



Life Lessons with Our Pets

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The truth of the matter is that, as much as we adore our pets, life with our animal companions can sometimes challenge us to our limits.

My first cat after college, Nazare, loved to hunt. As presents for me and entertainment for him, he would sneak live birds into my apartment and release them. (Well, it was better than mice, I suppose.) He rarely harmed the creatures, thank goodness. But guiding a startled bird toward an open door while keeping my cat at bay led to some very frantic moments. Scolding didn't accomplish anything. Eventually, I became adept at calmly rescuing the occasional trembling bird from my chandelier. And the funny thing is, as a result of this training I think I became more proficient at dealing with crisis situations in my life. Whether he was aware of it or not, Nazare taught me how to respond to chaos.

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Today, as an animal communicator, I remain intrigued with the life lessons, or agreements, between people and their pets. I find that by understanding our agreements with our animal companions, we can develop deeper and more harmonious relationships with them.

One client, Alisha, a composed 20-year-old student, was at her wits' end with her two-year-old Siberian Husky, Gaia. This boisterous dog constantly disobeyed Alisha—disappearing for an hour on a walk, ignoring simple commands. Yet Gaia was clearly bonded with Alisha and wanted to please her. After failing an intensely rigorous dog obedience class, Gaia seemed doomed for the Humane Society.

Looking at their agreements together revealed that Gaia and Alisha held opposite views regarding rules—Gaia, a free spirit, perceived rules as limitations while Alisha, a highly organized person, found solace in following rules to the letter. Alisha was trying to force Gaia to become a perfectly obedient dog in every respect, which left Gaia feeling like she was in prison.

Their difficult lesson together involved each of them finding more balance regarding discipline in their lives. Gaia knew that her free spirit nature could easily lead her into dangerous situations. So she trusted Alisha to guide

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her toward safety in life. But Gaia also needed breaks from the constant training to express her adventurous nature. Alisha, on the other hand, was learning from Gaia how to relax her need to control her environment so she could take more risks and explore a greater level of freedom in life.

Soon after our visit, their relationship blossomed. As Alisha eased up on enforcing unnecessary rules, Gaia began responding more willingly. And Alisha now tends to take life less seriously.

All agreements with our pets are not as challenging as the previous lessons. Sometimes animals simply help remind us about the basics in life –love, play and loyalty to our friends.

Once, I had the honor of meeting a spunky 46-year-old turtle, Zippy, who had stopped eating. True to his name, Zippy careened around the room with plenty of energy. Laura, his person, obviously cherished this life companion from the age of eight. One of Zippy's agreements with Laura was for her to provide a secure home for him in a house with four cats.

When I asked why he had stopped eating, he kept repeating, "Home, home." I asked Laura if she knew what

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he meant. Her eyes dropped and she said, “Oh, I moved his house to a spot I thought he would prefer. And it was about the time he stopped eating.” In the new location, he didn’t feel as protected from the cats, so he stopped eating to alert Laura to the situation. The problem was quickly rectified and Zippy resumed eating.

Becoming aware of the life lessons we are learning with our pets only enhances our relationships with them. So the next time your animal companion challenges you to the extreme, ask yourself what you might be learning from this amazing creature who has chosen to share a life with you.