



## **Be One With Dog.**

*How to love someone affected by trauma and loss.*

People just don't know how to respond when excruciating, soul-shattering events occur – that is the one, rock-solid, predictable truth that we witness time and time again, typically accompanied by the corresponding: "I just don't know what to say...what I should do...how I should act around X since Y occurred..." Although you really have to have a good read on the situation before you offer this type of sage advice, if/when appropriate, suggest to people that they should **act more like a dog.**

That's right, like a dog: always be open and happy to see them; be able to immediately pick up on the "energy" of the situation and adjust accordingly; be willing to sit in compassionate presence for endless amounts of time not saying a single word; never pity them and/or look at them with those "I'm so sorry this happened to you..." eyes; expect very little, if anything, in return; keep all secrets; remain loyal, ever present, and ready at their side no matter what else is going on; always be open to any and all new adventures as opportunities may arise; remain loving and ever-accepting regardless of how they look, smell, sound, feel, or act; do whatever you can to get them to go outside for fresh air and a walk as often as possible; share your plain, boring, simple food (complete with all essential vitamins and nutrients); take lots of naps together; and spontaneously do cute, silly stuff so if able, they are re-introduced to the possibility of a smile.

When we are under critical levels of stress, it is simply more difficult to be present and available to others. When our chosen profession is by definition to remain wholeheartedly available to others while simultaneously saturated in critical levels of stress – in those we are serving, and/or sometimes in ourselves – it can understandably get overwhelming at times to be in the presence of even our closest, most important and loved family and friends. Dogs (or dog-like behaviors) can create a respite, a bridge between the overwhelm and a renewed connection to love, life, and hope.

Chiron has worked on-scene alongside professionally trained crisis response K9s from the non-profit HOPE Animal Assisted Crisis Response ([www.hopeaacr.org](http://www.hopeaacr.org)) after line of duty death, mass shooting, completed suicide, and other extended deployments, and the response has been astounding. We know that powerful "reset" buttons for humans are laughing, crying, exercise, and touch. Dogs are experts at creating opportunities for all of these activities - without shame, judgement, or commentary.

When it comes to supporting someone deeply effected by shock, horror, and profound loss we could all do a lot of good by simply taking note of canine qualities and behaviors. Or at the very least, we can try to not take it personally when our loved one prefers a little quality time alone with Fido. Actually, when you break it down, we really can learn a lot from our truly wise, and healing four-legged companions. So go forth, and **be one with dog!**

Chiron Center, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our mission is to provide behavioral health education, support, and resources designed to maximize the professional excellence and overall quality of life of those who place themselves in harm's way in service of others. For more information, visit our websites: [www.ChironCenter.org](http://www.ChironCenter.org), [www.ChironCRT.org](http://www.ChironCRT.org), & [www.ChironStillStanding.org](http://www.ChironStillStanding.org)

