

Coping with Loss



The role of the pet in the family has evolved. For many, pets *are* the family. The loss of a beloved companion can be devastating. The support of understanding family and friends is important to the healing process. Surrounding yourself with loved ones who are sympathetic can have great power.

What else can I do?

There are many books that can be helpful for both adults and children coping with loss.

- *I Wish I Could Hold Your Hand* by Dr. Pat Palmer
- *Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss* by Claudia Jewett Jarrati
- *I'll Always Love You* by Hans Wilhelm
- *Coping with Sorrow on the Loss of Your Pet* by Moira Anderson Allen
- *The Pet Loss Companion* by Ken Dolan-Del Vecchio and Nancy Saxton-Lopez

Create a Memorial:

Everyone grieves differently. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Save a memento of your pet, such as a clay paw print (most vet clinics can make one upon request), his or her collar, a small snippet of fur, or any other thing that helps you still feel connected
- Make a small memorial with pictures, poetry, stories about your pet, or whatever you like. Dr. Naun keeps her very first cat's ashes alongside her food bowl, which is inscribed with "Cat from Hell" (she deserved it). Some people like to light a candle on an anniversary or another special time.
- If you are struggling, consider seeking the services of a spiritual advisor or a therapist trained in grief counseling.

Other Resources:

- The Hawaiian Humane Society offers a pet loss support group, currently meeting the first Tuesday of every month. Call 1-808-356-2222 to attend.
- The University of California at Davis School of Veterinary Medicine Pet Loss Support Hotline: 1-800-565-1526
- Iowa State University Pet Loss Support Hotline: 1-888-478-7574
- Additional hotlines, websites and resources:
<http://www.petlosshelp.org/bereavementresources.html>