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Every time I pass by a dog on the street, I can't keep my eyes away.

Not because I'm suddenly overwhelmed with all those emotions that make dog videos some of the most popular on the internet.

For me, it's something else. Something that causes my stomach to cramp. Something that makes my heart beat so fast, I feel like anyone who came close would easily hear the rhythm. And sometimes, especially when the dog is not on a leash, that same thing makes me cross to the other side of the street.

That thing is pure fear.

It all goes back to my childhood, in Lagos, Nigeria. I lived in a neighbourhood where some dogs had a sort of independence.

They roamed around freely without their owners during the day, and would return to their homes by sunset.

As a child, I occasionally heard stories about dogs that suddenly turned wild on their owners. And so I became afraid.

My neighbourhood's independent dogs could sense my fear. Even on days when I pretended to be confident and unaffected, they would chase me until I ran into a building to save myself. I still wonder how none of them ever caught up with me to inflict injuries.

Halima Sogbesan grew up in Nigeria, where people had a different relationship with dogs. Now in Canada, she's learning to be somewhat more comfortable around canines, though she still finds them terrifying. (Kate Tenenhouse/CBC).

Many years ladoter, that childhood fear followed me across the world to a place where I meet dogs everywhere, almost every day.

I now live in a place where a cute dog photo can instantly melt hearts. So my particular fear is often unexpected, and does not always make sense to others.

The owner of the puppy pleaded with me to be calm, but I couldn't be.

For example, it was unexpected when I fell on the grass, on my way to the bus stop, because a very small puppy suddenly broke out of its home.

As I tried to run away from the advancing canine, I tripped and fell. And I remained there, on the ground, screaming in fear as the puppy stopped in front of me and wouldn't stop barking. The owner of the puppy pleaded with me to be calm, but I couldn't be.

At the end of that encounter, I was glad the puppy chose to be the bigger person. After a few minutes, it just walked away from me and my self-inflicted embarrassment.

For Halima Sogbesan, even a friendly dog looks like this. (Shutterstock).

For the entire day, that event played out in my head, and I went about feeling ashamed.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to do something about my fear. I spent two weeks as the guest of a woman with a very friendly dog named Duncan.

When I told her about my fear, she embarked on a mission to make me more comfortable with Duncan. By the end of my visit, I was able to stay in the same room with him when I was sure something else had his attention. But when he tried to approach me, I would hop on the sofa or just run upstairs.

This was an improvement until I found myself not feeling any confidence when I saw dogs on the street. Nothing had changed.

This fear of dogs has stayed with me for so long, I think it will probably always be there.

But it does have an upside. It has forced me to be sympathetic to people who are afraid of things that don't make sense to me.

My brother is terribly afraid of escalators. He would rather climb uncountable flights of stairs than use one. And every time I see myself judging him for being unreasonable, I catch myself.

After all, I'm the one who fears man's best — and some think cutest — friend.

Man's best friend, but not Halima Sogbesan's.