



L O V E N E V E R L E A V E S SM

The Stages of Grief

GRIEF is the internal thoughts and feeling of loss and pain.

MOURNING is the outward, shared expression of that grief – a grief gone public.

People grieve when someone they love dies. But if they are to heal, they must have a safe, accepting atmosphere in which they can mourn.

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The Five Stages of Grief, also known as "The Kübler-Ross Model," were described by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*. As adapted for PetLossCare.com, this is the general process through which pet parents deal with the reality of pet death:

1. Shock & Denial

The reality of death has not yet been accepted by the bereaved. There are feelings of being stunned and bewildered-as if everything is "unreal."

2. Anger & Guilt

The bereaved pet parent may lash out at family, friends, themselves, God, the veterinarian or the world in general. There are feelings of guilt and fear. These emotions are especially pronounced when the pet parent has opted for euthanasia.

3. Bargaining

This manifests in different ways, depending on whether the pet has already passed away, or the pet parent is facing the choice of euthanasia. For adults, it involves asking for a deal or reward from God, the Veterinarian or the Clergy ("I'll go to Church every day, if only my pet will come back to me.") For children, the bargaining takes on age-appropriate topics ("I'll promise to clean my room next time" or "I'll share my toys better").

4. Depression & Sadness

There's a reaction, usually very intense, to the changed way of life created by the loss. There will be feelings of being sad, hopeless, drained and helpless. The pet is missed and thought about constantly. Given the fact that our pet companions are linked so strongly to routine for their schedules, the reality of the deceased pet, and the void left is real every day when that scheduled event comes up.

For instance, at feeding time, or when your thought processes are still in the mode of rushing home from work to let the pet outside, the experience of sadness will continue to be pronounced until a new routine is established.

5. Acceptance

This comes when the changes brought upon the person by the loss are stabilized into a new lifestyle.



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Individuals make their way through these steps in different orders. And, as with any process, there may be days when you feel like you've made it through the steps and an event pops up and takes you right back to being angry again. That's okay. Don't be hard on yourself, or your friends or family. This is a normal process.

Furthermore, remember that during the first year after the death of a pet, you will have a year of uncomfortable "firsts." The first spring the doggie won't be there for a walk, the first birthday, the first Christmas, these will all bring the emotions rushing right back again. Again, these are all very normal feelings for the grieving pet parent.

Most importantly, understand that the journey through grief to acceptance doesn't take a set amount of time, or move in a straight line. Everyone's experience will be different, and with support, everyone can learn to move forward with memories that bring more love than pain to mind.