

# My Dogs' Reaction to My Cancer Diagnosis



By [Gogs](#) November 16, 2021 4 min read

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After the doctor confirmed my prostate biopsy was positive for cancer, my first thought was, "I'm going to die." My heart started to pound, and I immediately thought about my family and how they would manage. And then I thought about our two dogs, Maya and Nelly. They always had a way to make me feel better, no matter how bad my day was going.

## **An instant bond**

We adopted both dogs from a shelter: Maya, a

Saint Bernard/German shepherd, and Nelly, a Shepherd/Border Collie. We adopted Maya first, and then Nelly about a year later, and they bonded with each other instantly. Maya loved to play-wrestle with me, and she naturally knew how to be gentle.

However, occasionally, while rolling around on the floor with her, she would bite me too hard. After I gave out a little scream, she would lick my face and be ever so gentle on the next bite. After our wrestling match, Nelly would check me over to make sure I was okay. It was a great way to unwind from the day.

## **Trying to comfort me**

Once the doctor concluded with my biopsy results, he recommended follow-up testing and a visit to the cancer clinic. With that news, my wife and I left his office holding hands. The drive home from the doctors was quiet, and my thoughts were again on the worst possible

outcome.

As we pulled into our driveway, I felt a sense of loneliness. That is until I opened the front door. As usual, Maya and Nelly greeted us as if we were royalty. They were always happy and eager to welcome us home, even if we were away for only a short time. But this time, it was a little different. As I got down on my knees to greet them, they both gave out a soft whimper. They had sensed my fear and were trying to comfort me.

## **Loyal companionship**

From that day, Maya and Nelly became my therapy dogs, providing much-needed comfort and emotional support. They followed me everywhere, day and night. Regularly, I would be awakened in the middle of the night by the dogs licking my face. When I assured them that I was okay, they would go back to sleep. The only trouble was that they could fall asleep in

an instant. In comparison, it took me much longer. But I didn't mind, as I loved the attention.

Their loyal companionship and unconditional love helped reduce my anxiety and distract my mind from worrying. They were there with me with every step. From diagnosis, the stress of waiting for test results to treatment and many months and years of ongoing recovery. I'm incredibly grateful to have had both dogs in my life during this time. They each played a critical role for me, and I'm sad to say that they have both since died.

## **Losing Maya**

It happened suddenly for Maya. One night, our son woke us up in the middle of the night. "Something's wrong with Maya," he stressed. My wife and I followed our son to the living room and found Maya struggling to breathe. On quick assessment, I noticed her stomach

was extremely bloated, and her tongue was hanging out of her mouth.

While my wife and son tried to comfort Maya, I urgently called the local veterinary clinic. At the time, it was a few minutes to midnight, and there was no answer. I quickly Googled and dialed the number to the closest 24/7 animal hospital. After speaking with the receptionist, she instructed us to bring her in immediately. But Maya died in the car a few minutes before arriving at the hospital.

## **Heartbroken**

The drive home was painful. And that wasn't even the worst of it. At home, Nelly searched inside the house and out in the yard for days looking for Maya. And then she would look at me with desperation, whining, hoping I would lead her to Maya. Seeing her this way utterly broke my heart.

A few months after Maya passed, Nelly developed a large lump on her hind leg. An examination from the vet revealed it to be cancer that was growing at a rapid pace. The tumor was too large to operate, and cancer had most likely already spread. We decided to keep her as comfortable as possible with medication. Over time, the tumor continued to grow and impacted her mobility. It got to a point where we had to make the painful decision to end her suffering.

## **Always thinking about my dogs**

There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about Maya and Nelly. Even though there's a massive hole in my heart that will never heal, I find comfort in the memories. They entered my life at the perfect time and provided me with many years of joy. Although there's never a good time to say goodbye, I feel blessed they

were around to help me face my cancer diagnosis.

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