**Grief – Relationships with our Pets**

Grief is a normal and natural process that takes work to get through. Dealing with the emotions

that occur in the grieving process takes much time and energy and is usually both physically and emotionally demanding. It is normal for people to grieve in very different ways. Some people grieve openly, while others hide their feelings of distress. Some people grieve quickly, while others take a long time to "finish." There is no "right way" to grieve. Each individual comes up with a method of grieving that fits them and their particular loss.

The bonds we make with animals are lifelong and provide entertainment, joy, pleasure and companionship. When a pet passes away or retires, the loss is keenly felt. An important aspect of grieving is to share the loss of your pet with people who will understand and support you.

While death is most probably the most commonly experienced loss of a pet, there are other ways to experience loss of a beloved pet, like parting with a pet through separation or disappearance, or when a pet retires who has worked alongside you such as a farm dog, police or army dog or a seeing eye dog.

For many people their pet has become their significant other, one who they have relied on and loved for many years. When this changes and a pet passes or circumstances change so that they are not in their humans’ lives anymore, the deep sense of loss and grief are sometimes not well understood by friends and family.

**Some Practical Tips for Managing Grief**

Fortunately, there are many constructive and healthy ways to deal with grief. These can include:

* **Take Time to Grieve** – your pet has been part of your family for a long time, give yourself time to grieve, there is not a set timetable for grieving.
* **Journaling** – Many people find comfort in writing out their thoughts and feelings during the grieving period. Some even decide to write poetry or a tribute to their pet. This can be a very good way to express feelings that people may not feel comfortable sharing with others and to avoid bottling up of emotions, which can extend the grief process or lead to other physical/emotional problems.
* **Talking with Someone that Understands** – Others find that talking with a close family member or friend is beneficial and allows them to share memories about the lost relationship or emotions that they are feeling.
* **Say Goodbye** –If possible, hold a small memorial service for your pet, whether it’s at home or a much loved location, it gives you and your family an opportunity to say goodbye to them. This can be a very healing process. Many people share pet stories or will speak tributes or poems to acknowledge the important loss.
* **Support Groups** – For those that don’t want to speak to an intimate friend or family member or a counsellor one-on-one, a community-based or internet-based support group is an option. Many people find it comforting to speak with others who are experiencing similar types of loss and who are at different stages of the grieving process. As is the case with individual therapy, support groups can help to normalize what grieving people are feeling.
* **Getting Professional Help** – Some people decide that they are not comfortable sharing their feelings with close friends and family. Alternatively, they may feel that they do not wish to burden those around them who are also suffering. In these cases, many choose to speak with a professional grief therapist.

**Remember, if you need additional support, there are a number of free support hotlines, resources or support groups available:**

**Lifeline 24/7**

**Phone: 13 11 14**

[**https://www.lifeline.org.au/media/tpmhzojb/web-oct\_ll-2pp-fact-sheet\_grief-loss.pdf**](https://www.lifeline.org.au/media/tpmhzojb/web-oct_ll-2pp-fact-sheet_grief-loss.pdf)

**Beyond Blue**

**Phone: 1300 224 636**

[**https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/grief-and-loss**](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/grief-and-loss)

**GriefLine -24/7**

**Phone: 1300 845 745**

**Online Forums**

[**https://griefline.org.au/resources/**](https://griefline.org.au/resources/)

**Pets and People**

**Location: Nationwide - AU & NZ**

**Phone: 1300 431 450 (AU) or 0800 114 421 (NZ)**

[**https://petsandpeople.com.au/**](https://petsandpeople.com.au/)