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# Discussing Pet Loss

## and Other Departures with Children

by Ronen Divon

“**W**hat happens when our beloved pet dies?” “Will I die?” “What happens when we die?” As a parent, or an adult in touch with children, have these questions been presented to you? Many parents dread this topic. Common answers may include “I cannot talk about it right now”, “we’ll speak about it when you grow up”, or “when pets die they go to pets heaven.” Some children may settle for these answers for a while, but even if it seems they do, deep inside many of them remain confused and worried. A veil remains shut mostly because the parents may not be ready to face these questions themselves.



Like it or not, death is always there, waiting; be it a dog, a parent or a friend. The dance of life goes on—we are born, we pass on, shreds of us remain through whatever we managed to do in this world. Regardless of our religious faith, we can choose to look at the ways those who passed on affected us as a form of eternal life and find comfort.

Ultimately, when it comes to death, nothing can bring back what was lost. Rather than looking at what is no longer there, the approach we, as parents and adults should encourage children to take is to look at what is there; using tools such as sense-memory and cherishing one’s legacy. Most importantly—communicate with your children. It’s okay not to know. It’s okay for your child to know you don’t know. Part of the growing up process is for children to realize that their parents do not know everything, but that together parent and child can develop a perspective that will serve your children for life.

*Ronen Divon resides in the lower Hudson Valley with his wife and four children: a set of triplets and singleton. He is the author of Daddy Fixes Everything, a picture-book that follows a family of four children and their parents as they cope with the death of their pet hamster. He also is a yoga and Tai chi instructor and business entrepreneur. For more information, go to DaddyFixesEverything.com or MonroeYoga.com.*

It is a wise father that  
 knows his own child.

~William Shakespeare

