



# BALANCED PAWS

Specialized At Home Veterinary Care

## J-O-U-R-N-E-Y-S: A Quality of Life Scale for Pets

(JOURNEYS scale created by Dr. Katie Hilst, DVM)

Assessing the quality of life of our beloved pets can feel overwhelming. How you come to be at this moment will be different for every pet and their family. It could be age related changes, cancer or a myriad of other diseases or symptoms that prompt the need to start considering your pet's quality of life. The very thought of losing our special fur baby is devastating. It can be extremely difficult to step outside of our intense emotions and evaluate our pet's quality of life with fresh eyes. We are with our pet every day, and for those of us that work from home, every minute, and so recognizing change can be difficult. Some changes happen so gradually that they seem normal. That is where a quantitative approach like the JOURNEYS scale can be helpful.

### **JOURNEYS: J - Jumping or Mobility**

**O - Ouch or Pain**

**U - Uncertainty and Understanding (factors that affect YOU)**

**R - Respiration or Breathing**

**N - Neatness or Hygiene**

**E - Eating and Drinking**

**Y - You**

**S - Social Ability**

Visit the following link for a copy of the JOURNEYS scale, as well as other useful quality of life handouts, grief resources, and other information to help during this difficult time.

[End of life resources](#)

There are a variety of factors to think about when considering your pet's quality of life. You, as their caregiver, are also factored into this scale. You may find it helpful to make notes over several days to get a clear picture of your pet's quality of life. Some pets do well during the day but then during the night they are restless, disoriented or struggling. Other pets may struggle with mobility issues each morning and only find some relief for a few hours during the day. You will be looking for trends to help you determine the number of bad days and good days, and even the number of bad and good hours during the day.

Some families may struggle with differing opinions on how their pet is doing and what decisions should be made. Perhaps each person could use the JOURNEYS scale, and after a set time come together and compare notes. We also recommend that you speak with a veterinary professional to discuss your concerns and ask any questions.

It's best to keep in mind that all parties involved want what's best for your beloved pet, and you as the caregiver need to be comfortable with the final decision. There are several resources available to help with the emotions you are experiencing prior to, during and after the euthanasia process. Resources are available in a variety of formats: books, podcasts, support groups, both in person and online, as well as individual therapy. Ask your veterinarian for help finding resources in your area.

The unconditional love of our pets is such a gift, which is why we continue to have them in our lives, even after the devastation of losing them. End of life decisions will never get easier, and we are here to support you through the process. Please reach out to Balanced Paws with any questions and let us know how we can support you and your beloved pet.

[Mobile Veterinary Service Acupuncture/Chiropractic and Euthanasia](#)