

*Coping with the  
loss of  
a pet.*

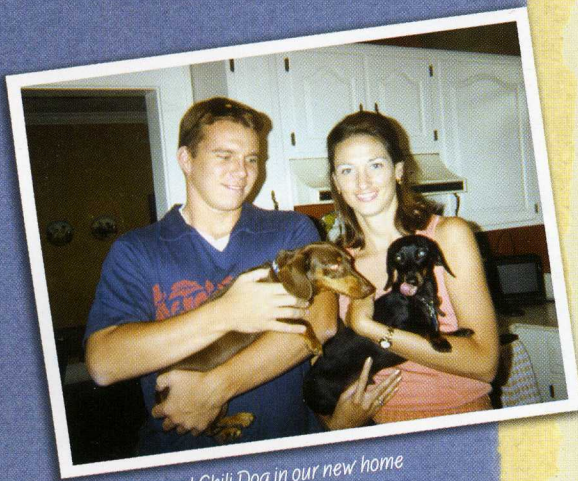




## *The Bond*

How you found your pet or how your pet found you is always a loving story.

The bond can happen instantaneously or over a period of time. No matter how it happens, your pet becomes part of the family. The beloved animal becomes "humanized," a sister, a brother, a child, a best friend. Strong emotions can develop in the relationship, and when the pet dies, it is truly like losing a family member.



*Dixie Dog and Chili Dog in our new home*

*Cooper and his friend Stogie*



## *Grieving a Loss*

Grieving is a normal reaction following any loss - the loss of a pet is no exception. Your best friend, a member of your family, is no longer with you. It is ok to cry, to be angry, to feel guilty, and to question why this has happened. A pet is special, a companion that will truly be missed. It is perfectly natural to mourn the loss.

Grief can manifest itself either emotionally, or physically, or both. Symptoms you may experience include feelings of sadness, confusion, or loneliness. You may also have difficulty sleeping, eating, or concentrating. Headaches and upset stomachs are also normal and natural responses that may follow the loss of your pet. Keep in mind that grieving is a unique experience for everyone, and there is no wrong way to mourn. Although you will gradually come to accept the loss, the memory of your special friend will never die.

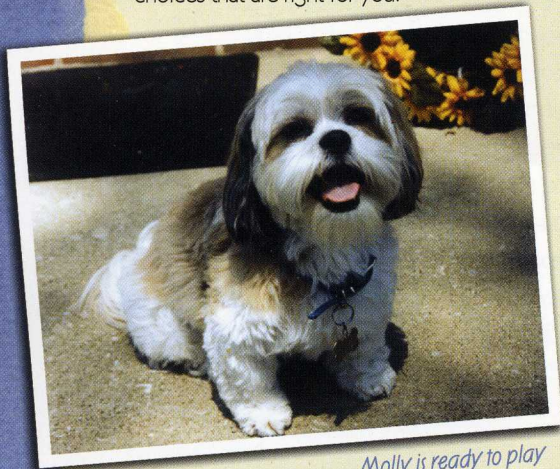


## *It's not your fault*

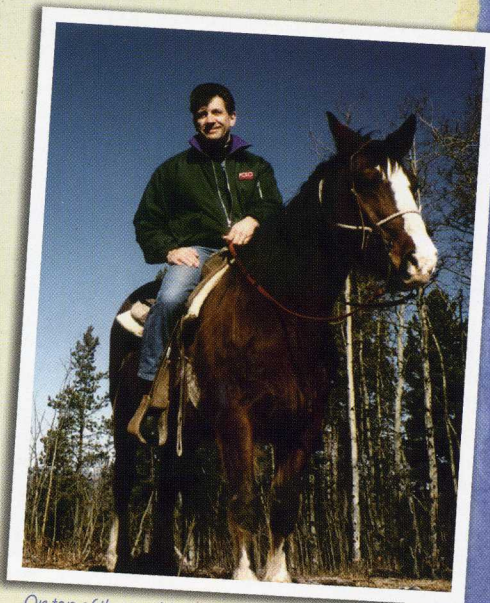
Guilt is a common feeling that you may experience following the loss of your pet. It is the one emotion that will take the longest to work through. Questions, such as "Why didn't I take better care of my animal?" and "Why didn't I take him to the vet sooner?" race through your mind. Speaking to your veterinarian about your feelings may help, as he or she may be able to allay your fears.

Veterinarian bills can be astronomical, not unlike doctor bills for humans. Yet, no one questions medical costs and procedures when a human being is involved. When a pet is involved, however, the cost can be quite an issue, and consequently, cause the owner much guilt.

Making a decision regarding medical care for your pet is not an easy one. Often, issues such as lack of insurance, or differences of opinion within the family can cause tension. Talking to other pet owners can help you make the choices that are right for you.



*Molly is ready to play*



*On top of the world together*

## *Euthanasia — a Difficult Decision*

If your pet had a terminal illness, choosing euthanasia was probably a very difficult decision. However, it is considered humane especially if the quality of life for your pet had become poor - for example, if your pet had trouble eating, sleeping, or moving about.

Once the decision was made, you might have experienced a period of anticipatory grief. Realizing that your pet was going to die probably led to powerful emotions, such as sadness, anger, and confusion. Making your pet as comfortable as possible prior to the procedure became your main function as a caregiver.

Know that your pet appreciated that time, as well. The passage of time will help you to realize you did everything you could for your pet.

