think that you should not grieve for your pet – or who will tell you that you should not be grieving as hard as you are because "it's just a cat." When a bond is broken – grief will happen. Your grief is normal – and the lost relationship that you shared with your special friend needs to be mourned.

- *Grief Can't Be Ranked* - When we are mourning the loss of a special pet friend, many times it is natural to think of others in the losses that they may be experiencing as well. Given that – many people will then want to "rank" their grief, pitting their grief emotions with others who may be "worse." While this is normal – your grief is your grief and deserves the care and attention of anyone who is experiencing a loss.

- *Questions of Faith* – During this time of your grief journey, you may find yourself questioning your faith regarding pets and the after-life. Many people around you will also have their own opinions regarding pets and heaven. It will be important during this time that you find the answers that are right for you and what your individual and personal faith belief are regarding seeing your pet in heaven again.

"Grief is like the ocean, it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim." Unknown

"Not the least hard thing to bear when they go from us, these quiet friends, is that they carry away with them so many years of our own lives."

Unknown



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What's Happening to Me?

Grief - "intense sorrow – as if by death; our internal feelings."

Mourning - "the showing of sadness at somebody's death; the external actions expressing grief."

Bereaved – "to be deprived of something valuable."



When something we love dies, we have a severing of a relationship that will cause us to feel grief and feelings of intense sorrow. By physically showing our grief, we actively mourn the death of that beloved. This active mourning will move our bereaved heart on a journey through grief and to grief reconciliation.

What Should I Do?

The Circle of Care Mourning Guide is central to your needs in the grief journey. These dimensions will not take on a prescribed pattern or look like stages. They are what your heart will need to actively mourn and to move you to a point of grief reconciliation. Move you to a point of a "new normal," knowing that the "old normal" can no longer be.

Acknowledge the reality of the death. This part will take time… it is natural for our hearts to want to deny that the death has actually happened. Be gentle and patient with yourself. Allow yourself to gently walk this path with your heart and mind together.

Allow yourself to hurt. Your entire body, mind, and heart will hurt. Allow the hurt. You will also find that you will hurt in your faith. These are all necessary for you to heal.

Remember your pet. Your beloved pet deserves your acknowledgement of the many memories that will come flooding back. While your initial thoughts will be of the final days/moments – you will find that time will bring you those more peaceful thoughts and memories of the life and times that you shared together.

Find your new role and responsibilities. Your daily tasks will change. No longer will the food bowl need filled and the litter box need cleaned. You will find that your body will be conflicted during the day with feelings that you should "be doing something." These changes will eventually bring you to a new normal – and new tasks.

Fact and feeling finding for your heart. Many questions will follow with the death of your pet. "Why did this have to happen?" "Will I see my pet again?" Allow your heart to search for your own meaning in these questions, eventually bringing a feeling of peace to your heart.

Find your friends You will know those friends that you can turn to for support. There will also be friends that did not understand the special relationship that you had with your pet during its life – therefore, they will not understand your pain in its death. Lean on those friends that will respect your grief and be there throughout your journey. Turn to those friends that will truly honor the story of the life that you and your pet shared together.

Things to Remember

The loss of your pet will come with some uniqueness as well.

- *The Deafening Silence* - The silence in your home after the death of a pet will be excruciatingly loud. While the presence of even our smallest of animal friends takes up physical space, many times the presence is felt more with our senses. When that pet is no longer there – the lack of their presence, the silence, becomes piercing. It becomes the reality of the "Presence of the Absence." Merely being aware of this stark reality will assist in preparing you for the flood of emotions.



- *The Special Bond with Your Pet* - The relationship that you shared with your pet is a special and unique bond, a tie that some might find difficult to understand. There will be well-meaning friends and family members who will