

# You Are Not Grieving Wrong

---

*A Gentle Guide to the Many Faces of Pet Loss Grief*

---

*“There is no correct way to miss someone who mattered.”*

---

*Hearts & Halos Photography  
Legacy, end-of-life & memorial photography · Nova Scotia's South Shore*

## Introduction

---

Grief is often portrayed as sadness.

But real grief is much more complicated.

After losing a beloved pet, people frequently experience emotions that surprise, confuse, or even shame them. Some cry every day. Others feel numb. Some want another pet immediately. Others cannot imagine ever opening their hearts again.

All of these responses can be normal.

This guide was created to offer reassurance that there is no “correct” way to grieve. Grief is deeply personal, and your experience may look very different from someone else’s.

If you’ve ever wondered, “Am I grieving wrong?” — this guide is for you.

---

## If You Feel Numb

---

Some people feel intense sadness immediately after loss. Others feel very little.

Numbness is a common response to overwhelming emotional pain. It can be your mind's way of protecting you when a loss feels too large to process all at once.

You may feel:

- *disconnected*
- *distracted*
- *emotionally flat*
- *strangely calm*

### **Gentle Reminder**

*This does not mean you loved your pet any less.*

*You do not need to force yourself to feel anything. Your grief will unfold in its own time.*

---

## If You Feel Relief

---

This is one of the emotions people are often most afraid to admit.

If your pet was elderly, terminally ill, in pain, or declining physically or cognitively, you may feel relief that their suffering has ended.

Relief and grief can exist together. Feeling relief does not mean you wanted them gone. It often means you hated watching them struggle.

### **Gentle Reminder**

*Relief is not the absence of love.*

*Sometimes it is an expression of compassion.*

---

## If You Feel Guilty

---

Guilt is one of the most common experiences after pet loss.

You may wonder:

- *Did I wait too long?*
- *Did I act too soon?*
- *Should I have noticed sooner?*
- *Could I have done more?*
- *Did I make the right decision?*

### **Gentle Reminder**

*The fact that you are questioning yourself often reflects how deeply you cared.*

*Grief frequently rewrites memories through the lens of hindsight.*

*Try to remember what you knew at the time — not only what you know now.*

---

## If Your Grief Shows Up Later

---

Some people cry immediately. Others seem “fine” for weeks or months.

Then suddenly — a photograph, a favourite walking trail, an anniversary, an empty food bowl — opens the floodgates.

Delayed grief is common.

### **Gentle Reminder**

*Grief does not operate on a schedule.*

*There is no expiration date on love.*

---

## If You Feel Angry

---

Anger can be directed toward veterinarians, family members, friends, illness, circumstances, yourself, or life itself.

Sometimes anger is grief looking for somewhere to go.

### **Gentle Reminder**

*Feeling angry does not make you a bad person.*

*It makes you human.*

---

## If You Cannot Look at Photos

---

Some people immediately surround themselves with photographs. Others avoid every image.

Both responses are normal.

Photos can be comforting. Photos can also be painful.

You do not need to look at them until you are ready.

### **Gentle Reminder**

*There is no timeline for opening the photo album.*

*The memories will still be there when you are ready.*

---

## If You Keep Their Belongings

---

Many people keep collars, leashes, favourite toys, beds, blankets, or food dishes. Some keep them forever. Others donate them quickly.

Neither choice is better.

### **Gentle Reminder**

*There is no deadline for deciding what to do with your pet's belongings.*

*Keep what feels right. Release what feels right.*

---

## If You Want Another Pet Right Away

---

For some people, welcoming another pet feels healing. It may bring companionship, routine, purpose, and comfort.

Wanting another pet does not mean you are replacing the one you lost. Relationships are not interchangeable.

### **Gentle Reminder**

*Love is not a limited resource.*

*Your heart can remember one pet while making room for another.*

---

## If You Never Want Another Pet

---

Others feel the opposite. The idea of another pet may feel impossible.

You may worry it would not be the same, that you are not ready, or that your heart still belongs to the pet you lost.

That is okay too.

### **Gentle Reminder**

*There is no requirement to open your heart again.*

*And there is no timeline if you eventually choose to.*

---

## The Truth About Grief

---

Grief does not follow a single shape. You may cry every day, or rarely cry at all. You may laugh at memories, or find it impossible to look at a photograph. You may feel relief, guilt, anger, or numbness — sometimes all in the same afternoon.

None of these experiences automatically mean you are grieving incorrectly.

*They simply mean you are grieving.*

## Final Reflection

---

*Take a moment to sit with these questions. There are no right answers — only honest ones.*

- *What part of my grief have I been judging?*
- *What would I say to a friend experiencing the same thing?*
- *How can I offer myself that same compassion?*

### Gentle Reminder

*You are not grieving wrong.*

*You are grieving someone you loved.*

*And love rarely follows a predictable path.*

---

*“There is no correct way to miss someone who mattered.”*

---

*Hearts & Halos Photography*  
*Legacy, end-of-life & memorial photography · Nova Scotia's South Shore*