



Sponsored by:

**roots & roads**  
Community Hospice Foundation

THE  
LEARNING  
COMMUNITY  
for Loss, Grief and Transition

**Harmony**  
HOSPICE  
— YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR HOSPICE. —

# COMPANIONING PET LOSS

(REV) SARAH BOWEN

1

## OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

### PART 1. LEARNING


- Why does pet loss matter?
- What is animal chaplaincy?
- Approaching the end of an animal's life
- Grief in the animal world

[break]

### PART 2. EXPERIENCING

- Getting ready
- Dealing with emotional overwhelm
- Sacred sendoffs
- Working with grief

### RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING



2



## WHY DOES PET LOSS MATTER?

3

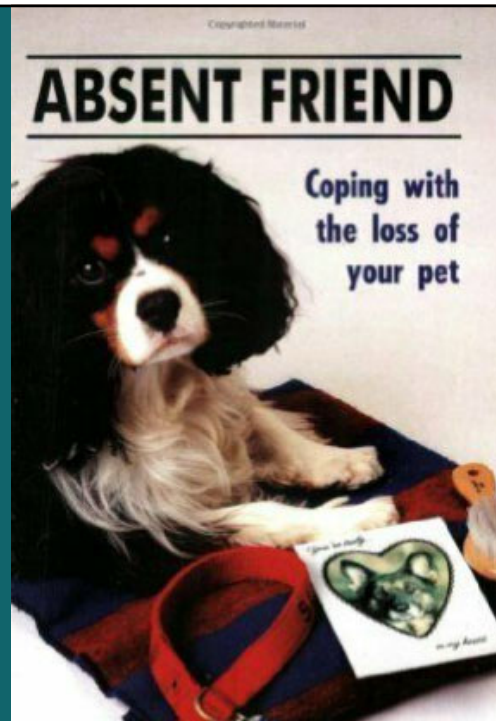
“ Until one has loved an animal,  
a part of one's soul remains unawakened. ”

Anatole France, French poet, journalist, and novelist  
Winner of the 1921 Nobel Prize in Literature

4

## TAKING GRIEF SERIOUSLY

**1990:** Lees surveyed 1,000 readers. Over 70% of respondents indicated they were “devastated” by the loss. Yet only 10 percent spoke with someone—usually the family doctor—and less than half of them found the doctor helpful.



5

## TAKING GRIEF SERIOUSLY: RESEARCH STACKS UP

**1970-2015:** A systematic review of research revealed that pets are commonly labeled as family. Strong bonds were not limited to cats and dogs but included a range of species. The loss of an animal was as painful as grieving a human, especially for people who lived alone. In over half of the studies, people describe the grief as “intense” or “profound.”

Taylor & Francis Online

Home ▶ All Journals ▶ Anthrozoös ▶ List of Issues ▶ Volume 29, Issue 4 ▶ The Lived Experience of Companion-animal Loss

Anthrozoös > A multidisciplinary journal of the interactions between people and other animals  
Volume 29, 2016 - Issue 4

Submit an article | Journal homepage

715 Views  
21 CrossRef citations to date  
1 Altmetric

REVIEWS AND RESEARCH REPORTS  
**The Lived Experience of Companion-animal Loss: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Studies**  
Hellen R. Kemp | Nicky Jacobs & Sandra Stewart  
Pages 533-557 | Published online: 22 Nov 2016

Download citation | <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2016.1228772> | Check for updates

References | Citations | Metrics | Reprints & Permissions | Get access

**Abstract**

The aim of this systematic review was to evaluate qualitative studies of the lived experience of companion-animal loss and grief. Six electronic databases (PsycINFO, CINAHL Plus, Ovid MEDLINE, ProQuest, Scopus, and Web of Science) were searched for English language, peer-reviewed articles from 1970 to July 2015. Only primary empirical studies using a qualitative method with textual data describing a direct ongoing relationship with, and subsequent loss of, a companion animal were included. A narrative synthesis was conducted on 11 eligible studies using inductive open coding techniques. Analysis revealed that pets were often labeled as family, and strong emotional connections between animals and humans

Sample our social sciences journals  
Save time and get support  
SDG Online  
Request a Free Trial Today

People also read  
Pet Loss  
Disenfranchisement  
Memorialization  
Posttraumatic  
Bereavement  
Anthrozoös  
Published  
When the Variable  
Grief For  
Companion  
Loss >

6



## TAKING GRIEF SERIOUSLY: DAILY LIVING

- After the death of a companion animal, sadness, grief, or guilt will likely be present.
- One study found that 93 percent of humans reported a disruption in their lives, such as trouble sleeping or losing appetite.
- Over 50 percent reduced their social activities, and 45 percent had job-related difficulties.
- Other studies have documented people's loss of motivation, increased stress, anxiety, worry, and depression. Furthermore, animal death tends to resurface our memories of past bereavements and losses.

...It's more than loss of a pet, it's loss of the rituals of daily life.



7

## TAKING GRIEF SERIOUSLY: “HUMAN VS. ANIMAL”

**2016:** Closeness to the deceased was overwhelmingly the strongest predictor of grief severity, not whether human or animal.

**2017:** There were no significant differences between the levels of grief severity between animals and humans.

...

Brief Report

### Grief severity: A comparison between human and companion animal death

Bianca F. Lavorgna & Vicki E. Hutton

Pages 521-526 | Received 12 Dec 2017, Accepted 08 May 2018, Published online: 14 Sep 2018

Download citation | <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2018.1491485> | Check for updates

Full Article | Figures & data | References | Citations | Metrics

Reprints & Permissions | Get access

#### Abstract

Grief severity was investigated and compared amongst 50 participants aged 18 to 65 years who had experienced the death of a

DOI: 10.1080/07481187.2016.1139014 • Corpus ID: 205585320

### Grief following pet and human loss: Closeness is key

Lizabeth M. Eckerdt, James E Barnett, Latishia Jett-Dias  
Published 14 January 2016 • Psychology • Death Studies

**ABSTRACT** The authors compared grief severity and its predictors in two equivalent college student samples who had experienced the death of a pet (n = 211) or a person (n = 146) within the past 2 years. The human death sample reported higher grief severity,  $p < .01$ , but effect sizes were small ( $d_s = .28-.30$ ). For both samples, closeness to the deceased was overwhelmingly the strongest predictor of grief severity; other predictors generally dropped out with closeness added to the model. Results... [Expand](#)

8



# EVOLUTION IN APPROACHES TO PET LOSS

A move from “closure” to continuing bonds

APA PsycNet®

**Pet loss: The interface of continuing bonds research and practice.**

EXPORT Add to My List

Chapter Database APA PsycInfo

[Carmack, Beth J.](#) [Packman, Wendy](#)

**Citation**

Carmack, B. J., & Packman, W. (2011). Pet loss: The interface of continuing bonds research and practice. In R. A. Nalmsney, D. L. Harris, M. R. Winokous, & G. F. Thomson (Eds.), *Grief and bereavement in contemporary society: Bridging research and practice* (pp. 273-284). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

**Abstract**

This chapter discusses grief and bereavement suffered by those who have lost a beloved pet, and includes material on research and clinical practice. Similarities in bereavement following the death of a significant human relationship are comparable to those following the loss of a pet. Similarities are reported in terms of sleep loss, days missed from work, and other socio-cultural and social difficulties. Gervols and Laboff assessed whether

DOI: 10.1080/13252024.2011.572046 · Corpus ID: 14434034

### Continuing Bonds and Psychosocial Adjustment in Pet Loss

W. Packman, B. J. Carmack · 11 author · *ResearchGate* · Published 27 May 2011 · Psychology · *Journal of Loss and Trauma*

This study investigated continuing bonds (CB) expressions among bereaved pet owners and the relationship between CB expressions and psychosocial adjustment. The sample included 33 participants who had lost a dog or cat within the past year. Participants who responded to a differentiated set of 12 CB expressions reported a tendency to experience CB as more comforting than distressing, and the extent to which they endorsed each of the CB expressions was comparable to that found in a spousal loss sample, thus highlighting important similarities in pet loss to that shown in human loss in regard to CB. The CB comfort ratings also provided unique information beyond extent of CB endorsement in predicting psychosocial adjustment. The implications of the findings are discussed in the context of an attachment perspective on pet loss. Collapse

9



## ABOUT ME: MY FIRST LESSONS

SARAH BOWEN  
CIRCA 1978

10

**ACCEPTING A CALLING:  
ANIMAL CHAPLAINCY**

ANIMAL CHAPLAIN  
CLERGY & EDUCATOR, COMPASSION  
CONSORTIUM  
DEAN, ONE SPIRIT INTERFAITH  
WRITER, SPIRITUALITY & HEALTH  
AUTHOR, SACRED SENDOFFS

11

## THRIVING & GRIEVING IN AN INTERSPECIES WORLD...

### Individuals of all ages

- Supporting the human/animal bond
- Ill, injured, or dying companion animals
- Weather disasters
- Wars and other issues of violence

### Family relationship changes

- Children who harm animals
- Divorce/separation
- Homelessness
- Domestic abuse
- Mental health changes / Hoarding

### Aging adults

- Do not want to move (and leave a pet)
- Facility issues with pets
- Aging adults who can't take care of pets due to cost, mobility challenges, dementia, and other complexities

### Careers, volunteers, & advocates

- Depression and suicide in veterinarians/vet techs
- PTSD/compassion fatigue/empathetic distress / moral injury
  - Animal rescuers & advocates
  - Farm/industrial ag workers
  - Environmental scientists

12

# & EVEN NEW KINDS OF PET RELATIONSHIPS!



**Aging & Mental Health**  
Volume 25, 2021 - Issue 7

Open access

8,200 2 Views | 93 CrossRef citations to date | Altmetric

Loneliness

### Reducing loneliness and improving well-being among older adults with animatronic pets

Rifky Tkatch, Lizl Wu, Stephanie MacLeod, Rachel Ungar, Laurie Albright, Daniel Russell, ...show all  
Pages 1239-1245 | Received 23 Sep 2019, Accepted 15 Apr 2020, Published online: 02 May 2020

Download citation | <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2020.1758906> | Check for updates

Full Article | Figures & data | References | Citations | Metrics | Licensing

13

## BEYOND TODAY... RESOURCES

<https://www.sacredsendoffs.com/rr>

**AARP** | Join | Renew | Help | Benefits | Login

### Family & Friends

Family & Friends · Personal Technology · Your Home · Family Caregiving · Community Voices

#### What to Do When You No Longer Can Care for a Pet

Whether you're affected by health, finances or housing, you have options  
by Louise Kramer, **AARP**, February 20, 2020

En español | Sara Knowles, a fundraising consultant in Denver, has happy memories of snowshoeing with her Australian Shepherd puppy, Sadie Mae, snug in the knapsack on her back. The duo enjoyed outdoor adventures for several years even when Knowles, now 63,

14





## BEFORE THE “BIG” LOSS...

(REV) SARAH BOWEN

15

## BECOMING “AWARE”

**A:** *Any behavior change or daily pattern.* Changes in appetite, anxiety, aggression, sleeping patterns, responses to other pets/ people, are all things to take notice of and not ignore.

**W:** *Weight shifting.* Or signs of limping or lameness. These are all signs of pain, even though you may not hear wincing or yelping- if your pet were not in pain, they would not be limping.

**A:** *Activity level changes.* Including reluctance to move, or sleeping more (especially seen in cats).

**R:** *Restlessness.* Difficulty sleeping, difficulty getting in a comfortable position.

**E:** *Expression & Appearance.* Watch for signs like panting, trembling, shaking, facial expressions (dilated or constricted pupils), excessive licking, and vocalization.

Pet Hospice Providers

16


**ANIMAL HOSPICE**

Highly recommended resource

Amir Shanani | Tamara Shearer | Jessica Pierce  
Editors

**Hospice and Palliative Care  
for Companion Animals**


Principles and Practice




17

**PLANNING FOR THE  
BEST WORST DAY:  
NATURAL DEATH**

- Understand what will happen
- Explore your options
- Get support




18



- Blanket
- Tissues
- Words
- Sacred items
  
- ...Let's brainstorm!

THE BEST WORST DAY KIT

19



- Sacredsendoffs.com/words
- Blessing the Animals: Prayers and Ceremonies to Celebrate God's Creatures, Wild and Tame (Lynn L. Caruso)
- Prayers for Animals (Carol Adams)
- Peace to All Beings (Judy Carman)

SACRED WORDS FOR DEATH

20



## MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS

- Medical
- Moral
- Spiritual

... all need to be supported

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

← Poor Quality of Life Good Quality of Life →


My pet...	Strongly Agree (All the Time) (Severe)	Agree (Most of the Time) (Significant)	Neutral (Sometimes) (Mild)	Disagree (Occasionally) (Slight)	Strongly Disagree (Never) (None)
does not want to play	1	2	3	4	5
does not respond to my presence or does not interact with me in the same way as before	1	2	3	4	5
does not enjoy the same activities as before	1	2	3	4	5
is hiding	1	2	3	4	5
demeanor/behavior is not the same as it was prior to diagnosis/illness	1	2	3	4	5
does not seem to enjoy life	1	2	3	4	5
has more bad days than good days	1	2	3	4	5
is sleeping more than usual	1	2	3	4	5
seems dull and depressed	1	2	3	4	5
seems to be or is experiencing pain	1	2	3	4	5
is panting (even while resting)	1	2	3	4	5
is trembling or shaking	1	2	3	4	5
is vomiting and/or seems nauseous	1	2	3	4	5
is not eating well - (may only be eating treats or only if fed by hand)	1	2	3	4	5
is not drinking well	1	2	3	4	5
is losing weight	1	2	3	4	5
is having diarrhea often	1	2	3	4	5
is not urinating well	1	2	3	4	5
is not moving normally	1	2	3	4	5
is not as active as normal	1	2	3	4	5
does not move around as needed	1	2	3	4	5
needs my help to move around normally	1	2	3	4	5
is unable to keep self clean after soiling	1	2	3	4	5
has coat that is greasy, matted, or rough-looking	1	2	3	4	5
How is my pet's overall health compared to the initial diagnosis/illness?	1 Worse	2	3 Same	4	5 Better

Current Quality of Life (place "X" along the line that best fits your pet's quality of life) ← Poor Good →

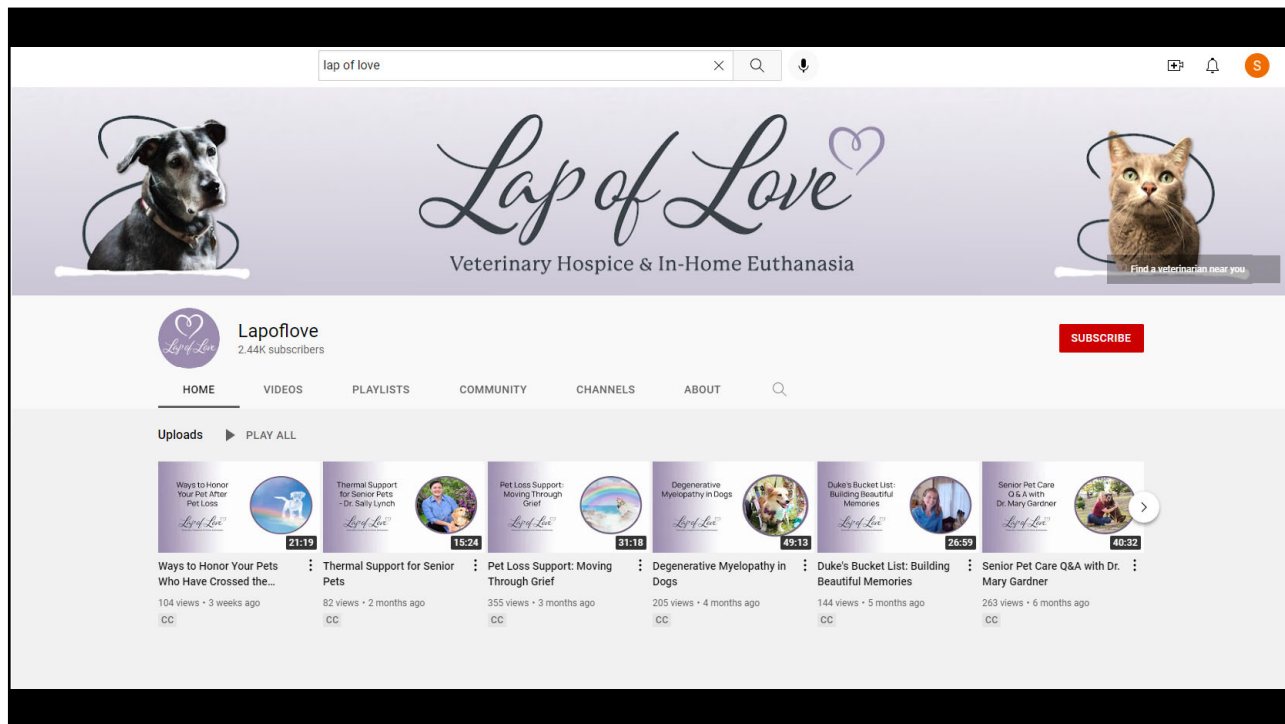
21

## PLANNING FOR THE BEST WORST DAY: EUTHENASIA

- Understand what will happen
- Explore your options
- Get support



22



23



24





25



26





27



28





29

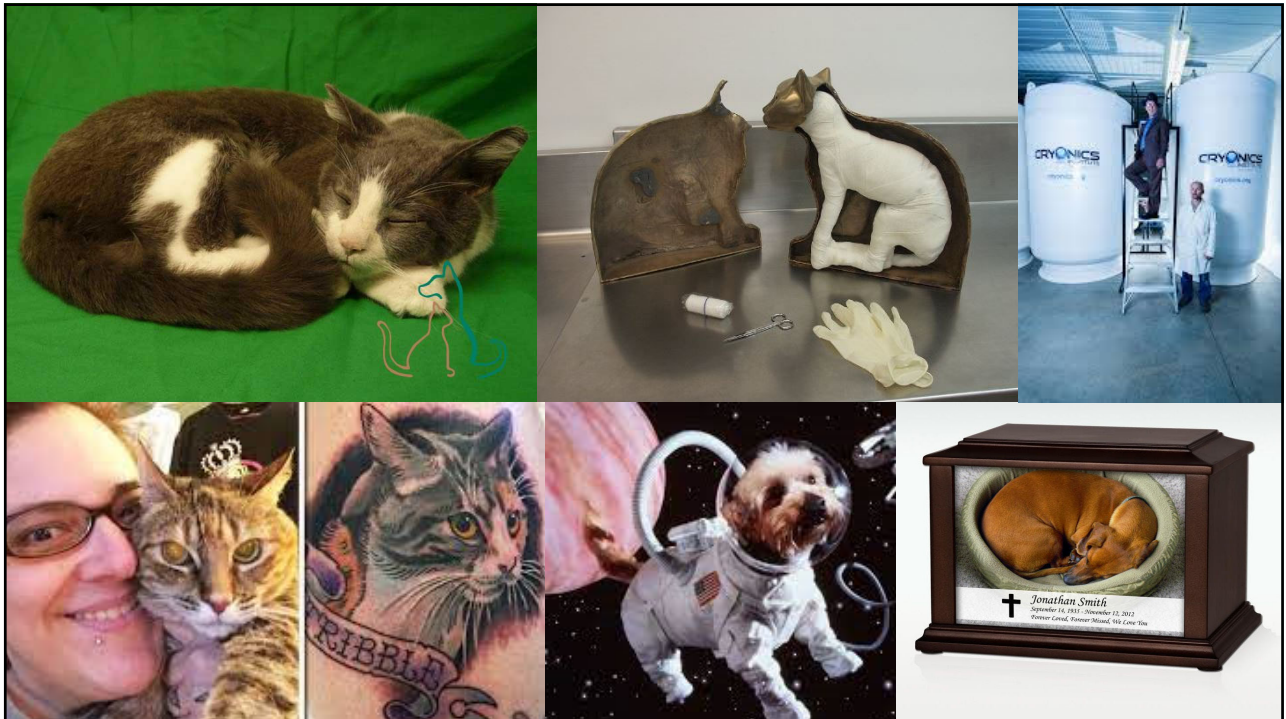


30





31



32





AN ANIMAL'S POINT OF VIEW:  
GRIEF IN THE ANIMAL WORLD

33



34

CBC | MENU Q Search Sign In

NEWS Top Stories Local COVID-19 Opinion World Canada Politics Indigenous The National More

### Grief or instinct? Interpreting a mother orca's actions

[f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [r](#) [i](#)

The world saw a whale in mourning when J35 didn't let go of her dead calf for days; the science less clear

[Bridgette Watson](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jul 20, 2019 5:00 AM PT | Last Updated: July 20, 2019



Orca mother J35, balancing her dead baby on her nose trying to keep it afloat on July 25, 2018. (Kelley Balcomb-Bartok)

35



36





37



38



USA TODAY NEWS TO YOUR INBOX Start the day smarter PASSAGES Notable deaths in 2022 RESOURCE GUIDE Navigating COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS NUMBERS Virus numbers by state


[ News ] Sports Entertainment Life Money Tech Travel Opinion 46°F Subscribe Sign In

**NATION**

# George H.W. Bush's service dog rests near his casket in moving photo: 'Mission complete'

Ashley May  
USA TODAY

Published 6:22 a.m. ET Dec. 3, 2018 | Updated 4:16 p.m. ET Dec. 3, 2018



COURTESY JIM MCGRAW

George H.W. Bush's service dog, Sully, loyal to the end

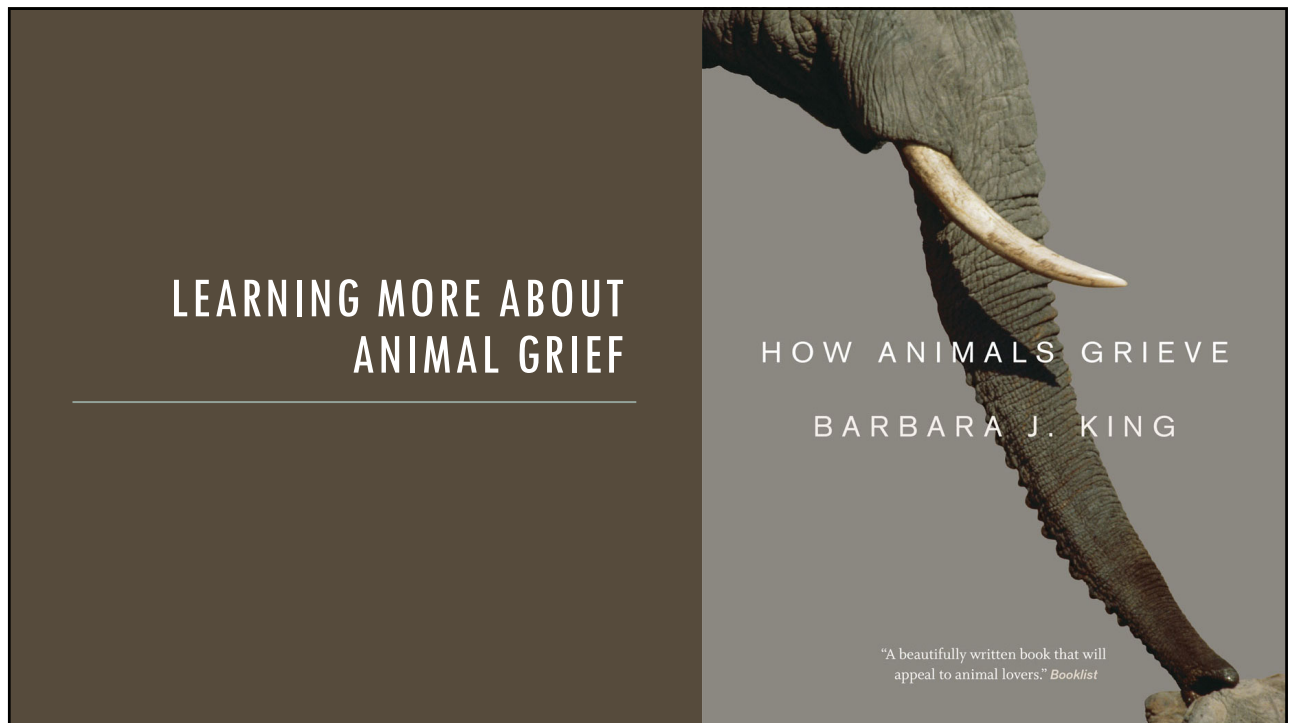
39



40



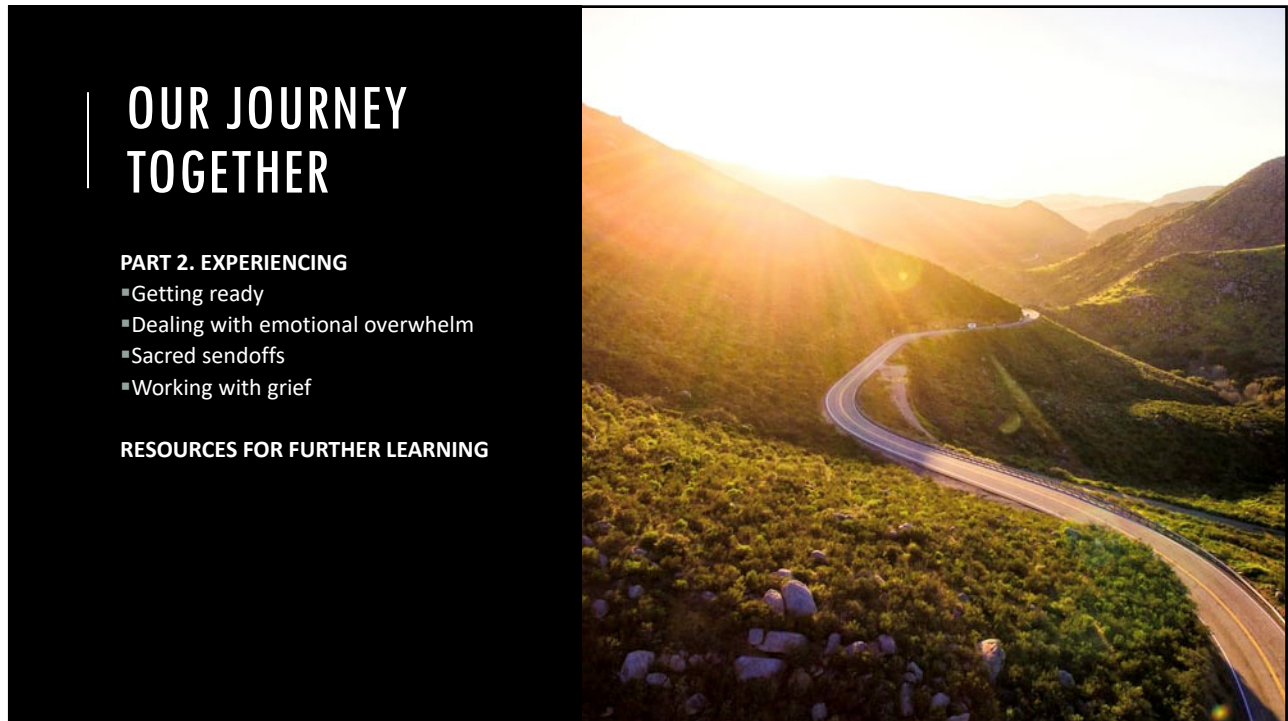
41



42



43





44



# YOUR LOSS LINE

<p>Hamster, lost "Be more responsible!" Was given a new one</p>	<p>Chipmunks, found dead "Don't touch them!" Buried in rose bushes</p>	<p>Ringo, diabetes "It's my fault" Cremated</p> <p>Cocktail, still missing "Something prob ate him" Created memorial</p> <p>Max, accident "Nothing we can do" Cremated</p>	<p>Mouse "Damn it! Who left the seat up?" Blessed &amp; buried</p>
1976	1977	2017	Wednesday

- Who?
- How did you mark that loss? Or how was it handled?
- What were you told? Or told yourself?

 EIGHT MINUTES 

45



**WTF PRAYER** | WELCOME THE FEELINGS

46



47

## MANAGING HUMAN'S LOSS & GRIEF

1. Accept the reality of the loss
2. Process the pain of grief
3. Adjust to a life after loss
4. Find enduring connections

A photograph of a person with dark curly hair and glasses, wearing a black shirt, sitting in a hospital bed. They have a distressed expression, with their hand pressed against their forehead, suggesting grief or emotional pain.

48

## COMPANIONING PET LOSS

1. Accept the reality of the loss
2. Process the pain of grief
3. Adjust to a life after loss
4. Find enduring connections

49

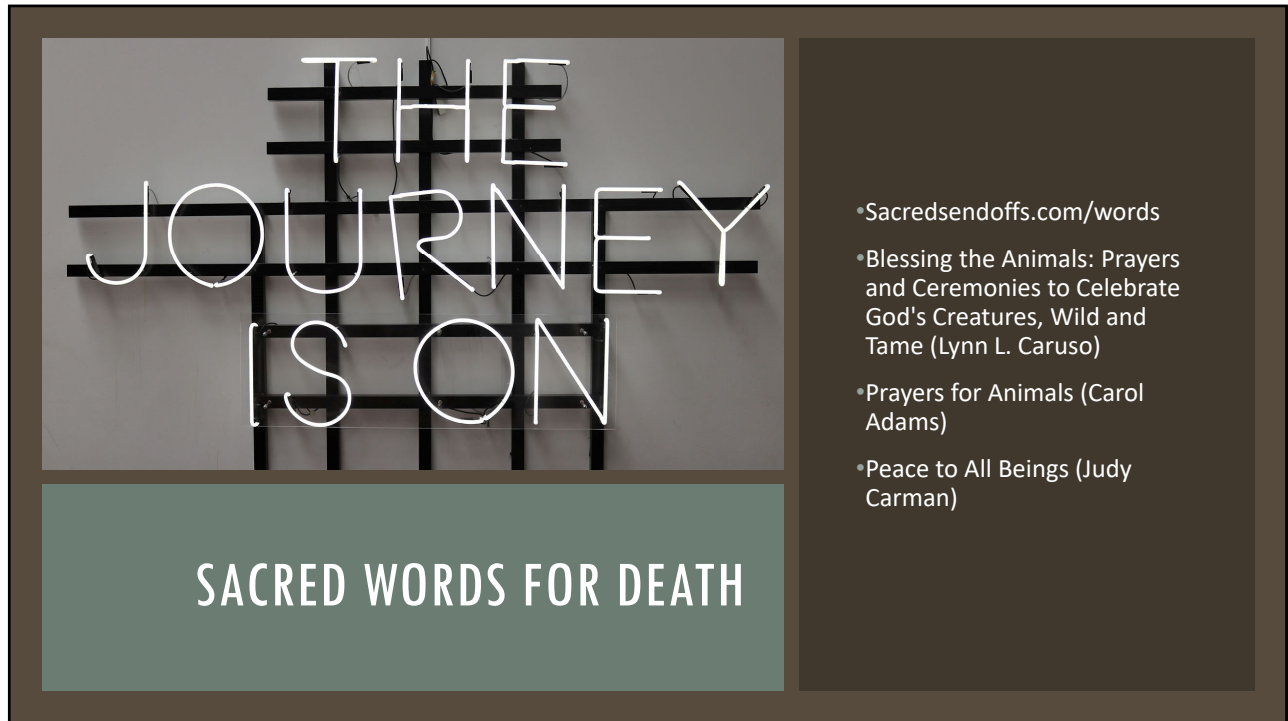


## SACRED SENDOFFS

CREATING RITUALS &  
MEMORIALS

50



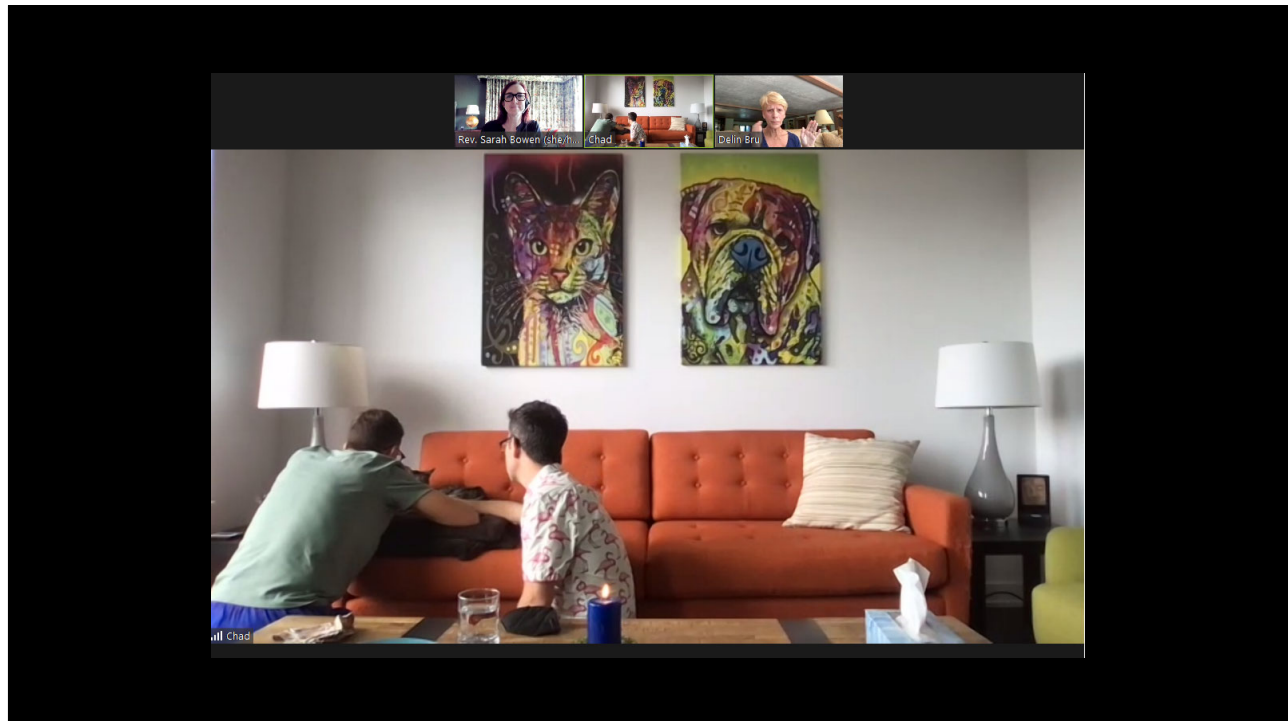


THE  
JOURNEY  
IS ON

SACRED WORDS FOR DEATH

- [Sacredsendoffs.com/words](https://Sacredsendoffs.com/words)
- Blessing the Animals: Prayers and Ceremonies to Celebrate God's Creatures, Wild and Tame (Lynn L. Caruso)
- Prayers for Animals (Carol Adams)
- Peace to All Beings (Judy Carman)

51



52



53



54





55



56





57

# THE FURRY WAKE

---


Magazine Services
Subscribe
Log in

Categories
Columns
**Spirituality & Health**
Podcasts
Collections

spiritual practices

## How to Give a Furry Wake

By Sarah Bowen



Share: [f](#) [t](#)
Share: [f](#) [t](#)

Honoring your pet with friends helps healing begin.

58

# THE ROLE OF RITUAL & MEMORIAL


1. Accept the reality of the loss
2. Process the pain of grief
3. Adjust to a life after loss
4. Find enduring connections

59

# PET LOSS SUPPORT GROUPS

**Support Groups**  
**Counselors**  
**Pet Cemeteries**

AL AK AZ AR CA CO  
CT DE DC FL GA HI  
ID IL IN IA KS KY LA  
ME MD MA MI MN  
MO MT NE NY NH  
NJ NM NY NC ND OH  
OK OR PA RI SC SD  
TN TX UT VT WA WY  
WV WI WY  
Canada UK AusNZ  
Add or update your listing




*The Pet Loss Support Page*


**CONTACT**

[HOME](#) - [HANDOUTS](#) - [Links](#) - [Pet Loss Hotlines](#) - [List Your Organization](#) - [List Your Product](#)  
[Emotions of Pet Loss](#) | [Defining "Quality of Life"](#) | [Pre-Loss Bereavement](#) | [Surviving Loss](#) | [Conquering Guilt](#) | [Creating a Memorial](#) | [Helping Children Grieve](#) | [Euthanasia: The Most Painful Decision](#) | [The Final Farewell](#) | [Do Pets Go to Heaven?](#) | [Get a New Pet](#) | [Stand in the Clones!](#) | [Some Questions on Loss](#) | [Pet Loss Bereavement Studies Seeking Your Assistance](#)  
[Get More Help: Coping with Sorrow on the Loss of Your Pet](#)


**Visit Our Sponsors!**  
[Add Your Product or Service](#)



Condolence Gifts



Memorial Cremation Jewelry



Memorial Products

**Pet Loss Hotlines**

[National Hotlines](#) | [State Hotlines](#) | [International Hotlines](#) | [Online Support Groups & Forums](#)

Please note that many pet loss hotlines have been discontinued in recent years due to lack of funding. This list is *not* just another copy of other lists online. Every hotline on this list has been confirmed as being active as of November 2017.

**STATE HOTLINES:**

**Arizona:** Chrysanne Fife - 520-304-3909. Hotline open 24 hours a day; upon leaving a message, she will return calls as soon as possible.

**California:** 833-PET-1234 - PetCloud. Available to anyone in the country. Calls accepted M-F 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. PST; S - S 12 p.m.-8 p.m. PST. If no answer, leave a message and your call will be returned the following day during the hours stated. <https://petcloud.pet grief.com/acting>.

**DC:** (202) 966-2171 - The PAL Pet Loss Comfort Line can be accessed by calling the PAL office in Washington, D.C., Monday through Friday, from 9am to 5 pm. You will be referred to a PAL counselor. [http://peopleanimallove.org/programs/pet-loss\\_info@peopleanimallove.org](http://peopleanimallove.org/programs/pet-loss_info@peopleanimallove.org)

**Illinois:** (630) 325-1600 - Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) Pet Loss Helpline. <https://www.chicagocvma.org/pet-loss-support/>

**Maryland:** (301) 231-8038 - Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, TTh 6-9 PM ET. <http://www.vetmed.vt.edu/vet-memorial/support.asp>

**Maryland:** See DC.

**Massachusetts:** (508) 839-7966 - Tufts University veterinary school; M-F 6-9 pm ET, calls from outside Massachusetts will be returned at no charge. For more information, visit <http://vet.tufts.edu/petloss/>

**Michigan:** (844) 423-3404 - Addison's Place: A Pet Grief Foundation. Call between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. EST. Messages will be returned. Currently available only within the state of Michigan.

60

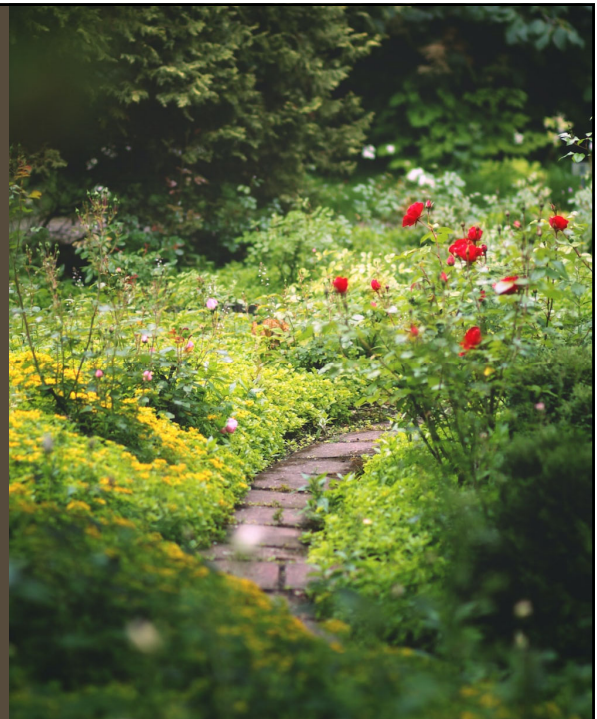
## MANAGING HUMAN'S LOSS & GRIEF

1. Accept the reality of the loss
2. Process the pain of grief
3. Adjust to a life after loss
4. **Find enduring connections**

61

## IDEAS FOR ONGOING HEALING

Create a small memorial garden in your yard where you can go when you miss Fido or Fluffy



62



## IDEAS FOR ONGOING HEALING

Place items on a dedicated bookshelf, like a collar, favorite toy, photo, a poem, or painting. Return to it when you feel sad and offer a few words or recall memories of times with your beloved four-legged.



63

## IDEAS FOR ONGOING HEALING

Create a portable memorial altar



64

## IDEAS FOR ONGOING HEALING

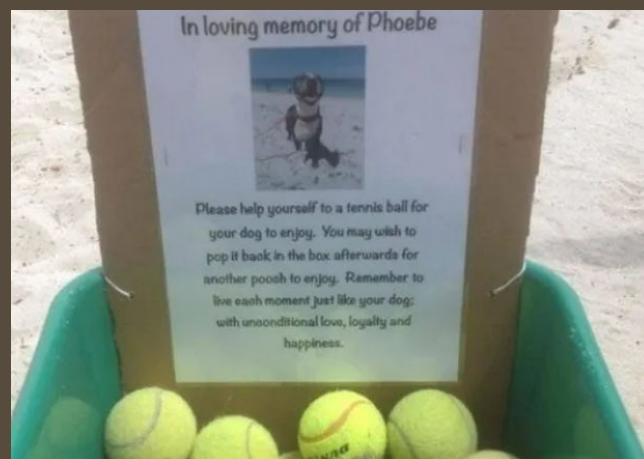
Hang wind chimes and use the sound as a reminder to say a little hello to Spot in the "What's Next" or offer a prayer



65

## IDEAS FOR ONGOING HEALING

Being of service



66



67



68





69

A photograph of a French Bulldog puppy wrapped in a brown, textured blanket. To the right of the puppy is a white panel with the following text and logos:

**Sponsored by:**

-   
**roots & roads**  
Community Hospice Foundation
-   
**THE LEARNING COMMUNITY**  
for Loss, Grief and Transition
-   
**Harmony HOSPICE**  
— YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR HOSPICE. —

# COMPANIONING PET LOSS

(REV) SARAH BOWEN

70