

When is it Time?

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These are my personal opinions on dogs and when it's Time. Everyone has their own opinions and must make their own choices.

If a dog is not happy, not enjoying life, or is in enough pain, and none of those are going to change, it's Time. You do no justice to a dog dragging it's life on when it's going to be miserable the rest of it's life.

If a dog isn't happy, not enjoying life, or is in enough pain, BUT that's likely to change due to drugs, surgery, or other, it's good to give the dog time.

If a dog's got so-so quality of life and has only a short time (weeks to a few months) to live, it's time to go hm... and do some very deep thinking. Sometimes the choice is to keep the dog going, sometimes it's to end it, sometimes it's to withhold treatment that could make things go on longer. Only a dog's owner can best make that choice.

Sometimes you can't physically deal with a dog's disability due to your own physical disabilities or financial status. The Wheelcorgis list is a great source for finding ways to help you deal with a dog's disabilities, thru environmental modification, that you never thought you could deal with. I managed to keep Jordan (degenerative myelopathy) going far longer than I ever thought, due to environmental modifications such as his cart, dog ramps, etc, that avoided reinflaming previous arm injuries.

Some people make a list of 3 or 4 things their dog most loves to do, and when he can't do those, that's Time. I personally tend to think so long as the dog is happy, eating well, you can deal with the dog's disabilities, and he's not in pain, that's enough. I don't worry about if they love walks in the park or chasing the ball so long as they're happy enough just hanging out.

The problem with making that oh so critical decision, most times, is that you don't always know if a dog can be fixed by drugs/surgery/etc. You don't always know just how much or little a dog is hurting, as they hide pain so well. You don't know if the dog will or won't start feeling good again in a few days. Vets can't always tell us what the problem is, to help us best make that final choice. Sometimes it's good to get a 2nd opinion from another vet. Alas, we don't have crystal balls to always know what the future will hold. So sometimes you have to use gut instinct to choose or even wildly guess, to go on, or not.

A mistake many make is choosing to keep a dog going longer due to one's own feelings. I watched my mom's poor animals get dragged on when they were hurting and she knew they were not going to recover. Please choose to do it when it's right for their quality of life, not you.

Don't avoid putting them down when they need it because you're avoiding the pain of losing your dog. You're going to have to go thru that loss anyhow.

Don't avoid putting them down when you really know they need to go, because you keep wishing maybe, just maybe, they might have a few more good days here and there, and hence feel guilty that you'd be denying them those days, all the while knowing they really won't have those good days.

Do what's best for the dog, not one's self. Put your own feeling of pain, guilt, and loss aside. Put the heart aside, and use the logic. Then have acceptance about your choice, whatever it might be. Guaranteed, whatever choice you make, right or wrong, you'll still feel guilty. Did I put him down too soon when he might have had more decent time? Did I wait too long and drag the pain on? Having this guilt and thoughts are normal, part of grieving.

It's a rare dog that passes quietly and painlessly in their bed, in good shape till the end. I wish it were otherwise.

~In Memory of Those That Have Passed.