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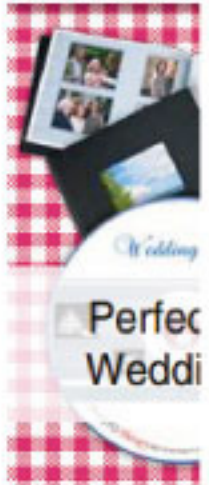


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Coping With Pet Loss

By NAPS!

Grief over the loss of a pet is normal and natural. Yet there are tools and coping skills that people can use to help handle that grief. With an estimated 71 million pet-owning households in the U.S., it's a situation many face but don't know how to handle, especially with children. Amy Cantazaro, M.S., Human-Animal Bond Counselor at the Iowa State School of Veterinary Medicine Teaching Hospital, counsels many families on how to handle their loss. "Sometimes people don't understand a pet's death can be as deep of a loss as a loved one," says Cantazaro. "They'll get responses like, 'It's just a dog' or 'It's just a cat,' which are not very helpful." What is helpful instead is to recognize the grief as legitimate and find a way to create a lasting memory.

Ms. Cantazaro offers a number of tips to help people understand and cope with their loss, including planting trees or flowers where the ashes are strewn, putting a picture of the animal somewhere special in the house, or creating a scrapbook or other memorial art that reflects the pet's significance.

Iowa artist Silvia Engel, who experienced the loss of her pet, was inspired to create a unique way to help other pet owners handle their grief. Her family lost their beloved dog, Kiki. "My two young children were devastated," Engel recalls. With the idea that she could help other pet owners cope with their losses, she founded Love Ashes, a design studio specializing in artistic memorial jewelry and memorial plaques. Experimenting with the special dichroic glass she used in her jewelry designs, she began mixing ashes into them. She ultimately perfected a technique of firing loved ones' ashes into her unique and brilliant glass art and jewelry pieces.



Creating the jewelry is satisfying, but Engel says the letters she receives are overwhelming. Pet owners write her and send pictures of their lost pets, along with stories of how Love Ashes memorial art has helped them cope with their loss. "It's gratifying to know I'm helping others," she says. "And it helps me to remember Kiki, too."

To learn more or to contact Engel, go to her Web site, www.loveashes.com.

Silvia Engel designs glass pendants that carry beloved pets' ashes.

Lexington Area Weather

Lexington, KY
Weather

Mostly Cloudy,
64°F

Thu: 79°F / 59°F

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