When a pet dies

Grief after the death of a pet, and what helps.

A pet is part of the household. They are there every morning and every evening, they shape your routines, and they ask for nothing complicated. When they die, the house feels wrong. Grief after losing a pet can be as strong as grief for a person, and there is nothing silly or excessive about it.

What makes it harder

- **"It was only a dog."** Other people may not understand, and there is no funeral and no time off. Grief that is not recognised is lonelier.
- **The day is full of gaps.** The walk, the feeding time, the sound at the door. Each one is a reminder, many times a day.
- **Guilt about the end.** If you had to decide to have your pet put to sleep, you may go over it again and again. Too soon? Too late? Should I have noticed earlier? Nearly everyone does this. You made the kindest decision you could with what you knew.
- **It can stir up other losses.** An older grief sometimes comes back with this one.

What helps

1. Let yourself be sad. You do not have to justify it to anyone.
2. Talk to people who understand, especially others who have lost a pet.
3. Mark it. A photo, a tree planted, a collar kept, a few words said.
4. Keep the walk, if it was good for you. The routine looked after you as well.
5. Go gently with children. Use plain, honest words. "Died" is kinder than "went to sleep", which can frighten them.
6. Other pets may be unsettled too. Keep their routine steady.

Another pet?

There is no right time, and no disloyalty in it. Some people are ready in weeks and some never are. A new animal does not replace the old one. It is the start of a different relationship.

What I miss most about them

How I would like to remember them

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