

The Role of Pets in Death and Dying

January 17, 2017



Presenters

- Mary Ann Virant, BJC Pet Therapy Volunteer
- Sharon Orlet, M.Div., Optum Compassus Chaplain
- Allison White, Program Manager, BJC Behavioral Health
- Kelly Karavousanos, Director, Baue Grief Services
- Teddy, Grief Support Goldendoodle

Mary Ann Virant

BJC Pet Therapy Volunteer

- Involved in pet therapy since 1994.













Sharon Orlet, M.Div.

Optum Campassus Chaplain

- Pastoral psychotherapist for 35 years
- Taught at two seminaries
- Chaplain at various hospitals
- Interested in helping people learn to be “friends with the dying.”

Sharon Orlet, M.Div.

Optum Campassus Chaplain

- What pets in hospice families need
- What they offer their dying loved ones

What hospice pets need

- Pets need to be comforted
- Pets need to be honored for how they are helpful

What hospice pets offer

- Know the deeper, true self of the patient
- Can communicate that when patients can't speak for themselves

FACEBOOK.COM/JJHOSPICETHERAPYDOG



Allison White, ACSW, LCSW, CCDPD

BJC Behavioral Health Program Manager

- Works for 23 years with clients who have mental health and substance abuse issues
- Brings her Golden Retrievers to animal-assisted crisis response and a local children's home, visiting children and staff
- Offers thoughts on the "Health & Wellness" live radio show

Allison White
ACSW, LCSW, CCDP-D



The gifts we get from animals

- Unconditional love
- Humor/Entertainment
- Socialization
- Family
- Routine/Purpose/A Reason to get up in the morning
- A Smile and Wagging Tail
- Health Benefits
- Stress Reduction
- Higher Self Esteem



The human-animal bond

1. Includes the emotional, psychological and physical interactions of people, animals and the environment
2. Has existed for thousands of years
3. Has major significance because it fulfills both human and animal needs

(AVMA)



“There is abundant evidence to suggest that the companionship provided by pets has the capacity to both reduce the frequency of serious disease and prolong life. It may be that caring for another facilitates a pattern of psychoendocrine organization, which results in greater resistance to disease.

Touch can act as an anti-anxiety agent and can decrease the probability of a progression of conditions (hypertension, stroke, diabetes), which are worsened by the presence of consistent emotional arousal. The presence of an animal, especially an animal that makes demands on the owner, provides a stimulus for maintaining a daily routine. Any factor which decreases fear and depression is likely to have direct, beneficial, psychological and physiological effects on health.”

Katcher and Friedmann, 1982



How pets contribute to human health

- Therapeutic Touch-releases hormones (endorphin, prolactin, dopamine, oxytocin and beta phenylethylamine (Odendaal & Meintjes, 2002)
- Stress relief: more than a spouse or close friend (Allen, 1998)
- Mood improvement: relieves loneliness and depression, dogs also help hospitalized children feel happier (Kaminski et al., 2002; Tsai et al., 2008)
- Blunting of pain: pets help with relaxation, taking their minds off pain and touch can block transmission of pain (Marcus, 2012; Marcus et al., 2013; Havey et al., 2014)
- Mindfulness-helps patients stay in the moment
- Increase laughter, which also increases release of hormones

Becker and Morton (2002)

Neurophysiological correlates of affiliative behavior

- Took blood samples before and after positive interactions with pets. All the “feel good” hormones increased after interaction including:
 - Oxytocin
 - Prolactin
 - Dopamine
 - Beta-endorphins
 - Beta-phenyl ethylamine-active ingredient in chocolate

Odendual & Meinties (2003)

My therapy
dog visiting my
grandmother
during hospice
care



Value of pets to patients & caregivers

- Animals look at patients without judgment. Don't treat them like they're dying.
- Animals' emotions do not interfere with a patients' ability to express fear and anxiety of dying when a caregivers' fears sometimes suppress this due to their own emotions.
- They help patients feel like they are still connected to life.
- Patients reported a reduction in pain after visit from animals.
- Helps patients focus on other things besides their illness.
- They also help caregivers by just being present without expectations or conversation.
- Provides a distraction and reduces stress among caregivers and hospice staff by giving them something else to discuss. Reduces compassion fatigue.

Allison White
ACSW, LCSW, CCDP-D



Kelly Karavousanos

Director, Baue Grief Services and Center for
Hope and Healing


- Specializing 13 in bereavement and trauma
for 13 years

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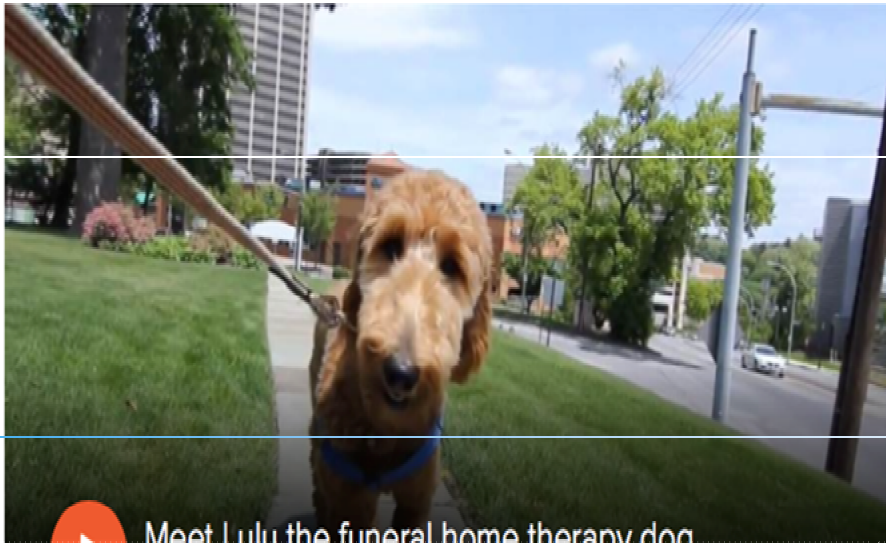
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Funeral home therapy dog brings comfort and unexpected smiles to grieving families

 Alexandra Zaslow
TODAY Jul. 5, 2016 at 2:05 PM

After she lost her beloved brother Stephen just days before his 25th birthday, Chelsea Sules thought she'd never smile again.

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Meet Lulu the funeral home therapy dog

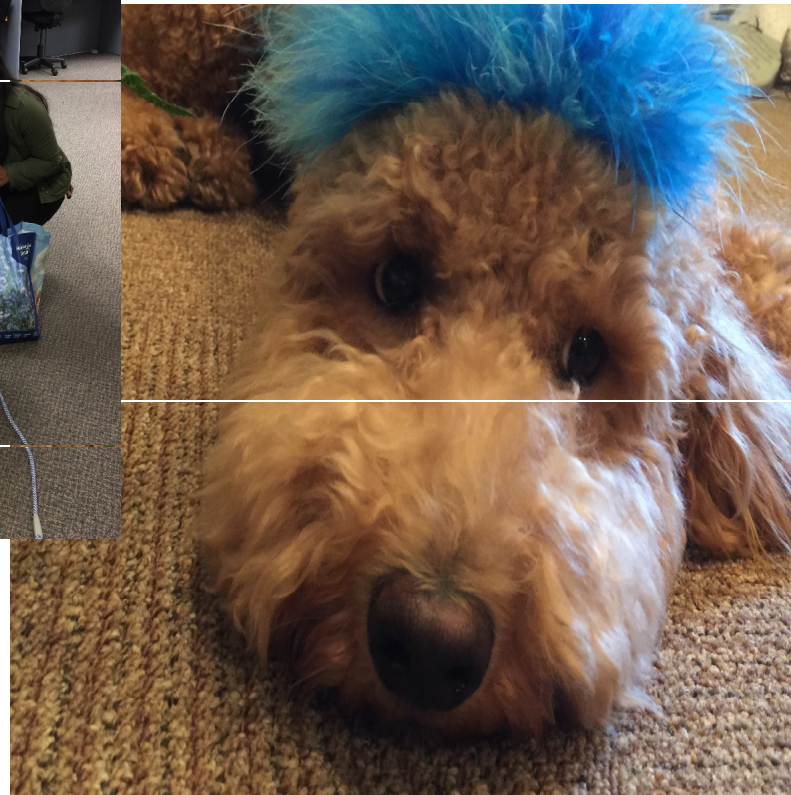
Teddy

Comfort Dog in Training

- Use in the funeral home and with families
- Accomplishments with families and staff



Why have a dog in the funeral home?



Stories
Insights
Comments
Questions?



The Role of Pets in Death and Dying

*Thank you for participating
in this presentation*

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