

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH OF A SPOUSE
BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP



dominicumurgido.com

sudS Spirit

Quarterly Newsletter



THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED
IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

John Bertocchi
Ken Greene
Roger Miller

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Welcome *from the Editor*

Happy New Year! This year marks the 15th Year that we, **sudSSpirit**, have been around. Our first support group meeting was in April, 2008 and our first newsletter came out in October of the same year. We have helped hundreds of people over the years through our support group, newsletters, conversations, public speaking events, and more recently two life experience books. If you were or are one of those that found solace with us, we'd like to hear from you. Please share with us how you found comfort or a little bit of peace along the way.

The poem that appears on our front page is from a friend of **sudSSpirit** who is no stranger to writing poetry. John Kreiser's poetry has graced many issues of this newsletter in the past and we re-print one he penned about our group. John was a former attendee and facilitator for **sudSSpirit** and we thank him for his long-time support.

Social media posts concerning **sudSSpirit** are now on my personal face book page:

www.facebook.com/dominic.murgido.

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. 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 additional information inside about our chapters. We also have a list of resources for support inside that may be helpful to you. Additional resources and books for suggested reading on the grieving process can also be found at **dominicumurgido.com**. This newsletter is available to anyone anywhere or any social service agency, hospice, support group, church, funeral home, medical office, library, hospital, clinic or organization anywhere FREE of charge via regular mail or email. 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. Current issue is also available at **dominicumurgido.com** as well as past issues that have been archived. You may also contact the editor/founder directly at 717-866-2401 or

sudsspirit@gmail.com / dmurgido@gmail.com / **dominicumurgido.com**

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 **sudSSpirit** and yourself to help you in your time of need. *Together We Can Help Each Other Heal.*

A Pathway to Healing and Hope

by John Kreiser

There's nothing like a life well-shared
With someone that you love
That special one beyond compare
A gift from high above
But, even in the best of lives
Things sometimes go awry
And when that tragic day arrives
You're left alone to cry
'Though many offer sympathy
Kind words as gentle rain
They lack the proper empathy
To comprehend your pain
An unexpected loss of spouse
Disastrous and unique
Casts dismal gloom upon your house
And leaves you feeling bleak
sudSSpirit's ready to relieve
Your overburdened heart
By offering a place to grieve
And make you feel a part
Of something larger than yourself
Where others share your grief
For having lost a spouse themselves
They too, desire relief
We share in one another's loss
Inviting deep reflection
True understanding comes across
Creating a connection
Recalling those no longer here
Expressing full emotion
Both laughter and unbridled tears
Apply a healing lotion
sudSSpirit is a place to find
A forward path to grow
By nurturing your peace of mind
It helps you to let go
Of much of what is weighing down
Your broken heart and soul
As we move onward, breaking ground
Advancing towards the goal
Of life beyond the one we knew
Before that somber day
Enabling us to start anew
And help us on our way.

Reprinted with permission from the author

Dominic Murgido - Editor

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Quarterly Quote

- Editor

"When you suffer from an incomprehensible loss you think you're sort of safe the rest of your life-like-one heartbreaking tragedy per person. But life isn't like that. Some get a lifetime pass while others get more than their share of grief. And the worse part is, it doesn't make you immune to even more."

-Harlan Coban, *The Woods*

Together we can help each other heal



717-866-2401 / dominicumurgido.com

Resources

- Editor

www.dominicmurgido.com

St Joseph's Spiritual Care
www.thefutureofhealthcare.org
 610-378-2297

Amedisys/Compassionate
 Care Hospice
 1-800-777-5109 / 717-944-4466

Family Guidance Center
www.familyguidancecenter.com
 610-374-4963

Clear Water Wellness
www.cwwellness.com
 610-750-9096

Promedica / Heartland Home
 Health Care and Hospice
www.heartlandhospice.com
 610-373-6898 or 866-380-5874

www.grasp.org (grief recovery
 after a substance passing)

Circle of Life Coalition
www.circleoflifecoalition.org

www.save.org (suicide loss)

www.griefshare.org

Diakon / Lutheran Home at Topton
www.diakon.org/fls/NPLoss.asp
 610-682-1337 / 877-342-5667

Bennington Area VNA & Hospice
www.bavnah.org 802-442-5502

Bayada Hospice Services
www.bayada.com 888-790-3025
 610-367-1608

Pathways Center for Grief & Loss
www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org
 800-924-7610

Spiritrust Lutheran Home
 Care & Hospice Mission Care
 800-840-9081

www.211.org (United Way)

www.speakinggrief.org

www.grief.com (David Kessler)

www.opentohope.com



Death came in an instant *by Dominic Murgido*

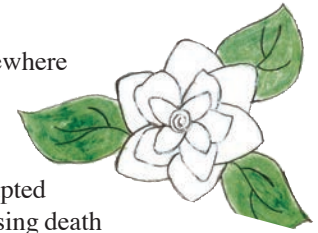
I didn't know the woman that called me on the last Friday of the month. She sounded in distress, unsure, and was seeking help with the terrible grief she was experiencing after the loss of her son, her daughter in law, and her grandchild. This sudden unexpected death of a family of three happened just five days prior. I know she was in shock. I only wish I would have been able to magically wave a wand and help her in that instant. But those of us that have suffered through the anguish of that early hurt and horror of grief know there is no magic wand. I calmly spoke to her and guided her to resources that may help her emphasizing seeing her family doctor to also gather referrals and peace of mind. I didn't even ask for her name nor was she of the mindset to offer it.

Hanging up from that call, I felt a disturbance in my stomach, an awful taste in my mouth, and numbness throughout my body. I wiped tears from my eyes reacting to her loss and despair knowing there was a time I was in her shoes. What detail she did provide allowed me to search online to discover the horrific multi vehicle accident where the death of her family of three occurred while eight other people were hospitalized on a late Sunday afternoon. According to the preliminary investigation six vehicles were travelling in the same direction on an interstate highway in the south and somehow managed to collide sending two of them into the median then igniting. One of the burning vehicles had three people trapped inside and bystanders tried to save them. All three died at the scene. Seven others, including several children, were transported to area hospitals while a 17 yr. old was airlifted to a medical center.

Vehicle accidents happen daily on our roads and most times are preventable. Careless, negligent, distracted, under the influence, speeding, recklessness can all be causes of fender benders to fatalities. I am so familiar with the heart-breaking feeling when a loved one is killed by the action or non-action of another while driving. None of us know when we enter a vehicle if we will make it to our destination safely because we can believe we are the safest driver but it is the other driver(s) that may not be and we are the ones that have to be alert, attentive, and ready to react to avoid a catastrophe.

After reading this, I continued to cry for this horrific loss of life and injuries to others from an accident where a full investigation was underway. Sudden unexpected death and injury of people

on their way somewhere at the end of a weekend never thinking that this trip was to be interrupted for some reason causing death to three and injury to eight others.



The three that died had local ties to the area and when the obituary showed up in the paper accompanied by a brief article, my thoughts turned to the woman on the phone that day who was in such pain from loss. For whatever reason I had to attend the service. I was one of hundreds who came and I sat among them in prayer and thought about what happened and how much their lives will be missed by family and friends. I thought about all that they will not be able to experience and offer to others in life, especially the twenty-year old college student. I thought of the surviving family members and other relatives and how empty their lives have now become.

The service and celebration of life was heartfelt and meaningful and my presence allowed me to offer prayer for those that died and those that remain in a world turned upside down. Each and every day is a gift. Live life to the fullest. Stay close to family and friends. Enjoy every day with a new sense of wonder. In a heartbeat, everything can change.



Book Review - Editor

Grief Day by Day: Simple Practices and Daily Guidance for Living with Loss

by Jan Warner

An incredible grief resource book that covers the fifty-two weeks of the year with daily reflections, thoughts, and themed topics with suggested exercises. Easy to read and follow and very helpful to anyone dealing with the loss of a loved one.

After the loss of her husband, the author founded "Grief Speaks Out", a community of hope for over 2 million people worldwide.

Grief is the price we pay for love. *Grief Day by Day* will help you understand your feelings while trying to help guide you through your worst moments. This book provides you with the tools you need to have faith and hope in your grief journey.

Grief In The New Year: 5 Mindful Tips To Cope *by Heather Stang MA C-IAYT*

Grief in the new year is never easy. I have been writing about New Year's Grief for a decade, and I know that on New Year's Eve the MindfulnessAndGrief.com website is busier than any other night of the year. I share this because I want you to know that you are not alone.

Whether your loved one died in 2021 or decades ago, when you are grieving, New Year's does not pass by without your thinking of, and yearning for, the person you love and lost. It is normal to feel strong emotions. It is normal to not know what to do.

So let's take a collective breath in, and out, to honor all our fellow humans who are missing someone right now. This includes you.

The new year is a marker in time. As we transition from 2021 into 2022, some of you may be feeling ambivalent. Part of you may be digging in your heels, while another part can't wait for this awful year to end.

However you are feeling, please own it. Acknowledge the spectrum of feelings without judgement or shame. This will give you the space to tend to what hurts while loving the memories that remain.

As with other holidays, anniversaries, and days that end in -y, feeling sad, angry, anxious, resistant, confused, detached, or any other difficult emotion is par for the course when you are grieving. Instead of fighting the reality that things are different, let go a little and allow yourself to do things a little differently than before. Here are a few ideas to help you cope with grief in the new year.

5 Tips to Cope with Grief in the New Year

1. Focus on self-compassion and self-care instead of self-improvement.

If you are grieving in the new year, you may want to skip the typical New Year's resolutions and instead focus on self-care for your grieving mind, body, and spirit. Simple things like getting good sleep, eating nourishing food, and exercising a little bit each day will help your body and mind support you during loss. However, do these things with an attitude of self-care instead of self-improvement, which is often implied in our resolutions.

Don't add to your suffering by trying to attain an unrealistic goal. Instead, treat yourself as you would treat a beloved friend in the same position. You can even start compassionately tending your grief with my free New Year's Eve Grief Meditation Retreat at Home.

2. Create your own mantra to replace "Happy New Year."

If you are like most grieving people, the idea of being happy is a bridge too far from where you are right now, but since you are going to hear these words again and again, you may as well incorporate them into your self-care practice. Instead of feeling bad for not feeling happy, or angry that someone would assume you could feel happy, use these three ubiquitous words as a reminder to send yourself compassion.

Try this: Each time you see or hear "Happy New Year," offer yourself words of kindness that resonate with you. For example, "May I treat myself with kindness this year," or "May I have a Compassionate New Year," or simply "This is hard and I am doing my best." This not only puts you back in the driver's seat so you have a modicum of control over your experience, but it is also a great bell of awareness that can remind you to take care of yourself.

3. Know that you are not leaving your loved one behind.

When you cross the threshold of a new year without your special

person by your side, it can feel like you are leaving them behind. That isn't the case. Yes, the annual change of the calendar is a marker that time is passing, but you will never forget your special person, no matter how many years go by.

Take some time out early this year to reflect on the ways you carry your special person with you. What habits, likes, dislikes, hobbies, or mannerisms do you share with them? What are your favorite memories of your time together? If they are a blood relative, in what ways do you look like them? They have left their mark on your heart, and that will never go away.

4. Prioritize your grief-work with your new calendar.

Instead of just scheduling things you have to do, use your new calendar to plan what you need to do to support yourself this year. While none of us have a crystal ball, most people find holidays and anniversaries especially challenging. Record them on your calendar, and plan how you want to spend those special days. If you are a member of Awaken, you will find a roadmap and worksheet that helps you fill the day with meaning.

And knowing what you are going to do on these special grief-days may help reduce your anxiety. Whether scheduling coffee over Zoom with a supportive friend on your loved one's birthday, or joining a wider circle of friends and family to reminisce on the anniversary of their death, be sure to connect with others unless you really prefer to spend time alone.

You can also plan ahead to attend grief support groups and memorial events through your local hospice or grief group, many of which are offered online during the pandemic.

I host the Awaken Meditation & Journaling for Grief Group online every Tuesday, and can tell you firsthand how beneficial regular group support can be. Members of Awaken also benefit from a library of grief resources, including guided meditations, videos, journaling prompts, and other supportive self-care tools.

Prioritize your group by putting it on your calendar now, before work and other obligations take over. You can also block off self-care time for self-massage, yoga, meditation, journaling, or just free time to do as you wish.

5. Steady your mind in the present with meditation.

The human brain is rarely fully present, and this is especially true when we are grieving. Part of us wants to fast forward and leave this awful time behind, but an even bigger part wants to turn around and sprint back to the time when our loved one was still alive.

The reality, of course, is that we can't control the passing of time, but we can control what we do with our attention. In the meditation world, we call this bouncing around "monkey mind." Although it is just a side-effect of being human, ruminating rarely reduces our suffering.

There are countless ways you can learn to tame your mind with meditation, but I find that in the early days, months, and even years of grief, focusing meditation practices can be especially helpful.

Try this: with your eyes open or closed, turn your attention toward your breath. As you breathe in, silently say to yourself – **In**. As you breathe out, silently say to yourself – **Out**.

Do this over and over each time you breathe, for three to five minutes. When your monkey mind wanders off, find your breath again and start over. It doesn't matter how often you need to begin again. After a few minutes, you may feel calmer and more in control of your own mind.

*Reprinted with permission: mindfulnessandgrief.com
December 20, 2021 Article edited for length- Editor*



Chasing the Shadow of Grief *by: Nan Zastrow*

Nearly two decades, and still counting. Might we still be chasing the shadow of grief? Or is the shadow of grief a forever thing, one that will always be there no matter how we try to shed it?

I'm sure some friends and family wonder why Gary and I are still absorbed in the work of grief. They may wonder why we still attend grief conferences, facilitate grief support groups, talk and write about grief, and mingle with a group of friends who all have in common the death of a significant loved one. A few may be so bold as to suggest that we are long overdue for putting our grief behind us and moving on.

While attending a National Compassionate Friends Conference, I thought about this. Why is it that Gary and I are still so engaged in remembering our loss? I decided to challenge myself to determine if it was possible to still remember how grief felt in those early years. I also wanted to justify my tenacity for all the reasons why we do what we do.

Many people believe that after a year or two has passed, grief passes also. They tend to think that bereaved people have put their emotions behind them and have moved forward to living normal lives. To an outsider, this may appear to be true, but as most bereaved persons will testify, every day is a continued act of healing. Significant loss sticks with us and though we may appear to have returned to our former activities, something inside has changed.

It's also true that many people successfully leave their grief behind and rejoin their lives as they left them. They find no need to continue the chase. Let's be clear on one point: this is perfectly acceptable and normal. Personally, I have determined that I'm just not one of them.

For the group of people who, like me, continue to "chase the shadow, this too can be perfectly acceptable and normal, providing there is continuous movement and improvement and one does not become stuck. By definition, we are not perpetual grievers. Instead, I believe that loss has touched our lives in a way that has changed us, and that challenges our deeper thoughts regarding the meaning and purpose of life. The sensitivity remaining after our losses continues to cause us to evaluate who we are and what we wish to become as a result of this slower transformation.

Moving forward, or remaining suspended, in good grief is neither right or wrong. It just is. It becomes what it is because of the personal experience. I believe, people respond to their grief experience in one of two ways: Grieve and Go / Grieve and Grow.

"Grieve and Go" grievers: In regard to a specific grief experience, these grievers choose to move forward and bank the memory of their experience. (Note: A future experience may be different.) This kind of grief is typically of shorter duration. This grief accepts that death is a natural part of life, and it's not necessary to revisit the loss experience, hang on to it, or even learn anything from it. They have honored their relationship, said good-byes, shed their tears and banked their memories. They keep with them the vivid memory of the person who died, and they cherish the good times and the warm stories. Their loved one becomes a treasured memory stored in their hearts and minds. Everything about their response is normal and natural.

"Grieve and Grow" grievers: For those who grieve and grow, a specific experience with death has touched their lives in an extraordinary way. The person who died has become connected to their souls spiritually. The bereaved person carefully dissects every emotion and life-change resulting from the death. They reflect often on their personal relationship with the person who died and glean important clues about their lives and their destinies. They are ready to accept the death only when they have processed the events of this life and are fully ready to say good-bye. Then, they stop intense grieving, but begin a different kind of transformation. They want the life of the person who died to mean something of value to others and/or to themselves. They become engaged and challenged. Grieve and grow grievers typically adopt causes, champion survivors, great legacies, accomplish great feats through physical or mental challenges, and/or become successful in careers that require compassion, sensitivity and community. This becomes their reality for as long as it is satisfying and necessary for them. Everything about their response is also normal and natural.

Grieve and Go, or Grieve and Grow? Either response is just a way of being that evolves from their experiences, but this response may differ from one loss to another. Persons with either type of response understand their journeys. Both experiences may differ from one loss to another. Persons with either type of response understand their journeys. Both experience the process; both recall the experience, but each chooses a different way to respond to a particular loss.

Gary and I definitely adopted the grieve and grow response after the death of our son, Chad, as a result of suicide in 1993. We responded to his death differently than other sudden losses or deaths in our lives. Each loss we had faced prior to this one (and some since) were undeniably grieve and go. None affected us or changed our lives as much as Chad's death.

Sitting in a workshop at a conference, I recognized that though I am a seasoned griever, I had something in common with everyone in that room. I believe that the majority of those present grieved much like me. I personally talked with people whose losses ranged from three months to twenty-nine years. And, the longer the period of time, the greater the chance they, too, would respond by grieving and growing.

So are we collectively then, chasing the shadow of grief? Call it what you may, I don't believe that chasing the shadow is a negative response to grief. Fortunately, there are a number of bereaved persons who can resume life in a reasonably normal way. And for those of us who continue the journey there are reasons in each of our stories. I believe I continue to chase the shadow of grief, not because it's right or wrong, but just because it's what has happened to me.

These are the reasons I Grieve and Grow...

FRIENDS: For those I have met, and for those I have yet to meet along the way. These friends are not pretentious, have no other agendas and are genuine from the core of their hearts. They have loved and lost. They are touched by their experiences.

EMOTION: I can still remember the first days and years as though they were yesterday. I'm grateful for the compassion I've



learned from my emotions, so I can still sympathize with the newly bereaved and bear witness to the fact that life does get better again, someday. Now, my emotions are not as fragile as then; the pain does heal, and it does become bearable over time.

EDUCATION: My bereaved friends have taught me about their losses, and that makes mine easier to accept. I also rejoice in the amazing and rewarding lessons I've learned from all the professionals who have given me the privilege of continuing to learn from them.

LOSS OF DREAMS: When I fret over my loss of dreams (wedding, grandchildren, accomplishments) that once were so important to me, I've learned that the "assumptions of life" are not valid. Life is fragile and unpredictable. I trust in building new dreams and finding happiness in alternate ways.

COMMITMENT: I am committed to honoring the memory of my son in a positive way. Suicide has always had the word "taboo" written all over it, so when Chad died, I wanted to influence people and let them know that bad things do happen to good people.

GRIEF WORK: I knew my grief work would continue for years, and that it would give me an opportunity to experience all that I needed to feel. Grief is a continuous act of healing.

EXPRESSION: I have found a way to use my desire to write and to express the sacred thoughts in my heart by sharing them with others.

CAUSE: I will continue the ministry of Wings that has come from the gnawing pain that wouldn't heal.

SPIRIT: I am committed to the knowledge and confirmation of something far greater than the human experience and to the wisdom of putting my trust in the promise of the next world.

MISSION: God have me this mission – not to save the world, but to preserve myself. I chose to be better instead of bitter. In the process, I've found that helping others is the greatest reward that has come from saving myself.

LEGACY: My writing and work to create a legacy of love – not on how Chad died, but on how he lived – has confirmed the fact there are often no answers to "Why?"

MYSTERY: I am forever amazed at the surprises that unfold when I am exactly where I am meant to be at exactly the time I should be there. Now, I look for the "ah-ha" moments.

SEARCH for MEANING: As I continue the search of who I am now (after loss) I prove to myself that I can be more than I ever was before. This search gives meaning and purpose to my life.

LOSS: I try always to remember that I am and always will be a bereaved parent who is feeling the honest emotions of loss and grief.

HOPE: I believe that life and love continue beyond death. No matter how you look at it, we all chase the shadow of grief, sometimes for a short time; sometimes for a much longer of time. We chase it for as long as it is necessary; we chase it to understand. We may never catch up to it. It can fascinate us or consume us. And, ultimately, it can challenge our lives temporarily or change our lives forever.

Reprinted with permission: HOPELine Newsletter, June, 2019

A Lesson from Mary Poppins on Grief

by Jocelyn Soriano

Grief is never an easy matter to discuss. And this is more difficult when you need to explain it to children. How do you tell young children that their loved one has died and that they would never see them again? How do you answer the many questions at the back of their minds?

This is when the power of storytelling comes into our rescue. Through books, songs and movies for children, we are given tools to help us and our young ones even in times of great darkness.

In this movie "Mary Poppins Returns" starring Emily Blunt, there is a very powerful quote that young and old could both learn from. The quote is in the lyrics of the song that was sang by Mary Poppins herself while trying to comfort the children under her care.

"Nothing's gone forever, only out of place."

— Mary Poppins, *Mary Poppins Returns, the place where the lost things go*, written by Marc Shaiman & Scott Whitman. Sung by Emily Blunt.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESsjRYWtSjM>

I just love how the song seems to only deal with simple matters at first but then has a deeper message within. This is the kind of message that can well be remembered by those whose hearts need healing and hope.

Reprinted with permission: whatsourgrief.com

sudSSpirit Bereavement Support Group meets monthly.

Berks Chapter
Reading, PA.

4th Tues. of the month
6 PM

Exeter Community Library
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Reading, PA 19606

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-Editor





What Mourners Long to tell Others

by Desiree Harless

Dear friend and potential comforter,

Perhaps you have noticed my watery, red-rimmed eyes. Maybe you've missed me and wondered where I've been lately. Is my downcast appearance a giveaway? Or is it my forced personality that clued you in? Yes, it is sorrow. Intense grief. It originated from loss, loss of someone dearly loved. What you see on the outside is just a fraction of the turmoil going on in the inside. Inside I am a crumpled heap on the floor. In an instant, everything changed. The plans I had for the future have been obliterated; the past has disappeared in pain. Surviving another minute seems impossible. My world is no longer safe. I realize I'm not in control. I don't know who is.

The one thing I do know is how uncomfortable I make you feel. Some people can't handle this and I won't see them again. Some people try for a while, but it's hard and they have their own life. It takes a special person to walk with the grieving. Being able to be my friend through all this is one part love, one part God's wisdom, and a hefty dose of perseverance. And it may take more than one of you.

So, what do I need while I walk this mourning road? I probably won't be able to communicate that to you. Sometimes I don't know. There are a few constants, though. I need to feel genuine love, I've lost that you know, love. I need to know that you love me, that God loves me, that I can love again. I need to feel safe; safe physically, safe emotionally, safe spiritually. I feel alone and that is not safe. When I am with you, I need to be able to express myself without feeling judged, be able to cry with you, be angry and mad without scaring you. I need to process my loss and not receive spiritual clichés in response. In grief, I can see right through them and they hurt.

I need prayer. Please pray for me and with me. Sometimes I can't pray on my own. I may be mad at God. Don't let that worry you; God is big enough to handle it, he does not reject me in my grief. But knowing that someone is praying for me is a big help and I can feel it.

Thank you for being there for me when it is hard. It won't always be like this. You may need to tell that to me, actually. I won't always feel so bad. And one day our crying together will change to laughing together. One day I will again feel joy, even while I feel sorrow. One day I will again be able to stand, even while in pain. One day, I will again be able to feel alive. Thank you, my friend!

Reprinted with permission: Desiree Harless, Gateway Church, Southlake, TX – HOPELine Newsletter, October, 2022.

An Entry From My Journal

"Sue loved candles and I find myself lighting candles when I'm home to not only feel good about myself but to also remember her. The light of a candle possesses a magic about it that provides faith and hope for all of us. Are we encouraged somehow to do things like this to feel good?"

-Editor



The Story Behind the sudSSpirit Logo

by Dominic Murgido

I have been asked many times about the sudSSpirit logo; the cross with a peace dove and a flower at the base of the cross with the acronym sudSSpirit across the middle of the cross. The acronym stands for **s**udden **u**nexpected **d**eath of a **S**pouse **S**urvivors in **p**articipation to **i**nform, **r**enew, **i**mprove, and **t**riumph. The cross is another story.

I was never one for wearing any kind of chain or necklace so when I received a silver chain with a sterling silver cross with a peace dove in the center of it one Christmas in the 70's, I wasn't sure how to react. It was nice and it was appreciated and it was from my soon to be wife. I did wear it occasionally but most times it remained in the box it came in.

When I started traveling for work and went places that took me away from her for a few days or a week at a time, the necklace came with me and I wore it to feel closer to my wife and that worked for me. I started to become accustomed to it.

Wearing that necklace now *all the time* works for me. It is now a permanent part of my being and a way to always have the memory of her with me against my chest close to my heart.

The gardenia flower was one of her favorites and I bought one for her from a street vendor in San Francisco during a weekend getaway after taking a ride on a trolley car. We had a wonderful time in California being our first time there and had the dream to return there again for another adventure, but that was not to be. I am so grateful that we took the time to travel there and many other places during our life together.

I miss my wife and I know that she is around me in spirit being proud that I took her passing and turned it into a positive to create a bereavement support group to help others cope with their grief journey.

A favorite flower plus a Christmas present from the distant past and an acronym became the reality of what represents sudSSpirit today.

Editor note: This is a re-print of an article that appeared in a prior sudSSpirit newsletter as well as in the book: Miss Your FOREVER.

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