
WHEN A PET DIES

Compassionate support through the process of mourning your pet,
remembering them and healing along the way.

Your Emotions Will Vary

Everyone has a different emotional experience and it can hit you at different times. You might feel things like confusion, guilt, sadness, disorganization and anger. These are all common. Allow yourself to go through the feelings as they are all a part of the process.

Losing a Pet Is Not the Same as Losing a Human

Pets are a source of unconditional love. They don't judge or hold anything against us. They're able to provide love and comfort without expecting anything in return. Human relationships are complicated and require our brain to sort through the ups and downs of our time with our loved ones. The relationship with our pets are simple, allowing for our brain to just process the loss which can often be a very intense experience.



A Pet is a Part of Your Family

Pets are a part of our every day lives and touch everyone in the family in a different way. They're a part of our daily rituals, whether it be feeding or walking them, changing their litter box or snuggles on the couch at the end of our day. When death separates us from our pets, our daily life changes from our rituals we once took part in, to how we feel connected to another living being. By nature of a pets dependency on us, we often interact with our pets more frequently than we do members of our human family. When that interaction is suddenly gone, it can be very painful. Understanding the gravity of this loss can help you get through the experience and intensity of the pain.



People Might Say Things That Hurt

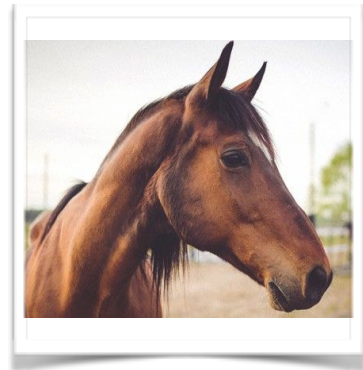
Unless one has lost a pet or it has been a long time since one has experienced that loss, people can say things that feel minimizing like "it's just a dog/cat/horse" or "you can get another one". Know that this is a possibility and if you're feeling like those comments might be too much to handle for where you are, clarify the meaning of the loss for you or limit your interaction to other pet lovers and like-minded people for the time being. Be aware of your limits and understand not everyone has had an experience that allows them to know how painful it is to lose a pet.

Keep Their Memory In Your Heart

Our pet's love will live on through our memory. There are things we can do to allow for that as we move through the grief process. While it is important to go through the process of getting rid of things you no longer need to care for your pet, choosing something special to keep can help with preserving that connection with our pet. It can also ease some of the guilt that may come up from clearing the space they once occupied.

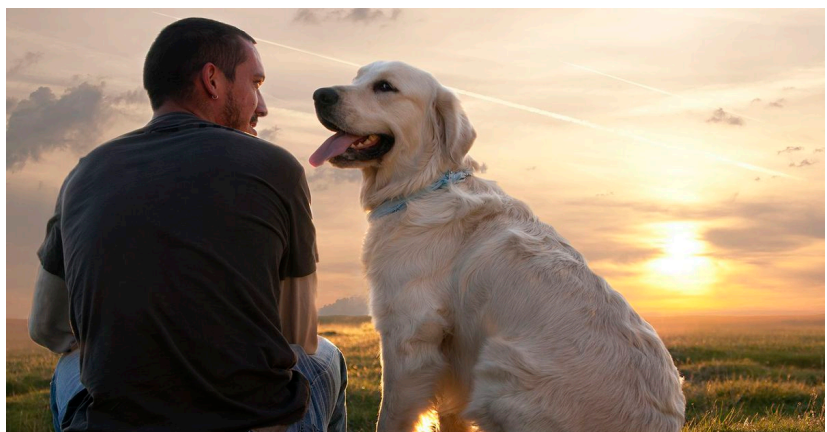
Be Patient With Yourself

There is no "normal" amount of time for someone to mourn the loss of a pet. The intensity of your grief is a reflection of how much you loved your pet and how much you were able to let their love in. Let yourself go through the process and be kind to yourself along the way with how long it takes. If you feel stuck and think you might need some extra support, find a support group or seek help from a mental health professional.



Rituals to Honor Your Pet

It's important that we get some closure after the death of our pet. Having a funeral, ceremony or some other special gesture, allows for us to acknowledge the death, share/recall memories and creates a point in our process of grief that opens up space for learning what life looks like without the physical presence of your pet.





Why I Specialize in Pet Grief

I did my clinical training at Cancer Support Community Redondo Beach where I worked with cancer patients and their families, supporting many of them through the grief of losing loved ones.

Through my experience at CSC and through my own experience of losing a close family member, and later, grieving my dog, I noticed the grief process for my dog felt different than the grief for my family member. I found myself confused and ashamed about the way I was grieving my dog and why it felt like I was “more sad” about my dog than about my family member.

When the dust settled, I set out to figure out why. In researching the human-animal bond, how deep we’re able to connect to our pets and why, I found peace and acceptance about the way I mourned these special beings in my life.

How I Can Help

Free 15 - Minute Phone Consultation

I can give you a listening ear and answer any questions you might have about the therapeutic process. Together, we can figure out if a full, paid-phone session or an in-office session would be a helpful next step.

Or visit my website [Pet Loss Page](#) for other helpful resources and articles on losing a pet and the grief process:

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Under the clinical supervision of Dr. Ron Glick (PSY17719)