WHO'S A GOOD DOG?

Who's a Good Dog?

AND HOW TO BE A BETTER HUMAN

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INTRODUCTION

We Dog

Before anything else, I need to introduce you to my canine companion Bella. She has been my collaborator on the research and writing of this book, and more than any other dog I've lived with, she's challenged me to think differently about good dogs and how I can be a good human in relation to a dog. You'll learn more about Bella as we go, but here are a few starters.

When she's curled up asleep, Bella looks like a black bean. But when she gets up, she unfurls the distinctive tricolor markings of her Australian shepherd genes (37.5 percent, according to results of her doggie DNA test)—white paw-shoes with brown socks, a white chest and belly, and a white-tipped tail. Her large velvety ears point out sideways from her head when she's relaxed, giving her a striking resemblance to Yoda from *Star Wars*. These past couple of years, her muzzle has become speckled with gray, as have the tips of her ears and the edges of her hind legs. She'll be nearly thirteen by the time this book is published, a fact that sends cold spikes of terror through me. I cannot imagine a post-Bella life.

Bella occupies my heart and soul.

When Bella meets another dog—and she enjoys meeting most new dogs—a patch of hair on her lower back, right at the base of her tail, stands on end. We call this her shark fin.

Bella's best canine friend is Poppy.

Bella has an ear-piercing bark, which, when I'm not expecting it, makes me jump and sends a surge of adrenaline through my veins. Thankfully, she employs the bark sparingly—when a magpie or jay is on the porch, when the UPS delivery truck comes down the driveway, or when someone enters the house. She also always barks immediately and very insistently after breakfast as she is on the way to the door for morning pee time. She has a special yodel that she reserves for the excitement of "bed." When she wants something, she growls her request.

For as long as we've known her, Bella has had a slight limp in her left leg. When we took Bella to the veterinarian for a wellness check soon after we brought her home from the shelter, we asked about the limp. The vet said she thought the leg had been injured in the past and had healed poorly. Maybe Bella had been hit by a car, she wondered. Or a human? Bella's serious mobility challenges started in July of 2020, when she tore her right cranial cruciate ligament. Although the ligament had likely been deteriorating for some time, it finally ruptured one day after Bella unexpectedly leapt off the back of our all-terrain vehicle to investigate a dog walking past the driveway.

We knew immediately that something was wrong: she wouldn't put any weight on her right rear foot. We took her to the vet for x-rays and got the stomach-punch news that Bella had a complete ligament rupture and that we should strongly consider surgery. The surgery would involve cutting her tibia, rotating it, and inserting a plate to hold it in place. We decided to go ahead. About two months after tibial plateau leveling osteotomy (TPLO) surgery, when Bella was finally liberated from the cone and we thought everything was going well, she walked out into the front yard to pee and her kneecap popped out of place.

We were urged to try corrective surgery for the kneecap. After another grueling month of painful recovery, Bella's cast came off, and we saw that the kneecap was still dislocated. The surgeon offered to try again, at a discounted rate, but we ran for the hills.

Bella's "bad" left leg is now her good leg; her right leg bows out and then collapses, and with each step her body lists to one side and then the other like a ship in a storm. Although she is on no less than four different pain medications, walking is still painful. And yet she gets around. Her capacity for adaptation amazes me.

Bella hates it when I sneeze. She droops to the ground, as if covering her head with her hands and readying for a blow. I have no explanation for this sneeze phobia.

Every thirty minutes or so when I'm at my desk and Bella is at her desk (her blue dog bed), she'll flip onto her back and lie belly up. My eye always catches on the little green line tattooed on her stomach, identifying that she was spayed during her time at the shelter.

We know very little about her first year of life, only that she was picked up off the street as a stray by Animal Control in Longmont, Colorado, and taken to the Longmont Humane Society. We were at the shelter looking for a dog to adopt on the day Bella was first put out on the floor. Perhaps because she was especially cute—with her huge ears, white socks, and deep brown eyes with little brown "eyebrow" patches—she was in a free-standing kennel right by the adoption desk and we saw her as we walked in. I sat down on the floor next to the kennel and started talking softly to Bella, trying to make friends. She looked at me sideways and growled. That's how it has been.

In the medical notes taken during home hospice care for our dog Maya, Bella was described as "busy." "Busy," in vet lingo, seems to be a euphemism for "needs careful management," which in turn is a euphemistic way of describing dogs

who cannot or choose not to follow the normal expectations of human society and may bite or otherwise act "inappropriately" in certain situations. Bella is not a huge fan of humans, unless they belong to her very small inner circle, which currently consists of seven people. If an unfamiliar person approaches or tries to touch her head, she will lift her lip and, if they keep coming, she'll give a warning nip. We rarely have people over to our house because we worry about Bella's behavior. When guests come inside, she barks for several long minutes, during which time we awkwardly try to talk over the noise, all the while feeling slightly embarrassed. Bella then settles into an uneasy watchfulness, staying close to me or my husband and eyeing our company suspiciously, jumping to her feet and resuming her barking if anyone gets up and moves around. I never feel completely relaxed when other people are within Bella's orbit. Yet going to other people's houses or going out and about are also hard because I don't like to leave Bella behind. I feel anxious and at loose ends when separated from Bella, like a piece of me is missing.

Bella is a hardcore micromanager, carefully tracking all activity within the house. We are always under surveillance. She shadows me from room to room. If I go outside, she waits at one of three stations (front door, sliding glass door, sofa) until I safely return. When my husband and I are both home but doing different things, she divides her time, moving back and forth at regular intervals between where he is and where I am.

Bella has a deep appreciation for toys. She brings a stuffed toy with her on our short little walks and when we go places in the car. Mostly she just carries her toy, but every so often she performs what I imagine to be a genetically encoded bite-kill sequence, vigorously shaking the toy while growling and making little hopping movements. She rotates her toy affections according to a schedule that I don't understand. At some point,

a given toy will be de-stuffed, shredded, and abandoned once the pieces become too small for tug-of-war. In the current rotation is a fuzzy blue yeti, a flea with bulging yellow eyes and neon green antennae, a Chuckit! cube that is bigger than Bella's head, a pink squeaky alligator, and a purple dinosaur skin (a scrap of fabric is all that remains).

Bella would be described by dog trainers as "highly food motivated." She will eat almost anything and is particularly fond of peanut butter, bananas, watermelon, and frozen green beans. Lettuce is one of the rare foods she doesn't seem to like, although she will manage if it is coated in salad dressing. She also loves to eat snow and will dip her head as she walks in the wintertime, scooping in mouthfuls like a mini-excavator.

Bella, like me, is a creature with strong commitments to habit and ritual.

Bella is a dog who some would say needs to be fixed. She is damaged, reactive. One (ex-)friend, when I told her that Bella bites my feet in the bed if I accidentally kick her, exclaimed, "I can't believe you put up with that. If she were my dog, she'd be on her way straight back to the shelter!"

Bella has challenged my thinking about dogs, especially my thinking about what it means to be a good dog. Because Bella is not, by outside standards, a good dog. She is noncompliant, intractable. She is cranky and has limited tolerance for human beings. She steals food from the counter and knocks over the trash cans. She doesn't do what I ask, unless it aligns with her own agenda or I have offered adequate compensation.

Bella is perfect just as she is, *and* she could use a little improvement.

Katie the vet, in explaining Bella's "issues," said she just has a small circle of trust and sees it as her lifework to keep this circle together and safe. "She's just a We dog." I, in turn, am a We human when it comes to Bella.

ONE

The Difficulty of Being a (Pet) Dog

> The Dog, Day 751. My captors continue to torment me with bizarre rubber squeak toys. They eat lavish meals in my presence while I am forced to subsist on dry cereal. The only thing that keeps me going is the hope of eventual escape . . . that, and the satisfaction I get from occasionally ruining some piece of furniture. I fear I may be going insane.
>
> MY NEIGHBOR'S DOORMAT[1]

This is a book about living ethically with dogs we bring into the human home environment to be our pets and companions.

About 20 percent of the world's billion dogs live as pet or companion dogs, under conditions of confinement within the four walls of a home and functionally dependent on a human to provide all their basic needs. The population of pet dogs—now at roughly 180 million—has mushroomed over the past several decades, and this demographic trend shows no sign of slowing. Not only are more and more people acquiring pet dogs, but the ways in which people and dogs are living together in homes has been changing, and these changes are posing new challenges for both species.

I have a sense—shared by many in the dog world—that pet dogs are not doing well. The millions of dogs living in closest association with humans are in crisis. This concern runs counter to the narrative about pet dogs nurtured in our imaginations by the media. Magazine and newspaper stories tout the wonders of twenty-first-century life as a dog. Dogs have access to top-notch veterinary care, high-quality food, soft bedding, shelter from heat and cold, and protection from parasites and diseases. But these outward signs of good care obscure the discomforts that many dogs are experiencing.

Despite being well cared for, many, perhaps even most, companion dogs are living with high levels of anxiety. A 2020 study published in *Scientific Reports*, which evaluated the medical records of nearly fourteen thousand dogs, found that three-quarters of these dogs suffer from some anxiety-related problem. About a third of dogs were reported to have a noise sensitivity, including but not limited to fear of thunderstorms and fireworks.[2] Anxiety is a normal physiological reaction to stimuli and has evolved to keep organisms alive. But anxiety at levels experienced by pet dogs goes well beyond any adaptive response to the environment. It is easy to gloss over the impact of this finding. But stop for a moment and think about it. Our dogs are suffering emotionally, every day.

Another indicator of a canine crisis is what appears to be an epidemic of behavioral problems. In a large survey conducted by data analyst Ian Dinwoodie and colleagues at a center studying canine behavior, roughly 85 percent of dog guardians reported that their dogs had behavior problems.[3] A similar study by Ryoko Yamada and colleagues at the Veterinary Laboratory of Ethology in Tokyo found that 86 percent of guardians said their dogs had unwanted behaviors.[4] Similar levels of dissatisfaction with how dogs behave have been confirmed in study after study.

Taken together, these findings point to two intertwined issues: dogs are having a hard time with people, and people are having a hard time with dogs. Dogs appear to be under extreme stress and are struggling to adapt to the very unnatural "ecosystem" of the twenty-first-century human home and the unnatural demands we place on them. People, in their turn, are struggling to live harmoniously with dogs. Despite how much we love dogs, we also find a great deal to dislike about dog behavior. Indeed, if the research accurately reflects human experience, we seem to find most of what dogs do annoying or unacceptable, and the behavior of highly stressed, slightly unhinged dogs can be especially challenging. Dogs just don't behave according to plan.

A complex constellation of demographic, cultural, aesthetic, historical, and economic factors is converging on dogs and their people, making it harder for us to coexist. I'll suggest a few of the things that I think are happening; there are likely many other things going on as well. We'll come back to each of these later in the book. As you'll notice, these factors are interacting and overlapping.

1. More dogs are living as pets than ever before. The number of pet dogs around the world has been steadily growing every year for roughly two hundred years, and the pace of growth has accelerated over the last decade. We're up to about 83 million pet dogs in the United States alone, where two-thirds of all households contain at least one pet dog. With a greater density of dogs, there is also a greater need for dogs to be tightly constrained.

2. There are also more people. Places are more crowded, and human presence is more condensed. What this means for dogs is less freedom because, as the density of human and dog populations increases, the tolerance for "loose" dogs decreases and the potential for dog-dog and human-dog conflict goes up.

3. Dogs are being kept in more intensively captive conditions than ever before and are experiencing extreme levels of physical and sensory constraint. Many pet dogs live almost entirely within the walls of a home or apartment, with little to no opportunity to move beyond this domestic box—a living situation I would describe as "intensively homed." When dogs do go out in the world, their movements and sensory engagement with the world are mediated by collars and leashes and fences. The qualifier "homed" could imply that dogs who do not live within human homes are "homeless," when, in fact, free-ranging dogs *do* have quite expansive homes. Indeed, it may be more accurate to describe free-ranging dogs as truly homed, with the freedom to choose and defend their own home range within a given ecosystem. Pet dogs, by contrast, must settle temporarily into whatever physical space their human owner places them. When I use the term "homed," then, I mean it in the narrow sense to refer to a dog who currently inhabits the ecosystem of a human home.

4. Intensively homed pet dogs suffer from social isolation, particularly isolation from self-determined social interactions with other dogs.

5. Human home environments expose dogs to a range of stimuli that are unnatural, unpleasant, and anxiety provoking and from which they cannot escape, such as strongly scented cleaners and detergents and loud noises from TVs, microwaves, and sirens; at the same time, home environments fail to provide adequate dog-appropriate sensory stimulation, leading to boredom, frustration, and ennui.

6. Dogs are being excessively "de-dogged." They are expected to suppress many of their natural instincts and species-specific behaviors, such as scent marking, roaming, digging, chewing, and scavenging. They are also frequently asked to do things that are unnatural, such as walking "politely" on a leash, balancing a biscuit on their nose, or riding on a skateboard.

7. Our dogs have been "hired" to do emotional labor on a scale and in ways never seen before. Dogs are no longer just companions or work partners. They are therapists and fur-covered antidepressants. People acquire dogs for emotional support, taking advantage of the profound emotional synchronicity between human and dog and the empathetic capacities of canines. The emotional labor may be taking a serious toll on dogs, who are like sponges soaking up pools of human despair.

8. Our expectations of dogs have changed. We want dogs who don't bark, don't shed, don't drool (all of which breeders promise they can deliver); we want dogs to be "perfectly behaved" (which dog trainers and training books promise they can deliver in as little as seven days); we want easygoing, friendly, compliant dogs.

9. Many of the methods and technologies used to train dogs and modify their behavior cause lasting psychological damage.

10. As a result of their isolation and captivity, combined with our expectations of what constitutes good behavior, dogs often have limited autonomy, choice, and control over their lives.

Dogs are not the only ones facing an untenable situation. People who are trying to give their dogs a good life are also struggling, as are professionals such as trainers, behaviorists, and veterinarians who work directly with dogs and the people who care for them. So, what can we do about it? We can take a close look at human-dog relations and see where things are going wrong and explore how to shift expectations and assumptions so we can do things better. Each of us who shares our home with a four-legged companion can become more attuned to the complexities of coexistence.

SIDEBAR: A SHORT COVID-19 DETOUR

It is worth mentioning COVID-19 as an additional and perhaps significant factor in human-dog relations. It is too early to know exactly how the situation of pet dogs changed because of the pandemic and whether COVID-19 will shift the long-term trajectory of dog-keeping practices, so I'm not going to say much. But it seems likely that the pandemic will be more than simply a blip in human-dog relations.

What do we know for sure? Many homed dogs experienced profound upheaval in their daily lives, just as humans did. The patterns of canine life abruptly changed, in parallel with the changes in human life. Dogs who were used to time alone when their humans went to work were suddenly never alone; dogs who were used to daily excursions to the park to play with friends were in lockdown. Humans were suffering emotionally and physically, and dogs certainly felt the effects.

Patterns of dog acquisition abruptly changed, too. Early in the pandemic, there was a frenzy of dog acquisition from shelters, breeders, internet suppliers, and other sources. Two years into the pandemic, the tides have shifted. Shelters in many places across the United States and around the world are suddenly awash with surrendered dogs. The Denver Animal Shelter, to offer an example from my small corner of the world, saw a 35 percent increase in surrenders of dogs during the first half of 2022, compared to the same time frame in 2019. Not only are dogs coming into the shelter, but they are spending longer periods of time at the shelter before finding a new home. Echoing a concern of many shelters and rescues, Denver Animal Shelter warns that they are in a "capacity crisis."[5]

What do we not yet really know? In what ways did the pandemic affect dogs acquired during the pandemic, and how does this compare to the pandemic's effect on dogs who were already part of a household? Will dogs who were puppies during the lockdown phase of the pandemic suffer from lack of socialization with other dogs

and unfamiliar humans? How might this manifest? Is the pandemic triggering an epidemic of separation-related disorders in dogs who have not learned how to be alone? Are the behavioral problems we're seeing now qualitatively different from prepandemic behavioral problems? Has dog welfare improved during the pandemic because people have been home more and have focused more time and energy on their canine friendships? Or has it gotten worse because when people are home more there is greater opportunity for them to get into conflict with their dog? Have dogs suffered from being locked inside with lonely, anxious people? Or has the emotional work carried out by dogs during the pandemic given them a sense of purpose? It will be fascinating to follow along as researchers try to unpack what has happened and identify what changed, how, and whether the changes are going to be permanent.

LIVING WITH DOGS

Dogs and humans occupy a shared ethical space and engage in a mutual negotiation of rules, boundaries, and appropriate behaviors. This book is an exploration of this shared space—though mainly, of course, from the human perspective. My aim is to invite the individual reader into a more curious and, hopefully, a more mindful and rewarding relationship with their individual dog. I am not offering a "right way" to live with dogs; I don't believe there is any such thing. There are multitudes of possible human-dog relationships that can be mutually enhancing and allow all partners a life well lived, where experiences and sensations are, on balance, richly satisfying and fulfilling and interesting. And, within every intersection of shared lives, there are compromises, failures, and heartache. These are just part of the package. And vexingly, many things in our lives with dogs are at once both good and not good (e.g., leashes). Let's explore the ambiguities in the coming chapters.

This book, then, is about the specific instance of choosing to overlap and intersect with the life of a dog by bringing her into our home. I am talking to you about you and the four-legged furry, wet-nosed miracle who might just be staring at you expectantly, hoping you'll put down this book and do something interesting together.

TWO

Human-Dog Relations

What does it mean to live well with a dog?

I am not asking whether it is ethical to keep dogs as pets in the first place, although this is a good question. Nor am I venturing into the many ethically fraught questions surrounding how we acquire dogs—the commodification of sentient beings, the cruelty of fracturing canine families, and exploitative breeding practices. Let's set aside these difficulties for now and work where we are.

How can we best deal with the very messy circumstances of our lives with dogs, specifically with the dogs we keep in our homes and call our companions? If we decide, as individuals, to bring dogs into our lives, we are creating for ourselves an obligation to be good stewards. What exactly responsible stewardship looks like is hard to spell out because each human-dog relationship is unique and each human home is its own ecosystem, but in the most general terms we can minimize and ameliorate harms imposed by pet-keeping practices and do our best to practice kindness and promote flourishing. Although there is no such thing as the "perfect dog guardian," nearly all of us can be doing better than we are.

The moral ecosystem of human and dog is rich, complex, and dynamic. Dogs are not merely passive objects of our ethical concern and care, but cocreators of a (hopefully) rich and meaningful shared experience. Feminist scholar Donna Haraway suggests that when species meet there arises an opportunity for mutual respect, esteem, noticing, and paying attention.[1] We can hold each other in courteous regard, respond to each other, experience reciprocity. Greater mindfulness in our relations with dogs can help foster habits of courteous regard that have immense power to shape our interactions with our dogs in positive ways. The goal is to change how we *do* things by altering how we *see* things.

This chapter offers some general considerations for thinking through our individual relationships with dogs. These will serve to orient the focused exploration of specific aspects of our daily care for and interactions with dogs that follows in chapters 3–7. I'll suggest

- two general moral principles to guide human-dog relations: nonharm and kindness;
- two ways to shift our attitude and get into the right headspace: astonishment and beginner's mind;
- some ideas for how to pay attention: ask what it's like to be a dog, make ethograms, and practice "Becoming Dog"; and, finally,
- three rules of engagement for human-dog relations, or what I call the three Cs: collaboration, curiosity, and care.

MORAL PRINCIPLES

Are there general moral principles that can help guide us as we think about human-dog relations? Yes, and they are the same basic principles that guide human interactions with one another, the same principles that recur over and over in philosophical and theological traditions around the world and across

time. One principle is framed in the negative: don't inflict harm. And one, the golden rule, is framed in the positive: treat others as you would like to be treated, with kindness and respect.

Practicing Nonharm

There is something appealing about a moral aspiration framed in the negative. Rather than (or in addition to) a laundry list of "You ought to do *X*," we can maintain an intention to avoid causing harm. Yet the principle of nonharm (which philosophers sometimes refer to as nonmaleficence or nonviolence), despite its negative framing, is an active principle that requires concerted and sustained attention and choosing. Doing nothing, being passive, and being unaware can be sources of significant harm.

"Don't be cruel to animals" is about as close as one can come to a universally accepted moral principle. But the central problem faced by dogs isn't outright cruelty by humans—although that's a problem, too. We wound dogs without being deliberately cruel. Because we love our dogs, it's painful to acknowledge ourselves as sources of harm. And the more we look, the more potential sources of harm we may see. The captive environment within which we keep dogs imposes many unseen harms. We are imperfect, and our understanding of who our dog is, what she is experiencing, and what she needs is imperfect. We harm our dogs when we ignore their desires and fail to acknowledge their autonomy. We engage in various small aggressions toward our dogs (a smack on the nose with a newspaper, withholding affection when we are annoyed or distracted) and perform acts of minor neglect or unawareness (forgetting to freshen the water bowl, forgetting to take the dog outside to pee at the usual time, playing loud music while in the car with our dog). We may be unaware of violence committed against our dogs, such as a vet-

erinary encounter during which our frightened dog is muzzled and held down while a vet draws blood or gives an injection. Or we may be acutely aware but believe that this harm is unavoidable or that we cannot question the authority of an expert. So, what should we do?

Is it possible to eliminate all forms of harm experienced by our dogs? Certainly not. But we can go a long way toward reducing small moments of violence and sources of harm within our dogs' daily lives, mainly by becoming more mindful. An ethic of nonharm is both a principle and a practice. We can commit to the general principle of not harming, and we can commit to the daily enactment of the principle, fostering through practice a sustainable habit of mind and heart.

Practicing Kindness

A bumper sticker plastered on the back of Subarus around Boulder, Colorado, exhorts us to "Practice Kindness." The admonition has nice purchase in human-dog relations. There are two important pieces to practicing kindness: (1) *affirming* kindness as a fundamental ethical principle, and (2) *developing* the practice of being kind.

Kindness as an ethical principle is the embodied desire to prevent or alleviate harm and to promote the positive well-being of another. To be kind is to be generous, considerate, and sympathetic in one's feelings or actions. To be gentle and averse to causing harm. *Kind* is etymologically related to *kin*. Animals are our evolutionary kin, and dogs are almost our actual kin when we bring them into the domestic sphere of our family.

A practice is a habit, a way of being. We develop habits through daily repetition. Achieving small kindnesses (not squishing a bug, not reacting angrily to a motorist who cuts you

off) develops the kindness habit. Mastering kindness is rather like mastering a musical instrument such as the piano: You practice a little bit each day. You break things down into small sections and master each section as you build skill. Going even further, you listen to the quality of each individual note. And you practice playing correctly. If you practice a section with a mistake you simply reinforce the mistake. To work through the mistake, you need to figure out why the mistake is happening and unwind the steps that lead you into it. Kindness works in a similar way: you need to cultivate a daily habit. If you practice small unkindnesses repeatedly, these become habitual. Likewise, practicing kindness creates positive habit loops and being kind takes less and less effort. We become kind dog guardians by making kind choices again and again, until they become more and more habitual.

Kindness needs to be grounded in knowledge about dog behavior and biology; lack of knowledge gets in the way of kindness or even creates situations of unintended harm (e.g., exposing a dog to sustained loud noise because we're ignorant of the sensitivity of dogs' ears). In contrast (see below on beginner's mind), accumulating scientific knowledge about dog cognition and emotion is not a formula for kind treatment or satisfying relationships. Indeed, an obsession with the science of dogs can get in the way of just being with them. This is in part because canine science tends to flatten out difference. The behavior of twenty dogs—or whatever *n* is—will be averaged out to the mean, and the behavior of the outliers fades into an invisible background.[2] Deindividualizing leads to a reduction of empathy.[3] Science also objectifies; it deliberately creates an emotional distance between us and the object of study.

Dogs are not passive objects of scientific study, nor are they passive objects of our care and teaching; they are active cocreators of a shared life. Dogs practice kindness toward us and often, it must be said, practice it more consistently than we do.

ATTITUDE

Kindness and nonharm are *lived*, embodied principles, not abstractions. To cultivate a daily practice of living well with our dogs, it helps to get into the right headspace: a place of receptivity and openness. There are a million ways to adjust our attitude. I'll just mention two that I find especially useful, astonishment and beginner's mind.

Astonishment

> Instructions for living a life:
> Pay attention.
> Be astonished.
> Tell about it.
>
> MARY OLIVER, "SOMETIMES"

I take Mary Oliver's words as wise instructions for living a life *in the company of a dog*. In the company of Bella, I don't always pay attention, but I am trying. I am constantly astonished, not only by Bella but by every dog I meet. The word astonishment comes from the Latin root *tonare*, to thunder. To be astonished is to be stunned, to be struck suddenly by the wonder and awe of what we have encountered.

Beginner's Mind

We are awash in human expertise about dogs, constantly being advised by trainers, behaviorists, nutritionists, veterinarians, and other "canine professionals" about who dogs are and what they need. We are continually flooded with information about dog behavior and cognition, much of it fascinating and instructive. Indeed, all of us who seek to live more thoughtfully with dogs should absorb as much information as we can because

knowing about dogs guides us in providing them with what they need to be happy and healthy. As ethologist Marc Bekoff says, anyone who lives with a dog should become dog literate.

But there is a danger in becoming overreliant on dog experts if we pass over to others the responsibility for being observant, insightful, and compassionate. At one point in my career, I found myself so busy trying to keep up with the flood of new research into canine cognition and behavior that I lost sight of what Bella was trying to teach me throughout the moments of our daily interactions. I was trying to understand Bella's behavior through layers and layers of complication and data. Rather than more expertise, what I needed was less. I needed to cultivate beginner's mind: open, empty of presuppositions and expectations.

Zen monk and teacher Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* is a collection of his talks given in the 1960s to students at the Los Altos Zen group. In the introduction to *Zen Mind*, Richard Baker says that "Zen mind is one of those enigmatic phrases used by Zen teachers to make you notice yourself, to go beyond the words and wonder what your own mind and being are." The practice of Zen mind is "beginner's mind" or *Shoshin*: "The innocence of the first inquiry—what am I? . . . The mind of the beginner is empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all possibilities."[4]

At the start of the first lecture in the book, Suzuki explains, "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few." The goal of Zen practice is to keep the beginner's mind and not to lose, through repetition, practice, and expertise, "the limitless meaning of original mind."[5] "The beginner's mind," he goes on, "is the mind of compassion. When our mind is compassionate, it is boundless."[6]

Beginner's mind can offer us two interconnected benefits in relation to our dogs: (1) it can help loosen the grip of preconceptions about who dogs are and, especially, what makes a

dog "good," and (2) it can help us be with our dogs, from moment to moment, in an open-minded and compassionate way.

What I have tried to do—and am still trying to do—is to let assumptions, preconceptions, and prior knowledge fall away as I encounter Bella and other dogs. It is hard work.

Within Western traditions of moral philosophy, ethics is often thought of as a skill linked with "expert mind"—with knowledge, rationality, and autonomous choice. The more we know, the better our ethical decisions, or so the logic goes. Becoming more ethical involves becoming more rational, more knowledgeable, gathering more and more expertise to make better, more informed choices. Yet this may not be the most productive approach. In *Straw Dogs*, philosopher John Gray contrasts the fetishizing of rationality and choice in Western moral philosophy with the Taoist view of the good life. From the Taoist perspective, Gray writes, "ethics is simply a practical skill, like fishing or swimming. The core of ethics is not choice or conscious awareness, but the knack of knowing what to do. It is a skill that comes with practice and an empty mind."[7]

When we step back from reliance on experts, we step into greater responsibility for our own behavior and choices. We become mindful of our own inner state, our limitations, and our self-righteousness. We are all beginners. There are no true dog experts except dogs themselves.

American Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön relates a teaching about taking responsibility for ourselves: "It's like what the Zen Master Suzuki Roshi once said. He looked out at his students and said, 'All of you are perfect just as you are *and* you could use a little improvement.'"[8]

ATTENTION

Being kind to our dogs and protecting them from harm flows from mindful awareness of who they are, what they are experiencing, and what they need. Because our dogs are so

deeply integrated into our lives, because they feel so much like an extension of us, it is possible to stop really noticing them. We take for granted the daily ebb and flow of our lives together. How can we pay better attention?

What Is It Like to Be a Dog?

In *Knowledge of Life*, French philosopher of science Georges Canguilhem writes, "What light are we then so sure we are contemplating that we declare all eyes other than man's to be blind? What meaning are we so certain of having given to the life in us that we declare any behavior except our own gestures to be stupid? Doubtless, the animal cannot resolve all the problems we present to it, but this is because these problems are ours and not its own."[9] Canguilhem's complaint against modern biology is both scientific and moral: a narrowly human-centric line of inquiry fails to reveal the true wonder of other lifeways; a privileging of human experience and an unquestioned valuing of human life over the lives of other creatures lead to an ossification of fellow feeling.

The challenge of decentering human experience has been met, at least partially, by the work of ethologists such as Jakob von Uexküll, who have insisted that to study other forms of life we need to imaginatively step outside of our own lifeworld and view each species from within its own ecological lifeworld or, in Uexküll's German formulation, its *Umwelt*. In a beautifully paradoxical way, we can become more objective in our study of other beings by becoming more subjective: by trying to see the world through their eyes (or noses or whatnot), by trying to interpret their gestures within their own language, and by trying to understand what evolutionary problems they have faced and have sought to resolve.[10]

Scientific investigation—if undertaken in the spirit of a

searching into (*in-vestigare*)—has the potential to awaken curiosity and broaden our sense of empathy. The essential Umweltian question, the inquisitive stance, is this: "What is it like to be a . . . ?" What is it like to be a bat, a barn swallow, a tick? And, of course, what is it like to be a dog? We don't need to be professional scientists to pursue this line of exploration. Indeed, I believe that all dog guardians would benefit greatly from more time spent walking in the paws of their furry companion. We can and should ask, daily and even hourly, what is it like to be a dog? And, especially, what is it like to be my dog?

During my imaginings of what it is like to be a dog, I am, like Mary Oliver, overwhelmed by a sense of astonishment. Olfaction is the most obviously astonishing capacity of dogs. Could we smell-challenged humans catch a scent from hundreds of feet away as it swirls through invisible currents of air? Follow the trail of another person by sniffing their footprints, using the strength of the odor gradient to determine which direction they most recently went?[11] What is it even like to have such a nose? I am both astonished and envious.

The more I've asked "What is it like to be a dog?" the more unfamiliar these animals seem to me. They become more Other. This sense of alterity can, perhaps counterintuitively, be a source of *increased* empathy. The typical formulation is "greater understanding of sameness = greater empathy." But empathy toward dogs is often hindered by presumptions about what their behavior means, whether because we've been told by a dog expert that "*X* behavior means *Y*" or because we have never been sufficiently curious. Indeed, I have found it useful to observe dogs in the same way I observe wild animals, such as the fox who frequents the culvert at the end of our driveway or the nuthatches who flit around the trunk of the ponderosa outside our window or the occasional Abert's squirrel who scolds me from high in the forest canopy as I walk one of the local

trails. My instinct, when spotting these animals, is to stop still and become quiet so that I don't scare them away and can watch as long as possible; I have the sense of peering through a small window into a world of mystery and awe.

There are many ways of looking at our dogs. One is with the eyes of a hiker moving through the wilderness, absorbing nature's beauty, beholding with awe. One is with the eyes of targeted love and affection, from within a bonded relationship. And one is with the more objective eyes of a scientist or an aspiring naturalist (which we can all be, regardless of our educational background).

In his beautiful guide to the world of birds, *What It's Like to Be A Bird*, David Allen Sibley says, "You will learn faster if you can be an active observer—draw sketches, take notes, write poetry, take photos—whatever will make you look a little more carefully and a little longer. . . . The more you notice the more you will learn."[12] One thing I love about Sibley's instruction is that he invites us to meld the scientific into the creative, to be both observer and participant, naturalist and storyteller. A narrative scientific account allows those who receive it to imagine the feeling of "What it is like to be a . . ."

Ethograms as Ethics

One of the tools used by ethologists as they observe animal behavior is an ethogram, a catalog of behaviors. If you were getting a PhD in animal behavior, there might be good and bad ethograms. But for our purposes here, there is no right or wrong way to do an ethogram. Any ethogram is a good ethogram—and with practice, your ethograms will likely get better and better. Ethograms are exercises in mindfulness, attention, and being present. You can think of an ethogram as a way of getting to know your dog and noticing how and what you notice, so that

it is an ethogram of yourself, too. Note the shared etymology of *ethics* and *ethogram*: *ethics* is from the Greek *ēthos*, "nature, disposition," and has come to mean "the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations."[13]

The possibilities for what we can observe and record (with lists, narratives, poems, photos, drawings, dance, etc.) are endless. Here are some ideas for you and your dog:

- Your dog at rest (really sleeping vs. resting but aware, dreaming, when and where she likes to sleep)
- Your dog in solitary play or exploration
- Your dog interacting with other dogs (in dyads or in groups, with familiar dogs/friends and with unfamiliar dogs). Are there some dogs your dog doesn't seem to like? Why do you suppose?
- Your dog interacting with humans (with you, with other familiar people, with strangers)
- Your dog's foraging and scavenging strategies on walks and in the home
- Your dog's social circle. Who are the important humans (both liked and disliked); who are the important canine friends, enemies, and frenemies (in the house, in the neighborhood, at the dog park)? With which other species does your dog interact (squirrels, birds, cats)?
- Your dog's home range and territory. Make an ethogram of what you think might be territorial behaviors. How does your dog use the space within the home (which spots are for rest, which for being vigilant)?
- Your dog's activities: playing, resting, foraging, scent-marking, eating, drinking, peeing, pooping, patrolling, soliciting attention
- Your dog's parts of the body: nose, ears, eyes, whiskers, hackles, tail, body, legs, jowls
- Your dog's vocalizations: growls, barks, howls, whines, silence, or

sounds that don't fit any of these categories and that only your dog knows how to make, like the "fft" sound made by John Steinbeck's dog Charley

Becoming Dog

Ethograms are one way of seeing our dogs more clearly. But they are a detached way of seeing. They ask us to observe our dogs objectively. Another possibility is to try to become dogs.

In his marvelous book *Becoming Animal*, philosopher and ecologist David Abram invites us into a new way of seeing, which is, of course, a very old way of seeing: removing layers of disconnection between ourselves and the rest of the natural world. This can best be accomplished not by seeing animals differently but by becoming different ourselves. Remembering—not intellectually, but physically, sensually—that we, too, are animals.

Abram argues that pets and other domesticated animals can be a hindrance to our rewilding, a blockage between humans and nature. He is probably right that pets often do further disconnect us from nature, but it doesn't have to be this way. Perhaps Abram has never lived with a dog or explored the possibilities that dogs offer in our quest to "become animal." Philosophical writer and dog trainer Vicki Hearne, in *Adam's Task*, relates how her dog taught her about the wind and invited her to pay attention to the movement of air currents—and smells—across a landscape. She expanded her sensory world and at the same time opened new lines of communication with her dog. Other people who have done nose work with their dogs report a similar uptick in sensory awareness of wind direction. Nose work is not only a wonderful form of enrichment for companion dogs but also a form of sensory enrichment for us.

Another exercise in "Becoming Dog" that I love is described by dog trainer Kristi Benson in a blog titled "The Essence of a

Dog."[14] Benson decided, one day, to follow her dog Mischa on their daily walk, rather than asking Mischa to follow her. Benson sniffed what Mischa sniffed (even the pee), darted here and there where Mischa darted, walked on all fours, and felt the cold sting of the granular snow on her bare hands. Benson's goal was not to Become Dog but to explore agency during a "free choice" walk (a point to which I'll return in chapter 3). But a side benefit of following Mischa was an awakening to the woods, an enhanced awareness of sensory experiences that are often underused by *Homo sapiens* during the behavior "walking the dog."

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: THE THREE Cs

Pulling everything together now and preparing ourselves to leap into the messy everyday lives of humans and dogs, we can distill from our principles, attitude, and attention three rules of engagement to help us navigate our relationships.

The first rule—and the one most often overlooked—is that each human-dog relationship is a delicate work of *collaboration* (#1). As dogs work hard to adapt themselves to our way of life, we can work equally hard to adapt ourselves to theirs.

An attitude of *curiosity* (#2) fosters collaboration. It can help us *care* (#3) well for our dogs and can generate compassion for animals and people alike.

Collaboration

In *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, anthropologist Anna Tsing writes, "Staying alive—for every species—requires livable collaborations. Collaboration means working across difference." Working across difference, in turn, leads to "transformation through encounter."[15] Our lives with dogs are cocreated. We work together in a shared experiential space to negotiate peaceful interactions. Many of the dog guardians I've talked to

speak of themselves as deeply transformed by their encounters with dogs, often through years of shared life together.

These encounters involve some friction. Recall the study by Yamada and colleagues that I mentioned in chapter 1, in which 86 percent of dog owners reported that their dog had at least one behavioral problem.[16] We could take this to mean that most dogs are very naughty. But a more accurate interpretation would be that humans find it challenging to live with dogs. (I am not aware of any research into how many dogs report behavioral problems in their human.) When something isn't working, the first thing we might think is "What is wrong with my dog?" We might feel frustration and perhaps even anger at our dogs for causing a problem and take a unilateral approach to fixing the problem: fix the dog. A far more productive approach, however, is to look at the broader picture and try to figure out what your dog might be trying to communicate, what needs your dog is trying to meet or what challenges she might be experiencing, what expectations you are bringing to the table, and, then, how you and your dog might compromise. We can respond to friction in the spirit of *collaboration*—we and our dogs can work together to resolve differences of opinion or conflicting needs. We and our dogs must come to what veterinary behaviorist Karen Overall calls "negotiated settlements."[17]

You might object that humans are the problem solvers. When our dog displays problem behaviors, we should double down on the training or take our dog to a behaviorist. Training is, indeed, often conceived as something we do *to* our dog; information flows in one direction. But learning to live together in a shared space—particularly in a space that may be less conducive to our dog's needs than to our own—involves partnering with our dog to identify and work through problems and miscommunications. So, the first step toward a negotiated settlement is recognizing that we are engaged in a team effort.

The second step is to recognize that many of the behaviors we find challenging in our dogs are natural, species-specific behaviors. They are "good" behaviors (adaptive for dogs) that *we* have labeled "bad." Indeed, Yamada's definition of a "behavioral problem"—and the most common definition in the veterinary literature—is "a behavior that humans find annoying." That's not very scientific, is it?

In Yamada's study, the list of bad dog behaviors reported by guardians included barking, attention seeking, fear of loud noises, chasing small animals, pulling on the leash, and elimination in the wrong place, among others. These are all examples of dogs being dogs. Some behaviors on the bad dog list, such as tail chasing and snapping at the air, are symptomatic of psychological distress, a point to which we'll return in chapter 7. The catalog of reported behavioral problems in dogs is lengthy. Yamada's list has twenty-five items. Dogs, apparently, have *a lot* of problems.

Here's a quick exercise. Get out a pen and paper, write the words "Bad Dog" at the top, and catalog all your dog's behaviors that you find difficult, annoying, scary, or otherwise problematic. Did you get to twenty-five? If not, keep working.

Next, put a check mark next to all the entries that you think might be species-typical dog behavior. If you aren't sure what's species typical, just do your best. You might peek at a book on dog behavior, such as Marc Bekoff's *Canine Confidential* or John Bradshaw's *Dog Sense* or the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists' *Decoding Your Dog*. Online research is fine, too, but be warned that misinformation and confusion about dogs are as plentiful on the internet as hairs on a dog's back. (For some ideas about how to separate the internet wheat from the chaff, see the resources section at the end of this book.) Save your list. We'll come back to it later in the book.

The fact that most items on Yamada's bad dog list are ei-

ther normal dog behaviors or signs of pathology should give us pause. Maybe what needs to change isn't our dogs—we can't really expect them to put aside their "dogness"—but us, our perceptions and our expectations. If we can reframe problems as a mismatch in human expectations and canine behavioral needs, we may be motivated to find compassionate, workable compromises, because most dog guardians care a great deal about their dog's happiness and well-being.

Continuing with the theme of negotiated settlements, we might take a few minutes to reflect on our own difficult behaviors—what are some things that you do which might be challenging for or annoying to your dog? Do you have a short temper? Are you always late? Are you moody? Get another piece of paper and list twenty-five of your own behavioral problems and put a check next to any that might make your dog frustrated.

Looking beyond our own behavioral quirks, we can explore more broadly which aspects of life as a pet might be difficult for dogs and what compromises they are already making.

In bringing dogs into the home environment, we expect them to suppress behaviors that they are biologically highly motivated to perform. As we'll explore in the next chapter and throughout the rest of the book, we systematically try to de-dog our dogs. We also dramatically reduce their agency. We deny them the opportunity to forage for their own food; we allow them to pee and poop only at designated times and in designated places; we scold them for trying to be protective of us and for being afraid of human gadgets and loud noises and weird surfaces; we ask them to refrain from chewing shoes made with animal carcass, from digging holes in the soil, from roaming around to find friends or mates. And, above all, we drastically reduce the size of their territory, the sensory complexity of their environment, and the richness of their social worlds. Given how

much they compromise, it seems only fair that we should compromise, too.

We can compromise by adapting our house, our lifestyle, and our expectations to support our dogs in satisfying their needs as comfortably as possible, allowing them to engage in natural behaviors that don't put them or us in danger and that we can, when pressed, tolerate.

The term *dogification* is often used to describe the process of making a house safe *from* the dog, trying to anticipate and prevent total destruction if the guardian leaves for the afternoon. But what about making a house safe *for* the dog? As we'll explore in more detail in chapter 4, we might try to see and smell and listen to our home from our dog's point of view and mitigate potential sources of olfactory and auditory overload (getting rid of the air freshener that is supposed to cover up the smell of wet dog; turning off the loud music or TV; having multiple comfortable, moderately dirty, familiar-smelling beds for our dog; putting carpet runners over slippery floors).

Not only can our homes be safe, but they can also be rich and interesting from a sensory point of view. In their book *Total Cat Mojo*, Jackson Galaxy and Mikel Delgado use the phrase "urban planning" to refer to the process of setting up a home to accommodate the traffic flow of multiple species, such that everyone can move about freely and without conflict. With cats, this means thinking about vertical, not just horizontal, space and creating overpasses and underpasses by which cats can navigate around people and, in multispecies homes, around dogs.[18] The idea of urban planning applies beautifully to dogs, too, and might involve mapping the physical space, including the soundscape and smellscape of the home, and creating infrastructure such as dog doors that increase dogs' autonomy.

We also need to dogify our minds and expectations. When I hear someone say, "I hate barking" or "I can't stand dog hair

on my clothes," I think to myself, "I really hope you don't have a dog." Dogs cannot easily stop barking or get rid of their hair, nor is it reasonable to expect this of them. Let's embrace the Dog in our dogs.

Curiosity

We know dogs. But is it possible that familiarity breeds a certain complacency?

The gorgeous documentary film *My Octopus Teacher*, directed by Pippa Ehrlich and James Reed, follows filmmaker Craig Foster during a year free diving in a kelp forest off the coast of South Africa. During his time in the kelp forest, Foster developed a curiosity about and eventually formed a friendship with a common octopus who lived in the kelp forest. The ocean home of the octopus was foreign to Foster, as were her behaviors and lifeways. But Foster was deeply curious. Foster went to the kelp forest every day for almost a year, swimming for hours and hours in the octopus's world, learning her ways. (He never tried to name the octopus, which would have been to "petify" and thus also to patronize.) He watched her hunt, witnessed an attack by pyjama sharks that left her wounded, and observed her as she sought out a mate. Foster approached the octopus with openness and curiosity, with beginner's mind. Without assumptions and without empirical knowledge, he awakened to her and was astonished by her. His empathy for her grew to be ocean deep.

It struck me, while watching the film, that I have failed to be curious enough about Bella. Although I've spent over four thousand days in the company of Bella, I have not spent even one entire day observing her lifeways, trying to understand her habitat, her perceptual worldview. Perhaps precisely because she is not strange to me, I have failed to observe with an adequately open, curious mind.

We can have a curiosity about what dogs are experiencing in their lives with us. Likewise, we can accept the invitation to be curious about our emotional reactions to our dog or to other people who may interact with us and our dog. In mindfulness training, the student is often instructed to respond with curiosity to thoughts, emotions, and sensations—especially those that are uncomfortable. Pema Chödrön talks about this in her teachings. When someone criticizes you, she says, you may feel a tightness in your chest, your face may grow hot, or you may feel anger or resentment or anxiety.[19] We can learn to respond to these uncomfortable feelings with curiosity. This shifts the mind out of "something bad is happening, and I need to fight or flee" and into "what exactly am I feeling and why?"

Curiosity cultivates collaborative lifeways by increasing our openness to difference, which helps build empathy, and by giving us a strategy for dealing with the negative feelings and conflict that will inevitably arise for us in our shared lives with dogs. We have a greater capacity for compromise and negotiation when we understand the other's point of view.

Care

Domestication as an evolutionary process may or may not establish special moral responsibilities on the part of humans toward dogs. But the *individual* domestic relationship most certainly does. The moment we decide to bring a dog into our home and "ask" this dog to be our pet we have accepted a duty of care.

In her classic 1984 book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, feminist scholar and philosopher of education Nel Noddings argues that the caring relationship is basic to ethics. Moral responsibility is shaped by and should be understood at least partially in the context of our caring relation-

ships, those relationships that are "rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness."[20] "If we establish an affectionate relation," she says, "we are going to feel the 'I must,' and then to be honest we must respond to it." When we make a pet of an animal, we establish a caring relation and assume a set of caring responsibilities. "We might live ethically in the world without ever establishing a relation with any animal, but once we have done so, our population of cared-fors is extended."[21] Our ethical domain, she goes on to say, is both enriched and complicated.

The general contours of caring include supporting physical, emotional, and social well-being; providing a sense of comfort, contentment, happiness, and excitement about life; making rich experiences readily available; and protecting the cared-for from harm. I like the gerund form—as in "caring relationship"—because it is more active and bidirectional than the phrase "to care for." Although there is considerable overlap, being in a caring relationship is not the same as caring for, nor is it equivalent to being a caregiver. I was in a caring relationship with my mother as she died. I cared for her, and she simultaneously cared for me. We hired caregivers to help support us in our caring relationship. I am in a caring relationship with Bella; I care for her, and she cares for me. When Bella was recovering from TPLO surgery, I was her primary caregiver.[22] We'll return in chapter 3 to a detailed exploration of caring responsibilities for companion dogs.

Is the caring relationship between human and dog reciprocal? It certainly can be. A dog in an affectionate relationship with a human often does, indeed, provide various kinds of care: protection from harm, care for physical wounds (licking an injury), care for emotional wounds (providing the comfort of physical touch when sensing distress), and so forth. Does it make sense to say that dogs have a duty of care for us? Inasmuch as "duty" is understood as an internal tug, a physiological response aris-

ing out of and supporting attachment behavior, then yes. A dog affectionately bonded to a human might well experience what Noddings calls the "I must."

Caring is closely connected to curiosity. "Caring means becoming subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity, which requires knowing more at the end of the day than at the beginning," writes Donna Haraway, in the evocative language that makes her work so mind altering.[23] She expands this kernel of thought in *When Species Meet* a few pages later, inviting us into the possibilities for interspecies collaboration: "Response and respect are possible only in these knots [of species coshaping one another], with actual animals and people looking back at each other, sticky with all their muddled histories."[24]

Human-dog caring is not limited to the context of a particular domestic human-dog relationship, nor do our responsibilities to individual dogs and to dogs as a whole stop at the front door. Dogs often extend care to strangers, just as people often extend care to dogs with whom they have not accepted a duty of care as conceived by Noddings. People feel compelled to rescue dogs from abusive situations, to care for dogs being held in shelters, and to advocate for dogs by supporting protective legislation. Caring can take place on a large scale. During the particularly cold winter of 2018, an IKEA store in Catalia, Italy, opened its doors to stray dogs at night, so they could sleep on the rugs and stay warm.

Do *all* humans have an obligation to care for *all* dogs?

One might argue yes: because humans have an obligation to care for any and all animals who need our help; because humans have a special evolutionary relationship to dogs; because we humans have made dogs dependent on us; because humans put dogs in extremely untenable situations, so we owe it to them; because humans need to compensate for our propensity toward cruelty and neglect.

But one might also say no: people have a caring responsibility only for those dogs they have brought into the home as pets. Or somewhat more broadly, we should care for all dogs with whom we have established an affectionate relationship (e.g., as a volunteer at the Humane Society, I may form special affectionate relationships with certain dogs and may feel a responsibility to care for those individuals).

Here's how I would answer the question: we have an obligation to actively care for any dog we bring into our home or for whom we have accepted direct responsibility. For other dogs, other humans, and other animals outside the orbit of our caredfors, we should be guided not by duty but by compassion.

The next five chapters dig deeper into specific ethical issues that arise in our caring relationships with dogs. Each chapter, in one way or another, invites us to pay closer attention to the ways in which our efforts to care for dogs also constrain and limit their capacity for flourishing. This material could have been organized in many ways, and you'll see that themes and even specific problems are interlinked and resurface in different places.

Here is the basic skeleton for my chosen chapter progression.

Chapter 3 explores daily components of physical care to which all "responsible" dog guardians attend: feeding, elimination, exercise, grooming, and veterinary visits. These aspects of physical care are intimately tied to dogs' psychological and social well-being, pointing us toward chapter 4.

Chapter 4 focuses directly on the emotional and social well-being of dogs, on how the home environment can be both nurturing and stifling, calming and arousing, and on how to think more rigorously about meeting dogs' psychological needs.

Chapter 5 explores the use of tools and technologies in our daily interactions with dogs. I felt it was worth singling out tools

as an area of focus because these so strongly mediate our interactions with our dogs and our dogs' interactions with their world. Because tools figure so prominently in dog training, I wanted to talk about them before moving on to chapter 6.

Chapter 6 discusses human expectations about the behavior of dogs and how people go about trying to create good dogs through a practice known as dog training. We'll explore some of the goals and methods of training, especially the use of rewards and punishments, and note the considerable fallout for dogs from unmindful or coercive training. I'll highlight the enormous potential for collaborative learning in building healthy human-dog friendships.

In chapter 7, we'll dive further into human expectations about dog behavior, focusing on why dogs get labeled bad and why some reframing is needed. Although there are no "bad" dogs, there are many, many dogs who are behaviorally disturbed. How can we best understand and respond to their suffering? And how can humans and dogs work collaboratively toward more harmonious negotiated settlements?

A warning. As you read, you may come across information that makes you feel uncomfortable or guilty or ashamed—maybe there are things that you are doing or have done that you didn't know were harmful to your dog. I want you to know that I experience feelings like these nearly every day. Part of becoming a better human is an openness to failure and a willingness to forgive ourselves. Errors are opportunities for growth. Just as you want to be compassionate toward your dog, be compassionate toward yourself, too. Acknowledge your mistakes, affirm your good intentions, and move forward. We are all perfect, *and* we could all use a little improvement.

THREE

Care and Constraint

The quotidian tasks of caring for a dog—feeding, walking, providing a chance to poop and pee, and grooming—have surprisingly deep ethical reach. As we move through the day with our dogs, we make countless decisions, both small and large, and engage in conscious and unconscious negotiations with our moral principles and with our individual dog's needs. In each of these daily interactions, we are making decisions or have already made decisions about what our dogs need and about how far we are willing to inconvenience ourselves to meet these needs. Each of these decisions presents opportunities to be kind and nurturing; each also presents opportunities for harm. Each of these decisions might evoke some ambivalence about keeping a dog as a pet because our daily acts of care are so laced with threads of control and domination.

FEEDING

I met a guy in Whole Foods one day last spring. We were both in the pet food aisle, clad in our masks and trying to avoid be-

ing in each other's space. As I took down a bag of pumpkin and berry Skinny Minis, he smiled at me. "Something for the fur baby?" It took me a moment to realize what he had said, and then I felt a warm sense of bonding. "What is yours getting?" I asked, peering at the small bag in his hand. He held the package out for me to see: Elk Jerky for Hip and Joint Mobility. Food is love. But it is a very complicated love.

Unfair Dominance?

Arguably, food is the basis of our evolutionary relationship with dogs. In the beginning, dogs and humans meant, for each other, access to more and better food than each species might have had on their own. We were partners, collaborators. Now, food-acquisition patterns have shifted dramatically, at least for pet dogs, and things have become very one-sided: we control the food.[1] Our dogs eat what we say, when we say, in what manner we say, and by what rules we set. We discourage any efforts they may make to procure food for themselves. Indeed, one of the key acts of disobedience by dogs is "stealing" food that isn't meant for them or that hasn't yet been dispensed by us.

Much has been written about what kind of food we should feed our dogs and whether certain diets are nutritionally or ethically superior to others. This debate is important, and we'll come back to it in a moment. But first. Aren't we glossing over a more fundamental question? Is it ethical that we unilaterally control access to a fundamental survival need, as a way of maintaining control over the movement and behavior of another being? What does it do to the psychological well-being of an intelligent, highly capable animal to be so utterly dependent on another for survival? To be denied the fundamental job of provisioning for oneself and one's family? Should I feel guilty about making Bella beholden to me because I control the food?

We may tell ourselves that we are doing dogs a favor by providing them with good-quality, consistent food: they don't have to worry about going hungry, and they don't have to lift a paw. But it is worth considering what dogs have lost in this transition to intensive food captivity.

A Cornucopia of Moral Choices

Putting aside this broad and rather abstract query about whether we should feed them, let's explore what it means to attend responsibly to our obligation to feed our dogs well. A core duty of a responsible dog guardian is to provide consistent, predictable access to nutritionally appropriate food and fresh water. That sounds simple enough. But it isn't so simple, is it? And it is only the beginning. Over the past several years, considerations about feeding dogs have expanded to include behavioral and social needs related to food.

Below is a condensed list of some ethically fraught food-related decisions. You can probably add to this list some other things you've worried about.

What do we choose to feed our dog? (Kibble or homemade, raw or cooked, paleo or gluten-free, plant or animal protein?)

How much label reading and nutritional research is necessary to make informed choices?

What should we try to ensure that our dog doesn't eat, and how hard do we try to prevent unsanctioned eating? (Do we allow "people food"? Do we allow our dog to eat goose poop at the park? As I'm writing this, Bella is down in the field below our house digging under the snow with her snout and eating something, most likely elk poop. Should I go out and stop her?)

How many meals a day? Free access to food at all times, or restricted to mealtimes?

Whose opinions about dog nutrition and feeding do we consider authoritative and why?

How does cost figure in? Must you buy the most expensive kibble to show your love?

How do we conceptualize "treats"? (What counts as a treat? Is kibble a treat, if given at some time other than dedicated mealtime?)

Should our dog have to work or perform for food, or is food given for free?

Are there appropriate/designated places that our dog must eat? (Only in the kitchen, never at the table?)

How should we train our dog in relation to food? (Not at all, never to be pushy, or to be as opportunistic as possible?)

What do we define as a food-related behavior problem? (Begging, puppy dog eyes, drooling on our leg, counter surfing, resource guarding, "food aggression" such as lifting a lip if we try to take the bowl away?)

Why are begging for food, stealing food, and resource guarding considered bad, when arguably these are natural behaviors for a dog?

From what receptacle should our dog eat? (One designated bowl, or anything we put on the floor? Is plate licking acceptable or gross?)

Are you a bad dog guardian if your dog is fat? Slightly overweight? At what point does "a little chunky" become a welfare concern?

Bones or no bones? Rawhide? Vegan chews?

If a dog is fed meat, are certain animals OK to eat and others not OK to eat? (Would you let your dog eat canned cat? horse? cow? kangaroo? lamb? crickets? Why?)

Should you only buy dog foods certified as not having been tested on laboratory animals?[2]

I could go on and on with questions, but you probably already feel overwhelmed. I'm going to touch on just a sampling of these food- and feeding-related complications.

For the sake of discussion, let's break these many issues

down into a couple of general categories (which, of course, are intertwined) and then pick a couple of representative issues to explore in more detail. The categories overlap: (1) the role of food in physical well-being, including meeting nutritional requirements, supporting good health, and preventing disease and suffering, and (2) the behavioral and emotional components of food and feeding.

Physical Needs

Dogs need the right food, at the right time, in the right amount. Dog guardians often feel tremendous pressure to make the "right" food choices yet must generally do so without the benefit of an advanced degree in animal nutrition. We can obsess all day over whether we are getting these things just right—and so, following fitness guru Tony Horton's advice, we should do our best and forget the rest. There is no perfect diet for dogs, just better and worse.

We might aim, then, to find a diet that gives our dog energy to be physically active, doesn't upset their stomach, doesn't cause allergic reactions such as itchy skin, doesn't put them in a low mood, and accounts for their individualized medical needs. And, of course, we want to offer foods that our dog likes, or maybe even loves (see below for cautionary tale).

Access

Not only do we have to figure out what to feed, we also need to make choices about when and how to feed. One decision point is how tightly to control access to food. Decisions about or attitudes toward access to food spin into our negotiations during walks, meals, and training sessions. Each of us must decide, for example, whether to let our dogs forage for themselves when

we take them outside the walls of our home. It is almost certain that our dogs will try to procure food, stopping to eat goose poop, chew on deer legs, or gobble up a bit of garbage thrown out a car window or left by picnickers. How hard do we work to prevent this? And perhaps more important, why do we care so much? My own answers, when it comes to Bella, are complicated. I have an irrational worry (fueled by real events reported in the news) that some dog hater will have planted poisoned meatballs in a park frequented by dogs; I worry that Bella will break a tooth or swallow a sharp sliver of bone when she stops to gnaw on a deer's jawbone or that she will get parasites from eating a rotting carcass, like my friend's dog Paisley did; I am completely repulsed by the idea (OK . . . the reality) of Bella consuming human feces, which she sometimes finds in the bushes or behind a tree alongside one of our local trails. At the same time, I tamp down my helicopter-parenting inclinations because I value her freedom and the pleasure she derives from finding her own snacks.

How fiercely do we protect "our" food from our dogs? It feels strange to me that I would mark and protect all the human food in my house as mine and never share with Bella and that she would be relegated to only ever eating her kibble. Dog food and human food have, for most of our evolutionary history, been overlapping resources, and dogs and humans are both social eaters. So I share, though with an eye to Bella's waistline. Bella participates in the process of food preparation; not only do I allow her in the kitchen, I consider it her kitchen, too. Although I give Bella some kibble formulated for dogs, she also eats what we eat. Bella helps me cook and gets a little taste of everything, if it isn't on the list of foods that are harmful to dogs. She gets to lick bowls and pans and plates. I always give her the last bite of my meal, which I think of as a form of tithing. When Bella does manage to successfully counter surf, I consider this fair play—

I forgot to move the food out of reach. I understand that most dog trainers would deeply disapprove of my behavior.

Feeding Schedules

What is the best feeding schedule for a dog? It depends on the age, body condition, special circumstances (pregnant or lactating), medical conditions, family schedule, dog's preferences, and so on.

But there is a tension within feeding schedules that all dog guardians will need to resolve: indulging your dog's desires may conflict with optimal physical care. Within the animal welfare literature there has been lengthy discussion of benefits of free—or ad libitum—feeding versus dietary restriction. With ad libitum feeding, food is always readily available, and animals eat whenever they want. Dietary restriction, just as the name suggests, involves restricting access to food so that animals can only eat enough to maintain physical functioning over their lifespan. Many captive animals under human husbandry are fed ad libitum because the goal is to make them grow fat quickly; destined for slaughter, they won't live long enough for obesity or other ill effects of overeating to take their toll, and anyway, we don't really seem to care whether they suffer. A paper by Finnish researcher I. H. E. Kasanen and colleagues cashes out the dilemma. The welfare implications of different feeding methods, they suggest, depend on how we're defining "welfare." If we define welfare in terms of functioning, dietary restriction would be the best way to feed animals because it results in improved physical health and longevity. Ad libitum feeding, they warn, "can produce obese individuals with severe health problems." Alternatively, if we focus on an animal's feelings, ad libitum feeding might be better because dietary restriction "can leave animals suffering from hunger, frustration or aggression."[3] Function versus feelings.

With pet dogs, our goals are mixed. One goal has to do with feelings: we want our dogs to be happy. The other goal has to do with functioning: we want our dogs to be physically healthy and active and live a long life. And, of course, these goals are entwined: being healthy and active contributes to happiness. Being fed more often or having food always available will presumably make dogs happy because dogs love to eat. Restricting their access to food—even making them go hungry—is better for their physical health but may be associated with feelings of frustration and hunger. How do we strike a good compromise?

Many dog guardians will wind up feeling torn: to keep our dog at a healthy weight, we must restrict food more than might feel comfortable. And it is such fun to give our dogs pleasure by offering treats and food and peanut butter Kongs—it is so hard to resist! Dogs, for their part, have evolved various communicative tools to impress upon us just how hungry they are. For example, dogs have facial musculature that facilitates "puppy dog eyes"; we, in turn, seem to have evolved a unique weakness to their solicitation behaviors.

Obesity

The local pet store in Estes Park, Colorado, where I will sometimes take Bella for a treat after the dog park, has a "canine body condition score" chart taped to the counter by the cash register. As I contemplate what yummy surprises I'll buy for Bella, I am reminded that she is slightly above where she should be on the chart. She scores a 6 out of 10—what the chart gently calls "over ideal"—with a score of 4–5 being in the ideal weight range. "Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernible when viewed from above but is not prominent." (You can view the chart in the resources at the end to see how your dog does.) After looking down at the chart, I put half of the treats back on the shelf. I am torn between the immediate

pleasure of making Bella happy and a nagging concern about her long-term well-being, especially the strain on her already fragile ligaments.

More than half of all dogs in the United States are overweight and obese. Obesity is considered one of the primary welfare challenges for pet dogs. Obesity contributes to disease, injury, and compromised daily quality of life. As with humans, the causes of canine obesity are complex and include genetic predisposition, diet (especially feeding frequency), and exercise. Not surprisingly, dogs who are fed twice a day and get daily walks or other vigorous exercise are less likely than their peers to be fat.[4] Allowing a dog to become overweight may represent a failure to provide appropriate care, but when food equals love the equation is complicated. And many challenges await dogs and their humans in this realm.

It would be nice to think that our dogs could modulate how much they eat according to what their body needs—an "intuitive eating" approach for dogs. Unfortunately, the way humans feed dogs is so far removed from the evolved suite of natural feeding behaviors in canids that intuitive eating is nearly impossible. Captive dogs don't necessarily eat when they are hungry since we control the timing of feedings, nor do they eat only when they've "earned" a meal by successfully navigating the challenges of their ecosystem.

My guess is that many dogs suffer from chronic anxiety related to food, particularly an insecurity about access, and that a certain level of food craziness is endemic to pet dogs. If you google "food anxiety" in dogs, you'll find a billion articles about how certain kibble formulations or certain foods such as blueberries and pumpkin seeds can help calm an anxious dog, suggesting widespread misunderstanding of what food anxiety means and a discounting of the possibility that food—or, more precisely, the way dogs are fed—might itself be a source of psychological distress.

Increasing the potential for food craziness is the fact that the processed dog kibble that most dogs eat is designed to be extremely appealing, even addictive—it's the equivalent of human junk food, which is formulated to hijack our brains' reward pathways. An article by journalist Zaria Gorvett for the BBC describes how Big Pet Food makes kibble irresistible by adding what are called palatants, including chemical compounds that smell like offal or rotting flesh.[5] There is nothing inherently wrong with kibble that appeals to dogs' desire to eat dead stuff. But the addictive quality of the food may drive dogs to eat more than they should, which increases the potential for us to feel torn between what our dog desires and what our dog needs.

As the grand comptrollers of the dog food budget, we must continually keep a balance sheet of what makes our dogs happy and what keeps our dogs healthy. If we overdo in one column, there may be deficits in the other. We also, often, control the amount and kind of physical exercise they receive, so we must add another column for calculating calories burned. Things can get particularly challenging with dogs who love to eat and hate to exercise.

Thinking beyond the Bowl

Although dog food might be filling, palatable, and nutritionally appropriate, it may not meet a dog's food-related behavioral needs. Dogs are motivated to hunt, chase, stalk, scavenge, tear, chew. Eating a bowl of kibble doesn't satisfy any of these behavioral needs. As animal welfare researchers Andrew Knight and Liam Satchell suggest, the way modern domesticated dogs are fed bears little resemblance to natural canid feeding behaviors.[6] Most notably, very few pet dogs rely on hunting or scavenging to source their food. Indeed, these are behaviors we often work hard to suppress.

The behavioral aspects of eating are important to dogs, and

dog welfare will be improved if we can find ways to make the act of eating more closely resemble natural feeding behaviors. Knight and Satchell suggest, for example, that because dog and human feeding behaviors were closely linked throughout our coevolution—with dogs successfully scavenging leftovers from humans—allowing dogs to eat at the same time as the human family may provide beneficial social enrichment. They also suggest facilitating dogs' appetitive problem-solving behaviors by asking them to "work" for food, whether by gathering kibble that has been scattered across the floor or by working through a puzzle feeder. (Appetitive behavior refers to active, exploratory, seeking behavior that increases the likelihood that an organism will satisfy a need. Appetitive behavior precedes consummatory behavior.) At the same time, we need to make sure that we aren't asking our dogs to work so hard that they get frustrated, which can happen, for example, if a puzzle feeder is too challenging.

As Knight and Satchell's remarks suggest, dogs have behavioral needs *related* to feeding that extend beyond the ingestion of calories. One of these related needs is chewing. A 2020 paper by veterinary researcher Christine Arhant and her colleagues Rebecca Winkelmann and Josef Troxler explores why chewing is behaviorally important. Looking at the feeding patterns of free-ranging dogs, which they consider the ecologically relevant analog of the domestic dog's feeding behavior, we see that about half of their diet comes from carcasses. Eating carcasses requires a lot of chewing—an average of twenty-six minutes of chewing during a meal. Dogs' behavioral motivation to dissect and chew dead animals will not likely be satisfied by eating a bowl of kibble.[7] I've timed Bella eating her morning bowl of kibble, and it takes her roughly two minutes to consume her meal, and there is very little chewing involved. How can I make up for the other twenty-four minutes of lost chewing opportunity?

One option for meeting dogs' behavioral needs around food

would be to supply carcasses as a supplement to kibble. But this may not appeal to most dog guardians—it certainly doesn't appeal to me—and the next best alternative is to provide acceptable (to humans) chewing material. Providing chewing opportunities and materials, though, presents another set of potential risks and benefits dog guardians must navigate. Chewing may improve dental health; it may also damage dogs' teeth. Chewing can reduce stress and meet a behavioral need; chewing on objects can also be an indicator of negative emotional states. Chewing can cause serious medical issues if dogs swallow nondigestible objects such as socks and plastic squeakers, which they seem inclined to do. Opinions about which chewing materials are best are all over the board. For example, some will tout raw bones because they allow dogs to tap into their inner wolf; others say that raw bones will make dogs ill and crack their teeth. If you are bothered by the suffering imposed by animal agriculture, pet stores are filled with chewing objects that will make you queasy: bull penises, pig ears, cow esophagi, dried chicken feet. Is it wrong to deny your dog these gruesome pleasures because you have moral qualms? If you choose plastic chewing materials, will your dog get cancer from phthalates, the chemicals used to make plastics more durable?

POOP AND PEE

My mother used to tell a story about her time at summer camp in rural Pennsylvania. She and the other children were required to use the bathroom at 8 a.m., no sooner and no later. Each child had to stay in the stall until there was proof of poop (a counselor would stand in the bathroom and check the toilet bowl). The fact that my mother remembered this experience seventy years later suggests a certain level of trauma. Yet this is basically what we do to our dogs. We are the camp counselor

telling our dogs, "You pee and poop during your 8 a.m. walk. No sooner, no later."

It may seem weird to have a discussion of dog excrement in an ethics book, but as I hope you'll see, the issues raised are not trivial. "Elimination problems," such as defecating and urinating outside of the times and places dictated by humans, are a primary source of human-dog conflict, and one of the top reasons dogs get relinquished to shelters. Dog excrement is also a source of human-human conflict and the root of considerable animus against dogs. Huge quantities of dog poop and pee are also an environmental problem of significant scale.

Control

One of the most severe constraints we place on dogs—and one we don't take seriously enough—is over their bodily processes of elimination. Perhaps second only to control over their access to food is our control over when, where, whether, and how they can empty their bladder and bowels. A minor but growing thread within human rights literature concerns the connection between toilets and freedom. The ability to manage, for oneself, the bodily functions of urination and defecation is critical to human dignity. Having some measure of control over bodily functions is critical to dog dignity, too, though for slightly different reasons.

In addition to loss of freedom over this basic life-relevant decision, we may impose discomfort on dogs by making them "hold it" for uncomfortable periods of time. Anyone who has ever needed a bathroom urgently and hasn't had immediate access will understand how uncomfortable and anxiety provoking this is. Having to hold it not only is stressful but can also cause gastrointestinal problems, including chronic constipation. Constraints on basic bladder and bowel functioning are

especially hard for dogs who are sick or who, as they age, have more frequent elimination needs.

How can we help our dogs feel a greater sense of control over this most basic activity of daily living? Perhaps the best-case scenario is a dog door into a fenced yard or safe open space, which allows dogs to make their own choices and relieve themselves whenever nature calls. But dog doors aren't always a viable option. An alternative is to take our dog outside more frequently. Yet another way to increase control is to teach our dog to ask to go out. My friend Jane's dog uses her nose to ring a small bell hanging from the doorknob to ask to go pee.

Scratch and Sniff

When it comes to poop and pee, there is a tendency to boil things down to the physiological process of eliminating bodily waste products. But just as feeding is about more than the physical contents of a bowl of kibble, elimination behaviors encompass much more than simply being able to empty the bladder and bowels. We humans think of using the toilet as a very private affair, and so we may not readily understand how different it is for dogs. For dogs and other canids, poop and pee are highly social and communicative activities relating, among other things, to territory, reproduction, social relationships, and activity patterns. Dogs need more than just a scrap of grass and a quick second.

Here are just a few things dogs might be doing when they are doing their business. Urine contains a great deal of salient information for dogs, so when they pee they are leaving messages for other dogs who might come by. Like graffiti, urine leaves a mark: "Bella was here." Pee might communicate information about reproductive status, emotional state, what Bella had for breakfast, or many other things beyond the ken of human un-

derstanding. In *Unleashing Your Dog*, Marc Bekoff and I refer to urine as "pee-mail" because of its communicative potential.[8] Where dogs choose to pee is not typically random nor do they necessarily want to pee in the places we choose for them. They may want to overmark on the pee of another dog, or they may want to start a new message chain. Indeed, it isn't only where dogs pee, but also how they pee. Male dogs lifting a leg high are giving a visual signal. As Bekoff found in his research, sometimes dogs use the visual signal of leg lifting without depositing any pee.[9] Poop, likewise, sends messages to other dogs and animals. The reason that dogs sometimes scratch the ground after pooping is to accentuate the communication both visually and olfactorily. Peeing and pooping are intimately related to sniffing. When dogs sniff the pee and poop left by other dogs, they are busy "reading" the pee-mail and poo-mail messages.

I had a reporter ask me several months ago if I knew when doggie pee pads and fake turf came into existence. And was it wrong, she asked, to make a dog pee on a strip of AstroTurf inside an apartment? I couldn't answer the question about when fake turf became a thing, but I suspect that these products entered the mainstream quite recently, over the past two decades. They are part of a trend toward increasingly intensive homing of dogs. More and more dogs are now "indoor only," living like intensively homed cats with litter boxes. As for the reporter's ethics question, my answer was yes, I do think it is wrong to make a dog "go" indoors only and to thereby reduce the complex suite of elimination behaviors to a bland, isolated, un-doglike experience. It is just one more step in the process of de-dogging our dogs, bit by bit taking away pieces of their natural behavioral repertoire.

The youth pastor at my childhood church used an image once that really stuck with me. Picture a piece of notebook paper with "IALAC" written on it, he said. I Am Loving and Ca-

pable. When people criticize you or make you feel small or stupid, they are tearing off bits of your IALAC sign. It can start to get small and crinkled. I think of our dogs as having a piece of paper with "IARLFD" written on it, in pee. I Am a Real Living, Feeling Dog. The IARLFD sign has pieces torn off when dogs are made to feel insecure, un-doglike. When we take away bits of their dogness. Reducing the number and complexity of dogs' elimination behaviors—or taking these away entirely—is like tearing off pieces of their IARLFD paper.

Human-Dog Conflict and Elimination-Related Behavioral Problems

When I was little, we had a dog named Brownie. Brownie had a terrible habit of peeing on the landing of our staircase. One of the scenes from my childhood is my father taking Brownie by the scruff, shoving his nose in a pee spot while scolding, "Bad dog! Bad, bad, dog!" We know now, of course, that this sort of after-the-fact punishment doesn't work and will only make a dog crazy. My father cringes whenever I remind him of this story. In Brownie's case, the real tragedy was that after Brownie died the pee problem continued. It had been the cat all along.

Behaviors related to elimination are among the most hazardous for dogs. The first thing a dog must learn, when brought into a human home, is to be housebroken. They must learn this strange skill quickly and thoroughly and mustn't make mistakes. Our expectations are exceedingly high. Unfortunately, many dogs are house-trained poorly—they aren't taken outside often enough, aren't watched closely enough by their humans, and aren't provided the right cues about what we expect. After an accident in the house, a dog may, like Brownie, get a scolding and even physical punishment. This seems deeply unfair. As one trainer told us, "If your dog ever pees in the house, get

out a newspaper and smack yourself in the head." It is *never* the dog's fault. Elimination problems can lead to relinquishment of a dog to a shelter, meaning that not getting properly housetrained can set a dog up for lifelong homing insecurity, even early death. And potty training in the wrong way can damage a dog psychologically, creating anxiety around elimination behaviors.

Human-Human Conflict

A couple of months after we moved into the Stone Canyon neighborhood in Lyons, Colorado, the guy who lived two houses down came over and yelled at us for letting our dog Maya pee on his perfect lawn (each blade clipped carefully to match all the others). Maya's pee, Rich told us angrily, had created ugly yellow spots in his grass. (Pee really does turn grass yellow because of its high nitrogen content.) "But we have a fence," we replied. "We just don't really think Maya could be the culprit." Still, she was guilty in his mind, and he gave us dirty looks whenever we walked past. Then one day when we were going past with Maya, she decided urgently that she needed to poop, which she did. On his lawn. While he was out there with his measuring tape making sure the blades of grass were even. And, naturally, this was also the day that the poop bag in my pocket had mysteriously disappeared. My husband and I stood there for a few awkward moments looking at each other, while Rich watched us intently. My husband strode over to the poop and picked it up with his bare hand, holding it out for Rich to see and squeezing a little so poop oozed out between his fingers. Rich, a former marine, never said another word about Maya and was always friendly thereafter.

Alongside barking, poop and pee are one of the hottest flash points between "dog people" and their neighbors and other members of a community and are triggers for a great deal of

ill will and conflict. Dog-hater websites and Reddit threads are filled with complaints about people not picking up poop or letting dogs pee on any and everything. Newspapers not infrequently run stories about violent conflict provoked by dogs going to the bathroom, like the Houston man who shot his neighbor's dog for pooping in his yard, the Georgia man who shot his neighbor because the dog pooped in his yard, and the woman who was shot during a dog poop dispute at a park in Denver. Taking a "my dog, my poop" approach—always being respectful in where we guide our dogs to do their business and always packing up poop and taking it with us—will translate into less hostility toward dogs and the people who choose to live with them.

Elimination and Health

I once observed a woman at the Estes Valley dog park squealing with glee as she scooped her dog's poop into a bag: "Ooooh. What a good poop!" To the guy who alerted her to the fact that her dog was "doing his business" while she was chatting him up, she announced loudly: "I like to keep track of his poops." She may have been a little over the top in her enthusiasm but taking an interest in our dog's "output" seems like a reasonable part of being a good dog guardian. Parents of babies take a disturbing (to an outsider) interest in the elimination patterns of their babies, keeping minute track of the babies' bowel and bladder functioning, peering into diapers to check for color, consistency, quantity, and so forth. Although the "dogs as (fur) babies" analogy is generally troublesome, when it comes to tracking output, the parallel makes sense. We care for our dogs' basic biological functions, and looking at their poop is a good way to keep an eye on the quality of our care, to assess the suitability of feeding choices to our individual dogs' needs, and to be proactive in treating discomfort or illness.

The importance of elimination and hygiene in human-dog relations is hard to emphasize strongly enough. Elimination is often a focal point in quality-of-life assessments, particularly for dogs who are nearing the end of life, and often figures significantly into euthanasia decision-making. I've written extensively about this elsewhere, particularly in *The Last Walk*, and will limit myself to two brief remarks. First, having had personal experience with this challenge, I would like to affirm that caring for a dog who is losing control of his bowels and bladder is exhausting, heart-wrenching, and smelly. Second, there is a real danger in confusing what bothers us with what bothers our dog. For example, on animal quality-of-life assessment tools, hygiene is often given the same weighting as respiratory distress or physical pain. For a dog, difficulty breathing is likely to cause acute distress, while wearing a diaper or peeing on a chuck (i.e., pee pad) may simply feel strange and uncomfortable at first but be adapted to over time. People will sometimes euthanize a dog rather than subject her to the indignity of a diaper or chuck pad. This suggests some confusion between what burdens we are experiencing as caregivers and what burdens our dogs are experiencing.

Environmental Considerations about Poop and Pee

Please Pick Up after Your Dog
Help keep this open space natural.

SIGN AT HERMIT PARK HIKING TRAIL

This is such an odd and striking reminder that dogs, as we perceive them, fall outside of nature. And so does dog poop. When I am running the trails at Hermit Park, I feel a sense of excitement and appreciation if I come across fox or mountain lion scat. When I see a dog poop, I feel something entirely different:

a bit of resentment. Why didn't the dog's guardian pick it up? It would never occur to me to call out in delight to my husband, "Look! Dog scat!" Poop is polluting; scat is part of nature. Why is this?

Part of it is attitudinal. And part of it boils down to chemistry. Because of the way we feed dogs (lots of animal protein), dog excrement has high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus. Dog poop also contains high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. And because there are so many dogs, there is an enormous quantity of excrement.

Dog poop and pee in wild areas can, because of its overfertilizing effect, reduce plant biodiversity, which in turn can reduce insect and animal biodiversity. A study by plant ecologist Pieter De Frenne of Ghent University, and colleagues, on the effect of dog excrement on several nature reserves in Belgium found that dog excrement had noticeable negative effects on plant communities, both by reducing the success of plants that rely on low-nutrient soils and by spurring the growth of fast-spreading plants like nettles, hogback, and hemlock. Tracts of land with high numbers of dogs peeing and pooping had nitrogen levels higher than the legal limit for agricultural lands.[10]

The environmental impact of pee and poop isn't isolated to nature reserves. Indeed, since most pet dogs inhabit urban areas, understanding the impact of excrement on urban ecosystems is equally important. A 2019 study on the effects of dog urine on urban soil microbial communities found that the application of pee in an experimental setting significantly decreased total soil microbial biomass and microbial richness.[11]

The conservationist in you may be at odds with the dog guardian in you: letting dogs run free in wild areas spreads the poop/pee, and thus the nitrogen/phosphorus, impacting plant communities throughout. It is much harder for guardians to track and pick up poop when dogs are running free. Having

dogs remain on leashes keeps nitrogen and phosphorus pollution contained to a limited area; it also provides visual reinforcement to dog guardians that their dog is, indeed, taking a poop and increases the likelihood that the guardian will scoop the poop. If people leash their dogs *and* pick up their dog's poop, the negative impacts on ecosystems are greatly reduced. I think that dog guardians should take the call of the poop bag seriously and consider keeping their dog leashed until the dog has done his business. Anecdotally, based on observations made by rangers at Boulder's Open Space and Mountain Parks, most dogs poop within a quarter mile of the trailhead; keeping dogs leashed at trailheads and for the first four hundred yards on a given trail significantly increases poop-pickup compliance by guardians.

Yes, we could now have a conversation about the environmental nightmare of millions of pounds of nonbiodegradable plastic bags in landfills. Composting dog feces is a viable option, but it needs to be done carefully because of the poop's high bacterial load. Ultimately, environmental considerations suggest that we may have already far exceeded Earth's carrying capacity for canines.

WALKING AND BEYOND

We affectionately call dogs our four-legged friends. Like other animals in the four-legged family Canidae, dogs are cursorial: they are adapted, morphologically and physiologically, to running, to chasing, to stalking. Dogs also "see" the world primarily with their nose. With four legs, and guided by their nose, dogs move through the world differently than we do.

When the local trails are freshly covered in a couple inches of snow, the crisscrossing tracks of human and dog are a narrative of overlapping excursions. I see the steady indentations from a human's boots, about a foot apart and extending in a straight

line along the trail, always on the trail. Dog paw prints appear next to the boot prints at first. Before long, though, the paw prints veer off left, disappear up the hillside, reappear and cross the trail, come back together for twenty or thirty feet, then move downslope toward a fallen tree. Although dog and human share this time together, they are also busy doing different things.

Compare what happens in this snowy off-leash scenario with the classic picture of "walking the dog": person and dog, connected by leash, strolling down the sidewalk together peacefully. The "good" dog doesn't pull, doesn't stop to linger over smells. The footprints and pawprints stay side by side, in pace.

I have never had a good dog, if I had to judge canine character based on adherence to standard leash-walking expectations. I tried, and failed, to teach good leash manners to each of my dogs. Maya was a terrible puller; as a pointer mix, her muscular body wanted to explode across a field. No smell was too insignificant to follow. And no amount of training could quell her enthusiasm. Ody couldn't keep his mind focused in one direction and wove back and forth in front of me, always tripping me up. I tried to insist on a "heel," but this felt like an imposition of my will on his and wasn't fun for either of us. Bella is slow and reluctant, as if not sure what the point of leash walking is. I used to blame my dogs and myself for the fact that walks weren't always enjoyable. Now I realize that my expectations were off. My dogs wanted something different from what I was giving; I wanted something different, too.

The dog walk is the nexus of a whole collection of issues, dilemmas, and choices. Walks can be the best time we spend with our dog each day. They can also be a concentrated dose of frustration between dog and guardian, a power struggle, a time of mutual disappointment. Dog walks are a potential landmine of unpleasant interactions with other people, especially

for those with dogs who are uncomfortable around unfamiliar people or other dogs. Walks are a time when we are responsible for our dog's interaction with the outside world, appropriately dealing with her excrement and negotiating interactions with other dogs, children, and emotionally labile adults. The walk is also a constant reminder of how limited the scope of our dogs' lives must be: it is mostly illegal for our dogs to be unleashed, much as we might yearn to just let them be free.

Why Walk?

Dog walking serves many different functions, some human centered and some dog centered. For some human guardians, dog walking is an unpleasant chore necessitated by the inconvenient fact that we haven't yet figured out how to breed dogs who don't poop and pee. For others, it is the highlight of the day, a chance to make their dog happy and to spend quality time together enjoying the fresh air. Whether begrudged or embraced, walking the dog is generally considered a component of providing reasonable care.

In an informative article on the benefits of walking, veterinarians Krista Williams and Lynn Buzhardt stress that, although letting a dog outside into a fenced backyard for a quick chance to relieve themselves is great, it isn't an adequate substitute for walking. Walking helps maintain weight and body condition. Obesity, which plagues more than half of all pet dogs in the United States, reduces quality and years of life and can lead to joint problems. Walking helps maintain healthy weight and joint health. As in humans, dogs' joints must be used to stay mobile and well functioning. Frequent and predictably scheduled walks—even short ones—can help maintain digestive health and avoid constipation because dogs don't have to hold their bladder or bowels. Having the chance to regularly empty the bladder also reduces the likelihood of bladder infections.[12]

Daily walking (and hopefully also running, loping, zooming, darting, etc.) also benefits canine mental health by counteracting the boredom of being inside all day. Giving a dog something constructive to do leaves them less time and energy to devote to destructive activities. Indeed, a common dog-training adage is "a tired dog is a good dog."

Some guardians view the walk as primarily a form of sensory enrichment, providing dogs the opportunity to sniff, to use pee to mark fire hydrants, to taste bits of french fry squished into the cement, to see and hear other people, dogs, and animals. I've heard walking referred to as a "sniffari," emphasizing the sense of olfactory adventure that awaits dogs if we let them follow their noses. The walk might also be a time for social engagement, a chance to meet up with familiar dog and human companions or to make new friends. Given the many possibilities for enrichment offered by dog walking and given that homed environments can be quite stultifying, I tend to agree with dog advocates who insist that daily walks—at least three of at least thirty minutes each, but preferably more—are essential to dog well-being and something we owe our furry friends.

Not Walking

All that said, there can be a certain authoritarianism about the necessity of dog walking. Sometimes wisdom and good judgment can lead to a conscious decision to *not* walk a dog. I can think of two circumstances in which *not walking* is the compassionate choice, and there are likely many others as well. One is when physical limitations make walking painful for a dog, whether due to illness, injury, or disability. In these cases, we may be able to find forms of physical exercise that are more comfortable than walking. Bella, for example, finds walking difficult, but she loves to swim and to chase balls in the water. (Unfortunately, this form of exercise isn't available to us during the

winter months.) Very reactive dogs for whom it is stressful to be out and about may also benefit from not going on structured walks. Yes, this is sad for the dog and their person, but it may be the most comfortable choice for everyone, and guardians can find fun and lower-stress ways to provide physical exercise and sensory stimulation.

What do we do about refusals to walk? A friend sent me this query a couple of weeks ago: his dog is telling him that she doesn't want to go on her morning or afternoon walk. She happily goes out to pee and poop next to the apartment, but she resists the walk. It's not an all-out sit-on-the-haunches refusal but a light indication that she'd just rather not go. She's been refusing for a couple of days. She isn't noticeably sick or injured, just seems to be expressing a preference. Should he force her to go because she needs the exercise? Or should she have the option to be lazy and watch squirrels through the window? If he lets her off the hook today, should he also let her off the hook tomorrow? How many days should he let her go without her exercise before more deeply investigating potential sources of pain, discomfort, or anxiety that may be influencing her choice?

I suspect the answer is somewhere in the middle: we should respect our dog's preferences. Not all dogs enjoy walking, and there are a billion possible reasons that an individual dog might not feel like going for a walk on any given day. At the same time, we must ensure that they are getting enough physical activity to keep their bodies and minds healthy, which may mean some coaxing and cajoling for couch-potato dogs.

A Daily Dose of Freedom

One of the recurring themes in my conversations with people about walking their dogs is that the daily walk is an opportunity for a dog to have agency. The walk is the dog's time, their

chance to be out of the house, to be "free," inasmuch as freedom is possible for companion dogs.

In leash-required areas, this might mean that the human tries to maintain a loose leash by modulating their pace and even their direction of travel according to where the dog wants to go. This runs counter to much dog-training advice, which counsels that the human must always be in control and that the dog is fully responsible for maintaining a loose leash—the dog must modulate his pace and direction to match ours and must always pay attention to what we are doing. Pulling and lollygagging are both frowned upon as bad leash manners. While it makes sense, from a safety standpoint, for dogs to learn not to pull on the leash (as I'll discuss in chapter 5, hard pulling can damage a dog's neck and can cause eye problems), this doesn't mean that the dog shouldn't get to choose where to sniff, how long to linger over a particular aroma, or where to leave pee-mail. Giving dogs agency and choice isn't going to fill their heads with dreams of canine domination—there is no behavioral link between a dog pulling on the leash and a dog "dominating" his guardian. This is nothing more than a damaging piece of folk mythology.

When I walk with Bella, I (almost) always let her choose which way we'll go and what our pace will be. When we walk from our house, I'll ask her in the driveway whether we're going on the road or through the field, to the left and up the hill or right and over the bridge. Bella always has an opinion and if I make a wrong choice—if she hasn't communicated her intentions yet and I'm impatient to keep moving—she will let me know with a sideways glance. If I ignore the glance, she'll plop her butt down until I've come to my senses. On some days—more and more, as Bella's legs and hips get more painful—her choice is to not walk.

Walks are not only a time for dogs to experience freedom but

also a time during which we can learn about what's important to our dog and how the world looks from our dog's perspective. We can engage in Becoming Dog exercises, as suggested in chapter 2 and recalling Kristi Benson's "The Essence of a Dog" blog. Instead of just giving our dog a free-choice walk, where our dog determines pace, direction, and so forth, we can follow along and try taking the walk from our dog's perspective. Benson is willing to sprint, stop with nose to the air, leap over logs, and get on the ground to sniff a pee spot.[13] Trying to step into our dog's perceptual world and seeing what a dog's walk entails will increase our attunement to our dog's interests and will help us create coadventures that are meaningful. We might also learn new and unexpected things about the places we go.

We can, in other words, approach dog walking with beginner's mind, letting go of what we've been told by experts is proper walking behavior for us and our dog. We can collaborate with our dogs on adventures, becoming more curious about who our dogs are, how they interact with their world, and what makes them happy.

Physical Movement and Use of Space

How do dogs move around in the world when they aren't constrained by collars and leashes and screaming human beings? What can it offer us, to compare the behavior of pet dogs with other dogs around the world who live on their own and have more, or at least different, kinds of freedom? The comparison is certainly fraught. Living as a free-ranging or feral dog is not "more natural" to a dog, necessarily, than living within a home. These are simply different canine ways of life, different dog possibilities. But just as looking at the feeding behavior of free-ranging dogs can help us understand why chewing is important, considering how dogs behave when not restricted by the

four walls of a human dwelling can perhaps give us a window into the kinds of constraint pet dogs might be experiencing, and where their natural inclinations and motivations are most hampered by our lifestyle. It might also suggest ways in which we can let them be more doglike within the domestic setting. Understanding the ways in which we de-dog provides opportunities for us to help them "re-dog." Two points of comparison are home range size and activity budgets, both of which fall loosely within the discussion of walking because both relate to physical movement within an ecosystem.

How do dogs use space? The simple answer: widely and in diverse ways. Unless constrained by walls, fences, or leashes, dogs roam. They move about over relatively large areas. One of the concepts used by biologists to describe how animals use space is *home range*, which was defined in a classic paper by biologist William Burt as "that area traversed by the individual in its normal activities of food gathering, mating, and caring for young."[14] Research on the home range of free-ranging dogs shows wide variation, with some dogs having a home range as small as half an acre and others having a home range as large as seven thousand acres.[15] In contrast to free-ranging dogs, pets don't generally have anything that approximates a home range, are rarely allowed to roam at all, and are considered very lucky if they have a half-acre backyard.

Activity patterns or time budgets are used by biologists to learn about animal behavior. How long a certain kind of animal spends foraging, grooming, and engaging in vigilance behaviors tells researchers about the animal's life-history strategies. For a species with whom we arguably have the closest bond, we know surprisingly little about the activity patterns and time budgets of domestic dogs.

A 2021 study by Silja Griss, a doctoral student at the University of Bern Veterinary Public Health Institute, and colleagues

sought to fill in some of the blanks. They were curious to see how activity budgets differed, depending on how much constraint was placed on dogs by humans, and to understand how much human control misshapes natural canine activity patterns. The researchers looked at activity patterns in several different populations of domestic dog: owned free-ranging dogs in Guatemala and Indonesia, farm dogs in Switzerland, and family dogs in Switzerland. Griss et al. refer to free-ranging dogs as "dogs that can make everyday decisions on their own," free of significant human influence. Pet dogs, by contrast, have their activity largely controlled by humans and have limited ability to shape activity patterns to their own needs.[16]

To track activity patterns, Griss et al. used a piece of technology called FitBark. FitBark is a collar that measures acceleration, proportion of time at rest, and proportion of time in "moderate" and "high" activity, over a twenty-four-hour period. The unconstrained, free-ranging dogs followed what biologists call a "bimodal activity pattern" found in other canid species. The dogs had a busy period in the early morning and one during the late afternoon and spent the time in between mainly at rest. Although family dogs were far more constrained, their activity patterns were in a similar general range as those of the free-ranging dogs, suggesting "that the owner-driven activities of the family dogs seem to be adapted to the dogs' needs."[17] Dogs sleeping indoors or in fenced yards showed greater periods of rest during the night, which makes sense—they may not feel as much need to remain vigilant. Interestingly, neutered dogs spent less time in "high" activity than intact dogs.

Does the fact that family dogs are more constrained than their free-ranging kin mean that they are less happy? Not necessarily. But the comparisons are educational. The point of looking at the behavior of free-ranging dogs is to see how far off "natural" we might be, in terms of what we ask of pet dogs. We might

be able to say, then, that a dog with a large yard or consistent access to open space is more able to fulfill his dog nature than a dog who never leaves her thousand-square-foot apartment, who relieves herself on a strip of AstroTurf, and who doesn't know the feeling of rolling in grass or running through the rain.

Some people think of the dog park as an expansion of a pet dog's available space, a place where a dog can run around and be free to do dog stuff. Often a dog park is the only place within miles where a dog can legally be off leash, and so it represents an opportunity for spatial freedom. Yet dog parks provide a very restricted and, in many ways, unnatural kind of spatial experience. Dog parks, especially the crowded ones, often force dogs into closer proximity with each other than they might like. Dog parks seem to attract a disproportionate number of overexcited dogs, along with overexcited and sometimes obnoxious guardians who seem compelled either to constantly meddle in dog-dog interactions or, in contrast, to take a totally hands-off, "let them work it out" approach, which can lead to escalating and dangerous conflicts or to the terrorizing of some dogs by others. Because the parks are fenced, dogs cannot choose to distance themselves from dogs or people who make them feel uncomfortable. Some dogs may, then, experience an acute and anxiety-provoking loss of agency at the dog park.

NOSE TO TAIL CARE

High on the list of caring responsibilities is basic preventive and hygienic care that keeps dogs physically healthy and maintains good quality of life or, perhaps more accurately, prevents unnecessary or premature declines in quality of life: dental brushing, nail trimming, ear cleaning, fur grooming, and other components of physical hygiene, as well as vaccinations and parasite control. These activities overlap with and sometimes take

place under the auspices of a veterinarian or veterinary clinic, which we'll come to in the next section. Here, let's focus mainly on those things guardians do in the home setting.

The three most common health disorders among pet dogs are periodontal (gum) disease, otitis externa (ear infection), and obesity.[18] These three conditions account for untold suffering and reduced quality of life. And all three are directly under our control as guardians. One might argue, "Well, dogs in the wild don't go to the doggie dentist or get ear antibiotics. And they do just fine. And they aren't fat because they are starving to death." But pet dogs are not in the same ethical category as dogs on their own. The way I see it, when we assume caring responsibilities for a dog, we make an implicit agreement that, in exchange for giving us their life and doing the work to adapt to our home, we do what we can to maximize their physical well-being and thus also their happiness and quality of life within this domestic arrangement.

Unfortunately, most dogs don't willingly and joyfully submit to tooth brushing, nail clipping, or ear cleaning. But neither do these tasks have to be forced on them against their will. Being physically restrained is scary and stressful for dogs (see the next section) and is largely unnecessary, except perhaps in emergency situations. A lovely book by psychologist and dog trainer Deborah Jones called *Cooperative Care* develops the idea that we can and should teach dogs to cooperate with grooming and veterinary procedures. Tooth brushing, ear cleaning, nail clipping, and other types of physical care can be accomplished with a dog's voluntary cooperation. She also emphasizes the importance of teaching all dogs to be comfortable in a muzzle, a "cone" (the so-called Elizabethan collar that prevents a dog from licking or scratching wounded areas), and a crate, because these tools may be in the cards for dogs who get injured, have surgery, or otherwise need veterinary care.

Husbandry, she suggests, is something you do *with* your dog, not *to* your dog. Dogs may not naturally enjoy having their teeth brushed or ears cleaned, but they can be taught to participate in these tasks, without being forced into compliance. They can even learn to enjoy these interactions because they become associated with rewards, including focused attention from their human and delicious snacks. "Not only will training build up your dog's tolerance to potentially unpleasant events," Jones says, "it will also teach you how to give your dog choices."[19]

We are circling back, then, to the idea of negotiated settlements. How and when husbandry interactions unfold is the result of numerous conversations between us and our dogs about what is tolerable, how to move around each other, how to respect each other's boundaries, and how to collaborate. Compassionate and appropriate care also depends on context and on the individual needs and experiences of dog and human. Perhaps there is a gold standard: we should brush our dog's teeth every day. But this might not be ideal or even possible for all dogs. Let's say, for example, that Matt has adopted an eight-year-old dog who does not like to be touched, particularly not on the face, and who tries to bite the toothbrush. Trying to accomplish tooth cleaning imposes a great deal of fear and anxiety. In this case, Matt could simply write off toothbrushing as impossible. Alternatively, he could very slowly, very gently explore the possibilities of trust building, using an enticing doggie toothpaste and a soft cloth or brush. The primary objective would be to strengthen the dog-human relationship; a little bit of tooth cleaning might also be accomplished in the process.

VETERINARY CARE

Medical care for companion animals—including the ethical contours of the patient-veterinarian relationship, the compli-

cated dynamics of the vet-patient-client triad, the goals of veterinary medicine, the participation of veterinarians in breeding, the special issues raised by palliative care and euthanasia, and the mental health crisis in the veterinary profession, among other things—presents a complex and important moral terrain, well beyond the scope of this book. I will mention veterinary care only briefly here, as an extension of our domestic caring responsibilities for dogs. Providing access to appropriate veterinary care is one of our core responsibilities. Preventive interventions (vaccinations, dental care, parasite control), treatment for injury and illness, pain and symptom management, and palliative care near end of life are goods we owe the dogs under our care. Yet the veterinary encounter can also be a site of potential violence, fear, and "behavioral injury"—a phrase veterinarians Gary Landsberg, Wayne Hunthausen, and Lowell Ackerman use to describe what happens to dogs when they go to the veterinary clinic to get a physical injury fixed but are emotionally traumatized by the experience.[20]

A growing body of research confirms what many dog guardians already know: veterinary visits are a significant source of stress for animals.[21] An observational study by veterinarian Dorothea Döring and colleagues, for example, found that fewer than 50 percent of dogs willingly entered a veterinary practice and over 75 percent of these dogs exhibited fear while on the examination table.[22]

Many dog guardians assume that the veterinary clinic is going to be a scary place that our dog will always hate. The vet is going to do things to our dog that she won't like, and we can't explain that this imposition is for her own good. We don't even entertain the notion that consent, choice, and respect for autonomy make sense within the veterinary encounter. But none of this is written in stone. The veterinary encounter does not necessarily need to evoke terror, and one way to make it less

scary is to take consent, choice, and autonomy seriously—to provide dogs with a sense of control over what is happening to them.

Several trends are moving us—and our dogs—in a better direction: increased attention to low-stress handling techniques and adoption of fear-free principles (these go hand in hand) by veterinary clinics around the country and the world, and a growing awareness that guardians can help dogs learn to feel OK during a veterinary visit, particularly if we begin when dogs are young. Some of the changes implemented by veterinary clinics that are reported to reduce stress include separating canine and feline patients, using nonslip surfaces, cleaning frequently and with nontoxic substances, minimizing unpleasant odors through good ventilation, reducing excessive noise, using lighting that isn't visually stimulating, using pheromone diffusers or sprays, placing animals in carriers in an elevated position such as on a shelf, and educating guardians and veterinary staff about behavioral signs of stress.[23]

Guardians can introduce the vet and the veterinary office slowly, at a time when everyone is healthy and relaxed, and with lots of treats and praise. And as Deborah Jones suggests, we can teach our dogs to be comfortable in a muzzle, crate, and cone in case these become a necessary part of treatment or care. These early interventions can go a long way toward minimizing the potential for harm and maximizing the incredible benefits that veterinary medicine has to offer.

Our dogs can feel powerless during a vet visit. And so can we, as their human caregivers. I've noticed a persistent tendency in myself, despite being relatively knowledgeable about dogs and their care, to feel nervous, almost even guilty, when at the vet clinic—like my ignorance must somehow be on display. I find myself going out of my way to prove that I've been responsible in my care. Bella's vet is a lovely person who has never done

anything to make me feel this way. But the vet-client dynamic is one of asymmetry; the vet is the expert, and we may feel a bit at their mercy. A sense of insecurity around vets can make it even more difficult to start a conversation about things that might not feel right, such as a physical exam that is clearly making our dog stressed. As hard as it can be, we need to reassure ourselves that we are our dog's number one advocate and that fear in the veterinary encounter, while perhaps not able to be entirely eliminated, can nevertheless be addressed. Many veterinarians will be open to having a conversation—or many ongoing conversations—about how to keep each individual dog feeling as safe as possible. We can begin these conversations nonconfrontationally by asking what we, ourselves, might be doing differently, then moving into what we think might be creating anxiety in our dog and brainstorming ways to help. If your vet isn't open to having these conversations, move on to another vet, if you can. Remember, too, that you have a right to be present while a vet is examining or treating your dog.

Compassionate Force and the Use of Restraint

A central feature in the veterinary encounter, and a common feature of husbandry within the home, is the use of force against a dog by a human, the brute exertion of power over a dog against his will for the purposes of restraint and "care."[24]

Is the use of force ever justified against our dogs? Probably yes. But we need to be cognizant of the potential for harm, think through situations where force seems necessary, use force only as a last resort, and find ways to maximize compassion if we do resort to force.

The most common variety of force we impose against dogs is physical restraint. We know from a huge body of literature in human psychology—most of it involving experiments on

animals in a laboratory setting—that involuntary physical restraint is stressful and can result in psychological injury. Indeed, many of the protocols for studying mental disorders, including learned helplessness and depression, have historically involved the use of restraint as part of the experimental protocol: the experience of restraint, paired with painful or scary stimuli, induces mental breakdown. Think, for example, of Pavlov's famous "restraining harness," which held dogs in place as electric shocks were delivered. It was the *inescapability* of the shocks that drove dogs mad. Just as a sense of control can help reduce negative emotional reactions to aversive stimuli, so too can powerlessness or a perceived lack of control heighten the stress response.

Why, then, is forceful restraint a core component of care? You might say that the reason is obvious: animals wouldn't agree to our interventions. They would run away or try to bite us. But aren't these escape behaviors communicating something important?

A helpful lens through which to think through the ethical terrain of using restraint in our care of dogs is a concept borrowed from human medical ethics: compassionate force. The words "compassion" and "force" rarely appear in the same context; indeed, they seem to be mutually exclusive. But the use of force is sometimes compassionately motivated. We can use force *for compassionate reasons*. Moreover, explicit attention to maximizing compassion can offset the harm imposed by using force. We can use force *compassionately*.

Within the medical ethics literature on humans, discussions about the use of force arise mainly in the care of institutionalized psychiatric patients who attempt to harm themselves or who refuse care. Patients may be held down by staff or cuffed to a bed so they can be injected or fed. Force protocols that draw on physical or pharmaceutical restraint may be clinically justi-

fiable but are ethically fraught because they erode trust, undermine the physician-patient relationship, and exacerbate emotional distress for patients.

Physician Massimiliano Beghi and colleagues estimate that up to half of all patients admitted to psychiatric wards experience some form of restraint—a percentage they consider alarmingly high.[25] Within veterinary medicine, some form of restraint will be experienced by *nearly all* canine patients at some point in their care. Dogs are physically held down by technicians and veterinarians, are muzzled and crated, and are given intramuscular injections of tranquilizers. As veterinarian Lore Haug notes in an article on restraint of animals in the clinical setting, "Effective restraint is one of those aspects of veterinary medicine that we . . . take for granted."[26]

The risks of using restraint, even in situations involving force applied for compassionate reasons, are clearly outlined in the medical literature. Psychiatric patients questioned about their experiences before, during, and after restraint reported deeply negative perceptions of coercion at all stages. During restraint, they experienced both physical pain and acute psychological discomfort. The perception of being controlled was associated with feelings of mental abuse, humiliation, and disempowerment. After coercion, patients cited long-term effects such as fear, helplessness, and loss of trust.[27] There is no reason to think that dogs under restraint would experience any less emotional trauma than these human psychiatric patients.

As medical resident Matthew Lin notes in a commentary on the use of compassionate force, use of restraint is "largely regarded by expert consensus as a last resort in the treatment of behavioral emergencies when patients pose an acute danger to themselves, medical staff, or other patients." Less traumatic, less restrictive alternatives are "professionally preferred."[28] The unabridged quote from Lore Haug above points us in this direction: "Effective restraint is one of those aspects of veterinary

medicine that we simultaneously take for granted but also wish we could do better." We can "do better" by learning to restrain in ways that reduce feelings of fear and distress and that minimize invasiveness.

But we also need to recognize that restraint is, by its nature, a harm, no matter how good our techniques. As Haug says, "Restraint dictates that we move into the animal's personal space without the animal's permission."[29] This move is not morally neutral. Whereas in human medicine the trend, at least over the past few decades, has been toward greater and greater respect for patient autonomy, the same trend is not recognizable in veterinary medicine. We move into the personal space of animals as a matter of course and without really thinking about it. Indeed, the use of the term "autonomy" in relation to animal patients is generally met with resistance and even puzzlement. The fear-free movement emphasizes that forcing treatment on dogs and other animals is stressful and potentially traumatizing for them. Saying we should reduce fear is still a long way from saying we should get consent or respect autonomy, but it is a step in the right direction.

Where does this leave us, then? Force can be applied for compassionate reasons and may be unavoidable at some junctures in our care of dogs. If we do decide, in collaboration with a veterinarian, that use of forceful restraint is necessary, we can then set our minds to minimizing harm and maximizing compassion. In the human context, compassion maximization involves maintaining patient engagement and respecting autonomy to the greatest degree possible.[30] Let's think hard about what this might look like with our dogs.

AGENCY, CHOICE, CONTROL

Issues of agency—which I'm taking here as the ability to make choices for oneself, to exert control over one's environ-

ment, and, more importantly, to have the *perception of being in control*—have arisen throughout this chapter and will arise throughout the book. If I could identify the single most significant problem facing pet dogs right now it would be lack of adequate agency. Luckily, even within the structural constraints of current dog-keeping practices, we have many opportunities to enhance agency. The first step is to become more mindful of the ways in which choice and control are lost or constrained. The second step, of course, is to create or embrace opportunities for choice whenever they arise.

The loss of agency happens in relation to the overall arc of individual dog's lives. Pet dogs rarely get to choose their home, nor can they choose to leave if they are unhappy; they cannot choose their family or friends, nor do they have much choice about how to provision food or when to mate and when to bear and raise young. Loss of agency also occurs in various small but significant ways throughout the day, through the imposition of a leash on free movement or the unwanted and invasive touching by familiar and unfamiliar humans.

Why is the ability to feel in control a part of psychological well-being? Because having a sense of control over one's environment is fundamental to psychological integrity. As veterinarian Frank McMillan notes in "The Mental Health and Well-Being Benefits of Personal Control in Animals," a vast body of research on human and nonhuman animals has established that having a sense of control over one's life circumstances, and especially over events or stimuli that are unpleasant, is a strong predictor of positive feelings and mental well-being. Particularly when faced with an aversive stimulus, the perception of being in control—of being able to move away from or reduce the intensity or duration of an aversive event—makes the experience more tolerable; feeling out of control increases the stress response to negative stimuli. Exerting control over one's envi-

ronment also seems to be rewarding in and of itself. McMillan cites a series of experiments of captive rodents that found that the animals "exercise control virtually any chance they get" and appear to find it intrinsically rewarding to exert a high degree of control over their environment.[31]

The *process* of making choices and exerting control promotes psychological well-being. But it may also be that actual choices that dogs make are important to them. They might make better choices for themselves than we make for them—or at least, they might make different choices. We cannot read their minds or get inside of their subjective experiences, nor do we always make choices that are in our dog's best interest. Aren't there some situations in which dogs might be able to make better choices than people? This certainly happens on a small scale: You see a person walking a dog on a leash, and the dog is sending clear signals that she would like to avoid a close interaction with a passing dog. The guardian ignores or fails to even recognize the dog's choice, the dogs are pulled together by force, and the dogs have been put into an extremely uncomfortable situation that may lead to fear, anxiety, or even injury.

In a 2018 article in the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, veterinarian James Yeates argues that it is both possible and morally desirable to empower animals in our care to make more and better choices.[32] He challenges what he calls the "hegemonic respect for human choices"—the widespread assumption that humans can and should make all choices for nonhumans because we truly know how to optimize their "welfare." Ignoring the choices of animals, ostensibly because they lack autonomy or some such capacity granted (inconceivably) by evolution to *Homo sapiens* alone, is a thinly veiled justification for orchestrating their lives according to our own wants and interests.

Animals have what Yeates calls "volitionality," the ability to make choices that are associated with an evaluation of their in-

terests and based on their individual preferences and motivations.[33] I would add that animals can also make choices that consider the needs and expectations of others. Volitionality is not, in Yeates's formulation, a synonym or a surrogate for autonomy. Yeates wisely chooses to sidestep the "Can nonhuman animals really be autonomous agents?" question, which is irresolvable as currently construed and, moreover, leads us into a philosophical vortex that is far more limiting than illuminating.

Yeates then goes on to explore a range of situations where we ought to respect an animal's choice. In many (perhaps all?) situations, humans lack full knowledge of an animal's subjective experiences, humans are biased in what choices we think are best, and humans simply cannot comprehend or adequately appreciate all the specifics of an individual animal's situation. Empowering animals is good for them in direct ways. Not only might animals make different and better choices for themselves than we might make for them, the process of making and implementing choices improves the well-being of animals by giving them control over their lives. Through the process of choice making, animals have opportunities to learn and develop. Moreover, lack of control can be unpleasant, even psychologically harmful.

Empowering animals is also good in indirect ways, because it helps shift the moral paradigm for humans. The act of respecting animals' interests in making choices is a way of acknowledging and respecting their intrinsic value. It also goes some small way toward redressing power asymmetries in human-animal relations.

The only problem I have with Yeates's proposal—which I otherwise think is exceedingly on target—is that humans are still taken to be the omniscient decision makers. We must assess each situation and decide whether to allow an animal to be empowered, which is actually a pretty disempowering frame-

work from the animal's perspective. But I think we are stuck between a rock and a hard place here, and I don't have a better solution than that offered by Yeates, which is to attend as best we can to the nuances of each situation, including the implications of each choice. If respecting an animal's choice leads to a seriously bad outcome for the animal, then empowerment may not be wise.

This is a good place to mention, again, some ways in which how we talk about dogs can subtly disempower them. Dog guardians often refer to themselves as a parent to their dog and, like the guy in the Whole Foods pet aisle, will call dogs "fur babies." Even within the veterinary encounter, dogs are often spoken of as babies. "We'll be sure to take good care of your baby" is a phrase I heard over and over during Bella's leg surgeries. I understand that the impulse was to reassure me, not to denigrate Bella. "Baby" can be, of course, a simple term of endearment. But the use of infantilizing language such as "fur baby" and "furry kids" may unintentionally reinforce the power asymmetries already in play within our caring relationships. By calling them babies, we affirm that dogs have no autonomy and cannot make good decisions for themselves, and that we should care for them paternalistically, as we would care for a human infant.[34] There is a particular temptation to refer to elderly, frail, or ill dogs as "sweet babies," thus denying not only their agency but also the embodied wisdom of their elderhood.

Focusing here on companion dogs, within the structural constraints of keeping dogs captive and thus taking on responsibility for their care, we have already enacted a broadscale disempowerment. To protect our dogs' welfare, we must restrict choice. But there are also endless opportunities to listen to our dogs' preferences and to empower our dogs to make more choices. Returning to the example above, if a leash-walking dog expresses a desire to avoid interacting with another dog,

we should absolutely respect this choice. We can also let our dog make choices about the pacing and direction of walks. But when we bump up against safety concerns—our dog would like to step into oncoming traffic—then we restrict choice.

Perhaps some reframing will be helpful. Yeates and I have been talking about "allowing our dogs to make choices." But this language reinforces the lopsidedness of the power relations. One of the remedies is to remember that we are working through myriad daily choices together with our dog; we are collaborating, cocreating, and negotiating settlements.

FOUR

Landscapes of Fear, Landscapes of Pleasure

For the most part, dogs these days receive good physical care—better than ever before. And yet many are not happy. A dog can be well fed, given an hour of vigorous daily exercise, taken to the vet at the least sign of discomfort, and provided an overflowing box of toys, yet still not have what she really wants and needs. Indeed, even as the creature comforts of pet dogs may have improved over the past decade or two, their comfort as a certain kind of creature has diminished.

As we have seen, dogs suffer from being excessively dedogged. Within the intensively captive home environment they are not able to live, to behave *as dogs*. Pet dogs no longer really have dog-relevant feeding behaviors and cannot move about freely within complex ecosystems, make decisions about how best to use time and space, or engage the full range of their highly evolved and complex social skills. They often live isolated, one-dimensional lives, drained of dog-salient sensory stimulation and interaction and species-relevant behavioral possibilities. The fact that they have nothing much to do doesn't, as we might imagine from our own overworked per-

spective, translate into a sense of ease and comfort. Rather, it simmers as uncomfortable feelings of frustration, boredom, and loneliness.

At the same time, dogs arguably experience too much emotional stimulation of the wrong kind, through chronic exposure to aversive stimuli such as loud noises, strong smells, cars, cell phones, televisions, and volatile human emotions that may or may not be directed at the dog but are deeply felt, nonetheless. (In the context of animal behavior, an aversive stimulus is experienced by an animal as unpleasant, irritating, painful, or scary and is something an animal will seek to escape from or avoid.) Dogs have very little control over their environment and their physical bodies and often cannot escape or move away from aversive stimuli. The psychological effects of captivity create a film of chronic stress, onto which fear gets layered.

Luckily, with increased mindfulness to our dog's sensory, social, and emotional environments, we can reduce discomfort and increase positive feelings. Let's start by looking at the sensory landscape of dogs, focusing first on potential sources of fear and anxiety and then moving into what we might call landscapes of pleasure.

MODULATING SENSORY ENVIRONMENTS

Human homes and communities can be landscapes dotted with fear for pet dogs. This may seem counterintuitive, since we tend to think of human homes as cushy, comfy places for dogs—much better, we might imagine, than the harsh realities of the wild. But as mentioned above, many things about our homes and neighborhoods can trigger fear responses.

A 2020 paper in *Scientific Reports* by University of Helsinki researcher Jenni Puurunen and colleagues declared fear a "major welfare problem in pet dogs."[1] When dogs are exposed to

prolonged or excessive feelings of fear, fearfulness takes root. Instead of being a transient, behaviorally appropriate response to a specific stimulus, the state of fear becomes permanent and generalized. Being in a state of near-constant fearfulness causes high levels of distress and anxiety, not to mention "behavioral problems" such as reactivity toward unfamiliar dogs or people that detract from a dog's quality of life and challenge the patience of dog guardians. And as we know from an enormous literature on human and nonhuman animals, long-term exposure to stress increases the risk for disease and premature death. A toxic "fear soup" is making our dogs sick.

Seemingly benign elements within our home can induce fear. The wood or tile flooring that we think is so pretty might be quite scary for our dog. If you have ever slipped on ice, you may have experienced a jolt of fear from the sudden feeling that you are falling. Your heart rate spikes, and adrenaline surges through your body. Unfortunately, humans seem not to take the dog's experience of slipping very seriously and more than likely will laugh at our dog as she struggles to remain upright. In fact, we often laugh at dogs and call them silly for being afraid. YouTube is crawling with "funny dog videos" that involve guardians hiding behind the door and screaming "boo" at their dog when he walks past, of dogs being startled by a toy jack in the box, of dogs jumping out of their skin when an airhorn goes off unexpectedly behind them. Just a few nights ago, I happened across a video of a German shepherd's terrified reaction to a giant blow-up T. rex lumbering into the living room.[2] Although many dog-loving people find humor in such situations, we also shouldn't underplay the negative feelings dogs are experiencing. It is all fun and games until somebody gets hurt or develops an anxiety disorder.

Although veterinarians and behaviorists have increased their attention over the past decade to landscapes of fear experienced

by dogs living in human homes, it is likely still underreported and underappreciated. A 2021 study by applied animal behaviorist Emma Grigg and colleagues on the prevalence of stress-related behaviors in dogs exposed to common household noises suggests that fear is widespread.[3] The prevalence of so-called noise sensitivities—extreme fear responses to noise—in pet dogs may be as high as 50 percent.[4] Grigg and colleagues found that human guardians appeared to underestimate dogs' fearfulness and that the majority responded to their dog's fear with amusement rather than concern.

Unfortunately, many of the fear-inducing stimuli in our homes may be beyond our control. Although it makes Bella cower in fear, I cannot avoid sneezing, especially during spring days with high pollen counts. If I try to suppress a sneeze, I wind up making a honking noise that Bella finds even more aversive than a regular "achoo." In the early days of her life with us, I tried to address Bella's fear of the vacuum cleaner by always bringing out a toy when I brought out the vacuum and intermixing play with vacuuming. I solved one problem but created another. I cannot vacuum without also, at the same time, playing tug—a ridiculous sight, pushing the vacuum in one direction, getting pulled in the other by Bella. But it makes cleaning less of a chore. And certainly, our goal shouldn't be to eliminate all sources and experiences of fear in our dogs—fear is a normal part of life for all living organisms and keeps things interesting. But perhaps it makes sense to try to protect our dogs from stimuli that evoke an acute fear response, that result in or perpetuate psychological trauma, or that are deliberately imposed by us, whether for "serious" reasons—such as using fear-based training methods or trying to "keep a dog in her place"—or just for fun.

Although the home can be a minefield of scary stimuli, at the same time, it can be barren of sensory stimuli that are salient to

dogs. Dog-relevant smells, such as the odor left behind by other dogs, sounds (the wind, squirrels chattering), and tastes (goose poop) may be lacking. Dogs often have limited opportunities to engage in behaviors that, as canines, they are highly motivated to perform. Even more, as we'll explore in chapters 6 and 7, human expectations of pet dogs involve regularly asking them to suppress a range of natural behaviors (e.g., roaming, barking, digging, jumping, foraging). We tell them no all the time without offering alternatives.

Being a kind, compassionate, ethical companion to a dog involves finding ways to say yes as much—and hopefully more—than we say no, making sure our dogs get to engage in as many of their natural behaviors as possible. I won't lie. I don't think this is an easy job. Indeed, one of the moral quandaries of having a dog nowadays, and something I think about all the time with Bella, is how we can support dogness within the constraints of human homes and neighborhoods, such that our companions aren't just surviving but are thriving.

I believe that with a little thought and effort, we can provide environments and experiences that interest our dogs, excite them, make them curious, and put their minds and bodies to work. Avoiding boredom is good but being *engaged* is even better. And when it comes to finding ways to help dogs engage, humans can be incredibly creative.

The term typically applied here is "enrichment." I will use the term, but with a caveat. The problem with the term "enrichment," as it is usually applied in the animal welfare literature, is its implication that enrichment is something *added on* to a care regimen. "If you want to do your dog a favor, add some enrichment into his daily life." You might spend five minutes enriching your dog. Yet if our dogs' lives lack richness, wouldn't it be better—rather than just adding five minutes of richness a day—to rethink the whole endeavor so that richness is built

into our shared lives? As dog behavior consultants Allie Bender and Emily Strong suggest in *Canine Enrichment for the Real World*, enrichment is a philosophy, a way of life. It is something that you are always doing, sometimes quite deliberately, sometimes less so. You can't just tick it off the to-do list.

Bender and Strong's book, Zazie Todd's *Wag: The Science of Making Your Dog Happy*, and Marc Bekoff and my *Unleashing Your Dog*—just to mention a few—use canine cognitive science to help explain to dog guardians why certain kinds of experiences are interesting for dogs and how we can best engage their senses. All three books are chock full of examples. The internet is also teeming with great websites and ideas. I recommend making an enrichment journal for your dog, where you can jot down ideas when you see them, keep track of what your dog most enjoys, and rotate enrichments to keep things interesting unless, of course, a certain enrichment becomes a daily ritual.

Here's a sampling of some enrichments we tried with Bella, some of which have been great successes and some of which fell flat. Bella is a good case study of needing to shape enrichment to the needs of the dog, because she has physical limitations—which is why I got so interested in enrichment in the first place. The things that used to bring her great joy, like chasing a frisbee and wandering around the edges of the dog park, became less available after her leg surgeries. How was I possibly going to keep her day interesting, without being able to go on walks and have long chase-the-ball sessions?

Some of Bella's enrichments I've integrated into daily care routines: we still go for walks, even though there isn't a great deal of walking involved. I take Bella on a daily Great Adventure down to one of our local trailheads and just let her meander for twenty or thirty minutes. We may cover a couple of hundred feet, on a good day, or sometimes we'll only walk ten feet. Just the fact of getting into the car and going somewhere—even

just down the road—seems to make Bella excited. She sniffs, finds pee spots to overmark, the perfect place to poop, some little snack (deer droppings?). Occasionally she'll get to greet another dog or two, and sometimes she'll pretend to chase a deer or a magpie. Since Bella can no longer go with me on runs, I will sometimes bring her back a stick, preferably one that another dog has found interesting for some reason. She will carefully sniff up and down the stick and then, often, will pull off all the bark. If I've met another dog while out running, I stand at the door as Bella sniffs my hands and legs.

In the warm months, I take Bella down to the little neighborhood pond for what I call hydrotherapy: swimming after balls in the water. We also play stationary "fetch" or gentle tug-of-war with Bella's stuffed flea or one of her many other stuffed toys. We bought Bella a wheelchair, which she soundly rejected, then tried a stroller, which we fully anticipated that she would also hate. To our great surprise, she loves it (thanks, in part, to the large quantity of treats we put inside it with her). She eagerly jumps in and sits upright as we do a loop around the neighborhood, her head poking out the top like a baby bird in her nest, sniffing the passing smells.

I've tried to make her food experiences more interesting, too. I feed her smaller meals and then supplement with some kibble in a snuffle mat. She gets frozen peanut butter Kongs, peanut butter on a LickIt Mat, empty peanut butter jars—anything I can think of related to Bella's favorite food. Every day at noon, she gets what's called green bean therapy, the low-calorie antidote to peanut butter: I fill a puzzle toy with frozen green beans, and Bella goes at it with enormous enthusiasm. Bella loves to do training sessions—both for the treats and because she likes to demonstrate how smart she is—but I only ask her to do things that don't require much movement: touch, high five, wave, watch me.

Enrichment is mainly something individual guardians arrange, but sometimes dog happiness is a community affair. The Estes Valley dog park, Bella's favorite, has huge bins of balls, cubes, ball throwers, ropes, and other toys for dogs to use while they are at the park—all provided by volunteers. A man in New Zealand, noticing an absence of sticks in the area where he walked his dog, created a "stick library," from which dog and guardian can borrow the right-sized stick to either carry around or use for fetch and then return.[5] Some individuals or communities have built what are called sensory gardens for dogs, areas that are designed to provide canine stimulation through different plants, textures, materials, shapes, scents, heights—in other words, an interesting and three-dimensional space, rather than a flat expanse of curated Bermudagrass.[6] Dogs can go to farms that host nose-work classes. A company called Sniffspot connects people who have private space such as a large, fenced yard with dog guardians who may not have access to a large off-leash and fenced area in which their dog can run free. You can search places appropriate for reactive dogs—places with no other dogs in visual or auditory range. Or you can arrange to meet up with other guardians and dogs for a session that includes play time and social interaction.[7]

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Some of the most acute difficulties for dogs arise out of the constriction of their social lives.

The social experiences of dogs are tightly managed by humans, who decide when, where, and under what conditions, and even whether, dogs will be allowed to socialize with others. The way we procure and live with pet dogs typically involves—you might even say relies necessarily on—the fracturing of canine familial social systems. The natural social behaviors of dogs *as*

dogs—flirting, love, friendship, pack-ship, sex, parenting—have been gradually erased. Slowly, over the past several decades, the social lives of dogs have become less dog natural, more tightly constricted, and more human centered.

Our management of the social lives of dogs has, in turn, become more challenging because of interlocking trends that shape dog-keeping culture: urbanization, increasing numbers of humans and dogs, shifting demographic patterns, laws that make it illegal for dogs to roam freely, a progressively tighter regulation of the bodies and physical movements of dogs, changes in the narrative of responsible dog ownership, and a growing obsession with the human-animal bond. The upshot is that attending to the essential social needs of dogs can be extremely difficult.

The constellation of issues is complex, and so I'll give only a cursory glance at some of the particular social deprivations experienced by dogs and how we might mitigate these harms to some extent.

Attachment

We want our dogs to be deeply attached to us and attuned to our emotions. And they are. But this attachment and emotional synchronicity comes with a cost.

The first order of business when we bring home a puppy is to create in the animal a secure attachment to us, her human guardian. The reason puppies are typically sold when they are eight weeks old is because this is the age at which we can most effectively hijack the biological attachment process occurring within the natal environment. (Although eight weeks is still broadly assumed to be the ideal time to adopt, it is also increasingly understood to be too early, from the puppy's and the mother's point of view.) By making ourselves, rather than the canine mother, the dog's attachment figure, we thereby manip-

ulate our dog into being emotionally dependent on us—which is exactly what we want. This is how a close human-dog bond is formed. The intensity of the attachment we expect from dogs seems to be without limit. But attachment is not without significant ramifications for human and dog alike.

SIDEBAR: ADOPT, DON'T SHOP!

I haven't found any comfortable way to label the act of bringing a dog into our home. To say "I adopted a puppy" is of course a euphemism, slipping us quickly past the reality that dogs come from canine families of their own that we have actively fractured. Still, it rolls off the tongue more easily than "I bought a puppy," which has a pretty high ick factor. (And who, when asked about the provenance of their cute little pup, would say, "Well, I stole her from her mom! LOL!") "Acquisition" suggests that a dog is an object or asset to be obtained and added, such as by a library acquiring books for its collection. "Rescue" has its own set of problems, from contributing to our overstuffed savior complex in relation to dogs, to supporting a narrative that normalizes the practice of incarcerating unhomed or fractious dogs. Despite its problems, I usually revert to the language of adoption, in part because it feels the least bad and in part because it aligns the user with a principled stance against commercial breeding of puppies for sale and also against the cultural obsession with purebred dogs. I also, despite my better judgment, will sometimes say of Bella, "She's a rescue," to signal that Bella may not behave the way society expects her to. It is a useful shorthand for "leave her alone."

In *The Dog: A Natural History*, ethologist Ádám Miklósi describes attachment as a "behavior control system." It manifests as a long-lasting attraction to the attachment figure and takes form as certain predictable behavioral hallmarks, such as prox-

imity and contact seeking, a secure base effect (the attachment figure serves as a safe base from which to explore the surrounding environment[8]), separation behaviors, greeting behaviors, and relaxation when in the company of the caregiver. Attachment, Miklósi notes, is not the same as dependency, though in practice the two tend to get mashed together. Dependency is the satisfaction of basic needs like food and shelter. Attachment, in contrast, relates to and relies on the physical accessibility and emotional availability of the caregiver, fueled by the social and mental needs of the dog.[9]

Dogs are often profoundly dependent on a human caregiver for the satisfaction of daily bodily needs such as food, water, shelter, and elimination. They are equally if not more dependent on a human caregiver for satisfaction of their social nature. Dogs cannot take care of their own social needs because we constrain their ability to do so. One of the key constraints is psychological: we create dogs who are emotionally dependent on us. Indeed, in this age in which dogs' primary work is in emotional labor, the primary objective in "getting a dog" is to create emotional dependence.

Through the socialization process, which is considered a moral task of all good dog guardians, we ensure that we become our dogs' primary attachment figure. We encourage them to be emotionally dependent on us and find it gratifying when they need us—even when their need for us becomes pathological. Often, we become not only the *primary* attachment figure but the *only* secure attachment figure for our dog. Either that, or through lack of attention to the delicacy of raising a puppy, we create dogs with insecure attachment who will be plagued throughout their life by fears and anxieties.[10]

When we orchestrate attachment in a dog, we must also take responsibility for the emotional consequences of this attachment. Something as simple as leaving a dog at home alone

while we go to work or go out with our friends takes on a certain moral edge when we know that periods of separation are emotionally distressing for our dogs. We want to have our cake and eat it too: we want a dog who is emotionally attached and dependent, but we also want an independent dog who won't make us feel guilty for leaving him alone. We create an unhealthy level of attachment and dependence and then are surprised when our dog starts displaying behavioral symptoms of separation anxiety and call our dog all kinds of crazy. And, indeed, some dogs do seem quite mad. But is it not a madness the seeds of which we have planted and carefully watered?

Perhaps moving forward, we humans can learn to be less emotionally greedy and needy when it comes to our dog's affections. As with children, we can work with dogs to help them build their own vibrant social worlds.

Separation-Related Suffering

Separation-related disorders—which are often all lumped together under "separation anxiety"—are one of the defining features of twenty-first-century intensively homed dogs and one of the most common reasons people seek help from a veterinary behaviorist or trainer. Separation anxiety has become a catchall for any kind of "negative" reaction to being left alone, whether chewing up the couch, digging a hole in the doorframe, barking frantically, or peeing on the bed cover. The epidemic of separation-related pathologies should be a cue to us that something is seriously wrong for dogs.

Treatments for separation anxiety often focus on gradually habituating a dog to being alone, sometimes in conjunction with medication that blunts feelings of anxiety. These treatments, although of keen value to dogs, don't address the background problems of dependence, social isolation, and

loneliness. Even more important than the development and dissemination of treatment protocols is a deeper understanding of the complex root causes of these separation-related anxieties and an attention to ameliorating the conditions that create so much suffering for dogs and their people. There are no quick fixes in this realm. Indeed, trainers who specialize in separation-related problems will often recommend that until a dog learns how to be alone comfortably, we should never leave them, ever. We can teach them to trust that we will come back, but it takes a long time and vast quantities of patience. One might begin by leaving for thirty seconds, then maybe increase this to a minute or two. It may take months of careful training before a dog can stay at home alone for a few hours. This requires a radical shift in our own social habits. Would you be willing and able to do this for your dog?

Canine separation anxiety has become a far more active point of awareness and discussion in the past several years, particularly as we spiraled into the COVID-19 crisis. The year-long lockdown during the beginning of the pandemic highlighted just how much time dogs were spending alone under "normal" prepandemic conditions, and how our being at home nearly all the time is perhaps the ideal condition for bringing a new puppy or adult dog into the home. What has also become evident to those paying attention is that going back to our old habits of leaving dogs in lockdown while we enjoy a busy social and work life outside the home is both untenable for dogs and deeply unfair.

Social Isolation

According to the World Health Organization, "High-quality social connections are essential to our mental and physical health and our well-being. . . . The effect of social isolation and loneliness on mortality is comparable to that of other well-

established risk factors such as smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity."[11] Social isolation, they note, is associated with depression, impaired cognitive functioning, immune suppression, and early death, among other things. The innate need for social connectedness is not, of course, unique to humans. All social animals suffer when isolated, and dogs are among the most exquisitely social mammals on the planet, so we can only suppose that social isolation would take a serious toll.

Much of what we understand about the psychological and physiological effects of isolation come from studies on laboratory animals, including dogs. By isolating animals, researchers discovered that isolation elicits a stress response—the activation of the cascading physiological fight-or-flight reaction. The stress response is not inherently harmful. Indeed, the stress response is what allows organisms to deal with challenges in their environment. But the stress response is designed to be short term and temporary, followed by a return to homeostasis. If chronic or if too often imposed, the stress response taxes our bodies and minds. Chronic stress, as the World Health Organization reminds us, can lead to emotional dysregulation, disease, and early death.

Social isolation is the defining feature of life for pet dogs and, at the same time, is a form of suffering that remains mostly invisible to human dog guardians. Many dogs are restricted to the home at all times, except for short, prescribed intervals of outside time during which they are expected to "do their business"; many are limited in the amount, quality, and type of social interaction they are allowed; many have nothing that resembles a social group; many only ever interact with one human. Indeed, dogs often live their whole lives in something like what many humans first tasted during the coronavirus pandemic: lockdown. Now that many of us have personally experienced being isolated in the home, we have the seeds to be more keenly

empathetic toward our dogs, since empathy is the process of thinking about another's suffering *as if it were our own*. We still need to take the further step of watering these seeds of empathy, acknowledging, and then working to redress, the lifelong isolation experienced by dogs.

Throughout our shared history with dogs, we have cultivated their gregariousness, their hypersociality. Now we greedily funnel this friendliness toward ourselves. Indeed, a key feature of contemporary dog keeping is the winnowing of the dog-human relationship to a simple dyad—the celebrated human-dog bond. There is an important asymmetry in how we do this. Our friendship with a dog is only one layer of our social world, one link in our social network. For dogs kept as pets, the human guardian is often the only link in their social network.

The social grouping of dogs into a human-dog dyad is a small-scale isolation with broad reverberations. We deny dogs the potential for extended canine family systems. Research into the social ecology of free-ranging dogs suggests that dogs will live in relationships with parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, siblings. We also detach dogs from their broader ecological community, restricting access to other species of animal with whom they might interact.[12]

Loneliness

Loneliness is defined by social psychologists as the gap between the social connections a person wants to have and what they experience. It is subjective, reflecting an individual's unique psychological reaction to the circumstances of being alone. This is true whether the species in question is human or canine. Social isolation will result, for many dogs as for many humans, in feelings of loneliness. As we know from a vast literature in psychology, loneliness is a form of emotional pain.[13]

Conditions that might make dogs lonely include but are not

limited to having no sense of belonging to a community; having no friends or not enough friends to satisfy needs; being raised in such a way that extreme overdependence on a particular human attachment figure develops, such that separation from this person induces feelings of panic or fear; or being left alone without anything interesting or meaningful to do.

Human loneliness has been driving dog acquisition. Now, on top of a human epidemic of loneliness, we have a canine epidemic, too.

Home Alone

Many dog guardians worry about leaving their dog at home alone—though often leaving a dog alone is the only option for going out into the world for work, school, and so forth. One neighborhood friend described how she felt: "I can't stand leaving Paisley. I'm out having fun, and she's just sitting at home waiting for me. I'm always worrying about her when I'm gone." It is a question that all responsible dog guardians ask themselves: How long can I comfortably leave my dog alone at home? How long is too long?

There is no clear, scientifically supported answer to this very common question. Indeed, almost no research has explored the comfortable limits of leaving a dog alone at home—it is entirely up to the discretion and judgment of the dog guardian. Perhaps this makes some sense, since "too long" will depend so much on the individual dog and the larger context of the dog's life. A dog left alone for eight hours a day, but who spends the other sixteen hours interacting with his family and doing interesting things is in a different situation than a dog who is left alone for eight hours a day and whose human family returns at night but basically ignores the dog and gives the dog no social or physical outlets for her energy and then makes the dog sleep in a kennel all night. It may be, too, that the outer limits on appropriate length of time alone at home will depend on the elimina-

tion patterns of the dog—how long she can comfortably hold her pee and poop.

Despite the lack of data, there is nevertheless a loose consensus among veterinarians and dog trainers that about four hours is a reasonable limit for most dogs. Beyond that, many dogs may begin to suffer. Unfortunately for the pet dogs of the world, many are left home alone for much longer periods—some for as much as twelve or fourteen hours a day. Although rarely defined as animal cruelty, leaving dogs alone for such long periods likely causes extreme psychological distress to at least some and perhaps many dogs. This is particularly true if dogs are physically confined to a crate, a kennel, or a small room, because the physical discomfort of confinement will compound the psychological discomfort. Standards for acceptable periods of "alone time" ought to be developed, along with information disseminated to dog guardians.

People often will defend themselves by saying that dogs can't tell time and don't know the difference between two minutes and two hours. Although dogs may not mark time in the same way we do, the claim that dogs have no sense of the passage of time is absurdly anthropocentric. It is also wrong.[14] Dogs undoubtedly know when we're gone and experience the length of absences. The more important question is at what point does lengthy translate into uncomfortable?

One of the ways in which people try to offset social isolation, loneliness, and time left alone is by having two dogs or more, or perhaps a cat or other animal with whom the dog can be friends. Multidog and multispecies households have the potential to be socially enriching, but they can also be challenging. Moreover, what little research we have on this subject suggests that adding another dog to a home won't necessarily address separation anxiety or loneliness and, in fact, might make things worse.[15]

"Adding a dog" sounds like simple math, but it is not. One of

the main difficulties is that you don't really know what it will be like until you're already in the middle of it, and at that point it is hard to back your way out. We brought Bella into our household in part to become a companion to our dog Maya, thinking that dog-dog friendships are important as a result of having only experienced the beautiful friendship between Maya and our now deceased dog Ody. When Bella and Maya did their meet and greet at the shelter, everything went swimmingly. And for the first year or two, Bella and Maya seemed to get along. But they never fell into the kind of easy friendship that Maya and Ody shared. As Maya grew older and lost some physical strength, and as Bella simultaneously grew into an adult and became more secure within the household, we could see things starting to shift. Whereas Bella would have once deferred to Maya, she now challenged her. Things grew tense. There were some minor scuffles, and then, finally, the real fighting began. They had three very serious, protracted fights, all of which involved blood-splattered walls and trips to the vet to address injuries sustained by one or the other or both. In the third fight, Maya wound up in a multihour surgery to repair a severed salivary duct and to remove several teeth that had been broken during the fight. For the remaining four years of Maya's life, we had to meticulously manage the social interactions, especially around trigger points such as food, the bed, and greetings at the door. I was constantly on edge, and I imagine Bella and Maya were equally keyed up. We felt (and still feel) that we had failed them both by forcing them into a situation that caused unhappiness and physical harm. Not only that, I felt that my love and attention really were divided and neither dog got as much as she deserved.

Despite our experience with Maya and Bella, I've generally been amazed at how well dogs adapt to sharing a home. Dogs are remarkably tolerant of each other—far more than most humans. But tolerating the company of another dog isn't the same as actively choosing to be in their company because you like

them. Dogs are regularly forced into proximity with other dogs and will often spend an entire lifetime in the same house, without having any choice in the matter and, likely, without being all that happy about it. Sometimes, in fact, it could be a living hell. Think, for instance, of a small, rather quiet dog being coupled with a large, rambunctious dog who constantly terrorizes her. Without active intervention from the humans in the household, the smaller dog might live in a near-constant state of fear.

This isn't an argument against multidog households but, rather, a cautionary note that when we ask dogs to share a home, we need to be mindful about how the relationship is working for everyone involved and how to keep everyone feeling safe and loved. And as Maya and Bella's story taught me, family dynamics are not static, and so we need to remain alert to changes over time. We also need to be prepared for the possibility of heartache.

Alone Time

Although we need to give careful thought to confining dogs alone within the home, we also must remain sensitive to a dog's need for time alone. Indeed, many dogs suffer from a bizarre combination of too much social isolation and too much social interaction.

Being socially isolated is different from choosing to be alone. Being socially isolated means being deprived of social opportunities; it involves the removal of choice. Being alone, in contrast, can be a deliberate temporary withdrawal from social interactions. A dog who is alone is not necessarily a lonely dog.

A dog who can't comfortably be alone is a dog who has been psychologically damaged. Dogs know, as mammals, how to be alone. We make them forget. The epidemic of separation-related issues has to do with how we raise and keep dogs, not with their natural abilities to spend time in solitude.

Indeed, many dogs choose to be alone at least some of the

time and benefit from a quiet room of their own. Dogs living within the hustle and bustle of a human home—especially a home with lots of activity and noise—may appreciate having a place where they can withdraw from social interaction.

Watering Seeds of Sociality

We cannot give dogs back what we have taken—the full suite of canid social behaviors—but we can work to open their social worlds in meaningful ways, and we have a responsibility to do this. What do dogs need in the social realm? The simple answer is more than they are getting. In addition to trying to add richness and variety to our dog's social worlds, we can also try to mitigate the harms caused by isolation within the home—which comes with a first hard step: acknowledging that isolating dogs within the four walls of our home is, in fact, a potentially harmful form of captivity.

Statements on responsible dog guardianship, when they do include reference to the social well-being of dogs, often focus on socialization: good dog guardians properly socialize their dog. Although socialization is related to social engagement, these are not equivalent. In the context of living with pet dogs, socialization generally refers to the process of introducing puppies into human domestic life during the so-called critical socialization window of eight to twelve weeks of age, when they are most open to learning new things and when positive exposures to humans, other dogs, and their environment can help them become confident and calm adults. The importance of appropriate socialization cannot be overstated: it helps set dogs up for success in adapting to human environments.

What garners less attention is the importance of *socializing* in the day-to-day life of dogs. Dogs need and want time with us and perhaps, depending on the dog, with other humans. They

also, especially, need and want time with others of their own kind. This means that dogs need more time outside the four walls of their human enclosure, more time out and about in the world, whether on walks and joint errands or in shared community spaces. If possible, we should aim to create conditions within which social interactions among dogs can flow freely, rather than being carefully orchestrated by human dog parents. Dogs need to be able to make choices about how, when, and with whom they interact. Just as forcing dogs into isolation is stressful for them, so is forcing them to interact with other dogs in uncomfortable ways.

Given the practical and structural constraints, it can be quite a challenge to nurture an interesting social life for our dogs. For example, dogs are mostly required to be on a leash. But leashes hinder natural patterns of interaction and communication between dogs. In off-leash areas, there are other kinds of problems, such as dogs who have been poorly socialized or simply haven't had adequate experience with others of their kind. Out-of-control dogs stress everybody out. Even if dogs are allowed to freely interact with each other, the emotional reactivity of today's dogs lends itself to encounters that are more often agonistic or awkward than enriching. (Chicken and egg problem: emotional reactivity might be caused by social isolation, but emotional reactivity leads to increased social isolation. Were dogs reactive first, or isolated first?)

RITUALS AND HABITS

Bella is a dog for whom ritual is very important. From the first moments of the day until its close, we play out familiar rhythms together. Some of these rituals are simple; others are multistage events. Every time I return to the house after being down in town, I open the door to find Bella's nose, then head, then body

squeezing out into the garage. She curls around my legs, sniffs my hand curiously, and then hobbles to her shelf in the garage where we keep a stash of frisbees, balls, and stuffed animals. My part in the ritual is now to put down whatever groceries or mail I have in my arms and proceed to the shelf and select a toy. I'll pick one—maybe her red frisbee—hold it out for inspection, and ask "Do you want your frisbee?" Sometimes the answer is yes, and she'll grab the object with enthusiasm and head out of the open garage door and into the yard, waiting for me to follow along. If I have made a wrong choice, she'll stare at me, feet planted. I'll exchange the frisbee for the Chuckit! cube or the stuffed flea, until I choose correctly. If I don't follow this ritual, she will drop her tail and ears a notch in a display of mild disappointment.

I'm using the term "ritual" loosely. I am specifically not talking here about what ethologists call ritualized behavior, such as the courtship display of a peacock as he fans his tail feathers. By ritual, I simply mean a sequence of actions that follow a predictable order and are performed at a predictable time. I'm especially interested in those rituals that are part of a shared lifeway—rituals that both express and cement an affiliative, interspecies bond. So, it isn't quite right to say that Bella is a dog who values ritual; we value ritual together. They are not her rituals but *our* rituals.

In *When Species Meet*, Donna Haraway describes research by primatologist Barbara Smuts on greeting rituals. Between beings who know each other well, there are frequent and brief greeting rituals, what Smuts calls an "embodied communication." Haraway on Smuts: "Greeting rituals are flexible and dynamic, rearranging pace and elements within the repertoire that the partners already share or can cobble together."[16] Greeting rituals are not discrete, denotative signals emitted by individuals; they are fluid and assume a background of relationship

and mutual understanding. A dance. Me and Bella and the shelf of toys.

Since starting work on this book, I have tried to give attention to Bella's rituals, those surrounding greetings—which are of intense importance and interest to both of us—but others as well. The more I look, the more I notice. And what strikes me is how deeply attentive Bella is to the flow of my movements, to the patterns of my life. I try to do the same for her. Identifying and understanding the rituals is a way to pay attention to the flow of our dance.

Coming back to the notion of using ethograms to invite increased awareness of our dogs, you might take some time to make an ethogram of your dog's various daily rituals. I've created one for me and Bella.

GREETING RITUALS: The garage toy shelf as mentioned above. Bella has a different greeting ritual for my husband. When he gets home from work, he comes in and puts down his things and gets down on the fuzzy living room carpet. Bella burrows into his chest, wags crazily, licks his face. He hugs her and rubs her head and talks to her in a high-pitched voice.

EATING RITUALS: Breakfast occurs at seven-ish and begins with my taking the bowl out of the drawer, opening the cabinet for pills. At noon, I open a different cabinet and take out the puzzle toy. Next the freezer door, then green beans into the slots. After lunch, Bella expects a couple of biscuits as we settle back into the office for another work session. Five o'clock dinner, same pattern: bowl, pills, food.

EXCREMENTAL RITUALS: The moment Bella finishes eating her breakfast, we go to the front door. She barks madly while I put on my boots and coat. I open the door, and she rushes out to chase rabbits (whether there are actually rabbits doesn't matter), then she circles about in a particular part of the yard, poops, scratches the ground three or four times on each side,

then walks toward the house, pees by the hosta plants, and heads to the door.

WALKING RITUALS: On those mornings that Bella feels like walking, we go to the end of the driveway and then decide which direction. Bella always gets to choose. Lately she's been going down across the bridge toward my neighbor Judy's house. (Judy often gives Bella treats.)

The Cree bridge ritual: if we take Bella in her stroller around the neighborhood loop, she demands to get out at the Cree bridge to sniff and pee. She seems to feel incomplete if we skip this part of the walk. The stop originally included a short trip down to the Little Thompson River, where Bella loved to wade. She often doesn't want to go that far now, but she likes to pause at this juncture. Also, there is a rock that is a favorite pee spot for neighborhood dogs, and Bella likes to take stock of what's been happening and leave her own message for others.

TIME OF DAY RITUALS: In the morning when I'm first waking up, Bella burrows her head into my neck. This is the only time Bella is cuddly in bed, and the cuddle period lasts only a minute or two—then it is obviously time to get up. In bed at night, she does growly displays and shows her teeth if I try to touch her.

As soon as my coffee cup is in hand, I say to Bella, "Off to the salt mines!" and she rushes to her blue bed next to my desk so that we can start work.

Bella's New Guinea singing dog ritual begins the moment we say the word "bed." (Does Bella know what "bed" means?[17]) Yodeling, squeaky-barking, madly rushing (inasmuch as she can now) up the stairs and to the side of the bed, in anticipation of the small collection of treats she gets every night. Since her leg surgeries, Bella hasn't been able to jump onto the bed. She tries, though. She puts her front legs up and leans as far forward as possible, scrabbling at the bedspread. If I help by lifting her back end, she growls and squabbles and snaps. The purpose of the treats-on-bed routine was to allow me to lift her hind end

while she was focused on gobbling down the treats. Now it is an eagerly anticipated ritual.

TOUCHING/PHYSICAL AFFECTION RITUALS: Bella is not a touchy-feely dog, but she has a few rituals of physical affection. In addition to her morning cuddles in bed, she has a take-a-break-from-writing-belly-rub ritual that she initiates every thirty minutes or so while I'm at my desk. She stretches out and onto her back in a dead-bug position and waits for me to get down on the floor with her and give a thorough rub to her chest and belly.

GROOMING RITUALS: Bella knows that when I get a small tube off the shelf in the kitchen (every Tuesday, before breakfast) she must submit to the unpleasantness of having something stuck in her ears, a long-term antibiotic to prevent ear infections. She sits still and lets me proceed without objection, but her displeasure is evident. Not all rituals are fun. But the predictability of the encounter, I believe, makes it tolerable for her: every single time she gets the ear medicine, she immediately gets breakfast.

A habit is a tendency to act in a certain way, and habit formation is the process by which a behavior becomes so automatic that we are no longer aware of it. A learned behavioral response to a particular situation is also a "habit"—and by this definition, our dogs likely develop a plethora of habits through their lives with us (and we with them). Over the past decade, there has been an explosion of research into habit, with several best-selling books alerting us to the psychology of habit formation and—of great interest to human beings—explaining why we have so many bad habits and how we can best break ourselves of habits that cause us harm, like smoking or overdrinking or eating a huge bowl of cereal right before bed.[18] Although this literature hasn't been directly applied either to dogs or to humans living with dogs, I believe this would be an area ripe for exploration.

Training or teaching dogs, the topic of chapter 6, is largely

about reinforcing good habits and trying to break or change bad habits (as we'll see, the language of "break" is not ideal in relation to dog habits), and greater understanding of the psychology of habit formation, habit stacking, and the interlacing of dog-human habits will help us understand ourselves and our dogs. For instance, when trying to train our dogs, we tend to underestimate just how deeply grooved behaviors can become and why it takes diligence and daily attention to form new behavioral pathways. People try for decades to quit smoking yet get frustrated if their dog fails to break a habit within two or three training sessions.

One of the great injustices that we inflict on dogs is not recognizing that we are a pivot point for habit formation in our dogs and that their so-called bad habits are often behavioral patterns that we have helped them establish and that we reinforce daily without awareness. Bella's habit of lurking around the kitchen is directly linked to my habit of letting her be a taste-tester as I cook. When it comes to training a dog out of a bad habit, we need to look at the cues in our own behavior that elicit the habitual response and realize that changing habits is a cooperative venture.

Predictability and Excitement

Total Cat Mojo, which I mentioned in chapter 2, is one of my favorite books about living with pets. Cat experts Jackson Galaxy and Mikel Delgado talk about the three Rs: routine, rituals, rhythm. The three Rs provide cats with a physical and psychological environment that feels secure and safe because they offer a key good: predictability. The three Rs apply nicely to dogs (and, also, to human children). Rituals provide a scaffolding for predictability, and predictability can provide a sense of control over one's environment. Rituals of feeding and going out to pee

and poop might be among the most important, because these are basic needs. If a dog has a regular feeding routine—if breakfast is at seven and dinner at five—she doesn't need to stress about whether and when her hunger will be satisfied. Likewise, if she knows that she will go outside to pee immediately after breakfast, she doesn't need to expend emotional energy worrying about holding her bladder. She can feel in control. (Even if the sense of control is an illusion, the psychological effect is nonetheless positive.) Predictable environments feel safe and keep stress levels low.

Admittedly, there is a tension between predictability and boredom, and boredom is a real risk for dogs. But predictability itself is not the problem. An environment can be barren and predictable—like the tiny cage of a laboratory mouse. It can also be rich and interesting, yet still predictable. We can provide a scaffolding of predictability while also introducing novelty, enrichment, excitement. Within a feeding routine (breakfast at seven, dinner at five) we can throw in some surprises: a midday peanut butter Kong, a new kind of treat. When we take our morning walk at the predictable time of seven thirty in the morning, we can go to interesting places, let our dog find new smells, new friends, and unexpected treasures. The general idea is to keep the essential needs (the first level of Maslow's hierarchy) predictable: feeding (seven in the morning and five in the evening), relieving oneself (seven thirty in the morning, noon, nine at night), sleeping/waking, socializing or not (presence of social attachment figure/person you love). Make sure excitement and interest are embedded within this secure framework. Play with the contours of the rest.

What about the element of surprise, which seems to be an antidote to boredom? We shouldn't confuse surprise with excitement or novelty or enrichment—these are all different. Surprise can be a wonderful thing, and we should try to surprise

our dogs sometimes and in nice ways. Thousands of YouTube videos feature "surprised dog." And many of these are wonderfully creative, like the couple in San Diego who surprised their German shepherds by bringing in a snow machine.[19] But surprises can also be unpleasant, such as the human dressed up in a T. rex costume. We should focus on the nice surprises. (And the surprises should really be *for* our dogs: the T. rex stunt was clearly designed to amuse other humans, not to give the dog an interesting experience.)

MEANINGFUL WORK

The "no such thing as a free lunch" school of dog training is built on the philosophy that all dogs should have to perform work in exchange for food or affection or any other good they may wish to procure from us. This work might involve spinning in a circle, sitting pretty, or waiting motionless, not allowing excitement to burst through, until we throw a ball, give a scratch behind the ear, or cue them that it is now OK to dig into their bowl of kibble. We control the essential goods such as food and love; we extract token behaviors from dogs in exchange for these goods. Our interactions create an exchange economy, built asymmetrically and within an extraction mindset. That's a negative take on the idea of making dogs work.

Yet there is another aspect to working in exchange for goods or rewards, which we might think of as evolution's exchange economy. Animals are wired to find hard work rewarding; reward, in the form of neurochemicals that create positive emotions, is nature's way of reinforcing behaviors that help organisms survive. Researchers have explored various angles of the "why work is rewarding" idea. A large body of research on what is called "contra-freeloading," for example, shows that given a choice, animals will work for food or some other reward rather

than take the reward for free; they don't want to be freeloaders. Hard effort, both physical and cognitive, is intrinsically satisfying and leads to positive psychological states. Like us, other animals experience positive emotions—what we humans often refer to as the "feeling of accomplishment"—after putting effort into solving a problem.[20] For example, research carried out by scientist Ragen McGowan and colleagues on the "Eureka Effect" in dogs (unfortunately, conducted on a group of beagles housed in a research facility) found that dogs experience a burst of excitement when they come up with a solution to a problem.[21]

As I mentioned in the section on feeding, captive dogs are forced into the position of freeloading when we deny them the opportunity to work for their own food. Extending this out to all corners of a dog's experiential world, dogs often lack opportunities to engage their world behaviorally (cognitively, emotionally, socially) in ways relevant to their biology. In their book *Cognitive Ecology*, Reuven Dukas, professor of psychology, neuroscience, and behavior at McMaster University, and John M. Ratcliffe, researcher at the Center for Sound Communication at the Institute of Biology of the University of Southern Denmark, note that, with few exceptions, all animals have to make decisions within the four main survival categories of feeding, predator avoidance, interactions with competitors, and sexual behavior.[22] The brain is wired to reward animals for doing the things necessary for survival—eating, mating, scaring off competitors, protecting themselves from threats. Our dogs' brains aren't getting these intrinsic rewards.

"Work" is a nebulous word within the dog realm, shifting meaning from one context to another, sliding from one set of moral implications to another. So, we should be mindful about what is meant by "work," and also by the qualifier "meaningful." Over the past decade, it has become far more common for dog guardians to be encouraged to engage their dog in mean-

ingful work. I take this, first, to mean that dogs benefit from opportunities to do things they have evolved to do—to take care of their own needs. If it isn't possible to allow dogs "natural" meaningful work such as procuring food and mates, the next best option is to fake it: to create work that at least feels satisfying for them, that activates the brain's reward system, that is challenging (but not so challenging that it leads to frustration), that engages the mind and body, that is relevant to dogs' unique sensory capabilities.

What are some examples of meaningful work for a pet dog? Informal "naturalistic" work might include allowing dogs to forage while on walks, to scent mark and sniff, or to act as property managers (e.g., not always putting the kibosh on barking). More formal kinds of work might include nose work, tracking, herding. For still formal but slightly less naturalistic work, we might think of flyball, agility, and doggie ninja training. Less naturalistic but better than nothing: puzzle toys for treats and even meals—though it is ironic, isn't it? We take away their ability to secure their own food, then try to compensate by making them "work" for kibble in a snuffle mat? Asking a dog to perform tricks, such as dancing on his hind legs or balancing a treat on his nose, might also be considered a kind of work (I'll come back to the trick training in chapter 6).

TOUCH

When we run our hands over the curve of a dog's back, feel-good hormones flood our brain. I am drawn to Bella almost like a drug: I just want to run my hands through her rough black fur, bury my face in her neck, breathe in her musky smell. The fact that we call our companions "pets" should leave no doubt about the importance of touch in our relationships. Yet while touching is one of the most basic forms of interaction we have

with dogs, it is also one of the most potentially violating. Dogs experience a great deal of unwanted, uninvited touching from humans, some of it surprisingly intimate (e.g., on the top of the head).

I don't particularly like the word "petting." Rather like "walking," it carries with it a whole set of assumptions about what dogs like and what constitute standard human-dog interactions. The most significant problem with the word—and with the way we touch dogs—is its one-sidedness; petting is something we do *to* them. Dogs don't pet people. Nor does anything in the term "pet" suggest that humans should ask for consent. As an interhuman term "petting" has sexual connotations. When directed at animals, to "pet" is to touch in a gentle, loving way. Although the word seems to function differently in these instances, I wonder if there aren't some traces of cross-contamination.

Other words we use to talk about touching dogs carry baggage, too. "Stroked" has vaguely sexual connotations; "touching" has taken on a sinister ring during #MeToo, especially when prefaced with "uninvited." There aren't really any good alternatives for talking about direct physical interaction with dogs, and that's fine. Perhaps the discomfort these terms evoke is useful: the slight feeling of ick that charges these terms relates to consent—and particularly to lack of consent. They all refer to kinds of touching that verge on intrusive. And let's face it, dogs are subjected to an unbelievable amount of unwanted touching, to a near-constant violation of their bodily integrity.

Touch of course extends beyond just petting. We touch our dogs during many daily care responsibilities such as brushing their fur or teeth, clipping their nails, holding them still or pressuring them to hold still while we put on a harness and leash, and lifting them into the car. We also expose our dogs to uncomfortable touching by others—whether by friends who are

over for dinner and want to pet our dog, by strangers at the park, and by veterinarians who are trying to give our dogs vaccinations or check our dogs for injury or illness. Touching can be physically uncomfortable for dogs, and sometimes even painful (e.g., a dog with osteoarthritis in the hips might experience pain when petted, especially when petted roughly or with too firm a pressure). Some touching is also scary and invasive. Although we may think of touching as a physical interaction, it has implications for psychological and social well-being, too. We must be our dogs' advocate when it comes to touching, because dogs are often not allowed to advocate for themselves.

It is possible for our dogs to get too much touching or touching of the wrong kind—scary, uncomfortable, and violating. But dogs may also suffer from a lack of touch. Touch is fundamental to healthy mammalian functioning, and many dogs in homed environments are starved for touch. A dog can be deprived of touch when kept by a person who considers dogs dirty and who is repelled by physical contact, who perhaps wants a dog for protection or to foster a certain public image. A dog can also lack adequate physical touch if his needs are mismatched with his human guardian's—a touchy-feely dog who lives with a person who needs and wants very little close physical contact.

By socially isolating dogs from others of their own kind, we also deprive them of intraspecies touch. When puppies are taken from their mothers, especially prior to weaning, they are denied the developmentally essential touch of their mother's tongue and body and the physical contact with siblings during rough-and-tumble play. Dogs who are isolated from other dogs can't enjoy the touching together of noses and other forms of touch that are part of the canine behavioral repertoire.

Dog-human consent is a two-way street. Humans need to consent to being touched by dogs, too. Some dogs aren't respectful of human boundaries and ignore our signals. We shouldn't blame the dog in these situations, because many dogs

are amped up, lack self-control, are attention starved, or haven't learned etiquette. Humans experience a high level of unwanted touching from dogs—a person walking through the park may find an unfamiliar dog, muddy paws and all, jumping up on them, rubbing back and forth, maybe humping their leg a little. Unfortunately, these interactions can build ill will toward dogs and "dog people."

How to Pet Your Dog

How *should* a dog be petted? It seems like a trivial question, but petting is a complicated business and has some surprisingly sharp ethical angles.

A child who has been raised by dog-responsible and informed parents knows the drill: You always approach the dog guardian first and ask politely if it would be OK for you to pet their dog. If the dog guardian says yes, then you (1) move slowly and gently, (2) stand a bit away and off to the side, so you don't crowd the dog or stare directly into the eyes of the dog, and (3) slowly extend the back of your hand toward the dog's nose, letting the dog sniff and being careful not to put your hand right in the dog's face. If the dog sniffs and licks your hand and then wiggles all over and leans into your legs, you may gently pet the dog on the back. If the dog doesn't sniff your hand, moves her head away, or does anything funny with her lip, you back up slowly, say thank you, and leave.

The child has learned the most important lesson, and one that applies to children and adults alike: get consent. Zazie Todd, animal behavior expert and author of the *Companion Animal Psychology* blog, offers what she calls a "consent test" to make sure a dog really wants to be petted by you. You can ask a dog if she would like to be stroked by holding out your hands and calling her over. If she comes over and rubs against your leg or nudges your hand with her nose, she is probably inviting you to give her a rub. Once you've initiated petting, you can ask

a dog if she would like you to continue by stopping for a moment. If your dog gets up and leaves, she's likely had enough.[23]

After we've decided that the dog really does want to be petted, we need to figure out—by carefully watching her reactions—exactly what sort of petting this individual dog enjoys. Dogs seem to have general preferences about where they like to be touched by humans. Dogs aren't too keen on having a human grip their collar during an interaction; they don't generally like being touched on the top of the head or on the paws. Their preferred spots seem to be on the side of the chest, on the top of the chest, under the chin, and on the shoulders.[24] Karen Overall notes that people often unintentionally agitate their dog when petting. Petting in quick, short strokes is not relaxing to a dog. "If we want a thoughtful, calm dog . . . we need to replace conventional petting with long, slow strokes, deep pressure, and massage."[25]

There are also questions of timing: some trainers advise that petting be reserved as a reward for good behavior. If you pet your dog whenever she asks for it, this will lead to problematic attention-seeking behavior, or so the logic goes. This is absurd, bordering on cruel. Ask yourself: If your child came and asked you for a hug, would it even cross your mind to withhold affection? Would you ask your child to solve a math problem or spell "Susquehanna" as a condition for getting a hug?

A more specific timing question that is frequently discussed, particularly in relation to separation-related anxieties, is whether you should pet your dog before you leave the house or deliberately, diligently withhold petting at this juncture. Some trainers claim (without any good, published data) that giving a dog attention and affection before leaving the house can lead to separation-related behaviors. Others say (also without much data) that petting has a positive effect on dogs before a short separation.[26]

PLAY

Play is fundamental to dog well-being. It isn't merely a nice extra for dogs, an enrichment that we provide here and there when we have time. Of course, dogs must have their other needs met, and in the hierarchy of needs, hunger, thirst, and safety generally take behavioral priority over play. If your dog is eager to play all the time, you are probably doing things right and providing good care (unless your dog is displaying some compulsivity around play, which is a warning sign that something is wrong). But play is a form of physical, emotional, and social nourishment that is vital to a dog's health, particularly young dogs. So, one of our caring responsibilities is to provide space, toys, friends, time, and a spirit of playfulness.

Dogs play naturally and don't necessarily need our help. But several components of the intensively homed environment can hinder play behavior. Natural opportunities for play are often constrained by the physical limitations of the home—there may not be enough space to play hard, and unless we provide toys, dogs may play with objects we consider valuable, like our pillows. We need to provide an emotionally inviting space for play as well. Dogs might get scolded for roughhousing or for pestering us when we're trying to work, suppressing the spirit of play.

Because of their isolation within the home, it is sometimes almost impossible for dogs to access the social conditions for play without our help. Dogs need to have the chance to make friends and to play with these friends—and not always with an unfamiliar dog who they are meeting for the first time. Like the parents of children, we can schedule playdates, or, perhaps even better, we can allow play to happen organically. But it takes some work to provide these opportunities.

Pet dogs are usually raised by humans and not by their canine parents, and so they are denied the chance to learn how to

play through interacting with their parents and siblings as other canids do. If we don't help puppies learn how to play effectively and don't give them opportunities to build this skill set, they may be play challenged for life.

Just as it is important to let dogs play in ways that fit their individual needs, it is equally important to let dogs *not* play. I can't tell you how many times I've witnessed a dog guardian forcefully pulling a dog by the leash into the dog park when everything about the dog is screaming, "No! Please don't make me." By definition, play can't be forced.

As Marc Bekoff suggests in his groundbreaking work on the meaning and function of canid play, it is a building block and expression of intraspecies moral behavior; watching dogs at play is observing them as they "display" empathy, fairness, cooperation, and trust. The play bow, for example, is a gesture of trust and fairness, and what ethologists would describe as an example of honest signaling.[27] Play is also, perhaps, a building block for *interspecies* moral behavior. Our shared games and playful interactions are bricks made of trust. Play is critical for dogs not only because it is fun but also because it engages them in the kinds of complex, nuanced social interactions for which they are so superbly evolved.

Play is arguably, alongside love, one of the primary things that draws people to dogs and that makes sharing our life with a dog so enriching. Dogs are so much better than humans at remembering to play, and the development of a shared repertoire of games and playful interactions feeds the human-dog bond.

As a result of the domestication process, play is more central to the behavioral repertoire of dogs than it is to their wild cousins. Dogs not only retain into adulthood paedomorphic physical features such as protruding eyeballs and big ears, but they also remain behaviorally inclined to play. The playfulness of dogs, although something we love and celebrate, can also

subtly work against dogs if we aren't careful. Play is often described somewhat condescendingly—dogs don't have any real work to do, so they amuse themselves with tennis balls and stuffed dragons. Their playfulness invites us to view dogs as furry children, as not-yet-developed, not quite serious beings. Perhaps we even begin to think of dogs as toys themselves—a toy that plays with the toys we give it. I've caught myself now and then having a nagging ambivalence in relation to Bella. As she bites and chews at her pink and purple giant squid stuffy, I look deep into the brown pools of her eyes and see the shadow of a wolf and feel uneasy.

JOY

But because keeping dogs in homed environments can reduce the dimensions and richness of their experiential world, it seems that we should also seek to redress the loss of happiness that might result from this loss of rich experiences. We have an obligation (don't we?) to provide dogs with the elements of life that allow for pleasure, happiness, and contentment. What about going one step further, and looking for ways to evoke in our dogs feelings of ecstasy and joy? Although there is now a rich literature on animal happiness, relatively little attention has been given to how animals, including dogs, experience joy. I hope this becomes an area of sustained research in the future.

What might we say, for example, about "zoomies"? Zoomies is the colloquial name for a sudden burst of high-energy playful activity. Dog trainer Steven Lindsay has provided one of the only formal descriptions of zoomies, which he calls "frenetic random activity patterns" or FRAPs. He says, "The spectacle may cause first-time dog owners to suspect that their dog has momentarily lost its mind. Dogs exhibiting such behavior appear to be possessed by a torrent of spontaneous locomotor impulses. They rush about as though careening around obstacles or flee-

ing from a nonexistent pursuer closing in from behind. Occasionally, a dog may appear to scramble forward faster than its body can follow, creating a hunched-up appearance as it steers wildly along its frenetic path. As the playful release reaches a climax, the dog may display a wide open-mouthed smile, wedging its ears back."[28] No human really knows whether zoomies are joyful, but it certainly seems like a possibility.

Then there are the times when our dogs seem to melt into a flow state. For my athletic pointer mix Maya, galloping through the field of tall grasses behind the local high school—just running full speed, letting loose, with no object in sight (that I could discern)—seemed to induce a state of ecstasy. Before her knee injury, chasing a flying disc and catching it in the air seemed to bring Bella an exuberant feeling of joy. She perhaps also feels a quieter kind of joy when pointing her nose into the air and catching a complex sensual bouquet.

I'm trying to be careful and use words like "seemed" and "perhaps." I'm not being cautious because I have any doubt that dogs experience joy, but simply because joy is a subjective experience, and it is impossible for me to get inside Maya's or Bella's mind. It may be, too, that there are important species differences that I will never be able to discern, being stuck as I am in one type of mammalian perceptual world. There are two somewhat different approaches to uncertainty: one is skepticism ("We don't have any scientific proof of dog joy so we can't safely talk about it"), and one is curiosity ("There is a lot we don't know or understand so let's keep an open mind as we explore the possibilities"). The latter seems a far more productive approach, not only regarding dog joy but in relation to a whole range of other canine emotional experiences about which we cannot be sure. What is the difference between happiness and joy? Is the difference quantitative or qualitative? How and when, exactly, do dogs experience joy? How is dog joy similar

to and different from the joy we humans experience? What is the role of joy in the canine good life? These are all questions of interest.

LOVE

Love is at the core of many relationships between human and dog, particularly in the bonds formed between dogs and their human guardians. The pet relationship fosters love through proximity, dependence, and shared experiences. Of course, we shouldn't mistake dependency for love, nor should we use dogs' dependency on us as a tool for forcing love from them. And not all successful human-dog partnerships have love as a core element. Trust, respect, and mutual aid can also serve as strong glue.

In *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin wrote: "It is scarcely possible to doubt that the love of man has become instinctive in the dog."[29] What is instinctive, of course, is the *capacity* for love of a human. Just as the capacity for love of a dog has become instinctive in the human. This is what coevolution has wrought. There are plenty of dogs who don't love or even like people; love of humans is not a necessary condition of what it means to be a dog.

The domestic relationship pulls dogs into our orbit of caredfors. Although acquiring a dog is what first creates a moral responsibility to provide care, the emotional impetus comes from love. But when it comes to caring for dogs, love is not enough. Our ways of loving need to be mindful, informed, and compassionate. A friend told me the story of having acquired a Bernese mountain dog when she was just getting out on her own. It was her first dog, and she was excited to be a dog guardian. But she didn't know how to train the dog and didn't socialize him well to people, and because of his size and power, he was hard for her to control. "Boy did I love that dog," she said. When

she moved into a house with five other people things really got out of hand, and she had to have him euthanized "for behavioral reasons." It was the worst experience of her life, she told me. She extended her hands in a sweeping gesture as she said, "I had plenty of love, but not enough care."

There is a tendency to fetishize love as it relates to dogs. "Dogs love us unconditionally" is something one hears so often that we no longer even think about what it means or whether it is true. It is often taken to mean that dogs will love us no matter how badly we treat them; we can be narcissistic, inattentive, riven with human failings, and our dog will love us regardless. But this isn't true. Dogs *choose* to love us and are smart in whether and how they love us. And their love for us is conditional, as is our love for them. Sometimes a dog loves a person who hasn't earned it and doesn't deserve it, who treats her with brutality. But this isn't unique to dogs.

Also, we are conveniently selective in how we use the word "love" in relation to dogs. We assert that our dogs love us, yet when it comes to saying that dog mothers love their children, and that taking their children is an act of cruelty, then a frequent response is "Oh, stop sentimentalizing." It makes no sense biologically to assert that dogs are capable of loving humans but incapable of loving their babies.

The Love Languages of Dogs

Gary Chapman's book *The Five Love Languages* is a self-help book for couples in a romantic relationship. Chapman's thesis is that each person has a unique or at least predominant love language, a way in which they express love and feel love expressed. Chapman breaks these "languages" into five types: (1) words of affirmation, (2) quality time, (3) receiving gifts, (4) acts of service, and (5) physical touch. When partners un-

derstand each other's love languages, they can more effectively communicate their love for each other. The love-languages framework has also been applied to parental relationships with children. And naturally, the internet is now also populated with "Five Love Languages for Dogs." I like the idea of dog love languages because it invites us to be curious—and more curiosity is usually a good thing.

A potential source of frustration in human-dog relationships is a mismatch in love languages. As in the example I mentioned in the discussion of petting, a person who shows and experiences love through physical touch may have a hard time with a dog who doesn't like to be petted or hugged. The dog's seemingly standoffish behavior might feel like a rejection. Likewise, a dog who shows love through acts of service for her human may find these acts met with indifference or even annoyance. Patrolling the house and barking at potential threats could be an act of service, in the dog's mind, yet be met with disapproval and punishment.

I found it a useful exercise to think about Bella's and my shared love languages—how she shows love to me (as I perceive it) and how she feels about the acts of love I extend to her (again, as I perceive it). I ended up with a somewhat different list than Chapman's and didn't hold myself to exactly five. As I thought about it, I decided that I needed two different lists: (1) how Bella shows her love for me (with some reflection on how this matches my own love-language idiosyncrasies), and (2) how she experiences my acts of love and what seems to matter most to her.

The expressions of love that matter most to Bella are, in rough order of priority:

1. Shared space/activities (being together in the same room, going places together, sitting on the porch, smelling, listening, and watching)

2. Food/sensual pleasure/gifts (peanut butter Kongs, frozen green beans, sharing whatever I'm eating)
3. Quality time (playing tug-of-war or hide-and-seek, "training")
4. Physical contact/touch (stroking Bella's back, brushing her fur, touching nose to hand)
5. Words of affirmation (Goooooood Beeeella)

Bella shows her love primarily through the following:

1. Shared space
2. Quality time
3. Acts of service (alerting me to the presence of deer, rabbits, the UPS delivery person; protecting me from the threat of unfamiliar people or people Bella knows but doesn't trust)

The love-languages framework is designed to facilitate understanding and thereby strengthen bonds of love. It nicely blends together and supports the three Cs of human-dog relations: collaboration, curiosity, and care. Humans and dogs surely have overlapping love languages, but we are also different species and need to find paths through the species divide.

FIVE

Technologies of Control

Caring responsibilities sometimes rest in uneasy tension with responsible guardianship of a dog; alongside and even woven into caring practices are exertions of power and impositions of power asymmetries enacted through tools and technologies of control.

Various technologies are used to track and control pet dogs' physical movements, to mediate their social interactions, and to shape their behavior, including leashes, collars, fences, and cages. Low-tech versions have been around for as long as humans have been actively trying to control the behavior of dogs, but over the past several decades, the options for controlling dogs' bodies and minds have proliferated. Many of the products available on the market are refinements of existing technology, with "refinements" typically involving an increasingly concentrated and, at the same time, increasingly remote exertion of power. These refinements add layers of moral complication to their simpler cousins.

Some of the technologies are basic instruments of physical control over the movement of dogs (leashes), some are train-

ing devices (clickers), some combine training with punishment (shock collars), and some are modes of deterrence (ultrasonic bark collars, booby traps). Sometimes one technology has multiple functions simultaneously. A collar, for example, can be a tool for containment, a tool for protecting a dog from harm, a tool used in training and behavioral modification, as well as a tool for inflicting punishment. The same technology can run the gamut from caring to cruel, depending on the way it is used. A collar can, with nothing more than a hard and fast jerk on the leash, go from a neutral experience to painful, scary, and possibly even injurious. Oftentimes, the human applying a given technology is unclear about their intentions (control? training? deterrence?), leading to misuse and, predictably, to confusion on the part of the dog.

It is tempting to say that "technologies of control" are, by definition, bad because they are all instances of humans wielding power over dogs, enforcing an asymmetrical relationship and "making" dogs be our pets and behave in certain ways. But at the most basic level, a technology is just a tool designed to solve a problem. We need to look at what problems we're trying to address, how we're framing the problems, and how we're applying technologies within this framing. And we need to look at what effect the technologies are having. How are they experienced by our dogs? How do they mediate our relationships with our dogs? Do they help build collaboration, or do they reinforce patterns of conflict and misunderstanding? These technologies are opportunities, each of them, for collaboration that can bleed into overt control and through which control can bleed into coercion. ("Collaboration" can easily become a euphemism. A dog wearing a shock collar is arguably not collaborating, whereas a dog wearing a harness and leash might be. Can it be called collaboration if there is a threat of punishment?)

Controlling a dog isn't ethically problematic per se, but it

certainly has the potential to be. There are compelling reasons for controlling the bodies, movements, and behaviors of dogs right now: it is legally required, it is a kindness to other dogs and people, and it keeps dogs safe from certain kinds of harm. Yet the level of control exerted over dogs by people is off the scale. The normalization of extreme control is especially acute in the United States and other countries in which keeping dogs as intensively homed pets is standard practice. And my sense is that the power asymmetries reflected in the range of technologies available and, more important, the ways in which those who live with dogs use these technologies represent a significant source of harm and go a long way toward explaining why intensively homed dogs are in crisis. (The "intensively" in "intensively homed" refers to the quality and quantity of our psychological and behavioral manipulation and invasion.)

These technologies also alter the way we interact with and perceive our dogs. High-tech dog products make possible the remote imposition of pain or fear by using a button. The prongs of a shock collar cause pain, not us. These technologies also, in the way they are designed and marketed, frame dogs as the source of trouble. Tools are designed to counteract unwanted behaviors, to control dogs' unruly impulses. The technologies frame the human-dog relationship as agonistic: "Finally! You can win the battle with your dog once and for all!" The application or recommendation of these technologies by trainers and other experts suppresses our curiosity about why they work and discourages us from the relatively lengthier and more intense process of collaboration. People want quick results, which some of the technologies seem to deliver, but with hidden costs to our dogs and to human-dog relationships.

My agenda is not to tell people whether or how to use these technologies but, rather, to explore why every item in our armamentarium of control is ethically loaded, even those that

may seem benign. Although shock collars are perhaps most likely to raise the ire of animal advocates, and for good reason, leashes and flat collars (the standard collar made of nylon or leather that lays flat against a dog's neck) have the potential to be damaging—perhaps even more so, precisely because we are less likely to think about how and why we use these tools to mediate our dog's experience of the world. The fact that we have at our fingertips such an expansive array of tools for controlling dogs is, of course, its own problem statement. How do we make decisions about which tools can be useful in a caring and collaborative relationship with our dog, and how do we learn to use tools to enhance communication with, rather than force our will on, our dog?

Discussions about the ethics of certain technologies of control often get stuck on the tension between efficacy (or perceived efficacy) and harm. We'll circle back to this tension in the next two chapters, in relation to the use of so-called aversives in training and behavioral modification. (In the context of dog training, an "aversive" is an unpleasant stimulus applied with the intention of reducing the occurrence of a behavior.) Here's what I'll say for now: efficacy is not irrelevant, but "does this work?" is generally the wrong question.[1]

MODES OF PHYSICAL CONTROL

Dogs live under nearly constant conditions of intensive physical and social constraint. Almost every dog—or at least every "good" dog—wears a collar and, whenever out of the house, a leash. These two basic technologies mark human ownership and control over the dog's interaction with the world. Indeed, these are among the oldest technologies of control applied by humans to dogs and are a part of life for nearly all pet dogs.

These technologies are also, of course, the very same ones

that allow dogs some measure of freedom within human society. Both technologies have the potential to be used collaboratively and in ways that respect the agency of dogs. If one of our caring responsibilities is to take our dog out in the world for exercise and social stimulation, one of our complementary responsibilities is to do this the right way. And there are many opinions about what the right way is. The right choice (with "right" here qualified under the umbrella of captivity and control) for collar, harness, and leash depends on the size, age, and body shape of the dog and the size, age, and body type of the human.

Collars

The collar embodies a set of power relations and social practices. It is the primal symbol of dogs as captive. By attaching a band around the neck, we make it so dogs cannot escape us. It is also the key feature that distinguishes the social practice of pet keeping: a pet dog wears a collar, while a free-ranging, loose, feral, unowned dog does not. The presence of a collar identifies dogs as belonging to the pool of pet dogs; it also, often, gives the details of the dog's belonging: the name, telephone number, and address of the owner. If you encounter a loose dog, the first thing you ask is "does he have a collar?" If so, you probably feel a sense of relief—you may be able to fix the situation, to reunite the dog with his guardian. Collars are a fascinating, colorful comingling: a display of human power and love at once. Collars are also, like clothing, an expression of who we are, mirrored through our dog.

A collar, especially when attached to a leash, mediates a dog's physical interaction with the world and constrains a dog's physical movement. A great many dogs resist this constraint, making the collar a potential site of harm. When coupled with a leash, a collar can be not only a source of frustration—"I really want to

sniff that spot but I . . . just . . . can't . . . quite . . . reach"—but also a source of physical injury. Collars that tighten in response to a dog pulling forward on a leash, such as choke collars, prong collars, and pinch collars, pose particularly acute dangers for dogs. The problem with these collars is that virtually no one uses them with the knowledge, skill, and precise timing needed for effectiveness with minimal fallout. When used incorrectly, these collars can cause pain and even injury. For example, Karen Overall says that dogs placed in choke collars are typically allowed to pull on the collar and to sustain the pull. They soon learn to override the discomfort of the choker. Sustained pulling can damage the delicate structures of a dog's throat, such as the larynx and esophagus, while increased intraocular pressure from pulling on a collar can damage a dog's eyes.[2]

Even flat collars, if not fitted and used properly, can cause injury to a dog's neck. For a 2020 study published in *Veterinary Record*, animal behavior and welfare researcher Anne J. Carter, along with University of Nottingham colleagues Donal S. McNally and Amanda L. Roshier, tested various collar types under a range of forces ("firm pull," "strong pull," "jerk") on a simulated model of the canine neck. They concluded that no single collar had low enough pressure on a dog's neck, when the dog was pulling on the leash, to mitigate the risk of injury.[3] Let's rephrase that: no collar was safe. On proper fit, Overall recommends that a collar should be tight enough that it remains on the animal when the animal puts her head down but sufficiently loose that the animal can pull her head out of the collar if it becomes caught or entangled. If a collar is not fitted property, she warns, the collar can become embedded in the skin and can even strangle a dog to death.[4]

Expert advice about collars isn't always sound, perhaps because the dangers of collars are still underrecognized and perhaps also because collar recommendations are often given as a

one-off, without context about the dog and guardian and without the ongoing training and supervision a guardian needs to use the collar safely. My pointer mix Maya was a terrible leash puller. She strained against the leash so hard that she would rasp like Darth Vader. I was given various pieces of advice about collars by trainers and by the local humane society, all of which I followed and none of which worked. I was told to use a metal prong collar (made from linked metal rings with prongs that tighten and pinch into a dog's neck when she pulls), a so-called good dog collar (which was our local humane society's kinder, gentler version of a steel-prong collar, made with plastic pincers instead of metal), a gentle leader head harness (which loops around a dog's snout and pulls the dog's head to the side if she puts even the slightest pressure on the leash), leash jerks (a hard, swift yank that surprises and/or hurts the dog), and an immediate change of direction if Maya wasn't paying attention to me—the equivalent of a leash jerk. I was also told by a professional trainer that, because Maya was a hunting breed, she had an especially tough neck—adapted to running through thick brush after birds—and that she felt nothing, even when she was straining against the big plastic barbs of the good dog collar, sounding like the Dark Lord of the Sith. In each case, the advised collar choice failed to reduce pulling, and I quickly rejected each option either because I worried about Maya's neck (prong and good dog), because Maya was miserable during ours walks (head harness), or because it felt mean to inflict pain (leash jerk, direction shift), no matter how irritated I was by the constant pulling. My mistakes, at the time, were in how I understood the problem (Maya was a "leash puller") and in thinking that a piece of technology could fix things. What I needed, instead, was training in how to collaborate with Maya in ways of walking together that weren't mutually frustrating. As for the "hunting dogs have tough necks" bit, this belongs in the overstuffed box of total dog-related hooey.

The potential for injury—combined with the inclination of many dogs to pull against a collar when on a leash (a sign of resistance to restraint)—is why I would encourage people to only ever use a chest harness for a dog walking on lead.

Labeling

One of the main functions of the collar is to label the dog. The very presence of a collar indicates a dog's status as "owned," and most collars have tags attached linking them to a specific human. To be unowned, unclaimed, and unmarked is illegal for dogs in the United States. A dog who isn't under direct control of a particular human is subject to immediate impoundment if caught.

Labeling dogs is a mix of legal requirements and general "responsible dog guardian" guidelines put forth by humane and veterinary organizations. Dogs in the United States are required to wear a tag indicating positive vaccination status for rabies and, in most jurisdictions, are also required to wear a dog license—which of course isn't really a dog license but a human license, giving a person permission to keep a dog and indicating that the owner has filled out paperwork, paid a small fee, and provided proof of vaccination.

In labeling their dog, most guardians are motivated less by legal requirements and more by a sense of wanting to protect their dog from the untenable freedom of being "lost." Lost dogs may very well know exactly where they are, but if they are separated physically from their guardian, they may be at risk of injury or incarceration or may fall prey to a human with malicious intent. Having a lost dog is one of the worst experiences a loving dog guardian can have—it is also, unfortunately, quite common. In *Dog Gone Missing*, writer and dog advocate Amy Mall estimates that about one million dogs go missing every year

in the United States—they chase after a deer and don't come back, get spooked and pull out of collars or jump fences, sneak out of gates that are accidentally left open, or are deliberately taken.

So, given the situation for dogs, the best thing we can do is make sure they are labeled properly and clearly, even if we balk at the idea that a dog is a piece of property. Tags affixed to a collar can fall off, so many people outfit their dogs with collars embroidered with a contact phone number; collars can fall off or be removed, so many guardians choose to have an identifying microchip inserted under the dog's skin, which can be scanned by shelters and veterinary offices. (In some places, microchipping is mandated by law for all pet animals.) Some dogs are given tattoos on the belly or inside of the leg. Trackers equipped with GPS attached to a harness or collar add a layer of protection for dogs and peace of mind for guardians by allowing a guardian to trace a dog's location in real time.

Bella has an ID tag with my name and address; it wraps around her collar and attaches with Velcro. I ask Bella to wear a collar during the day, especially when we are out and about. She was microchipped by the shelter before we adopted her. As a dog guardian, I have generally followed local rules about licensing and tags: Bella has a rabies tag, a city license, and a city of Boulder Voice and Sight Control Tag that allows her to be off leash in some areas (now expired, since we no longer hike). I don't keep these tags attached to Bella's collar because they are heavy and jingly but carry them with me in her treat bag. Because Bella is a We dog, who sees her life's work as keeping us safe, we've never really had to worry about her wandering off on her own or chasing after deer, and now that her mobility is so severely limited, I worry not at all. But if Bella were young and inclined to roam, I would likely attach a GPS tracker to her collar, for my peace of mind.

Leashes

In the various conversations I've had over the years with trainers, behaviorists, and scholars studying dog-human relations, a recurring motif is that leashes are a source of trouble for modern pet dogs. When I asked Mark Derr, author of *A Dog's History of America*, why dogs are in crisis today, he had two immediate answers. The first point of trouble was the beginning of intensive breeding several hundred years ago, when breeds and breed clubs became a thing.[5] The second point of trouble emerged in the 1960s, when rules against dogs being loose—often referred to as "leash laws"—started being enforced. Dogs suddenly lost the freedom to roam.[6] Their lives became much more intensively captive.

A leash restricts a dog's ability to engage with the world in a dog-natural way. Very often, you see a person and a leashed dog walking together down the street. The leash forces the dog to walk in a straight line (boring!), at the pace of the biped (unnatural!), right in the middle of the sidewalk when all the interesting stuff, like dog pee, is over to the side (frustrating!). The leash might be used to restrain the dog from saying hello to human and dog passersby and pulls the dog along before she's had a chance to even begin sniffing another dog's butt, narrowing her already small social world. The leash might also, sometimes, be used to force a dog to pass uncomfortably close to an unfamiliar human or dog, with no control over the physical distance the dog can place between herself and a perceived threat. If a squirrel darts across the sidewalk and the dog's instinct to chase kicks in, she may find herself painfully jerked sidewise or flipped flat onto her back.

Unfortunately, the problem with leashes is often framed as a problem with dogs themselves. A whole category of behavioral issues falls under the umbrella of "leash reactivity." The fact that so many dogs have leash-related problems—whether

pulling, becoming aggressive toward other dogs, or snapping at cyclists—should leave us in no doubt that leashes are, indeed, a technology with profound implications for dog happiness.

Leashes are not just about dogs; they are about human-dog connection. How and whether a leash is used often reflects how well people believe their dogs are trained, and "off leash" is a sign of trust and a show of confidence. On the one hand, this confidence appears to be lacking. In a survey of dog guardians in the United States, fewer than half reported feeling comfortable letting their dog off leash in public.[7] This statistic tracks with what I've observed. I often meet people out hiking on the trails with their dogs in the national forest surrounding my town. Off-leash walking is perfectly legal, yet I'd guess that about half of all dogs I meet are leashed. On the other hand, quite a few dog guardians are unrealistically confident about their dog's recall skills, and out-of-control dogs—often seen being chased by a human screaming "Come! Come here! COME HERE NOW!"—are a common feature in parks and other areas where dogs are walked.

Leashes, like collars and harnesses, can be employed in ways that do not harm dogs; they can be tools of collaboration and compromise. They can also—and very often are—employed in ways that *are* harmful. It is important to think about what these technologies are trying to accomplish and how we can use them to achieve our goals while leaving our dog physically and psychologically intact.

One of my neighbors, as an act of civil disobedience, refuses to put a collar or tags on his canine companion Duke, and Duke is never on a leash. I'm not sure Steve even owns a leash. His approach is based on the philosophy that Duke is not a piece of property and that Duke should be as free to move about in the world as we are. Duke often wanders down from Steve's house to say hi to Bella when we're at the little neighborhood lake. I must say that Duke seems to have a very good life, and being

uncollared and unleashed works well for him. But it wouldn't work well in very many places. Steve and Duke live in a tiny rural community with a high tolerance for dogs and for human individualism, narrow dirt roads that force people to drive slowly, and no regularly patrolling animal control officers.

Muzzles

From a post on the "reactive dog" subreddit:

> MUZZLE SHAMING/GUILT BY PET STORE EMPLOYEE
>
> Our sweet dog has developed reaction issues toward the other household dog and [we] realized we should start implementing muzzle training with him so we can all feel more calm as we go through trainings (on our own and with professional help) to hopefully lead a better life.
>
> So we stopped by the pet store for a well rated muzzle that we can start using for short periods in tense times and not worry about him biting the other pup. And when checking out, the employee scanned the training treats, the Adaptil plug in (worth a shot?), and the muzzle and when she got to the muzzle her happy mood dwindled and she got all awkward and stumbled on her words. Then she started asking personal questions about why we were buying it and when I explained we were working with a reactive dog, she just started saying they're bad to use and shaming us.
>
> Just ugh. I guess this is the start of our new life but we are so worn down, and we want to have a happier life for the dogs and us, so her criticism stings.[8]

The sight of a muzzle on a dog makes many people uncomfortable, both because we may worry about the welfare of the dog and because we might worry about our own safety around the dog. If you do an internet search for "dog muzzle," images

pop up of ferocious-looking German shepherd dogs lunging at the camera. Muzzles have long been stereotyped as a symbol of the dog as a dangerous weapon. The muzzle is the safety on the gun. It makes a dog appear mean and also temporarily contains a dog who has been trained to be mean.

Yet muzzles are starting to appear as tools of responsible dog guardianship. Why? Because there comes a time in the life of many, many pet dogs that a muzzle is a useful tool for providing care and keeping dogs and people safe.

For a long time, I bought into the negative stereotypes myself. I didn't discover the value of muzzle training until it was too late. My aha moment came about five years ago during a camping trip in a remote part of Colorado. Bella stepped on a cactus and had a collection of painful tiny cactus spines stuck in both of her front paw pads. She had no interest in letting us tweeze them out—she tried to bite us every time we touched her feet—and the spines were too small for her to manage with her teeth. She couldn't walk at all, and waiting the seven hours until we got home and could get to our vet didn't seem like a good option. We had to improvise a muzzle out of a leash, and my husband held Bella still while I performed cactus removal. The fear of restraint compounded Bella's discomfort. I felt like I had failed her by not forecasting how to handle this kind of scenario.

I started muzzle training the day we got home. Now Bella is comfortable sticking her nose into the loops and letting me fix the strap around her head, and she even gets excited when I get the muzzle out of her drawer for practice. When Bella tore her cruciate ligament and had her TPLO surgery in the summer of 2020, she wore a muzzle for various vet visits, and the fact that she was already comfortable with it probably took her suffering down a notch or two—it was one fewer point at which we had to use force. I also now keep a muzzle in my dog first aid kit in the car, and we are better prepared for travel emergencies.

Although many people are muzzle converts, like me, there is still a negative association. My friend has been diligently muzzle training her dog Poppy since puppyhood. For a while she and Poppy were doing muzzle-training sessions in the front yard of their Boulder home. Without fail, people walking down the sidewalk would stare wide-eyed at the muzzled Poppy and then hurriedly cross to the other side of the road.

The Muzzle Up Project is a nonprofit organization advocating for a change in perception, associating muzzles with loving, gentle care rather than force and fear.[9] The Muzzle Up Project is also trying to educate dog guardians about how to find and fit the right muzzle and how to mindfully train a dog to be comfortable with this form of restraint, because muzzles have the potential to harm dogs if not properly fitted or when a dog is put into a muzzle without appropriate conditioning and training. Dogs in muzzles need to be able to breathe freely, pant, take treats, and drink water.

In one of the few published studies on muzzle use, veterinarian Christine Arhant and colleagues surveyed dog guardians on muzzle introduction technique and found wide variation. While some dog guardians used a very gradual, long-term approach to habituation—considered best from a dog welfare perspective—some relied on quick, intense training or did no training at all. Not surprisingly, the technique chosen significantly impacted adverse behaviors in muzzled dogs. More than a fifth of guardians reported physical damage to their dog's fur or skin, problems with thermoregulation, ocular problems, or gastrointestinal problems from the muzzle.[10]

TOOLS FOR CONFINEMENT

Keeping dogs as pets involves confining them to certain spaces, notably our homes, garages, or yards, and, often, to smaller ar-

eas within these spaces. We confine dogs because they are our property, because we don't want them to leave us, because we want to keep them safe, and because we must: in our society dogs are considered loose if they aren't confined, and being loose is illegal. The level of confinement experienced by dogs varies widely—some pet dogs spend many hours at a time confined to a crate or kennel not much larger than their body, while other dogs enjoy relatively free access to their entire home, a yard, and sometimes even a larger community. Many dogs have lives that are rich and interesting enough that their confinement within the walls of a home is not experienced as a serious deprivation. Still, it is important not to sugarcoat this basic moral quandary: As a good dog guardian, we cannot avoid holding a dog physically captive. And captivity is a form of harm. How should we feel about this?

Since about the 1970s, the spatial area available to the average dog in the United States has been shrinking. A wide range of demographic and cultural shifts in dog-keeping practices have contributed to this constriction, including the implementation and enforcement of impound laws, the transition of dogs from outside animals to inside pets, and steady growth in the population of both dogs and people. Dogs now find themselves more often at the end of a leash, behind a fence, or on the wrong side of a door and no longer have free run of their neighborhoods. A greater density of dogs, and more dogs constrained by leashes and collars, may have translated into more frequent and stressful interactions with other dogs, giving rise to more dog-on-dog reactivity.

By confining dogs, we curtail their use of physical space, their ability to engage in natural behaviors such as elimination, their network of relationships, and their possibilities for interaction with the world. Mainly we do this by locking dogs up inside our home, often with no way to get out. We do this when we

are home and when we are gone, though we tend only to think of dogs as "locked up" when we aren't with them. Confinement has two important interlinked consequences: the imposition of psychological stress and the diminishment of a dog's physical, social, and sensory world and possibilities.

Crates

Keeping dogs inside the home increasingly involves a confinement practice known as crating. Although caging dogs and other domestic animals is hardly a new idea, the crate—the cage within a cage (cage within a home)—has become increasingly popular. Indeed, crates are often included in the things that all responsible dog guardians have and use. This technology of control is now so ubiquitous and unquestioned that the noun "crate" has become a verb, a dog-keeping practice: crating. "Just a sec, I'm crating my dog." I'm not sure when the description shifted from cage to crate, but this clever rebranding was no doubt facilitated by the pet industry. "Lock your dog in a cage while you are gone" sounds rotten; "crate your dog while you are away from the house" sounds benign.

Crate afficionados claim that dogs like to be in crates. The crate, they say, is a natural hidey-hole that makes dogs feel calm. A crate is just like a den. This is a common and sneaky substitution of something unnatural for something natural. Yes, denning is part of maternal behavior in free-ranging dogs and in other canids. But no canid lives in a den beyond early puppyhood. On the contrary, dogs are highly social animals who need and want to be near their family. Isolating dogs in crates is one of the most unnatural things we do to them.

A 1999 paper by Dutch animal behavior scientist Bonne Beerda and colleagues in the journal *Physiology and Behavior* discussed the successful use of social and spatial restriction

to induce chronic stress in a group of laboratory beagles. Dogs were confined to individual crates for six weeks, with no social interaction or even visual access to other dogs. The socially and spatially restricted dogs "exhibited a heightened state of aggression, excitement, and uncertainty" and showed hormonal and immunological changes associated with high levels of stress.[11] How is crating a pet dog in the home different from what is described in these articles as "social and spatial restriction" in a laboratory? What period of daily crating for a pet dog would lead to chronic stress? One hour? Eight hours? Twelve hours?

When talking to people about their crating practices, I often sense an undertone of discomfort. Unprompted, people will tell me they *do* have a crate and that they "crate trained" their puppy. "But," they will quickly add, "we don't ever lock the crate door now. And Bailey actually loves her crate. She goes in there all on her own when she wants to feel safe." This calls to mind the seemingly counterintuitive behavior of ex-prisoners who long for the safety of confinement. But the message to draw from this is not that incarcerated people want to remain locked up because they enjoyed their time in prison. The psychological motivation is trauma; the chronic loss of free choice changes people. It almost certainly changes dogs, too. And being in a crate, whether as a puppy or an adult, involves a chronic loss of free choice.

Like the shock collar, the crate is a familiar tool within the context of extreme exploitation of dogs in laboratory research. Oddly, the guidelines about appropriate cage size set forth by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)—which is not known to be a great friend to animalkind—are more rigorous than those typically applied by individual dog guardians.[12] In fact, individual dog guardians have no legal requirement to follow the USDA's Animal Welfare Act guidelines, nor are there any limitations on how dog cages can be marketed and sold. My

guess is that nearly all crates used to confine pet dogs would be judged by the USDA as too small.

I followed the USDA calculations to find the right size crate for Bella: Bella is about thirty-nine inches long. So, the floor size of her crate would need to be fourteen square feet. The size recommendation on Chewy's website for Frisco Fold & Carry (which looks like the crate we have for Bella) is more like eight square feet, and that's assuming I ignore the "your pet's weight" column, which would have put Bella in a medium, 5.75 square feet. The only consolation here for Bella is that she doesn't live in her crate the way dogs in a research facility or commercial breeding operation would. The crate is folded up in our basement and is only there for veterinary emergencies.

Like muzzles, crates are a tool with great value in a very narrow range of situations. We should consider it a kindness to help all dogs learn to feel comfortable in a crate. The crate—with the door wide open—can be a safe place for a dog to go when she would like some time alone or needs refuge from screaming children, other pets, and so forth. Used in this way, the crate increases a dog's autonomy because she can opt out of social interactions with others in the household. There is also value in helping a dog feel comfortable in a crate with the door closed, because there may be times when such confinement is important *for the dog*. The most obvious example that comes to mind is during an illness or after a surgery, when a dog may need to be kenneled at the veterinary clinic and while in recovery at home. Kenneling might also be necessary during evacuations for fires, floods, or other natural disasters. If being crated is familiar and has positive associations—lots of treats and praise, minimal fear or anxiety—then the stress of the surgery, illness, or major life disruption may be somewhat reduced.

Shaping the way crates are marketed, sold, and described in training literature could help reduce and refine their use by dog

guardians by shifting the narrative from the patently absurd "all responsible dog owners use a crate" to the more reasonable "this is a tool you might consider having around, but it should be used with extreme caution."

Fences, Yards, Dog Doors

As we've already seen, tools of confinement also often function as freedom enhancers. Yards represent a constricted space—most are far smaller than dogs want or need. Yet yards are still wonderful sites for play, sensory engagement, and socializing. Fences keep dogs in, yes. But they also expand dogs' range of free movement and allow dogs to be outdoors without leashes.

A door, too, is something that can either be open or closed. It establishes a perimeter, a confined space. Nevertheless, a door—especially a door designed to be opened by dogs themselves—provides a source of agency, freedom (however limited), and control for dogs. Dog doors are typically found on properties where there are fences and yards, so the freedom of dogs is expanded incrementally but relatively safely.

MIND CONTROL

Few issues are as hotly contested among dog advocates as the appropriate role of remote devices such as the shock collar, wireless fence, and bark collar. Some see these as essential tools to control and modify dog behavior, making dogs and humans happier together. Others see them as the work of the devil. My goal in this section is narrow: to explore some of the ethical issues raised by the use and proliferation of remote technologies, touching on but not trying to resolve debates about efficacy and harm. I'll come back, in chapter 6, to the role of punishment in training.

Several common features link these remote technologies: they are used to control or modify the behavior of dogs; they add a layer of anonymity between a dog and a human controller (there is no physical contact—the cue or punishment is given indirectly); like other technologies of control, they often seek to control or modify behaviors that are natural to dogs, such as exploratory behavior and barking; and they all rely on the use of an aversive.

Some questions, along with my answers. You may answer these differently.

1. Are these technologies necessary to keep dogs safe? No.
2. Can they enhance the freedom of dogs? Yes.
3. Do they harm dogs? Yes.
4. Do they harm us? Yes.
5. Can they foster collaboration between dogs and humans? Unlikely but possible.
6. Would you use any of these on your dog? No.

Shock Collars and "E-Collars"

I spent one morning going down a Sit Means Sit franchise rabbit hole. I was curious about this doggie training facility—especially after one popped up in a nearby town. The Sit Means Sit website pictures various dogs "being good" and prominently features "graduation" ceremonies. In one video, a graduating class weaves, dog by dog, through a room filled with platters of Thanksgiving turkey and other enticing-to-dog delicacies. The dogs trot past plates piled with food, move up and down ramps, past more platters of food. Visible around each dog's neck is the black band with a small box. We don't see the faces of the people, only their midsections, and in their hands, the black remote control. The dogs perform perfectly, although they look visibly uncomfortable.

The Sit Means Sit video seems to be par for the course these days. Electronic collars are everywhere. I'd guess that at least half of all dogs I pass out on our local trails are wearing an electronic collar of some variety—an old-fashioned shock collar or a newfangled "e-stim" collar. And the people out with their dogs are, from what I can tell, being *good dog guardians*—they are taking their dogs out for a hike in the woods, and, I'm guessing, quite a few of them feel comfortable letting their dog off leash precisely because of the electronic collar. I want to be clear that I don't think every dog guardian who puts a shock collar on their dog is a bad person. But I do want to be clear that I think this is a bad thing to do to a dog.

Electronic collars, or "e-collars," typically deliver a "cue" to a dog through two metal conductive prongs on the inside of the collar, through which an electric shock or pulse or stimulation is delivered to the sensitive skin of a dog's neck. Most of these are marketed as training aids. I'm lumping all remote electronic collars together here; some types of e-collar may be more problematic than others.

This issue exposes dramatic fault lines in the philosophy of training—weighing expediency against welfare and, to be charitable, weighing welfare against welfare (hurt a dog now to prevent the dog from being hurt more later or to prevent the dog from hurting other dogs, animals, or people). The literature is large and growing and not without ambiguity. The appropriateness of using e-collars seems to boil down to weighing their very narrow but significant usefulness against the very real and widespread problems of misuse.

Like flat collars and harnesses, e-collars are a form of physical control. But they are also more than this: they are mind control. Ironically, e-collars are often advertised as a tool that gives dogs more freedom, and in some ways, they might deliver on this promise—as in the many dogs out hiking, who get to enjoy off-leash time because their guardian feels a layer

of confidence about recall that they would not feel without the e-collar. Yet they also represent a particular form of captivity for dogs, and an especially insidious and damaging kind of captivity at that. In the case of a regular collar and leash, the technologies directly mediate a dog's physical interaction with the world; the physical effects, the pressure of the collar against a dog's neck, can be controlled (ideally, and to some extent) by the dog himself. The dog retains some agency. In the case of the remote shocker, the world may appear free and available, yet be overshadowed by fear; imagine walking through a haunted house, knowing that at any moment someone dressed as a ghoul might pop out and say "boo!" You cannot relax; your adrenaline pumps. Dogs who are at risk of being "stimulated" may be in a state of constant heightened arousal, particularly if the controls are in the hands of an inexperienced or unskilled guardian or trainer who hasn't mastered the nuances of operant conditioning.

The shock collar—and electric shock more generally—has a long history in behavioral research, particularly in research aimed at understanding and developing treatment for mental illness. This should be a red flag. To give two quick relevant examples, American psychologist Martin Seligman's research on learned helplessness involved exposing dogs to inescapable electric shock. One of Seligman's experimental devices, the so-called shuttle box, delivered a shock to dogs' paws through an electrified floor. B. F. Skinner, another American psychologist, used electric shock to study reinforcement schedules and operant conditioning. Skinner found that certain "schedules" lead predictably to neurosis: when an animal cannot accurately predict when a reinforcer (e.g., a shock) is going to come—if the reinforcer doesn't relate in an intelligible way to the behavior being elicited—the animal develops what Skinner called superstitious behavior, a form of neurosis.[13] The recommended tim-

ing of a reinforcer—discovered through a great deal of trial and error and canine neurosis—is 0.05 seconds after the response. That's damn fast.

Electric shock, in other words, has been a central tool in the experimental production of neurosis in animals used in laboratory experimentation. It seems no coincidence that the rising popularity of remote electronic collars over the past two decades follows the same trajectory as the burgeoning mental health crisis among dogs in the United States.[14]

A grave concern about shock collars is their use by inexperienced or inattentive dog guardians or trainers. The timing of a shock reinforcer must correlate precisely with the behavior for which the shock is being used as a deterrent, otherwise the punishment schedule will be experienced as unpredictable, in effect creating a reinforcement schedule that will drive a dog mad, as explored by Skinner. This concern does not seem overblown to me. Even the world's best trainers take years to develop this skill. When you see a good trainer at work, they are laser focused on their interactions with a dog—it is highly unlikely that they will be chatting on their cell phone about last night's Netflix binge.

In addition to harming dogs, remote collars may contribute to the breakdown of trust in the dog-human relationship, a relationship that already appears to be on the rocks for many dogs and humans. Another underacknowledged harm is that the human application of force, fear, and discomfort harms us, too. In brutalizing dogs, we brutalize ourselves.

Hidden Fence Company, which sells a variety of control technologies, goes to great lengths to explain to consumers that an e-collar is not one of those old-fashioned shock collars that have had so much bad press and that are illegal to sell in many countries around the world. The new generation of e-collars "ought not to be labeled in an exaggerated and libelous man-

ner as 'shock collars.'" "Electronic collars," the company claims, "were created to enhance animal welfare by maximising clarity and speed of an animals [*sic*] incentive learning."[15] Which is not quite accurate. E-collars are simply a newer generation of the same technology of control, the original function of which was to induce neurosis in experimental animal subjects.

Electric pulse training aids, advertisers claim, use electronic stimulation, not electric shock, by which they seem to imply that "stimulation" feels good as opposed to "shock," which feels bad. Electronic stimulation, or TENS—transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation—works by sending an electrical stimulation or pulse through tissue between two contact points, the two metal prongs on the e-collar. But the problem is not in the relative painfulness of the "punishment" or "aversive" but in the selection of an aversive in the first place. (And, by the way, if you have ever used a TENS unit on sore muscles, I doubt you would describe the experience as "stimulating" in a good way.)

Can electronic collars stop unwanted behavior? Yes, temporarily. Can they be used by experienced trainers with extreme care in such a way that the danger to dogs is quite minimal? Yes. But in the hands of the general dog-owning public, the technology has become a serious menace to dogdom. Given that there are viable alternatives, maybe we need to make different choices about how to exert control over dogs.

Is there any role for remote collar technology? Possibly, yes. Not all remote collars rely on painful stimuli, and, if used in the right context, they could conceivably help human and dog work together. Remote collars that rely on gentle vibration might, for example, be used to help communicate with deaf dogs. A deaf dog could be taught that when her collar vibrates, she should look at her human—that she'll get a treat. Her human could then use hand signals or gestures to request behaviors or communicate intention. A collar that uses different tones (but not

high-pitched ultrasonic noise that is inaudible to humans and painful to dogs' ears) to communicate content might be useful in a setting in which a dog is off leash and not within easy vocal range of their person. In these situations—and I'm sure there are others—the collar is not inflicting discomfort and is being used in the context of positive reinforcement and collaboration.

Another narrow setting in which open conversation needs to take place is the training of dogs by professional handlers to do work that is risky and where absolute and precise response by dogs to their partners or handlers is necessary for everyone's safety. The work of police and military K-9 units comes to mind. In addition to the ethics of using shock collars in these settings, there is important discussion to be had about the morality of exposing dogs to extreme risk for the benefit of humans.

Bark Deterrents

All the technologies under discussion seek to control or modify the natural behavior of dogs. Leashes and collars inhibit dogs from freely exploring, socializing, running, roaming, chasing, and so forth. But a few technologies are specifically designed to *suppress* natural dog behaviors through punishment. These strike me as unfair to dogs.

Bark collars, for example, are particularly insidious because they suppress natural behavior or, in some cases where obsessive barking is a symptom of compromised mental health, they heap insult on injury. Bark collars come in many varieties, from the more to the less strongly aversive (electric shock, ultrasonic beeping, a spray in the face with citronella oil or water), but they all do the same thing: punish a dog for engaging in normal dog behavior. The suppression of natural behavior, in turn, can lead to psychological damage that can then manifest in unwanted behaviors such as . . . compulsive barking. The human

guardian, growing more and more frustrated by the fractious and "stubborn" dog, may up the ante and increase the level of punishment. Ultrasonic bark deterrents, which detect and deter barking from roughly seventy-five feet, can be purchased and installed by people other than a dog's guardian, such as a neighbor who is annoyed by a dog incessantly barking in an adjoining backyard. This may be a godsend for someone whose neighbors are inconsiderate. I've received emails from people who, although sympathetic to the harm caused to dogs by these devices, are desperate for some peace and quiet. One elderly gentleman described how his quality of life has deteriorated because of the incessant barking of the neighbors' dogs. He can't sleep, can't concentrate. The neighbors, he says, are rude and refuse to talk about the barking issue. I've also had emails from people whose dogs are being impacted by a neighbor's bark-deterring device. A woman described how her once gregarious, happy dog completely shut down after the neighbors installed an ultrasonic bark deterrent. He will no longer go outside, refuses to go on walks, won't eat, and is listless and depressed. The potential welfare problems of sound-based deterrents are even more acute for the many dogs who experience sensitivities to noise.

Companies that sell anti-bark collars often defend their use as a kinder and gentler alternative to surgical removal of a dog's voice box. But the moral logic here—that the immorality of surgical "bark softening" serves as our moral defense of bark collars—is just weird. As with other remote technologies such as electric fences and e-collars, the marketing of bark deterrents is highly misleading and unethical. Almost without exception, potential buyers are told that the devices are completely humane and won't inflict any discomfort on anybody. Indeed, one website went so far as to describe a dog silencer as a device that uses ultrasonic technology "to emit waves that calm your dog." Really?

This is not to say that dog barking isn't problematic for humans—it can be. But what needs to change is what we expect from dogs and how we work with them to negotiate compromises (more on this in chapter 7).

Electric Fences

Rather than providing a visible, physical boundary a dog can see and with which a dog can interact, a wireless fence uses some form of remote "experience"—either an electric shock from a collar fitted on the dog by the guardian or an unpleasant ultrasonic sound emitted by a device placed on a tree or in the ground—to confine a dog to a given area.

Like bark collars, remote fences suppress a dog's natural behavior—in this case, the inclination to explore and roam. The fences work by eliciting fear or surprise and, like anti-bark devices, are often used not as a training tool but as a deterrent. A dog can only determine where the (arbitrary) boundary is by transgressing, which then results in punishment. Like ultrasonic bark deterrents, ultrasonic fences that work by emitting an aversive noise when crossed can be put up by neighbors, out of the control of the dog's guardian. These technologies are indiscriminate in who they affect.

Are there situations where a wireless fence might be worth consideration? Probably. A friend who lives on a forty-acre farm, bordered on one side by a busy road, uses an electric fence to keep her three dogs on her property. Building a physical fence that long is prohibitively expensive, she says, and she thinks it is worth the trade-off for her dogs to have such expansive freedom to roam in exchange for the potential to get a shock if they cross the line. Only she and her dogs can really make that choice, and at least she is engaging the technology mindfully. Pure freedom is rarely a safe option for dogs in the United States, and as I noted above, some technologies of control can sometimes

enhance the freedoms of captive dogs. But like shock collars and bark devices, electronic fences, e-fences, wireless fences—whatever we euphemistically call them—are oversold and overused, and the potential dangers for dogs underappreciated.

The Holy Grail of dog remote control fence technology—at least that's the claim made on the product website—is called Halo: "Your dog's personal halo of protection." Halo will "set your dog free!" Marketed not as a smart collar but as "the next-generation dog safety system," the Halo rolls several technologies of control—surveillance, confinement, activity tracking, and behavioral modification—into one device. The Halo offers total connectivity, so you can spend even more time on your cell phone while ostensibly hanging out with your dog.[16]

One of the neat and terrifying features of the Halo is that you can use a special mapping app on your phone to create up to twenty different wireless fences, the crossing of which delivers an uncomfortable stimulation to your dog. Twenty electrified boundaries for your dog, which you can change anytime you want! This might be a nice feature for feckless humans, but imagine the confusion of a dog whose "territory" is constantly shifting for no discernible reason; the outside world becomes one huge landscape of fear. (Is it a coincidence that most of the dogs in the advertising photos on Halo's website are panting?)

Booby Traps

Spike's Dog Blog on the Acme Training website offers this advice:

> BOOBY TRAPS are when you leave a temptation available but gimmicked in a way that when the dog tries to touch it, something sufficiently startling or averse occurs. The most usual booby traps would be mouse-traps (including for easily discouraged dogs, the variant called "Snappy Trainer" which has a plastic flap attached

that causes increased startle effect but prevents any stinging pinch if a paw or nose gets snapped). You can sprinkle enticing food with hot sauce, cayenne pepper, bitter apple spray, lemon juice, etc. Provided your dog doesn't love strange things and doesn't thoroughly inspect food before eating, you have a chance at teaching your dog that food on the counter tastes nasty.

Some people report success from arranging a pile of tin cans or pie plates that will fall with a crash when jostled. If you use pop cans put several pennies or pebbles in them and tape the cans shut with duct tape. Also select some very delicious, tempting, and smelly food to use as the BAIT. . . . The dog grabs the bait and upsets the stack of cans, which fall with a crash. The dog runs for cover and in so doing learns a lesson.

Another version involves enticing food, a cookie sheet, a thin rope, several pennies and soda cans and a good place for the human to hide. Put the food on the cookie sheet—the smellier the better. Put the cookie sheet far enough back on the counter so that the dog can't easily see it. Surround the food with soda cans that have pennies placed inside. Attach the string to the tray in such a way that you are able to hide while still holding the string. Wait for the dog to come in and find the food. As soon as it commits to being bad, pull the string. The trick is for the dog not to see that you made everything come crashing down.[17]

Are booby traps problematic? Booby traps are used in warfare, which should tell us something. The language of "sufficiently startling and aversive" gives some further clues. Booby trap technologies run the gamut from homemade string-and-cookie-sheet traps to the ScatMat, which will deliver an electric shock if the dog puts his paw on the counter. If using fear, pain, or the startle response to modify a dog's behavior is problematic—a point of discussion in chapter 7—then booby traps should be on the no-go list. Even worse, as the words "bait" and

"trick" suggest, booby traps are designed to lure dogs into doing wrong; we give them an incentive to walk into the trap, tempt them to transgress. This is a dirty trick and not something we should do to someone we love.

Like many of our remote technologies of control, booby traps are often described as a training tool. But they really aren't. They are forms of remote deterrence and punishment. Like our other remote technologies, booby traps create landscapes of fear. And, like bark deterrents and electronic fences, booby traps suppress dogs' natural behaviors, particularly the canine inclination toward curiosity, exploration, and food seeking. It is a rare dog who doesn't seek food and who doesn't find food rewarding—especially deliciously tempting (human) food. To punish dogs for seeking the pleasures of food is cruel.

Booby traps also assume—wrongly in my opinion—that a dog trying to access "our" food is committing a crime. Most pet dogs are denied the opportunity to forage for themselves—we hold the reins on what is perhaps the primary motivational need of dogs, maintaining tight control over what and when and how much a dog may have. It seems reasonable to me that under these conditions dogs would and even should try to take provisioning into their own paws.

Clickers

One of the most iconic technologies of training—second only to shock collars and on the opposite end of the spectrum—is the clicker, indelibly associated with animal trainer Karen Pryor. The discussion of clickers is interesting precisely because the tool is used exclusively in the context of reward-based training, or so it seems. Yet the nuances of its use invite us to think about why and how we use technologies when interacting with our dogs.

The clicker connects dog and human through a piece of handheld technology about the size of a Pink Pearl eraser: en-

cased in a small plastic box is a metal strip that makes a distinct clicking sound when pressed. The clicker is used to cue a dog that a certain behavior is what the human wants; the click is always followed by a food treat. The point of the device is to smooth the potentially clumsy timing of human communication with a dog, not leaving a dog to guess which behavior a given treat is rewarding. The click says, "Yes! That's right!"

A 2021 study led by Giulia Cimarelli of the Clever Dog Lab in Vienna asked what seems to me an appropriate question: Clicker training is widely assumed to be welfare friendly, but is it completely benign? Cimarelli and colleagues thought the matter was worth further consideration. As they note, there is variation in how clicker training is approached. Some clicker trainers always give a reward such as a food treat after a click, while others use partial rewards—a treat is only given some of the time and, seemingly (from the dog's perspective), at random. The theory is that dogs learn more quickly if there is uncertainty about whether they will receive a reward. Cimarelli's group wondered, though: If dogs are expecting a treat and none is forthcoming, might they experience frustration? And should we worry about frustration as a welfare concern?

Cimarelli and her team concluded that partial rewarding did not improve training efficacy. It was, however, associated with a "negatively valenced affective state"—in other words, dogs had bad feelings—bringing support to their hypothesis that partial rewarding might negatively affect welfare.[18] I asked trainer Rain Jordan what she thought of clicker training with partial rewarding, and she said that she views the click as a promise: food is coming, I just can't get it out of the treat bag fast enough. It is unfair to not follow through on the promise and give a treat for each click. Even if studies found that frustrated dogs learned a task or command more quickly than not-frustrated dogs, is rapidity in learning such an important goal that we would impose negative feelings to achieve it?

Another possible welfare concern with clickers is that some dogs might find the clicking noise startling or scary. Although the fear reaction would likely dissipate once the click is firmly associated with a treat, the click might nevertheless remain annoying. Our dogs are already subjected to an endless stream of acoustic overstimulation, and unless the use of a clicker substantially improves long-term learning and retention, maybe the clicker isn't worth the trade-off (here we are, back at the tension between efficacy and harm).

The thing about clickers, even if the research is ambiguous, is that they serve as an acute reminder of the importance of timing and can thus help people communicate more skillfully with dogs. This, of course, suggests that clickers are really designed as a technology of control *for humans*. Clickers can also help raise even more suspicion about the appropriateness of shock collars because clickers illustrate just how sloppy human timing is. If the bad that results from this sloppiness is simply a clicking sound, that's one thing. But if the bad that results is a painful or frightening electric shock or muscle contraction, then this is yet another good argument for extreme caution where electronic collars are concerned.

All in all, the clicker is probably a benign technology, but it should still be recognized as a technology of control. As dog behavior consultant and applied ethologist Kim Brophey says—a point we'll come back to in the next two chapters—all behavior modification is invasive and needs to be approached with mindfulness.

MODES OF SURVEILLANCE

Dogs and humans surveil each other as a matter of course. It might be said that one of the most important self-designated jobs carried out by dogs is the careful surveillance, tracking, and monitoring of humans, both familiar and unfamiliar. And

likewise, as responsible guardians, we should keep track of where our dog is to ensure that she is safe. But as dog guardians, we take surveillance to a whole new level, becoming for our dogs the panopticon so evocatively described in Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. We have become one large remote Eye, always watching, even when we aren't there, making sure our dogs are good. (Have pet dogs internalized the gaze?)

As dogs have become more and more intensively homed—with less freedom of movement and less outdoor space—the domestic bubble is an increasingly troubled place for dogs and an increasingly important site of care. The so-called pet cam gives us an unprecedented and sometimes uncomfortable window into this domestic bubble, showing us in real time what our dogs do when we leave them home alone. The pet market is awash with these canine surveillance devices, which typically involve a small camera or set of cameras placed strategically around the house, or sometimes even attached to our dog, that send a live feed of her activities to an app on our phone.

YouTube is littered with postings of pet cam footage. One couple discovers, to their delight, that their dog spends all day asleep in their bed, head on the pillows. Another family is horrified to see that their dog spends ten hours cycling through a series of repetitive behavior patterns: frantically pacing from one room to another in the house, digging at the doorframe, and howling. Despite a teeny ick factor in the home pet cam's invasion of privacy—not for what it does to dogs themselves, but for what it does to us in relation to our dogs—these surveillance technologies strike me as more useful than damaging. When used as a window into our dog's experiences when left alone and not, as they sometimes are, to catch our dogs out for some transgression or other, the pet cam can give us good information.

The level of invasion and control we consider to be normal,

even beneficent, with pet dogs is striking. In one of the strange ironies of dog keeping, the more responsible you are, the more closely you monitor, the more aggressive your surveillance, the bigger your Eye.

RESISTANCE

This chapter has explored a collection of tools and technologies through which humans seek to exert power over dogs, often in ways that are dominating, harmful, and excessive. These tools and technologies, taken as a collective, seem designed to break down dogs' resistance to being our pets. But dogs are not so easily persuaded. There are countless ways, both large and small, in which dogs challenge human control.

Dogs must be painstakingly trained to tolerate collars and leashes. A puppy who is first fitted with a band of nylon will scratch at her neck and fuss; when this band of nylon is clipped to a rope and she feels pressure against her neck when moving forward, she may plop her soft rear to the ground, feet pushed out ahead of her in protest. Most dogs will try to pull out of their collar on occasion. Some dogs remain "leash resistant" for their entire lives. Doors are sites of resistance (scratching and barking) and points of escape. Dogs confined by fences will dig holes, climb, jump, slip through gates left slightly ajar. They will sometimes choose to cross a wireless perimeter despite a painful shock.

The fact that we feel compelled to use technologies to control dog bodies is evidence of resistance: without fences, walls, doors, collars, and leashes, dogs would flee. Indeed, the very existence of an enormous and ever-expanding armamentarium of control hints at the fact that dogs maintain a strong level of objection to being held captive. Unfortunately, the ways these technologies are used is often one-directional, punitive, and with too little attention to their affective fallout for dogs. Al-

most always, we give dogs too little credit for being able and willing to work with us.

What do we do about the need to control dogs living as our pets? Can we exert control with self-control? Mindfulness about how and when we use these technologies—and which of them we choose—can go a long way toward reducing their potential for harm. If we remain aware of how these technologies can compromise our dog's well-being and maintain an awareness of the power asymmetries that are inherent in their application, we can give preference to those that foster collaboration, that affirm dogs' agency while keeping them safe, and that nudge us toward negotiated settlements. Chest harnesses, leashes, fences, doors, and clickers offer greater potential for collaboration than flat collars, prong collars, shock collars, booby traps, and wireless perimeters. The details of how these various technologies might function in our negotiated settlements depend, ultimately, on the unique challenges and nuances of each individual dog-human collaborative.

SIX

Training Dogs to Be Good

While getting my hair cut one day at Highlights Salon, I ask Frank about The Colonel, his mini fox terrier. Frank embarks on a lengthy tirade about his neighbor, who adopted a puppy at the beginning of the pandemic.

"A shee-doodle, I think it's called," he says. "A sheepdog/poodle mix. I would never get one of these designer dogs, these crossbreeds." The neighbor hangs out with Frank and his husband all the time because she is a divorcée and has a new puppy and needs help. The Colonel has been showing some aggression.

"He's jealous," Frank says. "He has only-dog syndrome." The neighbor is ruining her dog, making her dog crazy, he continues. The first night in the crate, the puppy cried, so she let him out and never crated him again. Now she can't leave him alone. "Those doodle dogs are crazy," he goes on, getting more and more animated. "She should have crated him. All dogs should be crated." He is disgusted by her failure to train her puppy. The COVID-19 pandemic is sort of an excuse, he admits. "But still," he sighs, "watching this just makes me crazy." I point out that

some dog trainers I know have been doing virtual tele-training and say that it can be quite a good way to work with dogs. Then, feeling that perhaps I've overstepped, I quickly add, "Of course hiring a private trainer can be expensive; maybe it isn't a viable option for her."

"Oh, honey!" he almost shouts at me. "Money isn't the issue. She just sold her house for $3.2 million."

I am amazed at how much Frank has said in this short outburst. Here we have a jumble of assumptions and stereotypes, both broad and specific. Certain breeds of dog are inherently difficult and "bad"; dogs reflect behavioral archetypes such as "only-dog syndrome" and "little dog syndrome" (The Colonel has both, apparently); people need to have a spine when it comes to puppy training (similar to the "let them cry themselves to sleep" school of child-rearing); the crate is an essential tool for shaping behavior and is used by all good dog guardians; and people who fail to properly socialize and/or train their dog are pathetic.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg. If you listen to people talk about dog behavior and training, you'll hear an almost endless and utterly contradictory stream of claims and counterclaims, folklore, and pseudoscience. And, of course, you also hear a lot of good science and common sense.

In practice, training and behavior modification, or "B-Mod," bleed together. For this book, I've tried to tease them apart, though bear in mind that the separation is somewhat artificial. Very loosely, this chapter will focus on the creation of good dogs through training and on the responsibilities of guardians to be good trainers. Good training, as I define it, means actively providing dogs the skills they need to survive and thrive as companion animals in human environments. Behavior modification, the subject of the next chapter, often gets triggered when a dog is "bad"—when a dog is struggling to adapt. Both chapters

are as much about human behavior and human expectations as they are about dog behavior.[1]

Ethical discussion within the realm of training usually focuses on the use of certain training methods or technologies—the use of shock collars, for example. But this framing of the problem obscures deeper issues. In all training, no matter how positive and rewards based, we seek to modify the behavior of another being; it is an essentially invasive way of interacting. We don't love dogs for who they are; we love them but want them to be someone different. Dog guardians have a laundry list of expectations about what "good" dogs are like and how they behave. These expectations are fed by the media, by breeding clubs, by training books and TV shows, or by people trying to sell training products, not by canine scientists who try to see dogs for who they are. Our expectations are unrealistic and largely work against dogs rather than with them; "good dogs" are those who are best able to suppress natural dog behaviors. Training has become a one-way imposition of human rules and expectations onto dogs and not an ongoing pattern of negotiated settlements between species. Even the use of the word "training" suggests the problem: we are trying to train dogs to conform to a very particular, quite unrealistic, and frankly unfair way of existing in the world. We are trying to fit square pegs into round holes, often through the use of force and coercive reshaping. As I'll mention below, I'd like to see the word "training" be retired and replaced with "teaching" or "collaborating." "Training" has too much baggage.

The explosion of training videos, TV, books, YouTube, and website resources makes information about dog behavior and training broadly available, which is great. But really understanding how animals learn and applying the principles of learning in a highly structured way, as professional full-time trainers do, is extremely complex and requires a lot of skill and experience. Individual dog guardians are working from an im-

perfect and piecemeal understanding. If dog-training techniques are mishandled—for example, the timing of rewards is sloppy or aversive stimuli are used in situations where communication is unclear—dogs are at risk of physical and emotional damage.

Perhaps dogs have severe problems adapting to human home environments, are suffering from exposure to landscapes of fear, and have no idea how to meet our expectations. Training is our desperate and mostly failed attempt to deal with a situation that isn't working. The crazier dogs become, the more training they need.

Most likely, we have a classic chicken and egg problem. Let's file this conundrum for now.

WHAT IS THE POINT OF TRAINING?

How did people get along with their dogs for fifteen or twenty thousand years without the benefit of learning theory, animal behavior, training technologies and tools, and an army of experts? Did people have ill-behaved dogs? Reactive dogs who lashed out at passersby? Dogs with such severe separation-related anxiety that they destroyed the contents of a human dwelling? Or is it a peculiarity of modern-day dog keeping that extensive and scientifically rigorous training needs to be applied at just the right time, in just the right way, by just the right person, otherwise we wind up with a totally out-of-control dog?

We tend to think of companionship as the central focus of the human-dog dyad. And perhaps it is. But happy companionship relies on a successful negotiation of the terms of interspecies cohabitation. As soon as we bring a dog into our home, we begin a long, sometimes painful, negotiation over appropriate behavior. Most of the time this is an under-the-radar process, a back-and-forth, call-and-response of mutual observation, communication, and compromise. Together we build a shared lifeway. But

achieving negotiated settlements also takes a more active form in what humans typically refer to as "training."

Dog training is often spoken of as an unqualified moral good: training one's dog is a core component of responsible dog guardianship, and the more training the better. Those who don't train, as Frank griped, are lazy and irresponsible. But what exactly are we trying to accomplish with training? What is it that we want our dog to know, and why does it matter? What methods are we using to accomplish this goal? How do we know when we've succeeded? For many dog guardians, and perhaps even some trainers, answers to these questions are ambiguous.

The point of training, in a nutshell, is to produce a good dog. But this could mean many different things. Here are some possibilities:

Making a dog fit the profile we have in our mind of a "good dog"—expectations that will vary considerably from one person to another.

Making our dog conform to the expectations of human society.

Making our dogs easy for us to live with, or at least less difficult.

Fixing behavior problems in our dogs.

Making our dogs obedient; bending them to our will.

Keeping our dogs safe.

Making our dogs emotionally well-adjusted. Helping our dogs navigate and adapt to the home environment without experiencing high levels of stress.

Helping our dogs understand what is expected of them so that they can feel calm and content and have good, happy lives.

Collaborating with our dog to negotiate a life with minimal conflict, maximal cooperation, and harmony.

Although dog guardians and even trainers may not always or explicitly think about the philosophy behind how they ap-

proach interactions with their dog—especially the specialized, focused interactions generally labeled "training"—our attempts to shape dog behavior are grounded in a set of beliefs about who dogs are, how dogs learn, what dogs need, and what constitute ethical interactions between humans and dogs. Although some of these beliefs may be conscious for some of us some of the time, many lurk below the surface of our immediate attention. Our conceptualizations of how animals learn, and our broader frameworks for understanding and interpreting animal behavior, are always bounded and weighed down by the scientific paradigm out of which they have grown.

Contemporary dog training has emerged from and is grounded in the science of animal behavior, particularly as it has developed over the past four or five decades. This science is subject to the constant undertow of the past: an agnosticism about sentience, consciousness, agency, and the moral value of nonhuman animals. It is constantly being pulled backward by a persisting sense of human exceptionalism, the conviction that humans are something other than animals. Most of what I talk about in this chapter sits *within this exceptionalist paradigm*. Nevertheless, ongoing discussions about the appropriate role of punishment and the use of aversives also open the way for significant philosophical disruptions; they reveal cracks in the paradigm. They reveal where we are stuck and simultaneously point us toward someplace different.

AT WHAT AGE SHOULD DOGS BE TRAINED?

Short answer: all ages.

Usually, the question of when to train is phrased as "what is the best age at which to train a puppy?" There are many subquestions embedded in this seemingly simple query. When are puppies developmentally equipped to learn such skills as

stay and come? When are puppies able to comfortably engage in structured learning? "Best age," of course, is relative to our goals. What are we after? Most obedient? Least stressed? Least likely to have behavioral problems?

Advice about when to begin puppy training can be misleading in several important respects. First, training is sometimes conflated with both socialization and habituation, yet these are all separate processes with distinct though overlapping goals. Mindful socialization of puppies is arguably one of the most important moral responsibilities of caring; the goal is to help dogs learn to interact skillfully with humans and other dogs. The goal of habituation is to help dogs adapt to the various stimuli they will encounter in human environments so that these stimuli don't provoke an overwhelming stress response leading to chronic anxiety and fear. Training, at least as it is often understood by dog guardians, involves the acquisition by a dog of specific skills and the learning of appropriate responses to verbal or gestural cues. Training is like the icing on the cake of socialization and habituation; it isn't very good if it isn't layered on top of a solid foundation of self-confidence and comfortable adaptation to a dog's living environment.

Second, the "best age" discussion can give the impression that training is something that you do for a limited period—you train your puppy, and you live happily ever after. But learning is lifelong and must be constantly reinforced, especially when we are asking dogs to go against their instincts. Dogs change over time, as does the way they learn. What they need to learn may also change. An adolescent dog, for example, may primarily need to learn self-control, while an elderly dog may need to learn new skills to help him adapt to impaired vision or hearing. An adult dog who is moved from one household to another has a tremendous amount to learn, such as how best to understand what his new human guardians want, what is expected of

him, and how to navigate his new environment. We humans, too, are changing over time, and what we are learning from our dogs needs to be continually reinforced.

The best-age question presents an ethical conundrum. The onset of learning for puppies is the moment they are born—or even well before. In a natural setting, dogs and other canids learn from their mother and their littermates and from fathers, older siblings, and alloparents.[2] Our aim, with pet dogs, is to take them from their natal environment at an age that strikes a balance between inflicting trauma by too-early separation and missing the window of opportunity during which a puppy will best attach to us. But this sweet spot is elusive. The ideal age at which to begin enculturating puppies into a human way of life, according to many behaviorists, is between about seven to twelve weeks of age.[3] At the same time, research suggests that it is detrimental to puppies and mothers for pups to be removed from their natal environment before weaning is complete, which in free-ranging dogs is between seven and thirteen weeks of age. Given the common practice of sourcing puppies for human sale, and exigencies of transporting and delivering puppies to human owners by eight weeks of age, the reality is that many pups are taken from their mother too early, often even before weaning is complete.[4] Early trauma sets pups up for lifelong challenges by making emotional regulation, cognitive processing, and learning more difficult.

A question that is asked less often, but that is equally important: What is the best age for humans to learn to collaborate with a dog? My own answer is that it is never too early. Humans can begin learning from a very young age how to feel compassion, how to enact kindness and empathy, and how to have good manners in interactions with animals. Growing up in a multispecies home offers rich opportunities for such learning, although it also risks sending children the message that ani-

mals are human belongings. By involving children in frank conversations about the moral contradictions of pet keeping, parents can encourage children to be ethically self-reflective and curious. Dogs themselves can be wonderful teachers, but it is not a dog's responsibility to teach children to be responsible. The behavior of human youngsters is primarily the responsibility of human parents, who need to mentor responsible behavior and healthy human-canine relationships.

We don't have to start as children. Learning to collaborate successfully with a dog is something anyone, at any age, can achieve. And all of us, whatever our life history with dogs, can consider ourselves in "adult continuing education" for the entire time we live with and care for a dog.

WHAT DO GOOD DOGS NEED TO KNOW?

From a book advertisement on the Your Dog website of Tufts University: "This fully illustrated guide filled with hundreds of step-by-step photos is organized from beginner level to pro. You'll learn tricks on the kinds of things any well-behaved dog should know—fetch, paw shake, roll over, sit, time out, cookie paw—to stunts from dance routines to flying disc acrobatics."[5] Why, we might wonder, should well-behaved dogs know cookie paw, which involves placing a cookie on top of a dog's paw and making her hold absolutely still and not eat the cookie until we give the OK command? Perhaps this is just an example of exuberant advertising, but it nicely raises a basic question about good dogs and good guardians. What skills do good dogs need to have? What are the essential components of a good-dog curriculum?

I asked Lisa Tenzin-Dolma, trainer and founder of the International School for Canine Psychology and Behaviour, for her training curriculum. "There are two basic views of training,"

she told me. "One. All of life is training. And two. Training is very specific—the acquisition of a specific set of skills at a specific time."[6] She leans toward the "training is very specific" philosophy but acknowledged that behavior shaping is something that goes on all the time.

I then asked her what specific skills all dogs need to learn. She didn't even need to think before answering. Dogs need three skills.

1. Recall, otherwise known as "come": the willingness of a dog to immediately return to her human guardian when given a cue. This is the number one skill dogs need because it keeps them safe and allows them to have freedom.

2. Social skills for appropriate social interactions, especially for polite greetings with people and other dogs. This means that a dog can say hello with self-control, without jumping on people or other dogs, going berserk and barking or lunging, or being either too pushy or too fearful when in close physical proximity with unfamiliar dogs and people.

3. "Lie down," which she thinks is more useful than "sit." Lying down can be a signal for a dog to stay put and stay calm. The lying down is associated, physiologically, with a state of calm, a tool that allows a dog emotional self-regulation. The lie-down command can be useful during potentially activating interactions with other dogs and people and can also be valuable at the vet's office, for care that involves body handling, such as teeth brushing and ear cleaning, and for exigencies such as extracting cactus spines from a paw.

Every trainer and behaviorist I queried offered the same basic skills list, with slight variations in ordering and detail.

What didn't appear on any of the lists—and which surprised me at first—was the most iconic item in dog training: "sit." "Sit" is the first skill that nearly every dog in the United States will learn. Yet many of the trainers I talked to mentioned that they

don't teach sit or at least don't think that sit is a very useful command. Indeed, our asking dogs to sit may subtly harm them by coercing them to engage in a behavior that is not easy and that doesn't feel natural. I asked dog trainer and behaviorist Barrie Finger why "sit" remains such a key part of dog training. The main thing it is used for, she said, is to ensure that a dog is paying attention and following commands. Also, perhaps even more important, it is a relatively easy skill for dog guardians to master—shaping the behavior by holding a treat up just high enough that the dog naturally stretches her neck up and her butt goes to the ground. It is a good starter behavior for humans.[7]

A blog by dog trainer Turid Rugaas called *When, Where, and How Do Dogs Sit?* explains why she stopped asking dogs she lives with or trains to sit. She and her trainer students engaged in a twenty-year-long sit study, observing dogs as they were asked to sit. Left to their own devices, dogs don't sit all that often and puppies especially don't sit often—they don't have the muscular control or strength, and sitting is hard work. It can also, she suggests, be hard on their developing joints. Likewise, older dogs or dogs who have any kind of hip or knee problem may also have trouble sitting—it simply might hurt. As she says, if you yourself feel like sitting, then sit. But take a pass on asking your dog to sit.[8]

In addition to training dogs to *do* certain things, good guardians are also tasked with training dogs *not to do* certain things. Some obvious contenders for bad behavior are jumping up on people, lunging at other dogs, begging, and pulling on the leash. The guardians of dogs who do these naughty things will often be scolded, either to their face or behind their back, for failing in their obligation to properly train their dog.

You could say that skill acquisition is what prevents bad habits from forming in the first place and that if we are in the posi-

tion of having to eliminate or modify a behavior, we've already failed: our dog should have known better, and we didn't clearly communicate our expectations. Now we have a problem to fix.

WHO DECIDES WHAT CONSTITUTES GOOD BEHAVIOR?

As the human companion of a naughty dog, I am often caught in situations where Bella displays what appears to be a disgraceful lack of training. She begs for food. She gets on the furniture. She lifts her lip at me if I cross a personal space boundary. I have a very judgmental friend (non-dog owning, incidentally) who often shrieks at me: "Oh my god! I can't believe you let Bella [fill in the blank]." To which I say, "Why do you care what Bella does? You don't live with her. And let me now give you the list of things you do that Bella really doesn't like." Her commentary goes beyond unsolicited parenting advice and into that strange realm in which my private interactions with Bella are overlain with the cultural narratives of "responsible dog owner" and "good dog." Good dogs don't beg. Good dogs stay on the floor where they belong. Good dogs are friendly and compliant.

I have decided with Bella, during our shared decade together, that trying to mold her into the Perfectly Trained Dog would require making her into somebody that she isn't. Not only that, but there are "bad" behaviors like begging that simply don't concern me. And, in fact, I have been complicit in shaping Bella's begging tendencies because I like to share my food with her—I feel stingy keeping the good stuff all to myself. Moreover, I think that asking for food is a natural behavior for a dog, one we should fully expect given the circumstances, and one that we may, in fact, be remiss in trying to extinguish. How did dog domestication happen, if not through thousands of years of dogs soliciting and humans offering food? If we control the food

purse strings, which most dog guardians do, then we should expect that dogs will ask us to loosen those strings and share what we have. Some people prefer that their dog not solicit food during the middle of human dinner, and that's fine. Don't reinforce the behavior and the dog will quickly learn that asking for food at this time doesn't get him anywhere. But there doesn't need to be a universal rule against dogs asking for food. Even calling the solicitation of food "begging" implies that it is a bad behavior, as does labeling home-based foraging as "stealing." And it is worth noting that we beg from dogs just as much as they beg from us. "Please, please love me!" Which behaviors matter and which don't is a matter of negotiation for each human and her dog.

TRICK TRAINING

The Your Dog advertisement mentioned above is for *The Big Book of Tricks for the Best Dog Ever*, by Larry Kay and Chris Perondi, which promises 118 tricks for your dog. How many of these are basic skills? Not many. But that doesn't mean they aren't worth teaching to dogs.

In the training realm, skills are often referred to as "tricks." I would distinguish between essential life skills for living safely in human environments (come, stay, lie down) and tricks, which might include cookie paw, speak, and fetch my slippers. There is some disagreement about whether trick training is good for dogs (mentally stimulating, physically challenging), bad for dogs (patronizing, undignified), or unnecessary but not harmful. The answer, I think, is somewhere in the middle. Dogs don't need to know "tricks"—it doesn't add anything to their essential goodness. But the process of training our dogs to do tricks can be beneficial for both dog and human, if done in the right spirit and with the right approach.

Trick training can certainly be patronizing to dogs. Tenzin-

Dolma told me that she's not a huge fan, though it depends, she says, on the method and the motivation. Too often, trick training is done with aversives and for the sake of human entertainment—we teach a dog to dance on her hind legs or to do cookie paw because we think it is funny and we laugh at her—or to exert control over a dog: "See, he is a robot who responds to all my commands!"[9]

In *The Ethics of Captivity*, philosopher Lori Gruen argues that training animals to perform tricks that are outside their species-normal behavioral repertoire—like training an elephant to ride a bicycle or a lion to jump through a ring of fire—is patronizing and harmful. "When individuals are forced to perform functions involuntarily that are not part of their behavioral repertoire . . . their dignity is being violated."[10] She goes on, "Often, in captivity, animals are forced to stop doing the things that we find distasteful and made to do things that they do not ordinarily do because of our own preferences. This is an exercise in domination and a violation of dignity, even if it does not cause any obvious suffering."[11]

A few years ago, BuzzFeed featured a story about an Australian shepherd named Secret who has learned how to play Jenga.[12] We could view this as an example of asking an animal to do something unnatural to them—the equivalent of training a bear to ride a bicycle for the circus. But another way to look at it is that this Aussie and her human have an amazing relationship and work together beautifully. And I must say, in the video of the Jenga game, the dog seems to be enjoying herself very much.

Zazie Todd nicely articulates the other side of the coin: trick training, if done right, is a form of enrichment, with "right" meaning done using reward-based training. Trick training can be fun and can help improve communication. She points out that teaching tricks is a nice form of training because unlike

basic skills, such as "come," tricks are just for fun. There is less pressure to achieve a certain outcome. This can make the experience more enjoyable for dogs and humans alike.

Trick training, then, can provide benefits such as cognitive enrichment, physical exercise, improved human-dog communication, bonding, and time during which our dog has our full attention—that elusive "quality time." Trick training can also be a great way for children to learn about dog behavior and cognition, without the serious consequences that may result from confusing or unskillful teaching of essential skills such as "come." Finally, we know from scientific research that problem solving elicits positive emotions. Trick training has the potential to make dogs happy and excited. However, we should listen to our dog. If there are certain tricks that our dog doesn't seem to enjoy, then scratch them off the list. A dog might not feel physically or psychologically comfortable doing something (e.g., lots of dogs don't like the teeter-totters in agility courses). If something evokes fear, don't do it. Or if a dog just doesn't enjoy training in general, then maybe it isn't a good idea to work on tricks.

HUMAN TRAINING

One section of the behavior questionnaire in Overall's *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine* asks,

> What is your dog's obedience school/training history?
> a. No school/trained yourself
> b. Puppy kindergarten
> c. Group lessons—basic
> d. Group lessons—advanced
> e. Private trainer—sent to trainer
> f. Agility
> g. Flyball
> h. Specialty training (hunting, herding, et cetera); please specify.[13]

This list looks like a display of commitment by a human guardian toward training their dog; the further down the list you make it, the better guardian you are. Although I tend to agree, it is also the case that you could have done none of these things and still be brilliant with your dog.

Let's shift the frame a bit and look at commitment to training from a different angle: not how much work you have done to train your dog, but how much work you have done to train yourself and how willingly and skillfully you have been trained by your dog. As we get further down Overall's list of training history, the entries become more and more collaborative, requiring more and more effort and engagement on the part of the human. Agility is something dogs and humans do together; so is flyball, a relay race in which teams of dogs run across a series of hurtles to a spring-loaded box that releases a ball; so are hunting and herding. To succeed at agility, flyball, or specialty training, humans must learn a lot about dog behavior in general, must understand their particular dog's behavior, and must develop top-notch communication skills.

Curriculum is shared space, a learning together, and not a set of words or skills or tricks that we imprint onto our dogs. Our dogs are teaching us—or trying, at any rate—and we have a lot to learn. To collaborate well with our dogs, we can prepare in three different ways. First, we can learn about dog behavior and biology, both from reading scientific books and from making careful observations. Think back to the discussion of ethograms in chapter 2. These can be an essential tool in human training. Second, we can listen to human experts such as trainers, behaviorists, veterinarians, and ethologists. Third, and most exhilarating, we can open ourselves up to what our dogs themselves are trying to teach us.

Vicki Hearne, in *Adam's Task*, offers an example of human openness to learning within the context of "dog training." Hearne writes about her experiences with scent training a re-

triever named Belle. When dogs learn the meanings of words, they "have imagined the forms of life that give utterances such as 'Find it!' meaning, they have not learned something *from* us exactly—not learned something that we knew ahead of time." Belle learns the meaning of "Find it!" from Hearne, who then comes to learn, from Belle, that "Find it!" means far more than she first imagined. Hearne learns what it *means* for a retriever like Belle to follow a scent trail.[14] In addition to a deeper appreciation for the meaning of the utterance "Find it!" Hearne is also Becoming Dog, in David Abram's sense: although not exactly learning to scent—something beyond our ken as humans—Hearne is "developing wind-awareness."[15] She awakens to subtle shifts in the direction and strength of air currents and can at least appreciate how scent travels, in and around Belle, along these currents.

Working with dogs, notes Hearne, forces those engaged in it to "recognize the rationality of dogs that occurs on the far side of the limits of the handler's knowledge." We can too easily "enclose" our dogs within the restrictive apparatus of our own assumptions.[16]

TESTING

I don't see a useful role for "tests" in the educational lives of dogs. Some dog-training academies and training courses have dogs perform a final exam of sorts, during which the dog and guardian show off how well the dog has learned the curriculum. In the Sit Means Sit graduation videos that I mentioned in chapter 5, the dogs are expected to follow commands and stay focused while they weave through platters of food. The Canine Good Citizen class offered by the American Kennel Club also ends with a final assessment, in which a dog must calmly walk next to her guardian, pass calmly and in very close proximity to an unfamiliar dog, and interact calmly with an unfamiliar human. If the dog passes the test, she earns the label Canine Good

Citizen. I'm distinguishing this kind of testing from behavioral assessments that are conducted in shelters with the aim of trying to understand whether a dog is going to pose a significant risk of bodily harm to potential adopters and what expectations are realistic. These behavioral assessments, although not without problems, have good intentions: to keep dogs and people safe and to improve the chances of successful adoption.

The problems with curricular exams are severalfold. First, they create an incentive for guardians and trainers to use aversive techniques like shock collars because they often appear to get quick results, despite their potential for long-term harm. Second, they put pressure on dogs and their people to learn a set of complex skills very quickly and under stressful and unnatural conditions. Third, they put dogs into scenarios that are abnormally stimulating, which imposes unnecessary harm. Fourth, the assessment tests imply that the dog is the student/learner and the human is the teacher/boss, reinforcing an asymmetrical and uncollaborative power dynamic. Fifth, the tests give the impression that training is a time-limited event, with a before and after. Your dog completes the course and then you are finished with training. But negotiated settlements are an unfolding, never-complete process. Finally, the tests allow for failure.

My dog Topaz had been labeled by our (ex-)veterinarian as a vicious dog. The Canine Good Citizen class was recommended as a last-ditch effort for reform. Topaz and I could not, within the span of the five-week class, get a handle on his emotional reactivity. Failing the test meant that Topaz also couldn't shake the label of vicious dog. The message was clear: he was unfit to be a member of society.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

There are many ways to understand reward and punishment, and a significant problem in the realm of dog training is the

ambiguity of this language. Within learning theory, reward and punishment represent two basic motivational systems: things animals want and will work to get (rewards), and things they don't want and will work to avoid (punishments). As dog behavior consultant Steven Lindsay says, "Properly understood, reward and punishment are morally neutral, the one being neither better nor worse than the other. Both outcomes serve equally vital functions in perfecting an animal's adaptation to the social and physical environment."[17] From a behavioral perspective, punishment and reward are everywhere, part and parcel of organisms interacting with their environment.

Ethical concerns about reward and punishment arise on two levels. Professional behaviorists and dog trainers who are steeped in and understand the theoretical literature on animal learning are engaged in an ongoing and contentious debate about which motivational systems can be ethically deployed for the purposes of eliciting desired behaviors in our dogs. Although "punishment" may be essential to the survival of all organisms, providing cues to move away from and avoid stimuli that will cause physical damage, is it appropriate to deliberately manipulate this motivational system in our dogs? We'll return to this fraught question below.

An interlinked question—or maybe this isn't a question so much as a problem—is what happens when the morally neutral behavioral descriptors "reward" and "punishment" become part of the vocabulary of millions of dog guardians. How do we address the inevitable confusion, the bleeding of technical terms into everyday interactions between guardians and their dogs? You might call this the trickle-down effect in dog training, where dog guardians talk about—and make liberal use of—rewards and punishments, reinforcers and aversives, without really knowing what they are and without understanding the potential repercussions for dogs. The moral dangers are particularly acute with respect to punishment. When the distinc-

tion between the technical meaning of "punishment" as a motivational system and the folk meaning of "punishment" as a punitive response to alleged misbehavior gets lost, dogs are in trouble.

Let's take a short detour here, to define a couple of additional terms that trickle down from learning theory into everyday dog-training lingo and have the potential to be confusing. First, many dog trainers and training books talk about reinforcement and reinforcers. A reinforcer is not the same as a reward. "Reward" refers to a motivational system in the brain; a reinforcer, by contrast, is a stimulus that increases the likelihood that the preceding behavior will be repeated.

There are both positive and negative reinforcers, and both theoretically increase the recurrence of a behavior. Positive reinforcement involves the addition of a pleasant stimulus to increase a target behavior; negative reinforcement involves the removal of an unpleasant stimulus to increase a target behavior. A food treat is a positive reinforcer (also commonly, confusingly referred to as a "reward"). The use of an electric shock can be a negative reinforcer: the shock stops when the desired behavior occurs. What's most important here for our purposes is that "reinforcement" could easily be misunderstood by someone without a PhD in psychology as something nice. "If you love your dog, give her a reinforcement!" Another term that peppers the dog-training literature is "aversive," an unpleasant stimulus applied with the intention of reducing the occurrence of a behavior. The debate about punishment in dog training is really about the appropriateness of using aversives. If you are now thoroughly confused, you are in good company.

Rewards

The basic idea of reward-based training is that we can focus on shaping behavior by presenting things a dog wants to at-

tain. There is no need to progress into the "want to avoid" side of the spectrum. The language that has attached to this pedagogy is "positive training," and it suggests—inaccurately—that training can and will only ever involve the use of rewards and positive reinforcements, never veering into the use of punishment or aversives. As many in the dog-training world will note, "purely positive" is a misleading label because it is impossible to train, much less interact with, a dog without some aversive experiences being added into the mix. Reward and punishment are woven into the fabric of life.

Still, it makes good sense for general guidance on dog training to urge guardians to use rewards and to avoid the use of punishments. Reward carries less risk of harm to dogs and to dog-human relationships. The difference between the technical meaning of "punishment" as a motivational system and the folk meaning of "punishment" as whacking a dog over the head with a newspaper or spraying a dog in the face with water will be lost on many dog guardians, so why not take the cautious route and steer people toward safer interactions with less potential for physical and psychological harm to dogs? This is especially compelling because we can, by all accounts, achieve our goals without resorting to practices that we know impose harm. (And also, we might want to reassess our goals.)

But this shouldn't be the end of the conversation. The way things usually get cashed out is this: the essence of positive reinforcement or reward-based training is kindness. A kind and gentle attitude toward and treatment of dogs and other animals not only is the ethically appropriate way for us to behave but also fosters the most effective learning in our dogs. This is a pedagogical philosophy—that positive training is the most effective way to teach dogs to behave in human-appropriate ways. It is also an ethical stance: we should maximize kindness and minimize harm. Often these two justificatory threads get

tangled, but it is worth teasing them apart. "Being kind" and "training with rewards" are not equivalent.

Reward-based training certainly carries less risk than punishment, but it is not ethically benign. Here are several considerations. I'm sure there are more.

Although dog trainers talk about positive and negative reinforcements and positive and negative punishments as if the distinctions were perfectly clear, they aren't—particularly not to dog guardians with no formal training in animal behavior or psychology. The line between reward and punishment is, in fact, quite blurry. Human-dog interactions, even the process of cue and response, are incredibly complex. Even in positive reinforcement–based training sessions, most dog guardians are likely sprinkling some punishment into the soup. And in the broader scope of our daily interactions with our dogs, which are arguably where the most substantial and sustained learning occurs, we are likewise employing a mix of reward and punishment. Our dog is doing the same with us. So, "reward/punishment" isn't an either/or, and setting it up this way in the minds of dog guardians is misleading.

In addition to being more confusing than illuminating, the language of reward and punishment fits too easily onto the moral scales—punishment = bad / reward = good—and reduces curiosity about the ethical implications of reward-based, positive training. Manipulating reward structures is not benign: it is still behavioral manipulation. We make dogs do what we want; we just do it in a nice way. Moralizing about the evils of punishment and the innocence of reward obscures some significant moral hazards.

Different rewards cater to different motivational systems, and individual dogs are differentially motivated by different kinds of rewards. Some dogs are highly food motivated, while others are more motivated by social interaction with their hu-

man or the enticements of play. Working with a dog effectively involves understanding what motivates him and playing off his particular needs and desires.

Food is one of the best reinforcers and is the strongest reinforcer for many dogs.[18] But using food as a reward is complicated. Access to food is tied to mental well-being: food scarcity or insecurity will generate anxiety. As we explored in chapter 3, dogs already likely experience some background anxiety related to food because they have almost no control over when and what they eat. When food is used as a reward, we might sometimes be playing off a dog's insecurity. Most problematic is the practice linking training with food deprivation. Many training books suggest training when your dog is very hungry because he will be particularly motivated to comply. Indeed, sometimes dog guardians are told to skip a dog's meal if the dog seems particularly recalcitrant. Then, the logic goes, the dog will be more highly motivated to comply with human demands. This practice seems deeply unfair and unkind.[19]

We can ask similar questions about other rewards that we might withhold from dogs until and unless they follow a command or engage in a behavior we want to reinforce. What if affection is withheld? Play?

Another quite different problem with food reinforcers is that many dogs, although food insecure because they cannot access food for themselves, are nevertheless suffering from excess. How do you balance using food as a motivator with keeping a dog at a healthy weight, especially an older dog in need of a lot of training but with limitations on physical exercise?

Karen Overall suggests another way of looking at rewards in the context of training. Animals work for reward, and rewarded behaviors are repeated. But, she says, "we should also understand that *evolution has guaranteed that the most valuable reward of all is good information*." Dogs work for information, especially

as it pertains to risk.[20] We need, then, to pay attention to how effectively we are communicating with them about our expectations and desires.

As psychologist and dog-training expert Susan Friedman has noted in her work, control is also a primary reinforcer for dogs.[21] Providing dogs with a sense of agency and giving them choices is rewarding and is likely to increase dogs' cooperation and participation in training. So we need to frame training not as a process by which we constrain dogs' freedom but as a process by which we expand it.

One final note on reward: reward and love are not the same, as every child of highly driven parents can attest. A regime of reward can become oppressive if expectations are too high or unrealistic and the "child" always falls short. Overpressuring to perform, even solely through rewards, can be as damaging psychologically as punishment for overt failure. We can praise our dog and give her treats without the expectation that she perform some task or job, where these are not rewards in any technical sense but simply acts of love and affection.

The Role of Punishment in Training

As I mentioned above, one of the most contentious issues in dog training is the role of punishment. Strictly speaking and in the narrow context of the psychological theory of operant conditioning—from whence the language of reward and punishment comes to us—punishment refers to an event or stimulus that occurs after a behavior and that makes it less likely that the behavior will occur in the future. Punishment is aimed at reducing or eliminating an unwanted behavior, whereas reinforcement is aimed at increasing a desired behavior. Going back to Lindsay, "Properly understood, reward and punishment are morally neutral, the one being neither better nor worse than

the other. Both outcomes serve equally vital functions in perfecting an animal's adaptation to the social and physical environment."[22] Punishment sometimes, although not always, involves an aversive.

Although punishment might be morally neutral in the specific context of Lindsay's remark, as soon as we open the door onto real life, and punishment becomes part and parcel of how people train and interact with dogs, it takes on significant moral weight. Punishment is almost always something that we do to dogs; it involves an "event or stimulus" actively, intentionally inflicted by us. As such, it has potential to affect the nature of our relationship with our dog. We can come to inhabit a punishment mindset with respect to our dog. We might believe that we are punishing to help our dog become a "good dog." But maybe being a good dog is not actually in the best interests of our dog; maybe our dog is good regardless of whether she conforms to superficial cultural narratives about how pet dogs should behave, in which case we are punishing her for nothing.

The Least Intrusive Minimally Aversive (LIMA) Clause

Some dog trainers and animal advocates argue that there is no place in human-dog relationships—even within the specific activity of training—for punishment and that positive reinforcement is the only ethical way to shape dog behavior. Others, including Lindsay, defend the use of punishment in dog training but say that humane trainers will always select the least intrusive punishment necessary to achieve their behavioral objectives.[23] And this is the essence of what has come to be called LIMA, or the philosophy of least intrusive minimally aversive. The LIMA philosophy sits at the core of one of the most contentious battles within the realm of dog training. To say that

there are two competing philosophies of training—positive reinforcement only and LIMA—oversimplifies what is, in fact, a complex conversation about reward, punishment, harm, efficacy, outcomes, and character.

The International Association for Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC) cautiously embraces the LIMA clause. A LIMA trainer, they say, is "one who uses the least intrusive, minimally aversive strategy out of a set of humane and effective tactics likely to succeed in achieving a training or behavior change objective."[24] The IAABC says that it strongly discourages the use of shock collars and wants to see them eliminated. "LIMA guidelines," the association states, "do not justify the use of aversive methods and tools including, but not limited to, the use of electronic, choke or prong collars in lieu of other effective positive reinforcement interventions and strategies."[25] The IAABC also encourages adherence to the Humane Hierarchy, a framework developed by Susan Friedman: "The hierarchy is a cautionary tool to reduce both dogmatic rule following and practice by familiarity or convenience. It offers an ethical checkpoint for consultants to carefully consider the process by which effective outcomes can be most humanely achieved on a case-by-case basis."[26]

Although the use of "humane" aversives is not off the table, LIMA practitioners readily affirm that dogs learn better through positive reinforcement and reward-based teaching than punishment-based training and that punishment-based training can cause long-term psychological trauma and often leads to worse behavioral outcomes.

The justification for keeping aversives on the table in our interactions with dogs is threefold. First, dogs can and do learn through punishment. Second, in some situations, other training methods have been exhausted and haven't been successful, so the trainer must ramp-up and use aversives. (What

"exhausted" means depends on the education, skill, and experience of the trainer and the capabilities and commitment of the human guardian.) Third, sometimes the situation is dire and the benefits (e.g., saving a dog from relinquishment or behavioral euthanasia) might outweigh the risks.

I asked Barrie Finger, a cofounder of the organization LIMA Beings, for her take on LIMA.[27] "Behavior change is inherently intrusive and just because we intend to be as kind and gentle as possible doesn't mean we always are. Sometimes even the act of putting a leash on can be viewed as aversive from the dog's perspective, especially, for example, if the dog is suffering from undiagnosed pain. To me, LIMA and the Humane Hierarchy are frameworks that underscore all the consideration that goes into the decisions of what strategies and tools we use and for honest reflection of how our actions effect our dogs."[28]

And here is where the real potential for interesting conversation arises. It is easy to point a finger at something like shock collars and say, "These are bad." They cause dogs physical pain and often injury (burns to the skin, cardiac defibrillation), as well as psychological pain and trauma. But all training, all behavioral modification, has the potential to be invasive. The point of training should be to help a dog feel safe and know what's going on and what is expected of him. Trainers may inadvertently have taught people to shut down some of the human nurturing that is evoked by dogs; we're supposed to withhold our affection as a form of teaching—we're advised to give our dog a time out, to turn our back to our dog. The upshot is that even training that doesn't use aversives can be damaging to dogs, emotionally. To my thinking, this doesn't mean we should embrace aversives; what it means is that all forms of training have the potential for harm, and we need to approach *all* training with clear intentions, appropriate knowledge, and mindfulness about its risks.

MORE TRICKY DOG-TRAINING LANGUAGE

A few other terms that pepper the language of dog training are worth attention: "obedience," "correction," and "command."

Obedience

"Obedience training" is a strange phrase. Many dog guardians think that they need to do obedience training as part of being a responsible guardian. Wrapped up in the notion of obedience is that we bend dogs to our will; they do what we say because we say, not because it makes sense behaviorally.

In *Adam's Task*, Hearne says that when we train dogs, we are educating them into citizenship. We should apply to dogs "the idea that freedom is obedience to necessity rather than freedom from it." The freedom that highly trained working dogs have is different from the freedom that wild animals have; it is more akin to the freedom that law and obedience to the law makes possible for humans. "Freedom," she says, "is constituted by certain kinds of moral relations, rather than simply enabled and enhanced by them."[29] In other words, a dog's freedom is constituted by a relationship of complete obedience to her human guardian. She distinguishes between commands issued with rightful authority and commands that are mere acts of force. We must earn the rightful authority to command a dog by earning and deserving the dog's respect. Getting absolute obedience from a dog "confers nobility, character and dignity" on the dog.[30] (The human, presumably, already has nobility, character, and dignity and doesn't have to work for them.)

Underlying Hearne's logic, of course, is the unspoken assumption that humans have rightful authority to command dogs and that dogs should, ethically, be obedient to humans and, moreover, that dogs want by their very nature to be in a re-

lationship of complete obedience to us. I agree that we should work to earn our dog's respect. But what we have thus earned is simply their respect, not their obedience. Where would the "rightful authority" to command our dogs come from if we did not bestow this authority upon ourselves? Isn't this self-servingly circular reasoning?

Steven Lindsay offers an aspirational view of obedience training in *Adaptation and Learning*, the third of his three-volume tome on dog training. Training that "strives to establish control for the sole purpose of dominating a dog in order to exploit its labor and services is demeaning and destructive. . . . Under the influence of such training, dogs are gradually transformed into tools or weapons."[31] In contrast, "obedience training, in the sense of the Latin root, *oboedire*, or the act of 'listening to,' exercises a profound mediation influence between humans and dogs." What's missing from Lindsay's formulation is an explicit affirmation that dogs and humans both engage in the act of listening to each other. Obedience flows both ways.

Very few parents of human children would say that their parenting goal is to produce an obedient child, a child who always does what we say. More parents, I think, would say that they want their children to become independent thinkers and good, happy people. Isn't this what we should want with our dogs, too? Given the possibilities for linguistic and ethical confusion, I propose that we no longer use the word "obedience" within the realm of human-dog relations.

Correction

Some trainers distinguish a "correction" from punishment. A correction is meant to stop a dog from engaging in unwanted behavior. For a puppy who is pulling on her leash, a correction might involve a sharp upward jerk on the lead.

Whether or not we can clearly distinguish between correction and punishment—and I'm not sure we can—the nuances of this distinction get lost in the real world of dog training. I've witnessed dog guardians offering various unpleasant corrections such as a hard yank on a prong collar, an electric shock, or a slap on the muzzle. None of these are worth offering to our beloved companions. If aversive experiences aren't essential to learning, then why use a correction in the first place? I can't get over the feeling that "correction" is just a creepy euphemism for inflicting discomfort. Even worse is the phrase "offer your dog a correction," which sounds more like a treat than the forceful application of an aversive. If this isn't demeaning to dogs, I don't know what is.

Correction is sometimes confused with redirection, in which a dog who is engaging in an unwanted behavior is offered a good alternative: you exchange your nice shoe for an interesting dog toy. As trainer Karen London points out, when a dog is not responding as requested or behaving as desired, he needs help, not a correction.[32] Like "obedience," the word "correction" should be stricken from our dog-related vocabulary.

Command

Training is often framed as teaching dogs commands. We utter a command such as "sit," and our dog responds immediately with a particular behavior. This language is part of the obedience mindset. And we humans are very zealous in our commanding.

A 2021 study on spoken words understood by pet domestic dogs, by Dalhousie University professors Catherine Reeve and Sophie Jacques, found that half of all words the dogs understood were commands. A sample of 165 dog owners were asked to identify which words they thought their dog understood.

The average number of human words in a dog's vocabulary was eighty-nine.[33] Key here—these were eighty-nine words owners *believed* their dogs understood. Magical thinking?

In a Your Dog article, veterinarian Stephanie Borns-Weil, head of the Tufts Animal Behavior Clinic, suggests that we move away from the term "command" and instead use "cue." "The word 'command' doesn't allow for any kind of mutuality and respect," she notes. "It doesn't allow for agency of the animals themselves. It implies 'Do it or else.'" "Cue," in contrast, implies learning and choice. "I believe in giving an animal as much choice as possible," she says. "We're not going to give them the choice to run across the road because they don't see the consequences of their behavior. But we can guide the choices they do have in constructive ways. We can teach them that their actions can result in a reward or no reward."[34] This cue-response-reward approach to training is empowering for dog and human alike.

It isn't that imperatives are, by their nature, an unnecessary display of authority. Indeed, simple, declarative words are likely very helpful to dogs who are trying to figure out what we want. A 1999 study by psychologists Robert Mitchell and Elizabeth Edmonson (mentioned in Reeve and Jacques's paper on dog vocabulary) reported that during a four-minute play session, a human uttered an average of 208 words to a familiar or unfamiliar dog. Most of what came out of the humans' mouths were high-pitched, repetitive utterances.[35] In the specific context of training, a more parsimonious communication style is no doubt important. Intonation and intention delineate cue from command. I can say "Bella, come!" as a communication of my intention and an invitation to a specific behavioral response; I can also say "Bella, come!" as a unilateral demand. The utterances certainly mean two different things to me. And I will report from my own research with Bella that she is 50 percent more likely to ignore a command than a cue.

The D-Word

Dominance is one of the most misunderstood and most consequential concepts in the realm of contemporary human-dog relationships. Dominance is often confused with or conflated with other things: aggression, leadership, obedience, hierarchy, punishment. This is not a monograph about the meaning and functions of dominance; we must look to ethologists to really understand the function of dominance within animal relationships.[36] But a few words about how "dominance" confuses human-dog relations.

Dominance-based training—colloquially referred to as "I am the boss of you!"—has held a strange appeal within dog-training circles over several decades. (Strange because it is both scientifically and ethically flawed.) Although dominance-based training is a loose and imprecise designation, it generally reflects the idea that to train well we need to be in a position of power, and we gain and maintain this power through brute force and intimidation. Training methods include the so-called alpha role (which involves pushing a dog onto her back and pinning her there, usually by holding the throat, until she stops struggling against you), "scruffing," and grabbing and holding a dog's snout. Purported bad behavior by a dog, which includes ignoring our commands, is the dog's attempt to go beyond their station, to dominate us, when we are clearly the superiors. What the dog has failed to understand, or, perhaps more accurately, what the dog has refused to acknowledge (because the problem is one of attitude), is that we are the boss. We lead; they follow. We command; they obey. All of this, of course, is malarkey.

The main ethical concern with dominance-based training has been the reliance on physical intimidation and punishment. Yet even some trainers and dog guardians who are trying to use only positive reinforcement are still stuck, conceptually, in a dominance mindset. And as Barrie Finger expressed

so aptly, "It is as confusing as hell for dogs, not to mention the people who are trying to help their dogs be successful."[37] The admonition that you must eat before your dog, pass through doors before your dog, and forbid your dog getting on the bed or couch all stem from a dominance mindset.

Some trainers and behaviorists have stopped using the word "dominance" altogether, because it is so fraught and misunderstood. The problem with eliminating the word completely is that we then eliminate accurate ethological discussion of an entire category of animal behavior. Dogs do display dominance and form dominance hierarchies—though not with people but, rather, with fellow dogs. Dominance behaviors are communicative strategies that help dogs (and other animals, including humans) avoid conflict. So, rather than throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater, we should continue trying to clean up the dominance mess—it matters to dogs and people that we get this right.

COERCION, CONTROL, COMPLIANCE, SHAPING

Is training, by its very nature, coercive?

Let's say for the sake of argument that we have answered in the affirmative. We can then ask a follow-up question: Are we justified in using coercion on our dogs? If so, under what conditions?

First, why might coercion be ethically problematic? Coercion is harmful because it violates an individual's physical and emotional integrity, and it violates the principle of respect for autonomy. I'm taking it as a given that dogs are "persons" in the morally relevant sense and that violating their integrity and failing to respect their autonomy imposes harm on them, as it does on human persons. We might distinguish between several different kinds of coercion in relation to dogs.

In chapter 3, I explored the idea of compassionate force or coercion, the application of which is limited to encounters within the veterinary realm.

Within the realm of training, one category of coercion is what you might call overt aversive control—control that will be perceived by the subject as aversive (provoking fear, a loss of control, anxiety). Examples are easy to find: holding a dog's head to the ground with a tight lead, forcing a dog into a particular physical space (dragging a dog by the collar, pushing a dog's body into a crate or other confined area), forcibly rolling a dog onto her back and pinning her down until she stops struggling. I see no plausible justification for overt aversive control, save for the very rare possibility that physically subduing a dog would be necessary to protect her or someone else from serious and imminent harm. And this, of course, is not training but rather responding in the moment to an acute situation.

Another type of coercion—and one that is likely to provoke far less moral concern—is the practice of "shaping" animal behavior. If you want an animal to perform a complex behavior, you break the behavior down into small bits and shape the larger pattern using the small bits. If you want to teach a dog to twist a doorknob with her mouth, for example, you might begin by teaching the dog to approach the door, then to approach the door and touch the knob with her nose, and so on. Rather like shaping or molding clay. The danger, of course, is that we begin to see our dogs as shapable, as claylike. Shaping is generally taken to be a sign of enlightened and skillful training, especially because shaping is accomplished using rewards. But shaping, like everything else under discussion in this chapter, involves manipulation, and the line between shaping and coercion is thin, though discernible.

Coercion has a hard ring to it. The softer, gentler cousin to coercion is compliance. Compliance is something you

ask for. Compliance is *sought*, allowing a modicum of self-determination to remain intact.

The concept of compliance has evolved in bioethics within the context of thinking through efforts by caregivers to respect the autonomy of patients, especially when caring for and protecting a patient requires getting them to do what a caregiver asks. "Seeking compliance" suggests a tension between the principles of beneficence and respect for autonomy. Compliance is generally sought for the sake of the patient, not for those treating the patient and not for the patient's family. Compliance involves elements of consent and is often achieved by providing the individual a feeling of being in control. To a patient in a nursing facility, for example, a caregiver can ask, "Would you like your bath now, or would you like to wait until after lunch?"

Seeking compliance for essential behaviors such as coming when we signal can be part of a collaborative effort to build negotiated settlements with our dogs. Demanding blanket compliance or compliance with commands that only serve to reinforce our desire for control, alternatively, is likely to reinforce a non-collaborative, one-directional, agonistic relationship.

What methods of seeking compliance are ethical? When do we cross a line? I would say that using a shock collar to gain compliance crosses a line. It is not an incentive but, rather, a threat. Using food to gain compliance seems to sit, safely, on the other side of this line. But admittedly we are in a very gray zone here.

As the robust literature on compliance within bioethics suggests, there is a decidedly fuzzy line between compliance and coercion, and many contextual factors might threaten to make compliance cross over into coercion as, for example, when seeking compliance from incarcerated persons. The line between coercing our dogs and seeking compliance from them will be

similarly vague, and contextual features will need to be identified.

LETTING GO OF NO

We say no to our dogs for a variety of reasons, in a variety of contexts. Sometimes no is used as a deterrent: We see our dog getting in position to lift her paws onto the edge of the counter where a fresh slice of bread is cooling. A firm no alerts her to the fact that we're watching and that we disapprove of what she's about to do. We've given her useful information.

Often no is used as a scolding after a canine infraction has taken place. Maybe the bread has already disappeared. In this case, the scolding serves no purpose; it simply expresses the sentiment "you are bad." No is also an expression of exasperation or frustration. Like yelling at a child, it serves no educational or caring purpose and will be an aversive experience. No is what Pema Chödrön might call a seed of aggression.

We use no so frequently and with such a range of meanings, that it likely becomes background noise to our dog, a kind of niggling leaf blower across the street in their awareness. Even worse, no may serve to reinforce the very behaviors we don't like. As dog trainer Claudeen McAuliffe notes in *Mindful Dog Teaching*, the vocalization no inadvertently provides attention, thus reinforcing the inappropriate behavior.[38]

In addition to overusing no, perhaps we also over command, asking for obedience when it really isn't necessary. My neighbor Ross and his dog Pi roam around the forest surrounding our mountain community. Ross told me that he doesn't ask Pi to come very often. For every five times that he might think to call Pi back, Ross will only actually ask once. He tries to use restraint. Pi knows the command and is responsive, but he is such a good dog that Ross feels that he owes him the space to make his own choices, follow his own agenda. "Pi deserves that freedom."

WHEN IS REFUSAL OK?

What should we make of it when our dogs say no back at us? What is the role of canine choice when it comes to training?

It may seem counterintuitive to say that training or teaching should involve giving dogs a choice. You might say, "Isn't the whole point of training to get the dog to do what we want, to override their autonomy?" This reflects an obedience mindset. But within a collaborative framework, it makes sense to affirm our dog's capacity to choose, both at the broad level of deciding whether to engage in a training session and through moment-by-moment choices of performing or not performing a certain behavior or doing a certain thing.

Are there times a dog might appropriately refuse to do what we ask during a training session? Yes, there are a few: (1) when what we are asking doesn't make sense, (2) when what we are asking causes pain or discomfort or fear, or (3) when a dog decides to have a mind of his own.

One of the most common reasons dogs don't do what we ask is that they don't know what we are after. This isn't refusal, per se, though it is often taken as such by the human.

Sometimes a dog is asked to obey a command or cue that causes physical discomfort. A classic example of this is the sit command. For dogs who have issues with their hips, such as misalignment, dysplasia, or osteoarthritis, sitting on their haunches can be painful.

What about an individual dog simply having preferences, shifting emotional responses to training, moods, whims? Trainer Deborah Jones emphasizes the role of choice in training, which means that dogs may choose to leave training sessions. "The idea might be pretty scary for some folks," she says. "Giving up control of the sessions and allowing a dog to have equal say in what happens is hard, but animals who are given a

choice often choose to opt in and cooperate." If your dog does decide to leave a session, she continues, "Take that feedback seriously and consider why your dog felt the need to leave. It is likely that something was happening that made him uncomfortable; dogs have no reason to disengage and leave when they are comfortable."[39]

Giving up control, loosening the reins—it may feel like the opposite of what needs to happen; we need to control our dogs to keep them safe. But as with children, too tight a leash doesn't allow them to be themselves, to explore the world on their own terms, to develop a sense of their own limits and possibilities. Jones is making this point about freedom from the perspective of a trainer—and emphasizing the benefits *for* training. But freedom is more broadly significant. Allowing dogs to make choices about the contours of their daily life and be freely moving within their encounters with us is ethically important, too.

A final possibility, and one that may be even more difficult for us to accept, is that our dogs may sometimes have better insight than we do. "Intelligent disobedience"—sometimes also referred to as "intelligent refusal"—is a specific skill taught to service dogs. When a vision-impaired person with a Seeing Eye dog tries, for example, to cross a road when a car is coming, the dog will refuse to move forward, no matter how much the handler insists.[40] Broadening this out, we might acknowledge that we all have blind spots in our perception of the world and that there might be great benefit to sometimes letting our own choices and decisions be guided by our dogs.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Should we even be training dogs? Dogs absolutely need help adapting to and functioning comfortably within human environments and within the specific home environment in which

they are asked to live, and all dog guardians are responsible for helping their dogs be successful. But training, per se, doesn't help dogs successfully adapt. Learning and communication and collaboration do.

Training can easily become adversarial for dog and human alike. Dog training has enormous potential to create bad dogs—dogs, that is, with behavioral issues, with psychological traumas that lead to acting out in ways that bother humans and that reflect deep inner suffering. The framing of our interactions with dogs through the lens of punishment and reward, correctives and reinforcements, and obedience and commands gets in the way of human-dog collaboration. Looking to Eastern traditions for perspective, we might envision a tao of training: instead of constantly fighting against the current (with the current being who dogs are and what they want and need to do as dogs), it might make more sense to flow with the current, to use the current to help move us along. Harmony, not warfare.

A model emerging in educational circles is collaborative learning. This seems to me a productive way to reframe dog training. Humans and dogs are learning together, teaching each other how to get along together and how to be safe around each other. Human and dog are both teachers, both learners. The idea of training dissipates.

SEVEN

Bad Dogs and Behavioral "Problems"

The goal and function of dog training is to help dogs be good, to help them learn what they need to know to function successfully in human environments. We looked in the last chapter at various approaches to training—or as it perhaps should be phrased, to learning and collaborating. In this chapter, I want to look at dog behavior itself, and particularly at behavioral problems. By many accounts, dogs are in a behavioral crisis. How did we get here, and how can we move ourselves and our dogs to a place of greater coadaptation?

Part of the problem is training itself. Training often fails to accomplish what it ultimately, at its best, might: to help dogs understand what we are asking of them and to help humans think through which of our behavioral expectations of dogs are reasonable and which are not. Instead of fostering collaboration, curiosity, and care, training too often instead fosters rigidity and emotional detachment. Dogs are being trained in ways that are psychologically and physically harmful and that further diminish the bare scraps of canine agency available to them. The goals of training often include teaching dogs to sup-

press natural behaviors, too often using fear or pain as a deterrent. This can lead to high levels of frustration and motivational conflict. (Motivational conflict involves the simultaneous experience of two or more motivations that lead to contradictory behaviors, e.g., wanting to bark but being afraid that barking will result in pain.)[1] The way many dog guardians approach training—the methods, the tools, the pedagogy—damages dogs and leads, through a vicious circle, to serious behavioral issues like aggression. These behavioral issues are often a trigger for calling an expert, so that instead of helping people teach dogs to walk nicely on a leash or to stop jumping on people out of excitement, trainers and behaviorists are increasingly being asked to diagnose and treat profoundly distressing behavioral challenges such as separation anxiety, fear-based aggression, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, and self-injury.

AN EPIDEMIC OF BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS?

The Finnish study of dog behavioral problems mentioned in chapter 1 concluded that three-quarters of all dogs engage in what their guardians describe as "unwanted behaviors." As you may recall, the study looked at data collected on nearly fourteen thousand dogs, through surveys of dog guardians.[2] The researchers looked at prevalence of seven unwanted behaviors, with "unwanted" taken as synonymous with "problematic": noise sensitivity; fearfulness of humans, other dogs, and unfamiliar locations; fear of surfaces and heights; inattention and impulsivity; compulsive behavior; aggressiveness; and separation anxiety.[3]

The Finnish study is just one of hundreds of reports and studies on dog behavioral problems that have been flooding the veterinary literature over the past decade. What's going on? Are people more attuned to behavioral problems than in the past, so there is more accurate reporting? Probably. Are there

more dogs living as pets, and thus that many more opportunities for trouble to arise? Yes, certainly. But my sense is that the problems go deeper. The emerging literature on canine behavioral problems should be read as a strong warning that the ways in which we keep dogs are very costly both to them and to us.

Recalling some of the themes we've covered thus far, we have some clues as to the root causes of the epidemic of canine unhappiness, if such an epidemic is indeed occurring. Many dogs are asked to live in ways that are extremely challenging for them. Dogs don't have adequate opportunities to experience and respond to stimuli that are biologically, neurologically, physiologically, and socially meaningful, and they are exposed to all manner of stimuli that are unnatural and uncomfortably arousing, leading to chronic low-level stress and anxiety. Perhaps, contrary to popular belief, the human home is not the ecological niche of the domestic dog, or at least not right now.

Never have behavioral problems been so prevalent and so complex, and never has the work of trainers and behaviorists been so challenging. During the many conversations I've had with trainers over the past few years, I've heard a recurring theme: burnout. They feel overwhelmed and compassion fatigued, like a doctor who sits all day with patients who have terrible problems. Many trainers wept while talking to me about their work.

Over lunch with two trainers from my area, I ask them to talk about what kinds of issues they are dealing with right now. Both tear up at various points in the conversation. The cases they see are getting harder and harder. There is more sorrow. Dogs are under increasing stress, as are humans. And people get in way over their heads, often with the best of intentions. For instance, they both refer to their work no longer as "training" but as "problem solving across species." They used to help with leash manners and recall; now they spend their time "sitting with families through tears."

Similar themes arise in a conversation with trainer Kim Brophey. She says that people's expectations of dogs are "off-the-charts unrealistic." "We get a puppy and think that we can 'program' this animal to be what we want." As we talk, she gets more and more animated and agitated. "People say, 'I wanted a dog, but I didn't realize he would bark. I hate barking.' 'I wanted a dog, but I didn't realize they shed. I hate dog hair on my furniture.'" How are trainers supposed to deal with "problems" of this sort? How do you teach a dog to stop shedding? Is it ethical to ask a dog never to bark? She says she has never witnessed the volume of behavior problems that she's seeing now. We're in "a mental health crisis for dogs . . . behaviors are exhibitive of massive levels of frustration."[4]

We have an ideal behavioral profile of a dog—a pastiche created from the American Kennel Club encyclopedia of dog breeds, TV shows, cartoons, Instagram and Twitter posts, "perfect puppy" books, websites like Meet Your Match that source puppies for interested buyers, and god knows what else. This pastiche doesn't create an accurate representation of a dog, not a real dog with real dog behaviors, real dog needs, desires, and motivations. So, we must mold the dog, or hire someone else to mold the dog for us. But, Brophey asks, is it ethical for our basic relationship with dogs to be based on us always trying to modify who they are by manipulating their behavior? We are always trying to modify the organism, she says. But this is the wrong focus. The organism isn't flawed; the environment is. Our ethical responsibility, she suggests, is to change the environment instead of trying to change dogs.

THE NORMAL AND THE PATHOLOGICAL

The Finnish study leaves open an important question: For whom are "unwanted behaviors" problematic? If we take the re-

searchers to mean "unwanted by dogs," the label makes sense. The problems the researchers identified, such as fearfulness and noise sensitivity, were indicative of compromised canine welfare—with dogs as the locus of concern. But we rarely talk about which behaviors dogs want and don't want. So, perhaps they mean "unwanted by human guardians."

Discussions of dog behavioral problems often reflect this same vagueness about who exactly is having the problem. Dog or dog guardian? A dog barking "too much" for a guardian's taste is not necessarily the same as a dog barking "too much" as a compulsive behavior reflective of psychological stress. Admittedly, the line between normal-for-dog-but-irritating-to-human and not-normal-for-dog is often going to be fuzzy. But it is perhaps worthwhile to tease apart human-centered and dog-centered behavioral concerns.

Recall from chapter 1 Yamada and colleagues' report in the *Journal of Veterinary Science* on the prevalence of canine behavioral problems. They began their study by making a list of common behavior problems reported in the literature and about which people had complained to a veterinary behavior clinic, which they capped at twenty-five. They then surveyed several thousand dog guardians and asked them to identify which of the twenty-five problem behaviors their dog exhibited and with what frequency. Dog owners were also asked to rate the frequency and degree of annoyance each behavior caused. Eighty-six percent of respondents reported at least one behavior in their dog that they considered troubling.

A behavioral problem, as they defined it, is a behavior exhibited by an animal that is unacceptable to the guardian, regardless of its level of abnormality. So, "exactly the same behavior can be regarded as either a behavioral problem or non-problematic normal behavior, depending on the owner's feelings."[5] As the researchers note, what is considered a behavior

problem varies from one country to another and even from one region within a country to another. In Australia, for example, overexcitement and jumping on people were two of the most serious problems; in South Korea, excessive barking and inappropriate elimination topped the list. Large variation is also, of course, found from one individual dog guardian to another—each person will have a unique list of which dog behaviors they find problematic. (If you followed my instructions in chapter 2 and made a list of your dog's behavior problems, go find it. Or make a new list. See if you can get to twenty-five.)

According to Yamada's results, the most common problems in Japan were barking at noises inside the house, barking at unfamiliar visitors, pica, pulling on the leash, and aggression toward other dogs. Scanning down the list, a surprising number of these behaviors would probably be considered normal dog behavior—that is, something that dogs are behaviorally motivated to do, that a happy and well-adjusted dog would likely do unless having been trained specifically not to: barking, jumping up on people, chasing small animals, mounting, seeking attention from their human. Interwoven with these normal but undesired behaviors were behaviors that likely reflect a state of compromised welfare: air snapping, separation anxiety, fear of loud noises, excessive grooming. These final few behaviors are best labeled behavioral pathologies and should be recognized as our dogs failing to adapt to the stressors of the home environment. As Overall notes in her *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, "The vast majority of problematic behaviors and true behavioral pathologies are rooted in anxiety and the neurochemical/neurophysiological response to that anxiety."[6]

I did a Google search for "what behaviors would you consider to be unacceptable in your dog." There were 470 million results. The first one that popped up was a blog on the Petcube

website that listed as bad habits "resource guarding, jumping on people, climbing on furniture, begging for food, clingy behavior, and taking over your bed."[7] Again, all are normal dog behaviors, except for "clingy," which might be categorized as a behavior resulting directly from emotional overdependence both exhibited and encouraged by the human guardian.

We have some tricky moral terrain to navigate here. Is it ethical to put on the list of "undesired" behaviors those that are natural to dogs? Where limiting or prohibiting the behavior might be asking a dog to not be a dog, such as barking, shedding, soliciting food, scavenging, chasing prey, or mounting?

When ought we, for the sake of our dog's well-being, frame a behavior as an outward manifestation of psychological suffering or physical ill-health? There are many behaviors that straddle the line between possibly normal and possibly a sign of deep trouble. Nearly all dogs bark, and barking serves important communicative functions between dogs and humans and also among dogs. So it would be wrong to label all barking as a behavior problem. Yet excessive barking—barking nonstop with no apparent communicative intent—is a sign of serious trouble. To take another example, self-grooming is something that all healthy dogs do to some extent; excessive grooming, such as licking so compulsively that it leads to an open lesion called a granuloma, is a sign of mental distress.

Attention seeking is one of several very nebulous behavioral problems where I think we err in our labeling, perhaps not quite accurately identifying the line between normal and pathological. In Overall's *Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Small Animals*, attention-seeking behavior is cataloged as diagnosis #0000YX05.2: "Animal uses vocal or physical behaviors to obtain passive or active attention from people when the people are engaged in passive or active activities not directly involving the animal."[8]

Attention-seeking behavior in dogs—which is basically defined as them wanting our attention when we don't feel like giving it to them—is pathologized; it is labeled as a behavior problem for which dogs should be treated. Here are some suggested treatment options for attention-seeking behavior:

- banishment
- crates
- extinction
- head collars
- secondary reinforcers for good behavior
- desensitization and counterconditioning

In chapter 7 of her manual, Overall says a bit more. "Attention-seeking behavior may be the label used for what is simply an undesirable but potentially normal behavior. The key is to distinguish between wanting the attention versus needing the attention, regardless of context."[9] If a dog *needs* attention, Overall suggests, the attention-seeking behavior is not only abnormal but is also probably the manifestation of a deeper issue such as an anxiety disorder.

It is worth noting that the reason people love dogs is because they are interested in our attention, *because they need us*. We love that they love us, and the more love they display the better. We constantly reinforce attention-seeking behavior in our dogs through rewards—our own affection, food treats, verbal reinforcement—because it satisfies us so much emotionally. Yet many of us (myself included here) are perhaps too cavalier in our reinforcement of attention-seeking behavior and, unintentionally, push our dogs from wanting into needing.

Over lunch one day in Boulder, highly respected experts in the field of dog training and behavior Kathy Sdao and Susan Friedman and I talked about the pathologizing of normal dog

behavior. Even the language used by trainers and behaviorists often lacks empathy. The most poignant example, Sdao said, is the problematizing of attention seeking. Is it not a cruelty to willingly ignore a companion who seeks our attention, especially when we have conditioned them, from puppyhood, to need us and seek our attention? Indeed, roughly twenty thousand years of human-dog coevolution have genetically reinforced the adaptive value of attention seeking. Not only that, dogs are also understimulated socially and, as highly social mammals, may be desperate for some kind of interaction. A confusing cycle of reward/ignore/punish can develop. What we reward at eight at night when we are on the couch watching *Sneaky Pete* we might ignore or punish at nine in the morning when at our desk trying to work. It makes perfect sense to us but is likely quite baffling and distressing for our dogs.

Although pathology has come to be associated with the study of disease, the Greek root *pathos* means suffering. It seems reasonable to "pathologize" dog behaviors if this truly reflects an acknowledgment of our dogs' mental anguish.

NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS

Overall's manual is, among other things, an 812-page exposition on the challenges of being a pet dog or cat. (Cats are arguably suffering just as much as dogs under the strain of modern pet-keeping practices.) Overall's book is about the unanticipated and seemingly omnipresent ways in which we stress our pets; for example, by not listening, by not communicating clearly, by having unrealistic expectations, by asking too much, and by ignoring their needs. On the positive side, her textbook suggests a multitude of ways in which to be more sensitive, more attuned, more curious, and more empathetic. And that's a good thing.

Included as a resource for veterinary behaviorists, Overall's

"Basic History Questionnaire—Dogs" is fourteen dense pages long. It provides comprehensive background on a dog and her environment for a behaviorist who has been asked to help with behavioral problems.[10] It is also—although Overall didn't write it for this purpose—a useful exercise for anyone who wants to live more mindfully with a dog. It took me hours to fill out the questionnaire for Bella. It includes a description of your dog (height, weight, color), a health history (vaccinations, illnesses, injuries), what your dog eats and when, where your dog sleeps, who else lives in the house, what happens when you leave, your dog's origin story (where and why did you get the dog), obedience training, specific complaints, behaviors, an aggression screening, and disciplinary practices.

The basic history questionnaire has a long list of possible treatments for behavioral problems. The dog guardian filling out the form is asked to go through the list and put a tick next to any forms of behavioral modification that have been recommended or tried. The first section relates to global or general approaches and includes the following: obedience class, private trainer, send to a shelter, place in another home, take to behaviorist, take to vet, make into a working dog, or kill. The second set of questions asks about specific strategies or tricks recommended or attempted to alter or shape the dog's behavior. There are seventy-one items, including stare at or "stare down"; grab by jowls and shake; get an additional dog as a companion; step on leash and force down; blow in nose or face; shock collar; throw a tin or can of pennies; water pistol; hit dog with hand; use a blow torch; hit dog with empty soda bottle; hit dog with wiffle ball bat; hit dog with leash; hit dog with chain; hit dog with board, plank, or baseball bat; hit dog under chin; step on dog's toes; knee dog in chest/belly; kick dog; bite dog; alpha roll growl at dog; scream at dog; deprive of food; and throw against a wall. Of the long list of seventy-one possible interventions,

I count eight that focus on the use of empathetic response to dog distress and/or positive reinforcement for desired behaviors: calming cap, ThunderShirt or Anxiety Wrap, Doggles (dog goggles) or eyeshades, praise for good behavior, treats for good behavior, increase play, increase exercise, and buying different types of toys. "Get an additional dog as a companion" might slip in as number nine on the empathetic response sublist but also has the potential to go dreadfully wrong for either or both dogs.

So, here's what we have: 812 pages worth of problems that can arise when dogs and humans live together and a list of almost a hundred treatments a guardian might apply to these problems, most of which are terrible for the dog and, arguably, equally terrible for the guardian. The point I draw from this, aside from feeling overwhelmed by the suffering experienced by these "bad" dogs at the hands of behaviorally disordered humans, is that humans and dogs can't live together all that easily and that humans expect dogs to do 99 percent of the adaptation. This is deeply unfair to dogs, and they obviously need more help. We need to be reasonable in what we ask of dogs and need to join them in the hard work of getting along.

The history questionnaire is a starting document for Overall's "negotiated settlements," which I first introduced in chapter 2. Overall's notion of negotiated settlements is designed specifically for resolving behavioral concerns and is an approach that seeks to meet dogs in the middle. I've broadened the scope of the term and use it to refer to the negotiations that take place throughout the entire collaborative building of a shared human-dog lifeway. For Overall, a negotiated settlement is essentially a veterinary-supervised conflict resolution and mediation effort: a negotiation between client and dog. The "agreement" on the part of the animal to this intervention is assumed. "Negotiated settlements," Overall explains, "allow clients to understand that setbacks are likely, the route will not be linear,

mistakes will be made, but improvement is still attainable, and recovery can be one of the ultimate goals."[11] The focus is on creating the best possible relationship, given the constraints we and our dogs face, as we collaborate in a process of mutual coadaptation. We may be perfect just as we are, *and* we can all use a lot of improvement.

LABELING

One of the pitfalls in our interactions with dogs is the use of labels to describe dog behaviors, such as the application of the label "attention seeking" to our dogs' efforts to socially engage when uninvited. Often the behavioral labels come to define the dogs themselves: "I have a reactive dog." With labels often come stereotypes and simplifications. Some common labels affixed to dogs: aggressive, mean, dominant, reactive (and the more specific leash reactive, dog reactive), and, of course, the positive labels: sweet, friendly, playful, loves everybody.

Many specific behavioral labels have been introduced to pet guardians through the intermediary of dog trainers, behaviorists, and veterinarians: we create medical pathologies out of behaviors that are normal but annoying (attention seeking, begging) or out of evidence of compromised welfare but with the blame placed on the dog rather than the dog's environment (separation anxiety, destructive behavior). Some of the behaviors we label and pathologize are ones that humans have cultivated in domesticated dogs—hypersociability, attention seeking, solicitation behaviors. Some labels make their way from descriptions of animal behavior (dominance, aggression) into descriptions of dogs themselves.

Other labels are virtue signaling by human dog guardians, such as "rescue." "He's a rescue" can be shorthand for "I am a good person because I adopted from a shelter rather than shopped at a pet store." It can also be an excuse for lack of train-

ing: "He's a rescue. Don't expect much in the way of good behavior." Or, "Keep your hands to yourself because she might just nip—which I understand is totally unacceptable, but she (I) can't help it." I've used this excuse many times with Bella.

Breed designations are also labels: "What kind of dog is he?" is taken as shorthand for "what breed is he?" rather than "who is he as an individual?"

When we affix a label to a dog, it reduces our sense of curiosity about who the dog is and what the dog's experience might be. In terms borrowed from human sociology, labeling is a substitution for observation. It reinforces a certain narrative about who's a good dog and pigeonholes dogs into a certain narrow, human-centered frame of reference.

Reactivity

Reactive is a particularly powerful label we place on dogs—and an increasingly popular one. According to Google's Ngram Viewer (a tool for tabulating the occurrence of a word over a given period of time), the incidence of the phrase "reactive dog" has increased by 175 percent since about 2000, before which it was virtually absent from our vocabulary. It seems like almost all dogs I meet these days are described by their human as reactive. I would describe Bella as reactive.

Unlike some labels such as mean, which simply pass judgment, the term "reactive" may provide useful information about a dog and her behavior. The problem is that nobody can say precisely what reactive means, different people may use the word differently, and each reactive dog is reactive for unique reasons and in unique ways. So, the handle is loose. Companion animal welfare researchers Emma Williams and Emily Blackwell define reactive behavior as "a colloquialism commonly used by dog trainers and owners to describe a dog that reacts to certain

stimuli. The 'reaction' is usually to bark, lunge, growl, or bite/snap at other dogs or people and represents one of the most challenging behavioral responses to manage."[12] Unlike the labels aggressive or mean, reactive tends to frame a dog's challenges within an overall affirmation of the dog's goodness. A reactive dog is edgy, anxious, potentially dangerous—but underneath these behaviors is a sweet, loving, well-meaning dog who is working hard to get along.

Nobody really understands why certain individual dogs develop reactivity. It could be traced to a dog's early developmental trajectory, even as far back as in utero; it might be a consequence of poor socialization or trauma; it might be linked to environmental stress, to a dog's nervous system being in a constant state of arousal; it might be linked to pain; it might also be linked with the use of punitive training methods. But the truth is that reactive behaviors are often a mystery, unfolding over time.

Many reactive dogs have "triggers"—a particular stimuli or situation that causes an overreaction. For Bella, a predictable trigger is unfamiliar people who reach out to touch her head or who hold their fingers out in front of her face. Fortunately, this is a reliable trigger, and we know to always create a physical barrier between Bella and other humans. Once a dog has been triggered, for example, by having a scary interaction with another dog, reactivity may be triggered more easily the second time, a phenomenon referred to as trigger stacking. Ethologist Marc Bekoff and dog trainer Mary Angilly describe trigger stacking as "a toxic accumulation of stress due to exposure to multiple triggers over a period of time that is too short to allow an animal's reactivity/stress levels to return to normal." Trigger stacking that goes unnoticed by guardians is anecdotally one of the primary causes of "outbursts" from companion dogs.[13]

People who care for a dog who cannot function as expected within human environments often feel embarrassment, isola-

tion, guilt, even desperation. And they are likely to encounter a considerable amount of blaming and shaming, whether by non-dog people or by the guardians of perfect dogs. One of my neighbors, after being scorned by Bella, pointedly remarked, "Well, she obviously didn't get socialized!" Poppy's guardian, who only walks Poppy in leash-required areas, has been yelled at numerous times for moving to the side of the trail and asking an oncoming dog walker to please leash their dog as they pass. People say things like, "You shouldn't be out here with a mean dog!" and will defiantly defend their dog's right to be off leash in a leash-required area because their dog is "sweet." These unpleasant human interactions just add insult to injury, as people with reactive dogs often work much harder than their dog-owning peers at training and go out of their way to make sure their dogs can feel safe and be safe, which is a challenge when other dog guardians don't obey leash laws and think that a friendly dog poses no risk to others. The anguish and frustration of those who care for a reactive dog is understandable.

The label reactive can be applied as usefully to us as to our dogs. We are reactive, some of us more than others. Often, our dog is a trigger for our own negative emotions. If our dog lunges at another dog walking by, we may feel embarrassment or fear, and no matter how self-aware and mindful we are, these emotions may get directed at our dog, who was the catalyst for the event. Dog-related interactions may also trigger anger from other people, as has happened for Poppy's human. Situations can escalate until everyone is highly reactive and suffering from negative emotional arousal.

We can use our own dog-related reactivity as an opportunity for self-reflection: What forms does my reactivity take? What are some of my triggers? What can I do to mediate? How do my triggers and my dog's triggers interact? We and our dogs collaborate on building a good life; we likely also collaborate in making things more challenging than they need to be.

What are we to do when we have a human-human reactivity problem related to our reactive dog's behavior or to the behavior of another person's reactive dog? I would love to see an entire book written by a communication expert or professional mediator on how best to navigate these sticky situations. Here are some general thoughts, from a nonexpert: we should go out of our way to avoid getting in bad situations, which seems obvious but is easier said than done. It often takes time and some heartache, because our dogs and other people's dogs do unexpected things, and we may be unconscious of potential triggers. How many times have you heard a frantic "Oh my gosh! He's never done that before in his life!" when a dog suddenly lunges for your pup or maybe for your leg? It might really be the first time this has happened and may have been completely unexpected. We can deescalate ourselves (by taking deep breaths, counting backward from ten). Often it is best to simply walk away and not engage. If we or our dog had any role in the situation, which usually we do, we can apologize profusely. And we try to give other people and dogs the benefit of the doubt—they may be feeling just as anxious as we are, and for many humans, anxiety manifests as assholery. Above all, and this is probably the hardest: we should resist the impulse to blame and direct anger at the dog, whether our own or someone else's.

DINOS

Saying "my dog is reactive" is one way of communicating with other dog guardians about the parameters for comfortable interactions, a way of saying, nicely, my dog prefers not to have a close interaction with you or your dog; it makes him uncomfortable. But the label can also be misunderstood, loaded, and potentially stigmatizing. Another way to say the same thing is with the label DINOS, a dog label I really like.

A DINOS is a dog in need of space. The DINOS concept was developed by Jessica Dolce, founder of Dogs in Need of Space, an educational nonprofit that tries to raise awareness about the etiquette of interacting with or letting your dog interact with other dogs who are out walking on leashes.[14] The basic point—one we've been coming back to again and again—is that dogs need to have their personal space respected, for a variety of reasons. And for some dogs, respecting their space is particularly important.

Who are these DINOS? Dogs in need of space include dogs on the reactivity spectrum; they also include senior citizen dogs, dogs who are ill and perhaps contagious, dogs recuperating from injury or surgery, therapy dogs in training, hearing- or vision-impaired dogs, and so on. In other words, there are all kinds of dogs who, for all kinds of reasons, have personal space boundaries.

Bella is a DINOS. So is Poppy. Bella needs space because she is uncomfortable with people. She also needs space because of her disability; an overly large or rambunctious dog could easily injure her. Poppy needs space because she is uncomfortable with other dogs and has a much better time just sniffing around on her own, watching squirrels, and eating acorns.

An educational image on Dolce's website features a dog who looks very much like Bella. As the DINOS spokesdog, she asks you to:

> Please respect my personal boundaries.
> Ask permission before approaching.
> Have your dog under control at all times.
> I am a DINOS. I am a good dog.

I like the DINOS label because it focuses on what the dog is feeling, and it legitimizes a dog's right to personal boundaries

and puts the onus on humans to *ask consent*. It focuses on how to help dogs feel safer and more in control. It doesn't label the dog as bad but, rather, labels the dog according to what the dog needs: space. It suggests that we adjust our expectations about dogs, too. There is nothing behaviorally wrong—or morally wrong—with dogs who don't want to be petted by every human or play with every dog they meet.

The DINOS label not only puts a positive spin on what dogs need, it also focuses attention on modifying the behavior *of humans* as they move around with their dogs in spaces shared by other people and dogs. The responsibility for respectful interactions doesn't rest completely with the dog guardian, but with others whom they may meet. It would be nice to get to a point where the norm for human behavior is to ask consent from a dog and from a dog's guardian before approaching or letting another dog approach. This rule of thumb would keep everyone safer and happier.

MEDICAL TREATMENT OF BEHAVIOR

In "Medical Paradigms for the Study of Problem Behaviour," veterinarian Daniel Mills outlines two broad approaches to behavior problems in dogs (and other animals): "call the trainer" and "call the doctor."[15] Companion animal behavior problems were long the domain of the dog trainer. Within the "call the trainer" paradigm, canine behavior problems are thought to arise as a product of an animal's lifetime experience; dogs with problems are seen either as struggling to adapt to their current environment or as having been damaged psychologically and needing careful, long-term emotional rehabilitation. Dogs aren't born neurotic; they become neurotic. A call-the-trainer framework emphasizes the role of the environment and the biology of the species in shaping behavior and is based on a behavioral model used in human clinical psychology.

The other paradigm, which has steadily gained traction within veterinary behavioral medicine, focuses on pathological processes within the individual organism and is based on the medical model of human psychiatry. Within the call-the-doggie-psychiatrist model, behavioral problems are diagnosed, discussed, and treated medically, often with pharmaceuticals, as in human clinical psychiatry. "In this context," Mills says, "problem behavior is viewed, like an infectious disease or traumatic injury, as having a physical cause that needs to be treated if the problem is to be resolved." The categorization of the problem behavior takes on greater importance because it determines diagnosis and treatment plan. Medical catalogs of doggie behavior problems begin to mirror the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

Take, for example, the all-too-common problem of separation anxiety, which is defined medically as "consistent intensive destruction, elimination, vocalization, or salivation exhibited only in the virtual or actual absence of the owner."[16] The disturbing medicalization of the dog's suffering is what might first capture our attention; a dog so ridden with anxiety that she defecates on herself and chews at the wooden doorframe until her mouth is bloody is described merely as "exhibiting intensive destruction." Next, we might notice the limited value of this description in helping us understand why the problem is occurring. We have only a cluster of physical signs. And, as Mills notes, this cluster of signs could result from several mechanistically different processes, such as hyperattachment to the owner, an aversion to isolation, a previous traumatic episode, or "the cumulative additive effect of the normal stress of isolation on an individual with high levels of trait anxiety."[17] The environmental, emotional, and social context within which—perhaps because of which—the dog is experiencing anxiety is completely out of view. "In reality," Mills says, "a behaviour problem arises because of the suboptimal nature of the system

of which the animal is only a part." The animal's behavior is a response to that system, and "if the problem is to be understood all parts of the whole system need to be given equal attention."[18] In other words, we need to get on the phone with the doggie psychiatrist *and* the trainer.

Mills distinguishes among three types of behavioral problems in dogs and other captive animals: (1) adaptive behaviors, or actions that have value to the species but are inconvenient to the keeper; (2) maladaptive behaviors, or attempts to behave in an adaptive way in an environment to which complete adaptation is not possible; and (3) malfunctional behaviors, or expressions of direct disruption of the nervous system.

Normal barking, mounting, digging, and food solicitation most likely belong in the adaptive category. Separation anxiety most likely belongs with maladaptive behaviors. Among malfunctional behaviors we might include seizures and behaviors stemming from age-related cognitive decline.[19] These distinctions are useful as we try to think through the behavioral crisis of current-day pet dogs.

Prozac as Behavioral Modification

The psychiatrization of canine behavior has led to increased interest in using drugs to modify behavior. We've gone from using psychopharmaceuticals sparingly in cases of acute canine malfunctioning to using drugs to try to help our dogs adapt and to make our dogs easier to handle. We are throwing pills around like dog biscuits. The media too often treat the issue of drugging our dogs as entertainment: "Look what we won't do for our furry friends!" "They are just as nuts as we are! LOL!"

A 2017 market survey reported in the *Washington Post* found that 8 percent of dog owners gave medications to their animal

to manipulate mood and behavior.[20] So nearly one out of ten dogs are behaviorally drugged. The US Food and Drug Administration has approved a range of drugs to treat mental health issues in pets, including the antidepressant clomipramine (Clomicalm) for separation anxiety and dexmedetomidine (Sileo) for noise phobia. Many drugs are used off-label (prescribed for a condition other than that for which the drug has been approved) to address problem behaviors, such as the prescribing of fluoxetine or Prozac to treat inappropriate urination and aggression.

Let me say, first off, that medications to address mood and behavioral problems in dogs can be extremely helpful, sometimes even lifesaving, and we are fortunate to have these options. Medications can help veterinarians manage dogs' emotional distress by reducing the affective severity of anxiety and phobias. Drugs can also be a powerful tool for facilitating behavioral modification because they can decrease a dog's general level of arousal, helping dogs and their humans work through serious behavioral problems over months and even years.[21] Many dog guardians do everything in their power to make environmental changes to help a dog suffering from behavioral issues but may nevertheless face practical or financial boundaries that cannot be overcome; medications can be the best way to achieve acceptable quality of life for a dog and his human family.

But the possibilities for inappropriate use of drugs also seem ripe. Medicating dogs to modify their behavior could easily become a substitute for addressing the root causes of dog distress. Many "psychological" problems of dogs are behavioral issues that dog guardians don't have the patience to address (e.g., separation anxiety that manifests in destructive chewing), and many are manifestations of unhappiness rooted in

a home environment that doesn't fulfill a dog's physical and emotional needs. We may be medicating our dogs in lieu of providing them an environment to which comfortable adaptation is possible.

As an example of potentially misleading information about dogs and drugs, consider an article appearing on the Daily Puppy website, recommending risperidone "as one way of improving your dog's behavior." Risperidone is an antipsychotic drug developed and approved for the treatment of human schizophrenia.

> Behavioral issues can turn a loving dog into a pet owner's nightmare. Destructive and harmful behaviors often have to be corrected before these animals can thrive as household pets. While training can do a lot in terms of correcting bad behavior, some dog guardians also turn to medical methods of bringing negative behavior under control.[22]

In this case, a mind-altering drug becomes a technology of control, a tool for forcing a square peg (a canid with complex behavioral, emotional, and social needs) into a round hole (a human home). To be fair, research has, in fact, shown that risperidone is a promising treatment for certain canine behavioral problems, such as owner-directed aggression, and in some cases a veterinary behaviorist might find the medication a valuable tool in helping reduce canine suffering and dog-human conflict, at least over the short term. But risperidone is not—let's be clear about this—a way to "correct bad behavior" or "improve dog behavior," language that invites us to gloss over the root causes of the problem: the social and environmental context within which the dog is struggling.

Is the modification of behavior using pharmaceuticals qualitatively different from manipulating behavior using rewards

and punishments or using other technologies of control, such as a crate? How ought we to distinguish between the use of psychopharmaceuticals and other forms of "chemical" behavior modification, such as a lavender diffuser to reduce stress in sheltered dogs or a pheromone product called dog-appeasing pheromone, sometimes sold under brand names like Comfort Zone or Adaptil. A dog-appeasing pheromone is one that supposedly mimics the pheromone that mother dogs release when nursing pups, leading to a sense of calm.

Whether we go so far as to call them coercive, the use of psychoactive drugs like Prozac or pheromones such as the dog-appeasing pheromone to make dogs calmer and more capable of dealing with stress and anxiety can become a human-centered response to a problem, not a dog-centered response. "Let's make the dog adapt to his environment (an environment he obviously finds challenging)" rather than "Let's adapt our human environment to this dog's needs." Square peg into round hole.

Psychoactive drugs have become so widely and easily available for humans that a good number of dog guardians may have Prozac or Xanax just sitting around in the home medicine cabinet. When they read articles in media outlets like the Daily Puppy about how everybody is slipping pills into their dog's dinner bowl, the manipulation of their dog's neurochemistry may seem benign. But it is not. The same logic that induces people to give their dogs aspirin or ibuprofen—"Well, it works for me, why wouldn't it work for my dog, who is an extension of me?"—may invite some experimentation. If you have ever taken and then tried to wean off an antidepressant or anxiolytic drug, you may be aware that both the taking and any subsequent not-taking can result in a range of unpleasant side effects. Are dogs any less likely than we are to feel such neurochemical whiplash?

It is great that people are acknowledging and openly discuss-

ing fear, anxiety, stress, and depression in animals—what a relief after an exhausting several centuries of denial about animal emotions. As noted, pharmaceutical interventions can be a compassionate, appropriate response to anxiety, depression, and other forms of mental suffering in individual companion dogs, especially when paired with interventions aimed at reducing environmental sources of stress such as long hours alone, punitive training methods, exposure to aversive stimuli such as loud noises, and lack of control. Moreover, if dog guardians go through a vet, or better yet a veterinary behaviorist, they may also get education and counseling that will help them understand the challenges their dog may be facing and that can help them learn to better read and respond to behavioral signs of stress.

Nevertheless, we should pause to consider the moral implications of broadly applying psychoactive drugs to behavioral problems and remain cognizant of the risks of relying on drugs to help dogs cope. Rather than focusing solely on modifying the organism, we need to look dispassionately at the environment within which the organism struggles to adapt, even when that environment is us.

Surgical Treatments

Various surgical "treatments" for behavior problems are also on the table, if you can find a veterinarian willing to perform techniques such as devocalization (removing the voice box) and dental disarming (extracting teeth or cutting off the crown to reduce the potential for a bite to cause injury). These physically invasive surgical methods of behavior control are blessedly infrequent and are generally pursued as a last resort effort to control the physical behavior of a dog. But there is another type of surgical behavior control that affects more than 80 percent of pet dogs in the United States: reproductive neutralization.

Spay/Neuter

Spay/neuter surgery is perhaps the most pervasive form of control over dog behavior in the history of human-dog relationships, more pervasive even than leashes and collars, and certainly more consistently and commonly applied than dog training. Reproductive neutralization of dogs is a profoundly invasive form of biopower.

The broadscale control of dogs' reproductive lives is often framed as beneficial *to them*. The practice, however, primarily serves us and is the key to commodification and commercialization of dogs. We should be very clear that the practice of spay/neuter serves dog breeders, the pet industry, and dog guardians. Open-minded conversation needs to take place about whether and in what ways spay/neuter practices serve dogkind.[23] Within the United States, the goal of spay/neuter has for many decades been framed through a narrative of dog overpopulation: we must control the reproductive behavior of individual dogs for the sake of dogs in general. More recently, the "desex to create a better-behaved dog" narrative has been gathering momentum, again despite being riddled with scientific and ethical problems. At least this second narrative is more transparent in its aims: to modify the bodies and brains of dogs so their behavior is more likely to meet a predetermined set of human expectations about pets.

Desexing as a form of behavioral modification has been driven partly by new research into the connections between hormones and behavior and partly by old and mostly wrong myths about dogs, such as the myth that intact male dogs are more aggressive. Adult dogs—usually male dogs—are sometimes desexed reactively, based on the possibility that removing their gonads will fix behavioral problems such as aggression toward other dogs or people. But good empirical support for

this behavioral "intervention" is lacking, as veterinarian Paul McGreevy and colleagues note in a literature review of canine gonadectomy. Only a few studies have assessed the effect of sex and gonadal status on dog behavior, and the results have been inconclusive. They mention a recent study of free-roaming male dogs in which surgically castrated dogs showed no less sexual activity or aggression six months after surgery than before.[24]

Many dogs are desexed prophylactically, as puppies, because of strong messaging that they will grow up to be better dogs. But behavioral forecasting based on spay/neuter status isn't very accurate. Not only that, as research on the behavioral effects of desexing evolves, the picture grows more and more complicated. The decision by a dog guardian to spay or neuter involves a complex set of behavioral trade-offs, none of which are very well understood, and which depend on countless factors such as age at time of desexing, breed, and type of surgery.[25] For instance, McGreevy and his team found that castration may reduce the incidence of some unwanted behaviors while increasing the possibility for others.[26] Adding further complication to the picture, desexing has lifelong implications for the health of dogs. Spay/neuter decreases the likelihood of certain diseases while increasing the likelihood of others, again depending on a whole range of individualized factors.[27]

Overall, the imposition of physically and behaviorally invasive surgery on millions of dogs, for the sake of helping them meet our behavioral expectations, shows questionable moral judgment on our part. Fortunately, the conversation about desexing dogs has evolved in significant positive directions over the past decade. There is now far more attention to the potential health and behavioral risks and benefits *to dogs* and more nuanced recommendations about when and if to spay or neuter, based on a dog's gender, age, breed, and other individualizing factors.

What I would also like to see is more rigorous discussion

about whether spay/neuter should be a normalized part of dog-keeping practices in the first place and what dogs lose when we sweep away a broad swath of their experiential potential, not only the behaviors related to finding mates—the sniffing, the flirting, the excitement—but also the range of behaviors related to being mothers and fathers. In the current "desex, desex, desex!" paradigm, dogs have no reproductive agency. We say to dogs: either you are a designated "breeder" or you aren't, and the decision is not up to you. It depends on who owns you, and on your fur color, your shape, your DNA, the whimsy of human fashion, and what's trending on TikTok. If you are chosen as a breeder, we'll decide when and with whom you will make puppies.

Many dog guardians I've talked to feel an undercurrent of discomfort about spay/neuter, yet also feel that questioning the orthodoxy is taboo. Indeed, there is considerable pressure on all "responsible" dog guardians to desex their dog. A vet will ask you about when but not about whether. If you bring home a dog from a shelter, he or she will already be desexed, no matter how young he or she is. Breeders will often ask those who buy a puppy to sign a contract agreeing to spay or neuter the dog at six months of age. (Is this for the dog? Or is it to maintain a monopoly on puppy production?) Humane organizations tell us that it is without question the right thing to do. Dog guardians are not given very many openings to be curious and think about the ethics of constraining the reproductive freedoms of dogs, and it would be nice if we could talk more openly and with less judgment about this fraught issue. Is it fair to compel dogs to make this sacrifice in order to be our pets? How is it serving *them*?

Behavioral Euthanasia

The ultimate medical treatment for bad behavior, and the ultimate tragedy in human-dog relations, is a practice known as behavioral euthanasia. The issue garners relatively little atten-

tion, perhaps reflecting our collective reluctance to dip into the pool of despair and pain experienced by everyone involved—dog, dog guardian, and veterinarian. It is simply too hard to think about. Yet this tragedy unfolds, again and again.

One of the most compassionate and forthright explorations of the issue that I've come across was a talk by veterinarian Christopher Pachel at the 2021 Lemonade Conference for dog trainers. Pachel distinguishes behavioral euthanasia from what is often called convenience euthanasia and from euthanasia at the end of life. Euthanasia is widely available and common as a component of compassionate end-of-life care for dogs and other companion animals. In such cases, the decision to euthanize is triggered by concerns about a dog's quality of life and may be deemed appropriate if a dog is experiencing progressive disease and is suffering pain or other distress and if death is close at hand. Convenience euthanasia, in contrast, is the term used to refer to a request that a veterinarian kill a dog for reasons that have nothing to do with the dog's welfare. For example—and yes, this really happens—a family might decide to "put down" their dog before a long vacation, because boarding the dog would be expensive and they need money to pay for Jet Ski rentals and mojitos. Dante has posthumously created a special circle of hell for people who make such requests.

Behavioral euthanasia occurs in response either to safety risks posed by the dog or to physical or emotional suffering on the part of the dog, such as might result from severe phobias, generalized anxiety disorder, or self-injuring. As with end-of-life decisions, behavioral euthanasia often comes down to a quality-of-life assessment for the dog. Is the dog so hyper-aroused that he is in constant mental anguish? Would managing the dog safely involve such a profound imposition on his freedom that death is preferable? As Pachel notes, the line between medical euthanasia and behavioral euthanasia is gray.[28] Woe to anyone who must enter this gray zone.

Behavior and Disease

I've talked about various ways in which the medicalizing of dog behavior can be problematic, for example, by pathologizing normal behavior and by encouraging the overzealous use of drugs to manipulate dogs. But *failing* to medicalize behavior can also be problematic. We too often fail to recognize when an underlying medical pathology is driving a behavioral problem. A 2021 study by veterinarians Ian Dinwoodie and Nicholas Dodman and dog behavior specialist Vivian Zottola found that 15 percent of dogs brought to a veterinary practice for aggressive behavior had an underlying medical issue that was driving the problem.[29] Other studies have looked at separation anxiety, fear, compulsive behaviors, "inappropriate urination" (peeing in the house, dribbling), and pica, to mention just a few.[30] Even perceived stubbornness in a dog may have a medical explanation, such as the dog whose refusal to learn the command "sit" was finally explained by an x-ray revealing the dog had a dislocated hip that nobody knew about and that made sitting excruciatingly painful.

In another excellent lecture at the Lemonade Conference, Daniel Mills explored the connections between pain and behavior problems. "Dogs work remarkably hard to please us," he noted, which often means they mask their pain or override their pain in responding to requests by us. So, he says, "if a dog is struggling to fit in with us, we need to consider why."[31] Could pain be playing a role?

As Mills notes, pain is very common in dogs. Many, perhaps even most, dogs are in some degree of pain for some period of their life, and often for their entire life. Why is this? Mills offers various possible answers. Breeding practices are partly to blame. Human guardians are partly to blame, because we don't read our dogs' pain behaviors very well and may not get dogs the veterinary help they need when they need it. Ironically,

the good care pet dogs receive is partly to blame because dogs may live to a ripe age under human care and most are likely to develop osteoarthritis. Pain may be partly attributable to what we are feeding dogs—Mills thinks that many dogs suffer from chronic gastrointestinal distress. Finally, physical pain can arise from chronic unhappiness or stress.

Discomfort is becoming increasingly normalized in dogs and even in entire dog breeds. We've normalized breathing disorders in brachycephalic dogs. We've normalized hip dysplasia and subluxated kneecaps. We've normalized physical malformations, abnormal postures, and strange gaits. A pug in a "lazy" sit with legs out to the side, not under the bum, doesn't sit that way to be cute in his Instagram photo; he sits that way because it hurts to sit like a normal dog. Yet very few dog guardians—or Instagram followers—would recognize this "lazy" sit as a pain behavior. Mills returns several times in his lecture to the situation of pugs, who, in addition to abnormal sitting posture, also frequently display air licking and fly snapping (both of which are often labeled as endearing by guardians), abnormal head/neck/ear scratching, and, often, overt pain. Because of their physical compromises, many pugs don't even survive to age eight. These adorable dogs live with chronic discomfort and die young.

Looking back over the course of his career in veterinary medicine, Mills has observed a striking trajectory. In 1980, about 5 percent of cases seen by behavior specialists had a recognized medical cause. By 1995, the size of the pie slice was 15–20 percent; by 2010, it had grown to 25 percent. In 2020, as many as 70–80 percent of behavior cases had a medical cause. The change, he says, could reflect differences in the way cases are reported, or it could reflect the increased number of veterinary behaviorists and an increased awareness of medically rooted behavioral disorders. But he thinks that case numbers are really increas-

ing, too. And one of the main reasons, he suggests, is the epidemic of pain. Pain can cause defensive behaviors, including aggression, changes in learning, house soiling, stargazing, fly snapping, and other compulsive-type behaviors, clinginess, and attention seeking. Untangling the threads of dogs' discomfort can be exceedingly hard. Excessive lip licking, for example, can be caused by musculoskeletal pain or gastrointestinal distress, among other things ("normal" lip licking is both a stress response and a calming signal); self-mutilation can be related to pain or to motivational conflict.

There is a temptation with our dogs to dismiss certain discomfort behaviors as either amusing (flatulence) or annoying (constant itchiness). But both are welfare problems. Flatulence is often a sign of gastrointestinal distress, so while the actual farting might not bother our dog, the feeling behind it very well could. Itchiness, too, particularly chronic itchiness caused by canine atopic dermatitis, could be linked with a range of behavioral issues in dogs. Research from the human medical literature has found that people with eczema—an extremely itchy skin condition—report psychological burdens including increased stress. Zoologist Naomi Harvey and her colleagues hypothesize that dogs with canine atopic dermatitis, analogous to humans with eczema, might also bear a psychological burden, for which "behavioral problems" can be taken as shorthand. In their research, they found that itch severity was associated with increased frequency of behaviors often considered problematic, including mounting, chewing, hyperactivity, coprophagia (eating feces), begging for and stealing food, attention seeking, excitability, excessive grooming, and reduced trainability.[32]

Mills suggests that individual dog guardians pay careful attention to the possible links between their dog's behavior and pain. He points to two excellent resources that help dog guardians recognize and track behavioral signs of discomfort: the

"Helsinki Chronic Pain Index" and Tufts University's "Comfort Diary for Dogs."[33] (See the resources section.) Why not just do a comfort assessment once a month for your dog, he says, even if your dog is fine? Then you have a baseline, you are tuned in and paying attention, and you will be more likely to notice if things are off. If your dog does show signs of pain or discomfort, a journal can be invaluable in figuring out which medications or other interventions seem to offer relief.

In addition to tracking discomfort, as Mills suggests, we can go two steps further. First, we can keep a good record—whether daily, weekly, monthly, photographic, narrative—of our dog's physical and mental well-being, and this can help us be more mindful caregivers. What are you feeding your dog, and how does his tummy seem on this food? What are his sleep patterns? What kind of treats are over-the-top exciting? How much is he weighing, and how far off from ideal weight have you both strayed? Have you started to notice that his paws are sore the day after a long hike? What did the vet tell you at the last visit (because admit it, it is hard to remember if you don't write it down)? Second, and as a special favor to our companions, we can collaborate on a happiness diary. Although there are many different quality-of-life trackers for dogs available online, I don't know of any that are focused primarily on positive experiences. But why not? What is on your dog's bucket list? What gives your dog pure, unbridled joy? Keep a list and come back to it often.

NO SUCH THING AS A BAD DOG

Although the phrases "bad dog" and "bad behavior" are a common part of our vocabulary, we might do well to put this language away in a bottom drawer. It isn't useful. There are no bad dogs and no bad behaviors; rather, there are dogs who are struggling to adapt and who don't always meet our wildly unrealis-

tic expectations. Our companions will surely appreciate it if we can find more compassionate, accurate, and nuanced ways of talking about the many difficulties of being a pet dog. It is no surprise that many dogs are having trouble. What's surprising is how well many dogs do, despite everything we throw at them.

EIGHT

Dwelling in Possibility

On the back cover of a children's book by Lauren Child called *Who Wants to Be a Poodle, I Don't*, we are given the etymology of "poodle": "an intelligent breed of dog with a thick curly coat that is often clipped in a distinctive manner. The name *poodle* comes from the German word *Pudel*, from *Pudelhund*, or 'splashing dog'; the word *Pudel* is also related to the English word *puddle*." The main character in the book is a dog named Trixie Twinkle Toes. Trixie lives in the big city with the elegant Mademoiselle Verity Brulée, who likes everything to be just so, including her dog. Despite her luxurious and pampered life, Trixie Twinkle Toes is not happy. She doesn't like her poodly name, doesn't like to be perfumed and poofed, and doesn't like wearing pink ponchos. The unhappy Trixie is sent to the psychiatrist, to whom she confesses her desire to just be a dog. She doesn't want to be "a pampered, poofy poodle." She wants to bark at other dogs, stick her nose out of the car window, roll in the mud, and be "dangerous and daring." "She wants to paddle in puddles, like REAL dogs do. Wouldn't you?"[1]

As is often the case, we can learn a basic moral lesson from a story written for children: dogs just want to be dogs.

Although there are many things about current patterns of interaction with companion dogs that are to be celebrated, there is also an abundance of harm and suffering—more than there needs to be or should be. Some of this harm is due to human mean-spiritedness, and there isn't much we can do about that. But many of the harms experienced by companion dogs today are fixable. They result from a mismatch between who we expect dogs to be and who they are and because of a tendency for humans to try to de-dog our friends, training away or constricting the things about dogs that we find challenging, rather than accepting the messy truths of interspecies mingling. We poof and perfume, rather than letting dogs bark, roll in the mud, and be dangerous and daring. John Gray, in *Feline Philosophy*, says, "A good life for any living thing depends on what it needs to fulfill its nature."[2] This seems about right. Part of dogs' nature is an openness to collaborating with humans in shared lifeways; living with us *can be* fulfilling. But we should remain aware that dogs do not need human companionship to fulfill their nature.[3] Their friendship is a gift, not an obligation.

Recognizing that human home environments can be challenging for dogs and that dogs are struggling to adapt, we can graciously meet them halfway. Instead of thinking of dog care as something we do to them or even for them, we might reconceive the caring relationship as working together *with* dogs, collaborating to negotiate settlements and build coadaptations that leave everyone relatively intact. We can engage our curiosity to learn about who the REAL dog is underneath all that hair. Rather than telling dogs what they want, we might try asking. Call and response.

The present flows from the past. Many of the problems dogs face today as pets stem from practices and beliefs we've inherited. We have preconceptions about who dogs are, what it means for a dog to be "good" or "bad," and how to interpret the behaviors and intentions of dogs. Science may be partic-

ularly responsible for many of our difficulties even as it also promises to unlock the secrets of the canine heart and mind. To take just two examples, if dogs and other animals hadn't been seen as a morally unproblematic tool for scientific experimentation, shock collars might not exist. And if we weren't stuck in the paradigm that emerged from behaviorism, the language of punishment and reward might not define our ideas about dog training. But we are where we are, and we need to move forward from here.

DWELLING IN POSSIBILITY

"I dwell in Possibility." My mother spoke this line from an Emily Dickinson poem during a conversation shortly before her death, while she was in hospice and under increasing pressure from a range of physical impositions connected with Parkinson's disease. At that point, she had been bedbound for over two years. The line lodged in my mind, as did the inspiration of my mother's perspective: faced with profound constraints, she nevertheless affirmed possibility. In American literary critic Helen Vendler's gorgeous commentary on Dickinson's poem 466, she says that the poem is about poetry itself. For Dickinson, poetry provides more vantage points on the world, more "windows" and better "doors" than simple prose. Poetry offers us a mental passage in and out, an "ecstatic entrance into the superlative of Being itself."[4]

I have taken these four words from Dickinson as a distillation of my ethical relationship with Bella, with a modification: *we* dwell in possibility. There are constraints we cannot escape, but these can serve to focus attention on the possibilities spanning out around us. My life with Bella and our lives with dogs are incomparably rich with opportunity. Dogs, and our shared lifeways with them, open windows and doors onto expansive ontological possibilities.

To dwell: to live in a place, a habitat (a dwelling); to linger. And to err, to delay. To dwell on a problem, to get stuck in a certain mindset. Let's dwell in possibility, while moving forward, hand in paw.

I AND THOU

Kukur Tihar is an annual Hindu festival celebrating our friendship with dogs and thanking them for their companionship. During Kukur Tihar—which roughly means "worship of the dogs"—garlands of bright flowers are placed around dogs' necks, their foreheads are decorated with red paste, and they are given plates of scrumptious foods. On this day, it is a sin to treat a dog with disrespect.

The following event did not occur on Kukur Tihar, but if it had, it would have been a sin. My family was walking into the REI store in Boulder one morning, to get I-don't-remember what. Poppy, a member of our extended family, was with us. We had seen dogs in the store and assumed they were allowed. The salesperson standing at the door, the one who puts a little yellow sticker on items people are bringing in for return, stepped in front of us and said, "I'm sorry. We don't allow animals in the store. You'll have to take it outside." I felt a wave of indignation and sadness pass over me, and I glanced down at Poppy's open, smiling face, her wagging tail. Calmly and politely, but with an edge in my voice, I looked the sticker guy in the eyes and said, "She is not an 'It.' But we will be happy to go outside with her."

We stand in sacred relation to dogs. An "it" is something objectified, something to which we stand in a relation of separateness. A dog is not "it," not an object that we experience or use as a means to an end, as a source of entertainment or an anti-loneliness pill. A dog is, in theologian Martin Buber's powerful formulation, a Thou. "I-it" objectifies; "I-Thou" acknowledges

a living relationship. In speaking Thou, the speaker takes her stand in relation.[5]

Every day should be a festival of celebration, an honoring of this living affiliation, this I-Thou relationship. "Thou" is an opening to the ineffable, the sacred; it awakens our sense of awe and astonishment.

It is often said that dogs are easy to love because they are simple and their relationships with us are simple. This, I think, does a disservice to dogs and dog-human dyads by downplaying the complications and heartaches of our relationships, the call-and-response that echoes back and forth throughout our shared time on Earth. But dogs—even those who have been badly damaged by previous experiences with humans—do seem to have an openness of heart that humans often struggle to maintain. The exchange is simple: dogs reward us for kindness. They understand the basic moral tenets of "do no harm" and "practice kindness" much more intuitively than we do.

Bella's life is enfolded into mine, into ours. My spouse Chris and I are each on one side of the couch, curled up with a book. Bella is in the middle, curled into a bean shape. The We dog, utterly focused on us, contained within us. I used to feel guilty because she has no life other than the one I make for her, thus my constant perseverating about whether I am giving her the best life possible. I pictured Bella's life as a small circle within the larger overlapping circles of my life and Chris's life. A black bean in our soup. But Bella has gently suggested to me that I've had it all wrong. It is egotistical and anthropocentric to consider her experiential and emotional world as circumscribed by me. She contains multitudes, and they are not encompassed by me, by her human family, by this domestic human dwelling. I inhabit only some of her; I am enfolded within her multitudes.

David Abram suggests that "each of us by our actions is composing our part of the story in concert with the other bod-

ies or beings around us. . . . No human individual can fathom just how the encompassing imagination is experienced by any other person—much less by a turtle, or a thundercloud . . .” or, I would add, by a dog. “Our carnal immersion in the depths of the Mysterious thus ensures an inherent and inescapable pluralism.”[6] “We are human,” Abram says, “only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human.”[7]

The intensively homed environment can close dogs off from sensual experiences that make their lives rich and interesting and can reduce their possibilities for being REAL dogs. Caring for them ethically involves nurturing these possibilities. You might say we ourselves, like our dogs, are suffering from being intensively homed. As Abram argues, we humans seem to forget our active participation in the world; we get trapped inside our heads and stuck to our screens. Dogs can help us with this. Through our collaboration in shared lifeways, dogs have the potential to make us more mindful and more humane; they can remind us how to experience with greater engagement the world that lives and breathes within and beyond the four walls of our house. Dogs provide mentorship in trust, loyalty, empathy, and the capacity to live in the present moment and can teach us to be passionate about the invisible gifts offered by a passing breeze.

In the standard narrative of human-dog coevolution, dogs are placed in the shadow of man. Wolves sought us out for our garbage; we saw an opportunity and made them our companions. And that’s where dogs remain today, forced into friendship and conscribed by their relations to us. But we can perhaps imagine a different telling of the story, passed by moonlight from one dog to another, about how *Homo sapiens* stepped into the shadow of Dog and, through this evolutionary collaboration, became human.

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Resources

CHAPTER TWO
The Three Cs for Human-Dog Relationships

Collaboration. As dogs work hard to adapt themselves to our way of life, we can work equally hard to adapt ourselves to theirs.

An attitude of *curiosity* and beginner's mind fosters collaboration.

We have a responsibility to *care* well for dogs we bring into our home; collaboration and curiosity can help us do this and can generate compassion for animals and people alike.

Ethograms

Here are two examples of ethograms from the scientific literature, so you can see what they look like (and also you might pick up some new ideas about how to read your dog's behavior). The first is an ethogram of tail and ear postures. The second is an ethogram of dog-directed behaviors (behaviors that might occur in an interaction between two dogs).

SAMPLE ETHOGRAM: TAIL AND EAR POSITIONS

Posture[1]	*Positions*	
	TAIL	EARS
High	Maximum highest carriage	Maximally erected (standing) or held forward (hanging)
Half-high	Partially highest carriage and held above the horizontal line of the back	Partly erected or hanging forward, higher than neutral
Neutral	Follows line of hindquarter and held around the horizontal line of the back	Held relaxed, partly sideward
Back	As in neutral but in dorsal or lateral lying position	As in neutral
Half-low	Lower than neutral but not held against or between the hind legs	Partly retracted into the neck, lower than neutral
Low	The upper side of tail against hindquarter and s-shaped, or lower tugged between the hind legs	Maximally retracted into the neck (standing) or held backward (hanging)
Low-on-back	As in low but in a dorsal or lateral lying position	As in low

1. The range of tail carriage (from high to low) differs strongly between breeds and has been taken into account in assessing the posture.

Source: van der Borg et al., "Dominance in Domestic Dogs." https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Ethogram-for-tail-and-ear-positions-for-7-postures_fig3_281377722. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.

SAMPLE ETHOGRAM: CANINE COMMUNICATION

Behavior element	*Description*
Mouth lick	Licking repeatedly with fast movements directed to the recipient's mouth corners
Body tail wag	Accelerated, irregular movement of the tail, often also the hindquarter is moving, in a neutral or lower posture (posture is included to distinguish from normal tail wag, see below)
Pass under head	Passing from the lateral side closely underneath the head of the recipient, often short nose-chin contact with the recipient, in a neutral or lower posture
Stare	Intense fixating look toward recipient with tensed body, for a minimal duration of 2 seconds
Pilo-erection	Raising the hair on one or more upper parts of the body (neck, shoulder, hindquarter) and/or tail base
Growl	Low-pitched rumbling, fairly monosyllabic vocalization from the dog's throat
Show teeth	Baring of the teeth, which become partly or totally visible
Snap	Attempt to bite while moving not more than 1 or 2 steps (about ½ meter) in the direction of the recipient, without physical contact
Lunge	Attempt to bite while moving over a distance from ½ to 3 meters in the direction of the recipient, without physical contact
Bite	Taking any part of the recipient's body between the jaws with sufficient pressure that could cause harm to the recipient
Fight	Severe, offensive aggressive interaction between two dogs, including aggressive elements like lunge and bite
Shrink back	Accelerated movement directed away from the recipient over a distance up to 1 meter
Retreat	Accelerated movement directed away from the recipient over a distance from 1 to 3 meters
Flee	Running away from the recipient over a distance of 3 meters or more, with head in opposite direction of the recipient
Stand over	Standing over the recipient's body, with four paws on the ground, in a neutral or higher posture
Muzzle bite	Inhibited biting over the recipient's snout from above or from the side
Tongue flick	Showing one or more brief licking movements with tongue directed toward nose and head oriented toward recipient, without physical contact
Look away	Turning only the head away from the recipient, while staying in the same spot

(*continued*)

SAMPLE ETHOGRAM: CANINE COMMUNICATION (CONT.)

Behavior element	*Description*
Freeze	General rigidity of the body, with exception of the tail, and no staring toward the recipient
Approach	In normal pace walking (not accelerated) toward the recipient up to a distance of 1 meter or less
Take away object	Taking away object or bone that is in possession of the recipient
Bark	Loud and repetitive barking (characteristic for dogs) directed toward the recipient
Tail wag	Nonaccelerated, regular sideward movements of the tail about in one plane
Paw on	Placing one or both front paws on the recipient's head or back

Source: van der Borg et al., "Dominance in Domestic Dogs." https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Ethogram-for-24-behaviours-in-dogs-adapted-from-Zimen-34-and-van-Hooff-and-Wensing_fig7_281377722. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.

For more ideas about how to observe and understand dog body language and behavior, here are a few books and websites to get you started:

Roger Abrantes, *Dog Language: An Encyclopedia of Canine Behavior*

Brenda Aloff, *Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide Interpreting the Native Language of Dogs*

Lili Chin, *Doggie Language: A Dog Lover's Guide to Understanding Your Best Friend*

Barbara Handelman, *Canine Behavior: A Photo Illustrated Handbook*

Mike McAuliffe, "Canine Communication," https://www.arl-iowa.org/webres/File/Canine%20Communication.pdf

Turid Rugaas, *On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals*, 2nd edition

"Bad Dog" Exercise

Make a list of all your dog's behaviors that you find difficult, annoying, scary, or otherwise problematic. Go back through and put a check mark before each behavior that you think is part of your dog's natural behavioral repertoire.

DOG BEHAVIORS

- ☐ 1._____
- ☐ 2._____
- ☐ 3._____
- ☐ 4._____
- ☐ 5._____
- ☐ 6._____
- ☐ 7._____
- ☐ 8._____
- ☐ 9._____
- ☐ 10._____
- ☐ 11._____
- ☐ 12._____
- ☐ 13._____
- ☐ 14._____
- ☐ 15._____
- ☐ 16._____
- ☐ 17._____
- ☐ 18._____
- ☐ 19._____
- ☐ 20._____
- ☐ 21._____
- ☐ 22._____
- ☐ 23._____
- ☐ 24._____
- ☐ 25._____

To find out more about canine behavior—and to help you distinguish between normal and problematic—you might look at one of the many excellent books on dog behavior.

Here are a few suggestions:

American College of Veterinary Behaviorists, *Decoding Your Dog*
Marc Bekoff, *Canine Confidential*
John Bradshaw, *Dog Sense*
Alexandra Horowitz, *Inside of a Dog*
Ádám Miklósi, *Dog Behaviour, Evolution, and Cognition*, 2nd edition, and *Dogs: A Natural History*

How to Assess Dog-Related Web Resources

When researching diet and nutrition, appropriate choice and use of technologies, training and behavioral advice, health concerns, or anything else related to dog care, you'll have a mountain of information at your fingertips. The internet is a goldmine of great information, but there is also a lot of junk, and it can sometimes be hard to tell what's reliable.

Here are a few thoughts on assessing websites, articles, blogs, and advice. Ask yourself two basic questions: Where does the information come from? And who is responsible for the information? You might also check to see how current the information is (although brand new content isn't always better than older content).

Use Caution

If a website is trying to sell or market something, a heightened level of scrutiny is generally in order. For example, don't try to read up on the pros and cons of e-collars by looking at the materials provided by companies that market or sell these products. Product marketing for dogs is peppered with a lot of humane washing, manipulative language, and just plain lies. So look for ".com" in the web address and proceed with caution. Dog breeders are also trying to sell products, so greater scrutiny is in order whenever information is presented by a breeder, breeding club, or the billion-dollar industry that supports breeding and showing dogs.

Watch out for stereotyping and "aggregating" of dogs or dog breeds: "Dogs are unconditional lovers." "The Great Pyrenees is a mellow, chilled out dog, perfect for the family who likes to cozy up by the fireplace." Typecasting dogs by breed is common (see, e.g., the American Kennel Club's website: https://www.akc.org/dog-breeds/). The problem, as Marc Bekoff often points out in his work, is that breeds don't have personalities; individuals do.

Generally Reliable

Dog advocacy organizations such as Humane Society of the United States or local shelters generally have no ulterior motives, other than to help dogs find and stay in homes. These organizations tend to provide carefully vetted information. (Look for ".org.")

Veterinary-based resources, especially those connected with large vet schools or professional organizations, are usually very good. These sources are especially good on health-related issues but will also often cover behavioral questions. (Look for ".edu.")

Another question to ask: Is the information I'm reading backed up by empirical research? Look for articles with citations, especially citations directing you to peer-reviewed literature. I have a higher level of trust for research that appears in peer-reviewed journals than, for example, research conducted by the pet industry. "Peer reviewed" means that the information presented has been assessed by other researchers in the field. (How to know if a journal is peer reviewed? Google the journal name and "peer reviewed.")

CHAPTER THREE
Food and Diet

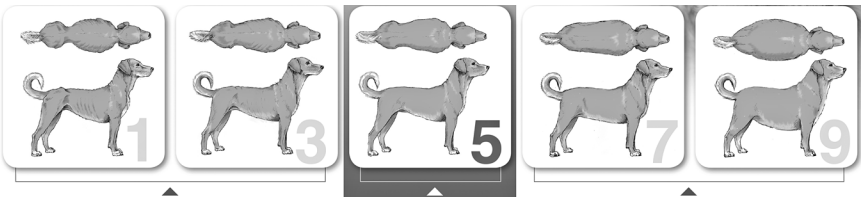
The WSAVA "Global Nutrition Guidelines" webpage has a lot of useful information: https://wsava.org/global-guidelines/global-nutrition-guidelines/.

The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention's "Pet Weight Check," in addition to providing the body condition score guidelines shown in the figure below, will also help you find resources on how to determine caloric needs for your dog and ideal weight and offers ideas for safe weight reduction (https://petobesityprevention.org/pet-weight-check).

The WSAVA's "The Savvy Dog Owner's Guide to Nutrition on the Internet" has helpful guidance about which nutrition ad-

WORLD SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY ASSOCIATION,

BODY CONDITION SCORE SHEET



Under Ideal	*Ideal*	*Over Ideal*
1) Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones, and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass. 2) Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, and pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some evidence of other bony prominences. Minimal loss of muscle mass. 3) Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.	4) Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident. 5) Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.	6) Ribs palpable with slight excess of fat covering. Waist is discernible viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent. 7) Ribs palpable with difficulty. Heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Abdominal tuck may be present. 8) Ribs not palpable under very heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present. 9) Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine, and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.

Source: World Small Animal Veterinary Association, "Body Condition Score," WSAVA (website), https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Body-Condition-Score-Dog.pdf. These guidelines were first published in *Journal of Small Animal Practice* 52, no. 7 (July 2011): 385–96, published by John Wiley and Sons Ltd. and are published with permission.

vice to trust and includes links to various resources that can help dog guardians understand their companion's nutritional needs and how best to meet them (https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Savvy-Dog-Owner-s-Guide-to-Nutrition-on-the-Internet.pdf).

Tufts University's Petfoodology website has numerous ar-

ticles about how and what to feed, written by veterinary nutrition specialists (https://vetnutrition.tufts.edu/petfoodology/).

All about Dog Food is a United Kingdom–based web resource designed to help consumers understand the nutritional pros and cons of a huge variety of foods and treats and to make informed choices about them. It includes interactive directories of available foods and treats, a food comparison page, feeding guidelines, and links to numerous articles on food and feeding (https://www.allaboutdogfood.co.uk).

Whole Dog Journal has a webpage called "Food," which includes reviews of various categories of food (e.g., dry grain free, canned, limited ingredient). Like Petfoodology, the Whole Dog Journal site isn't trying to sell a certain food or kind of diet, and I find their information to be overall objective and balanced (https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/category/food/).

The FDA's website offers guidelines on safe handling of dog food and treats (https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-literacy/tips-safe-handling-pet-food-and-treats). The FDA emphasizes the importance of keeping bowls—water and food—clean, as well as scoops and storage containers. Guardians should wash their hands with soap and hot water before and after handling food or treats. Food should be stored in airtight containers to preserve freshness and prevent spoilage. One of the nicest things you can do for your dog is to provide fresh water in a sparkling clean bowl every single day.

To find out which brands of dog food have not been tested on laboratory animals, you can search by company name at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' "Beauty without Bunnies" database (https://crueltyfree.peta.org/company/).

Cooperative Care, Fear-Free Care, Low-Stress Handling

Deborah Jones's book *Cooperative Care* has a companion YouTube channel, Cooperative Care with Deb Jones, with short

instructional videos on teaching dogs to feel comfortable with veterinary and husbandry procedures (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLdrsXsstUUTcTdWS21pZVA).

Pat Miller's "Cooperative Care: Giving Your Dog Choice and Control" on the Whole Dog Journal website is filled with specific exercises guardians can do with their dogs (https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/training/cooperative-care-giving-your-dog-choice-and-control/).

Alicea Howell and Monique Feyrecilde's *Cooperative Veterinary Care* is aimed at veterinary professionals but has useful information for dog guardians who want to be proactive.

The Fear Free website has a list of Fear Free–certified clinics and professionals, as well as numerous articles for pet guardians about creating a fear-free home (https://fearfreepets.com).

CattleDog Publishing's website describes low-stress handling, a philosophy and set of techniques developed by veterinarian Sophia Yin (https://cattledogpublishing.com/why-and-what-is-low-stress-handling/). See also Yin's book *Low Stress Handling, Restraint, and Behavior Modification of Dogs and Cats*.

CHAPTER FOUR

It is worth spending some time carefully thinking through your dog's daily sensory environment and trying to identify and ameliorate sources of fear and discomfort and increase the possibilities for positive, enriching experiences.

Some General Questions You Might Ask

- What are potential sources of fear in my home? In my neighborhood? Think about all five sensory modalities: smell, sound, sight, taste, touch. Physical sources of discomfort might include slippery floors, temperature, confinement, or a too-tight collar or harness. Psychological discomfort might be caused by sirens, loud television or music, or too much time alone.

- What rituals are most important to you and your dog?
- In what ways is your dog's environment predictable? Is it good predictable or boring predictable?
- What brings your dog the greatest pleasure?
- What are your dog's love languages?

Landscapes of Fear

The Fear Free Happy Homes website has a wealth of information on how to create a home environment that is as stress free as possible (https://www.fearfreehappyhomes.com).

Learn to identify behavioral signs of stress with Dogs Trust's webpage "Signs Your Dog May Be Stressed" (https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/behaviour/signs-your-dog-may-be-stressed).

Enrichment

If you google "dog enrichment," you'll find a treasure trove of ideas and inspiration for making your dog's life more interesting. It is hard to go wrong with enrichment, so the caveats applied to other internet resources don't apply so much here. You can use a basic rule of thumb: try it, as long as participation by your dog is completely voluntary. If your dog doesn't seem engaged, move on to something else. There are many good enrichment products on the market (toys, puzzle feeders, etc.), but you can create enrichments from scratch and just by using your imagination.

The Dogs Trust webpage "Enrichment Activities to Keep Your Dog Entertained" has links to a series of videos with games, challenges, and activities for physical and mental stimulation (https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/behaviour/enrichment-ideas-for-bored-dogs).

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals webpage "Canine DIY Enrichment" offers puzzles and

games you can create on your own (https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/dog-care/canine-diy-enrichment).

The Animal Friends webpage "Dog Enrichment" also suggests various activities for your dog's enrichment (https://www.thinkingoutsidethecage.org/pet-resources/games-and-enrichment/dog-enrichment/).

Marc Bekoff and my 2019 book *Unleashing Your Dog: How to Give Your Canine Companion the Best Possible Life* is full of ideas for reducing fear and providing enrichment in your dog's daily environment.

Finally, here are a few of my favorite books on the why and how of enrichment:

Allie Bender and Emily Strong, *Canine Enrichment for the Real World*
Shay Kelly, *Canine Enrichment: The Book Your Dog Needs You to Read*
Pat Miller, *Play with Your Dog*
Zazie Todd, *Wag: The Science of Making Dogs Happy*

CHAPTER FIVE

On collar and harness fit, the Whole Dog Journal webpage "The Safest Types of Dog Collars (and the Most Dangerous)" by Pat Miller includes tips on proper fit (https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/care/collars-harnesses-leashes-muzzles/the-safest-types-of-dog-collars-and-the-most-dangerous/).

For resources on muzzle fit and safety, as well as a careful training plan, see the Muzzle Up Project's website (https://muzzleupproject.com/resources/).

CHAPTER SIX
Calling in the Experts

I'm a huge fan of enlisting the help of others in building good collaborations with dogs. But I would advise putting care-

ful thought and research into finding training and behavioral help—your dog's mental and emotional well-being are on the line.

If you decide to call in the experts, think about your goals and concerns and then find the right kind of expert to help—for example, do you need a veterinary behaviorist or a trainer or a behavior consultant? You may need or want to talk to all of these. What do you want help with? Diagnosing/troubleshooting behavioral problems? Or skills training? Whose problems are they? Are they annoying to you? Or are they a sign of poor welfare in your dog? Or are you not sure? Veterinary behaviorists have access to medications, if there is a serious maladaptive behavior. Keep in mind that behavioral issues can stem from stress/anxiety and from pain or physical discomfort (itchiness, gastrointestinal distress, etc.).

If you decide to find a trainer or behavior consultant, look for someone who is certified and has educational background in animal behavior, ethology, or psychology. One good certifying body is the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (https://iaabc.org).

No matter how good they are or how well reviewed, not every trainer is going to be a good fit for you and/or your dog. Have a list of questions you want to ask about methods (rewards vs. punishments), philosophy of training (obedience mindset vs. collaborative), and use of aversives (including definition of what counts as an aversive). Is the training relationship-focused or behavior-focused? Dog training versus human training?

If you are trying to troubleshoot behavioral challenges, having someone come into the home environment can be valuable, to see the dog within her ecological niche and observe how daily interactions unfold.

I'm not a huge fan of sleepaway camps/doggie boarding school because they are not collaborative—the dog is doing his part to learn, but the human guardian is doing nothing other

than paying the bill. Also, many of these camps and schools use aversive tools like e-collars and tend to emphasize obedience.

An immersive camp where human and dog go together? That's better. (But I don't know of any.)

View TV training shows, if you must. But watch these as entertainment, not for training advice.

Because aggression is such a commonly reported behavior issue, and because it can have such profound implications for dogs and humans, I'd like to mention the work of aggression expert Michael Shikashio. His website is a great resource (https://aggressivedog.com), and his podcast *The Bitey End of the Dog* offers insights from some of the most thoughtful dog trainers and dog advocates in the business.

CHAPTER SEVEN
On Assessing Pain/Quality of Life

Pain and quality-of-life assessment tools and scales can be valuable in directing attention to and deepening our awareness of what our dogs are experiencing. There is no single go-to resource here. My advice is to use the following links to get ideas and as a springboard for finding other resources. Some key points in the process: learning to recognize signs of pain and discomfort, which can be very subtle; addressing pain or discomfort as best you can, in collaboration with veterinary professionals; staying on top of pain and symptom management, which is much easier than trying to play catch-up; and tracking your dog's comfort over time. Pain scores and quality-of-life assessments should be considered dynamic tools, to be used over and over as needed.

Dr. Petty's Pain Relief for Dogs: The Complete Medical and Integrative Guide to Treating Pain, by veterinary pain specialist Dr. Michael Petty, is written for dog guardians. Dr. Petty helps read-

ers understand the physiology of pain and learn how to recognize pain and how to help our dogs feel more comfortable. The webpage "15 Signs of Pain in Dogs"—a nice overview of common pain behaviors in dogs—is drawn from Petty's book and can be found on the American Animal Hospital Association website (https://www.aaha.org/globalassets/02-guidelines/pain-management/painmgmt_15signs.pdf).

For trustworthy information on a variety of topics in veterinary care and pain management the following websites are recommended:

https://fearfreepets.com
https://veterinarypartner.com
https://www.aaha.org (American Animal Hospital Association)
http://healthypet.com
https://ivapm.org (International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management)
https://wsava.org (World Small Animal Veterinary Association)
https://pets.webmd.com

For a comprehensive list of behaviors that can indicate pain, see the three tables reproduced below. The first is the American Animal Hospital Association's "How to Tell If Your Dog Is in Pain." The "Canine Brief Pain Inventory" developed by Dr. Dorothy Cimino Brown is a useful tool for monitoring pain in a dog who is ill, injured, or suffering from a painful chronic condition such as osteoarthritis. The "Comfort Diary for Dogs," developed by Dr. Alicia Karas, provides a way to record a dog's attitude and response to medications and guide decision-making about optimal dosing and timing of medications.

You might consider keeping a quality-of-life journal to track your dog's pain, discomfort, and other symptoms, as well as positive experiences and good days. This is especially impor-

tant for dogs who are ill, who have experienced serious injury, or who are elderly and need additional/different support. The journal provides a baseline for "normal" to help track trends over time and act as a record of what you've tried (e.g., pain meds, home modifications) and how well various interventions have worked. This journal will become an invaluable tool for guiding palliative care and making end-of-life decisions. I think quality-of-life journals are useful for healthy, young dogs, too, as they help focus our attention on what our dog is experiencing and how to keep the balance of experiences positive and pleasurable. A quality-of-life journal could even be used to explore and track landscapes of fear and pleasure, as discussed in chapter 4. You might devote a special section of the quality-of-life journal to happiness. What are your dog's special likes and most joyful experiences? How can you make more of these?

It is also useful to keep a written health record to track vaccinations, preventive treatments, illnesses and injuries, allergies, foods that disagree, and so forth.

Elderly Dogs

Elderly dogs need special care. Dr. Mary Gardner's *It's Never Long Enough: A Practical Guide to Caring for Your Geriatric Dog* is one of the best books on living with a geriatric dog, especially when combined with her *Geriatric Dog Health and Care Journal: A Complete Toolkit for the Geriatric Dog Caregiver*.

HOW TO TELL IF YOUR DOG IS IN PAIN

Vocalization	*Daily habits*	*Self-mutilation*
• Whining • Howling • Whimpering • Yelping • Groaning • Grunting	• Decreased appetite • Withdraws from social interaction • Changes in sleeping (less or more) • Changes in drinking habits • Lapses in housetraining or struggling to get into position • Seeks more affection than usual	• Licking one or more areas obsessively of his/her body • Biting at one or more areas of his/her body • Scratching a particular part of his/her body
Facial expression	*Posture*	*Self-protection*
• Grimaces, vacant stare • Glazed, wide-eyed, or looks sleepy • Enlarged pupils • Flattened ears • Pants excessively at rest	• Hunched, with hindquarters raised and front end down on the ground • Lays on his or her side	• Protects a body part • Doesn't put weight on a leg • Limps • Doesn't want to be held or picked up
Aggression (especially a previously friendly dog)	*Activity level*	
• Acts out of character • Growls • Bites • Pins ears back • A normally aggressive dog may act quiet, docile	• Restless, pacing • Repeatedly gets up and lies down; can't seem to get comfortable • Difficulty lying down or getting up • Trembling, circling, or lying very still • Moves stiffly or slowly after exercise or sleeping/resting • Less energy or activity • Reluctant to move • Less playful or willing to exercise • Less eager or able to jump on furniture or into car • Difficulty walking or running, particularly on wood or tile floors or stairs	

Source: "How to Tell If Your Dog Is in Pain," AAHA (website), https://www.aaha.org/globalassets/02-guidelines/pain-management/painmanagement_dogs_web.pdf. Copyright 2022, American Animal Hospital Association. Reprinted with permission.

CANINE BRIEF PAIN INVENTORY

Description of pain:

1. Circle the number that best describes the pain at its *worst* in the last 7 days.

Rate your dog's pain:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No pain										Extreme pain

2. Circle the number that best describes the pain at its *least* in the last 7 days

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No pain										Extreme pain

3. Circle the number that best describes the pain at its *average* in the last 7 days.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No pain										Extreme pain

4. Circle the number that best describes the pain as it is *right now*.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No pain										Extreme pain

Description of function:

Circle the number that best describes how during the last 7 days pain has interfered with your dog's:

5. General Activity

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Does not interfere										Completely interferes

6. Enjoyment of Life

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Does not interfere										Completely interferes

7. Ability to Rise to Standing from Lying Down

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Does not interfere										Completely interferes

CANINE BRIEF PAIN INVENTORY (CONT.)

8. Ability to Walk

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Does not interfere										Completely interferes

9. Ability to Run

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Does not interfere										Completely interferes

10. Ability to Climb Stairs, Curbs, Doorsteps, etc.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Does not interfere										Completely interferes

Overall impression:

11. Circle the word that best describes your dog's overall quality of life over the last 7 days.

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Very Good

Source: Dorothy Cimino Brown, *The Canine Brief Pain Inventory: User Guide* (2017), https://www.vet.upenn.edu/docs/default-source/VCIC/canine-bpi-user%27s-guide-2017-07.

TUFTS DAILY COMFORT DIARY FOR DOGS

This week begins on what date?		*Mon*	*Tues*	*Weds*	*Thurs*	*Fri*	*Sat*	*Sun*
How did your dog move today?	Stiff or motionless							
	Tough getting up, able to get around with major effort							
	Able to get around fairly well but some effort and panting occurs							
	Moving very well, not seeming too bothered by moving							
	Has energy, ease, does stretches and "full body shake"							
How was your dog's attitude today?	Uninterested, depressed for the most part, "inward look"							
	Greeted family or other pet but not very engaged, sleeping a lot							
	Gladly aware of family/pets much of the time, lies in one place							
	Happily greets others, seeking attention, may tire out							
	Meets and follows us with enthusiasm galore, begging for attention							
Appetite? (Good, Fair, Poor)								
How many episodes of falling, crying, or other signs of pain or distress?								

How did your dog sleep last night?	Mostly restless, panting, changes position/ location, got me up often							
	Some panting or movement but generally slept well							
	Relaxed, deep breathing, occasional big sighs or "dreams"							

Medications you gave today?								

A space for comments, observations, things to ask	

Overall, today's quality of life? On a scale of 0–10: 0 = extremely poor, 10 = excellent.							

Source: Alicia Z Karas, DVM, DACVAA, Assistant Professor of Clinical Sciences, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, "Comfort Diary for Dogs," 2009.

Notes

CHAPTER ONE

1. High Cotton Doormats, https://highcotton.com/collections/doormats.
2. Salonen et al., "Prevalence, Comorbidity, and Breed Differences."
3. Dinwoodie et al., "Demographics and Comorbidity of Behavior Problems," 62.
4. Yamada et al., "Prevalence of 25 Canine Behavioral Problems."
5. CBS Colorado. "More People Surrendering Pets as Denver Animal Shelter Reaches Capacity Crisis." May 27, 2022. https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/foster-surrender-pets-denver-animal-shelter-capacity-crisis/.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 19.
2. Dr. Susan Friedman, professor of psychology at Utah State, describes behavior analysis as a "study of one": each individual organism has evolved within her lifetime to fit the needs of her environment. See, e.g., "An Interview with Susan Friedman," World Parrot Trust, October 23, 2007, https://www.behaviorworks.org/files/articles/World%20Parrot%20Trust%20Interview%20-%20Forums%20and%20Experts.pdf.
3. See Wegner and Gray, *Mind Club*.
4. Suzuki, *Zen Mind*, xiv.
5. Suzuki, *Zen Mind*, 1.
6. Suzuki, *Zen Mind*, 2.
7. Gray, *Straw Dogs*, 113.
8. Chödrön, *Practicing Peace in Times of War*, 31.
9. Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life*, xviii.
10. Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals*.
11. Hepper and Wells, "How Many Footsteps Do Dogs Need?"

12. Sibley, *What It's Like to Be a Bird*, 191.
13. *Oxford Etymology Online*, s.v. "Ethics," https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=ethics.
14. Benson, "Essence of a Dog."
15. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 28.
16. Yamada et al., "Prevalence of 25 Canine Behavioral Problems."
17. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*. I'm taking liberties with Overall's original use of the term.
18. Galaxy and Delgado, *Total Cat Mojo*, 108.
19. See, for e.g., Chödrön, *Start Where You Are*.
20. Noddings, *Caring*, 2.
21. Noddings, *Caring*, 157.
22. In the context of veterinary care, especially care provided during protracted illness or at the end of life, dog guardians are often spoken of as the dog's caregiver, signaling a shift into a special set of caring activities and decision-making responsibilities. In my work on animal hospice and palliative care, I have used the language of "caregivers."
23. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 36.
24. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 42.

CHAPTER THREE

1. I'm talking here about typical pet dogs in the United States. In places where people hunt to survive, dogs still participate in food acquisition.
2. You can search dog food companies in the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' database to find out if the company tests on animals: https://crueltyfree.peta.org/company/.
3. Kasanen et al., "Ethics of Feeding," 37.
4. Bland et al., "Dog Obesity."
5. Gorvett, "Hidden Reason Processed Pet Foods Are So Addictive."
6. Knight and Satchell, "Vegan versus Meat-Based Pet Foods," 2–3.
7. Arhant, Winkelmann, and Troxler, "Chewing Behaviour in Dogs," 1.
8. Bekoff and Pierce, *Unleashing Your Dog*.
9. Bekoff, "Observations of Scent-Marking."
10. De Frenne et al., "Nutrient Fertilization by Dogs."
11. Lee et al., "Evaluating the Effects of Canine Urine."
12. Williams and Buzhardt, "Benefits of Walking Your Dog," 1.
13. Benson, "Essence of a Dog."
14. Burt, "Territoriality and Home Range Concepts," 346.
15. Macdonald and Carr, "Variation in Dog Society"; Spotte, *Societies of Wolves*; Boitani and Ciucci, "Comparative Social Ecology"; Gompper, *Free-Ranging Dogs*.
16. Griss et al., "If They Could Choose," 2.
17. Griss et al., "If They Could Choose," 8.
18. See, e.g., O'Neill, "Prevalence of Commonly Diagnosed Disorders."
19. Jones, *Cooperative Care*, 9.
20. Landsberg, Hunthausen, and Ackerman, *Behavior Problems of the Dog and Cat*, 22.
21. See, e.g., Feilberg, Corridan, and Buckle, "A Cross-Sectional Survey of UK Veterinary Practices."

22. Döring et al., "Fear-Related Behaviour of Dogs."
23. Feilberg, Corridan, and Buckle, "A Cross-Sectional Survey of UK Veterinary Practices."
24. A related ethical issue of immense importance is the use of physical restraint as a form of analgesia during painful veterinary procedures, a practice the late Bernie Rollin referred to as the use of "bruticaine." Luckily and due in large measure to the work of Dr. Rollin, animal pain is taken far more seriously than it used to be, though we still have a long way to go before we can claim to be a humane species. See Rollin, "Veterinary Medical Ethics."
25. Beghi et al., "Prevalence and Risk Factors," cited in Lin, "Who Should Implement Force?"
26. Haug, "Improving Patient Restraint."
27. Lin, "Who Should Implement Force?," 313. See also Tingleff et al., "Treat Me with Respect," a systematic review and thematic analysis of psychiatric patients' reported perceptions of the situations associated with the process of coercion.
28. Lin, "Who Should Implement Force?," 312.
29. Haug, "Improving Patient Restraint."
30. On compassion maximization, see Trestman and Nagaraja, "How Should Clinicians Execute Critical Force?"
31. McMillan, "Mental Health and Well-Being Benefits," 67.
32. Yeates, "Why Keep a Dog and Bark Yourself?"
33. Yeates, "Why Keep a Dog and Bark Yourself?," 170.
34. On using infantilizing language, see Vineland Sanctuary's blog by Bravebird, "Meet the Cow Who Jumped Over the Moon," *VINE Sanctuary News*, May 27, 2018, http://blog.bravebirds.org/archives/3242.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Puurunen et al., "Inadequate Socialisation," 1.
2. "German Shepherd vs T-REX! [Try Not to Laugh or Grin]," April 24, 2021, YouTube video, 2:43, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28QenrKMxXU.
3. Grigg et al., "Stress-Related Behaviors."
4. See, e.g., Blackwell, Bradshaw, and Casey, "Fear Responses to Noises."
5. Roy, "Something to Chew On."
6. "Creating a Sensory Garden for Your Dog: A Step-By-Step Guide," RuffleSnuffle (website), https://www.rufflesnuffle.co.uk/creating-a-sensory-garden-for-your-dog-step-by-step-guide/; "How to Create a Sensory Garden for Your Dog," Australian Dog Lover (website), https://www.australiandoglover.com/2018/12/how-to-create-sensory-garden-for-your.html.
7. "Rent Safe and Private Dog Parks Hosted by Locals," Sniffspot (website), https://www.sniffspot.com/.
8. On secure base effect in dogs see Horn, Huber, and Range, "Importance of the Secure Base Effect."
9. Miklósi, *The Dog*, 138.
10. On the art of raising well-adjusted puppies, see Rousseau and Rugaas, *How to Raise a Puppy*.
11. World Health Organization, "Social Isolation and Loneliness."
12. See, e.g., Paul and Bhadra, "Great Indian Joint Families of Free-Ranging Dogs." For an

overview of the social lives of free-ranging dogs, see Pierce and Bekoff, *A Dog's World*, chap 5.
13. McMillan, "Psychobiology of Social Pain."
14. See, e.g., Heys and Dombeck, "Evidence for a Subcircuit."
15. Stephan, Leidhold, and Hammerschmidt, "Pet Dogs Home Alone."
16. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 26. Haraway refers to Barbara Smuts's "Embodied Communication in Nonhuman Animals."
17. On lexical capacities, see Magyari et al., "Event-Related Potentials."
18. Clear, *Atomic Habits*; Duhigg, *Power of Habit*.
19. "We Surprised the Dogs," January 3, 2020, YouTube video, 6:48, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ioA-6l3EFI&t=31s.
20. See, e.g., Meehan and Mench, "Challenge of Challenge."
21. McGowan et al., "Positive Affect and Learning."
22. Dukas and Ratcliffe, *Cognitive Ecology* II, 3.
23. Todd, "How to Pet Cats and Dogs."
24. Kuhne, Hößler, and Struwe, "Effects of Human-Dog Familiarity."
25. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 584.
26. But see Mariti et al., "Effects of Petting."
27. Bekoff, "When Dogs Play." See also Allen and Bekoff, "Animal Play"; and Bekoff and Pierce, *Wild Justice*.
28. Lindsay, *Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior*, 3:322.
29. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 189.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. "Effectiveness is not enough" has been a theme in the work of psychology professor and behaviorist Susan Friedman. See, e.g., "What's Wrong with This Picture? Effectiveness Is Not Enough," https://www.behaviorworks.org/files/articles/What%27s%20Wrong%20With%20this%20Picture-General.pdf.
2. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 741.
3. Carter, McNally, and Roshier, "Canine Collars."
4. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 740.
5. For more, see Derr, "Politics of Dogs."
6. Mark Derr, personal communication/Zoom conversation, September 2021. Changes in the way dogs move about human communities, especially large cities, began even earlier. Between the late nineteenth century and about 1930, dogs went from being relatively free to move about within human-dog commons to being constrained within human dwellings. See Pearson, *Dogopolis*; Robichaud, *Animal City*; and Brown, *The City Is More Than Human*.
7. Lily Velez, "States with the Most Obedient Dogs," April 20, 2022, https://www.veterinarians.org/most-obedient-dogs/.
8. r/reactivedogs/ (Reddit community), "Muzzle Shaming/Guilt by Pet Store Employee" (comment has since been deleted by the poster), https://www.reddit.com/r/reactivedogs/comments/mf7nnv/muzzle_shamingguilt_by_pet_store_employee/.
9. "Muzzled Dogs Aren't Bad Dogs," Muzzle Up Project (website), https://muzzleupproject.com/.
10. Arhant et al., "Owner Reports on the Use of Muzzles."

11. Beerda et al., "Chronic Stress in Dogs."
12. Here is the USDA's formula, and good luck with the math:

    (i) Each dog housed in a primary enclosure (including weaned puppies) must be provided a minimum amount of floor space, calculated as follows: Find the mathematical square of the sum of the length of the dog in inches (measured from the tip of its nose to the base of its tail) plus 6 inches; then divide the product by 144. The calculation is: (length of dog in inches + 6) × (length of dog in inches + 6) = required floor space in square inches. Required floor space in inches/144 = required floor space in square feet. ("Code of Federal Regulations. Title 9. Animals and Animal Products," Animal Legal and Historical Center [website], Michigan State University, last updated February 2022, https://www.animallaw.info/administrative/us-awa-subpart-specifications-humane-handling-care-treatment-and-transportation-dogs#s6.)

13. Keehn, *Animal Models for Psychiatry*, 66.
14. For some representative studies, see Masson et al., "Electronic Training Devices"; Blackwell et al., "Use of Electronic Collars for Training Domestic Dogs"; Blackwell et al., "Relationship between Training Methods"; China, Mills, and Cooper, "Efficacy of Dog Training"; Vieira De Castro et al., "Does Training Method Matter?"
15. "Shock Collars versus Electrical Stimulation Collars," Hidden Fences (website), https://hiddenfence.com.au/shock-collars-versus-electrical-stimulation-collars/.
16. "Wireless Dog Fence and GPS Dog Collar for Ultimate Dog Safety," Halo (website), https://www.halocollar.com/.
17. "How to Stop Dog from Jumping on Counter," Acme Canine (website), June 23, 2018, https://acmecanine.com/how-to-stop-a-counter-surfering-dog-from-stealing-you-blind/.
18. Cimarelli et al., "Partial Rewarding during Clicker Training," 107.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Given the complexity of the issues raised by training (or not training) and the physical and psychological repercussions for dogs, it is surprising that the topic hasn't elicited more sustained attention. Although the literature is small, there has been some interesting reflection on the form of interaction typically labeled "training." I've found particularly useful insights in Justine Włodarczyk's *Genealogy of Obedience*; Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet*; and Vicki Hearne's *Adam's Task*. Steven Lindsay's massive three-volume *Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training* is, among other things, an ethical treatise, especially his chapter on cynopraxis. And Karen Overall's two large textbooks, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats* and *Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Small Animals*, although not explicitly about ethics, present the case for a certain set of moral parameters in human-dog relations.
2. The way I've phrased this suggests that the human home is *not* the natural habitat of dogs, which of course goes against folk belief and science. But folk belief and science have both been overly uncritical in their designation of the human home as dogs' natural habitat. Almost never do you see a specification of what kind of human home we're considering to be the dogs' so-called natural habitat. Each home is different, and the "home habitat" is quite different now than it was fifty years ago, much less

twenty thousand years ago when dogs and humans were in the early stages of our evolutionary journey together. It is perhaps more accurate to say that a human home represents one of many possible habitats for domestic dogs and that some home habitats more closely match the present contours of dogs' behavioral evolution than others.

3. Scott and Fuller's *Genetics and the Social Behaviour of the Dog* is a classic text on critical socialization period for puppies.
4. In *How to Raise a Puppy*, Rousseau and Rugaas present a strong case for taking puppies from their mothers at no earlier than twelve weeks of age.
5. Advertisement, Your Dog (website), Tufts University, accessed October 2, 2022, https://www.tuftsyourdog.com/product/the-big-book-of-tricks-for-the-best-dog-ever/.
6. Lisa Tenzin-Dolma, personal communication/Zoom conversation, September 2021.
7. Barrie Finger, personal communication, October 3, 2022.
8. Turid Rugaas, "When, Where, and How Do Dogs Sit?," Turid Rugaas (website), http://en.turid-rugaas.no/sit.html.
9. Tenzin-Dolma, personal communication/Zoom conversation, September 2021.
10. Gruen, *Ethics of Captivity*, 161.
11. Gruen, *Ethics of Captivity*, 162.
12. Lauren Yapalater, "This Dog Can Literally Play Jenga and Also Do a Million Other Things Expertly," *BuzzFeed*, June 7, 2019, https://www.buzzfeed.com/lyapalater/im-obsessed-with-this-dog-that-plays-jenga-and-does. You can watch Secret playing Jenga here: "Dog Playing Jenga," June 6, 2019, YouTube video, 1:28, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kl3Y82qRDg&t=2s.
13. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 560.
14. Hearne, *Adam's Task*, 93.
15. Hearne, *Adam's Task*, 97.
16. Hearne, *Adam's Task*, 100.
17. Lindsay, *Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior*, 222.
18. See, e.g., Fukuzawa and Hayashi, "Comparison of 3 Different Reinforcements"; Feuerbacher and Wynne, "Relative Efficacy of Human Social Interaction"; Feuerbacher and Wynne, "Most Domestic Dogs."
19. Rousseau and Rugaas discuss the ethics of using food deprivation in training (*How to Raise a Puppy*, 58–59).
20. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 67; emphasis in original.
21. See Martin, "The Top 10 Behaviors." See also Friedman and Haug, "From Parrots to Pigs."
22. Lindsay, *Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior*, vol. 1, *Adaptation and Learning*, 222.
23. Lindsay, *Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior*, vol. 1, *Adaptation and Learning*, 223.
24. International Association for Animal Behavior Consultants, "IAABC Statement on LIMA," https://m.iaabc.org/about/lima/.
25. International Association for Animal Behavior Consultants, "IAABC Statement on LIMA," IAABC (website), https://m.iaabc.org/about/lima/.
26. International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants, "Hierarchy of Procedures for Humane and Effective Practice," IAABC (website), https://m.iaabc.org/about/lima/hierarchy/.
27. "LIMA Beings: Cultivating Conditions for Compassion," LIMA Beings (website), https://limabeings.com/.

28. Finger, personal communication, October 3, 2022.
29. Hearne, *Adam's Task*, 41.
30. Hearne, *Adam's Task*, 43.
31. Lindsay, *Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior*, vol. 1, *Adaptation and Learning*, 285.
32. London, *Treat Everyone Like a Dog*, 19.
33. Reeve and Jacques, "Responses to Spoken Words by Domestic Dogs."
34. estaff, "Is it a Command or a Cue?," Your Dog (website), Tufts University, May 18, 2021, https://www.tuftsyourdog.com/dogtrainingandbehavior/is-it-a-command-or-a-cue/.
35. Mitchell and Edmonson, "Functions of Repetitive Talk to Dogs."
36. For an illuminating discussion of dominance—what it is, what it is not, and how it found its way into dog training—see "Why Dogs Were—Unfortunately—Turned Back into Wolves," chap. 3 in Bradshaw's *In Defence of Dogs*.
37. Finger, personal communication, October 3, 2022.
38. McAuliffe, *Mindful Dog Teaching*, 20.
39. Jones, *Cooperative Care*, 15.
40. Miller, "Intelligent Disobedience."

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Jules Masserman, whose research in the 1940s and 1950s involved the development of animal models for neurosis, helped shed light on motivational conflict. As historian Alison Winters argues in a 2016 article, Masserman instigated a "nervous breakdown" in animals, particularly cats and monkeys, and then tried (with arguable success) to perform a kind of feline psychoanalysis, intended to "demonstrate the universal nature of ego psychology" (Winter, "Cats on the Couch").

   One common experimental "motivational conflict" was between hunger and fear. In a representative setup, described by Masserman and two colleagues in *Psychosomatic Medicine*, monkeys were carefully trained to respond to a series of cues to obtain a food reward. At some point, experimenters switched up the apparatus, and when reaching for "its properly early food reward," the monkey "was confronted instead with the head of a toy rubber snake extruding into the food box." After 12–15 such "psychologically traumatic" experiences, "the animals developed severe experimental neurosis variously characterized by hypersensitivity to nearly all stimuli, frequent startle and phobic reactions, inhibitions of feeding, play, and exploratory activities, chronic neuromuscular and organic dysfunctions, markedly increased homoeroticism, masturbation, and other sexual deviations, hallucinatory and delusional patterns, and persistent alterations in social relationships parallel to those that occur in human neuroses and psychoses" (Masserman, Techtel, and Schreiner, "Role of Olfaction in Normal and Neurotic Behavior in Animals").
2. Surveys of dog guardians are the method by which nearly all research on companion dog behavior is conducted. It is worth noting that surveys of dog owners are a troublesome source of data, and much of what we supposedly know about dogs and dog ownership rests on nothing more than these survey-collected data. There is almost no way for survey questions not to be leading; answers from dog guardians are highly subjective, as is the interpretation of these answers by researchers.
3. Salonen et al., "Prevalence, Comorbidity, and Breed Differences." The researchers used the language "problematic behaviors" and "behavior problems" in the published study. Hannes Lohi used the language "unwanted" in the interview with *Sci-*

enceDaily. It is unclear how "unwanted" is defined: is it "unwanted by owner" or "thought to be a welfare problem for the dog"?
4. Kim Brophey, Zoom interview, May 17, 2021.
5. Yamada et al., "Prevalence of 25 Canine Behavioral Problems," 1090.
6. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 172.
7. Tamara Peco and Petfood Team, "Different Dog Behaviors and What They Mean," *Petfeed*, accessed October 20, 2022, https://petcube.com/blog/pet-behavior-problems/.
8. Overall, *Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Small Animals*, 511.
9. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 306.
10. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 558.
11. Overall, *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats*, 56.
12. Williams and Blackwell, "Managing the Risk of Aggressive Dog Behavior," 2529.
13. Bekoff and Angilly, "Perils of Mislabeling Dog-Appropriate Behavior."
14. "Welcome to the Official Home of DINOS: Dogs in Need of Space!," Dogs in Need of Space (website), https://dogsinneedofspace.com/.
15. Mills, "Medical Paradigms."
16. Frank, "Separation Anxiety."
17. Mills, "Medical Paradigms," 267.
18. Mills, "Medical Paradigms," 272.
19. Mills, "Medical Paradigms," 270.
20. Morris, "Does Your Pooch Really Need Prozac?"
21. Craven et al., "Veterinary Drug Therapies," 3.
22. Davis, "Risperidone and Dogs."
23. I explore this narrative in *Run, Spot, Run*.
24. McGreevy et al., "Behavioural Risks in Male Dogs," 14–15. See also Zink, "Gonadectomy—Rethinking Long-Held Beliefs."
25. See, e.g., Oberbauer, Belanger, and Famula, "A Review of the Impact of Neuter Status on Expression of Inherited Conditions in Dogs."
26. McGreevy et al., "Behavioural Risks in Male Dogs." See also Urfer and Kaeberlein, "Desexing Dogs."
27. Hart et al., "Joint Disorders, Cancers, and Urinary Incontinence."
28. Pachel, "Bringing the Conversation Out of the Shadows."
29. Dinwoodie, Zottola, and Dodman, "An Investigation into the Effectiveness of Various Professionals."
30. For an overview, see Camps et al., "A Review of Medical Conditions."
31. Mills, "Pain and Problem Behavior."
32. Harvey et al., "Behavioural Differences in Dogs."
33. "Helsinki Chronic Pain Index" (Hielm, Rita, and Tulamo, "Psychometric Testing of the Helsinki Chronic Pain Index") can be found here: https://www.fourleg.com/media/Helsinki%20Chronic%20Pain%20Index.pdf. The Tufts "Comfort Diary for Dogs" can be found here: https://yourfamilydogpodcast.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2019/05/Tufts-Comfort-Diary-for-Dogs.pdf.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Child, *Who Wants to Be a Poodle, I Don't*, back jacket copy.
2. Gray, *Feline Philosophy*, 65.

3. Pierce and Bekoff, *A Dog's World*.
4. Vendler, *Dickinson*, 222–23.
5. Buber, *I and Thou*.
6. Abram, *Becoming Animal*, 272.
7. Abram, *Spell of the Sensuous*, 22.

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