Remembering My Pet

A Collyvale pack for children aged 4–9 and their grown-ups

Gentle support for children and their grown-ups when a pet dies

A little note for grown-ups

A pet can be a much-loved friend and part of the family. This pack gives you gentle words and simple activities to share, at your child's pace.

Start with closeness, not perfect words

Tell your child in a quiet place, using clear words such as "died." Give a little information, then pause. Listen to their questions and answer honestly without distressing detail. Avoid "gone away," "lost" or "gone to sleep."

Use what helps today

Mainly for children aged 4–9, with a trusted adult. Children under 4 can join in with help: point to pictures, draw or share a short conversation. Read one page, skip an activity or return another day. Children do not have to talk, write or finish anything.

Their feelings can come and go

A child may cry, ask questions, then go back to playing. That does not mean they have forgotten. They may ask the same question many times. Offer comfort, familiar routines and space to remember. There is no deadline for grief.

Pages 2–7 are for sharing with your child. More grown-up guidance is on page 8.

This pack is not a substitute for professional advice.

Collyvale

A little place for big feelings.

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What does "died" mean?

A little explanation from Riley

I'm here with you

When a pet dies, their body stops working. They cannot breathe, eat or feel anything now, and they cannot come back to life.
You can still talk about them and remember them.

Different from an everyday sick day

Your grown-up can help explain what happened. Your pet may have been very, very sick, very old or badly hurt. This is different from the sick days people and pets usually get better from.

You can ask your grown-up about anything you do not understand. You do not need to find all the words today.



Your thoughts, wishes or angry words did not make your pet die.

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Whatever I'm feeling

You can point, color, draw or leave this page for another day.

There is no right feeling to choose. You might have lots of feelings, or feel unsure. Color a face that fits today, or draw your own.



Sad



Angry



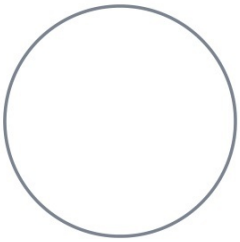
Worried



Quiet



Unsure



My own feeling

It is okay to laugh and play while you are missing your pet.

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Questions and worries

You and your grown-up can choose which questions to read.

Can my pet come back?

When a pet has died, they cannot come back to life. We can wish they were here and still remember them.

Will my other pet die?

Most pets and people live for a long, long time. A pet dying does not mean another pet will die now. Your grown-up can tell you about your other pet's health.

Where is my pet now?

Your grown-up can explain what happened to your pet's body.
Burial: the body may be buried in the ground in a special place.
Cremation: the body is gently turned into soft ashes. The ashes may be kept in a special container or placed somewhere meaningful.
Their body cannot feel pain. Burial and cremation do not hurt them.
Some families do not see their pet's body or receive ashes. You can still remember your pet in your own way.
Families have different beliefs about what happens after death. You can ask your grown-up what your family believes.

Was it because of me? Tell your grown-up if you are worried about something you said or thought. Riley's reminder on page 2 is for you.

You can ask the same question again.

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When I miss my pet

Little things that might help, alongside a grown-up.

You do not have to make the missing feeling go away. You can choose something comforting while it is here.

Someone I can go to

A trusted adult, a cuddle if I want one, or someone to sit beside me.

Something that feels comforting

A favorite toy, a blanket, a quiet place, or a familiar story.

Something I might like to do

Draw, talk about my pet, walk with a grown-up, or take a break to play.

My helper or comfort idea:

You do not have to talk or finish this page today.

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My pet's memory page

You can draw, color, write, or ask someone to write for you.

My pet's name: .....

A picture of my pet, or a memory we shared

A favorite thing or funny habit

Something I want to remember

There is no perfect picture or memory. Whatever matters to you belongs here.

You do not have to make the grown-ups feel better.

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Remembering in my own way

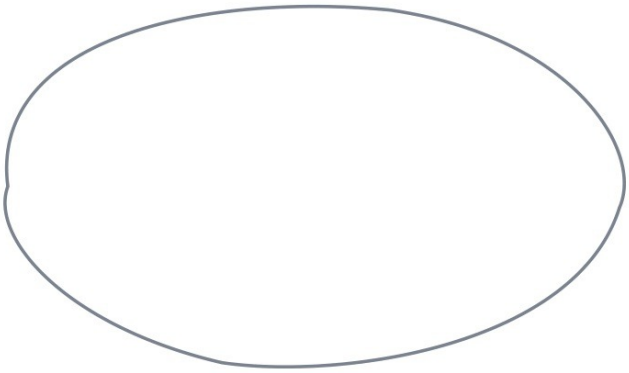
Choose an idea, make your own, or do nothing today.

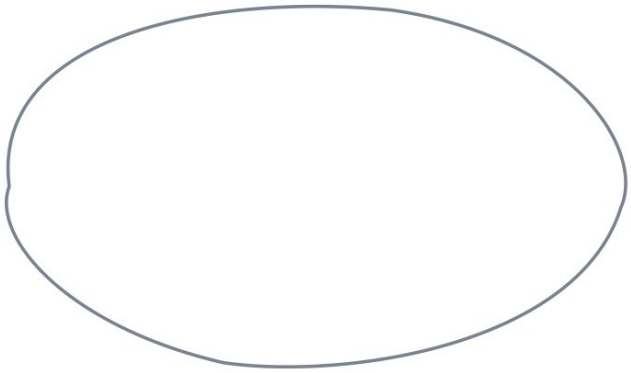
You might keep a photograph, make a memory box, draw a letter, put flowers somewhere special or have a small family goodbye. Ask a grown-up to help.

A memory pebble from Pebble Hollow

In Collyvale's Pebble Hollow, painted pebbles help us remember the ones we love. You could paint a pebble with your pet's name, a color or a picture that reminds you of them. A grown-up can help you choose a suitable pebble and a place to keep it.

Try a design on these pebble outlines. Color them in, or draw your own.





My remembering idea: .....
.....

You can miss your pet, remember your pet, and have happy moments too.

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The days afterwards

A little more support for grown-ups

Keep listening, keep explaining, and keep familiar routines where you can. Let school or preschool know discreetly if helpful. Grief can return around reminders or special days.

Children may also ask whether you or they will die. A calm, simple answer helps, such as: “Most people live for a long, long time, and I plan to be here to look after you.”

Simple words you can use

“[Name] has died. Their body has stopped working. They cannot breathe, eat or feel anything now, and they cannot come back to life. We can still talk about them and remember them.”

“[Name] was very, very sick / very old / badly hurt. This is different from the sick days people and pets usually get better from.” Choose the explanation that fits.

If the vet helped your pet die

“The vet could not make [Name] better. Vets have a medicine that is only for animals who are very, very sick and cannot get better. It helped [Name] die peacefully, without hurting.”

Children may hear others say “put to sleep.” Explain: “Some people say ‘put to sleep’ when they mean a vet helped an animal die. It does not mean normal sleep. When we sleep, our bodies keep working and we wake up.”

Goodbyes and new pets

If death is expected, offer an optional quiet goodbye, guided by the vet. Prepare a child for anything they may see; never force them to join in or make them responsible for the decision. Not saying goodbye does not mean they loved their pet less.

Do not secretly replace small pets, such as hamsters or fish. Do not promise or rush into a replacement pet. A new animal will have its own place in the family; it cannot replace the pet who died.

Support for you and your child

You can show sadness and explain that you have grown-up support. Your child does not have to make you feel better.

Pet Bereavement Support – aplb.org – Find support groups and resources

Speak to your child’s doctor if distress worsens or affects sleep, eating, school or daily life.

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