

## HEART

Grief is truly a universal experience. While you cannot choose whether or when a loss happens to you, you can choose how you respond to it. Animals are part of our family. We are losing a family member.

As you walk through the season of grief, you will feel a myriad of emotions. You may also feel an absence of emotion or feel numb. There are also times you may smile or laugh as you recall the memories of your pet. These ups and downs are normal. It is normal to feel these emotions in relation to the loss of your companion animal; those who have not had a companion animal may not understand and tend to minimize your feelings. The loss of a companion animal may trigger other unresolved losses in your life.

Remember the only way to deal with grief is by walking through it. There are no shortcuts as you begin living with the loss, adjusting your life and recreating yourself.

## SOUL

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. NRSV*

These words remind you there is a time for everything. You may be in a time of grieving, weeping, mourning, or healing. You can be comforted in knowing there is always healing and new life.

## Living Compass Wellness Points

*Journeying Toward Wholeness with All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind*

### Living Well in the Midst of Grief and Loss



When a companion animal you love dies, you experience grief in a number of ways. Grief is a natural emotion, and it is experienced differently by each person. Depending on your relationship with your animal, how death came to him/her, whether you were able to say goodbye, your beliefs, your background, your personality, your history around loss, each of us reacts and processes grief in a different way. As you walk through your season of grief and loss, you may find yourself feeling a range of emotions including sadness, regret, anger, guilt, relief and a longing to see your companion animal again. All of these emotions, which are natural and normal, are given to us to help us understand our world.

## STRENGTH

*Grieving doesn't make  
you imperfect.  
It makes you human.*

*Sarah Dessen, writing of young adult books*

Grief is exhausting. It saps your energy and your ability to concentrate. Grief may last 6 months to a year. Even then, grief can still bubble within you.

While grief is normal, you may feel challenged as to how to respond to it. There are several things that will help you process and handle your grief in healthy ways.

Concentrate on good nutrition, exercise, rest and time outdoors.

Let the waves of grief wash over you, and allow yourself to feel them rather than fighting them.

Try to reduce stressors in your life or taking on new responsibilities.

Seek support from friends, family and others.

Look for simple things around you that can bring you moments of peace and pleasure and keep a journal about all that is good in your life.

Give yourself permission to take care of yourself, and seek those things that help your grieve and help you heal.

## MIND

*Grief is not a disorder, a disease, or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve.*

*Rabbi Earl Grollman, counselor*

The process of grief is not a linear progression, but steps you go through over and over. One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself is the gift of time to grieve and to be gentle with yourself. With time you will feel more like yourself. By sharing honestly about how you are feeling, you may grow closer to others, becoming more aware of aspects of the world that you might otherwise have missed.

When you first experience loss, it is an enormous boulder that sits in front of you. It is huge and heavy, and seems impossible to move. At first it might take all your strength, but you can inch forward. You move it a little more, then a little more – until slowly, gradually, it starts rolling more easily. Eventually, it gets smaller and smaller. Finally, one day, it is a small rock that you can pick up, put in your pocket, and carry with you. It is still a part of your life to be treasured, but it no longer prevents you from moving down life's path.

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

### Living Well in Thought, Word, and Deed

Now that you've read through this information in "Living Well in the Midst of Grief and Loss" wellness point, we invite you to make it personal to your own life. Note how this material may have stirred up a new thought or insight for you, or how this material may have sparked a desire for you to participate in a grief group with others who have lost a companion animal.

**Thought:** Is there something that you might like to think about differently regarding your loss? How could that help you heal and move on?

**Word:** Is there a conversation you would like to have with someone in response to what you have read about grief and loss?

**Deed:** Is there something different you would like to do going forward to enhance your wellness during your time of grief?

These original materials were developed by Living Compass, Dr. Scott Stoner. They have been adapted for Compassionate Paws, Inc. program by D'Ann Downey, Ph.D. with permission from Living Compass.

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***The Living Well in the Midst of Grief and Loss  
Group consists of four weekly sessions.  
For more information or to register  
call 706 295-2498.***

***There is no charge for the classes but regular  
attendance is expected.***