

lissa.scott

From: lissa.scott [lissa.scott@verizon.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 05, 2007 6:30 PM
To: 'extMAGDRL'
Subject: DOE Topic #38: Coping with the Loss of Your Pet

Hi All,

Several of us have dealt with the loss of a beloved pet this year. In looking for a memorial for our Kuna, I came across this helpful list from Iowa State University's Veterinary Teaching Hospital web site. I'm sharing it (with permission) as Dog Owner Education topic #38: Coping with the loss of your pet.

Ten ways to cope with the Loss of Your Pet

1. **Give yourself permission to grieve** because you've experienced a tremendous loss. For many of us, beloved pets are our "children" - companions who provide unconditional love.
2. **Realize that you're not going crazy when you grieve deeply for a pet.** It's normal when you've sustained a great loss to feel debilitated for a while. So take all the time you need to heal.
3. **Know that guilt often accompanies grief, especially over pets.** Because your pet couldn't tell you that he/she was sick, you may feel guilt about not taking him/her to the vet sooner. Or you may feel responsible if your pet was killed after escaping from the yard. Guilt - which suggests that you could have done something - can mask the fear of being powerless to keep your pet alive.
4. **Find a special way to say goodbye to your pet.** Often, pet loss happens so quickly that you don't have time to say the things you wanted. But you can do so even after a pet has died. Write a letter to your pet. Have family ritual celebrating his/her life and acknowledging death. Or look at a photo of your pet and tell him/her all you would have said if there had been time.
5. **Pick a meaningful way to memorialize your pet.** Do a scrapbook. Plant a tree, write a poem, donate money in your pet's name to a charity for animals or a pet loss support hotline.
6. **If you decide to get another pet, do so only when you are ready.** You will never be able to replace the pet you have lost; it takes time to invest emotionally in another.
7. **Find at least one other person you can talk to openly about your loss.** Share your feelings without censorship. Realize that family members or other beloved ones may grieve differently or be in too much pain to support you.
8. **Be especially good to yourself,** because it takes a lot of energy to grieve. Get extra rest. Eat a healthful diet. Drink lots of water. Avoid caffeine. Exercise moderately. Deeply relax through massage or meditation. For sleep problems, take non-addictive herbal drops or capsules from a health food store.
9. **Find creative expression for your feelings:**
 - a. Do journaling. Write down whatever you're feeling without criticism.
 - b. Work out your feelings in clay. Be mindful of what you've created because it will have a special meaning for you.
 - c. Use pastels, oils, charcoal, crayons, pen, or pencil to draw your feelings.
 - d. Make a collage that captures your feelings in pictures.
10. **Each day, to at least one thing that brings you joy.** Fly a kite, take a walk, garden, watch the sunset, listen to music, see a funny movie. And allow yourself to laugh! Laughter releases the body's natural opiates and gives respite from pain.

As always, thanks for educating yourself to benefit dogs and their owners!

Lissa Scott
AKC Canine Good Citizen Evaluator
Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League
MAGDRL web: <http://www.magdrl.org>
MAGDRL events: <http://www.lissa.net/Joya/MAGDRL.htm>
Bloat info: http://www.lissa.net/Joya/Merlot_bloat.htm
Gastropexy info: <http://www.lissa.net/Joya/Lapro-Pexy.htm>
Colon Torsion info: http://www.lissa.net/Joya/jupiter_torsion.htm

"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself." - Josh Billings

