

Do you love your dog more than humans?

By Anna Medaris Miller, U.S. News and World Report

P. Elizabeth Anderson once had a daughter named Grace. Like any parents would, she and her husband cared for her, nurtured her and tried to keep her out of trouble. They took her on vacations and enjoyed her company around the house. “She was my constant companion,” says Anderson, a journalist in the District of Columbia.

So when Grace died unexpectedly at age 14, the couple was crushed. But because Grace was a dog, “I was unable to talk to anyone about this immense grief,” says Anderson, who wrote the book “The Powerful Bond between People and Pets: Our Boundless Connections to Companion Animals.”

The depth of Anderson’s devastation surprised her, but it’s common to feel that way after the loss of a dog, says Lori Kogan, associate professor of clinical sciences at Colorado State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. Some people feel so sad, in fact, that they wonder if the death of a human companion would have been easier. “People feel guilty because they feel worse when their dog dies than if a family member dies,” Kogan says. “And then they think they’re a bad person.”

But in reality, it’s normal. “There’s a reason you feel that way,” she says. One of them? Unlike the mixed feelings we have toward each other – and that arise after a person’s death – “our relationship with dogs is so uncomplicated,” Kogan says. Some might call it true love.

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