



# Veterinary Wisdom<sup>®</sup>

for pet parents

## 5 Ways to 'Bounce Back' from Grief

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Grieving is a *normal* and *necessary* healing process. When you've experienced loss, your body naturally attempts to 'purge' toxins that have accumulated within from the fear, anxiety, and sadness you've been feeling. This is why you feel a need to cry and talk about your loved one over and over. You literally need to 'get it out of your system.'

And as you probably know, a 'grief purge' can feel overwhelming. In the depths of grief, while you're sobbing, ranting, and wailing, you may feel a little bit 'crazy.' You might even worry that you may not 'come back' to our sane, stable self. Yet, it's important to allow yourself to grieve this deeply and fully. Think of it as the process of becoming whole again.

Here are 5 ideas for 'bringing yourself back' after a healing 'grief purge.'

1. Set an alarm clock or timer for 20 minutes, then lose yourself in grief. When the alarm rings, stretch, move around, drink water, and gently bring yourself back to the present. Check in with your body. You probably feel drained and tired, but are you also more relaxed and calmer, feeling more satisfied?
2. Schedule a visit with an understanding support person—a friend or family member—to immediately follow a 'grief purge' session. Tell this person you're in the midst of grief and want to look for some comforting time with a friend. Tell them you don't want them to cheer you up, help you problem-solve, give you advice or "fix" anything for you. You simply want them to listen to your feelings and memories. Be respectful of your support system and don't exhaust them in the process! Talk about your loss for about 30 minutes and then turn your conversation to other topics.

3. Save time for a 20-30 minute nap. Crying and thinking and talking can be exhausting. Make time to replenish yourself.



(Photo from Dreamstime.com/Micropix)

4. Cue up your favorite music before you immerse yourself in grief, then listen to these songs as you coax yourself back to day-to-day life. Music is a powerful way to alter a mood. Don't use it to avoid your grief, but to soothe yourself after grieving.
5. Walk. There is endless research confirming the restorative power of walking. After a good cry, take yourself to a park or simply walk around your neighborhood. If you live in the city, go to a gym and walk around the track. While you walk, picture you and your loved one walking together. Love never leaves you, it simply changes form.

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