

Is It Too Early to Bring Home a New Pet?

After a beloved pet dies, many people react in one of three ways:

- 1 **Vowing** to never again own another pet.
- 2 **Deciding** to adopt a new pet as soon as possible.
- 3 **Resigning** to a period of grieving before adopting a new pet, but then feeling guilty. In this case, you feel the new bond is a betrayal of the love you had for your lost animal.



Vowing not to own another animal is usually not absolute. Instead, it reflects the deep grief you feel about your pet's death. Acknowledging and validating these feelings can assist you in beginning the healing process.

Immediately adopting a new pet after the loss of a companion animal is a way you may try to avoid the sadness and loneliness of grief. Be careful; do not adopt a new pet too soon. And remember: Animals are as individual as people, with different personalities, habits, and needs. Have you thought about what it might be like to have a kitten now after living with an older cat for so many years?

When you feel you might be ready to accept a new pet into your life, you may feel disloyal—even guilty—about loving a new pet. You should know that love is unlimited and as humans we are capable of loving more than one being at the same time, both living and dead. This needs to be emphasized to children especially. They should be told they can choose to love a new companion without being disloyal to the one they have lost.

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Take Time to Think

Reflect on what you think will help you through the grief process. Don't be afraid to ask for help from a solid support system. After this process is complete and you truly feel ready, you can begin exploring the idea of adopting a new pet.

You might find that activities such as pet-sitting for a friend or relative or volunteering at a local animal shelter will help you know when you are ready to own a new pet. Resist the urge to try to "replace" a companion animal with a look-alike; whether your new pet ultimately turns out to be its spitting image—or a different species, take time to find the pet you connect with and will enjoy sharing your life with for years to come.

