The Death of a Pet

Librarian Guide

Welcome, friends.

Thank you so much for choosing to lend this healing kit through your library. The creation and implementation of the kit are up to your discretion, but we offer these recommendations to aid you.

The Goal of This Kit

This kit will not heal a family in its entirety. It can not undo what has happened. Instead, it is intended to start families down a path of healing by:

- Offering books to share and empathize with,
- Discussions to ensure everyone feels heard and knows what's happening,
- Activities to provide comfort to family members,
- Suggested acts of kindness to take away the powerless feeling the death of a pet can cast over us,
- Community helpers so families know where to start reaching out for continued help.

Together, all these pieces start families down a path of healing of their own design, a path that will be different for everyone. By offering this kit, you are not taking the place of a therapist. You are merely providing a curated set of resources designed by professionals to aid your community members in a variety of ways.

Who Created This Kit?

This kit was put together by a team of people, including:

- David Moorhead, children's librarian at the Lewiston (Maine) Public Librar
- Bonnie Thomas, a licensed children's counselor specializing in art and play therapy
- Megan Emery, guide author and experience designer coordinator at the Chattanooga Public Library
- Kirsten Cappy, a children's literature advocate and owner of Curious City

Lending Period

Ultimately, it's up to you. Therapist Bonnie Thomas suggests giving families 2-4 weeks with the kit, with additional time as needed.

Assembling the Kit

Based on the books and replaceable materials you choose to include, you may put this kit into one of the following:

- Backpack
- Wheelable bag/box
- Duffle bag
- Canvas tote

Providing Materials for the Activities

It's up to you to determine how many activities you'd like to provide materials for. We suggest each activity be organized into a clearly labeled individual container, such as a clear plastic tote. We have included labels designed for Avery Label 5164.

A few easy and inexpensive options to start with are:

Make a Memory Book: Suggested Activity Materials:

- Tissue paper
- Markers
- Colored pencils

- Cardstock
- Glue
- Stamps and a stamp pad, especially individual letters
- Scrapbook papers
- Scissors that cut interesting edges
- Ribbon scraps
- Stickers (especially hearts, stars, happy faces, and pet items)

Charm Art: Suggested Activity Materials:

- Embroidery Floss
- Instructions on how to create friendship bracelets
- Lobster clasps
- Jump rings
- Zipper pulls
- Fishing line

Have a Memorial Service for Your Pet: Suggested Activity Materials:

- Wood burning kit
- "Fancy" stationery paper (this can be printed)

Thinking About Heaven: Suggested Activity Materials:

Suggested activity materials include:

- Sketchpad of art paper, card stock, or oversized paper
- Variety of markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Get Planting

- An easy-to-grow seed such as a marigold
- Growing instructions

Consider Local Materials

There may be local organizations or individuals that could further help a family in need. Consider including brochures or a custom resource page to your kit.

Materials to Replace After Each Lending Period

- Any/All Handouts
- Activity Materials

When the Kit is Returned

Upon the borrower's returning the kit, the librarian should ask whether there is anything more the library can do to help. There is a lot of information included in the kit which may leave the family with questions, new research to complete, or community partners to seek out. Even if they don't need any assistance upon returning the kit, it's a good idea to offer a gentle reminder that the library is here to help them should they need it.

Designing Your Own Materials

You are, of course, welcome (and encouraged) to create any additional materials. To assist with design:

- Header font is Montara 24 pt.
- Sub-header font is Montara 16 pt.
- Content font is Archer 12 pt.
- The labels were designed with the Avery Label 5164 template
- The Healing Library logos can be found at: **CuriousCityDPW.com/category/healing/**

Share Your Library & Follow Others

Please share your ideas and questions about the Healing Library with librarian Megan Emery at meganfemery@gmail.com.

We will share new ideas and implementations at:
CuriousCityDPW.com/category/healing/

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Book Discussion

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Conversation Starters

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Book Discussion

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Community Helpers

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Acts of Kindness

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Activity
Memory Book

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Activity
Memorial Service

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Activity
Thinking About Heaven

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Activity
Get Planting

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Activity
Charm Art

Family Materials

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Discussion Guide

Grief is actually a healing process that takes place after traumatic experiences such as the loss of a pet. It is a serious matter, but also an opportunity for growth individually and as a family. Pets may die, become lost, or be stolen, all of which can result in an sense of loss for a child. The loss felt during any of these experiences is painful for all family members, but adults, wanting to minimize the grief in their children, can often unintentionally make things worse than they are. Parents often lie to children in an effort to soften the blow, because they are inadequately prepared to discuss loss, death, and grief with children.

This guide will give you strategies to talk to your children in an honest way so they understand what has happened and can heal in a way that affords growth, better enabling them to deal with difficult times as they grow older.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Understanding Your Child's Bond

As a parent, it's important to understand how close your child's bond was to their pet. When a close bond is formed, a child will refer to their pet as "best friend", "brother" or "sister", or even as "parent." (Corr & Corr 1996) As such, when the bond is broken, their grief can be overwhelming, feeling the same as losing a sibling, child, or best friend. (Corr & Corr, 1996) Respecting this bond through honest conversation is the best way to assist your child through the grieving process.

The 5 Stages of Grief

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross identified 5 stages in the grieving process. (Kübler-Ross, 1969) These stages are typically experienced when we suffer a loss, though not necessarily in order. Sometimes a particular stage or stages are repeatedly revisited. Not all stages are

necessarily experienced, and the amount of time spent in the stages is different for everyone. Some may take only minutes to process, while others can take years. It's important to understand that this timeline has nothing to do with the amount of love a person felt for their pet. These stages are not signs of mental illness, but rather indicators that your loved one is going through the healing process of grief.

- **Denial:** The world feels overwhelming and meaningless. Denial allows us to process our loss over an amount of time suitable to each person by suspending belief. When we begin to ask questions, we know that we are beginning to heal. However, as we begin to heal, the feelings we were originally denying begin to surface and must be dealt with.
- **Anger:** This stage of the healing process can feel endless. You question everything with anger, but underneath anger is your own pain. Although we live in a society where anger is not welcome, anger can provide one with the strength needed during this period of healing. Anger is also representative of the love that is felt.
- **Bargaining:** If your pet is dying, you may find your child bargaining: "If he gets better, I'll never yell at him again." If your animal has already passed, this may sound more like "what if" statements. This stage can lead to feelings of guilt which are sometimes merited and at other times are not. If, for example, your child left a door open and your cat ran out and was hit by a car, the child may feel guilt for being careless. Don't be afraid to discuss this guilt with your child and to reassure them that we all make mistakes, we simply need to learn from them. As Buzhardt & Steib point out, "Learning from mistakes is constructive; blaming ourselves for them is not."
- **Depression:** This stage embodies a feeling of great emptiness that seems to last forever. Often the person experiencing depression withdraws from family, friends, or school. Please remember that crying is a natural part of grieving, and don't encourage your child to "stop crying." They will stop when the time is right.
- **Acceptance:** This stage is about accepting the reality of a new world without your pet. It's understanding how to adjust in this world without your pet and knowing that you may not feel "OK," but you can move forward. While for some this may include getting a new pet for your family, the American Humane Society suggests carefully considering this and not rushing into a new pet relationship. Paying close

attention to feelings, continuing your discussion, and continuing to participate in healing activities together will let you know when the time is right to welcome a new pet into your family dynamic.

How to Start a Conversation

In conversation, there are three simple steps for parents and helpers to follow: (a) be honest with children; (b) encourage children to be involved; and (c) avoid euphemisms about death. (Corr & Corr, 1996) Listening to your child's questions will give you insight about what they understand about death already and what stage of grief they are going through.

A Few Things to Avoid

A few common tactics parents have developed to try to minimize their child's pain include the following. Also considered are the potential repercussions of these actions:

- Lying to your child by telling them their pet ran away.
    - While this is an easy solution to the problem, your child now believes that the animal they have loved as a family member did not care about them and chose to leave their love behind. In addition, the child will ultimately learn the truth and may wonder what else you have lied to them about.

- Telling children their pet has gone to heaven when you do not believe in heaven
    - Your child is likely to ask you questions about what happens to a pet after it dies. For example, the child may ask if pets have souls or spirits, and whether their pet will live on in some other place or time after death. Be honest about your own beliefs on the topic. This will spare the child from confusion or any unintentional feelings of being lied to later on.

      You can also ask the child what his or her own thoughts and beliefs are, or ask your child what s/he has heard from others about their beliefs. Furthermore, there's nothing wrong with letting your child know you're not sure what happens, if that is true. An open dialogue will allow your child to

explore this challenging topic in a way that respects your own cultural and/or religious beliefs as well as recognizing that people have different views about the topic.

- Telling children the pet is taking a long nap, or won't wake up again.
    - Death is different than sleep. Some pets do die in their sleep, but it's important that children realize the pet has died. Children and their loved ones go to sleep every night. Thinking their pet went to sleep and never woke up can scare children into thinking the same may happen to them or their loved ones. In addition, this thought may be too complex or frightening for them to verbalize.

If Your Pet Needs to be Euthanized

The following are suggestions to begin this process in a way where your child will understand and feel respected

- Prepare by getting a pamphlet from your vet explaining the euthanization process.
- Start the discussion with your child with some of the prompts suggested below.
- Involve the child in the decision making process.

Some important points to mention to your child are:

- Prepare to see changes in your pet. He or she no longer feels good and no longer experiences pleasure the way they used to.
- Although you are making a decision to end your pet's life, everyone is sad, including the vet and you, the parent.
- At many clinics euthanasia can be performed as a ceremony, and children may be present if they wish. For other clinics euthanasia can be performed in your own home. Talking to your vet about what is right for your family should include the input of your child.

Ages Birth Through Preschool

Children of this age do not have a solid concept of what death is. Though they may say they miss their animal, they will also be aware of the emotions and stress of their family

members. (Buzhardt & Steib, 2008) Children mirror and take on the emotions of others at this stage of their life, so it's important to reassure them with love, patience, and kindness. In addition, you may be going through the grieving process yourself. Don't hide this from your child; instead, model healthy behaviors. If you are crying, let your child know it is because you miss your pet. Children at this age ask a lot of questions that may make you sad, but answer them as honestly as you can. Children also repeat questions at this age as a way to process information. Your honest answers when grieving or feeling better will provide them with what they need for their own healing process.

Grade School and Beyond

Grade school aged children begin to have an understanding of death that becomes clearer as they become preteens and adolescents. For this age group, the 5 stages of grief will be more apparent, and your attention to verbal and physical cues will assist you in understanding what your child needs to talk about.

Where to Draw the Line with the Truth

Being honest about your pet's death is important. There are instances when you should consider what your child needs to know and provide that information delicately, while still being honest. For example, Buzhardt & Steib recommend being honest if a pet is killed by an automobile accident, but simply telling your child the animal was hurt so badly the doctor couldn't make her well again will be enough. A detailed post-mortem discussion will not help your child.

Remembering Your Pet Together

Talking about your pet can provide comfort long after your pet is gone. Your family will have stories to share that will comfort everyone. These questions may spark this sharing:

- How did my pet make me a better person?
- What are your favorite memories with your pet?
- How did your pet grow and change with your family?
- Did your pet ever seem to behave like a human?

Keep the Conversation Going

To keep your conversation going, we've included discussion guides specific to each book in this kit based on what we've gone over in this Discussion Guide. We recommend reading through each book's guide before sharing it as a family.

Resources

Corr, D. M., & Corr, C. A. (1996). **Handbook of Childhood Death and Bereavement.** New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.

Buzhardt, L. F., & Steib, S. D. (2008). **Can We Have One?: A Parent's Guide to Raising Kids with Cats and Dogs**. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

The Humane Society of the United States. "Coping with the Death of Your Pet." (2017). http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/coping_with_pet_death.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/

Kübler-Ross, E. (1969). **On Death and Dying**. New York: Macmillan.

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Healing Activities

These activities can be done individually or together as a family. Some will feel appropriate to do as a family, others can be performed solo by you or your child/ren. While there may be suggestions for ages that are most appropriate for each activity, do not let this information stop you from using the activity if you know it's the right one for your family.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Have a Memorial Service for your Pet

Dealing with a pet's death requires tough decisions such as what to do with the pet's body, how to commemorate the pet, and ultimately how to say goodbye. A memorial service for a pet is one way to address these issues. Common memorial services include burials, scattering of ashes, or releasing them into water. Regardless of the ceremony you choose, make sure to include your child in the decision making, as this helps the child with the grieving process.

If you are having a burial:

Preparing your pet may include:

- Spending time with your pet's body individually or as a family
- Choosing items to bury with your pet
- Decorating a box in which to bury your pet

Remembering your pet may include:

- Reading poems
- Sharing stories
- Writing letters to your pet that are read aloud

Finalizing their resting place may include:

- Creating a marker to show where they are buried
- Planting flowers over their grave to show their final resting place

If you are scattering their ashes:

Preparing your pet may include:

- Spending time with the ashes before they are scattered as a family or one on one

Remembering your pet may include:

- Reading poems
- Sharing stories
- Writing letters to your pet that are read aloud

Finalizing their resting place may include:

- Creating a marker to show where your ceremony took place
- Planting flowers to show where your ceremony took place
- Planting flowers to honor your pet and have a physical place to visit when you'd like to remember them

If you are releasing the ashes into water:

Preparing your pet may include:

- Spending time with the body or ashes before they are released as a family or one on one.

Remembering your pet may include:

- Reading poems
- Sharing stories
- Writing letters to your pet that are read aloud

Finalizing their resting place may include:

- Creating a shore marker to show where they were released

- Planting flowers to honor your pet and have a physical place to visit when you'd like to remember them

During this process there may be lots of tears. It's important to reassure your child that tears are okay but they should remember that their pet's love for them will always be there, just like your love.

Create Charm Art

Working together, use your animal's tags or charms to create a bracelet or necklace for your child to wear. The charms can be added to a pre-existing bracelet or necklace, or you can create a new bracelet or necklace that you make yourself. If your child does not want to create jewelry, you can use the charms to make zipper pulls for their backpack.

Finally, you can use the charms with items from a nature area your pet enjoyed to create a wind chime to hang.

Thinking about Heaven

If your family does believe in heaven, you and your child can draw pictures about all the wonderful things in your pet's heaven. While you draw, be sure to talk about memories of your pet and how they relate to the heaven you and your child are drawing.

Make a Memory Book or Memory Box

These days our phones are filled with pictures along with our social media sites. Printing these photos and taking the time to make an album in memory of your pet will spark discussion and creativity while creating a memento your family can use to remember your pet, or when they feel sad and miss your pet.

In addition to the photos, you can include:

- Pieces of fabric from favorite toys, bedding, or collars
- Written poems, stories, or memories
- Drawings of your pet, of memories, or of funny stories

Get Planting

Creating a physical space of beauty to honor your pet can provide your child with a place to go to remember your pet. Are there plants that were significant to your pet? A particular tree, bush, or flower you have memories of with them?

You can also relate to your child that caring for this new plant or garden is a way to continue your love for your pet, to continue caring for them even after they're gone.

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Acts of Kindness

When we lose a pet, we are left feeling powerless. Participating in an act of kindness on behalf of your pet can leave you feeling more powerful and can provide a sense of purpose when that feels missing. You can do these activities as a family or your child may want to participate in some on their own.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Take Care of Someone Who's Lost Their Pet

Prepare a care package including tissues, lozenges (or other items to soothe a throat that may be sore from crying), eye drops, a sympathy card. Are there other personal things you could include?

Help a Pet in Need

Shelters have many needs, and you can help animals by donating food, clean blankets, or toys.

Love a Pet in Need

Volunteering at a local shelter can look like a variety of things. At some shelters you can walk dogs who need exercise, at others you can help replacing the bedding and water for pocket pets. Call your local shelter to find out how best to help local animals who could use your love and care.

Fundraise for Pets in Need

The Humane Society of the United States has a collection of fundraising ideas for you to do to raise money for their organization or any local humane society. Check out their website for cool ideas people all over the country have successfully used.

Treats Are Always Good

Create some treats for the pet of a friend or loved one you care about. This could be a new toy to play with or a baked good appropriate for a dog. Try freezing nonfat organic yogurt with some chopped up bacon or carrot in a dixie cup for a yummy treat!

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Community Helpers

The following are suggestions for types of helpers that may exist within your community. Some are resources for you to explore in a face to face setting, others are for you to look up online and continue your reading.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library you are welcome to do so.

Veterinarian

Whether you're making plans for your pet's euthanasia, or simply looking for someone helpful when your child asks questions, it's most likely your family's vet has the knowledge you're looking for in general and specific to your pet. Furthermore, if you'd like to have an autopsy to understand why your pet died, they can arrange for that to take place.

Counselor

Parents often try to help their children during their period of grief but lack the training to properly discuss difficult topics like death, grief, and loss with children. We hope that this kit will provide you with the framework to honestly grieve with your children so that they heal and grow from this sad experience. However, if you feel you or your child are experiencing depression or anger that has gone on too long, we recommend you reach out to a counselor who can assist you.

Counselors can be found for specific age groups, genders, religious beliefs, or specifically for pet loss.

Religious Leaders

Everyone deals with different versions of the afterlife when it comes to the death of a pet. Some people talk about "The Rainbow Bridge," others talk about "Doggy Heaven" or "Kitty Heaven." How your family explains what happens after your pet passes on may leave your

child with questions about what happens after we die that could best be answered by your family's or community's religious leaders.

Cultural Leaders

Teachers, librarians, childcare providers, extended family members, and friends of your family may all be leaders during this time of healing for your child. Letting your child know these are all safe people to talk to will allow them to see how large their support system is. Similarly, you may want to warn those people that your family has experienced this loss. If you have any particular messages you're conveying (such as the honest version of events for a pet who has been killed in a car accident, the inclusion or exclusion of afterlife beliefs, or avoiding euphemisms for death), you'll want to share those when appropriate.

Animal Shelters

When the time is right to begin looking for a new pet, an animal shelter will have a variety of animals who are looking for forever homes filled with the love your home holds. Shelters can also be places to go when your child is missing their pet, as you can interact with a wide variety of animals. Your children may also wind up with questions about new types of animals that the shelter technicians can answer.

Additional Reading

Buzhardt, L. F., & Steib, S. D. (2008). **Can We Have One?: A Parent's Guide to Raising Kids with Cats and Dogs**. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

"Coping with the Death of your Pet" (2017). Retrieved February 13, 2017, from http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/coping_with_pet_death.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/#children

"Five Stages of Grief" by Elisabeth Kubler Ross & David Kessler. Retrieved February 13, 2017, from http://grief.com/the-five-stages-of-grief/

Book Discussions

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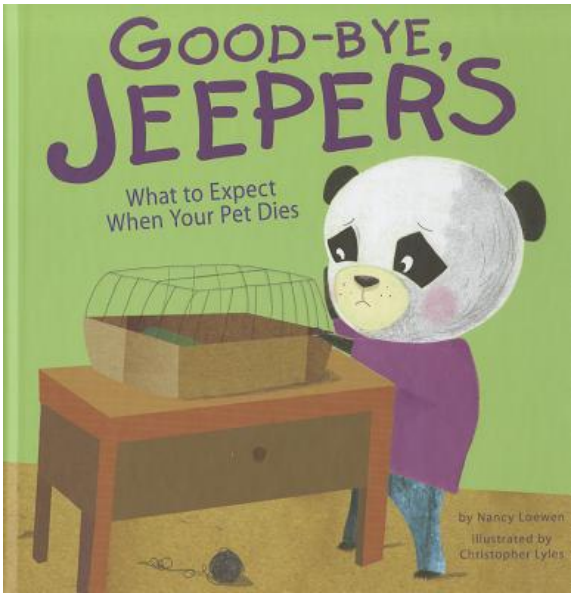
Book Discussion: Good-Bye, Jeepers

Good-Bye, Jeepers:
What to Expect When Your Pet Dies
By Nancy Loewen
Illustrated by Christopher Lyles
Picture Window Books



This story is as helpful for adults in understanding the way children grieve as it is for children in understanding their own feelings. It will be useful for anyone who has experienced the death of a pet, but it deals specifically with the death of a pocket pet, in this case a guinea pig named Jeepers. In addition to the discussion points we are providing, the book provides many helpful considerations in yellow boxes.

Below are some helpful notes for you to use or paraphrase when reading the book together. If it's written in italics, it's a note for you as a parent to read and consider. If it's written in quotations, it's a discussion prompt for you and your child. There's no need to use all the notes, just what feels natural or most beneficial for your family.

Wherever there is a "_____" you may insert the name of the pet you've recently lost. You don't need to use all these suggestions, just what feels right for the moment or the family member you're reading with.

Although this story is about the death of a guinea pig, the discussion points are still relevant to your family's loss. It is a suitable book to use for discussion whether your family is missing a dog, cat, pocket pet, bird, or exotic pet.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Discussion

Pages 4 & 5

Not wanting to cry can be all right. Reassuring your child that they can cry, especially if they're sad, may be helpful.

These pages are indicative of the Denial stage of grief, even though the child had stated aloud he knows Jeepers is dead.

The child says he knows what dead means, and this may be a good time to establish whether your child understands what dead means. The helpful instructions in the back of the book Something Very Sad Happened by Bonnie Zucker & Kim Fleming suggest the following for letting your child know about death: "his body stopped working so he died. When someone dies, they cannot eat, sleep, or breathe anymore." (p. 23)

Pages 6 & 7

Children process grief differently than adults. They may be incredibly sad one minute and then will seem to have moved on in the next, only to revisit those feelings of extreme sadness later. This suspension of grief is common during the Denial phase and is how our minds allow us to grieve in our own time. It is perfectly normal and to be expected.

Children may feel guilt over experiencing happiness during their grieving process. You can simply reassure them that grieving is complex, but our bodies know how to take care of us. They do not need to feel guilty, and it does not mean they didn't love their pet.

Pages 8 & 9

The guilt the child feels on these pages is indicative of the Bargaining stage of the grief process. Don't forget that discussing guilt with your child is important and shouldn't be

brushed aside in an effort to make them feel better quickly. Remember that, as Buzhardt & Steib point out, "Learning from mistakes is constructive; blaming ourselves for them is not." It is perfectly acceptable as a parent if you want to cry over the loss of your pet. Modeling a healthy grieving process lets your child know it's okay to cry, and they will learn from and imitate your behavior. If, however, you feel you must cry uncontrollably, you may want to remove yourself, as that may frighten your child.

Pages 10 & 11

"The box that they're making for Jeepers is so nice. Would you like to do something similar for _____?"

"What are some special things you would want to put into _____'s box?"

The materials to assist you with this process may be included in this kit, excluding the proper sized box.

Pages 12 -19

"It's okay if you feeling like talking about what happened to _____, and it's fine if you don't feel like talking about it. I think that the little boy felt better when he talked about Jeepers and got to hear other people's stories, though. Do you think so too? Even if you don't want to today, you can always talk to me about _____."

Page 21

"There are a lot of people you can also talk about _____ with if you like. Your teachers, relatives, friends, and other helpers you know."

Don't forget that warning your child's teachers, child care providers, and other points of contact may be helpful for them and your child.

Page 22

If your family is considering getting a new pet, it's important to take your child's input into your decision. As a family, you'll know when it's the right time to get a new pet.

"Would you like to get another pet someday? How do you think we'll know when it's time?"

Resources

Zucker, B. (2016). **Something Very Sad Happened: A Toddler's Guide to Understanding Death**. Washington, D.C.: Magination Press

Buzhardt, L. F., & Steib, S. D. (2008). **Can We Have One?: A Parent's Guide to Raising Kids with Cats and Dogs**. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

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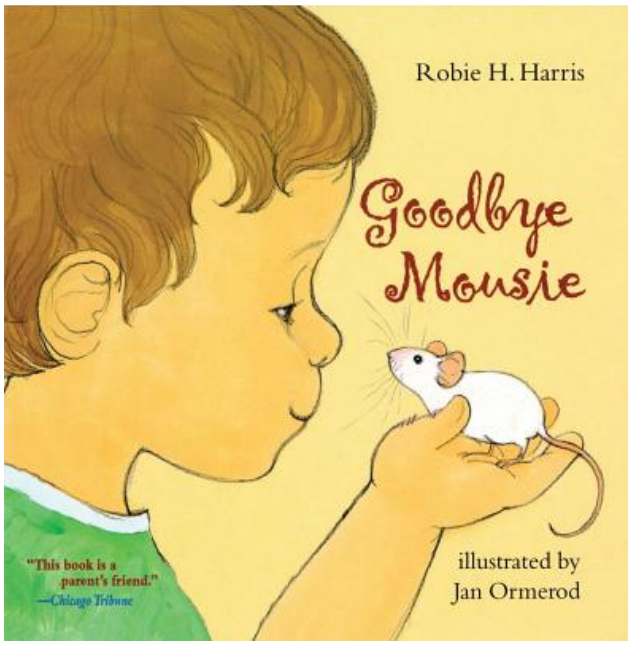
Book Discussion: Goodbye Mousie

Goodbye Mousie
By Robie H. Harris
Illustrated by Jan Ormerod
Aladdin



This story will be of the most help for those raising a young child. It deals with the confusing mixture of sadness and anger a child can feel when their beloved pet dies. It also provides a reassuring level of detail as the child prepares to bury his pet mouse, and it is filled with ways your child can provide care for your pet one last time.

Below are some helpful notes you can use or paraphrase when reading the book together. If it's written in italics, it's a note for you as a parent to read and consider. If it's written in quotations, it's a discussion prompt for you and your child. There's no need to use all the notes, just what feels natural or most beneficial for your family.

Wherever there is a "_____," you may insert the name of the pet you've recently lost. You don't need to use all these suggestions, just what feels right for the moment or the family member you're reading with.

Although this story is about the death of a mouse, the discussion points are still relevant to your family's loss. It is a suitable book to use for discussion whether your family is missing a dog, cat, pocket pet, bird, or exotic pet.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Discussion

Pages 1 & 2

Although you may want to reduce your child's suffering by skirting around the subject of death, it's important to be honest as the dad did here.

Pages 3-6

Children this age may have a harder time understanding death. There are helpful instructions in the back of the book **Something Very Sad Happened** *by Bonnie Zucker & Kim Fleming where they suggest the following for letting your child know about death: "his body stopped working so he died. When someone dies, they cannot eat, sleep, or breathe anymore." (p. 23)*

The child's response on these pages is indicative of the Denial and Anger stages of the grieving process. Reassuring your child that their feelings are natural will help them. "I'm so sorry you feel hurt, sad, or angry right now. Death can leave us feeling very confused, but I'm always here to talk to you about this or give you love."

Pages 7 & 8

It is perfectly acceptable as a parent if you want to cry over the loss of your pet. Modeling a healthy grieving process lets your child know it's okay to cry, and they will learn from and imitate your behavior. If, however, you feel you must cry uncontrollably, you may want to remove yourself, as that may frighten your child.

The child wanting to hold Mousie even after Mousie has died is normal. For many children, holding their pet again provides comfort as well as an opportunity to say goodbye in a physical sense. You can tell your child the following:

"If you would like to hold or cuddle _____ again, that's fine. Do you want to do that together?"

Young children may ask the same questions over and over again about the death of their pet. This is how they process information. Be prepared to answer the same question repeatedly and with patience.

Pages 9 & 10

Discussing the way your pet passed away with honesty will be important for your child in understanding death and life. Beyond what you tell them, you can also ask the following:

"Do you have any questions about what's happened? You can always ask me questions, no matter how you're feeling."

Pages 11-17

The family's preparation for Mousie's funeral is wonderful in its description of involving the child's input. The section dedicated to this in the Activities Guide of this kit may be of use to you if you're also planning a burial. Some helpful questions to ask your child may include:

"What would be a special way for us to show our love for _____? What should happen when we bury _____? Would you like to include items that were special to _____ when we bury him/her?"

Pages 18 & 19

Children grieve differently than adults. They may seem fine one minute and heartbroken or angry in the next. This is a natural part of how they process grief and allows them to deal with their emotions at their own pace.

Pages 20 & 21

Making your pet's resting place will be different for every family. Allowing your child's input can allow them the chance to care for their pet one final time. Helpful questions to ask might include:

"The way they're burying Mousie seems very special. What are some special things we can do to honor our love for _____? Are there special stories or activities you think we should do as a family when we bury _____ that he/she would have liked?"

Pages 22 & 23

The Humane Society of the United States cautions against rushing into getting a new pet before your family is ready. It will be very important to your child to be a part of this decision and your continued discussion and observing their progress through the grief process will let you know when that time has arrived.

"Would you like to get another pet someday? How do you think we'll know when it's time?"

Resources

Zucker, B. (2016). **Something Very Sad Happened: A Toddler's Guide to Understanding Death**. Washington, D.C.: Magination Press

The Humane Society of the United States. "Coping with the Death of Your Pet." (2017). http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/coping_with_pet_death.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/

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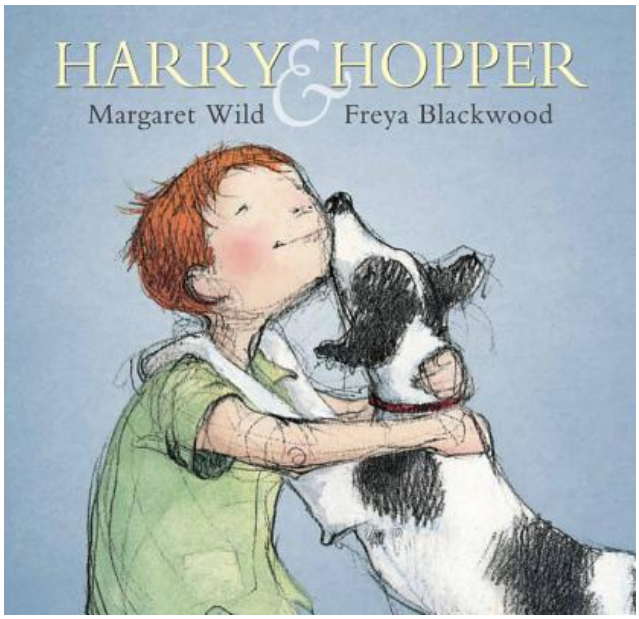
Book Discussion: Harry & Hopper



Harry & Hopper
By Margaret Wild,
Illustrated by Freya Blackwood
Feiwel & Friends

This book will be especially helpful if your pet died suddenly in an accident. It tells the story of a single father and boy who adopt Hopper when he is a puppy. While Hopper is still quite young he dies in an accident. The boy goes through a grieving process of saying goodbye to Hopper through a series of dreams rather than talking out loud about his feelings.

While this introspective story may appear to have less to discuss, listening to your child's answers and reactions can be used to assess your child's current progress through the 5 stages of grief.

Below are some helpful notes you can use or paraphrase when reading the book together. If it's written in italics, it's a note for you as a parent to read and consider. If it's written in quotations, it's a discussion prompt for you and your child. There's no need to use all the notes, just what feels natural or most beneficial for your family.

Wherever there is a "_____," you may insert the name of the pet you've recently lost. You don't need to use all these suggestions, just what feels right for the moment or the family member you're reading with.

Although this story is about the death of a dog, the discussion points are still relevant to your family's loss. It is a suitable book to use for discussion whether your family is missing a dog, cat, pocket pet, bird, or exotic pet.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Discussion

Pages 1 & 2

"I like the way they picked their dog's name. Do you remember how our dog (or fill in the appropriate type of animal here) got his name?"

Take a beat to talk about getting your pet and naming them.

Pages 3 & 4

"They did a lot of fun things together. You did a lot of fun things with _____ too, didn't you?"

Pages 5 & 6

"Sharing those special moments is one of the best things about having a pet. What special moments did you and _____ share?"

Pages 9 & 10

This method of telling Harry that Hopper has died seems fast, but drawing out the explanation can be confusing for children.

Pages 11 & 12

Harry's behavior is indicative of the Denial stage of grief.

Dad tried to get Harry involved in the burial process for Harry, but Harry did not want to participate. This is fine on Harry's part.

Later in the book you can discuss involving your child in saying goodbye to their pet.

Pages 13 & 14

Harry's behavior on these pages are indicative of the Denial and Depression stages of the grieving process.

Pages 15 & 16

"Not wanting to talk about Hopper is fine. What Harry is feeling is very personal and taking time to think about him on his own is okay."

Pages 17 & 18

"I know it looks like Hopper has come back in this part, but Harry is having a dream about Hopper. We can daydream about our pets as a way to feel better when we are sad and miss them. You might also have dreams about _____, and if you want to tell me about them I would love that."

Page 21

"Have you ever had a dream that felt real? Like Harry's dream? What happened?"

Page 22

"Just like Harry's dream, there are some memories of _____ that might fade away. It doesn't mean you love _____ any less, it's just how our minds work. There will be other memories you have of _____ for your whole life."

Page 27 & 28

"There are all kinds of ways for us to say goodbye to _____. I like that Harry found a way that was special for him. What are some things we could do for you to say goodbye to _____?"

Page 29

"Do you see the boy is ready to visit his dog's burial site now? Would you like to plant some flowers at a place that was special for you and _____?"

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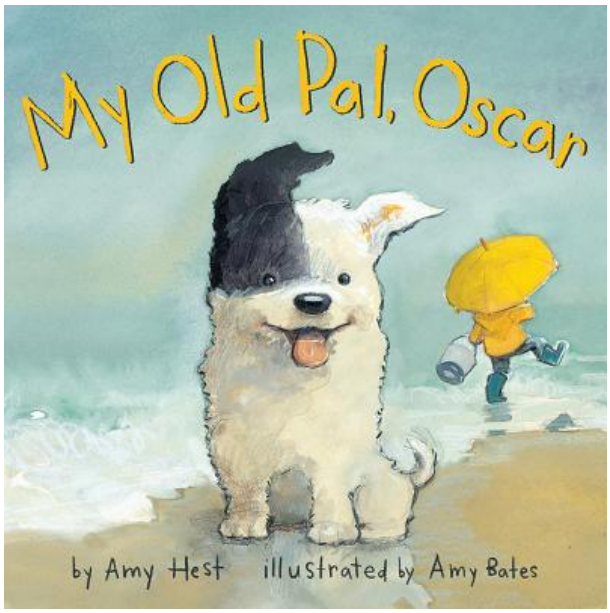
Book Discussion: My Old Pal

My Old Pal, Oscar
By Amy Hest
Illustrated by Amy Bates
Abrams Books for Young Readers



A beautiful book in which a child tells the story of how his last dog died to a puppy he meets with no owner. At times the text tells the story, other times it's the soft illustrations doing the storytelling work. This book will be especially useful if you're interested in getting a new pet as a family, or if you're trying to get your child to open up about their feelings.

Below are some helpful notes you can use or paraphrase when reading the book together. If it's written in italics, it's a note for you as a parent to read and consider. If it's written in quotations, it's a discussion prompt for you and your child. There's no need to use all the notes, just what feels natural or most beneficial for your family.

Wherever there is a "_____" you may insert the name of the pet you've recently lost. You don't need to use all these suggestions, just what feels right for the moment or the family member you're reading with.

Although this story is about the death of a dog, the discussion points are still relevant to your family's loss. It is a suitable book to use for discussion whether your family is missing a dog, cat, pocket pet, bird, or exotic pet.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Discussion

Title page

This scene shows the boy's dog who has passed away, Oscar, playing on the beach where the story takes place.

Pages 1 & 2

"Look at that tiny puppy! How do you think that puppy feels right now?"

All of these are acceptable, allow your child to reach them on his or her own:

- *Scared*
- *Sad*
- *Cold*
- *Lonely*

They may also have ideas of their own, which is perfectly fine. What's important is empathizing with the puppy.

Pages 3 & 4

"How about this little boy? How do you think he's feeling?"

All of these are acceptable, allow your child to reach them on his or her own:

- *Sad*
- *Bored*
- *Lonely*
- *Tired*

They may also have ideas of their own, which is perfectly fine. What's important is empathizing with the boy.

"Do you ever feel that way? It's alright to feel those things, especially if you are missing _____."

"Oh! Look at the puppy now! Do you see him looking at the little boy? How does he feel looking at the little boy?"

All of these are acceptable, allow your child to reach them on his or her own:

- *Happy*
- *Excited*
- *Curious*

Again, they may also have ideas of their own, this is perfectly fine. What's important is empathizing with the puppy.

Pages 5 & 6

"Now what happening?"

"Does the puppy look like he's having fun?"

Pages 7 & 8

"The puppy looks so happy in this picture? Why do you think he looks so happy?"

No matter what your child answers, you can add that the puppy seems happy to have found the boy.

Pages 9 & 10

"Is the puppy sad to see the boy leaving?"

Page 11

"Why is the puppy following the boy?"

You may hear

- *Because he likes him*
- *Because he loves him*
- *Because he wants to be friends*

Page 12

"Why doesn't the boy want to look at the puppy?"

No matter the answer, it's alright to let your child know that feeling sad or angry after the loss of _____ is okay.

Page 13 & 14

"It sounds like it hurt a lot when Oscar died."

"Look at the puppy's face. Do you think he wants the boy to feel better? Do you think the puppy can help the boy?"

Page 17

"I felt very sad when _____ died. I still do sometimes now and I will always love _____. I know you feel the same way."

"What are some things that _____ loved as much as Oscar loves the beach?"

Page 18

"I love the picture the little boy made of Oscar, it's a very nice way to remember him. Would you like to make a picture of _____?"

Pages 19 & 20

"The puppy looks scared of the storm clouds, but the boy doesn't. What could the boy do to make the puppy feel better?"

Pages 21 & 22

"Uh oh! Where can they go?"

If your child doesn't know, reassure them they can go home to be safe together.

Pages 23 & 24

"That little puppy needs the boy. He needs his help, doesn't he?"

Pages 25 & 26

"Does the boy's mommy look happy he found the puppy?"

Pages 27 & 28

"They look cozy cuddled up together, don't they? What do you miss about cuddling with _____? Can you imagine cuddling with another dog *(fill in the appropriate type of animal here)* someday?"

"I think they look happy together too. Do you think they make each other happy?"

Pages 29 & 30

"Oh, yay! The little boy and the puppy are going to live together! That makes me happy, because we could tell they liked one another and they needed one another. I think the little boy knows that he can love his new puppy and still love Oscar too. I think the best part about having a pet is all the love you give and receive."

Pages 31 & 32

"Look at that! The little boy has a happy picture to draw because of his new puppy!"

End paper

The little boy and his new dog are walking like the little boy used to do with Oscar.

"Are there any things you miss about doing with _____ that you'd like to do with a new dog *(or fill in the appropriate type of animal here)* someday?"

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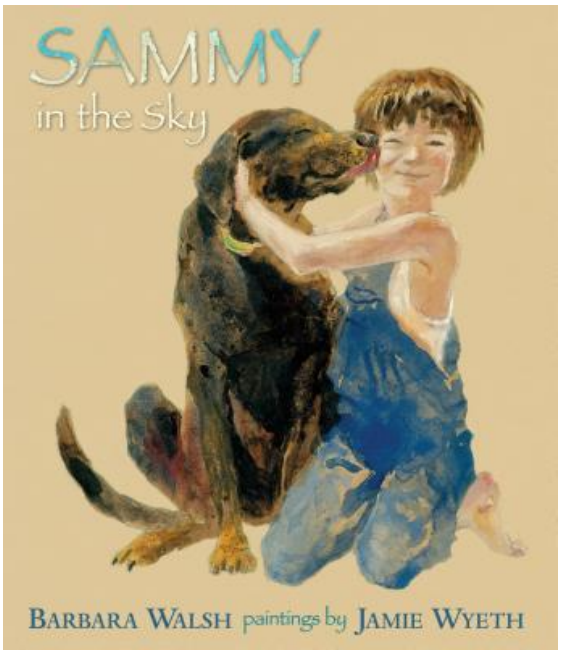
Book Discussion: Sammy in the Sky

Sammy in the Sky
By Barbara Walsh
Illustrated by Jamie Wyeth
Candlewick Press



In this story, which will be especially useful for families who believe in heaven, a young child goes through the process of the family dog, Sammy, dying. Later, the family has a celebration in the dog's favorite place to honor the dog's memory that would have been something Sammy would have enjoyed very much.

Below are some helpful notes you can use or paraphrase when reading the book together. If it's written in italics, it's a note for you as a parent to read and consider. If it's written in quotations, it's a discussion prompt for you and your child. There's no need to use all the notes, just what feels natural or most beneficial for your family.

Wherever there is a "_____," you may insert the name of the pet you've recently lost. You don't need to use all these suggestions, just what feels right for the moment or the family member you're reading with.

Although this story is about the death of a dog, the discussion points are still relevant to your family's loss. It is a suitable book to use for discussion whether your family is missing a dog, cat, pocket pet, bird, or exotic pet.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Discussion

Pages 2 & 3

"How can you tell that the boy and Sammy love each other? What were some special ways you could tell that _____ loved you?"

Pages 4 & 5

"This is so silly! Did you and _____ ever do anything so silly?!"

Pages 6-9

"There are so many wonderful memories about Sammy! What are some of your favorite times you had with _____?"

Pages 10 & 11

The way the vet explains Sammy's condition to the little boy is honest without being so detailed that it will disturb him more than he is able to handle. If you are going to need to euthanize your pet, or need to explain what happened to your pet, this is a healthy way to share the news with children. It is perfectly acceptable as a parent to cry over the loss of your pet. Modeling a healthy grieving process lets your child know it's okay to cry, and they will learn from and imitate your behavior. If, however, you feel you must cry uncontrollably, you may want to do that privately as it may frighten your child.

These pages can also be useful if your pet will require a new routine. You can explain that the new way we will love _____ as much as possible means... (bathing him, feeding a new way, giving medicine, etc.).

Pages 14 & 15

The little boy's reaction here is indicative of the Denial or Anger phases of the grieving process, based on how you interpret the text and images. If your child is angry, you can let them know it is okay to feel angry about _____ dying.

If your family believes in heaven, these pages can be used to begin a discussion about what will happen to Sammy after he dies.

If your family does not believe in heaven, you can use these pages to explain that, although your pet's body may die, the love you felt for him/her and the love he/she felt for you will never die.

Pages 16 & 17

Involving your child in honoring your pet's remains is important to them. You can use this page to start asking your child:

"How would you like to honor _____'s memory? What should we do when we bury him/her?"

There are suggestions in the Activities Guide in this kit to help you.

Pages 18 & 19

The child's response on these pages is indicative of the Denial stage of the grieving process. The father's answer is both honest and a reminder that Sammy will always be around because of the child's love and Sammy's love.

Pages 20 & 21

Younger children will have a harder time understanding death. This page shows both that we need to be careful with our metaphors for dying and the way we explain our views on the afterlife to children.

Pages 22 & 23

Your child may feel guilty when they stop feeling sad about the death of their pet. It's important to reassure them that feeling better does not mean they love their pet any less.

Initially, your child may not be able to offer ideas about honoring the remains of your pet. Continued conversation and observing their grieving process will let you know if you need to

have a follow up ceremony to honor the pet and provide your child with another chance to say goodbye. You can welcome their input with questions like:

"What are some special things we can do to celebrate our love for _____? What would you like to do to honor the way you feel for _____?"

Pages 24-26

If your family believes in heaven, these pages will be useful in discussing what heaven must be like for your pet.

If your family does not believe in heaven, you can use these pages to discuss how, just as the mother said, "Sammy's spirit is all around."

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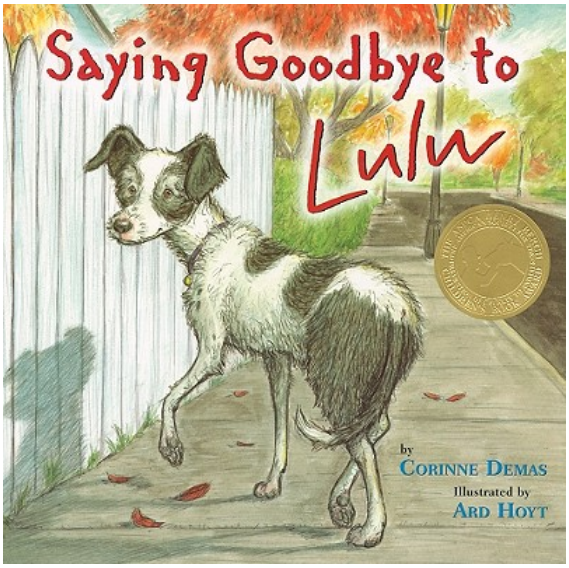
Book Discussion: Saying Goodbye to Lulu

Saying Goodbye to Lulu
By Corinne Demas
Illustrated by Ard Hoyt
Little, Brown Young Readers



This book will be especially helpful to those who are currently saying goodbye to their pet. If your pet has not yet died, consider switching the suggestions for discussion below to the present tense. The book tells the story of the family dog Lulu dying, while also remembering all the fun time a little girl has spent with her. It is especially tender during a period when Lulu needs extra special care from the girl and her family.

Below are some helpful notes you can use or paraphrase when reading the book together. If it's written in italics, it's a note for you as a parent to read and consider. If it's written in quotations, it's a discussion prompt for you and your child. There's no need to use all the notes, just what feels natural or most beneficial for your family.

Wherever there is a "_____," you may insert the name of the pet you've recently lost. You don't need to use all these suggestions, just what feels right for the moment or the family member you're reading with.

Although this story is about the death of a dog, the discussion points are still relevant to your family's loss. It is a suitable book to use for discussion whether your family is missing a dog, cat, pocket pet, bird, or exotic pet.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Discussion

Endpapers

In the end paper at the beginning of the book, the little girl is seen walking with Lulu. In the end paper at the back of the book, the little girl is older and is walking with her new puppy.

Pages 1-4

"It sounds like Lulu isn't able to do some things now that she's an older dog. Is there anything that _____ couldn't do anymore before he/she died?"

"The little girl does a lot to take care of Lulu, doesn't she? Are there any special things you did for _____?"

Pages 5 & 6

The powerless feeling that comes from losing a pet can be eased somewhat by participating in the suggested Acts of Kindness within this kit.

Pages 7 & 8

The Humane Society of the United States cautions against rushing into getting a new pet before your family is ready. It will be very important for your child to be a part of this decision, and your continued discussion and observing their progress through the grief process will both let you know when that time is at hand.

The little girl's reaction is indicative of the Anger stage of the grief process. Even though Lulu has not passed away at this point in the story, it is not uncommon for children to begin their grieving process before a pet who they know will die has actually died.

Pages 9 & 10

"Lulu and the little girl have a lot of good memories together. Talking about our _____ is a nice way to honor them and to feel better. What are some of your favorite memories of _____?"

Pages 11 & 12

If you are going to bury your pet, you may be able to involve your child in the planning process using these pages. You could say:

"I like that even though Lulu is not healthy they are able to make a place for her that is as comfortable as she can be. When we bury _____, what are some things we can do to be sure it's the most comfortable place possible?"

There are suggestions for this in the Activities Guide in this kit that may be helpful to you.

Pages 13-16

Inviting your child to see the body of their dead pet may be something they need in order to say goodbye. However, if they don't want to, you shouldn't push the issue.

Crying together can be very healing for parents and children. Our children imitate our behavior, so grieving in a healthy and honest way can help them understand that what they are feeling is natural and okay to engage in. However, if you feel you will cry uncontrollably, you should find a private space to do that, as it may frighten your child.

Pages 17 & 18

Planting flowers over the grave of your pet can create a comforting and beautiful place for you and your child to visit when you want to remember your pet. There are helpful suggestions for doing this in the Activities Guide in this kit.

If you are going to bury your pet, you may find these pages useful for getting your child's input in how they'd like to see this handled. There are burial suggestions that may be helpful to your family in the Activities Guide in this kit. You could also ask the following questions:

"When we bury _____, we can bury him/her with his/her favorite things too. What do you think he/she would like to have buried with him/her? What else would you like to see happen that day?"

Crying is a natural part of our grieving process. It may seem like the little girl in this book cries a lot, but it's important that we let our children know that crying is okay and not tell them to stop. They will stop crying when the time is right. If, however, you feel your child is experiencing trauma that is extreme, we recommend you see a counsellor. There are recommendations for this in the Community Helpers Guide in this kit.

Pages 19 & 20

"Sometimes we may want to talk about what happened to _____, and sometimes we may want to just keep those thoughts for ourselves. Both are okay. Although _____ has died, the love we felt for each other will never die."

Pages 21 & 22

If you are interested in planting something to honor your pet and create a special place to remember them, there are suggestions you may find helpful in the Activities Guide in this kit.

To involve your child in this process you can ask:
"The cherry tree she chose to celebrate Lulu is beautiful. What do you think _____ would prefer to have in his/her special place?"

Pages 23 & 24

"If you would like, we can create a special memory book for _____ together."
There may be supplies included in this kit to assist you with this activity.

Pages 25-28

Before your family is ready to get a new pet, your child may benefit from holding and caring for another animal. The pets of friends and family may help with this, or you may want to

volunteer with a local animal shelter. Suggestions for this are included in the Acts of Kindness section in this kit.

Your child may feel guilty when they are ready to get a new pet. You can reassure them by telling them:
"Loving a new pet does not mean you love _____ any less. Your heart has so much love in it that there is room for both of them."

Resources

The Humane Society of the United States. "Coping with the Death of Your Pet." (2017). http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/coping_with_pet_death.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/

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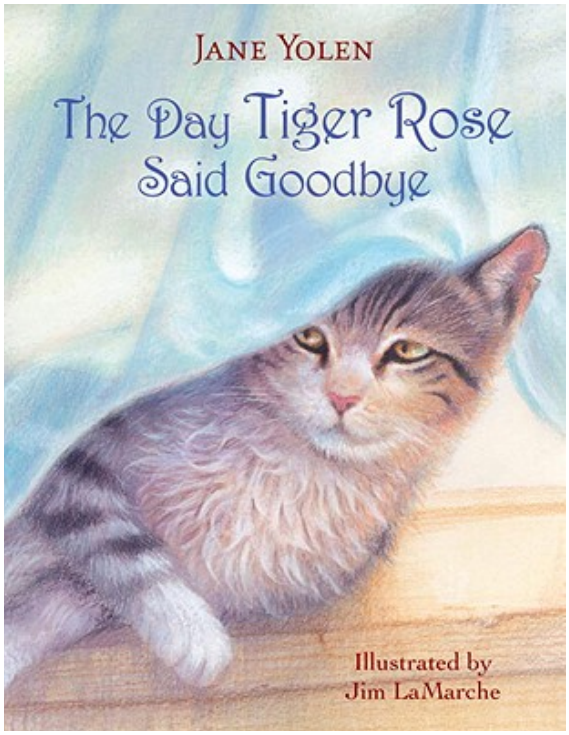
Book Discussion: The Day Tiger Rose Said Goodbye

The Day Tiger Rose Said Goodbye
By Jane Yolen
Illustrated by Jim Lamarche
Random House Books for Young Readers



This is the peaceful story of a cat's last day. It highlights all the things a pet can find pleasurable about their experiences with their humans and their homes in a reassuring way. If you are going to go through the process of euthanizing your pet, this book may assist your child in understanding what your animal is experiencing. In all cases it provides reassurance that our pets can be ready to say goodbye to us. If your pet has already passed away consider changing the discussion points below to the past tense.

Below are some helpful notes you can use or paraphrase when reading the book together. If it's written in italics, it's a note for you as a parent to read and consider. If it's written in quotations, it's a discussion prompt for you and your child. There's no need to use all the notes, just what feels natural or most beneficial for your family.

Wherever there is a "_____," you may insert the name of the pet you've recently lost. You don't need to use all these suggestions, just what feels right for the moment or the family member you're reading with.

Although this story is about the death of a cat, the discussion points are still relevant to your family's loss. It is a suitable book to use for discussion whether your family is missing a dog, cat, pocket pet, bird, or exotic pet.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Discussion

Pages 1-4

"Tiger Rose has such a nice home and family to live with! What are some things you think _____ loved about living in our home with our family?"

Pages 5 & 6

This may be a good time to discuss death with your child. The helpful instructions in the back of the book **Something Very Sad Happened** *by Bonnie Zucker & Kim Fleming suggest the following for letting your child know about death: "his body stopped working so he died. When someone dies, they cannot eat, sleep, or breathe anymore." (p. 23)*

If you are going to euthanize your pet, this page may be of particular importance. You can ask the following questions to help your child understand why your family has chosen euthanization:

"Tiger Rose sounds like she has some discomfort. Have you noticed anything different about _____? Is there anything they used to like to do but don't enjoy anymore?"

"When our pets no longer are able to enjoy their lives, it's sometimes our hard decision to know that allowing them to die is the best way for us to care for them. This is a very sad decision for all of us, but it would also be sad to keep them alive and living in pain."

Pages 9 & 10

If you are euthanizing your animal, your child should have input as to how this procedure takes place. Offering time for the child to spend alone with the animal to say goodbye may be important to them. You could try saying something like the following:

"I like that the little girl is saying something caring and special to Tiger Rose. If you would like a special time to talk to _____, we can make that happen."

Pages 11-16

Tiger Rose takes the time to say goodbye to all her special places in their yard. If you are burying your pet, you could suggest taking mementos from your pet's favorite places in your yard (or home) to bury with them or to make a marker above their grave. You can ask your child:

"What are some of _____'s favorite places in our yard/home? Would you like to put together pieces from those special places to honor _____ when we bury him/her?"

Pages 19 & 20

Tiger Rose seems at peace on this page. Reminding your child that death can bring peace to a suffering pet may help them. Death does not have to be negative, but rather is a part of all life.

Pages 21-24

If your family believes in heaven, these pages would be appropriate for discussing what will happen when your animal goes to heaven.

If your family does not believe in heaven, these pages can be related to the feeling we experience when we are relaxing as we prepare for sleep. It may be important to remind your child that your pet who has died is not asleep but is dead.

Resources

Zucker, B. (2016). **Something Very Sad Happened: A Toddler's Guide to Understanding Death**. Washington, D.C.: Magination Press

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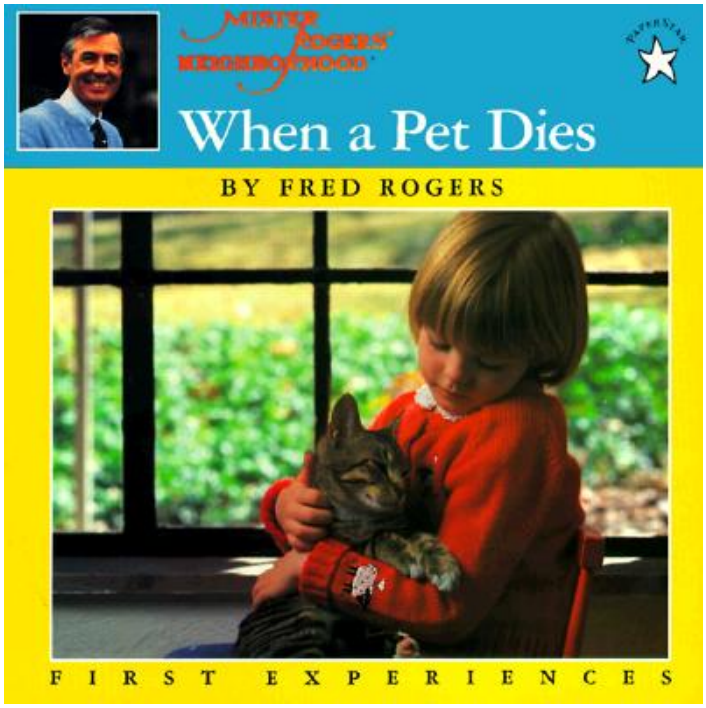
Book Discussion: When a Pet Dies

When a Pet Dies

By Fred Rogers

Puffin Books



This multicultural book from Mr. Rogers offers the story of two different families who are both experiencing the loss of their family pet. If your family is planning a memorial service for your pet or if your pet is in the process of dying, this book can be a great comfort to your child.

Below are some helpful notes you can use or paraphrase when reading the book together. If it's written in italics, it's a note for you as a parent to read and consider. If it's written in quotations, it's a discussion prompt for you and your child. There's no need to use all the notes, just what feels natural or most beneficial for your family.

Wherever there is a "_____," you may insert the name of the pet you've recently lost. You don't need to use all these suggestions, just what feels right for the moment or the family member you're reading with.

Although this story is about the death of a dog and a cat, the discussion points are still relevant to your family's loss. It is a suitable book to use for discussion whether your family is missing a dog, cat, pocket pet, bird, or exotic pet.

If you would like to keep this sheet when you return the kit to the library, you are welcome to do so.

Discussion

Foreword

If the copy of the book included in your kit includes a foreword written by Mr. Rogers, it's worth reading. There's an especially considerate explanation of death that may resonate with your child.

Pages 1 & 2

Understanding your child's bond with their pet is critical to understanding the sense of loss they are experiencing. It can be as traumatic as losing a friend or sibling.

Pages 3 & 4

These pages provide a nice opportunity to discuss your child's bond with their pet.
"What are some things that made _____ so special?"

Pages 5 - 8

These pages provide a good opportunity to remind your child that death occurs when a body is so tired or ill it can no longer work properly.

In addition, you can ask your child whether they have questions about death. If you don't know the answers, you can write them down to find answers later.

Pages 9 & 10

The sadness these children are experiencing reflects symptoms associated with the Depression stage of the grief process.

Page 11

"It's okay to cry, especially when you're feeling sad. I'm sad about _____ too."

Page 12

This child's behavior is indicative of the Anger stage of the grieving process. Participating in activities from this kit's Activities Guide may help your child process their feelings when they aren't feeling able to verbalize those feelings.

Pages 13 - 15

Your explanation of death should be consistent, clear, and something you'll remember if and when your child repeats the question. Kids have a tendency to ask the same questions over and over, especially during the Denial phase of the grief process. This is how they digest difficult information.

Page 15 has an especially helpful way to explain death to children.

Page 16

The guilt the child feels on this page is indicative of the Bargaining stage of the grief process. Don't forget that discussing guilt with your child is important and shouldn't be brushed aside in an effort to make them feel better quickly. Remember that, as Buzhardt & Steib point out, "Learning from mistakes is constructive; blaming ourselves for them is not."

Pages 17 - 20

If you're going to have a memorial service for your pet, there are helpful instructions you can use to involve your child in the process in this kit's Activities Guide. Involving your child in this conversation is critical because of their close bond.

" What can we do to honor _____ when we have our celebration of his/her life?"

"Did _____ have a special place in our yard where he/she should be buried?"

"Are there special plants we should plant or buy for the memorial service?"
"I like the drawing that the little girl made to honor their cat. Would you like to do something like that for _____?"

The materials to assist you with this activity may be included in this kit.

Page 18

Needing some alone time is perfectly natural when a child is going through the grieving process. However, if you are becoming concerned with your child's behavior, we suggest reaching out for help. Contacting your primary care physician or a school guidance counsellor is a good place to begin.

Page 19

During the Denial stage of grief (which, you'll remember, can be revisited many times during the grieving process). your child may seem extremely sad one minute and fine the next.

Page 20

"It's okay if you feeling like talking about what happened to _____, and it's fine if you don't feel like talking about it. Even if you don't want to today, you can always talk to me about _____."

"Who are some other people you can talk to about _____?"
All these answers are fine:

- *Teachers*
- *Family Friends*
- *Relatives*
- *Friends*
- *After School Care Providers*
- *Coaches*
- *Your child's own safe suggestions*

Pages 21 & 22

Look! They've made a photo album of their dog! Would you like to make a photo album or memory book about _____?"

There are instructions to get you started in the Activities Guide of this kit.

Pages 23 & 24

The Humane Society of the United States cautions against rushing into getting a new pet before your family is ready. It will be very important to your child to be a part of this decision, and your continued discussion and observing their progress through the grief process will let you know when that time is at hand.

"Would you like to get another pet someday? How do you think we'll know when it's time?"

Page 25

This wording is a great way to remind your child that the love they shared with their pet will always be with them.

Resources

Zucker, B. (2016). **Something Very Sad Happened: A Toddler's Guide to Understanding Death**. Washington, D.C.: Magination Press

Buzhardt, L. F., & Steib, S. D. (2008). **Can We Have One?: A Parent's Guide to Raising Kids with Cats and Dogs**. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.