

## **Coping With The Loss of a Pet**

Whether your pet dies, is lost, or stolen, or must be placed in a new home, the end of a relationship with a special pet can be one of the most difficult times of your life. The people who staff the Pet Loss Support Hotline understand this.

### **It's O.K. to Truly Love a Pet**

For those of us who choose to share our lives with pets, at one time or another we will undoubtedly become emotionally attached to them. Even for people who share their lives with many animals, every so often an extra special one comes along.

When we must face the loss of an extraordinary animal companion, we may be shocked to find ourselves experiencing intense grief. It might even be worrisome to have such an overwhelming response to losing “just an animal.”

You need to realize this is **NOT** “just an animal.” This pet, for reasons perhaps known only to you, has managed to find a very special, unique place in your life and in your heart. Part of the sadness in losing a special pet is knowing that no other pet or person will ever fill that special place.

### **Reactions to Loss**

First and foremost, **GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION** to have a reaction, whatever it is. Know that grief can occur before, during and after the loss of a loved one. Grief also includes a wide range of reactions that are considered normal, such as feeling numb, irritability, crying spells, hallucinations, and feeling hopeless

Every loss is unique and every person grieves differently — even when experiencing the loss of the same animal or person.

Profound sadness and grief may last from a few weeks — and without proper care and attention — to many years.

### **Recovery From Grief**

If you have suffered painful losses before, you may know that no two losses are alike and losing loved ones does not get easier. If a loss of this magnitude is new to you, you may feel as though you will never get over it and that you will be suffering forever.

**PEOPLE DO RECOVER** from painful losses. The people who adjust to loss are those who experience their feelings about the loss and take one day at a time. Many eventually decide to bring another pet into their lives.

In every case, grief does not go away magically. Dealing with your loss and the passage of time are the two best healers.

**THE PET SUPPORT HOTLINE**

**(800) 565-1526**

**Weekdays: 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm (PT)**