

Ask the Trainer: Is “Training” Really What Your Dog Needs?



The more clients I see, the more dogs and humans I meet, and the more families and communities I interact with, the less I feel like a dog “trainer.” I typically work with people who are looking for help to address something about their dog that concerns them, but when it comes to challenging behaviour issues, dog training has traditionally focused on the behaviours rather than the underlying causes.

While the path to resolving many behaviour concerns involves teaching and reinforcing more desirable

ways of responding to situations, there is so much more to it than that. In many cases, we don't even need to teach the dog new skills!

How can that be? Well, the types of dog behaviours that are typically disruptive to our human lives, like all behaviours, are motivated by some sort of need. If we thoughtfully investigate the underlying needs behind those behaviours, we often discover that a remedy doesn't require any new skills.

For example, I've had a handful of cases involving growling, snapping, biting and fights that, at first glance,

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About Speaking of Dogs

Speaking of Dogs Rescue Program is a Canadian registered charity established in the Greater Toronto area (with foster homes across Ontario). Launched in 2001, we are a foster-based, all breed rescue with a focus on senior dogs. We are run solely by volunteers with a mission to help homeless dogs in need by providing shelter or sanctuary, necessary medical care, adoption and education.

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Newsletters

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seemed to require intensive training but were resolved by tending to an ear infection! Once we discovered that the dog was behaving so intensely because they were in pain or discomfort (I've had one ear infection in my life, and it was horrible!), things started to make a lot more sense. Moreover, in each of these cases, the dog's guardians were greatly relieved to know that there was a reasonable explanation for their dog's worrisome behaviour.

As dog trainers, we often encounter such examples of behaviour issues being triggered by underlying causes that have next to nothing to do with training, skills, or obedience. However, some situations are more obvious than others. Most people would agree that a wild and rambunctious young dog who isn't getting daily walks would really benefit from more opportunities to explore, exercise, get some fresh air, sniff around, and play. It's a typical dog doing typical dog things who hasn't been provided with appropriate places to do these things. This dog doesn't need to be trained to be more relaxed; they need more opportunities to have their needs met.

Like humans, dogs almost invariably feel good in all the right ways when they have their needs met. I like to think of this as satisfaction or fulfillment, and a satisfied, fulfilled dog is the antidote to so many behaviour issues. Some would say that "inappropriate" or "maladaptive" behaviours are actually just the dog doing their best to meet their own needs, which is a beautiful and compassionate perspective.

But where can you start if you want to better understand your dog's needs? Allie Bender, CDBC, and Emily Strong, CDBC, do a fantastic job of outlining this in their book *Canine Enrichment for the Real World*. I highly recommend picking up a copy – mine is well worn, dog eared, and full of underlined passages and notes in the margins.

As I've continued to pursue my career as a dog trainer, I've become more and more interested in looking beyond the symptoms and, as a result, the less I've prioritized "training" solutions. This sort of approach is hardly groundbreaking, but it is all too often a fairly niche conversation in the broader dog training world, even though it could really benefit dogs and their guardians.

I like to think of this as a needs-based approach. We all have needs. Some of them are basic biological or psychological needs, and some are more specific to individuals. There is a great deal of overlap between species when it comes to basic needs, but it's important to recognize that dogs have many needs that differ from ours, and some of these can be challenging for us to appreciate. When out for a walk with your dog, you might easily think Why is it so important for you to smell that wet spot for so long!? Wait, did you just lick it!?

Since our dogs' needs can differ so greatly from our own, it can be hard to know if you're checking all the boxes, so to speak. This is one of the reasons why it's so often beneficial to involve a qualified professional who takes a positive, rewards-based approach if you're experiencing behaviour difficulties with your pet. When it comes to caring for your dog and understanding what might be underlying their behaviours, it's not one-size-fits-all. A qualified trainer, behaviour consultant, or veterinary behaviourist can help you make the connections between your dog's needs and their behaviours.

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 Thank you! 

THANK YOU to the youth of today for helping raise funds for our dogs! BIG WAGS and WIGGLES to Claire (11 years old), Grace (8 years old), Jake (4 years old) and Yehor (5 years old). "My Dad is a veterinarian and he loves your dog charity, so when the kids said they wanted to raise money for an organization that helps animals, my Dad suggested yours! They made \$80 for Speaking of Dogs Rescue!" says Mom. We can't thank you enough for your tireless efforts and commitment to this fundraiser! What a wonderful, kind group of children with shared family values and strong guiding lights!

Best wishes from all of us at Speaking of Dogs Rescue!



Claire, Grace, Jake & Yehor

Dogs Looking for Homes

A friend in need is a friend indeed

Without a doubt, a dog is a real friend. Our dogs come in all shapes and sizes, but they have one thing in common they all need loving forever homes. Open your heart and your home to a rescue dog. You'll be glad you did. For complete information about the adoption process, please visit www.speakingofdogs.com/adoption-process. For more information on each dog, simply click on their name.

Meet our feature Dog

PONCHO

Poncho is a 13-year-old hound/collie cross and weighs about 65 pounds. Poncho has adjusted nicely into his foster home and is getting on quite well with their dogs. He will give a growl for space if they come too close to him. He loves attention and could easily be pet all day. Of course, that is not realistic, so when his foster parents tell him enough, he is content to lay by their feet, keeping a watchful eye in case they decide to move or might like to re-engage in some petting action! He is starting to explore in small snippets. He is excited to go outside and walk the property or go on forest walks with his foster dad. He walks nicely on a leash. Poncho is not totally housetrained, but his foster family manages this by keeping a close eye on him and paying attention to his schedule and his body language. He has gone from frequently lifting his leg indoors to maybe twice a week, and that is because his fosters were not paying attention. He's a work in progress and is doing better. Poncho has glaucoma and, as a result, has had one of his eyes removed and needs drops daily in his other eye. He stands still and lets you put them in without a struggle.



Click here to visit Poncho's Adoption Page



He also has some hearing impairment. Otherwise, he appears to be a happy, healthy man. He seems to prefer to be inside, but also likes to go outside with his foster mom, keeping a close eye on her while she gardens, or snoozing on the porch while she has her coffee. Poncho sleeps through the night, sleeping on a dog bed beside his foster mom. He also likes to sleep on the furniture. He was apparently previously crated trained, but at this point in his life we do not feel he needs it. He is not destructive and does not appear to have

separation anxiety, so the fosters just block the basement stairs (for safety, as he seems to have depth perception issues) and he is free to roam the house when left alone. He just sleeps. Poncho is a dandy old guy and would love to find a nice retirement home where he can soak up sun rays, putter around the yard, go for walks, and have snack and nap times!





Ally

Husky / Labrador Retriever / Mixed
Large Young Female



Annabelle

Pug / Beagle / Mixed
Medium Senior Female



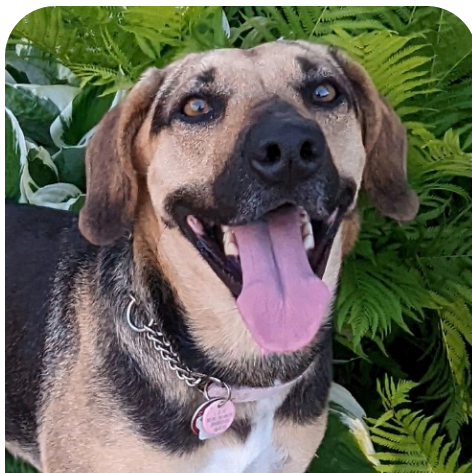
Griffin

Border Collie / Hound / Mixed
Medium Young Male



Lacey

Golden Retriever
Medium Young Female



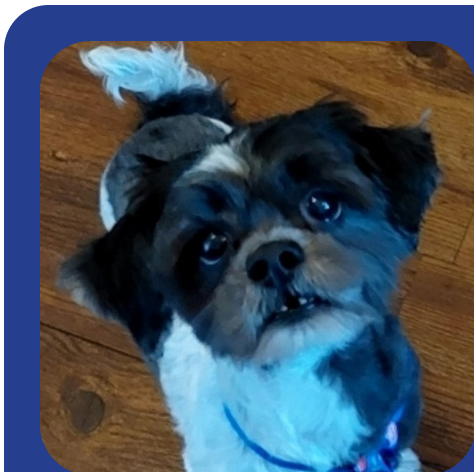
Ginger Snap

Shepherd / Hound / Mixed
Medium Adult Female



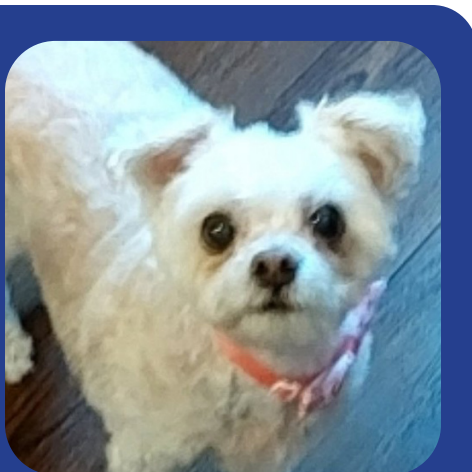
Veeru

Whippet / Mixed
Medium Young Male



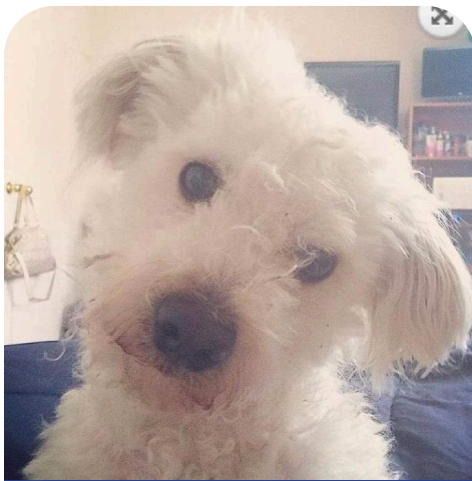
Ruby and Dan

Shih Tzu / Maltese / Mixed
Small Senior Female & Male



Giles

Border Collie
Medium Senior Male



Teddy

Bichon Frise
Small Senior Male



Archie

Shih Tzu
Small Senior Male



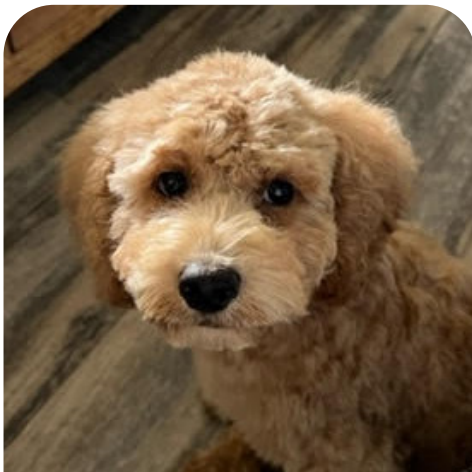
Griffin

Border Collie / Hound / Mixed
Medium Young Male



Sky

Labrador Retriever / Mixed
Medium Young Female



Ginger

Miniature Poodle / Mixed
Medium Baby Female

THE CONNECTION THE SUN READERS CHOICE AWARDS 2022

Simcoe County Readers' Choice Awards Please Choose Speaking of Dogs Rescue!

It's Reader's Choice time again, and we're delighted and grateful to be nominated for Best Animal Rescue. Speaking of Dogs Rescue is a registered charity run solely by volunteers, and this year we're proudly celebrating 21 years of promoting responsible pet ownership and caring for and rehoming dogs in need. We'd be very grateful if you could take a few moments to help spread the word about the wonderful dogs in our care by voting for our rescue.

All you need to do is click below, sign in, and cast your vote for Speaking of Dogs Rescue!



Click Here to Vote



Voting closes September 12!

Adoption Update

*To: Speaking of Dogs Rescue
From: Catherine Wassmansdorf
Subject: Simba*

Dear Speaking of Dogs Rescue,

Simba is doing amazingly well. He continues to be energetic, loving long walks in our local parks, chasing his beloved tennis balls, and playing in the backyard. He has made many dog friends and even a cat who is walked on a leash in our neighbourhood. He has a perch by the front window where he watches the neighbourhood and lets us know when there is something interesting to see. He is so affectionate, welcoming us home with his signature happy dance, and directing us immediately to his toys to play. With lots of patience and persistence, Simba is becoming more tolerant of grooming. We can now brush him and even get little tail wags when

his back is brushed. Simba has a wonderful groomer that keeps him looking handsome.

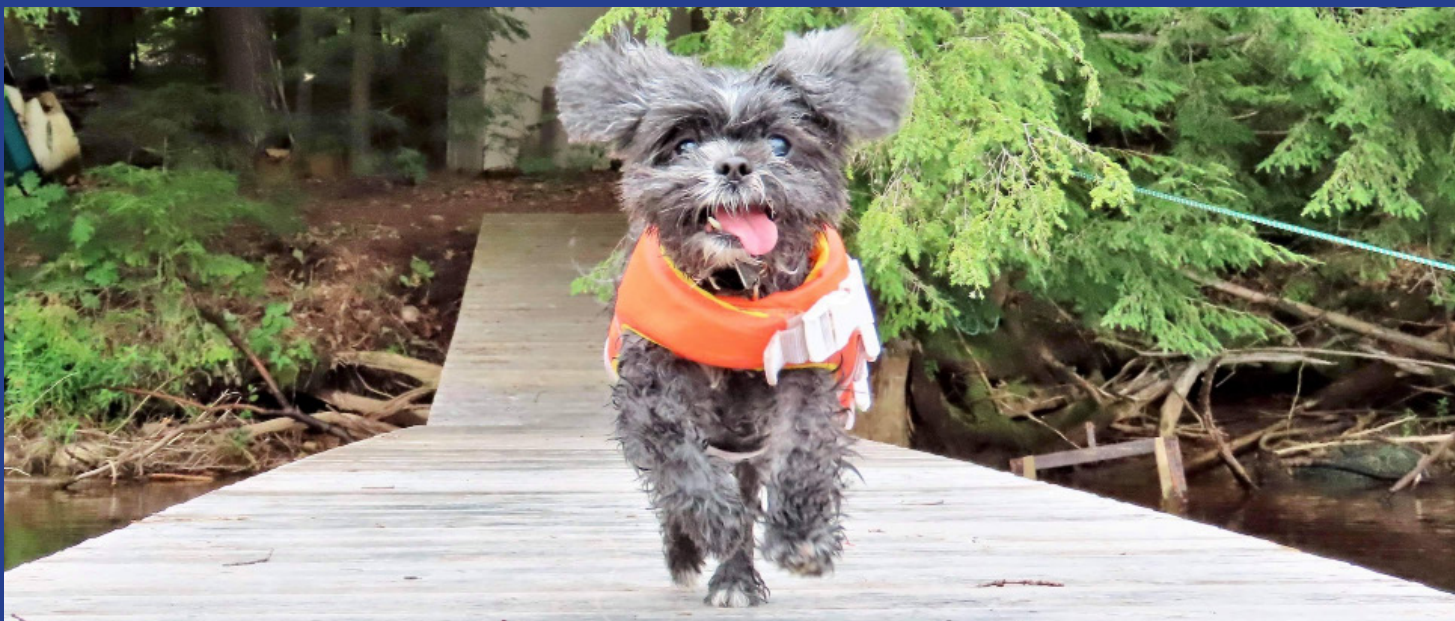
We have been happy to take Simba on adventures with us. He has had sleepovers in Waterloo, and at friends' cottages. Last summer he got to come to our friends' northern cottage for a weekend. He was well behaved, and with his little life jacket, got to ride with me in a kayak, and with Gregg on a paddle board. He liked the dock best of all and I took this photo of him racing back and forth after a kayak ride. Simba is completely adored by our family. He brought comfort to my father-in-law when he faced cancer and sadly passed away last

December. He wanted Simba by his side especially when he became too weak to get out of bed. Simba seemed to know, and willingly cuddled up with him for many hours.

Simba was a comfort and even source of joy for all of us at that sad time. He is such a sweet, loving dog.

We are so incredibly grateful that we have been able to give Simba a home.

Catherine Wassmansdorf
with licks
from
Simba



Happy Tails

RECENT ADOPTIONS:

A big thank you to our foster parents and our new adoptive guardians for helping give these loving dogs a second chance.



Chloe



Coop



Maple



Tía



Buddy



Gracie



Kai



Matilda



Ollie

More Happy Tails



Skye



Gucci



Patti



Simba



Teal



Dont forget to
Like and subscribe
to our [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
pages for all of the latest SOD news

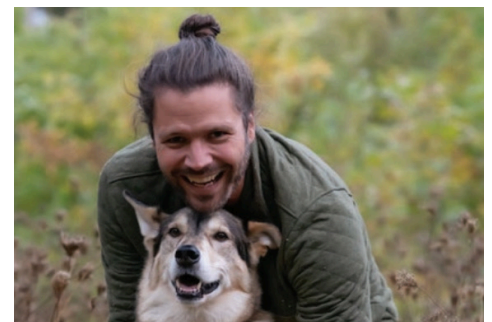
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It's been my experience that a sincere effort to meet a dog's needs is the solution to many behaviour issues. In the situations where more sophisticated behaviour modification strategies are necessary, a needs-based approach helps establish a foundation that makes those strategies much more effective!

To me, this kind of dog training feels a lot more like the dog equivalent of social work, while traditional, "old school" dog training is more like being a sports coach or

fitness trainer. There's value to all of these approaches, but dog guardians too often find themselves looking for help in a sea of football coaches who insist that all they need to do is run a few more drills when what they really need is some help to better understand the issues underlying their dog's behaviour and a plan to resolve them. A dog who barks a lot may need more exercise, or they may need counterconditioning to help them cope with anxiety, or they may need antibiotics to treat a painful infection, or it might be something else entirely. The right dog trainer – one who goes beyond

the basics of what most of us commonly understand dog training to be – can help you get closer to the right solution!



Don Hutton is a certified dog trainer, providing dog behavior consultations and ethical training solutions through Running Dogs – Training & Behavior (www.runningdogs.ca)

 Thank you! 

BIG MONEY for our dogs thanks to the efforts of our amazing **YARD SALE TEAMS!**

Vicki Chorley and her merry band of yard sale helpers: Dale, Lynne and Bob Mari-Anne and Carl McCleary and their neighbourly team of helpers: Grant, Sharon, Susan, ChrisAna, Dan, Luba, Lubo and Francine.

Fun and Fundraising can go together when it's
ALL FOR DOGS and the
TOTAL of your efforts are just over \$1,500.00!

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!
We are so lucky to have such great volunteers!

Best wishes from all of us at Speaking of Dogs Rescue!

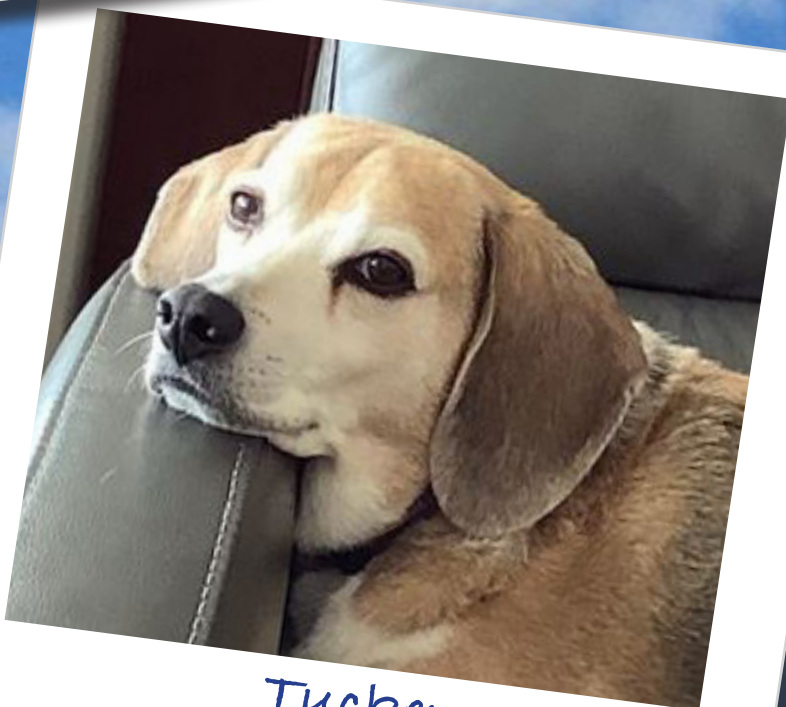


In Memoriam



Coby

ADOPTED MARCH 2011
LOVED BY CHRISTINE AMSDEN AND FAMILY



Tucker

ADOPTED JULY 2019
LOVED BY THE FILLION FAMILY