

## **Healing from pet loss during the holidays-By Claire Gillenson, M.A.**

The holidays are around the corner and it can be easy to feel lonely and isolated after experiencing the loss of a pet. If this is your first holiday without a beloved family cat or dog—below are five ways in getting through these weeks without having to “be strong”, “act normal” or hide from the emotional pain.

Five ways to cope with pet loss during the holidays.

**-Deck the halls with new rituals.** Honor your departed pet’s memory by sharing a story, hanging a stocking, ornament or lighting a candle in remembrance, creating new rituals is important in integrating the loss and creating new traditions. It is important to acknowledge the bond and depth of relationship you’ve shared with your pet.

**-Talk about your feelings with those you love and love you.** Celebrate your beloved pet with people who understand. Talk about the gifts you’ve received from your furry family member. Acknowledge the ways you’ve moved through grief this year.

**-Acknowledge all of your emotions.** Give yourself permission to FEEL. To laugh, cry, be in joy, quiet, take pleasure in the holidays. You don’t have to be strong and pretend everything is fine if it isn’t. Sometimes, it can be difficult to experience joy when one is “mourning”. There can be a sense of “guilt” in having fun. It is not disrespectful to the memory of the departed pet if you enjoy yourself.

**-Plan ahead and make backup plans.** Make several plans for holiday dinner and parties. IE- I will attend the Christmas party, but if it becomes too hard for me emotionally, I will stay home with a movie, call a friend for a walk. Create a list of close friends you can reach out to ahead of time. A studies show volunteering improves your emotional and physical health. Volunteer in memory of your beloved pet. Bring old towels to a shelter. Create gift baskets for homebound seniors with pets. The possibilities are endless and will help take your mind off the death of your pet.

**-Self-care/creative outlets.** Take baths, long walks, journal, massages, soothing music, adequate sleep and rest, anything that supports you in being gentle with yourself. Do something creative! Create a holiday

scrapbook, painting, or journaling can help channel feelings and emotions in a positive way.

If you find yourself without close friends or family and are having a difficult time, find a grief support group in your area. Grief is an ongoing process, lean into the ebb and flow of pain by journeying through it.

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Claire Chew Gillenson is a Life Transitions/Grief Coach based in Los Angeles, serving clients locally in Southern California and globally via Skype. Her work has been featured in *Marie Claire*, *InStyle*, *Martha Stewarts Living*, *Body + Soul*, and on *Good Morning America*. Claire brings an integrative approach to her life coaching, melding eastern and western philosophies with a focus on the whole of our being: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Her proven methods help empower individuals to create their own joy and happiness while moving through life transitions. Claire specializes in grief that are not part of mainstream conversations: pet loss, miscarriage, pregnancy loss, suicide and recovery. A published author, speaker and educator, she is the founder of Luxepets, and can be found at [ClaireGillenson.com](http://ClaireGillenson.com). To contact Claire directly, [claire@clairegillenson.com](mailto:claire@clairegillenson.com)