



Hear the Music Before the Song is Over

by Michael Lemm

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from the above titled article. One of the most important things I learned after my wife Sue died was to not take anything or anyone for granted. I regret not practicing that before. Live in the moment. Life is a gift.

...If you were going to die soon and had only one call to make, who would you call and what would you say? And why are you waiting?

Have you ever watched children playing on a merry go round or listened to the rain lapping on the ground?

Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight or gazed at the sun into the fading light?

Do you run through each day on the fly? When you ask, "How are you?" Do you hear the reply?

When the day is done, do your lie in your bed with the next hundred chores running through your head?

Ever told your child, "We'll do it tomorrow." And in your haste, not see his sorrow?

Ever lost touch? Let a friendship die? Just call to say "Hi".

When you worry and hurry through your day, it is like an unopened gift...Thrown away.

Life is not a race. Make each day count.

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streetdirectory.com*

Welcome *from the Editor*

A new year is upon us and with that a new year of healing and peace among us. I wish all of our readers a Happy and Healthy New Year.

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, Etters, 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 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.

I would like to encourage all readers of this newsletter to make comment on what you read or make a suggestion as to what you would like to know more about. If there is a resource you have been trying to find, please ask us to help. Please email sudsspirit@gmail.com. **sudSSpirit** is here to help you throughout your grief journey and our meetings will never end. Our structure is designed to provide continuous monthly meetings. We want to be there for you to provide the support and validation that you need to move forward with your life.

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, and a poem. But that's not all. This issue includes an article about Journaling the editor wrote for the first issue of this very newsletter. Other articles include; Suicide Grief, Moving into a New Life, and Hear the Music Before the Song is Over.

Wishing you Peace and Comfort in 2016

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"Our ability to feel sad is what stirs compassion in others and empathy in ourselves. There is no growth without loss, and no art without longing."

- A. O. Scott



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.bavna.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



My Discovery of Journaling by Dominic Murgido

*Re-printed from the inaugural edition of
the sudSSpirit Quarterly Newsletter
Fall, 2008.*



If someone told me five years ago, that I would journal some day, I would have looked at them like they were crazy. "Journaling" was something that did not appeal to me. Maybe it took a life changing situation, like the sudden unexpected death of my wife, for my opinion to change on this topic.

Within days of my wife's passing, I found myself jotting down thoughts, fears, emotions, anger, regret, and confusion on 3 x 5 index cards. Each day I would complete two or three cards with expressions of pain, frustration, and loneliness.

It is so common for those of us that have experienced the loss of a loved one to have feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. I found journaling to be a great release of my sadness and depression that I was experiencing with the knowledge that I was now without my wife. It also helped me with the struggle of so many unanswered questions concerning the rest of my life.

This daily ritual continued and by the end of the first year, I completed about 250 cards. I received a journal of blank lined pages from someone as a gift. It was at that time I realized I was "journaling" and did not even realize it through my unrefined methods of utilizing simple 3 x5 index cards.

Sometimes I would write a single word or only a few words to express my feelings. Other times I wrote incomplete sentences. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling did not matter when I wrote my thoughts and feelings. The content of what I was writing is what mattered. Depending on the time of year or the relevancy to a special date, there are many thoughts to reflect upon and write about. I date the entries and sometimes note the weather or a significant news item that is happening along with my thoughts. I reflect on things and how different it is without my wife being with me. I often comment on "how she would say this or ask that" if she were physically here with me or "how much I miss that about her".

My writings are not all sad; they also contain happy thoughts, memories, and even questions. There is something about writing down a question that makes it easier to deliberate the answer. And if you do not answer the question, it will be asked again on another day as you continue to write your thoughts. Eventually you will answer it or resolve the conflict somehow.

I write daily, usually at the end of the day. I pick

this time for the silence of the night and in a way as a ritualistic approach to going to bed alone, something that I am not used to doing. I find comfort in that time of day, pondering my thoughts and reducing my experiences to writing. I realize that putting my thoughts on paper allows me to vent, gives me a sense of peace, and provides me with an unofficial progress report at the same time.

Writings can be as simple as random thoughts jotted down that can become priceless months or years later as you process your experiences and feelings. I wrote for about a year and a half before I even thought about looking back at some of what I had already written in the past. I have never read all that I have written nor do I go back regularly, just on occasion.

When you return to the past writings that you created, it allows you to see where you were and compare that to where you are now so that you can further understand where you are going. I read things that I wrote that I couldn't believe. It's amazing how you can believe in something at one time, and have another viewpoint on the same thing a month or so later. I also read some parts that made me cry all over again or smile at my humility. This process of writing can bring tears. There is nothing healthier than a good cry as you grieve your loved one.

Whatever works for you is what you do. Some people are more comfortable with a keyboard when expressing thoughts as an electronic "journal" on a computer. I began on index cards and expanded to an organized bound book form.

I continue to write with a pen on lined pages in a more traditional journal format. This form is best for me because it can be taken anywhere and be able to write anyplace. I find that when we think of things or experience an emotion as it relates to our bereavement, it is important to recognize it and jot it down. It may help us later or might mean something in the future as we continue to work through our grief journey.

When my wife died, my life and how I view the world has changed. This new world of mine is without her. I try to use my time of sorrow in order to grow as a new person through the journaling process. Journaling is for your benefit and you can choose to keep it private to you. I encourage you to start and recognize how it can help you as it does for me.

Progress is something we all like to see in ourselves, especially in our own time of need. Our time of need combined with our grief experiences will yield with time. Be patient and allow yourself to heal.



Moving Into Our New Life *by Ellen Perry Berkeley*

I've heard it called our "new life," without our beloved spouse. It is indeed a new life. We wouldn't have chosen it, if we'd had a choice. But a new life is precisely what we're facing and we need to accept it and make it fully our own.

How do we do this? Sometimes things just happen, as we go through the grieving process.

If, however, we're not "moving on" on our own, how can we make it happen? Let me convey to you what I did and how it worked for me. Perhaps some of you have also done this. If you haven't, perhaps you might just follow my example, and watch it work for you too.

I've mentioned Grafton, Vermont, in an earlier column in this newsletter. It was a place Roy and I loved, and we managed a "Grafton Getaway" each year, staying in the wonderful inn and partaking of whatever was available at that time in that remarkable little town.

In spite of the superb memories I have of the two of us there together, I realized that I wanted to go there now on my own. Without knowing it, maybe I wanted to move further into my "new life."

But I didn't want to go there alone. Suddenly, I knew exactly who to ask. Hallie is a lovely new friend, exactly two days younger than I am (we discovered) and similarly widowed although more recently than I was. I suggested that we celebrate our birthdays in Grafton, and she eagerly agreed. She had been there once, and had found the town memorable – its buildings so magnificently preserved, its historical museum so expertly managed.

She hadn't stayed at the inn, but I knew she'd be as pleased as Roy and I always were with its unusual cordiality, its charming rooms, its comfortable public areas, and its friendly service (especially at breakfast, which is nothing less than a banquet).

The inn offered a special rate for a second night, so Hallie and I reserved our two rooms for two nights. On our first evening, we played Scrabble in the otherwise empty living room. Huge fun. Roy never liked games, and although this never

damaged our relationship, I regretted his attitude. Long ago, I played every possible game with my Dad, who loved jacks – and Pick-Up Sticks, and checkers, and rummy, and more -- as much as I did.



On our second night, Hallie and I had a marvelous time sitting on the inn's front porch, gazing up and down the picturesque Main Street as the sun slowly went down and the evening quietly settled in. For our hour (or two), bouncing gently back and forth on the historic rocking chairs, we talked even more openly and became even better friends. Roy and I never spent end-of-day time on this porch. Anyone would love it, but I found the experience particularly important.

I was not just coming back to a place that Roy and I had loved. I was making this experience "my own." I'll never forget being in Grafton with Roy, but now I have additional memories. I can almost hear myself telling Roy about this new stay – visiting with a new friend and enjoying the town in a new way. He'd be pleased, I'm sure, as he always was with whatever delighted me, encouraged me, and comforted me.

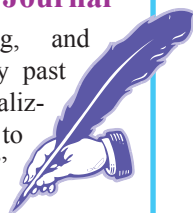
I wasn't even sad, being there without him – I guess I was having too good a time. I probably could describe my two days of this new Grafton getaway as "living in the moment." But it was more. In a way that pleased me, I was moving decisively into my new life.

There are no rules about this journey. Just take it. Enjoy it. And know that your beloved spouse would be pleased for you. Because I think of Roy's love for me as "undying," I know he'd be glad to see me take this important next step in my life.

An Entry From My Journal

"Reflections, remembering, and reliving moments from my past life with my wife and realizing how lucky a man I am to have shared them with her."

-Editor



Thoughts to Ponder

- Editor

"When it is dark enough, you can see the stars."

-Chares A. Beard

"In the depth of winter I finally learned there was in me invincible summer."

-Albert Camus

"Suffering isn't ennobling, recovery is."

-Christiaan Barnard



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,
Richland, PA
3rd Tues. of the month 6 PM
Richland Community Library

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

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- Reading, Lebanon and York, PA

lmurray2@comcast.net

- Etters, PA

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- 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





Suicide Grief: Healing After a Loved One's Suicide

Editor's note: *This article was edited for space requirements.*

When a loved one commits suicide, overwhelming emotions can leave you reeling. Your grief might be heart wrenching. At the same time, you might be consumed by guilt — wondering if you could have done something to prevent your loved one's death.

As you face life after a loved one's suicide, remember that you don't have to go through it alone.

Brace for powerful emotions

A loved one's suicide can trigger intense emotions. For example:

- Shock. Disbelief and emotional numbness might set in. You might think that your loved one's suicide couldn't possibly be real.
- Anger. You might be angry with your loved one for abandoning you or leaving you with a legacy of grief — or angry with yourself or others for missing clues about suicidal intentions.
- Guilt. You might replay “what if” and “if only” scenarios in your mind, blaming yourself for your loved one's death.
- Despair. You might be gripped by sadness, loneliness or helplessness. You might have a physical collapse or even consider suicide yourself.
- Confusion. Many people try to make some sense out of the death, or try to understand why their loved one took his or her life. But, you'll likely always have some unanswered questions.
- Feelings of rejection. You might wonder why your relationship wasn't enough to keep your loved one from committing suicide.

You might continue to experience intense reactions during the weeks and months after your loved one's suicide — including nightmares, flashbacks, difficulty concentrating, social withdrawal and loss of interest in usual activities — especially if you witnessed or discovered the suicide.

Dealing with stigma

Many people have trouble discussing suicide, and might not reach out to you. This could leave you feeling isolated or abandoned if the support you expected to receive just isn't there.

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As you face life after a loved one's suicide, remember that you don't have to go through it alone.

Adopt healthy coping strategies

The aftermath of a loved one's suicide can be physically and emotionally exhausting. As you work through your grief, be careful to protect your own well-being.

- Keep in touch.
- Grieve in your own way.
- Be prepared for painful reminders.
- Don't rush yourself.
- Expect setbacks.
- Consider a support group for families affected by suicide.

Know when to seek professional help

If you experience intense or unrelenting anguish or physical problems, ask your doctor or mental health provider for help. Seeking professional help is especially important if you think you might be depressed or you have recurring thoughts of suicide. Unresolved grief can turn into complicated grief, where painful emotions are so long lasting and severe that you have trouble resuming your own life.

Depending on the circumstances, you might benefit from individual or family therapy



Book Review - Editor

A Year in the Grief Valley

by John Pavlovitz

The author, a pastor and blogger from North Carolina, has much to say in this short under 40 page booklet. This quick read is filled with insight and writings of the author's feelings from the first year after the recent death of his Father.

At the end of each of the seven chapters, Pavlovitz provides reflections for the reader. A great simple guide for anyone who grieves that provides validation of their own feelings and emotions.

— either to get you through the worst of the crisis or to help you adjust to life after suicide. Short-term medication can be helpful in some cases, too.

Face the future with a sense of peace

In the aftermath of a loved one's suicide, you might feel like you can't go on or that you'll never enjoy life again.

In truth, you might always wonder why it happened — and reminders might trigger painful feelings even years later. Eventually, however, the raw intensity of your grief will fade. The tragedy of the suicide won't dominate your days and nights.

Understanding the complicated legacy of suicide and how to cope with palpable grief can help you find peace and healing, while still honoring the memory of your loved one.

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Winter Surprise

by John Kreiser

Who says that winter months are dull?
 What right have they to say?
 I'm certain that they're sound asleep
 When dawn begins the day
 Each sunrise is a work of art
 The colors are so bold
 The beauty of this brief event
 Excites both young and old
 The sky may burn a fiery red
 Or blush in pink and blue
 Sometimes, the glare of orange on gray
 Lends contrast to it's hue
 The clouds form giant window shades
 Restricting the sun's glow
 They force it to appear as just
 A stripe, when they hang low
 Still other days, the sky is filled
 From east to west to north
 As every color known to man
 Chaotically comes forth
 This ever-changing picture that
 We witness at sunrise
 Assures us that God does exist
 The proof's before our eyes
 With His own hands, He paints the sky
 For all the world to see
 It's He who rules the heavens and
 Is Lord to you and me

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