

THE FUREVER FOREST

Coping with Pet Loss

a self-care guide



*“Just because I can't see you doesn't mean you're not there.
Like seeds buried in earth, or when breath becomes air.”*

— from *It's All the Same Forest*, the book I wrote to honor my cat

About



Hello, and welcome. I'm Paige Rechtman. I'm a therapist, writer, and bereaved pet parent. And this is Squiggles, my one-of-a-kind, perfect, soul-creature-pet, who passed away in June of 2023, at age 21.

If you are here, that means you've also lost a pet that means the world to you.

There is no sugar-coating it — losing a pet *sucks*. It is one of the most painful life experiences you can go through. And as awful as that pain is, it is also **a testament to how much love you and your pet shared.**

I created this guide so you have something to turn to when your greatest source of comfort, your pet, is no longer there to reach out to. And it's also how I honor Squiggles' memory — by supporting others who have lost a pet-best-friend.

I hope that you find the tools helpful, and that they bring some semblance of calm while you're navigating this devastating loss.

If they do, I invite you to join [The Furever Forest Circle](#), which offers even more support, resources, workshops, and events to help you navigate life after the loss of your pet.

Remember, we don't "heal" grief. We learn how to integrate it into our life and try our best to live as fully as possible along the way.

With time, it will get easier. **I am right here with you. And in many ways, your pet is too.**

Facts & Tips

Know these facts about grief as you navigate your journey.

Crying is healthy

Letting yourself cry can actually help you feel better. Your tears hold stress hormones. Releasing them reduces emotional pain while increasing well-being.

Schedule “grief time”

It may seem counterproductive, but dedicating time to be sad about your pet can help you feel less overwhelmed. Start by giving yourself 20–30 minutes of quiet time to think about your pet.

Losing a pet is just as hard as losing a human

Pet grief is a form of disenfranchised grief — meaning your loss is not recognized by society as “significant.” This is invalid. Talk to others who understand and validate your pain.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve

Your grief timeline is unique to you, your past experiences, and your bond with your pet. Give yourself as much time as you need to grieve.

Grief is unexpressed love

Grief is incredibly painful. And grief is breathtakingly beautiful. Because grief is all of the unexpressed love you have for the one you lost.

The Basics

Self-care while grieving is about the smallest of acts. You don't have to do it all. If you take one tiny step to care for your wellbeing today, that is enough. Remember to be as gentle with yourself as possible.

1

Water

During the first few days of loss, you may be in shock. Keep water with you and try your best to take small sips throughout the day.

2

Nourishment

Even if you have no appetite, try to get some food in your system. Eat whatever appeals to you. And try to limit alcohol, especially if you're using it to cope with the pain of your loss.

3

Movement

Getting out of bed might feel impossible right after the loss. Don't put pressure on yourself in those first few days. Eventually, try to bring yourself to get out of bed. A shower or a short walk is more than enough.

4

Nature

Spending time in nature can help clear your mind and feel connected to your pet. Nature reminds you of the circle of life, and that we are all a part of something greater than ourselves.

5

Sleep

Sleep problems are very common when you're grieving. Limit caffeine in the afternoons. Try to keep a consistent sleep schedule. Talk to your doctor if sleep issues are affecting your functioning.

6

Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing can help calm your nervous system so you feel more at peace. Spend a few minutes each day breathing deeply and slowly, and try it before falling asleep.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Give Yourself Permission

If you'd like, print this out and draw a picture of your pet doing something they always loved to do (no artistic skills required!). Hang this page up as a reminder that you have permission to take whatever you need while you're grieving.

If you'd like a dedicated place to hold onto their memory — the little details you never want to forget — that's exactly what I made my guided journal for. Take a look → *Furever in My Heart: A Year of Remembering*

Take What You Need

A GOOD CRY

A GLASS OF
WATER

COMFORT FOOD

MENTAL
HEALTH DAY

A HUG

NIGHT OUT
WITH FRIENDS

BINGE WATCH A
SHOW

SCREAM INTO
YOUR PILLOW

COMIC RELIEF

PEOPLE WHO
UNDERSTAND
(CLICK HERE)

Self-Compassion

Getting rid of your pain will not work; *tend to it instead.*

Self-compassion means treating yourself with as much love and care as you would your pet.

In a nutshell, self-compassion is treating yourself with grace and loving kindness.

While you're grieving your pet, practicing self-compassion takes your self-care efforts deeper. Here's what it can look like.

01 Speak to yourself with kindness

Pay attention to how you talk to yourself, and be extra gentle. Try saying things like:

"It's okay that I'm hurting."

"I don't have to do it all right now."

"I can take as much time as I need to grieve."

"I'm allowed to feel sad."

02 Remember your common humanity

The pain, suffering, and vulnerability you feel is nothing to be ashamed of. Loss is part of the human experience. **You aren't alone.**

03 Be mindful, without judgment

Notice how you feel by observing your experience with curiosity, instead of over-identifying with it or pushing it away.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Comfort Toolbox

Having a variety of self-care practices to turn to while grieving can help you cope. Some days, one option may work better than another. That's okay. Here are some ideas to get you started — add the practices that work for you in the blank spaces.

Take a hot shower

Do a yoga class

Lay in a sunbeam

Listen to your favorite music

Look at photos of your pet

Throw out your to-do list

Make some tea and journal

Watch a light-hearted movie

Make your bed

Call or text a supportive friend

Cook a nourishing meal

Take a short nap

Cry

Sign up for an art class

7 Days of Self-Care

Each day, do one small thing to care for yourself. Use this guide for ideas.

You've already started. Just by being here and taking a moment to think about self-care, you're taking a major step toward tending to your grief — and it matters.

Some examples:

- "I drank water to hydrate."
- "I gave myself permission to have a good cry."
- "I took a shower."

No pressure. No perfect way. And remember, if some days you're just surviving, that's more than enough.

DAY 1 *I downloaded this self-care guide and looked over it.*

DAY 2

DAY 3

DAY 4

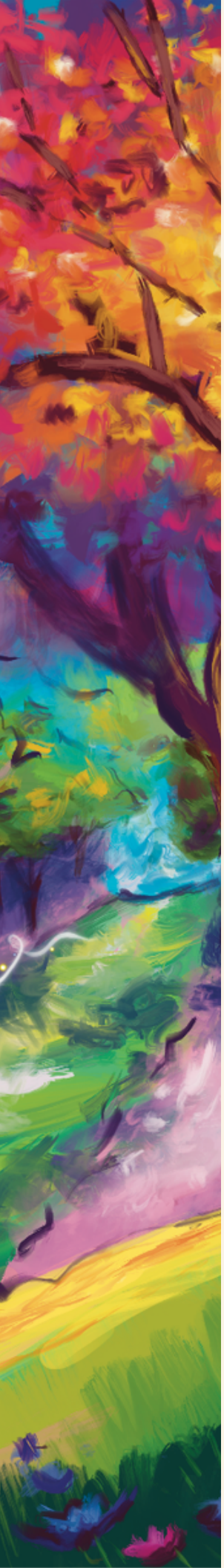
DAY 5

DAY 6

DAY 7

This is the gentle, do-it-yourself version. If you'd like more guidance — daily lessons and support that walk you through the first month after losing your pet — that's what my guided course offers, whenever you're ready.

Take a look → [Navigating the First Month of Pet Loss](#)



Before You Go

Self-care is one piece of getting through the day without your pet by your side — but the first month without them can feel particularly surreal and excruciating. There is nothing wrong with getting the support you need.

I created [Navigating the First Month Without Your Pet](#) as a guided path through the hardest early days: riding the waves of grief, understanding how you feel, releasing guilt, and finding ways to cope with triggers.

→ [Start here](#)

And whenever you're ready, there's more to lean on by visiting my website, [here](#).

Sending a big hug your way 💙
Paige

The Furever Forest offers educational and peer support, not therapy or mental health treatment.

thefureverforest.com