

PET LOSS GRIEVANCE SUPPORT RESOURCES:

- **COMPANION ANIMAL LOVE, LOSS & MEMORIES (CALLM)**
The University of Minnesota Veterinary Medical Center (VMC) offers a bereavement group to support those grieving the loss of a beloved animal. CALLM provides attendees with a supportive and confidential environment in which to share their story. Sessions are free. For more information call VMC Social Work Services at 612.624.9372
- **ANIMAL EMERGENCY & REFERRAL CENTER OF MINNESOTA PET LOSS SUPPORT GROUP**
The group meets at the Oakdale location. For more information please call 651.501.3766
- **THE ANIMAL HUMANE SOCIETY OF GOLDEN VALLEY PET LOSS SUPPORT GROUP**
The support group is led by compassionate facilitators and is provided to the public for free. For more information, visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/services/pet-loss-support-group
- **VETERINARY WISDOM FOR PET PARENTS**
www.veterinarywisdomforpetparents.com
- **THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS (ASPCA) PET LOSS HOTLINE**
www.aspca.org/pet-care/pet-loss
- **TUFTS PET LOSS HOTLINE**
508.839.7966
<http://vet.tufts.edu/petloss/>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR ADULTS:

- *A Dog's Purpose* by W. Bruce Cameron
- *Saying Goodbye to the Pet You Love: A Complete Resource to Help You Heal* by Lorri A. Greene, Ph.D. and Jacquelyn Landis

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR TEENS:

- *Goodbye Friend, Healing Wisdom for Anyone Who Has Ever Lost a Pet* by Gary Kowalski
- *Healing Your Grieving Heart 'For Teens:' 100 Practical Ideas* by Dr. Alan Wolfelt

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR CHILDREN:

- *Saying Goodbye to Your Pet: Children Can Learn to Cope with Pet Loss* by Marge Eaton Heegaard

Bereavement Support



Often, our pets are much more than just pets - they are family, friends, sidekicks, and teammates. Experiencing the loss of a pet is a very personal and individual thing. It can be surprisingly more challenging and painful than we expect.

Grieving the loss of a pet can occur on a physical, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and spiritual level. It can be exhausting. Our hearts feel broken, our minds alternate from confusion to guilt. We spend a lot of time asking "could I have done something better or different?" These feelings are all normal.

Depending on your comfort level, there are many ways to express your feelings. Some ideas are to:

- Write about your loss in a journal.
- Write a private letter to the pet you lost.
- Create a memorial in a frame (or via your personal social media page.) These memorials can include pictures or videos of your pet, your pet's identification tags, and/or an urn containing your pet's ashes if you opted to have the ashes returned to you.
- Use a portion of their ashes to be made into a pendant or jewelry.
- Plant a tree in honor of your pet.
- Make a donation to or volunteer your time at a local organization of your choice.

While friends and family members can offer support, they may not understand the sensitivity of your grief and can unintentionally react in a way that leaves you feeling hurt. There are other ways to acquire the support and comfort you may need at this time. Many seek comfort through local animal grievance support groups or through a pet loss support hotline like those listed on the back of this pamphlet. It is healthy and even encouraged to talk about the life you shared with your pet as this is an important part of your healing process.



WHAT DO I TELL MY KIDS?

This may be your child's first experience with loss and feelings of grief. This could be a good opportunity for you to teach your child to accept and express his/her feelings in healthy ways, free of expectation and embarrassment. While it is tempting to try to protect your child from emotional pain, telling your child that the pet ran away or went to live with someone else could invoke feelings of abandonment and rejection. It is best to be as honest as possible with your child.

WILL MY OTHER PETS AT HOME SENSE THIS LOSS TOO?

Research shows compelling evidence that your other pets can sense the loss of another. Understand that during this time of loss and grief, your other pets may need extra attention and comfort as well.

Signs that your other pets may be experiencing grief can include, but are not limited to:

- Increased desire for attention
- Separation anxiety
- Decreased eating/drinking
- Increased vocalization
- Increased sensitivity to noise
- Searching for the missing pet

Be aware of the changes in your animal hierarchies, especially dogs, that may occur following a pet's passing. If the deceased animal was a dominant animal, you may notice an increase in aggression with your remaining pets as they compete for status and dominance in their new arrangement. Talk to your veterinarian about these behavioral changes should they occur.



NOTE:
It is important to be conscious of the duration and intensity of comfort-giving, as animals are quick to adapt to this special attention. Too much of this can reward and develop unwanted behavior. For example, giving treats each time the pet vocalizes or becomes restless will encourage that behavior.

Some animals to seem unaffected by the absence of a pet and that is completely normal. Treat these animals just as you always have. Pets that are grieving and showing obvious signs of loss can be given special attention through extra pats and rubs, walks or time outdoors, and appropriate treats to encourage their appetite. Even giving them a blanket with the deceased pet's scent on it may bring comfort.

Keep a close eye on elderly pets. Decreased appetite and thirst is far more serious in elderly animals and can cause life threatening issues.