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LIFE PETS

# I'm Too Obsessed With My Pets

When half your monthly credit card statement is charges for them, there's no denying it.



By Erin Auerbach



An uncharacteristically hot October day didn't stop me from driving my French bulldog 75 miles so we could participate in a pet costume contest. I dressed up Pony as a strip of bacon. I wore a fried egg getup. Together, we were breakfast. We sat outside for hours, first waiting for our turn to strut across the stage and then for the contest results. I kept Pony hydrated and happy with purified water and meat snacks.



THE MIX

No one I know is the least bit surprised that I go to so much trouble for my dog. Since I adopted my first pooch when I was 26 years old, my pets have been the center of my universe. Half of my monthly credit card statements are full of animal expenses, from organic dog food to prescription veterinary wipes to fabulous outfits. Before I brought home Pony in June 2014, I spent years keeping alive my ailing rescue dogs.

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In fact, when my beloved pug Yogi was diagnosed with lymphoma 10 years ago, I spent thousands of dollars on his care from one of the best veterinary cancer centers in

the country. I convinced my employer to let me work split shifts each week so I could make the 60-mile round trip to take him to his chemo appointments. It was worth it. Those treatments bought Yogi three extra years with a good quality of life. I didn't consider giving up vacations and my acrylic nails too much of a sacrifice. Who wants to stroll on a tropical beach with gorgeous hands when you can sit in your air-conditioned condo and scratch a snoring dog on your lap with your ragged nails?

My family begs to differ. More than once, my brothers have accused me of shuttering myself away from the world to stay safely ensconced in my condo with my pets. There's some truth to those accusations. They were annoyed when I opted out of a family cruise so that I could be home with my animals. I used my job as an excuse, claiming I couldn't get the time off. But we all knew that was B.S. I just didn't want to leave my boys in a kennel for 10 days.

When I was younger, it was much easier to stay home with loving, snuggly dogs than to go out to the club scene. As I got older, I preferred the company of my pets to forced social events. People can be mean and thoughtless. They hold grudges and keep score. I'm no different. But even in rare moments of insubordination (e.g. the occasional poop on the rug), I can't stay mad at my animals. Dogs live in the moment. I appreciate everything that's awesome about them. In the last years of Mookie's life, I cherished every minute we had together, despite how painful it was to witness his slow demise.

After Mookie died in late 2013, I spent seven miserable months without a dog. I tried to embrace my liberty. I did yoga. I marveled at how much more affordable my life was without a high-maintenance pet to nurture. But I couldn't deny how much emptier it felt, too.

So when Pony came into my life, I knew I wanted to do things differently. I chose her because she was almost 2 years old, young but well beyond her puppy phase. She

has a wonderful temperament, and she loves other dogs. I take her to restaurants with patios and friends' houses. She's an exemplary guest.

This time my obsession with my dog (while still admittedly a bit neurotic) is much healthier. I've spent the last six months training Pony to become a Canine Good Citizen. And she's almost passed the test. Twice. (Her big sin is pulling on the leash. We're working on fixing that.) My hope is that she will eventually become a therapy dog who I can take to hospitals, nursing homes and other places where she can bring comfort to people who are suffering. Goodness knows she's been amazing medicine to me.

We didn't win the Halloween contest. (We were robbed!) But Pony got an honorable mention, which came with a bag of dog food as a prize. I graciously accepted it on her behalf, but wound up giving it away. There's no way I would feed her anything that isn't grain free.



From: [The Mix](#)



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