

Adopting a new pet after the loss of another

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The decision to open your home to a new dog after the loss of another can be a tough one. Many people wrestle with this decision and often ask me, "How soon is too soon?"

But, just like so many circumstances that occur in our lives, there is no concrete answer. In other words there is no formula as to when is the right time, which is why it can be such a hard decision. However, for anyone considering the adoption of a new pet, there are several factors to consider to help determine if you are really ready.

One of the top reasons people tell me they aren't sure if they are ready to adopt a new pet is that they feel guilty for so-to-speak "replacing" their deceased dog. This is completely understandable, but if this is your case, you may not be ready just yet. For instance, if the sense of guilt is an overwhelming emotion, it is probably not the right time for you to bring home a new dog. On the other hand, some people can move on knowing that they may miss their deceased pet, but they gain hope by the realization that they are giving another dog the chance to live a good life in a great home.

If the new dog will be brought into the home of a family that includes children, it's also crucial to take the time to teach children that dogs are not items that can simply be replaced. Explaining and including kids and young adults in all discussions is very important in their education of the value a dog. It also serves well to reassure them that it is natural to mourn the loss of a family member.

Of course, adults also need to understand that no dog will ever actually replace the pet you lost because, just like people, dogs have their own personalities and quirks. It's important to realize this because if you're looking to find a dog to extend your lost pet's life, you may end up disappointed and frustrated at your new pet, which will not result in a happy home for either of you. However, if you're looking for a dog that will keep another pet company or solve your own loneliness, adopting another pet can be the perfect way to solve that.

Overall you don't want to rush into a decision. It is simply whenever you feel that you are ready and capable to open your heart to another dog. Some people may be

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ready almost instantly and start the adoption process for a new dog within days of the passing of another, while others may take weeks, months or even years. No matter the timing, the same rules apply for adopting a new dog.

In addition to timing, it is equally important that the dog you choose to adopt is not a decision that you make spontaneously or just because you want another pet. For a long-term happy home, it is always crucial that you take the time to choose a pet with a personality to fit your lifestyle. If you have another pet you want to be sure that they will get along. The same goes if you have children in your home or anyone who requires special care.

Another factor to consider is that you should also not feel pressured into adopting another dog. You may love animals and want to continue to help them, but if you're not ready for the long-term commitment that comes with adopting a new pet or still deeply mourning the loss of your deceased pet, there are a few great ways to continue helping animals without taking full responsibility for them. A couple of ways to accomplish that is to volunteer with a pet rescue organization or foster a dog from an organization like Paws 4 You Rescue.

However, if you are ready to adopt another dog, Paws 4 You Rescue can help you find a dog that is right for you. We rescue dogs from euthanasia lists at local animal shelters and learn their personalities while they are in our care. If you're interested in adopting dog, please visit our web site, <www.paws4you.org>, to learn more about our organization, our adoption dogs and to find out more about our events. You can also come by to see us in person at the Colonial Palms PetSmart, 13621 S. Dixie Hwy., every Sunday from 11a.m to 4 p.m.

PET OF THE WEEK

Pete is a one year old chocolate lab (mix) who is intelligent and friendly. He is a fun dog that is up for adoption at Paws 4 You Rescue. Go to the website for more information and to fill out an adoption application.

Carol Caridad is president of Paws 4 You Rescue. She may be contacted by calling 786-242-7377, by addressing email to <carol@paws4you.org> or by visiting <www.paws4you.org>.