

Pet Loss: *Grief Rituals*

One of the reasons pet loss is difficult is that traditionally, there are no set rituals that happen at the time of the pet's death. Funerals and memorial services are for the living, not for the dead. They are formal events, which mark the life change that has occurred for those, left behind.

These events allow for an outpouring of support and love from friends and acquaintances and they validate the fact that a major loss has occurred and that it matters.

You may find it helpful to do something to commemorate the loss of your pet. This may be anything from the very simple to actual ceremonies like funerals—do whatever helps you find a sense of finality and closure that is helpful to healing from your loss.



Ideas

- ❖ Talk to your veterinarian about spending 15 minutes or so alone with your pet to say goodbye after the euthanasia procedure.
- ❖ Ceremonies: If your pet was cremated, gather significant people your life who can help you spread the ashes. A burial ceremony, including with readings or remembrances of your pet, can also help you cope and find closure.
- ❖ Frame your favorite photograph of your pet companion and display it in a special frame to help you remember happy times you spent together. Or make a scrapbook with memories and pictures.
- ❖ Write up the story of your life with your pet and send it to family and friends. Or read it at a special gathering.
- ❖ Take a special walk or hike in memory of your beloved pet.
- ❖ Write a letter to your pet thanking him/her for your years together.
- ❖ Ask your veterinarian about Claypaws, a clay impression of your pet's paw-print you can keep.

