

# BE THE PACK LEADER

*Cesar Millan with  
Melissa Jo Peltier*



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# Cesar Millan

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WITH MELISSA JO PELTIER

## BE THE PACK LEADER



USE CESAR'S WAY TO TRANSFORM YOUR DOG . . .  
AND YOUR LIFE



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*Dedicated to my wife, Ilusion, who is the inspiration  
and the source of my leadership*

*and*

*to you, the reader, because I genuinely believe if we can change  
our own lives and become better pack leaders to our dogs, to our  
families, and to ourselves, then together we can change the world*

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In my last book, *Cesar's Way*, I thanked my family, my role models, and all the people who have helped me on my amazing journey to becoming “the Dog Whisperer.” Of course, I remember them always, and without them this book would not have been possible. For *Be the Pack Leader*, however, I want to acknowledge all women, and the special power that all women hold—even though they may not realize it yet. I worry about the fact that my kids are growing up in a very unstable world; a world that is going to require some incredible pack leaders if it is going to be made right again. I believe that women hold the key to helping put our world back into balance. But they can't do that until men truly acknowledge and honor the unique wisdom and the leadership women have to offer—and until women can embrace the pack leaders within themselves. More than most men, many women seem to instinctively know that leadership doesn't mean negative energy. It doesn't mean pitting one person against another, one country against another, one religion against another. I also believe that women are more likely than men to act for the good of the pack. And like dogs, we humans need to remember that without the pack we are nothing. I have seen more compassion from women in my life than I have seen from men. Women have taught me true calm-assertive leadership, and because of them I have become a better, more balanced leader in all areas of my life, not just with dogs.

Dogs are all about the pack. They are guided by an instinctual way of being that we humans can't have access to if we simply say, “I am here to live every moment to the fullest; to fulfill my own life and to help fulfill everybody else around me.” I owe a huge debt of gratitude to dogs for the values they have taught me—such as honesty, integrity, consistency, and loyalty. These are the qualities that make a true pack leader.

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## INTRODUCTION

This past year has been exciting and a little bit overwhelming for me, my family, and the people I work with. There have been television shows to film, seminars to give, and more dogs—and people—to help. We've all been very blessed. But between my first book, *Cesar's Way*, and this one, more canine companions have been continuing to teach me new lessons about dog behavior—and about human behavior as well. Over the past year, I have experienced so many new types of cases and learned so many new things. I have studied more behavioral and scientific research, and joined forces with and studied techniques of those who prefer other methods of helping dogs. All this has deepened and enhanced my perspective. I also took to heart some of the criticisms I received about the last book. Some readers wanted more case studies; others wanted more hands-on, step-by-step instruction. The last request is the hardest to accomplish, since *I am not a dog trainer*. To train your dog to sit, stay, or roll over, there is a very specific progression of steps to go through. To rehabilitate an unbalanced dog, I almost always work from instinct with the dog right in front of me, and my core fulfillment formula of exercise, discipline, and affection, in that order, are still the backbone of my methods. That said, we will be providing easily remembered, practical tips throughout this book, and are adding an entire, easy-to-reference section at the end of the book, with step-by-step suggestions for very specific situations.

We will also be including some amazing true success stories throughout the text—many of which I didn't have access to until my show became more popular. We receive literally thousands of letters each month and the stories are truly amazing, reminding me to give thanks that our work is now accessible to so many more people. These letters were what inspired the promise of this book's subtitle—that you'll be able to use Cesar's way to transform your dog *and* your life. In fact, many people who began using the power of calm-assertive energy to help have better relationships with their dogs are reporting that their human relationships—with their kids, their bosses, and their spouses—are becoming more manageable as well.

The goal of this book is to help you strengthen the bond between you and your dog—but I hope it will also show you how closely linked humans and dogs are—and how much our dogs have to teach us all. The “power of the pack” idea doesn't just apply to dogs. It applies to another species of pack animals whose destinies have been intertwined with those of dogs for tens of thousands of years. They would be our very own species, *Homo sapiens*.

After you read *Be the Pack Leader* I sincerely hope you will feel more strongly the link between you and Mother Nature, and learn to become more in tune with your instinctual self. My goal for you is that you use the power of calm-assertive energy to become the pack leader in every area of your life, and open up to you a new dimension of living that you never before realized was possible.



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Now this is the Law of the Jungle—as old and as true as the sky;

And the Wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the Wolf that shall break it must die.

As the creeper that girdles the tree-trunk, the Law runneth forward and back

For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.

—Rudyard Kipling, *The Law of the Jungle*



## Mirror, Mirror?

Money will buy you a pretty good dog, but it won't buy the wag of his tail.

—Josh Billings

**K***oyaanisqatsi* is a Hopi Indian term that roughly translates in English as “life out of balance.” I learned this from watching a 1982 documentary film directed by Godfrey Reggio, which shows, without commentary, a series of powerful images edited to the music of Philip Glass, reflecting the impact of humans and their technology on the planet. The subtext, of course, is that the rise of technology has knocked life on earth off-kilter.

Don't worry, this isn't an environmental book. It's a book about the connection between dogs and people. But the term *Koyannisqatsi* has a special resonance for me because, in a way, much of the book is about how we humans are living our lives out of balance. We are in the process of losing the instinctual sides of ourselves that make us animal first and human second. And instinct equals common sense.

I believe a healthy human being must be balanced in four areas of his or her life. First, there is the intellectual area. This is the side of our natures that most Westerners have down pat. We are masters of reason and logic. In America especially, the lifestyle most people lead here is very intellectual. We communicate with one another almost exclusively through language. We send worded messages on the Internet and on cell phones; we read; we watch television. We have lots of education and more information at our fingertips than ever before, which allows some of us to live almost 100 percent on our minds. We agonize about the past and fantasize about the future. All too often, we become so dependent on our intellectual sides that we forget that there is much, much more to this amazing world we live in.

Next there is the emotional side. Growing up in Mexico, I was taught that only women can have emotions. Women carry the whole emotional load there, and in many other third world countries, as well. My father taught me that to cry was to be weak, to be a sissy. Men in my culture are conditioned from very young ages to suppress our feelings and hide them under bravado. Pretty soon, we are so distanced from our emotions that we don't even recognize them when they come up. When I came to America, I saw that compared to what I'd known in Mexico, everybody seemed free to show their emotions—even men. I saw Dr. Phil telling men that it was okay to cry, and asking them to talk about what they were feeling. "What?" I wondered. "How do they even know what they're feeling?" That's how messed up I was in terms of emotions. Once I married my wife, I had to get with the program and learn to communicate, learn to use my emotional side. Until I was able to access my emotions, I couldn't really become balanced. I believe that countries like Mexico can never be healthy societies until they learn the importance of emotions—and to value women and children, which is where most of the world's emotional power currently lies.

Another part of being human is our spiritual side. Of course, many of us fulfill our spiritual needs by going to a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple, or engaging in other forms of meditation and reverence. This is often a peaceful respite where we can get in tune with a deeper part of ourselves than the mundane part that gets up, reads the newspaper, and goes to work every morning. But spiritual fulfillment doesn't have to mean belief in a religion or disbelief in science. In the words of the late Carl Sagan, "Science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality." Spirituality takes many forms, but one thing is known—it is a deeply ingrained part of being human that has existed since early civilization. Whether one believes in an unseen, all-knowing force, or the wonder of science and the universe, or simply the beauty of the human spirit, nearly every one of us feels an inner longing to feel part of something bigger than ourselves.

Finally, there is the instinctual side of our human nature. To be instinctual means to be clearheaded, open, and aware of the signals we are getting from other people, animals, and our environment all the time. It means understanding our connection to our natural selves and the natural world, and acknowledging our interdependence with that world. I spent much of my childhood in a third-world rural environment where we had to be in tune with Mother Nature for our very survival. When my family moved to the city, I began to feel a barrier come up between my instinctual self and the civilized life I was now supposed to live. And once I moved to urban Southern California, I observed yet another layer of intellectual, "rational" living that separated people even farther from the instinctual side.

Humans will follow intellectual leaders. They will also follow spiritual leaders, and they will follow emotional leaders. Humans are the only species on earth that will follow a totally unbalanced, unstable leader. Animals, however—though I believe they possess an emotional and spiritual side—will only follow instinctual leaders. *I believe it is our loss of connection with our instinctual side that prevents us from being effective pack leaders for our dogs.* Perhaps it is also why we also seem to be failing in being positive guardians of our planet.

Without being in touch with our instinctual side, we are dangerously unbalanced. Most of us probably aren't aware of it. But believe me, our dogs know it; we absolutely cannot fool them. And all the unstable behaviors that my clients call me in to "fix," they are unknowingly sounding the alarm for us to get back to our instinctual side and realize balance. Balance comes from having all four parts

of ourselves—intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and instinctual—in alignment. It is only through balance that we can become fully realized creatures of Mother Nature.

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The good news is that our instinctual selves are lying deep within us, just waiting to be rediscovered. And our best friends and companions—our dogs—can be our guides to reawakening our instinctual natures. In this book, I invite you to learn about true life balance from those who have already learned these lessons from their dogs. Our dogs are our mirrors—but do we dare look into their eyes and truly see our reflections?

## The Tycoon

I was in New York City with my wife and kids to attend the fifth anniversary party for the National Geographic Channel, when I got a call from a former client. She had referred me to a friend of hers, a tycoon and a very powerful man. <sup>\*1</sup> He wanted to see me right away, because, in his words, “My dogs are about to kill each other.” When I heard the amount of money he wanted to pay me, I honestly nearly fainted. Though of course the money was very tempting, that wasn’t the only reason I went. I was by now insanely curious. What would make such a rich and powerful figure want to throw away that kind of money to a “dog behavior expert” he doesn’t know, just to help two dogs? And how could a man who obviously was a supersuccessful “pack leader” in his own life have let his dogs get so far out of control?

When I arrived at the Tycoon’s penthouse apartment, I was stunned by the high ceilings, marble floors, and dazzling, priceless artwork everywhere. I’d never seen a place like that before in my life. But instantly, my instinctual side began to pick up on an unbalanced energy. The maid who opened the door and took my coat seemed quiet and nervous, as if she was afraid to do something wrong. And when the man himself came out and introduced himself to me, I could see her body language diminish even more. (Body language—no matter what species is displaying it—is the secret language of Mother Nature.) When the Tycoon addressed himself to me, I could clearly tell that he saw me, too, as a kind of servant.

I looked him over as I always do a prospective client—simply observing energy and body language and comparing how they do or do not mesh with the words coming out of his mouth. The Tycoon wasn’t a tall man but he carried himself proudly; his advancing age only evident by the thinning hair on the top of his head. Most interesting were his eyes. They were incredibly intense—showing an amazing intellect—but as my observant wife later described them, “They had a glaze over them, as if he were looking at you, but calculating his next deal at the same time. He wasn’t *with* you, he was trying to figure out if he could make you into an asset.”

Whenever I’m in a situation such as this one, I remind myself that I’m there for the dogs, *not* the powerful client. I also remember that the dogs do not recognize wealth and artwork and what we call power in the human world. They only seek out balance. And of course, by then, I knew for certain that I was not walking into a balanced household. All I could do was remark on how lovely his home was and ask him, “So how can I help you?”

The Tycoon told me his dogs were impossible and couldn’t be in the same room together because

they'd attack and try to kill each other. He immediately blamed the situation on his assistant, "Mary saying that she had caused the behavior because she spoiled the dogs too much. That was another red flag for me. Whenever a client immediately blames another person for a dog's problems, I remember the age-old adage "Point a finger at me and there's three more pointing back at you." It's a sign that a person isn't grounded and isn't looking to take responsibility for his or her own actions. But of course I had to meet the dogs for myself.

Willy and Kid were both little gray miniature schnauzers, living in the lap of luxury, each in his own separate room. They were absolutely cute and beautifully groomed. As soon as they appeared, the Tycoon who had appeared so intimidating a minute ago turned into a total softie. "Hey, Willy, hey, Kid." His voice got higher and his face relaxed. Even the glaze over his eyes disappeared. "You got to fix these dogs, man. These dogs are my life." And by the desperation in his previously gruff and cocky tone of voice, I knew how much he meant it.

Privately, I was already wondering why this man seemed to have no emotion invested in any human being around him but had such a huge amount of emotion invested in these little dogs. But first, I had to deal with the immediate issue: Could these dogs be together without a fight? Of course they could. I first established dominance with Willy in one room, then with Kid in another room. Within a few minutes, I created a strategy for them to be together by addressing the behavior of the dog who was showing the highest level of energy and aggression at that moment—in this case, it happened to be the Tycoon's favorite, Kid. The Tycoon had been blaming Willy all along, since Willy was the newer dog, but it turned out that Kid was starting most of the conflicts between the two dogs. Kid was not the dominant or aggressive dog by nature, and needed very little correction to get the picture. I was not the one in control, and I was telling him, "No fighting with your brother." Suddenly, right in front of the Tycoon's eyes, there were Willy and Kid, getting along just fine. Was the Tycoon appreciative? Certainly not at first; that wasn't his style. It became apparent that he equated showing favor toward anyone to be a show of weakness. "Maybe *you* did that, but my staff can't. There's no way in the real world we can put them together like that. They're going to kill each other." No matter what I tried to say to him or to explain to him how simply he and his staff could do exactly what I had just done, I kept returning to his negative, fearful memories. He kept being panicky, but with an angry, accusatory edge.

During that first session, I came to realize I had very little hope of getting through to him at that moment. After all, like most of my clients, he had hired me to help *his dogs*, not to help *himself*. But while most other clients eventually open up to at least looking at how their own behavior is reflected in their dogs, it was clear that Mr. Tycoon was certain *he* didn't need any help. He continued to blame his assistant, his staff, practically the rest of Manhattan for the problem. While I tried to get through to him, I noticed he would not make any eye contact. He was looking at his watch, eyes darting distractedly all around the room. In the animal world, we call that avoidance behavior. Nature deals with threats in four ways—fight, flight, avoidance, or submission. I was threatening his vision of the animal world, and he was fighting, fleeing, and avoiding—right on cue. Today wasn't the day for the powerful tycoon to face how his own problems were reflected in his dogs' behavior.

But that day was about to arrive.

# Dogs Under Pressure

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Like Willy and Kid, many of America's dogs are living under the pressure of too-high expectations from their human owners. "Pressure?" you ask. "I treat my dogs better than my kids. My dogs get anything and everything they want. What kind of pressure is that?"

I've got news for you. Every time you humanize your dog and expect him to fulfill the position of an absent child, lover, friend, or parent in your life, you are putting unrealistic expectations on him. You are taking away his dignity, the dignity of being a dog. And a dog is part of Mother Nature, which means he is naturally wired to expect order in his life, to expect that he must work for food and water and must follow the rules and guidelines of an orderly social system, under the watch of a trusted pack leader. If you are not giving your dog these things, yet you are projecting on him all the emotion, affection, and intimacy that you lack with the humans in your life, then you are being very unfair to your dog—and you may well be the cause of his or her bad behavior.

What evidence do I have that we in Western society—particularly in America—are pressuring our dogs to fill inappropriate voids in our unbalanced human lives? First of all, I have my clients. In the following pages, you will read about some case studies from both my private work and my television series that dramatically illustrate how the owners' various psychological needs were being unfairly projected onto their dogs. But there's other evidence, too.

Take, for example, this survey of 1,019 pet owners, conducted by the American Animal Hospital Association in 2004.<sup>1</sup> The study asks this question: *You're stranded on a deserted island. Which would you rather have for companionship—a human or animal?* Think about it for a minute. The respondents could choose whomever they wanted to share the island with—Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Jennifer Lopez, Antonio Banderas. As devoted as I am to my Dog Psychology Center pack, I would choose my wife, Ilusion, hands down.

But who did the survey respondents pick? Fifty percent of them picked their *dog or cat!*

The survey also showed that 80 percent of the pet owners listed "companionship" as their primary reason for owning a pet, as opposed to a playmate for a child, protection, breeding for profit, or other reasons. Seventy-two percent of pet owners cited "affection" as their pet's most appealing trait; 72 percent routinely gave their pets holiday and/or birthday gifts; 33 percent spoke to their pets through the phone or answering machine; and 62 percent admitted signing letters or cards from themselves and their pets.

Here's another fascinating statistic: A 2006 study by geriatric studies researchers at St. Louis University School of Medicine found that senior citizens in nursing homes felt much less lonely after spending time alone with a dog than they did when they visited with a dog and other people.<sup>2</sup> The upside is that the animals relieved their loneliness. And animals do have that power; I'll talk about that later in the book. But the downside is they identified more with the animal than with other members of their own species.



# People Who Live in Glass Houses...

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There's a saying that "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones." Well, I have to reveal my own glass house. It's a pretty fragile one, but through the school of hard knocks, I've finally learned that it's not a weakness to admit a weakness. When I first came to America, I totally believed that my relationships with dogs would ultimately mean more to my life than my relationships with humans. I mean, women were for pleasure, and men were for interacting with in the working world. Nothing more. Why bother with people when you had dogs?

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## DOG PSYCHOLOGY BASICS

- Dogs come into the world using their nose first, then their eyes, then their ears. Smell is their strongest sense. "I'll believe it if I see it" for dogs translates to "I'll believe it if I smell it." So don't bother yelling at them; it's the energy and scent they pay attention to, not your words.
  - Dogs are communicating with one another (and other animals) all the time using scent, body language, and energy. They are also communicating with *you* all the time, though you may not be aware of the signals you are sending. You absolutely *cannot lie* to a dog about how you are feeling.
  - Dogs have an ingrained pack mentality. If you're not asserting leadership over your dog, your dog will try to compensate by showing dominant or unstable behavior.
  - Dogs never "think they are humans," as many pet owners would like to imagine. They are exceptionally happy just being dogs. If you are telling people your dog thinks he's a person, chances are he's a dog who knows he's *your* leader.
  - In a dog's world, you're either stable or unstable, a leader or a follower.
  - A dog's natural "goal" is to be connected, to live harmoniously, grounded, and balanced, in tune with Mother Nature.
  - Dogs live *in the moment*. They don't reminisce about the past or worry about the future; therefore, they can move on from unstable behavior very quickly—if we let them.
- 

I grew up in Mexico, where my family went back and forth from my grandfather's farm in the countryside to the bustling city of Mazatlán, where we went to school and my father made his living

never liked the city and always longed for the simpler, more natural life at the farm. In the city, among the throngs of people, I learned all the human ways of gaining power and status—work, money, jobs, grades, sex—but I never felt that the “real me” fit into that equation. My affinity with dogs was at my center—it kept me going and moving toward my dream. It also gave me nonhuman companions who fulfilled my emotional needs for acceptance and love. Among the dogs, I didn’t have to worry about being judged like I did when I was with people. The dogs accepted me as their pack leader without question or judgment.

I think many people can identify with my feelings back then. A dog is not critical of you, and he lives in the moment, so he naturally forgives any mistakes you might make. He is always loyal and trustworthy. Since I viewed people as critical, unforgiving, and untrustworthy, dogs were for me, by far the better choice for companions.

Years later, my wife, Ilusion, woke me up to the realization that you can’t just “dump” your whole species simply because you’ve had a few bad encounters with some of its members. What other species on the planet does that? None! *Intimacy* is a greater goal to seek—with one’s wife, children, parents, and friends. That true knowledge of intimacy within our own species will allow us to pass along to interspecies relations. After years of working with but being puzzled by American dogs, I soon realized that there was a line that separated people who loved animals into those whose cups were almost equally full with human and animal love, and those whose cups were very much weighted in one direction. Without Ilusion, who knows which way I would have gone? After all, animals do offer us unconditional love. But they do not fulfill all the needs of our species. And more importantly, just because you and your dog share unconditional love does not mean you have a healthy or balanced dog.

## **The Tycoon Transformed**

Clearly, my new friend the Tycoon is a prime example of a person whose emotional cup was tipping over when it came to his dogs, but running on empty when it came to his human relationships. He left the first session still blaming his assistant, Mary, for the dogs’ behavior.

The next step in my relationship with the Tycoon was part two of the dogs’ rehabilitation process—socializing them with other dogs at my Dog Psychology Center in Los Angeles. Believe it or not, I put each dog separately in his private jet and flew each one across the country to Los Angeles accompanied by his assistant. Think about it. Four cross-country trips made by a jet carrying only one dog and one assistant each time! This was a man who guarded every one of his billions of pennies dearly, so you can imagine how much those dogs were worth to him psychologically and emotionally. Unfortunately, there were few people in his life whom he could feel this way about. While working with the dogs at my center, my most important job was to teach his assistant Mary how to handle the two of them together with calm and assertive leadership. But there was a huge roadblock—she was clearly terrified of failing. If she failed and the dogs got hurt, she would be the one blamed, and her boss would not only be enraged over the situation with the dogs, he would also unleash all his frustration from everything else in his life on her and the rest of his staff. Between the time I saw the Tycoon again and while I was working on the dogs, I had a chance to interview several members of his

staff, who all shared the same extreme fear of this man. Of course, they were all grown-ups, and they did have free will. Any one of them could have quit at any time. They didn't have to be victims. But I know from my work with dogs and with people that even the slightest bit of negative energy can have a ripple effect in any community, whether it be a classroom, a company, a country, or a dog pack. Extreme negative energy, like psychological depression, can truly make people or animals believe they are helpless or "stuck." And clearly, this man's negative energy was powerful. His staff members even claimed the lights in his penthouse would blink on and off when he was on his way home. Whether they were imagining it or not, he definitely was controlling them through their fear.

Once at the center, my regular pack of dogs helped both Willy and Kid finally learn how to be dogs again. Willy and Kid each learned how to approach other dogs politely, nose first, smelling in order to get to know each other—not immediately going into defensive or attack mode. They learned how to walk with a pack and feel part of a "family." They learned how to play with others of their kind and respect all humans as pack leaders. But of course, the dogs weren't the only ones who needed rehabilitation. As is almost always the case with my clients, the humans were the root of the problem. Since I didn't have access to the Tycoon quite yet, I did an energy makeover on Mary. Mary was a smart, efficient, extremely capable woman. She could do a million things at once. But with Willy and Kid, she lost all her confidence. She was terrified that if anything went wrong with them while they were in her care, her boss would fire her. Mary and I worked on her calm and assertive energy. We worked on breathing and posture, and on taking the mind to a place of pure positivity and superconfidence. Mary was already a pack leader at heart—she just didn't know it! Later, Mary's new calm-assertive energy would pay off in ways that she never imagined. But by the end of our time together, she felt totally confident in handling Willy and Kid.

Now it was time for me to meet the Tycoon again, face-to-face, at his mansion in Beverly Hills. All the warnings from his staff had made me even more determined to confront him about how his unbalanced life was hurting his dogs—not to mention everyone around him. "No one talks to Mr. Tycoon like that!" Mary warned me. But hey, that man had entrusted me with a task, and I was going to complete it to the best of my ability. He was definitely going to get every penny of his money's worth—whether he wanted to or not. I had nothing to lose—and the dogs had everything to gain.

## Facing the Mirror

The Tycoon and I sat together in his posh living room and I calmly but firmly addressed him, suggesting that perhaps he was the problem, not his dogs and not his assistants. Once again the avoidance behavior began: eyes roving, foot tapping, constantly looking at his watch. He didn't want to hear what I had to say. In his mind, he had sent the dogs out like appliances to be fixed. I was going to give his assistants precise instructions that there would be hell to pay if they didn't follow, and that would be that. But this time, every few seconds in the midst of his avoidance strategy, I would stop and address him firmly. "You're not listening, are you?" I'd ask. "No, I'm listening," he'd reply, clearly annoyed that anyone would dare challenge him like that. I would continue talking, then stop again. "If you're not paying attention to me, how can I talk to you?" Now he was getting really mad. "But I *am* listening!" he'd respond. "No, you're looking up there, over there. You're looking everywhere else. I really need you to pay attention to what I'm saying." Eventually, Mr. Tycoon ble

up. “You dominant motherfucker!” he said to me. From him, that evidently was a compliment because he didn’t usually surrender to other people. Somehow, by standing up to him, I had won his respect—at least for that moment. “All right,” he said, gruffly. “I’ve got five minutes.” “Fine,” I said. “you give me five good minutes and we can get some quality work done. We can create a lot. We can accomplish a lot in five minutes, but we need five one-hundred-percent minutes.”

When I talk with a client, I have an advantage because I can get to his or her own personal issues a roundabout way. We start talking about the dogs, then we get to the real heart of the problem, the human. That’s how it worked with the Tycoon. I was fascinated by the way he had transferred all his emotional needs to those dogs, yet he didn’t have many family members or confidantes whom he trusted. Little by little, the story came out. As a boy, he had overcome major insecurities and fear by constantly achieving. That was where all his focus went, all his life: *I’ve got to be the best!* And it worked. It made him powerful; it made him rich. But it also pushed a lot of people away. He couldn’t compete with them or control them, but he could never be close to them. And so his life played out that same old story, over and over again. It didn’t surprise me at all that underneath the intimidating exterior lay a good heart. It was his good heart that he desperately wanted to share with his dogs. Because you can’t fool animals. The negative energy was stronger, and that’s what was making them—and everyone else around him—unstable.

I am certainly not a human psychologist, but I don’t need to be because so many times, even the most unobservant person can see an owner’s own issues totally mirrored in his or her dogs’ problems. The tycoon was unconsciously favoring one of them—Kid. He couldn’t believe that Kid was the one attacking Willy, and not the other way around. Just like the Tycoon, the dogs’ lives had become all about competition, not cooperation.

The Tycoon had a hard time hearing what I had to say at first. After all, how could I be telling a man brilliant enough to make hundreds of millions of dollars and run dozens of successful companies that he is unbalanced? How could I be telling him that he wasn’t being a good leader, when all he did all day was run the show? Doesn’t wheeling and dealing in the world of international finance take leadership? Doesn’t it also require instinct? I tried to explain to him that, yes, in the human world he was perceived as a leader and of course he had exceptional business instincts. But the strategies and instincts that work in the business and political world are not always those of Mother Nature. Mother Nature is ruthless to the weak, but is not arbitrarily cruel or negative. Mother Nature saves aggression for extreme situations, and instead uses dominance—consistent leadership—to help keep things running smoothly. Mother Nature does not rule by fear and anger, but by calm strength and assertiveness.

The amazing thing about the Tycoon is he loved his dogs so much that he was willing to change. He finally *did* succeed in getting him to listen to me. He was used to telling, ordering, and lecturing—but never listening. And in listening, he showed another side of himself. I learned that he is an incredibly charitable man; that his passion is sending poor kids to camp—yet he doesn’t like to share that part of himself with most of the people he interacts with in his life. Perhaps he views this “soft side” as a weakness, when I see it as a strength.

I started this book with the example of the Tycoon because he is the most extreme example I have ever encountered of how an unbalanced human can create a ripple effect of dysfunction within his

his dogs and all the humans around him. He is also a powerful example of how looking honestly ourselves can restore us to balance and create a positive ripple effect in our worlds. I'm happy to report that since I worked with him and his dogs, he's showing the wonderful softer side of himself much more often. According to his assistant, Mary, with regard to the people closest to him, the Tycoon truly has changed. She told me that for the first time, he actually listened to her—not only to her gratitude for the money he pays her, but to her candidly expressing her need to be appreciated and treated better by him. She had always known that there was a human being underneath that suit and armor. And that human being was the one who needed to listen to all these people so he could feel how much he influenced them—feel not only their fear and their gratitude but also the pain that he caused them. According to his assistant, he's made a lot of progress in that area. The whole tale sort of reminds me of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. The Tycoon is now like Ebenezer Scrooge after he's been visited by the three ghosts on Christmas Eve. But the Tycoon didn't need ghosts to see the hard truths about himself—he had his two dogs!

And there's another happy ending to the story. Not only are the dogs doing great, but Mary got the courage for the first time since he hired her to tell him she was taking a vacation! And she did it from a place of strength. She approached him and told him what the options were for her vacation dates, case closed. That's what calm-assertive energy will do for your life—it works on much more than your dogs. You'll read more such inspiring stories in future chapters.

The moral of the story is no matter how much money or power you have, how many academic degrees, or how many priceless works of art you own, *your dogs don't care*. They *do* care how unstable you are, because, being pack-oriented, it directly affects them. Dogs do know how comfortable you are with yourself, how happy you are, how fearful you are, and what is missing inside of you. They can't tell you, but they absolutely know exactly who you are. You can ask a human, "Are you happy?" Some, like my friend the Tycoon, will say "Of course"—either hiding or unaware of the fact that he's not. Then you'll see the dog. The dog can't hide his emotions, and he's *clearly* not happy. It becomes very obvious, by reading a dog, how stable or unstable his human companion is.

Our dogs are our mirrors. Have you looked in yours lately? If my friend the Tycoon could face himself in a mirror, confront a lifetime of demons, and make a better life for not only his dogs but also for the people around him, then any one of us can. That's why I say that harnessing the power of calm-assertive energy can not only improve your dog, but change your own life as well. Our dogs can lead us back to the balance that nature intended for us, if only we are willing to follow.

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# PART ONE

## BALANCING YOUR DOG

In order to really enjoy a dog, one doesn't merely try to train him to be semihuman. The point of it is to open oneself to the possibility of becoming partly a dog.

—*Edward Hoagland*

A dog is not “almost human” and I know of no greater insult to the canine race than to describe it as such.

—*John Holmes*

As the story of the Tycoon has taught us, our dogs are our mirrors, and in order for them to have a balanced life, we need to address our own issues as well as theirs.

This book is about your dog and you—his bad behavior and your own helplessness. Or permissiveness.

Or anger. Or frustration. Let's start with the easiest part of the equation to face—your dog, and his problems. Because probably, at this point, you might be thinking that his problems have nothing to do with you.

I believe that 99 percent of all dogs are capable of living full, happy, balanced lives. These chapters are designed to give you a better understanding of your dog's mind, needs, and what you can do to fulfill them.



## 1

### Identifying Instability

There was something I had never told him, that no one ever had. I wanted him to hear it before he went. “Marley,” I said, “you are a *great* dog.”

—*John Grogan, Marley & Me*

**H**ow do you know that your dog is unstable? If you are like the majority of my clients, you just *know*. Your dog gets aggressive with other dogs on walks and at the dog parks. Or howls for hours when you leave the house. Or compulsively runs away. All this is puzzling to you, because the family dog from your childhood was perfect—or that is the way you remember him. In the amber glow of your memory, your beloved Blackie was mellow, obedient, and content to stay in the background. He was naturally social, and always got along with strange people and dogs. He fetched and returned the tennis ball, walked beside you to school, and never peed in the house. So why does your current dog dig up your garden? Why does he hide under the table when the garbage truck drives by? What in the world is up with him when he manically spins in circles when he gets excited? Of course, like most of my clients with unstable dogs, you simply accept that your dog was born with something missing—he has some sort of mental disorder. Or, if your dog was adopted from a rescue organization, you create a story—that he had such a traumatic experience in his past placements that he will never be able to forget the terrible abuse he suffered during those dark, lonely years before he met you. So of course he will never be stable, and you should not complain, but instead, remain tolerant and feel really sorry for him when he pees all over your sofa whenever you turn the television on. How could you criticize him when he bites anyone who comes near his food dish, knowing what he’s been through in his short but traumatic life? You decide you have to pay the price to live with an unstable dog, because of everything that happened to him before. You owe it to him.

**They’re All Great Dogs**

The truth about dogs is, they don't feel bad about the past. They don't dwell on their bad memories. We are the only species that does that. Dogs live in the moment. If they feel safe and secure in the moment, then any past conditioned behavior can be reconditioned, provided we give our time, our patience—and our consistency. Dogs move on—often, very quickly. They—like everything else of Mother Nature—naturally want to return to balance. Too often, it is we, the humans, who are unknowingly preventing that balance from occurring.

We are human beings, and one of the most beautiful things about our species is that we have empathy. When someone—including an animal—who we care about is in distress, we feel bad for them. We hurt when they hurt. But in the animal world, hurt is a weak energy. Feeling sorry is a weak energy. The kindest thing we can do for our animals who have suffered in the past is to help them move forward into the present. In short, that uncontrollable, neurotic monster you are living with is just waiting for you to help guide him on the way to becoming one of the world's greatest dogs!

## Marley & Me

John Grogan's book *Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog* hit the best-seller list in November 2005 and, as of this writing, is still in the top ten. It's easy to see why—this fun-to-read, touching tale of a lovable but out-of-control family Labrador, Marley, could easily be the life story of many of my clients' dogs. Marley is usually destructive, rarely obedient, sometimes obsessive, and always unpredictable. He's even described on the book jacket as *wondrously neurotic*. To me, joining the words *wondrous* and *neurotic* is part of the reason that there are so many unstable dogs in America. Many people who love their dogs think that their pets' unhealthy issues are just "personal quirks." When author Grogan first published his tribute to the recently deceased Marley in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, he initially thought that his former companion was one-of-a-kind—"the world's worst dog." He was soon flooded with letters and e-mails informing him that he was actually just one member of a giant "Bad Dog Club."

"My in-box resembled a television talk show," Grogan writes, "'Bad Dogs and the People Who Love Them,' with the willing victims lining up to proudly brag not about how wonderful their dogs were but about just how awful." Like many of my clients, however, all these well-meaning dog lovers may not understand that their dog isn't happy being "awful."

I was thrilled last year when the wonderful Grogan family actually became my clients. Through my National Geographic Channel series, *Dog Whisperer*, they contacted me and invited me to their home in Pennsylvania to help them with Gracie, their current dog. Also a gorgeous yellow lab, Gracie had a very different issue than Marley (which I'll get to in chapter 4). But as different as the two dogs were, Gracie and Marley's problems were both caused by the same *human* issues—lack of leadership. When I finally met John Grogan and his wife, Jenny Vogt, Marley's story made more sense to me. They are highly intelligent, compassionate people who see the world through the eyes of talented journalists. They observe, analyze, and describe—but they don't interfere or try to change. They assumed they were stuck with Marley the way he was—that, in the words of John's father, Marley just "had a screw loose." Indeed, as the couple laughingly said to me, if it hadn't been for Marley's quirks, they wouldn't have been a wonderful book for so many people to identify with, and to bring tears to:



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