



Module 4: Pet Loss Training

Part one:

“I did not experience this much pain when my mother died.”

“I cannot believe I am still so sad about losing my dog.”

“I felt like that was my dog.” (stated by someone in a Rescue)

There is no need to attribute guilt or even give credit to the person responsible for these quotes because there are so many who have expressed these same feelings. It could be anyone. In addition, there are so many more words of despair in that regard attesting to the dire impact of losing a loving companion animal. Many actually feel it is more anguishing than losing a human companion.

As a society, we have made some progress accepting the passing of a pet, though in many cases, it is still a disenfranchised loss.

Regardless of the degree of devastation, as an Animal Chaplain you will be called upon to provide pet loss assistance to people you administer.

It is important to know, when someone exhibits unhealthy or exaggerated signs and references solutions that are dangerous and perhaps even life-threatening, it goes beyond the scope of this training. This being the case, always have on hand referrals for a licensed professional therapist.

Even when a dog is adopted, which is a good thing, there is a sense of loss for the foster and the Rescue.

Nevertheless, there are many instances in which you will be able to help the person cope with their grief journey.

When Your Pet Dies by Alan D. Walfet, Ph.D. is a good resource book.

Following is some helpful information on pet loss.

Often, we have an urge to say something to the person experiencing grief, and although not intentionally, it may not be appropriate for the situation and be more injurious.

Start out with a few *don'ts*:

- Expect the person to mourn and heal in a certain way or within a certain time frame
- Talk about your own losses especially early on
- Use judgmental words like...should and shouldn't
- Begin any sentence with the words "at least"
- Compare one loss with another
- Try to change their thoughts and feelings
- Try to fill up every moment with conversation
- Ignore warning signs of self-destructive behavior

The five stages of grief:

Denial

Anger

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance

- There is no time limit on any of these stages
- There is a strong possibility that the person swings back and forth between stages
- Although progress is made, total acceptance may never occur. It is a slow process and many times complete closure does not happen for every person.

Optional phone interview is encouraged at this point. Kindly contact me if you wish to participate in a phone discussion.

Part two:

Our class will schedule about 60-90 minutes to conduct a conference call as we work through the PowerPoint on Pet Loss training, Part two.

This will provide an opportunity for discussion and sharing.

Module 4: Assignments

Assignment Number 1

Now that we have covered some of the *don'ts*, describe some of the best *do's* that you feel will fit and profit most pet loss situations.

Assignment Number 2

Provide your thoughts on how you would proceed in the following situation:

A woman comes to you for help after her dog was euthanized by her Veterinarian. Rocket was twelve years old and suffered from cancer. The woman, Ethel feels guilty for making the decision to euthanize Rocket and is annoyed with the Veterinarian who she claims did not demonstrate the best bedside manner. Ethel informs you that this happened two weeks ago and she was cruelly told she should not dwell on her anger, but move on instead!

Our next group call will incorporate a more enhanced lesson on pet loss and bereavement.

Congratulations!
You have successfully completed Module
4.

Find a way to celebrate this accomplishment then spend some time to rest and reflect before moving on to Module 5.