



Quality of Life, Part I

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Quality of life is a term we often hear when a pet is nearing the end of their life or experiencing an illness. There are several ways to assess quality of life but it is very important to remember that you and your family are the experts when it comes to your pet. Discussing quality of life issues with other people who love your pet can be very helpful. Including children in discussions can be particularly helpful to them as they process what is happening to their dear pet.

Here is an exercise you could do yourself or with your family that will help you assess the quality of life your pet is experiencing. Many people whose pets are nearing the end of their lives ask: *“How do I know whether I am contributing to maintaining quality of life or whether I am prolonging suffering?”* It is a complex question and in order to begin to understand it better consider creating a checklist. Think back to a time when your pet was perfectly healthy and in the prime of his/her life. Try to recall what a typical day was like for them then and make a list of things they could do or enjoyed doing. What was the very first interaction you would have with your pet in the morning? Did she jump on to the bed to wake you? Can she still do that? Then did she ask to go out to potty? And is she still able to do that? What did she like to have for breakfast? Go through an entire day (until bedtime) making note of all the things your pet could do or liked to do.

After you have completed your list return to each entry and consider whether your pet can still do or enjoys doing each thing. Cross those things off the list that your pet can no longer do or enjoy.

If many of the things on your list are crossed off, then you may begin to see that your pet’s quality of life is diminished. Doing this exercise may illuminate or allow you to have a more objective perspective on what challenges you and your pet are facing at the end of life. It will likely bring to mind some pertinent questions to bring to a conversation with your veterinarian—keep a record of those questions.

It is also often helpful to keep a daily journal about the quality of the day your pet has had with you.

http://www.lapoflove.com/Pet_Quality_of_Life_Scale.pdf is a daily diary page that we like.