

Quality of Life: Self-Coaching Questions

A reflection guide for pet caregivers

You know your pet better than anyone else. Sorting out what you feel and what it means can be difficult, but deep down, most caregivers already sense what is best for their pet. The questions below are offered as a starting point for reflection.

- Is your pet still doing things he or she enjoys most days — lying in the sun, coming to the kitchen at dinnertime, playing, resting with you on the sofa, watching TV? Or is he or she hiding and withdrawn?
- Is your cat sitting hunched up with her hair fluffed, eyes half shut, chin down? This posture is often a sign of significant pain.
- Can your pet eat and drink comfortably?
- Does your pet vomit more than half the days of the week?
- Does your pet dread the car ride to follow-up visits? Has behavior modification training been tried to help your pet cope?
- Are needles — at home or at the clinic — something you and your pet can tolerate, or are they out of the question?
- Does your pet vomit up medication?
- Is your pet eating and drinking? Have you tried the suggestions your veterinarian has offered?
- Is your pet clean and comfortable? Can he or she be groomed without discomfort? Does touching hurt?
- Can your family find the time and resources to follow your veterinarian's treatment plan? If not, can your veterinarian help build a plan that is fair to your pet and keeps them from suffering?
- Are you able to think clearly about this? Can you tell whether your pet is in pain?
- Are you setting aside valid advice from your veterinarian, family, or friends? Sometimes they're wrong — but often, the people who know and love your pet best are worth listening to.

These questions are meant to support your own reflection — they are not a diagnosis or a substitute for professional guidance. For any medical decision, including pain management, treatment options, or end-of-life care, please work closely with your own veterinarian.