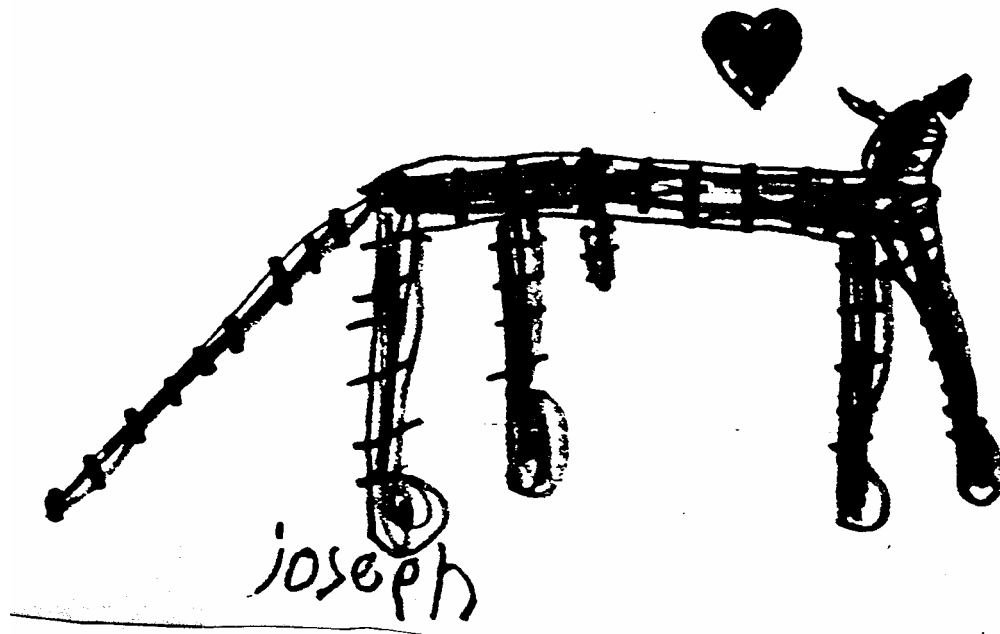


I Miss My Pet: A workbook for children about pet loss



*Illustration by Joseph, age 6, The Solid Foundation Association,
State College, PA.*

Developed & Illustrated by
Katie Nurmi

This is YOUR book about you and your pet who is gone. I wrote this book because when I was a child, nobody really wanted to let me talk about how I felt when my pets died. I felt very alone and hurt. I also had a lot of questions and there were things I didn't understand that were scary.

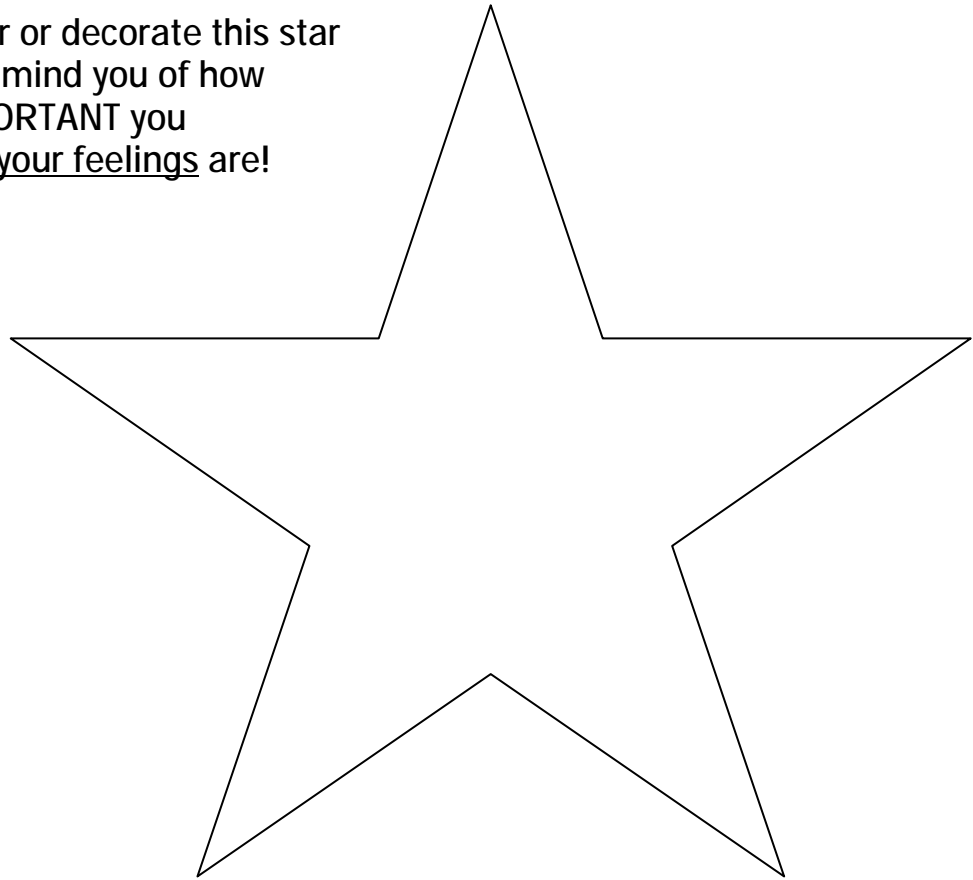
Now that I am a grown up, I talk to lots of kids about how they feel when their pets die. I want to be able to share what those children have taught me. Some of the most important things I know, I have learned from children like you!!

This is a long book, and sometimes working on it can be hard. So, I want you to give yourself a sticker on each page as you get it done. Remember that you are doing hard work, but very important work.

I hope this activity book will help you to feel less scared and less hurt and not so alone.

That is my wish, for you. You are a very special person !!

Color or decorate this star
to remind you of how
IMPORTANT you
and your feelings are!



I gratefully acknowledge the support and collaboration of my Solid Foundation French students, and all the other wonderful children in my life, in the development of this workbook!

About Me:

My name is _____

I am _____ years old. My birthday is _____.

I live with _____, _____,

_____.

My pet was a DOG CAT [other kind?] _____.

His / Her name was _____, but sometimes

I called him / her _____.

This is a picture of my family & me:



When you lose a pet...

Dogs and cats and other animals do not get to be as old as people do. They are not made to live as long as people, even if nothing bad ever happens to them. Animals know this and they don't worry about it.

People do worry about it. They don't usually like to talk about what happens when an animal or a person dies because it can be sad or scary to think about.

Animals don't stop to think about being sad because they are very busy loving us and being special.

Our animals always love us, no matter what.

Some animals even have important jobs to do in a family, like looking out for strangers or helping someone who can't see. Cats sometimes have the job of catching mice so they don't live in our houses.

There are different reasons for missing a pet.

Sometimes pets get sick when they get older and die. They might get sick or hurt and can't get better. Sometimes, grown-ups have to make very hard decisions about what is the best thing to do. The veterinarian (the animal doctor) can't always make the pet better. This is very hard.

It is also very hard when a pet dies and we are not expecting it, like if there is an accident. Sometimes, pets get lost or run away. People spend a lot of time looking for them everywhere and even put up signs or ask for help in the newspaper. But sometimes they can't find their pets. Not knowing what happened can be really hard.

This book will help you talk about what happened. It is important to be able to ask questions.

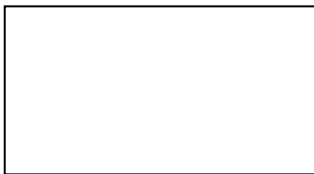
Saying "good-bye" is really hard!

Lots of people wish that they could have had a chance to say "Good-bye" to their pet.

Often, we feel sad about not saying things we wanted to say to our pets, or not doing things they liked to do when they were still with us.

You can't go back and change things that happen, but a lot of people find ways to say "Good-bye" to their pets after they are gone. At the end of this book, there are some ideas about how to do this. The important thing to remember is that their bodies may not be with you any more, but their memory always will be with you.

That is why this special way of saying "good-bye" is called a "MEMORIAL." This word has the word "memory" inside it.



M E M O R I A L

M E M O R Y

WORDS FOR FEELINGS:

We all need words so we can talk about what happened and how we feel. If, we don't know the words, that makes it hard to talk about it.

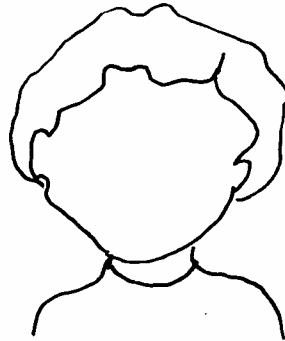
People feel all different kinds of ways when they lose a pet. Grown-ups and children don't always feel the same kinds of feelings. In fact, no two people feel exactly the same.

Using FEELING WORDS lets people know things about how they might be able to help you with your problem. Being able to name your feelings helps you, and others, to understand them. Here are some words for feelings. They are good words to know.

Can you make the faces show the feelings?

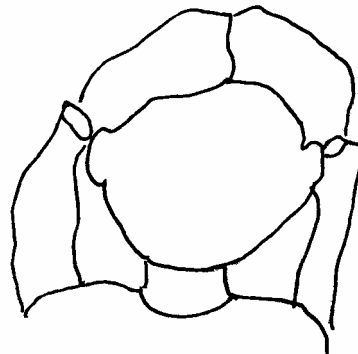
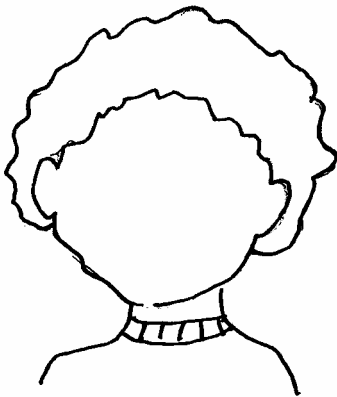
Sad

Scared

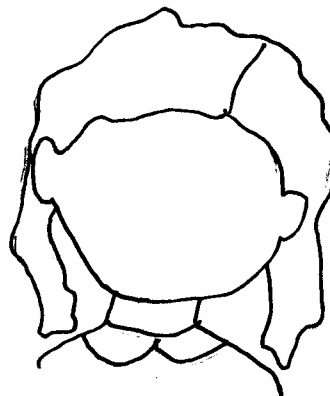
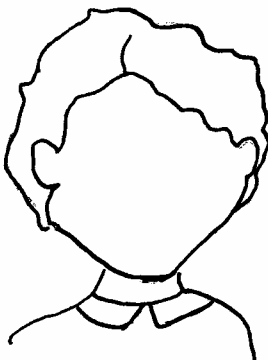


Lonely

Angry



You choose... write the feeling name under the face...



Can you think of other feeling words?

If you can, you can write them on this page, or ask someone to write them for you. Then you can draw them.

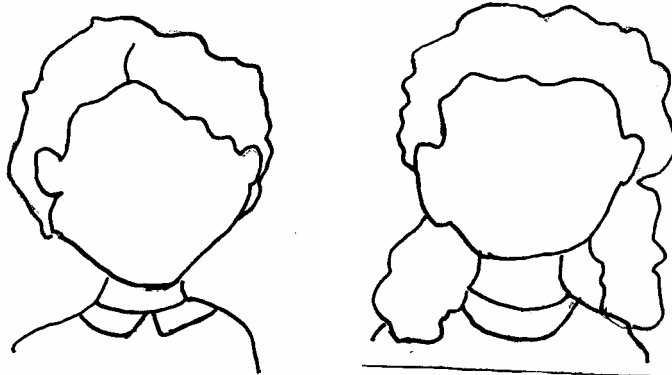
Confused is a feeling word that means you are feeling a LOT of different feelings all at the same time.

Are you feeling confused?

- ☞ If you have questions and need answers
- ☞ If you think what happened MIGHT be your fault.
- ☞ If you have many feelings, and some don't fit together.

If any of these things are true for you, it is probably CONFUSION.

- Can you make the faces look CONFUSED?



CONFUSION is a whole lot of things put together:

- Can you name the different feelings in the CONFUSION?

FEELINGS: _____, _____, _____

Just like in arithmetic:

Feeling + Feeling + Feeling (a lot of them!) = confused

Grief... This is a word for what we all feel when somebody or something leaves us, and is not coming back. It is what we feel when we have lost something that is important to us, like a person or an animal. Dying is a kind of leaving and a special kind of loss. Grief is the feeling we have when this happens.

Grief is something we feel in lots of different ways...

- Sometimes, we feel “numb.” It is hard to feel anything. We can’t believe somebody or something is gone.
- Sometimes, we feel alone and we have a kind of “empty” feeling – like there is something missing. That is because there IS something missing.
- Sometimes, we even feel sick with stomach aches & headaches.
- Sometimes, the things we are used to doing, like feeding a pet, or walking a dog, or playing with a pet—all the things we used to do with and for our pet—leaves a big hole. When it is the time we used to do things with our pet, the hole feels bigger.

Our Grief is something very important to talk about with a good listener. (We will talk about how to find a good listener a little later.)

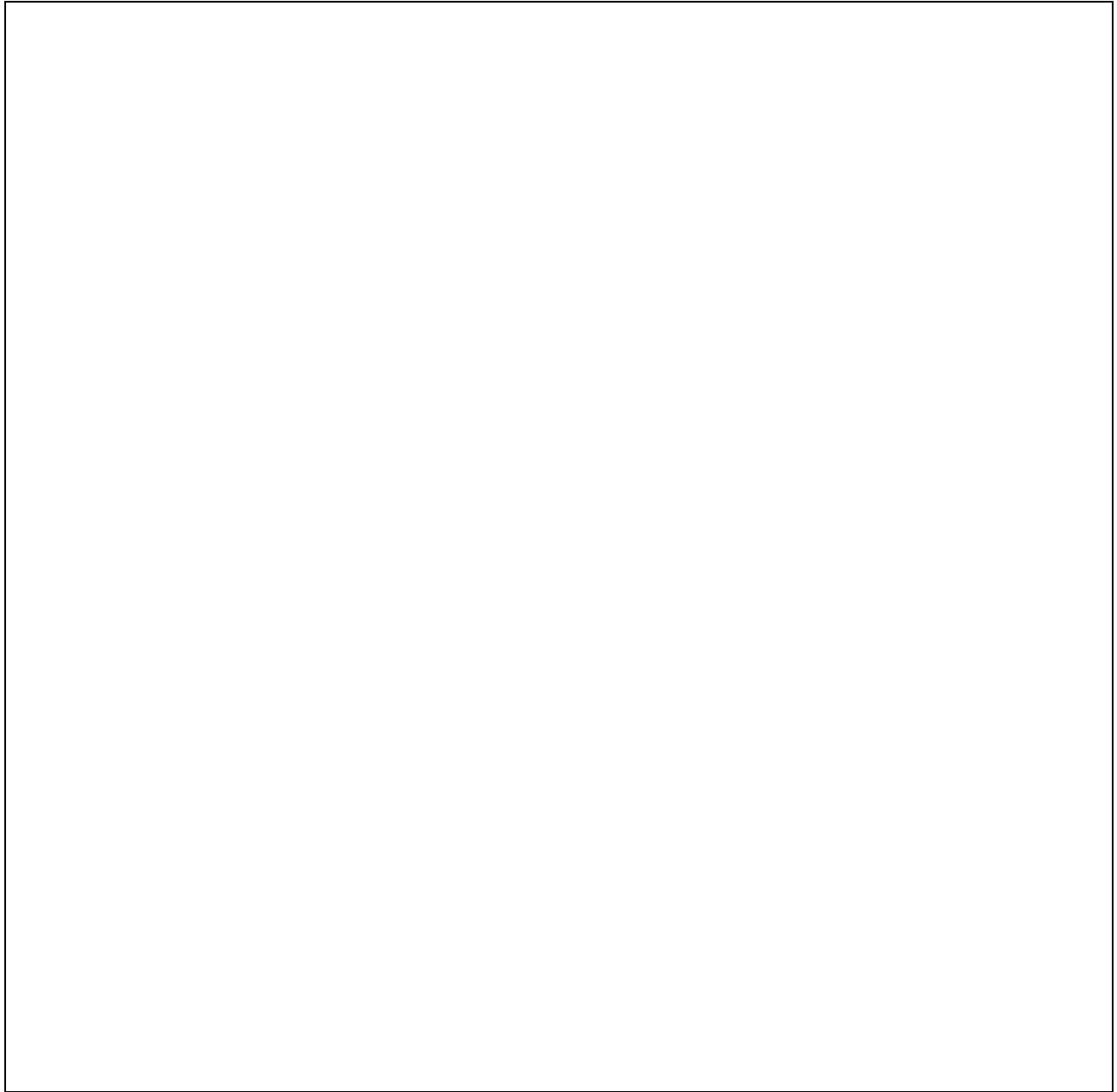
Your grief is your own. Everybody does not feel grief in the same ways. That’s why talking about it is so important.

Some things that might happen...Maybe some of this is happening to you.

- | | |
|---|---|
| _____ I cry a lot. | _____ My tummy or my head hurts. |
| _____ It’s hard to sleep. | _____ I don’t want to go to school. |
| _____ I can’t feel anything,
even good things. | _____ I get in fights more often,
or I am always grumpy. |
| _____ I worry a lot. | _____ I don’t want to play with my friends. |

Can you think of others things that are happening?

Can you DRAW what your "GRIEF" looks like to you?



This may be a very sad picture right now. You will not feel this way always..... I promise.

HEALING:

Something called "HEALING" happens after we lose someone or something important. But it takes time for this to happen.

If you fall down when you are playing, and you get a cut or a scrape, your mom or another grown-up usually cleans your hurt up and puts a band-aid on it to protect it. (I know...sometimes a grown-up will put medicine on the hurt place, and sometimes it STINGS!!! 😞)

Sometimes, remembering stings too. Remembering is part of healing. It is part of the hurt getting better.

HEALING happens best when we can talk about what we feel with someone who is a good listener.

A GOOD LISTENER... 🦻

1. LISTENS and does not say your feelings are dumb.
2. Lets you talk about what YOU want to talk about.
3. Does not interrupt you when you are talking.
4. Sometimes helps you to name what you are feeling.

This last thing is important, because when things have NAMES, they are not so scary. A GOOD LISTENER can sometimes give you names for things, like feelings.

Can you think of other things a good listener does or does not do?

1. _____

2. _____

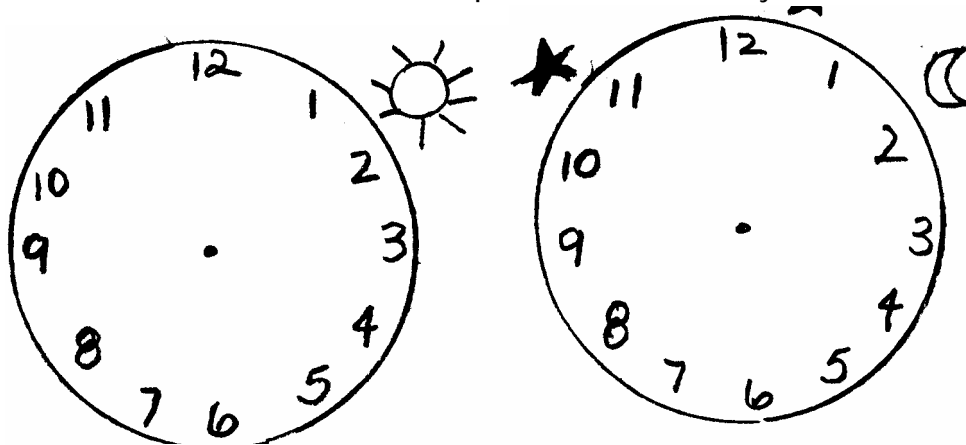
3. _____

Do you know someone who is a good listener? Sometimes your mom or dad can be a very good listener, or another grown-up.

Sometimes grown-ups are busy, or have feelings of their own, so sometimes the trick is finding a GOOD TIME to SHARE what you feel. You can always ASK a grown-up when a GOOD TIME would be.

⌚ A GOOD TIME is _____.

Fill in the clocks, or draw a picture to remind you.



Can you draw lines through the maze to find the good listeners?

Start here ↓



My GOOD LISTER is _____.

Another good listener is _____.

Children have lots of QUESTIONS when a pet dies.

You may feel AFRAID about a lot of things too. What happened to your pet was very, very sad and scary.

It is also hard to understand WHY it happened to your pet.

If you are scared, and you have questions, the VERY BEST thing to do is talk about them.

- Sometimes, it helps to write them: ✎ You can get your good listener to help you.

QUESTIONS:

1. ✎

2. ✎

3. ✎

Things I am scared about:

1. ✎

2. ✎

3. ✎

✎✎✎ Writing these things helps a lot.

(Remember, you can ask for help with the words.)

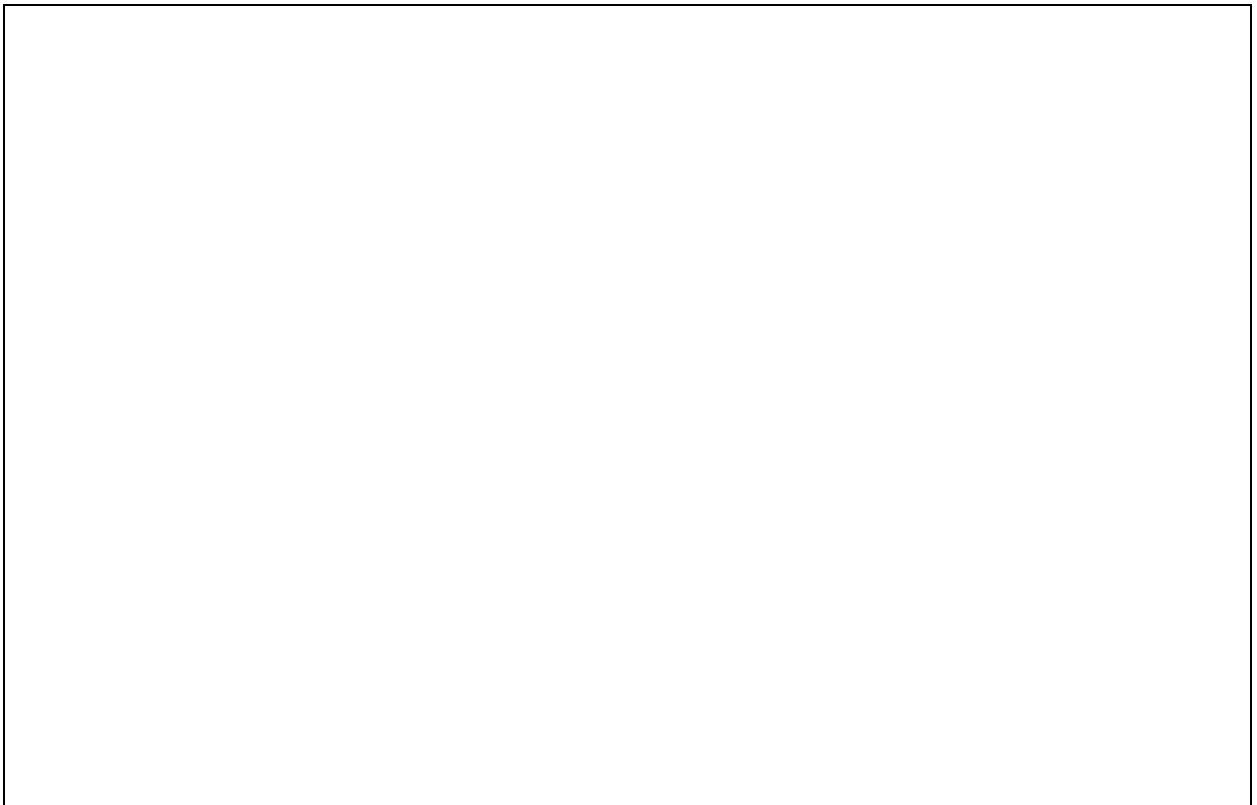
Two things that happen a lot when something bad happens to your pet are:

1. You might feel as if it is fault your that this happened. Lots of kids feel this, and even grown-ups feel it, but it is NOT TRUE!

If this is something you feel, it is **REALLY IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!!**

You did not make anything bad happen, and it does not mean that more bad will things happen! This is something lots of kids are afraid of.

Can you **DRAW** what someone looks like if they think a bad thing is their fault?



The child in the picture probably has a very sad face.
Was I right?

2. When something bad happens, it is hard to TRUST. This is also something lots of people, including kids, feel.

TRUSTING means feeling safe that nothing bad will happen. It is very scary when it is hard to feel TRUST.

FEELING SAFE is very important.

Can you talk to a good listener about feeling safe, and about ways to help you feel safe again?

What do you think are things you can do to feel SAFE?

WRITE THEM OR DRAW THEM:

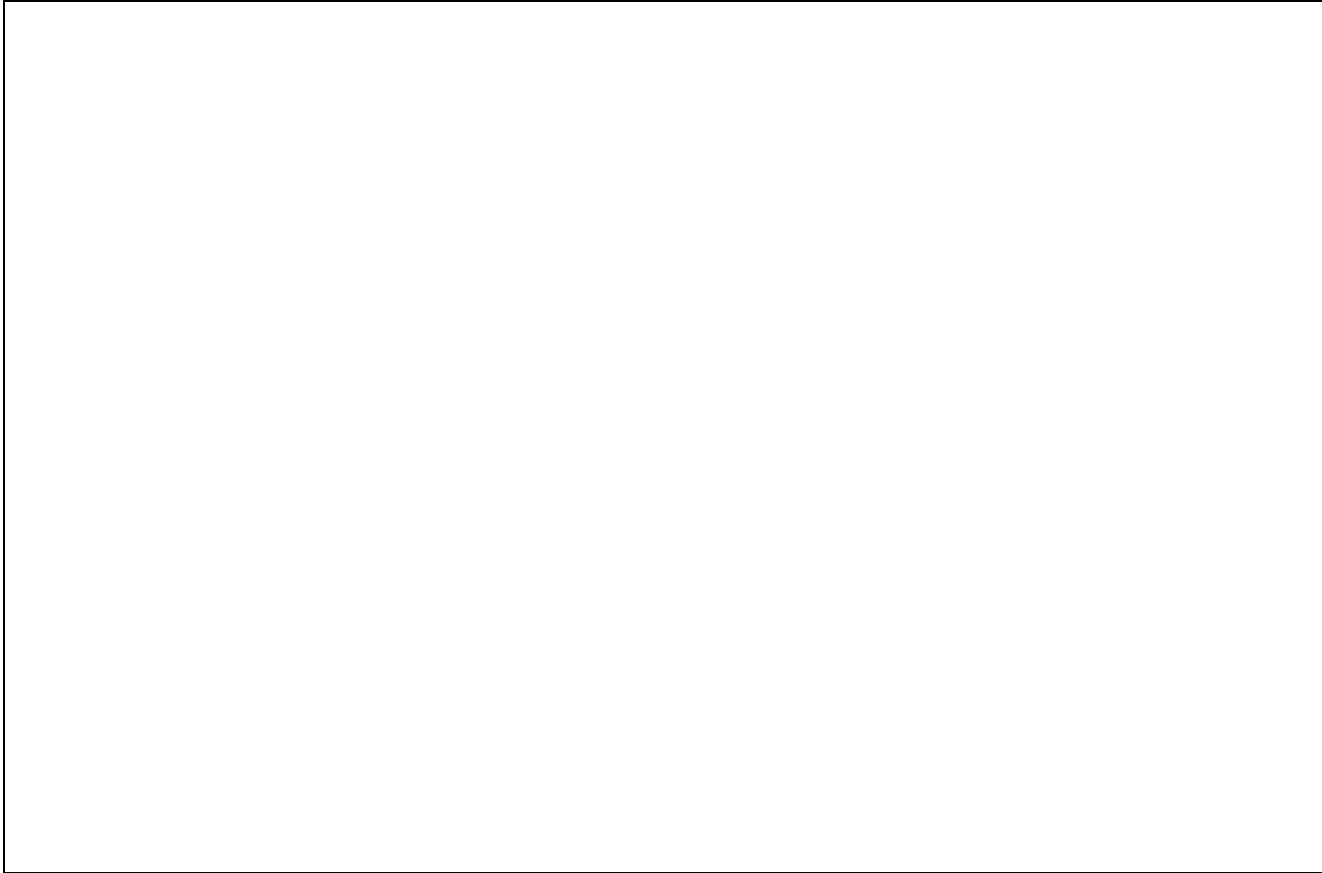
1. ✎

2. ✎

3. ✎

Can you draw HOW YOU FEEL NOW? Do you look like you feel SAFE in your picture? If you don't, how can you change the picture so it is a SAFE picture?

HOW I FEEL:



How can I change my picture so I can look and feel safe in the picture?

Can I do these things I drew? Is there somebody who can help me?

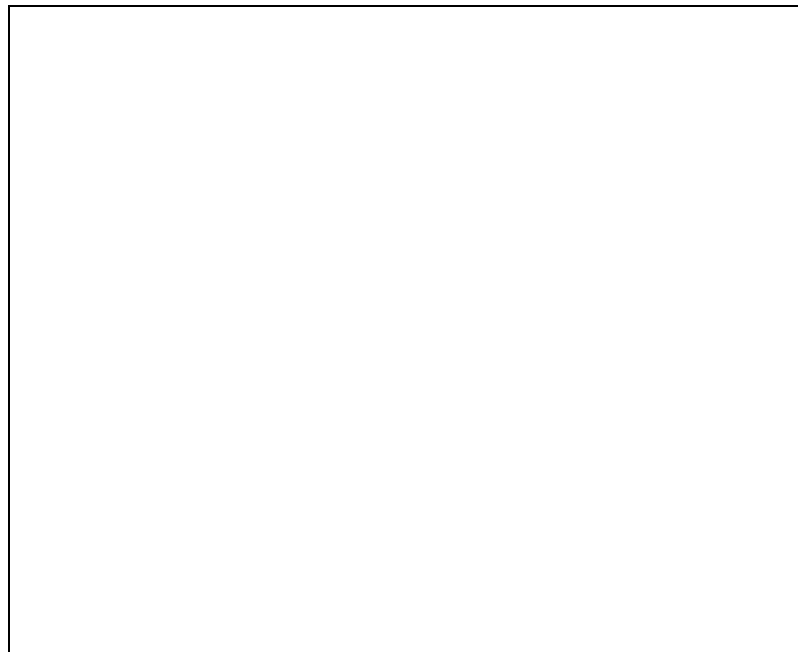
Who can help me? _____

ANOTHER FEELING: **ANGRY!!**

It is OK to feel ANGRY about what happened to your pet.
ANYONE would feel ANGRY.

Sometimes, ANGER is a very scary feeling.
When we don't talk about feeling angry, sometimes it stays
inside of us. Anger inside you can hurt you.
It can even make you feel sick to your stomach!

What
Do you think
ANGER
looks like
INSIDE
You?
Can you
DRAW
IT?



Sometimes, when ANGER is inside us for a while, we can start
to feel some of these things:

- sadness that we can't name (This is called "depression.")
- We may have NIGHTMARES, or have trouble sleeping.
- We may not feel like eating, or playing, or doing any of the
things we usually do. We may not even want to go to school.
- Sometimes, we feel angry at everybody and everything, even
at our pet who died.

Feeling this way is OK, but it is good to talk to somebody
about it.

It is good to SAY you are angry. Sometimes it is hard to say, but there are **OTHER WAYS** to say it besides words. You can:

- DRAW IT
- STOMP YOUR FEET
- PUNCH A PILLOW, or something else soft, so you don't get hurt
- YELL, and even CRY

It is usually a good idea to let someone know that you are saying your anger when you do these things.

You want to be sure that people know you are doing something **POSITIVE**.

We have to make sure that we make GOOD CHOICES about how we say our anger.

A grown-up can help with this.

What do you think you can do? Who can help you?

What I can do:

Who can help me with this?

The Feelings Bag:

Here is something you can do if you are having an angry or scary problem of some kind. Maybe you can get a grown-up to help you. This would be good.

For this activity, you will need:

1. a big paper bag, like from the grocery store
2. markers or crayons, or something else to draw with
3. paper to draw on—big pieces are really good
4. tape, or anything else you find to CLOSE the bag
5. a good place to PUT THE BAG when you are done

1. Draw as many pictures as you need to that show how ANGRY you are inside, what is in your nightmares, what makes it hard to sleep, or whatever else is scary... Draw as many pictures as you need to. (You can also do this with other kids who feel like you do.)

2. Take the brown paper bag and write on it what you are putting inside: NIGHTMARES ANGER SCARY THINGS
Whatever you want to write on it is OK.

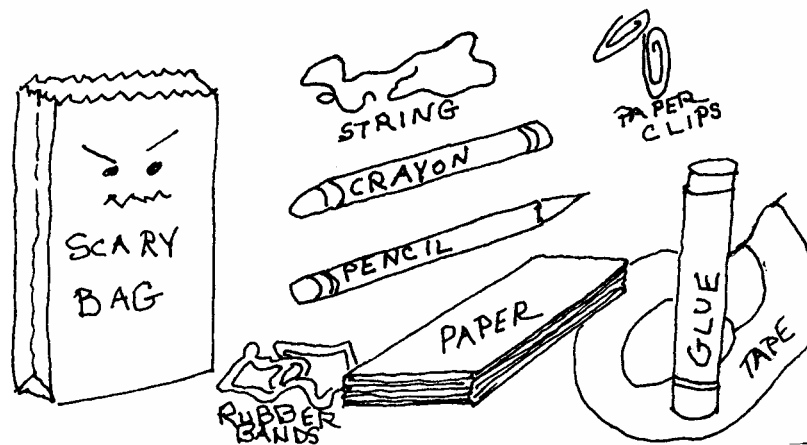
You can also draw on it.

3. Decide how you will close up the bag.

Make sure you choose a way to keep it closed so all your scary and angry feelings are inside the bag. You can tape it shut, fold it up, or use anything safe to keep it closed, but be sure YOU KNOW it is CLOSED TIGHT.

4. Put the bag, with all that stuff in it, in the safe place. It might be a place inside, outside, or even in the GARBAGE!!

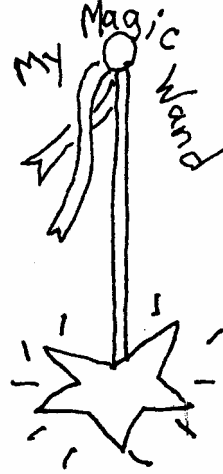
Then, tell yourself, and the people who did this with you:



**These things CAN'T HURT ME!!
They can't get out of the BAG!!**

Magic Wishes...

When something very scary and sad happens to us, we often feel like we don't have any control or any choice about ANYTHING that happens in our lives. Sometimes it helps to pretend about having a magic wand or



something to
them to be.

make things the way we want

If you had a magic wand, what would you wish?

Right now, if I had three wishes, they would be:

WISH #1

Wish #2

WISH #3

Maybe you wished about some of the happy times with your pet, and about being able to have those times and do those things again. After some time passes, you will be able to remember the happy times without feeling all the sadness you feel now. This takes time, and it doesn't happen all by itself. It helps a lot to make it happen if you can talk about what you feel and wish, and about anything that is scary for you right now.

Happy Times with my Pet

This is a happier part of the book.

This is the part of the book where you get
To make MEMORIES!

Some people get really afraid that they will FORGET their
pet, and the happy times they had together.

A lot of people feel afraid that they will forget once they
stop feeling sad all the time.

FORGETTING your pet does not happen !

They stay with you forever, in your memories.

Here are some ways to help remember your pet:

--Write your pet's life story. (There is a sample below.)



--Collect pictures of your pet
and make a book.

If you can use a computer, there are places to post your
pet's photo in an album on-line.



--Plant flowers,
when the weather is warm.

Can you think of other ideas?

MY PET'S HISTORY—(You can get someone to help you write this, and you can draw the pictures, if you do not write yet.)

Here is a start to your story:

This is a story about _____(pet's name)

We named him/her that because_____

He /She was ...(What did he look like?)_____

_____. I was (how old?)_____

when we got him/her.

This is me with my pet.

Some of my favorite things to do with
_____ (pet's name) were

I remember one really funny thing that happened with my pet.

My pet) was very SPECIAL because:

He / She will always be important to me because:

Some of the ways I showed my pet I loved him / her were:
(write or draw)

Some of the ways my pet showed Me he or she loved Me were:
(write or draw)

These are other happy things I want to remember about my pet.

If I could see and talk to my pet one more time, this is what I would say or do:

DRAW A PICTURE OF A HAPPY MEMORY WITH YOUR PET:



Where do pets go when they die?

This might be one of your questions that you wrote down. This is what some people think:

When pets die, a lot of people believe that they go to a special place. One special place is called The Rainbow Bridge.

(Believe it or not, there is a real place in the United States, far out in the west, where the Grand Canyon is, called The Rainbow Bridge. It is a very beautiful rocky canyon that has rainbow colors on it.) Rainbows are a symbol, or a sign, for HOPE and happiness. Rainbows make a lot of people happy.

That is why this place for our pets who are gone is called The Rainbow Bridge.

Here is a poem about this special place:

The Rainbow Bridge

There is a bridge connecting Heaven and Earth.
It is called The Rainbow Bridge because of its many
colors.

Just this side of the Rainbow Bridge there is a land of
meadows, hills and valleys with lush green grass.

When a beloved pet dies, the pet goes to this place.
There is always food, water and warm spring weather.
There, old and frail animals are made young again.

Pets who were sick are better again.

They play all day with each other.

They never forget their special person who loved them on
earth, and their Angels are always looking out for that
special person.

They run and play all day.

Many people believe that ALL our pets go to this
Rainbow Bridge when they die. If you have lost a pet
before, it might help to think of all the pets you had
being together in this special place.

I believe that all of my special pets are there and that
they help all the other pets when they arrive.

Thinking about that helps me.

My pet, _____, at the Rainbow Bridge.

Lots of people have said that it helps a lot to write a letter to their pet. This is something you could write for your memory book.

You can write a letter to your pet right in this book.

DEAR _____,

Love,

Sometimes, when people are grieving and are sad about losing a dear pet, they try to help other people who may be feeling some of the same things. If you were a helper to someone who felt some of the things you do, what would you want to say to that person?

Dear _____,

Yours truly,














































You probably helped that person a LOT by sharing your feelings!

Forest's story about his pet crab...

A VERY SPECIAL KIND OF CALENDAR: JUST FOR YOU!

Here is a place for you to mark down how you are feeling as the days go by. Write in the day, or get a grown-up to do it. Circle the face that looks like your feeling.

You can circle what you felt MOST of the day, or you can circle any of the feelings you had, and even add one in the space, or write a word.

   Day:	   Day:	   Day:	   Day:	   Day:
   Day:	   Day:	   Day:	   Day:	   Day:
   Day:	   Day:	   Day:	   Day:	   Day:

You can mark as many of the days as you need to, until you start to feel better. Your grief belongs to you, and so do your feelings. You are the best judge of when you start to feel better. People you trust are there to help you get there!

Sharing your feelings is **IMPORTANT!!!!**