

Grieving for a Dog

Tips to help grieving dog owners make it through the holidays.

Posted: December 16, 2008, 5 a.m. EST

The holiday season can be overwhelming for some as memories of past holidays and loved ones, including departed pets, are conjured. Whether the wound is still fresh or your dog or cat has been gone for some time, the grieving process is very important. Colleen Mihelich, founder and creative director of Peternity, a company dedicated to memorializing pets, offers several helpful tips on how to honor your pet during the holidays.

You know the old adage "what you resist persists?" During the holidays, rather than trying to push aside the pain and sadness that you're feeling in missing your pet, allow yourself to acknowledge the way that you feel. Expressing your feelings can help minimize their power over you. Write a letter to your pet telling him the things that you miss about him and thank him for all of the precious memories and friendship that he gave you.

During your holiday meal, place a special candle in the middle of the table and light it in memory of your pet. He will be with you in spirit and will still be included.

Take your favorite book on grieving and write a dedication in the inside cover to your pet. Donate it to your local library.

Give yourself a holiday de-stressing gift and treat yourself to something that you find relaxing and rejuvenating.

Volunteer at a shelter or animal rescue – maybe even take home a new pet. When grieving, it may lift your spirit to give to others who are in need.

Many of these suggestions can be useful in helping you process your grief or create traditions to honor your beloved pets. Every person grieves differently, but it's important to surround oneself with support and focus on the good times.