

# Advice on dogs, life and love



ask dog lady

Dear Dog Lady,

Our daughter recently adopted a one-year-old male cocker spaniel. When they came recently for a visit, he attacked our two-and-one-half year old, 250-pound mastiff, Mango. Mango is very friendly and a good host and is confused by this behavior. The little black devil is quite spoiled and is allowed on furniture and has no obedience training. It makes their visits very stressful for all of us (especially Mango, who is just an easy going guy who loves everybody). How can I convince them to train their dog? What should I say about them bringing him to our house?

—Nancy

*Nancy, you own the house. You make the rules. You control who or what sits on the furniture. You decide what people and animals to allow under your roof where Mango reigns. The crazy little black spaniel peeling around Mango should be banned. Right?*

*Perhaps you don't have the heart to outlaw your daughter's dog completely, but advise her of the new conditions. Invest in a visiting crate to contain the little gremlin. Insist the spaniel go into the crate whenever he invades. Place the crated one in a quiet room away from the festivities—allowing him out only to do business. When your daughter sees the good effect of confinement, she might be moved to try it herself.*

*Your daughter will not be motivated to train her spaniel simply because you lecture her to do so. Usually, people who don't cope well with their dogs are lazy bones by nature. They are inspired only by seeing the happy outcome of boundaries imposed on their out-of-control critters. Your crate should work wonders and Mango will think, "Sweet!"*

Dear Dog Lady,

I think one reason I like my dog so much is that he's so uncomplicated and direct. If he's hungry, he's hungry. If he wants to go out, he wants to go out. If he sticks his nose in the face or butt of another dog we meet on the street, he does so without worrying about being polite. He's in your face because it's the only way he knows how to be. Why can't people be more like dogs?

—Chuck

*Chuck, as much as there is to recommend the unswerving ways of dogs, you probably wouldn't want all people to act in all the same ways. For example, you decline to mention dogs' lack of linguistic prowess. This inability to articulate feelings and thoughts shrouds dogs in secrecy—despite their "in your face" habits.*

*Dogs do not understand subtleties. They dwell in a black and white world. Recently, Dog Lady, Mr. Dog Lady and the dog spent time in a house with a cat. "He's either in heaven or hell," opined Mr. Dog Lady about the dog. We couldn't tell if he was bewitched, bothered or bewildered by the cat's presence.*

*One reason why dogs and humans get along so well is the great divide of understanding. We know they love us. Kinda. Is what they feel a genuine emotion—real love? Or unconditional need? We all live well together in the shadowy area—somewhere between "I must have now" and "perhaps I should wait until tomorrow."*

Dear Dog Lady,

My girlfriend is absolutely perplexed by her dog, a terrier I think, and yearns to know what it is thinking. She wants to bring him to a dog psychic. I checked out Sonya Fitzpatrick, the Sirius radio pet psychic, who offers private phone readings for \$300. I'm thinking of getting my girl a gift certificate for this. Do you think I will be throwing away my money?

—Brian

*Brian, in the spirit of full disclosure, Dog Lady recently had a complimentary phone reading with Sonya Fitzpatrick and the results were mixed, although the process is as easy as pie. You merely send off a picture of the dog to be analyzed and wait by the phone.*

*Fitzpatrick mentioned a "black dog" my dog wants to see. This could have been any number of black dogs. I chose to believe it was a Lab who recently died and was very friendly with my dog. She also mentioned my pet's culinary needs: "He's asking if he can have some more chicken." Okey-doke. What dog doesn't want chicken? Duh.*

*Fitzpatrick will not lead you astray in her care and concern for dogs. Her empathy for them is no act and, if she can really communicate with woofers, nobody will better channel an animal's feelings—although Dog Lady believes these thoughts basically boil down to: "Gimme a walk. Gimme food. Gimme you."*

*Fitzpatrick clearly is a dog lady after Dog Lady's heart. With any dog problem, she said, "It's never the dog. It's always the human being." Her insight is right on the money. Whether it's worth \$300 is up to you.*

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