



Noble Strength

Animal Chaplain Pet Loss
Training

Goals

- ❖ Understand the importance of Pet Loss Support (especially that it is not well understood!).
- ❖ Understand the basic principles of both Anticipatory Bereavement and Pet Loss Support.
- ❖ Develop effective techniques and styles for assisting those you serve.

Anticipatory Bereavement



Anticipatory Bereavement

- ❖ The internal acknowledgement that comes when people realize their pet is reaching the end of his/her life.
- ❖ The feelings of sorrow and loss are very similar to the feelings that occur with the actual loss.

What People May Feel

Symptoms of grief

- ❖ Dread
- ❖ Guilt
- ❖ Helplessness
- ❖ Feeling overwhelmed
- ❖ Heightened concern for the pet
- ❖ Worry
- ❖ Difficulty in making decisions

What Can Help?

- ❖ Support
- ❖ Allow clients to feel grief
- ❖ Education/Information
- ❖ Resources on what to expect
- ❖ Prayer to assist in making choices



Pet Loss



Factors Affecting Grief

- ❖ Spiritual Support/Foundation
- ❖ Life Circumstances
- ❖ Support System
- ❖ Relationship with the Pet
- ❖ Grief History

Stages of Grief – Fact or Fiction

- ❖ Denial – Anger – Bargaining – Depression – Acceptance
- ❖ Positive - Stages can help frame or identify feelings
- ❖ Negative – Stages can also inhibit grief and make person feel worse.
- ❖ There is no order or time frame for the grief process.
- ❖ Grief is different for each person and each loss is different.

Common Symptoms of Grief

Physical

Eating Problems

Restlessness

Headaches/Getting Sick

Behavioral

Neediness

Irritability

Communication Problems

Emotional

Sadness

Disbelief

Anger

Spiritual

Question faith/God

Lack of Purpose

Increased Belief/

“Dependency”

What Does Guilt have to do with it

- ❖ Guilt can easily intensify the loss.
- ❖ After grief, guilt is the most common emotion.
- ❖ Can happen no matter the cause of death.
- ❖ Promotes self doubt and questioning.
- ❖ Most notably guilt takes over after euthanasia.
- ❖ Guilt can also be seen during an illness of a pet.

How to best deal with Guilt

- ❖ Encourage people to go easy on themselves, and eliminate critical self talk.
- ❖ Remind people of all they Did Do for their pets.
- ❖ Have people speak to a trusted friend or family member to get a different perspective.
- ❖ Allow time to answer questions about the disease or the course of treatment and validate that they made the right choices.

Anger

- ❖ The emotion of anger is often easier to feel than other feelings such as fear or sadness.
- ❖ It is not uncommon for clients who lose a pet to feel anger – at themselves – at God – and at anyone.
- ❖ Recognize it for what it is and don't take it personally.

Acceptance vs Closure

- ❖ For some grieverers the term closure can be upsetting.
- ❖ One belief is that closure rarely happens, but that the goal is acceptance and peace.
- ❖ Moving from “getting over” a loss to “getting through a loss”.
- ❖ Progress is made but total closure is not a goal, and should not be expected to happen.

Do's and Don'ts When Talking To Grieving People

DO'S & DON'TS

- ❖ **Do** – Allow people to express their story as many times as they need to.
- ❖ **Don't** – Schedule time to talk to people when you're too busy or preoccupied to really pay attention or listen.

DO'S & DON'TS

- ❖ **Do** – Listen more than talk. Listen non-judgmentally. Allow periods of silence.
- ❖ **Don't** – Avoid saying anything while a person is expressing their feelings. This can be seen as invalidating their loss.



DO'S & DON'TS

- ❖ **Do** – Use words of condolence from the heart. Saying “I’m sorry” followed by a pause – says so much.
- ❖ **Don’t** – Don’t try and use logic to help a grieving person. Avoid phrases like “Time heals.” “It was God’s will.”

DO'S & DON'TS

- ❖ Do – Validate the person's emotions and offer support without imposing timelines on the grief.
- ❖ Don't – Tell the client to go get another pet to help ease the grief.

DO'S & DON'TS

- ❖ **Do** – Pray together if the person is open to it.
- ❖ **Don't** – Your role is not to fix the person. Know your limits. Your role is as a spiritual guide, supporter and a resource and referral source



Communication Techniques



Verbal Communication

❖ Acknowledging

“I know how difficult this must be for you.”

❖ Normalizing

“It’s completely understandable that you’re crying like that Ms. Jones, Dottie was a huge part of your heart.”

❖ Self-Disclosure (never first)

“I’m so sorry Ms. Jones, I lost my dog to Cancer last year and know how painful it can be.”

Verbal Communication

Active Listening

Listening not only to what the person is saying but the feelings behind what the client is saying. Watch body language/tone of voice.

- ❖ Paraphrasing
- ❖ Necessary Silences
- ❖ Minimal Encouragers

Non-Verbal Communication

Attending Body Language

- ❖ Open Body Posture
- ❖ Encouraging Gestures
- ❖ Direct Eye Contact
- ❖ Nonjudgmental Facial Expressions
- ❖ Affirmative Head Nods

Touch – A gentle touch of an arm or shoulder during a tense or anxious time can often mean more than words.

Who is the Griever?

- ❖ One thing is for sure, each person grieves differently.
- ❖ Each loss a person goes through is processed differently than past losses.
- ❖ Personality styles can be a major factor.
- ❖ The life circumstances previously described affect how the person experiences the loss.
- ❖ It comes down to not making assumptions and being observant of cues that will help you provide the best resources the person.

Identifying At Risk Clients

Red Flag Warnings



- ❖ People who live alone and cannot identify others sources of emotional support.
- ❖ People who exhibit excessive remorse/guilt after the death.
- ❖ People who have experienced other significant losses.
- 🔊❖ Suicidal Ideation.

Types Of Support

- ❖ There are several options for support when someone loses a beloved pet.
- ❖ People should choose one or more types of support based on their comfort level, and what works best for their lifestyle.
- ❖ The main types of support are chat rooms, support groups, individual support, animal chaplains and written resources.

Chat Rooms

- ❖ Chat rooms provide anonymity for the person while also providing the benefit of hearing other grievors share their stories and experiences.
- ❖ Usually there are several trained people to keep the chat room focused and offer their support and experience while assisting new chatters as well as people returning.

Support Groups

- ❖ Support groups should be held in a neutral environment that helps makes members feel most comfortable.
- ❖ A benefit is that people have the opportunity to share and interact with each other in a supportive environment with a trained person facilitating the discussion and offering support.
- ❖ It is very important for the facilitator to keep control of the group while letting people express their grief.

Individual Counseling

- ❖ Individual counseling provides the benefit of one-on-one support for the person grieving.
- ❖ It's most useful for those who don't feel comfortable sharing their loss in the presence of others and need more individually guided counseling. Lost is the group dynamic that can assist in the healing journey.

Animal Chaplains

- ❖ Animal Chaplains provide an opportunity to include spirituality or religion into the healing journey.
- ❖ The best option is someone who is willing to offer inter faith services so that a service can be structured to meet the desires of the people.
- ❖ Services include funerals and memorials, prayer services and spiritual direction.

The Importance of Follow-Up

- ❖ Call to check in to see how people are doing and truly listen to them. Assure the person that tears are normal and that everyone heals in their own time. If you are concerned, encourage the person to seek additional pet loss support.

Compassion Fatigue

- “Inner exhaustion caused by the stress of caring for and helping others who are traumatized or suffering”

- Charles Figley

- Similar to PTSD

Stress Continuum

Compassion Fatigue can occur suddenly or over time.

Burnout occurs over time.

Compassion Fatigue is a factor in Burnout.

Vicarious Traumatization can be acute or prolonged.

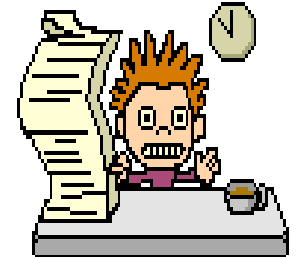
Stress



Compassion Fatigue



Burnout



Similarities:

Loss of energy

Feeling of depletion

Diminished ability to empathize

Loss of joy

Contact Information

For more information contact:

Joe Dwyer

joedwyer1207@gmail.com

Or Visit:

- www.noblestrength.life
- www.joedwyerspeaking.com