



# Arms of Love Support Journal

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*Lap of Love* 

Pet Loss Support Group



Dear Friend,

If you're reading this, then you clearly have a shattered heart. Maybe it's from a recent loss, or maybe it's from a loss that has had some time pass. Whatever it is, it's an honor to walk this healing journey with you.

We have made it our life mission to be a partner to pet lovers just like you, to assist in creating an experience in the final walk with a precious love. To heal. To share. To show up unabashedly, to give you permission to mourn a lost love. To honor a life shared, and to share in the messiness of grief together.

We are here with you as fellow pet lovers, as people who have been on this path before, and as a group to provide you the support and care you need. We're here to do this together, and we're here to give you permission to have your solitude in the journey of this "Arms of Love Support Journal."

Warmly,

Dr. Dani McVety

*Founder, Lap of Love Veterinary Hospice*



Dear Pet Lover,

I'd welcome you here, but I can assure you this is probably the last place you want to be. This place that serves as a reminder a bright and shining light has been taken away from your world. For that, please know how sorry I am.

Please know you have a very caring group of people to walk with you in your journey. Not to tell you how you should feel, or how you shouldn't feel, but to walk with you and allow you the space to take this grief journey in the way that's right for YOU.

Some days are going to be minute by minute. Others you'll find you can go hour by hour. You'll face your year of firsts: the first time you won't have that special spirit by your side. However, wherever you are and whatever your emotions are during all of this, please know that's exactly where you should be.

Be kind to yourself. Allow yourself the time to do your mourning work. And, always know where you are is exactly where you should be.

A Companion In Your Journey,  
Coleen Ellis  
*Founder, Two Hearts Pet Loss Center*



**\*Grief:** the word “grief” is the simple shorthand we use for what is actually a highly complex mixture of thoughts and feelings. Grief is everything we think and feel inside after someone we love dies or leaves or something we are attached to goes away. In other words, grief is the instinctive human response to loss.

Grief is natural and necessary. Our culture tends to deny, diminish, and judge the pain of grief, but the truth is that grief is not something to be afraid of, hide from, or think of as “bad” or “weak.” It is not an illness or mental-health problem. If you are grieving, rest assured that what you are experiencing is not only normal, it is the very thing that will help you heal.

**\*Mourning:** mourning means to express your grief outside of yourself. Mourning is crying, talking to other people about the death, sharing stories, putting together photo albums, journaling, and other actions. Mourning is essential because it's through mourning that you begin to heal.

**Sympathy:** feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.

**Empathy:** the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

**\*Companion:** when broken down into its original Latin roots, means com for “with” and pan for “bread.” Someone you would share a meal with. A friend. An equal.

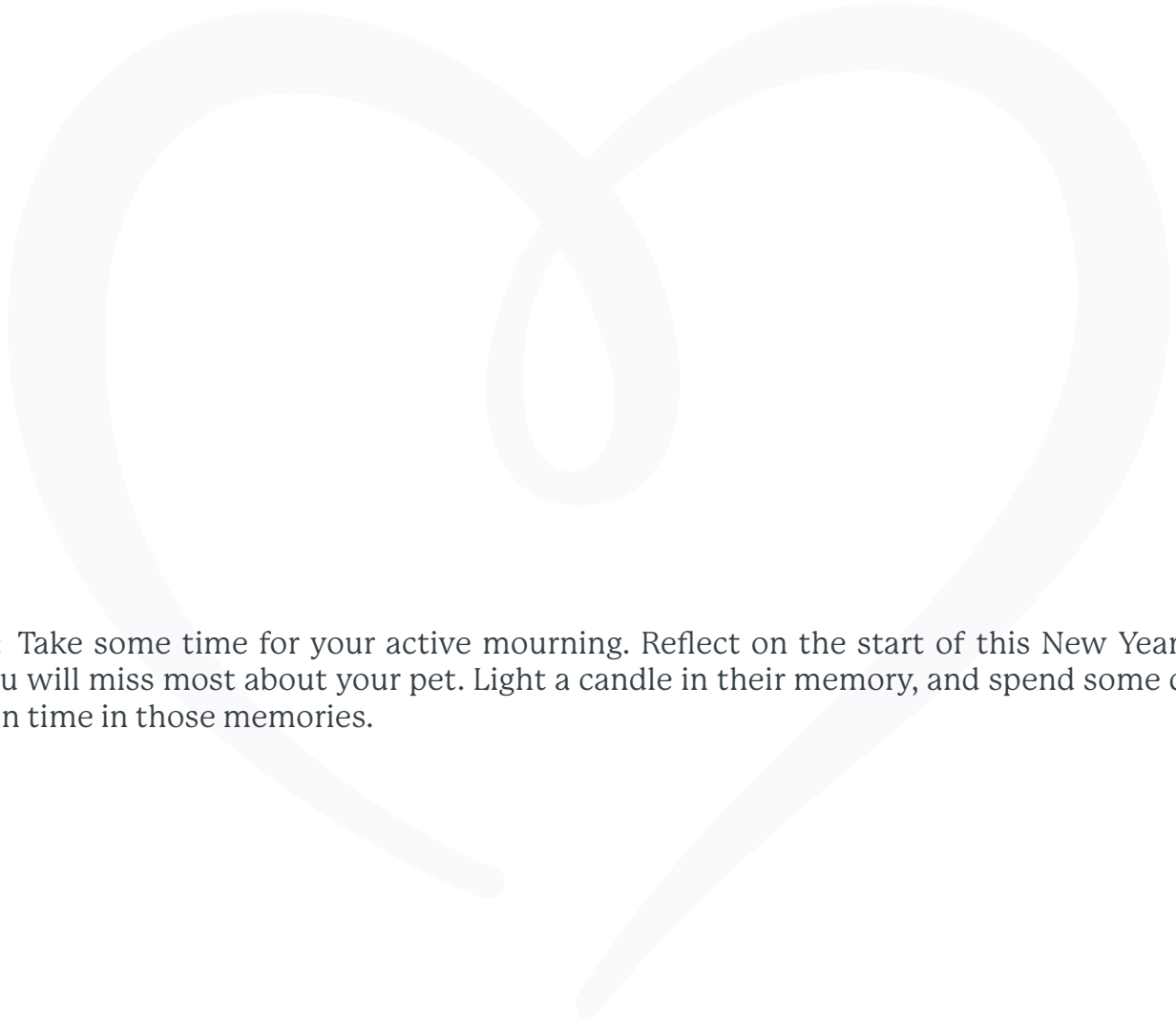
\*CenterForLoss.com

# January

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It's the New Year. The start of a new year without your pet, and another harsh stark reminder of reality. Take this time with the start of the New Year to continue to keep your pet a part of your life, now in memories.

**Week 1:** Animals always have an amazing aspect of teaching very organic lessons. What were the lessons you learned from your beloved pet that you will take into this calendar's new start?



**Week 2:** Take some time for your active mourning. Reflect on the start of this New Year and what you will miss most about your pet. Light a candle in their memory, and spend some quiet reflection time in those memories.

# January

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**Week 3:** Take a look in your phone, or in those old photo storage boxes. What were your favorite photos of your pet? Why did you pick those? If you have the strength, journal what you remember from those photos, what you were feeling when those were taken, and being mindful of what you're feeling now.



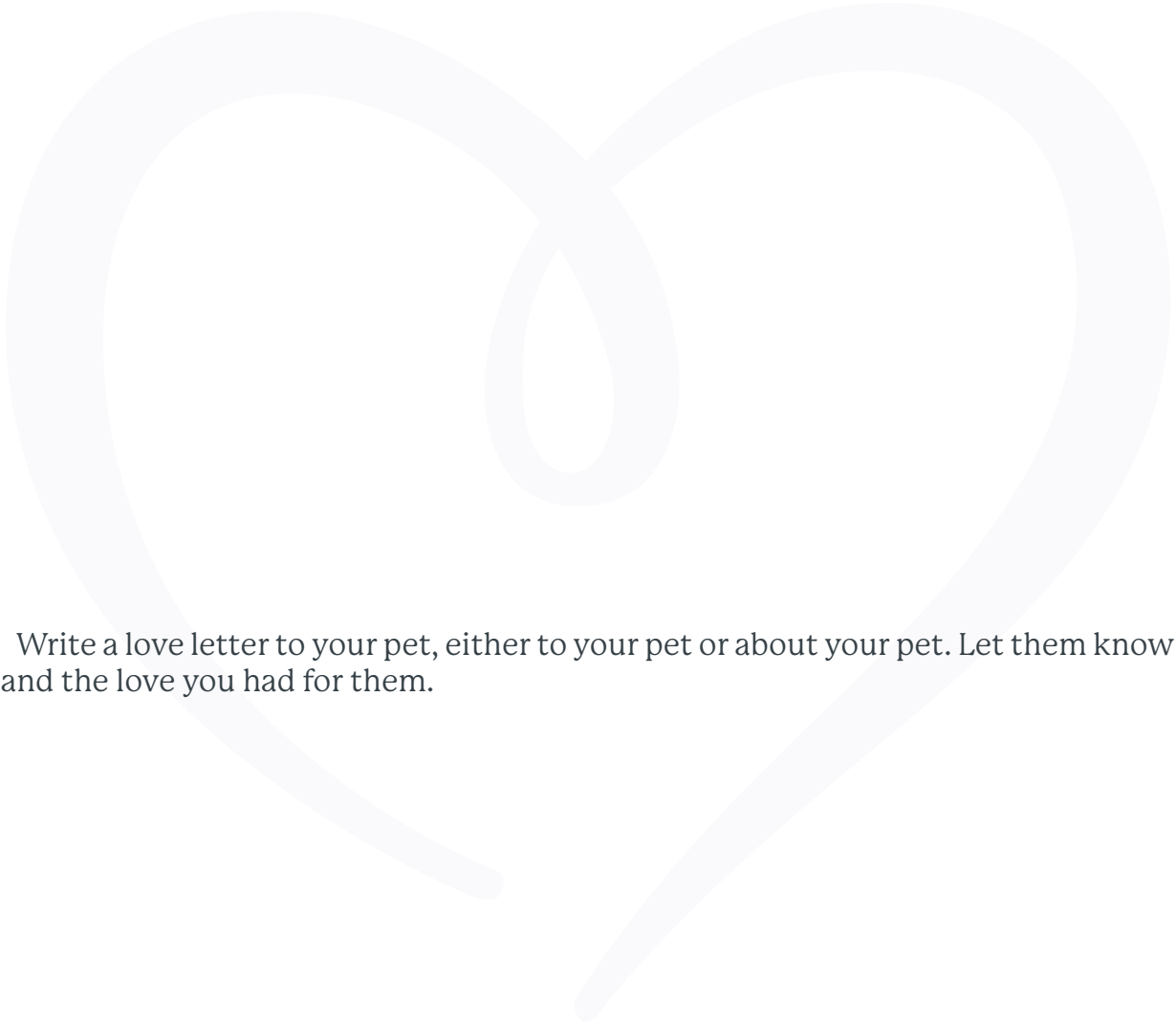
**Week 4:** What do you remember about the day your pet became a part of the family?

# February

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February is the Month of Love. Reflect on the love you shared with your pet with these weekly activities.

**Week 1:** When you think of the word “Love,” what can you create with that word in honor of your pet? A poem, a letter, a song, but it’s all about your pet.



**Week 2:** Write a love letter to your pet, either to your pet or about your pet. Let them know how you feel and the love you had for them.

# February

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**Week 3:** Take some quiet time to read the poem below and reflect on the love that you shared with your pet.

## Our Best Friends

From the moment that I saw you,  
Somehow I knew you needed me.  
Someone who'd love and protect you,  
To show you what it meant to be free.

And as the years went by,  
I knew I could always depend on you.  
To share in the times that were happy,  
Or be at my side if the day had been blue.

I can remember so many quiet evenings,  
As I'd watch you curl up on your bed.  
I had always thought I was your teacher,  
But, it seems the lesson was mine instead.

I learned so many things from someone  
who never spoke a word.  
I learned to listen with my heart,  
I learned that love is felt, not heard.

When the day came that you had to leave me,  
I thought my heart would break in two.  
But I would've never learned what  
unconditional love meant,  
If it weren't for the friend I found in you.

— *Lorrie Neal, 2003*

**Week 4:** The world goes “red” during the month of February. What color(s) do you associate with your pet? Why that color?



# March

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The luck of the Irish is symbolic with March and St. Patrick's Day. For this month, let's focus on how lucky we are to share a relationship with our beloved pet, and knowing how lucky they were to share time with us.

**Week 1:** What would your pet say as to why they were lucky to have you in their life?

**Week 2:** What does it mean to you to be a pet parent?

**Week 3:** Take some time... if you could only say 5 words as to why you were lucky to have your pet in your life, what would those 5 words be?

**Week 4:** Take some time this week to spoil yourself in a small way in honor of your pet. For instance, treat yourself to a coffee and place the name under your pet's name.

# April

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April is the beginning of spring and rebirth.

**Week 1:** As you anticipate those ways you would like to have the freshness of spring with you, even as you honor the loss of your beloved pet, what are those emotions that you would like to have released to allow you to begin this rebirth? There are no wrong answers, just an exhaustive list of your true emotions and feelings in your grief journey.

**Week 2:** Take the emotions from the previous week and release them. Burn them in a fireplace, set them free with a balloon...

**Week 3:** For this spring time week, do a bubble release in honor of your pet. Read the following:

Today I symbolically release your beautiful spirit, to a place where there's no sadness only happiness, asking you to watch over me in a much larger way.

Today I symbolically release your beautiful body, to be in a place where all is well. To run free, to be as you were, in a place where there's no age and no sickness.

Today while I symbolically release you and your spirit, know I will always hold your love and your presence close to my heart. I will cherish the time we had. I promise to remember the lessons you taught me, the memories we shared, and to honor your presence as the gift it was.

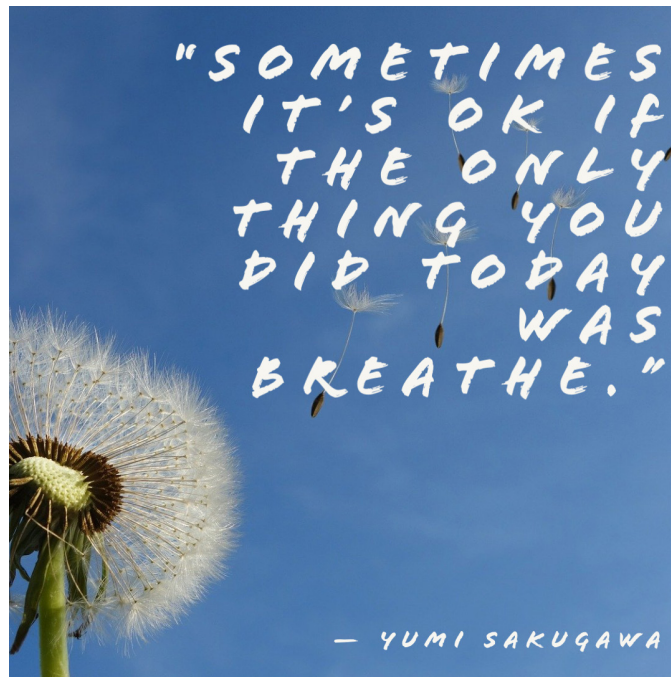
Today I give my heart permission to grieve and to mourn for you. This chapter in life we shared will always have your name on it, held tightly as a part of my life story.

And, today, I thank you. I thank you for your unconditional love, your forgiveness, and the memories. As with these bubbles that we symbolically release, life is fragile. These bubbles are not meant to be held forever but represent the same beautiful yet brief time we too shared together. Rest in peace, my beloved, as I symbolically honor you in this bubble release.

# April

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**Week 4:** Be kind to yourself. Dose your grief, and know that just breathing can be the work you do this week. Be mindful of where you are, and when you feel your shoulders tighten, you find your mouth is clenched, you find you're holding your breath and you didn't even realize it. Breathe. That's the mourning work for this week. Just breathe.



# May

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Memorial Day falls in the month of May...

**Week 1:** Memorial Day finds loved ones remembering a life shared with a deceased special being. What memories are the most fresh for you and your pet?

**Week 2:** “Animals are such agreeable friends. They ask no questions, they pass no criticisms.” – George Eliot. What qualities made your pet such a great friend?

**Week 3:** With Memorial Day in the month of May, many people will have family rituals to honor those loved ones who have died. Whether it's visiting your pet's gravesite or creating a special tribute with photos, your pet's urn, or flowers, spend some time in solitude to honor your pet, quietly and reverently. Light a candle and give yourself permission to fully embrace whatever feelings come over you.

**Week 4:** On Memorial Day, light a candle to honor your pet. Have a moment of silence in honor of your pet and read the following:

Today, I light this candle for you. To remember the light you were to me.

Today, I light this candle for me. To shed some light into my darkness with you not being here.

Today, I light this candle and take the time to truly focus on the flickering flame. The mystery of all the flame represents from warmth to the light it sheds, so much like the life we shared together.

Today, I light this candle for us. As a reminder of our time together.

Today, I light this candle and to take the time to remember. To cry, and to remind myself of how lovely our time was together and how much I miss you.

Today, I light this candle and vow that every time I see a light this beautiful, I will remember you and all you were to me.

# June

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**Week 1:** The gemstone representative of the month of June is a pearl. What were the pearls of wisdom that you learned from your pet?

**Week 2:** Reflect on this...

Today, what do you remember about the time you had with your special pet?



I WILL ALWAYS KEEP  
TALKING ABOUT YOU.

YOU DESERVE TO BE  
REMEMBERED.

# June

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**Week 3:** A bit of a whimsical question: What job or career would your pet have done in their life? And, why?

**Week 4:** Life with a pet is about routine, from feeding to play time to breaks outside. When a beloved pet dies, the interruption in this routine is a stark reminder that they are no longer in our home. What were the routines that you miss the most with your pet?

# July

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July is the month that we celebrate our freedom.

**Week 1:** Are you ready to celebrate the life you shared with your pet? So many times in the early, raw days of grief, don't feel you have to rush it when you're told "you should celebrate the life you shared." When the grief is raw, take your time. Grieve, mourn, and when you're ready, celebrate. Where are you at right now with this word "celebrate?"

**Week 2:** Be kind to yourself. For a bit this week, every time you think you shouldn't be feeling the way you are, or that you should be in a different place with your grief journey, stop and think what you would tell a friend who is in your same position? Would you be kind, and caring? Would you extend a listening ear? Be kind to yourself. Treat yourself like your own best friend.

Where are you right now in your self-care? Be honest, and write that here. What will you be mindful of in the negative self-speak and do differently this week?



# July

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**Week 3:** Fireworks. Many pets are afraid of the unexpected thunder of fireworks. How did you help your pet when they were faced with their fears, whatever those fears were?

**Week 4:** Summer time – what were your favorite summer time activities that you would do with your pet? Take some time this week to do one of those activities with a family member or member of your support system.



# August

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What if your pet really was a person?

**Week 1:** If your pet could talk for just 1 day, what would you have asked them? What do you think their voice would sound like?



**Week 2:** What was their favorite music, or musician? Did they have a favorite TV show?

**Week 3:** What kind of car would your pet say they would drive?

**Week 4:** If your pet could live anywhere in the world, where would they say they lived?

# September

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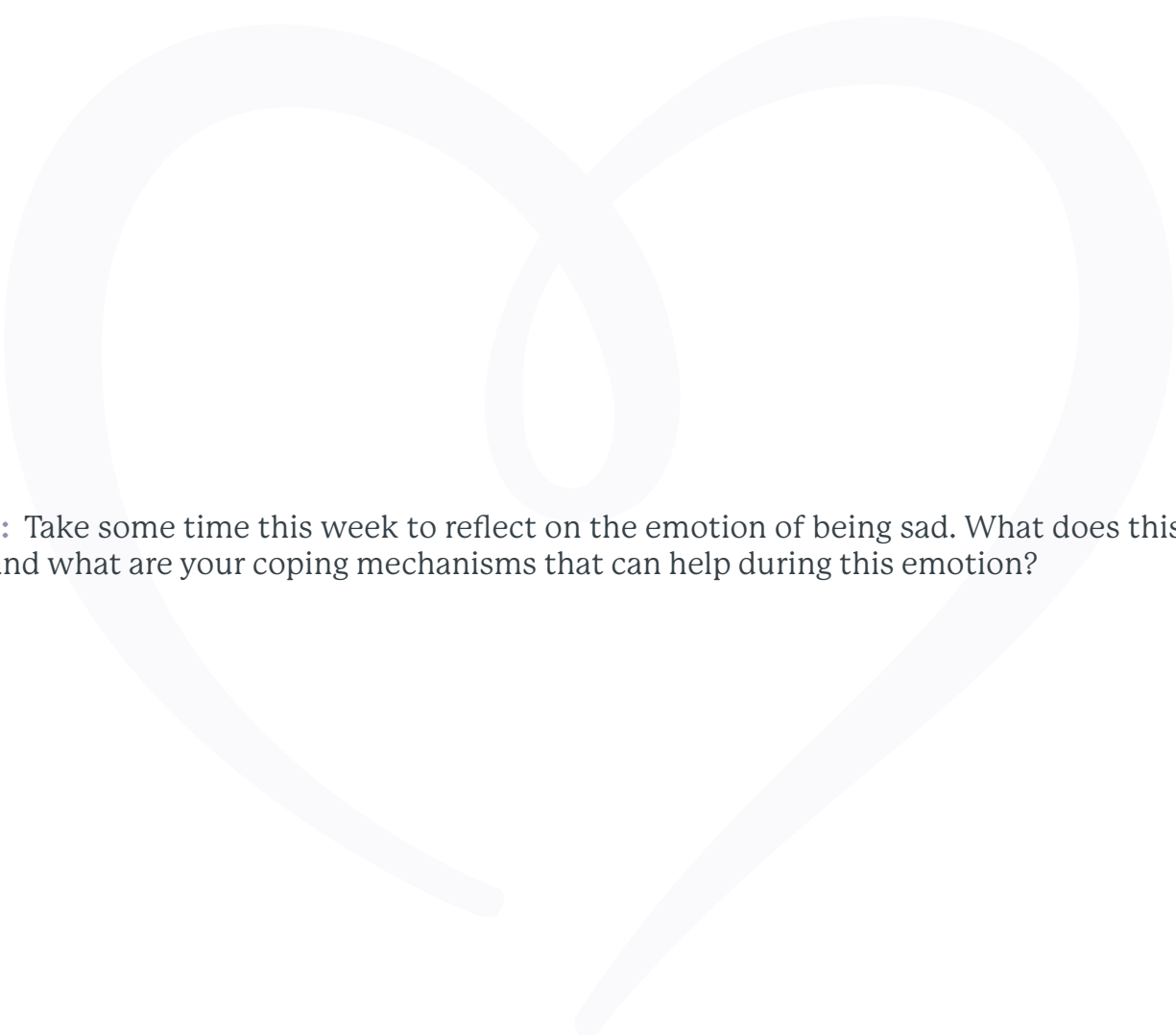
**Week 1:** National Pet Memorial Day is next week. Take some time this week to prepare and plan a service or tribute. What will the service look like?

**Week 2:** Sunday of this week is National Pet Memorial Day. How will you carry out a tribute to your pet? How could you pay tribute to all of the pets lost this year? Put ceremony ideas in here.

# September

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**Week 3:** Insert a reading here, with reflection.



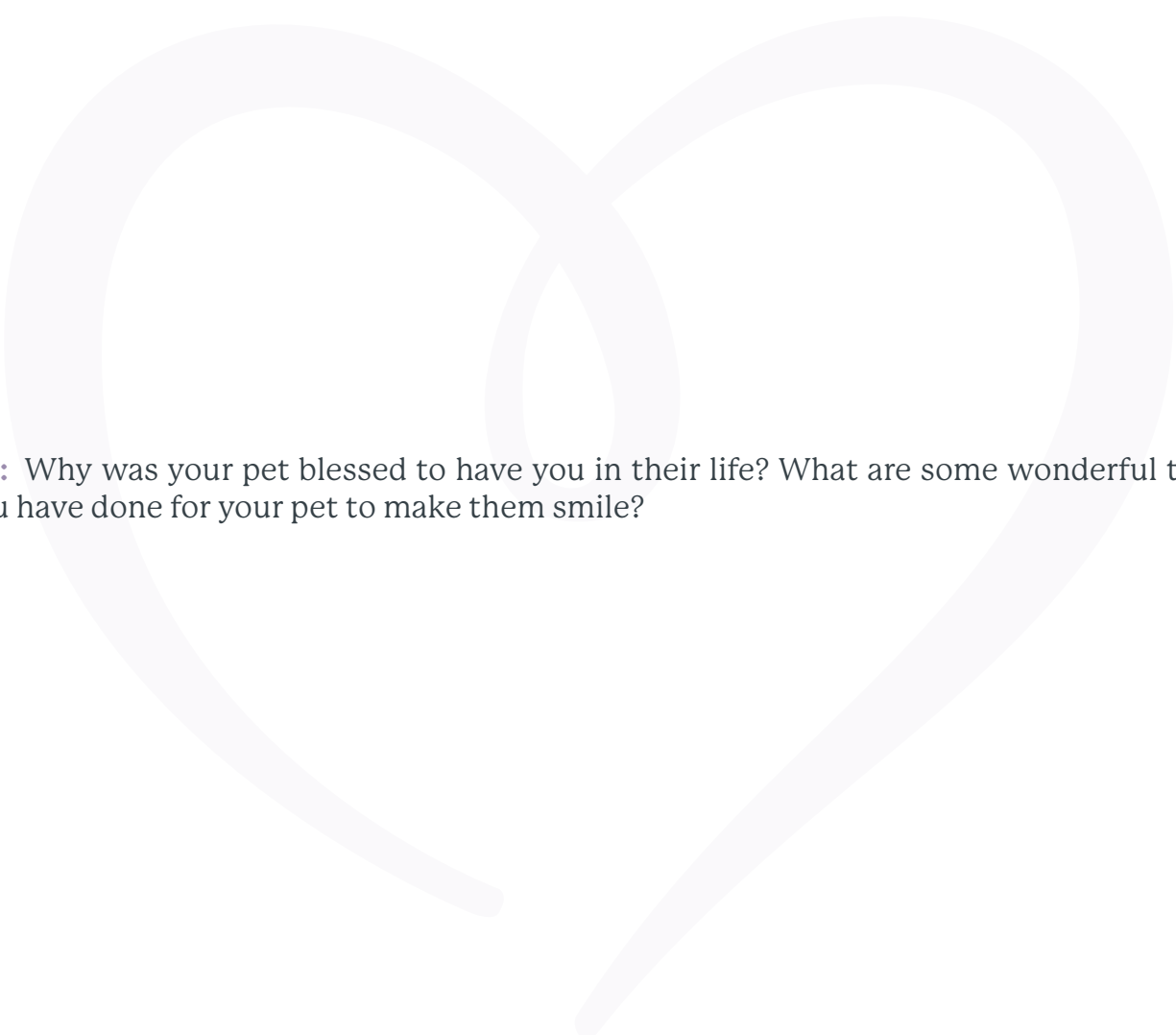
**Week 4:** Take some time this week to reflect on the emotion of being sad. What does this mean to you and what are your coping mechanisms that can help during this emotion?

# October

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October is the month where many Pet Blessings happen across the country as many religious affiliations celebrate St. Francis, the patron saint of pets.

**Week 1:** Insert the pet blessing here:

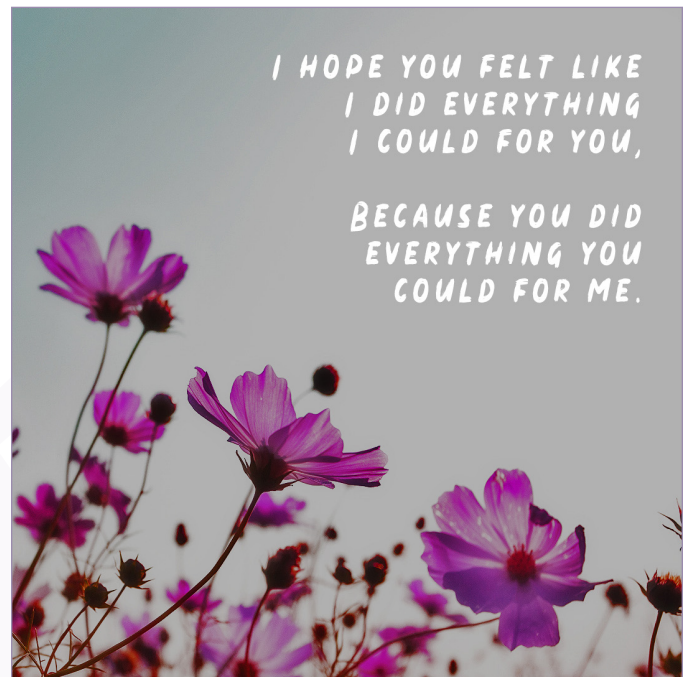


**Week 2:** Why was your pet blessed to have you in their life? What are some wonderful things that you have done for your pet to make them smile?

# October

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**Week 3:** Guilt is such a large part of grief. Where are you with that emotion? What are you doing to work through that for yourself?



**Week 4:** This week is Halloween. What was a Halloween memory you have of your pet? Costumes? Trick or treaters? A favorite candy? What?

# November: *The month of Thanksgiving*

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For each week of November, please do an event that honors your pet and shows your thankfulness for the time you had together.

**Week 1:** Create a holiday piece in honor of your pet to put in a special place, allowing your pet to still be with you during this time.

**Week 2:** Be mindful of where you are in the holidays without your special pet. What intentional mourning work can you do this week to honor that time and life you shared?



IT'S TRUE —  
WHEN I COME TO YOU IN DREAMS,  
I'M REALLY THERE.

WHEN YOU SEE ME OUT OF  
THE CORNER OF YOUR EYE,  
I'M REALLY THERE.

WHEN YOU "SENSE" ME  
AROUND THE PLACE,  
I'M REALLY THERE.

I HAVEN'T LEFT YOU,  
NOT REALLY.

MY SPIRIT IS  
EVERYWHERE,

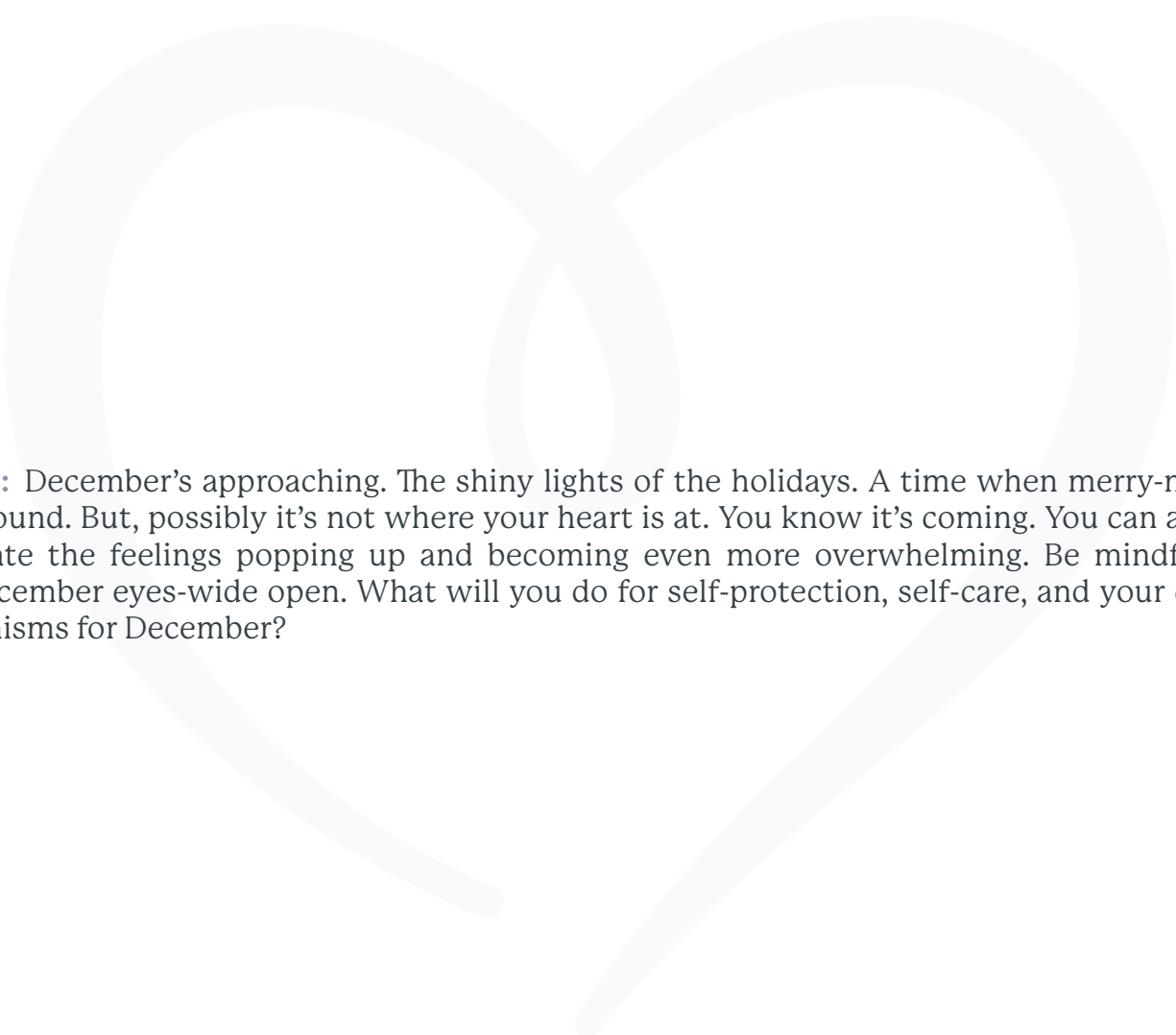
BUT ESPECIALLY  
WITH YOU.



# November: *The month of Thanksgiving*

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**Week 3:** Think about your holiday traditions and how your pet made them special. Can you remember all of the Decembers you were together, and a memory for each of those years? Do you have photos from every year?



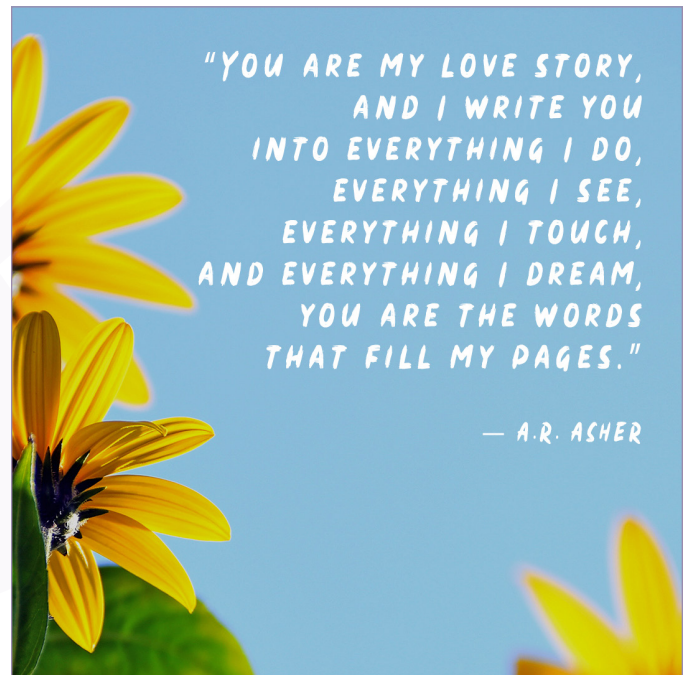
**Week 4:** December's approaching. The shiny lights of the holidays. A time when merry-making is all around. But, possibly it's not where your heart is at. You know it's coming. You can already anticipate the feelings popping up and becoming even more overwhelming. Be mindful. Go into December eyes-wide open. What will you do for self-protection, self-care, and your coping mechanisms for December?

# December

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This year is about to be over. Reflect on this year, and do some intentional mourning work as the year is about to end.

**Week 1:** While our pets represent one of the most amazing gifts bestowed upon us, it's more than that. It's truly their presence that's the gift. When you close your eyes and remember their presence, how did they sound laying next to you? At night? Any time throughout the day?



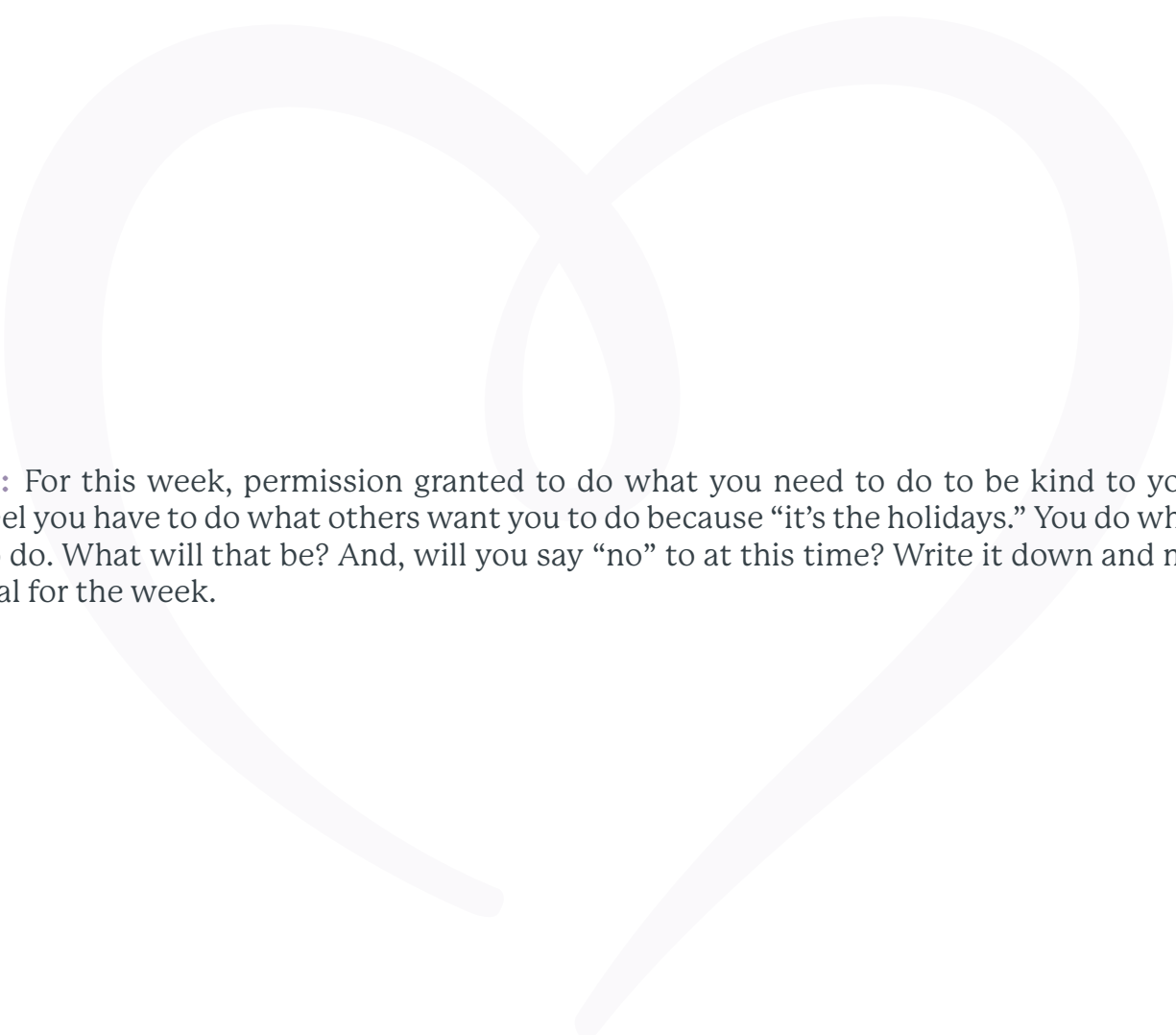
**Week 2:** If you were to write a book about your pet, a love story, what would the title be? Are you up to writing a chapter of that book here? Share your story.



# December

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**Week 3:** What will you do this week to make your precious pet still be a part of your holidays? And, if you do not have the strength to do anything, permission to have that as an answer too.



**Week 4:** For this week, permission granted to do what you need to do to be kind to yourself. Don't feel you have to do what others want you to do because "it's the holidays." You do what you want to do. What will that be? And, will you say "no" to at this time? Write it down and make it your goal for the week.