

5 Things Our Pets Teach Us

As a Keynote Speaker on Leadership and Innovation, I've discovered that there's great wisdom to be learned from my pets that I often share with audiences. Funny how a coaching principle accompanied with an adorable picture of my dogs, cats and birds has been embraced more readily than a habit or principle quoted by the most current leadership guru.



Granted, it did get me in trouble speaking in Dubai, where dogs are not as welcome as they are in the west and considered unclean.

My joke was that I wished my husband would greet me like my dog, with a picture of Mr. Bucky enthusiastically embracing me at the door, landed not with the usual awe and, "I get it" but a horrified gasp.

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Having pets can teach us a lot of things. For kids, they are often their first lesson in responsibility, and being responsible for the well being of another living thing is actually great for anyone, kid or adult. It teaches empathy, consistency, and so much more -especially if that pet is a dog.

CesarMilan

So, FAAN-atics, knowing you're all animal lovers with no such negative vibes, I feel safe to share five teachings I have learned from my pets (Dogs, Cats & Birds) and ask you to observe and reflect on how your pets can be your greatest life coach.

In 15 seconds, we decide if we like you or not.

My rescue dog, Mr. Peabody enthusiastically greets guests at the door.

When FAAN President, Jose Gomez comes to the house for a board meeting, he not only greets Jose, he jumps right into his arms. Not surprising that the 160 dogs in FAAN's care feel the same way and that Jose knows every single name of every single dog. In contrast, Mr. Peabody quickly picks up on guests who give him the stink eye for his welcoming enthusiasm.

Lesson: *Be welcoming to those you meet and yes, be aware that in 15 seconds, we usually decide if we like you or not, so first impressions matter.*

The Nature of Inspiration

I've watched my cat bask in the warmth of the sun on our stone path in his enchantment of leaves, birds, and the delight of a warm breeze. The greatest daily joy for all of my dogs even beyond food has been the sound of my voice saying "Want to go out?" and their clear delight in using all of their senses to explore the world beyond. They walk tall and proud with their human companions; just taking a walk makes all the difference in their day.

Lesson: *Take in the nature of inspiration. Move your body, move your mind and get outside every day for your physical and mental well-being.*



Loyalty and Forgiveness

You probably won't find a more loyal companion than man's best friend, but when they do behave badly, they are quick to ask for your forgiveness.

A growl is quickly converted into sorrowful eyes and a hundred kisses. I worked with a life coach once who suggested when an apology is needed "Rather than saying the rote 'I'm sorry' ask *can you forgive me?*"

It seems in today's political divide accompanied by the use of our devices as a primary communication tool, long-lasting and loyal friendships can quickly end with one social media growl.

Lesson: *Consider the value of loyalty in friendships and how that often depends on the ability to overlook and forgive. You might still growl in a conflict on an issue but be quick to remember how special that human really is.*

Napping is a Good Thing

All my pets have loved their naps.

When I've been spending hours at the computer or running around, I often wish I had my dog or cat's life and time for a glorious nap.

Oh wait, I can make time. "That's up to me. I'm semi-retired and living in Ecuador."

Lesson: *Enjoy the beauty of a planned or unplanned nap in the middle of the day. For overachievers, I would go so far as to say put a "Take a Nap" on your To-Do list. You'll feel more productive and less guilty enjoying your respite.*

Love Unconditionally

Our pets love us unconditionally.

They overlook our imperfections, bad moods and not being present with them all the time. Then when they do look at us, they make us feel like we're the most important humans on the planet.

In a world of critics and where we can spend a good deal of time criticizing ourselves, unconditional love is a pretty awesome thing.

Lesson: *Overlook imperfections in yourself and others and experience the joy of love and appreciation. You just may win "Best in Show"*

Rosemary Rein
Advisory Board Member

