

Pushing the Clouds Away



A Pet Loss Journal for Kids



This book belongs to

Dedicated to the memory of my pet

Acknowledgment & Dedication

My name is Kim Stacey. I am not a clinical psychologist or social worker, but I *do* have some credentials: a Master's degree in Socio-Cultural Anthropology, a Certification in Grief Counseling, and I'm an authorized Funeral Director in California. What's more important to us here, however, is the fact that I am a *mom*. My sons, now grown, helped me to explore the dynamics of childhood grief firsthand.

We worked our way through the loss of our canine buddy, Gus, together – using many of the ideas in this pet loss journal. It is to *them*, Paul, Nathan – and let's not forget Gus – that I dedicate this collection of ideas and activities.

I hope it helps you through the loss of your cherished pet – so that one day – you'll be really ready to bring another animal companion into your home...and more importantly into your heart.





What are you feeling right now?

One of the things that's important to do right now is to really know how you're feeling — and what you're thinking. When we lose a pet, our thoughts get all jumbled up with our feelings. Here's a chance for you to sort them out, either with the help of your parent or caregiver, or in private. Finish these thoughts...

The thing that makes me feel the saddest is...

If I could talk to my pet, I would ask...

Since my pet's death, my family doesn't...





My worst memory is....

If I could change things, I would....

One thing that I liked to do with the pet that died was...

When my pet died, I...





Since my pet's death, my friends...

After my pet died, school...

When I am alone...



Circle 5 words to describe the ways your body is reacting to the loss of your pet.
If the words are not listed, then add them to the box below.

How are you feeling right now?

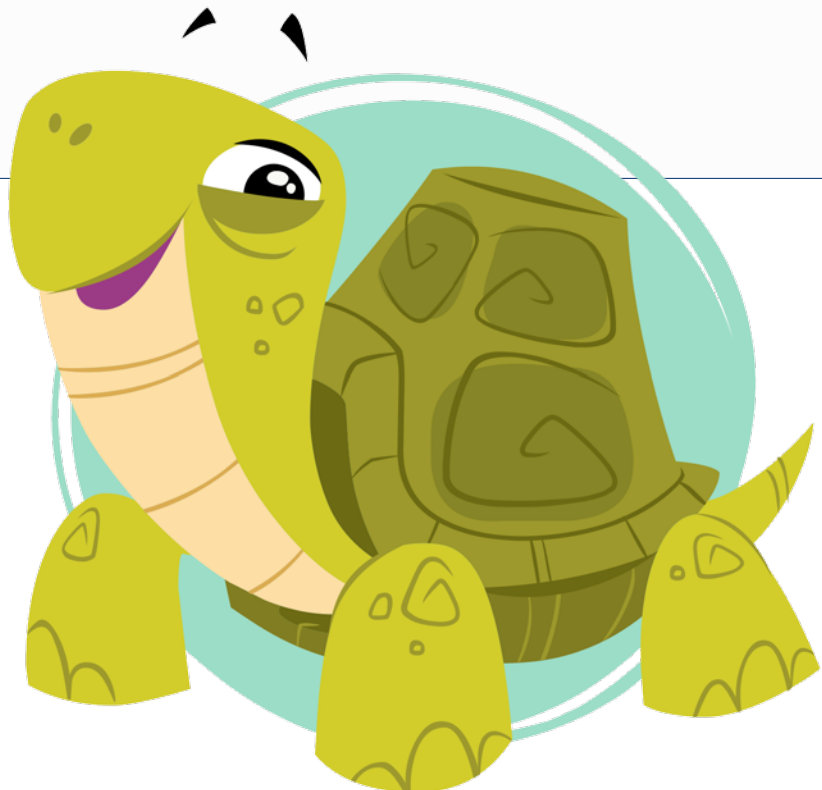
alone incapable anxious

weak miserable

tense tearful heartbroken lonely

guilty upset empty powerless

crushed





How is your body?

can't sleep

hungry

headachy

stomach upset

ready to throw up

tired

can't breathe

jumpy

heavy

not hungry

shaky

pained

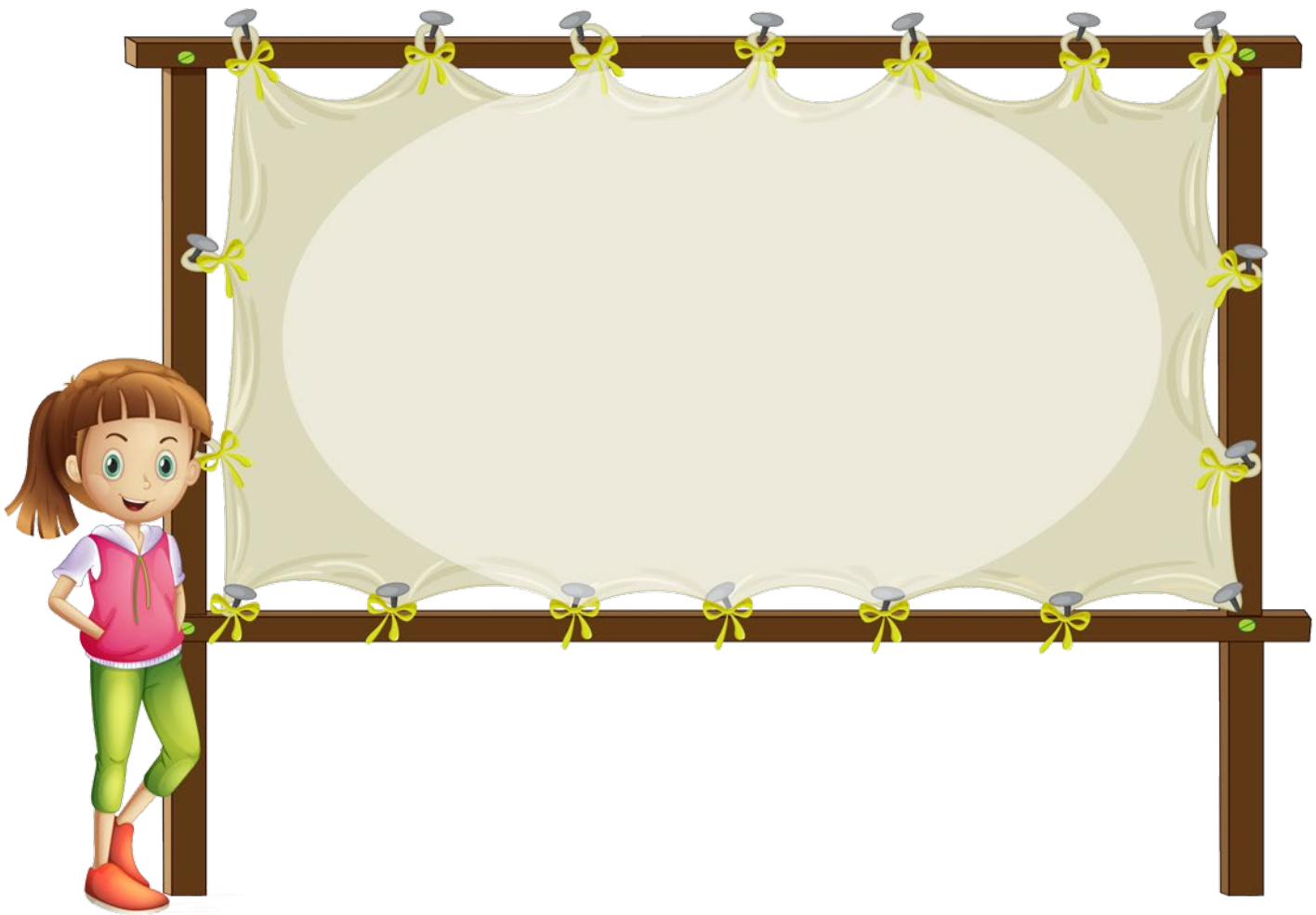
dry
mouth





Here's a Picture of My Pet

If you love to draw, then get out your pencils or crayons, and draw a picture of your pet in the picture frame below. If drawing isn't fun for you, then search your family photos for a picture of your pet, and simply glue it into the frame.

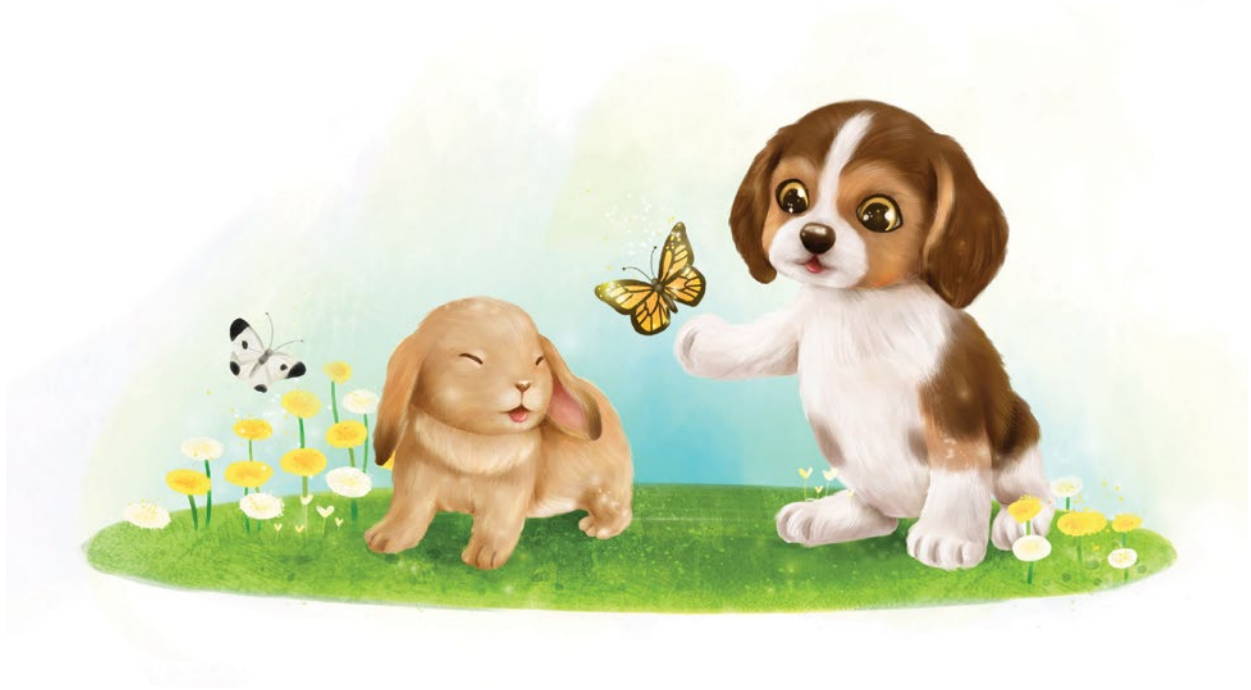




My Pet's Story

How did you meet your pet? How long did she or he live with you and your family? What were the special things you did together? Those are just some of the kinds of things you can write about now. It's a celebration of your time together!





My Best Memory

I once had a dog named Courage who loved to play egg bowling. I would roll a hardboiled egg across the floor and he would chase it wildly. Once he caught the egg, he would take it into the dining room and eat with gusto. It was big fun for both of us! Egg bowling is one of my favorite memories for sure. What's your treasured memory of your pet? Write it down here or ask your caregiver to write it down for you.



Celebrating My Pet's Life

There are lots of ways to celebrate the many gifts your pet gave to you and your family through love, loyalty and a special personality. Here are some great suggestions to get you started:

Create an online memorial web page. Many families choose to create an online memorial webpage dedicated to their pet, and we invite you and your family to do the same. These tributes include videos, pictures, and memory sharing options. Talk to us to learn more.

Plant a memory garden or tree. Plant a tree in your own garden or through a charitable organization such as Treegivers (www.treegivers.com) or Plant a Tree USA (www.plantatreeusa.com) that will do so in your pet's name, in the state of your choice. Your local parks department might also allow you to plant a tree in a park, in memory of your pet.

Have your family contribute to an animal welfare organization in memory of your pet. Often, animal shelters will provide a plaque or paving stone with your pet's name on it for a minimum donation.

Create a Memory Box. Put some of the pet's treasures such as a collar or a lock of hair inside the box. Here's a tip: browse the selection of photo-display boxes on our website. Be sure to gather your items together ahead of time in order to select one large enough to hold all your pet's treasures.

Hold a Remembrance Ceremony. It could be a family-only event or you could invite others, including close friends and classmates. When Gus died all those years ago, the boys and I picked out 9 bright, shiny helium-filled balloons (one for every year of his life). Together, we wrote down our hopes, wishes, and prayers for him, and tied these messages of love to the end of each balloon's ribbon.

Our ceremony was simple. We took the balloons to a local park where we used to all play together. We gathered in the very middle of the empty playing field and released our balloons – one at a time, after reading each message aloud – into the bright blue sky. Caught in the breeze, they sailed skyward and away from us. We watched with tears in our eyes and smiles on our lips. And you'll never guess what we did next...



We Took a Trip to the Library!

When Paul and Nathan were young, we'd go to the library every week. Together, we'd spend time picking out two books each. After our balloon release ceremony, our visit was spent looking for kids' books about dealing with the death of someone they loved.

There are some really great books about how hard it can be to lose a cherished pet; books written just for you. Talk to your librarian to discover the titles available in your library system.



And Then We Shared Some Food

Did you know that it's a tradition in many places for grieving family and friends to share a meal together in remembrance of someone who has died? Paul, Nathan, and I had a very special meal in tribute to our buddy Gus after that trip to the library. It was a picnic!

You see, such a meal, sometimes called a “repast”, can be anything: a well-loved family breakfast — like pancakes and fresh fruit — or a formal sit-down dinner where everyone dresses in their very best clothes. It's simply a time to spend sharing food and telling stories, crying (maybe), and laughing (often, and a lot). That's because there are so many more good memories than *bad* ones...and when you share them, they expand and fill the empty spaces in everyone's heart. It's a time to feel good about being surrounded by people you love — at a time when you need it most!

So, why not do like me, Paul and Nathan: plan a picnic for after your trip to the library? Bring snacks, and bring this journal too — so you can share your pictures, story, and special memories of your really loveable — and very much *loved* — pet. If you really like doing it, plan another remembrance event (maybe a picnic or something else) for next year, on the anniversary of the day you had to say good bye.



Did You Know You Have Rights?

It's true. Lots of very smart people, including your mom and dad, want you to know that you have the birthright (that's something you can do just because you were born!) to grieve the passing of your pet. You see, human beings naturally have everything we need to heal after they lose someone we love. We can laugh, cry, yell — even sleep is a natural way human beings handle the stress felt when anyone is lost to us.

You're smart, right? You can cry and feel sad but you can also remember the good days you shared with your pet, feel happy again, and even laugh at the many memories. We want you to know that you have the **right** to do all those things — and more.

You have the right to:

- your own unique feelings about your pet's death.
- talk about your sadness whenever you feel like talking.
- show your feelings of grief in your own way, as long as you don't hurt anyone — including yourself — in the process.
- ask grown-ups around you to pay attention to what you are feeling.
- get upset about normal, everyday problems, or to experience sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness.
- ask for help from the adults around you.
- try to figure out why the pet you loved died.
- think and talk about the memories of the pet that died.
- move forward and to heal.





Schoedinger Pet Services 229 East State Street Columbus, Ohio 43215
Tel: 614-224-0010 Web: www.schoedingerpetservices.com Fax: 614-224-2687

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