

A SPIRITUALITY & HEALTH E-BOOK

Pet

Wisdom From Animals

BEYOND SNUGGLES AND
COMPANIONSHIP, OUR
PETS OFFER US PROFOUND
SPIRITUAL LESSONS.

Spirituality
& Health

Contents

Paw prints not only leave impressions on our hearts—
but on our souls, minds, and spirits as well. Our beloved
pets offer us so much more than unconditional love.
Fur baby dogs and cats lend us wisdom and spiritual
awakening unfound in our human peers.

Spiritual Lessons We Learn From Cats	4
What My Puppy Teaches Me . . .	7
Love Lessons From Pets	9
Learning Spirituality From Animals	10
Pet Dogs Lessen Risk of Schizophrenia	13
Field Notes From a Dog Owner's Awakening	15
5 Ways to Bond With Your Pooch	16
Puppy Love: It's Official! Having a Pet Is Good for Your Heart	17
Is It Okay to Grieve for Your Pet?	18
Pets as Gateway Love	20
Puppy Guru: Why My Dog Is My Best Yoga Teacher	22

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“Your fears, worries, and anxieties affect the behavior and wellbeing of your dog. So let go.”

From “Field Notes From a Dog Owner’s Awakening” by Caroline Griffith, page 15

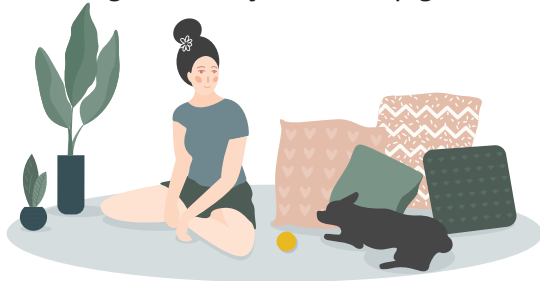
“Dogs give us a life-altering chance to value equality over hierarchy—to see each connection as an exchange of emotion and life-force charge, rather than a need to be in charge.”

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“If you want to know how you feel” Milan offers, “look at your dog.” (Cesar Milan, dog whisperer)

From “Puppy Guru: Why My Dog Is My Best Yoga Teacher” by Julie Peters, page 22



“Animals can teach us all to practice regular gratitude.”

From “Learning Spirituality From Animals” by Ashley Brown, page 10



“Dogs and humans are flooded with the feel-good hormone oxytocin when they look into each other’s eyes”

From “5 Ways to Bond With Your Pooch” by Kathryn Drury Wagner, page 16



“Dogs offer the chance to empower ourselves to create and transform, rather than to blame”

From “Field Notes From a Dog Owner’s Awakening” by Caroline Griffith, page 15





Spiritual Lessons We Learn From Cats

BY SARAH BOWEN

SHOCKINGLY, THERE WERE NO KITTENS in my Protestant childhood Bible.

Alas, the scripture was silent on **cats**, unless you considered lions (or you were Catholic—a single deuterocanonical verse, Baruch 6:22, includes the word “cat”).

Yet, lessons from inspired felines can be found in many of the world’s wisdom traditions. In Islam, a story is told of the prophet Muhammad’s beloved cat, Muezza, who had fallen asleep on his shirt. Needing the shirt for prayer time, yet reticent to disturb the cat, Muhammad cut off the shirt’s sleeve. In the eighth century, cats in China helped with divination. And, although cats sometimes get a bad rap in Indic spiritualities, how a mama cat carries kittens is used as a delightful metaphor for the soul’s journey from one birth to another. And who doesn’t immediately think of the role of feline familiars in Earth-based spiritualities?

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION

Admittedly, it's hard to top the ancient Egyptians. Considering cats semidivine, they modeled what it means to grieve a cherished animal companion: When a cat passed on, its human family would shave off their eyebrows to demonstrate their grief publicly.

Today, honor feline wisdom—while keeping your eyebrows intact—with these five helpful examples from the four-legged inspirations.

ALTERNATE NAPS AND ACTIVITY ▶

Cats seem to have an inherent sense of Tao, alternating between sleep and action, then napping. Sleeping almost 15 hours a day total, cats flow between these states with superb stretching skills. Humans go, go, go till we drop, drop, drop.

TRY IT: Each time you transition from sitting to standing, stretch your arms as high up as possible, separating your fingers and toes widely. Then, sometime today, grab a short catnap.



BIRDS ARE GOOD MEDITATION PARTNERS

No, birds are not necessarily what's for dinner. Cats love objects that move because they are easier to see. In fact, many slow-moving objects you can detect appear stationary to cats. The fluttering of bird wings outside a window can be an endless source of still—yet present—sitting for a kitty.

TRY IT: Create a cozy spot near a window where birds congregate—or head outdoors. Sit silently, observing movement around you. Avoid judging the bird for its color, type, or activity. Just follow the flight, letting thoughts pass.

◀ BATHE OFTEN

Water permeates sacred rituals, from washing before prayer to full-body mikvah or baptism. Most cats abhor a bath, instead spending up to a third of their day grooming with the lick-my-paw method.

TRY IT: Fill a pretty bowl with fresh water. Add slices of cucumber or orange, or try fragrant flower petals. Find a location where you won't be bothered by any of the human or furry members of your family. Create a small altar for the bowl. Place a few of your favorite sacred objects nearby. During the day, return often, dipping your fingers in, then gently touching your forehead, temples, chin, and wrists.

USE YOUR WORDS JUDICIOUSLY ▶

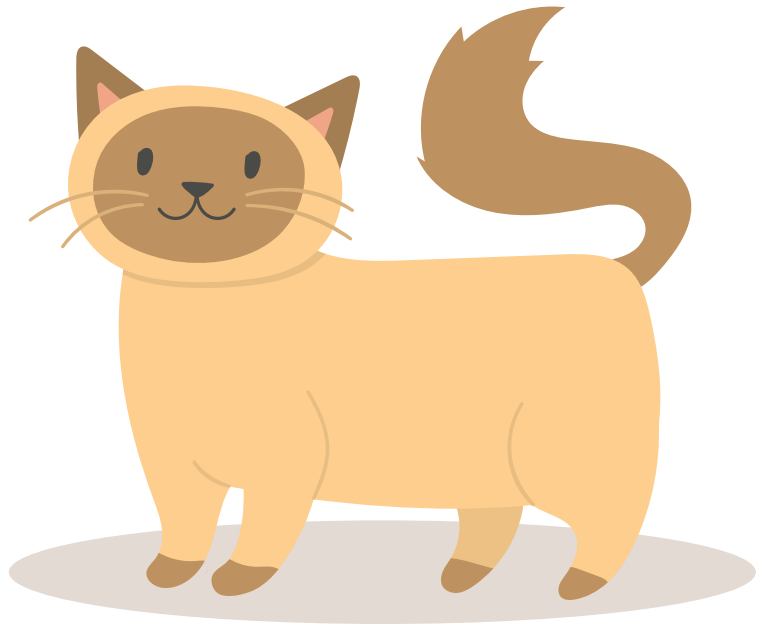
My two fluffy companion animals have very different communication patterns. Buba-ji is loquacious, with an incredible range of “words” he uses nonstop. Deacon, on the other hand, rations his vocalizations as if they are precious jewels. Consequently, when he speaks, we are more apt to listen.

TRY IT: Use these guiding principles from the Buddhist tradition to check if your thought truly needs to be conveyed. It is spoken at the right time. It is spoken in truth. It is spoken affectionately. It is spoken beneficially. It is spoken with a mind of goodwill.

PURRING IS POWERFUL ▼

Cats purr continuously at fluctuating levels that can indicate contentment, solicit attention, relieve pain, or promote healing. Studies have shown cat purrs can promote tissue regeneration and promote bone health. Vibrational healing is not limited to the feline world. Practically everything on our planet vibrates, whether we can see or hear it.

TRY IT: Get out to a gong bath. Or if you’re homebound, consider jumping into your parked car, gently closing your eyes, and submerging yourself in the pulsing vibrations of your favorite kirtan hits.



Or you could do none of these things and simply sit with your cat. Petting at an optimal rate of 40 strokes per minute may increase both your and Fluffy’s oxytocin, suggests Takefumi Kikusui, an animal behaviorist at Azabu University in Japan. “Oxytocin is a hormone associated with trust and maternal bonding,” he explains. “It increases when you’re close to someone you love and gives you that warm fuzzy feeling.”

Further, a cat on your lap becomes an enticing reason to be still—you know, the old “I can’t. I have a cat on my lap!” excuse. Forget the apologies. Perhaps the greatest lesson we can learn from cats is to rest. In fact, my cats and I are just about to settle down for a purrfect viewing of our favorite sacred narrative, *Star Wars*, which, for some ridiculous reason—like my childhood Bible—lacks cats. Buba-ji and Deacon don’t mind. They seem to grasp the paw-some power of the Force. **S&H**





What My Puppy Teaches Me

BY RUTH WILSON

WE ADOPTED A PUPPY SEVERAL YEARS AGO. I knew the puppy would have some things to learn about getting along with us inside a house. We had expectations that the puppy's behavior would conform to our desires. What I didn't realize was how much I had to learn about getting along with the **puppy**, and that I, too, would have to change. Once I learned this, I found the lessons applied to my interactions with people as well.

Lessons started the day we brought the puppy home. Rudy, our new dog, did well in becoming housebroken, wearing a collar, and walking on a leash. Rudy was becoming a fun, interesting, and devoted companion.

Then, one day, I came home from work and discovered Rudy had chewed the covers and some pages of three new books. I yelled at Rudy and shook my fist at him. I told him he was a "bad dog" and that I was very angry with him.

Rudy's response? He peed on the floor and shook with anxiety. We had just gotten him housebroken the week before. The lesson: Yelling and threatening a puppy is not very effective in producing desired outcomes.

I was recently reminded of this lesson while having a heated discussion with my sister, Pat. I don't see Pat very often, as we live more than a thousand miles apart. We're generally good friends, enjoy

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION

many of the same activities, and look forward to our times together. That day, however, our conversation turned to politics, where our ideas differ dramatically.

At one point, I used sarcasm in asking a very pointed question tinged with a bit of blame. My intent was to convince Pat I was right. I was going to shame her into admitting her views were self-centered and biased. Pat remained silent for a minute. She then told me what was hard to hear—"I feel like you're attacking me." I knew at that moment my behavior could lead to a very unpleasant outcome.

Fortunately, Pat and I were able to continue our conversation and our visit without hard feelings. We were soon talking about how to have a meaningful conversation with someone who holds very different views. We decided that really listening to each other and showing respect for each other was more important than being right.

I've since given some thought to how I might respond to frustrating and difficult situations in positive and productive ways. I learned, in many cases—as in the situation with the puppy—threats and expressions of anger can lead to a mess no one wants to deal with. And—as in the situation with Pat—blaming and shaming can take you to the brink of destroying a healthy relationship.

With both, what I really wanted was companionship and a healthy relationship. My response to conflict with them, however, indicated I expected them to conform to my way of thinking and behaving. Missing on my



What I really wanted was companionship and a healthy relationship.

part was a respectful consideration of who they were and how they felt. My angry response to Rudy left him standing in front of me shaking with anxiety. My attack on Pat left her sitting across the table from me in a state of shock and disappointment. I, at first, thought both had let me down; they didn't live up to my expectations. What I realize now is that I didn't live up to theirs.

In both cases, I threw obstacles in the way of getting along. The shaming, the blaming, the threats—these aren't instruments of peace and reconciliation. Pat gave me a gift when she expressed her feelings about my behavior. Rudy showed me threats and expressions of anger can jeopardize a trust relationship and diminish a spirit of camaraderie. Getting along with others who do things we don't like or who think differently than we do can be challenging.

While I still have a ways to go in knowing how to handle frustrating and difficult situations in relating to others, I know now it's important to focus on the relationship, to look for common ground, and to let go of the need to impose my will or views on someone else. I've also learned the use of blaming, shaming, and threats is unproductive and can lead to an unwelcome mess that may be hard to fix. **S&H**

Love Lessons From Pets

BY EVE HOGAN

WHEN MY CATS SHED in the house, I never get mad at them for not cleaning up after themselves. When my dog begs for attention, I am usually obedient and love him up. When my animals ask for food, I stop what I am doing and take care of their needs.

Why? Gratitude. It makes me happy to make them happy! If they were not so responsive with purrs and wags, it wouldn't be nearly as pleasurable to care for them. So, in honor of this awakening, here are some great love and relationship tips from our pets:



- 1 Make time for loving touch every day.
- 2 Good grooming and hygiene make time together more likely and prolonged.
- 3 Greet your partner with the same enthusiasm with which you greet your pets—or with which your pets greet you!
- 4 Let your needs and desires be known; show your partner exactly where the spot is that needs scratching, and then let them know they got it right!
- 5 Don't make others feel wrong for being exactly who they are.
- 6 Be loyal. Know whom it is you are to protect.
- 7 Take care of your body: Get plenty of sleep and food; then, play fully!
- 8 Always show your gratitude—for touching, meals, and time together. **S&H**

Spirituality
& Health

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION



Learning Spirituality From Animals

BY ASHLEY BROWN

FROM THE TIME we're born, it's natural to not only connect with animals, but to perceive in them something sublime. Because they don't use words, animals and humans communicate with a different kind of language—one of spirit and energy that can be uniquely pure and profound.

Animals of all kinds, especially the ones sharing our home, can be our spiritual guides and healers if we pay attention. In the tradition of spirit animals, the cat represents independence, curiosity, courage, and the ability to act only when the time is right. Their intuition is as sharp as their claws. The animals we're drawn to can often represent what we need to manifest more within ourselves. When I recognize how much second-guessing and hesitating I do in my life, I know I could use more cat in me. (Read "[The Healing Energy of Cats.](#)")

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION

Whether appreciating an animal for its individual essence; marveling at how different species connect, share, and communicate love; or pondering what animals can teach us, there are so many ways they can help us understand grace and spirit.

Here are five simple practices to try with the animals in your life that may not only help you appreciate their spirituality and connect with them, but could even heighten your own wellbeing.

~1~

Observe

Take five minutes to simply observe your animal companion. Whether your cat is basking in a sliver of sunlight or on the prowl ... or your dog is sniffing up the daily news on a walk, or sleeping ... just watch. Listen. Smell. Try not to touch. Rather than snuggling, use this time just to witness.



~2~

Practice Patience

When my husband, Nathan, was a boy, he spent countless hours at a pond near his home watching muskrats coming and going from their den. One evening, he lay on his belly, slowly and almost silently inching toward the den until his face was right above it, and he waited ... and waited, perfectly still. After a time, a muskrat emerged so close Nathan felt its movement on his face. Recalling the experience still fills him with joy.

When we are still and we wait quietly, it's amazing what might come to us: a muskrat, a sea turtle ... and maybe, over time, intuitive breakthroughs, peace of mind, or even hints of enlightenment.



~3~

Communicate With Energy

I once attended a workshop hosted by a shaman and a horse trainer. I'd been around horses much of my life, but I was still fascinated to learn just how attuned they are to energy. The premise of the workshop was how we can understand, and control, our own energy through observing horses' responses to us. We even practiced silently making requests of the horses with nothing but our focused thought. Watching a 2,000-pound animal come to me and follow—simply because I concentrated my energy on that request—was empowering and enlightening.

~4~

Breathe

Mindful breathing is a well-known meditative technique, beneficial for peace of mind, calmness, physical health, energy, and more. Try sitting with your cat or dog and listening to their breath along with yours, or even breathing at the same pace (if that's comfortable).



~5~

Be a Student

Ask yourself what your animal companion might be here to teach you. Does your elderly cat try your patience when she cries at 4 a.m. for food or affection? Are you most vulnerable when nobody is around but your dog? Have animals in your life offered you opportunities to be more confident and self-assured? Do they remind you how to forgive?

Animals can teach us all to practice regular gratitude. Notice when they make you smile or laugh, and be grateful. You might say a (silent or audible) thank-you to your dog for her display of utter happiness every time you come home. You could even thank bees for their almost miraculous role in pollination and the life cycle of ecosystems, or a horse for allowing you to take a ride on his back. **S&H**



Pet Dogs Lessen Risk of Schizophrenia

BY KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER

RESEARCH JUST PUBLISHED in the journal *PLOS One* revealed a surprising finding: People exposed to a pet dog in childhood are significantly less likely to later be diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Scientists from Baltimore-based Johns Hopkins Children's Center and the Sheppard Pratt Health System explored the connection between having a pet dog or cat during the first 12 years of life and later diagnoses of either schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION



The study involved both male and female subjects between the ages of 18 and 65. Some had schizophrenia; others had bipolar disorder; and a control group had neither. All were asked if they had a pet cat or dog in their home growing up before age 12. Having a pet is very common: There are 94 million pet cats and 90 million pet dogs in the U.S. (Here are [5 Ways to Bond With Your Pooch.](#))

THE RESULTS

Being around a pet dog was linked to as much as a 24 percent decrease in the likelihood of being later diagnosed with schizophrenia. “The largest apparent protective effect was found for children who had a household pet dog at birth or were first exposed after birth, but before age 3,” wrote the study’s lead author, Dr. Robert Yolken.

No link was found between exposure to a dog and later developing bipolar disorder, nor any significant

links between cats and either disorder. “However, we did find a slightly increased risk of developing both disorders for those who were first in contact with cats between the ages of 9 and 12,” Yolken wrote. “This indicates that the time of exposure may be critical to whether or not it alters the risk.”

WHY THE CONNECTION?

“There are several plausible explanations for this possible ‘protective’ effect from contact with dogs,” Yolken wrote in the study. “Perhaps something in the canine microbiome ... gets passed to humans and bolsters the immune system against or subdues a genetic predisposition to schizophrenia.”

Past research on pet dogs and cats also suggests they may alter our immune systems, whether by an allergic response, contact with bacteria and viruses, or even the stress reduction pets can have on the human brain. (See [10 Ways Pets Improve Mental Health.](#)) **s&h**



Field Notes From a Dog Owner's Awakening

BY CAROLINE GRIFFITH

- No animal on our beautiful planet Earth evolved on processed foods, and all creatures are worthy of eating well.
- It is every creature's right to literally walk the Earth. Do your best to get off the asphalt and concrete with your dog and kick off your shoes. Create opportunities to ground yourself—and enhance both of your lives.
- Dogs have about the biggest heart per body mass of any animal on the planet, making them highly attuned to reflect the emotions in our hearts. In practice, that means that you can completely transform your dog's behaviors by transforming your own emotional state of being.
- Your fears, worries, and anxieties affect the behavior and wellbeing of your dog. So let go. Recognize you are capable and can trust yourself.
- Dogs will teach you that less control equals more, less attachment actually strengthens bonds, and all of life is made of flowing, moving energy—and it is not supposed to stay the same.
- Dogs offer the chance to empower ourselves to create and transform, rather than to blame—blame the other dog owner, the other dog, or the vet, or even your dog.
- Dogs give us a life-altering chance to value equality over hierarchy—to see each connection as an exchange of emotion and life-force charge, rather than a need to be in charge. **S&H**

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION



5 Ways to Bond With Your Pooch

BY KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER

1 Say nice things. Researcher Gregory Burns has been working with MRIs to figure out what parts of a dog's brain lights up based on food or rewards. His work showed dogs responded the same to hot dogs and praise—here we thought they were all about the kibble!—and 20 percent of dogs actually responded more favorably to praise alone. So talk Fido up; he'll love it, and you'll enjoy the positive loop too.

2 Gaze at your dog. According to the website Dogtime, dogs and humans are flooded with the feel-good hormone oxytocin when they look into each other's eyes.

3 Chant with your dog. We often share a love of nature with dogs by taking them to the beach with us, on hikes, or on rambles through the woods. Why not introduce them to our

spiritual side? Invite your dog into the room as you do your morning chanting or play spiritual music in your dog's presence.

4 Share your bedroom with your dog. A new study from the Mayo Clinic found people sleep better and have a greater sense of security and comfort if they sleep with their pets. However, there was one caveat: Keep your dog off to the side in a separate dog bed rather than under your own covers for optimal sleeping conditions.

5 Volunteer together. Share the love you feel by visiting a nursing home or hospital via a visiting dog program. Your dog will be showered with affection and feel useful—and you'll both feel great. **S&H**

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION

Puppy Love: It's Official! Having a Pet Is Good for Your Heart

BY S. RUFUS

WHILE ALL ANIMAL LOVERS KNOW instinctively that living with a pet can lift their spirits, a scientific statement from the American Heart Association confirms it is literally good for the heart.

Based on many studies, the statement correlates pet ownership with reductions in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and obesity risk, while potentially also reducing the body's reaction to stress.

This is because pets “probably provide a calming effect” on their owners, says the statement's lead author, the cardiologist and Baylor College of Medicine professor



Glenn Levine. “This leads to less release of adrenaline-like chemicals and less increase in heart rate and blood pressure.”

These benefits apply to owners of all types of pets, but dogs especially—because “regular aerobic activity, such as walking, is associated with a decreased risk of heart disease,” Levine explains. The statement cites a study in which dog owners were found to be 54 percent more likely than non-dog-owners to perform AHA-recommended levels of daily physical activity.

These benefits do not apply only to healthy pet owners with no heart-disease history: Pet owners with past or current cardiovascular problems tend to show longer survival rates than their petless counterparts. Nonetheless, the AHA warns against acquiring pets merely for medical reasons. Even a scientific organization knows it's all about the love. **S&H**

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION



Is It Okay to Grieve for a Pet?

BY RABBI RAMI SHAPIRO

HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO put your dog to sleep? (I hate that euphemism but asking if you ever had to kill your dog seems too harsh.)

I have. Several times. And I will have to yet again. Murphy, my gold-endoodle, is 11 years old and tiring. When the time comes, I will hold her head in my arms, stroke her back, whisper my love into her ear, and cry as the vet ends her life with a lethal injection. But then what?

In Judaism, we mark the death of a parent, sibling, or child with a weeklong period of mourning when friends and family visit, bring food, and make themselves available for conversation and comfort-giving. I suggest we do something similar for our deceased animal friends as well.

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION



When Murphy dies, I want to grieve my loss with loved ones and friends. I want people to drop by that day with food (human food, not dog food), and stick around to talk. I want my living room filled with photos of Murph. I want to tell stories of her life. I want to confess my love and share my loss in public. (See our story “[Support for the Bereaved Animal Lover.](#)”)

When I have shared this idea, people often object that I am treating my dog as I would a person. Is my love of Murphy the same as my love for my dad, who died a few years ago?

The same? No. My love for my dad is in spite of difficult memories. My love for Murphy has no such memories.

For example, my dad and I would play catch in our backyard. My dad played first base when he was in the Army, and he was as loyal to his beloved Yankees as he was to his no-less-beloved Jews. He wanted me to grow up to be a solid ballplayer and playing catch with him was always a test of my forever-lagging abilities.

Murphy and I also play catch, but with her, there is no test and nothing to prove. We play for the sheer joy

of me throwing something and her catching it, racing it back to me, then wrestling with me to get it out of her mouth. Honestly, in many ways, my love for Murphy is purer than my love for my dad.

This is on my mind because someone emailed me asking for a prayer to offer when “I have to release my dog from this life.” I sent her the following. She found it helpful; perhaps you will as well:

Return home, beloved.

Return to the one in whom we live and move and have our being.

Return with my love surrounding you.

Return with my tears dampening your head.

Return with the pure being, consciousness, and bliss you embodied while alive. Thank you for loving me.

Thank you for caring for me and allowing me to care for you.

Thank you for showing me I am needed.

Thank you for cultivating a love in me so deep that even heartbreak and grief cannot quell it.

Lech b'shalom, beloved friend, go in peace. S&H



MAX, COURTESY CELIA ALARIO

Pets as Gateway Love

BY CELIA ALARIO

SOMETHING REALLY WILD has been happening to me lately. I find myself falling in love with every animal I see. Seriously, I am talking about all creatures great and small. But, really, I mean a hopeless, sloppy, so-much-so-that-it-hurts-inside kind of love.

I blame my mini-poodle pal, Mack, and here's why: Remember the theory of a gateway drug? It's the concept that so-called softer drugs like tobacco and alcohol, if abused, lead to an interest in the harder stuff.

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION

Well I'll tell you this: The love I share with Mack is some sort of *gateway love* and has resulted in a deep yearning love for bug and bird, otter and elephant.

Well I'll tell you this: The love I share with Mack is some sort of *gateway love* and has resulted in a deep yearning love for bug and bird, otter and elephant.

It's odd because I already considered myself an animal lover before I met Mack. I had donated to the Adopt-a-Whale program and proudly displayed the wildlife calendars I got in the mail from Sierra Club and Greenpeace. I'd even spent time working on behalf of rainforests and wetlands and other ecosystems that wild-life call home. But I see now that I was acting more out of respect for other life forms. I might even have loved them. But this—this is being *in love*—and with more living beings at the same time than I'd ever thought was possible.

I'm finding profound joy watching nature shows or reading the latest research about the way animals live and love one another. And, oh, how they play! I was enthralled for hours with an 56-second [YouTube video](#) of a black bird repeatedly surfing a snowy rooftop on a plastic water bottle cap.

The great humanitarian Albert Schweitzer warned us: "Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not

himself find peace." But ol' Albert didn't warn us about all this heartache. Not heartache as in heartbreak, but as in the stretching and strengthening of a muscle, and the ache that goes along with that.

What is happening to me? Has this ever happened to you? Is this just the best kept secret about having a pet that I only now am discovering? And where will all this camaraderie lead?

I'm willing to see this through and hoping this love and compassion is the first step toward an interspecies community-organizing project of sorts. Perhaps all this love will open up my ability to understand and even communicate across species? Perhaps then I'll be able to take their lead and collaborate on efforts to protect our common home? Maybe Mack the mini-poodle is one of the best grassroots organizers I've ever met. Who knows, it might just be that together with the winged ones and the swimmers, the four-leggeds and the creepy crawlies will we be able to build a movement strong enough to protect our Earth community for future generations—ours and theirs. What do you say, two-leggeds? Who's with me? **S&H**



Puppy Guru: Why My Dog Is My Best Yoga Teacher

BY JULIE PETERS

A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO, I adopted a dog from the animal shelter. His name is Finnegan, and he is the best ever: He is snoring belly-up beside me as I write this.

A few years ago, a Chinese astrologer advised me that because there is so much Metal and Air in my chart, which involves a lot of thinking and worrying, I should try to spend more time around dogs, whose element is generally Earth.

I was not expecting the Dog Whisperer himself, Cesar Millan, to confirm this advice for me. Dogs are simple, he says. They live in the

**Spirituality
& Health**

THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION

moment. They do not obsess about the past or worry about the future. A dog does not wonder *why* he loves his ball so much, or worry if his ball addiction is affecting his relationships and career aspirations. He just loves his ball. When the ball is not there, he loves his bone or his bed or the person who wants to snuggle with him. Simple.

Dogs, like people, require appropriate boundaries, consistency, and compassion—the same qualities required of, say, a yoga teacher and studio owner. Pack leaders must project, in Millan’s words, “calm, assertive energy.” Whatever is projected by the leaders will be manifested by those being led, and not only in dog society. The Tao Te Ching, an ancient Chinese philosophy text, has the following lines on leadership:

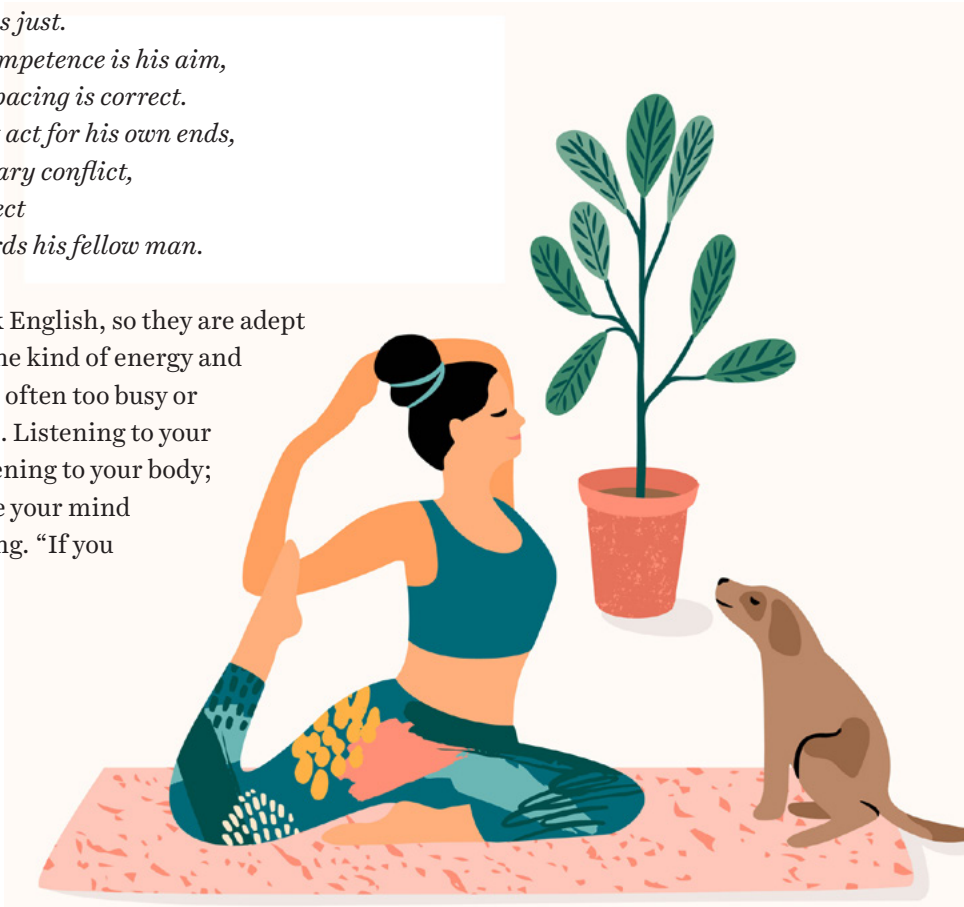
*Like water, the sage abides in a humble place;
in meditation, without desire;
in thoughtfulness, he is profound,
and in his dealings, kind.
In speech, sincerity guides the man of Tao,
and as a leader, he is just.
In management, competence is his aim,
and he ensures the pacing is correct.
Because he does not act for his own ends,
nor cause unnecessary conflict,
he is held to be correct
in his actions towards his fellow man.*

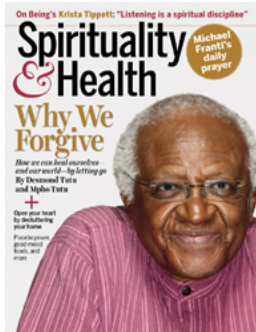
Dogs don’t speak English, so they are adept at understanding the kind of energy and body language I am often too busy or impatient to notice. Listening to your dog is a lot like listening to your body; there are cues there your mind is not acknowledging. “If you

want to know how you feel,” Millan offers, “look at your dog.” This morning I was in a bad mood, and Finnegan was uncharacteristically barking at everything. It was *exactly* what I felt like doing.

He also barks when he can feel something is wrong, even when he can’t see it. He wants to meet everyone in the park and say hello, so I admonished him when he started barking at a figure coming closer when we were out after dark. This man was cradling a glass of whiskey, stumbling drunk, menacing. As we walked away, it occurred to me there are times to trust my dog rather than try to constantly bend him to my own will. Except, of course, for the time he barked, terrified, at a garbage bag. I’m pretty sure that was just a garbage bag.

Finnegan is teaching me about my No as well as my Yes. He’s showing me all the ways I will continue to be humbled by my mistakes, to be more patient, listen more, and become a better teacher and leader. Two weeks in, and I already feel Finnegan is the best yoga teacher I have ever found. Now I just have to train him to get off my yoga mat. **S&H**





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