

THE POWER OF PETS

"As a veterinarian, I can appreciate that people do not always receive the support they need from friends, family and coworkers after losing a beloved pet. Marybeth's book is invaluable for pet owners as they move through their loss and open their hearts to the healing power of the human-animal bond."

DR. COLLEEN SKAVINSKY, DVM CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER WESTERN FINANCIAL INSURANCE COMPANY

"Weaving her own perspectives and experiences with those of others, Marybeth Haines has created an easy-to-read, practical resource for those grieving the loss of a pet. From the very first page, she joins the reader as if in the same room, conversing as one's best friend at a time of need. Hope, the element that sustains us to every tomorrow, is threaded throughout her book as she sensitively guides the reader through the seven tools. The Power of Pets is a welcome addition to the world's library of books that recognize and celebrate the human-animal bond."

DEBBIE STOEWEN DVM, MSW, RSW, PHD CEO (CARE AND EMPATHY OFFICER) PETS PLUS US

"In The Power of Pets, Marybeth Haines reinforces the impactful role of how pets have become such an important part of our lives. They are our family members and friends. If you have experienced the loss of a pet and are ready to take the next step in healing from grief, I highly encourage you to read this book."

- MARY SIEMIESZ NESTLÉ PURINA PET CARE CANADA "I highly recommend The Power of Pets as an invaluable tool for anyone who is experiencing the loss of a pet and is ready to move beyond the grief. Marybeth's passion and desire in helping others are present from the moment you meet her or read her books."

- GERRY ROBERT INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE MILLIONAIRE MINDSET

"Every pet lover experiences grief and loss at some point. Marybeth Haines approaches the topic of loss in a way that is as practical as it is profound. The Power of Pets will take you on a journey from acknowledging the loss to moving forward into healing. This book is one that everyone should keep on hand for themselves or for a friend."

KIM CAMPBELL THORNTON AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR OF MORE THAN 25 PET CARE BOOKS

'The love of a pet – and for a pet – is forever. When a pet passes on, our world can fall apart. Fortunately we have a compassionate ally in Marybeth Haines. Her must-read book, The Power of Pets, delivers invaluable tools for anyone coping with the loss of a pet."

- ARDEN MOORE
THE PAWSITIVE COACH™ AND AUTHOR OF WHAT DOGS WANT

"Marybeth understands what it's like to grieve and to heal. She shares powerful tools that you can implement immediately with empowerment and inspiration. As a skilled pet trainer, I highly recommend The Power of Pets to anyone who has loved and lost a pet. The bond and connection are immeasurable and this book will support you in moving forward into healing."

- MIKKEL BECKER THE FEARLESS TRAINER ANIMAL TRAINER FOR VETSTREET.COM SYNDICATED COLUMNIST AND AUTHOR

"The Power of Pets provides an insight into the intimate relationships that many people experience with animals and provides an opportunity for healing and growth when that relationship ends. As a veterinarian and Faculty Advisor of the Ontario Veterinary College Pet Loss Support Hotline, I have researched and experienced first hand the power of the human - animal bond most specifically with grief and loss. After connecting with Marybeth, I have found her enthusiasm and genuine concern and desire in helping others through their grief inspirational. In this book, she will lead you on a journey in recognizing the gifts pets give to us with compassion and empowerment."

- DR MICHAEL MEEHAN BVSC, BSC(HONS), PHD FACULTY ADVISOR FOR OVC PET LOSS SUPPORT HOTLINE, ONTARIO VETERINARY COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

"Through The Power of Pets, Marybeth highlights the significant role pets play in our lives. This book helps empower the reader to heal and to move past grief, making it an effective tool to support pet owners experiencing loss."

JESSICA DANELON COMMUNICATION & CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIRECTOR ROYAL CANIN CANADA

"In this book, Marybeth Haines shares on a subject that is universal worldwide. She provides insightful support with the grieving process along with effective steps towards healing and recovery. The Power of Pets is a book every pet lover should have."

- TAMAR GELLER
FOUNDER; THE LOVED DOG™

LIFE COACH FOR DOGS AND THEIR PEOPLE
NY TIMES BEST SELLING AUTHOR

YOUR FREE GIFT: THE POWER OF PETS COMPANION JOURNAL



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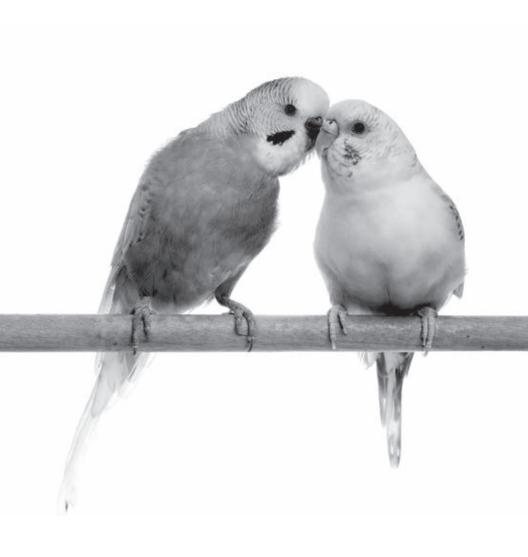
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THE POWER OF PETS

7 EFFECTIVE TOOLS TO HEAL FROM PET LOSS

MARYBETH HAINES



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is dedicated to those who have loved and lost their pets and to all of those pets that have loved us.

My first acknowledgement is to my father, Ralph who taught me the magnificent role animals play in our lives. Thank you for teaching me to follow my dreams, follow my passion and create.

To my husband Troy, my mother Maurie, my sister Kellie and my brother Rafe; thank you for believing, supporting and encouraging me during every step big or small.

To my mentor Gerry Robert — you took my dream and supported me in making it come true. You've changed my life! Thank you!

To Deb Turton my Production Manager — thank you for helping me in fitting all these pieces together. You encouraged and inspired me all the way!









To Kitty, my inspiration and reason for writing *The Power of Pets*. Thank you for your many gifts.

"I believe that deep within our hearts, we genuinely understand that death is a part of life. It actually shows us meaning as to why we are here by reminding us how precious life really is."

- MARYBETH HAINES



Kitty ~ May 3, 1991 to December 25, 2011



FOREWORD

When Marybeth asked me to write the foreword for her book, I was immediately taken by her knowledge, compassion and commitment to pets and people. Marybeth's book is testimony to a woman who is passionate about highlighting the roles pets play in our lives and the benefits of the relationships we share with them. Her message is offered through inspiration and personal empowerment.

Growing up on a family farm in southern Idaho gifted years of experience where I was able to learn from animals. After leaving the farm and moving to veterinary medicine, I've become a strong advocate for them and have dedicated much of my time to making their lives better so that those who love them can love them well. Practicing veterinary medicine for over 30 years has provided me an opportunity to support the bond and connection a pet gives.









The Power of Pets – 7 Effective Tools To Heal From Pet Loss is a book that has the ability to change people's lives in a powerful and positive way. The collaboration of wisdom using practical tools for healing is found within the pages of this book. We have experienced the challenges, missing our beloved pet and the feelings of unhappiness. The tools in this book will empower you with courage to take each step.

Marybeth will inspire you to face the challenges, encourage and remind you that you are being guided and supported every step of the way. Within these pages are the keys to help you find clarity so you can achieve healing in this very touching subject.

- DR. MARTY BECKER
"AMERICA'S VETERINARIAN"

AUTHOR OF 24 BOOKS

FEATURED CORRESPONDENT ON VETSTREET.COM

VETERINARY CONTRIBUTOR FOR GOOD MORNING AMERICA AND THE DR. OZ SHOW.



PAWS OF REFLECTION

When Marybeth asked me to share my reflections for this book, my memory instantly went to the reason why I chose this field of supporting animals in the first place. I have fond memories while growing up of taking care of animals. In fact, at one point, I actually wanted to become a veterinarian.

As CEO of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, I face various situations in supporting animals every day. Many of us, myself included, have felt the loss of a pet and each of us have grieved in our own way.

While growing up, I remember many happy years with our dog Tessu. After her passing, we received a beautiful card of condolence. This act of a simple card had allowed us to accept our grief and know that it was okay to be sad. Ever since, I have chosen to do the same and extend to other people so that they too can feel their grief. It is when grief is felt, that healing can follow.



Keeping the memories close and sharing them with my children who have never met Tessu brings me comfort. They hear stories, see pictures and know her as one of our family. Being able to celebrate our time we had together is an important part of realizing that we will always have her with us.

I've read dozens of books, many of which were extremely helpful. This book is different as Marybeth Haines shares healing in a new light. Using the tools outlined in this book reinforces to me how powerful healing can be and is an invaluable tool for anyone who is experiencing the loss of a pet.

BARBARA CARTWRIGHT
 CEO, CANADIAN FEDERATION OF HUMANE SOCIETIES

"It is important to recognize that grieving is natural and it is normal to grieve for a companion in your life. Healing takes time and an important part of this process is realizing that you will always have their memories with you."

BARBARA CARTWRIGHT, CEO,
 CANADIAN FEDERATION OF HUMANE SOCIETIES



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A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

Did you know that your healing journey has already begun? You would not be reading this book right now if it hadn't and for that, I want to welcome you.

This book takes you on a journey of healing and is open to everyone from all walks of life. It is a journey of discovery so that we can mend and continue to move forward. *The Power of Pets* is about pet loss,

Did you know that your healing journey has already begun?

however, you may be pleased to discover that the main tools in this book can be easily utilized to help you heal from any type of loss.

In this book, you will learn about 7 effective tools for healing and how to apply them. It is important to note that these tools are not rocket science nor are they new. These tools for healing are strategies that we don't always see, although they have always been within us.







Often we cannot see these tools because we are on the inside looking out. We are experiencing many different emotions and often these emotions can feel like a whirlwind to us. We may feel like we have lost the control we once had. Perhaps coming back to common ground with some gentle guidance is all we need to feel better.

I invite you to walk this path with me, taking it step by step and remembering that you are not alone. Let's begin, shall we?



Photo credit: Souls Reflections



ALL PATHS LEAD TO HEALING

"Grief is like a snowflake; unique in shape and size. All emotions are unique."

- MELISSA AXLER

I invite you to go on a journey with me and I'd like you to use your imagination for the next few minutes.

This journey begins in a plush green garden. In this garden, you see many flowers, plants, and trees. The colours are vibrant and breathtaking. You notice there is a path and this path is made of cobblestone. You decide you are ready to take a walk and see where this path might lead.

As you walk along the path, you notice birds singing; there is a brook and you hear the soft sounds of



nature singing to you. You continue walking and notice something that looks like a fork in the road where you can go left or you can go right. As you look closer, you notice that there are more forks. In fact there are several of them. There are seven forks in total.

The seven forks in the road may look overwhelming at first and you instinctively want to turn back. You don't know where these forks or paths will lead you. Maybe you'll get lost! But then you see a sign that says: "All Paths Lead To Healing."

The next step is yours to choose. Will you choose one of the paths? Or will you turn around? If you choose to turn around, that's okay, it's your journey and you are in charge of it. However if you choose one of these 7 paths, you just might find it leads you to exactly where it says it will: "All Paths Lead To Healing".

To those who chose the first path, come with me and let's take that first step together.



THE HEALING JOURNEY

Animal connection with humankind has been in existence since before recorded history. The vast amount of benefits an animal provides is extraordinary. Animals have this remarkable ability to assist in lowering a person's blood pressure when we pet them, or bring a smile to someone who is experiencing depression. Studies also show that on average, pet owners are less lonely, have higher selfesteem and exercise more. In my opinion, animals are Guardian Angels in animal form. We as humans have only begun to scratch the surface of what wondrous intellect and communication animals have.

Amos the cat was adopted from a local shelter and came to live in a nursing home. He came to comfort the elderly residents who lived there. As he became accustomed to his new living environment, staff began noticing that Amos had a 6th sense about him. When the time came for the end of life for residents of this home, days before, Amos would sit at their feet at the end of the











bed for hours on end. He would spend day and night with them almost as if to comfort them during their transition from life to death.

The staff was amazed at the dedication Amos had for the residents. And it would happen time and time again. The staff would know who would be next to pass on as Amos would let them know by his stance by their feet at the end of the bed. They described Amos as "an incredible cat" and called him "our palliative care cat." After Amos' passing, staff placed a plaque on the wall with special recognition of Amos being an employee with years of service forever remembered in the home.



Photo credit: Matthew Joseph Photography



If you are an animal lover, most likely you have, or have had, a pet at some point. When a beloved pet passes away, often a large void remains in your heart.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Jessica Danelon, Communications and Corporate Affairs Director with Royal Canin Canada during the creation of this book.

Being a pet owner and having experienced pet loss herself, Jessica was able to identify with this touching subject and she shared something that struck a chord of kindness with me. She said with respect to animals, "Love them like people but respect them for the physiology they physiology have."

"Love them like people but respect them for the physiology they have."

It made me think about how long the human life span is compared to how long our pets live. It's inevitable that when one owns a pet, more times than not, their lifetime will end before ours does. I feel the life span of a pet goes too fast for us and what Jessica said is very powerful. No wonder we feel so much grief, but why are we so hard on ourselves?

When we realize that pets do not possess the same genetic makeup as people, we need to respect their needs, even at the end. Understanding the differences between animals and humans can create a comfort. We would love our pets to live so much longer than the time we are given with them. However since this is not the



case, how we can care for them can play a huge and key role in your healing when they're gone.

Jessica said,

"When you've done your utmost to keep your pet healthy and happy which I know every pet owner wants to do, then you can have that to help with the grieving process which provides the ability to be able to heal as you move on."

Another connection I made was with Ernie Slone who is Editor of *DOG FANCY*, DogChannel.com. Through personal and professional experience, Ernie has completed extensive research regarding the 'human-animal bond and connection'. Each week, Ernie and his service dogs Gordon and Gypsy visit patients in hospitals. They have visited more than 21,000 people in the last 5.5 years and have witnessed remarkable benefits in how the patients respond to this type of therapy. They visit, talk and touch lives, one person at a time. It was empowering to hear him explain how psychologists and psychiatrists have incorporated the use of therapy dogs in their practices. The therapy dogs are effectively helping people feel safe and comfortable enough to open up in their own therapy. The evidence is clear - pets heal. Pets



are powerful intuitive beings and because of their gifts, we as people benefit from this connection and we love them.

Throughout the development of this book, I had the opportunity to talk with many incredible people including when I was at an appointment, getting groceries or exercising. I don't believe we realize the extraordinary conversations that can come from speaking to a total stranger in line at a store or while waiting for a bus. It was interesting to discover that each person I spoke with would share something with me on how they experienced grief from losing their pet.

There were a few people that I spoke with that were not pet owners. They didn't like to have pets or were never really the type to own a pet. However, they did say that they knew of someone close to them who had lost a pet and how they felt very sad and wanted to help them with the grieving they were experiencing.

I had the most wonderful conversations with complete strangers. They told me the experiences and challenges they had and how they impacted their lives. I enjoyed the process of listening to their stories about a pet or memory and I received good energy from these interactions too.

As a result, every single person I spoke to shared information with me that opened up an opportunity for



sharing and healing. It strongly brought to my attention how, in some parts of society, we have been taught

This book is meant to be of assistance for you to feel comfort and understanding, so you can heal your grief. not to talk about these things openly and that many of us do need an outlet in which we can communicate our thoughts and feelings and truly heal from our grief and loss.

This book is meant to be of assistance for you to feel comfort and understanding, so you can heal your grief. As you continue

to read onwards, you will find 7 effective tools for healing from pet loss and information on each of them:

Tool #1 ~ Recognition

Tool #2 ~ Permission

Tool #3 ~ Learning

Tool #4 ~ Personal Empowerment

Tool #5 ~ Receiving Guidance

Tool #6 ~ Taking Action

Tool #7 ~ Gifts of Many

This step-by-step process will help you discover some of the reasons for your grief and how you can transform your grief into healing.



TOOL #1 - RECOGNITION

"Our pets connect us to parts of our life and parts of ourselves that we wouldn't otherwise experience."

DR. DEBBIE STOEWEN,
 PETS PLUS US

The first tool I wish to share with you is a very simple concept or step that can be very difficult to master. I say this with complete honesty and a sense of humour. Why do the simplest concepts seem so difficult? I invite you to walk along this path with me and welcome what unfolds.











Whether a pet dies suddenly or gradually, someone who has lost a pet often does not realize that the trauma can be as strong as if they have lost a person.

While writing this book, I wanted to interview people who have worked on the front lines in caring for pets. Dianna Hull, Customer Experience Manager with Trupanion Pet Insurance, worked 14.5 years in veterinary hospitals before coming to Trupanion. Diana has been present with many people in the last moments their pets' lives. From being on the front line in this area of grief and loss, she certainly understands the emotions, the feelings and the sorrow that follow.

"For many people, myself included, pets are an important part of my life; they are part of my family. It's important to acknowledge that and for people to feel that it's acknowledged and to have others recognize that bond they have with their pet."



This merges very nicely with this tool of Recognition as I share with you the following story about Melissa. When we recognize the loving bond that we have with our pets and when the time comes for them to pass and no longer be with us, we also require the recognition that healing needs to take place.

Melissa was going through a separation from her husband. He was her high school sweetheart and they were married shortly after graduation. Being together for 15 years, she became accustomed to feeling that her identity was not just hers but both of them together. When the time came for them to finally agree that it was best to separate, it was one of the most challenging things she had ever done. After the separation and when the house became quiet with just her movement around the home, she found herself in a deep depression.



One day there was a knock at her door. Her friend had stopped by to say hello and had the most beautiful dog with her. This dog was a gift to help in the healing of the separation and Melissa immediately bonded with her new friend and companion. She named him Bowser.

They spent two years together, going for walks and visiting others. Bowser was always by her side and always there for her. After some time, Bowser had become ill and after many trips to the vet, it came to the point where she needed to make an extremely hard decision. Would she

continue the medical treatment to keep Bowser alive, but not at his best health or choose for humane euthanasia to end his suffering? Knowing the pain her beloved Bowser was feeling, she chose to allow him peace and had him put to sleep.

Going home that day without Bowser by her side, the deep depression returned. At first she resisted these feelings, telling herself they were silly. She would think thoughts such as, "He's just a dog" and "It's not the same as when my husband left." The more she resisted these feelings, the worse her depression became. She became fearful of meeting others and refused to get another pet. The pain was too hard and she *never ever* wanted to experience that again. Her worry and sorrow continued and things were not getting better.

She finally decided to seek counselling because she felt her life was turning in circles without an exit. It was her counsellor who helped her gain clear focus and observe what was actually happening to her. She learned how she had not been in tune with what she was truly feeling and that she was in fact resisting the emotions of grief and then wondering why her depression was deepening and not getting better.

When Melissa had the recognition and acknowledgement that her feelings were real and there was a problem, she came to the realization that

In any type of healing process, in order for the healing to take place, it's always up to us to do the work. This work can feel very overwhelming but time and time again, we prove to ourselves that we can do it!

she needed help and the healing process began. Did she really get through the loss of her husband? Did the loss of Bowser trigger her feelings of grief from her separation? Once the counsellor validated her thoughts and emotions, she began to realize she was not alone and there were others who have also experienced the same types of loss. It wasn't until she came to the point of recognition, that she was able to take the next step, even if just a baby step, on her healing journey.

In any type of healing process, in order for the healing to take place, it's always up to us to do the work. This work can feel very overwhelming but time and time again, we prove to ourselves that we can do it!

When it comes time to heal from the death of a pet or animal companion, most times we tend to downplay what we are feeling and we often keep the mourning to ourselves. We go through the emotions such as anger, worry, sadness, frustration and confusion, yet we tend to not want to admit that we are feeling these feelings because we miss our pet.

At the workplace, usual standards dictate an allowance of 3 days bereavement leave upon the death of an immediate family member. After the 3 days have passed, you are expected to return to work and continue on as normal.

The grieving process takes much longer than 3 days and we have become accustomed by societal standards to move on quickly. Grieving takes time and we will go into more detail on this in a future chapter. My point for bringing this up now is to point out that we usually don't give ourselves the time we require to heal from the death of our pet. Our pets are our family and friends. They are our companions, our listeners and our unconditional love.

I want to make something very clear to you — these emotions and feelings of grief over the loss of your pet are normal and natural.

Let me ask you some questions:

- How much time did you spend with your pet?
- 2. Was your pet always there for you whenever you needed him/her?
- 3. Was there a time when you experienced hardship and your pet was there for you, always by your side unconditionally?
- 4. If your pet was with you only for a short time, did your pet give you a close and loving companionship?

The answers to these questions I'm sure will confirm and validate my statement earlier about grieving over the death of a pet to be very normal. Did you know that research shows the human grieving process following the death of a pet is similar to that by people who have lost a family member or a close friend? In fact, there is often very little difference in the emotional attachment from an animal or human. The grieving process often remains the same.

Many times, we are told by those who care for us that "it's just a pet, it's not like it's a family member or close friend." We may also be told to "get over it, it's



only an animal." Family and friends who make these statements, are doing their best to help us. They see our suffering, they help us as best as they can and they may have different outlooks on what a pet means to them. Although other people's comments may deeply offend a person in grief, the pressure is lifted when you allow yourself to follow your own healing path. Everyone is entitled to their thoughts and opinions; it's what you do for you that counts the most.

Another area that some experience with the loss of a pet can be similar to what is known as "disenfranchised grief". Helen Hobbs, owner of Pets at Peace Pet Loss and Memorial Services in Toronto, Ontario explained that sometimes this type of loss is not an accepted loss in some societies as it would be with a human family member or friend. For example, when a mother miscarries or a suicide happens, most times people aren't comfortable talking about it and actually don't know what to say.

When experiencing the loss of a pet, sometimes friends and family members surrounding that person become uncomfortable because they do not share the same love for animals or type of relationship with pets, therefore they are not quite sure how to respond in

You received
unconditional love
from your beloved
pet and it can be
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pets are so innocent
and loving.

a supportive nature. You may feel that you are not able to openly grieve your pet in the way that you want. Again, you are not alone.

Helen said, "Support in this area is becoming more and more accepted and available," and I agree with her. Resources, organizations and tools have been increasing and are available to support pet lovers and owners.

your beloved pet and it can be sometimes more painful a loss since our pets are so innocent and loving. Sometimes with human relationships, we don't find the same level of

You received unconditional love from

unconditional love and that is why the grief and loss of a

pet can be so strong.

Taking this first step of recognition — recognizing that you are in fact grieving, acknowledging that you miss your beloved animal companion and are experiencing the many emotions that follow the death of your dear friend, is the very first step in your journey of healing.

Are you ready to take that step and recognize that it's okay to grieve?



If so, I welcome you to recognition and sincerely congratulate you for taking that step in understanding something needs to happen to heal.

As mentioned earlier, it's a very simple tool yet a challenging one for many of us. By this acknowledgement of recognition, you have now taken the next step forward onto your true healing journey.



Photo credit: Joanne Ingrassia, Toronto



TOOL # 2 - PERMISSION

"Dogs are just so innately innocent.
Their lifespans are so brief that so much is packed into such a brief time. Simple moments become substantial moments.
He was an incredibly gentle dog. He really touched everybody that knew him."

 REFLECTIONS OF NUGGET TOM A. SANDFORD,
 DOGS, DOGS, DOGS NEWSPAPER

With the tool of recognition, you have learned that the first tool in your healing is being able to identify and recognize that grief is occurring and healing needs to happen.

The next step brings us to the second effective tool in healing from pet loss called the tool of Permission.









Too often, experiencing pet loss and the feelings of grieving is hidden from others due to the fact that much of modern society does not understand grieving for pets. We often feel ashamed to open up to why we are really grieving. These feelings bottled deep inside can fester and wrap their way into what may feel similar to a large knotted ball. This knotted ball then continues to grow and manifests into something bigger if it is not dealt with and released.

Can you remember a time, perhaps as a child where something happened and you felt that your heart was truly broken? You cried and were innocent with your emotions of grieving. Many times parents and caregivers see their child upset and want to take away their pain and therefore tell them "That's enough now", "You're okay" and "It's time to go on as normal". With this happening so early in our lives, we actually have been denied permission to follow our true grieving process.

Please note there is no blame here to place on anyone, as each person does their best to help and how a person copes is often learned by traditions being passed down from generation to generation. The inherent sense of helping the child get over what it upsetting them is the



goal at hand and the parent or caregiver does what they can to help.

Being children, we had the gift of versatility and many times were able to bounce back and move forward easier than in adulthood. The original feelings however are often now in our cellular memory and we have carried these emotions forward into adulthood. Understanding our emotions and the true reason behind why we are feeling them is something that we can often overlook.

To access how you are truly feeling is an inward process where you ask yourself, "What is the feeling that I have at this time?" This is not so easy to do as we live in a fast-paced society and we most often do not take the time we need to take care of our thoughts and emotions. Often we forget to have the time just for ourselves. Sometimes, we may even have anger and emotions that come out towards others when we don't ever mean for them to happen.

Have you ever yelled or said something out of reaction, without thinking that was upsetting to someone else? And did you say to yourself after the fact ,"Where did that come from? Why did I just do that?"



This is an example of what can happen when we are not in touch with our true feelings and emotions. We also tend to shallow breathe from the upper part of our chest and diaphragm instead of full belly breathing to get

When we resist or fight
against feelings of
grief such as sadness,
anger and loneliness,
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more of those same
emotions reflecting
back on us.

adequate oxygen both in and out. Taking a minute to take 3 deep breaths can really help to bring us back to grounding and to the present moment.

When it comes to healing from any type of loss such as with pet loss, you must first give yourself permission to heal. Without this permission, healing can't happen. Often times, we fight back and resist the emotions that are coming to us. We resist these uncomfortable emotions because we don't

want to have to go through the pain and we also resist because we aren't allowing ourselves to truly grieve.

When we resist or fight against feelings of grief such as sadness, anger and loneliness, we can create a mirror effect that gives more of those same emotions reflecting back on us. Now, I don't recommend that you focus on these feelings and let them take over you day



after day. What I mean is to give yourself permission to experience them, because when you truly feel them and know you have allowed yourself to do so, the emotions can often become easier to handle as they are now being accepted and more understood. Once we realize and give ourselves the chance to grieve, we come to a moment where we look at things differently.

One important thing to remember is that the events that have happened that have led up to this defining moment in your life do not make you who you are, your choices do. You have the ability to choose your thoughts and outlook towards everything you do. Choice is a key concept here and if you choose to take ownership and give yourself permission to heal, it will then open the door to allow the healing to take place. This is a process that will take time but will happen if you want it to.

Mary Siemiesz, Executive Director Purina PetCare Legacy, (Nestlé Purina PetCare Canada) invited me to tour their PawsWay location in Toronto, Ontario and share how Purina as an organization supports community initiatives and celebrate their belief that "Life is better together with a pet." She shared what pets mean to her and how a bond with a pet enriches our lives.

"Pets add spontaneity to our lives, humour and a sense of meaning. It's a bond that reminds us to play, which I think in our busy world we don't do enough of these days. They teach us to love generously and to find new ways to look at the world. Our pets add adventure to our days and they become a central part of our fondest memories so very often."

When the emotions of grief, loss and healing are taking place, the act of self-permission is such an important step. This is actually a tool that you can use as you continue your healing.

By giving yourself the permission to heal, you begin building a healing environment that supports your journey and you can then continue taking those baby steps on your path to feeling better.

When you are ready for this step, you will know. At the very moment that permission is granted from yourself to yourself, the door opens and the gates of healing are allowed in.

You allow the opportunity for healing to take place. And this is one of the most beautiful gifts you can ever give to yourself.



TOOL # 3 - LEARNING

"What's unique about pets and our relationships with them is that they're there with us, they experience everything. Pets are there to help, there's absolutely no judgement."

KRISTEN LYNCH,
 NORTH AMERICAN PET HEALTH
 INSURANCE ASSOCIATION

Once you have completed the first two tools, Recognition and Permission, you are now ready to take the next step to walk onto the path of Learning.

This path of learning is *key* and it's a path that will begin a journey of understanding so that healing can continue.









To learn why you are feeling the way that you are and that there is a reason for the emotions you are experiencing will help you to understand more about yourself and the situation at hand. Many times, we start to feel things that we cannot explain and confusion sets in, making us feel worse because we don't understand what we are feeling.

Loss can come in many forms. It can be from a loss of a pet, a marriage, a friendship, a job, a home, or many others. Loss can be defined as a disappearance of something cherished or something special and close to a person. There is an emotional attachment that we connect to and that is what holds us in a deep and bonding tie.

When our emotional attachment to that connection becomes severed, we begin the cycle of loss and discover the many emotions that come along with it.

"In society, we're taught to push away anything that is painful. I believe when we do that, we give up that opportunity to be transformed, to heal and to learn. Allow yourself to be in the moment, feel and experience grief in a way that feels safe for you."



- ANGIE AURORA,
PAWSWAY PET DISCOVERY CENTRE

THE STAGES OF GRIEF

There are 5 stages of grief and these were originally recognized to describe the stages of human loss.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. We are all individuals with different methods of processing our feelings and emotions. These stages can be experienced

in order or they can change their order. You may find that some stages are skipped, some go back and forth from stage to stage or you experience one stage for a long period of time. I would like to validate that these feelings are normal and are there for you to experience in your own time, in your own way.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. We are all individuals with different methods of processing our feelings and emotions.

After a lengthy period of grieving and just when we feel that we are doing okay, we may find old repressed emotions arising once again! What does this mean?

Here is a brief outline of the 5 stages of grief so that we can review this information in more detail:

STAGE 1 - DENIAL

This stage of denial is similar to a feeling of numbness and shock. The system is still working on catching up emotionally to what has happened. Mentally, you know



that the death of your animal companion has occurred but your emotional and psychological state is still going through the motions to process what actually has happened.

The reason for this shock and numbness is often referred to as the body system's instinctive way of protecting itself. This protection is something that we self create so that our nervous system does not fully overwhelm itself to the point of having no coping mechanism whatsoever.

We know what has happened, however we have protected ourselves for a little while to allow us time to adjust to what has happened.

STAGE 2 - ANGER

Once the first stage of numbness and shock has started to pass, anger can become present. In modern society, anger is usually a misunderstood emotion and is usually frowned upon. Many times we are taught to 'keep the peace' instead of 'making a scene' when we are angry. However, anger is an important emotion that when displayed appropriately in the right time and place, can be a significant piece to the grief healing process.



In this stage other emotions such as hurt, loneliness, anxiety and sadness can be present as well. With all these emotions however, anger is usually the strongest. Working through these feelings of anger is an important and necessary step for when, as you take each step, you continue the journey on your healing path.

STAGE 3 - BARGAINING

Many times, this stage can happen when our beloved pet is still alive and we in secret try to make a deal with God or a higher power in an attempt to delay the inevitable. This is a weaker line of defence that puts up a barrier of protection so that we don't have to experience the painful reality.

The Bargaining stage also provides us some distraction from the pain that we are feeling even if for brief periods. After an animal companion has died, we might have questions of "What if?"

"What if I had only taken him/her to the vet sooner?"

"What if I had seen the signs early enough, would my pet still be here with me?"

"What if I had gotten a second opinion from another vet? Would my pet still be alive today?"

There can be feelings of guilt in this stage and playing of things over and over in our mind in the "what if?" question format because we want to make sure that we chose the best possible choices for our beloved pet.

STAGE 4 - DEPRESSION

The fourth stage of grief is Depression.

Depression can come in various degrees with mild depression giving you the ability to still carry out daily activities. Moderate depression is when we are still able to carry out our everyday duties however with greater challenges. With severe depression, we are not able to continue our daily routine without much needed support.

An important aspect to remember in this stage is that feelings of depression are okay. While some may tell us that we need to "get over it" and that "life must go on", we need to know that this is a process and things will happen in the course they are meant to.

Having support in all 5 stages, especially in this stage, is beneficial. There are counsellors, doctors, support groups and several online organizations that can be of great resource for healing and feeling better.

STAGE 5 - ACCEPTANCE

The fifth and last stage of grief is Acceptance.

Reaching this stage does not mean that you are fully healed and over the loss of your beloved pet. It does not mean that all is okay and that you are happy with the situation. And in some cases, this stage may never be fully reached. If the death of your animal companion was sudden or unexpected and perhaps ended tragically, it may take a long time to heal beyond the feelings of anger or denial.

However, when the time comes and this stage has been reached, you will start to view your pet's death in a different light. You are now able to see that you can look forward. There still may be good and bad days, days of sadness and days of happiness.

By continuing with your steps, you will continue to heal and know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. An example of this stage would be you smiling with a memory of your beloved pet even though there are still some tears.



GUILT

Guilt is a feeling that is felt by many pet lovers, even if they didn't do anything wrong. Often, the memory of the last moments of your pet's life may play over and over in our minds. I remember asking myself, "What if I could have done something differently?" and "Did I do everything I possibly could?" Deep down inside, I knew the answers to those questions, but I was in mourning and was attempting to deal with the loss.

Our pets depend on us to take care of them. They need us to feed them, ensure that they have enough water and the necessary things that they require on a daily basis. For dogs, we need to make sure they can get outside to walk and move around. For cats, they need to have their food and fresh water available to them. Fish need to have a clean tank with just enough food. We get used to being needed by our pets.

Since these creatures are our loving pets, it can be difficult to remain objective. Anger, as we know, is one of the 5 stages of the grieving process. Guilt is actually turning anger inward towards oneself creating negative internal thought processes and feelings.



When something happens to our pet such as illness, accident or death, we often turn inwards to the feelings of guilt. We question ourselves. We often can feel like we might have let our pet down in some way or perhaps that we missed something that we could have done for them.

You may be feeling that you did not recognize the illness in your pet in enough time. Perhaps you feel guilt from a death that occurred after letting your pet out, keeping your pet in, or losing track of your pet's whereabouts. There are times where actions have led to an accidental death by unintentionally leaving the pet in harm's way. The key focus here is that these actions were accidental and were never meant to be on purpose. We know that. So how can we heal?

Reminding yourself that you did not deliberately harm your pet and that it was an accident is a very important thing. You most certainly would have done things differently if you had known that the outcome of death is what would happen, but we are human and life has unknowns, which can be extremely difficult to grasp.

The Argus Institute at Colorado State University provides specialized services including a clinic support program with high level specialty care for people who

are facing difficult decisions regarding their pet's health. The Institute helps people manage the challenges during times of illness and end of life decisions with their pet. Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD is the Associate Professor and Director of Argus Institute at the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

I asked Dr. Shaw if she had any thoughts to share on how she would assist people who have suddenly lost a pet. What happens when there is a traumatic experience where the owner has witnessed the death of their animal (may be the owner's error or someone else's) and there is not enough time allowed to process everything? What had she found to be a valuable tool to help a person heal afterwards?

Dr. Shaw said that acknowledging the guilt and validating a person's feelings are very important. At the same time, she encourages the person to stay with it (their feelings) for as long as they need to. She mentioned how some folks need to stay with these feelings longer than others.

What I found to be a powerful message was when she said.



"It is important to tell yourself that you did the best that you could with what you had at the time."

Dr. Shaw's words resonated with me in that remembering time is the key and there is no magical fix for the feelings one has after suddenly losing a pet. We must remember to take time to process the loss, acknowledge any guilt you might have and not be afraid of it.

When the thoughts and feelings of guilt arise, remember to be kind to yourself, knowing that you did the best that you could. I truly believe our intentions are important in everything we do and remembering that your intention all along was to love and care for your pet is important. Your intentions were of goodness and of love. I hope that knowing that can bring you some internal peace and help you to take the next step in your healing.

When you begin to understand the 5 stages of grief, the many emotions of guilt and how they all play a part in your life, you will gain a new outlook on why you are feeling what you feel. You will understand that it's all 'okay' because it's a process that guides us on the path of healing and feeling better.



TOOL # 4 - PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

"All those years I thought I was taking care of him, he was taking care of me."

- JO-ANN WILLAERT,
REFLECTIONS ON CHAMP

Becoming active and involved in your healing will lead you to personal success. By motivating yourself, you will work through any challenges that appear along the way. One of the ways you can actively heal is by moving away from isolation and instead reaching out to personally empower yourself and find the validation for what or how you are feeling.

While writing this Personal Empowerment chapter, I have been reminded of two universal laws; The Law





of Polarity and The Law of Germination. I came across these two laws upon reading a book my mentor authored and had shared with me. These laws have re-introduced some information that I had learned several years ago.

My mentor's name is Gerry Robert and although his book is not on the subject of pet loss or healing, it contains information that can be transferred into this very book and I'd like to share part of it with you.

In his book, he talks about the universal laws. These laws have been around forever. They work whether you know they exist or not or whether you use them or not. No matter what, they are there, whether working in the background or the forefront.

Quoted from Gerry Robert in his book, he shares the following:

THE LAW OF POLARITY

"There are two sides to everything in nature except gravity. Every circumstance in life has its opposite; every situation can be seen two ways. If something is very bad then it holds the potential to be very good. If a situation is



terrible then it can also be fantastic from a different point of view. If something is terrible, it has the ability to be fantastic on the other side. You can't have an inside without an outside. It can't be a long way up and not be a long way down. If you have an inside of a book then you must have an outside of the book. There are two sides to absolutely everything"

This law has really spoken to me in the writing of this chapter.

When it comes to empowerment, one tool to help lead you in your healing journey is this very Law of Polarity.

Losing your beloved pet to death can be devastating. The feelings and emotions of working through each stage of healing and grief can be a true challenge. However when we look at this very important Law of Polarity, it reminds us that when there is sadness, there can be happiness. When there is depression, there can be vitality and where there is loneliness, there can be connection. When you truly grasp that fact and full understanding, the light at the end of the tunnel may

become a bit more visible, a bit brighter and a bit more within arm's reach and that is empowering. You have it within you to grieve AND to heal — a wonderful blessing when you can see both sides.

The second law Gerry Robert shares is:

THE LAW OF GERMINATION

"This law says whatever is planted requires some time before it comes to fruition.

Every idea, everything you plant, requires a certain action, a certain amount of time before the outcome is realized. You need to sow your ideas, allow them to germinate, give them lots of energy and then you will reap the rewards."

Therefore, to rephrase this above paragraph in my words:

"When you are ready, plant the seeds for healing. Give it time so that the seeds can take root and then step by step, bit by bit start sowing those seeds so they may grow into flowers."



Each time you heal from a life experience, you grow stronger. It may not fully take away the pain, but it helps to make it more bearable, more manageable. Did you know that you are a strong and deserving individual who

can achieve anything? You can remind yourself of this daily. You can tell yourself that nothing is impossible because you have everything you need within you. Personal empowerment starts from within, and radiates externally.

Nancy Graham, owner of Thistledown Pet Memorial in Uxbridge, Ontario shared some words with me that resonated strongly. She said, "It is never too late to Each time you heal from a life experience, you grow stronger. It may not fully take away the pain, but it helps to make it more bearable, more manageable.

heal" and she's right. Healing can happen at any time in one's life. It will happen at the time that is best for you and your healing journey.

When Nancy is assisting her clients, she asks them a powerful question; "What did your pet teach you?" She asks this question because she truly believes that pets are here to teach us and I couldn't agree with her more.



Using the lesson of patience for example:

If your pet has taught you patience, Nancy counsels you on how you can take that lesson and become a better person. She encourages you to pick a time each

Personal empowerment is an effective tool that we often forget about.

Knowing that you hold the power to heal yourself is something that becomes a gift when you embrace it. day that you are a little more patient than you normally may have been and carry that feeling with you. Doing this exercise is one way to feel your pet with you, and honouring their memory by using the gift of that lesson that you learned from them. This act of using what your pet has taught you and bringing it into your life is an act of personal empowerment that can help you help yourself as well as help others.

Personal empowerment is an effective tool that we often forget about. Knowing that you hold the power to heal yourself is something that becomes a gift when you embrace it.

You may not be ready yet and that is okay. We make the choices we wish to make. When we are ready to heal, we will make it happen.

And I "empower" you to do so when you feel the moment is right.



TOOL # 5 -RECEIVING GUIDANCE

"At the end of it all, I honestly believe that she dedicated the year and a half she was with me to bringing me to where I am now."

- ANN BURNS,
REFLECTIONS OF TUX

This chapter is dedicated to sharing strategies and guidance that can be useful, helpful and healing.

SUZIE AND OLA

Paws Above is an organization in King City, Ontario that provides foster care, training and support to animals and offers the gift of receiving a second chance at life.









Suzie is one of these sweet animals that received this loving care. She had lost the use of her back end due to a herniated disc which affected her spinal cord. Through the teamwork of Suzie's owners and Ola Zalewski, they provided veterinary care, surgery and physical therapy. During this time, Suzie stole the hearts of all who crossed her path. She was loved and adored by many. After 5 months, the time came where a decision had to be made in regards to Suzie's quality of life. It was kinder to help Suzie pass peacefully than to prolong any discomfort she may have been feeling.

After euthanasia was completed, Suzie was brought back to Ola's home where she was buried near a painted rock bearing her name. Friends came together for a BBQ and even brought flowers. They were able to come together in support of Ola and Suzie's owners to comfort them and help them with this healing process. In fact, these friends were also grieving the loss of Suzie as they got to know her very well throughout the months.

Coming together and sharing with friends the memories of the loving bond that was shared with Suzie became a tool that was helpful and healing. Thoughts of Suzie will always hold such special memories, just like a candle flame that shines so very bright. So does her love



and the connection she shared. The organization Paws Above was such a place where guidance was found.



Photo credit: Jen Worrall, Owner of Gotcha! Photo Studio is a pet photographer in Aurora, Ontario. Part of her services is in offering FREE photos of pets in need of adoption and care at shelters and charity events.

YOUR PERSONAL TOOLBOX:

There are many things you can do to help your grieving process and release emotions to allow for healing to take place. I invite you to review these strategies and then carry out the ones that speak to you the most. By working with strategies that look right, sound right, feel right and resonate from within, opportunities of successfully completing them greatly increase.



- 1. Having your loved ones such as family members and friends that are supportive to you to be in your life during your healing is something that will give you comfort and peace. There are many that want you to know that they are there for you and want to help you in your healing. You may also find the opposite in that some are not supportive because they do not fully understand. If you can, continue to connect to the ones that do understand and support you fully. This support is what will continue to guide you as you take each step to healing.
- 2. Connect to a support group and/or counsellor there are many online support groups as well as groups in your city, town or surrounding area that can be of assistance in this healing time. Online message boards often have information about counsellors who work in the area of pet loss. Pet loss phone services are also available. Others find helpful information from personal growth and development courses because they are working on developing themselves on an inner level. Even though the course may not be on the subject of pet loss, it can still apply to the healing process.



- 3. Connect with other people in your community or online who have also experienced or are dealing with the death of their beloved pet. Many online websites offer a connection to others. Support is very important at this time and aligning and sharing with others who truly understand is an important piece to your healing journey.
- 4. Try out new activities that will help keep your mind active on something positive. While this may not be easy to do, it can be helpful when you feel you are ready. Things that interest you like gardening, sports, joining a club and anything that would be helpful for you to have the opportunity for healing and encouraging activities really does help take our minds off of our worry.
- 5. Pay tribute to your animal companion in some way that is meaningful to you. Some examples of this are:
- Gathering photos of your pet and putting them together in an album or book of memories.
- Writing down the happy times and memories you shared with your beloved pet. Include the ones that will make you laugh and bring a smile to your face.



- Doing something to honour the celebration of the life of your pet. This could be making a donation to an animal organization in the name of your pet or planting flowers or a tree to symbolize new beginnings and in respect of the time you had together with your pet.
- 6. Begin to pay attention and become conscious of your thoughts and feelings. Many times, during the grieving process, we often think and say things that are disempowering to us. Examples are:
 - "I can't do this" or "I give up". When you realize you have thought or said something disempowering, simply take a step back, observe what has happened and then replace that thought or word with a positive, empowering one. A simple affirmation can do this, or just the intent of knowing and thinking about moving to a positive vibration can be just enough to bring you back to healing with empowerment.



- 7. Journal connecting pen and paper together in the form of writing is a very powerful and healing tool. It allows for the release of emotions and release is a key component of the healing process. Each day, take a few minutes and write down whatever comes to your mind. I've personally done this and discovered that at times, I would get only scribbles with no words or anything that appeared to make sense. However I've learned that even the scribbles made the most perfect sense because my disjointed writing was a form of releasing emotion.
- 8. Write a letter to your pet. Take some time and write an actual letter sharing your thoughts you wish to share with your pet. Include the happy memories that you shared, the things you want to thank your pet for and anything else that comes to your mind in a loving and compassionate way. You may want to remember to keep this a positive experience. Writing this letter in a constructive manner can help you in releasing the emotions that you are feeling and bring you further in your healing process.



"You're telling a story, you're remembering the good times. Many emotions may come flooding into your heart and that's all part of the road to healing; that's all healthy. Crying is healthy, remembering is healthy. That's what we want to do; we want to remember our loved ones. Grief knows no time, but it certainly knows that expressing through healing will help things through."

- STEPHEN & CAROLINE PURDY, PET PASSAGES BY PURDY FUNERAL SERVICES

9. Perform a random act of kindness to someone. By making someone else's day, you might find you feel better yourself because you have helped someone. When you do something nice for someone, it will get reciprocated back to you in one form or another. Doing things that will help you feel better, even if for just a short time is worth it as those few minutes of feeling good were not there before. You create good things in your life this way and can attract more good things to come your way.



10. In the first 5 minutes of your day and the last 5 minutes of your day, say some powerful declarations to yourself (try to aim for 3 to 5 power statements). Say them out loud if you can. If you are not able to, saying them silently to yourself will also work. By doing this each day, you may start to feel better and become able to manage things better in your life. Some examples of these statements can be:

"Today, I greet my day with gladness"

"All is well in my world"

"I welcome healing into my day"

"I connect to the Source Energy and fill my whole being with Love and Light"

"God surrounds me with such ever abundant love"

"Angels are watching over me, guiding me always"

"I celebrate each and every moment with love and healing"

"I listen with my heart and hear my true, divine guidance"



Then before retiring to bed for the evening, these statements can be said to remain in the subconscious for the rest of the night. You will find that after the repeated use of this exercise, it will become a regular part of your routine and won't feel so 'forced' as you might when you first begin.

- 11. Spend a few minutes or more each day in quietude and connect through prayer and meditation. Breathing in love and healing while breathing out the release of anything that does not serve you any longer really does work. Daily use of this tool has been proven to help clear the mind and heal the heart.
- 12. Take time for you, remember to eat right and get enough rest. Most times, we are the hardest on ourselves, therefore remember to be kind to yourself and most of all, love yourself unconditionally.



Some notes of reflection:

- Always remember, if you feel anger, sadness, frustration or depression, honour that within you and know that those feelings are happening for a reason.
- You are grieving and emotions are actually a gift to us so that we may choose to release them and move forward in the way that we desire in our healing.

 You are grieving and emotions are actually a gift to us so that we may choose to release them and move forward in the way that we desire in our healing.
- Give yourself the permission to honour yourself and your healing process.
- Honouring ourselves is one of the greatest gifts we can give to ourselves.

You are grieving and emotions are actually a gift to us so that we may choose to release them and move forward in the way that we desire in our healing.

 This tool of Receiving Guidance is just a starting point and you will find that as you continue to utilize it, you will find many more gifts waiting for you on your healing journey.



TOOL # 6 - TAKING ACTION

"Knowing you made a difference in an animal's life is priceless."

- EVELYN AVILA-PALMACCI,
TAIL-WAGGERS DOG WALKING & PET SITTING

Jennifer lived on a hobby farm. She loved animals and had several different types of animals. She gave each animal love and care on a daily basis while ensuring that they had good food and proper shelter. These animals were her pets, and she thought of them as her family.





Life and death of her pets were a part of her life. This transition was never easy for Jennifer and she found herself always replacing the deceased animal with a new one. Her sadness was helped each time she replaced the pet with another one right away or so she thought. After a while, old feelings of loss would creep up. She researched information on the internet as well as contacting her local veterinarian for ways to deal with the loss of a pet and had many resources at her fingertips. None of the resources seemed to help her and she didn't know why.



Sometimes it's so easy to live our lives and ignore the signals we receive when we need help. Unless we take action in our healing and get to the root of what is

bothering us, we'll never find that missing piece. Jennifer felt loss but didn't take action in healing the emotional pain she was experiencing.

I share this story with you because many times we think we are dealing with loss and grief in our lives because we have acknowledged that pain but unless we take action, and go deep inside, we will only continue to put a bandage on our wounds

Taking this step of action is one of the most important and valuable tools in the healing process. It is very much connected to taking responsibility and being proactive in your own therapeutic journey.

I wish to be clear that getting a new pet can be a positive direction after the passing of recent pet. Sometimes, this can be just the right thing when you are ready. I don't believe in comparing one person's healing process to another. When a person has taken action and feels ready, there is no better way to honour a pet that has passed than to love another.

Taking this step of action is one of the most important and valuable tools in the healing process. It is very much



connected to taking responsibility and being proactive in your own therapeutic journey.

By aligning yourself with your desire to heal, you feel more control over the situation and emotional pain you are feeling. When you take action you provide yourself with the environment for personal growth, healing and feeling better.

Out of all aspects of healing, the principle of taking action is the most important tool in making it happen. Without this very significant step, healing will not and cannot occur. What is one thing that you can do today, this very moment, to take action and take the next step in your healing?

If you do just one thing, even if it's a little thing, you are taking action, and be sure you give yourself the credit you deserve. Taking action is something that can be very frightening or intimidating but so very rewarding once it has been completed. Believe in yourself, and trust that you have what it takes to do what you need to do.

"Animals matter. They think and they feel and there is something very powerful about the bond that humans have for them. Grieving for the loss of the animal and having feelings, empathy and a range of other emotions is right and proper. It is part of our humanity and who we are."

WAYNE PACELLE, CEO HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES



Photo credit: Glenn Willcox Photography



TOOL # 7 - GIFTS OF MANY

"To combat the grief of my dog's passing, I try to focus on the gifts he gave me in our 14 years together. The gift that stands out the most was the communication in Bob's eyes. The eyes that spoke to me and said, "Pick me and I will love you forever, Glenn!" Or, the eyes that asked permission. "Is it ok if I lie with you on the couch?" The eyes that would light up and say, "Yes, of course I would love to go for a ride. Let's go!" Dogs do not speak, but they certainly communicate with their eyes. Pets give us such wonderful gifts, if we only look for them and pay attention."

- GLENN WILLCOX,
GLENN WILLCOX PHOTOGRAPHY



When we experience the feelings of loss, as with any type of traumatic experience we may have in life, the path can be challenging, perhaps rocky and unstable. We know that the loss of a loving animal companion and pet may be like losing a family member or close friend. The feelings we have inside include heartache, sadness and pain. These can be unbearable at times and often we may look at it as having no end in sight. We find it challenging to see that light which is supposed to be at the end of that tunnel. I personally remember asking, "What tunnel? Everything feels so dark; I can't even see the tunnel."

Personally, after I was able to put all the above tools 1 through 6 into motion, I not only saw the tunnel, I saw the light. The light was very small at first and perhaps a bit dim but the more I followed these tools and the more I opened myself and gave myself permission to heal, the brighter the light became.

Do I still have tears of sadness? Of course I do, but those tears of sadness have become easier to manage. The sadness never goes away but it does get easier. I can promise you that.



This chapter is dedicated to the realization of the many gifts we receive from our loving pets. Did you know that there can be wonderful gifts that can come out of heartache, sadness and pain from pet loss? Many have looked at me like I had lost my mind when I have said this, but they soon began to understand what exactly I meant.

You see I believe that you and your pet did not meet by accident. I believe that there is a reason why your pet came into your life and why you came into theirs and I truly believe that you and your pet found

I believe that you and your pet did not meet by accident. I believe that there is a reason why your pet came into your life and why you came into theirs and I truly believe that you and your pet found each other at the exact right time you were meant to.

each other at the exact right time you were meant to.

Pets give to us many things; companionship, friendship, unconditional love, laughter and the feeling of being needed. Of course there are many more, these are just to name a few. All these are gifts and when we realize the many gifts we have shared and received, knowing that these will always remain with us can bring us comfort as we heal.

Everything that happens to us in our life whether it is happy, sad, scary or otherwise remains with us. My attention here that I would like to focus on is the happy and positive memories that have been carried forward. This is a gift, something that can never be taken away from us.



Photo credit: scruffy dog photography

Illona Haus, photographer and owner of Scruffy Dog Photography in Kitchener, Ontario shared her story of her dog Murph. She was a novelist at the time Murph came into her life and she experienced his passing prematurely at the age of 4 to lymphoma.



This had a profound impact on Illona. After diagnosis, she only had 7 days left with him. When interviewing Illona for this book, she shared some words of empowerment that I felt would fit perfectly in this tool called "Gifts of Many".

"Everyone needs to grieve in their own way. I have learned so much from each dog that I've had. I can use Murph's loss and his loss can help me for all my future dogs. If it wasn't for Murph, I wouldn't have had Matea come into my life and then Morley and then Merrick. Without them, I wouldn't be photographing dogs today."

Illona has been able to take the death of her companion Murph to use as a tool in moving forward. His memory and beautiful gifts continue to live on through her camera lens. Since Murph, all her dogs have been named with an "M" in his honour. She has since been able to adopt and provide a loving home to these dogs and this is all because of the beautiful loving bond that had originated with Murph.

When we are feeling the emotions of pet loss and the feelings of depression we can take a tool from our toolbox on our path of healing at any time. It is always there for us and it will bring forward beautiful memories. Memories being shown to us like watching a movie or maybe like looking through a photo album. Perhaps hearing the sounds of our laughter from these memories

Even though your animal companion is no longer here in the physical sense, your connection to them remains... always.

or feeling the warmth it provides. The choice is yours on how you would like to recall these memories and the gift of them is priceless.

Even though your animal companion is no longer here in the physical sense, your connection to them remains... always. It is a wonderful gift that will stay with you to guide

you and support you with a loving embrace and perhaps can bring your awareness to a deeper appreciation in thanking your loving pet for the many gifts he or she shared with you.

As we reach our destination on the final tool in this book, I would like to share with you the following:

"Pain can heal but memories last a lifetime"



A VETERINARIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

"There is so much we can learn from our pets; being in the now, enjoying simple moments. When you know the time is right, you just know. That is one last gift we can give".

 TRACY MCKENZIE, FIONA MCKENZIE, ANIMAL REHABILITATION CENTRE

Experiencing an end of life moment with our pet is never easy. As pet owners, this is something we do not wish to think or even talk about unless we absolutely have to. When the time comes for this to take place, most often our veterinarian is involved.







In Tool # 3 of Learning, we covered the stages of grief and the many emotions that can occur. When we gain awareness of these emotions, we can begin to understand and allow healing to take place. When it comes time for a loving pet to pass, decisions need to be made often under much stress. You are experiencing many turbulent emotions and sometimes perhaps not even thinking straight. At this point, the connection with your veterinarian and team can be of wonderful assistance to you.

Have you ever noticed that most veterinarians and their teams all have animals of their own?

Do you notice the compassion and care that your veterinarian gives to your pet during treatment? Veterinarians and their team members do what they do because they are passionate about animals.

When you find a good veterinarian, you will notice that they will take the time with your pet, time with you and the necessary steps that are in your pet's best interest. Many bonds and relationships have been formed between pets and veterinarians as well as pet owners and veterinarians. You may have brought your pet to your vet clinic ever since your pet was young, or

maybe just recently. So often, rapport and the building of trust between you, your veterinarian and animal has been established. A veterinarian can develop a caring

relationship with you and your pet because they are interested in your pet's wellbeing and a deep sense of communication occurs that is often unsaid.

During the writing of this book, I have realized that the bond that human beings can have with their pets is beyond words. I had the opportunity to speak with Doug Raven, the CEO of the OVMA (Ontario Veterinary Medical Association) and I was quite taken by how he honoured and spoke about the relationship he and his family had

A veterinarian can develop a caring relationship with you and your pet because they are interested in your pet's wellbeing and a deep sense of communication occurs that is often unsaid

with their dog Chelsea, as well as the respect he carries for his own veterinarian.

I read his column (A Word from the Chief Executive Officer) where he describes his pet Chelsea as always loving having her ears scratched for hours and how seeing the "delight of a dog having their ears scratched" was no better stress reliever in the world. When the difficult time came, at the end of Chelsea's life, Doug expressed the

comfort he received from his veterinarian of 20 years. He spoke highly of the role of the veterinarian:

"...the veterinarian becomes a part of the extended family...they get to know you and the animals and the family – the whole dynamic."

Doug is a pet owner who happens to also be a CEO of the OVMA and he believes in the important role of the veterinarian not only because of his work, but because he has been on the other end as a pet owner and that combination struck a chord with me.

In every profession, there are some professionals that excel and go above and beyond their duty. I understand that this may not always be the case. However, there are many amazing professionals in this field that truly care.

During the writing of this book, I personally met and interviewed several veterinarians. In my communication with each of them, my goal was to listen carefully enough and gain some perspective in the role they play in pet loss.



Through using the analogy of a pair of glasses, I was able to put on these glasses and look through their eyes to see what they see every day. I was comforted to hear that many clinics feel that both patients and their owners are part of a team and in some cases, part of the veterinary family. The close connection and bond was clearly expressed. Many shared the emotions that they, the professionals, go through when it is time for the end of a pet's life and how they have felt sadness and grief right beside their client.

I dedicate this chapter to our veterinarians and their teams and wish to especially acknowledge the role they play in our pet's lives. During my interviews, each veterinarian shared stories and experiences with me. It reinforced my belief in their support and assistance. Many times, if it wasn't for their guidance, many of our loving pets wouldn't have had a chance at life. I have dedicated this chapter in support and honour of the relationship between veterinarians and pet owners everywhere.

A special thank you to the following veterinarians who provided valuable information for the creation of this book:

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AFTERWORD

Do you remember how at the beginning of this book, we went on a journey that began on a cobblestone path?

We ventured onto that path only to find that it led to several unknown paths and we weren't sure what way we were to go. We needed to make a decision on how we wanted to proceed.

Did we want to go back or did we want to move forward? If you are reading this now, you decided to embrace this opportunity and follow each path of healing.

I wish to congratulate you and sincerely encourage you to keep going. Remember, you are not alone. Healing takes time and now you have 7 effective tools that you can utilize as you continue your step-by-step journey.

Each time you feel like you need additional support, open up your toolbox and take out what you need at that time. It will be always there for you.





It's like beginning with an empty toolbox, and now your toolbox is full. Each time you feel like you need additional support, open up your toolbox and take out what you need at that time. It will be always there for you.

I wish you the very best and sincerely thank you for joining me in this healing journey. By writing this book, I also have been able to further my own healing and I have you to thank because with you as the reader, we become a part of the collective who are healing together. We support one another and that reinforces that you are never alone. This book is yours to utilize and support is always there for you whenever you wish.

"We are so grateful to be able to work with pets every day. Most days they give us great joy and laughter. Yet if they become injured, ill or pass away, we experience intense sadness. Remembering our time together and the relationships we share brings us comfort. This is <u>The Power of Pets</u>."

- MORAG WILLCOX
YORK PROFESSIONAL PET SITTING



THE POWER OF PETS MARYBETH'S STORY

Ever since I can remember, growing up from a small child of about 2 years of age, there were always animals in my life. From living on a hobby farm with cows, pigs, chickens, goats, horses, fish, ducks...you name it...I always had a pet of some sort. My mother and father taught me to treat animals with respect and to treat them well. When it became time for an animal to pass on, it was emotional, however I was a small child and seemed to accept that as a part of life. And it was a part of my life right from the beginning.

I have memories of my father taking us out to where we would bury our pets and say a prayer. This area became what we would refer to as our pet cemetery for many years to come.



As time progressed and the older I became, I grew closer to these beautiful friends I called pets. Realizing that these loving creatures were not just animals, I would see much more in them and would soon learn that they were my teachers and had many lessons to teach me.

My more recent and beloved furry family member was Kitty. Kitty came to live with me when he was nine years old. A beautiful silky black colour with green eyes and a purr that would make you want to just listen. Your whole body would just relax in the meditative sound of this stillness. I would often refer to Kitty as an "old soul" as there was something in his eyes that told me he has MUCH wisdom to share. Kitty had the gift of 'talk'. He would say "hello" so clearly and would sound like a young boy.

Do you remember Mr. Snuffleupagus from Sesame Street? He was the brown mammoth type creature with a long trunk that only Big Bird would see. Any time Big Bird saw him and would tell the rest of the Sesame Street gang, they would never believe him because he would never be there when they would look to see him. Mr. Snuffleupagus was never able to be seen by them until the 17th season where finally the gang saw him and believed Big Bird.

I often refer to Kitty's talking to be of the same. Any time someone was around, there would be no talking. If there was no one around, he would talk and as soon as I would get someone to hear him, he would stop as if to say "Who me? I didn't say anything." It was quite comical actually how it would all work. And the lesson for me was that I should be just listening and hearing his message instead of trying to show everyone that my cat could talk.

As Kitty grew older, he began 'talking' more and more. I listened to him on a daily basis and had such joy and gratitude for his gift. My husband Troy and I were blessed with his love for more than 11 years.

At the age of 20 Kitty was called home to the spiritual plane and was able to pass in peace and with us by his side. I have since felt Kitty's guidance and he is my inspiration for writing this book. Using this inspiration to help others in their experience with pet loss brings me the feeling of peace. As I wrote this book, it has also helped me in my healing process as I have been able to continue this journey with many blessings.

I sincerely thank you for reading this book and trust that is has been able to bring you peaceful feelings of

comfort. By taking these steps together, we can walk beside each other and follow our paths of healing.

Remember:

"All Paths Lead To Healing"

-MARYBETH HAINES





THE POWER OF PETS AMBASSADOR'S PROGRAM

Beginning a new journey with a book takes many steps. It takes time, patience, courage and a supportive environment.

The Power of Pets Ambassador's Program was created in recognition and honour of family, friends and businesses that supported this initiative. It was a gesture that contained unconditional support and belief in this project and for that I am honoured and forever grateful. I wish to thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart! Without you, this book would not be where it is today.

From bringing it from a hopeful glimmer in my eye to an actual finished product I now have a tool to share for helping and healing. I wish to specifically recognize the following friends and family with heartfelt thanks:



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"Give yourself entirely to those around you. Be generous with your blessings. A kind gesture can reach a wound that only compassion can heal."

> - STEVE MARABOLI, LIFE, THE TRUTH, AND BEING FREE



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During the creation of *The Power of Pets - 7 Effective Tools To Heal From Pet Loss*, I received the gift of connecting with wonderful people and organizations. I completed many interviews to gather research for this book. I went into each of these interviews and came out with many friendships and connections.

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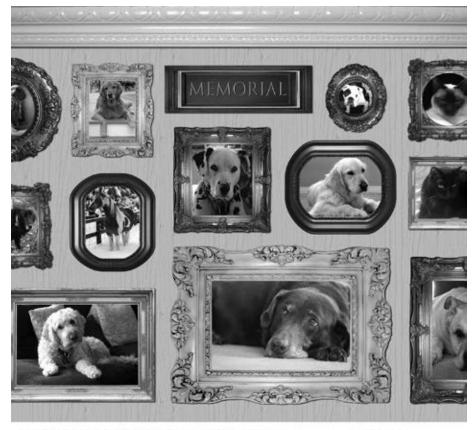
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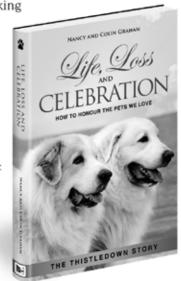
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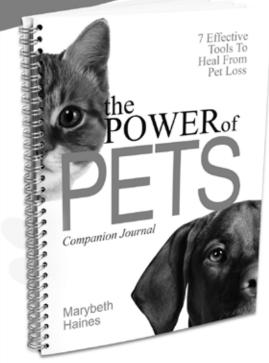


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Marybeth is available for workshops, seminars or keynote events. Her passion lies in sharing with others how they can capture the values and connection with animals to use every day in empowerment and healing.

To reach Marybeth contact: marybeth@powerofpets365.com or 905-931-5159

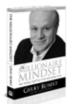
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Why does the death of a pet often feel as painful as the death of a family member or friend?

How does one grieve and heal from the loss of an animal companion?

The Power of Pets empowers people to take the necessary steps to transform grief into healing.

Our pets are our family and friends. We feel the loss so strongly because of the emotional connection and unconditional love we receive from them.

This book provides learning and support and will guide you in implementing tools to help you deal with the loss of your pet.

You will learn ways to promote personal growth and daily practices to help you become more connected after the loss of your pet. This translates to not only a more heartfelt experience, but greater understanding, and a more focused approach in healing from pet loss.



The Power of Pets shares with you 7 Effective Tools that can be used successfully in your healing journey. These tools will help you to find clarity and peace as you take each step on your path to feeling better. Learn how to break the cycle of sadness and worry and receive the comfort and understanding necessary in allowing healing to take place.

