



I've been around dogs since my childhood and have always loved being in the company of our four-legged friends. When I told my husband I wanted a dog, he wasn't too thrilled with the idea at first. I was traveling a lot for work at the time, and he knew he'd have most of the responsibility. The compromise we made was to let him choose the breed. I wanted a small, non-shedding, off-leash dog. What we adopted, however, were three husky puppies. A large breed known for shedding and wandering. And despite the years of constant vacuuming up dog hair, we loved the breed so much that when our original three passed away, we adopted two more huskies! Our dogs have been a constant source of love and amusement, but even more so, they've taught us some of the greatest life lessons.

Here are 10 things dogs can teach us about what matters most in life:

1. Live in the moment.

Although dogs remember things like where the treats are kept, what street takes them home and who they've met before, they only access that information when they need it -- in the moment. Whether they're eating a bowl of kibble or chasing a ball, dogs live for the present moment. The past is gone; you can't do anything about it. The future is unknown. The only thing you can really enjoy and affect is the present moment.

2. Overcome fear with love.

There are plenty of stories about frightful, aggressive dogs who transformed into kind, gentle dogs after they were placed in a loving environment. Dogs can overcome their fear and insecurities through love, and so can humans. Love truly does conquer all, and the first step for us is to love ourselves. If you can replace fear and self-criticism with self-love, no matter what situation you're in, life gets easier.

3. Don't hold grudges

A grudge is a feeling of resentment toward someone. It originates in our mind. Humans are probably the only species that holds a grudge. A dog will never be angry with you because you didn't give him a treat after dinner last night. Holding a grudge weighs you down emotionally and keeps you from moving forward in life. Let grudges go and you will create your own personal freedom.

4. Play every day.

Dogs love to play, which usually involves lots of movement, whether it's running, chasing or jumping. This is a good reminder for us to play and move our bodies every day as well. Playing opens up your mind and spirit to all kinds of new ideas and creativity. It's a needed break from the constant 24/7 work environment. And if you can exercise while you play, even better. Dogs actually give you a reason to get out and go walking, hiking, running, biking or even Rollerblading. (Although, I wouldn't recommend Rollerblading if you have dogs that pull like I do. Very fun for them. Very scary for you!)

5. Jump for joy when you're happy.

Have you ever seen a dog circling around or jumping up and down at the thought of getting a treat or chasing a ball? Wouldn't it be fun if we could all jump around when we're excited about something? We live life so fast that we often forget to get excited and celebrate the good times because we're already on to the next thing. We live in a miraculous world where the sun comes up every day, flowers bloom and seasons change. There is much to jump for joy about.

6. Accept yourself.

Can you imagine a terrier wishing she were a boxer or a poodle envious of a collie's mane or a pug wanting the nose of a greyhound? We humans spend a lot of time trying to make ourselves look like someone else's version of perfection instead of loving our unique features, our unique life, and yes, our unique problems. How boring it would be if all dogs (or all humans) looked and behaved alike! Love everything about yourself -- the good, the bad and the ugly!

7. Enjoy the journey.

When dogs go for a car ride, they stick their head out the window, smell the air and feel the wind against their fur. They don't care where they're going. They're just enjoying the journey. Although goals are great to set, we often forget that it's the journey that matters most. When we get too attached to the outcome, we set ourselves up for frustration, depression or even anger if our exact expectations are not met. Next time you set a goal, be open to other possibilities and enjoy every moment of excitement, creativity, fun and lessons in the journey.

8. Drink lots of water.

Dogs instinctively know when their bodies need water. They usually stop eating when they're full, and won't eat anything that seems poisonous to them, except of course, for one of my huskies who once ate an entire platter of chocolate rum balls. Anyway... back to water. It's a good reminder for us to stay hydrated and drink when we're thirsty. In fact, drinking water when you feel hungry is good for weight management because often you just need some water. Another good practice is to drink a glass of water as soon as you wake up in the morning.

9. Be loyal and dependable.

Dogs are pack animals. They stick with their pack. They play with their pack. They defend their pack. This is a great reminder for all of us to be conscientious members of our human pack. The Golden Rule of treating others how you would like to be treated applies here. Being a loyal and dependable friend, lover, sibling, partner or parent will enrich your life in many ways.

10. Love unconditionally.

No matter what, dogs love you unconditionally. They wag their tails when they see you, no matter what mood you're in. They still want to give you big wet kisses, even if you've just yelled at them. And they instantly forgive you no matter how you behave. Loving others unconditionally is a difficult task, but it's the one that would surely make the world a better place if we all just tried.

So, we can learn a lot from our dogs. Their companionship, loyalty and unconditional love is unmatched by any human standards. And if you have huskies like I do, their singing will always brighten your day. Here's a look at my [howling huskies](#).