



## fast facts for pet professionals & organizations

### who we are

- The Good Grief Center for Bereavement Support (GGC), a community-based nonprofit organization, is the region's first and only center dedicated exclusively to bereavement support. Its service area spans Western Pennsylvania—as well as any part of the English-speaking world over the phone and through its web site, [www.goodgriefcenter.com](http://www.goodgriefcenter.com).
- Its mission is to be a comprehensive bereavement resource and referral center that builds a more compassionate community through grief awareness, education, support and hope; creating a safe place where all who have experienced the pain of death may come to work through loss and learn to manage grief.

### what we do

- GGC helps anyone who is having trouble coping with the death of someone important in their life, or a **beloved pet**.
- GGC supports individuals and families as they work through the grieving process by providing **free services** that include compassionate listening, education, a lending library of grief-related materials (including items on the subject of pet loss), and referrals to community resources. Services are available in person or over the phone.
- The cornerstone of GGC is confidential "**peer support**," where staff and trained volunteers—most of whom have experienced grief themselves—serve as educators, listeners, advocates and coaches while offering empathetic understanding and a healing presence to grieving individuals and families.
- GGC's focus is on bereavement—regardless of whether the trigger for someone's grief is a family member, friend or pet. We have offered pet loss support for nearly 10 years.
- Society does not always acknowledge the **death of a pet** as a serious, grief-worthy event. This leaves many pet owners to grieve alone because they have no one to talk to, or are afraid that others will ridicule them and think they are foolish or crazy because "it was just an animal." GGC responds to this stigma by educating pet owners on how their feelings of grief are natural and normal, and by listening with compassion as they share their pain.
- GGC is a bereavement support center, not a counseling center. The Center does not provide psychotherapy or professional mental health services, but it does maintain a referral list of professional therapists who specialize in grief-related issues, including pet loss.

- Just like people who are grieving the death of a friend or family member, pet owners who have experienced the death of a beloved pet (or are anticipating a pet's death) are often overwhelmed with emotions or fatigue. As such, one of the Center's primary, ongoing goals is to make asking for help—at one of the most vulnerable, poignant moments in life—easy.

## ggc growth

- Since its September 2001 opening, the Center has reached more than 33,000 people in Western Pennsylvania, and in the past year alone, more than 120,000 people worldwide through its web site. GGC's list of community partners has grown to include area healthcare providers, foundations, hospices, funeral homes, universities and religious organizations.

## about grief

- Grief-related terms can be confusing. GGC uses these definitions:

**Grief** – What an individual thinks and feels inside when someone they love dies. In other words, it's the internal meaning given to the experience of loss.

**Mourning** – The outward expression of those thoughts and feelings. For example, talking about the person who died, crying, or expressing grief through art.

- Grief is not a mental illness; it is a part of being human. It is a multitude of emotions and a natural, although intense, reaction when someone dies. It also is something that everyone will experience, probably many times in their lives.

- Symptoms associated with grief may include the following:

**Emotional** – Sadness, anxiety (including panic attacks), fear, shock, disbelief, numbness, anger, guilt, loneliness, and feeling as if you're going crazy.

**Physical** – Crying spells, fatigue, insomnia, nausea, aches and pains, lowered immunity, and weight loss/gain.

**Behavioral** – Sleep problems, absent-mindedness, confusion, and withdrawal from friends and relatives.

**Spiritual** – Searching, exploring, questioning, and a deepening or lessening of one's faith.

- Grief has no time limit. It can last for days, weeks, months or years depending on factors such as the individual's relationship with deceased, religious beliefs or life experiences. Experiencing the death of a loved one is life-changing; at times, this can apply to pet loss.
- The goal of healing through grief support is not to "get over" the loss, or work towards "closure"; these things imply that a door should be closed, the deceased (or pet) should be forgotten about, and painful memories should be erased. Rather, the goal of healing through grief support is to learn how to live with the loss—to manage the pain of a loved one's (or pet's) death, and to remember the loved one (or pet) fondly.

*For more information on GGC's free pet loss support services, call 412.224.4700 or send e-mail to [support@goodgriefcenter.com](mailto:support@goodgriefcenter.com). For general information on grief, visit [www.goodgriefcenter.com](http://www.goodgriefcenter.com).*