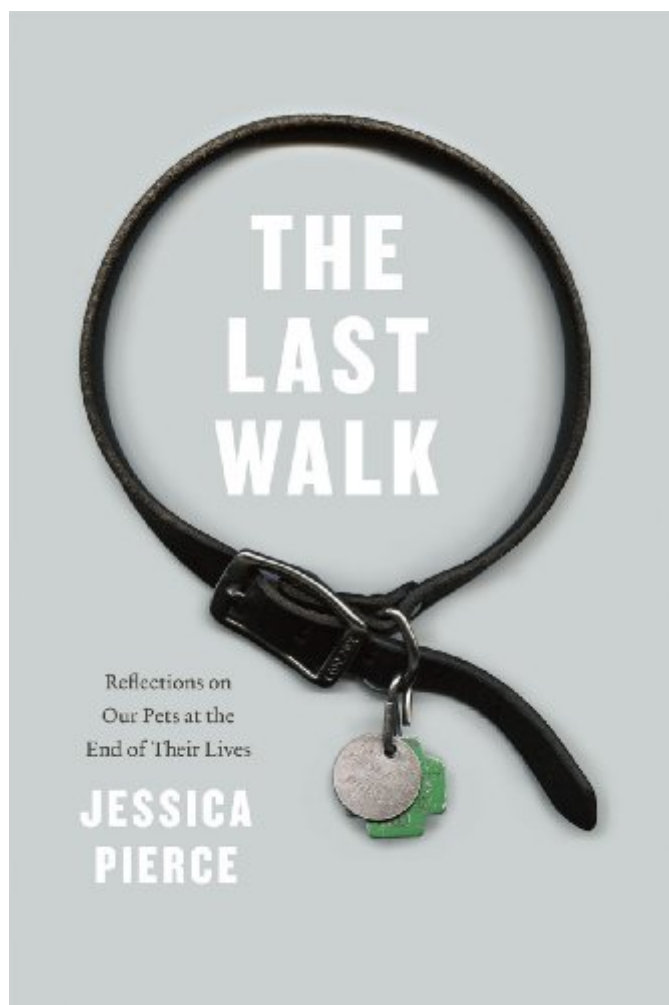


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The Last Walk: Reflections On Our Pets At The End Of Their Lives



Synopsis

From the moment when we first open our homesâ and our heartsâ to a new pet, we know that one day we will have to watch this beloved animal age and die. The pain of that eventual separation is the cruel corollary to the love we share with them, and most of us deal with it by simply ignoring its inevitability. With *The Last Walk*, Jessica Pierce makes a forceful case that our pets, and the love we bear them, deserve better. Drawing on the moving story of the last year of the life of her own treasured dog, Ody, she presents an in-depth exploration of the practical, medical, and moral issues that trouble pet owners confronted with the decline and death of their companion animals. Pierce combines heart-wrenching personal stories, interviews, and scientific research to consider a wide range of questions about animal aging, end-of-life care, and death. She tackles such vexing questions as whether animals are aware of death, whether they're feeling pain, and if and when euthanasia is appropriate. Given what we know and can learn, how should we best honor the lives of our pets, both while they live and after they have left us? The product of a lifetime of loving pets, studying philosophy, and collaborating with scientists at the forefront of the study of animal behavior and cognition, *The Last Walk* asksâ and answersâ the toughest questions pet owners face. The result is informative, moving, and consoling in equal parts; no pet lover should miss it.

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Customer Reviews

We just recently had to take our Golden Retriever, Kasey, age of 13 years old. She made the decision herself by not eating or drinking. She also had problems with mobility. She would have seizures every month. There was no doubt it was a brain tumor & where located since our 6 year old female, Chili would lick Kasey's head. It must have soothed it because Kasey got that "feels good" look. Wish I had this sooner!

In the past year my little Yorkie (13 years old) developed breathing problems. He was already starting to show signs of aging but this started speeding up the process. For months we tried everything and anything to help him. We nursed him 24 hours a day and then were faced with the worst decision in the world when the vet said that there was no more that could be done. His health was bad, he was out of ideas and he was old. We had already tried many other vets previously too & holistic treatments. Nothing was working anymore. I was scared about what was to come and so I went online and looked for books to help prepare me for what lay ahead. This book looked good. Once I started reading it, I could not put it down. All the questions and guilt I had were the same as the book documented and I finally didn't feel so alone. The months of struggles that we had faced looking after a pet that was getting old very quickly were experienced by others. The fear of not knowing what the next month, day & hour holds were made easier knowing someone else had also walked in these shoes. This book really carried me through one of the hardest times a dog lover faces and exceeded my expectations of what I thought would be. (Basically a woman's journey with her old furry friend). I was surprised & delighted that it also included so much research and factual information. It made decisions a bit easier for me and prepared me for what would eventually come. The journey this book took me through answered my many questions: Am I doing what is best for him or what is best for me? How do I take a life away when God really should only hold that power? Would I be doing this because it has become too hard for me or is it too hard for him? When is the right time? When is enough really enough? When Toby's final day arrived, I knew what was going to happen and how the process worked as well as all the questions that would follow (cremation or burial etc) because I was armed with all the knowledge this book provided me with. I was able to make well informed decisions that I am 100% certain were the right ones. I have no regrets. I was

able to go into that room and hold him in my arms, talk to him and comfort him. I didn't cry or make him feel scared with my own anxiety because there was none. I felt calm & confident. That moment was about him and I was prepared. I was by his side comforting him like he was always at mine. I recommend this book to:- Anyone that is facing life with an old dog. (Being prepared & knowledgeable takes a lot of the fear away. It also helps you make decisions that are informed & from a place of confidence)- Anyone who has lost a dog after a lifetime of memories and is trying to heal. You will relate with many things the Author documents and find comfort that you are not alone- Anyone with a love of pets and a thirst for knowledge. It is a beautifully documented account of an old dog's last year and is entwined with so much well researched information that it is a fascinating read.

The book covers the horror and wonder of your final days with a loved pet as none of the chirpier books can. Did I do the right thing in electing euthanasia? Was he suffering needlessly? What is the meaning of this wonderful dog in my life and am I a fool for feeling that the stars will fall from the sky and the sun go out when he is gone? The author cannot answer these questions, but she examines them in depth and from all angles, and illustrates the choices with moments from her own difficult last year with her dog. After my dog died, people gave me other books, full of poetic platitudes. Their message was well-meaning, but gave no lasting comfort. In contrast, this book walks with you through the valley of death. It is a matter of faith whether you will emerge from the valley and be together with your loved pet again, but in this book you will find a resolute guide on that difficult journey.

Dr. Jessica Pierce does a fabulous job of candidly telling her story, and then choosing and critically relating research to end of life care in our animal companions. How can we ever really know what is "right" or "wrong" for a completely dependent being who cannot express themselves through a language we fully understand? "The Last Walk" is one of a kind and surpassed my expectations, as it seems to have for so many readers here. Some of the criticisms have to do with Jessica and her family's most difficult decision of a lifetime of loving and living with her beloved companion. As one who has been through that experience personally, and through professionally supporting families, I can say that when you find yourself in that position you do the best you can with the information you have available to you. Scientists and philosophers like Dr. Pierce can do their best to piece together research taken from the human experience and even in research animals, though in companion animals how can we know their experience and perspectives? Research suggests that animals live in the

moment and are not concerned about how they were yesterday or where they'll be in even one hour. When physical and emotional distress are so fleeting, how can we really know the best time to make the most difficult decision we will ever have to make for them? Jessica shares candidly that she and her family had questions surrounding Ody's continued well-being and the complicated aspects to end-of-life caregiving for animals. She vulnerably shared how she did the very best she could trying to find her way. As the field of animal hospice and palliative care expands, more caregivers will find the support from their team of professionals as well as their personal community, and we hope that this decision making will become easier and more straightforward. In the meantime, "The Last Walk" is very touching and an honest story of one family's struggle, with the joys and challenges that come from companioning your animal friend through end-of-life care.

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