

# The dogs have it

## Opinion

Or do they? Many people think that the dog's life these days is pretty sweet, and in some cases, they would be absolutely correct. However, in far too many other cases, this simply is not the case. Why would I say this, you might ask? With over 40 years experience teaching dog psychology to humans and helping families rehabilitate their canine counterparts who have "mysteriously" developed behaviour problems, I think I have gained the experience and expertise necessary to be able to tell the real story.

For instance, if the dogs' life is so great these days, what about all those many thousands of abandoned dogs behind bars in the pound, SPCA or rescue?

Let's start from the beginning, shall we, because there's really no "mystery" to deciphering canine behavioral problems. The following is a brief synopsis recounting the evolution of the human and canine relationship.

First of all, many of us humans today do not realize that without our canine friends, as a society, we might not be quite so nearly as "evolved" as we currently are.

Our dogs used to work right alongside us humans out in the fields, protecting and herding flocks, hunting large beasts, pulling carts to market, retrieving fishing nets and downed birds, eliminating disease spreading vermin, protecting the home and family, playing with the kids and providing warmth and comfort on a cold night. Industrialization of the world happened and the use of dogs to perform the many tasks that were essential to our very existence became, in large part, obsolete and many dogs were simply out of a job.

Some breeds became extinct as a natural result of the changing times, while those humans with sentimental attachments to specific breeds did their best to keep working breeds alive that were no longer required to work and still others manipulated breeds and created designer dogs to appeal to human vanity. Now the role of the dog is generally no longer to perform a duty or task, but to simply look pretty and provide companionship for humans. For some breeds that have actually been designed to be companions, this is perfect. However, for the many who still possess the strong instinct to work, the story is not quite so ideal.

Throughout the world, there still exists many breeds of dogs that are hard wired to work alongside their humans and for these dogs, often their life is not the idyllic world you might imagine it to be. Let's for a moment, talk about the world's most popular canine — the Labrador retriever. This is a dog that was born to work and your first clue is that word "retriever", which is a throw back to what this breed was originally bred to do. Yet, many people continue to share their lives with an active retriever breed when the family is more accurately described as sedentary. Do you think genetics is what causes just about every Lab you see these days to be overweight?

In other words, a highly active dog is now often paired up with a sedentary or highly inactive family who spend most of their time in front of the TV, on the Internet, or at work, and the dog, although in most cases, a sweet-natured and loving addition to the family, spends too much time alone with nothing to do, gets little exercise and is not nearly getting his or her needs met. When this happens, the dog

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suffers from health-related issues and usually a shortened lifespan. Many families are pairing themselves up with the totally wrong dog because they simply do not first of all take a close look at their own family energy and dynamics before choosing a canine companion, or indeed, even asking themselves the all important question — do I have the time for a dog? Often the human side of the equation is choosing their fur friend based on how pretty the fur might be, because they had the same type of dog in their family 20 or 30 years ago, or because they fell in love with a talking dog they saw in a movie. Does this sound like a family you might know? I know many families just like this, who meant well, but just don't have it in them to be good canine guardians and are doing all the wrong things, which means that their dogs are suffering the consequences.

When the dogs are suffering, the family and the neighborhood is also suffering, and that's when my dog whispering team is called into action and we swoop in to set things right.

The good news is that IF the family is actually willing to do the right thing by their dog, any sort of behavioral issues can be alleviated. If you or someone you know is having troubles with their canine counterpart, first ask yourself if you have the right dog for your energy and then ask yourself if you are willing to do what is necessary to rehabilitate your fur friend so that everyone can live a happy and stress-free life together.

Next, if you're truly committed to alleviating problems that may already have occurred, you will need a little dog whispering psychology to help you understand what your dog actually needs to be a happy member of your family and if you need help with that, call or visit us online, because we can work remotely, too. Most importantly, really think long and hard before deciding to share your life with a dog, and if you ARE the right candidate for the type of dedication that is required, do your research and make certain you choose the appropriate dog for your energy and lifestyle. There is also nothing quite so sad and frustrating for both human and dog when the relationship is mismatched, just as there is nothing quite so rewarding as the right canine/human relationship.

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## Conflict of interest

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