

*Grief is
the price
we pay
for loving.*

PET LOSS

Support & Resources



OUR MISSION

Working with our
compassionate community,
we will end pet homelessness
and animal suffering.

2080 S. Quebec St., Denver, CO 80231
303.751.5772 • ddfl.org





The loss of an animal companion, whether due to death, being lost or stolen, or placement in a new home, may be one of the most devastating and painful experiences we ever face. For many, such a loss is as traumatic as losing a family member or a dear friend and can trigger an intense grieving process.

Grieving for a loved animal is a natural and normal reaction and will vary from person to person.

Shock, denial and feelings of anger and guilt are frequently felt upon learning our pet is terminally ill, injured, or dead; these feelings may last minutes to weeks. Typically, there is a sense of numbness, disorientation, or unreality. As we struggle to come to terms with the reality of the loss, many of us will experience waves of grief and intense painful awareness, alternating with periods of exhaustion and automatic functioning.

This document is meant to offer resources to aid in the grieving process, including suggestions for coping with various forms of grief and ways to continue to care for ourselves throughout the process. Additionally, this pamphlet includes advice on supporting a friend that has lost an

animal companion. Finally, some books on pet loss for both adults and children are listed, as well as hotline numbers and information about the Pet Loss Support Group meetings for additional support.

Self-care

1. Remember that your grief is valid, and that feelings of denial, anger, guilt, depression, and loneliness are normal.
2. Understand that grief looks different for everyone, and there is no definite timeline when coping with loss.
3. Practice self-compassion by caring for yourself physically and emotionally and by engaging in activities that bring you comfort.
4. Seek support from people you trust, pet loss support groups, or grief counselors and other professionals.
5. Honor the relationship you shared with your pet by creating physical memories, such as:
 - Establishing a memorial site
 - Planting a tree or flower as a remembrance
 - Making a photo album or memory box

Supporting a Friend

1. Silence is OK. There is comfort in quiet company.
2. Try to plan activities you can do together.
3. Be patient; grief is an individual process and resolution comes at various times for different people.

Pet Loss support hotline numbers

- The **Pet Loss Support Group** meets every Thursday evening from 6:30–8 p.m. There is no cost to attend, and there are two options to participate in the sessions—via phone call or online video call. Visit

petlossdenver.org or call 303.539.7646 for additional information.

- **Staffed by Michigan State University veterinary students**
Tuesday–Thursday, 6:30–9:30 p.m., EST
517. 432.2696
- **Staffed by Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine**
Tuesday and Thursday, 6–9 p.m., EST
540. 231.8038
- **Staffed by Tufts University veterinary students**
Tuesday and Thursday, 6–9 p.m., EST
508.839.7966



Reading for Children

- Rogers, F., *When A Pet Dies*
- Rylant, C., *Dog Heaven, Cat Heaven*
- Raeside, A., *The Rainbow Bridge: A Visit to Pet Paradise*

Reading for Adults

- Fitzgerald, H., *The Grieving Child: A Parent's Guide*
- McElroy, S., *Animals as Teachers & Healers*
- Kowalski, G., *Goodbye, Friend: Healing Wisdom for Anyone Who Has Ever Lost a Pet*