



## Guilt

When our pet dies our natural instinct is to believe we could have done something to prevent it. This dreaded guilt consumes our life, we lose sleep and have difficulty functioning on day to day activities.

### **Guilt running riot**

If a pet dies from an accident, eating something they shouldn't, Guilt immediately takes a hold. Maybe you blame a family member for not closing the door and the pet was hit by a car. Perhaps someone left out some tasty chocolate and your pet ingested it and died. It could be a range of things, pets are curious by nature and so it is almost impossible to ensure their safety all of the time. When something tragic happens guilt closes in quickly.... If only you had known chocolate was toxic... If you had just come home earlier you could have gotten them to the veterinarian sooner. The final memories you have of your pet are now tarnished with you questioning yourself and feeling like you have failed your pet.

Euthanasia is the grand master of guilt. It doesn't matter how certain you are that you are doing what is best for your pet not everyone is comfortable with their decision. There are only a handful of people who can walk away from a euthanasia without any doubts that their pet is in a better place. Often too many times people question if they should have waited longer or done more to help their pet. Even if you are among the few who are not plagued with guilt after their life is ended sure enough we will start questioning why we didn't spend more time with them when they were alive. Why didn't I take them on more walks .... Feed them nicer food .... Sought medical intervention sooner. Before long we convince ourselves we were the worst pet parents ever!



### **Why do we feel this way?**

Instinctively when something goes wrong we want to make it right, when we feel like we are losing control we must find something or somebody to blame for the way we feel. Guess what, rarely can we acknowledge that no one was at fault and you did everything you could have possibly done and you did it right.

This response is even more intensified by the profound sense of responsibility we feel toward our pets. We know that pets can't understand all the dangers out there, they don't know running in the street will lead to an accident no more than they know that eating tasty chocolate is toxic to their bodies. No matter what happens we are responsible and when something goes wrong guilt is not far away.

### **From Guilt to Redemption**

A little bit of guilt, for the right reasons is good, it makes us question of ourselves and promise to be better in the future.

A lot of guilt, however, is not a good thing and can prevent us from seeking out the love and companionship of another pet. Everyone has a choice in how they respond to a negative stimulus. With guilt comes resilience,

think about all the people whose homes have burned down during wildfires or those who have lost everything in a hurricane or flood damage, they can choose to rebuild be positive or become depressed and miserable.

We can't always control what the weather does or how we lose or pets but we can choose how to respond to our emotions, not blaming yourself and understanding you do not need to continue suffering are ways to break the cycle of guilt. At the end of the day your pet loved you unconditionally and the last thing they would want is to see you sad. Here are some choices that can help you take the upper hand over guilt.

### ***1. Choose not to rehearse guilt.***

Stop repeating the same guilty thoughts over and over. This is one way to ensure they are not going to go away. You must tell yourself to stop thinking about guilt, when you find yourself wandering down that painful mental path, put up a mental road block. Try instead to focus on something that makes you happy and remind yourself that there is more to your life than negatives from the past.

### ***2. Choose to accept what cannot be changed.***

A self imposed life sentence for past mistakes accomplishes nothing. It does little to change the past and can ruin your future. You have probably made any changes you had to make (such as educating family members of toxic material) Let that be it, focus on your future, the one thing you have control over because you cannot change the past, what's done is done.

### ***3. Choose balance.***

Guilt keeps us focused on the times we imagine we have failed – the times when you were too busy to go for a walk or to play with our pets. When you find yourself thinking of negative thoughts try focusing on the fact that you did go for long walks and you did play and cuddle. Remind yourself that you were a very good, caring and responsible owner. Remember the fun times and all the things that you did right. Chances are you were not the perfect owner but you certainly weren't the worst one either.

### ***4. Choose forgiveness***

Forgiveness leads to freedom, freedom to get on with your life without regrets for the past. Forgiveness allows you to let go and start getting on with your life. If you think about all the times your pet pooped in the living room or chewed on your sofa or even broke a valuable vase, if you didn't forgive your pet for their actions then you probably wouldn't have had a deep meaningful relationship with them. It works both ways how many times did your pet forgive you for coming home late and yelling at them. Forgiveness has always been at the foundation of your relationship with your pet, and now you need to make it the foundation of your own healing. Each time guilt tries to remind you of some past mistake, acknowledge the mistake and forgive it. What's done is done, move on. Treat yourself with the same degree of love and acceptance that your pet gave you. Only then will you be able to heal and love again.



Pet owners who “don't care” will never experience the pangs of guilt. Only caring, responsible pet owners go through this agony. The problem is too much guilt can prevent you from becoming a caring pet owner again.

We have enough people who don't care about their mistakes, we need more good people who do care! Choose to learn from your mistakes and don't let guilt stop you from forgiving yourself and living a life of misery. Live life and move forward, Pets need people like you!.

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