



After Losing a Pet

Why it can hurt so much, what you may experience, and ways to care for yourself.



For many people, a pet is part of every day life.

They are there when you wake up, when you come home when you sit on the couch, when you go for a walk and when you are having a difficult day.

When they die, you are not only missing them. You may also be adjusting to the loss of routines, companionship and a presence that was woven into your day.

You may be grieving:

- their companionship
- your daily routines together
- the comfort they gave you
- the role you had caring for them
- the way they greeted you
- walks, feeding times or bedtime routines
- future plans you expected them to be a part of
- the feeling of having them nearby

Some people are surprised by how intense pet loss can feel.

The size of your grief does not depend on whether the one you lost was a person or an animal. It reflects the relationship you had.



What You May Experience

Everyday habits do not disappear immediately

You may still listen for their footsteps, expect them to greet you at the door, reach for their food bowl, think it is time for a walk, look toward their usual sleeping spot, or start to call their name.

The moments can catch you completely off guard. Your brain learned these routines through repetition, and it can take time to adjust to the fact that they are no longer part of your day.

Your feelings are complicated

You may feel sad, lonely, angry, numb or lost. You may also feel relief, especially if your pet had been ill or struggling. Relief and grief can exist at the same time.

If you had to make difficult decisions

If you were involved in decisions about treatment or euthanasia, you may find yourself replaying those decisions. You might wonder: Was it too soon? Did I wait too long? Did they know I was there? Could I have done something differently?

Those questions can be a painful part of pet loss. Missing them does not mean you made the wrong decision.

Other people may not understand

People grieving a pet sometimes hear comment that minimize the loss, like “You can get another one” or “It was only a dog” or “It was only a cat”. Another pet cannot replace the relationship you had with this one.

There may also be no rituals, no bereavement leave, and very few people checking in after the first few days. That does not make the loss less real.

When extra support may help

- you feel very alone in your grief
- guilt about your pet’s death is consuming your thoughts
- you feel unable to talk about the loss people around you
- sleep or eating continues to be difficult
- the loss has brought up other grief or losses
- you simply need somewhere to talk about your pet without having the loss minimized



Seasons of Grief

Pet loss is a real loss. If you need somewhere to talk about what your pet meant to you and what life feels like without them, support is available

Book at Free 15 minute connection call www.seasonsofgrief.ca/connection-call