

OVER THE RAINBOW

A Guide for Holding Your Grief After Losing Your Dog

Pet Wearables for Fit Dogs



Prepared by: For Dog's Sake®

"Some things cannot be fixed. They can only be carried."

Megan Devine

"Grief and love are sisters, woven together from the beginning."

Francis Weller

WHAT NO ONE TELLS YOU

Your dog died. And the world didn't stop.

People went to work. They laughed. They posted on social media. They asked you how you're doing in that casual way that expects you to say "fine."

But you are not fine.

You are standing in the wreckage of a life that no longer makes sense. The mornings are wrong. The evenings are unbearable. The silence where their breathing used to be is so loud it drowns out everything else.

What You Need Right Now (Not What People Think You Need):

You don't need solutions. You don't need to "look on the bright side." You don't need to be reminded that "they had a good life."

You need someone to sit with you in the dark and not try to turn on the lights.

Survival Instructions for the First 72 Hours:

1. Let yourself be undone. Don't perform strength. Don't "hold it together." Fall apart if you need to. Cry until you're empty. Scream into a pillow. Sit in silence. Whatever your body needs—let it happen.

2. Find one person who won't try to fix you. Not everyone can hold space for grief. Some people will panic at your pain and try to make it smaller. Find the one person who can sit with you and say nothing. Or find an online community of people who've lost their dogs. They'll understand in ways others can't.

3. Don't make decisions yet. Don't give away their things. Don't adopt another dog. Don't force yourself to "move forward." You're in shock. Your brain isn't working the way it usually does. Give yourself time.

4. Eat. Drink water. Breathe. Even if you don't want to. Set a timer if you have to. Ask someone to bring you food. Survival is enough right now.

THE GUILT - WHEN YOUR MIND BECOMES A PROSECUTOR

Almost everyone who loses a dog is haunted by guilt.

"I should have noticed sooner." "I should have done more." "I should have chosen differently." "Did I make the right choice about euthanasia?"

Your mind is doing what minds do in the face of unbearable loss: trying to find control where there is none.

Psychologists call this "counterfactual thinking"—the endless loop of "what ifs" that your brain uses to try to rewrite the story.

But here's the truth: You cannot rewrite this story.

If You Chose Euthanasia:

This is where the guilt lives most fiercely.

You made a choice to end their life. And even though you knew it was the right thing—the merciful thing—it feels like betrayal.

Megan Devine writes: *"The reality is that love and grief are inextricably intertwined. To love is to grieve. To grieve is to have loved."*

You ended their suffering because you loved them more than you loved having them here.

That's not betrayal. That's the last act of love.

You held them. You whispered to them. You stayed even though it shattered you.

They trusted you to make this choice for them. And you did.

If They Died Suddenly:

You didn't get to say goodbye. You didn't get to prepare. One moment they were here, and the next they weren't.

And now your mind tortures you with all the signs you think you missed.

But dogs are masters at hiding pain. Vets miss things. Bodies fail without warning.

You did not fail them.

A Practice for When Guilt Comes:

Sit quietly. Place your hand on your heart.

Say out loud: *"I did the best I could with what I knew." "I loved them fully." "I cannot control everything." "I am not to blame."*

Repeat this as many times as you need. Let your body hear it.

THE WAVES - GRIEF IS NOT LINEAR

People will expect you to "get better" in a predictable way.

They'll check in after a week and say, "You doing okay now?"

And you won't know how to tell them that grief doesn't work like that.

Francis Weller teaches us about the "wild edge of sorrow":

"Grief is not a single event. It is a long, winding path that circles back on itself. Just when you think you've found your footing, another wave knocks you down."

This is normal. This is how grief moves.

You'll have a day where you smile at a memory. Where you feel almost okay.

And then something will break you open again.



A song. A smell. The way the light hits the floor where they used to sleep.

You'll think: "I thought I was getting better. What's wrong with me?"

Nothing is wrong with you.

The Dual Nature of Grief:

Grief researchers call this the "dual process model"—you oscillate between:

 **Loss-oriented moments:** Feeling the pain, crying, yearning, remembering 

Restoration-oriented moments: Distracting yourself, re-engaging with life, finding moments of normalcy

You'll swing between these states multiple times a day. And that's how it should be.

Megan Devine says: *"Grief is not something to be overcome, but something to be lived alongside. You don't move on from grief. You move forward with it."*

When a Wave Hits:

Don't fight it. Don't shame yourself for it.

Name it: *"This is a grief wave."*

Breathe through it: Four counts in, four counts out.

Let it move through you. Waves always pass.

YOUR BODY IS GRIEVING TOO

Grief is not just in your mind. It lives in your bones, your blood, your breath.

Studies show that grief activates the same neural pathways as physical pain. When people say "my heart is broken," they're not being metaphorical.

Your heart is, quite literally, aching.

What Grief Does to a Body:

- **Immune suppression** (you get sick more easily)
- **Cardiovascular stress** (chest pain, heart palpitations)
- **Digestive disruption** (nausea, loss of appetite)
- **Sleep disturbances** (insomnia or sleeping too much)
- **Cognitive fog** (forgetting things, losing focus)
- **Fatigue** (bone-deep exhaustion)

This is not weakness. This is your body trying to process an overwhelming loss.

How to Care for a Grieving Body:

1. Hydrate. Crying dehydrates you. Drink water even when you don't feel like it.

2. Move gently. Not exercise. Just movement. A slow walk. Stretching. Rocking. Let your body release what it's holding.

3. Rest without guilt. Sleep when you can. Lie down when you need to. Your body is doing hard work.

4. Let yourself be held. If you have someone who can hold you—let them. Physical touch helps regulate a dysregulated nervous system.

5. Breathe. When panic comes, breathe: Inhale for 4, hold for 7, exhale for 8. Repeat until your body softens.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LET GO

Old grief models told us we had to "let go" and "move on."

That's a lie.

Francis Weller writes:

"The work of the mature person is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other and to be stretched large by them. Grief keeps the heart fluid and soft, which helps make compassion possible."

You don't let go of your dog. You learn to carry them differently.

Grief researchers call this "continuing bonds"—the understanding that healthy grief doesn't mean severing the relationship. It means transforming it.

Your dog is still with you. Just not in the way they were before.

Ways to Carry Them Forward:

1. Create a memory ritual. Light a candle on their birthday. Donate to a rescue in their name. Plant something living.

2. Talk to them. Out loud or in your mind. Tell them about your day. Ask them what they'd want you to do. This isn't pathological—it's connection.

3. Hold their belongings. Their collar. Their favorite toy. A blanket that still smells like them. These are not "just things." They're anchors to love.

4. Write their story. Everything you remember. The funny moments. The hard ones. The way they looked at you. Write it down so it doesn't fade.

5. Let them change you. They taught you how to love without condition. How to be present. How to find joy in small things. Let those lessons live in you.

A Ritual for Connection:

Find a quiet space. Light a candle. Hold something that was theirs.

Say out loud: *"Thank you for loving me." "Thank you for teaching me." "I carry you with me."*

Sit as long as you need. Blow out the candle when you're ready.

You can do this whenever you need to feel close to them.

WHEN GRIEF GETS STUCK

Most people move through grief naturally, in their own time.

But sometimes grief becomes a trap.

What Complicated Grief Looks Like:

If, after six months, you're experiencing:

- **Intense yearning** that hasn't softened at all
- **Avoidance** so severe you can't function (won't go near parks, pet stores, other dogs)
- **Intrusive, obsessive thoughts** about their death
- **Inability to accept they're gone** (still setting out food, expecting them home)
- **Feeling life isn't worth living** without them

You may need support from a grief therapist.

Megan Devine is clear about this:

"Grief is not something to pathologize. But when grief becomes so overwhelming that you can't function, when it traps you in a loop you can't escape—that's when skilled support can help."

Asking for help is not failure. It's wisdom.

Where to Find Help:

Complicated Grief Therapy (CGT) is an evidence-based treatment specifically for prolonged grief. It has a 70% success rate.

Find a therapist trained in CGT at: **Center for Complicated Grief, Columbia University** complicatedgrief.columbia.edu

Or search for grief counselors specializing in pet loss through: **Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement** (aplb.org)

IF YOU'RE WONDERING ABOUT ANOTHER DOG

People will ask. And you might not know the answer.

There is no timeline. There is no "right" way.

Some people adopt another dog within weeks and find it helps them heal. Others wait years and still don't feel ready.

Both are okay.

What Francis Weller teaches:

"Grief and love are sisters, woven together from the beginning. There is no love that does not contain loss, and no loss that is not a reminder of the love we carry."

Getting another dog doesn't erase your grief. It doesn't replace your dog.

It's a choice to love again, knowing full well that love will one day break your heart again.

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Am I looking for *this* dog, or am I ready to love a dog?
- Can I let a new dog be themselves, or will I compare them?
- Do I have emotional capacity to bond with someone new?
- Am I adopting to avoid grief, or because I'm ready to love again?

If you're unsure, wait. There's no rush.

When You're Ready:

Say this out loud:

"I'm not replacing [dog's name]. I'm honoring them by giving another dog the love they taught me how to give."

Your heart is big enough for both.

A LETTER TO YOU

Dear Friend,

I know you're in the worst pain of your life right now.

I know you'd give anything—*anything*—to have them back for one more walk. One more morning. One more moment of their head resting on your lap.

I know you're wondering if this will ever stop hurting.

It won't stop. But it will change.

The sharp, jagged edges will soften. The waves will come less frequently. You'll start to remember the joy more than the loss.

But you'll never "get over" them. And you shouldn't have to.

Francis Weller writes: *"The work of the mature person is to carry grief in one hand and gratitude in the other."*

One day, you'll be able to hold both.

You'll cry and laugh in the same breath. You'll miss them and feel grateful they were yours. You'll carry them forward, not as a weight, but as a gift.

But not today. Maybe not for a long time.

And that's okay.

For now, just survive.

Eat. Sleep. Breathe. Cry.

Let people who love you hold you.

And know that your dog—wherever they are—knows they were loved.

They knew. They always knew.

With deep compassion,

For Dog's Sake®

A FINAL WORD FROM FOR DOG'S SAKE®

You are not alone in this.

We created this guide because we know—deeply, personally—what it means to lose a dog who was more than a pet. Who was family. Who was home.

Grief is not something to rush through or "get over." It's something to be witnessed, honored, and carried.

If this guide helped you in any way—even just to feel a little less alone in your pain—we'd be honored to hear from you.

Share your story. Tell us about your dog. Let us witness you.

Because every dog deserves to be remembered. And every person grieving deserves to be seen.

Find us here:



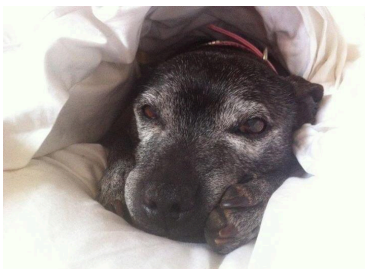
Instagram: For.Dog.Sake



Facebook: ForDogssSake

And when you're ready—when the grief has softened enough to make space for love again—we'll be here to help you welcome a new companion into your life.

Because loving a dog is worth the heartbreak. Every single time.






With compassion and understanding,




The For Dog's Sake Family 🐾

Remembering you Ella. Our beautiful girl

"Grief is just love with no place to go." — Jamie Anderson





 Animal Samaritans Pet Bereavement Service  0203 745 9859 Support for all types of pet loss

 Cats Protection "Paws to Listen"  0800 024 9494  Monday–Friday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (excluding Bank Holidays) (Primarily for cat loss, but compassionate support for all pet owners)

 The Cinnamon Trust (*for elderly or terminally ill pet owners*)  01736 757 900  Monday–Friday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

RESOURCES & SUPPORT





US Pet Loss Hotlines (Free, Confidential):

 ASPCA Pet Loss Hotline: 877-474-3310  Cornell University Pet Loss Support: 607-218-7457  Tufts University Pet Loss Support: 508-839-7966  UC Davis Pet Loss Support: 800-565-1526

UK Pet Loss Hotlines (Free, Confidential):

 Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support: 0800 096 6606 (Daily, 8:30 AM–8:30 PM)  Animal Samaritans: 0203 745 9859  Cats Protection "Paws to Listen": 0800 024 9494 (Mon–Fri, 9 AM–5 PM)  The Cinnamon Trust: 01736 757 900 (Mon–Fri, 9 AM–5 PM)

Online Support Communities:

 Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement: aplb.org  Blue Cross Pet Bereavement Support (UK): bluecross.org.uk  The Grey Muzzle Organization: Support for senior dog loss  Reddit r/Petloss: Anonymous community support

Recommended Books:

📖 ["It's OK That You're Not OK"](#) by Megan Devine 📖 ["The Wild Edge of Sorrow"](#) by Francis Weller 📖 ["Goodbye, Friend"](#) by Gary Kowalski 📖 ["The Loss of a Pet"](#) by Wallace Sife

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