

Here to help you through the
anticipated loss of your dog



To help you with your loss

Learning someone you love so much has been given a terminal diagnosis is very challenging. It opens up a wide range of emotions and feelings. It can give the opportunity to live life to the full, creating many wonderful treasured memories. However, it can also evoke lots of sadness, anxiety, stress and even anger. We have created this pack as a resource of support, to outline what you can expect from us and should you wish to gain further support we have identified some key external resources.

*When I come to the end of the road
And the sun has set for me
I want no rites in a gloom-filled room
Why cry for a soul set free?
Miss me a little - but not too long
And not with your head bowed low
Remember the love that we once shared
Miss me - but let me go*



Illustration © Sarah Flint

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Grief

Knowing you will soon be losing a loved one can be emotionally traumatic. It is important to recognise that there is no right or wrong way to grieve, everybody is individual and unique in the emotions they go through. The grieving process takes time and will happen gradually and naturally. Remember to be patient with yourself and your loved ones who may be grieving.

There are many emotional and physical aspects of grief. Traditionally it is thought that grief involves a five-stage cycle of Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. This model, referred to, as the Kubler-Ross cycle after the psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, was first used to describe the stages that somebody experiences when they have been diagnosed with a terminal illness. It was identified that this is similar to the stages of a bereavement. There are now thought to be two additional stages of pet bereavement – shock and guilt. The stages of grief are completely fluid and perfectly normal to move back and forth through them or not experience some at all.

Shock

A stressful situation can cause the release of adrenaline and cortisol hormones, which can trigger a natural fight or flight response. This can often happen when you have been given the news that there is nothing more that can be done for your loved one. Physical symptoms can involve increased heart rate, confusion or an inability to think clearly, fatigue or numbness. These feelings will pass over a period of time as your body begins to process the situation.

Denial

In a similar way to shock, denial is your body's attempt to slow the process down and protect yourself from emotional trauma. You may find it difficult to accept what you have been told or what you see. You may feel irritable, have fatigue or disturbed sleep and general restlessness. This stage of

grief may be a time when you feel you want to try to seek a second opinion about your dog's diagnosis and try to look at other treatment options. Similarly, if a loved one has already passed, you may continue as if they will come home soon. It can be a natural way to absorb and understand the loss. Denying the truth may be a conscious or unconscious choice, and may last for varying degrees of time.

Guilt

This can take many forms and often revolve around things you feel you could or couldn't have done such as making the decision to euthanise earlier or later. These feelings of guilt are perfectly normal and a way of self-punishing, despite there being no way to change what has happened. Take comfort in knowing that your decisions will have come from a place of love towards your dog. It's important to try to look at things in a different perspective to reframe this guilt.

Anger

It is very easy when you have suffered a loss or who have been informed of a terminal illness to become overwhelmingly angry or resentful at the cruelty and unfairness of death. You may feel anger or frustration towards veterinary professionals, anger at the charity, other relatives, friends, anger at the deceased or even towards religious deities. This anger is rarely rational, but it can be overwhelming and consuming and is often as a result of feeling powerless.

Bargaining

It's not unusual to feel desperate and that you are willing to do anything to alleviate or minimise the pain. This can produce feelings of helplessness or thoughts of 'what if'. This can be fleeting or can be attempted over and over and allows us to hold onto some hope. Often the bargaining stage of grief may be longer in children. This is also likely to be stronger where you are dealing with the diagnosis of a terminal diagnosis. Sometimes, this bargaining may also occur irrationally after a death, in which we beg for our loved one to be returned to life.

Depression

Depression associated with grief can generally last a couple of months and is not the same as diagnosed clinical depression, if however these feelings do not begin to subside, it is important to speak to a doctor or healthcare professional. If an individual was clinically depressed at the time of their loss, the feelings may be compounded and it may take longer to work through this. This stage of grief may cause a range of physical and emotional responses including sadness, anxiousness, lack of concentration, fear, isolation and socially withdrawing. These physical and emotional responses are often the first hints at beginning to accept the loss and leads onto the last stage of grief: Acceptance.

Acceptance

This final stage of grief is about accepting the reality of the bereavement, it is not about closure or no longer feeling sad. Acceptance is about acknowledging and being able to move forward into a new way of living with the loss. The intense feelings of grief (physical and psychological) may be experienced again and you should not worry about this.

Being able to talk about the loss and remembering the loved one with joy and meaning is an important part of this stage of grief.



The Ball in the box analogy

This analogy suggests grief is like a ball inside a box, that has a pain button at the side. In the early days of grief, the ball is large, out of control and when it bounces around inside the box, it frequently hits the pain button. Over time, this ball can become smaller and it hits the pain button less often, but the feelings are just as intense. Some days this ball can be bigger than other days and therefore the pain or emotions are more difficult to control.

Physical aspects of grief

The mind and body are connected and it's important to acknowledge and recognise the physical aspects of grief that you may experience:

- Feeling tired/exhausted – often having no energy for everyday tasks
- Being unable to sleep properly
- Lack of concentration
- Fluctuations in your heart rate
- Nausea or an unsettled tummy
- Changes to your appetite – loss of interest in food or comfort eating
- Lowered immunity
- Aches and pains such as headaches, neck or back pain

Psychological aspects of grief

- Depression/Crying a lot
- Confusion/Inability to think clearly
- Anger/Frustration/Fear/Guilt
- Disturbed sleep/Racing thoughts
- Anxiety



What can I do to help myself through this time?

Grieving is a natural process which everyone may experience slightly differently, you should allow yourself time. If at any time grief becomes overwhelming or your physical and psychological symptoms do not begin to ease, we would advise you to speak to a medical or mental health professional for further support.

It is important to recognise that our physical and mental health are linked. Often we can neglect our physical health during a time of sadness and grief, which can lead to a lowered immune system and can exasperate the grieving process.

- **Relax** – Find something to do that relaxes you and be kind to yourself; this can be breathing exercises, yoga, reflexology, meditation, or something that works for you as an individual. You could consider activities such as writing a diary, art therapy, craft projects or something you enjoy.
- **Exercise** – Try to get out in the fresh air if you can. Losing your dog can mean that you change your routine of not getting out and walking them. You might find it easier to go somewhere you wouldn't have normally gone with your dog.
- **Sleep** – Lack of or too much sleep can impact our physical and mental health. This can be easier said than done!
- **Try to have a good bedtime routine.** think about what helps you to relax – can you take a bath, listen to some music or a podcast. It is recommended to avoid any electronic devices that emit a blue light before going to bed e.g. computers, tablets or mobile phones. Think about your environment including lighting, background noises, temperature, bedding and any scents, such as lavender, that might help you to feel relaxed. There are some great sleep apps that can help with relaxation.
- **Eating and drinking** - Avoid caffeine a couple of hours before going to bed. Similarly avoid eating a big meal or doing excessive exercise close to bedtime.
- **Try to eat a healthy and balanced diet** – You may not feel like you want to eat or you may feel like you want to eat 'junk' food. It is important to try to eat something nutritious, even if you can only stomach something light.
- **Talking to others** - Talk to friends, family, your Canine Partners Representative, other people who have experienced loss of their dog or a pet bereavement counsellor. Remember you can access the Individual Assistance Programme at any time. For further external support please visit our bereavement page on the website caninepartners.org.uk/bereavementsupport or for further internal support please contact a member of the team on bereavementsupport@caninepartners.org.uk
- **Be wary about resorting to alcohol, drugs (including sleeping pills)** or excessive caffeine intake as this can exasperate psychological (and physical) symptoms of grief.
- **Take one thing at a time** - Try to focus on each individual thing, e.g. I am just going to make myself a cup of tea; I am just going to drink my tea; I'm going to make myself a slice a toast etc. Don't try to think too far ahead or become overwhelmed by thinking about the whole day.
- **Remember grief takes time** and there is no quick fix, over time you will find ways to live with your loss and begin to think about the happy memories.

End of life care

“End of life” does not just include the final minutes of life; instead, it is a compassionate term for the final days, weeks or months of life and can have different meanings for different people.

Palliative care aims to improve your dog’s quality of life by relieving pain or distressing symptoms. It can be a challenging time caring for your dog but also incredibly rewarding, allowing you to spend precious time together. It is not always possible for this palliative care to be provided at home, therefore Canine Partners have foster rehabilitation homes available for these circumstances.

Deciding when your canine partner no longer has a good quality of life can be extremely challenging. Your Canine Partners representative will work alongside you and your veterinary team to monitor and manage end of life care, and then to make decisions on how and when the time is right to say goodbye.

Monitoring tools

You are the one who knows your dog best, however when you spend every day with them it can be challenging to spot the more subtle changes. Your vet will be able to support with regularly monitoring your dog’s health and will monitor the dog’s demeanour, comfort, heart, breathing and circulation. Checks that are more frequent may be required during this time.

Your Canine Partners representative will help to monitor other aspects of your dog’s physical and mental health including feeding, happiness and mobility. We may advise that a specific quality of life monitoring tool is used, if you feel this tool would be beneficial for you. Your Canine Partners representative will discuss how and when they will contact you depending on your circumstances.

For further external support please visit our bereavement page on the website [caninepartners.org.uk/bereavementsupport](https://www.caninepartners.org.uk/bereavementsupport) or for further internal support please contact a member of the team on bereavementsupport@caninepartners.org.uk

Support and what to expect from Canine Partners

Following the news of a terminal diagnosis, your Canine Partners Representative will have connected with you as soon as possible. This will have provided an opportunity for you to talk through any practical decisions that might have needed to have been made, but it can be a time for you to talk through your thoughts and feelings about such an unexpected and sad situation as well.

If you find that you did not feel able to talk so soon after receiving such news, we really do understand this. We will be in touch again via your chosen method of communication two to three days after your dog’s diagnosis and the following week. Please let us know how you would prefer to be contacted at this difficult time. We are here to support you but also respect the fact you may wish to have some privacy, too.

We will do everything that we can to help you at such an upsetting time. When the time does come, we will let everyone within Canine Partners who was involved in your dog’s journey know that he or she has sadly passed away and we hope that this bereavement guide will provide useful information for practical and emotional support both before and after your dog’s passing. We appreciate that every situation is unique and if you would like our help with anything please just ask.

When the time comes and someone loses their canine partner, we send a card of condolence from the charity and we also like to send a certificate as a small way to celebrate the life and work of the dog, but if you would find receiving either of these upsetting and would rather not receive them, please let us know.

If you ever feel like you need any support or wish to talk to someone, you are always welcome to reach out. You can get in touch with your Canine Partners Representative, who will be on hand to support and guide you through this challenging time, or you can send an email to our dedicated Bereavement Support inbox at bereavementsupport@caninepartners.org.uk and we will do everything we can to help.

Bucket List ideas

It is devastating to receive the news that your dog has a terminal diagnosis. However, you may want to consider using this time to ensure you and your dog get to share in as many memories together before the time comes to say goodbye. A great way to do this is to make a bucket list for your dog.

It is important to be mindful of the type of diagnosis your dog has received and therefore what activities will be appropriate for them to physically and mentally take part in. Make sure the list is about your dog, right at that moment in their current state, and not the regrets you might feel about what you missed your chance to do.

Below are some suggestions you could put on a bucket list for your dog:

- Throw a going-away party. Have the people who love you and your dog visit to say goodbye. It may be an idea to do this in stages with one or two people at a time, rather than have lots of people visit at once, as this may be overwhelming for your dog.
- A family photoshoot. It might seem odd to have a photoshoot in the last few weeks or days of your dog's life, but these pictures will turn into treasured memories to reflect back on.
- Give your dog a tasting platter of all their favourite healthy and non-healthy treats (be mindful of toxic foods though).
- Let your dog choose a new toy from a pet shop or buy them one online.
- Visit your favourite park, woodland or beach and take some time to just sit and enjoy the surroundings together.
- A commitment to cuddle. Whatever form of physical contact your dog likes best, be it strokes, massages, grooming or cuddling, make time each and every day to do it.

Finally, it is always worth seeking veterinary guidance before embarking on any bucket list items, to ensure it is safe and fair for your dog to do so. Be sure to take plenty of photographs, relish every moment and just spend time with your dog.

When the time comes

Home or clinic euthanasia?

In emergencies, sadly we do not have the option of home euthanasia. However, in some cases when your dog is receiving palliative care you may decide that a home euthanasia would be the best option for you and your dog. The flow chart (appendix 2) may help you to decide which option is best for you. We can help guide you in this decision should you wish.

What happens on the day?

Your vet will talk through the procedure with you on the day; however, it can be beneficial to be prepared in advance. The process is generally the same for a home or clinic euthanasia, however if it is in an emergency unfortunately you may not have as much time prior to the procedure to protect your dog's welfare and prevent them from being in pain. In emergency circumstances, your veterinary practice will allow time after to say goodbye if this is something you wish to do.

If your dog is nervous or in discomfort, the vet may suggest that the dog receives a mild sedation to allow the process to be less stressful for you and your dog. If your dog is sedated, they will be relaxed but awake, so they will still be able to hear you talking to them.

Sedations can be given in a small injection into the muscle that will take up to 20 minutes to have effect; the veterinary team are likely to leave you alone with your dog during this time. In some cases, the vet may advise a sedation via a tablet, these can take 40 minutes to have an effect and work best when the dog is not already stressed (i.e. given at home ahead of travelling to the clinic or the vet arriving).

A small area of hair will be clipped on your dog's front leg and in most cases the vet will place an intravenous catheter into the vein, which will be secured with some tape and bandage. The dog will feel a small scratch from the needle, however this will be painless once it is in place and allows the vet to access the vein without restraining the dog.

Your vet will let you know when it is time to give the injection, which is essentially a large overdose of anaesthetic and allows the dog to drift quietly to sleep. In most circumstances, you are able to hold and stroke your dog whilst this is given if you chose to.

The vet will check that your dog has passed by listening to their heart with a stethoscope. The dog's eyes rarely close and they can appear to stretch, twitch, pass urine/faeces or take a few deep breaths after they have passed. This is normal and it is only the muscles of the body relaxing, it is not something they will be aware of. This may be more common in dogs who have received a sedation.

Who will be present?

If possible, you might like to give some thought as to who you would like to present when your dog is euthanised. This could include somebody that will be present to support yourself or family members that also have a close bond with your dog. If there are older children in the household, you could have a conversation with them to find out whether they would like to be present or whether it would be too upsetting for them.

Consideration might have to be given to where you will be as, if at the vets, there will also be the vet and possibly a vet nurse in the room too.

There is some thought that, if there are other dogs in the household, giving them the opportunity to see and smell your dog once it has passed can help them with processing what has happened. This isn't always possible though and depends on the situation.

Things to consider

Your dog's belongings

When you return home from the vets or crematorium the impact of the grief can be compounded when you are faced with your dog's belongings such as their bed, toys, water bowl, food, treats and chews etc. You may want another family member or friend to go home ahead of you to 'tidy away' some of these items such as your dog's water bowl, or you may want to leave everything where it is for a period of time.

There is no right or wrong way to deal with your dog's belongings. When you are ready, you may want to make a memory box with some of them, or you may want to store them away to use with another dog in the future, or you may feel it is best to donate them to charity. Try not to rush this decision.

Change of routine

One of the difficult elements of losing your dog can be the change or loss of routine. You will be used to your four-legged companion wanting to go out to the toilet, having their breakfast and going out for a walk. You may find it useful to try to maintain some of the routine of getting up at a similar time and going out to get some fresh air - [click here](#) for more information on **What can I do to help myself through this time?**

Physical support

It's also important to consider additional physical support you may require without the assistance of your canine partner. You may want to think about this prior to your dog's passing if they have a terminal diagnosis. Do you need to increase the hours of existing carers, can friends and family help, do you need to contact social services to arrange for new carers? Consider how you managed prior to having your assistance dog, including any physical aids that may help you.

Options after

When a dog passes away, we recognise that it is inevitably an upsetting and overwhelming time, with many emotions and thoughts to process. However, we want to ensure you are aware of the options available to you in order for you to make an informed decision as to what is best for you to start to come to terms with your loss.

You may choose to have a private cremation for your dog. This is completely your choice and Canine Partners will support this, though due to the costs involved with this, it would be your personal choice and it would be at your own expense. A private cremation can often involve a small service or celebration of your dog's life and you could even choose to have their ashes returned home to you, or your dog buried in a memorial garden you can visit. There are many pet crematoriums around the UK and we recommend sourcing one from The Association of Private Pet Cemeteries and Crematoria.

As well as various ways to memorialise your dog further down the line (see Memorial Ideas within this pack) you may also wish to take some of their fur or a stamp of their paw print, if this is a feasible option after a sudden loss. If these options are not possible due to circumstances around your dog's passing, perhaps you may have some of your dog's fur in a brush at home, or you could take their collar and/or ID tags to keep.

Supporting children and other animals in the home

Losing a pet is often a child's first experience of bereavement and as difficult as it is, it is also a very important learning experience. It is important to note that this maybe an extremely difficult time for you, so do reach out to family or friends if you need to, to help support any children you may have in the home. Ensure you are all clear on how you wish to discuss this with them.

The information we have outlined below is useful but is generalised. A child's age and if they have ever experienced death before can greatly impact how they react to death. Please do seek further support on how best to navigate any behavioural changes your child(ren) may experience if you are worried.

Age

- Children up to two years of age have little concept of death, but may miss the presence of an animal and will be aware of tensions in the family if others are grieving.
- Two to four-year-olds have difficulty grasping that death is permanent and may commonly ask: "Where is Sammie going? Why isn't he moving?"
- Five to ten-year-olds may ask: "Why don't their eyes close? What happens to him when he goes in the ground? Does euthanasia hurt? Will my other pets be lonely?"
- Aged nine onwards, most children are aware of the biological finality of death and they may be curious about the aspects surrounding death, such as post-mortem or burial.
- Adolescence is a time of high emotions and may be less willing to share feelings or talk about real issues. In fact they may feel closer to their pet than with other members of their family.

Use clear and simple language

We tend to, particularly in Britain, avoid using words such as died or dead in fear of upsetting people or in this case children. However, children need clear and simple language that they can understand. There isn't anything wrong with the use of words such as died or dead. In fact using terms such as, gone to sleep, gone away, or lost can actually be extremely confusing for children. This can result in them struggling to process grief, as well as you processing your own grief.

Explain

Don't be afraid to explain what 'dying' means. Highlight that all living things die, plants, trees and pets. This is a nice time to identify with your child that this means that when a pet dies it is no longer, thirsty, hungry, tired, cold or feeling pain. This can really help children to understand if a pet has been unwell for a period of time and that they are now free of any discomfort they may have had.

Acknowledge feelings

Make sure you acknowledge not only their feelings but also yours. Ensure they know it is ok to feel sad, worried, confused or even angry about what has happened. Some children may be a little young to be able to identify those feelings themselves, so try help them by saying things like 'I think you're feeling sad because Buddy has died'. Explain to them it is normal to feel these things just as you are feeling them. Allow your child to know how you are feeling, this can help them process emotions and that it is ok to feel them but it could benefit you too.

Happy memories

It can be easier said than done but try to focus on all the happy times and memories you shared together. Reassure them that although it will take time to feel less sad, it will get easier. You can look at happy videos or photos together but also remember to be respectful of your child's wishes as they may not want to do that depending on their age or how recently the dog died. Try to keep to their normal routine and give them activities to do that they enjoy.

Keep talking

By discussing the death of your dog it will help lay down the foundations for them learning how to deal with bereavement. You can help encourage your child to express their feelings through talking, drawing, writing or even creating special memory boxes that reminds them of happy times.



Book recommendation

The book below is lovely and doesn't relate death to any religion or heaven, but in a way that a child can still connect to a deceased dog.

The Invisible Leash by Patrice Karst: *After Zach's dog, Jojo, dies, his friend Emily tries to comfort him with the "best news ever": an invisible leash around our hearts connects everyone to their pets no matter where they are, on this Earth or somewhere beyond - maybe they are even near right now. Zach is skeptical, saying he only believes in what he can see, but Emily lets him find his own way to eventually come to feel the comforting tug of the Invisible Leash.*

For useful links to help support your child with the loss of your canine partner, please speak to your Canine Partners contact.

Helping support any of your other pets in the home

Just as you are experiencing many emotions following the death of your canine partner so too may any of your other pets in the home.

However, you are more likely to notice this with your pets through changes of behaviour. Below are some key changes you may notice:

- Requiring more attention
- Requiring less attention
- Seeking out key spots where your deceased canine partner used to be
- Sleeping more
- Decrease in appetite
- Increase in vocalisation volume/frequency
- Change in toileting habits
- Lack of motivation
- Diarrhoea
- Over grooming

It is also important to note that you may not see any of these symptoms but that doesn't mean your surviving pets loved your canine partner any less.

If you notice any of these things in your pets please do support them. If they need more attention give them more, equally if they have retreated a little please don't force extra love on them, though this can be difficult for you personally. Respect what your pet is trying to communicate.

Keep an eye on decreased appetite, any diarrhoea or over grooming that may occur and if this persists please do seek veterinary attention.

Stick to normal routines as much as possible, this can help your pets to manage any of anxiety towards the loss. That includes things like walks, meal times or visiting places. Engaging your pet in some of their favourite activities can also help but again please do listen to your pet if they say 'not right now'.

There are several holistic options to help support your pets with anticipated loss or immediate loss, such as plug-ins that can help you pet to feel calm and relaxed.

Please do speak to your Canine Partners Representative if you have any concerns over an active canine partner that you may have in your home.

If your canine partner is put to sleep in the home or if you experience a sudden loss of your canine partner in the home, allowing any other pets who have had regular contact with them to see them before they may be buried or taken away for cremation can help them. This is a personal preference.

If you ever feel like you need any support or wish to talk to someone, you are always welcome to reach out. You can email our dedicated Bereavement Support inbox at bereavementsupport@caninepartners.org.uk and we will do everything we can to help.

Social media guidance and telling others

Social media is often a big part of our everyday lives and you may choose to share the news of your dog's passing on your social media platforms. However, we do ask that you wait until seven days after you have notified Canine Partners to do this, so we can ensure that we have had the opportunity to privately inform all of the people who have been a part of your dog's life through the organisation. This will include puppy parents, fosterers or Advanced Trainers and the reason we ask this is so these people can be told directly, rather than finding out the sad news via social media. Your Canine Partners contact will stay in touch with you and let you know when these parties have been informed.

Social media platforms generally reach a wide audience and you may want to share the news of your dog's passing to your friends and family via your social media, to mitigate the need to notify people individually. However, this is a very personal choice and there is no right or wrong way to share this news. You may want to stay off social media altogether. Some things to consider:

- You may wish to post a photo and a brief notification to inform others of your dog's passing
- You can always turn off comments on your post if you do not wish to have notifications coming through to your phone, tablet or computer
- You may want to have a complete break from social media for a little while - this is absolutely fine, you do not 'owe' anyone an explanation
- It is completely understandable to ask that friends or family do not contact you via social media for the foreseeable future, to give you time to process and grieve privately
- Equally, if you find it better to keep in close contact with others then you may want to post regular memories of your dog on your social media platforms or ask that others share their favourite memory of your dog in a comment thread
- As mentioned before - social media is very personal. It is totally up to you if you want to utilise it to notify others of your dog's passing and share memories of your dog, or if you would rather keep things more private. Everyone is different and it is important to find a way that helps you to process the passing of your dog.

Preparing for everyday triggers and conversations

After a bereavement, there are often many things that crop up in everyday life that can remind us of our loved ones and can invoke happy, but also at times upsetting, memories. Initially this may be conversations with others, certain items or places and in time, it may be anniversaries.

It is important to acknowledge that there will be occasions when you are up against a trigger or a conversation that you weren't expecting. Being prepared mentally for this is an important thing to consider. Emotional reactions to triggers and some conversations are normal. Acknowledging that you're likely to experience these reactions can help you understand them and even turn them into opportunities for healing. Here are some tips:

- You may wish to notify family and friends of your dog's passing in a round robin text message or social media post, to avoid having to discuss it each time you speak to someone.
- Connect with others and consider asking a relative or friend to accompany you to your usual excursions such as shopping or clubs, if you feel like you need moral support. If you work, notify your colleagues of how you are feeling and be open about any support you might need at work.
- Stay connected to your usual support systems, such as friends/family, spiritual leaders and social groups. Consider joining a bereavement support group.
- Be prepared for scenarios or conversations such as well-meaning people asking where your dog is. I.e. visiting the local shop without your dog for the first time may result in a staff member asking where your dog is. You can be prepared with a statement such as "Unfortunately, my dog has recently passed away. I appreciate you asking after them but I am not in a position to be able to talk about this right now. Thank you for understanding".

- Keep a journal of what your triggers are – be that a smell, a place, a specific date etc. Self-reflection through journaling has been found to be very therapeutic for the grief recovery process. You can better learn about those triggers to find a solution so that you can gain some control over them as you progress through your grief recovery in the future.
- Once you recognise what your triggers are, you can better prepare for them and create some distractions where possible.

Memorial ideas

There are many special and creative options available for memorialising a dog that has passed away. You might want to consider a personal option, a memorial at our training centre, or a combination of both.

Jewellery

There are many options for memorial jewellery on the market these days. Some of your dog's fur or a small amount of their ashes can be included in a bespoke piece of jewellery.

Paw prints

A paw print of your dog can be used to create a memorial item in various mediums. If you have experienced a sudden loss of your dog, this is something that you might not have thought to do previously, but if you speak to your vet or the pet crematoria, they may be able to offer advice on taking a paw print.

Plant a tree or rose bush

A tree to remember your canine partner could be planted in your garden or possibly even at a place that you both used to visit.

An online search might help to identify whether there is a rose bush or other flowering plant that shares the same name as your canine partner:

We may be able to plant a tree or rosebush at our Midlands Training Centre. If this is something you would like to enquire about, please email bereavementsupport@caninepartners.org.uk for advice. We recommend a bird cherry or alder buckthorn trees. These are both small native trees and are great for bees and birds. We recommend also purchasing some fencing to put around the tree to keep it protected. Please note, the fencing will need to be purchased and provided by yourself.



Memory box

Memory boxes are lovely keepsakes that you revisit time after time and when you wish. This also might be good a good activity to do with children to help them with the loss of your dog and to keep treasured items in a safe place. You could include your dog's tag, a favourite toy and collar, some fur, a paw print and favourite photos of your dog. Children could be encouraged to draw a picture of the dog or older children could write a letter to be included in the box.

A plain wooden box could be purchased and decorated on the outside by yourself, but there are also engraved wooden boxes available to purchase.

Canine Partners Training Centre memorial options

You may wish to commemorate your dog by placing a memorial at our training centre. As well as planting a tree or rose bush (mentioned above), there is the possibility an engraved plaque or bench can be placed at our Midlands Training Centre. We cannot purchase plaques or benches from charity funds, or purchase them on your behalf, but you can place the order for delivery to the Midlands Training Centre.

We do already have some memorial benches at our Midlands Training centre and for this reason we like to keep the look and feel of the benches similar to those that are already on site. If you would like to look into this option, please make contact with us first so we can discuss it with you.

You are welcome to come and visit your plaque, bench or tree once it has been placed, but please do contact the centre before travelling to ensure we can accommodate your visit on your chosen day.

If you are interested in a memorial item at the Midlands Training Centre, please email us at bereavementsupport@caninepartners.org.uk for initial discussions.

Other ideas to consider include:

- Wind Chimes
- Personalised hanging ornaments, Christmas tree ornaments and wooden hearts
- Paperweights
- A Memorial Frame
- Book of Remembrance - You can download and print pages and personalise by adding a message, verse, drawing or photograph of your choice
- Name a star

The first year

The first year following a loss can be particularly challenging. This could be things from everyday tasks, actions or routes that remind you of your dog to more significant anniversaries, such as birthdays, 'gotcha-days' and holidays. Many partners find the process of applying for a successor dog can be particularly triggering. It's important to be prepared for these emotions and to acknowledge and recognise them, however try not to 'overthink' or prepare how you 'might' feel.

Think about how you managed your grief in the early days of your loss and be kind to yourself. Some people find it useful to have a specific way of memorialising their dog on specific dates; other people prefer to see how they feel on the day. It might be that you would like to 'keep yourself busy' and do something you wouldn't normally do, living in the moment, just as your dog would've done. As with all grief, there is no right or wrong way, it is whatever feels right for you.



Successors

The loss of a canine partner may not just affect you emotionally. As you know, having a canine partner can have a huge impact on you physically. You may need and want another canine partner. However, it may seem a difficult decision to make for a variety of reasons. It is important to know you are not replacing your late canine partner – they can never be replaced.

Key points to remember:

- **You don't need to rush your decision** – to be classed as a 'successor' for application process you have up until two years to apply from your late canine partner being out of your home or a canine partner being retired out of the home.
- **Do not compare yourself to other partnerships** – everyone grieves differently, has different needs and lifestyles
- **Your new canine partner is not your previous canine partner.** Try not to compare – they will be completely different, have different personalities and different strengths.
- **Training** – you will be required to complete a training course with your new canine partner. Remember, your partnership will be new, training has evolved, you will differ from when you applied for your first canine partner. We are here to support you
- **Focus on the positives.** You know us and we know you much better. Your Canine Partners Representative will be working closely with you, the Applications Department and Advanced Training Team to find the best-suited dog to you now. Here you can access the eligibility criteria appendix. Please see the flow chart to show how the application process works.



For further external support please visit our bereavement page on the website caninepartners.org.uk/bereavementsupport or for further internal support please contact a member of the team on bereavementsupport@caninepartners.org.uk

