Pet Loss

GRIEF SUPPORT GUIDE

1st pet VETERINARY CENTERS

The one to call – 24/7

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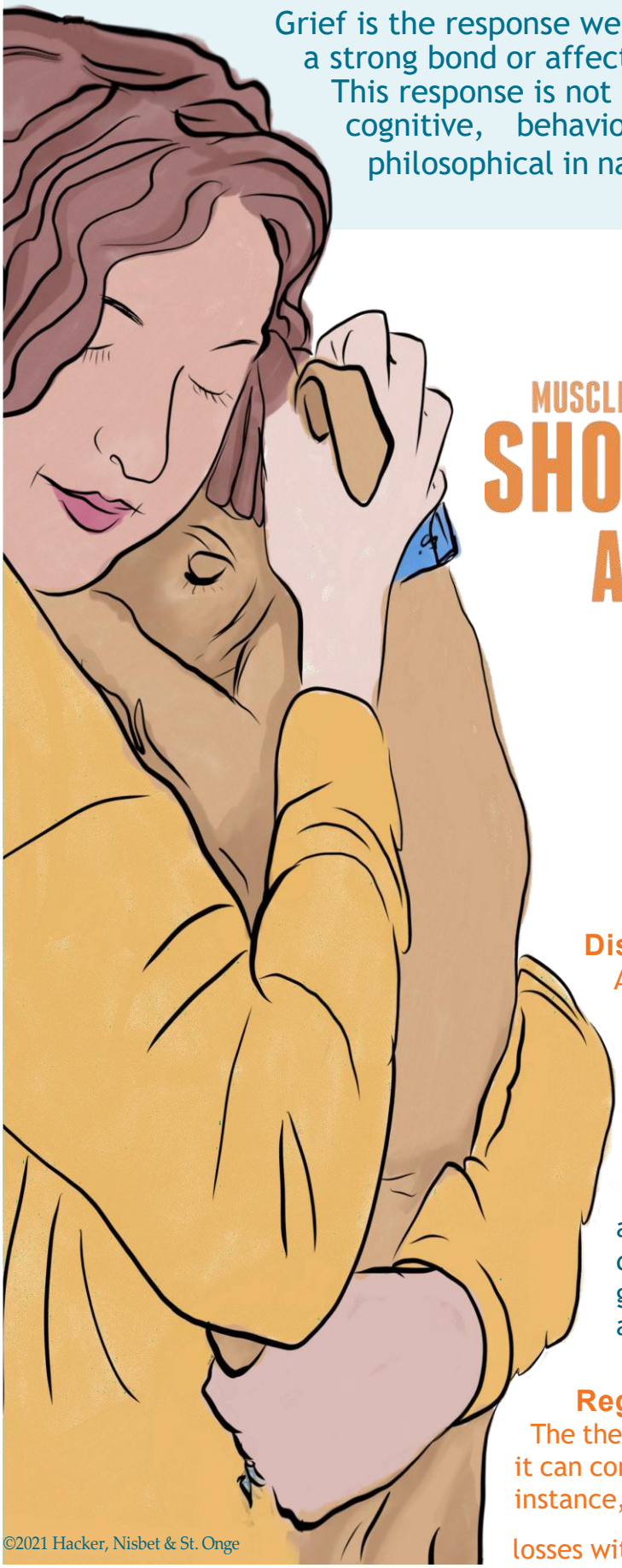
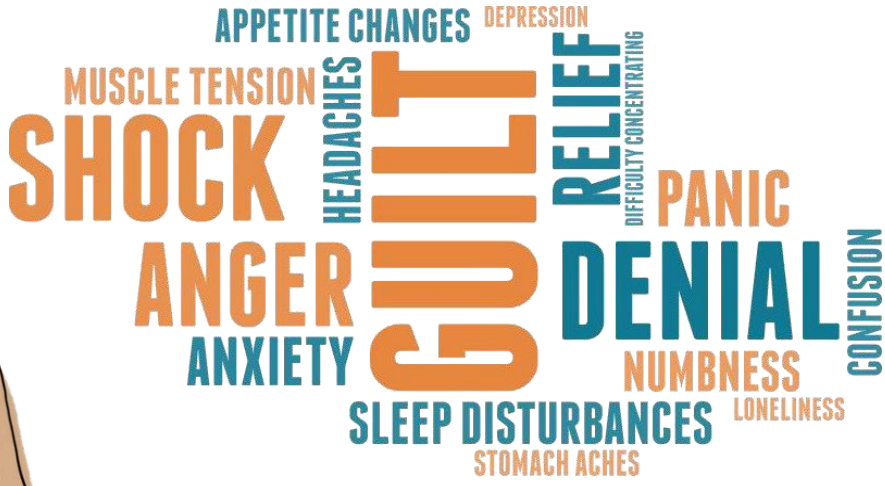
Please accept our sincerest condolences for the loss of your cherished animal companion. You are not alone as we understand how significant this loss is for your family. Weinvite you to review the information provided in this guide and reach out to us as needed.

~1st Pet Veterinary Social Work Team

Understanding Grief

Grief is the response we have to loss, particularly profound when a strong bond or affection was present, such as with an animal. This response is not only emotional, but also can be physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, cultural, spiritual and/or philosophical in nature.





Subtypes of Grief

Disenfranchised

Also known as hidden grief. Refers to any grief that is often minimized, invalidated, or unacknowledged by social norms, such as pet loss.

Complicated

Strong grief that goes beyond at least six months and has other underlying factors (i.e., other losses during the same time, trauma, etc.). This type of grief can be tough to handle with everyday life and may need the help of a professional.

Regrief

The theory that we feel all our past losses with new losses; it can come up suddenly and feel very intense. Pet loss, for instance, can bring up not only previous pets, but other losses within the family.

Bill of Rights for Grieving Animal Lovers

You have the right to:

- **Feel the pain of grief when the bonds with our pets are broken.** The bonds we have with our companion animals are deep and strong; the pain we feel when those bonds are broken is real and worthy of our grief.
- **Feel shocked and overwhelmed by the intensity of our grief.** The grief we feel at this loss can be far more intense than we ever expected, no different from that of losing another special family member or cherished friend.
- **Understand our grief reactions, feelings and behaviors as normal.** Grief is a natural, spontaneous response to the loss of a significant relationship.
- **Express our grief in our own unique way, within our own time frame.** How we express our grief will vary among individuals, but we all get through it in personally meaningful ways.
- **Have our grief recognized by others as significant and legitimate.** We're not grieving "just an animal." Since we're the only ones who know how much our animals meant to us, when they're gone, we're the only ones who can measure how very much we've lost.
- **Feel supported by others in our grief.** We must find someone with whom we can openly acknowledge our feelings, express and work through our pain, and come to terms with our loss.
- **Honor the memory of our pets in whatever way we see fit.** To memorialize our beloved companion animals is to honor and acknowledge the important role they played in our lives, to bring comfort to ourselves and to help us keep their love and presence in our hearts.

Marty Tousley, CNS-BC, FT, DCC

Growing from Loss

Self-care is always an important practice to follow, but perhaps even more imperative during this trying time. Take care of yourself by following good nutrition, practicing a healthy sleep schedule, moving your body, and finding ways to relax that you enjoy. Be kind to yourself during this time. Honor your feelings. Allow sadness and joy to occur at the same time. Reach out to any friends or family that understand your bond and grief. Ask one of our friendly Veterinary Social Workers to talk.

MEMORIALIZATION

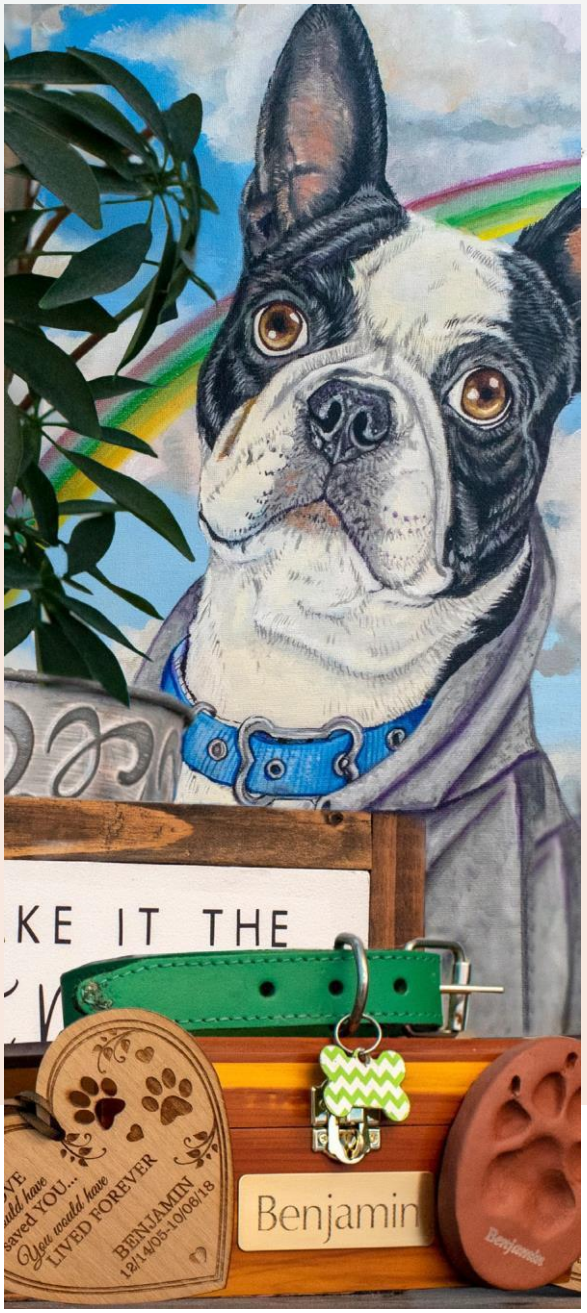
Memorialization of a lost loved one is a deeply personal and individual process that can help start healing. It can be seen as a form of catharsis that can aid us in coming to terms with the loss. Further, memorial events in particular can allow for a time and place for friends and family to receive more in-depth support.

CREATE A SPACE

Create a space to honor your pet, to let yourself mourn and heal openly. This can be a garden space where you have buried/spread your pet's cremains, a quiet place in your home with photos of your pet, or even a small table with your pet's keepsakes on display.

MEMORIAL JEWELRY

Various retailers, such as in-store jewelry artisans and online crafters on spaces like Etsy, offer customizable jewelry and keychains. You can take a photo of your pet's paw/nose print, upload them to the retailer of your choosing, and within a few weeks have a very personal memory of your friend that you can carry with you.



SHADOW BOX
PHOTO BOOK
PLANT A TREE
TATTOO
TURN PET TAG INTO A NECKLACE
PAINT YOUR OWN URN OR GARDEN ROCKS

PET RESOURCES

www.aplb.org
Association for Pet Loss & Bereavement

www.caaainc.org/pet-grief-support
Companion Animal Association of Arizona

www.lapoflove.com/pet-loss-support-resources
Lap of Love; pet loss grief courses & support

www.pet-loss.net
Pet Loss Support Page by Moira Anderson Allen

www.rainbowsbridge.com
Virtual memorial and grief support community

LOSS SUPPORT

1st Pet Veterinary Centers

REGISTER

Virtual Pet Loss Support Group

24/7 Support
602.347.1100

Solari Warmline

Hospice of the Valley

Pet Loss Support Group
602.636.5390

Pet Loss Grief Recovery
602.750.8051

Deer Valley Counseling