



## Suggestions for Coping with Pet Loss

- Take care of your body. The body is the container of the mind which is now feeling intense emotion. Nurturing it in the following ways will ease your grieving process.
  - \*Nutrition: eat healthy meals even if your appetite is reduced.
  - \*Sleep: be sure to get at least 5-8 hours daily, no more, no less.
  - \*Exercise: even walking will help your mood in this difficult time.
- Talk to people who can empathize with your grief. Consistent interaction and sharing with those you feel comfortable around will be most beneficial.
- Maintain structure in your life by continuing to do the activities you did before the loss, with the exception of those you did with or for your pet. Do not allow this major disruption to snowball into every aspect of your life. Structure will help your regain your bearings.
- Perform a ritual when you feel the time is right. Some have funerals at a pet cemetery or memorials with friends and family. Others may create a small shrine for a brief time.
- Allow yourself to feel sadness and loss. Grief is a normal response to a normal occurrence, yet each person goes through it differently. *If you feel as though you cannot recover, or if you have thoughts of self-harm, contact a mental health professional immediately.*

The above was written by Dr. Matt Zimmerman, a licensed psychologist practicing in Pembroke Pines, FL. He provides grief counseling and facilitates a Pet Loss and Grieving Support Group at the Broward County Humane Society.

## Pet Loss Discussion Group: Sharing and Caring

Anyone who has had a pet for any length of time knows how painful it is when that beloved pet reaches the end of his or her time here with us. We are often left with questions, anger, guilt, or an overwhelming sense of loss that we are sometimes unable to cope with. Very often, sharing these feelings with others who will understand is the first step toward healing. Discussing them and realizing we are not alone helps us find strength and solace. We begin the healing process which will allow us to cherish the memories of our pets and recall them with fondness. It allows the pain to start to diminish and gives us permission to continue to love and concentrate on those still with us.

Share your feelings now, either about your own pet, or help console those who need it.