

The Digni Framework



A practical framework for contextualised care at end of life

This process is not linear- move between the stages repeatedly as circumstances change

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Define the context

Every family and pet is unique. Explore the factors that shape care, including the pet's preferences, disease trajectory, family circumstances, practical limitations, cultural factors and goals of care. Build trust and seek to understand the wider context before discussing options or developing a care plan.

Define: What is unique about this pet, family and situation? Use: Hx, ABCDE framework, Hospice nurse

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Identify priorities

Priorities may change throughout the end-of-life journey. Identify what matters most to the pet, the family and care team at this stage, including areas where priorities do not align.

Identify: What matters most right now? Use: QOL and Pain scoring, ABCDE Framework, Hospice nurse

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Guide decision-making

Use a shared decision-making approach that balances clinical recommendations, welfare, and family priorities. Discuss options, benefits, risks and likely outcomes in a clear way. These priorities and decisions lead to a plan.

Guide: What is the most appropriate path forward? Use: Disease education, Owner refusal, Hospice nurse

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Navigate the journey

Help the family to implement the plan, prepare for challenges and adapt decisions. Provide resources, QOL and crisis planning, including discussion of euthanasia where appropriate. Monitor progress together with the family as circumstances change.

Navigate: What support is needed for the next step of the journey? Use: QOL app, Crisis kits, Hospice nurse

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Integrate support

Contextualised end-of-life care is most effective when a multidisciplinary team works together to support the pet and family. Share professional services and support networks trusted by your care team that align with the family's priorities and goals of care. Acknowledge the family's choice of providers and include them in every step.

Integrate: Who else could help support this pet and family? Use: grief counsellors, rehabilitation therapists, pet sitters, cremation providers, complementary therapists and more.

Disclaimer and acknowledgement

The Digni Framework was developed by Dignipets to make contextualised end-of-life care more operational, and informed by established principles of veterinary hospice and palliative care, including the work of Dr Amir Shanan, Dr Tamara Shearer, the IAAHPC, and others who have shaped the profession.

It has been further refined through Dignipets' experience supporting more than 22,000 pet carers over the past decade. The framework brings these influences together into a practical approach to contextualised decision-making, collaborative care planning and multidisciplinary support throughout the end-of-life journey.

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Supporting resources and reading:

- Owner Refusal, Professional Obligations and Legislation (Dignipets) (Dignipets downloadable)
- Boussolari et al. (2018). Human-animal bond and end-of-life decision-making in veterinary practice.
- ABCDE Cultural Assessment Framework: Attitudes- beliefs- context- decision making style- environment (Kagawa-Singer & Blackhall, 2001) (modified by Dignipets in 2025)