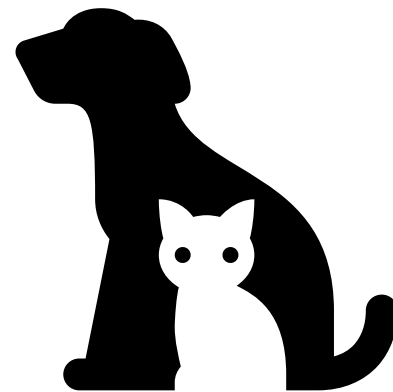


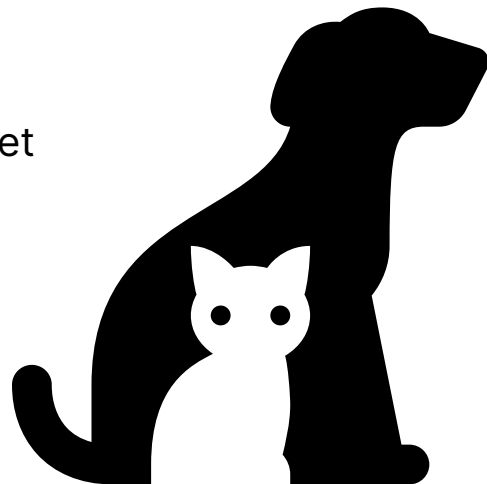
Dealing with the Loss of a Pet



How to start a conversation about the death of a pet

- **Be honest with children.** When a pet dies, we often want to minimize children's pain, but using euphemisms such as "We lost Lucky" or "Lucky went to sleep" may cause confusion or scare children. There are helpful instructions in the book *Something Very Sad Happened* by Bonnie Zucker and Kim Fleming for explaining death to young children. Tell them that the pet's body stopped working so he or she died. When someone dies, they cannot eat, sleep, or breathe anymore.
- **Tailor your response to your child's ability to understand.** The younger the child, the simpler explanations about facts and emotions should be. You can be honest about how a pet died without including graphic details. Tell your child what you did to help the pet, if anything was possible. When using new vocabulary, such as "emergency surgery" explain what it means to avoid confusion. Remind kids there are things in life no one can change.
- **Give children many opportunities to ask questions.** They'll have a lot you can't answer, but you can say, "I don't know, but I've wondered about that too." Be patient when children ask the same questions over and over. Why it happened, how it happened, and where a dead pet goes will be of great concern to kids. And they'll wonder why it can't be changed.

- **Be accepting and listen to any and all feelings.** Kids may feel shock, disbelief, confusion, denial, panic, insecurity, betrayal, abandonment, loneliness, rejection, anger, frustration, and guilt -- all normal and predictable feelings we experience when losing a loved one, four-legged OR two-legged.
- **Experiment with ways to express and sort out feelings.**
 - Read a book about pet loss.
 - Write a letter to your pet.
 - Play make believe with puppets.
 - Draw pictures of your pet.
 - Talk about your memories of your pet



Books to Read Together

- *When a Pet Dies* by Fred Rogers..... Easy 155.9 ROGERS
- *Big Cat, Little Cat* by Elisha Cooper.....Easy COOPER
- *I Remember* by Jennifer Moore-Mallinos..... Easy 155.937 MOORE
- *Talking About Death* by Karen Bryant-Mole..... Easy 155.937 BRYANT
- *The Best Cat in the World* by Leslea Newman..... Easy NEWMAN
- *Cat Heaven* by Cynthia Rylant..... Easy RYLANT
- *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* by Judith Viorst.... Easy VIORST
- *A Stone for Sascha* by Aaron Becker..... Easy BECKER
- *Tough Boris* by Mem Fox..... Easy FOX