

Dealing With Grief ... Unwelcome News



by Dr. Michele Tucker
& Andrea Ficocello
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when it comes time to make sensitive decisions. There may also be a level of guilt that you begin to feel as you wonder if there is something more you could have done or not done that would contribute to your pet's condition.

When someone receives the news that their pet has an illness or disease that is fatal, they will experience something called anticipatory grief. Unlike grief after a loss that becomes less intense over time, anticipatory grief becomes more intense as the loss approaches. This is because it is very difficult for us to watch our beloved pet's quality of life lessen over time and to be reminded that death is inevitable.

If you receive news from your veterinarian that your pet is terminally ill, you will experience a tirade of emotions. This will include anxiety in anticipation that you will have to say good-bye to your pet. You may feel anger that your pet is sick. Denial about the seriousness of your pet's condition may affect your ability to be rational

Anticipatory grief is a normal and necessary part of the grief process, and so is the emotional pain that comes along with it. During this difficult time, try to focus on the time you do have left with your pet. Consider spending more quality time with your pet by sharing special moments that will celebrate your relationship. Take pictures and carry them with you. Talk about your pet and tell stories. Videotape your pet doing anything, even simple things like running

around the yard or sitting in front of a window. Write down these special memories of your pet by keeping a journal.

When the time comes to say goodbye, believe in your special bond that you and only you have with your pet and trust that the outcome will become clear at the proper time. Obtain guidance from your veterinarian and speak openly about your pet's prognosis. Trust your judgment. In your time together with your pet, you have learned to recognize your pet's needs and you will be able to face the next difficult steps.

At Palm Beach Veterinary Specialists, Michele Tucker is the Director of Florida Animal Blood & Tissue Bank and Andrea Ficocello is the Certified Grief Counselor.

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This month's BARK Magazine focuses on seniors. Here are a few articles of note:

Figuring age of your dog – is your dog a senior? If you have a 10 year old the following will apply:
Under 20 lbs. – 56 yrs
20 – 50 lbs – 60 yrs
51 – 90 lbs – 66 yrs
90+ lbs – 78 yrs

- Also included in this issue are:
- ◇ Now Let us Praise Old Dogs – Health and wellness for the senior years
 - ◇ In Praise of Older Dogs
 - ◇ Aging Lessons
 - ◇ Joint Efforts (strategies for relieving your dog's arthritis pain)

And finally, a moving article by Susan Seligson "Be Gentle – I know my dog is old"

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