



Time for Paws

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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Have you ever noticed that some people treat their animals better than they treat other people? They beam when Spot enters the room and spend time greeting and cuddling him. The cat eats gourmet food out of Royal Dolton and crystal. Every room has climbing posts, pet toys, plush beds and special grooming aids. The family pet is included in most or all of the Facebook photos. Even the calendar reveals that there are more visits booked with the vet than with the family dentist or physician.

Each of my adult children has a dog. Kristal's Daisy is aging and not as spry as in the past. She walks a little slower and doesn't get as excited when people come to the door as she had a few years ago. Her health also isn't as good. The boys have both graduated so Daisy gets less attention than when they were in school. She is alone during the day but I have noticed that everyone takes time to greet her and ensure that her needs are met. Her presence in the home is quiet and comfortable.

Mark's Gizmo is about middle-age. I call him Chewbacca because he chewed a pair of my good leather shoes when I was visiting one day. Everyone in the family defends him though and claims that this was the only time he ever chewed shoes! Gizmo is just one member in the family of five. He is usually wandering through the children's play area, under the table during mealtime or enjoying a cuddle while on someone's lap. He travels with them when they leave home for more than a day and his name is always included with all the others at the bottom of greeting cards.

Rob clearly states that Koda is his best friend. She is a lively puppy who loves to run around the house while being chased and to go for long walks outside with Rob. Despite her young age, she has learned a lot of tricks that delight observers. For example, when you point a finger and say "Bang" she drops to the ground and plays dead. Sometimes she has an "accident" on the floor but that doesn't diminish the love that her owners have for her. (Actually, I think it is the adults who have the "accident" because they often ignore or misjudge her body language).

Are there people in your life who need the love and respect that you might offer a pet? Do you know someone like Daisy who is aging and sick but needs someone to help fill needs while providing a comfortable and stressful environment?

Do you know any Gizmos who have made mistakes and need forgiveness but are willing to offer companionship in exchange?

How about Koda? Are there people who require a lot of your attention but will bring a smile to your face every day because of their humorous "tricks"?

I remember hearing a speaker talk about his dog. He was jealous when she got excited and wagged her tail when his wife entered the room but was apathetic when he entered. Andy started wondering why this was happening and slowly began to realize that the difference was in the way that he and his wife treated the dog. So he changed his behaviour towards the dog and soon he started getting the greeting he desired!

We can follow Andy's example. Instead of wondering why people treat you the way that they do, perhaps you need to look at the way that you treat others.