

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES
BENEFICIAL TO DOGS AND HUMANS!

By [Maureen Ross, MA](#)



I came across the following “writing” while purging my files, most of which I decided to keep. This sharing comes from a July 2004 issue of *Counseling Toda*, then published again 10 years later in the *Latham mag*. My addition is adding dogs -- of course.

Little Boy and the Old Man
By Shel Silverstein

Said the little boy, “Sometimes I drop my spoon,”
Said the old man, “I do too!”
The little boy whispered, “I wet my pants.”
“I do that too,” laughed the old man.
Said the little boy, “I often cry”.
The old man nodded, “So do I.”
“But worst of all,” said the little boy,
“It seems like grown-ups don’t pay attention to me.”
And he felt the warmth of the wrinkled old hand.
“I know what you mean,” said the old man.

Re-read the above keeping the older adult for the human part and substituting “little boy” responses with what a puppy, or a re-home, confused and fearful dog might say if they spoke “human”. Example: Change “I wet my pants” or “I cry” to a dog’s innocent plea, “I peed in my crate, I whine or bark, or I was so lonely and happy to see you when you got home that I couldn’t wait and christened the carpet.” A re-homed dog may say, “I’m glad you adopted me, but I haven’t a clue what to do yet. Please give me some time, guidance and be patient until I learn how to live in with you.”

One of the emotional human dilemmas I come across in private coaching and on pet therapy visits is meeting loving, caring people looking for solutions to:

1. Leaving their puppies (or dogs) alone for more than a few hours.
2. Is it okay to leave a dog in a crate all day?
3. What should I do with a pet when a friend or relative can no longer care for them?
4. Should a pet be given away if they have lived with someone for 10 years and now the owner cannot care for them?
5. Should pets who are not Registered / Certified be allowed to visit?

I don’t walk in anyone’s moccasins but my own, but my inner wisdom knows that there are two distinct dilemmas; they have similar solutions / alternatives.

Everyone has different lifestyle needs. Careful thought and planning should go into any decision to add a puppy or dog to a family. Puppies need to eliminate at least every 2 hours. Many will hold it for much longer in a crate, but it is not healthy (or fair) for them.

Puppies need socialization and manners (SAM). Adult dogs do too unless they have been conditioned, slowly, to being left alone for longer periods. The operative words are “slowly conditioned” not speed dialed into instantly trained. Older and adopted dogs need time to transition into new situations.

If a loved one needs to relinquish a pet due to transition or illness, friends, families and staff need to consider both the human and the pet. It can be unbearable for families to make decisions about giving up a pet, especially if no-one in the family is capable of or wants to take it. Emotions and stress take their toll. Here is what may be a solution to consider:

Intergenerational Programs

Today, some of the interaction between generations is decreasing because individuals are relocating around the country for a better whatever. Quality time between the older and younger generation is valuable to pass on wisdom and traditions. The positive emotional benefits of being around older adults are invaluable. The role-modeling of mixing teenagers with older adults and/or those in need (hospitals, assisted living, Veterans) is an invaluable lesson in humanity.

Intergenerational programs are growing nationwide. The *National Council on Aging* defines *Intergenerational Programs* as “Activities or programs that increase cooperation, interaction or exchange between any two generations. They involve the sharing of skills, knowledge, or experience between old and young.”

In some cultures, older adults are revered. They should be everywhere! They can use their skills to help the less knowing or disadvantaged. Young and older people are motivated, enriched and feel a sense of fulfillment spending quality time teaching someone (or a dog). Consider this!

If you are aware that you or someone you know will need assistance for a puppy, adult dog, adopted dog or aging dog, check into intergenerational programs in your community. Better still, start one! It’s not difficult. Check out your local churches; post them on the community bulletin boards, schools, libraries and veterinary practices. Check with friends and neighbors. You may find that they have had similar needs and found some terrific solutions to share.

Get someone (*after interviewing*) that you trust to come in once or twice a day to spend quality time walking your, or your loved one’s dog, making sure they have fresh water and are comfortable in their crates or confined areas in the house or outside kennels.

If someone you know has been moved due to age, illness or other reasons, and they have shared years with a beloved pet, it may be possible to integrate this pet into your life with help. At the very least, it will give you (and your loved one) some breathing time to transition into life without a pet while being mindful that this is stressful for the pet too.

For registered visiting teams: If you are faced with emotional transitions where someone has had to relinquish their pet to live in transitional care, be mindful that this may or may not be a good time to visit this person with your pet. Check with staff, then ask the person directly if they want a pet visit.

***Let those missing their pet know that you care / empathize.
Let them choose. Then, share your pet with joy and kindness.***

There is no easy way to tell someone that they can no longer see their pet. I can't imagine not being able to touch my pets. I know if it were me, and someone re-assured me that my pets would be loved and cared for, and that they could visit me, my chances of healing and emotionally surviving would increase 100%.

[National Council on Aging](#)
[New England Pet Partners, Inc. 501c.3](#)