

Alec's Story

APRIL 14, 2012 · 11:37 AM

10 Healing Tips for Surviving the Loss of an Extra Super Very Beloved Companion Animal

I originally wrote this for the [Animal Legal Defense Fund blog](#); an edited version is [here](#).



This is for everyone who has deeply loved and lost a companion animal. This is not an exhaustive list by any means. It is just a collection of a few things I found helpful as I struggled with my own intense grief after losing my beloved German shepherd Alec in the summer of 2010. If you are bereaved, I hope you will find something here you can use. If you have ever lost a special animal friend, feel free to share your tips for what helped or comforted you. I would love to read them! I can honestly say it felt like nothing helped during the first 6-8 months, but looking back some things were more healing than others. Maybe one day I will make an alternative list, “Destructive things you should not do after losing an animal friend!” But for now we’ll stick with the positive. In no particular order, here goes:



1. Run! Or kick box or cycle or climb or swim or dance – only do something physical. You may need to take a break from things you love because they won't feel the same. Now is a great time to try something new. I used to love singing and dancing. Not for an audience, mind you! Just for fun, around the house, in the car (just the singing)...but I did it a lot. So much I didn't even think about how many times a day I would burst into song and/or pop off some silly dance moves. But I noticed it when I stopped. I lost all desire to dance, to sing, to listen to music even (and I LOVE music). These things came back of course, but that's just to say you may not feel the desire for your most loved activity while you are grieving. Or you may want to throw yourself into it. Everyone's different, but the universal point here is exercising the body, even though you may not want to get out of bed, is very helpful for your mental and emotional state. I know it's difficult to get started when you're feeling depressed, but it's almost impossible not to feel a little better after some physical activity.

For my part, I decided to train for a half marathon about nine months after Alec died. I was not much of a runner so this was a big deal for me. Sticking to a training schedule was a good counterpoint to the disorganizing effects of grief; it gave me something healthy to do when I felt lost and scattered. It kept my body tired and my mind focused on something constructive. The race also took place on the one-year anniversary of Alec's death, so it gave me a positive goal for this significant day – I would run for him.

Although the training was a good distraction, I was extremely nervous when race day came. But this anxiety served a purpose too; it helped keep my mind from dwelling on what I was doing at this time last year: saying good-bye to my best friend. Without this race to preoccupy me, I would have been in a very bad place that day. My only goal was to finish, and when I actually did that (remarkably, way under the cut-off time where they sweep you onto the sidewalk) and got my little finisher medal, I was so exhilarated and exhausted that the day passed without me having a meltdown. Mission accomplished.



2. Hike . Or sit near a river, rest on a mountaintop, doze in a garden, stroll along the ocean, or take a walk in the park...just get outside and clear your head. I know hiking is physical, but for me it was qualitatively different from training for the half marathon. To me, hiking is quieter and more contemplative, and the important point I am trying to stress here is to just be in nature as much as possible. I have always loved hiking, so I was no stranger to it, but it became my go-to “keep myself busy” activity after Alec died. I went whenever I could. But I had always had dogs with me before and it was a completely new experience to go hiking utterly alone (kind of scary too, just being honest! but I stuck to popular trails). My brain was so busy after Alec died. It would just chatter and chatter away. It would do this while I was hiking too, but I noticed the farther I hiked eventually...it would...just...stop. And my head would be quiet. During these times I would frequently have flashes of insight or comforting thoughts or other epiphanies. Sometimes it felt like I could talk to Alec in my head. I would have conversations with him, and while I am pretty sure it was just my mind talking back, what is this thing

we call “mind” anyway? Either way, they were comforting thoughts that would eventually bust through the sad, mad,



confused chatter and that’s all that mattered.

For some reason I needed to be moving through the woods, by myself, for this to happen. I think sitting by a river or on a mountain or in a garden or a park would also be good for quieting your mind and letting the comforting epiphanies rush in. But I am not good at sitting still and I even think better when I’m in motion, so hiking was perfect for me. Plus after hiking 14 miles you are going to be tired enough to fall asleep, which is a bonus if you are having trouble with that.

3. Memento Mori. Remember your mortality. Death comes for us and everyone we love, and we don’t get to choose when. This is not meant to be depressing but rather to remind you that death is a normal part of life and nobody is exempt. The positive spin on this is it should help us to remember to live and love to the fullest, to make the most of our days and nights while we have them. This means different things for everyone, but surely one thing we can all agree brings meaning to our lives is love, not only to be loved but also the incomparable joy that arises from loving another unconditionally – and showing them this every day through our actions.

Also, if you have been blaming yourself in some way for your loved one’s death, stop. You are only human and I’m sure you did the best you could.



4. Remember the good times. If losing your friend was traumatic for you – as it was for me – trust me, the disturbing images, whatever haunts you most, will eventually quiet down. This sounds cliché but while you may never stop missing their presence, and you may never be okay with the circumstances surrounding their death, I promise you will get to a place where you can laugh and smile again when you think of them. I honestly wasn’t sure I would, so if you have doubts about that, I understand. In the early stages of grief it hurts even to think of the good times, at least it did for me. If you get comfort from these happy memories right away, you are probably more evolved than me. I admit I am an extreme case, which is why I am writing this...for the people who are really struggling. I have been there. It will get better.

5. Get out of Dodge. When Alec was here it was not easy for me to travel. He had special needs the last two years of his life (unrelated to the cancer that would kill him), and when he became sick I really couldn't leave. After he died, I found myself in the strange position of having a lot of time and freedom on my hands. I was so used to caring for Alec and scheduling my life around him (happily, I always feel compelled to add, because I loved him beyond measure and was devoted to his well-being; I never thought of him as a burden), I didn't know what to do with all this time. Right after he died, I hopped a plane back east and stayed with my best friend for two weeks that turned into a month because I couldn't face going back. I realize not everyone can do that, but you may have options. I was single and it had just been me and Alec for a long time, so I didn't have a family to stick around for. Alec was my family, and when he was gone I felt rootless. When I got back to Portland, I moved out of the apartment we shared. It just didn't feel like home anymore. But I was glad I spent that month in New Jersey, crying on my best friend's couch.

I also have a friend in Germany I had always wanted to visit, and a few months later I booked the flight. This trip abroad was an important turning point in my healing process. Travel is what you make of it, but it can definitely help clear out the metaphysical cobwebs and give you a new perspective.

By the way, I am talking about temporary travel – avoid big decisions like relocating or quitting your job while grieving. It's just not the best time to make a major decision. Although I moved out of my apartment and don't regret it, I stayed in the same city.



6. Love again. Adopt another animal. Some say the best way to honor the life and memory of a dear companion is to save the life of another. I can't dispute that. Although I vowed I would never adopt again after Alec died, I started to realize how much I still had left to give another animal. And although I could not make a dent in the problem of pet overpopulation, I could make a very big difference in the life of one animal. It goes without saying Alec could never be replaced, but with no one to take care of there was a big, gaping hole in my life. I am so glad I adopted [my dear sweet Teagan](#), who was recently [ALDF's mascot for National Justice for Animals Week](#) due to the abuse and neglect she suffered before being rescued. Teagan came to live with me almost exactly one year after Alec died. She has been with me nine months now and has done more for my healing process than anything on this list by far.

I have approximately a million photos of Teagan [here](#).

7. Talk, talk, talk. Or write, write, write. Just as you need a healthy physical outlet, you need an emotional outlet too. You need to get the thoughts out of your head. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Sometimes even close friends don't know what to say around the bereaved and you may feel like people are avoiding you. It is common for people to avoid bringing up your loved one, and if you do it they may change the subject, trying to steer you away from painful thoughts, worried you will start crying and not realizing that it is healthy, normal, and necessary for you talk about your loved one. It is part of the processing you need to do – processing what happened, and that they are no longer

here. Assimilating the loss doesn't happen all at once. It happens in small steps. People mean well, so just try to clearly communicate your needs. Tell them that it really helps and you actually feel better after talking (even if you end up crying, which you probably will – but you also will feel better. It bears repeating: tears are necessary and healthy!).

My friend Mike was on the receiving end of plenty of tears (I know how much guys love that! He squelched his instinct to run away most of the time, and for that I am grateful)...



...so was my best friend Kristine, who opened her home and heart to me in a million big and small ways. I was (and am!) very fortunate to have her unwavering support.



You may want to visit a pet loss support group if you feel unsupported or alone. Many veterinary specialty hospitals now hold ongoing free groups that meet a couple times a month or sometimes weekly, and you can take advantage of these to meet like-minded people who will understand some of what you are going through. It is immensely important you feel understood. There is nothing wrong with you for feeling this loss so deeply. He or she wasn't "just an animal," despite what some thoughtless people might say.

Writing is a good emotional outlet, too – anything that gets the thoughts and emotions out of your head for awhile. You may feel you have nothing to say but when you put pen to journal you might be surprised at what comes pouring out. Give it a try. You might even end up with a blog!

8. Read. It helped me so much when I thought I was going crazy to know that I was not alone, that other people had stood where I had stood and they had gotten through it (notice I did not say "over" it). I read pretty much every book on grief out there, and I have some favorites that were immensely helpful. I definitely took refuge, or looked for it anyway, in books, in shared experiences, as I tried to extract meaning from my own experience.

A few words about books on grief generally (i.e. grief over a person) versus those specifically about pet loss: If legitimizing your grief is an issue, then the latter may be especially helpful for you. These books go a long way toward explaining why you may feel alone in your grief or as if no one understands, because bereavement over a companion animal is not considered as socially acceptable as grief over a human friend or family member. This is changing for sure, but depending on your work environment and the level of understanding among your family and friends, you may feel isolated, which will only exacerbate your grief. If, on the other hand, you have a supportive social network, as I was lucky enough to have – I can't imagine a more supportive workplace than [ALDF](#) – or if your relationship with your companion animal was especially profound and deep, you may get more out of reading books about the loss of a child, best friend, or partner.

These were some of the ones that helped me most; none of them are animal-specific:



- [Transcending Loss: Understanding the Lifelong Impact of Grief and How to Make it Meaningful](#)
- [Grieving Mindfully: A Compassionate and Spiritual Guide to Coping with Loss](#)
- [I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping and Healing After the Death of a Loved One](#)

9. Create. I pretty much failed at creating any kind of artsy crafty memorial, I think in part due to my unwillingness to let him go, and also just because I moved through my grief at a proverbial snail's pace, examining every stone on the path, really taking my time, which has seemed to work for me...and partially due to the fact that I am perhaps the least crafty person on the planet. But I did do a [collage and meditation activity](#) that was extremely therapeutic for me. I also have a blog (obviously), which fits under the "writing" tip above, but it also serves as a memorial of sorts, and it really is a creative process for me as I also include photos, links to songs, passages from novels, etc. So it has become a memorial space in itself. And it just goes to show your memorial can be whatever you want it to be.

The bottom line is it can be very therapeutic to work on a memorial to honor your friend, whether it is a slideshow, memory scrapbook, poem, or other kind of art. The emergency animal hospital in my city has [Memorial Art Therapy Workshops](#) where you can craft a bookmark, prayer candle, fused glass keepsake, paperweight, memory box, or picture frame in honor of your companion animal. I loved the idea of memorial art therapy, but when I finally tried one of these workshops I cried the whole time and then ran away (and that was my second attempt! The first time I sat in the parking lot crying and never made it inside). I was not ready. Plus I think it was not the right outlet or

environment for me. But try some things out – you will find something that feels right for you and it will be as constructive as training for a marathon (or even just half of one).

10. Don't expect to ever get over it. Now, you might “get over it”- and that's fine. But some people experience such a profound connection with their animal friend that they will never, ever stop missing them. What you will do is learn to live with it. You will integrate the loss into your life, and you will find a way to make it meaningful. You will think of all the ways your unique relationship, and the pure unconditional love you felt for your dear companion, changed you for the better. And you will nurture these good parts. In doing this you will honor your friend for the rest of your days. And in doing this they will never really leave you because you are not the same person you used to be. They changed you and therefore are a real part of you – that part we call the “self” or identity. And they can continue to inspire you. Your love is beautiful and it is not gone just because their physical presence is. In fact, you may find as you move through your grief process that your love for your departed friend grows even bigger, and you will realize that although they are gone your love never will be. And you can fill their absence with more love. You will find a way. It's okay if it takes time. Grief knows no schedule. It is a part of life just like love and death. So be gentle with yourself and take your time.

Finally, you are awesome for loving your animal companion that much. I wish everyone did. Thank you.



Advertisements

[Report this ad](#)

[Report this ad](#)

Share this:

 Twitter  Facebook 7  Google

 Like

Be the first to like this.

Related

[Sharing our Stories.](#)

In "Teagan"

[Alec, Teagan, and Me.](#)

In "Grief and loss"

[Magic words.](#)

In "Grief and loss"

30 responses to “10 Healing Tips for Surviving the Loss of an Extra Super Very Beloved Companion Animal”

Frank

February 28, 2013 at 8:48 pm



I realize that you wrote this a while ago, but I only found it tonight after losing my beloved German Shepherd this week. I am very sorry for your loss. As you know, it is a heart breaking experience to lose such a wonderful companion. She was intensely loyal and would walk on hot coals for me if need be. I had her for 12 wonderful years. The pain that I am feeling is more intense than I would have imagined, but I know that things will get better over time.

I found your story very moving and also helpful. Thank you for sharing.

Thank you and take care,

Frank

[Reply](#)

Nicole Renee

September 6, 2014 at 9:51 pm



Oh my goodness, Frank, I don't know why I am just seeing this comment now, so long after you wrote it! I am so very sorry for your loss. I can relate so much to the intensity of the pain, and I know how hard it is to lose such a loyal and true friend. However, you wrote more than a year ago that you know things will get better with time. I hope you have found this to be true and have been able to experience peace and healing over the past year and a half. Thank you for you kind words about my post. I also find hearing other people's stories comforting. Wishing you all the best!

[Reply](#)

Heather

March 9, 2013 at 11:53 am



I don't know if this will reach you since you posted your blog some time ago, but Thank you for such a wonderful blog about your dog Alec. Recently (a week ago), I lost my German Shepherd girl Maddie. She lost her fight with Cancer. It seems that when you love them they love you back 100x more, and it's amazing how they do that. I know that I have been taught and given an amazing gift by Maddie. This blog article showed me that I am not alone in my grief for Maddie, nor am I alone when one loses a best friend/companion. It's wonderful when German Shepherds (or any animal friend) enters our lives and it's an honor to be with them in the end. Again, Thank you so for much for your article. It has helped me during these past days.

[Reply](#)

Frank



March 9, 2013 at 3:34 pm



Heather,

I am so very sorry for your loss of Maddie. My German Shepherd Pescha also died of cancer. We are still heartbroken, but it is getting better each day. I hope that the pain that you are feeling will get easier each day.

take care,
Frank

[Reply](#)

Heather

March 10, 2013 at 5:00 pm



Frank,

Thank you for your comment. I am sorry for your loss, she sounded like a wonderful dog. German Shepherds have such a special bond with their owners. It's amazing the love that they give. May our hearts heal and keep the memories of our companions alive!

-Heather

Nicole Renee

September 6, 2014 at 9:59 pm



Heather, as with Frank above, I somehow missed your comment! I am so sorry for the loss of your girl Maddie. I hope the loss has gotten easier to live with since leaving your comment more than a year ago. I am touched you found my article helpful. You are most certainly not alone in your grief (or your love) for your best friend...no matter how devastated I was after losing Alec, the knowledge that I was not alone in what I was feeling did provide some comfort. I think it's wonderful that you are dwelling on the gifts Maddie gave you and the lessons she taught. I agree it is an honor to be with them in the end. All the best to you!

[Reply](#)

jonsutz

August 20, 2014 at 5:19 pm



Bless you for everything you gave to Alec. I cannot write more now; I am four months away from having had to say goodbye to the miracle dog who saved my life:

<http://shaynathemiracledog.com/book/about-book/>

But I am working on a new project, in her honor, that I hope to collaborate on with the ALDF, which is how I found your blog:

<http://heatkills.org/>

Unfortunately I could not reach anyone there by phone today, so I started poking around the staff directory, which is how I found you. As difficult of a time as Shayna and I had (also hemangiosarcoma), I am humbled by what you and Alec went through. But like Shayna, I am confident that he is waiting for you in Heaven, to say thank you... and affirm that your goodbye was only temporary.

Jon Sutz
Charlottesville, VA

[Reply](#)

Nicole Renee

September 6, 2014 at 9:43 pm



Hi Jon, thank you for reading and commenting! I just read through your website (with tears in my eyes) and I could relate to so many things you went through with Shayna (down to the “bedroom in the living room” and many other things). I am so sorry for your loss. Shayna was beautiful and so clearly loved and so happy! I loved looking at the photos of her smiling face and I watched a couple videos of her and she was so smart! Dogs can be so healing, and I am so happy you and Shayna found each other at just the right time. As even a quick glance at my blog will tell, I was devastated after losing Alec and a little out of my mind. Adopting another dog (my dear sweet Teagan) was the most healing thing for me and my love for her helped me move through my grief and find meaning in life again. I do fervently hope our goodbyes are only temporary!! I would really, really like this to be true 😊

I hope you were able to get in touch with someone at ALDF about your project. It looks great. I did let our communications people know you were trying to contact them. Thanks for all you are doing to help dogs. What a wonderful way to honor Shayna.

[Reply](#)

Robert K. Tarquinio

May 29, 2015 at 12:46 am



I just read your article today.

I lost my dear kitty Tiger to cancer. He passed away on 25 March 2015. I miss him more than anything in this world. He was my feline little brother. I love him more than anything in this world.

He was 13 almost 14 years old. He was a Main Coon. He came to me and my dad in 2001. My dad passed away in 2006. And my kitty cat Tiger has passed away and I'm so beside myself.

I have photos and videos. I know it will take a long time to get through it but my loss will be forever. I just want to be with my Kitty cat Tiger for always!

I intend to write about Tiger and put together a photo album with DVD videos for keep sake.

I paid rush fee for Tiger to be preserved via freeze dry process. He's not ready yet; they will call me when he is. When my time comes I will have Tiger with me on my chest. He was my beloved and best kitty cat pal ever! I will always love him for forever and for all time! I want to be with him for forever and for all time!

[Reply](#)

Nicole Renee

December 22, 2015 at 12:23 pm



Robert, I am so sorry for the loss of your dear friend Tiger, and for the loss of your dad not long ago. Losing two close relationships is very difficult. A new loss can at times bring up previous feelings of grief over another loved one in unexpected ways, and I hope you have someone to talk to. As you noted, the loss is forever, but so is the LOVE, and I hope you still feel that even though Tiger's physical presence is gone. It is so sweet you refer to him as your feline little brother. I hope you did write about him and put together that memorial photo album. I have no doubt a piece of him is still with you and will be always and forever. That love will never go away. Tiger was lucky to have a friend like you, and I know you feel the same. I hope you have found some healing and peace with time.

Saad Ullah Sooraj

January 8, 2015 at 7:30 am



My Dinku Went yesterday, he was three years old a loving and gorgeous cat, my friend and companion, my family member. My family and friends are also shocked at the death of Dinku. He was suffering from severe illness and I admitted him in vet clinic but he died there after three days. I left my home and native city 7 months ago for the sake of job, my family love Dinku as I do but his health started to collapse we took him to vet several times and they tried their best to treat his ailment but all in vain. Dinku stopped eating and drinking, my father and mother fed him with tubes and water with bottles but he refused to eat and drink. I went to my village on Saturday to admit Dinku in a renowned vet clinic in a capital city, he was so ill that it was impossible for a vet their to take his blood tests so they admitted him in clinic and I left my heart my friend my Dinku their with a hope that he would get well soon, I went to my office in another city leaving Dinku in aforesaid vet clinic. He was dehydrated and they tried to rehydrate Dinku with drips BUT his health did not improve and yesterday a vet informed me telephonically that Dinku died. My father was on the way to bring him back to home after three days of treatment that was all in vain. Doctors said that he was extremely dehydrated and his whole body and organs were infected and he died. I am feeling guilty that why I took my Dinku to above mentioned vet clinic, he was suffering but he was alive at home under the care of my family and when in the care of vet he died within three days. But I had no other option because vets in my city failed to treat him and then I decided to admit him in a facilitated and renowned vet clinic but alas! he died there. We tried our best to save his life but I am not satisfied with the explanations of vets and their treatment. My companion my Dinku died and I was far away from Dinku to hug him.... O my Dinku I have no words to express my grief.... My tears are my words.....

Reply

Nicole Renee

December 22, 2015 at 12:05 pm



Saad, I am so sorry for the loss of your friend Dinku. You did the absolute best that you could for him. It is completely normal to second guess our decisions – I did it over and over with Alec too – but please don't think that if you had not taken him to this clinic that the outcome would have been different. You just don't know, and it seems unlikely that he would have gotten better at home, although your family did an admirable job caring for him with devotion and love while you were away. It sounds like he was very ill and you did the right thing by taking him to the best possible place to receive the best medical care he could have gotten. Unfortunately his illness was out of your control, and I am so sorry you were frustrated by the answers you received from the vets. Sometimes it is hard to feel satisfied with any explanation when we are dealing with such a devastating loss. Dinku knew how much you loved him and that you did everything you could. I hope

you have been able to find some peace, and that the sweet love you shared with your dear friend will bring you comfort with time and stay in your heart always.

[Reply](#)

Saad Ullah Sooraj

January 8, 2015 at 7:45 am



Your article regarding the healing tips is a great worth for those who lost loving companions.

[Reply](#)

Nicole Renee

December 22, 2015 at 12:10 pm

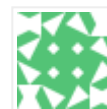


Thank you for your kind words and for sharing your story about Dinku. Grief can be very isolating, but it helps to know we are not alone in our feelings.

[Reply](#)

maya

January 25, 2015 at 10:32 pm



I cried a lot when I read this. I just lost my 4 month old pup just yesterday. The thing is, it's a different case. Two days ago, he was hypersalivating. I brought him to an animal clinic "before things get worse" as I thought that time. Just after some physical assessment, the vet injected what she mentioned as antibiotic, vit b complex and some drug for the vomiting and diarrhea. She said it's best to have him confined. Then the vet hooked an iv fluid and I left my friend there, hoping he will be better the next day. But then, just 6 am the following day, the clinic texted and called me to inform my pup died due to excessive vomiting of blood and bloody diarrhea 3 am. When we went there to get my buddy, they're charging more fees. When asked where the lab results are, the vet said, "We didn't perform any as the condition of your pup was like the usual case being brought here." I presumed she meant routine case such as parvovirus with many cases these days. I'm kind of blaming myself since I should have trusted my instinct to not have left him there. What kind of animal clinic doesn't do diagnostic tests?! Didn't even have a medical basis for his death that medical providers can give. And I really think he died due to negligence. My pup might have died thinking I left him there since he's not well anymore. It's just so hard to get through it when I should have just get another vet to cure her. I'm just lost.

[Reply](#)

Jackie

February 10, 2015 at 10:52 pm



Maya,

I am so very sorry for the loss of your beloved pup. I, too, left my little girl, Coco at the Vet for IV fluids due to dehydration. I am a Nurse and I looked over the lab work and she was dehydrated. She was 7 years old and had never been left alone even when we had to go out of town, my kids would come stay over with my fur-babies. This particular Vet was one I had never met (our Vet was out of town) but yet I trusted he knew what he was doing because he was a Veterinarian. He assured me and my husband that he would stay with her the

whole time and come to find out, he left her alone for more than 10 hours and she died from aspirating all the fluids. I filed a lawsuit against him and it's in two days. He had told me that she was doing great when I called to check on her and I said that I'd come get her and he talked me into leaving her so he could just keep an eye on her during the night...I received the horrifying call at 7:57 am June 23, 2014 and my life has never been the same. The necropsy showed that she had kidney problems but ultimately she drowned. Praying for peace and trying to remember the beautiful memories of her daily.

Jackie

[Reply](#)

Nicole Renee

December 22, 2015 at 11:46 am



Jackie, I am crying reading your story. I am so sorry this happened to Coco. It is such a helpless feeling when we leave our beloved friend with a trusted professional and feel they made mistakes or were negligent. I can't imagine the guilt you must have felt, but you did not do anything wrong in leaving her. You made the best decision you could with the knowledge at hand. I would have felt reassured from what he told you as well. I know vet malpractice cases can be difficult. I hope you had as good an outcome from that as you possibly could. If this vet was truly negligent then he should be held accountable. Again, I am so very sorry. I hope you have been able to find some peace and that your beautiful memories, and the love you shared with Coco, will stay with you always.

Nicole Renee

December 22, 2015 at 11:39 am



Maya, I am so sorry for your loss and I understand we always second guess our decisions, but please know you did the absolute best for your pup with the knowledge you had. We of course trust our veterinarians as they have the specialized medical training and we do not. You did the right thing and could not have known how it would turn out. It sounds like he was very sick, and you do not know if things would have been different had you taken him to another vet. You just don't know, but I know it is almost impossible to not imagine how things might have turned out differently had we taken a different course of action. It is a normal part of the grieving process. My heart breaks reading: "My pup might have died thinking I left him there since he's not well anymore." Please, please don't do that to yourself. Your pup knew you brought him there to be taken care of and that everything you did for him was out of love. He knows. You did everything you could, and I am so sorry.

[Reply](#)

christine oconnor

April 1, 2015 at 8:33 am



what an amazing thing to do, to write with such honesty and true feeling. I lost beautiful girl Sandy in November and my heart will never be the same. My entire family still grieves our beautiful sweet girl. She wasn't sick. she went to the vet for a routine ear drainage. As I was putting my shoes on to pick her up the vet called to tell me my girl had a heart attack and was gone. No words can explain the heartache and grief. I still cant believe she is gone. I have felt the feeling of guilt and questions that come when you lose a loved one who relied on you for protection

and love. I loved your blog because you didn't sugar coat it—it was real feelings and real grief. I know how hard it is for others to console you when your heart breaks. I spend night looking at her pictures and it brings a smile to my face. What a loving heart and beautiful friend I had. My life will never be the same. Sandy changed me for the better. I still have her leash—hangs outside. I still have her bed (which a chihuahua slumbers in—a companion she had and loved). I often at times by myself think of our great times together. What you touched on is the grieving process which is unique to everyone. Being kind to yourself is key. I am so sorry for your loss and I feel that pain—and thanks for sharing your beautiful story. I was touched. It is so heartwarming to hear stories of love with the beautiful animals who ultimately make our lives fuller. Thank you. I really needed it tonight. God bless all animal lovers as they have great gifts in the beautiful animals they love and cherish!

Reply

Nicole Renee

December 22, 2015 at 11:27 am



Christine, thank you so much for your kind words, and especially for sharing your wisdom and your story about Sandy. It brought tears to my eyes. I am so sorry for your loss, and how shocking for it to be so sudden. You say “my heart will never be the same” and I identify with that so much. I agree that there is comfort in hearing others share their stories of such profound love for their animal friends, even in the midst of pain and loss. It has been more than a year since you lost Sandy and I hope you have been able to find some peace and comfort, even as she forever remains a part of you.

Reply

Jan Carroll

May 10, 2015 at 11:14 pm



I am in complete despair. My beloved 8 year old Labradoodle Buddy was stabbed his throat cut and died in my arms at vet blood gushing from his neck mouth and nose. He was my shadow and slept by my side every night. He was over friendly to people and other animals.. I am a responsible pet owner he was micro chipped and several gates in place to assure his safety. A repair person left gates open, we did not know he was there. We were having coffee and had just fixed the dogs breakfast when I heard three high pitched blood curdling yelps. Ran out to my front yard and found my angel blood gushing from his neck. The whole event has been horrific. the police will not do anything the vet was incompetent and I still don't know who murdered my dog. I have been up and down my street asking questions and interrogating everyone I see. Heard reports of a person bragging at local gas station that he was tired of stray dog's approaching him and had devised a “shank” type weapon to dispose of them. I live on a dirt road in a rural town. When I reported it to police I was told that if the person walking by my house felt threatened they were justified to defend themselves and that officer's have to shoot dog's in self defense if approached. My dog is not a vicious breed or aggressive but was unfortunately not on a leash. Five minute's out of his yard and all of our live's haved changed forever. His 14 year old Mother and litter mate will not eat and go in and out the dog door and room to room looking for Buddy and trying to find his scent. I am unconsolable . Can anyone help me word a flyer to distribute or and article for newspaper? I can hardly function but it has been a week and I don't want too much time to pass. I know nothing can bring him back but feel his violent death should not be forgotten and need some type of vindication and public awareness. thank you Jan Carroll 707-994-2222 babysunltd@aol.com 3820 Pine Ave Clearlake ca 95422, RIP Buddy To quote B Meyers ONLY a dog? Only the singular experience in life that offers what we all need and want...complete acceptance, unconditional love, deep and everlasting friendship and trust.

Reply

Nicole Renee

December 22, 2015 at 11:17 am



Jan, this is utterly horrifying. I am so sorry someone did this to your beloved Buddy. The emotional pain and devastation of this happening is unimaginable. I am so sorry the police will not help; that is infuriating. I hope you are able to find some peace and comfort with time, but it is terrifying to think that someone could do this to an innocent dog. My heart goes out to you and, again, I am so sorry.

[Reply](#)**Molly**

November 14, 2015 at 7:17 am



My beautiful, healthy 8 year old cat Latte died shortly after having surgery to remove mylar streamers he ate from his stomach. This came from a company where this toy is still for sale on their website. I am truly damaged from this experience. Truth be told I wish I were dead too.

[Reply](#)**Nicole Renee**

December 22, 2015 at 10:57 am



Molly, I am so sorry for the loss of your friend Latte. It is a truly horrible and helpless feeling but please know this is not your fault. I encourage you to share your story with the company and to everyone and raise hell about this toy so that they remove it from the market if it is dangerous. My heart breaks to read you say you also wish you were dead, however I can empathize with that feeling when you are deep in the throes of grief. I felt in a similar way after I lost Alec. I did a little research on pet loss hot lines and here are some that I found that seem to be current. I think it would be beneficial for you to talk to someone about what you are going through, so I hope you see this and consider reaching out:

Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine

<http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/outreach/pet-loss-hotline>

University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine

<http://vetmed.illinois.edu/CARE/>

(CARE Helpline brochure: http://vetmed.illinois.edu/CARE/UI_CARE_Helpline.pdf)

Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine:

<http://www.vet.cornell.edu/org/petloss/>

Tufts University College of Veterinary Medicine

<http://vet.tufts.edu/petloss/>

University of Guelph Ontario Veterinary College

<http://ovc.uoguelph.ca/petloss>

There are further resources on some of the pages as well. I hope they will help. I am truly sorry you are going through this and I wish you peace, comfort, and strength. Latte knows you love him and did everything you could.

[Reply](#)

Bill Jensen

November 15, 2015 at 9:02 pm



So hard to read these poignant stories. We lost our 9 year old shepherd (Dorothy) this morning to metastatic cancer and it was the most devastating loss I have ever experienced – still in shock/denial/grief. We knew it was coming for about 10 days (when her rapid decline began) and did everything in our power to make her as happy and comfortable as possible. It was made all the more mind-numbing by the wonderful day she had yesterday; and we were hopeful for yet a few more good days, but not to be.

We got her three and a half years ago as a rescue (we thought we were rescuing her – lol) and it is impossible to express the joy she brought to our lives. I could immediately tell how special Dorothy was so we started together on the adventure of her becoming a therapy dog. She easily passed her final exam and just three weeks ago we received her certification from Therapy Dogs International. Included with their materials to us was a round yellow plastic coin for her collar which read “I am a Therapy Dog”. I will carry it with me always.

Thanks to everyone for sharing their experiences – and especially for the brave lady who so selflessly expressed her wisdom on this website!

[Reply](#)**Nicole Renee**

December 22, 2015 at 11:06 am



Bill, thank you for sharing your story about your dear Dorothy. I am so sorry for your loss. Alec was 9 as well. It is so hard when it happens so fast like that, and when they have had a good day (or several), and you so badly hope for more, just a little more time. We never stop hoping until the very end. It is all we can do, and you did everything you could for your friend. Thank you for rescuing her; I have no doubt you brought as much joy to her life as she did to yours. I am sorry you lost her just as she was about to embark on her journey as a therapy dog. I think it is lovely for you to carry that coin with you, and I hope when you are ready you consider sharing your big heart with another fortunate animal.

[Reply](#)**Bill Jensen**

December 24, 2015 at 5:01 am



Thanks Nicole. So much appreciated. Definitely plan on doing it again.

Kimberly

January 1, 2016 at 8:27 am



Hello Nicole,

I feel that I have found your page for a reason. My fiance and I had a very loyal dog named Draven whom we loved immensely. About a week ago we noticed that he was acting a bit strange. We took him to the vet and they couldn't find anything wrong. I called and spoke to my landlord to see if she knew of anything. She went on about

how 5 years ago she lost her dog who has the same symptoms as Draven. Found out that her tenants (at the time living next door to her) left anti-freeze out for the chipmunks and what not to get into and never told her. Her dog got into the anti-freeze and digested a lethal dose and died. (Fast forward 5 years) Those tenants who poisoned her dog are now our next door neighbors as well as still our landlords tenants. They left anti-freeze out again and our dog got into it and he has since passed away. The suggestions that you have wrote about sounds perfect to do, except they went everywhere together. Car rides, hiking, running and walking. In time I think things will get a little better, but there will always be that void in our hearts.

Reply

Karen

March 4, 2017 at 1:20 am



I just found this & thank you for sharing your experience with the loss of your beloved Alex.

I lost my beloved rescue rabbit Edie last July. I was blessed with her presence for 10 of her 11 years on this planet. She was my 5th rabbit, but she was extra special & the silly mold was broken after her creation. She was such a cuddle bun & rabbits typically don't like to be held. Eeds would just hang out & cuddle for hours on end on the couch or bed. She also had health issues her last year of life. I had to give her eye drops, meds, take her for laser treatments, acupuncture, holistic meds & everything else in between.

I literally busted the bank with her, but I don't care, BECAUSE SHE WAS WORTH EVERY PENNY & THEN SOME!!!

I was devastated in saying goodbye to her, I had to make a painful decision to let her go. Once a rabbit's legs give out on them, and you have to hold them up to drink their water, their quality of life becomes severely diminished. She struggled to move, she so desperately wanted to get up to run, play, eat, drink, etc., but her legs wouldn't allow her to move. Although her appetite was good, she was losing weight. We were both suffering & it was such a painful decision to make. Its the one where you song want them to succer, but you always second guess yourself if you could've done more to make them comfortable, because you just don't want to lose them. But you have no choice, but to let them go so they don't have to suffer anymore.

I just kept missing her on her forehead & telling her over & over that I loved her & within 20 seconds she was gone.

What makes it worse is my boyfriend at that time told me I could bury her at his parents because he knew I wanted to sell my house later this year. He said he knew how much I hated where I loved & wanted to move & to bury her at his parents, "because the two of you should always be together."

I'm sorry I didn't bury her in my backyard, I broke up with him 6 weeks after losing her when he failed to stand up for me & Edie, when one of his sick, twisted junkie friend's (both of those idiots attend 12 step.meetings & do NOTHING to be responsible for their behavior & play a dog & pony show in what "great" guys they are;NOT!) This slimy junkie boasted about how they were going to have rabbits at the upcoming pig roast, when that jerk knew Edie was sick & died. My "boyfriend" said it was cruel, that he would talk to him. He later admitted he knew how bad it was going to be over the violation of the picnic contract (it didn't allow pig roasts), so he didn't bother to go to the meeting. Long story short, he failed miserably to stand up for either of us, so that was the last straw & I broke up with him.

Now, I'm stuck for the rest of my life and his close to 80 year old parents lives in visiting Edie at their house. Thank God I've got a good relationship with them.

I go when I know he's not there, because I don't want to see him. He was a miserable jerk after her memorial. I was raw with emotion & he was 100% miserable prick! He even went as far as saying, "because you needed a place to bury your rabbit" when I questioned him why he even suggested burying her there with all the break ups, etc. I just wanted to slap him. If that wasn't bad enough, his response to taking the memorial info & THEN blowing off going to her memorial was, "I was there for her when she was alive, I have a life & I moved on!"

I honestly hope he rots in hell for those remarks, because he was way beyond insensitive in making those miserable remarks when he knew how much I missed her & still grieving her loss.

She's been gone for just shy of 8 months & I STILL MISS HER! 😞

She was the love of my life & my heart & soul. She survived uterine cancer & an injured paw when she & my other bun knocked over the board to separate them. They didn't get along & somehow knocked down the board when I wasn't home. So, I was used to nursing Edie back to health, she was quite a trooper! My vet referred to her as a miracle bunny & the entire staff loved her. They'd light up when I'd take her in for her treatments. She wasn't very appreciative, since she'd trash the exam rooms. I was forever apologizing to the kennel attendants.

I try to visit her every week, but sometimes the weather is just too bitterly cold.

I spent a lot of time volunteering at a rabbit shelter & we lost a bun there about a month after I lost Edie. He had the same health issues as she did & was the same age. We lost another bun last month, same age, same issues, but she had far worse health problems since some human piece of garbage used her as pit bull bait. I hope the same is done to that piece of garbage that he did to that poor bun.

I try to comfort myself in thinking how happy Edie, Bailey, & As she must all be in bunny heaven. That they're romping, playing, eating hay, clover, etc. to their heart's content! I think Edie was there to greet them & they were happy to meet Edie & tell her how they knew me & how much love I gave them. That she was telling them how much I loved her & how much mischief she caused in our lives together. She certainly was the best comic relief you could ever imagine!

People say how lucky they were to have us. No; we were lucky to have them! We don't pick them, they pick us.

I adopted Dave, who supposedly had aggression issues; lunging, biting, etc. Bah! He's a perfect little lamb at home. He sadly was abandoned by dimwits who don't have a clue in caring for or understanding rabbits. I've had rabbits for 24 years, so he knew in picking me, he'd finally have a forever home he's always deserved.

I believe Edie picked him for me; I believe she found a way to connect to him to let him know, "I need you to take care of my mommy, she's going through a lot & you need to be there for her Now." I also believe Dave knows how much I miss her & he's just as cuddly as she is.

I think she uses him to pop in for occasional visits, when he knocks over the garbage can & pulls out the banana peels. My other bun Marci never does that. Edie was notorious in making a beeline for the garbage can, knocking it over & pulling out the banana peels.

So, the two of them act in concert!

I'm glad you shared your story about Alec. At least you get it, sometimes you just never get over them & will always miss them.

[Reply](#)

Karen

March 4, 2017 at 1:36 am



Blasted autocorrect! I meant you don't want to let go, but have to so they don't suffer. I meant I kept kissing her on the forehead in saying goodbye. I meant hated where I live. I meant Bailey & Essie.

[Reply](#)
