

How to help your pet age in place

Living with Pets: Part 1

HE WAS THERE for her in her darkest hour. Later, she was there for his.

At age 3, Mya, a rat terrier mix, had been left at an animal shelter. Her owners deposited her there when she turned up pregnant. (Don't get me started on whose fault that was.) Her six pups all found homes. But no one wanted a depressed, postpartum dam with a questionable past. That D.C. rescued her from a most certain death 10 years ago she has not forgotten.

Two years later, when D.C. lost his wife to cancer, Mya offered comfort and companionship, helped shoulder his grief, and got him out of the house.

Not surprisingly, when I came on the scene seven years ago, Mya had little use for me. I was the other woman, competing for her master's time and attention. Eventually, after I tossed Mugsy, her favorite toy, 100 times, and



AT HOME WITH
Marni Jameson

supplied an ample flow of treats and belly rubs, she decided, just maybe, she could make a little room in the relationship for me.

Back then, Mya was athletic and alert. She could jump like LeBron James and effortlessly catch (and release) lightning-fast lizards. A born watchdog, she supervised the house and inspired respectful fear in all trespassers.

When her two younger pup brothers came along, she became a tolerant, if reluctant, older sister.

Today, at 13-plus years old, close to 80 in human years, Mya is



Let 'em lie A soft bed, a nightlight, and a quiet place to be alone are a few ways we can help older pets feel more comfortable at home. Photo courtesy of Dreamstime/Jaromir Chalabala

slowing down. She eats less and sleeps more. She doesn't see well, and her penchant for long walks exceeds her stamina. When she gets up from a nap, she's stiff, and, like me, often forgets why she

walked into a room.

D.C. and I talk often about what would make Mya happier or more comfortable at home. And I imagine, given that 67% of U.S. households have a pet, says the

American Pet Products Association survey, similar conversations must be happening in homes across America.

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