Coping with the Loss of Pet Cat



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Like most cat-owners, you probably see your feline friend as a member of your family. So, when she finally passes away, you'll experience a very real sense of grief.

Allow yourself to feel this pain, which is absolutely normal, but also remember that time is a great healer.

Letting yourself say goodbye

If your cat is being put to sleep by your vet, you will probably be able to stay with her throughout the procedure. For some people, it's important to be able to say goodbye to their pet in this way. But even if you can't be in the room, you'll be able to spend some time with her first, and say your final goodbyes afterwards.

Allowing yourself to grieve

After your cat has passed away, you'll probably feel a variety of emotions. These might include shock, disbelief, pain, anger, guilt, depression and anxiety. Don't suppress any of these feelings - they're quite natural. Going through this grieving process will help you to come to terms with the death. In time, previously painful memories will remind you of your

cat in a positive light, and you'll find yourself smiling instead of crying.

Help and support

Everyone grieves differently. You might prefer to grieve alone, perhaps writing down your feelings and thoughts in a diary, or in poetry. You might look to your family and friends for support. Or you might feel more comfortable talking to strangers, in which case your vet will be able to tell you about local support groups.

Most important of all, never feel embarrassed about grieving over “just a cat” - the emotions you’re feeling are real, and you need to deal with them in whatever way suits you best.

Helping your children deal with death

Most children under the age of five don't understand the concept of death. They may understand that death isn't very nice, but they won’t really understand that your cat won’t be coming back. Even so, they may be deeply distressed by the fact that their furry friend just isn't around any more. So make sure you give them lots of love and support.

Between the ages of five and nine, children become aware that death is final. They may even believe in an afterlife. Let them talk about what's happened, and never dismiss your children as being "too young to understand".

Older children will fully understand the concepts of death and grief. So they’ll experience the same range of emotions as adults following the death of your cat. Grieving children can occasionally develop behaviour problems, such as becoming clingy, wetting the bed, having nightmares or being unable to concentrate in school.

You can help by talking to your children about how they feel, and by being honest about what's happened. If it's necessary to have your cat put to sleep, include them in that decision-making process, so that their feelings are acknowledged early on. And while as an adult you’re probably more comfortable with the phrase “putting to sleep”, make sure you tell your children that your cat is going to die. While it may seem harsh, it’s more important that they understand exactly what’s going on.

Cat memorials

You may not have considered what you want to do with your pet's body. It's a good idea to talk this through with your family and vet while she's still alive. There are four basic options - your vet will be able to advise you on all of them:

- Burial at home
- Burial in a pet cemetery
- Individual cremation - your pet's ashes are returned to you
- Communal cremation

Your decision might be guided by all sorts of things - emotional, financial and practical. If you choose burial at home, contact your local council first to find out about any guidelines you should follow. And whatever you decide, make sure that everyone who was close to

your cat is comfortable with the plan.

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