


EASE NEWS



ENVIRONMENTAL ANIMAL SANCTUARY AND EDUCATION
THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF EASE

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Editorial

***H**ello everyone, and welcome to the Summer 2019 edition of EASE News. In this issue we are sharing a further chapter from Angela Garner’s forthcoming book on pet bereavement, an article on ‘The Closeness of Animals’ by EASE Friend Deirdre Chitwood, and other news stories and items of interest concerning animals.*

I hope you enjoy the newsletter, and thank you for your continued support.

*MELINDA HILL
EASE PROJECT MANAGER*

***W**e are pleased to include here an extract from a forthcoming book by Angela Garner, the EASE Pet Bereavement Specialist, entitled ‘**Finding Sanctuary in Pet Bereavement – Journeying Together Through Grief**’. This concise, practical book has been written to support people through the loss of a pet – before, during and after bereavement. It has been created as a guide, and is intended to be like a friend walking alongside the reader, supporting them through each step of their personal grief journey. The book addresses many knotty areas that a distressed pet owner can face, and includes a number of different exercises to help the reader to stay focused and to regain their own centre of gravity in the face of their grief. Here is an extracted chapter on:*

The Seasons of Grief

One way of approaching grief is through the analogy of the four seasons.

At first, you’ll need time to take on board what has happened. Even when distressing news was expected, the actuality causes shock, bringing with it a sense of disbelief and that ‘this can’t be happening’. It is like finding yourself suddenly thrust into the middle of a cold, hard winter where everything has frozen over and life comes to a standstill. It may feel a bit surreal, especially when the rest of the world around you carries on as though nothing has happened, while you feel that your life as you knew it has changed forever.



The shock you experience can make you feel out of sorts and ‘all over the place’. It is a confusing and exhausting time with everything out of sync, and although you may desperately want to find some peace and rest, sleep can become elusive, causing you to generally feel under par.

As you begin to take on board the reality of what has happened you may find yourself overwhelmed by the depth of emotions you experience – rather like the torrents of rain filling fast flowing rivers as the winter snow and ice finally begin to melt with the onset of early spring. These emotions can be overwhelming, and you need to give yourself the time and space to work through them. It is vitally important **to allow yourself to feel what you feel**, which can be more difficult than it sounds. You may be afraid of the depth of pain you’ll experience, or fear that you’ll never be able to stop crying.

Try not to censure your emotions but to release them as they arise, which you may prefer to do in the privacy of your own home or in another quiet place. The anguish during grief can cause a lot of tears, deep sadness, anxiety and maybe feelings of anger, all of which are natural and normal responses. Rather than bottling things up for fear of appearing weak or unable to cope, do recognise that you are going through a significant process that takes time and effort to work through.

If you find yourself worrying about some aspect of a pet's death, rather than suffer such anxiety alone, it can help to share your feelings and to talk things through with someone who you know will understand. If there are recurring concerns which you cannot resolve, try writing them down and then think about who you can discuss them with to try to settle your mind. For example, you may need to arrange to talk to the vet for a few minutes to seek reassurance about some aspect of your pet's end of life.

It is easy to feel as though you're losing control during this early stage of the grief process. If you find yourself desperately wondering how much more you can take, think of the emotions like waves in a stormy ocean rising up and crashing around you. Know that eventually each high wave has to come back down, giving you a chance to take a breath and regather yourself. Remember that every storm eventually settles bringing calm in its wake, as indeed will the pain and distress you may be experiencing.

As you begin to gently re-adjust to your loss you will find you are able to take tentative steps to re-engage in some of your usual activities. By analogy, this is like the relief of the warmer, drier summer weather after a very wet and windy spring.

However, even in the summer there will still be some rainy days, when you suddenly feel low again and some of the emotions and feelings, which you thought you'd already dealt with, resurface. This can be disconcerting when you were finally starting to make some progress, and then, wham, it's like you're back at square one. Be aware that certain things – and often it's the small things such as a sound, sight or scent – can trigger a sudden setback. But it's okay – this is normal. Often it can be a case of three steps forward and two back for a while, and then three steps forward and one back, but do remember that you are still progressing – just a little slower for a while. So try to recognise setbacks as they occur and know that these too will pass and you will be able to once again move forward.

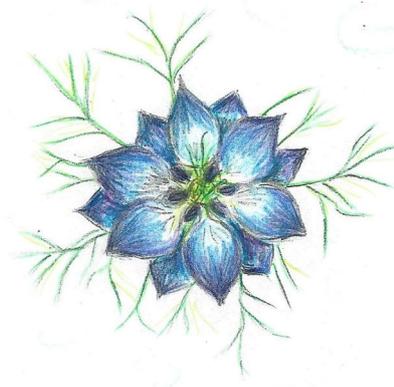
The autumn of grief is about the process of gradually and gently letting go of the pain and distress, a little at a time. This is analogous to the autumn leaves which over time slowly change their colours and state before being released back down to the earth. As with the trees, this doesn't happen all at once and it's certainly not a process to be rushed.

That said, one of the hardest things can be 'to let go'; yet we each need to find our unique way of doing so.

Remember that grief is the other side of caring and you feel pain because you cared. However difficult it seems at times, know that as you progress gently but surely through the different seasons of grief there comes a quiet healing and eventually a settlement to the fact that life does indeed move on. Naturally you may always miss the one you have loved and lost, but in your heart and mind you can cherish the special times you shared and the many memories gifted to you within your journey together.

It's never a case of 'getting over it' – grief simply isn't like that, so never allow yourself to feel under pressure from yourself or anyone else to do so. Take your time, and do what feels right for YOU.

It is normal to feel low at times during bereavement because you're trying to cope with having lost such a precious part of your life. However, there may be times when you need to gently but surely lift yourself up from the anguish and sadness – to allow yourself to feel a little lighter and happier, as and when you can.



Please remember that it is totally normal to grieve for the loss of a beloved pet, and through the care you offered to your companion animal over the time you shared together, you helped to make the world a better place for animals.

We will let you know when Angela's book is published and how to get hold of a copy.



The gift which I am sending you is called a dog, and is in fact the most precious and valuable possession of mankind.

Theodorus Gaza

World Watch

Finn's Law, named after a hero police dog, came into force in June 2019 to ensure police dogs and horses will have more protection from attacks. The Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill was nicknamed Finn's Law after a loyal dog who was brutally stabbed while protecting his handler from a knife-wielding suspect in October 2016. The bill removes a section of the current law of self-defence, often used by those who harm a service animal while committing a crime.

Handler PC Dave Wardell, from Hertfordshire, said hero police dog Finn, now retired, saved his life when a robbery suspect they were pursuing turned on them with a knife. The German shepherd was stabbed in the chest and head and was initially thought unlikely to survive, but despite his injuries he did not let the thug go until reinforcements arrived.

“In a split second, I saw the man lunge at Finn's side with a weapon”, PC Dave Wardell said. “As he pulled away, I saw a ten-inch blade, covered in Finn's blood. The man then lunged at me with the blade but Finn, despite being seriously hurt, grabbed hold and stopped him from landing a fatal blow. My hand was cut in the struggle and Finn's head was sliced open.”

The suspect was charged with actual bodily harm in relation to Mr Wardell's wounds, but faced only criminal damage charges over the injuries caused to Finn.



PC Wardell said, “The last two and a half years have been quite a journey of discovery for Finn and me. We decided that we just had to bring change to make sure our amazing service animals, including police dogs and horses, had protection in law. We wanted to bring as much positive from that one negative as we could.”



Animal Epitaphs from the wit Donald Sinden:

The Bird of Paradise: I want to go home
The Cat: Quick, a recount! That was surely only eight
The Crocodile: This is no time for tears
The Dog: Just lay me by those bones
The Fatted Calf: I hear the young master has returned
The Lemming: We can't all be wrong
The Ostrich: Just bury me in the sand
The Phoenix: Cremation, please

The Closeness of Animals

Have you ever wondered why so many people choose to share their lives with animals? And the evidence is huge to substantiate that a large majority of people in the West live with a least one furry companion. In the UK 45% of the population own a pet, and in the USA it is 68%. So what is the attraction? Despite increasing our workload, taking time out of our already over-busy lives and costing us an estimated £14.9 billion in the UK and \$60.28 billion in the USA on food and vet bills, many of us still prefer to have a pet in our lives.

Up until relatively recently, animals were primarily kept as working animals – dogs to herd sheep and cats to catch vermin – but now this is not so much the case. The role of domesticated

animals in our world today is mostly for emotional support. The human/animal bond is increasing and wonderful stories of this profound connection are now often documented. There are myriads of books, some becoming best-selling novels and films, depicting this closeness. It seems as well as seeking this closeness for ourselves, we have a magnetic attraction for this connection wherever it happens.

Animals open our hearts and make it easy for us to love them. And a lot of people who like animals often prefer their company to that of other people. Is it because they do not have agendas, they are not deceptive and they are not governed by time in the same way we are? They can teach us so much, if we have the eyes to see, in the ways of unconditional love, not having judgement, having humility and forgiveness, and being patient to name just a few. But within all this it is the feeling of closeness they give us that I think most of us are seeking.

Being close or intimate with things other than loved ones is something that is rarely experienced in our fast-paced world except perhaps by artists or poets or the religious few. Computers and technology, while bringing us closer in many ways, are also keeping us further apart and more separate from physical contact. Animals seem to be filling that gap. They have not, like us, lost their ability to be close and natural with things. As they wander around sniffing, jumping, running and playing, they are being intimate with their surroundings. This is why it is so important for a dog to have off-lead time, and why a working horse will become ill if not allowed some time to wander in the fields. Perhaps it is this desire to return to what is a more natural way of being that attracts us to animals.

A large part of being intimate with another being is to do with the element of touch. Learning how to touch your pet in a gentle way can open up a gateway of connection that will go much deeper than general petting. In a study funded by the US Government's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine it was discovered that 'light touch' produced more oxytocin – labelled the 'trust hormone' – and less

cortisol, the stress hormone. Oxytocin promotes mother-child bonding and appears to be associated with greater relaxation, willingness to trust others and general psychological stability. Even playing with your dog can cause a surge of oxytocin, according to a 2009 study published in the journal 'Hormones and Behavior'. Cortisol on the other hand is a stress hormone released by the adrenal glands and is important for helping your body deal with stressful situations. It is responsible for the fight or flight response. So by the use of a light, gentle touch we can be causing well-being in ourselves and our animals, and be teaching our animals to trust us on both physical and emotional levels.

Being mindful and respectful in the way we are around our animals is also crucially important if we want to engender a deeper bond; remembering that we are much bigger in size than our pet, and we stand on two legs not down on the ground on four, which immediately makes us appear dominant to them. All animals are experts at reading body language so we have to be very aware of the signals our body is sending. This is one reason why it is important to bend down when you greet a dog or a cat for the first time and not to look an animal directly in the eyes unless you know them well and they trust you.

A good rule of thumb is to always be relaxed in our bodies. The moment we tense our muscles, they read this as a sign of threat – either we are going to do something to them or there is something we are fearful of that they need to protect us from. Make a mental note to relax your body and hands when you touch your animal, to breathe evenly and to slow down. Animals are extremely sensitive and pick up when we are focusing on them or thinking about something else. They can read our intent with alarming speed and accuracy and if we are thinking loving thoughts about them they know it and respond accordingly.

Touching your animal in this way is much more intense than general petting so it is advisable to stop and pause every few minutes. Check whether they are enjoying the experience and if

not, change what you are doing. Allow them to move away if they want to and you may find they choose to return to you in a short while.

By using some of these simple techniques you will find that touching your animal will become a great deal more pleasurable for you and your pet, and you will be building and deepening that bond of developing closeness that you may be seeking with your pet.



Deirdre Chitwood is a Certified Tellington TTouch Practitioner for Companion Animals who lives in Florida, USA with her four cats. She volunteers at her local no-kill cat shelter and frequently writes for animal magazines and journals.

www.tendertouch.com



Animal Companions

The cat man of Aleppo, Mohammad Aljaleel, touched the hearts of millions when his sanctuary featured in a BBC video in 2016. He had to leave the city when it fell to Syrian government forces, but he's now back – in an area nearby – and helping children as well as animals.

Just weeks after the video was filmed, Mohammad Aljaleel (known to everyone as Alaa) watched helplessly as his cat sanctuary was first bombed, then chlorine-gassed, during the intense final stages of the siege of Aleppo. Most of his 180 cats were lost or killed. Like thousands of other

civilians he was trapped in the eastern half of the city under continuous bombardment from Russian and Syrian fighter jets. As the siege tightened, he was forced from one Aleppo district to another, witnessing unimaginable scenes of devastation. Yet throughout, he continued to look after the few surviving cats and to rescue people injured in the bombing, driving them to underground hospitals.

When the city fell in December 2016, he left in a convoy, his van crammed full of injured people and the last six cats from the sanctuary. "I've always felt it's my duty and my pleasure to help people and animals whenever they need help," Alaa says. "I believe that whoever does this will be the happiest person in the world, besides being lucky in his life."

After a brief recuperation in Turkey, he smuggled himself back into Syria – bringing a Turkish cat with him for company – and established a new cat sanctuary, bigger and better than the first one, in Kafr Naha, a village in opposition-held countryside west of Aleppo. Using the same crowdfunding model employed successfully in east Aleppo, funds were sent in by cat-lovers from all over the world via Facebook and Twitter.

But Alaa has always worked for the benefit of the community, as well as the cats themselves. In Aleppo, he and his team of helpers bought generators, dug wells and stockpiled food. Even at the height of the bombing, they ran animal welfare courses for children, to develop their empathy. They also set up a playground next to the sanctuary where children could briefly escape from the apocalyptic events taking place all around them.

The new sanctuary has expanded to include an orphanage, a kindergarten and a veterinary clinic. Alaa and his team resemble a small development agency, providing services that government and international charities cannot or will not. He strongly believes that helping children to look after vulnerable animals teaches them the importance of kindness to all living creatures, and helps to heal their own war traumas. "Children and animals are the big losers in the Syrian war," he says. "It's the adults who so often behave badly."

As well as cats, the new sanctuary has dogs, monkeys, rabbits, a chicken that thinks it's a cat, and an Arabian thoroughbred horse. "There are so few thoroughbred horses left inside Syria now that I worry about finding him a mare to breed with. I plan to perform the role of a traditional Syrian mother and try to find him a wife, so that he can have children and start building up the population of thoroughbred horses in Syria again," Alaa says.

In the new sanctuary he looks after 105 children, of whom 85 are "orphans" (in Syria the word covers children who have lost a breadwinner, as well as those who have lost both parents). Only 11 children actually sleep in the orphanage at present, because it isn't finished, but all receive education, food and clothes.

The biggest risk is the instability in the region. Clashes break out periodically, as it's close to the border with Idlib province, which is controlled by rebel groups who often fight each other. No-one knows what will happen next to that part of Syria and who will end up in charge. "I blame all fighting parties equally – no matter who they are or why they say they're fighting – for the killing of civilians," Alaa says.



"We are rebuilding our communities and my role in that is to rebuild my sanctuary for cats. Friendship between animals is a great thing and we should learn from them."



World Watch

'Dog-Speak' is important for social bonding between pet and owner

Scientists at the University of York have shown that using 'dog speak' to communicate with dogs is important in relationship-building between pet and owner, similar to the way that 'baby talk' is to bonding between a baby and an adult.

Speech interaction experiments between adult dogs and humans showed that this particular

type of speech improves dog attention and may help humans to socially bond with their pets.

Previous studies on communicating with dogs had suggested that talking in a high-pitch voice with exaggerated emotion, just as adults do with babies, improved engagement with puppies but made little difference with adult dogs. Researchers at York tested this theory with new experiments designed to understand more about why humans talk to dogs like this and if it is useful to the dogs in some way or whether humans do this simply because they like to treat dogs in the same way as babies.

Dr Katie Slocombe from the University of York's Department of Psychology, said: "A special speech register, known as infant-directed speech, is thought to aid language acquisition and improve the way a human baby bonds with an adult. This form of speech is known to share some similarities with the way in which humans talk to their pet dogs, known as dog-directed speech. This high-pitched rhythmic speech is common in human interactions with dogs in western cultures, but there isn't a great deal known about whether it benefits a dog in the same way that it does a baby. We wanted to look at this question and see whether social bonding between animals and humans was influenced by the type and content of the communication."

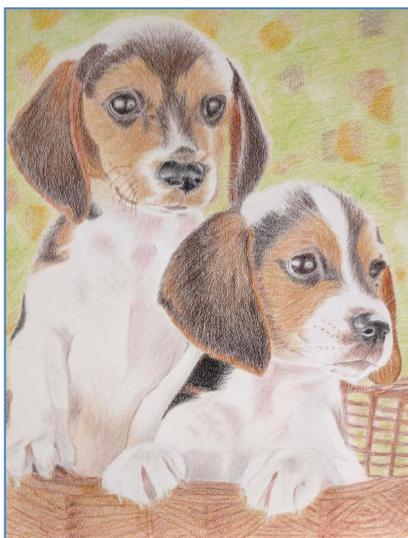
Unlike previous experiments, the research team positioned real humans in the same room as the dog, rather than broadcasting speech over a loud speaker without a human present. This made the set-up more naturalistic for the dogs and helped the team test whether dogs not only paid more attention to 'dog speak', but were motivated to spend more time with the person who had spoken to them in that way.

Researchers did a series of speech tests with adult dogs, where they were given the chance to listen to one person using dog-directed speech containing phrases such as 'you're a good dog', and 'shall we go for a walk?', and then another person using adult-directed speech with no dog-related content, such as 'I went to the cinema last night.' Attention during

the speech was measured, and following the speech, the dogs were allowed to choose which speaker they wanted to physically interact with.

The speakers then mixed dog-directed speech with non-dog-related words and adult-directed speech with dog-related words, to allow the researchers to understand whether it was the high-pitched emotional tone of the speech that dogs were attracted to or the words themselves.

Alex Benjamin, PhD student from the University's Department of Psychology, said: "We found that adult dogs were more likely to want to interact and spend time with the speaker that used dog-directed speech with dog-related content, than they did those that used adult-directed speech with no dog-related content. When we mixed-up the two types of speech and content, the dogs showed no preference for one speaker over the other. This suggests that adult dogs need to hear dog-relevant words spoken in a high-pitched emotional voice in order to find it relevant. We hope this research will be useful for pet owners interacting with their dogs, and also for veterinary professionals and rescue workers."



I never saw a wild thing sorry for itself. A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough without ever having felt sorry for itself.

D. H. Lawrence

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM DOGS

- * **NO MATTER HOW OFTEN YOU'RE SCOLDED, DON'T POUT OR FEEL GUILTY**
- * **NEVER PASS UP THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO FOR A JOY RIDE**
- * **ALLOW THE EXPERIENCE OF FRESH AIR, THE WIND IN YOUR FACE AND SIMPLY BEING ALIVE TO BE PURE ECSTASY**
- * **WHEN LOVED ONES COME HOME, ALWAYS RUN TO GREET THEM AND BE PLEASED TO SEE THEM**
- * **WHEN IT IS IN YOUR BEST INTERESTS, PRACTISE OBEDIENCE**
- * **LET OTHERS KNOW WHEN THEY HAVE INVADED YOUR TERRITORY**
 - * **TAKE NAPS, AND STRETCH BEFORE RISING**
 - * **RUN, ROMP AND PLAY DAILY**
 - * **EAT WITH GUSTO AND ENTHUSIASM**
 - * **BE LOYAL**
- * **NEVER PRETEND TO BE SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT**
- * **IF YOU WANT WHAT LIES BURIED, DIG UNTIL YOU FIND IT**
- * **WHEN SOMEONE IS HAVING A BAD DAY, BE SILENT, SIT CLOSE BY AND NUZZLE THEM GENTLY**
 - * **AVOID BITING WHEN A SIMPLE GROWL WILL DO**
- * **ON HOT DAYS DRINK LOTS OF WATER AND LIE UNDER A SHADY TREE**
- * **WHEN YOU'RE HAPPY, DANCE AROUND AND WAG YOUR ENTIRE BODY**
- * **DELIGHT IN THE SIMPLE JOY OF A LONG WALK**
 - * **RUN RIGHT BACK AND MAKE FRIENDS**

(Author unknown)



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