

TRY IT ON

WHAT FITS MY GRIEF?

The Grieving of a Pet Owner, Nathan, and David

Some features to help you determine if you want to *TRY ON* the grief because the circumstances are similar to your own:

- Death of a pet
- Inability to afford many animals
- Theft of a pet
- Crime against the family
- Contradicting views about pets

Some feelings to help you determine if you want to *TRY ON* the grief because the emotions are similar to your own:

- Anger
- Helplessness
- Disregarded
- Shock
- Betrayal
- Loneliness
- Misunderstood

A summary about what happened.

Nathan, a prophet, told the king, David, a story. There was a poor man who bought a lamb for a pet. The lamb grew up with his children, shared the man's food, drank from his cup, and slept in his arms. The lamb was like a child to the man. One day a rich man in the same town was hosting a traveler, but the rich man decided not to prepare one of the many sheep or cattle that the rich man had. Instead he took the lamb from the poor man, killed it, and prepared it for the traveler to eat. When David heard the story, he was sad. David cried out that the poor man needed justice. David burned with anger that the rich man had no pity on the poor man.



Some of the actions of the Pet Owner, Nathan, and David that you can TRY ON to see if any fit you well:

- **Burn with anger** - When a pet dies, it is fine to become upset. Getting angry is normal. Allow yourself or others to burn with anger at the injustice of a death as long as that anger is not directed at harming living creatures around us. Try engaging in a physical activity where you can get out some angry energy.
- **Cry for justice** - If the death of a pet was wrongfully caused whether on accident or on purpose, consider if you want to ask the person who caused the death to do something that would address the harm that was caused. Consider crying out for others who have lost their pets unjustly.
- **Tell a story** - Compose a story about your pet. The story can be fictional like Nathan's story or a memory of the pet. Consider illustrating or publishing the story to honor your pet.
- **Find a pet** - A new pet cannot replace one that died. However a new pet can provide comfort and love.

Some of the phrases of the Pet Owner, Nathan, and David that you can TRY ON to see if any feel right for you:

- This was wrong.
- Who would do such a thing?
- The LORD lives
- Have pity.
- Bring justice.
- Pay for what was taken.

Some ideas you can TRY ON with a child:

- **Encourage safe anger** - Ask your child if there is anger about the death of the pet. Suggest some safe ways to express that anger through voice or physical exertion. Be sure to explain the difference between healthy and hurtful expressions of anger.
- **Fight for others** - Invite your child to search for others whose pets have been unjustly treated. Discuss ways that you and your child could help them. Consider supporting an animal shelter.
- **Write a story together** - Ask your child if it would be nice to tell a story about your pet. Ask questions like:
 - How should we tell the story?
 - Who would we like to hear the story?
 - What pictures should we include?
- **Talk about pets** - Ask your child whether it might be good to look at options for a new pet. A child may need some time to grieve and not want to “replace” a beloved pet. When the time is right, exploring new options for pets can bring comfort, love, and new experiences.

A summary of what happens next:

The story of this poor man's pet changed a leader and a nation. This story led others to grieve with the pet owner and lament the loss of his beloved pet. The entire nation realized that things needed to change to keep this from happening to them and their pets. So they made sure their laws would protect families with pets. The story also has inspired lots of other stories about the value of lambs elsewhere in the Biblical texts.

Where to find the *Grieving of the Pet Owner, Nathan, and David:*

2 Samuel 12