



Ottawa Humane Society Pet Loss Support Group Guidelines

For a group to be effective, a safe environment must be in place. When you join our group, you are agreeing to uphold our confidentiality rules. These guidelines will add to the success of the group.

The OHS Pet Loss Support Group aims to provide the following to participants:

- A safe, confidential, and caring environment where group members can share their experiences of loss and grief with others who are having similar experiences.
- A place to remember and honour the life of the animal who has died.
- An opportunity to learn additional ways of coping with the loss of a beloved pet.

If you are experiencing ongoing mental health distress, we encourage you to reach out to a mental health professional to seek individual help.

Example Session Structure **may differ depending on individual facilitator*

Greeting and overview of group guidelines/housekeeping/mindfulness exercise – 10 minutes

Sharing of stories – 70 minutes

Closing – mindfulness exercise and pet loss quotation/closing housekeeping – 10 minutes

Group Information

- Sessions are virtual and run through Zoom.
- Our group facilitator (and assistants) will guide the session.
- In order to reduce background noise, we request that participants remain muted until it is their time to share.
- Participants take turns speaking, sharing their stories and challenges with pet loss. We ask that only one person speak at a time.
- We welcome participants who prefer to listen instead of speak. Sharing is optional, not required.
- Communication between volunteer facilitators and participants is limited to support group sessions.
- For any technical support issues with Zoom, please contact Zoom directly.
- We recommend logging in to the Zoom meeting 5 minutes before the start of the session.
- **Participants are not able to join the session more than 15-minutes past the start time.**
- Participants are welcomed to upload a picture of their pet during registration – this picture may be shared at the end of the session by the facilitator.



Confidentiality

Being in an environment where open sharing takes place can be stressful and may feel unsafe. For all members to feel safe in sharing their experiences, all members agree to make a commitment to not discuss anything, including other's reactions, with anyone outside of the group.

As a member of this group, you may discuss your own emotions and reactions regarding the group process inside and outside of the group, but not discuss information about or shared by others. What others say in the group needs to remain confidential in the group.

Legal obligations and limitations of confidentiality include:

- If you sign a release of information for the exchange of information with a third party
- If there is a suspicion of child or elder abuse
- If you threaten serious harm to yourself or someone else (this may be reported to the police or appropriate authorities)
- If a subpoena is presented for legal proceedings.

Rules

- I agree will be on a "first name basis only" in the group to help ensure confidentiality.
- I agree to maintain confidentiality about group members and not to disclose any identifying information regarding another group member to anyone outside of the group that may help identify that member(s).
- I agree to maintain confidentiality about any comments/discussions that occur within the group.
- I agree to be on time and exit the group quietly if I need to leave before the end of the session.
- I agree to silence my cell phone notifications (exceptions for personal reasons are understood).
- I agree not to make any recordings, video, audio or transcripts, during the group.
- I agree to respects other's thoughts, feelings, and ideas.
- I understand that abusive language or behaviour towards participants, facilitators or volunteers will not be tolerated.
- I agree that if I am in breach of this agreement, I will leave the group if asked.

I have read this entire document and have asked questions for clarity about the items that I do not understand. I understand and agree to abide by this agreement.