

My experience with Animal Bowen started in June 2015. My Old English Sheepdog, Dusty, who had just turned 14 in March, was having ongoing mobility problems. He couldn't walk without support, wasn't able to stand without collapsing, and seemed to be in a lot of pain. He also had major muscle wasting in his hind end. The vet diagnosed severe arthritis, prescribed the typical pain medication, and told me Dusty would have to be euthanized if he could no longer walk. In defiance, I started looking online for therapy that would help strengthen his muscles, and alleviate his pain without having to resort to medication or the big sleep needle. My search led me to Debi and Animal Vitality Plus.

When I learned that Debi also taught Animal Bowen, I decided to learn. I thought that I could help my own dog while learning how to help others, so it was an easy decision to make. I looked forward to the first class with great anticipation.

I found the moves fascinating. As I learned them, and practiced them on my dog, I began to feel part of something very special and empowering. Dusty loved his Bowen sessions with me, and I loved being able to treat him myself. Then the time came to start working on case studies, and I got a little worried, wondering if I was capable of working on someone else's dog.

My first case study rocked me to the core. The dog I was working on had Degenerative Myelopathy, and two days after our last session, he was euthanized. This really hit me hard since my own dog had been diagnosed with DM the previous year, and I had been trying so hard to keep him going. I couldn't understand how people could just give up, especially when their dog was still able to walk and run. By this time, my dog was paralysed in his back legs and his disease was progressing.

Once I was able to get past this experience, I worked on several dogs in quick succession, and literally fell in love with all of them. Being able to make a difference in their lives gave me a lot of joy, and helped to offset the despondency I was feeling as I was no longer able to help my dog with Bowen. He still loved his sessions, and I think Bowen helped to release the trauma of his disease, but I knew he would never walk again.

As his care started taking more and more of my time, my dedication to Bowen started to wane. I was still determined to complete the requirements for certification, but just couldn't find the time or the energy. Dusty was my only focus.

I made an effort to chat with a woman at work who is an operator at one of the locks. I discovered that she has four dogs, including two rescues that she is fostering. I made arrangements to include them in my case studies, and set off feeling confident that the five case studies I had left to do would be wrapped up shortly.

As it turned out, the two rescued dogs wouldn't let me near them. I was saddened by this experience since it really drove home the whole issue of animal abuse. What had happened to these poor little creatures to make them so fearful and full of mistrust? It was a real wake up call for me. I wanted to help them; I knew I could help them, but they didn't want anything to do with me.

I still had three case studies left to complete, and in the meantime, my dog Dusty died. I couldn't think about anything, could barely make it to work. Bowen sat on a shelf for a while and collected dust. I started asking myself if I even wanted to continue. My whole reason for starting this journey was gone, and all I had left was a huge ache that Bowen couldn't fill. Lucky for me there are a lot of dog lovers in the world, and people who understood how I felt. I found my final three case studies, and fell in love all over again, with the dogs and with Bowen. I realized that my experience with Dusty set me on my path, but it wasn't the entire path. My journey continues and I am grateful to him.

I plan to use this therapy full time once I retire. I am looking forward to the day when I can dedicate myself to making a difference with all animals. In the meantime, I will work at it as time and energy allows.

My experience with Debi has been nothing but positive. Debi, you are inspiring, supportive, understanding and most of all, empathetic. Your words of encouragement guided me through some very rocky times. So, you're stuck with me for the long haul.

Pamela Foley
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