

Welcome

Hope this finds you all doing well. This month's newsletter we will discuss a tough subject but something we all have to deal with at some point, the loss of a pet. If you have any questions or have a topic you would like to hear about please contact our staff at 630-365-9599 or you can contact us via email at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net

Coping with the death of a pet

When a person that you love dies, it is natural to feel sorrow, express grief and expect friends and family to provide understanding and comfort.

Unfortunately, you might not get that same understanding when a pet dies. Some people don't understand how much a part of our lives a pet can be, and some may not understand why you are grieving over the loss of a pet.

Many of us share a deep love and bond with our pet, our pet is a beloved member of our family, it brings us companionship and joy.

A pet can keep us active and social, add structure to our days, and provide us with a purpose. When a loved and cherished pet dies, it is normal to have deep feelings of grief and loss.

For some of us the pain of the loss can be overwhelming. While some people may not understand the depth of your grief, you should never feel guilty or ashamed for the way you feel.

The more significant your pet was to you the more intense your pain may be. If your pet was a working dog, service animal or therapy animal, you will not only be grieving the loss of a companion, but also the loss of a coworker, support

system, the loss of independence.

If you lived alone with your pet and it was your only companion, the loss can be even harder.



Dr. Susan Cechner with "Cherie" who passed last year and "Moose" who passed in 2016.

The grieving process

The grieving process happens only gradually, there is no certain timetable for grieving. Some feel better in weeks, others will grieve for years. Allow the process to naturally unfold.

Feeling sad or lonely is a normal reaction, you are mourning the loss of a pet you loved, and it is nothing to be ashamed of.

Don't withhold or bottle up your feelings, write about your feelings or talk about them with a friend.

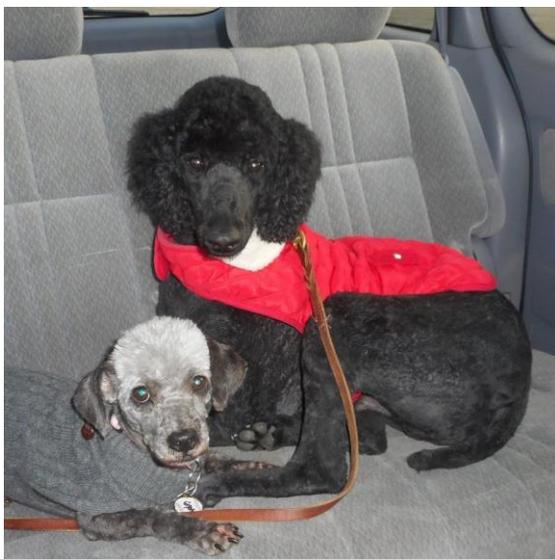
Don't let anyone tell you how to feel, your

grief is yours, no one can tell you when it's time to "get over it". It's okay to cry, or not cry and it's okay to be angry. It's okay to find moments of joy and laugh!

You can reach out to others who have lost pets. There are online message boards, pet loss hotlines, and pet loss support groups.

The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association has a pet loss helpline and support group. You can call 630-325-1600 and leave a message and someone will get back to you. Dr. Cechner volunteers for this helpline once every 5 weeks so you may be dealing with her if you call. Prepare a memorial, plant a tree in memory of your pet; create a photo album or a scrap book of memories with your pet. You can take your pet's collar and use it around a pot to plant a special flower or plant in honor of your pet.

If you have other pets, maintain your normal routine. Surviving pets can also experience loss when a pet dies. Maintaining their daily routines will benefit the surviving pet and help boost your mood as well.



"Kizzy" and "Gibbs", late pets of Kim

Meziere

Helping children grieve the loss of a pet

The loss of a pet may be your child's first experience with death and can be a traumatic experience for them. Your child may not remember a time in their life when that pet wasn't around. They may feel scared that other animals or even people they love will also leave them. How you handle the experience can determine whether the experience has a positive or a negative effect on your child's personal development.

Some parents will try to shield their children from the sadness of losing a pet by not talking about the pet's death or by not being honest about what's happened.

They might pretend the animal ran away or went to sleep. This can leave a child feeling even more confused and frightened. It's much better to be honest with a child and allow them to grieve in their own way.

Let your child see you expressing your own grief. If your child doesn't express their grief the same way as you, respect their grief and let them express their feelings openly, without making them feel guilty or ashamed.

If you have chosen euthanasia for your pet, be honest with your child. Explain why the choice was necessary and give your child some time to spend with your pet and say goodbye in their own way.

Help your child create a memento of the pet, whether a photo or a plaster cast of the pet's paw print.

Don't rush and get your child a replacement pet, give them time to grieve the loss they feel.

Tips for seniors grieving the death of a pet

The death of a pet can hit retired seniors even harder than younger adults who may be able to draw on the comfort of a close family, or distract themselves with the routine of work. If you are an older adult living alone, your pet may have been your sole companion.

Stay connected with friends. Pets, dogs especially, can help seniors meet new people or regularly connect with friends and neighbors out on a walk or in the dog park. Having lost a pet, it is now important that you don't spend day after day alone. Try to spend time with at least one person every day. Regular contact can help ward off depression and stay positive. Call up an old friend or neighbor for a lunch date or join a club.

Boost your vitality with exercise. Pet's help many older adults stay active, which can boost your immune system and increase your energy. It's important to stay active after the loss of a pet.

Try to find new meaning and joy in life. Caring for a pet previously occupied your time and boosted your morale and optimism. Try to fill that time by volunteering, taking a class, helping friends, rescue groups, or homeless shelters care for their animals, or even get another pet when the time feels right.



"Skippy" late pet of Carol Recker

Making the hard decision to put a pet to sleep

Deciding to put your pet to sleep is one of the most difficult decisions you will ever have to make for your pet. As a loving pet owner the time may come when you need to help your pet make that transition for life to death, with the help of your veterinarian, in as painless and peaceful a way as possible.

Knowing when it's time to put a pet to sleep

Euthanasia for a beloved pet is a highly personal decision and usually comes after a diagnosis of a terminal illness and with the knowledge that the animal is suffering. Important things to consider should include:

Are they still eating and drinking?

Activity level - does your pet still enjoy previously loved activities or are they able to be active at all?

Response to care and affection - does your pet still interact and respond to love and care in the usual ways?

Amount of pain and suffering - Is your pet experiencing pain and suffering which outweigh any pleasure and enjoyment in life?

Terminal illness or critical injury - Have illness or injury prohibited your pet from enjoying life? Is your pet facing certain death from the injury or illness?

Your family's feelings - Is your family unanimous in the decision? If not, and you feel it is best for your pet, can you live with the decision that you have to make?

If you do decide that ending the suffering is in your pet's best interest, take your time to create a process that is as peaceful as possible for you, your pet and your family.

You may want to have a last day at home with your pet in order to say goodbye, or

to visit the pet at the animal hospital. You can choose to be present during your pet's euthanasia, or to say goodbye beforehand and remain in the waiting room. This is an individual decision for each member of the family.

How to explain pet euthanasia to a child

Be honest and start by explaining your pet is ill, suffering badly, and that you have the ability to end that suffering in a very humane and gentle way. The injection is a very peaceful and painless process for your pet. Sometimes when you really love a pet, you have to make these difficult decisions to spare the animal from more pain and suffering. Children tend to feed off their parents reactions. If you're hysterical or feel it's the wrong decision, your children will likely react in a similar way. If you're sad, and deal with the sadness in a healthy way, your child will follow your example. As long as you are putting your beloved pet to sleep for the right reasons, tell your child that is ok to feel sad, but there is no need to feel guilty. You should feel sad, and your children can feel that sadness, but don't mix guilt in with the sadness.



"Woody" late pet of Carol Recker

Getting another dog or cat after pet loss

There are many reasons to once again share your life with a companion animal, but the decision of when to do so is a personal one. In most cases, it's best to mourn the old pet first, and wait till you're emotionally ready to open your heart and your home to a new animal. You may want to start by volunteering at a shelter or rescue group. Spending time caring for pets in need is not only great for the animals, but can help you decide if you're ready to own a new pet.

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“Bruno” late pet of Carol Recker and Darlene Adams



“Sera” late pet of Darlene Adams

Throughout the newsletter, we are sharing some of our personal pets that we at Elburn Animal Hospital have lost throughout the past few years. We love and miss them all dearly.



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If you have any questions or comments, please email us at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net or call 630-365-9599! If you have a subject you would like covered in our newsletter please let us know!