



## Thought of the Month News and Notes

### In This Issue

[Thought of the Month](#)  
[Upcoming Workshops](#)

### Quick Links

[Register for 2012  
Workshops](#)

[Next Step Workshops](#)

[IRI Couples Blog](#)

[LaSplash online  
magazine](#)

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**Issue: #37**  
**JANUARY 2012**

**Dear Friends,**

We are a little late this month but have had a roller coaster of events. Life is interesting, isn't it? Our Thought this month is very personal and we wanted to share with you all, as you are so much a part of our lives.

**Donna and David**

**JANUARY: "Aspects of Grief...No Matter What the Loss."**



Most people reading this have had some connection with our dog, Cujo, who was a big part of the workshop. A few of you wished he had not been so present. The overwhelming majority of you found him to be a pleasant (and, often, important) part of your workshop experience.

Cujo died suddenly three weeks ago and the resulting grief has made me ponder anew this phenomenon of life. Grief is hard. It's fierce. Grief is relentless...a poison that must be drunk and suffered. There is no running from grief. It will catch up with us always.

Loss is final. It hurts...literally.

Grief flows as a river and every new loss opens the dam. Every loss in our life experience (however "small" and however traumatic) begins to wash over us. Some moments we are able to flow with the current. Some moments we are pulled under but quickly resurface. Some moments a current takes hold of

us and we feel as if we are going to die (and are puzzled as to how such a small amount of water can have such power.) Just as we have been taught about being caught in a rip current, we must move toward our grief and feel it and, well....grieve.

Each must grieve in our own way...no right or wrong. There is no substitute. There is no putting it off...the stark emptiness of grief. At the same time, grief is a blessing; a natural feeling phenomenon that allows us to move forward and live fully. It brings relief. Tears are cleansing. They deepen our experience of life itself. Grief reminds us that we loved much and had great joy together. Grief invites us to be conscious and hold both joy and pain at the same time...the inevitable experience that reminds us of our humanity and our aliveness...that we are wired for connection.

Below is an expression of that joy and pain that Donna shared with family and friends the day Cujo died. Perhaps you have similar thoughts and feelings about your own grief experiences.

Just wanted to share with all of you who love us and know how much we love Cujo, that he became suddenly ill early this morning and we quickly released him to a place where we know he will actually be able to catch those squirrels he has been chasing for 15 years. (We assured him that he has done a really good job of keeping them all on their toes for all these years and has certainly earned such a reward.)

We also imagined with him that there will always be bright sunshine that follows him around for his naps (rather than him having to follow those elusive sunny spots here in the woods) while, at the same time, it will always be a comfortable, energizing 50 degrees for him (his favorite temperature.)

We also dreamed with him that there will be cars that he can get into and drive any time he wants to take a ride rather than having to wait for us to "invite" him to go somewhere with us. And, of course, the drive-thru at the bank will be open any time he wants and he will be given at least TWO treats every time he drives through....even without a deposit!

And, rather than being on a leash to walk around the "loop" at the beach, he will finally be free to chase all those deer and rabbits without fear (okay...our fear) of all the traffic on Route 1 lest he stray.

We also encouraged him to share his singing talent with others....perhaps even teaching and tutoring while assuring others that they, too, have a voice and a song that is important to be heard and appreciated.

And, of course, no one will ever try to brush him again because his hair will grow perfectly, free of matts and shedding....as he will be just perfect the way he is.

And, we promised him that we will do our best to care for each other...even when he is unable to comfort each of us when sad or upset.

And, we acknowledged to him that in our workshops, couples will certainly be more bored listening to us while eating their snacks without his wide, beautiful, begging eyes...and that they will be more anxious without his presence and his soft body to be stroked. We assured him we will do our best to help them feel safe and relaxed (although we made it clear we draw the line at humping his toys in the middle of the floor...he seemed to be okay with that.) We reminded him of how important he has been for almost a 1000 couples and that we will really miss him and it will be a loss for future couples.

And, we asked him to finally explain to us how it has been that he growls at people he loves while wagging his tail (and sitting on their laps...Cari...and others!) He was clear that it was a mystery he was taking with him....but assured us we were right....he only wagged his tail with those he loved.

Another mystery he is taking with him is all his licking in the last months. He clearly only licked those he loved....along with the sofa, of course. but why just the last months? He's entitled to his mysteries!

He also knows he will be able to jump onto any sofa and any bed anytime he wants without having to wait for us to assist him. What a joy for him after these last few years.

And, we appreciated with him that somehow the unknown tumor in his spleen was relatively painless as it grew quickly before it ruptured this morning (rather than the middle of the night) and that Cujo called for us to provide comfort and care until the very loving caregivers at the vet's office (who have loved him and cared for him for 15 years...and where he still growled as I carried him in this morning because he REALLY has never liked going to the "doctor") could provide the information, guidance and support for all of us on this difficult day.

And, when we brought "Cujo" home from the vet and he was in the car for a little while until we knew where we wanted to move him, there were suddenly dozens of birds in our parking area....6 male cardinals, 3 female cardinals, finches, blue jays, woodpeckers, chickadees, etc. They are often in the back yard with the bird feeders but this was really unusual. Seemed meaningful but don't know exactly what...any ideas?

We wrapped him in an old and favorite Rehoboth blanket and placed him on his favorite wall outside the family room (after being unable to jump there for several years) so he (okay...we) could have a bit more time for good-byes...knowing, of course,

he was dreaming of those squirrels

We've chosen a special place for him where he will rest in our woods and where we can visit him.

Thanks for listening and for caring.

Donna and David

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS...LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES COMING UP!**

***Be sure to watch this space or check our web site for future opportunities.***

### **Getting the Love You Want Workshops**

**February 3-5, Frederick, MD  
March 30-April 1, Frederick, MD**

#### **Next Step Workshop**

**March 24-25, Frederick, MD**

### **QUOTES OF THE MONTH**

The difference between friends and pets is that friends we allow into our company, pets we allow into our solitude. Robert Brault

Ever consider what pets must think of us? I mean, here we come back from a grocery store with the most amazing haul - chicken, pork, half a cow. They must think we're the greatest hunters on earth! Anne Tyler

Animals are such agreeable friends - they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms. George Eliot

An animal's eyes have the power to speak a great language. Martin Buber

Lots of people talk to animals.... Not very many listen, though.... That's the problem. Benjamin Hoff, The Tao of Pooh

Man is rated the highest animal, at least among all animals who returned the questionnaire. Robert Brault

The kind man feeds his beast before sitting down to dinner. Hebrew Proverb

Animals have these advantages over man: they never hear the clock strike, they die without any idea of death, they have no theologians to instruct them, their last moments are not disturbed by unwelcome and unpleasant ceremonies, their funerals cost them nothing, and no one starts lawsuits over their wills. Voltaire, letter to Count Schomberg, 31 August 1769

**It often happens that a man is more humanely related to a cat or dog than to any human being. Henry David Thoreau**

**Our perfect companions never have fewer than four feet. Colette**

**Most pets display so many humanlike traits and emotions it's easy to forget they're not gifted with the English language and then get snubbed when we talk to them and they don't say anything back. Stephenie Geist**

**I believe in animal rights, and high among them is the right to the gentle stroke of a human hand. Robert Brault**

**Be it human or animal, touch is a life-giving thing. Has anyone ever had a stroke or a heart attack while cozied up with a pet? I doubt it. Robert Brault**

**I have been studying the traits and dispositions of the "lower animals" (so called) and contrasting them with the traits and dispositions of man. I find the result humiliating to me. Mark Twain, Letters from the Earth, 1907**

**If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beasts also happens to the man. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth. Chief Seattle of the Suquamish Tribe, letter to President Franklin Pierce**

**We are on this journey with you. Keep in touch!**

**Sincerely,**

**David and Donna Bowman  
Bowman & Associates, PA**

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