



dominicmurgido.com

sudSSpirit



Quarterly Newsletter

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED IN
LOVING MEMORY OF...

Brenda Julian

FALL 2025

Volume 18, Issue 1

Welcome *from the Editor*

There are struggles that we have in common, struggles that are unknown by those who aren't experiencing this thing called grief. You will eventually be able to handle all of these struggles, some easier than others, but you will handle them. There are some things I have yet to do, go through, let go of, become, visit, and talk about. But these things will be completed someday, on my own timeframe.

Every change of the season provides us with a new outlook. It is up to us to either dwell on another season as it changes and stay trapped in negative thoughts and feelings or to embrace it, be positive, and make it the best that we can as we move forward one season at a time. Happy Fall!

sudSSpirit, founded in 2008, stands for "Sudden Unexpected Death of a Spouse – Survivors in Participation to Inform, Renew, Improve, and Triumph." Social media posts concerning **sudSSpirit** are now on my personal Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/dominic.murgido.

Please check out my website:

www.dominicmurgido.com.

for more information.

We also have a list of resources for support inside that may be helpful to you. Additional grief resources, videos, suggested books to read, and past issues of this newsletter can be found at www.dominicmurgido.com. You may also contact the editor/founder directly at 717-866-2401

or sudsspirit@gmail.com

or dmurgido@gmail.com

or www.dominicmurgido.com

Thank you to those who have been long time supporters of our group such as other grief support groups, churches, social service agencies and the Exeter Community Library. A thank you to all of the past attendees that have been helped and to the current attendees for believing in **sudSSpirit** as a helpful resource to help you in your time of need.

Together, We Can Help Each Other Heal.



Mission Statement

sudSSpirit wants to provide you with a supplemental group experience in addition to professional therapy and / or counseling sessions that are currently happening in the lives of those interested.

sudSSpirit does not take the place of professional guidance and we encourage you to seek therapy as required.

sudSSpirit wants to provide a comfortable setting with a sense of community among those in attendance. People should feel free to communicate and share feelings as it pertains to their journey through the grieving process.

sudSSpirit wants those in attendance to realize that they are not alone with this problem and the group is available to provide infinite support.

For additional information:

www.dominicmurgido.com

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Quarterly Quote *-Editor*

"The surest way to avoid grieving forever is to not put caps on the wells of our grief and try to walk away but to deal with grief honestly, embracing and experiencing its pain and anger as long as we need to. Only then are we able to incorporate the meaning of our loss into our lives and move forward."

**-Martha Whitmore Hickman,
"Healing After Loss"**



Resources

-Editor

www.dominicmurgido.com

St. Joseph's Spiritual Care, St. Joseph Medical Center

bereavement@pennstatehealth.psu.edu
610-378-2297

Family Guidance Center

www.familyguidancecenter.com
610-374-4963

Clear Water Wellness

www.cwwellness.com
610-750-9096

Greater Reading Mental Health Alliance

www.grmha.org
610-775-3000

Diakon/Lutheran Home at Topton

www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp
610-682-1337 / 877-342-5667

Lori Kuhn, RN-BC

Grief Recovery Method Specialist

www.lorikuhngriefrecovery.com
610-334-9845

Pathways Center for Grief & Loss

www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org
800-924-7610

<https://www.211.org>

www.speakinggrief.org

www.save.org (suicide loss)

www.griefshare.org

www.grief.com (David Kessler)

www.opentohope.com

www.unitedway.org
(bereavement support)

www.healingenergy.world



Her last pocket size planner

by Dominic Murgido

How many of you use your phones or another electronic device to record your appointments, comings and goings, events, vacations, days off, etc.? Probably most of you. I'm still old school and have to purchase a pocket size planner / calendar annually to record important dates and events of my daily life throughout the year. And then at the end of the year I would store it away and eventually discard it years later.

Recently I was trying to remember a date when something happened years ago and went to my archive of personal calendars to try to find it. Not only was I able to find what I was looking for, but discovered my wife's last pocket size planner / calendar. I forgot I even kept it. I immediately froze in my thoughts and actions and held it with reverence.

Here was a historical review of events and daily happenings in Sue's handwriting on calendar pages from the last year she was alive. I stopped what I was doing at the time and sat down to page through the final year of her life on earth. It actually started on the last month of the previous year. Most of it was her work schedule but it also included the date we saw a Christmas play, a weekend trip we did to Chicago, and the Saturday we got our Christmas tree that year.

As I paged through the last year of her life, there were doctor appointments, Hal's vet and grooming appointments as well as Hal's schedule for his therapy visits, notes on a winery tour weekend we spent in the finger lakes in NY, my teaching schedule, the last Broadway play we attended, her hair appointments, our yard sale we had on Memorial Day weekend, dates when our daughter was coming home, and vacation weeks that we were off together. Turning the page onto the month of January, it was difficult not to focus on her birthday, a Friday, with a note that I was off for it and the following Monday, with her scheduled time for work, which she

never arrived to due to the accident that killed her. Going into February, it was clearly marked a full week of our long awaited and planned trip to Belgium and Amsterdam that I would be canceling shortly after her death.

Tears flowed freely onto the pages of this open calendar while staring at Sue's handwriting and remembering all of these events once noted by a very much alive and vibrant woman I loved very much. It seemed to me to be another lifetime ago, another realm of time where we once existed in love and harmony. A place that no longer exists and I can never experience again.

I looked at my own planner / calendar and realized that whatever I currently write and have written is what I need to know and to remember to do, attend, and make use of my time. What I write and what any one of us writes on calendars or types into our cell phones do this task knowing it is for us and us alone. It is designed to keep us in the know and somewhat organized.

What we fail to recognize is that someday our recordings will become known and reviewed by someone else, and it may very well be a loved one who will cherish the mundane notes, remarks, and life's activities that were at one time of great importance to the writer. And seeing this will bring tears and joy to whomever is reading it, knowing that this person who was loved so deeply by us will forever be in our hearts. I miss and love you, Sue. Your spirit lives within me.



When Grief Lingers and Robs Life of Meaning, It's Time to Get Help.

by Kim Painter

When we lose someone dear, it's normal to feel twinges and waves of grief, even years after the death, says psychologist Robert Neimeyer. "That in itself is simply a response to the informed heart," says the director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition.

But what Neimeyer and other mental health experts now call prolonged grief disorder (PGD) is something different.

It's the kind of distress John Barba, 76, of Oakton, Virginia, still felt six years after the death of his wife, Margie, from cancer. One day, he says, he was at home listening to a favorite opera when he was overcome with an out-of-body experience "that Margie was dying, that she was still here, she was dying upstairs in the bedroom."

Barba, a school psychologist, says that event helped him realize he had never "faced the horror of her death." He'd had therapy on and off, he says, but still felt "locked in," and detached from life. He couldn't work full time, enjoy old friends or savor time with his children and grandchildren. He couldn't look at pictures of his wife or talk about her. At his younger son's wedding, he felt no joy, just intense anger that his wife wasn't there. In 2017, Barba got specialized therapy for what was then called complicated grief. He's doing much better today.

Experts hope many more people will get similar help as the result of some recent changes. After years of debate over whether grief could ever be a mental illness, PGD was added to psychiatry's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) in 2022. (The DSM is the health care handbook for the diagnosis of mental health disorders.) That means more mental health professionals are learning to recognize it and provide targeted therapies, including the type Barba underwent at Columbia University's Center for Prolonged Grief in New York.

What prolonged grief disorder is — and isn't

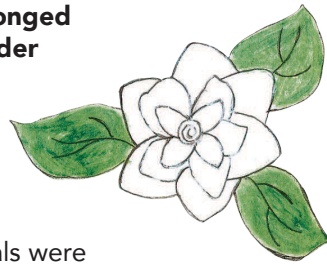
For years, mental health professionals were surprised when standard therapies for depressed people did not work for prolonged grief, says M. Katherine Shear, M.D., founding director of the center at Columbia. Today, it's clear that PGD differs not only from typical grief but also from depression and other mental health problems, she says.

Under the DSM-5 definition, PGD can be diagnosed a year after a loss. Another authoritative source, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), puts the mark at six months. But it's not just about the length of grieving, Neimeyer says: "The question is, is your grief disabling?"

People with PGD yearn for their lost loved one with an urgency that lingers much longer than it does for most people, Shear says. Many also struggle to believe the death really happened and avoid reminders that it did. They may feel that their lives have no meaning, struggle to relate to others and feel emotionally numb, intensely sad or angry. And those symptoms don't just happen occasionally: they happen most days, according to the American Psychiatric Association.

They are "extremely shaken to the core," says Holly Prigerson, a professor of sociology in medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York. "They don't really understand how they can have a happy future without this person in it."

Bridget Clawson, 68, of Edmonds, Washington, had such feelings, she says, long after the 2009 death of her husband Ted. "I thought that it was not possible for him to be dead and gone,"



she says. "I'm a science believer ... but I really felt like maybe he would show up in somebody else's body."

Clawson, who is the author of *The Widow Lessons: One Widow's Journey Through Complicated Grief*, was diagnosed with PGD two years after Ted's death. When she joined a grief support group, she thought she might be out of place among newly bereaved people but soon realized she fit right in. Eventually, she says, she was able to accept that her husband was dead and to keep his memory alive in healthier ways — such as talking about him with her seven grandchildren.

Disabling grief is treatable

The psychiatric association says 7 to 10 percent of bereaved adults develop PGD. Some studies suggest the number is closer to 4 percent. It's most common in older adults and caregivers and after sudden or traumatic deaths.

"When Grief Lingers"

Continued on page 6

Thoughts to Ponder

"Those who died yesterday had plans for this morning and those that died this morning had plans for tonight. Don't take life for granted. In the blink of an eye, everything can change. So, forgive often and love with a full heart. You never know when you may not have that chance again."

-MindsJournal

-Editor



3 Tips for Coping with Grief During the Holidays

by Dr. Margaret Rutherford

It's hard to describe. It's bad enough that someone dies. Especially if they are young. When it occurs during the holiday season, all the jingling bells and fa-la-la-las are a crude backdrop for pain. The stark emptiness of loss throbs through your veins. You can barely breathe.

Those who have had loved ones die at all experience a difficult enough time. "How am I going to get through everyone talking about blessings and presents?" "I just want to shut my eyes and it be January." Whatever scab that may have formed over the wound is ripped off. Memories of past holidays come flooding back. Gut-wrenching sobs become the lonely connection with the one who will not be there; for this holiday.

Or maybe it's too painful to feel anything. I have written about my own parents' deaths at Christmas in 2007. December 17th, my mom. December 24th, my dad. Going through the motions seemed paramount. After all, I had a 13-year-old who was excited about Christmas. My husband's parents and other friends were counting on me for Christmas dinner. All the food was bought. Even some prepared. I don't remember much except trying not to cry.

I hope that yours is not one of the families whose loss occurs during the holidays. But about 1/12 of you are. Three pieces of advice:

1. Especially if it has been recent, allow others to help you. You could still be in shock. It is the time for receiving from those who love you.
2. Know that your grief will be unique to you. Don't feel that you must grieve the same way others do. Everyone will be different. Do the things that take care of you. That might be distraction. It might be the doing of tasks. It might be journaling about your pain. Whatever helps.
3. Understand that there are many facets

of grief. Anger, denial, despondency; all of these feelings are normal. The most important thing is not to become stuck in any one feeling. It takes time; frequently a lot of it.

If you do find that you are trapped in anger or deep sadness, please reach out to a therapist, a pastor, or a friend. If not, your grief may consume you, and you may become how you define yourself. You can trudge through it with the help of faith, friends, or the knowledge that you must. If you are not going to die along with them, you can celebrate their life as well as your own.

You can find more of Dr. Margaret at <http://drmargaretrutherford.com>.

Reprinted with permission:

Huffington Post. January 25, 2015



An Entry From My Journal



"I know I appreciated every moment but I took it all for granted; to be loved and to have your spouse to come home to everyday. Until everything topples, we have no idea what we actually have, how precariously and perfectly life all hangs together."

-Editor



Christmas stockings come out of storage

by Dominic Murgido

They haven't been part of my annual decoration routine for years although I saw them every time I pulled out the boxes to sort through after Thanksgiving. These are not Christmas stockings that you would purchase at a store or online. The stockings I speak of were knitted by my wife many years ago for us along with our daughter to hang by the fireplace with the anticipation of a gift from Santa. Each has our name on it as well as either a candle, bell, or evergreen trees.

I'm not sure why this time I decided to include them in the few decorations that I do display over the holidays. It just felt right and maybe nostalgic of Christmas's past when life was so much full of promise and hope when we were a family of three.

Santa will not be stopping at these stockings to fill them because just being present and seeing them out after all these years has filled my heart with beautiful memories and hope for tomorrow.

Editor note: This reflection was written in November 2024.

Grief and the Myth of Closure

by Ashley Davis Bush

When faced with grief, we often ask, "When will I begin to feel better? When will I return to normal? When will I achieve some closure?" The idea of closure in our culture is one of tidy endings, a sense of completion. The reason we long for closure, of course, is because we would like to be rid of this pain. We would like to shut out the sad, confused, desperate, angry feelings from our lives, putting all of this pain behind us so that we can feel joy again.

For some of us, we expect "closure" to happen after the funeral or memorial service or after a loved one's room has been cleared out. For others, we look for closure after a personal ritual, or after the first anniversary comes and goes. "Surely then, we will have closure," we think. We pray.

But what an odd concept really, closure.... as if we could turn the lock and throw away the key, as if we could truly close the door on our emotions and our love for someone lost. The truth, of course, is far more complex. The 'closure' that we all strive for loses its relevancy in the realms of loss and love.

Closure may work well in the world of practical matters – with business deals and real estate transactions. But closure does not apply to the human heart, not in a pure sense. It isn't possible to permanently close the door on the past as if it didn't exist. And why would we want to anyway . . . really? If we so thoroughly detached from our loss, we would not only close the door on the pain but we would also sever the connection to our loved one.

In losing someone dear to us, it's important to remember that the relationship itself is not over. Death cannot take away the love that weaves its way through every fiber of our being. Love will always triumph over death in this regard. We want to hold our cherished memories close to our heart, recognizing that our love is an essential part of us. In fact, we want to open the door, not close it, onto the reality of living



with loss.

Perhaps it is better to drop the idea of closure and think instead in terms of healing and growth. We can process our pain and move to deeper and

deeper levels of healing; we can find ways to move on while holding our relationship with our loved ones forever in our hearts; we can channel our pain into meaningful activities to honor our loved ones; we can even learn to smile again, laugh again, breathe again and love again.

Our loss becomes love transformed, transformed from that which relies on physical presence to something more pure. So let us not strive for closure. When we do that, we unwittingly close the door on all the love that we shared. And, truly, that would be a loss too terrible to bear.

Reprinted with permission: HOPELine Newsletter, October 2010



What the death of someone precious calls out for is not to be "resolved" or "explained" but to be expressed, storied, experienced, and gently, over time and in small doses, to find its way to meaning.

-Alan Wolfelt

Reprinted with permission from the author



sudSSpirit
Bereavement
Support Group
meets monthly.

Berks Chapter
Reading, PA
4th Tues. of the month
6 PM

Exeter Community Library
4569 Prestwick Drive
Reading, PA 19606

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-Editor



"When Grief Lingers"

Continued from page 3

People with a history of depression or bipolar disorder are at increased risk.

It's possible to have PGD along with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety or other mental health problems that require their own treatment.

Depression is distinct from PGD, because bad feelings are not just focused on the death, Prigerson says. For depressed people "everything stinks," she says.

The primary treatments for PGD itself are specialized forms of talk therapy. In the version developed by Shear, patients work through 16 weekly sessions to process their loss and look toward the future. Barba says a particularly helpful, though difficult, part for him was repeatedly telling the story of Margie's death. "Each time I did that with my therapist, there were different nuances that came out," he says. In a 2018 speech to death educators, he said the retelling reminded him that his wife "died at home, surrounded by family, with peace and respect." It "helped heal me," he said.

Other treatment ideas are under study. Prigerson and her colleagues, for example, are enrolling some patients in a study of naltrexone, a medication used in addiction treatment, on the theory that it might reduce feelings of yearning and craving for lost loved ones. They also are working on prevention efforts, including an app that will match bereaved people for mutual support and an already available website for griever called the Living Memory Home.

Moving on from disabling grief doesn't mean forgetting your loved one, Neimeyer says: "We need not only honor their memories with our anguish. We can honor their memories with our appreciation, with our gratitude, and by acting on the life lessons that we learned with or from them."

Reprinted with permission: aarp.org, July 2023

Your Pain is Not Your Connection

by Litza Williams

Or, perhaps I should say, that your pain is not your only connection. The pain in your grief is most certainly your connection to their absence. But it is unlikely that your pain is your connection to who they were. It is not the connection that most represents their life and your relationship.

I recently posted a list on Instagram of things that (at least for me) are my connections to the people I have lost. I shared this because I remember in my early grief when I feared that my pain changing, evolving, or becoming easier to carry was a sign that I must be losing my connection.

We have heard from thousands of people with this fear, so I know I am not alone. But what I also know, as griever and a grief therapist, is that my pain is not my connection. Your pain is not your connection.

In fact, it is often when our pain takes up less space that our other connections are able to strengthen and deepen.

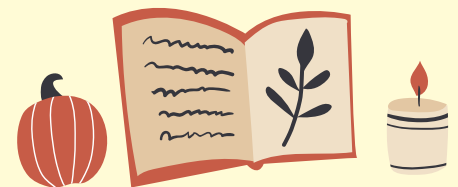
- If your pain is not your connection, what are your connections?
- Your connection is your memories.
- Your connection is the things they taught you.
- Your connection is your ability to imagine what they would say and the advice they would give you.
- Your connection is the moments you see something and think, they would have loved this.
- Your connection is visiting the places you always went together.
- Your connection is the co-destiny you create when you visit the places they always wanted to see but never did.
- Your connection is knowing you would never be the person you are had they

not lived.

- Your connection is doing the hard work of making the most of this "option B" life because you know that is what they would have wanted for you.

- Your connection is every time that you introduce someone new to them through your memories and stories, shouldering the pain and tears to the side long enough to say, they were amazing and I wish you could have met them.

Reprinted with permission: whatsyourgrief.com, May 2024



Find your Support
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Fuel your Spirit

www.dominicismurgido.com

