

# **Finding Ways to Honor Your Pet After They Pass**

## **A Special Interview With Carol Bryant**

**By Dr. Karen Shaw Becker**

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

I'm Dr. Karen Becker and joining me today for a really important conversation is Carol Bryant. And she's here to talk about ways that we can honor our animals after they're no longer with us. And I think it's a really important conversation to have for a bunch of reasons, but partly because listening to this information, potentially, before your animal transitions is going to give you the opportunity to do a little bit of thinking, regardless of how difficult it is, about things you might want to do. But also if you've already lost your animal and you're still at a state of wanting to express how you're feeling or wanting to honor your pet, this conversation will be for you. So thank you so much, Carol, for joining me for this important conversation. And I'm looking forward to hearing your suggestions because I'm one of those girls that will probably take all of them and put all of your suggestions to good use. So thank you so much for joining us.

**Carol Bryant:**

I appreciate it. Such a fan of yours, and it's a pleasure to be here and the more pet parents we can help out, my mantra is the more, the better, so.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah, it's so true. And I have to believe that you probably have cultivated your list of ways that we can honor our animals from life experience. You probably have lost animals, and you have done things that have helped your heart. And so I appreciate you sharing your list, your ideas, your thoughts, some suggestions probably coming out of your own point of pain.

**Carol Bryant:**

Absolutely, yeah. When you go into a relationship with a dog, chances are, as you know, you're likely going to outlive them. And so knowing that, I suffer from anticipatory grief as well, but what my dogs have taught me, I mean fully, and it's so cliché is you've got to stay present and live in the moment. And I live with no regret. I've dug the dog birthday parties, and I've given my dog birthday presents, and we do the cross-country road trips together. So that's my way of saying, "Hey, anticipatory grief, you don't get to win. I'm going to live large. And my dog's coming along for the ride."

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

So good. So good. And that's actually a really good tip, preemptively. I have had some of my clients that at the first exam, Carol, when they're 8 weeks old, the tears come and their comments isn't, "How do I help this brand new life live maximally and fully?" Their first comments are, "Oh my gosh, this beautiful creature is, someday, going to die." And they're correct. That beautiful creature is, someday, going to die. And yet, if we go through life as that being our front and center fear, oftentimes we miss amazing opportunities to celebrate all this relationship and

our animal's life has to offer. So I think even hearing about some of these suggestions, ways that we can even honor our pets while they're still alive, and then of course, things we can do after they've transitioned to help our hearts heal, or to, at least, be able to put one foot in front of another, on a really bad day. I think having the conversation and talking about it is the first step of facing some of our fears.

**Carol Bryant:**

Yeah, absolutely. And one of the greatest quotes, I wish I knew who said this, but I had read this recently because within the past few months, my cocker spaniel did pass away suddenly from hemangiosarcoma that we had no idea he had. We thought he was going in for a pulled muscle in his back. And as you know, hemangiosarcoma is that evil train that no one sees coming. What someone said to me was, "You were the last face he saw before he closed his eyes. And wherever you feel your dog moves on to, whether that's nowhere or heaven or the rainbow bridge." And someday when I go, he's going to be the first thing that I see when I open my eyes. And so that's what I cling to, is that it's not forever and he would want me happy. So that anticipatory grief, I had a hard time with that, but I still struggle. My spouse likes to say, change the channel. When that starts coming into your brain, you need to change the channel and enjoy your dog because you're right, someday they won't be here, but that's not the focus. Your dog wants you to be happy. Trust me, your dog wants you living in the moment.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

And isn't it awesome that dogs give us — Cats, all life, animals in general, the reason that I think all of us are animal junkies, junkies of creatures, is because they do live in the moment and they role-model that for us on a second to second basis. So even when we have a hard time staying focused and present, they give us, literally, constant reminders that that's where they're at. They're the best role models in life for a multitude of reasons. But one of them is that, that they can stay present and give us the ability that if they can do it, we can do it too. And we live with these blessed role models that are square and center in our lives. And we need to take advantage of all of the life lessons that they offer us. So first of all, I'm sorry about your recent loss. This is a hard topic then coming. You got an open wound brewing, girl, and it's, this is, it's a hard discussion I have to ask, have you done anything so far in terms of creating? Have you done anything to memorialize your babe that just transitioned?

**Carol Bryant:**

That's been my focus since I lost him. One of the things, as a writer and a blogger, I find it very helpful and cathartic for me to help others going through the same thing. And so I've just reached out to people who are in grief, and told them some of the things I've been doing. I've also, until another dog comes in my life, I've been helping dogs get into new homes by, I have a nice network of people, a pretty strong following. So I'll just tell someone, "I'm not ready, but this dog really needs a whole him and look at him and now cute and he does this and that," and I've helped to get dogs home. So outside of that, yes, I'm an over-the-top dog mom first, and then I'm a writer and a blogger second.

**Carol Bryant:**

So yeah, one of the things that I've done is you've mentioned the hair, but it was right before Christmas that he passed, so they gave us his hair when we took him to be cremated. And so I made an ornament with his hair in it, and that's going to kind of stay. His name was Dexter. So that's going to stay out year-round. Etsy is a wonderland of places for people who love pet jewelry and things like that. And there was a woman who was making rings and she could take a piece of hair that you send her and put it into this resin ring with dried flowers. And then you'd always feel like you were petting your dog and your dog was nearby. Things like that, those tangibles give me comfort. I also wrote an obituary for him.

**Carol Bryant:**

I had ordered my Christmas cards. They were ready to go out. Of course, it's the dog in a silly Santa hat. And I thought, "What do I do? Are they going to think I'm crazy if I send it out? "Is she off the deep end?" And I kind of left what people think about me at the door years ago. So I sent the Christmas cards out, but I did an obituary with it, with all his accomplishments. He wasn't just my dog. He earned his canine good citizen and he had trick dog titles and he traveled around the country and he was ambassador for cocker spaniels. So I hoped to inspire someone. And I had someone say, because of that note, they went out and adopted a dog. So he's not gone. I feel like you could keep your dog alive in so many ways and memorializing them, those are just a few that came off my head, but memorializing them in your everyday life and in your actions, then they're never gone.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Really good advice. I think that for some people, especially when you have a family member that you can see or a friend that you can see so profoundly grieving, I think, sometimes, we don't want to ask, we don't want to bring it up. I think a lot of times, family members, friends, and family, they don't know what to say to someone who who's hurting so profoundly. I think it also happens when humans die and in an attempt to not try to make the wound more painful, a lot of times we just tiptoe around the elephant in the room rather than just acknowledging it and saying to people who are hurting, "Hey, I know you went through a loss and I'm thinking about you."

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

I think for me, when I have lost animals, people recognize the depth and breadth of my grief and they just don't want to say anything. And it helps a lot I think when people do just let each other know that they're hurting. And so I think having people check in on you, it's great that you've got a circle of support, having those people let you know that they're thinking about you, I think is important. And I think that that's something that if you know someone who's lost an animal, just acknowledging that they're hurting right now is an important step.

**Carol Bryant:**

Exactly, and it doesn't stop. The hardest part for me was when, and like yourself, you're in the public eye, suddenly your Instagram stops and suddenly your Facebook comes to a halt and it's awkward. But for people who aren't maybe so much in the public eye, one of the things that I found, and again, this was, I think, Dexter, my dog, he's fluttering his wings at me, there are hashtags you could follow and find a community of people who are suffering with you. So

whether that's like pet loss or #petgrieving, or wherever you go, all of the different resources you have available, there is a community out there because a lot of people I'm finding suffer in silence, whether it's because it's just a pet, or if they're not online a lot, or maybe they don't have a presence.

**Carol Bryant:**

I found some of the greatest friends and the most supportive people, just because we shared this common bond of loss. And online, I went to an online support group also. The hospital where Dexter died had a service that they offered, three online classes or online support groups, I should say, with a counselor because you can't get together in-person. And we were able to talk about our pet. And now I have friends from that too, because two of us had our dogs die suddenly from hemangiosarcoma. So I think it's that embracing that even though you don't have your pet with you physically anymore, and this is coming from a girl who has now cried three months' worth of tears, is finding a new way to honor them and keep them in your life. And in that way, you never let go. They're always with you if you're honoring them in a special way.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Really good advice. And are you finding that as you are working through your grief and processing your grief, that you are coming up with different ideas or thoughts, or maybe inspirations, maybe divine, maybe Dexter divine inspirations of how you can, things you can do to be able to feel connected to Dexter despite the fact that you're still hurting?

**Carol Bryant:**

Yeah. I think like one of the first things and we all do this is for about a week, I took all of his photos down. I don't know what it was. It was just a reminder he wasn't here. Having the photos around me helps. Of course you could do gifts and trinkets. And I mean, I have my memorial angel and I light her with a little votive candle and I just kind of, I talk to him. I don't see why you shouldn't talk to your pet just because they're physically — I'm very spiritual, not the world's most religious girl, but I am spiritual. One of the things that I read, I loved this so much and I started doing this, ask your friends, whether that's online, your family, your neighbors, for a special anecdote about your pet who passed away. So what do you remember about Dexter or what do you remember about my cat who's no longer with us? And have them email them to you, snail mail them to you.

**Carol Bryant:**

Put them all in a jar. When you're feeling down, you can pull one out, and you have this memory that somebody else experienced about your pet, or I love the idea of, and I'm going to do this, making a collage of all of them. And so it's all of these. I've seen pictures now that people took at events with my dog. I have no idea. They're like, "Do you know I had a conversation with your dog? And he smiled at me." And these are things I had no idea until he's gone. And so in that way, all these random acts of kindness, it's actually restored my faith in humanity with how the shape of our world in these past couple years, pet people are awesome people when they come together. And so you might not think something so small as to say, "I'm so sorry for your loss," or, "Your cat, I used to love this picture when you put it up on Instagram," or whatever it is. Just tell someone that even if you leave it in a comment or you send them an email, you could gather

all those up together and make a memory board. And that's what I plan to do. That's one of the things I've started.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

That's a great idea. And one that I've not heard, but that's a really good idea. Even for me, I think about asking people that you maybe only met my dog or cat once or twice, just asking them what they remember or their experience. It's really, really good. That also gives you perspective. And also you hear new stories about an animal that you know very intimately, which is awesome. That's a great suggestion.

**Carol Bryant:**

And it might just be things that you might not have met these people in person. But if you put a photo on the internet or if you have an Instagram or a Twitter account or a TikTok or something, just asking for those memories, it's phenomenal. And something I do plan to do is take another visit to Dog Mountain in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, which I've been to twice. There's a chapel there, and you could put your deceased pet's photo on the wall of the chapel. And when we went a few years ago to memorialize my first cocker who died, it's an overwhelming experience. I literally sat in the chapel for the day. You could feel the love, the grief, but also the sense of hope. I don't even, I cried for hope to see these thousands and thousands of pets on the wall that are loved and they're not lost because there I was looking at them all, that kind of thing. So that's something else once the weather breaks and the pandemic calms down, I plan another trip to Dog Mountain in Vermont. I think it's one of those meccas every dog or pet parent should take.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

It's beautiful. I've never heard of it, but I would also like to mecca there. I think, yeah, that sounds like a beautiful experience. Was it a chapel that was specifically built or converted to be-

**Carol Bryant:**

Yes, it was a chapel that was built so that the pews at the end have carved wooden sculptures of dogs. And there's 140 acres and dogs are welcome. So you could let your dog off-leash there to run if you wanted to. Everything is about the dogs. They have a little museum and it's absolutely, you're coming up on this dirt road and you think, "Am I going into a serial killer's house" or "Where am I exactly headed?" And suddenly, there's this heaven on earth. It's dog lovers at St. Johnsbury, Vermont. There's not much else around it, but you could probably find a nice hotel about like half-hour to an hour from there. It's worth the, and like I said, we're planning on going there again. We took him there and now we'll take our next dog there.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

What a beautiful ritual. That's okay, thank you. That's a bucket list item for me. It's really, that's a great suggestion. Wonderful.

**Carol Bryant:**

Oh, and it's just, it's so peaceful and I thought I'm never going to be able to make it through, but I mean I was just kind of catatonic and I sat with my dog and he knew too. He knew he was very,

dogs were very serene there. Nobody was crazy and throwing balls or any of that. Even the dogs kind of had a sense of something came over them. Very magical, Karen.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Really good. That's a beautiful suggestion. Yes, and yeah, that's wonderful.

**Carol Bryant:**

And I think for those who can't get there, you can probably visit online. I'm sure they have a website or something.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah, and we will link that website to the article. That's a fantastic suggestion. Do you have people, Carol, that because you're out and about educating, doing a lot of education in the name of helping dogs, specifically, have healthier, happier lives, did you have people reach out to you? Did you publicly post that your dog had transitioned?

**Carol Bryant:**

Yes, I'm a public girl. And so from when we took him to the vet to, sad story, pandemic-related, we couldn't find an emergency hospital to take us within three hours of our house because they were all full. And so I'm in Pennsylvania. We wound up in Jersey with an amazing hospital. I don't know if I'm allowed to shout them out or not.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Sure.

**Carol Bryant:**

Oradell Animal Hospital in New Jersey, who, at midnight, coming in with a sick dog and you know something's up when they bring the cart out and you can't go back because it's COVID. But I went on from the time, I have a community and I needed that support. And I said, "We're in a situation here." So I Facebooked it and people followed along and I just felt the power of their love during, and I also needed that power of their love once it happened, because everybody from Dr. Coger to my friends that I've known from childhood to people follow my dog. I'm just the other end of the leash. I don't even know if people know what I look like. "What's new with your dog? What are his comings and goings?"

**Carol Bryant:**

And so I had to say something when he passed, and for me, putting it out in the public helped me even more, because people came out with stories of their own. They shared tips. I talked to a veterinarian who really calmed me down and explained, "I didn't do this to my dog." I blamed myself. I thought I missed it. I'm used to, I'm this dog mama rights and what's my problem? So that took a few weeks to say, "It wasn't my fault," but I think you've got to have a community. Even if anybody out there's listening to this with anticipatory grief, talk to people who have pets and just share the love together now because none of us are guaranteed tomorrow, not just our pets. So I just, I'm really trying my hardest to stay present and living in the moment.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah. And for people who maybe don't feel comfortable announcing that their animal has transitioned, maybe they don't want questions. They don't want people asking, "How are you?" because they're terrible. They're just not interested in letting anyone know that internal pain can become unbearable, but there are things that people can do that will resonate with them, that can help relieve some of that anxiety and feeling of being completely and utterly broken and shattered.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

One of the things that I did when Gemini died was I found my most favorite pictures of her and then made a wall collage of my favorite photos of her and that's still, I wrote a poem. I wrote a poem, but it just has been so – this picture, I had professionally made soon after her death, but I'll have it with me until the day I die, because it's just such a beautiful way that every single time I look at her beautiful face, it just reminds me of how energy cannot be created or destroyed. It just changed forms and Gemini changed forms, but it has helped immensely to have kind of a living picture of her with me, wherever I go.

**Carol Bryant:**

That's beautiful. That's the sort of thing my office is surrounded with, my dog memorabilia. But I also did tattoos. That was something I wanted also. And rather than getting an image, cocker spaniels, they sit, plop, right on your lap and they leave those marks, any dog, if they're on your lap, I'm pointing to my leg, their paw print sort of leaves its impression. And so if you have shorts on, when they get up, that paw impression is still there. So I have his paw prints and my first dog's paw prints exact where they would have sat on my leg. That gives me much comfort. And that's something that people could do. I think that if they don't want to talk about it, but they want a permanent memorial and maybe a necklace or a ring isn't enough and photos, they love them but they want to go something more, and I will say the pain of losing a dog is much harder than the pain of a tattoo.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yes, yes. Well, and I haven't thought about tattoos, but I do have clients that have beautiful paw prints of all of their beloveds. And it's such, it literally is a living memorial to that relationship, to all of those relationships. And they're gorgeous. So that's another great idea. I love that as well. Did you cremate Dexter or did you bury him?

**Carol Bryant:**

I did. We cremated and called the crematorium every day until we can go pick up his remains. And I feel such a sense of comfort having him here with us. I hope someday that it will be allowed that he and our other dogs can be cremated and put together with me and put out at the dog park or wherever someone wants me to be. But we did the special urn. I had a special urn made. And I went to a grief counselor because it got to be too much for me. And after a week, I seem so strong now, but I wouldn't get out of bed. I didn't want to take a shower. I was still in the same clothes. And so if that's you, that happens. But after about a week, my family was like, "You smell and you need to get up."

**Carol Bryant:**

I mean, I'm being funny about it, but so I sought the help of a grief counselor, who I saw the last time a dog died. And I tell her that it's like my oil check. I just need that look under the hood and kind of help me and remind me. And she said, "You're a dog person. You're not just a one-dog person. This is something that you bought into for life. And so with that great love is going to come great pain." So outside of the tattoo and the counselor, I also started journaling just for me. I literally picked up a pen. I got one of those paw print, just like a Walmart \$2 journal-type thing with paw prints on it. And I've just started writing down things about him I don't want to forget, just some of the little things, and I don't know where that will end up right now. That's just for me that maybe it will just stay in that journal, but I have been blogging an inordinate amount about death. And so anybody that follows my blog, happier times are coming, but I needed to do that for me. But the response from the people who are reading about grief or a way that I help them, that's how my dog lives. I feel like he'd want me to do that.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yes. Well, and I'm so proud of you for doing that. Out of you expressing just your sheer transparent pain, many other people can relate to that and maybe don't have the energy or the ability right now to express it themselves. Maybe they don't even have the words, but by reading someone else's perspective, they can relate totally to where you are at, because they're at the same point. So thank you for publicly sharing how you're doing. If people wanted to read those intimate conversations that you've had, where would they go, Carol, to read your conversations with yourself, about how you're working through this?

**Carol Bryant:**

Yeah. So everything is on my blog, which is [FidoseOfReality.com](http://FidoseOfReality.com). It's spelled just like sounds, [FidoseOfReality.com](http://FidoseOfReality.com). And they could just search "grief" or "pet loss" in the search bar. And there's quite a few articles there and it's just raw and real and actionable because I just felt like when it came over me, I didn't know where to put this grief. And I'm sure you've heard this, grief is love with no place to go. And so I am going to give it to another pet and I'll still help animals, but I live to write.

**Carol Bryant:**

I mean, I think I'm on this planet to write and to help dogs and to also find my spouse, but that is something that I think people could do is if they don't feel they could express it in their own heart or I've had people tell me they've sent a blog post to a family member and it was like, "Here's what I'm going through. I can't talk about it, but this is how I feel." And just the outpouring of love. It makes me think that in some way, Dexter and all these lives have sort of wherever you think your pet is, or if you think it doesn't go anywhere when we die, wherever you think your pet is, I feel like they've all found each other in some way, the way we've found each other here on Earth.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah. And that there is that connection, that energetic connection, which is-



**Carol Bryant:**

I feel it.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah, exactly.

**Carol Bryant:**

Yeah, and I do, I feel it in the funniest ways. And just before I got on with you, I went on Etsy to try to find an announcement to announce our next pet when he comes into our lives and honest to goodness, on the first page, it didn't have jewelry. And the name on the jewelry was Dexter. I just look at those things like there's millions of dog names out there. I don't know. There have been signs since, and that's another thing I do believe, they pass us signs but we don't go looking for them like, "Well, why didn't he wake me up in the middle of the night?" Or "I'm not dreaming about him." It might be the slightest thing, but I'm telling you there have been enough things that have happened to me over the years after losing my dogs that you'll get signs they're there. That connection, the energetic connection does not die just because the body's gone. That's my belief.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah. And it's also very reassuring for people that think, "Oh, no, what if I never feel what I feel? My dog or cat's still alive right now, but they're in the dying process. What if I don't have that connection?" I think that for me, when I was going through my most significant anticipatory grief, I read every possible book on animals and spirituality and animals and heaven and humans and energy transfer. I just wanted to know, I just wanted to read everyone's perspective because in some way, it allowed me to recognize that there's all these scholars and thousands of people around the world that have and are experiencing what I am feeling. And yet they have more confidence in recognizing that that energy connection remains. And at a point in my life when I didn't have faith or confidence, reading other people who had it gave me a profound sense of peace. And I think that journaling and reading are two really good soul-soothers, at least for me. They were incredibly beneficial at helping me when I was at my weakest. And I think that that's something else that we can just talk about. It's just the fact that we don't necessarily have to say anything profound or meaningful, but that we can use other people's words that have been through what we're going through to find a source of strength.

**Carol Bryant:**

Absolutely. And that made me think of something my therapist said to me. I went there and I just, I poured my heart out and I said, "Just help. I can't even see the light. I don't even know what I'm supposed to do now." Because I work from home. I have my home office. And so your dog is always with you. I think that also, it just adds a next, they're happy to see you when you come home. She said, "There's no fast forward button on grief, Carol. You're going to have to walk through the fire. I can't make you better." And she's right. And there's no timeline on it, timeline to grief. But during those most wicked, horrible gut-wrenching times, I just, I clung to his blanket. I talked to people. Sometimes I didn't want to talk to people, but if it gets to be way too much, and I always tell people this, if you feel you cannot survive or get by without your pet,

definitely look for some intervention. You need to get help for that because your pet would not want you to not be here because they're not.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah. And I think that that's really important, I think you can have flashes of thoughts that are incredibly dark, but you are spot-on. Your animals' perspective on your thought processes are worth thinking about because our animals want us grounded and they want us in a state of balance. And they do not, us being caught up in grief to the point that we are not functional humans is not where our beloveds would want us to be.

**Carol Bryant:**

Not at all, not at all and something else I did too. A friend of mine did it, but during the pandemic and being, we're all indoors, people have done crossword puzzles and they've done jigsaw puzzles. I've learned I don't like either, but there's this thing called diamond art. I don't know if this is going to show up Dr. Becker-

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Oh, beautiful. Beautiful

**Carol Bryant:**

You can order these kits for like, I don't know, \$10, \$15, and they'll lay out your, this is Dexter and they'll lay out the photo for you. And then you get these little pieces of, they call them "diamonds." They're little and you hand-set each one. So my best friend did this for me when he died. I mean, it literally took her weeks, but she said it was so cathartic for her because it was something she could pour. She's like, "I know you couldn't help me with my grief over losing your dog." So she did that for me. And I just, I don't know, some sort of sense of peace has come over me when I think people love me that much to do that.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yes, and Carol, do you know the website for that again?

**Carol Bryant:**

That was Etsy. I'm one of those Etsy junkies that if you put in "diamond art," they're all different sellers and that kind of thing. But she had it framed for me.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

It's amazing, and that would be something that for me, some of those meticulous, the act of placing those would be really, that resonates with me profoundly because-

**Carol Bryant:**

I might want to do one now. I'm actually thinking of doing one, just because crossword puzzles and jigsaw puzzles, no, they make me more frustrated, but diamond art, I can do. Diamond art, I can do.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

That's beautiful. I had no idea. I love that suggestion as well. Wow, all of these things I didn't know about. This is really nice.

**Carol Bryant:**

I try to do things that, I've had friends, I've planted a tree in my dog's honor. Also, if you have the space and I have a deck, I don't have a backyard, but if you have a garden area, you can make a memorial garden. My friend who did that art for her first cocker, did like a little garden flag. She has a garden stone and she actually put some of the cremains in the dirt, in that area. And it's just her little prayer garden where she can go and visit with Coco, whenever thoughts come to her. And she's always right there for her. So I think everybody's grief is different, but I think that everybody's way to memorialize honor, think of and never really let go of your pet. There's so many, you don't have to let go. Why let go? Talk about them, keep them alive. Make it your screen saver, personalized wind chime. I found a lady, here I go. I have no stock in Etsy. She does these things on Etsy where she'll do like little statues of your dog.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Oh my gosh.

**Carol Bryant:**

And then she did an angel for my first dog. And it's like \$10. I mean, so it's not that you have to break the bank and you could send someone, if you know someone that's grieving, send them an Etsy gift card to get what they want. I mean, that place, that's dangerous for me and something else I did was I cyber-fostered a dog. I wanted to get that out there. In his name, I just went to one of my cocker spaniel rescue groups and said, "Who really needs help?" And they said, "Oh, this poor guy. And we found him, he's 10 years old and he's got no teeth." And I said, "I want to donate to him every month." So I'm cyber-fostering.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Beautiful, that's a beautiful idea as well. Gosh, really good. Really good. Wow.

**Carol Bryant:**

There's other things, there's other things, but those are some of the, like getting a memorial quilt or you can do a blanket with your dog's photo on it, stuff like that. But I had a hard time taking a walk without my dog. Thirty years, I haven't taken a walk by myself, so I took his leash with me and his collar and I put that in my cross body bag. And then I didn't feel so alone.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

It's good. I'm not crying.

**Carol Bryant:**

I know, I know, I know. That's the hardest part for me, is the physical, it's the physical, of course-

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

I'm a carton junkie is what I say. I just like the, I really like how my animals smell and how they feel.

**Carol Bryant:**

Yes, yeah. And I mean, when that fur came, they gave me a paw print at the crematorium. Well, that's kind of worn down now because my hand has been on it so much that it's – I'm not here to say it's that pain ever goes away and nor should it. My last one died 13 years ago. So it just becomes a part of you. I don't think I'll ever get over it. And there's not a timeline that you should. That's the one thing that makes me angry like, “Can I talk about it now? Are you over it?” We don't get over our mom or our dad or our friends dying. So I just believe we carry that love with us and I want to honor him. Most of all, I want to honor him. And in that way, when someone says his name, he's here, he's here.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

And it's really wonderful that you can continue to speak about him, and that potentially, when you hear his name and you say his name, it does shift from maybe initially overwhelming pain to really just good memories and then get to a point where you can say his name and there isn't hurt and darkness and regret and all of those negative emotions. But you eventually get to the point where it's just warm and fuzzy and connecting and edifying. And that's full circle in the sense that the pain is still there. You miss them excruciatingly, but you're able to move forward because that's what they want us – they do want us to be functional in our lives and us getting to a place where we can be functional is really important.

**Carol Bryant:**

And you know, I would never want any pet I ever have to suffer or just to be alive for me. And so that was, I think that was the one piece that tipped me forward that they said, “You could take your dog home and he might bleed out on you or you need to make a decision here.” And as you know, hemangiosarcoma just comes out of nowhere.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Brutal, brutal, it is. And, you literally go into shock. It's like, “I'm sorry, what did you say?”

**Carol Bryant:**

What is this 6x6 mass on my dog's liver and it's [inaudible 00:37:51] what? And they brought it out. And I thought we were going in for a sore back because he was eating and drinking and had a clean bill of health. So that was the guilt in me. But now I know I always will put my dog first and keeping him alive for me to suffer would have been a tragedy. So that was my final sense of peace that I did the right thing for him. I did that as an act of love. This I say three months later, I didn't feel that in the beginning. I thought I killed my dog. But it's a process, and this is cliché, but whoever is listening to this, I've learned so much from you, Dr. Becker. Whenever something comes up in my life, right to your blog, right to your YouTube. “What does she have to say about it?” Because you're my authority. And I gain inspiration from you and everything you do in the name of dog.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Thank you. And it's humbling and I appreciate people that resonate with my experiences, my mistakes, how I've grown and evolved as a veterinarian, as a human, as a pet lover. Talking about all of this is the most important thing because either we've all been there with these common emotions of loving and losing things, or we will all be there. So having a community, talking about what we've been through or what we're going to go through, being supportive to one another, engaging in conversations and community that allows us to support each other when we're going through these things, that is the most important thing that we can do for each other. So I'm thankful that I have been able to be a resource to you. And in turn, you're a resource to thousands of people as well. So this is exactly how we support and love those around us, knowing that they are going through or will go through the exact, same excruciating pain that we all have experienced.

**Carol Bryant:**

And it's worth it. And I think, "Why? What is wrong with me that I'd want to go through that?" Because the love is so worth it. One of my friends, she's a reader. She said, laughter through the tears, you'll eventually get there. Put a lid on that, Lisa, but she's right. She's right. There are things now that I think of the funny things he did and I'm laughing about them. So it's one of those hourglasses when you get a dog. And I feel like the time clips through, again, I'm pushing that to the side too. None of us know. And so it's that living for now, it's hard. I know that anticipatory grief is rough, but for now, it's that living for now and just taking that love and caring with you because if it wasn't your dog, he or she would belong to someone else. Somebody told me this. And so what a gift you have that somehow in this crazy, mixed up universe, he found his way to you.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Mm-hmm (affirmative). And when you can really absorb the magnitude of that union and the blessing of you being the one to have had the honor to care for that creature, it's like, thank you, universe, whatever, fill in the blank. Thank you for this amazing opportunity to be able to be in relationship with this unbelievable animal. It's truly a gift. The suggestions that you have provided for us today have been really good. Many of them I didn't know about, and many of them I'm going to institute. So thank you so much for taking the time to put together this little list for us in a sense that these are all things, maybe not all of them for everyone, but there's something in this interview that will resonate with everyone that is going to lose or has lost an animal and can bring a little healing and peace to our broken heart. So thank you for putting your thoughts together for us.

**Carol Bryant:**

I appreciate that. And in that way, I feel like all of us who have loved and lost a pet, the body's not there anymore, but no one can take that love away. Love never ends.