

Six Things No One Tells You About Dog Ownership

I think we can all agree there are a lot of good reasons to adopt a dog, right? Here're a few:

- First, they're so freaking cute and adorable and lovable!
- Second, dogs will love you unconditionally for as long as they live, making them one of the best companions you could ever have.
- Many breeds can provide excellent protection.
- Getting a dog for your kids will be a great opportunity for them to learn responsibility. And what a great birthday present!
- A lot of people get puppies as a training program for having kids.
- And I've had a number of people tell me that the grand kids would love for me to



have one to play with when they visit, and since I'm semi-retired now, I have plenty of time for one. Ha!

So who wouldn't agree? Great idea, right?

Yeah, no.

While I agree with *all* those statements wholeheartedly, I still won't own a dog. And I have all kinds of reasons for that. And the reason I'm sharing my reasons with you is because I heard about an adoption event on the radio this past weekend where they were encouraging all their listeners to go to their local animal shelter and help them out by adopting a dog. Kid's birthdays were mentioned quite a few times along with companions for single-dog homes and then companions for those who live alone.

So, wow! Tens of thousands of dogs were adopted nationwide because of this annual event! It sounded wonderful!



But, hmm yeah, I wonder how many of these poor puppies will end up back in the same shelters in a few weeks because people didn't realize how much time, energy and work they really are. That's what compelled me to write out this list.

Since I've had both dogs and kids I'm going to make this list a little more interesting by throwing in a few comparisons between dog ownership and kid "ownership." Hahaha! This *should* be interesting, right?

By the way, I wouldn't advocate having kids based on this list. That's a whole other discussion and a whole 'nother book. (read: "*You Can't Love Your Children Too Much*") This is just for sake of helping you to see things from another perspective.

1. Potty Training: The back yard will be your dog's forever toilet.

Yes, potty training seems to take forever for both toddlers and puppies. At least with babies though, they have a diaper to contain their "accidents." Anyone who's tried to potty train a puppy knows what it's like to get up in the middle of the night and step in a nice cold puddle of dog pee...or worse! If you've never experienced this before, why would you want to start now?

As far as the time it takes to potty train a puppy...I really can't remember how long it took. Probably the same amount of time it took me to get my kids trained...maybe a few weeks...well, when they were ready. What I do remember was stepping in a lot of puppy puddles and piles in the house for however long it took, which was way too long in my book.

And yeah, when you do get your puppy trained, that means he's trained to go outside...in your yard. How much fun does that sound like to have to go out and shovel dog poop every night when you get home from work? Especially if that's the same yard the kids play in.

At least apartment dwellers can take their dogs for a walk so they can relieve themselves everywhere else. Of course they still have to pick up and carry *those* prizes home with them. Sweet!

Either way, dogs will never clean up after themselves, poop or toys. At least kids will eventually learn how to use the toilet by themselves and not have to wake you up to go outside. And, bonus, they'll even learn how to flush the toilet!

Ok, yes, a dog will clean their own hiney's so I'll give you that one.



2. Entertainment: You're at your dog's mercy.

All dogs are pack animals which means they are happier and healthier when they are running around and hanging around other dogs or at least one person. So unless you have a huge yard in which they can run and play all day you will have to schedule daily morning and afternoon walks as well as time to play fetch.

But wait, that's not all. You must also have time to sit with Fido and cuddle and talk with him. He loves the attention, just like kids. There is no substitute for that. And they will love you back...so there's a bonus.

"He's going at it like a dog with a bone!"

Have you ever heard that phrase? You'll learn what it means real quick the first time you leave your dog home alone - inside or outside - when you have to run to the store or, say, go to work every day.

Know this: Dogs like to dig! They are constantly looking for that elusive bone. So when you do have to leave them home alone be prepared for torn up furniture, sheets, carpet, chewed up shoes, and trash all over the house, not to mention the holes in any window screens or anything else they attempt to dig at.

If you leave them alone outside you might as well say goodbye to your grass, garden, trees, patio furniture, etc. Hey, they get bored and they need to find that damn bone!



At least kids will eventually get to the point where they can go out and make new friends and entertain themselves. And if you "train" your kids really well they could even potentially pitch in with the housework.

3. Protection: Saving your life.

While some dogs are smart enough to alert a neighbor (in the right environment) if you get hurt, they'll never be able to pick up a phone or text for help. Period. Most five year olds know how to make a call.

On the other hand, there are quite a few breeds that can rip the arm off an attacker. Which can be a good thing when someone breaks into your house or just attacks you in broad daylight. But as a



dog owner, you need to make sure that if you are going to be walking your dog out in public on a regular basis, that he is of the temperament to know friend from foe. While some dogs have this “built in,” many do not. So this may require some owner/doggy behavioral training.

4. Communication: Love that body language.

I’m sorry but dogs will never master the spoken word. Facial expressions and body language are the best you can hope for. Although there is nothing like that look of love on their cute little faces when when you get home from a long day at work. And they’ll cuddle up to you on the couch in a heartbeat. In this, they don’t differ from kids one bit!

But then there’s also that barking thing. Yeah, that’s their way of talking. If they’re lonely, they’ll be barking to see if other dogs will answer back, or to get your attention, or to alert you of danger, maybe. It’s up to you to figure out which is which. The really cool thing is if you don’t figure it out, your neighbors will start pounding on your door in the middle of the night to remind you to do so.

At least kids will eventually be able to talk with you on a decent level. You may not want to hear what they have to say (again, a whole ‘nother discussion), but at least you’ll know *what* they’re saying..

5. Self Preservation: Dogs will never learn how to prepare their own meals.

Nope, they can’t open the can or the bag. (*Unless you leave the bag out where they can get to it. But then they’ll tear into it and eat till they drop.*) And if you’re going for a more ‘natural’ diet for Fido, he’ll never be able to chop and cook the meat and serve himself.

If you think it’s a good idea to leave out enough food to last a couple of days, maybe while you spend a weekend at a friend’s house, think again. Dogs have no self regulation when it comes to eating. They will lick their dish dry the first day and then starve the rest of the time. That’s if they don’t make themselves sick from overeating...which is yet another problem.

Yeah, I know, I know, babies start out by depending on you too. But they do get to a point where they can pour their own cereal and milk and then eventually have the capability to advance on to cooking full-on meals. Babies and kids also know to stop eating when they’re full.



6. Vacations: Good luck with that.

You can't ever leave a dog home alone (overnight) because they will eventually starve as I mentioned above. Not to mention the issues with self entertainment as I also already touched on under the "Self Entertainment" section above.

So vacations become a challenge because you'll have three choices for Fido when you're planning a vacation:

- One, pay for a good, reputable boarding facility.
- Two, constantly ask friends or relatives to come over DAILY to feed and walk and clean up after your dog. Hopefully said friends or relatives don't have allergies.
- Three, take your puppy with you with the hopes that all hotels, campgrounds and restaurants (along with other travelers) will welcome it and be able to accommodate it. I know some hotels are now "pet friendly" but you have to pay a pet fee between \$25 - \$50 per pet. I know because I've have to pay when moving a long distance with my two cats. Yikes!

And don't think you can just sneak them in without mentioning it and without anyone noticing. Hahaha!!! For those of us without dogs, guess what: they do have a smell. And I've learned the hard way that some maids have allergies...so yeah, they will figure it out. Also remember that the check-in clerk does have a copy of your credit card so you will be charged.

The nice thing about kids? Well, you can always take them with you or ask a friend or relative to watch them. And bonus, if all goes well as they get older they can stay home alone for longer periods of time. Eventually they move out and take care of themselves.

Pssst! Did you notice I didn't bring up the cost? Just know It's not about money, it's about time and effort. Which by the way, is exactly the same with kids. Y'all need to put a lot of thought into both decisions.

So here's the deal.

Yes, puppies are very cute and very lovable, but like kids, they require a lot of time, work, energy and love. And since they never learn how to talk or take care of themselves, it's like having a toddler for 12 – 15 years (depending on the breed).

So when anyone tries to tug at your heartstrings and tries to convince you to adopt a puppy for whatever reason, keep this list in mind.



My Intent

It's not my intent to discourage people from adopting puppies and dogs. My intent is to educate people so they know exactly what they are getting into when they talk about adopting a puppy during these "clear the shelters" campaigns, or getting their kids a puppy for birthdays or Christmas. There's nothing worse than having a cute puppy that falls in love with you, you and the kids fall in love with him, and then you decide after a few weeks that it's too much work. Now you have to give it away.

How do you think that little guy feels? Not just your kids, but the puppy!

I've seen this happen so many times and it just breaks my heart every single time. Especially because I know I don't have the desire, or the time or energy to help. All I can do is educate people and hopefully prevent at least one broken hearted puppy.

I wish you the best whatever you decide to do.

Sincerely,

Jan

