



Pushing the Clouds Away

A Pet Loss Journal

“The sun always shines above the clouds.”

— Paul F. Davis

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Forever in My Heart



(Attach photo of pet here)

In Loving Remembrance of

Who Joined my Family on

And Passed Away on

in



"Life is a moving picture and nothing stays the same for long. It is a matter of riding out the bad times and looking towards the better ones, all the while waking up each morning giving thanks for the good and choosing to be happy despite whatever grief, sadness, or stress is there."

Pip M, About.com Guest



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“GRIEF SHARED IS GRIEF DIMINISHED.” RABBI GROLLMAN

Pushing the Clouds Away

Today is a very important day. Recently you’ve experienced the loss of a beloved animal companion. And today is the day that you’ve decided to come to terms with the experience and begin to work through the grief you currently feel. A day you’ve set aside to begin the work of “pushing the clouds away”.

We are so sorry for your loss. Believe us when we say, we know, from personal experience how much the death of a pet can really hurt.

The hurt doesn’t go away overnight but it will lessen over time. If you allow yourself to sit with the sorrow and make friends with it, you will find emotional balance again. You are sure to feel the warm rays of the sun on your face and shoulders once again.

You’re Not Alone

We’re walking this path together, step-by-step, through the Pushing the Clouds Away pet loss grief support email series, which is the companion to this Journal.

Have you subscribed? It’s free and your personal details will never be shared, rented or sold. You will never receive promotional messages from us; our only goal is to support you during this difficult time.

So, if you have yet to subscribe, please visit the website where you downloaded this journal and register your email address. Each of the 15 days following your registration, you’ll receive a supportive message with tasks or activities, offers of comfort, and some food for thought. You have the opportunity to record the responses to the inquiries and activities in this journal.

Shall we get started?



The First Step

Acknowledge how you're *really* feeling, right at this moment. Choose 5 words to describe the ways your heart, mind, and body are reacting to the loss of your pet. Exactly how is your body feeling? If the words are not listed, then add them in the spaces provided.

How are You Feeling Right Now?					
<input type="checkbox"/>	alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	upset	<input type="checkbox"/>	tense
<input type="checkbox"/>	guilty	<input type="checkbox"/>	crushed	<input type="checkbox"/>	tearful
<input type="checkbox"/>	weak	<input type="checkbox"/>	heartbroken	<input type="checkbox"/>	incapable
<input type="checkbox"/>	miserable	<input type="checkbox"/>	powerless	<input type="checkbox"/>	empty
<input type="checkbox"/>	anxious	<input type="checkbox"/>	lonely	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

How is Your Body?					
<input type="checkbox"/>	weary	<input type="checkbox"/>	jumpy	<input type="checkbox"/>	headachy
<input type="checkbox"/>	hungry	<input type="checkbox"/>	muscle tension	<input type="checkbox"/>	nauseous
<input type="checkbox"/>	stomach upset	<input type="checkbox"/>	heavy	<input type="checkbox"/>	shaky
<input type="checkbox"/>	pained	<input type="checkbox"/>	no appetite	<input type="checkbox"/>	difficult to breathe
<input type="checkbox"/>	dry mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	insomnia	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	



Suppressing Your Emotions

When we have an experience that we find painful or difficult — such as the death of a pet — and are either unable to cope with the pain or just afraid of it, we often dismiss this emotion. Instead, we choose to get busy: exercise more, drink or eat a bit more, or just simply pretend it has not happened.

When we do this, we do not *feel* the emotion and these feelings just sit in our muscles, ligaments, and digestive system. They remain buried within us until we have the courage to bring that emotion up and experience it fully, thus releasing it. The following are a few examples of the methods people use to avoid feeling their emotions:

- Ignoring feelings
- Pretending something hasn't happened
- Overeating
- Eating foods loaded with sugar and fat
- Excessive drinking of alcohol
- Excessive use of recreational drugs
- Using prescription drugs such as tranquilizers or Prozac
- Exercising compulsively
- Any type of compulsive behavior
- Always keeping busy
- Constant intellectualizing and analyzing
- Excessive reading or television viewing
- Working excessively
- Keeping conversations superficial

Remember, emotions have a direct effect on how our bodies work. And long-suppressed — or buried — emotions are those that normally cause physical illness. They damage the chemical systems, the immune system, the endocrine system and every other system in your body. Our immune systems weaken and many serious illnesses set in.

Not only that, research has shown that suppressing or avoiding your emotions in fact *can make them stronger*. Right now, if you want to avoid feeling the sadness of losing your animal companion, you may choose to watch happy movies and may even talk to your family and friends as if nothing happened.

But, you can bet the sadness is still present in your mind, and a small event in the day may cause you to overreact to the situation. Even if the object of your emotions is different, this is your body's way of releasing the pent-up emotions. Just as emotion suppression is your body's way of protecting you during a trauma, emotion release in a non-traumatic situation is your body's way of protecting itself from further damage.

Effects of consistent emotion suppression include physical stress on your body, high blood pressure, and incidents of diabetes and heart disease. In addition, people who regularly engage in emotion suppression are more likely to experience stiff joints, bone weakness and other illnesses due to lowered immunity.

What's the lesson in all this? Feel the feelings; weep openly and often if that's what your body is calling for you to do. Don't seek constant distraction. Instead, reflect on your recent experience — fitting it into place within the story of your life.

"In a study conducted at the University of Colorado in the US, researchers found that people who repressed their emotions after a traumatic event had lowered immune systems compared to those who shared their feelings. Our work suggests that emotional disclosure may influence immune responsiveness as well as having general health benefits."

University of Auckland, Medical & Health Sciences

"People who have repressive styles tend to be more prone to illness, particularly [immune-system related] diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, infections, and cancers."

Dr. George Solomon,
University of California Los Angeles



On Managing Your Emotions

Every day it happens. You experience emotions. And today, those emotions may be overwhelming since after all, you've recently lost one of your dearest friends. How do you deal with the anger, the loneliness, the frustration — not to mention the deeply-felt sadness?

The first step in managing your emotions is to recognize that you are experiencing one — that's the reason for the previous exercise. For true well-being, you simply *have* to be self-aware but unfortunately, most people aren't. They act out of habit. Someone experiences an emotion and there is an automatic response, a responsive habit cultivated over the years without even being consciously aware. That *habit* may be doing you harm — causing untold stress and even conflict with others. So, what's the next step, after self-awareness? After recognizing and naming the emotions you're feeling — now or at any time in the future — pause before you respond. Your emotions are *inner messages*, bringing your attention to something of significance. You really *do* have free choice in responding to the situation.

However, remember this...you cannot think and feel at the same time. If you are upset or emotional — as you were (and perhaps still *are*) on the day you said

When you can be calm in the midst of chaos, life is naturally easier, and more enjoyable. You are better able to weather the difficulties which life is sure to bring and develop resiliency along the way. There's an added benefit: the more you practice, the more comfortable you become not only with our own emotions, but those of others as well.

farewell to your pet — you cannot think clearly. Take a time-out from decision-making to fully experience the emotion. If the opposite is true (if you *can* think clearly) then handle the situation and process the emotion later. The overriding guideline is to never repress your emotions. Experience them and then move forward into action.

You really *can* become more skilled at handling emotions. By learning this process of acknowledgment and self-mastery which allows you to fully experience your emotions, you can then recognize what they are trying to teach you.

"A human being has so many skins inside, covering the depths of the heart. We know so many things, but we don't know ourselves! Why, thirty or forty skins or hides, as thick and hard as an ox's or bear's, cover the soul. Go into your own ground and learn to know yourself there."

Meister Eckhart, Writer and Theologian

On Reflection

On New Year's Eve in 2009, Leo Baubata published a blog post on the website, *Zen Habits*. Unfortunately burdened with a cumbersome title, '5 Powerful Reasons to Make Reflection a Daily Habit, and How to Do It', the post remains as powerful today. Leo recommends (as do we) that you develop the daily habit of reflection. "It could," he tells readers, "have profound changes on your life." Here are some of his reasons why:

1. It helps you learn. "If we don't reflect on our mistakes", he wrote, "we are doomed to repeat them. And that's not very smart."
2. It helps you help others. What you've experienced, and what you learn about yourself, and life in general, can be valuable information to those around you (many of whom you have yet to meet.)
3. It makes you happier. "If you reflect on the things you did right," shares Leo, "that allows you to celebrate every little success. It allows you to realize how much you've done right, the good things you've done in your life. Without reflection, it's too easy to forget these things, and focus instead on our failures" and, I might add, our sorrows.
4. It gives you perspective. "Often we are caught up in the troubles or busy-ness of our daily lives," notes Leo. "But if we take a minute to step back...it can calm us down and lower our stress levels. We gain perspective, and that's a good thing."

We love Leo's suggestion for cultivating the habit of reflection: start a *one sentence journal*. "I picked up this trick from my friend Gretchen Rubin of The Happiness Project," he shared. "Basically, it's the easy way to start the journaling habit. If you've tried and failed at journaling in the past, try the one-sentence journal. It's a habit that you'll love, especially when you look back on a year's worth of entries."

He also recommends that you sit in reflection at the same time every day. (Just before turning out the light at night or first thing in the morning are preferred times for reflection for many but 5 or 10 minutes spent at any time of the day is just fine.)

"Reflection must be reserved for solitary hours; whenever she was alone, she gave way to it as the greatest relief; and not a day went by without a solitary walk, in which she might indulge in all the delight of unpleasant recollections."

Jane Austen



A Moment of Shared Insight

One of the things we love most about the Internet is the access it gives people like us to the great minds, witty words, and powerful insights of those who lived before us. Whatever you're experiencing, you can surely find a quotation or casual remark — from the world's well-known writers, actors, poets and politicians — which comforts you, makes you laugh, or deepens your awareness of your current journey of loss. Maybe it's something as simple as this:

"My philosophy when it came to pets was much like that of having children: You got what you got, and you loved them unconditionally regardless of whatever their personalities or flaws turned out to be."

Gwen Cooper, *Homer's Odyssey: A Fearless Feline Tale, or How I Learned about Love and Life with a Blind Wonder Cat*

We'd like you to visit the *Grief & Healing* section of our website, where you'll find an archive of quotations about pets: how we love them, the dynamics of our relationships, and the many gifts they bring to us. Select the one which means the most to you right now, noting the quotation, and then the reason why you chose it.



My Favorite Quotation

Here's What it Means to Me

Shared Insight

We never want to ask you to do something that we've not done. So, in case you want to know which quotation we like the most, here it is:

"Sometimes losing a pet is more painful than losing a human because in the case of the pet, you were not pretending to love it."

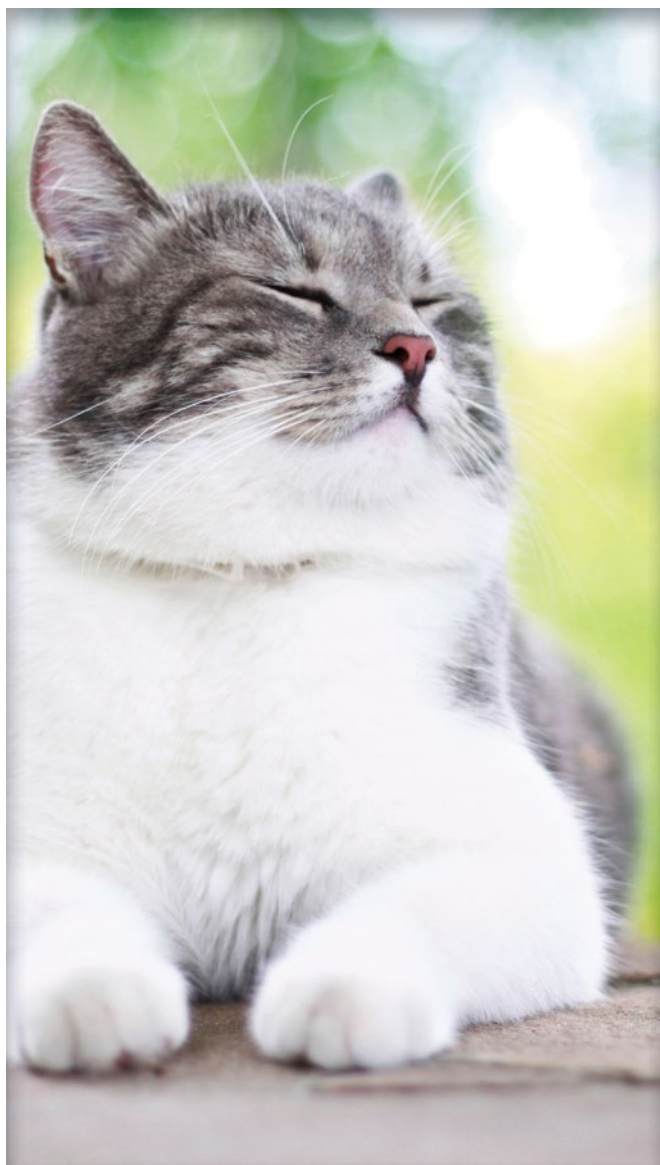
Amy Sedaris, *Simple Times: Crafts for Poor People*

Much like the earlier example, we think this quote reflects total honesty. While there have been people in our lives who we have not truly cared for — or enjoyed the company of — there has never been an animal companion in our lives that we didn't freely give our love.

Maybe you have a second quotation you really appreciate? We do, and here it is:

"No matter how close we are to another person, few human relationships are as free from strife, disagreement, and frustration as is the relationship you have with a good dog. Few human beings give of themselves to another as a dog gives of itself. I also suspect that we cherish dogs because their unblemished souls make us wish — consciously or unconsciously — that we were as innocent as they are, and make us yearn for a place where innocence is universal and where the meanness, the betrayals, and the cruelties of this world are unknown."

Dean Koontz, *A Big Little Life: A Memoir of a Joyful Dog*



All we need to do in order to know his words are true is to look into the eyes of our family's beloved animal companions. Does his elegant comment about the magic of a relationship with "a good dog" resonate with you, too?

Reflecting on Your Loss

You've inventoried your emotions and have learned that to have a deeper understanding of exactly what you're feeling, you must cultivate a greater sense of self-awareness to really get in touch with what's going on inside your *heart*. Now we're going to look at what's going on inside your mind, in reaction to what you're experiencing in the wider world. We'd like you to write down your thoughtful answers to the following questions about your recent loss.

The thing that makes me feel the saddest is...

If I could talk to my pet I would ask...

Since the death, my family doesn't...

My worst memory is...

If I could change things I would...

One thing that I liked to do with the pet that died was...

When my pet died I...



Since the death my friends...

After the death, work/school...

When I am alone...

What you've just done is profound: you've confronted the truth of life as it is for you right now, after having to let go of your animal companion. You've sat down and really thought about, reflected on, the experience. How brave is that? You are a hero, in every sense of the word!

"Heroes take journeys, confront dragons, and discover the treasure of their true selves."

Carol Lynn Pearson, American Writer and Poet

Grief and Resiliency

Right now you know exactly what grief is; after all, you're experiencing it firsthand. But, are you familiar with "resiliency" — the long-term capacity of, in this case a person, to deal with change and continue to develop. In short, it's the ability to overcome challenges of all kinds — trauma, tragedy, personal crises (such as the death of your pet) — and bounce back stronger, wiser, and more personally powerful.

The Resiliency Resource Center in Australia offers these definitions of this important attribute, as it has been defined by researchers in the field:

- 'Remaining competent despite exposure to misfortune or stressful events'
- 'A capacity which allows a person ... to prevent, minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity'
- 'The capacity some children have to adapt successfully despite exposure to severe stressors'
- 'The human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by the adversities of life'
- 'The process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances'

Now, here's something to consider. Could this current time of grieving be nature's way of making you more resilient? Could this be another life-changing, personality-shaping moment in your life — with untold value to you?

What's our answer to this question? **"Yes."**

"Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it's less good than the one you had before."

Elizabeth Edwards

In this challenging time of loss, you can find solace in knowing your animal companion — that gentle creature you loved so dearly (and will always love) — continues to serve you as a teacher and ally during this transforming time. Your pet wants you to believe in your ability to not only survive, but come to a place of thriving. He or she asks that you:

1. Build Positive Beliefs in Your Abilities

Remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments. This will lead to you becoming more confident about your own ability to respond and deal with crises such as this one, and is a great way to build resilience for the future.

2. Find a Sense of Purpose in Your Life

This might involve becoming involved in your community, cultivating your spirituality, or participating in activities that are meaningful to you. For example, many bereaved pet parents become very active in fundraising for the local — as well as the national — American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (A.S.P.C.A.). It makes them feel good — and feeling good (especially right now) would be an unexpected pleasure, wouldn't it?

3. Call on Your Social Network

While simply talking about a situation with a friend or loved one will not make troubles go away, it allows you to share your feelings, gain support, receive positive feedback, and come up with possible solutions to your problems.

4. Embrace Change

Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. While some people may be crushed by abrupt changes, highly resilient individuals are able to adapt and thrive.

5. Be Optimistic

Staying optimistic during dark periods can be difficult, but maintaining a hopeful outlook is an important part of resiliency. Positive thinking does not mean ignoring the situation; it means understanding that setbacks come and go and that you have the skills and abilities to combat today's challenges, growing stronger every day. What you are dealing with may be difficult, but it is important to remain hopeful and positive about a brighter future.

6. Nurture Yourself

When you're stressed, it can be all too easy to neglect your own needs. Make time for activities that you enjoy. By taking care of your own needs, you can boost your overall health and resilience and be fully ready to face life's challenges.

Isn't life a remarkable journey? As we sit and reflect on our lives, we see there were some times that were dark as can be. Yet, they passed, as the clouds drifting in the blue sky outside our window. Now the sun shines just a bit brighter, because of the resilience we gained from living through those difficulties.



Choose Happiness

Rediscover Your Own Strength

Here's your next task: write down three of the times in life when you survived loss, or successfully navigated through changes – becoming stronger, smarter, and more capable. Why? So you can see just how strong you really are! Here's your story starting statement:

I remember the time when...



Your Special Memory

Each of us carries with us sweet memories of our pets. Stories like this one, where the family pet — a Boston terrier — commonly snatches abalone shells from the garden border, only to drag the cumbersome shell up the stairs and into the house. Ever the catalyst for laughter, his antics were sorely missed after his passing. Immediately after his passing, that memory would usually bring tears to the family. But today his playful antics are remembered lovingly, and with quiet joy.



"The richness of life lies in memories we have forgotten."

Cesare Pavese

Now it's your turn to write down that very special memory of your animal companion. Have fun with it. Cry if you feel the need — but be sure to laugh as well. Reminiscing can bring all the emotions alive, so feel them deeply — and write in as much detail as possible (even if it's hard), in response to this story-starter:

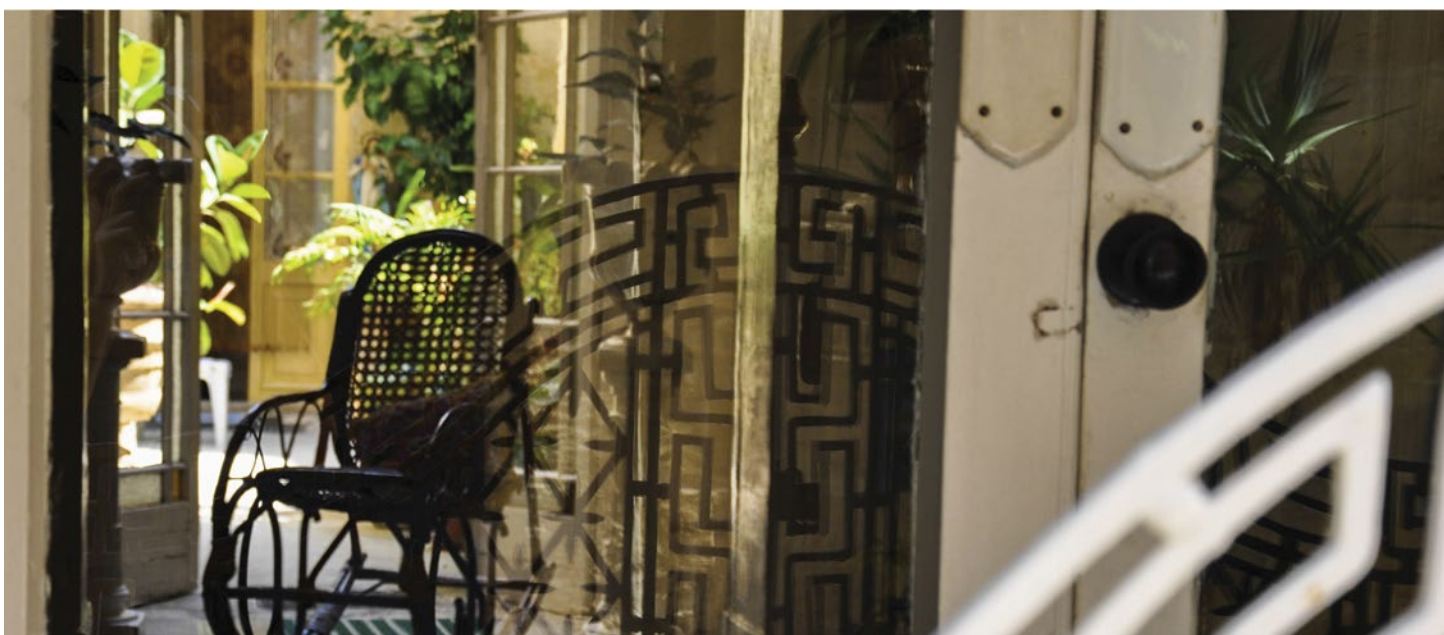
My favorite memory comes from the time when...

Redefining Yourself

A part of who you are today was formed by the relationship you had with your animal companion. This can be long and hard work. We know; after all, as pet parents we've done it many times before. We recommend trying this short exercise to get you started. Write down this sentence, filling in the blanks as you go:

"I used to be _____.
Now that _____ died, I am _____.
This makes me feel _____."

Don't just do it once. We suggest that you take 2 minutes once a day to complete it as part of your new habit of reflection. We've included a special page at the back of this journal to record your creative musings. Once completed, this will be an insightful record of your healing.



Choose to Move Forward with Love

We've heard of grieving pet owners who vow to never again have a pet. Broken-hearted people like Rosemary who, after the untimely death of the family dog way back in 1969, vowed never to open her home or heart to another pet. She sat in her sorrow and anger for years, until her death in 2008. And yes, she died without ever again sharing her home with a loving animal companion. How will you move forward? Will you choose, as she did, to keep your heart under lock and key as a means of protecting yourself from future sorrow? Or, will you have the courage to open your heart fully, when the time feels right, and bring another pet into your home?

We ask this question because it's important to your health. Rosemary's story is only a cautionary tale, one about what can happen when we choose to close ourselves off. Her family shared that after she made the vow, Rosemary was never really happy again. She was so fearfully lonely, and her surviving family members truly think that if she had only changed her mind and brought a dog or cat into her house — while she may not have lived longer — she would have lived better.

Doctors and Researchers Agree

“Pet ownership is good for your health both physically and psychologically,” says Connecticut psychologist Herbert Nieburg, author of Pet Loss: A Thoughtful Guide for Adults and Children. Research has shown that — besides giving us their unconditional love — they can “also help reduce stress and blood pressure in their human companions, increase longevity in those who’ve had heart attacks, and even relax and improve the appetites of Alzheimer’s patients.”

Author Karen Springen, in the 2008 Daily Beast online article, *Pets: Good for Your Health?*, continues with this insightful comment from biologist Erika Friedmann, a professor at the University of Maryland School of Nursing: “Any disease condition that has a stress-related component to it, we believe pets could ameliorate stress and moderate the situation. It’s providing a focus of attention that’s outside of someone’s self. They’re actually letting you focus *on them* rather than focusing inward on yourself all the time.”

It’s just another of many gifts they bring us. In fact, the Center for Disease Control, or CDC, shares some of the other health benefits of pets on their website, where they tell visitors that pets can decrease:

- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol levels
- Triglyceride levels

Not only can they reduce your feelings of loneliness, pets can increase your:

- Opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities
- Opportunities for making new friends

So, think twice, if you feel your heart closing the door on pet ownership in the future. It may be in your best interest, when you’re ready, to adopt a new animal companion. You may have heard this before. *“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one’s soul remains unawakened.”* That was said by Anatole France, way back in the 19th century, and we think he couldn’t have spoken a greater truth.

For those of us who have always believed that pets enhance our lives and make us better human beings, the choice to bring an animal into our lives is as easy as can be — almost too easy. But, there are those who need some convincing, and if you’re one of those, we’d like to suggest that you venture down to your local SPCA and spend some time among the cats and dogs that need homes. Bringing a rescue animal home is a win-win situation.



But, if you just don’t want to deal with the side-issues, we understand. Simply volunteering at the SPCA will give you many of the benefits Dr. Becker illustrates — even volunteering to walk a friend’s dog once in a while will add quality to your life.

Whether you decide to adopt, or simply want to volunteer, here are a few websites you may find valuable:

<http://www.petfinder.com/index.html>

A great place to start if you’re considering adoption.

<http://www.theanimalrescuesite.com>

Every day, families click on “the big purple button” on this website to donate food to shelter animals, and read inspiring rescue adoption stories.

<http://www.asPCA.org/>

Connect with your local SPCA, or donate to the national organization here.

<http://www.deltasociety.org/>

You can train a therapy dog, and ease the hearts and minds of others in hospitals, nursing homes and rehab facilities!

While you may think Anatole’s words are a bit over-the-top, or believe that your soul is already fully awakened, just know this: bringing a cat or dog into your life will forever change it. And, we bet it will be a change for the *good*.

Rediscovering Life's Meaning and Value

Earlier, we mentioned your pet as being more than just your companion. The gentle being you said farewell to recently has given you another opportunity to consider the real meaning and purpose of life and death (particularly this one that you are now grieving).

You may remember the 1983 Monty Python film, The Meaning of Life, where the troupe attempts to answer the question: *Why are we here, what's it all about?* Now, your answers to this important philosophical question may not lean to outrageous humor as theirs did; but still, it's worth attempting to answer it for *yourself* – especially in relation to your recent loss.

Write down a list of 'why' questions that have come up (if any) for you since the death of your pet. Then, enjoy the time of reflection in the search for answers. Or, if you are confident of your understanding of the meaning and purpose of life, then simply write down your personal philosophy in the space provided. (And don't forget to think about how your pet's life, and death, fits into that understanding).



My "Why" Questions...

My Understanding of the Meaning and Purpose of Life...



My Support System

We need the love and understanding of others to heal, so don't feel ashamed of your dependence right now; recognize others truly care for you. Write down the names of those you can trust to safeguard your emotions (remembering the suggestion from message #6, in the email series, *Pushing the Clouds Away?*), and then reach out to them. Tell them what you need. Ask if they are willing to help. (If you've not subscribed to the email series, visit our website to complete the short subscription form. You'll receive the first message immediately upon our receipt of your request.)

Name	Phone	Email

You may wish to use this list as a guest list for the next assignment: designing, and hosting, a remembrance ceremony for your animal companion.

Celebrating the Times We Shared

Human beings have always acknowledged the passing of a member of their family or community with ceremony. Around the world, such remembrance ceremonies exist to commemorate and pay tribute, but also to unite the participants in healing after the loss.

We urge you to summon up your memories as a means of comfort, but also to keep your pet's love and presence in your heart. Here are some suggestions for activities or events that can become the catalyst for tapping into the well of memories of your pet, which will become the creative force behind the design of your pet's memorial. For additional inspiration, we invite you to browse our collection of pet memorials and remembrance keepsakes found on our website.

Here are some of our suggestions, based on experience. It doesn't matter if you've chosen private burial or cremation, a ceremony gives you time to remember and pay tribute; binds us closer together, and begins the collective healing.

1. Pick a time and place for this event.

If you are choosing to bury your pet in a private location, the burial itself becomes the focal point of the ceremony. However, if you've chosen cremation, our location may provide the setting for a simple viewing and remembrance event. Or you may choose to have a private ceremony after the ashes are returned to you.

2. Create the ceremony structure.

Many families like to really personalize the event with special songs and activities. One family sang "All You Need is Love" as they dug their pet's grave together. They then planted a tree over the grave, and surrounded it with abalone shells (their dog's favorite "toy") and candles, lighting the candles in the evening hours. They described it as absolutely beautiful. Each of the guests lit a candle, while sharing a memory of a special time with the animal they had all come to love.

3. If you plan to bury keepsakes with your pet's remains, gather them ahead of time.

Some families choose to include their pet's toys, collar, or other items as part of the ceremonial structure. If that's your intention, have a special box for all these items, and bring them to the ceremonial site. Each participant can select an item, and then place it in the grave, while sharing their memory.

4. Always give voice to your sorrow, and gratitude.

While we often have moments of silence in commemoration of someone, silence doesn't necessarily heal broken hearts. Speaking of your loss, sharing your feelings, reaching out for comfort from



others — that's what ceremony is all about. Invite each participant to speak, but never force the issue. If they're not ready to share, so be it. It may take time for them to find the right words.

To that end, we suggest simple ceremonies on the anniversary of their pet's passing — a month, a year... you'll know the right time. Often, it's the younger children in a family who are the catalyst for such an event. Be watchful of their hearts — they are usually more in tune with feelings than us adults.

Setting aside a time to remember and commemorate your companion is the first step toward healthy healing. Whether you choose private property burial or cremation, setting aside that time when all can gather to share in memories and support can make all the difference in the days, weeks, and months following loss. The event will be a mix of tears and laughter, as those memories come to the participants. Why not ask each participant to share a memory of your pet? Usually that one memory opens the floodgates, and many more memories will tumble into the mind and heart.



My Pet's Memorial

We suggest that families who have lost a cherished pet engage in one or more of the activities or events below to commemorate their pet and safeguard their memory:

1. Create a craft tribute.

One family created plaster garden stepping stones, created from kits purchased at a local crafts store. There are services that will create a needlepoint kit from a treasured photo, or a paint-by-number portrait on canvas. A Google search will bring up many reputable online vendors.

2. Put them into a frame to create a keepsake.

Gather a collection of photos of your pet engaged in different activities with the family, and at different ages – and turn them into a collage. You can purchase art mats with cutouts for as many as 20 photos. Put into a frame, this becomes a keepsake.

3. Give voice to your feelings and memories.

The poem to or about your pet, a letter to your pet (or even “from” your pet to you), or account of your pet's life, can be read at a remembrance ceremony as a way of expressing your feelings and memories.

4. Create a printed Remembrance Book.

With today's printing technologies, you can even extend this option by having an actual bound book printed that includes both written tributes and photos. There are many print-on-demand publishers that can print as many as you'd like, at minimal cost.

5. Post a tribute online.

Our website is an archive of love. Many of our families choose to create an online memorial webpage, and we invite you to do the same. These tributes include videos, pictures, and memory sharing options. Talk to us to learn more.

6. Create a memory garden, or plant a tree.

Whether in your own garden, or through an organization such as Treegivers (treegivers.com) or Plant a Tree USA (plantatreeusa.com), such a memorial tribute will span the decades.

7. Contribute to an animal welfare organization.

Often, animal shelters will provide a plaque or paving stone with your pet's name on it for a minimum donation.

8. Create a Memory Box.

Put your pet's picture in a photo-display box (one that has a place in the top for a photo). Put some of the pet's treasures such as a collar or a lock of hair inside the box.

9. Keep a journal.

You're on a journey of healing, and a journal can help you through the grieving process. Take the time to record your pet's life story in that journal.

My Pet's Memorial

Whatever you choose, please take the time. Know there's no right way, no wrong way to say goodbye. But, saying goodbye is essential. Let's begin with this opportunity to express your heart's message.

This is what is inscribed in my heart:

How I want to memorialize my animal companion:

Donations have been, or will be, made to:



Recognizing Your Growing Sense of Ease

Our time together is drawing to a close. Today, our hope is that you are slowly discovering a new sense of happiness and have found ways to keep your pet close in your heart while at the same time, letting go. Take a moment and circle the words which resonate with how you are feeling right now. If the words are not listed, add them in the spaces provided.

How are You Feeling Right Now?					
<input type="checkbox"/>	accepting	<input type="checkbox"/>	thankful	<input type="checkbox"/>	blessed
<input type="checkbox"/>	serene	<input type="checkbox"/>	loving	<input type="checkbox"/>	optimistic
<input type="checkbox"/>	resilient	<input type="checkbox"/>	fortunate	<input type="checkbox"/>	reassured
<input type="checkbox"/>	relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/>	eager	<input type="checkbox"/>	compassionate
<input type="checkbox"/>	hopeful	<input type="checkbox"/>	secure	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

As you move into tomorrow, we’d like you to continue to acknowledge this most recent experience in your life. It has been a life-changing time, rich with emotions. I want to share some words from Joe Hill, the author of a number of wonderfully creative short stories and novels (and son of Stephen King) – from his latest, NOS4A2:

“What a blessed if painful thing, this business of being alive.”

Your pet was a blessing to you. How many other blessings in your life can you count today?

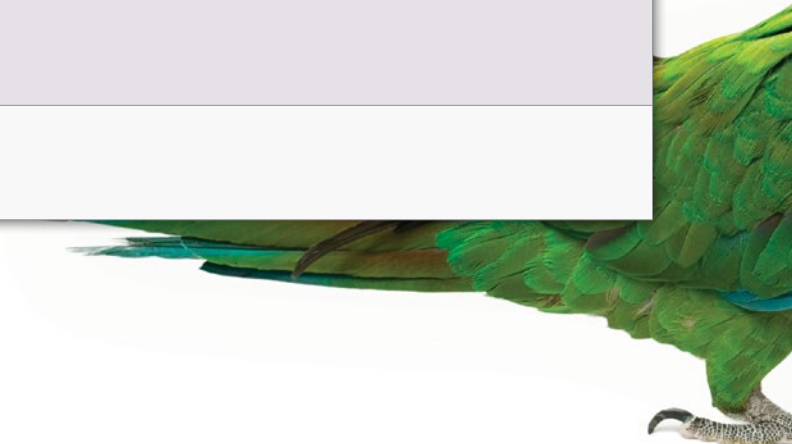
Counting My Blessings

Who I Am Today: My Record of Redefining

Use the space below to complete the following sentence: "I used to be _____.

Now that _____ died, I am _____. This makes me feel _____."

Today's Date	My Statement



Notes:





Thank you for spending this time with us. We hope it has been helpful during your time of loss, and that you are fast becoming your best, most resilient self.

"And from the midst of cheerless gloom, I passed to bright unclouded day."

Emily Bronte