



Forever FRIENDS

DEDICATED TO THOSE SUFFERING THE LOSS OF A PET

Vol. 1 Issue 3

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

by Debbie Boettcher, CSW

Those of us who lose a pet to old age or a lengthy illness may realize in hindsight that we have been experiencing something called “anticipatory grief” for quite a while prior to its death. As we see our beloved friend slow down and lose the ability and desire to do things it once enjoyed, we hastily push away any thoughts of our pet not being with us someday. But gradually we cannot deny the message of these symptoms, and consciously or subconsciously we prepare each day.

As we anticipate our pet’s death we may experience some of the emotions of grief: sadness, loneliness, guilt, anxiety, anger or denial. The opportunity of knowing that its life is coming to an end, and being willing to face that reality, allows us a chance to really appreciate the special bond and the love we have shared with our pet throughout its lifetime. We are afforded the chance to realize that “precious and few are the moments we two can share”. We are allowed the chance to give an extra hug and kiss everyday before we leave and each night before we sleep, and whisper into those soft ears how much we love this special creature.

How does this anticipatory grief affect us after the death of our beloved pet? Some people tell me that their grief isn’t as prolonged or intense as they thought it would be; recognizing that they had actually been grieving the loss of their pet while it was still living. Perhaps their eyes filled with tears as they

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went out alone for walks where their dog used to eagerly accompany them, knowing it now preferred to stay home and sleep, snoring loudly, deaf to any sounds that previously would have awakened it. In this case, anticipatory grief seems to ease the intensity of the grief experienced after the actual death, in that a person is more prepared for the death, and has already experienced much of the pain of grief.

However, often people are surprised to discover the advanced age or lengthy illness of a pet hasn’t prepared them for this death as much as they thought. This often happens when a pet with a serious illness almost dies from it, and then rallies and temporarily recovers. When this occurs repeatedly, anticipatory grief is often replaced with hope and the expectation that our best friend will recover, as it had so many times before. In this case, we may be in shock and disbelief when our friend and companion finally dies. Our emotions of grief may be intense as death was thwarted so many times that we feel unprepared when it does happen.



An awareness of anticipatory grief and how it may have affected us in the death of our pet may help us to understand some of our feelings, and how we are

grieving. As always, it helps to talk to other like-minded animal lovers, especially those who have experienced the death of a pet. They understand the unique, special connection that our pets have with us, and can offer their support and experience. 🐾

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Forever FRIENDS

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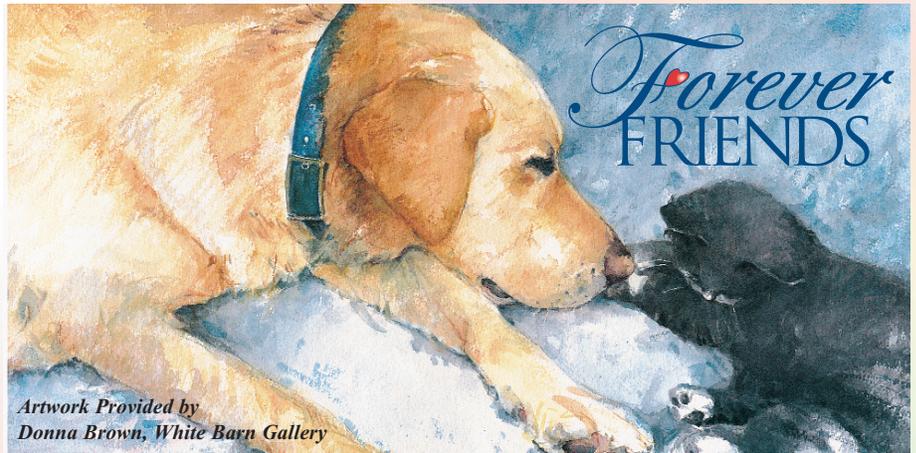
PET BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

- 🐾 **The Association for
Pet Loss and Bereavement**
(718) 382-0690
www.aplb.org

- 🐾 **Petloss.com**
For pet lovers grieving the
death of a pet or an ill pet
www.petloss.com

- 🐾 **The Rainbow Passage**
Pet Loss Support Center
(262) 376-0340
douglasc@execpc.com

- 🐾 **Books available for checkout
from *Forever Friends* Grief
Support Library**
Charlotte's Web
by E.B. White
Pet Loss by Herbert A.
Nieburg, Ph.D.
and Arlene Fischer
The Fall of Freddie the Leaf
by Leo Buscaglia, Ph.D.
I'll Always Love You
by Hans Wilhelm
When A Pet Dies
by Fred Rogers
Lifetimes by Bryan Mellonie
and Robert Ingpen
*The Tenth Good Thing About
Barney* by Judith Viorst



Remember Author Unknown

I stood by your bed last night; I came to have a peek.
I could see that you were crying. You found it hard to sleep.
I whined to you softly as you brushed away a tear,
“It’s me, I haven’t left you, I’m well, I’m fine, I’m here.”
I was close to you at breakfast, I watched you pour the tea,
You were thinking of the many times your hands reached down to me.
I was with you at the shops today. Your arms were getting sore.
I longed to take your parcels; I wish I could do more.
I was with you at my grave today; you tend it with such care.
I want to re-assure you, that I’m not lying there.
I walked with you towards the house, as you fumbled for your key.
I gently put my paw on you; I smiled and said “It’s me.”
You looked so very tired, and sank into a chair.
I tried so hard to let you know, that I was standing there.
It’s possible for me to be so near you everyday,
To say to you with certainty, “I never went away.”
You sat there very quietly, then smiled, I think you knew...
In the stillness of that evening, I was very close to you.
The day is over...I smile and watch you yawning
And say “Good-night, God bless, I’ll see you in the morning.”
And when the time is right for you to cross the brief divide,
I’ll rush across to greet you and we’ll stand, side by side.
I have so many things to show you, there is so much for you to see.
Be patient, live your journey out...then come home to be with me. 🐾