

Advice on dogs, life and love



ask dog lady

Dear Dog Lady,

About two months ago, a dog started living in the parking lot where I work. Someone must've been feeding her because she made this her home before I started caring for her. The more attention I give her, the more attention she wants. She's a very happy dog—always wagging her tail when I talk to her. I have been feeding her before and after work (including weekends) for over a month now. I also give her treats such as dollops of peanut butter. I think she will make a great pet. My only problem? She is scared. She wants to be around me, but only lets me touch her very carefully. If I stand up, she backs off. I will take this dog in if I can, but there is no way I could get her in my car or even put a leash on her. What can I do? I know I can help her, but she has to learn to trust me.

—Natalie

Natalie, you are a good soul to care for this woofers wanderer. You seem to be taking all the right steps in getting her to trust you—giving food, appropriate attention and peanut butter. (Oh Lordy, peanut butter is a narcotic for doggies.) You don't report any kind of identification on this dog so it seems as if the nervous darling is ripe for a new loving home.

Dog Lady cannot tell you how to induce this dog to be leashed and corralled. That's for a rescue professional to calculate. The best you can do is phone your local no-kill animal shelter and ask them to get involved in this case of the parking lot angel. Shelter workers will not only advise you how to rein in the dog, they will probably do it themselves because strays are their specialty.

This dog needs to be checked up and cleaned up for adoption. Since you called the shelter and reported this dog, you will be able to follow the progress and place your name first on a list to adopt her. The rescue organization's staff will also advise you on behavior and trust issues. You have been very kind to take care of this stray, but, if you really want a long-lasting relationship, you should call in the pros.

Dear Dog Lady,

I went to a professional mixer and met a man who was very good-looking, well-dressed and fun.

We made easy conversation and laughed a lot. Afterward, he took me to dinner. He talked about Yahoo, a big mutt (a shepherd mix) that he got at the pound. I was thrilled when he asked me to join him and Yahoo on a long walk the next day. I love dogs and think guys with dogs are sexy until he left a big Yahoo pile behind. I couldn't believe he ignored the mess. I wanted to say something but didn't. Now, he's asked me out again but I can't decide whether to go or think up an excuse. Advice?

—Becca

Becca, you seek a man who scoops to conquer your heart. Your aim is true, but don't dump this fellow immediately. Give him another chance to clean up his act.

Some guys have a thing about picking up dog poop. Call it queasiness, embarrassment, or just plain obliviousness, but they don't like to do it. Remember, this indiscretion occurred during a self-conscious first date. If it happens again, be direct and say something to him—something light and airy instead of confrontational. Or you could magically pull a baggie from your pocket and pick up, although the preemptive strike would probably shame him, which you should avoid because he's sounds like a decent man who adopted a shelter dog. This alone should tell you he has a big heart even if his environmental manners require a tutorial.

Dear Dog Lady,

A woman in my office has recently lost her dog, Nikki. I've already said I'm sorry to her but want to reach out to her in a more significant way. Is there a dog sympathy card or a token gift to express my condolences?

—Steve

Steve, you are thoughtful to understand that your grief-stricken colleague has suffered a deep loss. Often, non-dog people don't realize the death of a dog can be just as traumatic as the passing of a human loved one.

Card companies do have lines of pet sympathy sentiments. Another suggestion is Barbra Streisand's The Movie Album. This 2003 collection of songs from films, includes a poignant rendition of "Smile," from Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times. In the liner notes, Streisand writes of her melancholy mood when she recorded "Smile":

"It's funny how great songs somehow relate to everyday life. Two nights before I recorded this, Sammy, my sweet nine-year-old Bijon-Frise had to be put to sleep. When I stepped into the vocal booth, his brave and loyal face was very much on my mind. 'Smile, though your heart is aching...' Dog lovers will understand." Yes, Barbra, we do.

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