

## **The Care & Handling of a Broken Heart**

**Mary-Ann Bowman, PhD LCSW**

**Tuesday April 29 3:00-5:00p.m.**

Our dogs teach us so much about what it means to be human. In the context of our lives with dogs, we practice communicating effectively, creating respectful relationships, and behaving with integrity even when nobody's watching. Dogs also teach us what it means to grieve deeply. This interactive presentation will provide an informative structure to help participants make sense of the experiences of loss and grief. Specifically, we will hold in our minds and hearts the death of a beloved dog as context for understanding the experience of normal, typical grief in adults and children. We will explore symptoms of grief, common manifestations of grief, and how to manage expectations of ourselves and others when living in the shadow of loss. We will discuss what helps – and what doesn't -- when the unimaginable becomes real life.

This is a presentation for people who want to better understand their own broken heart, and those who want to better support the broken hearts of others. It is also for those who want to be better prepared for that future time when their heart is broken. In other words, this Berner U session is applicable to all -- and all are welcome.

**Dr. Mary-Ann Sontag** is an Associate Professor at the University of Montana where she specializes in issues related to loss and grief, and integrated behavioral health. She has long combined her life with dogs and her professional interests, including three professional book chapters related to the human-animal bond. Mary-Ann has lived with Bernese Mountain Dogs since 1994, and her Kaibab Berners reflect generations of BMDCA Versatility Dogs and Working Dogs.