



Avoid the Top 12 Costly Mistakes Dog Owners Make



LEARN HOW TO HAVE HAPPIER, HEALTHIER DOGS



By *Val Heart*

Congratulations on your purchase of *Avoid the Top 12 Costly Mistakes Most Dog Owners Make!*

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Preview the classes for free by listening to The Real Dr Doolittle Show With Val Heart, now available on iTunes and on Val's Blog <http://www.valheart.com/blog>

Did you miss it?

If you missed the live teleclasses, the recordings will be available so don't wait! Register now so you can be a better dog parent. Your dog depends on you to make their world a safe, happy, healthy place and we all need a little help sometimes to get there.

DEDICATION:

To all the wonderful dog teachers that have blessed my life and taught me so much, including Fritz, Rodie, Charlie, Snowball, Razor Rocket, Shazaam and Einstein.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Without the assistance, support and encouragement of these amazing people, this book would not have been possible. So I offer my heartfelt gratitude to Charlene Doyle, Jan Rasmusen, Dr. Laura Cioppa, Marcy Cassius, Dr. Ernesto Fernandez, Tom Watts, Dona Kerr, and, of course, my wonderful parents.

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FOREWORD BY JAN RASMUSEN

Hi. I'm Jan Rasmusen, author, writer, blogger and impassioned dog care advocate. Several years ago, things were different. To me, dog care meant needles and can openers and control-freak dog trainers ... and not a whole lot more.

You see, back then, I learned dog care from television commercials, "popular" trainers and corporate veterinarians. My two beloved Maltese, Chiclet and Jiggy, ate a top brand of "natural" pet food. (No dreaded "people food" for them!) Too afraid not to comply with every one of my vet's friendly reminders, my dogs were "up-to-date" on their shots and always protected with monthly heartworm and flea meds. Not for one moment did I suspect that **my good intentions were actually shortening my dogs' lives.**

I awoke to the truth when Jiggy contracted a life-threatening autoimmune liver disease. Two years of research into his illness, and dog care in general, made me realize that I'd been duped. Dog care had become a \$45 billion business, with \$12 billion of that for vet care. Profits had trumped care.

Worst of all, fear permeated everything: fear of disease, fear of parasites, fear of my dog embarrassing me in public because of poor behavior, fear of doing anything wrong.

Now five years into daily research and interviews, I make decisions from knowledge, not fear. I know that Val Heart feels the same way. We are fellow crusaders for smart training and informed health care. We are for prevention, not intervention.

Val and I have taught each other a lot. I'm sure she'll teach you a lot as well.

Jan Rasmusen

Author, *Scared Poopless: The Straight Scoop on Dog Care*

WINNER, Ben Franklin Award for the Best Health Book of any kind

WINNER, USABookNews Award for the Best Pet Health Book

Finalist, Dog Writers Association Best Care and Health Book, Recommended by *The Journal of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association*, *Animal Wellness Magazine*, the Animal Protection Institute and countless veterinarians

www.Dogs4Dogs.com and www.Truth4Dogs.com

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Dear Fellow Dog Lover,

So how do you know if you have an unhappy dog? Often it's just a feeling, but most of the time, they demonstrate it in no uncertain terms. They tear things up, they bark constantly and won't shut up, they run away, they don't listen to you or they become a Velcro dog who won't leave your side. They often act aggressively toward other people and dogs or they may be extremely shy, nervous nellys. They exhibit obsessive compulsive disorders, or they just wind up getting sick.

Dogs do feel pain, sadness, anger and grief, they reason and think, and make decisions which make sense from their viewpoint. They will also display nervous anxiety and stress symptoms when something isn't right in their world. And they do everything they can to tell you about it.

This book is not about how to train your dog... It's about the Guiding Principles that will help you learn how to raise and teach your dog to be the Perfect Dog. It points out how you can avoid making many of the Mistakes that might ruin your relationship with your canine friend. If you catch yourself before making these Mistakes, you can make the difference between enjoying a long happy, healthy life with your dog ... or not. Because when your dog is healthy and happy, you're happy, right?

Once you understand their perspective, their viewpoint and what really makes them happy, then everything else gets so much easier. I want you to have the best dog in the world, not a trouble maker or someone you dread being with or have come to regret having in your life and home. In fact, when we become better dog owners and trainers, we become better humans!

The stories you will read about are all true stories. They are situations that I have worked with and I'm sure you can relate to. Only the names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Since 1993, I have managed a successful practice working with thousands of animals, their owners, trainers and veterinarians from all over the nation, helping them accomplish their goals in animal health issues, personality problems, performance, training and behavior modification.

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In addition to private sessions, I teach a variety of fun, information packed Classes designed to help you better understand yourself and your animal friends, communicate more easily and clearly, get help resolving issues, learn exercises you can practice with your animal friends, and deepen your connection and love for each other.

If you have any questions or comments, please let me know. I love to help people with their dogs, so if you feel you could use some assistance, please contact me.

I wish you and your Family Pack health, joy, laughter and wellness,



Val Heart, MBA, PaCBP

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Animal News Blog: www.valheart.com/blog

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INTRODUCTION

Dogs live long lives, and most folks intend to give their dogs a forever home. After all, our pets are like our children! But the fact is that millions of dogs are adopted or purchased every year, and about 40% of them wind up at shelters, dumped, given away (again), abandoned to the streets, or are euthanized. Through no fault of their own, they simply weren't the right fit with their human or were misunderstood! People don't mean for things to go wrong with their dogs. All dog lovers feel the same way about this. But things do go wrong, all the time.

I'd like to start out by telling you a few stories.

Suzie Q, a Chihuahua, would often take off barking and racing after whatever caught her attention, never knowing that if she ran into the nearby street or actually tackled that big mean dog or snake, that she could be killed. And when she was caught up in the excitement of the chase, she never even acknowledged her terrified human, Anne, desperately running after her, screaming, "Stop! Come Back!!" Suzie Q came close to dying many times, and Anne couldn't understand why she wouldn't come to her when there was danger!

Baby Blue, a blue heeler mixed breed, was rescued off the street. She wound up living with a couple who were having a really tough time. Sarah said she found herself hiding in her room, away from her dog, often in tears because the dog was terrorizing her. Baby Blue had taken control of the house! Adam told me he dreaded coming home at all and often would drive around after work for quite a while until he felt strong enough to enter the house.

Baby Blue was so frustrated with her humans that she didn't know what to do. She craved their company and tried to show them how happy she was to see them all the time, but all they did was retreat from her, run away, or go hide in rooms she couldn't get to. She was miserable and didn't know what to do, and she spent most of her time all alone. She was a very intelligent and caring dog so she also was aware that her humans were unhappy. What a dilemma!

A miniature schnauzer named Houdini had severe anxiety during thunderstorms and, more importantly, a serious biting problem. From a young age she snapped at strangers.



Her owners, Tom and Clara, worried about her attacking and hurting someone. They questioned whether they still wanted to keep her or if they should put her down. This was very distressing because they were extremely attached to her and felt she was part of their family.

Walking with Houdini had become a nightmare. They were to the point that they dreaded taking her out at all! If she saw another person or dog, she'd go nuts, and Tom and Clara were terrified she'd get in a bad fight. They just didn't know what to do.

I once worked with a chow dog named Sam who had become frightened and nervous all the time and refused to drink out of his water dish. He would only drink water from the bubbling fountain in the back yard, and only then if he was told to do so. He was having kidney problems and had recently undergone surgery to save his life. If he didn't start drinking enough water, he would surely die. His owners and veterinarian felt helpless.

Chelsea brought her old dog, Zoe, to me afraid that it was time to euthanize her. Zoe was struggling to get around, having trouble eating, was lethargic and seemed depressed. Was it time to let her go? Chelsea just wasn't sure and didn't want to put her down unless Zoe felt she was ready to go.

Another client, Barbara, contacted me crying as she said, "My Great Pyrenees dog, Beau, just attacked my friend! He wouldn't stop when I shouted at him; he just barreled in and bit at her! Now I am terrified that I'll have to put him down! Why is he doing this? Doesn't Beau know he's not supposed to do that?"

Jane decided to rescue a young stray pit bull she named Happy. The barely one-year-old dog was frightened easily, growled at people, had no social skills, and had obviously been abused by someone. Happy was an accident primed and waiting for the right incident to trigger her defensive instincts! Jane had some smaller dogs. She didn't understand how to train Happy or to deal with her issues but still wanted to give her a safe, loving home.

With all the frightening media exposure against pit bulls, Jane spent a lot of time worrying about what could happen. Trying to reassure herself and the dog, Jane asked Happy repeatedly if she was okay? Was she nervous? Was she scared? Was she going to attack somebody?

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Their walks quickly became nightmares as Happy pulled and lunged on her leash, basically ignoring her human friend. Jane became obsessed with wondering if Happy was a good dog or, because of her breeding, she would turn out to be a bad dog who would have to be put down after she went on the kind of rampage others of her kind had become known for.

So what's really going on when our dogs behave like this? What are they thinking? Do they understand the consequences of their actions? Do they want to die? Are they just trying to make our lives miserable? Or are we just making some of the classic and often deadly and tragic Mistakes people make with their dogs?

And that's what we're here to talk about today! How you can turn all that around by learning how to recognize and avoid making these serious Mistakes with your dog. This book will help you avoid some of the most common fundamental Mistakes and pitfalls that can ruin your relationship with your dog friends. If you catch them in time, it can make the difference between enjoying a long, happy, healthy life with your dog or not.

Remember that our dogs (like our children!) are greatly affected by us, their caregivers. What we do, say, think, decide and feel can rock their world – or anchor it! The better balanced you are, the less stressed they will be. The more informed we are and better prepared to include dogs in our lives, the happier we all are.

This book is designed to:

-  Prepare you consciously to be your dog's best friend and a better caretaker
-  Teach you how to be more open to and consider your dog's viewpoints
-  Explore different ways of looking at problems and their resolutions
-  Help assure you and your dog have a good life together

One more thing before we start. Please remember that every dog is a unique individual. That means that your job is to do some research, try different things, and do 'due diligence' with the ideas I will present to you until you find what works best for you and your dog! Okay, let's go right into it. We have a lot to cover and your dog is wanting us to hurry up..

MISTAKE #1: GETTING THE WRONG DOG FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

The first and easiest way to avoid this major Mistake is to get the right dog, right off the bat! Please avoid impulse shopping for your new dog partner. You don't want just any dog that catches your eye or that has a cute face or that reminds you of a dog you used to have.

You really want a dog that is the perfect fit for your family and your lifestyle. If you get the wrong dog, you will wind up in a difficult, frustrating existence, and you're going to doom your pet to being unhappy, misunderstood, and worse, you could even put them at risk losing their home and even their life.



Now remember, you wouldn't take a new job without an interview, and you certainly wouldn't marry someone without getting to know them. In the same respect, you shouldn't bring a dog into your home without interviewing your prospective dog companion.

Determine in advance:

- What lifestyle you actually live
- How much time you are willing and able to dedicate to your new companion
- How much training and skill you currently have and whether you need to learn more for the breed you are considering

Also,

- Do some research and talk with people who own the breeds you are interested in
- If you decide on a dog of mixed breeding, remember that each of the breeds in their makeup contributes to their personality and potential challenges.

Write a 'job description' for the dog you'd like to have. Decide what you really want from a dog and do your best to match a dog to your wants. Then spend some quality time with a prospective dog before you bring it home. Paying close attention

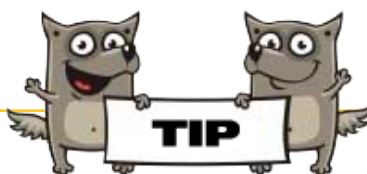


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to what the 'job description' consists of and whether the prospective dog has what it takes to be successful in that job can make the difference between being reasonably sure that dog is a good match for you in the long term or not.

For instance:

- 🐾 Herding dogs aren't a good match for city dwellers who tend to be couch potatoes. They have unique personalities, drives, needs and instincts that must be satisfied in order for them to feel happy.
- 🐾 Just like not all humans are cut out to be Olympic athletes, not all dogs have the ability, interest or the conformation to do agility, showing or obedience sports. Other dogs won't be really happy unless they are performing.
- 🐾 High energy dogs, like Chinese Cresteds, don't fit too well with people who like a peaceful and quiet existence.
- 🐾 Bulldogs are not a good match for athletic types who want their dogs to exercise with them.
- 🐾 People who really don't like to do a lot of training probably aren't going to do well with German Shepherds, larger dogs or other working breeds.



Please don't buy your dog or puppy from a puppy mill, pet store or a breeder who you have not thoroughly checked out. Puppy mills are set up to produce the maximum number of dogs as quickly as possible without regard to genetics, health or environment. Puppies or dogs who come from mills or unscrupulous breeders are often sick and suffer serious genetic flaws. And, because they have not been properly handled or socialized, and their mothers are often unable to take good care of their babies, they usually have short lives with many behavior challenges.

Go to www.stoppupmills.org to learn more.

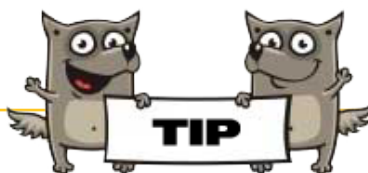
SPAYING AND NEUTERING:

What about spaying and neutering? Dogs who are not being bred truly do need to have this done. Hormonal rushes and instincts are difficult to manage and encourage bad habits like territorial marking and roaming. It also exposes them to unnecessary risks like cancer, urinary tract issues and pyometra (a disease of the uterus most commonly seen in dogs; similar to appendicitis in humans). Dogs that dart out the door and wander are often unaltered and are simply following their hormones and reproductive drives.

Dogs need to have their growth plates fully developed before this surgery. It's up to the dog, not the calendar. Watch your dog for signs of mature sexual expression before you make your decision. If you spay or neuter too early, you can cause a lot of damage later in life, including hip problems and dysplasia.

I recommend that dogs be altered between 6 and 12 months – but not sooner. The body has to develop to a certain point before having this major surgery or it simply doesn't develop properly.

Altering after they are grown can certainly be done. Just remember that it can take as long as a year or more for the testosterone levels to go down for a male (or estrogen levels for a female), and that during that time, they are still feeling the effects of it and still smelling like an intact animal to other dogs.



If you wind up with or already own a problem dog whose personality doesn't match with yours, there's still hope. Animal Communication can help dramatically to identify and resolve the real issues. And, Dr Jean Hofve and Jackson Galaxy created a line of products designed to help balance personality problems. They call them Spirit Essences (similar to Bach Flower Essences).

Many of my clients have tried it and they have really helped. Remember though that nothing can change your dog's basic nature and instinct completely so do your best not to make the Mistake of getting the wrong dog. It's also important for you to take the product yourself – after all, theirs isn't the only personality that could be imbalanced, right? Spirit Essences can help you and your dog both be more balanced emotionally, so go check it out, okay?

www.spiritessences.com

MISTAKE #2: BEING UNPREPARED TO PROVIDE PROPER BALANCED SOCIALIZATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR DOG

Let's move right on to the next Mistake. So many dog owners miss this step. I spend the majority of my time trying to resolve the Mistakes made with improper socialization, and it can be one of the most difficult problems to resolve. The Mistake is being completely unprepared to provide proper socialization for our dogs.

Dogs crave good parental guidance. And if you take a puppy away from their parents, then you are now their parent and must provide proper guidance in order for your dog to be balanced, healthy and happy.



Some people forget that dogs don't come already trained. They think they should already know how to behave in all situations and somehow become the perfect pet as they get older. We're expecting that perfect, well-mannered, easy going, affectionate dog to suddenly appear when they're one year old, but they're not perfect yet. So we wait until the dog is two years old. Hmmmm, not quite there yet. Maybe at three years?

You know, after the dog is about five years old, people start thinking, "Hmmm. When are they supposed to grow up? When are they going to mature? Aren't they supposed to grow out of those behaviors and become the wonderful dog that we thought they were going to be or become more like the other dog we had? We've been putting up with these problems all this time, and they've still not figured it out." Instead, maybe we need to figure it out, right?

Puppies aren't born knowing how to be the perfect domesticated dog in your household. Learning how to be appropriate in all situations, what good manners are, what's wanted or needed from it – that is the hallmark of good training and proper socialization from calm, stable assertive family members and pack Leaders.



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Taking on a puppy means that you're taking on the role of that dog's parents with all the responsibilities of teaching that baby all the rules in a way that it can understand. There is a critical development stage in every puppy's life – between 2 and 6 months old – when certain lessons can be most easily be learned.

Confusing social encounters, bewilderment, pain, miscommunication, danger - both emotional and physical – and other negative experiences that occur during this time will scar them for life, and you'll be dealing with those issues for the rest of your lives, I promise you.

You must provide safety and protection for that puppy. You have to teach them how to play. You have to teach them how to interact with other dogs and how to get along with other species like cats and birds – and even human children! You have to teach them how to respect authority and follow guidance (their mothers can do a lot of this if you leave the puppy with them long enough).

Taking on a puppy means that you're taking on the role of that dog's parents with all the responsibilities of teaching that baby all the rules in a way that it can understand.

Finally you have to come up with and prepare lesson plans (like their canine pack members would) that are appropriate to their age, paying careful attention to help the puppy feel safe and protected, how to create and enhance that puppy's feelings of self-confidence, and how to create trust in authority figures that's going to foster a willingness to follow guidance. If you do your job properly, training will never be a problem, and you will have a dog friend who is a joy for everyone to be around.

You have to learn how to communicate in a way that includes body language, telepathy, emotion, scent, cues and signals from a dog's viewpoint.

Did you know that exuberance in a dog doesn't necessarily mean they are happy? It means they are excited and their nervous system is hyper-stimulated. Their sympathetic nervous system is on high alert, very similar to when they are in danger, are anxious or afraid.

If you don't properly prepare your puppy through training and other careful socialization or allow too intense, unsafe confrontations with other beings or put them into

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situations before you've prepared them, before you've created self-confidence and an understanding in them of what the appropriate behavior is, then you're going to set your puppy up to have a very difficult life, whether they stay with you or move on to someone else.

I want to talk about coddling for a minute. Often we get into trouble with this and it's such an honest Mistake. When our children or friends are scared, it is very helpful to be comforted by someone. When we offer what we think of as comfort or reassurance to our dogs when they are scared, confused or not sure what to do in a new situation, they see it entirely differently.

They think we are rewarding their fearful behavior! That means that they are doing the right thing – that acting afraid, worried, aggressive, or nervous is, in fact, the proper way to behave in this situation. Plus, it gets them lots of attention for behaving this way.

We keep thinking they'll recover themselves and be confident again when we keep showing them that there *is* something to be frightened about! And that they are right to be wary, cautious and afraid. Then we wonder why they are always so afraid of that thing.

Please do not coddle or try to comfort your dog. They need you, their calm, assertive Leader, to tell them what to do and how to feel about it. If you continue to radiate anything other than calmness, peace and clarity, then they will be unable to get over their traumatic experience because you won't let them.



By now it should be clear that puppies and human babies don't really go well together. I know, it seems so cute to see them playing together but the fact is that puppies need to feel safe and stable in order to socialize well and learn the rules. Human babies can be very unpredictable, to say the least, and can often unintentionally hurt the pup until they learn how to treat dogs properly. So by all means, include dogs in your baby's life – just be sure that your puppy gets their needs met too.

MISTAKE #3: FAILING TO TEACH YOUR DOG HOW TO BEHAVE

What every dog needs to know is how we want them to behave in different situations. If we don't give them clear guidance and preparation, then how do they know what is expected of them?

Our dogs learn very quickly what they can get away with and what they can't. They're very smart. Just asking someone else, a friend or a professional, to train them rarely works in the long run. In fact, I don't think it ever works in the long run unless *we* are the ones being trained. It's actually not our dogs who need training – it's *us*!



They take their cues from you (or their primary person) and then try to figure things out as best they can – from a canine viewpoint, based on their breeding, instinct, experience and levels of experience.

Many dog owners feel their animal is so out of control that they hire a professional to help them. And their dogs probably did pretty well with that trainer. But then when they got them back home, they quickly reverted back to their bad manners.

What's cute and adorable behavior in a puppy isn't so cute or adorable when they weigh more than you do or when they're more powerful or faster than you are. And it's especially not cute when they're out of control so badly that they are dangerous to themselves or others or they're being rude or embarrassing.

I know you've probably heard the phrase "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Well, that's wrong. Of course you can teach an old dog new tricks! It's just harder when they're older, partly because *you've* invested so much of your time and energy into teaching all the old tricks! All you have to do to teach new tricks is toss out the old tricks you don't want to reward anymore, get clear in your mind what you do want, then consistently reward that!

The happiest dogs I've ever met are those that have the most training. They know exactly what they're supposed to be doing, they trust their Leaders, they know their job



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