

WHAT LOSS FEELS LIKE

EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT LOSS FEELS LIKE, RIGHT? WELL, NOT NECESSARILY. ALONG WITH THE OBVIOUS FEELINGS OF PAIN, DEPRESSION AND SADNESS THERE ARE OTHER REACTIONS TO LOSS THAT ARE NOT SO OBVIOUS, SUCH AS:

*FEELING HELPLESS, FEARFUL, EMPTY, DESPAIRING, PESSIMISTIC, IRRITABLE, ANGRY, GUILTY, RESTLESS.

*EXPERIENCING A LOSS OF CONCENTRATION, HOPE, MOTIVATION, ENERGY.

*ANY CHANGES IN APPETITE, SLEEP PATTERNS, OR SEXUAL DRIVE.

*A TENDENCY TO BE MORE FATIGUED, ERROR-PRONE, AND SLOWER IN SPEECH AND MOVEMENT.

ANY OR ALL OF THESE ARE TO BE EXPECTED DURING AND AFTER THE EXPERIENCE OF A LOSS. IT'S PART OF THE BODY'S NATURAL HEALING PROCESS. BE WITH THESE CHANGES, DON'T FIGHT THEM. IT'S OK.

FROM HOW TO SURVIVE THE LOSS OF A LOVE, BY MELBA COLGROVE, PH.D. ET.AL.

/T.O.

The Authentic Self vs. The False Self

The False Self:

- **Is based on individual social conditioning.** It is a collection of beliefs and habits, all of which can be useful at times, but that can also take on an identity of its own that we come to believe is all of who we are. It includes: the habits, customs and beliefs of our family, school, community, religion and national culture, as well as identifications such as the degrees that we've earned or our business title.
- **Makes judgements and assumptions.** Judgements and assumptions keep us from being open to possibilities. We don't have access to all the information available to us when we operate from our false limited selves.
- **Takes everything personally.** The false self automatically takes things personally: "Everything is my fault, my responsibility." "I have to solve this." And as a defense, will blame: "You did this to me"
- **Seeks approval from outside the self.** Children quickly learn what they must do to get approval and what happens when they don't. Our own guidance about what is best for us is pushed aside in order for us to survive in the world we inhabit.
- **Repeatedly uses the words should, what if, always, never, I know, and I can't.** Without inner guidance to rely on, we develop fixed patterns based on what success has felt like before. This leads to beliefs like: "I should do it this way, I will always do it this way, I will never try another way, I know this is the only way, and I can't do it any other way"
- **Often runs critical, controlling, mental tape loops creating internal slavery. It tells stories over and over with no resolution.** The false self will repeat conversations, replay incidents and create imagined mental disaster stories, with the self either as victim or as the hero. Usually there is no point, no resolution and no progress. It is a circular pattern which maintains beliefs and behaviours.
- **Needs the security of established habits, activities and beliefs.** The false self becomes insecure and feels vulnerable outside the comfort zone. It is unable and unwilling to learn anything.
- **May have a secret identity, called "terminal specialness."** "I am more special than everyone else" is a false self belief, and a twisted variation of an authentic self knowledge and celebration of our uniqueness. In adulthood, the terminally special self is unable to enter satisfying relationships because no one else is really good enough. It will repeatedly choose partners and friends who do not have as much education, income, social status and spiritual knowledge in order to feed the secret self belief that it is better.
- **Often sees itself a victim and needs a "bad guy" to focus on.** This may be an authority figure such as a boss at work or the government. It can focus on unsatisfying relationships with others without taking responsibility for its part. It holds that someone else is responsible for the situation, which keeps the false self re-energized, and in place.

- **Can also have an overly optimistic viewpoint**, kind of a "Pollyanna" attitude, which is equally dysfunctional as an overly negative voice. It will say, "There is no fear, only love," which ignores the value of fear as nature's warning system that we ignore at our own peril.
- **Any belief or perception that prevents an authentic, yet compassionate, response in the moment is an element of the False Self.**

The Authentic Self:

- **Recognises everything as information, including body sensations, emotion and intuition. Examples:** The sky is blue, she did not call me back, I am hungry, and this is the choice I will make for myself today.
- **Is willing to take chances and be versatile:** This job, marriage, friendship, situation no longer satisfies or inspires me. I will choose to explore other options.
- **Is willing to activate the imagination.** I wonder what my life would be like if I didn't work a 9 – 5 job, lived in another country, or experimented with this new activity.
- **Lives in the moment with curiosity about what is actually happening now and what is possible in this moment?** So much of what we think about is the past or the future. The authentic self thinks about and experiences "the now", what brings joy or what inspires right now?
- **Is willing to activate and trust inner wisdom.** Since I am not yet sure, I will sit quietly with my decisions and allow more information to come to me.
- **Is open to the creative process and venturing into the unknown.** The authentic self understands that there is no finish line, that life will continue to unfold even when the current goal is achieved.
- **The Authentic Self is you being fully present to your own inner receptivity and guidance in this moment.**

Developed by Linda
Kohanov and Carol Roush.
Revised 2/10

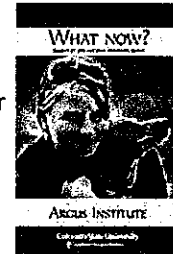
Nine Essential Skills for Authentic Community Building

1. Using emotion as information.
2. Sitting in uncomfortable emotions without panicking.
3. Sensing and flowing with the emotions of others, again without panicking
4. Reading “misbehavior” as a form of communication.
5. Sensitivity, flexibility and responsiveness to personal space and boundaries – yours and those of other people/horses.
6. Understanding the dynamics of shared emotion: distinguishing between instructive personal feelings, conditioned (False Self) emotional patterns, affect contagion, empathy, projection, transference, and emotional resonance.
7. Resisting the temptation to aggressively “fix” people, horses, uncomfortable situations etc.
8. Creating a psychological container of support, what Kathleen Ingram calls “holding the sacred space of possibility.” This fully-engaged form of patience is crucial to tapping innovative solutions arising from the ninth ability:
9. Activating the Authentic Self.

From *Riding Between the World*, By Linda Kohanov, New World Library, 2007

[For Children](#)[For Parents](#)[For Veterinarians](#)[General Grief and Loss](#)[Helping Others](#)[Pet Loss -
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What Now? Support for You and Your Companion Animal by The Argus Institute at Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital, ISBN 9780692001035 (2009). Argus Institute's new, comprehensive guide helps you through a difficult journey that begins with hearing that your animal is ill. By offering strategies for evaluating healthcare choices, assessing quality of life, making end of life decisions, and coping with loss, you and your veterinarian or client can work together through challenging times. \$3.00 per copy. Please call Argus Institute at 970-297-4143 to order.

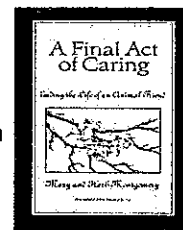


Goodbye My Friend by Herb and Mary Montgomery, Montgomery Press, ISBN 1879779005 (2001)

This soft cover, 31 page booklet offers the reader comfort by providing a variety of personal stories written by different individuals who have experienced the loss of a pet. Stories range from sentimental, to educational (helping children) to uplifting, and provide an opportunity for individual reflection.

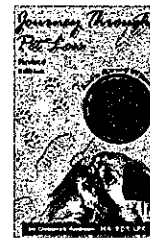
A Final Act of Caring by Herb and Mary Montgomery, Montgomery Press, ISBN 1879779021 (1993)

This soft cover booklet provides comfort to pet owners who must deal with end-of-life decisions for their pets. It encourages people to seek medical facts and emotional support from their veterinarian in order to clearly understand all options available. It includes information about euthanasia.



Journey Through Pet Loss by Deborah Antinori, YokoSpirit Publications, ISBN 0966884817 (Revised edition 2000) Audio Cassette

Journey Through Pet Loss is an insightful, creative, and heartfelt odyssey through the loss of a beloved companion animal. As an experienced drama therapist, Deborah Antinori understands the importance of using creativity and imagery to help move grief from the intellectual realm, to the emotional one. Anyone suffering from the loss of a special friend should experience Deborah's unique approach to healing. She provides valuable ideas in a way that feels very personal and meaningful. (review by Dana Durrance, formerly of Argus)



Pets Living with Cancer: A Pet Owner's Resource by Robing Downing, DVM, American Animal Hospital Association, ISBN 1583260226 (April, 2000)

Where do you turn for an educational resource for your clients whose pets have just been diagnosed with cancer? *Pets Living With Cancer* will help you educate your clients about their pet's cancer diagnosis, treatment options, and their role in the pet's therapy. Taking a sensitive and caring approach to your clients' fears will help them face their pet's diagnosis with a positive outlook. Dr. Robin Downing shares her expertise and personal experience with her own dog, Murphy.



Grieving the Death of a Pet by Betty J. Carmack, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, ISBN 080664348X (January, 2003)

In this book, Carmack draws from her experience of counseling more than two thousand people who have lost a beloved pet, as well as the loss of her Rocky and other furry friends. She offers the book as a kind of pet-loss support group to counter "a world that reminds us repeatedly that grief for an animal doesn't count as much as grief for a person." (Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.)

Surviving the Heartbreak of Choosing Death for Your Pet: Your Personal Guide for Dealing with Pet Euthanasia by Linda Mary

Peterson, Greentree Publishing, ISBN 0965257223 (1997)

From a customer who purchased this book: "Having to choose death for my best friend of 20 years was incredibly painful and brought feelings of guilt, despair, relief and depression. At the time, I felt I might just be losing my mind. This book helped me work through all of my feelings. It gave me a peaceful feeling. It let me know, that I was not alone. There are a number of useful references in the back."

Goodbye, Friend: Healing Wisdom for Anyone Who Has Ever Lost a Pet by Gary Kowalski, Stillpoint Publishing, ISBN 1883478227, (1997)

Kowalski's book is full of sound, compassionate advice to get you through the loss of your pet(s). The book addresses animals' grieving; their life spans; their growth, illnesses and needs. These are similar to ours: need to eat, to exercise, to sleep, to have fun, to enjoy companionship and to expect routine. Kowalski includes advice on how to take care of yourself after the death of a pet and the importance of honesty when talking with children about this event. (summarized from a review by Independent Publisher)



My Personal Pet Remembrance Journal by Enid Traisman, Dove Lewis Emergency Animal Hospital, ISBN 0965113108 (1998)

This gentle and enchanting journal is an excellent place to celebrate the life and passing of a much-cherished animal companion. It encourages a deep and healing introspection, gives tribute to the unique gifts of our animal companions, and documents our path into, up, and beyond the dark hollow of mourning and grief. (summarized from a review by Best Friends Animal Sanctuary Workshop)



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Related Links

National Support Hotlines and Resources:

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) - 24 Hours
1-877-GRIEF-10 (1-877-474-3310). This is a direct line to ASPCA's psychologist and grief counselor, Dr. Stephanie LaFarge, PhD.
www.asPCA.org

Chicago VMA
630-325-1600

Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine
607-253-3932
www.vet.cornell.edu/public/petloss/

University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine
Pet Loss Support
352-392-2235, ext. 5268

University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine
877-394-CARE (toll-free) 217-244-CARE (local)
www.cvm.uiuc.edu/CARE/

Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine
1-888-478-7574 (toll-free)
http://www.vetmed.iastate.edu/animal_owners/petloss/default.htm

Michigan State University
517-432-2696

Ohio State University
614-292-1823, email: petloss@osu.edu

Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine
508-839-7966
www.tufts.edu/vet/petloss/

Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine
540-231-8038

Washington State University
509-335-5704
<http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/PLHL/>

Resources on the Web:

American Veterinary Medical Association
www.avma.org/careforanimals/

The Delta Society - the Human-Animal Health Connection
www.deltasociety.org

Pet Loss Support
www.apib.org
www.pet-loss.net
www.petvets.com/petloss

www.selfhealingexpressions.com

Horse Loss Support
www.hoofbeats-in-heaven.com

Candle Lighting Ceremony
www.griefonline.com

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