**Support for grief – losing a pet**

Anyone who enjoys having a pet will sadly have to see the day when their pet dies. For some it may be a sudden experience, for others they may have seen their pet become poorly for some time. Pets are companions for us whatever has happened during our day – greeting us with a squeak, a purr or a wag and loving us unconditionally. Our houses can feel awfully empty without them, and grieving can be really hard.

It can help some people to have someone to talk to about their loss who isn't a close friend or family members. There are several free helplines where you will be able to talk to a kind person who will understand your grief. The RSPCA have links through their website:

https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/bereavement#:~:text=Grieving%20for%20a%20pet,these%20emotions%20are%20perfectly%20normal.

Everyone has a different experience of grief – there is no right or wrong way to feel or behave. The following website has a link to supporting children with the loss of a pet, and also covers the process of grief:

https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-losing-a-pet.htm

When we are overwhelmed by emotions, we can forget to look after ourselves, causing us to feel physically ill, or to suffer from depression or anxiety. The following website contains some suggestions for practical ideas to practice a little self-kindness during difficult times:

https://doctorconnor.com/grieving-the-loss-of-a-pet/

It can be hard to share intense feelings of sadness with other family members, but they will be feeling their own sense of loss too. You may feel cross if you think they are 'coping just fine' but remember that we all cope differently. If you have other pets, they will also be feeling grief – give them extra play time or cuddles because they will appreciate it as much as you!

Some people find their grief follows stages. We can be angry, sad, disbelieving or just incredibly sad. It can help to see that grief can follow a pattern (although this isn't the case for everyone):

https://www.dignitypetcrem.co.uk/coping-with-the-5-stages-of-grief-after-losing-a-pet/

Finally moving onto a new pet in our lives can be emotional too – and you may not feel ready to do this for a long time. It can remind you of your old pet, or you can be scared to start to love it as you anticipate their loss already. No pet replaces the pet which has passed, but you will joy all over again as you get to know your new friend. You will never forget your old pet, but you will be able to remember them with a smile.

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