

Losing a pet

Losing a pet can be a deeply sad and painful moment in life. Many people love their pets profoundly and spend a lot of time with them. Daily care routines – like walks, meal times, and grooming – create strong bonds between people and pets. It's natural to feel devastated by the absence of your pet.

Why does it hurt so much?

Grief brings with it lots of different emotions and hurdles. You may find the sadness hits you at unexpected times or comes and goes on a schedule you don't understand. Although we know pets rarely live as long as humans, it can still be a shock when they die.

When you lose a pet, you also lose a source of unconditional love and a day-to-day companion who provides routine and security. Like any other loss, grief from losing a pet can manifest both physically and emotionally. Feelings of sadness, disbelief, or loneliness are all normal responses to loss.

Coping with the grief of losing your pet

A pet is a treasured member of your family and it's natural to feel their death deeply. Here are some tips to help you cope with the pain of losing your pet:

Allow yourself time to grieve

The grief process can't be forced or hurried. Since the rhythm of grief is different for everyone, no one else can tell you when it's time to move on.

Honour your pet

Hold a ceremony to celebrate the role your pet played in your life. Plant a tree in their memory, write a story, or create a piece of art to remember your pet after they're gone.

Connect with those who understand

Talking or being with others who have also experienced the loss of a pet can be comforting, and provides a safe space for you to express your feelings without fear of judgement.

Disregard those who don't understand

Unfortunately, you may discover some people don't have as much sympathy to share over the death of a pet. They may be surprised or lack patience when you express your grief. Everyone has different experiences with grief and your grief is real even though some people might not understand.

Be kind to yourself

Losing a pet can be physically, as well as emotionally, taxing. Looking after your physical and emotional needs will help lift your mood and support your recovery. Get plenty of sleep, keep moving, eat well, and spend time with people who care about you.

Support is available

If you decide you want help to navigate your grief, you can connect with others who understand on the Pet Bereavement Online Forum at griefline.org.au/forums or call our free helpline on **1300 845 745** to speak to a trained volunteer.