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What You're Feeling Is Real: Tools for *Pet Loss Grief*

Losing a beloved pet can feel overwhelming. You might feel:

- *Deep sadness or waves of tears*
- *Guilt or second-guessing*
- *Anger*
- *Numbness*
- *Disoriented*
- *Anxiety*
- *Relief followed by shame for feeling relief*
- *A sudden quiet in your home that feels unbearable*

If your grief feels intense, confusing, or bigger than you expected, you are not alone. Pet loss grief is *real* grief.

WHY DOES LOSING A PET HURT SO MUCH?

For many people, pets are:

- Daily companions
- Emotional anchors
- Sources of routine and stability
- Nonjudgmental comfort
- Witnesses to major life chapters

They are woven into the structure of everyday life. Morning routines, evenings, walks, even shared spaces. When they're gone, it's not "just a pet." It's the loss of relationship, routine, identity, and unconditional connection.

Your nervous system feels that absence, as does your body. That depth of pain reflects the depth of love.

WHAT IS DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF?

If you've felt hesitant to talk about your grief, or worried that others won't understand the depth of your pain, that experience has a name: **disenfranchised grief.**

Disenfranchised grief happens when a loss isn't fully recognized or validated by society. It can leave people feeling isolated, like they have to carry their grief quietly.

Pet loss is one of the *most common* forms of disenfranchised grief.

Other examples include:

- Miscarriage, pregnancy loss, or infertility
- The death of a former spouse
- The loss of a friendship
- Job loss or retirement
- The loss of someone with whom the relationship was complicated
- The loss of someone to suicide or a drug overdose

In these situations, people often hear minimizing comments. For pet owners, that may sound like:

- "At least it wasn't a person."
- "You can always get another one."
- "You knew you were going to say goodbye eventually."

When grief isn't acknowledged, it can intensify feelings of loneliness. You may question whether your pain is valid. You may try to shrink it to make others comfortable.

But here's what matters: your grief is **real**. Many, many people are carrying it, *just like you*. *You are not alone in this experience.*

GRIEF DOESN'T FOLLOW A STRAIGHT LINE

There is no single "right" way to grieve, and there is no set timeline.

Some people cry constantly. Others feel numb, restless, fatigued, joyless, or irritable. Some experience sudden, heavy waves of emotion that seem to come out of nowhere.

These feelings may surface immediately, or they may emerge days, months, or even years after a loss.

You may carry guilt, doubt, or replay medical decisions. You may question yourself, your identity, or the role your pet played in your life.

All of this is within the range of normal.

WHY IT CAN FEEL SO OVERWHELMING

Pets often provide:

- Regulation during stress
- Physical touch and comfort
- Emotional safety
- Joy and laughter
- Routine and structure

When that presence disappears, it can disrupt your emotional equilibrium. The absence can feel physical.

This doesn't mean you are "too sensitive." It means the bond mattered.

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A Gentle Reminder

There's no such thing as a perfect way to grieve. Grief doesn't follow rules, timelines, or social expectations. It reflects attachment, love, and the role your pet played in your life.

Many pet parents find more peace when they allow themselves to feel what they're feeling, rather than judging it or minimizing it for others' comfort.

Remember, your grief makes sense. Your bond mattered. Your pain is not an overreaction.

For more information, support, and resources to guide you through grief, visit www.jaspergrief.com
or use the QR code below.

You don't have to navigate this alone.