

SAYING GOODBYE

WHETHER YOU LOSE YOUR BEST FRIEND SUDDENLY OR IN A PREPLANNED WAY, THE EXPERIENCE CAN BE OVERWHELMING.



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"HE IS YOUR FRIEND, YOUR PARTNER, YOUR DEFENDER, YOUR DOG. YOU ARE HIS LIFE, HIS LOVE, HIS LEADER. HE WILL BE YOURS, FAITHFUL AND TRUE TO THE LAST BEAT OF HIS HEART. YOU OWE IT TO HIM TO BE WORTHY OF SUCH DEVOTION." - UNKNOWN

This article follows the sudden death of my beloved horse, Monty. He was my partner, best friend and loyal companion for 17 years. His grand spirit will live on forever in my heart. While his story is so fresh in my mind, I write these words, hoping to help all of you who have been through this devastating experience.

LIFE AND DEATH CYCLE

Some people's whole lives revolve around their dogs, tailoring their work and leisure schedules to meet their dog's every need. Even their relationships tend to reflect their canine activities and acquaintances. Others refuse to travel on vacation stating, "No one can care for my dog as well as I do." They fear something will happen in their absence.

In reality, the cycle of life and death has its own agenda. Your dog has his own personal journey, choosing his birth and death. It does not necessarily coincide with your wishes or hopes for a long shared partnership.

Sometimes they depart quickly, leaving us in a state of shock and disbelief. Preparing to help an old or sick dog journey to heaven is a relief and a blessing. There is time to celebrate, say goodbye and ready yourself emotionally. Yet, no matter whether his death is sudden or preplanned, the void that ensues can be overwhelming.

We are the ones who wish to understand death. We don't grasp the cycle of life and

death. We believe death is final, absolute and permanent. Your dog knows it's not – that you and he are eternally connected to the infinite oversoul of the Universe.

YOUR DOG'S VIEW OF DEATH

Dogs don't fear death like we do. To them, it's like shedding a layer of clothing.

Metaphysically, spirit disengages from the physical form to ascend to divine light or heaven. It's a blissful process and your dog looks forward to leaving an old or diseased body behind for rejuvenation in the spirit world. He will recreate another body when the time is right.

Your dog won't avoid the death process unless he's hanging on for you. This can happen when he's concerned about you after he's gone. Many dogs continue to live in painful or diseased bodies because they realize our grief will be enormous. It's our job to allow them to make their own decisions; it is not up to us to control their timing.

THE MANY PHASES OF GRIEF

There are many stages of grief that we must process in order to heal completely. Besides the physical emptiness, your emotional, mental and spiritual energies are impacted. Processing the many phases of grief helps you understand the deep messages, heal from within and find a peaceful place in your heart where loving memories can nourish you.

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ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS

The first step is to acknowledge your feelings. At the outset, you might feel numb and disconnected from everything around you. Maybe you're angry that your dog left you suddenly without warning? Or guilty, blaming yourself for not seeing any signs of illness. You might feel abandoned, hurt or confused about your dog's timing. The emptiness around and within you may lead to tremendous sadness, followed by deep depression.

All of these feelings get tangled up inside, leaving you confused and sad. They come and go, ebbing and flowing at different rates and intensity. Any one of these emotions can catch you off-guard, triggered by a memory or thought.

IDENTIFY THE WOUNDING

Digging deeper within your emotions, you can uncover your personal wounding and how that relates to your relationship with your dog. First, understand that your dog was the innermost link to your soul, easing the painful parts of yourself that are not complete. Your dog mirrored these profound woundings, encouraged you to bring them out into a healthy light, then gently supported you to heal them.

If the woundings are very deep, they can resurface when your dog dies. For example, when your protective dog dies, you may feel vulnerable and fearful because your shield is gone. Perhaps you are still working on that lesson so his death amplifies those emotions. Therefore, it is important to seek out other ways and tools to empower yourself from within.

Your soul wounding could represent diverse issues such as abandonment, lack of trust, betrayal or unconditional love. These inner truths exist within us but often we don't have a conscious awareness of what they are and how they manifest in our lives.

CREATING A CONSCIOUS AWARENESS

Critical to this journey is an awareness of why your dog came into your life. What was the soul contract between the two of you? Was it related to confidence, protection, abandonment, fear or something else?

Maybe it was simply that he understood you better than anyone else; that he could read your moods and feelings. Our dogs help us feel supported and loved, alleviating the vulnerability and loneliness we witness in the world. They take it in and never judge us.

Once you're able to embrace some of your feelings, your healing path will open up

and unfold. This is a gentle process, one that moves from an unconscious state to a conscious awareness in order to shift from grief to happiness.

TURNING GRIEF INTO GRATITUDE

How do you begin to fill the void, heal the energetic wounding and find peace and happiness in their memories? How do you begin the process of grieving that is necessary to move on?

YOUR GRIEF WILL BEGIN TO SHIFT ONCE YOU ARE ABLE TO FEEL GRATITUDE FOR THE LIFE YOU SHARED TOGETHER. WHETHER IT WAS SHORT OR LONG, THE HEART TO HEART BONDING IS REAL AND LASTING. CHERISHING THE TIME SPENT TOGETHER BRINGS PEACE OF MIND.

Your grief will begin to shift once you're able to feel gratitude for the life you shared together. Whether it was short or long, the heart to heart bonding is real and lasting. Cherishing the time spent together brings peace of mind. Appreciate how your dog helped mold you into a better human being, and learn that dogs are healers and helpers for our lives. Holding the memories close to our hearts will help us move forward in our grieving process. ☺

HEALING FROM WITHIN

You have the resources and inner strength to heal from within. Recognizing your feelings, bringing the lessons into the forefront and accessing gratitude will all aid the healing. Being gentle with yourself is of the utmost importance. Select the friends, family and calendar events that comfort you. Avoid any situation that feels uncomfortable and don't feel guilty about cancelling engagements.

Take time to reflect and just be. A walk in nature will connect you to his spirit. Cry, laugh and sit with his memories. Ask that he visit you in a dream or in your meditation. Although you will always have a tender place inside, the intense trauma will ease over time.

DEATH IS NOT FINAL

Physical death is one of the most challenging events we face in our human-canine experience. We may be prepared for their death, yet when they choose to leave this world without any warning, it can leave us reeling in shock and disbelief. Whether they face a life-threatening crisis or endure a long debilitating illness, there's no easy way to say goodbye.

But is it goodbye forever? Whether it's that special bond, a familiar personality trait, physical resemblance or look in the eye, the soul to soul connection is clear. You know intuitively that you've been together with your dog before.

After all, you are here on this earth to become more enlightened and connected to divine love. Who better than your dog to be your teacher? His patience, devotion and unconditional love are the greatest gifts anybody could ask for. Honoring him for these blessings is a beautiful tribute to his memory. ☺



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