

I Shouldn't Feel this Way... IT's ONLY an ANIMAL

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I am often asked the question “Why does losing my cat (dog, horse, etc.) hurt worse than losing humans in my life? I feel guilty because it hurts more.”

When I was asked that question, I thought back to the death of my horse, Chris, to find the answer. Her death had left me emotionally devastated. I wasn't aware of all she had been in my life. Without conditions. The hurt seemed stronger than losing humans I had been close to. It wasn't until the loss of my parents, that I was able to experience the difference.

Only then could I understand it was judgments I made, and the perspective I took that kept me in emotional pain about the difference.

Chris and I had come together at a pivotal time of personal growth and change. No human knew how insecure I felt on the inside during that time of my life. I matured in many ways on her back. She had my heart and supported me, as I matured into an adult with a federal job and a mortgage.

I became more confident in many areas of my life, from riding her. I trusted her with my heart and life. She knew me in ways no human could. When on her back our energy fields become one. I could never hide my feelings from her; she always knew what my heart didn't always want my head to know. Chris knew things about me no human could see. She judged none of it.

My parents didn't often see me when I was emotionally down. I didn't want them to. That was reserved for when I was home alone. They were there for me unconditionally as was Chris. Just as we love one person differently than another, I loved them each as the individuals they were.

Her death marked the end of an era in my life, in a way no human could. What I did everyday changed because I was no longer caring for her physical well-being. I no longer had her strong presence in my immediate day-to-day life.

Until her death I had no idea how deeply she had gone into my heart. She had gotten beyond its protective walls. There was no need to pretend with her. I couldn't anyway. Even if I tried. She had become a constant in the center of my world.

I did come to realize that there was no guilt when

I didn't judge the difference in how I grieved her death, versus the death of my mother and then my father. My relationship with my parents was different to that of my horse, that's all. I had moved out of their home many years before their deaths. I loved them with all my heart and soul but I didn't see them everyday. I wasn't responsible for them in the way I was for

Chris. She depended on me for all her needs.



One Is Not Better Or Worse than the Other

Our animals are a constant companion. They see us during our highs, lows, and less than stellar moments in our behavior. They are there in moments no one else sees. They see us without the pretenses that accompany human relationships.

They love us, even when we don't love ourselves. They see us without filters. Humans, no matter how much they love us, see us through a collection of who they believe us to be, accompanied by expectations of us and more.

When we take the step from childhood to adulthood our relationship with our family evolves out of the dependency we once had on them. We begin to forge our own way in the world. That doesn't happen with our animals.



Many humans feel a need to place grieving into categories of better or worse than. Believing that grieving for a human should somehow be in a higher category than animals. While at the same time believing that animals are either equal or better than humans. There is disparity in all those feelings. An inconsistency that doesn't fit into the expanded possibility that one thing is merely not the same as the other. Society has taught us to grade things in our lives from a perspective of duality, either/or, better/worse, and more.

Animals don't categorize. They like, or don't like. They grieve without the need, the "should" of how it is acceptably done. They simply grieve. Humans have been taught to rate one thing against another. If our feelings don't fall into acceptable parameters, guilt sets in.

Chris had been my other mare Brandy's constant companion for most of Brandy's life. She mourned Chris' death, without apology. This is one perspective I gratefully adopted from her example. Animals love from a place of purity within them. Even those who have experienced abuse. They love or they don't.

With our animals we can express love unencumbered by the intricacies we weave into the tapestries of our relationships with humans.

Shoulds and Shouldn'ts Have No Place in Grieving

- Animals are not less than, or more than, humans.
- Judging what we feel adds guilt to an already bruised heart.
- Allow yourself to feel differently about death and grieving.
- Grieve by the individual soul you mourn, not by the species they fall into.
- The hurt in how we love different individuals comes, when we embrace an opinion about ourselves in how we're grieving.

I realized when Chris, and subsequently when my parents died, that I grieved them each in a different way. I observed how people were different with me when my parents passed away. With Chris' only those who had ever shared their life with an animal could understand.

One is not better or worse than the other, merely different. I didn't want "should or shouldn't" to tell me how I could feel during either time. It didn't belong there. ■

Karen E. Nowak is an animal communicator, author, lecturer and alternative healer for both humans and animals. Visit her at FreedomReinsllc.com for info.



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