



What To Do In The First 24 Hours After Losing a Pet

The hours after losing a pet can feel surreal, overwhelming, and impossibly heavy. You do not need to do everything. You do not need to feel okay. This is a gentle guide for the next 24 hours — nothing more.

Drink water

Grief is physically exhausting. Your body needs water even when you have forgotten it exists. Put a glass beside you now. Eat something small if you can — it does not have to be a meal.

Rest without guilt

You may feel wired, numb, or completely depleted — all of these are normal. Lie down even if you cannot sleep. Let your body be still. Sleep is not abandonment. It is how you survive this.

Decision fatigue is real

Your brain is in shock. You do not have to make any decision today that can wait until tomorrow. If someone asks and you don't know, "I'm not ready to decide yet" is a complete answer.

Memorial decisions can wait

Cremation, burial, keepsakes, photographs — none of these need to be decided in the next few hours. Most providers understand grief timelines. Give yourself at least 24–48 hours before making permanent choices.

If children are grieving

Let them see you sad — it teaches them that grief is safe to feel. Keep routines where possible. Answer questions simply and honestly. You do not need to protect them from this loss; you need to move through it together.

Your other pets are grieving too

Animals feel the absence of a companion deeply. They may search, grow quieter, or want more closeness with you. Extra gentleness and a steady routine will help you both. Their grief is real.

Guilt spirals

"Did I do enough? Did I wait too long? Should I have known?" These thoughts are almost universal after loss. They are grief talking, not truth. You loved your pet. That love was enough.

Ask for help

Tell one person what has happened. Let them bring food, sit with you, or simply know. You do not have to carry this alone in the first 24 hours. Receiving care is not weakness — it is wisdom.

You have permission to postpone

Work emails, social obligations, admin — almost all of it can wait. A brief message to the people who need to know is enough. The world will still be there tomorrow. Today, you grieve.

Gentle reminder: There is no right way to grieve. There is only your way — and it is enough.

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