

# Advice on dogs, life and love



## ask dog lady

Dear Dog Lady,

I've had it up to here with dog walkers who use these ridiculously long leashes that they can't control, never mind their dogs. When I run in the park, I often get tangled up in these fishing lines while the owner tries desperately to reel in a dog to get it out of my path. Why can't people use shorter leashes? Or, at the very least, learn how to operate the retractable monsters?  
—Dennis

*Dennis, you have an unleashed supporter. Too many times, Dog Lady has been walking with people who can't operate their expandable tether so that everybody's lines get twisted as walkers weave under and over, or trade leash handles back and forth, trying to disengage from the web of fettered foolishness.*

*For your own sanity, you can't stop and lecture every dog walker who shouldn't have a license to operate an oxymoronic "Flexi" leash. But Dog Lady can use her bully pulpit to preach: People, please, keep your leash under control.*

*Before using a retractable restraint, make sure you know how to manipulate the darned thing so you have the best control over your dog. Often, dogs on long leads can run out into a busy street while the owner fumbles with the buttons on the handle.*

*Dog Lady urges everyone who walks a dog to use a sturdy leash that has instant manipulability. People in your path will be safer. So will your dog.*

Dear Dog Lady,

How many times do you need to walk a 65-pound dog? My boyfriend walks Stinky five times a day. On weekends, we can't be together for a whole eight hours without him going home to walk the dog every three hours. He baby talks his dog, has a picture in his wallet, an oil painting hanging on the wall of his house. His house and his car have dog's hair all over, and he just doesn't care.

Even if he denied it, I feel his dog is his priority. She's ten years old now and they've been together for six years before we met. He said he's just taking care of a creature that is totally dependent to him.

But I think he's taking the responsibility way too seriously. When she passes away, will he make me his priority? Isn't that unfair? I'm so confused already. I think he is obsessed with this dog and I want to break up with him. I'm not a dog lover and I don't think I can handle getting up every morning with dog's hair all around me if I move in. What shall I do?

—Yanni

*Yanni, don't take your frustrations out on your boyfriend's dog. You can't waste time in a relationship waiting for a guy's dog to die. Stinky has become a smelly excuse for you to sniff out reasons why the entire liaison is tainted.*

*Sit down with your boyfriend and talk to him. Tell him exactly how you feel about his attentions toward his dog and his romantic evasion. It sounds to Dog Lady as if he's avoiding a deeper relationship with you by transferring his affections to Stinky. That's OK, but it doesn't help you at all.*

*Before you have this little chat, make sure you are prepared to hear what he has to say. Open your ears, eyes, and heart to the possibility he may tell you he doesn't want to pursue the relationship any further. Then, you can tell him with candor and without rancor your own doubts. He may be relieved to hear them.*

*At the end of the day, any healing discussion should be about you two. Bickering or horse-trading over Stinky should be off the table. For your boyfriend, the bond with his dog is non-negotiable.*

Dear Dog Lady,

This woman I work with has gotten one of these designer breed dogs. I think it's a shih-poo, which sounds disgusting. All this person does is brag about her dog and when another co-worker cracked about how it was really a mutt instead of a pure-bred, the woman looked like she was going to break down in tears – as if she had bought a Prada pocketbook from a street vendor and found out it was a fake. Isn't a shih-poo a mutt?  
—Jessica

*Yes, Jessica, a mongrel by any other name is a shih-poo, or a labradoodle, or a pugle, or any other chic cross-breed. But why burst this woman's bubble? She must have paid top dollar for this poodle-shih tzu blend, and she's protecting her investment.*

*Internet jokesters make fine sport of creating faux exotic new breeds. Here are a few of the funnier ones: Collapso—a cross between collie and lhasa apso—for easy transport; Poinsetter—a pointer and setter—makes a lovely Christmas pet; and Newfoundland Asset Hound—a mix of Newfoundland and basset hound—is a must-have companion for a hedge fund tycoon.*

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