



## Fido Files: Dealing with the loss of a Pet

There are so many reasons why living with a pet can bring us health and happiness. But, what do we do when we lose the pet that has been there for us through thick and thin?

### **How do I deal with the pain?**

Having a relationship with an animal can be quite different than those we have with people. After all, our pets are there for us no matter what our mood or how much weight we have gained. They forgive us if we come home late, or forget to pick up their pet food. The pain of losing such a loyal companion can sometimes be unliveable.

What can make grieving a pet even harder is the lack of understanding from other people. After all, there is no leave from work for the death of a pet even though I personally could not imagine going to work as per normal after losing one of my furbabies.

The best thing to do is remember that the opinion of others does not matter. The pain you are feeling is real and in order for it to come to pass, it is necessary to grieve.

### **Learning to Grieve**

Grieving comes in many stages and is different for every individual. It is important to remember that with time, life can become normal again. Allow yourself to FEEL whatever emotion comes to you. It will pass.

Crying is one of the most therapeutic ways of healing. If you are not a crier, try looking at old photos or recalling fond times you spent with your pet. If you have a pet loss support group in your area, or a friend with a shoulder to cry on, try to find someone who understands what you are going through for support. Eventually the tears will be replaced with smiles and fond memories.

### **Grieving Pets and Children**

Remember that if you have other pets, they too may be grieving. You may notice that they don't have that spunk that they once had, they may have lost their appetite or maybe they are unusually clingy. They may need extra attention from you to help them get through the hard times.

Learning to grieve at a young age is also an important lesson for children to learn. Try not to replace a pet too quickly; this may teach children that loyalty is easily transferred. Allow them to talk about their feelings and ask questions. Be honest with them – without being too detailed.



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### Getting another pet

How long to wait before getting another pet is going to vary from person to person. A new pet will be demanding and may encourage you to get out and move on. A new pet can also bring a reminder that no one can replace the pet you've lost and you may find that reminder more difficult to cope with. Just remember that getting a new pet is not an attempt at replacing the lost one; it's a whole new baby with a new personality and new joys to bring. The pain of losing a pet should never cause you to miss out on the love of another.

References: Good-bye my Friend – Grieving the loss of a pet – Mary and Herb Montgomery

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