



How to Help a Grieving Cat

BY RITA REIMERS

I still remember the day like it was yesterday. I came home from my morning kitty visits to find that my sweet cat, Sadie, had passed away. She had a heart condition, so we knew the day would come eventually, but we were not at all prepared for it to happen as suddenly as it did.

I also was not prepared for her buddy, Trouble's, response to the passing. Looking all around my house for the other cats to make sure everyone was alright, I couldn't find Trouble anywhere. I called and called, finally opening my sliding closet door to find Trouble cowering in the corner, visibly shaking. To say that cats do not have feelings is such a fallacy; Trouble was scared and started crying the moment he saw me.

Sadie had come home to live with us at the tender age of 6 weeks, and

Trouble immediately took her under his wing. They were always together over the nearly seven years Sadie was with us, and my guess is that when Sadie had her heart attack, he must have been right there and witnessed it all.

He eventually "recovered" but he was never the same cat after that. He was no longer our alpha boy; he was now very quiet and subdued. I'm sure that when he passed six years later, it was with a still-broken heart over the loss of his pal. We both grieved her loss

very hard. (I wrote a book about losing her called *Sadie's Heart*, a Kindle download on Amazon.com).

I have also experienced a cat's grief over the loss of her chosen human and her home. When I adopted 12-year-old Pickles from the Van Nuys, California, shelter, she was going through grief over the loss of her home and her human who had passed away.

She settled into our home nicely, and we became pals, but there was a sadness to Pickles. She never did befriend the other cats, preferring to be solitary or to sit quietly by my side. I know she came to love me, but I was not her human. She was with us for four years before she passed, joining her human on the other side.

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Steps to take

Cats do grieve the loss of their cat friends, their humans and sometimes the loss of their homes, too. You may see your cat hiding more, being more withdrawn or acting depressed. Sometimes, particularly with the loss of her human, your cat may decide to stick to you like glue, afraid that you may disappear as well.

While cats don't like change in general, losing a fellow cat, their favorite human or their home is a change they often don't adapt to without some support. But we can help get them through the process by following these guidelines.

❖ **Keep her routine the same as usual.** Too many changes in the household, on top of the grief, can cause stress, fear and even illness to your already anxious cat.

❖ **Watch her actions closely.** If your cat is avoiding places that may smell like the kitty or person they are grieving for, clean those places, or remove any items that may keep her feeling the loss. On the other hand, if she seems

to be seeking comfort in those places, there is no hurry to clean up those items.

❖ **Spend quality time with her.**

Sit by her, talk in soothing tones, pet or brush her, and reassure her that you are not going anywhere and neither is she. Offer treats, toys and other distractions to help her come out of mourning quicker.

❖ **Try calming remedies.** Adding herbal calming remedies to your cat's diet may help ease her feelings of sorrow and loss.

❖ **Check your emotions.** Cats are very sensitive creatures, and they pick up on our emotions. If you are also grieving deeply, your cat is likely to grieve the loss harder.

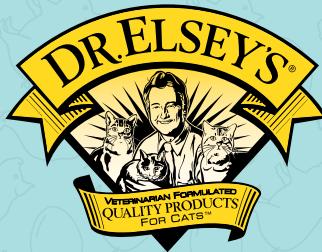
❖ **Seek veterinary help.** If your cat seems to be stuck in grief for a long time, and/or is acting sick or refusing to eat, take her to your vet at once to prevent serious illness. Your vet can also prescribe medications to ease your cat's feelings of sadness.

If your cat is grieving the loss of a cat friend, you may be tempted to bring home a new buddy for her. Eventually, this may be a good idea, but in the short run it's best to wait until your cat is back to herself before adding a new feline friend to the family. If she is grieving the loss of a human, be consistent in the rest of the household and with your attention to her. If you are taking in a pet who is in grief over her human, give her a calm, stable environment and plenty of time to adjust to her new life. In either case, love, patience and time will help your cat get back to the business of being a happy cat. 🐾



Rita Reimers' Cat Behavior Coaching has helped many cat owners better understand their feline friends. Visit RitaReimers.com to read her cat behavior blog or to book a cat behavior coaching session. Rita is also the CEO/owner of JustForCatsPetSitting.com. Connect with her on Facebook and on Twitter at [@thecatanalyst](https://twitter.com/thecatanalyst).

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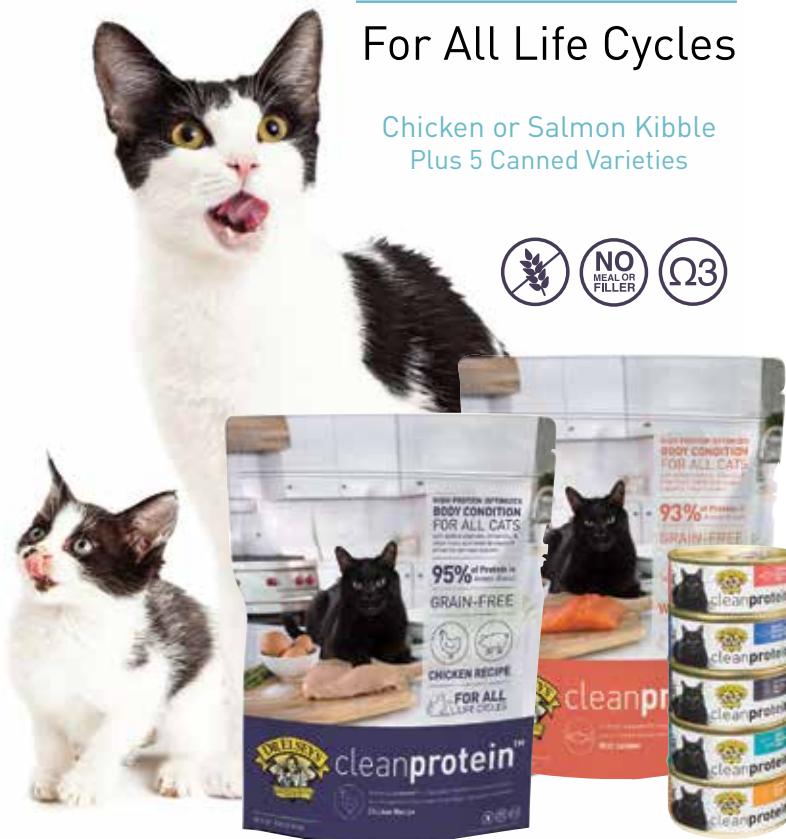
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