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When is it time to say good bye to your pet? *Dr. Lianna Titcombe*

Pet owners often struggle with the decision of when it is time to let go and choose to end the life of their beloved companion. Above all, they don't want their pet to suffer; they want them to have a certain quality of life. This can be hard for a pet owner to determine on their own so they will often turn to their trusted veterinarian to help them make this most heart wrenching decision. Thus I have created a questionnaire regarding your pet's quality of life, which may be used as a guide during end-of-life decision making.

Your pet's health can be comprised of two elements: physical and psychological.

Physical

- Are they eating and drinking well?
- Are they able to walk, urinate, defecate, and groom on their own?
- Are they able to have a restful sleep?

Psychological

- Do they still have the same level of interaction with the family?
- Do they still have a reasonable level of control over their environment?
- Are they able to enjoy their usual routine?
- Are they coping with the stress of ill health well? (such as urine soiling, ability to do stairs, etc.)



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Is your pet in pain?

Here are some signs to look for:

- Trembling
- Panting
- Increased heart rate
- Vocalizing
- Restlessness
- Limping
- Slow to rise
- Reluctant to move
- Change in energy level
- Hesitant to touch
- Acting out of character (you know them best)

Is your pet suffering?

Remember, suffering doesn't necessarily mean in pain



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Some questions to ask yourself

- Is your pet still affectionate and playful?
- Are they still interested in daily activities?
- Are they engaged with the family and interactive or tired, withdrawn, and hiding?
- Is your pet experiencing more bad days than good days?
- How has your relationship with your pet changed?
- How are you coping? Caring for a sick pet is hard work and takes its toll physically, emotionally, and financially. How is your quality of life?

Develop a personal bottom line.

- What makes life worth living for your pet?
- At what point do you think life would no longer be worth living (under what circumstances)?
- Record this (possibly in a journal) in order to revisit later to help you in your decision.