

Pet's Passed (Past)

I talk with people somewhat frequently who are mourning the loss of a beloved pet. This loss sometimes creates difficult and conflicting feelings and processing these feelings can be difficult. There is no recipe for or right way to grieve. There is no way to compare our process to how someone else deals with their grief.

At Sammie's Friends Animal Shelter I have heard the gamut of responses from "I lost my dog/cat yesterday and want to adopt someone else to love." to 'I lost my pet two three years ago and felt I was ready for a new pet, but now I see that I am not ready.' These responses seem so different but neither one is to be judged. Everyone just needs support and love when they have lost someone (two legged, four legged, finned or feathered) important to them.

Most importantly be kind and patient with yourself. Find an ally that you can talk to about your feelings and whatever difficulties you are having. Pick carefully; at this tender time you do not need anyone to say things like "Oh, it's just an animal" or "Get over it." This will add more pain to your already difficult situation. If you do not have such a person in your life, many areas have pet grief groups that can be very helpful. Even joining a grief group where the members are grieving the loss of humans in their life, could be helpful, if you cannot find a pet group. The relationships we have with our pets can be every bit as profound and deep as the ones we have with other humans. The loss can be just as painful. Go with and join up with people who are kind and empathetic.

When I miss my pets a walk down "memory lane" is always uplifting to me. I go through their life and reminisce about the fun things we did together and the love we shared. Some people would say this would just make them sad. Only you can decide if this would be uplifting or make you sad.

I am the MaMa to the famous Sammie Shar-pei and created a legacy to this amazing creature. In his name we have saved thousands of animals and provided veterinary care to many others. You do not have to do something this grandiose, but doing something for someone else (animal or human) can be helpful and lighten your load. Doing some volunteering at an animal shelter or walking a dog for someone can be therapeutic. If being with another pet just makes you miss your own more, you could make a donation in your pet's name to your favorite charity or volunteer at a non-profit that has a different cause than animals.

You can do something to honor and memorialize your pet like plant a tree or sow a garden.

Be kind and patient with yourself, this your process and do not let anyone tell you to grieve some other way. Look for empathetic and kind people to talk to. Memorialize and honor your pet.

My condolences to anyone who has ever lost a pet. It hurts and eventually the sun shines again on a new day with perhaps a new pet. I have found that I love all my pets but I never compare them to the one who has passed. They are all uniquely themselves, just as we are.

I am writing this in memory of and honor of Sammie, Destiny, Mon-Mon, Teddy, Buddy, Wilma, Plummie, Billy, Tigger and Pudder. I loved them all deeply, madly, with all my heart. Thanks for the memories!

Cheryl Wicks is the Co-Founder and President of Sammie's Friends