

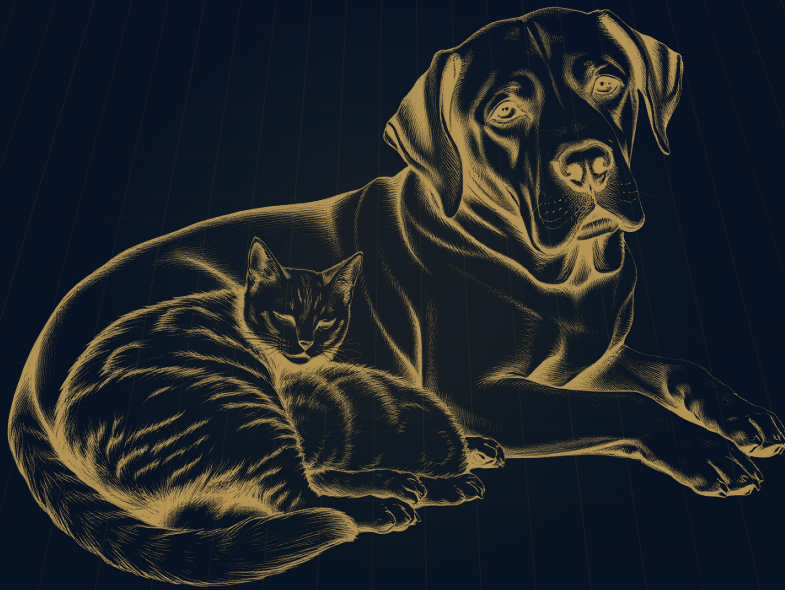
HARBOURSIDE
PET & EQUINE CREMATIONS

FAMILY FAVOURITE

GRIEF JOURNAL

The Harbourside Grief Journal

A quiet companion for the days after losing a much-loved animal



INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Five chapters, 30 writing prompts
- Guided “letter to them” exercise
- “Letter to future-you” closing prompt
- Preface and closing notes from Alby

33 PAGES

FREE TO DOWNLOAD, PRINT & SHARE

Written for the families we sit with.

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A note before you begin

If you are holding this journal, something enormous has happened. Your pet has died, and the world has kept moving in a way that feels almost offensive. People are answering emails. The kettle still boils. And you are somewhere else entirely.

This journal is not therapy, and it is not a set of instructions. It is a quiet place to put things down. Some people write in it every day for a month. Some open it three times in a year. Both are right.

There are five chapters and thirty prompts. You do not have to do them in order, and you do not have to do them at all. Skip anything that stings today; it will still be here in a fortnight.

Write badly. Write in fragments. Swear if you need to. Nobody is marking this.

“In fourteen years of this work I have never once thought someone was grieving too much for a pet. Not once.”

— Alby Koster, Harbourside

How to use this journal

- Print it single-sided so you can write on the back of a page if you run out of room.
- Ten minutes is enough. Set a timer if the blank page feels like too much.
- Do not re-read what you wrote for at least a week. Early grief writing is not meant to be tidy.
- If a prompt makes you cry, that is the prompt doing its job — not you failing at it.
- If a prompt makes you feel nothing at all, move on. Numbness is a stage, not a verdict.

THE FIVE CHAPTERS

1. What happened — putting the story down once, so you can stop carrying it in your head.
2. Who they were — the ordinary details that nobody else will remember.
3. The hard feelings — guilt, anger, relief, and the shame that follows relief.
4. Carrying them forward — what you keep, what you change, what you let go.
5. A letter — to them, and then to the version of you who is reading this in a year.

Chapter One — What happened

The last ordinary day

Before it all changed, there was a normal day. Write it down: the weather, what you fed them, what you said in passing.

The day itself

Tell it once, plainly, from beginning to end. You are allowed to leave out anything you are not ready for.

Who was there

The people who stood with you. The vet. The neighbour. The one who made the phone calls so you did not have to.

The moment you knew

There is usually a moment — sometimes hours before — when you understood how this would end.

What you said to them

Whatever you managed to say, or wish you had said, in those last minutes.

The first night after

How you got through it. What you ate, if you ate. Whether you slept.

Chapter Two — Who they were

The day they arrived

How your pet came to you, and what you thought the first time you saw them.

Their face

Describe it as if to someone who never met them. The markings, the expression, the particular look they gave you.

Their noises

The sounds you would know anywhere. Write them down before they fade.

What made them difficult

Every animal we love is annoying in a specific way. Record it — it is part of the truth of them.

Their favourite things

Food, weather, people, places, times of day.

The funniest thing they ever did

Somebody in the family still tells this story. Write it here.

What they taught you

Patience, probably. But be more specific than that.

Chapter Three — The hard feelings

The guilt

Write the what-if loop out in full. Get it onto the page so it stops running at 3am.

A reply to the guilt

Now answer it as you would answer a friend saying these things about themselves.

The anger

Who or what are you angry with today? The vet, the weather, the cost, yourself, them for leaving.

The relief

If there was relief, say so here. Relief does not mean you loved them less; it means the weight was real.

The loneliness

Grief for an animal is often invisible to other people. Where has that shown up this week?

What you cannot say out loud

The sentence you have not said to anybody. It is safe here.

Chapter Four — Carrying them forward

What you kept

The collar, the halter, the rug, the last photograph on your phone. What could you not put away?

What you changed

Sometimes we move a feed bin or a bed. Sometimes we leave everything exactly as it was.

The habits that remain

Still glancing towards the house. Still buying the wrong thing at the shops.

The people who helped

Name them. Consider telling one of them what it meant.

A small ritual

Something you could do on their birthday, or the anniversary, that would feel right.

What you would tell someone newly grieving

You know something now that you did not know a month ago.

Chapter Five — Letters

A letter to them

Everything you did not get to say. Take as long as you need — use the back of the page.

A letter to yourself, one year from now

Tell her or him what today feels like, and what you hope will have softened.

The one sentence

If the whole of this loss could be one sentence, write it here. Then close the book for today.

Closing note

There is no last page to grief, only a page you stop on. This one will do.

Closing notes from Alby

You will not always feel like this. That sentence is impossible to believe in the first weeks, so please just file it somewhere and come back to it.

Grief does not shrink so much as your life grows back around it. The days between the hard days get longer. One morning you will think of them first with warmth rather than with a drop in your stomach, and you will not even notice it happening.

If the heaviness is not lifting at all after several months, or if you cannot see a way forward, please talk to your GP. Asking for help is not a failure of love.

And if you ever want to talk to someone who understands exactly this, you can call us. We are not counsellors, but we have sat with a lot of people on the worst day of their year.

With care, Alby and the team at Harbourside Pet & Equine Cremations.