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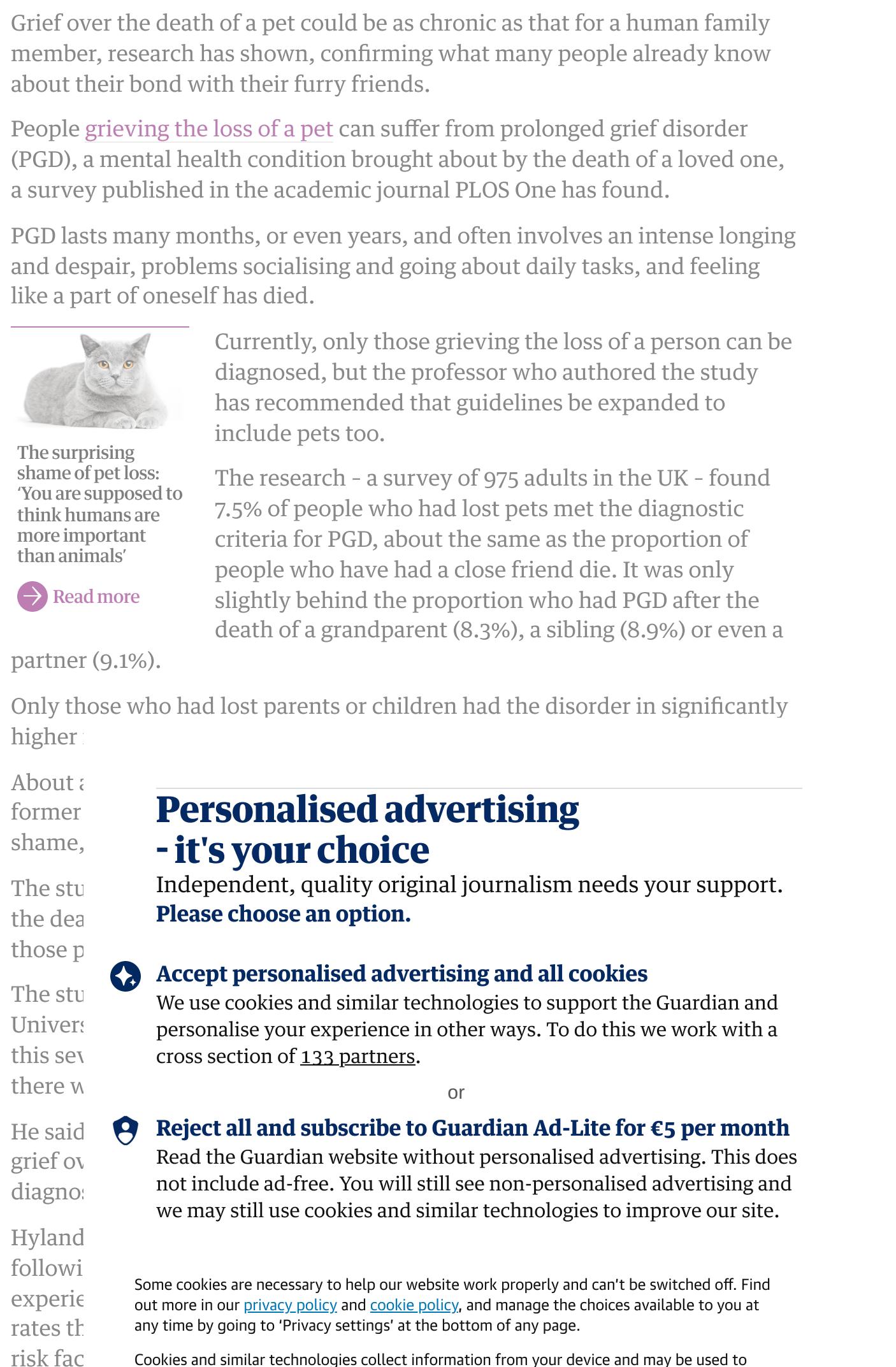
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Pets

Grief over pet death can be as strong as that for family member, survey shows

Researcher calls for guidelines for diagnosing prolonged grief disorder to be expanded to cover people who lose pets



 The survey found 7.5% of people who had lost pets met the diagnostic criteria for prolonged grief disorder, Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images

Robyn Vinter

Thu 15 Jan 2026 13.55 CET

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Grief over the death of a pet could be as chronic as that for a human family member, research has shown, confirming what many people already know about their bond with their furry friends.

People **grieving the loss of a pet** can suffer from prolonged grief disorder (PGD), a mental health condition brought about by the death of a loved one, a survey published in the academic journal PLOS One has found.

PGD lasts many months, or even years, and often involves an intense longing and despair, problems socialising and going about daily tasks, and feeling like a part of oneself has died.



Currently, only those grieving the loss of a person can be diagnosed, but the professor who authored the study has recommended that guidelines be expanded to include pets too.

The research - a survey of 975 adults in the UK - found 7.5% of people who had lost pets met the diagnostic criteria for PGD, about the same as the proportion of people who have had a close friend die. It was only slightly behind the proportion who had PGD after the death of a grandparent (8.3%), a sibling (8.9%) or even a partner (9.1%).

Only those who had lost parents or children had the disorder in significantly higher

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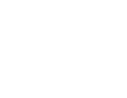
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