

Grief and Loss

Whether due to death, being lost or stolen, or placement in another home, losing a cat is often one of the most devastating and painful experiences you ever face. For many people, this loss is traumatic because the loss of a family member / dear friend always triggers an intense grieving process. This is no different. It's a natural and normal reaction to loss and it will vary from person to person – no two people grieve the same way...and that's okay.

Emotions like shock, denial, anger, and guilt usually happen upon learning our pet is terminally ill, injured or dead with these feelings lasting days to weeks. And as with losing humans, a sense of disorganization, hopelessness and depression is created by the void left by the loss of your feline. As time passes though, you can focus more on fond memories and less on the pain of loss. And just like losing people, it's important to acknowledge our feelings and give ourselves permission to grieve.

Self-care for Grievers

- Attend a support group – in person or on-line.
- Don't be afraid of your feelings; be open to sharing them with loved ones.
- Take care of yourself with exercise, eating right and getting plenty of rest.
- Find activities that are comforting or enjoyable to you.
- Avoid alcohol/drugs, which can intensify depression.
- Manage one day at a time or even minute-to-minute or hour-to-hour if need be.

Support a Grief-Stricken Friend

- When you learn of the loss get in touch since it's never too late to offer support.
- Silence is OK. Just being physically near a friend helps.
- Skip cliches that could minimize their loss. Simply say "I'm sorry" and offer hugs.
- Acknowledge the loss and talk openly about it.
- Accept your friend's feelings, whatever they may be.
- Let your friend cry - tears can be healing.
- Offer activities to do together but don't be hurt and don't give up if offers are declined.
- Be patient; grief is an individual process and is different for everyone.

Websites for Pet Loss

Human Animal Bond Trust - <https://www.humananimalbondtrust.org/>

Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement- <https://www.aplb.org/>

Cornell University Pet Loss Support- <https://www.vet.cornell.edu/impact/community-impact/pet-loss-support-hotline>