

The Pawprint in My Heart

A Comforting Children's Story About Pet Loss and Love

Janet Paul · Recommended ages 3–8 · A 24-page picture book to read aloud

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Saying goodbye to a beloved pet can be a child's first heartbreak. *The Pawprint in My Heart* is a gentle bedtime fable that helps young children understand the death of a dog, cat, or other cherished animal. Through soft rhyme and comforting imagery, the story reassures children that love does not disappear — it can change into memories, warmth, and a quiet feeling of companionship that stays in the heart.

BEST FOR

LOSS

The death of a dog, cat, or other beloved pet.

SETTINGS

Counseling office, classroom after a loss, hospice family room, library, veterinary office, and at home

BEFORE YOU READ

This story does not rush a child to feel better. It makes room for sadness and for the love that remains. Let the child use the name of their own pet if they wish, and pause whenever they need to. A slower reading is often enough.

TALKING TOGETHER

1. What do you remember most about your pet?
2. How did this story make you feel?
3. Where do you still notice your pet's love — in memories, in feelings, or in your heart?
4. What would you like people to know about your pet?
5. Is there a favorite thing you used to do together?

SIMPLE ACTIVITIES

Draw a pawprint in your heart

Invite the child to draw their pet, a pawprint, or a picture of a favorite memory.

A memory jar

Write or draw one memory of the pet and keep it in a jar, envelope, or other special place.

A thank-you

If the child wishes, they can say or write one thing they are thankful for about the time they had with their pet.

GENTLE REMINDERS FOR GROWN-UPS

- Let the child lead. Some children will talk a lot; others will be quiet. Both are okay.
- It is okay to say "I don't know." Honest, simple answers are enough.
- Watch for signs that a child may need more support — such as lasting trouble with sleep, eating, play, or school, or distress that does not ease — and connect with a counselor or grief professional.

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