

The Loss of a Pet and New Pet Adoption

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I have shared my life with many great pets through the years. While I can't always remember our anniversaries I can remember the names and faces of most of the pets who have been my companions. Each was special; each had some particularly memorable characteristic. But I have often told folks there is always one that stands out in my heart -- Hobbs. As my wife always said -- he was, "the best darn cat in the whole wide world!" Hobbs was an orange tabby male who lived a long and happy life (although not long enough for me); fortunately, He lives on when I think of him -- every day -- or when I enter a password on my computer (an homage to him).

Losing a dog or cat

Dogs and cats have relatively short life spans and during our pet owning years we often see many come and go.

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest disadvantages of pet ownership is the inevitable sadness that accompanies their death. Coping with the loss of a beloved pet is a very personal thing. As with any loss, friends are often at a loss for words. In past history, the emotions and tears that accompanied losing a pet were frequently undermined by rolled eyes or statements like, "Get over it. It was just a dog!" or "You can get another cat." Today people are more supportive and sympathetic. Hugs and shared tears are the norm. Excused absences from work are common. Sympathy notes, cards, and memorial donations are frequent responses for someone who has lost a pet. All are intended to support us as we mourn. [\[Editor's note: The ASPCA offers a pet loss hotline if you need more support -- \(877\) GRIEF 10.1\]](#)

When is it a good time to adopt again?

Some people wait days to weeks, while others hold out for months to years. Some people even decide they no longer wish to have dogs. I have had experiences with clients who were without a pet in their life for months and clients who obtained a new pet literally the same day or even in anticipation of their pet's death. It is

reasonable to allow for time to process your sadness and your grief. To experience and recall the uniqueness of your departed pet. However, the void left can be overwhelming and it is also perfectly understandable that you find a new pet to share your life with sooner rather than later. A new pet is not evidence of any lack of grief but more likely a realization that our pets fill a unique place in our hearts.

I have often used the analogy of a beautiful rose bush in your yard that dies or has to be removed. An empty spot is left; a hole where a beautiful tree once lived. There is a hole in the ground that is obvious every day. There are no fresh flowers or sense of enjoyment.

Now plant a new rose bush in that spot and instead of the void you see new life, new commitment of nurturing and feeding. Now that bush is not a replacement but rather a fresh start.

The same holds true when we lose a pet; seeing their leash, dish, bed, or looking at that place where they once slept is a continual reminder of loss. At some point it is appropriate, and indeed healing, to get a new pet; a new friend. Note I did not say a replacement. You never replace a friend but the greatest honor you can pay a friend or a pet is to appreciate the joy they gave you, and recognize the fact that your life and theirs were both benefited by your relationship.

We are all different. But I encourage you to always be open to a [new pet](#) to share your day, your home, and your heart with.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian -- they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.

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