

November 2025

Ask the Trainer

Training Myths That Hurt Your Dog: What Science (and Our Dogs) Really Say

Bringing home a new dog is exciting but it's also a big responsibility. You want to do right by your dog, but there's a world of advice out there, some of it outdated or rooted in myths. Some of these myths not only fail to help – they can actually harm your dog's well-being.

One of the most powerful shifts in dog training and behaviour work today comes from understanding dogs as whole beings. As a Licensed Family Dog Mediator, I use the L.E.G.S. model developed by Kim Brophy, which helps us look at a dog's behaviour through four crucial lenses:

- **L = Learning** – Everything the dog has learned so far in life
- **E = Environment** – The dog's current surroundings and context
- **G = Genetics** – Breed traits and inherited tendencies
- **S = Self** – The dog's unique personality, health, and experiences



When we look at dog behaviour through L.E.G.S., we see that it's never as simple as "obedience" or "stubbornness." Dogs are complex animals with needs and instincts shaped by nature and nurture, and it's our responsibility to help them thrive.

Let's debunk a few of the most persistent training myths and discover what science really tells us about helping our dogs thrive.

Myth #1: "You need to show your dog who's boss."



This old belief comes from a dominance theory, which claims dogs are always trying to become "alpha." People are told to use harsh corrections, or rituals like eating first or walking through doorways before the dog.

Reality:

Dominance theory is outdated and has been debunked by modern research. Dogs are not plotting to overthrow your household; they're trying to feel safe, meet their needs, and navigate a world they often find confusing.

From a L.E.G.S. perspective, many so-called "dominant" behaviours are driven by a dog's genetics, learning history, stress levels, or unmet needs – not a power struggle.

Myth #2: “Punishment stops bad behaviour.”



People often believe that yelling, leash corrections, or shock collars will “teach” a dog to behave.

Reality:

Punishment might stop a behaviour briefly, but it doesn’t teach the dog what to do instead and often causes pain, fear, stress, or aggression.

Positive reinforcement, on the other hand, builds trust, helps dogs learn faster, and supports their wellbeing. Training should always avoid fear or pain, so dogs feel safe as they learn.

Myth #3: “Dogs know when they’re being bad because they look guilty.”



That “guilty look” – cowering, tucked tail, and avoiding eye contact is often mistaken for a confession.

Reality:

Dogs don’t feel guilt the way humans do. That look is appeasement behaviour, a dog’s way of saying, “Please don’t be upset.” They’re reacting to your tone, posture, or facial expression – not remembering the chewed shoe from hours ago.

Understanding L.E.G.S. helps here, too: If a dog has learned that certain situations lead to scary outcomes (yelling, punishment), they’ll show appeasement signals even if they’re confused about why you’re upset.

Myth #4: “Dogs should just listen – training treats are bribery.”

Some people think using treats is spoiling a dog or bribing them into obedience.

Reality:

Reinforcers like food, toys, or play aren’t bribes. They are how learning works, scientifically speaking. Rewards build neural pathways and help dogs learn which behaviours “pay off.” And from a welfare standpoint, positive reinforcement training is humane and enjoyable for dogs. It’s a way to create a cooperative relationship, not a power struggle.



Myth #5: “If a dog doesn’t obey, they’re just stubborn.”

Many people think their dog is “stubborn” if they don’t comply with commands.

Reality:

Dogs are rarely stubborn. More often, they’re:

- Confused about what’s being asked
- Overwhelmed or fearful
- Distracted by the environment
- Not sufficiently motivated or reinforced

Through the L.E.G.S. lens, we consider: What learning history might influence their behaviour? Is the environment too stimulating or scary? What does this dog's genetic makeup predispose them to? Is the dog feeling well physically?

Training works best when we listen to the dog and set them up for success.

Welfare: Creating a World That Meets Your Dog's Needs

Beyond training, it's crucial to consider your dog's overall **welfare**. Behaviour problems often arise when a dog's physical, emotional, and instinctual needs aren't being met.

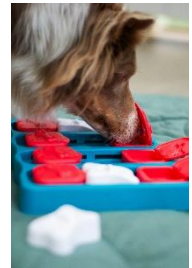
Every dog comes with biological drives shaped by **genetics**. For example:

- Herding breeds often need outlets for stalking, chasing, and control games
- Scent hounds thrive on sniffing and tracking
- Guardian breeds may be naturally wary of strangers

Ignoring those traits can lead to frustration, stress, or behavioural issues. A beagle who's never allowed to sniff or follow scents will be frustrated and stressed, because an essential part of their well-being is missing no matter how 'well-trained' they appear.

Meeting your dog's needs might mean:

- Providing mental enrichment (puzzle toys, scent games, training games)
- Giving safe opportunities to express natural behaviours like digging, chewing, or sniffing
- Ensuring adequate rest and downtime
- Creating predictable routines to help dogs feel safe



Ultimately, **welfare is about the whole dog**. It's not just avoiding punishment, but actively creating a world where your dog can feel safe, fulfilled, and understood.

Dogs are complex, feeling creatures with unique genetic makeups, life histories, and personalities. Behaviour is never just "obedience" or "stubbornness", it's a result of many factors working together.

Instead of relying on old myths, we owe it to our dogs to embrace science, compassion, and a deep understanding of who they truly are. The L.E.G.S. model helps us see dogs as individuals and guides us to build lives and environments that help them thrive.

If you're struggling with behaviour issues or simply want to start off right, connect with a certified, force-free professional. Together, you can help your dog live a life full of joy, safety, and species-appropriate fulfillment.

Let's leave old myths behind and build a future where every dog can be seen, heard, and loved for who they truly are.

Written by
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Licensed Family Dog Mediator
Muttz with Mannerz
www.muttzwithmannerz.com





BLACKIE'S FUND

Every dollar donated in November will be matched up to \$5k by a generous donor!

Help us help dogs by donating at www.speakingofdogs.com/donate or by e-transfer to rescueprogram@speakingofdogs.com.

All donations of \$20 or more will receive a tax receipt.

BLACKIE'S FUND

Here is how Blackie's Fund has helped over the past year:

Boston: 3 days in ICU to survive parvo

Bren: infected skin care intervention

Banks: surgery for foreign body obstruction

Alex: veterinary intake costs

Ellie: covered the spay to support a partner rescue

Gigi: covered the spay and dental to support a partner rescue

Harley & Marvel: covered boarding for an owner who needed time to get his life back on track

Stryker: covered an orthopedic consult

Louie and Tiger: covered their spay and neuter to support a rural shelter (both since adopted)

Riley: malignant mass removal to help his adoption chances (adopted by his fostered dad)

Sadie: covered an orthopedic consult (which showed the affected area was indeed operable)

Kimbo: covered her dental

Cleo: covered the spay (was abandoned in an apartment, now happily with a new family)



Charity Fundraiser In Memory of Diane Purser



Every contribution helps give rescue animals
the love and care they deserve.



Muttz with Mannerz is holding a fundraiser in honour of one of their team members, Diane Purser, who passed away in October 2023. Diane's passion and dedication to animal welfare continues to inspire her former co-workers every day.

In her honour, they have launched a fundraiser to support two organizations: **Speaking of Dogs Rescue** and the **Ontario SPCA**. Both of these rescues work tirelessly to care for animals in need.

These rescues currently have an abundance of toys, leashes, collars and crates, so they're asking dog treats and monetary donations (tax receipts are available for donations over \$20 as they are registered charities). Whether big or small, every contribution helps give rescue animals the love and care they deserve.

You can drop off your donations by **November 8th** at Muttz with Mannerz during their regular hours (found at <https://www.muttzwithmannerz.com/>) and they'll ensure everything goes directly to the rescues.

amazon wish lists

Want to help our dogs?

Consider making a donation from our Amazon wish list of priority dog supplies.

[Click here to view list](#)

Dogs Looking for Homes

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

Meet our Featured Dog for November – Lana

Your Future Best Friend

Are you looking for a loyal, goofy, and affectionate gal to share your life with? Then allow us to introduce Lana, a 10-year-old bulldog mix with a heart full of love and a gentle soul that will absolutely steal yours.



At around 40 lbs, Lana may be considered a senior, but don't let her age fool you — she's still got plenty of pep in her step and personality to spare. Lana came to us as a stray from a GTA shelter, and while she was a little shy at first, she's blossomed beautifully in foster care. Her sweet, silly nature shines through more every day — and yes, she's a total cuddle bug!

Lana's favorite things in life? Belly rubs, kisses, cuddles, and car rides. She LOVES car rides. She'll also happily play fetch or tug-of-war with a rope toy, then curl up with you for a well-earned nap. At night, she'll happily snooze right beside you, making sure you both sleep soundly knowing you're not alone.

She's currently living with other dogs and gets along well with her foster siblings, but deep down, we think she'd thrive as the centre of someone's world. When she meets new people, she greets them with her signature "woo-woo" and a happy tail wag — truly, she's never met a stranger.

Health & Special Notes

For a gal her age, Lana is doing great!

- She has some hearing loss, so her foster uses hand signals and gentle touches for communication.
- Her eyesight is still good, though she has some decreased peripheral vision, especially at night.
- She has the beginning signs of arthritis in her spine, but currently doesn't require medication. No stairs or high jumps would be best though. Frequent short walks will keep her moving comfortably.

She's currently on a joint-supportive diet (Hills Metabolic with some wet food topper) and gets daily glucosamine, fish oil, and collagen supplements to keep her feeling her best.

Lana's Stats

- She's good with dogs, kids and strangers
- Unknown how she is with cats
- She's housetrained, though she goes out frequently
- Not Crate trained, but doesn't need to be (she's not destructive and sleeps peacefully when alone)
- Low to medium energy level (she still enjoys playtime!)
- Excellent on leash (and she enjoys stopping to "smell the roses")



The Perfect Home for Lana

Lana would be happiest in a calm, loving home where she can be someone's one-and-only companion (or share space with friendly dogs). She'll follow you from room to room, lay at your feet, and remind you every day how special it is to be loved unconditionally.

If you're looking for a gentle, goofy, loyal best friend who's already house-trained, past the puppy chaos, and full of love to give, Lana might be the perfect match for you.

Click [here](#) to visit our adoption application.



Dora
Beagle
Medium, Senior, Female



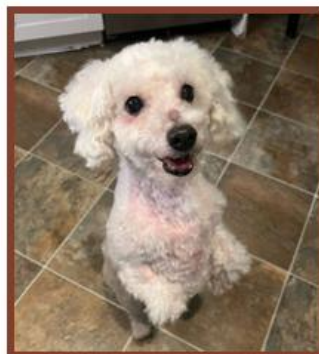
Jessie & Junie
Pomeranians
Small, Adult, Females



Kona
German Shepherd Dog Mix
Medium, Adult, Female



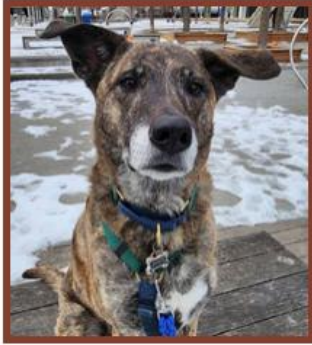
Pippy
Miniature Poodle Mix
Small, Adult, Female



Frosty
Bichon Frise Mix
Small, Senior, Female



Margaux
German Shepherd Dog
Large, Senior, Female



Piper

Labrador Retriever / Greyhound Mix
Large, Adult, Female



Summer

Bichon Frise Mix
Small, Adult, Female



Marshall

Havanese
Small, Adult, Male

2026 Calendars Available to Order

Our 2026 Speaking of Dogs Rescue calendars are almost ready!

The cost is \$15.00 each or, if you order 10 or more, the price drops to \$12.00 each.

If you are interested in purchasing a calendar, please email
speakingofdogs@gmail.com.



Wiggles and Wags



Congratulations to Jane-Anne who won a \$25 gift card for our Newsletter mystery draw

Thank you to our anonymous Leafs ticket donor and to everyone who supported the Leafs raffle

- Special thanks to Gerry B who kept up with ticket sales
- The winning ticket number was 235



Happy Tails (Recent Adoptions)



Amelia



Archie



Chico



Dior



Gigi



Maggie



Maggy



Suki



Storm



Tango

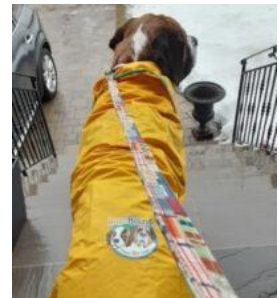
Adoption Update

Dear Speaking of Dogs Rescue,



Bella is fantastic. It's been about 18 months since she joined our family, and we could not be happier. From day one, it felt like she belongs with us. Her adjustment to our home was fast and easy. Bella did not need any obedience training. She came to us with the basics – sit, down, shake a paw. We taught her to stay, leave it and how to walk on a leash. Leash walking was a challenge because of her strength, so we used a gentle leader at first, but now she doesn't need it and walks beautifully. We think she didn't get to socialize much before she came to us, so she would pull on the leash to see other dogs. Now other dogs are normal, and she has dog buddies too, so she doesn't get excited and pull anymore.

Her personality is such that teaching Bella anything has been easy – she is very intelligent and a people pleaser. She likes visiting the vet, loves being brushed, and contentedly tolerates having her teeth brushed, nails trimmed and having baths. When Bella came to us, she wouldn't walk in the rain, didn't like water or the garden hose. But now, none of these things bother her. She even has a raincoat she likes to wear! At the end of August, we rented a cottage and Bella came with us. It was a fantastic week for all of us. Since we returned, Bella has been more confident than before. It's as if she realizes that she can go for a long drive, stay somewhere new, but she does it with us and we all come home together. She is happiest when we are all home, on the sofa, having a cuddle and hanging out together.



As you can see, I can go on and on about Bella. We love her and could not have asked for a better dog. Bella gets a lot of attention on the street, and I love telling her story as well as telling people we got her through Speaking of Dogs. She has been a perfect adoption story. We know how lucky we are to have her, and we think she knows she's lucky too.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Siemens and family

Speaking of Dogs is in search of its next Newsletter Designer & Editor Volunteer

Are you — or someone you know — creative and crazy about dogs? Are you passionate about finding the best ways to communicate how to help our adoptable and foster dogs? Do you get excited about sharing Speaking of Dogs' powerful stories and remarkable initiatives? Do you want to volunteer with Speaking of Dogs but can't always contribute in person?

If so, this remote volunteer opportunity might be perfect for you!

In this role, the ideal candidate will be:

- Very comfortable using computers
- Creative and media-savvy, with the ability to create engaging graphics
- Flexible with their schedule, particularly during the last week of each month
- Able to dedicate 7–9 hours during the final 3 days of each month to prepare the upcoming newsletter
- Reliable and self-motivated
- Willing to learn how to use our WordPress-based website to design the newsletter
- Comfortable editing articles (a nice-to-have, but not required)



If this sounds like you, we would love to hear from you. If this sounds like someone you know, we would love to hear from them too, please share the word!

Please reach out to us at speakingofdogs@gmail.com

In Memoriam



Alek

Adopted May 2023
Loved by Catherine A.



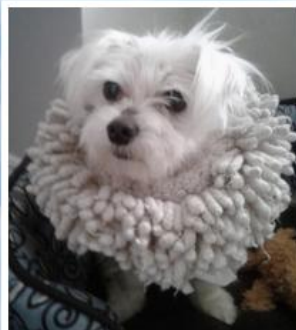
Leia

Adopted July 2013
Loved by Dr. Erica Lutman



Star

Adopted March 2022
Loved by Anna B.



Toby

Forever in Foster
Loved by Bonnie and Melvyn Viner

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.

Newsletter Team

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