Ray's Little Light

COMING BACK TO TODAY

Understanding anticipatory grief while your pet is still here.

GRIEF CAN BEGIN BEFORE GOODBYE

You don't have to have lost your pet to begin grieving them.
Anticipatory grief can begin when you receive a diagnosis, notice changes that frighten you, or simply find yourself looking at the pet you love and thinking, I can't imagine my life without you.
It may come unexpectedly—a song, a quiet moment together, a veterinary appointment, or even an otherwise perfectly good day can suddenly bring thoughts of a future you don't want to imagine.
These feelings are a natural response to loving someone deeply and knowing that your time together cannot last forever. You don't need to push them away or feel guilty for having them. **Your feelings are real, and they deserve to be felt.**

DON'T LET TOMORROW TAKE ALL OF TODAY

There may be moments when the fear of losing your pet feels bigger than the moment you're actually living. Let yourself feel what you're feeling. Cry if you need to. Talk about it. Write it down. Your grief doesn't need to be pushed away.
But when you notice that your mind is spending more time in a future without your pet than in the life you're still sharing together, gently bring yourself back.
Ask yourself: If I knew I would someday look back on this time, what would I want to remember? Is there anything I would wish I had done more of?

COME BACK TO WHAT IS TRUE TODAY

When you notice your thoughts moving too far into the future, pause. Take a slow breath in, hold it for a moment, and gently release it.
Then bring yourself back into the room. Notice what you can see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. Let your senses remind you where you are—not in tomorrow, but here.
Then remind yourself:

My pet is here today.

Today, I can love them. Today, I can care for them. Today, we can still have moments that belong to us.
What those moments look like may change. A long walk may become a few quiet minutes outside. An adventure may become an afternoon together on the couch. That doesn't make those moments less meaningful.

DO THE EXTRA THING

Anticipatory grief has a way of reminding us just how precious ordinary time really is. Instead of letting that awareness become only fear, let it become an invitation to be more present.
Give the extra cuddle. Take the extra picture. Share the special treat. Sit outside together. Take the walk they can manage. Let them sleep in the bed. Cancel the plans once in a while and spend the afternoon on the couch together.
It doesn't have to be extraordinary to become a memory you'll treasure.

YOU'RE ALLOWED TO HAVE A GOOD DAY

There may be days when you laugh, go out, enjoy yourself, or realize you haven't thought about what's coming for a little while. **You do not need to feel guilty for that.**
Loving your pet does not require you to be sad every moment simply because you know your time together is limited.
A good day does not mean you're ignoring what's happening. It means you're still living—and your pet is still living, too.
You are allowed to enjoy the life that is still happening.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS

So many of us have looked at a pet we love and wondered how we could possibly live in a world without them. You are not strange for thinking about it, and you are not alone in feeling it.
None of us knows exactly how much time we'll have. A diagnosis may make that reality feel closer, but the truth is that our time together has always been precious.
So when the fear comes, let yourself feel it. Then come back.
Come back to the warm body beside you. The familiar face. The ordinary routines. The little things that make your relationship yours.
Tomorrow will come when it comes. Today, they are here.