Help Your Pet Deal With Death, Like Life, Naturally

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OF ALL THE DECISIONS people are forced to make there are few as wrenching as those involving the end of life for our beloved animal companions. Whatever the circumstance, the process of making decisions regarding a sick, injured, or elderly animal can be one of the most difficult and confusing times in our lives.

As a professional animal communicator I have helped hundreds of people and animals through this difficult time. What has become clear to me over the years is the natural way in which animals view death and how different this is for people. A cat who made his transition two years ago gave me an interesting analogy about how differently animals and people view death. He showed me that for people death is like being on a conveyor belt and when it ends they just fall off into the unknown. For animals death is like being on a ladder; the transition is simply stepping up onto another rung.

Many animal clients who appeared to be suffering made it very clear during a communication session that it was not time for them to depart. They explained that the dying process was every bit as important as living and they did not want to have this process hurried or cut short. For them dying was not to be feared but something important to be experienced.

Is it really the end?

This is a common question during animal communication sessions dealing with an animal's illness, injury, or old age. They are very forthright in revealing whether they've had enough or are willing to go on. There is no vacillating; either they are ready to call it quits or they want to continue care and/or treatment. Sometimes an animal will hang on waiting for their people to be ready to let them go. Often, when people are able to finally look their animal companion in the eye and let them know it's all right to leave and that the human family will be okay, the unburdening gives the animal a new burst of energy. This can sometimes result in the animal staying around even longer.

To make a difficult situation even worse, some of my animal communication clients are bombarded with usually well intentioned but very confusing advice on what to do with a sick, injured, or elderly animal. Many of these advisors are quick to give their help based on clinical evidence or simply the appearance of the animal in question. My clients say that intuitively they know their animal is not ready to go but “everyone is telling me I should put her down.” I always remind them that the relationship they have with their animal is very intimate and no one else knows better than they do what is really best in their situation. For an excellent discussion of animals and the transition process I recommend Dr. Pitcairn’s Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats. It is a classic in holistic animal care and the chapter “Saying Good-bye: Coping with a Pet's Death” is especially helpful.

Natural passing or euthanasia?
For many people this is a difficult decision to make, especially if they have cared for their animal companion in a holistic way until this point. The thought of purposely helping their animal die after helping them live in a natural way is unthinkable. For others, the idea of providing hospice care at home to allow a natural death is not an option. Again it's best to ask the animal what they want and honor their wishes to the extent possible. Checking in with the animal periodically is also a good idea because as the dying process unfolds there may be a change of heart depending on the animal's condition and experience. Again, Dr. Pitcairn's book is invaluable, listing physical conditions that would necessitate helping the animal pass rather than waiting for a natural death.

Reincarnation

There are abundant cases of animals reincarnating to be with the people they loved in this lifetime. They often look very similar to how they looked in their last life with minor variations. They also will display many of the same idiosyncrasies they had in their previous life. If reincarnation is part of a person's belief system they may find some comfort when faced with the passing of an animal companion. In such cases one can ask the animal to come back if possible and then say, "See you later, hopefully," instead of goodbye.

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