

# Learning Unit: Pet Bereavement 16+

<b>Unit title: Coping with the death of a pet</b>		<b>Teacher:</b>	
<b>Subjects: English; PSHE; General studies; Science</b>		<b>Duration of Unit: 1 week</b>	
<b>Summary: How to support individuals suffering a pet bereavement</b>			
<b>Desired Results</b>			
<b>Objectives:</b> To support people through the loss of a pet		<b>Essential Questions:</b> How does a pet's death make us feel? How can we memorialise our pet? Who can I talk to to help me process my feelings?	
<b>Factual Knowledge:</b> Students will know: That their feelings are valid. That self care is important Where to get help if they need support.	<b>Embedding Knowledge:</b> Individuals will: Have a discussion around the topic of a pet's death. Be encouraged to talk about their pet. Encourage others to support the person grieving.	<b>Information becoming knowledge:</b> Students will discuss their feelings to help process them and consider other ways to memorialise their pet.	
<b>Extensions: discuss your feelings with family, friends or a professional</b>		<b>Differentiation considerations:</b> Describe the strengths and needs within the group and how to meet needs and objectives in different ways.	
<b>Learning Plan</b>			
<b>Differentiated Objectives:</b>			

**Most will be able to understand that losing a pet can be very emotional**

**Some will understand that pets can be family members and loss can be very difficult and can also cause feelings of guilt**

**Some will understand and empathise with feelings of loss**

**Some will liken the loss to the loss of a human family member, which can amplify feelings about the loss of a pet.**

**Plan:**

**The session plan can be used with a whole class, or an individual suffering the loss of a pet. If you feel the person needs further support, talk to them about seeking professional help.**

**Post 16 links to the National Curriculum**

**Citizenship is a statutory subject on the national curriculum in secondary schools in England, and it is monitored by the schools regulator, Ofsted. At Post-16 students no longer have a national curriculum to follow and follow study programmes enabling them to work towards specific areas of learning that is of interest and important to their future aspirations. The key focus is to support the students to become as independent as they can be. Many of the unit plans from Oak Tree Animals' Charity will support independent research and learning, and will offer ideas for discussion and debate.**

# Session Plan

**Project Name:** OTAC education programme

**Programme Session Name:** Pet Bereavement

**Session Date:**                      **Session Time:** 1 hour

**Group Name/Age Group:** 16+

**Session Lead/Planner:**

<b>Healthy Living</b>	Promoting and supporting healthy life-styles to secure physical, spiritual, social and emotional well-being.
<b>Feel Safe</b>	Ensuring that members of the Community are supported to feel safe.
<b>Life Enhancement &amp; Achievement</b>	Inspirational and exciting learning activities that ensure members of the Community raise their expectations and aspirations, and achieve at the highest possible level.
<b>Participation</b>	Opportunity for the voice of the Community to be heard and to help shape the services available to them, whilst encouraging them to make a positive contribution to their local community.
<b>Learning &amp; Development</b>	Providing access to a range of learning pathways so that members of the Community develop knowledge and robustness.

## **Session Aims and Objectives:**

**To cope with the loss of a pet.**

**Teacher's notes:** This session can be conducted with a group, or can be used one to one to support a student if they have come into a setting after a recent pet bereavement.

**If someone has also suffered another recent bereavement, this can amplify feelings of loss and make them difficult to cope with. If you feel the individual is struggling to cope, talk to them about seeking professional help.**

### **Session/Activity Outline:**

- Tell the group that today we are going to talk about pet bereavement, or when a pet dies. Sadly pets don't usually live as long as us, so at some point we will have to cope with their death.
- Ask if anyone had a pet who died? Encourage the students to express their feelings about the pet and their death.
- Tell them that it is important that they talk about the pet and their loss whenever they like, as losing a pet can feel like losing a family member. Bereavement can cause feelings such as sadness and loneliness and those feelings can become overwhelming. If the student was the person to make the decision about a pet being put to sleep, they may have feelings of doubt or guilt as well as sadness. Remember that allowing our pet a peaceful, timely death and avoiding undue suffering is the last kind thing we can do for our pet. Holding a funeral or ceremony for your pet can help process feelings of loss.
- Remind the students that self care is very important and they must make sure they are still doing the basics like eating and sleeping, even when they feel very emotional.
- Ask them to discuss how they felt when the pet died, and they may still be having those feelings. Remind them that it is ok to feel very emotional when someone close to us dies, and that pets are part of our family too. Also that there is no time limit on grief and we all deal with death in different ways.
- Tell the student that it is good to talk about how we feel about the pet's death, but it can also help to remember the happy times we had with our pet when they were alive. Encourage them to think and talk about happy times they had with their pet. Other positive ways of coping could be to donate or volunteer for a local animal charity.
- Discuss other family members who may be affected. Remind them that other people may be feeling sad about the pet too, and even other pets could be missing them. Encourage them to talk to other family members about their loss.
- Ask the student if there is something they could keep to remember their pet. This could be an accessory like a collar or name tag, a memory box, a plant or tree they plant in the garden or a plaque they make with the pet's name on. It could also be a photo of their pet.
- Ask the student (in confidence) if there is anything else going on in their life which they are also struggling with? Explain that this can make it harder to cope with the bereavement and suggest

they find someone they trust to talk to. This could be family, a friend or a professional.

- Ask the rest of the group how they could help support the person suffering the loss to feel better.

**Resources/Materials:** Basic stationery box, projector or board for class discussion notes

**Extension Exercises/Take-Home Activity:** Talk to a trusted person about your feelings of loss. Think about whether there is anything you could keep to remember the pet.

## Session Evaluation

Participant Comments/Evaluation

Staff Evaluation

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**Issues Raised/Discussion Points**

**Follow-up/Action Required**

**Additional Notes**

**Staff signature:**

**Name:**

**Date:**