

Nate Dog Training

HOW TO TRAIN A RESCUE DOG

NATE DUNHAM WITH LISSETTE VICTORIA



**A Revolutionary 3-Step System to
Prevent and Eliminate Behavioral Problems
so You Can Truly Rescue Your Dog**

HOW TO TRAIN A RESCUE DOG – PAPERBACK

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REAL CLIENT RESULTS

“Our one- year-old beagle shepherd mix, Luna, was a nightmare to walk. She would bark excessively at everything that she encountered and was terrified of other dogs. We saw a remarkable difference after the first session and she has continued to improve with each and every session. Nate is awesome and helped us to better understand our dog. I highly recommend him.”

~KATEY.S

“We are so happy that we found Nate. We have a 10 year old Cockapoo and a 6 year old Mini Goldendoodle. They barked every time the doorbell rang or someone walked by our home. Nate helped us to understand their behavior and gave us the tools to correct their barking. We now have a quieter and more relaxed home. Thank you Nate.”

~PATRICIA H.

“After using other trainers that failed we were recommended to Nate by a friend. After our phone consultation we knew Nate was different. He listened to all of our concerns and you could really tell he cared. After one training session we saw a noticeable difference in both our dogs. It only got better as time went along. Our training has ended and we are completely satisfied. Nate helped us learn what our dogs need to succeed. We will forever be grateful for the time we spent with him.”

~ADAM B.

“We contacted Nate to help our pugs (ages 4 and 8) with some territorial behavior during walks, as well as separation anxiety and marking issues... After a few months of consistently following his advice, we are no longer seeing the negative behaviors!”

~KEVIN L.

“Nate is amazing. He helped us with our 4 year Bernedoodle’s jumping on people and our 3 year old Golden Mix’s anxiety and fear of the pool. Totally amazing and a doggie Miracle Worker.”

~DUSTIN S

“Nate truly understands dog psychology. He helped us change our dogs from frantic maniacs to calm, well behaved pups who are now a pleasure to take anywhere. His logical, understandable methods have made a huge difference in our ability to control and be comfortable as pet owners. We can’t say enough about how grateful we are to Nate and his band of rescued dogs who all helped Nora and Biscuit become the best behaved dogs we could have ever wished for. Thank you Nate!”

~KATE K.

“Nate has been incredible. I have two 6 yo Border Collies who are absolutely wonderful. When they’re not counter surfing and dumpster diving. With Nate’s help I have been able to find ways to prevent both. I have also been able to improve their recall, walking on a leash, reaction to other dogs and my females need to control/herd. Nate is very knowledgeable and easy to work with, it’s clear that he genuinely cares about my dogs and he has helped me create a better, more stress free home for myself and my pups.”

~SHARON T.

“Nate is very positive. He focuses on behaviors and identifying what causes anxiety for your pup and how to eliminate it. He has been extremely helpful with our German Doodle puppy and our 6 year old poodle who was a barker and very territorial. Both are much calmer and happier! We highly recommend Nate!”

~RACHEL M.

“Ben, our goofy St. Bernard, was just over a year when we adopted him. Ben was very leash reactive to anything and everything that would catch his eye when he went for a walk... whether it be a bird, a person, or another dog. Nate has given us the confidence to take Ben on walks and to shops...that allow dogs...Thanks, Nate!”

~VICKY M.

“Not only did [our German Shepherd] Oliver learn so much, but we learned a lot about the mindset of a dog. The training we learned are life long lessons that we can continue throughout Oliver’s life to make our relationship better.”

~CARISSA H.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1: THE TRUE MEANING OF RESCUING A DOG	1
THE RESCUE DOG DILEMMA	7
THE SOLUTION	9
COMMON UNWANTED BEHAVIORS OF RESCUE DOGS	11
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “RESCUE” A DOG?	12
PREVENT YOUR RESCUE DOG FROM GOING BACK TO THE SHELTER	13
UNDERSTANDING THE COMMITMENT TO YOUR RESCUE DOG	14
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 1	25
CHAPTER 2: A RESCUE DOG SUCCESS STORY	27
CHAPTER 3: A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF A DOG’S MIND	35
HUMANS RESPOND. DOGS REACT	35
HUMANS THINK. DOGS ASSOCIATE	38
DOGS ARE LIKE TODDLERS	39
HOW TO MAKE YOUR TODDLER DOG A COLLEGE GRAD	42
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 3	45
CHAPTER 4: WHY STRONG LEADERSHIP IS CRITICAL TO YOUR SUCCESS AND WHAT HAPPENS WITHOUT IT	47
WHAT IS LEADERSHIP TO A DOG?	48
HOW A LACK OF LEADERSHIP CREATES PROBLEMS WITH YOUR DOG	52
TRAINING YOUR RESCUE DOG IN 3 STEPS	55
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 4	59
CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING DOG BEHAVIOR	63
POSITIVE BEHAVIORS	64
NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS	67
THE CAUSE OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR	71
NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS ARE LEARNED	75
A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE OF LEARNED NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR	76
A FEW MORE REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES OF LEARNED NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR	79
COMMON BUT OVERLOOKED NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS	83
SUMMARY	86
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 5	87

PART TWO

CHAPTER 6: WHAT YOU SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT DO THE DAY YOU BRING HOME YOUR NEW DOG	93
PREPARING PROPERLY BEFORE ADOPTION DAY	94
ADOPTION DAY	99
DAILY ROUTINE	115
EXAMPLE OF A DAILY ROUTINE	116
SUMMARY	118
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 6	123
CHAPTER 7: NATE'S 3-STEP SYSTEM	127
WHY FIRST, HOW SECOND	128
STEP 1: CONTROL THE WALK	131
REDEFINING HOW TO WALK A DOG	136
STEP 2: CONTROL THE MOVEMENT	163
STEP 3: CONTROL THE BARKING	187
SUMMARY	192
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 7	195
CHAPTER 8: DOGGIE DOORS AND YARDS	199
THE MAGIC OF THE 3-STEP SYSTEM	203
USING A DOGGIE DOOR OR YARD CORRECTLY	204
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 8	205
CHAPTER 9: CORRECTING YOUR DOG'S BEHAVIOR	207
YOU'VE ADOPTED A FURRY TODDLER	208
WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A DOG "TO BE A DOG"?	208
BUT I DON'T WANT TO POLICE MY DOG ALL DAY	210
THE REPERCUSSIONS OF NOT CORRECTING	210
HOW TO CORRECT YOUR DOG	211
EXAMPLES OF CORRECTING	213
WHAT STYLE OF PARENTING IS BEST FOR DOGS?	215
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 9	217
CHAPTER 10: ADDING ANOTHER DOG TO YOUR FAMILY	221
BEHAVIORAL CHANGES AFTER ADOPTION	222
BEFORE ADOPTION ENSURE YOUR EXISTING DOG FEELS SAFE	225
THERE IS A BETTER OPTION THAN RETURNING YOUR DOG TO THE SHELTER	227

EXAMPLE OF AN UNSUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION	229
THE BEST WAY TO ADD ANOTHER DOG TO YOUR FAMILY.....	231
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 10.....	233
CHAPTER 11: DOES THE BREED MATTER?	235
BREEDS AND INSTINCTUAL BEHAVIORS.....	237
FINDING THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU	239
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 11.....	243
CHAPTER 12: FEEDING	245
CHOICE OF FOOD	246
HOW TO FEED.....	246
SUMMARY.....	247
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 12.....	249
CHAPTER 13: PUPPY TRAINING	251
TRAINING TWEAKS FOR YOUR PUPPY	252
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 13.....	259
CHAPTER 14: CRATE TRAINING	263
THE CRATE IS NOT SOLITARY CONFINEMENT	264
CRATE AS A TEACHING TOOL.....	265
CREATING A POSITIVE ASSOCIATION TO THE CRATE	268
SUMMARY.....	269
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 14.....	271
CHAPTER 15: FOSTERING	273
KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 15.....	277
NATE'S RESCUE DOG TRAINING PRINCIPLES	279
ENDNOTES.....	282
NATE DOG TRAINING.....	284
ABOUT THE AUTHORS.....	285



CHAPTER 1

THE TRUE MEANING OF RESCUING A DOG

THANK YOU FOR being a hero! You are among the champions who rescue 2 million dogs from shelters every year in the United States.¹ It is an act of pure selfless compassion to save an animal from suffering. According to the ASPCA, 3.1 million dogs enter animal shelters nationwide every year² and 390,000 dogs are humanely euthanized.³ These are staggering numbers. By adopting one of the millions of dogs in need of a home, you have become a lifesaver and have given a dog the chance at a better life.

I know that you have the highest intention to give your rescue dog a peaceful, happy life. However, I also know that **without the knowledge of what rescue dogs need, your dog could develop behavioral problems as early as two weeks after adoption.** This is important to recognize because **behavioral problems are the reason that 7-20% of all adopted dogs are returned to the shelter, and typically returned within 2 months of adoption.**⁴

Of course, you don't want to be faced with the decision to take your dog back to the shelter; doing so would increase their chances of never getting adopted again. To truly rescue your dog for good, you must give them a better life than before, which requires an understanding of your dog's exceptional needs.

Millions of shelter dogs are relying on humans to solve the crisis they face. It is my mission to share what I have learned about training rescue dogs so that more and more people can contribute to reducing the number of dogs returned or abandoned after adoption every year. Since 2005, I have been working within my community as a full-time certified dog trainer and behaviorist for private clients in their homes. The majority of dogs I work with are indeed rescue dogs. Unlike pet training offered by major vendors, my training occurs in the environment in which the dog lives. This allows me to observe the unique dynamics between the owners, the dog, and any other animals in the home. From there, I can determine the causes of the unwanted behavior and offer solutions that effectuate positive, permanent changes in the dogs. My approach includes educating owners about their dog's behavior, how their dog relates to the human world, and how to build a relationship with their dog to prevent behavioral problems. Typically, my clients see changes during their very first session and need only two to four more sessions to complete the learning. My approach has been so effective that I've never had a client who followed my system consider returning their dog to the shelter. The reason for this is that I take a non-traditional approach to training, one that I will teach you through this book so that you too can be part of the solution.

When I entered the industry in 2005, the generally accepted approach in the dog training world to addressing behavioral issues was to focus primarily on obedience cues such as "come," "stay," "sit," "down," and "heel," and train those cues using dog treats. This is still the most widely used approach today. Yet, despite the increasing number of dog trainers in the workforce, the data informs us that dogs are still being relinquished to shelters by the millions, and that number is not yet decreasing.

What I have been observing all these years is that families with challenging dogs are not getting the results they need after completing obedience training classes. Dogs who can obey up to ten commands are still engaging in unwanted behaviors such as frantically patrolling the backyard, disturbing the neighborhood with their barking, pulling their owners on the walk, lunging out at people and other dogs, ruining items in the house, pacing around at home unable to rest, growling at family members, barking at outside sounds or the doorbell, biting

family members or guests, and fighting with other animals in the home. Dog owners contact me daily at their wit's end complaining that they've tried everything from obedience classes, board-and-train, hiring multiple trainers, and isolating their dog, to psychoactive medication and CBD supplements, all to manage their dog's behavior, but to no avail. It is clear that the demand for real solutions to these problems is growing higher and higher every year.

To illustrate this point, I've included in this book many examples of actual inquiries I have received from concerned dog owners in my city. (I get hundreds of similar inquiries a year!) These queries detail the behaviors that are causing frustration for dogs and their owners. It's remarkable to see how similar they all are. I've also included some of the results my clients have received after implementing my 3-Step System because they describe how those specific behavioral problems were resolved through proper training. Strategically adding these examples to each chapter of this book will serve 4 purposes: (1) to highlight how pervasive dog behavioral problems are today; (2) to give you an idea of what behaviors to expect if you fail to train your rescue dog; (3) to notice, as you progress throughout this book, how most of the issues stem from the same core problem; and (4) to see how utilizing a different training approach brought these families resolution. Take a look at just some of the typical problems dog owners are experiencing:

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REAL CONTACT FORM

**names have been omitted for privacy*

"The dog we have has an issue with being aggressive a lot and he also needs to be leash trained as well. He's about 8-9 months old and recently has been getting aggressive with me and my family. He has bit me twice and my sisters each once. [He] used to be playful but now he growls before doing so and means it with malice."

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“Hi, we have 2 dogs. [] is our American bulldog mix, who pretty much eats, sleeps and wants hugs. Our girl, [], who is a queensland heeler, went through basic training when we adopted her 2 years ago. She knows sit, stay, etc. The main pain point is she gets all crazy, jumps and barks when someone comes over or if the kids have friends over. Looking to see if some training can be done and cost. Thank you.”

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“Hi Nate - I am looking for help to correct leash reactivity / whining / insecure behaviors (specifically with other dogs & cats) with my Pit/Vizsla mix. He is a rescue...We have been thru 1:1 training with another trainer. [] knows basic commands, such as “sit”, “stay”, “down”, “place”, “leave it”. We also worked on recall training and leash training (with slip leash, pinch collar, e-collar). However, I haven’t been able to break his leash reactivity, excessive pulling, whining when he sees another dog/cat... Thanks.”

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“Hi Nate - I’ve had my dog [] for almost a year now (first dog ever & a rescue.)...He’s an incredibly sweet dog & we nearly completed 3 levels of training at []. I’ve had him enrolled at [] to get him get some fun, exercise, socialization, and using them for boarding when I leave town. He’s always had a lot of energy and has had trouble restraining himself from jumping into tiffs other dogs would have while at daycare. Recently he got into a more serious fight between him & 1 other dog. Then today I was told he initiated a fight with another dog & despite 3 corrective tools he refused to release. Thankfully the other dog was not harmed but they’ve (understandably) dismissed him from daycare pending further training. I do struggle with leash pulling, jumping up on guests, & getting him to listen to me as well. Can you possibly help?...Thank you!”

What I have witnessed in these years is that today, more than ever, dogs are living in a state of significant, ongoing stress. No longer are the majority of my cases about simple obedience and puppy training; they are now mostly about serious problems in which the owners have lost control of their animals. Just take a walk outside, and you’ll see what I’m talking about. You’ll always hear dogs in your neighborhood barking frequently from their home or yard. You’ll see dogs choking themselves out on the leash during a walk, pulling so hard that the owner is getting dragged faster than they can walk. You’ll see dogs lunging out at other dogs or people everywhere you turn. The number of posts on social media about dogs who have run away has increased exponentially. Dogs are getting into fights at the dog park more than ever. How many more stories do we have to hear in the news about people getting attacked by dogs? And how many more of these dogs have to get returned to the shelters for us to acknowledge that there is a serious issue with the way we are treating our dogs today?

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“We have two dogs [] (8 year old high anxiety pit/chi mix) and [] (1 year old Beagle pandemic puppy). Both dogs hate when anyone other than our immediate family come over. We aren’t able to walk [] without her barking at literally everything that she’s sees. [] has tremendous anxiety...”

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“My Rottweiler mix has aggressive behavioral issues. It may be lack of socialization (Covid puppy) but he also gets in resource guarding fights with our other dog and bullies him. He has human and dog aggression with strangers. I am mostly trying to figure out if what he needs can be done with at home training or if he needs to go to a rehab.”

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“We have a Bichon-poodle mix that has aggressive/reactive behavior. He is reactive and snaps when on the couch and other person approaches. Also has aggression with some toys and food, and cries for attention when others are talking or watching a movie. Can you tell me if you think these behaviors are something that can be changed or do we need to give him away or put him down?”

THE RESCUE DOG DILEMMA

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, almost 9 million dogs have been acquired through shelters and breeders, bringing the total reported number of dogs in the U.S. to a whopping 108 million in 2022, which equates to approximately 1 dog for every 3 humans.⁵ It's truly wonderful that so many dogs are being adopted. In my small corner of the dog training world, I have worked with five thousand dogs thus far in my career. That's no small number, and it's enough for me to notice that **a large portion of pet dogs, including rescue and bred dogs, are under serious mental stress today. Way too many dogs are living with ceaseless anxiety and fear and have little to no guidance on how to resolve their stress.** We know that stress is one of the most significant contributors to disease and mental health issues in humans. But have we considered what that stress is doing to our dogs? Do we even notice?

I see the distressed state of our dogs today as an epidemic that is spreading by the millions each year, as people are short on time, money, and attention. Most dogs are not getting the parenting they need, and although it's just due to a lack of education rather than malicious intent, I fear that our society is beginning to normalize this state of mind in dogs, and no one is noticing.

What is noticeable is the fact that in 2023, Americans spent \$12.3 billion on professional pet services including grooming, boarding, insurance, pet sitting/walking, and training.⁶ In 2020, Americans spent over \$462 million on board-and-train programs and pet daycare alone. By 2026, it is expected that dog training services in the U.S. market will exceed \$820 million⁷. If all this training is going on, why is it that 24% of the 3.2 million dogs surrendered to shelters in 2023 were relinquished by their owners due to behavioral problems?⁸

To understand the gravity of the dog crisis in America, we need to look at the data. Using intake and outcome data from over 6,000 organizations nationwide, an organization called Shelter Animals Count developed a peer-reviewed estimation model that includes representative data from all animal sheltering organization types and sizes across the U.S. and its territories. According to their 2023 Annual Report, 3.2 million dogs entered shelters and rescue organizations in 2023. That's a 3.2% increase compared to 2022, and a 10.2% increase compared to 2021. Although 2.2 million dogs were adopted in 2023 in the U.S., 3% more dogs entered shelters than left that year.⁹ **Of the 3.2 million dogs who entered shelters and rescues in 2023, 768,000 dogs were surrendered by their owners due to unwanted behaviors.**

A study conducted by the American Humane Association looking at post-adoption retention rates determined that “nationally, *hundreds of thousands* of adopted animals are no longer in the home six months post-adoption.”¹⁰ According to the ASPCA's National Rehoming Survey, **behavioral problems are the most common reason dogs are surrendered, accounting for 47% of rehomed dogs.**¹¹

Herein lies the dilemma we face as a nation. More dogs are entering shelters than leaving shelters, and roughly three-quarters of a million dogs are being surrendered by their owners each year due to behavioral issues. These dogs had a chance, but something went wrong. Overwhelmed owners were faced with the devastating decision to return their dogs because they could not manage their dogs' behaviors, even after engaging in traditional dog training classes. Tragically, a huge percentage of rescue dogs have been returned to shelters multiple times, having changed families and homes repeatedly. Dogs who have had multiple returns to a shelter have a much lower chance of being adopted permanently than dogs who have had only one stay in a shelter and may ultimately become part of the 350,000 dogs euthanized every year.¹²

If 24% of all dog returns are due to behavioral issues, we must acknowledge that decreasing this number is within every rescue dog owner's power. In consideration of these statistics, it is

clear that **without proper training, dogs are not being “rescued;” they are just being moved between homes and shelters, along with their behavioral issues.**

THE SOLUTION

Traditional training methods, ubiquitous as they may be, do not appear to be resolving the behavioral issues that are making hundreds of thousands of owners decide they have no option left other than to return their dogs to the shelter. I firmly believe that this is because there is not enough of the right education being offered to owners. Obedience training is failing owners with problematic dogs. Most owners cannot afford to send their dogs away to sophisticated rehabilitation centers if there even are any in their region. It is time for a different approach, one that ensures that we, as a collective of responsible dog owners, do our part to truly save dogs for good.

First, we must understand how dogs operate mentally. Then, through that lens, we can learn how positive and negative behaviors arise in our dogs. Once we understand these two fundamentals then we can implement a training method that prevents undesirable behaviors and creates well-mannered, easy-going dogs. Well-behaved dogs are dogs that are not returned to the shelter or abandoned by their owners. The more dogs that can stay in homes permanently after adoption, the more impact we can make toward solving the dog crisis in America (and hopefully the world).

My system of training developed out of a deep understanding of dog psychology and behavior, and thousands of hours in the field with dogs from all backgrounds. It teaches owners the principles of relationship-based training, which has proven to be most effective in preventing and resolving difficult behaviors. This book will provide you with everything you need to know about creating a fulfilling life for your dog, from puppy training to behavior correction, no matter the breed, the age, or the history of your dog.

It's never too early or too late to educate yourself on becoming a better pet parent. Ideally, it's best to prepare yourself before you bring home your rescue so that you can prevent behavioral problems from happening. If you've already brought your dog home, educating yourself will help you reverse any behavioral problems that may have since arisen.

For those of you generously fostering a dog, you play a very special role in this cause. Foster dogs make up a significant number of the dogs who are relinquished to shelters after adoption. How you parent that dog will either increase or decrease the chances of them being surrendered. You have the power to save the dog's life for good by preparing the dog to behave well at their future "forever" home. Recognizing how much energy and time foster parents are already putting into caring for these animals, I can assure you that applying my 3-Step System will not add to your burden. Rather, it will make things so much easier for you. This book not only teaches how to train desirable behavior but also teaches how to properly integrate a new dog into a home that already has dogs, which is the case for most foster families. With the utmost gratitude, I thank all the foster parents around the world for giving these dogs a chance to find peace again. I am certain that if you add the techniques in this book to your parenting, you will find an even higher purpose in your fostering endeavor and become a superhero to both the dog and their next owner.

Just as much as all human lives matter, so does the quality of the lives of our rescue dogs. They too should have a chance at contentment, ease of well-being, happiness, and safety. As a rescue dog owner, you have the power to be part of the solution to this nationwide dilemma. I hope you will join me on my mission to reduce the number of dogs being returned to shelters, euthanized, abandoned, and living with unbearable levels of stress. My purpose is to educate heroes, like you, to go beyond adoption day and give dogs a better life, not just a better home, for years to come. By educating yourself with the information in this book, you can avoid the many pitfalls that cause undesirable behavior and ensure your rescue will have a peaceful, happy life. I want you to become a superhero to your rescue dog!

You might be thinking that a rescue dog is no different from a bred dog. After all, a dog is a dog, right? Actually, there are important differences that necessitate a unique training approach to ensure these special animals get the happiness they deserve. Let's begin by learning about these differences so that you can prepare yourself to be the best parent possible.

COMMON UNWANTED BEHAVIORS OF RESCUE DOGS

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“Hello, We rescued a pit bull about two months ago. She is a 2 year old. She is very reactive towards other dogs, lunging, barking and biting. It’s a challenge to take her on walks as we are always worried about her seeing other dogs. Would love to see if we can change these behaviors. Please help.”

With exposure to thousands of dogs over my career, I have seen that rescue dogs in particular share many common behavioral problems that develop as early as two weeks after adoption. Some of these common behavioral problems include:

- pacing
- following their owner around the house
- excessive barking
- fear of people or other dogs
- not listening to their owner
- hiding, obsessing over toys or food
- acting aggressively
- pulling on the leash

Behaviors like these are an outward sign that the dog does not trust their owner to lead them properly and that the dog’s psychological needs are not being met—they are stressed

and frustrated. If these dogs do not consistently receive proper directions from the day they are adopted, they will eventually attempt to take over their environment and the relationship in order to feel the safety they need. When dogs do take over, they exhibit behaviors that indicate fear, insecurity, anxiety, and/or dominance. Typically, these are the very same unwanted behaviors that got them surrendered to a shelter in the first place.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “RESCUE” A DOG?

The true rescue of a dog is rescuing their mind, creating internal peace, and revitalizing the spirit of the dog. To be at ease, your dog needs to feel safe and secure in themselves. In their world, that need is met by you, their owner. Dogs are pack animals and are designed to follow strong leadership. It makes sense, then, that part of your job as a rescuer is to educate yourself on how your dog thinks and behaves. Then you can give directions to them in such a way that they truly understand you are here to make them feel safe and protected.

This follows the **Principle of Reciprocity: when you step into your role as leader, your dog will relax back into their natural state of ease.** Because their mind will be balanced, their behavior will be too. This is the true meaning of rescuing a dog.

NATE’S DOG TRAINING PRINCIPLES

~BALANCE OF RECIPROCITY~

When you step into your role as leader, your dog will relax back into their natural state of ease. Because their mind will be balanced, their behavior will be too. This is the true meaning of rescuing a dog.

PREVENT YOUR RESCUE DOG FROM GOING BACK TO THE SHELTER

On the surface, rescue dogs can be considered to be dogs or puppies who were found homeless, placed in foster care, housed in a rescue organization, or relinquished to a shelter, and subsequently adopted. These dogs may or may not have been owned previously, and they may or may not have had prior abuse or underlying issues. Certainly, every rescue dog comes with a story of their past and reasons why they were surrendered. The top reasons why dogs are relinquished are: time commitment; financial cost; change in life circumstances; and negative behavior.

To be sure, the most significant reason dogs are returned to shelters after adoption is negative behavior toward humans or other animals shortly after adoption. Not only do I see this firsthand in the field, but research has confirmed this through various surveys.

A study published in *Scientific Report* in April 2021 analyzed 23,932 animal records from a U.S. shelter and identified the likelihood of an animal being returned, the reasons why animals were returned after adoption, and what happened to the animals after they were returned. The most common reason for return was “behavioral issues and incompatibility with existing pets.”¹³

A 2020 study performed by the Institute for Human-Animal Connection examined the reasons why 102 dogs in the study were returned to the shelter within just four months of being adopted. They found that 38.2% of the dogs were returned for behavioral issues related to aggression. Notably, 49% of the 102 dogs were returned within just two months of being adopted!¹⁴

A study conducted in Northern Ireland looked at the reasons dogs were returned to the shelter after adoption. They surveyed 556 families who adopted dogs at their local shelter. Within just one month of adoption, over half (56%) reported they had returned their dog to the shelter. Nearly 90% of the participants who ultimately returned their dog to a shelter shared that they did so because of behavior issues, and the most common behavior issue was aggression toward humans.¹⁵

It's true that behavioral problems are on the rise. It's equally true that pet owners can get so overwhelmed that they find themselves making the unbearable decision to return their dog. Yet, it doesn't have to be this way. With my 3-Step System, you can make it better for your dog. The beauty of my system is that it improves all the behaviors that can drive an owner to want to return the dog. Let's take a closer look at several reasons why dogs are returned after adoption and what you can do to prevent that from ever being an option for you.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMITMENT TO YOUR RESCUE DOG

The top reasons dogs are returned to the shelter after adoption are:

- Time commitment: owners underestimated how much time the dog required.
- Financial cost: owners were not able to afford medical bills, dog sitting, dog training, or quantity of food.
- Change in life circumstances: owners were unable to give enough attention and care to the dog due to emerging conditions.
- Behavior: owners did not educate themselves in advance to prevent bad behaviors, nor did they get dog training from the first day.

I know you don't want to be part of the statistics above by relinquishing your dog back to a shelter after adopting it. To save your dog's life, you must understand the demands on your time and energy this dog will require, and you must prevent behavioral issues.

Time Commitment

This is a big one. Underestimating the time it actually takes to meet a dog's needs is one of the top reasons dogs are surrendered to shelters or abandoned. You have to understand how much of your attention and supervision your dog will need, realistically. Dogs do need a lot of time. I implore you not to adopt a dog if you truly can't give them the time they need to be mentally and physically healthy! Rescuing a dog means giving them a different

life than they had before. Not taking care of the dog's mind and body isn't really changing their life for the better. To take good care of another life takes time.

How much time? This detailed list covers all your dog's needs:

DAILY WALK	All dogs without health issues would do best walking 30 - 60 minutes a day. Younger dogs with high energy levels will need the longest walk. Elderly dogs with low energy will need the shortest walk. Never leave out the walk to save time.
VIGOROUS EXERCISE	Dogs who don't get vigorous exercise often exhibit frustration, such as chewing, digging, pacing, and patrolling. Dogs need to "let loose" by using their strength and agility and by elevating their heart rates. For healthy dogs, this is accomplished separately from the walk. Expect 10-30 minutes of vigorous exercise, depending on the size, age, and energy of your dog.
PLAY	All dogs, like humans, need to play. They can play with other dogs or with their owners. Playtime includes things like fetching, performing tricks, retrieving, and socializing with other dogs. This can be added to their exercise session or done at a separate time, 10-30 minutes a day.
BATHROOM BREAKS	Most people interpret the walk to mean giving the dog a chance to go potty. Yes, that happens on a walk, but your dog will need to relieve themselves several times a day. Make sure to give your adult dog at least two other opportunities to relieve themselves in between the other outdoor activities in their day, especially before bed. Puppies will need more breaks.

FEEDING	Some dog parents feed twice a day, others once. Expect a dog to take up to 5 minutes to complete a meal. Then add a few minutes on either end to prepare the meal and clean up.
GROOMING	Every dog must be cleaned and groomed at least every other month. Depending on the size of your dog, washing the fur, drying the fur, brushing their coat, clipping the nails, cleaning out the ears, and anal glands, can take 30 minutes to 2 hours. Between grooming visits, dogs with shedding fur or long fur should be brushed several days a week.
CLEANING	Prepare to take time out of your day to sweep and vacuum the dog hair in your house, launder the dog beds, and clean their crate or area. Puppies may relieve themselves in the house until potty trained, so be prepared to clean up their mess.
TRAINING	Training a dog to have proper behavior at home and in public is a joint effort between dog, owner, and a professional trainer. No dog trainer can successfully modify a dog's behavior without the participation of the dog's owner. Private training sessions with a trainer are typically once a week or every other week. Between sessions, the owner must practice everything the professional trainer has taught the dog to reinforce the lesson. Be prepared to allocate time daily for these "homework" sessions. If you are not hiring a professional trainer, you will need to allocate time to first educate yourself on how to modify dog behavior and how to communicate with dogs, then spend even more time applying that education to your dog. You are your dog's leader; therefore, it must be you who rehearses the training every single day, for months, or years.

How To Train A Rescue Dog

MEDICAL CARE	Every dog owner should be taking their dog for regular medical checkups at least once a year. Expect a checkup to take 30-60 minutes, plus waiting time and driving there and back. You must make sure to have your dog's teeth cleaned regularly. Infected or decaying teeth can cause a lot of pain which then affects their behavior and, of course, their health.
AFFECTION	It's not fair to a dog to be isolated and untouched. Dedicate time every day to pet your dog and lovingly bond with them. This could be part of your daily routine, for example, after dinner. Naturally, you can give affection at other times as well; however, affection given at the wrong moment can increase poor behavior in your dog.
VACATION/DAYS OFF	Dogs can't be left alone for whole days at a time. You must consider who will take care of your dog while you are out traveling, doing outdoor activities, or away from home for long swaths of time. Without spending money on a dog sitter or using a daycare facility, you will have to take care of your dog on your days off, which means you will have less time doing these recreational activities.

Financial Cost

You want your dog to have a better life than it had prior to you rescuing them. Well, that is going to require a financial commitment, one that will continue for the life of that dog (dogs live an average of 8 -15 years). You must be certain you can afford to take care of your pet, and it's not cheap. Let's look at some typical expenses you'll encounter in the life of your dog.

ADOPTION & LICENSING FEES	<p>Typically, shelters charge adoption fees that range from \$25 to \$400, but they vary from shelter to shelter. This money goes toward all the expenses incurred to shelter the dog. Foster families may or may not charge a fee. Donations are greatly appreciated when no fees are charged. Every state requires owners to license their dogs. Fees vary but typically range from \$5 to \$20 per year, depending on the state.</p>
FOOD	<p>The more your dog weighs, the more food you will have to feed them to meet their nutritional demands. And you're going to want to feed high-quality food; otherwise, you'll spend that money on medical bills due to poor health. On average, a 23.5-pound bag of premium-quality dry dog food can cost between \$80 and \$100.00. If your dog weighs 60 pounds and is active, the brand's recommendation will be an average of 2.33 cups per day, which will deplete that bag in roughly 33 days. Over a year, for a dog at this weight, you'll spend \$880 - \$1100 on premium quality dry food. For dogs with medical conditions, prescription dog food can cost a lot more. Raw dog food is even more expensive. Raw, fresh dog food delivered biweekly in vacuum-sealed 1 to 2-pound packs cost, on average, \$10 to \$15 per pound. For a 60-pound dog who eats roughly 1.2 pounds per day, that turns out to cost roughly \$372-\$558 per month for a dog at this weight. Of course, trying to spend less money on food by choosing low-quality, highly processed dog food could help your wallet in the short term, but it will cost your dog their health and consequently cost you more in medical bills.</p>

How To Train A Rescue Dog

REGULAR MEDICAL CARE	<p>Annual checkups and regular vaccination boosters are a necessity for the care of your dog. The fees vary per veterinarian's office, but on average, annual medical checkups can cost \$50 to \$250 per year, and boosters cost on average \$15 to \$30 per shot. Expect medical bills for "unexpected" illnesses and injuries. Serious injuries can incur thousands of dollars in emergency and veterinary care. Dog owners are also strongly encouraged to spay or neuter their dogs, as the number of homeless puppies is now at an all-time high. Sterilizing a dog is a big surgery and, therefore, can cost hundreds of dollars, depending on the veterinarian's fees. Dental cleanings can cost an average of \$300 to \$1000 per year, depending on the medical office and the condition of your dog's teeth.</p>
PROFESSIONAL DOG TRAINING	<p>Educating yourself and learning how to train your dog is by far the best investment you can make for your dog. Aim for at least 4 sessions with a highly qualified dog trainer. Private, in-home sessions can cost up to \$200 per session. Group/socialization classes can cost up to \$50 per session. No matter which type of training you choose, I strongly recommend setting aside funds for this most important investment.</p>
GROOMING	<p>Grooming can cost an average of \$30 to \$90 per session, depending on the groomer and the size of your dog. Grooming should be done at least every other month.</p>
GEAR	<p>Leashes, collars, beds, feeding bowls, toys, treats, sweaters, etc. all vary in price. Some of these are necessary; others are not. I recommend spending less on gadgets and toys for your dog and putting that money toward training and educating yourself.</p>

DOG LIABILITY INSURANCE	Dog liability insurance protects you from significant financial responsibilities if your dog injures a person, another person's pet, or causes property damage. Not all dog owners get pet insurance, but it's a good idea if your dog will be exposed to a lot of people on a regular basis, such as a service dog, a dog who goes to the office, a dog who lives in a home that has lots of visitors, or if you rent the home where your dog resides. Insurance rates vary by carrier and state but can average \$60 per month.
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If you can foresee that you will have a large expense coming up in the near future (1-5 years) such as buying a new car, paying college tuition, or paying off debt, for example, you may want to consider delaying adopting a dog. Dogs cost a significant amount of money, and you must be certain you can sustain that animal for the entirety of its life. Remember that the financial commitment is one of the top reasons that dogs are returned to the shelter. Take a moment to consider your budget and, for example, what you would do if your dog got injured but you could not afford the medical care.

Change Of Circumstance

There are certainly rare cases where a sudden change can occur for a dog owner that makes it nearly impossible to keep the dog. Such things can include death, sudden onset of severe illness, debilitating injury, family emergencies, natural disasters, financial crises, etc. In these special cases, one can try their best to place the dog with a family that knows the dog already. Unfortunately, many of these dogs are returned to the shelter and end up being humanely euthanized due to a lack of resources and space in the shelter.

In my years of experience with thousands of families, I have concluded that many of the typical changes in circumstances were not sudden; rather, they were foreseen ahead of time. With proper planning and realistic expectations, these families could have waited to adopt a dog and thus prevented sending them back after a few months.

A change in circumstance that is often overlooked is living arrangements. Throughout my career, I have seen dog owners change their living circumstances without considering the dog. For example, dog owners get roommates, move in with their partner, break up with their partner, decide to split custody of their dog, open their home to an elderly family member, relocate, or move homes. Most of these changes can be tolerated without negative behaviors in dogs who are properly trained, mentally well-balanced, and feel strong leadership from their owners. Sadly, I see that this is not the majority. If you can foresee any change in your living arrangements, please inform the shelter before adopting a dog, and please seek out professional dog training to help balance your dog before executing such a big change. Otherwise, you may find yourself with a stressed dog and may consider returning them to the shelter.

NateDogTraining.com

REAL CONTACT FORM

**names have been omitted for privacy*

"I have a 5 year old boxer and a 3 year old boxer female, both fixed both healthy. After moving twice since February the older one has decided she hates her sister and has been trying to kill her! The dog fights are horrendous and the 10 year old male boxer tried to break up the fights and just gets nipped. I have them separated while I'm at work and have to play prison isolation and yard time rotation. I tried a muzzle on them both last night and it was a huge fail. HELP!!! ...I can't live like this and know there is gotta be more than drugs to help my problem child. Thank you!"

Another common scenario I've seen is families who were expecting a baby adopted a dog. Although their hearts were in the right place, these families mistakenly thought they could handle a newborn and a newly adopted rescue dog at the same time. In these situations, because the newborn required an enormous amount of attention and demand, meeting the dog's needs became increasingly difficult, and leadership for that animal waned

considerably. Unfortunately, in anywhere from days to months, a dog without leadership will attempt to take over, and this is when bad behaviors emerge.

Unsurprisingly, many of these owners found themselves unable to cope with challenging behaviors from the dog and the demand on their time for the newborn at the same time. Exhausted owners can find themselves with no other choice than to return their dog to the pound, which is heartbreaking for them and terribly stressful for the dog. Take a moment to consider all of the demands on your time in every aspect of your life, including time for yourself. Do you realistically have the time and resources to give this dog everything they need every day?

Behavior

Negative behavior is the number one reason dogs are returned *after* adoption. In the decades I've been working with rescue dogs, I have learned that most surrendered dogs were not properly trained at home when they were first adopted, so stress, frustration, anxiety, or obsessive behavior developed and overwhelmed the family. Because of this, many dogs have changed families and homes repeatedly. **Without proper training, dogs are not being "rescued;" they are just being moved between shelters and homes, along with their behavioral issues.**

Proper training is all about leadership. A dog will know right away if their new owner has what it takes to provide them with leadership and safety. If the dog's trust in the owner is deficient, they will exhibit negative behaviors in as little as one day to a few months from adoption. (This is why I've dedicated an entire chapter to detailing precisely what to do and what to avoid on adoption day.) These behaviors can include:

- urinating in the house repeatedly ("marking" territory)
- excessive barking
- attacking other pets at home
- lunging at people or other dogs
- jumping up at people
- pacing

- following their owner around the house
- fear of people or other dogs
- hiding
- excessive whining or scratching
- not listening to their owner
- obsessing over toys or food
- destroying furniture and objects
- acting aggressively, growling, guarding
- biting children, adults, other dogs
- refusing to be groomed
- pulling on the leash

It is critical for you to understand that in order to truly rescue a dog, you must rescue their mind, not just their body. Training is the way to rescue your dog's mind. If you fail to properly train your dog, you will be inadvertently encouraging negative behaviors.

Take, for example, a true scenario I encountered with a client. He adopted a small dog from the shelter. This gentleman had such a loving heart, and he was truly compassionate. However, he did not educate himself prior to adoption, nor did he arrange for dog training immediately upon adoption. The dog hid in the house the same day she was brought home. She hid under the couch and in the closet. The dog ran from the owner whenever he would attempt to approach her. The owner could not even pet his new dog.

Within days, the dog was marking (urinating) in the house and refusing to urinate outside. The owner struggled to get the dog to go out on walks. This was a fearful dog. My client had wonderful intentions, but he did not prepare himself. **Because of his lack of knowledge, his dog had no proper leadership to resolve her fear. She remained stuck in her fear.** Within 3 months, things got bad enough to prompt the owner to finally seek help.

In the 3 months it took him to call me, that dog became conditioned to not trust her owner. Her fear and subsequent distrust drove her to take control any way she could. In this way, she had gained too much power in the relationship. Fortunately, it took just a few

sessions to educate the owner about my system and for him to learn how to apply specific methods and techniques with his dog. After months of consistent application of his learning, he reversed his dog's fear and created a balanced mind for her. Although he could have started better, I commend him for getting the education he needed to rescue his dog from her own fear. **He was a hero for rescuing her from the shelter. He became a superhero by educating himself and being consistent with his training.**

Unfortunately, rescue dogs with behavioral problems aren't always returned to the shelter; sometimes they are abandoned or euthanized. This breaks my heart because I know the right training resolves most behavioral problems. Discarding a dog or putting a dog down are solutions I would never choose over relationship-based training. Part of my mission with this book is to prevent unnecessary euthanasia, abandonment, and returns to the shelter. You can help me with this mission by educating yourself and becoming the best dog owner you can be.

This book is designed specifically with that goal in mind: to empower you to prevent behavioral problems starting the first day you adopt. Dogs aren't complicated and giving them a happy life is not complicated either. This program is simple, easy to understand, and extremely practical.

I congratulate you on your desire to be a superhero to your new dog. With loving intention and proper education, your dog will indeed be "rescued," and you can be certain that you truly saved a life.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 1

- Rescue dogs have specific needs and require a different approach than dogs who are bred.
- Do not adopt a dog impulsively. Consider that the average lifespan of a dog is 8-15 years, that dogs require a lot of time to get their needs met, and that dogs cost a significant amount of money. If you can foresee a change in circumstances in your life, consider waiting to adopt.
- According to the ASPCA's National Rehoming Survey, behavioral problems were the most common reason 47% of the dogs in the study were surrendered to shelters.
- Behavioral problems are the reason that 7 to 20% of all adopted dogs are *returned* to the shelter. Do you want to be part of this statistic?
- Without proper training, dogs are not being “rescued;” they are just being moved from home to home, along with their behavioral issues.
- Rescue dogs could develop behavioral problems as early as two weeks after adoption without proper training.
- In order to truly rescue a dog, you must rescue their mind, not just their body. Training is the way to rescue your dog's mind. If you fail to properly train your dog, you will be inadvertently encouraging negative behaviors.
- Principle of Reciprocity: When you step into your role as leader, your dog will relax back into their natural state of ease. Because their mind will be balanced, their behavior will be too.
- The true rescue of a dog is rescuing their mind, creating internal peace, and revitalizing the spirit of the dog.

REAL CLIENT RESULTS

“We rescued a German Shepherd / Queensland Heeler Cattle Dog mix. At 5 years old he was still extremely leash reactive, suffered from anxiety, had been attacked, and felt like he needed to be on alert at all times of the day and night...Nate told us over the phone that he could help. We noticed a difference after the very first session. People who come over to our house now think we have a different dog. The best part... our dog is so much happier and we are able to do so much more with him! Nate is so good at what he does and he is extremely passionate and truly cares. If you follow his system and do what he tells you to do then you will be successful.”

~PAYTON L.



CHAPTER 2

A RESCUE DOG SUCCESS STORY

I WANT TO SHARE a case story with you about an actual client and her German Shepherd.* This story is like that of most cases I get, and it illustrates the typical downward pattern a rescue dog and their owner will go through without know-how or effective leadership. It also details how we were able to bring this dog back into balance utilizing my 3-Step System and avoid him being returned to the shelter. If you already have a rescue dog with challenging behaviors, you might recognize many of the same behaviors as your dog in this story. If you have not adopted yet, this story will help you become aware of potential pitfalls, and things you can do to prevent difficult behavior.

* Names have been changed for privacy.

From Controlling Codie to Cheerful Codie

I met my client, Maya, 3 months after she adopted an 11-month-old German Shepherd named Codie from the shelter. Like all adoption stories, Maya and her two children wanted to adopt a dog because of their compassion for suffering animals. Maya knew that her children would learn time management, stewardship, and leadership with this new responsibility. She knew that giving them a dog would cultivate power and confidence in her children. She knew that a dog could provide her children with a safe source of comfort and friendship. Although they had never owned a dog before, they were excited to have a new purpose in their lives. At our first session, she told me about how she came to adopt Codie and described his unexpected behavior.

At the shelter, the staff introduced Maya to Codie. They told her that he was turned in because his former family experienced a sudden illness that required significantly more attention than they could offer their dog. Codie had been in the pound for 3 months, as German Shepherds tend to be stereotyped as aggressive dogs. Maya knew to look beyond stereotypes and observed that Codie was actually quite friendly. They adopted him that very day.

Upon bringing Codie home, he seemed to bond immediately with Maya. From the very first day, he followed Maya everywhere she went throughout the house: to her bedroom, to the living room, to the kitchen, and even to the bathroom! Maya naively thought this was cute and that it made Codie feel safe in his new home. She gave him loads of affection for being next to her all the time.

Within days, Codie started barking at noises coming from outside the house, such as gardeners, pool cleaners, delivery trucks, and cars. He even started barking overnight at the small sounds the house would make or the sounds of nature outside their home. Although the barking was startling, Maya mistakenly thought this was Codie's way of protecting her family. When she took him on walks, Codie would pull on the leash and walk ahead of her. This wasn't comfortable for Maya, but she thought it was normal for dogs to walk ahead and sniff whenever they wanted to.

Within two weeks, Codie began to growl at her children when they came downstairs or walked into the house. On two occasions, Codie charged her children aggressively and

made them jump back in fright. It didn't take long for Maya to become frustrated with Codie and develop concerns for her children's safety.

Only 4 weeks after bringing him home, Maya found herself calling a dog trainer for help. She told the trainer that she assumed that since she rescued him, he would be happy, but he seemed to be growing more and more agitated over time. Her family was becoming stressed by his behavior. This wasn't the way she imagined bringing home a cute dog would turn out.

The trainer signed her up for 10 private sessions at his facility and 30 group sessions at a city park far from her home. The upfront cost to Maya was \$3,000, a fee higher than she expected. But the trainer assured her that he would have Codie able to follow at least 10 commands, all of which would help him to behave better at home. He was very convincing, so she signed up.

The first session at his facility was teaching Codie the "place" command. The trainer spent 50 minutes teaching this one command, prompting Codie to walk over to a little cot and lie on it. He told Maya to practice this for two weeks until their next session. The second session was teaching Codie the "down" command. The whole session was about getting Codie to lay on his belly on the ground the moment he was told. Maya was again instructed to practice for two weeks. The third session, which was led by a different, less experienced trainer, covered two commands: "sit" and "up." The trainer taught Maya how to get Codie to sit at doorways, sit before getting fed, and sit at every corner on walks. The "up" command was to teach Maya and Codie how to get him in the car on command. Neither trainer accompanied Maya on walks with Codie, nor did either go to her home to help her in the very environment most of the behaviors occurred.

The trainer prescribed 5 weeks to get Codie through these first 4 commands. Maya tried very hard and practiced these commands with Codie every day. Sure enough, and rather quickly, Codie learned how to do them.

During this period, Maya and Codie also attended two outdoor group classes. At each class, there were over 25 dogs with their owners. The instructor, who was not the trainer she hired, simply shouted a command so that everyone in the group could make their dogs perform that command. Pairs who hadn't been taught that command in their private

sessions were invited to attempt the command anyway. The instructor even had their own dog, who was performing each command rather quickly. Seeing the instructor's dog perform so well made everyone in the group envious and impressed. At no time was the group invited to let the dogs mingle or meet. Instead, they were told to stand around the instructor in a huge circle, 10 feet apart from the neighboring dog-handler pair and follow the commands. Fortunately for Maya, Codie didn't get too triggered by the other dogs, so he didn't act out. But Codie would perform his "sit" and "down" on the ground in front of Maya instead of next to her. Maya didn't know then, but Codie was attempting to control her and the situation.

It didn't get better. After practicing the first 4 commands for so long and attending group classes, Codie was still barking at noises, growling at the children, pulling on the leash, and following her around the house. Maya would command Codie to sit when the children came downstairs, but Codie still growled. Maya commanded Codie to go to his place in the house, but he would eventually get up and approach her wherever she was. On walks, Codie would sit at every corner, but as soon as Maya would take a step forward to cross, Codie would lead the way again.

None of the command training resolved Codie's controlling behavior. So far, it had been 9 weeks since bringing her rescue dog home, and Maya only saw things getting worse, not better. 5 weeks of training, group classes, and practice at home didn't seem to fix the issues. In fact, Codie's behavior worsened! He began barking loudly at people, cars, and dogs whenever he was in the car, startling Maya while she was driving and blocking her view. When the children would reach for his ball to start playing with him, he would snap at their hands to guard his ball. On walks, Codie would suddenly stop walking and puff up when he would see another pedestrian walking in his direction, attempting to guard Maya. Whenever Maya would bring up these issues to the trainer and his junior trainers, they did not have sufficient answers. Every answer was either an excuse about how it would take more time, or it was because of his breed, his past, or a claim that these behaviors were normal.

Maya became overwhelmed trying to control him. The commands weren't working, and now she was \$3000 in the hole (the trainer refused to refund her, even partially). It was at this point that she considered returning Codie to the pound.

The children begged her not to. They promised to help out. Maya knew that Codie wouldn't listen to the kids. She knew that he wasn't listening to her. Yet she also knew that returning him would be devastating for the children, and certainly for the dog. Finally deciding not to surrender Codie, Maya went back to her research to find another trainer, and that's when she called me for a consultation.

At our first session, in her home, I explained to her that although Codie was a sweet dog, his behavior was typical of a dog who was trying to take control of the home and of the relationship—he was becoming “Controlling Codie.” With a little investigation into Codie's home life before the shelter, we discovered that the previous owners barely paid attention to Codie. They allowed him to do whatever he wanted in the home, go in and out of the yard through a large doggie door at his discretion, run endless circles in the backyard, and bark at people and dogs. They did not supply structure, corrections, or boundaries for him. They were too involved with the sick family member to give him the proper attention or guidance. I explained to her that by living that way, Codie was conditioned to make his own decisions, which actually made him feel unsafe. I also explained that, like most rescue dogs, this side of him was not obvious at the shelter and only resurfaced once Codie figured out that Maya wasn't leading him either.

In the conversation, I taught her that when dogs do not sense strong leadership and therefore a lack of deep safety, their natural reaction is to put themselves in the leadership role in an attempt to have their needs met. This is not a good thing! Dogs do not have the same brain as humans; they cannot reason, they can't be logical, they can't self-observe, and they can't foresee consequences. Taken together, this means that **dogs will not make good choices in our world without proper guidance and continual directions.**

I made it simple for Maya to understand: dogs have the mental capacity of a two-year-old human child, and no parent would allow their two-year-old child to be in charge and left to make their own decisions. What Codie needed was for her to make the decisions, for her to give him directions, and for her to protect him, just like she did with her children. At this point, I introduced my 3-Step System to her and created a parenting plan she could follow every day to reverse Codie's need to take control and thus extinguish his frustrating behavior.

In just four in-home training sessions, Maya discovered in real-time that her walks with Codie could be far more peaceful. I demonstrated how Codie was fully capable of not pulling on the leash. I taught her how to respond to other dogs and people. She learned how to interpret Codie's body language. I showed her which behaviors indicated that her dog was anxious, guarding, and controlling. She learned how to communicate with Codie. I demonstrated how proper communication could snap Codie out of a negative mental state right away. She learned why correction is necessary to inform her dog of what behavior is acceptable or not. I taught her exactly how and when to perform a correction. She learned why allowing him to follow her everywhere was contributing to his bad behavior. I taught her how to control his movement around the house. She learned that Codie's barking at home and in the car was his way of trying to alert Maya, albeit unnecessary. I offered solutions that would reduce his temptation to bark. We created a specific daily routine that would satisfy all his needs and fit into her schedule. I also offered her multiple tips on other things such as feeding, resting, and playing.

I never taught her one obedience command but explained that command training doesn't reach the dog's mind, where the behavioral issues originate. I reassured her that my system of training would put her in control, increase her power, and extinguish any remaining fear that would cause Codie to become reactive.

Within months of applying the system, Controlling Codie no longer followed her from room to room, and he learned how to enjoy resting in his bed during his time at home. He stopped barking at everyday noises and growling at her children. During walks, Maya learned how to make sure he walked at her side, establishing her position as leader. Finally, Codie learned which behaviors were acceptable in public and which behaviors were not. Maya's frustration totally dissolved, and she replaced it with the feeling of being a proactive pet parent.

With daily reinforcement of the system, Codie gave up his desire to be in control, and his anxiety began to dissolve. He reclaimed his true nature, "Cheerful Codie," and found safety and comfort in Maya's leadership. Codie did so well that he earned the coveted AKC Canine Good Citizen designation. Now Maya and the children enjoy the "big goof" that he is, without fear that he will act out anymore. They can take him anywhere and be certain that he will remain calm and respectful at all times.

The take-home lesson from Codie's story is fourfold:

- ✓ Dogs always need directions and guidance in order to feel at ease. Without this, they get stressed. Their behaviors are an outward expression of their inner state. A stressed dog will exhibit undesirable behaviors. A satisfied, happy dog will exhibit desirable behaviors.
- ✓ Obedience training does not equal behavior resolution—they are mutually exclusive. Dogs can perform tricks, and tasks, and comply with commands, and still exhibit negative behaviors. Obedience training alone does not reach the source of the problem: the dog's inner state. However, given the right tools and knowledge, owners can eliminate or greatly diminish negative behaviors and gain more control over their dogs. This is how they can bring their dog back to their fun-loving, “goofy” personality, free of stress.
- ✓ With proper education, owners can learn how to communicate with their dogs to provide them with a sense of safety and leadership, which is exactly what leads to good behavior.
- ✓ Regardless of their history, dogs can change, and so can their owners. The level of change is directly related to how much effort an owner is willing to invest. Change takes time—longer than most owners realize. Consistency is key.

Fortunately, Codie's story is a success story, and the work he and Maya put in prevented him from being returned to the shelter. However, now more than ever before, shelters and foster homes report that dogs are being turned in for the second or third time. Something has to change. That change can happen through you. Rescue dogs need superheroes. By educating yourself with the help of this book, you can be part of reducing the number of dogs that are returned each year. You can truly save your dog.

REAL CLIENT RESULTS

“Marley is a 1.5 year old Dachshund and when I rescued her, she was incredibly dog reactive. She was so dog reactive that it was hard to bring her anywhere. She lunged and growled at every dog we saw... Nate changed everything! After just 3 lessons with him, Marley is a new dog. She's so much better behaved and can meet new dogs without a problem. I truly appreciate everything he has done for me and Marley. I would highly recommend him to anyone who needs help with their dog. I had tried group classes and other trainers and nothing helped until I found Nate.”

~SABRINA C.



CHAPTER 4

WHY STRONG LEADERSHIP IS CRITICAL TO YOUR SUCCESS AND WHAT HAPPENS WITHOUT IT

IN THE DOG world, I define leadership as one's ability to provide their dog with a felt sense of safety by guiding the dog's actions and choices, using effective communication, trusting their own power, and by maintaining a state of levelheadedness. This is exactly how the leader of a dog pack in the wild would look. Our modern pet dogs aren't "wild" since we've domesticated them, yet they still maintain their innate need to have leadership. As pet parents, it would serve us to learn more about this type of social structure and how it effects our dog's psychology.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP TO A DOG?

In “wild” nature, two or more dogs living together create a “pack.” In such a social structure, typically one or two dogs will lead, and the rest will follow. This hierarchy is “hardwired” into every dog’s DNA, and its design permits the species to survive. Certain ranks within the hierarchy are fluid and can be taken on by different members of the group when the circumstance requires. But in general, **the leader dictates everything the pack will do; the dogs are never without direction.** The pack relies on their leader to provide them with safety, shelter, food, and the chance to procreate successfully.

To do this, the leader must have the confidence to know where to find safe shelter, when and where to go hunting, when and where to rest and play, and how to defend the group. They must also know how to effectively communicate with the other members of the group so that they work as a team, and no one dog ever risks the pack’s survival through poor choices. Notably, the leader maintains a sense of composure and even-temperedness throughout the pack’s challenges. All this helps the other dogs not only receive information accurately but to trust the experience and wisdom of the lead dog so that they can fulfill their roles as followers.

To be at this level takes lots of trial and error, hard-earned experience, and consistent proof of skills. This role is so critical to the survival of the pack that leaders will hold their position with steadfast determination and only give it up through fight, death, or submission.

To lead requires the other dogs to follow. The act of following gives dogs purpose and with that purpose comes harmony within the family system. For other dogs to follow, they must trust their leader. All trust in dogs is based on how well their leader governs the group.

If the leader is not stable, dogs sense that imbalance which, in turn, decreases their trust. If the leader cannot provide them with all their needs or threatens their survival to any degree, anxiety increases. To relieve themselves of this state of unease, a member of the pack will understandably attempt to take over the role of leader. In general, most dogs do not want to be the dominant dog but their innate need to feel safe and secure will compel them to assign themselves the role even if they lack the necessary experience or skill.

Obviously, you are aware that today's pet dogs are not "wild" like their ancestors. However, even after tens of thousands of years of being domesticated, their need for leadership to this day is greater than ever before. Our modern world—full of cars, concrete, busy parking lots, shopping centers, disturbing noises of all kinds, and so many strangers and unknown dogs sharing the same territory—is completely foreign to dog's innate programming. In addition, dog owners are in and out throughout the day, sometimes leaving their dog at home alone to deal with the other pet dogs, delivery trucks, construction noises, etc. On top of all that, the average responsible adult has more on their plates than they have time for, and everything in their lives gets less and less attention, including their pets. Let's not forget that a rescue dog has already been through tremendous stress before they were even adopted, and the memories of that stress still "live" in their nervous systems. There is just so much more a dog can be worried about or feel the need to protect in today's busy world than the dog's programming is equipped for. A dog in today's world has so much more incoming stimulation to manage than their ancient ancestors ever did, it's almost unfair to these animals. To navigate such a different world, your dog is going to need very strong leadership in order to feel safe.

This is where you come in. The day you adopted your rescue dog, the two of you instantly became a family. As a rescue dog owner, it is your job to honor your dog's ancient need by being their leader in this modern world. When you step into this role, you will not only be saving your dog from the shelter, but saving them from anxiety, fear, and insecurity.

Dogs who feel a deep sense of safety with their owners feel at ease and are therefore reliable in all situations. A dog at ease knows how to relax and follow directions because that's what they are designed by nature to do. These dogs are a pleasure to live with. When leaving the house, they show respect and go through the threshold after their owners do. On the walk, they walk at the owner's pace right next to them, without any tension on the leash. They don't lunge out or bark at passing dogs during the walk. At home, they stay in their designated area of the home while family members move about doing their business. These dogs are non-reactive to sounds outside the home or to visitors in the home. They are patient at mealtime and wait to be told when they can eat their food. When the owners are not interacting with them, these dogs are resting peacefully. This is the ultimate life for a dog—one filled with safety, peace, and ease.

As you learned moments ago, the lead dog in a pack provides the other dogs with a felt sense of safety and guides their actions and choices. This is accomplished by the lead dog's constant directions to the rest of the pack. You also learned earlier that in today's modern world, you represent the leader to your rescue dog. Putting these two together, begin to understand that **your dog is relying on you to give them directions all day long in order to feel safe, and fulfilled.**

Without clear direction every moment these rescue dogs can't help but feel unsafe. Yes, of course, you love your rescue dog and would never imagine purposefully making them feel unsafe, but dogs "think" differently than humans. Their survival instincts are far more prominent in their minds than we assume. Therefore, giving your dog purpose and structure will allow them to feel safe to relax back into their role as follower. Doing so also helps to counter many of the pre-existing issues they came to you with, otherwise, those issues will very likely become exacerbated.

Some people feel uncomfortable establishing this level of structure for their dog because they believe it's too restrictive. The truth is, it's no different than being a good parent. Remember the toddler analogy? If you had a 2 or 3-year-old child whom you wanted to feel safe, you would provide them with directions that lead them toward safety and away from danger. You wouldn't let them free roam around the house alone or make any significant decisions because you know toddlers can't comprehend or handle that degree of responsibility. You wouldn't have a problem telling them they have to wear their seatbelt in the car, stay away from the fire, or not run out into the street. You would have no problem determining a feeding and napping schedule for your child.

There is ample research showing that children do better when parents provide healthy boundaries and that those boundaries help children grow their self-esteem and integrate into society with ease. In contrast, studies have also shown that parents who are too permissive raise children who ultimately struggle with self-control, are more impulsive and aggressive, and exhibit more anti-social behavior. By giving your child directions and maintaining healthy boundaries, you uphold the position of "parent" and help shape that child into a confident, well-balanced child.

It's the same when you are a dog parent. I joke with my clients that they should avoid being in the "friend zone" both when dating and when they're with their dog. But it's true:

your dog doesn't need you to be their friend, they need you to be their parent. Dogs don't do well without boundaries and guidance. In fact, without leadership dogs will exhibit stress behaviors, just like children. **Your main job is to give your dog directions that lead them toward ease and away from unease.**

In working with thousands of dogs and their owners in my career, I've witnessed this to be utterly true. And this is actually backed up by research. In a study published in the journal Animal Cognition, researchers noted that very few studies were looking at how the quality of an owner's relationship with their dog influences the dog's performance on behavioral or cognitive tasks. So, this study questioned the correlation between parenting styles and the dog's social and problem-solving behavior. The researchers concluded that **owners who had a more authoritative parenting style—meaning more structure, direction, and rules—and who were more involved with their dog, raised dogs who were secure, highly social, and better behaved.**

*"On average, dogs with authoritative owners (high expectations, high responsiveness) had the highest rate of secure attachment, were highly social, sensitive to social context, and were more persistent and successful on the problem-solving task than dogs with authoritarian owners (high expectations and low responsiveness) and permissive owners (low expectations, low responsiveness)."*⁷

The act of following is an ancient program hardwired into dogs' DNA! When you take the parent role with your rescue dog, and give them directions throughout the day, you actually improve your dog's confidence, allowing them to integrate into modern life well, and to fulfill their purpose to follow. Collectively, that means your dog will have a balanced mind and they will be so happy their behavior will show it—they will only want to please you. By giving your dog directions and maintaining boundaries, you uphold your position as a leader, which is what your dog wants.

I will expand on exactly what to do with your dog on a daily basis in Chapter 6, but for now, it's important that you understand what a dog really wants from their owner. **Dogs want their owners to stop facilitating anxiety and become the strong leader they require.**

HOW A LACK OF LEADERSHIP CREATES PROBLEMS WITH YOUR DOG

Every week in my career, I have “first sessions” with new dogs and families who are seeking my expertise. During these first sessions, I get to see how the dog really lives and how the families and owners relate to their animals. I’ll never forget the time I met Max, a 1-year-old Black Labrador rescue. I met him outside in the owner’s yard. He was confined behind an 8 by 12-foot pen made by the owners with 6-foot-high fencing, within the yard. The owners had adopted Max as a puppy and decided Max would live outside and not be allowed to go into the house at any time. Within a short time, Max totally destroyed the yard, became incapable of walking calmly on a leash, and menaced other dogs and people in the neighborhood. The owners resorted to building an outdoor pen for Max so he could still be outside, and they stopped taking Max for walks to prevent an incident. Neighbors complained about his barking, and the family was utterly frustrated. They could not figure out how to help their dog, especially since obedience training did nothing to address his deeper issues. They admitted to not spending much time with him because they felt defeated by his behavior.

Life inside the pen was not better for Max. His owners let me know that Max would pace inside the pen all day long, bark at everything, and he would dig and scratch at the fencing repeatedly throughout the day. This dog rarely rested, and he never went out on walks, chased a ball, or played with other dogs. He had absolutely no social skills and even the owners’ children were afraid of Max. This is how Max lived every day for the 5 months before I met him. Luckily, on the guidance of a friend, the owners placed a hold on their plans to return Max to the shelter and instead reached out to me for help.

I’m glad the owners did. Fortunately, they were open to hearing how specific changes could be made to their parenting to give Max a better life and relieve the family of the stress connected to Max’s behavior. In our very first session, Max’s parents were taught that their general absence from Max’s life was causing him a lot of stress. We took Max for a walk and his owners learned how to control Max on the leash and establish themselves as the leaders for him to follow. In subsequent sessions, we established an area in the house where Max could rest that felt nonintrusive to the family. The parents learned how to interact with Max in such a way that made him feel safe and satisfy all his needs. They were given a structured

schedule which included walks, exercise, feeding, and rest. We also investigated the other triggers that caused Max to react and figured out how to reduce them.

Once they saw how Max acted with me and my pack of dogs, the owners totally understood how desperately Max needed them to take charge every single day for the rest of his life. They no longer felt overwhelmed because they saw the changes in Max throughout the three sessions, extinguishing any doubt that Max was beyond help. I prescribed the owners make changes to their schedule so that they could spend quality time with Max, practice and control the walk, and control his movement in the house. Doing so would allow Max to fall back into his natural groove of following, and it would prevent future problems. Checking in 12 weeks later, Max turned out to be a very trainable dog and now the owners let him inside the house, the children can play with him, he is no longer frantic in the backyard, and he gets to go out on long walks every day. Best of all, the pen was taken down.

Certainly, cases like Max's are not the majority, but their existence is a constant reminder of how bad it really can get over time, for both the dog and the family. Undoubtedly, every owner has the best intentions when they bring home a new dog, but without educating themselves, they can unintentionally create anxiety in their dogs. **The lack of leadership combined with feelings of anxiety, make these dogs really stressed out. In time, this stress increases exponentially to the point that the dog's behavior becomes overwhelming for the owner. Sadly, this is why so many dogs are returned to the shelter or abandoned.**

Proper training and understanding of how dogs think could prevent much of this overwhelm. **The solution is not to make excuses for your dog or yourself.** The solution is to learn how dogs think and behave, to be aware of the potential outcomes that could happen without proper leadership, and to utilize specific techniques that will help you regain control. **Dogs who have strong leaders and thus feel safe do not exhibit negative behaviors as they feel no need to be in control—they feel safe enough to take their natural position as followers.**

When rescue dogs—and all pet dogs for that matter—feel there is no leadership from their owners, their survival instincts will compel them to take over the leadership role. This need is so great for the dog that they will attempt this even without the necessary skills, experience, or demeanor. Dogs in this predicament endure unbearable levels of anxiety, not least because they are at the mercy of their owners for food, shelter, walking, and socializing,

and under the ceaseless stimulation of the modern world—they couldn't even be a successful leader if they wanted to. **Without strong leadership, these dogs are always caught between their inability to control their environment and their instinct to try anyway.**

It's important to reiterate that when dogs do not feel safe due to a lack of guidance from their owners, they become very stressed. This stress is expressed in a variety of ways depending on the individual dog, from subtle to intense, and most people don't even notice the clues their dogs are revealing all day long. So that you can be a better dog parent, I've outlined several behaviors that indicate stress, which you'll learn all about in the next chapter.

Before jumping over to read about those behaviors, it's important to understand how these behaviors arise in rescue dogs. Remember, the number one reason that dogs are returned to the shelter after adoption is negative behavior. **Most negative behaviors are an expression of a dog's need to control. When dogs feel they do not have leadership and consequently feel unsafe, dogs will try to take control as a survival reaction.**

These stressed-out dogs can become destructive, protective, overpowering, stubborn, self-harming, and/or fearful. Any one of these traits can become a liability for you, other people or animals, yours or other's property, and of course to the dogs themselves. Therefore, **it is your responsibility to your community, your family, and your dog to learn how to reduce the chances of negative behavior arising in the first place.** This will be expanded upon in Chapter 7, where I explain my 3-Step System and in Chapter 6: What You Should and Should Not Do The Day You Bring Home Your New Dog.

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REAL CONTACT FORM

**names have been omitted for privacy*

"Hello! I have two dogs at home. One is needing training more than the other. She is a 5 year old Pit/Bully/Shepherd mix that we adopted a little over two years ago. She pulls on her leash and goes crazy when she sees other dogs or cats out on walks by aggressively pulling, jumping/lunging at the other animal, barking/growling/whining loudly. Thank you!"

Just like a caring parent whose primary objective is to raise a happy, healthy child, your role as a rescue dog parent is to reduce your dog's stress level so they can be happy and well-balanced. To raise a child with this objective takes devotion, consistency, patience, and knowledge. Dogs need this very same level of stewardship in order to thrive in our modern world.

Be aware that if you have not been providing your dog with consistent directions, but allowing your dog to make their own choices, you have unknowingly given all the power in the relationship to your dog. Your dog thinks they're in charge of you and your family. And if this has been going on for a while, it is going to be rather challenging to take back control. As touched on in the previous chapter, dogs do not readily relinquish their leadership role, and in nature, they'd only do so through fight, death, or submission to a stronger leader. Generally speaking, most dog trainers today are teaching owners to manipulate or bribe these dogs through commands, punitive gadgets, or treats, which all just give a false appearance of submission. The truth is, dogs who have this much power will always try to get it back the moment the command fails, the punitive gadgets are gone, or the treats run out. They will bolt, bark, pull on the leash, lunge out, hide, run away, or harass another dog, pet, or person.

TRAINING YOUR RESCUE DOG IN 3 STEPS

Understanding this tendency in dogs and recognizing that owners can really struggle with getting that control back all on their own, I created a 3-Step System that all dog owners can utilize to be better parents to their beloved dogs. My system works because it is rooted in dog psychology, not manipulation or bribing. Both first-time dog owners and experienced dog owners will benefit from this system as it is designed to prevent negative behavior in the first place and resolve existing behavioral problems.

In the dog training world, there are hundreds of different approaches, philosophies, methods, and techniques. They all have their place and their value. However, I find that the average dog owner can get so overwhelmed with such diverse information that they just give up.

This book is here to simplify it for you, to narrow it down to what matters most. I've identified the three most powerful actions you can take to regain control:

- 1. Control The Walk**
- 2. Control The Movement**
- 3. Control The Barking**

These three steps were specifically chosen because most behavioral problems are correlated to a deficiency in at least one of these factors. I can equip you with the knowledge and the action steps, and if you apply each of these steps on a daily basis for several months, you will see a significant improvement in your dog's behavior across the board.

I would never claim that you could get a "perfect" dog because there's no such thing. Heck, even my own dogs have their quirks, but none is disruptive or harmful, and that's what counts. What this system can do for you is have you take control back from your dog, which is what your dog actually wants. Remember, they'd rather follow you than be an anxious, fearful, unqualified leader.

If you execute this system with ardent consistency, you can achieve **the three most important behaviors a dog should have:**

- 1. Walks calmly on leash as a follower, not a leader**
- 2. Relaxed and reliable at home and in public**
- 3. Non-reactive to noises**

If you can attain these three overarching behaviors, it will resolve your dog's need to:

1. Control the walk
 - ✖ *pulls on the leash, resists going for a walk*
2. Lunge out at other dogs or people
 - ✖ *insecurity in most cases*

3. Anxiety and confusion

- ✖ *pacing at home, following owner around the house, excessive licking or gnawing, destroying things in the home, marking*

4. Vigilance at home and in public

- ✖ *barking at sounds at home, patrolling the yard, keeping watch at the doors and windows, barking in public and in the car, unable to be still, doesn't rest*

It's worth noting that some rescue dogs have deep underlying issues that require long-term rehabilitation in a facility that has many balanced dogs, plenty of rural space, and a very skilled professional trainer. I definitely encourage anyone with a dog that has serious issues to take this route, if they have the financial resources to do so. But, for the average dog owner, the extraordinary expense of such rehab is not feasible, nor is it needed for most behavior cases. Furthermore, I've found that a lot of dogs who do board-and-train or rehab revert to their behaviors when they are returned to their owners. The owner must be involved in training otherwise they won't get the level of respect and trust from their dog, which is the foundation upon which a dog will follow a leader. It is critical that the dog's owner is doing some changing too, and this system makes it very easy and practical to make those changes.

I hope you're beginning to see that allowing your dog to pull on the leash, lunge out, avoid, hide, pace, patrol, guard, bark, growl, gnaw, mark, and the like is keeping your dog in a stressed body and mind. I see it every day and it's the unfortunate reason I work so much. I know you may be seeing other dogs and owners allowing this, and you may hear other owners or even professionals telling you that all this is normal, but the truth is it's not right nor is it natural for your pet dog. The true rescuing of a dog is relieving them of all that stress so that they can just be a happy dog. Anything less does not serve your animal for the better. And didn't you rescue your dog to give them a better life? Yes. Your dog needs you to rise up and treat them with respect and dignity. They need you to be the best leader you can possibly be. Your responsibility to your dog is as serious as it would be to a spouse, a child, or an employer. Your responsibility to your community is to have a dog that is reliable and safe.

The beauty here is that bringing your dog back into balance takes only a matter of months of consistency, and after that, your dog learns this routine on their own. When you apply yourself like this, you'll not only have a stress-free dog, but you'll bring out your dog's true personality, which is typically a loyal, fun-loving, and carefree animal. I understand that this takes energy and time, and that may feel overwhelming at first. But you don't have to worry. The next few chapters will guide you step by step toward becoming confident in your ability to provide the happiest life for your dog.

KEY POINTS FROM CHAPTER 4

- As a rescue dog owner, it is your job to honor your dog's ancient need and be their leader in this modern world. When you step into this role, you will not only be saving your dog from the shelter, but saving them from anxiety, fear, and insecurity.
- Researchers concluded that owners who had a more authoritative parenting style—meaning more structure, direction, and rules—and who were more involved with their dog, raised dogs who were secure, highly social, and better behaved.
- Leadership is characterized as one's ability to provide their dog with a felt sense of safety and to guide their actions and choices every day.
- Strong leaders exhibit self-confidence, effective communication, devotion to learning, the willingness to make changes, and the ability to maintain a state of levelheadedness.
- The leader dictates everything the dog family will do; the dog is never without direction. Without clear direction, rescue dogs can't help but feel unsafe.
- Dogs who have strong leaders and thus feel safe do not exhibit negative behaviors as they feel no need to be in control—they feel safe enough to take their natural position as followers.
- For dogs to follow, they must trust their leader. All trust for dogs is based on how well their leader governs the family.
- The act of following is an ancient program hardwired into a dog's DNA. When you take the parent role with your rescue dog, and give them directions throughout the day, you actually improve your dog's confidence, allowing them to integrate into modern life well, and to fulfill their purpose to follow.

- If the leader cannot provide them with all their needs or threatens their survival to any degree, trust diminishes, and anxiety increases. Dogs want their owners to stop facilitating anxiety and become the strong leader they require.
- A lack of leadership combined with feelings of anxiety make dogs really stressed out. In time, this stress increases exponentially to the point that the dog's behavior becomes overwhelming for the owner. Sadly, this is why so many dogs are returned to the shelter or abandoned.
- Your dog doesn't need you to be their friend; they need you to be their parent.
- It is your responsibility to your community, your family, and your dog to learn how to reduce the chances of negative behavior arising in the first place.
- Be aware that if you have not been providing your dog with consistent directions, but allowing your dog to make their own choices, you have unknowingly given all the power in the relationship to your dog.
- Most negative behaviors are an expression of a dog's need to control. When dogs feel they have weak leadership, dogs will try to take control as a survival response.
- All positive behaviors indicate your dog feels safe, accepts their role as a follower and you as a leader, and lives in a state of ease. All negative behaviors indicate your dog feels unsafe to some degree, does not accept you fully as a leader, and lives in a state of stress.
- The three most important behaviors a dog should have are: 1) walks calmly on leash as a follower, not a leader; 2) relaxed and reliable at home and in public; 3) non-reactive to noises
- With devotion, consistency, patience, and knowledge you can truly rescue your dog from a life filled with stress.



Leading a group class with clients

REAL CLIENT RESULTS

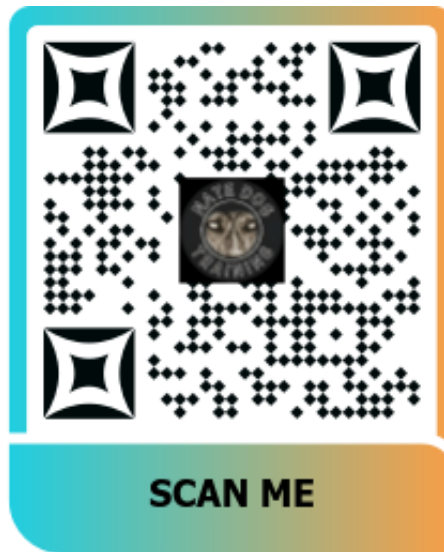
“Before Nate Dog Training, my rescue dog, Rosie, age 1.5, was in control of me or at least she felt like she needed to be in charge at all times. She would pull on walks, bark at other dogs, fearful of people, and generally stressed out in all environments. Much like her, I also needed training to regain leadership and have a better understanding of what messages I was communicating with my pup. With Nate’s expertise, Rosie and I have come so far in just a couple months! We enjoy walks, able to explore new environments, and building skills around new dogs and people. I am very thankful for this new relationship with my Rosie.”

~HEIDI B.

[END FREE CONTENT]

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