

## Natural Dog Success Story: The Essence of Healing

### Flower remedies help Poodle handle grief over loss of canine pal.

*Denise Flaim*

The dog: Skila, an 8-year-old Poodle.

The problem: When Skila's companion, a 5-year-old German Shepherd Dog named Duke, died suddenly from an aggressive form of lymphoma, the little white dog showed all the classic symptoms of grief, says her owner, Barbara Meyers of the Holistic Animal Consulting Centre in Staten Island. Skila searched for her beloved friend, lost her appetite, and was lethargic. The expression in her face and eyes lost their brightness.

The conventional approach: Generally, there is none, other than what Meyers calls "the tincture of time."

But the physical effects of an animal's grief can be life-threatening, raising stress hormones, weakening the immune system and exacerbating pre-existing medical conditions, warns Meyers, who is a certified grief therapist. "We need to take this very seriously and be aware that one can literally die of a broken heart."

The holistic approach: Meyers is certified in the use of Bach Flower Essences, 38 flowers and plants whose healing properties were discovered by British physician Edward Bach in the 1930s. The essences are made by placing them in spring water and exposing them to sunlight so their energetic pattern is transferred; these tinctures are then preserved in brandy. Non-habit-forming and exceedingly gentle, flower essences do not work on a biochemical level the way herbs do, but rather on an energetic one, helping to center emotions and restore psychological balance.

For Skila, and grief-stricken patients like her, Meyers uses six essences: star of Bethlehem, which is specifically for loss and trauma; walnut, a stabilizing essence that helps with transition; larch, which restores confidence; honeysuckle, for those who dwell in the past and struggle with nostalgia; gorse, which addresses hopelessness and futility; and, finally, Rescue Remedy, a combination remedy for trauma that Meyers includes "in just about every" flower-essence formula because it tends to amplify the effects of the other essences.

Meyers says a drop or two of each essence suffices, either administered on the dog's gum line or put in drinking water.

The results: Meyers says that within three days she began to see a change in Skila, "a real improvement" at five days, and after a week, "she was pretty much back to herself."

Meyers believes that a grieving animal who does not respond after 10 or so days should be re-evaluated. "It's never too soon to intervene with good veterinary care," she reminds, "especially if there's a known medical condition that the survivor is dealing with" that might be aggravated by the stress of grieving.

Caveats: Meyers notes that flower essences are very safe: There is no danger of overdosing (she advises giving them as often as possible, minimally four to six times a day), and the worst result is no result at all.

Flower essences should not be given with food, which coats the mouth and prevents proper absorption.

Finally, Meyers notes, flower essences are a gentle, subtle way to balance an animal's emotional state, and are suitable for "mild to moderate" problems. They may not be able to help with serious issues such as thunderstorm phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Resources: You can learn more about the individual essences at [www.bachflower.com](http://www.bachflower.com) and [www.bachcentre.com](http://www.bachcentre.com). An excellent guide to the use of flower essences in animals is *Bach Flower Remedies for Animals* by Gregory Vlamis and Helen Graham (Findhorn Press, 1999).

Denise Flaim is a DOG FANCY contributing editor.