

About the Grief Resource Center

The Grief Resource Center has been created to reach out to those in the community who are grieving and to promote an awareness of the many ways grief can be experienced. At the Grief Resource Center, service providers can come together and work in partnership to help individuals define their own unique pathways to healing.

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The Grief Resource Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

The Death of a Pet

by Linda Phelps, Ph.D.

GRIEF
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The Death of a Pet

The death of a beloved pet can feel as devastating as the death of a beloved human family member or friend. Since research shows that the majority of pet owners consider their pets as treasured members of their own family, the death of these cherished companions can be difficult and challenging. For those who share the remarkable, spiritual and unique relationships with their pets and are mourning their loss, consider the following:

- When someone's pet dies, it's not uncommon to hear comments such as "Oh, it was only a pet." or "Don't be so upset, you can get another one!" Such insensitive words can often be heard from a society that makes it difficult to mourn the loss of an animal. For those who believe the death of a pet is not as "important" as the death of a human family member or friend, there is little understanding of the intensity of one's grief, and even less sympathy for it.

- The grief experienced by pet owners can be as profound as that experienced after the death of a human family member or friend. The death of a beloved pet can mean the loss of a love source that does not pass judgment or withhold companionship and affection. It can mean the loss of unconditional love and unwavering loyalty. The reality is that all losses, whether animal or human, have the potential to trigger overwhelming feelings of grief and loss. The loss of someone or something deeply and unreservedly loved can cause great pain.

- Mourning the loss of a companion animal is a very real process. It is one that can take people to their spiritual and emotional edges making it very tempting to avoid it all together. Don't! Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings. Try to gain an understanding of them by writing about them or sharing them with others. Use the knowledge you have gained from previous losses, whether human or animal, to help you understand your pain. Take time to feel your loss and reflect on how your life has now changed.

- There are many resources that can be instrumental in helping you begin the healing process after the death of a pet. There are books written by pet owners that discuss the bond between humans and their animals and give insight on the grief experience. There are also online resources that offer information on difficult topics such as euthanasia and other end of life decisions. In addition, a pet loss support group can be an effective resource if you are working through the heartache and grief associated with losing a beloved pet.

