

ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

Losing a pet is devastating. This journal was created out of my own deep need for support, as I struggled to cope with the loss of my beloved cat. There are 30 days, each delivering a profound grief theme that represents what I needed on that particular day in my own cycle. I offer reflections, insights, inspiring quotes and journal prompts to help you through this impossibly difficult time. Taking just a few minutes every day to reflect and process your loss works wonders for your healing. As you walk through your grief journey, know that I'm right there with you and have experienced firsthand what you're going through.

Grieving is never easy. But with the right tools and a little extra support, you'll learn that it's possible to cherish your lost companion and live effectively with your grief as life carries on.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Katie Kuperman is a captivating author, illustrator, public speaker and entrepreneur. She writes with intent and purpose to evoke emotion, ignite learning and encourage positive action in people's everyday lives. Situated in Toronto, Canada, Katie lives with her family (of humans and cats) where she also runs Striking Content, a writing and publishing business. It's Katie's hope and vision that, through her work, she may be the ink that dots the lives of others in a meaningful and supportive way.

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**PART OF ALL PROCEEDS
DONATED TO ANIMAL RESCUES**



PET LOSS GRIEF JOURNAL : 3 MINUTES A DAY

KATIE KUPERMAN

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30 DAYS OF GUIDED REFLECTION AND HEALING
PROMPTS FOR GRIEVING PET OWNERS



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A DAY

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Prompts for Grieving Pet Owners

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This journal is intended as a supportive resource to help navigate the grief and healing process after the loss of a beloved pet. It is not a substitute for professional mental health services.

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To all the incredible pets who have come and gone.

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A FRIENDLY WARNING & DISCLAIMER

Friendly warning

This book necessarily deals with an emotional and possibly traumatic event that you've experienced. Please participate at your own discretion.

Disclaimer

This book reflects my personal experience and research in pet loss and the grieving process. Please note that I am not a therapist. If you are in deep distress or severely struggling, be sure to seek professional help.

INTRODUCTION

My idea to create this book and journal comes from personal life experience. I lost one of the great loves in my life: my cat, Hank. While I knew it was going to be a huge loss to mourn, it's been even harder than I anticipated. I needed a plan and a process for my mourning – something a little extra.

I thought to myself: *what better way to work through my own impossible pain and grief over the loss of Hank than to create a journal that I can use?* And then that morphed into: *I'll publish it and maybe others can benefit from it, too.*

So, here I am.

This journal is unique in the sense that it's a reflection of my personal experience. Each day represents my own strong sentiment on that particular day in the cycle. There are writings, quotes and guided journaling prompts each day that reflect precisely what I felt I needed and was ready for at that point in

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time, as I progressed through the grief process. Every word of this journal comes from a real place, because I lived and breathed all of it right in the moment. I was once in the same boat you find yourself in right now.

The order of your feelings and experiences may not be the same as mine, so if you think it's necessary, I invite you to flip through this book and find the way you feel on any given day. Your Day 2 might be my Day 10, and your Day 12 might be my Day 3. The order of emotions isn't what's important. How we face, process and deal with these emotions is what matters. Writing this book and journal has been a huge help in my own personal healing process.

The act of self-reflection is incredibly powerful as you deal with what feels like the impossible. The second piece is writing. For centuries, writing has been known to be a therapeutic activity, through which we can feel a release and a sense of peace. Take a minute (or five) each day to explore this book and to journal about what you're feeling. I promise, each day that you do this, you'll feel better when you're done.

As you move through this book, you'll notice I don't delve into Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' Five Stages of Grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance), nor do I go into the specifics of J. William Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning (1-accepting the reality of the loss; 2-processing the pain of grief; 3-adjusting to a world without the deceased; 4-finding a way to remember the deceased while continuing life) or Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut's Dual Process Model of Grief (loss-oriented coping and restoration-oriented coping). This is deliberate because everyone experiences loss differently. All experi-

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ences are right and there's no such thing as a wrong path or a missed step. Having said that, you're bound to find overlaps and touchpoints that relate to the different stages of grief as well as the inevitable tasks associated with mourning. It is my intention that you find comfort in knowing you're not alone and that whatever you're feeling is okay. There are hard truths you'll need to face but there's always a silver lining that illuminates effective ways to deal with those, helping you form a new path where joy co-exists with your grief.

One thing I find particularly helpful throughout my grieving process is talking to others in my life who know precisely what it's like to lose a pet. As you work through this journal with me, I want you to know that I get it. I understand what you're going through and even if it feels like others around you don't, there are plenty of us who do. And we're in it together.

I believe the bond between pets and humans is profoundly special. Without language to bind us, we find other ways to connect. Through eye contact, touch and daily care, there forms a deep trust, an understanding of one another, a special bond that envelopes our love tightly. It's an intuitive connection that runs far deeper than words.

Following the ordeal my husband and I shared with a tyrant cat of the Jekyll and Hyde type, came our savior, Hank. Through the glass window of the shelter that day, we chose each other. And he couldn't have been more different from what we were accustomed to – a kind, gentle, loving feline soul who swept us off our feet. For the next decade, we shared our lives, closely knit together. From me, to my husband, to my two children, every one of us fostered and nurtured an incredible bond with him. He

INTRODUCTION

filled our lives with love, laughter, fluffy snuggles and the loudest purr you've ever heard. There were tough times, though. He was a cat with nine lives, battling inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), a urinary tract blockage, gingivitis and several "accidental" escapes from our house. We survived it all. Finally, oral cancer took him from us. For the last seven months of his life, there was a slow deterioration, from losing his hearing, to IBD flareups, to thyroid elevations, and finally, a metastasized malignant tumor under the tongue that stopped him from eating, no matter how much he still wanted to.

It was excruciatingly difficult to watch him suffer in the last week of his life. Regardless of how he maintained his sweet and lovable demeanor, never failing to purr the moment you came to pet him, I knew how much he was struggling. I also knew the end of his life was near. The night before the call from the doctor, as I watched him battle to swallow even his most beloved Temptations treats, it hit me like a ton of bricks. I began to weep on my kitchen floor where we sat together. I embraced him with all my love and told him I was there for him.

Still, when the call came on Sunday and we had to *accept* our new reality, my heart began to ache and I felt like I was going to vomit. That feeling didn't go away for days.

The four of us spent the whole day with our feline boy, snuggling him, helping him eat even the tiniest of sprinkles of food and keeping him comfortable. In the afternoon, it was time. We couldn't let him suffer any longer and the anticipation for what was coming was too much to bear. It got to the point where we made an important realization: we were keeping him here for us, not him. That's a hard reality to accept.

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An hour later, he died in our arms.

I believe human beings who are pet owners have an added layer of selflessness. We choose to care for an animal and never question what that entails. In return, we have unwavering companionship. The score is never tallied and there are no petty calculations of gives and takes. On the contrary, a beautiful understanding forms between us, forever to be honored. We let ourselves be vulnerable and open our hearts to pure, unconditional love. While it lasts, it's one of the greatest experiences of our lives. But when it ends, the blow comes hard and fast. We chose to love big, and now we have no choice but to grieve big too.

So, let's get on with it.

We can do this.

DAY 1

SAYING GOODBYE

The hard truth

This is the hardest.

Without question, pain and suffering are at an all-time high on this day. Not only for you, but also for your companion pet. Whether the end comes fast or slow, all of a sudden or in the form of a gradual buildup, the final 24 hours mark the day when your pet is at their worst, and as a result, so are you.

You knew this day would come, and yet every part of your being wished it wouldn't. For years, it's been the day that was far too difficult even to think about. If ever the fear of losing your companion flashed into your mind, you'd quickly shake it away because the mere thought was unbearable.

And now?

It's here. The day has come. You're not ready. But then again, you never would have been. Even if you had a feeling, even if your intuition told you the end was near, the actual moment when it all becomes real seems impossible. Untrue. Some kind of nightmare you're going to wake up from.

When the terrible news arrives, you may scream, cry, crumble to the ground. It feels as though you can't do it, you can't live it, you can't get through it, and yet you know all too well that you have to. There's no choice and this has become your living reality.

If your companion passes suddenly, shock sets in. You won't believe it. Robbed of any time to comprehend or process what's happening, you're bewildered and beside yourself. In this case, it takes more time for you to come to terms with your loss.

On the other hand, if your pet has been deteriorating for some time, is sick or terminally ill and euthanasia is the clear but oh-so-difficult answer, your grieving process begins from the moment that awful word is uttered to you by the vet. I despise that word – not only because it's one of the hardest things you'll ever have to do, but also because I can't help but notice the contradiction of sound versus meaning. "Euth" is pronounced "youth" and yet there is nothing youthful about the procedure. Quite the opposite.

The silver lining

Take small comfort in the fact that this is the worst part. Even if the increments in your healing progress are small from here, there's only one way to go: up.

However your goodbye happens, it will feel out of this world. After the moment has come and gone, you'll wonder how you

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ever got through it in the first place. And then you'll realize you're tougher than you think.

“There are no goodbyes for us.
Wherever you are, you will
always be in my heart.”

MAHATMA GANDHI



JOURNALING TIME

Write about the way you felt when you had to say goodbye to your companion. Let the words flow uninhibited. It doesn't need to look pretty or sound nice. It's about getting all those painful images and feelings out of your head and onto your paper.

This is a cathartic process. You'll understand what I'm talking about when you're finished.



DAY 2

ACHING HEART

The hard truth

Without a doubt, the day you say goodbye to your pet is the absolute hardest. But be prepared for Day 2 to be an unexpected close second – or even just as hard as yesterday.

Why? Because this is the day you begin life without your pet. The usual morning routine with your companion is fresh in your mind and the heartache starts immediately, that is, if you even slept in the first place.

I woke up more times than I can count that first night after saying goodbye to my cat. Each time, for a split second I thought the pit in my stomach could have been from a bad dream until I quickly realized it wasn't. Then I tossed and turned until I caught a few more winks, which inevitably didn't last long and I found myself awake once more.

In the morning, none of us wanted to move. There were no words. Just sad faces and uncontrollable tears.

You won't want to do anything. If you can take a day off, do it. You need time to just be and to get yourself in order a little bit. Emotions are difficult to keep at bay on this day so, if at all possible, put yourself in situations that enable free expression. Holding in and bottling up are not ideal.

The silver lining

Give yourself a break. Feel all the feels.

Your goal for this day: get through it. That's all.

Reaching out to family and close friends is a great idea, particularly those who have been through this before and understand what you're feeling.

“I wanted to spend the rest of
my life with you; but instead I
am deeply honored knowing
you spent the rest of your life
with me.”

CAMILLE MARCOTTE

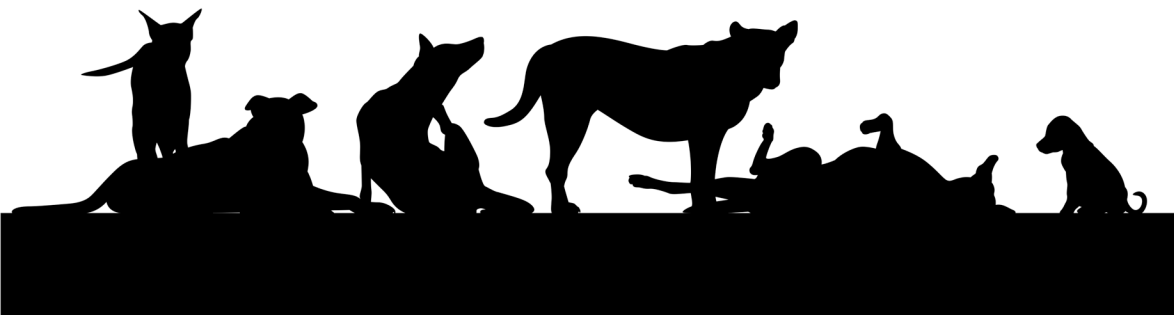


JOURNALING TIME



Onto the lines below, unload all the things you wish you could do with your lost pet today. As painful as it will be to write this down, it will do two things:

1. You'll reflect on the rituals that became a daily routine with your companion.
2. You'll release your impossible wants and wishes onto this paper, lifting at least part of the heavy weight you now carry on your shoulders.



DAY 3

SHOCK

The hard truth

You're shocked and in a state of disbelief.

How did I get here? Just two days ago, my companion and I were together. We went for a walk. She was on my lap. He was lying on the sofa right there beside me.

Denial is normal and an expected part of your grieving process. When you're used to something, it becomes ingrained in your daily life. We are routine-based creatures who thrive on predictability and comfort. If there's a disruption to that routine and our sense of comfort gets rattled, naturally we go through a phase where we simply can't believe it.

On this day in my own grief cycle, my son said it so well:

“Mom, I keep wishing that I'm in some kind of horrible nightmare and that

*I'm going to wake up and it will all have been just a bad dream...and
Hanky will still be here."*

Think of a time when you've had a bad dream and then woken up in a state of anxiousness and fear. After a few seconds, in your sleepy state, you realize it was just a dream. You let out a huge sigh of relief and fall back to sleep.

This is not that. It's the opposite.

The silver lining

The only way to deal with your state of shock is to come face to face with it. You may find it comes and goes, or you might have a linear spell of disbelief before you move on to the next phase. Gently remind yourself of your reality and understand that shock and denial represent your movement through the grieving process. It's common and it's okay. Call it what it is. Talk about it. Cry about it. Journal about it.

“Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief. There is a grace in denial. It is nature’s way of letting in only as much as we can handle.”

ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS & DAVID KESSLER



JOURNALING TIME

Is it possible you're in denial? If so, do you believe this is easing your pain in any way?

When your brain snaps you out of it and tells you what's real, describe the physical and emotional feelings associated with that shocking moment of realization.

