YOUR PET LOSS

Your Pet Loss Comfort & Healing Guide

Understanding grief after losing a beloved companion



A gentle resource for the journey through pet loss

Healing Solutions for Pet Loss • petsorrow.com

Grief is a unique experience for pet owners

There is no right or wrong way to grieve, as long as you don't hurt yourself or people around you. Remember, there is help available, if you need it.

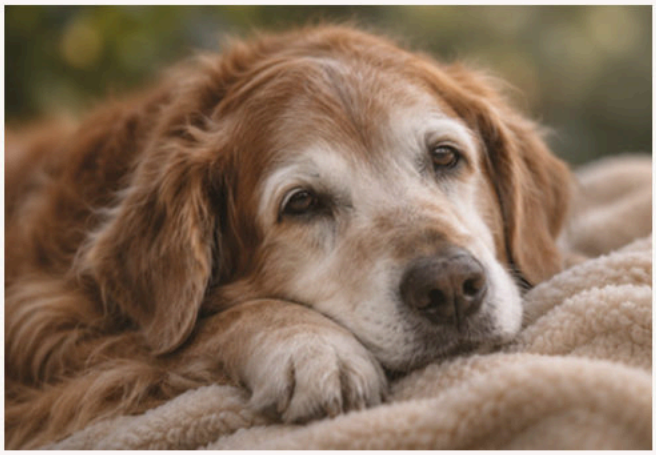
Despite the fact that Americans spend billions of dollars a year on pets, and occasionally give them seats at the dinner table, pillows in their beds and create social media accounts for them, their deaths have an unspoken stigma: 'JUST.' It was just a pet. Just a dog. Just a cat. Society does not get it. So tell me where does that leave the brokenhearted?

I like to say that we never get over a loss; things just become different. Life is different, we are different. Grieving forces us down. If there was a place lower than the ground, I feel we would be able to find it.

Feelings associated with loss

Words from my clients:

We feel lost. It is as if our heart is broken in two. We are overwhelmed with pain. It is the misery we feel. It is sitting at home not wanting to do anything. It is not wanting to go home due to the constant reminders. It is crying for days on end. It is not being able to sleep. It is having our pet on our mind all the time. It is being tired. It is feeling dark. It is feeling guilt. It is feeling ok sometimes then having a flashback and feeling terrible all over again. It is looking for peace. It is being broken. It is crying uncontrollably, feeling empty. It is not being able to be cheered up. It is seeing people who want you to move on with your life. The silence in the house is deafening. It is knowing that some people are putting you down. I can barely remember a life without her. I miss her so much it hurts. She was my world. I am trying very hard but I miss her so much.





How grief can affect us

Emotional symptoms of grief

Denial • Shock and disbelief • Sadness / Depression • Confusion • Guilt • Shame • Anger • Fear • Acceptance

Physical symptoms of grief

Fatigue • Nausea • Weight loss • Weight gain • Aches • Pain • Insomnia • Panic attacks • Headaches

Grief is more than sadness

Grief can come in waves. One moment you may feel calm, and the next a familiar sound, an empty bed, or a daily routine can bring tears. These changing emotions are a natural response to losing a companion who was part of your life.

The effects can reach into everyday life

You may find it harder to concentrate, make decisions, enjoy familiar activities, or spend time with others. Your appetite and sleep may change, and you might feel exhausted even after resting. Some people also experience loneliness or guilt, especially when difficult end-of-life decisions were involved.

Be gentle with yourself

There is no set timeline for grieving. Try to eat regularly, rest when you can, and talk with someone who understands the bond you shared. If emotional or physical symptoms become overwhelming or persist, a healthcare professional or grief counselor can offer additional support.

When others don’t understand pet grief

Some people will never be able to understand how hard it is to lose a beloved pet. In our society today, pet loss is not recognized as an important death. When a person dies, employees often receive bereavement leave from their jobs. People around them understand if they are not quite themselves. But when you lose a pet, it is not like that at all.

A client of mine told me about her experience attending a bereavement session in her hometown. She was actually asked to leave, as her loss was not something of importance, and the people in attendance at this group were all suffering major losses. Some people just cannot form a strong attachment to a pet. But that is not all people. That is not you.



Grief is love's unwillingness to let go.

Hold a memorial service for your pet. Perhaps scatter your pet's ashes in a place that holds special meaning to your family or your pet.

Create a legacy, plant a tree or flowers in your pet's favorite spot, or create a shadow box filled with their favorite toys, blankets and collars.

Make a scrapbook.

Have your favorite photographs of your pet framed and close by.

Make sure you meet your basic needs: eat, sleep, bathe. Fill yourself with healthy food, try to maintain a sleep schedule of some sort. You need to look after you.

The world does not slow down for anyone, even when we are hurting. Know this.

Take time to grieve. Allow your heart to mend.

Grief is the price we pay for love.

Find people you can talk to about your pet who understand they were way more than JUST a pet.

Journal your feelings.

Seek out a bereavement meet-up group in your area, if you are lucky enough to find one.

Don't try to hide or ignore sadness. Cry, scream, pound a pillow.

Surround yourself with people who will support you rather than try to solve your problem. Grief has its own timeline and cannot be rushed.

Watch for signs from your pet where they may be reaching out to you. Tap into all of your senses. You may see a shadow, hear a whinny, feel a strong presence, or see little paw-print impressions on your blankets.

And most importantly, love yourself.

Comfort quotes

Our animal friends teach us more than we could have expected and love us more than we could have hoped... that's why we miss them more than we could have imagined.

At first they need us, and then we need them.

Sometimes losing a pet is more painful than losing a human because in the case of the pet, you were not pretending to love it. — *Amy Sedaris*

A pet is never truly forgotten until it is no longer remembered. — *Lacie Petitt*

It's hard to turn the page when you know someone won't be in the next chapter, but the story must go on. — *Thomas Wilder*

No time on earth is long enough to share with those we love or to prepare our hearts for good-bye.

My mind still talks to you and my heart still looks for you. But my soul knows you're at peace.

