

 **Daily Doga Inspirations for you and your dog**
Celebrating Life, Coping with Loss, Maureen Ross, MA

Whether you celebrate Memorial Day or not, coping with the anguish of loss can be painful and paralyzing. Knowing that when one door closes, another one opens does not minimize the roller coaster of emotions that accompany a loss - or the triggers that reawake the pain from previous tragedies. We simply get better at rolling with the grief, learning new ways to cope and feel better.

Losing loved ones is painful and watching others lose loved ones, experience tragedy (bombings, hurricanes, crazy people) is equally hurtful and hard to figure out. Don't try. Simply breathe, acknowledge and spring into action - doing what makes you (and those around you) feel less anxious.

Coping with loss is personal. As we grieve through the quicksand of all that has happened in the last year alone, imagine someone tossing you a line, then toss it to someone else. Grab on. It may be a slow process, but you will make it to surface. Things do get better, day by day.

Recently, I attended a DBHRT Conference (Disaster Behavior and Health Response Teams). It was a day of listening, learning and connecting. I was inspired by the Sandy Hook first responders that ranged from a General in the National Guard, State Troopers, Social Workers, Counselors, Comfort Dog Teams and other volunteers. As difficult as it is, we learned to never "self-deploy" as shared by "Jim" who shared that someone drove a pack of miniature horses from Florida to CT to "help-out" then realized that it was December in New England, *freezing, and pouring*. She was now in distress with her horses looking for help and shelter. What did Jim do? Instead of ripping into this woman for being so blissfully ignorant, he made a few calls and had the horses (and her) sent to a community center. Not only were crisis responders dealing with grieving families who had lost children, but now they had to figure out what to do with people who self-deploy to help. Good to help, better to ask first, "What is the best way to help?"

The universe has a way of assigning each of us what it thinks we can handle. Responders are taught how to self-preserve in the face of devastation. They go home to their own loved ones and pets. One speaker said, "I had to air out my Boxers." Everyone laughed. He meant his dogs, but the humor was visualizing what many responders have to do, wear the same clothes for days, eat when they can and try to balance home, crisis and processing, so they don't fall to pieces.

Troy spoke of his Boxers who instinctively knew he was stressed. That few hours he got to spend with them, helped him shore up, and get back to Newtown CT.

Dogs experience emotion, loss and pain, but nature has provided them with a unique gift of being able to let go, with the flow, and move on. However, first responder pet therapy or comfort dogs need specific training and so do their handlers.

Absolutely experience your loss. Take time to grieve. Then bounce back with resilience. Lessons and memories from loss are the gift. Helping others is a great way to feel better – doing so with integrity and guidance – even better.

Celebrating life, dusting off and salvaging the pieces takes more courage than grieving for a lifetime over something we cannot control but can certainly help to lighten and enlighten.

Coping with Grief: A Journey through Death ... Transition, by Maureen Ross, MA

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[Psychological First Aid First Responders](#) (a brief / helpful ABC, 123).

[Psychological First Aid for Responders](#) more detail