



Helping a Dog That Has Lost a Mate



Dogs grieve the loss of another dog to varying degrees, depending on the relationship and bond they built over their time together. Some dogs will refuse to eat; some suffer the loss more dramatically by trying to escape, apparently to go in search of their lost mate. Some seem to instinctively know what has occurred and behave in a more needy fashion than usual, following you from room to room, demanding attention or affection. No matter how your dog reacts, the following tips can help you and your dog get through this difficult situation together.

If possible, prepare your dog for the departure of his mate.

Soften the upcoming transition by spending extra time alone with your other dog, engaging in activities that they enjoy, such as walks or playing fetch. Your aging or sick dog will probably enjoy some peace and rest. If you make the difficult decision to euthanise one of your dogs, you may want to consider allowing your other dog to be present (with your vet's approval), as this may speed up his grieving process.

Continue taking walks and playing games with your remaining dog

Whatever forms your dog's grief takes, you have to ensure that special thought is given to helping them cope with their loss. Lots of walks can be very helpful; try not to leave your dog alone too much. Fresh air and exercise can benefit you both. Instigate play, or try providing an interactive toy that delivers a treat (e.g. Gamechanger® or KONG® puzzle toys). You will be grieving too—after all, you have also lost a friend—but you need to keep your spirits up as you still have a dog that needs you now as much as ever.

Stick to your normal routine as much as possible, and show your dog that you are still his leader.

Some owners begin to alter their own behaviour; they stop taking the remaining dog for walks or stop behaving like a leader. The dog's whole routine is changed, which is very stressful for a dog and will add to their loss and compound their problems. It is extremely important that the leadership you have provided your dogs over the years remains, as dogs that lose a mate often suffer from what their owners fail to do. If you stop showing clear leadership, your dog has not just lost a mate, but also his leader. By remaining calm and consistent and providing clear direction, your dog will feel more secure in the stable environment you are maintaining.

Don't rush into getting another dog.

Think carefully before bringing another dog into your household, as this can be counter-productive. Your remaining dog may not bond with the new dog because he hasn't finished grieving. It is not easy to mend a broken heart, human or canine, so try to wait it out.

Remember that your dog needs your love and understanding. Be patient and supportive and he will return to his normal, fun-loving self. For more information, suggestions or just a sympathetic ear, give your nearest Bark Busters dog behavioural therapist a call.

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