

**Anniversary Reaction To the Death of a Pet**  
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It has been a year since we euthanized our sweet Tipper-cat, who was 19 years old when she died. After our veterinarian left our home with Tipper's body that Saturday afternoon, I went for a jog along the familiar bike path where we often walk the dogs and jog.

Toward the end of the path, I saw a gray and white cat sitting in the middle of the trail. She didn't startle or move away as I approached her; in fact she almost seemed to be waiting for me. I stopped to pet her, and as I touched her she moved toward my hand and meowed at me with a high-pitched, two-syllable meow that was very distinctively the way Tipper used to sound.

I was astonished, because although this cat didn't look at all like Tipper, she sounded exactly like her. The first thought that rushed into my head, and what I actually said to this cat was - "Tipper sent you to tell me that she's OK and not to worry about her".

Although the skeptical scientist in me says this can't be true, the sentimental pet owner part of me has found this incident very comforting to think about in the year that Tipper has been gone. I had never seen this cat before on the bike path, and I have never seen her since, even though we frequent that path at least three times a week.

I've found myself thinking about this incident frequently recently, because it is the year anniversary of Tipper's death. Anniversary reactions for pet owners are quite common, and can occur around any time period that was significant - the pet's birthday, the date the pet was adopted, or when the pet recovered from an illness.

Owners may find themselves feeling depressed or irritable, but don't connect their feelings to these anniversary dates. Taking time to remember the pet or memorialize her may be helpful. I'm going to light a candle for Tipper, to symbolize her spirit and the joy that she brought to our lives.

Whether our pets' spirits have the capacity to communicate with us after death is a question that can only be answered by our own personal beliefs. The question would be very hard to study objectively. I don't know that I could answer an unqualified yes they do, but I definitely want to believe it has happened at least once.

*For people who are having difficulty coping with the death of a pet, or facing the prospect of euthanasia, a pet loss support group is available in the Denver metro area. Call the Denver Area Veterinary Medical Society at 303-318-0447.*