

What Dogs Teach Us

Whenever you bring a dog into your life, they teach you something. Sometimes it's an easy lesson, sometimes it's a hard lesson. Here are a few of the lessons that some Animal Rescue Konnection (ARK) dogs taught us. Dog names that have an asterix (*) have had their names changed to protect their identity.

Johnny is a sweet older dog that was surrendered to a doggy day care, which, because he had not been socialized with other dogs, was pretty traumatic. A lot of people worked very hard to understand what Johnny needed and were able to find the perfect adopter. Johnny taught us that it takes a village to rescue a dog.

Rover* is an energetic dog that was not getting along with his human siblings. The family decided that removing Rover from their home was the best option. After some training we were able to teach the family that Rover's personal space needed to be respected. Rover taught us that sometimes a dog is surrendered because of something that the humans are doing, not the dog.

Bosco* is another good boy that was not meshing well with his human siblings. Much like Rover's family, Bosco was going to be rehomed, although he'd been living with his family for 7 years. We taught the family how to communicate with Bosco and to understand what Bosco was telling them. Bosco taught us that dogs are dogs, and we should expect them to act like dogs, not like humans. Bosco wasn't doing anything wrong, but his communication was being misinterpreted.

Jacques* is a dog that is beyond lucky. He was rescued by a good samaritan from an incredibly dangerous and malicious person who threatened to publically kill him. Jacques, who is still a puppy, obviously has some PTSD from his violent experiences, and various shelters recommended euthanizing him, believing that rehabilitation would be impossible. Jacques taught us that dogs are resilient and despite what they've been put through, they can still trust. Jacques is now living the life of Riley and learning that not all people are scary.

Benny* is a dog that was rescued from another bad situation. He was rehomed with an elderly couple who thought that they had what Benny needed. Unfortunately, they didn't. Benny is a large lab who had traumatic experiences in his past, and needed support. It causes a lot of anguish to go to a home for a few days and get returned. Benny taught us that we have to be realistic about our capabilities because when we decide to help a dog we are literally taking their life into our hands.

Violet* is a dog who was also incredibly lucky in the end. She was adopted out to a person who didn't know their limitations, too. She was returned to the shelter and immediately put on death row. She was given 48 hours to find someone before she would be euthanized. The adopter told the shelter that something had happened and the shelter didn't have the resources to verify the story. This unfairly labeled Violet as an "aggressive" dog. No other shelters would help Violet, and she was deemed "unadoptable." Violet taught us that we need to be very careful about what we say about dogs. Words that are incorrectly used to describe dogs can have a lethal effect on them. We need to be aware that sticks and stones can break our bones but words can lead to euthanasia.

Every dog we meet has a story. And every single one of them teaches us something. What have you learned from your dog?

Written by Sheila of Integral Dog Training in collaboration with Animal Rescue Konnection (c) 2022.