them, share them with others going through the same thing we are going through in support groups or in a one on one counseling session with a trained professional. And that is all good and understood, but sometimes everyone's phase or stage isn't exactly like what they say or one goes through. That is ok. Realize that each one of us is going to go through this journey in our "own" way on our "own" time schedule. Knowing this and accepting it will help you in many ways so that you don't feel like you are alone out there and isolated from others.

The benefit of support groups is that at times, those that are in attendance are at these different phases of their grief compared to you and to the others and that can be very helpful. Listening and sharing amongst each other allows everyone to learn from each other and feel a little bit better about where they are on their journey. This is a healthy feeling when you realize that someday you may feel better than you do right at that moment because others who have been there have survived it and they are there to prove it and talk about it.

It may take a long time, a substantial time to re-discover who you now are. And at times this discovery happens in small increments over a period of time. So if you think once you discover something new about the new you, just wait, because there will be something else that will be coming along at another time. This is a process that seems to not end as we think it might. At least that is what I am experiencing. I am still discovering and finding out things about my journey and I am on my way to 7 years now without my wife.

I have been through and have put myself through many changes and challenges in my life without her and all of it was worth it. The good, the bad, the indifferent, the successes as well as those things that just didn't work out the way I thought they would, but I tried and became a better person for trying and certainly have learned a lot about me along the way. You know what

they say; when life gives you lemons, make lemonade. Turn a negative into a positive for yourself and others. All of us that are going through this grief journey face challenges. We may not think of them as challenges and changes as they are happening, but afterwards we realize that we overcame it and got through it. Facing situations alone for the first time can be very difficult. Those "first times" don't all come within that first year either, contrary to what most people outside of our grief world believe or have read about from people who have NOT been through this. Another point we have to become better at.

Firsts can be as simple as grocery shopping alone and for one to a more complicated and complex situation like moving out of your house that you shared for many years. The birthdays, date of death days, anniversaries, season changes, they all factor into re-discovering the new you. Changing careers, retiring, beginning a new job that you didn't have to have before but is now a necessity, they all factor into re-discovering the new you. Changing your diet, health concerns, new socialization circles, learning to do things you'd never thought you had to worry about, they all factor into re-discovering the new you.

And it is ok. You can do this. You have to believe in yourself and have faith and hope that better days are ahead and they truly are for you. Stay confident, focused and learn to accept the new person that you are becoming, a person that looks forward to new experiences, enjoying life, and laughing again.

Winter Canvas

by John Kreiser

Shades of gray and purplish blue
On display for all to view
Rising sun transforms the hue
To pink and orange, some crimson, too
Wintertime lacks in basic green
Summer's standard, now seldom seen
Leaves and grass asleep, serene
Awaiting spring to intervene
Landscape's oft encased in white
Providing contrast, boldly bright
Days bereft of time and light
Shadows deepen into night
The world's a canvas held on high
Almighty God paints earth and sky
And even skeptics can't deny
His artwork's pleasing to the eye

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from the author





Are We All Losers? Understanding Grief

By Sandra L. Washington

The well-known pioneer researcher Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross identified five stages through which the dying patient goes. It is also true that the recently bereaved and the about to be bereaved evidence the same stages. Kubler Ross has labeled the 5 stages denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. People do not necessarily go through these stages in any set order or over a set length of time, nor does the individual necessarily pass through each of the stages. Most controversial is the final stage of acceptance. Kubler-Ross believes that all of us come to accept death as it approached, but other researchers do not agree.

Westberg, for example believe, as do the writer, that we come to a point of living with the loss.

Let's now review the 10 stages of grief as defined by

Westberg. If you have or can access his tiny book entitled, *Good Grief*, it would help you to understand each stage in more depth than the writer will go.

10 Stages of Grief According to Granger Westberg (*Good Grief*):

- 1) shock – numbness, denial, disbelief
- 2) emotional releases – tears, cursing
- 3) physical manifestations – loss of sleep, eating
- 4) depression, panic –how do I go on, detachment
- 5) guilt – if only
- 6) anger – god, self, deceased, blame
- 7) idealism – halo effect, past was perfect
- 8) realization – past not perfect, maybe a future
- 9) new patterns – begin again, let go of past images
- 10) living with the loss – live, love. Laugh again, adjusting

Another valuable resource is Catherine Sanders book, *The Mourning After*. Taking an integrative approach, she identifies 5 primary phases of the grief process:

5 Phases of the Grief Process According to Catherine Sanders (*The Mourning After*)

- 1) shock – disbelief and denial, confusion, restlessness, state of alarm
- 2) awareness of loss – separation anxiety, conflicts, prolonged stress, acting out emotional expectations
- 3) conservation/withdrawal – despair, withdrawal, diminished social support, helplessness
- 4) healing – turning point, assuming control, identity restructuring, relinquishing roles
- 5) renewal – new self-awareness, new sense of freedom, accepting responsibility, learning to live without

In summary, it should be understood that the numbness and sense of unreality when first hearing about the death of a loved one is both a gift and an adaptive

response which prepares one to deal with the loss. Statements expressing this surreal phase includes: "I don't believe it," or "It can't be."

It is common to lose a loved one and feel angry about the death and consequences. Since anger needs a target, it is frequently directed at the self, doctor, nurse, funeral director, clergy person, family member, friend

or God. Since anger is a choice, it is important for the bereaved to recognize and acknowledge the fact that they are angry.

It is said that actress Elizabeth Taylor, speaking about the death of her husband, Michael Todd, and her subsequent depression, stated: "I didn't think I would survive and I didn't much care. To this day my feelings about him are so strong that I cannot speak about him without being overcome with emotion." For the majority of people in grief, feelings of emptiness and sadness generate feelings of depression.

"My husband died after a long illness. Several times I lost my temper and said some cruel things to him, but when I realized he couldn't get well, I took loving care of him until God called him home. Now I regret all the wrong things I did." Like many who have experienced a loss, this woman is tortured by regrets. While feelings of guilt are quite normal, they are usually not very realistic.

Sometimes anxiety and frustration are connected to the fear of being alone and without a loved one. There may be concern about the future and fear about losing someone else to death. There is no timetable for grief. No one need feel ashamed while getting over a traumatic loss. It is a long complex business. It is the process of grief.

The day will come when grief softens and even dissipates. Usually the recovery is so gradual that the bereaved is not even aware that healing is, in fact, taking place.

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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)

sudSSpirit

Bereavement Support Group currently meets monthly in three locations:

Berks Chapter, Reading, PA.
4th Wed. of the month 6 PM
Exeter Library

Cumberland /York Chapter,
Etters, PA.

2nd Thurs. of the month 7PM
Fishing Creek
Salem U.M. 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 – Reading, PA

bluemorpho316@gmail.com
– Reading, PA

lmurray2@comcast.net
– Etters, 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

802-440-8100
– Bennington, VT



Grief: The Price We Pay for Love *by Darcie Sims, Ph.D., CGC, CHT*

Grief is a NATURAL and NORMAL reaction to loss, loss of any kind. It is a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological response. The death of a loved one is perhaps the most devastating loss one may experience. Yet, grief occurs following ANY change in our lives. Even positive changes can bring a momentary grief response.

Grief is a complex process, guided by our past experiences, our religious beliefs, our socio-economic situation, our physical health and the cause of the loss. LOVE, ANGER, FEAR, FRUSTRATION, LONELINESS and GUILT are all part of grief. It is important to understand that grief is NOT a sign of weakness or a lack of faith. **GRIEF IS THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE.**

Grieving may cause physical and behavioral changes such as: sleep irregularities, changes

in appetite, gastro-intestinal disturbances, heart ache, restlessness, spontaneous crying, irritability, and sighing or muscle tension.

Anger and guilt are common emotions. You may feel angry with God, your spouse, your children or with others, either involved or totally separate from the death. You may be angry with yourself. Guilt feelings often accompany or follow anger. You may want to withdraw and be left alone.

Depression, feelings of emptiness or hollowness may temporarily overcome you. You may experience headaches, tightness in the throat or chest, muscle aches, or burning sensation in your stomach. **GRIEF HURTS!** You may, for a while, become preoccupied with images of your loved one. You may see or sense your loved ones presence. You may begin to wonder if you are going crazy.

You can help yourself through grief. 1. Acknowledge the loss. 2. Accept the pain of grief. Try to live THROUGH it, not avoid it. 3. Share your thoughts and feelings. Find enough compassionate listeners. You can talk - - more than one person can listen! 4. Understand that each person has an individual timetable for grief. Each person grieves separately and differently. We move through grief at our own pace. 5. Find your sense of humor. Try to hang on to it! 6. Get some physical exercise. If nothing else, jog your memory. 7. Learn to hug again. 8. Accept yourself. Understand you are someone new. Acknowledge that change. 9. Begin to become the person you already are . . . 10. Remember, though death comes, **LOVE NEVER GOES AWAY!!!**

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Books about the experiences of grief have been very helpful to most of us, but at times we have to search for those books that allow us to look at life differently and grow from that experience. This book is one of them.

Book Review - Editor

The Power of Kindness - The Unexpected Benefits of Leading a Compassionate Life

by Piero Ferrucci

The author examines more than a dozen aspects of kindness and guides the reader to the realization that now more than ever, we all need to pick up the pace that will lead us to individual happiness as well as the happiness of those around us. This thought provoking work provides a simple but profound concept of the surprising secret to a happy life: acting with kindness.

With a preface by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, this book has so much to offer the reader through discussions of warmth, forgiveness, empathy, respect, memory, gratitude, joy, and humility. A must read that will change your perspective and help you pay it forward through a kind act while reaping the benefits for yourself.

Sunday Pasta *by Dominic Murgido*

When I was growing up, Sunday was pasta day. It was rare if we did not have pasta on a Sunday. It was anticipated and delivered by my Mom's great cooking. And it was an experience of enjoying food together as one.

When I was married, we had pasta on Sunday occasionally and it brought back memories of my childhood and growing up in those early years. My wife and I would enjoy a meal together prepared by her with love.

I had pasta today and it is a Sunday as I write this to share with you. I experienced a mix of emotions and feelings of my childhood with my family as well as my married life with my wife, Sue.

The pasta was great with a glass of wine and some toasted garlic bread but something was missing. My family wasn't with me nor was my wife. My dog was at my feet as I enjoyed my dinner keeping me company as he has done these many years without her.

I enjoyed my dinner and reflected on how fortunate I was to have had such a wonderful family growing up that provided me with these kind of warm memories and how extra lucky I was to have met a girl at college and began a life together as a married couple. A life that was filled with joy, companionship, and shared interests that made us the best for each other during our time together.

Enjoying pasta on a Sunday is one of those things that I occasionally do and remember. It is only one of many memories that bridge the gap between the past and my present reality and it feels good to acknowledge this and accept it.

I am sure there are many memories that you have that can help you bridge that same gap that exists in your present life. I encourage you to allow your fond memories to help you open up and experience the joy in remembering.

As long as you have memories, you are never *really* alone.



An Entry From My Journal

"Sometimes in the middle of the night as I come out of a deep sleep and re-adjust in bed and close my eyes, I really believe that I am not alone in bed. I recall back to my previous life and think she's still here - and when I reach out - no one is."

- Editor

