

Anne Hamilton
www.hamiltonlit.com
<http://hamiltondramaturgy.wordpress.com>
Read Anne's articles on the [Open to Hope](#) website
hamiltonlit@hotmail.com

A Forever Decision
By Anne Hamilton

I'm starting to realize that she is not coming back.

Five days ago, I put my beloved dog Camilla to sleep. She had a tumor on her pituitary gland and she was experiencing debilitating symptoms. It was best to end her suffering. It was a forever decision.

The first day I felt relieved. I had been nursing her for a year and a half. I never knew when she would have another seizure. I had to guide her to and from the backyard by clapping so she could follow the sound – she had gone blind.

I have another dog and together, we cuddled and went for walks and bonded again.

The second day I still felt like I was on alert. I didn't want to talk to anyone. I think it's much better for me to reorient myself without the burden of interacting with people.

The third day was September 11th, a day where I traditionally stay home and remain quiet, out of respect for the American tragedy which I experienced as a resident of New York City eleven years ago.

The fourth day, I felt like I had to get out of the house. I wrote thank you cards to my parents and family members who supported me while I was making the decision to let Cami leave our close-knit family peacefully. And I felt a fear of the vet's office where we all went together to say goodbye to her, knowing that we would leave with a hole in our hearts and our lives.

I decided to be brave, so that I wouldn't be afraid of that place which was a necessary part of our lives. I cleaned out the dog's medicine cabinet and took Cami's unused medicines back to the vet's office. I took my other dog, Isabella, with me, because I wanted her to feel comfortable going to the vet when she needed care.

I walked in and immediately saw the room where we lovingly surrounded Cami and held her as the doctor administered the medicine to put her to sleep. The door was open. I looked at the floor and pictured her there, that last time, and also the time before, when I visited her during her last hospital stay and she fell asleep as I petted her dear face.

I didn't cry. I told the vet's assistant that I came because I didn't want to be afraid of the vet's office. I gave the medicine back and walked the grounds with Isabella, exploring the field with the dog agility equipment.

I decided then that it was time for Izzy to have some canine company and determined to bring her back the next day to play in the fields with her friends.

Today when I awoke, I felt the dread of dropping her off, and I also felt the absence of Camilla. It's easy for the first few days after a death to think that the loved one is just away for a few days, but as the adrenaline wears off, we are left with stone cold logic. She will not return and I have to live with it.

At the same time, my boyfriend boarded a plane to speak at a conference in the Midwest, placing him farther from my reach.

I battled my fear and put the dog in the car and drove her back to the kennel. She happily went with the doggie day care worker. I left quickly.

It's important for me to keep up my relationship with the kennel to get the needed care for my remaining dog. It's important for me to find a way to process my own feelings, and to care for Isabella's socialization and exercise needs while we are adjusting.

I need to adjust to the loss of a pet whose presence made my life easier during difficult times. It's important for me to continue to get the necessary medical care for the surviving pet companion.

I feel like I'm walking through a dark cave. I'm trying to find the right thing to do. I'm praying and crying when I need to. I'm writing to help process my emotions. I'm showering my surviving pet with affection.

I'm balancing needs. My own, first of all, because I'm a caregiver for Isabella and responsible for running the household. When one member of the family dies, life must go on.

I think that proceeding slowly and steadily is the answer. It's the method which works for me.

In five more days I'll open my office again. And begin to speak with my clients again. And go back to work. I have a lot of tasks to complete.

But for now, this week, I'll slow down and breathe. And remember the perfect pet who gave me so much love for ten long years.

And thank my lucky stars for letting me know such a beautiful soul for so long.