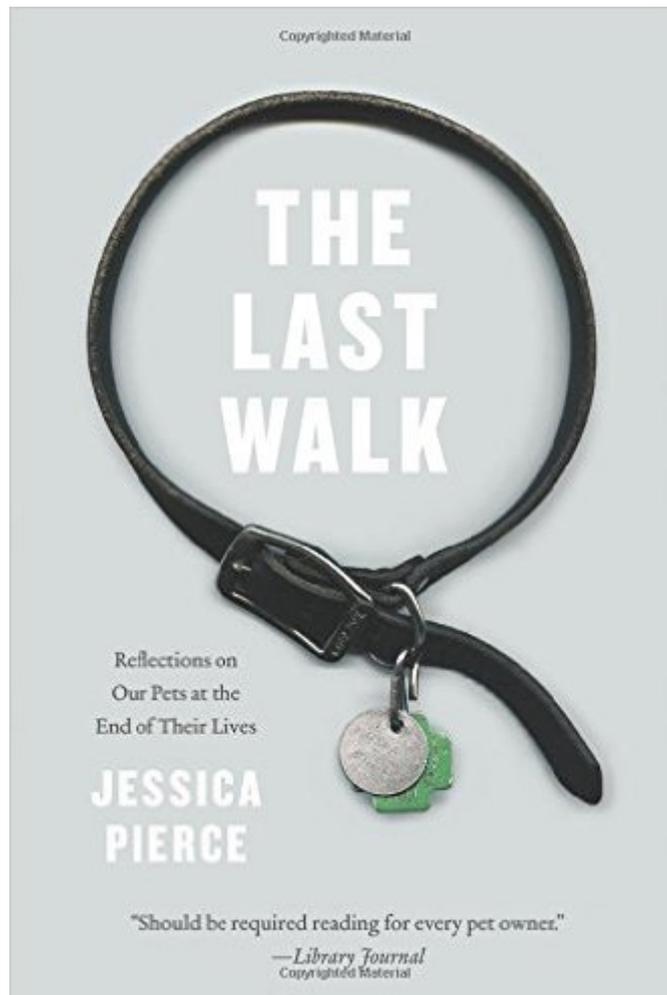


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# The Last Walk: Reflections On Our Pets At The End Of Their Lives



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I could not agree more the reviewer Barbara King. I loved this book, found it intriguing, thought provoking and quite frankly....BRILLIANT. The negative reviewers were certainly quick to judge and

it is obvious they have totally missed the point of this book. Or they simply could not handle (or maybe imagine?) someone loving a pet on that deep of a level. What we don't have is the 14 years of heart strings attached to Ody. Pierce did not write this book as a "How To" manual on putting your animal down. This book opened my mind and made me see animals in a way I have never considered. Her theories/studies were intriguing, thought provoking and at times disturbing. They also made me question my decision for putting our dog down several years ago. What this book made clear for me is how much we personify our animals based on what WE think they must be feeling. Interestingly enough, we do this with our fellow humans as well. Pierce breaks the barrier and opens up new possibilities on what your pet is REALLY going through with aging, pain and emotions (and much more). Yet these are not instructions, just studies and theories which help you develop your own opinion based on your moral values. People who do not think animals could possibly have feelings and emotions are going to be turned off by this book and by Pierce. There would not have been a "journal" because they would have put their animal down much earlier and could not have been bothered with taking care of their ailing pet. I am honest when I say, we put our dog down too soon. The care and cost became too much. In MY mind I wanted her to feel better. This book would have changed my perspective in a good way and I would not have been so guilt ridden for putting her down.

Wow! I highly recommend this book - simply stated, there is not another one like it. It's sort of like a real life version of Marley and Me, with much more breadth and depth, and without Hollywood's polish. Pierce takes a courageous journey into thoughtful, compassionate, and sometimes painful end of life issues surrounding her beloved animal companion, Ody. Anyone who has ever owned a Vizsla or other "high maintenance" breed will relate to, and will probably both laugh and cry with, the experiences and reflections into this revolutionary book. READ this book if you are open-minded and wish to be more mindful and present of your loved animals, especially as they age. Read the book if you dare to face hardship, pain, and self-doubt that accompanies the loss of an animal friend. Read this book if you simply wish to get to know Ody, the chaos and humor that surrounded his life, and the thoughtful processes and insights it gave birth to. DO NOT read this book if you are looking for an easy or step by step "how to" manual on pet death. Do not read the book if you want to laugh without crying. Do not read the book if you are not willing to face painful emotions and decisions that many pet owners deny or bury. Do not read the book if you wish to avoid being angry at times, perhaps at the situation or story in the book, or perhaps because the book strikes a personal, sensitive chord. Pierce beautifully faces the pain and pleasure that Ody's life presented. She is

honest, raw, and vulnerable in her writing. The book will not provide you with an outline of how to face animal companion death, although it does offer pointers throughout the text.

We have much longer lifespans than our dogs, and those of us who love them get to see lots of them off. It's tough. In my work I often talk to people who are sad about having lost a pet, and I myself am inconsolable for a long while after one of our dogs dies. It's happened to Jessica Pierce, too, and she has all the intellectual equipment for dealing with the loss and making the right decisions about it. While her Vizsla Odysseus (Ody) was going through his last years, she was finishing a large college textbook concerning her field, bioethics. She saw the connections between end-of-life decisions for humans and for animals, and realizing that bioethics has not generally concerned itself with how animals get treated, she has written *The Last Walk: Reflections on Our Pets at the End of Their Lives* (University of Chicago Press). It is a journal of Ody's last year, a personal and humane memoir, interspersed with chapters on such things as pain, euthanasia, and animal hospice. It is a thoughtful book that poses big questions about both dogs and humans, and doesn't pretend to have all the answers. The book is a good way to appreciate anew that classic dog-and-human partnership, both in general and in Ody's specific case. As she says, it is Ody's story, but hers, too: "It is my story of choosing and not choosing; of action and inaction; of coming to terms with change; of accepting the inevitable; and of holding his life in my hands and trying to figure out what to do with it." The enormous problem trying to figure out how to help our dogs is that for all their goofy affection for us and ours for them, and for all their proximity to us over the ages, they are still alien beings.

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