Speaker 1 ([00:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=5PIqhRw2o4h6WAQh-T47pWS9chV3vig9TF3Ga08rKRJ1tfBgwYBJTtD1fSwqfRQwoIpsvmTBR4trWdLGApimeS4BYnk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2.56)):

Hello everyone. And welcome to this episode of ask a death doula. I am your host, Suzanne O'Brien. Thank you so much for being here today. Doggy doulas, what? Yes. So there is, you know, as well as I do that, death is having a rebirth in the most beautiful way, bringing all things natural and sacred to the death experience that is bringing it back natural and sacred to the life experience. And one of those things is now death doulas for pets. So there are people that are called to this space, and we always say, it's a calling, right? This is a calling this work as a doula giver calls. You, you do not pick it. It picks you and you follow that. And there are people within this space that I always say, have a gift within the gift of being a end of life, doula, doula giver.

Speaker 1 ([00:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=FBSEL0Hg0lWw8z0Il3BbvqVrbe9ARdLh5bgJrMlVAoKQjgtYTXI-9xIPj-vU-izt_tmK791QOxEnmugk-k_PkYNjT2I&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=55.15)):

And so now there are people that are drawn to do this work at the end of life, to support family members with the death of their animals of pets. And it is incredibly beautiful and incredibly needed. So one of the things that I wanna start out with, if you don't know that death doula, doula giver the holistic non-medical practitioner to care for those at the end of life and their families, and this is a movement that's been on, I've been doing this for almost two decades now, but in the last few years, it has really gotten so much global attention. And it's been beautiful. Bringing again, back that awareness, that death is a natural experience and a holistic one at that. And now we have people who have stepped forward and said, wait a minute, you know, my animal died and I could have used a doula, or this is really where I wanna focus my work as an end of life provider support practitioner for those, with their animals at the end of life.

Speaker 1 ([01:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xDK27FqubGLL2B5KcIN9V0cxlHvSmgemJpv6r6LWcxQTv8DHtuDVJTOFRk6Km3xJAi-WiBniL-eQPQH0SwskUb8a_Vs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=116.57)):

And how beautiful is that? So I wanna start by sharing a little story about my own experience with one of my animals. I get choked up right already. I mean, it's just like the emotions. That's what memories do comes right back to you. So I had a dog, um, I say, you know, it's interesting. I was gonna say, had, and then have, because I still feel the Omni presence of him, but I had a dog in this physical journey named max who is a golden retriever. And I really will say to you, I think there's certain things that we look at in our lives that are like the loves of our lives. Um, New York city is a place that I consider a love of my life, where I lived. And max, um, was just the most loving dog. I just, my heart bursts open with love for this dog.

Speaker 1 ([02:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LgnRS_7rFtRw_cYkN8PS40YwwwTWDJ1qzxGUimCK6cLNYFT0wkvUSSXGDe2tMsYKdLuJYlZLhXeJlqDWGPWB2F1tEM4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=169.22)):

Um, you know, like we do for our animals. And I think it was just, you know, the time in my life, but also just the love that he exuded all the time. I mean, just such a beautiful dog. So he was 11 years old. And I remember I was in Boston, visiting my sister with my mom and my son called me up and he said, maxes, didn't eat his breakfast. He won't eat. And I knew right then and there, I just knew, I mean, this is a dog who loved his food, that something was really wrong and it took hours before I could leave Boston and get home. And it felt like an eternity. And I remember when we got there, my mom who he loved and always used to give him a biscuit when she'd come over, um, said, no, I can get him to eat.

Speaker 1 ([03:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=5WRHcXozxpFHA28mgS3AFZkvcCb1sQ0QjoLdHFvBsdAFHCOFfti1hoo5aGD4dHRFMRO5cVuFSzHezYdUtDBq0TvaDzA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=214.23)):

You know, he came over and he's wagging his town happy to see us as usual. And she put the biscuit out and he just went and just turned his head and was like, Nope. And she went, oh, and we all were like, oh, so this was a Sunday and all. And, and mind you, I am a hospice nurse, an oncology nurse. And yet, somehow this who was my main dog in my adult life. Um, really my only dog that, you know, I've really had like that. Somehow I felt like it was still so early in our relationship. Somehow I let the illusion that, you know, again, that hi, he would have his end of life in that timeframe. That was really for a dog, which by the way, we know it can strike anyone at any time, but it really kind of escaped my awareness.

Speaker 1 ([04:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=PZZdm1ar_XaTRS1eXe3WXIMBuwQmVl3jKkoy75cf1wdU3Jrjj_aVU5ZpUNjwpEYHST57601svQHMf6R0b4FBjcN5iOg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=270.05)):

So it was very sudden he was not sick. I brought him to the, the vet and I remember it was a vet who was working that day, who was not one that I was, uh, had a relationship with. And, you know, she has her own way of doing things. Anyway, I remember her, they, they took him into the another room. And I remember her coming into the, um, exam, the, the, the room that I was waiting in, the, the, I can't even, I'm getting upset about thinking about it, but the consultation room and she had a syringe and she put it right up to my face and she said, look, what I just got out of his belly, this, this guy's in big trouble. You need to get him up to the, you know, the oncologist in wherever it was right away. And she put that fluid and that syringe in my face with a provoking of fear, and it was, it was devastating, but I was just like, you know, what is happening here?

Speaker 1 ([05:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4QKvKZh6onW4qGIkm-NlYp7kiFkArPCoOteE_UXl-FunzvwdEOp_45BHJd4Uj7eMKcNJK6HSdmK_ymPfRHG892U8vtc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=331.81)):

Not on top of that, but saying that he's in big trouble and rush him to the oncology doctor. I mean, again, you know, there's, no, I'm not saying what, what is right or wrong to do with yourself or your animals, but we have to not panic and breathe in and ground and then make the best choices that we can. So I remember her saying that and, um, okay. And thank you very much. And actually I'll tell you a little funny story. It took forever for them to bring him back. And I remember finally, um, leaving the, the examining room and going back into the, the vet area. And they had him on a, a table with sandbags on him that they were taking x-rays and they were just sort of marveling at what they were finding on the, um, the x-ray and like studying it.

Speaker 1 ([06:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Oav9DmLLOdb6fn5kbBIE303Z8h3aX2SFL7Di1Ip2bHY9XBH6-0ml8dZykle0KRDXom6AZHGOM93vWij-BwN2O5-eD3o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=379.87)):

And he was just devastated with sandbags on him. And I said, can he get up now, keep your common composure. Can he get up? Can he please get up? And she said, oh yeah, he can get up. So he had a tumor and anyway, so I left, I left there, you know, obviously very devastated. He was 11 years old, which to me seems very young, but I understand that this is, you know, this can happen and it's very typical. And then I brought him to another doctor and she had a very, you know, really wonderful reputation in all of this. And she said, yeah, you know, he's very advanced, very advanced cancer. Let's put him down now. And I was like, wait, like, I couldn't even catch my breath. Wait a minute, wait a minute. You wanna just put him down right now. He still had a, he wasn't suffering.

Speaker 1 ([07:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=paXJHqP7XLg3maTNYUHW1WSmW2zoiQeAY2clSiT2A7iCw8Y0MSyGOg2dbctGIbina9KNoFCzbmRAVV_-_DIhzFZD4a0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=427.97)):

He had a quality of life. He was still happy, but also this shock of this whole moment. And I said, and this is really what I said, you know? And I, I said, this is what the work that I do. I am a hospice nurse. I care for people at the end of life, creating sacred spaces, keeping them pain, you know, pain under control, comfortable. I can do this with him and I'll bring him home. And she gave me medicine for him. And that was my full intention to be fully present, to be able to manage his symptoms if he, if he, and when he had them. And it really doesn't work exactly like that. I, I needed more education, more time. And if I had a, a pet doula, doggy doula, it would've been phenomenal. So he was, you know, on his journey. And again, it was probably 10 days from the first diagnosis till the time that he had his end of life.

Speaker 1 ([08:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=lBmaIXexgIvZ58Cb0lJQzJDbsTi0UpVo2r3vxYdakrEXDlROsI_VR5Los0pYhL33nIzLQ3m9jHcvdkbNY6RT6a7w8Us&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=482.17)):

But it seemed like a long time, you know, our animals operate very differently. So one of the first things again, is that they stop eating or drinking. And this is something that we talk about that humans do as well. And then there's nonverbal communication. You have got to be so tuned in to nonverbal communication with what is happening. And of course, you know, always wanna manage suffering and pain if you can, but you can't verbally communicate. You can't verbally explain things to an animal what you're doing. So I had medication for him to relax him and for pain, and he absolutely did not wanna take any, he hated it. He didn't know what we were trying to do. And, and it got a little, you know, like we wanted to get him the relief and then it was, you know, he was fighting to get the, to not take it. It was like, oh

Speaker 2 ([08:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9JwqZvE6ifNXApFbocfjpkIx2h_VrNur9aVOgXJWDXOUzih1HeQ54fhvpNlt95RB_Gs-04i9zJS9n-JRWcJza6hc8dU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=534.76)):

My goodness, what do we have here? So yeah, when I look back on it, would I have done things differently? Yeah, absolutely. I would've done things differently. And again, you know, I wanna say this to everyone listening. Who's had an end of life who wishes they had done it differently, um, and made other choices. I wanna say that you're doing the best you can with where you were at that moment with what you had. And I say this to myself as well, and it wasn't terrible, but I, again, I, I know we can do better and I wanna share with you how that can be done. So he didn't want the medicines. Um, it was just, you know, it just seemed like, unfortunately at the last couple of days that probably having him, uh, put to sleep, you know, a little bit sooner than we did probably would've been best.

Speaker 2 ([09:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gzReTDj4rHhIggUzTHJKNIOS4qlOLFpQP-nRoSk4BNfJjgjx94sAViT0g8qmK81KQBfLZCodTzlEJTx_yrlW5Dj87gQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=580.76)):

And, you know, by the time you call the vet to ask them to come to the house, you know, they couldn't get there for a couple of days. So that that's okay. That that is what it, what it is. Um, but I remember it being very interesting the last day of his life when the doctor was coming and it was March, so it was March 25th. And it was very cold in New York. And very, and there was snow all over this beautiful dog wanted to be outside and it was really cold, but, but there was this. So not only was he outside, but he kept looking up and it was freezing out. He was outside, but he would look at the sky and he didn't wanna come in. I would be calling him to come in. He wouldn't come in. So finally I put all these bla, I got all these blankets and I tried to make him as warm and comfortable as we could outside. But what was he looking at? What did he see? And we talk about this with people at the end of life, see loved ones, see people, they know, see angels was maxing. The same thing I think he was. So I tried to bring as much warmth out there as I could. Finally, he did come in and I remember the doctor came to knock on the door and, and max was wagging his tail. And he, the doctor said, oh, I didn't expect him to be like that.

Speaker 2 ([11:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Z0onb1TnugVonRqsMxO4OVHXBHMsGY3Z8qlyhpUtmc9UvxW4nwER3JXATwyfC4zXlOaOt66UGvnbmU_7Hur2b31sfbY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=664.309)):

Cuz he's so full of love. And he was so, you know, you're here. Okay. And so when the time came to put him down and the doctor's name was Dr. Hart and that's I and wonderful, beautiful doctor, I was holding him and had my head on his head and holding him. And then he said, he's gone. And I remember getting up and walking upstairs, didn't even look at him, didn't even look at him and just said, please just, you know, take him and shut the door behind you. And all of that, cuz it was just so traumatizing and they

Speaker 3 ([11:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=wckCRxDFWPsXNEpWkjMEsRNubJD0TreTfRz8hCqsnz-AXWnLNbXIpYUW1JZZ72BwABsodlE46dwsTRgqMnaJ_rnJY3E&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=712.84)):

Were so sweet. And then I made pictures and a shrine and, and all of this and really held that. But when I go back and look at it, first of all, a couple of things that I would've done is not assume that again, that I could take care of him at home comfortably without support or preparation or more knowledge in that area for pets, communication, all of that. And then I would've absolutely had a, a home vigil and a viewing and loved him at home for quite some time after his death. There's so much data about us doing that with humans, that it works with, obviously our beautiful animals as well. And because again, that was so seeming to me sudden of the time of him getting a terminal diagnosis till when he wasn't, um, living anymore, you know, that time period, would've been extremely helpful and healthy for me to process.

Speaker 3 ([12:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_hvDJju4RmQu2HQuCzHdYyMUzuZ926utj8NKt1ljSI3RwXGJxFa-OYIh5fza7koCdD_bsmhIQGOhLlwRFwX1GE-OpS0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=773.38)):

Although, you know, I've done a lot of processing and you know, created this beautiful, um, shrine to him with pictures and all of that. But when I look back on it, wow. And now talking to other people about their animals and how devastating and I understand it, not everyone does by the way, but I understand the feeling of grief and loss with a pet. I don't wanna say more so than people, but I feel like it's a little different. And why is it a little different? Let's talk about these incredible beings. Let's talk about these incredible beings that are animals unconditionally loving teach you about presence. Okay. Cuz they're always in the moment right. Of joy and happy to see you in, you know, just in the moment don't judge, they don't judge. So there's so much that we learn from them and there's so much love and they, they bring us into the present moments.

Speaker 3 ([13:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=s5DLB3lFnT9hhlzaSaeA3XHb_H0d0PiaC-vFTGVshq4fTQSuNBenq9e1ihWD0Xd0JzT9cMQ2QPpeY_8olMlsVwFAjSM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=832.39)):

They, they bring us into that alignment. So of course there's gonna be the strongest of loving bonds that we have with these animals. Again, those of you who are animal lovers. And so when that end of life comes about perhaps out absolutely one of the most difficult and painful experiences. So how can we do it? Well? So now you have defo doulas who are specifically trained to help with pets. And I will share with you that I think understanding pet needs and pet physiology, of course we talked about the not eating, um, and those kind of things, but going at their rhythm it's nonverbal communication. You know, I thought because I do this with humans all the time that I would easily be able to translate that to an animal. Now I'm not saying that you can't, but I just didn't have all of that understanding. And it was my animal. And so it was very quick. And so my emotions were wrapped up in that as well. Um, having somebody else help guide that

Speaker 2 ([14:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=nBHRwhq6O4cd9fOSB9EKr1Vt2_xYTLlvGagR0MvvOSjhkgMSqMA6RQY3WFgnmJtHu_MjZIoJZ1Ct5jMRVPn6hWgDeZM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=890.64)):

Would've been really helpful and kind of, you know, maybe helping me navigate some choices and what might be the best thing to do. I also would have done a whole ritual around the end of life. Again, I would've kept max at home. I would've had, um, him, you know, loved and cared for and laid out and honored. And all of the things that we talk about with home funerals that are so beautiful. So I would've done it a little differently. Of course. And I also am very honored that there are people that specialize in this area because I think it is extremely needed. There are when I, you know, was researching it. So now we have our doula givers, a few of them, we have a woman who I really wanna have on a podcast who has worked with animals that have been in sanctuaries and in trauma, she has such incredible stories and she is such an incredible being the work that she has done.

Speaker 2 ([15:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ny7Iv3re2p7bBhopAgHPMCVLEQ691bxswlH77QdSF7Wsv1buciXId0NmZ1ymEYYKBLnNSikwFVRyZ3Uj1OyIX80A4uM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=942.84)):

I'd like you, her to share some of her stories with you, but looking it up, there are animal grief, support groups, many of them there's animal hospice, so to speak. But I think most of them are really just wonderful services that will help you to put your animal to sleep, um, in your home. I think we could do more again about memorials and honoring and um, all that goes along with it, all that goes along with the pet, one of the things I should have brought it here, I'll post a picture of it. One of the things that I had heard on a show, this woman who again had an a, her dog died, she was talking about how devastated, what she was. She got this pillow that was made by a certain company. You take the picture of the animal, the dog, you sent it to them.

Speaker 2 ([16:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=x7gPK0oS62WE355_tVXlOeGuw5-hwS6omXYrVCma8MSucHK3c1u8k2kbaapK0nj1zJNWSHAph5SGfKkMzA_dRCoQB6k&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=989.18)):

They make a pillow like a, like a body pillow, but like a doggy pillow with the whole picture of the, um, beautiful dog on it. And you can hold that and squeeze that and love that. And I had one made of max and I'm gonna post that picture for you and you know what? I go pass by. And I'm like, hi, max. Sometimes I give him an absolute hug and hold and there's something that's really nice about that. There's just something that's really nice about that. So ritual around the pet loss, um, and then of course, you know, memorializing and how we go on from that, these are all extremely important components to a healthy relationship. When we say goodbye to a physical form of not only animals, but of people and vice versa. So love that we have pet doulas. Now there is a grief group that I found online resource that might be interesting to some of you it's called rainbow bridge pet loss grief center. And they seem to have a lot of resources and support groups for anyone who is interested in that. And again, you know, our pets are so very important to us and just because they are animals. And I say just because, and that just seems so wrong that I'm even saying it that way, but sometimes people in the world, we don't think there's

Speaker 4 ([17:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=5vU-R96Vo3Wd9JTbDeKLy_jbfFQNFnFPUHvwD2Qro0CEbGvgc9AH-pGAlaqDxemzXzPz7z275S51fWE1tTP42W_p-r8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1068.76)):

As much of a loss when it's an animal. And there absolutely is. So I understand that we, those of us who are animal lovers have so much attached to that beautiful unconditional loving being. And when we are approaching their end of life, knowing that there's support, knowing that there's tools and knowing that there are different, uh, rituals and things around that end of life can help to ease this part of our journey with that wonderful animal. So doggie doulas, pet doulas, they're here. There's a couple of links below for resources. And again, let's not only honor each other, but let's honor those animals. All right, everyone. Thank you so very much. My name's Suzanne Brian, this was ask aula. I will see you in the next episode.