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ABSTRACT

THE THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS UPON DOG OWNERS WHO
INTERACT WITH THEIR DOGS IN A MINDFUL WAY

by

Amy Jackson-Grossblat

Chair: Dennis Waite

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: THE THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS UPON DOG OWNERS WHO INTERACT
WITH THEIR DOGS IN A MINDFULWAY

Name of researcher: Amy Jackson-Grossblat

Name and degree of faculty chair: Dennis Waite, Ph.D.

Date completed: April 2011

Problem

For many in contemporary culture, the pursuit of possession has become an attempt to achieve happiness. However, this path may not always be congruent with psychological well-being. In addition, this path may lead us further away from relationships within the natural world. Humanistic and existential psychologists have suggested that a mindful connection to ourselves, to other-than-human beings, and to the natural world would enable more meaningful lives. If dogs are considered an extension of nature and those interactions between dog and owner that promote mindfulness are examined, there is the potential to obtain a better understanding of how individuals are

affected by these interactions in terms of self-growth. Specifically, how do these interactions influence relationships with themselves and others?

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to describe the experiences of three individuals who have worked with their dogs in a mindful manner and to understand how these experiences influenced their relationships with themselves, others, and the natural world and to determine the benefits of these experiences on self-growth and increased happiness from an existential perspective.

Methodology

A qualitative single-case study was chosen for this research. I chose to examine three individuals' experiences of mindful interactions with their dogs. Participants were selected based on recommendation from Patricia McConnell, Ph.D., who has worked with these individuals and their dogs, promoting a mindful interaction and who observed general benefits to psychological well-being in these three individuals. The data for the study consisted of open-ended interviews and field texts of observations and researcher notes.

Results and Conclusions

Six major themes emerged from the data: Context; Intervening Conditions; Interventions; Differences in Relationships With Others; Changes in Self-Awareness; and Spiritual Growth. Working with an interim text of fictional journals as alternative data representation verified the emerged themes. A cross-case analysis was performed within

a three-dimensional space inquiry to deepen the understanding of experience and qualify self-growth for the individuals who participated.

These interactions and processes of working with dogs in a natural way appeared to promote mindfulness, heightened awareness, and reportedly improved relationships to other-than-human beings. A process emerged that started with a shift of focus from dog interventions to the individuals' actions and awareness of self. Once there was increased self-awareness, the individual had the opportunity to practice with their dog and make improvements within that relationship. The heightened self-awareness from the relationship with the dog appeared to transfer to other human relationships. As the individual experienced greater satisfaction within themselves and connecting to others, a deeper sense of connection and meaning reportedly developed for that individual. This study supports the opinion that therapeutic benefit can be obtained through re-establishing a sense of self as part-of-nature utilizing the dog as an extension of nature. The results of this study have the potential to significantly assist humanistic and existential psychotherapists as well as counselors and other clinicians by providing their clients a direct and practical means of developing new life meanings, to address the problems of life and confront existential issues, all with the accessible modality of the family dog.

Andrews University

School of Education

THE THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS UPON DOG OWNERS WHO
INTERACT WITH THEIR DOGS IN A MINDFUL WAY

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Amy Jackson-Grossblat

April 2011

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

In contemporary Western culture, the pursuit of material possessions and wealth has become a primary principle for many. Those who have such regard for material abundance may believe this is the road to happiness and meaning in their lives.

R. B. Anderson (2009) suggests that material success of the human endeavor has not brought happiness, wisdom, or enlightenment. In fact, Fisher (2009) suggests that despite being a society at its peak of production, we are at our weakest spiritually. In addition, the process of seeking material success may have led us to alienation of nature. Morrison (2009) suggests that “our culture is living under a collective illusion—the belief that this planet is composed of a collection of unrelated and independent objects, rather than interrelated and interdependent subjects that make up a fragile and miraculous web of life” (p. 104). Buzzell (2009) and others propose that a return to meaningful interaction with nature can provide significant psychological benefits.

There are those who offer solutions to this materialistic path which they believe leads to isolation, selfishness, and greed. For example, basic existential and humanistic psychological concepts emphasize the role of the individual including active participation in their own life story and motivation for fulfillment of one’s potential. A key humanistic psychologist, Abraham Maslow, is known for his motivation theory which culminates in

the quest of reaching one's fullest potential as a human being (Schneider, Bugental, & Pierson, 2001). These motivational needs move from basic to advanced ultimately culminating in self-actualization (Schneider et al., 2001). Many of these needs are not cultivated in a society based upon the accumulation of materials and wealth. In contrast, the existential movement is an approach to psychology that is based on the whole person and understanding people by examining their interpersonal relationships with an emphasis on self-awareness and the concept of the individual as an active participant in their own lives (Jacobsen, 2007).

One significant voice of dissent is Erich Fromm, a prominent sociologist and humanistic psychologist of the 20th century. With sharp critique of industrialized society and material abundance, Fromm proposed that our reliance on advanced technology and communication resulted in unhealthy consumption and ultimately self-alienation. Fromm (1997) posits that two modes of existence have emerged subsequent to industrialization and massive cultural shifts: the *having* mode and the *being* mode. He describes our preoccupation with consumption as the predominant expression of the *having* mode through which our society only temporarily relieves the existential anxiety common to industrialized and technological societies. Inevitably, consumption leads to dissatisfaction. Paradoxically the consumer is driven even further along the path which Fromm formulates as, "I am = what I have and what I consume" (p. 23).

Fromm's (1997) alternative to the crisis of existence engendered by the *having* mode is to regain ourselves through consciousness and awareness, become more fully human, and re-establish the essential connection to ourselves, the natural world, and to each other. Fromm identifies this alternative state as the *being* mode. The increase in self-

awareness and consciousness occurs when one is fully present in the moment, utilizes one's senses, and concentrates on being deliberate and intentional with every act. It is what has also been described as mindfulness. This mindfulness is reflected in the process of being and reconnecting to self in the existential tradition.

Ecopsychology is described by Wilson and Kellert (1993) as a branch of psychology that brings together the study of humans interacting with the environment. This notion is grounded in the concept that the human psyche has an innate need to interact with the living world of which we are a part (Gorrell, 2001). Ecopsychology seems to embrace the core ideas of existential psychology. That is, the goals implicit in existential approaches to psychotherapy (i.e., experiencing awareness and consciousness in one's subjective existence, ultimately finding more fulfillment, peace and happiness) resonate with ecopsychology's self-embedded-in-nature models.

Given such a diversity of ideas (humanistic, existential, and ecopsychological), it would follow that there may be many methods to reduce the existential dilemma of material consumption and re-establish a connection between ourselves and the natural world. I propose that dogs are an extension of nature through interactions that promote mindfulness. This "natural way" of interacting with dogs means being fully present, mindful, and purposeful of the interactions taking place between oneself and a dog. It allows the human to cultivate and shape the relationship to benefit both creatures by being fully cognizant of trying to shape the interaction with the dog utilizing a language that a dog understands: dog psychology.

Patricia McConnell (2002), Ph.D., a professor of zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, works with individuals

and dogs to help them cultivate a rewarding relationship. This is accomplished through her emphasis of practicing mindful awareness and the immediacy of the moment. For example, with some knowledge of dog psychology in an immediate moment may help an owner decide whether or not a dog is going to act aggressively based on their alertness, body language including tail posture, and if the corners of their mouth are pulled back or drawn forward. Other key concepts important to understanding dog psychology and an openness to a dog's experience may include how to approach a dog, read body language, play, and socialize. McConnell has focused on helping dogs to have better relationships with their owners, but invariably she is also reversing the dynamic and helping dogs with humans who have problems as well, especially those owners who have lost the ability to connect effectively with others. Through working with dogs, McConnell teaches humans how to open an often overlooked pathway and re-establish connection and active interaction with the natural world. These interactions are the focus of this study in order to better understand how the dog owner gains entry into the natural world through mindful interactions with their dog.

Statement of the Problem

Humanistic and existential psychologists, including Rogers, Maslow, and May, as well as ecopsychologists point out our society's attempt to achieve happiness and well-being in our lives through materialism and consumption (Jacobsen, 2007). These psychologists and theorists suggest that a mindful connection to ourselves, to other-than-human beings, and to the natural world would enable us to lead a more meaningful and fulfilling life. This psychological attention is similar to Fromm's (1997) *being* mode, which has not been studied in the psychological literature. If dogs are considered an

extension of nature through this mindful interaction, then it would appear that there is much to be learned of these experiences of dog owners who are reaping personal benefits from working with their dogs in a mindful and natural way under McConnell (2002). Published research that examines and expands on the human-dog relationship as a modality to achieve connections between self, other, and nature is absent. There is a paucity of published research focusing on *how* to connect to other-than-human beings (and specifically dogs) or descriptions of the outcomes of facilitating such natural human-dog interactions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this single-case study was to describe the experiences of three individuals who have worked with their dogs in a mindful manner and to understand how these experiences influenced their relationships with themselves, others, and the natural world and to determine the benefits of these experiences on self-growth and increased happiness from an existential perspective. This exploration of experiences provided much-needed documentation in the literature to understand the human-dog relationship as a means of entering and practicing the *being* mode. The results of this study may significantly assist humanistic and existential psychotherapists as well as counselors and other clinicians in providing their clients a direct and practical means of developing new life meanings, to address the problems of life and confront existential issues, all with the accessible modality of the family dog.

In particular, the purpose of this study was to discover whether individuals who were given the opportunity to work with their dogs in a natural way by application of McConnell's (2002) training methods, would experience (a) a change in their sense-of-

self, and (b), if such change occurred, whether it led them into an experience of self-in-nature and into what Fromm identified as the *being* mode.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do participants describe their experience working with dogs in a natural way?
2. How did these experiences of working with dogs in a natural way influence these individuals' relationships with self, others, and the natural world?
3. How did the result of working with dogs in a natural way provide the larger and more general benefits of happiness and reconnection in the humanistic/existential tradition?

Research Design

A qualitative single-case study was chosen for this research. I sought to examine three individuals' experiences of mindful interactions with their dogs. This seemed the most appropriate choice as a case study is one of several methods of qualitative research that intensively studies socially related phenomenon within a group of individuals (Creswell, 1994). A full understanding of what it means to experience working with dogs in a natural or mindful way requires an in-depth examination of these participants as individuals. This includes exploration of their stories including a chronological recitation of events and significant turning points. Therefore, a narrative inquiry seemed to provide the best process to examine this case study.

Participants were selected based on recommendations from McConnell (2002), who worked with these specific individuals and their dogs by encouraging a mindful interaction; these individuals also incurred a positive benefit related to their psychological well-being as identified by McConnell. Open-ended interviews and researcher notes including observations from the interview formed the data for the study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was inspired by three esoteric concepts linked through the published research. These concepts include the following: the humanistic and existential psychological perspective, most specifically the philosophical constructs of the *having* versus *being* dynamics best described by Fromm (1997); ecopsychology which connects psychology with ecology; and finally a discussion of the nature of dogs. These concepts present a specific outline for an approach to understanding how clients can act as their own vehicles of change and resolve existential problems related to self-alienation by viewing the dog as part of nature and finding a reconnection to self and others through a mindful interaction with their dog.

Within the humanistic and existential traditions in psychology there are a number of key theorists that include May, Rogers, and Maslow (Bien, 2006; Maslow, 1954; May, 1967; Yalom, 1980). Basic existential and humanistic psychological concepts emphasize the role of the individual, including active participation, motivation for fulfillment of one's potential, and emphasis on self-awareness (Jacobsen, 2007). A key humanistic psychologist, Abraham Maslow, is known for his motivation theory which culminates in the quest of reaching one's fullest potential as a human being (Schneider et al., 2001). In addition, these theorists support that therapeutic change and growth comes about due to

the therapeutic encounter between the therapist and client, which aids the client to actualize personal potentials (Bien, 2006; Maslow, 1954; May, 1967; Yalom, 1980).

Bohart and Tallman (1999) developed a model of therapy in which the primary agent of change is the client. They believe that individuals are capable of emotional self-healing. In this model, clients are generative; *they* are the ones who invest interventions with life, *they* create the intervention effects which are supposed to produce change, and *they* actively use these interventions in their own unique life contexts in creative ways.

Bohart and Tallman further suggest that most people solve problems on their own, are self-righting most of the time, and do so without therapist assistance. They describe this self-righting capacity as

a desire to be effective in coping with the world, a capacity for initiative, a desire to pursue and achieve goals, a desire to solve problems and create livable accommodations with life's contingencies and constraints, the ability to bounce back from adversity and to continue to struggle to achieve workable accommodations, a capacity for understanding, a capacity for change when needed for developing new ways of being and behaving, a capacity for exploration when necessary, a capacity for productive thinking and the generation of new hypotheses, and a capacity for creativity. (Bohart & Tallman, 1999, p. 59)

This capacity and desire to self-right and solve one's own problems requires a certain level of self-awareness, which brings forth the final key humanistic psychologist who composes the conceptual framework of this case study because it also addresses the specific existential dilemma of the increasing alienation from self, other, and nature that Erich Fromm (1997) believes to be occurring. Fromm, a prominent sociologist and humanistic psychologist of the 20th century, posits that two modes of existence have emerged subsequent to industrialization and massive cultural shifts: the *having* mode and the *being* mode. Fromm's alternative to the crisis of existence engendered by the *having* mode is to regain ourselves through consciousness and awareness, become more fully

human, and re-establish the essential connection to ourselves, the natural world, and to each other. Fromm identifies this alternative state as the *being* mode. The increase in self-awareness and consciousness occurs when one is fully present in the moment, utilizes one's senses, and concentrates on being deliberate and intentional with every act, or what some also describe as mindfulness.

This mindfulness, as described in the existential tradition, brings forth a second concept outlining the framework of this study, which is ecopsychology. Ecopsychology connects psychology and ecology and provides individuals a way of healing alienation and finding connection in oneself and others through a process of mindfulness within nature. Roszak (1995) and Cohen (1997), key figures in the ecopsychology movement, insist that changes occur in sense-of-self and relation to others when an individual interacts with nature in a mindful way.

I propose that dogs are an extension of nature, and through interactions that promote mindfulness, a reconnection to ourselves and others can be found. This third concept, the nature of the dog, that outlines the framework of the study, involves the specific training methodology of Patricia McConnell (2002), a professor of zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a certified Applied Animal Behaviorist. Dr. McConnell works with individuals and dogs to help them cultivate a rewarding relationship. This is accomplished through her emphasis of practicing mindful awareness and the immediacy of the moment (McConnell, 2002). This “natural way” of interacting with dogs means being fully present, mindful, and purposeful of the interactions taking place between oneself and a dog. It allows the human to cultivate and shape the

relationship to benefit both creatures by being fully cognizant of trying to shape the interaction with the dog, utilizing a language that a dog understands: dog psychology.

In summary, these concepts of humanistic/existential psychological perspectives including Maslow's (1954) self-actualization, Bohart and Tallman's (1999) model of client as their own agent of change, combined with Fromm's approach of mindfulness to resolve alienation through the *being* mode can all come together and be applied within nature. This specific application of experiencing mindfulness in nature is a major construct of ecopsychology built on the premise of integration with the natural world. The nature of the dog would suggest he is also part of nature as an other-than-human being. McConnell's methods specifically target an understanding and interaction with dogs by implementing self-awareness, immediacy of the moment, and understanding dog psychology as a means to communicate. This conceptual framework presents a specific approach to understanding how clients can act as their own vehicles of change and resolve existential problems related to self-alienation by viewing the dog as part of nature and finding a reconnection to self and others through a mindful interaction with their dog.

Importance of the Study

A growing body of research supports the notion that human-animal interaction may facilitate human wellness in a variety of situations (Johnson, 2003). However, the examination of psychological state and mindfulness which may facilitate these interactions within nature has not been reported in the literature. Through the study of these individuals' experiences resulting from natural interactions with their dogs, a new direction for research is explored. This includes the contribution to the literature in the field of applied ecopsychology as the use of dogs within the humanistic-existential

context of self as active agent of change. The application of two ideas, clients as their own agents of change and the deliberate facilitation of a more natural relationship with dogs, may allow therapists a more effective approach to facing the existential concerns of alienation from self, other, and nature. With 68 million dogs in America (Millan, 2006), opportunities for improved individual happiness and well-being may be as accessible as the family pet.

Definition of Terms

Alternative Data Representation: In qualitative research, the exploration of different forms of communication that we do not normally use to represent what we have learned and chosen to present as data; forms may include stories, pictures, diagrams, maps, theater, demonstrations, and poetry; rooted in the nature of knowledge and the relationship between what one knows and how it is represented (Eisner, 1997a). This will be referred throughout the text as “fictional journals” as well as “interim text” as defined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

Awareness: The state or ability to perceive, to feel, or to be conscious of acts or events.

Being: Interchangeable with “living” and “existence.” In existential psychology terms, it is used for conceptualizing subjective aspects of the self (Jacobsen, 2007). Fromm (1997) termed a *Being* mode as the process of regaining ourselves through consciousness and awareness, becoming more fully human, and re-establishing the essential connection to ourselves, the natural world, and to each other; in contrast to Fromm’s *having* mode, I am equals what I have and what I consume.

Consciousness: An alert cognitive state in which one is aware of self and situation.

Ecopsychology: The study of the relationship between the human psyche and the environment.

Existentialism: A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience, and freedom of choice and responsibility for one's own actions (Jacobsen, 2007).

Human animal bond: A mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and other animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both.

Humanism: A human-centered philosophy that focuses on needs, concerns, and values and the capacity for self-actualization and fulfillment (Jacobsen, 2007).

Interim Text: Texts, or simply data, in the qualitative inquiry process that are situated in the spaces between field texts and final research texts, emphasizing the reconstruction of the field experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

McConnell method of dog training: Practicing mindful awareness in the immediacy of the moment while working with dogs (McConnell, 2002).

Mindful: Being fully present in the moment utilizing one's senses with concentration on being deliberate and intentional with every act (Fromm, 1997).

Natural: Existing in or produced by nature.

Nature: The world of living things and the outdoors.

Natural way of working with dogs: Being fully present, mindful, and purposeful during the interaction that takes place between humans and dogs; an example is McConnell's (2002) methods of dog training.

Self righting: As described by Bohart and Tallman (1999), the ability to bounce back from adversity and to continue to struggle to achieve workable accommodations with a capacity for change and creativity (p. 59).

Delimitations

While there are many dog psychology experts who help train dogs and help them to become better family pets, Patricia McConnell (2002) helps her clients by utilizing a psychological shift through the practice of mindful awareness during the human/dog interaction. This study limited its scope to three specific individuals with whom which Dr. McConnell has had direct or indirect influence upon their dog training methodologies. Participation in this study allowed these individuals the opportunity to reflect on their experiences working with their dogs using McConnell's method.

Limitations

Limitations to the study are evidenced by the limited availability of people who have interacted with McConnell (2002) and her dog training methods. In addition, a subject's voluntary response to the researcher's participation invitation further limited the availability. The interviews and subsequent interpretation of data were limited to the participant's ability to accurately and descriptively articulate and reflect on their experiences. Finally, the study was limited to those clients identified by Dr. McConnell

with positive change in self after their dog training experiences. Other individuals who worked with McConnell were not identified and were not studied.

Summary

The remaining aspects of the study include the following: Chapter 2 is a review of the current literature, chapter 3 includes methods of inquiry and the design of the study, chapter 4 is the analysis of data, and chapter 5 is a discussion of findings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature for an approach to understanding how clients can act as their own vehicles of change and resolve existential problems related to self-alienation by viewing the dog as part of nature and finding a reconnection to self and others through a mindful interaction with their dog. It begins with a basic exploration into the humanistic and existential realms of psychology, including Maslow's (1954) self-actualization, Bohart and Tallman's (1999) model of client as their own agent of change, and most specifically the philosophical constructs of the *having* versus *being* dynamics best described by Fromm (1997).

The review of literature continues with the existential approach of Fromm's (1997) ideas of mindfulness to resolve the problem of alienation through the *being* mode that can be applied to the concepts of ecopsychology. Ecopsychology connects psychology with ecology, by studying the relationship of the human psyche to the environment or nature. Finally, a review of the nature of the dog is explored to present as a valuable avenue and means of reconnecting with nature. Patricia McConnell's (2002) methods specifically target an understanding and interaction with dogs by implementing self-awareness, immediacy of the moment, and an understanding of dog psychology as a

means to communicate. By viewing the dog as part of nature, a reconnection of self and to others can be established.

Humanistic and Existential Philosophies

There is a broad tradition of humanistic and existential philosophies which provides important conceptual background for this study. Humanism is a moral philosophy that places humans as primary in range of importance. It is a perspective common to a wide range of ethical stances attaching importance to human dignity, concerns, and capabilities. Specifically, humanistic psychology is a school of psychology that emerged in the 1950s in reaction to both behaviorism and psychoanalysis (Schneider et al., 2001). It is concerned with the human dimensions of psychology and the human context for development of psychological theory. Major theorists in humanistic psychology and in the subkind theories of existential psychology, which focus more on the question of concrete human existence and the conditions of these existences, include Maslow, Rogers, May, and Yalom (Schneider et al., 2001; Yalom, 1980).

General Overview of Humanistic and Existential Psychology

Abraham Maslow (1954) may be considered the individual most responsible for developing humanistic psychology into a cohesive viewpoint and served as the foundation for future humanistic psychologists (Schneider et al., 2001). Maslow (1954) is best known for his hierarchy of needs, proposed in his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*. These needs move from basic to advanced: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and finally self-actualization (Schneider et al., 2001). Self-actualization is the summit of Maslow's (1954) motivation theory which culminates in the

quest of reaching one's fullest potential as a human being. Furthermore, individuals who continually grow towards this goal often experience moments of profound happiness and harmony (Schneider et al., 2001).

Another pioneer in humanistic psychology, Rollo May (1967), was influenced strongly by existentialism. He was interested in reconciling existential psychology with other philosophies, especially Freud's. May was critical of the mainstream psychology of the 1960s which avoided the most concrete aspects of being human, which, he believed, were lost in the reduction to objective measurement and the search for an animal counterpart. Instead, May proposed a model of study called "the ontological characteristics of human existence" (p. 192). These characteristics include the capacity of individuals to relate to themselves as both subjects and objects; their potential for choice and for ethical actions; their ability to reason; their ability to create myths, metaphors, and symbols; and their ability to participate in the historical development of their communities (Schneider et al., 2001, p. 296).

Existential psychology, then, is the branch of psychology which deals with each human being's relationship to life's most essential dilemmas. Jacobsen (2007) describes that existential psychological theory attempts to capture the spirit and feel of life itself rather than the reduction of life to a system of logical categories. One of the key assumptions of existential psychology is that life's meaning is never fixed and is constantly being created and recreated. Jacobsen (2007) further describes that it is an approach to psychology based on several premises including: understanding that a "whole" person is more than the sum of his or her parts; understanding people by examining their interpersonal relationships, understanding that people have many levels

of self-awareness that can be neither ignored nor put into an abstract context, understanding that people have free will and are participants rather than observers in their own lives, and understanding that people's lives have purpose, values, and meaning.

Yalom (1980), who was influenced heavily by May (1967), is one of the great organizers of existential theory. In his book, *Existential Psychotherapy*, Yalom (1980) organized the breadth of existential theory into four major themes: (a) Death, (b) Freedom (& Responsibility), (c) Isolation, and (d) Meaninglessness. According to Yalom, these four existential realities are the root of most psychological problems and have no ultimate answers. Although other existentialists may be more optimistic about the ability of people to find answers to these questions, it is generally agreed that these four issues are central to the human experience.

Fromm's Alienation of Self

Erich Fromm (1997) was a German social psychologist and humanistic philosopher who lived from 1900-1980 whose writings were remarkable for both social commentary and psychological foundation. During his lifetime, he was considered one of the most prolific and well-known analysts of his generation (Rasmussen & Salhani, 2008). Fromm's (1997) work notably attempts to bridge social and psychodynamic theory and is an essential piece of the theoretical framework of this study. Fromm's body of work postulates six basic needs: relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, sense of identity, frame of orientation, and excitation and stimulation. His fundamental proposal is that two modes of existence struggle for the spirit of humankind: the *having* mode, which concentrates on material possessions and power; and the *being* mode, which is based on love and the connection and sharing with others.

In Fromm's (1997) book, *To Have or To Be*, he suggests our contemporary culture's primary goal today is to "have." He believes that we as an industrialized society have placed too much importance on acquiring material things as our primary path to enjoyment of life (p. 13). Greed, money, fame, and power have become recurrent themes driving today's culture. He believes that for many "having" has become the primary purpose for interaction within the world. Fromm continues by asserting that the very essence of *being* has become *having*, and that if one *has* nothing, one *is* nothing.

Humans have thus become driven into never-ending consumption (Fromm, 1997). Fromm suggests that consuming relieves our existential anxiety which we feel because of selfish and greedy egos. In searching for security, we have become dependent upon possessions: money, prestige, power; all of which are outside of the self and support the false illusionary picture. An ego driven by this consumptive greed, however, can never gain enough wealth because consumption can never fill the inner emptiness, loneliness, and depression and disappointment it attempts to overcome.

Fromm (1997) proposes a major dilemma for humankind: that we alienate ourselves from our true nature from connection with others, because we have lost the capacity to understand the spirit of a society that is not centered in property or greed (i.e., consumption and possessions). He asserts there is no living relationship between self and what one has, leaving man in the most crucial problem of existence, one of *having* versus *being*. According to Fromm, the full humanization of man and fulfillment of desires requires a shift from the possession-centered orientation to the activity-centered orientation, from selfishness and egotism to solidarity and altruism, and into what Fromm terms the *being* mode of existence.

This *being* mode of existence refers to experience, aliveness, authentic relatedness to the world, and our true nature (Fromm, 2006). He describes that only in the process of mutual alive-relatedness can the barrier of separateness be overcome and we can participate in the process of life together. This process involves change, growth, and an awareness that the only meaningful way of life is the active process of caring for and loving the fellow beings that inhabit our Earth (Fromm, 2006). Specifically, Fromm (1997) describes that this change and growth process is possible through consciousness and awareness, to become more fully human, and re-establish the essential connection to ourselves, the natural world, and to each other. The increase in self-awareness and consciousness occurs when one is fully present in the moment, utilizes one's senses, and concentrates on being deliberate and intentional with every act, or what some also describe as mindfulness.

However, a literature review for studies supporting these aspects of Fromm's work in applied psychology results in a scarcity of research. There are studies related to his work within psychoanalysis (Biancoli, 2006; Simmonds, 2006) and his influence on the works of Freud (C. M. Anderson, 1958) and Jung (Domingo, 1976). Also, there is contemporary recognition of Fromm's body of contributions to social psychology including key elements of social criticism as discussed above (Rasmussen & Salhani, 2008). Certainly, many (Lonky, 1984; Rasmussen & Salhani, 2008) have commented on Fromm's moral philosophies and social insights but most of these works include popular writings rather than published peer-reviewed research. Unfortunately, there is no published applied research in support of his *having* versus *being* concepts.

For the purposes of this study, however, Fromm's (1997, 2006) work, which remains a significant influence on modern psychological therapeutic interventions today, will also form a key component to the theoretical framework of this study.

Philosophical Kinship With the Great Masters

According to Fromm (1997), there is a remarkable kinship in the teachings of a number of the Great Masters including the ideas of the Buddha, Eckhart, Marx, Freud, Spinoza, and Aristotle. Fromm (1997) finds similarities in this group including the shared radical demand for giving up of the *having* orientation, and for attainment of a life of *being*. Both Aristotle (1905) and Aquinas (1981) devoted much of their lives to the inner stillness and spiritual knowledge that is the highest form of human activity. Spinoza's optimal realization of one's nature is the goal of life; the closer we are in reaching the model of human nature, the greater our freedom and our well-being (Spinoza, 1927). He described that achieving optimal growth leads to freedom, strength, and mental health. Spinoza was also one of the first modern thinkers to postulate that mental health and sickness are outcomes of right and wrong living.

Eckhart (1941), too, taught that to have nothing and make oneself open and "empty," not letting one's ego stand in the way, is the condition for achieving spiritual wealth and strength. Fromm considered the concept of *being* as an "unmasking," which is expressed by Eckhart and is central in both Spinoza's and Marx's work as well as a fundamental discovery of Freud (Fromm, 1997). Freud believed that the insight into hidden conflicts between conscious and unconscious forces would result in the cure of neurosis (Freud, 1909). The way to *being* means increased insight into the reality of one's self, of others, of the world around us (Fromm, 2006).

Fromm (1997) considered that alienation in humans, as taught in Buddhism, occurs because our perception is distorted and we see ourselves as separate. The Buddha teaches that in order to achieve the highest state of human development, we must not crave possessions, neither things, nor the self; nothing is real but processes (Dalai Lama, 1998). If one accepts the Buddhist idea that much of consciousness serves the purposes of the ego, then it follows that a need-obsessed ego is what drives a culture “engulfed in consumerism” (Greenway, 2009, p. 137). In practicing the teachings of Buddhism, we as humans are awakened and liberated from the illusion that craving for things leads us to happiness. Furthermore, Buddhism and similar practices can offer a fairly rapid reorientation “when the conditions are right for a new story” (Fisher, 2009, p. 66).

These similarities in message of many of the great masters over time help support the potential universality of these *having* versus *being* motifs presented by Fromm. For example, both great thinkers Aristotle (1905) and Aquinas (1981), separated in time by over 2,000 years, devoted much emphasis and focus on the pursuit of happiness through a practice of inner stillness in life. Similarly, much of Buddhist philosophy practices this same devotion to pursue self-fulfillment as taught and practiced even today by the Dalai Lama (1998).

Process of *Being*, Self-Transformation, and the Therapeutic Realm

The processes of *being* and reconnecting to self and others are clearly attributes of many great teachers, philosophers, and psychologists. They have all essentially arrived at similar norms for living: overcoming greed, illusions, and hate, and the attainment of love and compassion through self-transformation (Fromm, 1997). While some approaches to the process of *being* vary slightly, all have the same basic fundamental root of valuing the

identity of the human being as found in the humanism tradition (Schneider et al., 2001). Schneider summarizes Maslow's self-actualization quest as culminating in working with the self to obtain one's fullest potential (Schneider et al., 2001). In the similar existential tradition, the process of being and reconnecting to the self is examined through self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, and meaning making to life's essential questions and anxieties (Jacobsen, 2007). These pioneers within both humanism and existentialism echo a number of similar themes. Again, this leads back to the process of *being* and reconnecting to self found in these philosophies repeated through time as detailed above.

A similar theme throughout these humanistic authors is the belief that the basis for any approach to self-transformation, to have one's center in oneself, is an ever-increasing awareness of reality and the shedding of illusions. The more "seeing" (or aware) one becomes, the more likely they can produce changes, both individual and social changes. Pointedly, the root of the word "aware" in the English and German history of the word is "attention" or "mindfulness" and has the meaning of discovering something that was not quite obvious (Skeat, 2005). In other words, awareness is knowing or consciousness in a state of close attention.

In the humanistic therapeutic realm, self-transformation is addressed through psychological treatment programs which emphasize human uniqueness, positive qualities, and individual potential. Therapy is often focused on increasing awareness of one's self-concept, addressing and making meaning of unique human issues, such as the self, self-actualization, love, being, and individuality (Schneider et al., 2001).

Self-transformation in existential psychotherapy is initiated through self exploration aimed at alleviating core anxieties. Further, it becomes an existential method

of psychotherapy that operates on the belief that inner conflict within a person is the result of anxieties with the givens of existence (Jacobsen, 2007). Yalom (1980), as noted earlier, identifies these as: the inevitability of death, freedom and its attendant responsibility, existential isolation, and meaninglessness. These four givens, or themes, are used to compose a framework from which a therapist conceptualizes a client's problem to facilitate a method of treatment. Existential therapy starts with the belief that although humans are essentially alone in the world, they long to be connected to others. Existentialists believe we are alienated and isolated, and our lives are also meaningless; nothing exists which is greater than ourselves, therefore there are no external sources of values and absolutes from which we can draw (Jacobsen, 2007). Against this background, however, we humans possess the freedom and responsibility to create our own values and personal life-meanings.

The existential psychotherapist is generally not concerned with the client's past; instead, the emphasis is on the choices to be made in the present and future (Bugental, 1987; Jacobsen, 2007; Yalom, 1980). The therapist and patient may reflect upon how the patient has previously answered life's questions, but attention ultimately shifts to searching for a new and increased awareness in the present and enabling a new freedom and responsibility to act (Jacobsen, 2007). James Bugental has a combined existential-humanistic approach that is described as existential in dealing with the essence of existence and also humanistic in that an awareness and realization of inner potential is an outcome sought in psychotherapy (Bugental, 1987; Schulenberg, 2003). It is an experiential-centered approach that focuses on the immediate moment, emphasizing the

importance of the client's subjective experience in order to heighten consciousness and examine what it means to be a human being (Bugental, 1987).

But perhaps the most important aspect of any therapy is the client. Bohart and Tallman (1999) propose that self-transformation can occur within the individual themselves. They believe that humans have a unique ability to empower themselves with the ability for self-growth and healing. Self-healing refers to the human capacity to repair dysfunctional life pathways, to recover from emotionally injurious experiences, and to change ways of being, behaving, and experiencing so that one moves toward greater coherence and functionality.

Bohart and Tallman (1999) propose a model of the client as an active self-healer, suggesting the primary healing agent in psychotherapy *is* the client themselves. Clients are generative; they are the ones who invest interventions with life, create the effects which interventions are supposed to produce, and actively use these interventions in their own uniquely creative ways. Clients heal by blending therapeutic interventions with their own views of problem identification, their own ideas of how to solve them, and activate those solutions within the contexts of their own lives. Most human beings generally solve problems on their own, and self-right most of the time without therapist assistance.

Bohart and Tallman (1999) describe this general human capacity for self-righting as follows:

a desire to be effective in coping with the world, a capacity for initiative, a desire to pursue and achieve goals, a desire to solve problems and create livable accommodations with life's contingencies and constraints, the ability to bounce back from adversity and to continue to struggle to achieve workable accommodations, a capacity for understanding, a capacity for change when needed for developing new ways of being and behaving, a capacity for exploration when necessary, a capacity for productive thinking and the generation of new hypotheses, and a capacity for creativity. (p. 59)

The role of the therapist has many facets; they are resource providers, information providers, idea providers, strategy providers, supporters, mentors, and coaches (Bohart & Tallman, 1999). The therapist is primarily a process expert whose expertise consists of helping clients identify their problems, helping them develop and define potential solution pathways, and ways of attaining that solution.

Buddhist Philosophy and Mindfulness

A complete summary of Buddhism is far beyond the scope of this paper. However, certain aspects of the Buddhist philosophy are especially relevant to this study as they relate to reconnecting to oneself, others, and nature within the theoretical constructs of both the humanistic and existential philosophies and the implementation of effective therapeutic techniques that facilitate the concept mindfulness. Several psychologists and therapists (Bien, 2006; Fehmi & Robbins, 2007; Unno, 2006) are increasingly borrowing the concepts of mindfulness from several sources including Buddhist philosophy.

In particular, Buddhist philosophy states that no separate self can ever be found; all things co-arise interdependently with all other things (Dalai Lama, 1998). Similarly, Adams (2005) believes that one cannot overemphasize that our well-being is interwoven with the well-being of our family, friends, community, culture, and society. Clearly, the importance of interconnectedness seems essential to the pursuit of happiness. This brings up the definition of this well-being or happiness.

This is addressed by psychologists Ekman, Davidson, Ricard, and Wallace (2005) who define happiness in the Buddhist sense as “a state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality” (p. 60). It is realized by a radical

transformation of consciousness by sustained training in attention, emotional balance, and mindfulness so that one can learn to distinguish between the way things are as they appear to the senses, versus the projections that one casts (Ekman et al., 2005). As a result of such training, one perceives what is presented to the senses, including one's own mental states, in a way that is closer to their true nature, undistorted by the projections people habitually mistake for reality (Ekman et al., 2005). The idea is to incorporate the recognition of one's deep kinship with all beings who share the same yearning to be free of suffering and to find a lasting state of well-being (Ekman et al., 2005).

This kinship is taught in Buddhism from a spiritual not moralistic path (Bien, 2006). This distinction is important as the spiritual person, for example, does not love other people due to some type of rule, but because of the interconnectedness of all beings, and sees deeply that it makes no sense to do so otherwise (Bien, 2006; Dalai Lama, 1998). Similarly, Buddhist teachings do not invoke blind faith but consider true faith as provisional, or as a working hypothesis, and then seek out whether it is so (Dalai Lama, 1998). This distinction between Buddhist philosophy and Buddhism as a religion is important as it makes the spiritual path accessible to the agnostic or practicing Jew or Christian (Bien, 2006). This spiritual approach to living through the practice of deep awareness, calm presence, and minimal dogmatic belief is called mindfulness (Batchelor, 1997).

Several psychologists and therapists (Bien, 2006; Fehmi & Robbins, 2007; Unno, 2006) are increasingly borrowing the concepts of mindfulness from Buddhist philosophy. These proponents suggest that the benefits and positive effects help the therapist to be fully present for their clients, as well as help their clients find meaning and purpose in

their lives (Bien, 2006). It is an approach to living that potentially can be shared with patients of diverse belief systems and backgrounds. However, a review of the bibliographies of these authors work demonstrate a paucity of experimental research in the area (Bien, 2006; Fehmi & Robbins, 2007; Unno, 2006). While the distinction between thoughts and emotions may not have existed in the East at the time of Buddha, mindfulness of emotions is quite important in psychotherapy. Germer, Siegel, and Fulton (2005) describe the following:

Traditionally, in Buddhist psychology, the mindfulness practitioner may focus on different parts of the body; the pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral quality of sensations; states of mind, such as distraction or the arising of pride; and various qualities that foster well-being, such as energy and tranquility, or qualities that inhibit wellness, such as anger and sloth. (p. 15)

Therefore, Buddhist philosophy provides potentially valuable therapeutic tools for the practicing psychologist. These resources include the use of Jungian concepts of bringing into consciousness those hidden parts of ourselves into a fully integrated and whole being (Aizenstat, 1995). This includes the self that is connected to all other beings and gives an existential context and purpose to the practice of mindfulness when brought into the therapeutic realm. How then can the practicing therapist incorporate these concepts into psychological practice and better teach this concept of mindfulness to clients?

Specific Approaches to Meditation and Mindfulness

In the humanistic therapeutic realm, self-transformation is addressed through psychological treatment programs which emphasize human uniqueness, positive qualities, and individual potential. Therapists may draw on a number of specific techniques to facilitate mindfulness in their clients as well as embrace mindfulness themselves in the

relationship and therapeutic encounter with their clients. In addition, there are also specific techniques available to help clients understand the practice of meditation.

This concept of well-being and health being intimately related to how one attends and concentrates in daily life is presented by Fehmi (Fehmi & Robbins, 2007), clinical psychologist and researcher. Fehmi has described techniques called *Open Focus* attention training, citing a number of proposed benefits including the crucial and global role that attention plays in our mind and body as the source of stress reduction healing power. He offers techniques to improve attention and focus, utilizing visualization and meditation. For example Fehmi's exercises include many meditation cues on the order of, "Can you imagine the space between your eyes?" or "Can you imagine the volume of your eyelids?" (Fehmi & Robbins, 2007, p. 25). Fehmi presents a number of anecdotes regarding benefits of these techniques but little research aside from basic work from the biofeedback literature (Valdes, 1985) described below. Also, he does little to suggest how the therapist might incorporate these concepts with "talk therapy."

In the cited biofeedback study, Valdes (1985) provided open-focus attention training exercise via a series of six cassettes and a study guide to college students. Participants, in both experimental and control groups, completed an initial and final 18-page stress level assessment form consisting of about 75 questions on a variety of stress-related symptoms. The open-focus exercises were used during workshops and at home. Ninety-minute workshops were held weekly over a 9-week period and included biofeedback measurements for both groups including EMG, EEG, digital temperature, and blood pressure. Analysis of the data suggested post-training improvement in grade point average, stress scores, and biofeedback modalities. However, the control group in

this study was not a true control but those students who were lost to follow-up or unable to complete the workshop schedule due to lack of time (Valdes, 1985). Also, the addition of biofeedback to meditative open focus techniques makes it difficult to attribute the experimental result to one variable.

Alternatively, Bien (2006) focuses more on the therapist's role which he believes is to relieve suffering in others through deep listening, which he calls *mindful therapy*. Being mindful as a therapist can lead the way to a true healing encounter with another human being instead of what he suggests frequently happens in today's therapeutic practices: receiving a few sessions of well-intentioned advice giving, particularly in areas where managed care dominates. Bien asserts that mindful therapists know it is the relationship that brings the healing because of the authentic meeting with another person through the therapeutic door of our own suffering as a human being. This focus on the therapeutic relationship is predominant in both humanistic and existential therapies which value the therapeutic encounter and help the client actualize their own potentials. As discussed, this focus on the therapeutic relationship is prominent in the works of influential pioneers of existentialism and humanism including May (1967), Yalom (1980), and Maslow (1954). More recent existentialists such as Jacobsen (2007) and Bugental (1987) continue to emphasize this focus on the therapeutic relationship. For example, Bugental emphasizes the importance of the client's subjective experience in order to heighten consciousness. However, this theory does not have support in original research. Similarly, Jacobsen (2007) theorizes about the importance of a new and increased awareness in the present and in order to enable a new freedom to make changes

in behavior. A review of Jacobsen's publications reveals many theoretical sources but no peer-reviewed research studies.

Several psychologists have incorporated meditation drawn from certain Buddhist philosophies discussed earlier into the therapeutic setting. Bien (2006) describes the most basic of the Buddhist meditation exercises that lead to an increase in mindfulness as awareness of breath. Similarly, Fromm (2006) asserts that the first and most basic step towards awareness is to simply practice directed concentration towards nothing, or perhaps a specific thought, feeling, or another person for 15-20 minutes daily.

Fromm (2006) believes that from the practice of concentration, a direct path leads to one of the basic preparations for learning the art of being: meditation to a higher level of being, attaining a higher degree of nonattachment, non-greed, and of non-illusion.

Proponents suggest breath language speaks about life and death (Bien, 2006; Manne, 2004). Our first breath informs the world that we are alive just as our last breath signifies our departure (Manne, 2004). Buddhist meditations begin with breathing because it is the most fundamental act of life; as we breathe in and out, we nourish every cell in the body (Bien, 2006). Breathwork is considered an excellent introduction to mediation as therapists teach clients about relaxation, self-control, and later optimism for other techniques after early success utilizing the technique (Hoshmand, 2006). Bien (2006) suggests that when we bring mindfulness to our breath, we experience more of the full benefit of breathing: its full calming, healing, nurturing potential. He goes on to say that one can be fully aware of the sensation of breathing in and out for the space of one breath, then it will be possible to have brought body and mind together for that length of time, calming the mind and bringing about true presence. Bien believes that when we

struggle against something difficult, negative, or painful, this only gives it more energy. If we instead allow ourselves to acknowledge the difficult element, and let it simply *be*, it comes into our awareness and goes: It does not get stuck or gain power. Bien also describes a powerful feedback loop between breath and emotion; when for example we feel anxious, we breathe shallowly and begin to feel more anxious; as we begin to breathe more calmly and deeply, we start to feel calmer and avoid perpetuating these maladaptive emotions.

However, Bien's (2006) conclusions are entirely based upon observation and theory. Breathwork, or focused deliberate breathing techniques, does have some support within the physiologic literature. For example, several studies have shown the relationship between deep, slow breathing and activation of the parasympathetic nervous system. Joseph et al. (2005) tested whether slow breathing was capable of modifying blood pressure in hypertensive and control subjects. After monitoring both groups during spontaneous, controlled breathing at 15 breaths per minute, and controlled breathing at 6 breaths per minute, the authors found that slow breathing decreased blood pressure especially in the hypertensive group (Joseph et al., 2005). It should be noted that the subjects were naïve to breathwork of any kind. A limitation of this study was the acute and transient amount of time that the subjects were breathing and monitored.

Similarly, many meditation practices known to increase parasympathetic activation are thought to have a quieting effect on the respiratory system and metabolism. Wolkove, Kreisman, Darragh, Cohen, and Frank (1984) studied the effect of controlled breathing on the respiratory system using 16 experienced subjects and 16 control subjects. In controls, there was no significant difference in physiological variables such

as respiratory pattern whether breathing with eyes open or meditation with eyes closed (Wolkove et al., 1984). In comparison, the researchers conclude that those subjects experienced in focused breathing could significantly influence physiological parameters of the respiratory system, suggesting increased parasympathetic activation (Wolkove et al., 1984).

Mindfulness can be practiced in daily meditation exercises in which awareness of breathing is the central issue. These exercises vary from very specific image and voice-guided routines to more simple techniques. Mindfulness may also be practiced in every moment of daily living, whether that is walking, eating, thinking, or seeing; so that living becomes fully transparent by full awareness and every experience becomes clear, distinct, and real (Fromm, 2006). Bien (2006) describes that the best way to take care of one's self is to cultivate mindfulness, a calm, spacious, accepting, and open awareness of what is happening in the impermanent and ever-changing world inside and outside of our skin. Bien also asserts that by taking care of ourselves in this way, we are at the same time of the most help to others and become a true source of healing in the world. This implies that the mindful therapist may be more effective for their clients.

These influential figures and related concepts within and related to the humanistic and existential philosophies establish key constructs and a body of work emphasizing the importance and potential of the individual and the value of relationships and connection through mindfulness. As will be seen later, relationship and connectedness are crucial to working with dogs in a mindful or natural way.

Ecopsychology

This mindfulness, as described in the existential tradition, brings forth a second concept outlining the framework of this study, which is ecopsychology. Ecopsychology is a term coined over 25 years ago by Theodore Roszak (1995) and connects psychology and ecology to provide individuals a means of healing alienation and finding connection in oneself and others within nature. This avenue of interaction and kinship within the natural world shares a great affinity with Fromm and other existential theorists as outlined above. Like all forms of psychology, ecopsychology concerns itself with the foundations of human nature and behavior merging with ecological foundations (Roszak, 1995). It is “the study of the psychological processes that tie us to the world or separate us from it” (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009, p. 17).

This section on ecopsychology delves further into the science of ecology with an exploration of the self as it relates to nature. Next, the literature reviews how we can experience nature from an ecopsychological perspective by incorporating the concepts of mindfulness and specifically the use of our five senses. This section also explores specific programs designed to enhance a reconnection to self and others through nature. Finally, research is presented of the most comprehensive studies and their effects in nature. These programs all share a kinship and emphasis on the positive effects of natural settings.

Basic Tenants Within Ecopsychology

Ecopsychology, according to Wilson and Kellert (1993), is positioned on the premise of Harvard Zoologist E. O. Wilson’s concept of *biophilia*, which is described as an innate emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms. Ecopsychology proceeds from the assumption that at its deepest level the psyche remains sympathetically

bonded to the earth that “mothered us” into existence. Roszak (1995) insists that some of these concepts of ecopsychology may have been around since ancient times among indigenous people who practiced healing within the context of environmental reciprocity.

Ecopsychologists such as Shepard (1995) and Conn (1995) describe the same sense of alienation as a state of disconnection from which humans have been suffering in our contemporary society which the existentialists have described. Shepard (1995) states that our species once lived in stable harmony with the natural environment, but with the progress of civilization our stance toward nature changed during the emergence of Neolithic from the Paleolithic period (between 5,000 and 10,000 years ago) to an increasingly destructive relationship. Roszak (1995) believes that this connection can help rebuild our alienated relationship with the natural environment resulting from years of industrialization.

The cultural pathology of our current time is radical individualism. Conn (1995) calls our need to consume a “materialistic disorder,” and believes it indicates a serious problem of our culture’s ongoing disconnection from the Earth. Durning (1995) suggests however that consumerism is failing in its promise to deliver contentment. Furthermore, Durning (1995) asserts that by diminishing our free time and distracting us from relationships, the culture of consumerism is actually making us less happy. People have been attempting to satisfy what are essentially social, psychological, and spiritual needs in material ways. Kanner and Gomes (1995) concur, stating that consumer practices serve to temporarily alleviate the anguish of an empty life. The purchase of a new product, especially a big ticket item such as a car or high-end computer, typically produces an

immediate sense of pleasure and achievement, but as the novelty wears off, the emptiness threatens to return.

As can be seen, these prominent voices of ecopsychology, Roszak (1995), Shepard (1995), and Conn (1995), strongly echo the ideas of humanistic and existential traditions in psychology. These ecopsychology voices describe man's ability to find meaning in life; to fulfill one's social, psychological, and spiritual needs by reconnecting with his true nature in the context of earth's natural environment. Greenway (1995), for example, states, "To reverse our tragic and growing alienation from nature, it is essential that we free ourselves from addiction to dualism [the two basic opposing elements of nature and self] through extended forays into wilderness, meditation, and other awareness-expanding experiences" (p. 122).

This application of ecopsychology has been coined ecotherapy (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). Clinebell's book in 1996, called *Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth*, described this healing and growth as both green therapy and earth-centered therapy. This includes work with the body and the study of psychological relations with the rest of nature (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). This nature-based method of physical and psychological healing both acknowledges the vital role of nature and addresses the human-nature relationship. It takes into account the latest scientific understandings of our universe and the deepest indigenous wisdom (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). Grasping this fact perhaps shifts our understanding of how to heal the human psyche and the current dysfunctional human-nature relationship.

These early pioneers of ecopsychology provide a model for healing through nature by opening the senses and increasing awareness within nature. Roszak (1995) and

Cohen (1995), key figures in the ecopsychology movement, insist that changes occur in sense-of-self and relation to others when an individual interacts with nature in a mindful way. In this research study, nature is represented by the dog in the home whose presence evolves into an agent of transformation if interaction with the animal occurs in a mindful and present manner.

The Experience of Consciousness, Unconscious, and the Ecological Self

Both Freud and Jung emphasized a psychology of the human experience. Freud identified an integrated self, comprised of both conscious and unconscious experience (Ellenberger, 1981). Consciousness, as Freud (1909) conceptualized it, is the quality of the mind that indicates an alert state of awareness, and perception of one's self (or the Ego) and its relationship with the environment. The unconscious refers to lacking awareness and capacity for sensory perception as if asleep, therefore the unconscious mind, or subconscious, is a part of the mind wherein psychic activity takes place outside the person's unawareness. The human psyche, then, is the unconscious workings of the Id, Ego, and Superego. The Ego takes on an executive function that manages relations between the instinctive Id, and the more cultural, repressive, and moralistic Superego. Human behavior, then, is driven by these dynamics of the unconscious according to Freud (1909).

Jung (1916), however, viewed the unconscious comprised of two parts or levels: the Personal unconscious and the Collective unconscious. Jung (1916) asserted that The Personal unconscious is made up of complexes, or sets of repressed feelings and thoughts that are experienced and developed during an individual's lifetime. Jung (1916) defined The Collective unconscious as a set of inherited and typical modes of expressions,

feelings, thoughts, and memories that are seemingly innate in all human beings. He describes these typical patterns of behavior and personalities as archetypes. Jung held that the individual unconscious is integrated with various archetypes of the collective unconscious in hopes of achieving individuation, or wholeness of self. Through this process, Jung believed that individuals have the ability to become “self-creating” and “self-determining” beings (Jung, 1916, p. xliii).

According to Yunt (2001), Jung never wrote specifically about the science of ecology, but his insights often carried an intuitive sense of the precipitous changes between the modern and natural world. Jung understood nature as one of four significant archetypal images to suffer repression in the civilized mind. Hence the idea of a fully developed human being depends upon our ability to participate actively in the vitality, richness, and depth of the natural world (Yunt, 2001). Our current understanding of the world, however, appears grounded in dualistic assumptions about the psyche and its relationships to events and objects in the world. In describing Jung’s therapeutic process of bringing all opposing tendencies within the personal self, Yunt concludes that the self attains a balanced wholeness. There is a reconnecting the self with its world in a relationship of healing and union; a union in direct contrast with the predominant Western-style relationship of alienation and domination.

Although Jung probably never imagined there would one day be a field of study called ecopsychology, many of his concepts were incorporated into this area of study. These ideas were expanded to include nature’s impact on the psyche with the goal of expanding our psychological understanding beyond purely intra-psychic and interpersonal realms (Yunt, 2001). Yunt believes that psychology has ignored the fact

that humans are animals. While intelligent, clever, highly emotional, and creative, humans are, nonetheless, beings living in and dependent upon natural processes. Yunt suggests that human development is based on a process of balancing the various functions of the human psyche; when one consciously understands, accepts, and integrates all aspects of one's self (including our *ecoself*), a new vision of reality can take place.

Spitzform (2000) offered an earlier description of this construct of ecological self referenced within ecopsychology literature. She discussed the concept of ecological self in the context of a discussion of three of her clients seen in therapy but does not perform data collection or prospective research on the subject per se. Spitzform explains the ecological self as sense of self which emerges within an ecological context, and is maintained into adulthood by relationship with a wide range of non-human others. Greenway (2009) provides a clear example of this by describing a group of individuals sitting silently around a fire, which always prompts someone to remark, "We've been here before"; the archetypal setting links us to earlier cultures and earlier times. Spitzform (2000) elaborated on this through description of how these experiences accumulate and unfold and these qualities become distinguishable and are grouped into meaningful ways of understanding self in relation to the more than human surround. She described the ecological self as an ongoing evolving structure of interactions with animals, plants, and place. This is an important concept of the evolving structure of interactions with nature but perhaps the development over a lifespan is not required. Spitzform continues to say that these other-than-human relations and relational interactions largely go unnoticed in the clinical arena.

Macy (2009) describes the self as the “metaphoric construct of identity and agency, the hypothetical piece of turf on which we construct our strategies for survival” (p. 239). It is an experience of self that emerges out of dynamic engagement with the more than human world, and is a profound relational event. Relational theory is based on the notion that humans and animals are dyadic, social, interactional, and interpersonal; hence, it is similar to systems theory. This mutual interaction and influence between human and nonhuman animals puts more emphasis on interaction in contrast to Freud’s subjective representation of self.

Several ecopsychologists describe a crisis of consciousness in that we are disconnected from the natural world (Adams, 2006; Roszak, 1995; Shepard, 1995). For example, Adams (2006) describes humans and their psyche as a “separate egoic subject,” that is, individuals who view themselves as above and independent of the natural world (p. 117). He continues to elaborate on the “dualistic separation,” or dissociation between self and world, humans and nature (p. 117). Adams states, “We have become ignorant of nature in its wholeness and sentience, viewing it only instrumentally as raw material to be exploited for human satisfaction” (p. 117). He suggests that this egoism and dissociation creates a human pathology that needs to be resolved and restored. Resolution can be found through relating more wisely and compassionately with the natural world. He argues for this to happen; humans need to acknowledge that a dualistic separation does not exist. Adams asserts that we need to realize that we have always existed in an inseparable, intimate interrelationship with nature. The quest for healing through nature, then, becomes a search for “ecological unconscious” (Greenway, 2009, p. 137). And because humans are relational beings, our sense of meaning, value, purpose, and vitality

emerges in and through our relationships (Adams, 2006). And so, this rediscovery of the relationship with nature represents an important remedy to the crisis of egoism and dissociation.

However, Adams (2006) does not contribute any new original research, but rather bases his ideas upon existing theories, not experimental work. Furthermore, while one may agree with many of his assertions about the egocentrism of humans over the environment, he offers few alternatives other than the acknowledgment of this annihilation of nature. Adam's work is focused on the prevention of destruction of habitat rather than this study's goal of personal growth through reconnection to nature.

In summary, both Freud and Jung emphasized a psychology of the human experience. This concept was expanded upon by pioneers of ecopsychology by elaborating this experience to include interaction with nature. Others such as Spitzform (2000) discuss the concept of the ecological self and the egocentrism of humans over the nature (Adams, 2006). These concepts support that the human experience and one's psyche include both conscious and unconscious thoughts.

Therefore the unconscious includes parts of self that make one a whole person including the part of our self that is in touch with nature, or the *ecoself*. This quest for healing through nature then becomes a search for the "ecological unconscious" (Greenway, 2009, p. 137). It may be that the more one can bring into consciousness the different parts of ourselves and integrate them without leaving out our *ecoself*, the more balanced and happy we can become as a whole human being.

Ecopsychology and the Concept of Mindfulness

Many ecopsychologists, including Shepard (1995), Conn (1995), and Greenway (1995), practice mindfulness while interacting with nature and believe that harmony of self and world is possible for all. For example, Shepard (1995) describes that beneath the veneer of civilization lies the human in us who knows what is right and necessary for becoming fully human. Conn (1995) posits that the ecologically responsible construction of the self would include not only growth in human relationships with family and community, but a broadening of the self through identification with all beings, even with the biosphere as a whole. Arne Næss (1989), the founder of deep ecology, calls this the “ecological self.” Similar to Fromm’s *being* mode of existence, Conn (1995) posits that this active self-world connection would provide a true “fourth force” in psychology, one that goes beyond the psychoanalytic, behavioral, and humanistic focus on human needs to emphasize the relational nature of the self, the transpersonal aspects of reality.

Similarly, Kanner and Gomes (1995) state it is common for ecopsychologists, whose work includes long wilderness trips or intense urban restoration projects, to report dramatic breakthroughs of insight and personal development that shake individuals to their core. However, these dramatic effects are first-person anecdotal accounts only. The proposed mechanism is that the natural world reawakens and resonates with our primal knowledge of connectedness, and graces us with a few moments of pure awe (Cahalan, 1995). It then can shatter the hubris and isolation which prop up our narcissistic defenses. Once this has happened, proponents suggest that ongoing contact with nature keeps these insights alive and provides necessary motivation for continued change.

However, these potential restorative effects of rejuvenating outdoor excursions have been documented (through narrative accounts and not experimental design) time and time again (Chalquist, 2009). Participant encounters with the natural world bring a sense of relief and balance from everyday stressors and rekindle a sense of belonging. Fatigued and anxious college students have shown benefit across many physiological and psychological dimensions tested after they walked in the woods. Perhaps, mothers may have been right all along to tell their misbehaving children to go outside and play awhile.

Greenway (1995) proposes that such experiences ultimately fill the empty self and heal the existential loneliness so endemic to our times. Greenway calls this experience with nature and retreat from cultural dominance the “wilderness effect.” In contrast to the benefits of interacting with nature, walking through a shopping mall has been shown to raise stress and lower self-esteem (Chalquist, 2009). Greenway (1995), who has led wilderness groups and explored this topic for the past 30 years, describes a body of work conducted on 1,380 people, including 700 questionnaires, 700 interviews, 52 longitudinal studies, and more than 300 personal responses. Greenway gives conclusions supported by descriptive statistics which show that 90% of respondents described an increased sense of aliveness, well-being, and energy. He reports that participants most often referenced feelings of expansion or reconnection, spiritual experience, a sense of exquisite beauty and clear impact. Greenway reports these feelings either dissolved upon return to the original culture or context or left the individual in conflict with the original way of life. However, it appears that all of this work is unpublished. The lack of peer review is acknowledged and justified by Greenway because the phenomenon is difficult to study. Greenway (1995) states the following:

I do not believe the therapeutic effects of wilderness can be proven by scientifically objective measures and with statistical confidence. Nor am I fully confident that, within the dynamics of my own culture, these effects are in fact therapeutic, whether proven or not. I have observed many (mostly futile) attempts to prove beneficial outcomes of various psychotherapeutic approaches and realize wilderness therapy deals with even more variables. (p. 207)

Therefore, it would appear a number of ecopsychologists espouse the personal and therapeutic benefits of mindfulness (Hick, Segal, & Bien, 2008). This better establishes the definition of mindfulness and provides anecdotal examples and theoretical utility within psychology. However, actual research on the subject is lacking.

Perceptual Practices in Mindfulness

Laura Sewell (1995) is a perceptual psychologist. Sewall argues that the deadening of our senses is at the heart of environmental crisis and that reawakening them is “an integral step toward renewing our bond with the Earth” (p. 201). She continues to assert that interaction and learning of the world through the senses has the potential to become a pathway to a lasting state of well-being and to promote feelings of connectedness. Sewall asserts that when we head outdoors with the intention of being mindful and to find a greater connection with the Earth, we have to rely on our selves and our own resources to facilitate it; that is, through our five senses of smell, taste, touch, hear, and sight. Sewall describes that if we can focus and attend while we exert our senses, then it becomes a much more profound and in-depth experience. Sewall reminds us again that the ability to use our full attentional capacity is a learned skill requiring the practice of mindfulness and awareness. Sewall also believes that learning to attend is, in essence, a spiritual practice. There are five perceptual practices that Sewall describes that are directly relevant for perception of nature:

1. learning to attend, or to be mindful, within the visual domain
2. learning to perceive relationships, context, and interfaces
3. developing perceptual flexibility across spatial and temporal scales
4. learning to re-perceive depth
5. the intentional use of imagination.

In fact, Sewall (1995) suggests that learning to attend is, in essence, a spiritual practice and that the deliberate insertion of consciousness into the present moment makes things visible that were previously unseen. If one is receptive to the ways in which perception serves as a channel for communion, we may reawaken and preserve a sense of human integrity within the family of all relations. However, Sewall supports these ideas with theory and citations of other theorists but offers no original research on the subject. However, through the application of these five perceptual practices, a useful guide may exist of what to do when mindfully interacting with nature.

Cohen's and Chard's Work: Mindfully Experiencing Nature

Michael Cohen (1997) is a well-known teacher of reconnection with nature in natural settings for over 30 years. Cohen founded Trailside, an outdoor living program that utilizes natural group processes and states, helping individuals recognize the natural potential of the immediate sensory moment. Cohen has encapsulated his nature-reconnecting processes in a series of 107 published sensory activities. He also teaches counselors and educators how to incorporate nature into their lives to revitalize natural sensory communication.

According to Cohen (1997), the purest truth in our lives is our immediate experience. What we are in the immediate moment is what we think, feel, and do; it is the

only time that nature actually exists or that we can consciously change our relationships. When we react only to the images, memories, or projections that play in our mind, we fill the moment with feelings and reactions to stories, old pictures, and the sensations attached to them, and relate to past experiences and not to the realities and potentials of the immediate moment (Cohen, 1997). According to Cohen, life exists only in the present; everything else is images, labels, and stories.

Blocking wider access to the present moment, Cohen (1997) suggests much of our consciousness is tied up using language, which interferes with the use of our senses. He states that the works of nature come through sensory experiences, not through words. To emphasize the nonverbal and emotive dynamic, Cohen sees each natural experience as a form of love. Cohen describes four attributes of nature connectedness:

1. Namelessness; or non-language ways of relating, knowing, and feeling
2. Intelligence; the natural ability for attractions to blend in supportive ways
3. Attractions; the natural energies that draw things together
4. Love; our ability to enjoyably feel nature's attraction process.

Accordingly, by connecting with nature through sensory contact, we learn how to habitually think like nature works (Cohen, 1997).

Chard (1994) agrees that one must lose the mind and come back to the senses, back to the language of the Earth. He continues to say that our awareness is shaped by what we choose to direct our attention towards. "You are what you think, having become what you thought," according to Gautama Buddha (as cited in Chard, 1994, p. 37). Chard (1994) believes experiences like sadness, joy, anxiety, and contentment are natural and innate; they are part of our nature, and that nature is derived from the substance and spirit

of the life. Chard states, “When you experience your feelings, you are sensing the changes and energies of the life force within your own individual being; emotions are energy in motion” (p. 30). Chard adds that personal transformation is best cultivated by partnering with the supreme agent of change, the Earth.

While one is psychologically and emotionally reconnecting with nature, a spiritual encounter is often involved. Chard (1994) references the biblical Book of Job: “Speak to the Earth and it shall teach thee” (Job 12:8). He goes on to remark that some of those who work purposefully in nature such as farmers, gardeners, and naturalists, have expressed fulfillment in this kinship with the outdoors which grounds their psyche and soul. Chard (1994) continues by describing the converse situation: If one loses touch with these natural rhythms, one has lost touch with the deepest part of self, the grounding of being. Each human being is a direct offspring of nature. It is when we know who we are, why we are here, and where we belong that the ever-present problems of living become easier to bear and make more sense.

Applied Ecopsychology: Wilderness Therapy

Harper (1995) describes Wilderness Therapy as the boldest ecopsychological method developed thus far, by its abandonment of offices, cities, and clocks to favor a setting more closely related to natural habitat. Harper contrasts the 50-minute office appointment of a modern psychotherapy session with potential of complete immersion of the guided wilderness experience. He continues to state that natural settings have always been used by traditional cultures for healing the troubled soul. Although there has been a growing interest in using the wilderness as an environment for many of the new humanistic and existential therapies since the 1960s, Harper believes that wilderness is a

technique in its own right. He claims that if we are willing to be still and open enough to listen, wilderness itself will teach us. This “practice,” as he calls it, implies a process with no beginning or end but a lifetime of engagement and discovery (p. 183). Harper describes upon entering wilderness, “One of the first things that almost everyone experiences is an enlivening of the five senses; new sounds, awesome sights, interesting textures, different smells and tastes, all awakening and coming to our awareness” (p. 189). In wilderness, we begin to develop a sustained continuum of mindfulness and are “not necessarily focused on a single object, but rather on the stream of awareness itself” (p. 189).

Harper (1995) suggests that in the process of growth and transformation we must begin to reclaim and own the rejected parts of ourselves. “The essence of wilderness practice is to practice *being* wilderness” (p. 192). He believes that many indigenous cultures have always had ritual methods for people to become “things” outside of themselves; to mystically become the Other, to *be* the animal, the fish, or the mountain. Harper asserts that using dance, masks, and costumes helps transform them fully into the embodiment of the Other. The awareness of ourselves, our environment, and the relationship between them, or simply the awareness of our expanded self, is the experience of wholeness as described by Harper.

While Harper (1995) describes a number of programs that utilize the wilderness as the setting for therapy, he does not cite or publish any research on this area. These espoused benefits are once again anecdotes from Harper’s group outings. However, within the realm of ecopsychology, wilderness therapy remains the best example of therapeutic application.

Review of Other Programs Oriented to Exposure to Nature

Outward Bound (2010) is perhaps one of the most well-known wilderness and challenge programs that teaches participants the skills which enable them to survive in wilderness environments. It is a non-profit educational organization that serves 70,000 students yearly through active learning expeditions that inspire character development and self-discovery (Outward Bound, 2010). Outward Bound (2010) involves some level of risk, adventure, and group effort with an aim to expand self-expectations and self-discovery through motivation and interest, utilizing the challenges found in the natural setting.

Other therapeutic programs have also become increasingly popular as well, and take advantage of connecting individuals with the natural world to promote healing and self-growth using natural and logical consequences. Many such programs are oriented towards special populations such as corporate managers and educators, but adolescents with behavioral problems are particularly popular. These programs utilize unfamiliar settings to experience adventure and challenge in a way that helps individuals realize they can do more than they thought possible.

Another example of wilderness therapy is Adventure Therapy, a change oriented, group-based experiential learning process that occurs in the context of a contractual, empowering, and empathic professional relationship (Ringer, 1994, as cited in Hans, 2000). This program is defined by an emphasis and reinforcement of controlled risk-taking behavior that supersedes the natural wilderness settings. Kelley and Coursey (1997) developed an outdoor adventure therapy program that involved weekly day-long adventure activities (hiking, rock climbing, cave exploring, canoeing) for 9 weeks and

found significant increases in scores on Self-Efficacy Scales and Self-Esteem Inventory, as well as reductions in scores on the Anxiety and Depression subscales of the Brief Symptom Inventory. However, these programs are the closest examples within the literature of therapy within a natural setting. A distinguishing feature of the current project is the emphasis on connection to nature through the dog and “being” mode of the owner rather than risk-taking behavior or group settings.

Doucette (2004) designed a program that was successfully used with behaviorally challenged adolescents who engaged in counseling while walking and nurturing a connection with the outdoors. In her study, eight youths were coded by school assessors as behaviorally challenged and in need of special education. The principal author met with each subject for 30-minute interviews conducted weekly over the 6-week walk-and-talk intervention. During the interviews, the subjects were provided stress-reduction strategies, visualization techniques, and methods to improve focus. Doucette (2004) described how the ecopsychological components of the interventions were tied to the psychological processes that bring people closer to the natural world. She concludes that the program was a success based upon the assessment of school officials, improvement in subjects’ self-esteem, and improved anger management. However, there was no control group who received the weekly counseling sessions but not the walking and talking outdoors.

In another study, Berger (2006) took seven school children ages 8-10 in Israel with below average IQ’s into nature and conducted sessions in 1-hour blocks every week for 10 months. These sessions included group therapy combined with exploration of the grounds around the school. Here, nature provided not only a setting for a therapeutic

encounter, but was also an integral part of the non-verbal and experiential group learning process. In a grounded-theory case study, Berger found that nature's changing dynamics through living things had a major influence upon the learning process. He also found that it was a positive experience in the way in which nature provided the group with an alternative space. Berger found the different atmosphere provided by a natural setting led to an experiential mode of "being," increasing participants' connection with themselves and others. Berger further found the experience helped the group reach new levels of interpersonal intimacy, increased individual group members' self-esteem, and produced a meaningful therapeutic encounter. These end points were evaluated by both interview and questionnaire. Berger proposes that by encountering the direct and immediate experiences without cognitive and verbal processing domains in which the subjects had some deficits, these students were better able to gain a personal process of feeling for the natural world, moving them from initial alienation and fear of nature into one of familiarity, belonging, and caring.

However, Berger's (2006) study only briefly touches on experiential mode of being and granting love and care in nature. There is also an attempt to incorporate the improved connection between participants and themselves. The study gives recognition of change through an emotional process, but no specifics of the process are offered. Also, the direct encounter with nature is not described in any detail beyond the development of a personal emotional process. The details of this process and how nature is utilized as a therapeutic medium are related to the goals of the present study.

Burns (2000) similarly applied nature-guided therapy to couples who sought to create positive experiential contexts for the development and maintenance of healthy

interpersonal relationships. The relevance of nature-guided approaches to family and couples therapy rests largely on Bateson's view that individuals' existence and well-being is part of an intimate ecological relationship and unified biosphere. One couple had been together for 10 years and both were in their late 40s. For both, it was a second marriage. The couple was referred for psychotherapy by a general practitioner as the wife had developed anxiety and the husband was grappling with a violent temper. The couple met with Burns for two appointments and he administered the Sensual Awareness Inventory (SAI). The SAI records sensual activities (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) that bring pleasure, enjoyment, or comfort. From the inventory, Burns directed the couple in ways to employ the activities which often took place in nature. For example, strolling hand in hand along the beach or picnicking by a stream, which also happen to be contexts for romance and love. Burns (2000) states that many couples lose awareness of those contextual factors by getting caught up in everyday activities including work, household commitments, and child rearing. However, this limited case study represents his only contribution on the topic in the literature.

Alves (2003) conducted unpublished research and reported that participation in nature-related activities facilitates restoration and promotes the psychological well-being of nursing home residents by providing more socialization, constructive engagement, and positive affect when compared to non-nature-related activities. Twenty-five nursing home residents were observed while participating in the two differing activity programs. The residents were then interviewed about their preferences and opinions concerning preferences in the nursing home. Quantitative statistics and qualitative content analysis were used to analyze the data. Results indicated the benefit of nature-related activities

and also that irrespective of type of activity (nature versus non-nature), direct forms of participation, not surprisingly, enhanced engagement. The details of the nature-related activities were not described. Also, this population may represent one that would benefit from any focused interaction.

Perhaps the most widely known and available work on the psychological benefits of nature comes from Kaplan and Kaplan's (1995) numerous published studies on outdoor wilderness programs and the effects of natural settings. Empirical research from their wilderness program, The Outdoor Challenge Program (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1995), originally modeled after Outward Bound (2010), may provide insight into factors that enhance the restoration of the human spirit. The project involved multiple backpacking trips of about 2 weeks through a large wilderness area in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Participants were asked to complete materials prior to departure and provided journals to record feelings and reactions upon return home. These studies also draw upon research tools including structured and open-ended questions and ratings. These types of data were collected from a total of 176 participants for over 10 years. Kaplan and Kaplan (1995) describe measurement of effect upon self-esteem, self-concept, and the process of becoming familiar with the environment. Participants report improvement in both woodsmanship skills as well as greater independence, self-discipline, and patience. These results are based on self-reports and largely do not use standardized measures. The journals depicted themes such as feelings of awe and wonder, intimate contact with the environment, thoughts on spiritual meanings and eternal processes, and feelings of "wholeness" or "oneness." Kaplan and Kaplan found that participants noticed more

aspects of the environment, lived differently, and felt differently during their experience in the natural setting.

Kaplan and Kaplan (1995) also put forward that pure wilderness is not the only setting for experiencing restorative satisfaction. Kaplan and Kaplan propose other activities are capable of bringing one in closer contact with nature and may include walking outdoors, picnicking, and gardening; these may have similar effects on the human spirit as the wilderness experiences. However, Kaplan and Kaplan do not specifically study these other less intense activities. They do cite research on the importance of being near nature (Talbot & Kaplan, 1984). They found much of the pleasures people derive from nature may come from such occasions where they simply observe and appreciate nature, such as buds blossoming on trees or leaves changing color. This rather broad finding by Kaplan is further supported by subsequent research. For example, Chalquist (2009) found that horticultural therapy has been effective in curtailing stress and obesity, enhancing self-esteem, and treating substance abuse. Diehl (2009) recognizes that gardens are a fundamental component of human life and have been used to “grow food, provide shelter, display symbolism, reveal beauty, reflect beliefs, and offer refuge” (p. 166). Nature may also be found and experienced in many other more accessible places other than wilderness settings, such as nearby parks, a cluster of trees, or even a view from a window.

The benefits of even limited visual interaction with nature through a window have also been studied. A classic study reported in 1984 documented that hospital patients with a view of trees went home sooner than did those without (Frumkin, 2001). The surgical floors of a 200-bed suburban Pennsylvania hospital had some rooms facing a stand of

deciduous trees, while others faced a brown brick wall. Postoperative patients were assigned essentially randomly to one or the other kind of room. The records of all surgical patients requiring removal of the gallbladder over a 10-year interval were reviewed including endpoints of length of stay, need for pain medication, and occurrence of complications. Patients with the tree views had statistically significant shorter hospitalizations, less need for pain and anxiety medications, and fewer negative comments in nurses' notes compared to the patients with the brick-wall view. A similar study conducted by Frumkin (2001) found that Michigan prisoners whose cells overlooked farmland had 24% fewer illnesses than did those whose cells looked into the prison courtyard. The architecture of the prison led to this natural experiment as prisoner assignment to one or the other kind of cell was at random.

Generally, higher levels of life satisfaction and neighborhood enjoyment were found among individuals who more frequently pursued gardening and other nature-related activities near their homes (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1995). In fact, the garden is also a type of natural area that is nearby and highly valued. Their studies suggest that more happens through gardening than just the growth of pretty flowers. The satisfactions people derive from this activity have been found to include: pride, joy, and a sense of tranquility. The immediate outcome of contact with nearby nature includes feelings of enjoyment, relaxation, lowered stress levels, as well as an increased feeling of well-being and life satisfaction.

Therefore, the therapeutic programs discussed in this chapter are set in nature and vary in intensity from guided nature walks to couples therapy in the outdoors to full wilderness experiences. These programs all share a kinship and emphasis on the positive

effects of these natural settings. Greenway (2009) describes that a typical wilderness trip, whether intended to produce a therapeutic effect or not, requires considerable periods of silence, listening, pondering, and contemplation. For many who practice within these settings, the greatest challenge is incorporating these new insights and ways of being to everyday life once the trip is over. Harper (1995) poses the question: “How can we find this same sense of sacredness in everyday life? . . . We have experienced parts of ourselves and parts of the universe that have been forgotten, we have felt the meaning of wholeness and holiness” (p. 197). Greenway (1995) also describes similar concerns about maintaining or even integrating wilderness-learned modes of knowing when living again within our culture. Greenway (2009) identifies multiple modes of knowing, each useful for different stages of human development including science, “dialogue, narrative, even music and contemplation” (p. 134). So it appears that the benefits of wilderness therapy and the therapeutic utility of nature in general are vastly weakened or even lost upon returning back to the original, more mundane life. However, one potential conduit for these effects of nature into daily life is the dog in the home. In fact, the dog may provide the potential of transformation of consciousness into everyday life outside of expected natural settings.

The Nature of Dogs

The concepts of reconnecting to oneself, others, and nature, as described in the existential tradition, combined with the similar philosophical constructs of ecopsychology and the practical application in nature, bring forth a third and final concept that completes the conceptual framework of this study. It is the concept of the nature of dogs; I propose

that dogs are an extension of nature, and through interactions that promote mindfulness, a reconnection to ourselves and others can be established.

This third concept, the nature of the dog, that outlines the framework of the study, involves understanding the dog as a natural being on this Earth. This review of literature on the nature of dogs also delves into their own psychological world and how humans can better understand them and communicate with them. This review of literature also covers the specific training methodology of Patricia McConnell (2002), a professor of zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a certified Applied Animal Behaviorist. Dr. McConnell works with individuals and dogs to help them cultivate a rewarding relationship. This is accomplished through her emphasis of practicing mindful awareness and the immediacy of the moment. This “natural way” of interacting with dogs means being fully present, mindful, and purposeful of the interactions taking place between oneself and a dog. It allows the human to cultivate and shape the relationship to benefit both creatures by being fully cognizant of trying to shape the interaction with the dog, utilizing a language that a dog understands: dog psychology. Finally, this section covers a review of research related to previous studies conducted that display positive therapeutic effects from interacting with animals.

The Connection of Nature Through Animals

According to Conn (1995), each of us has the ability to connect to the whole interdependent web of life on Earth at any moment and in any activity in our daily lives. Gaining a sense of self-balance, peace, and reconnection is possible not just through interaction with the trees, mountains, and majestic rivers of our natural landscape, but also through interacting with the other-than-human beings that inhabit our natural world.

Cohen (1997) believes that most species own and react to the same sensitivities to nature in some way; they share instincts of flight and fight as well as living in the present moment. In fact, animals may be good at teaching humans about the experience of just being. Chard (1994) states:

The lion sitting languidly beneath a shade tree, a puppy chasing its tail, the spider still and patient in its web, the hawk gliding high on a thermal, the bunny nestled in the grass beneath a gentle train, the turtle sunning itself on a fallen log—all are creatures in a state of being. (p. 121)

Chard (1994) asserts that animals may teach us the art of being by example, letting go of doing and having so they can linger in the timeless, peaceful embrace of life's milieu. Chard explains further that while there is an element of satisfaction in having playthings and accomplishing tasks, animals demonstrate a balance between task-oriented activity and just lying around or playing with others. He believes that one of the greatest connections we can make with the "other" is through animals. Chard explains that animals may offer us a subjective presence, they are an "other" to connect to, and, perhaps more strongly, confirm the uniqueness of our own human selves.

Analogous to Harper's (1995) and Greenway's (1995) description of wilderness experiences, Bekoff (2002) proposes that animals help us with the discovery of ourselves in the natural world. Dr. Bekoff is professor of biology at the University of Colorado at Boulder and trained as a cognitive ethologist, which is the field of science concerned with the biological bases of behavior. Bekoff states that reconnection with nature can help us overcome alienation and loneliness. "We need animals, and we need wildness and wilderness, to be healthy human beings, we need to allow animals to be our teachers and healers" (p. xxi). He further asserts that close interaction with animals as they naturally are can significantly affect us, helping us resolve questions about self-identity and our

own human uniqueness. Bekoff continues by stating that to learn about other animal beings, how they spend their time, who they interact with, where they spend their time, what they do and how they do it, their intellectual and cognitive abilities, and their deep emotional lives, is essential for gaining a full appreciation of human spirituality and what it is to be human. He maintains that our own nature and spirituality are embodied not only by who we are, but also defined by our relationships with other beings (Bekoff, 2002).

Bekoff (2002) describes his own 30-year journey of studying animal behavior. Originally a graduate student in neurobiology and behavior, Dr. Bekoff claims he left this program at a major medical school because he did not want to sacrifice dogs or cats as part of his education. This led to Bekoff's study of social behavior in animals including a publication using behavioral phenotypes to compare and assess the taxonomic relationships between the canid, wolf, and coyote (Bekoff, Hill, & Mitton, 1975). Bekoff (2002) describes his research as an attempt to understand individual differences within species and variations among species. This includes interdisciplinary work with geneticists, anatomists, and philosophers.

Bekoff (2002) summarizes his study of the development of animal play. To study the ways in which play unfolds in early life, one needs to be able to watch very young animals and follow known individuals as they grow up. This research is understandably challenging to perform in the wild without influencing the animals' behavior. Bekoff describes watching young animals play, film their behavior while taking detailed notes, and then spending time in analysis after conclusion of the field work. Bekoff has published a number of studies on animal behavior, but there is a significant leap from

these experiments to his espoused theories of animal psychology. For example, a published field study of Steller's jays and their feeding decisions resulted in conclusions of the birds' preference for an unoccupied feeder and, surprisingly, the feeders further from cover (Bekoff, Allen, & Grant, 1999). However, these types of studies do not offer specific insight or support to Bekoff's (2002) more humanistic theories.

Bekoff (2002) proposes that when we learn about other animals and how important they really are to us, we may ultimately learn more about ourselves. He maintains this potentially empathic connection is essential and primal; it forces us to confront issues about our existence on Earth. In support of this concept, Bekoff quotes Thich Nhat Hanh (the expatriate Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk), "We are the shared emotions of all our brethren, we are truly a kindred spirit with all of life" (p. 197). Bekoff concludes that "we are all part of the same deeply interconnected and interdependent community; we are all woven into a seamless tapestry of unity, of friendships, with interconnecting bonds that are reciprocal and overflow with respect, compassion, a sense of oneness, and love" (p. 197).

The Historical Progression of Our Relationship With Dogs

Scholars disagree exactly when dogs became domesticated by humans and from what ancestor (Irvine, 2004; Scott & Fuller, 1965). Some believe that the great ancestor of the dog came directly from wolves, while others believe they evolved from a hybrid of wolves and other species such as coyotes and jackals (Irvine, 2004). The earliest reports of domestication of dogs range from 8,000-10,000 years ago (Scott & Fuller, 1965). Irvine (2004) reports it is agreed upon, however, that dogs were the first animals to be cared for, fed, and bred under human control. Irvine explains that dogs may have become

domesticated through shared scavenging; or perhaps their keen hunting, guarding, and herding skills acted as a catalyst to unite and bond dogs with humans. There are many biological and behavioral factors that predisposed dogs to fit easily with humans and a desire to be close together. Most notably, dogs, who are members of pack families, find a similarity in dynamics of human families and relate to humans as pack members and litter mates. Irvine asserts that other animals, such as horses and cows, do not have a tendency to incorporate humans into their pack or social groups. Other factors, as described by Irvine, which may predispose dogs to being companion animals include physical size, diurnal behavior, ease of house training, and their interest in play.

Historically, even though these domesticated animals were admired and useful to their owners, there existed a disconnect from nature which even centuries ago prevented humans from truly relating and attempting to understand the feelings, emotions, or thoughts of other beings. Domination over nature and open antagonism towards animals were widely accepted and practiced, particularly in the medieval and early modern times, and religion was a large enforcer of these beliefs. Christianity had difficulty with close contact between animals and humans because humans were made in the image of God and animals were made to serve the needs of humans. Other religions, such as Judaism and Islam, held similar beliefs of “dominion-ism,” or a God-given rule over nature (Irvine, 2004). Quoting Gen 1:28, Irvine gives an example: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Irvine, 2004, p. 37).

Changes in our views of animals, and dogs in particular, have been slow but are emerging. Irvine asserts that both scientific and Darwinian theories were chiefly influential to lessen the gap between animals and humans by putting us on the same continuum. Advances in technology and machinery eventually replaced animal labor and, in time, animals began to symbolize an older, more traditional way of life. Irvine (2004) points out that as people felt safer in nature, they could then allow select forms of nature into their homes. Irvine (2004) continues to explain that when animals were no longer a physical menace or simple contrivance, the popularity of having and keeping pets emerged. The evolution of attitudes surrounding pets is noted by the gradual shift in terminology of pet keeping from master, or owner, to the gentle and accepting term “companion animal.” Irvine’s take on this concept still implies other-than-human, but represents a shift in thinking from inferior to worthy of honor. The idea of “companion” also suggests increasing anthropomorphizing projection and may fulfill human-to-human relational needs via a substitute or surrogate. This may cloud the perception of pets as creatures of nature and may ultimately help sustain the alienation from nature.

This history and progression of how animals were utilized, perceived, and eventually welcomed into the home is most likely accompanied by changes in pet discipline and obedience. Millan (2006) also believes that significant changes are evident in the realm of dog training, noted by a trend toward nonviolent and compassionate methods. McConnell (2002) and Millan (2006) both are of the belief that traditional dog training is about getting the dog to do something such as sit or lay, expecting them to learn in human terms and respond to a language they don’t understand. More compassionate methods are represented by positive reinforcement methodology and the

formation of a partnership. This partnership requires working together and paying attention to motives, behaviors, and needs that emerge. Irvine (2004) believes that the structure of interaction between people and animals seeking a relationship, concern for well-being, and engaging in interaction, suggests animals may mean something for our experience of selfhood.

Adopting an Animal-Centered Perspective

One aspect of the shared ecological experience between humans and animals is relatedness through companion animals (Spitzform, 2000). Many owners of companion animals describe the soothing quality of contact with their beloved friends. Chard (1994) states, “Dogs and cats in particular, lead by example and encourage us to make a psychological shift into a different state of being; their immersion in the here and now draws out the human capacity for simply being” (p. 122). Spitzform (2000) theorizes that their presence slows our fast-paced active lives, calms the voices urging us to do more in less time, and invites us to dwell or play for a while in whatever the moment may bring.

Bekoff (2002) suggests, “We need to be motivated by love, and not by fear of what it will mean if we come to love dogs and animals for who they are; they are not human, nor are they less than human, they are who they are and need to be understood in their own worlds” (p. 198). Yet, because we are human, we have a human view of the things and surroundings in our lives. Bekoff describes that while animals are certainly different, this does not mean that they are lesser beings or less valuable than humans. Bekoff adds that if we promote and participate in a hierarchical view of nature in which there are “lower” and “higher” animals, then we often find ourselves making judgments that portray higher ranking animals as being more valuable and lower ones existing for

the sole purpose of human ownership, service, or disposal. Instead of thinking of animals as objects (or material possessions such as discussed earlier by Fromm), but as subjects of life that deserve compassionate and respectful interaction, we may be able to understand the world as the animal experiences it and ultimately to love them more authentically.

Bekoff (2002) explains that people often project their own perceptions onto animals, making them the beings they wish them to be. For example, many people see in their companion animals traits which they value, such as trust, devotion, or unconditional love. He also warns us of assuming that animals and dogs are merely “us” in disguise. While there are many similarities between nonhuman animals and humans, there are also many differences that must be given careful attention. Bekoff emphasizes the importance of adopting an animal-centered perspective, rather than a solely human-centered or anthropocentric view.

Adopting an animal-centered perspective involves acknowledging and identifying how animals view and experience their worlds. Similar to becoming the “wilderness,” Bekoff (2002) writes that he tries to step into the animals’ sensory and locomotor worlds to discover what it might be like to be a given individual, how they sense their surroundings, and how they behave and move about in certain situations. Bekoff states that the more we come to understand other animals, the more we will appreciate them as the amazing beings that they are. Irvine (2004) adds that no one is outside of nature; how we relate to other animals influences how we view ourselves and relate to other people, and compassion for animals can make this a more compassionate world overall.

Animal Selves Connecting With Human Selves

Many of us who live with and love animals know that they have feelings, preferences, personalities, and other familiar characteristics. Animals do share similarities with humans; like us, dogs can initiate action, respond to their environment, interact with others, have intentions, histories, and experience emotions. Irvine (2004) believes that animals have the capacity for shared interaction, despite the lack of a shared language, and are capable of sharing intentions such as in play, sharing the focus of attention, and sharing emotional states with other animals and humans. Irvine (2004) believes that like humans, animals have elements of a core self that become present to us through interaction with them, but unfortunately most owners do not acknowledge animals' sense of self. She proposes that how we view other animals informs how we view who we are in this huge and diverse world; we are unique, but so are other animals. Irvine (2004) believes that once you consider an animal as having a subjective self and the capacity to share intentions and emotional states, it becomes harder to think of him or her as existing solely for your amusement, use, and pleasure.

Interacting with animals by honoring their sense of self has the potential to promote a deeply satisfying relationship between humans and animals. In addition, it can improve our own social and interactional abilities. But most importantly, recognition of the animal's sense of self actually reinforces our own being, aliveness, and what it means to be human. Irvine (2004) asserts that animals can actually help create human identity by interacting with us as selves in relation to us through many of the same processes as humans. Irvine goes on to explain that because animals have selves, we are able to construct shared meanings when relating. Using the example of play, both players,

whether animal or human, must be able to recognize and communicate the intention to enter into the protective frame, or signal that they do not wish to do so. Irvine concludes that if animals can share some of our subjective experiences, then the animals become separate others who hold definitions of situations against which we can construct our own which ultimately strengthens and deepens our relationship with them.

Understanding Dog Psychology

Therefore, in order to best cultivate the most deeply satisfying relationship possible with our dogs, it appears that one should take advantage of the opportunity to enter what Bekoff (2002) calls a living relationship. Additionally, it may be most effective to understand the animal through attempts to understand their own language and communication, emotions, and social pack behaviors (Bekoff, 2002; Irvine, 2004).

Bekoff (2002) believes that one reason many animals are able to form close and reciprocal social bonds with one another and with humans is shared emotions. Bekoff states that shared emotions and empathy may be the social glue for the development and maintenance of human and animal bonds. Like humans, Bekoff suggests animals may experience a broad spectrum of feelings they express in a raw unfiltered manner.

However, this conjecture does not have a strong research basis. He continues to state that unlike many humans, dogs may be able to experience an emotion, and then let it go to return to their ongoing state of being. Perhaps dogs are able to express themselves as dogs only in the immediate experience, or by living in the now. Bekoff states that “animals may experience immense joy when they play, greet friends, groom one another, or are freed from confinement. They tell us they are happy by their behavior. If they are

relaxed, they walk loosely as if their arms and legs are attached to their bodies by rubber bands, smile and go with the flow” (p. 16).

Bekoff (2002) suggests that the emotional states of animals can be easily recognized if we focus our attention towards them; their faces, their eyes, and the ways in which they carry themselves can be used to make strong inferences about what they are feeling. For example, changes in muscle tone, posture, gait, facial expression, eye size and gaze, vocalizations, and odors may indicate emotional responses to certain situations, or according to Cesar Millan (2006), their universal projected energy.

McConnell (2002) educates her students in training on the concepts of dog psychology. To put it into practice and have openness to the dog’s experience, it requires both mindful awareness and the immediacy of the moment on the human’s behalf. For example, some knowledge of dog psychology in an immediate moment may help an owner decide whether or not a dog is going to act aggressively based on their alertness, body language including tail posture, and if the corners of their mouth are pulled back or drawn forward. Other key concepts important to understanding dog psychology may include how to approach a dog, read body language, play, and social interaction.

Dogs seek affiliation and socialization, which undoubtedly contribute to the strong bond that can be formed between dogs and humans. The underlying reasons dogs are attracted to staying in a group may vary according to Hauser (2000): an instinctual, genetic predisposition shaped by a pup watching its mother and siblings, a better chance for survival and reproduction by staying in a group to fend off predators, or the evolutionary characteristic from their ancestors, or like humans, dogs undergo hormonal changes associated with separation. Irvine (2004) adds that as pack animals, dogs are

highly sensitive to the emotional states of others; among their wild relatives, survival depends on being able to read the others inside of the pack as well as outside. Millan (2006) asserts that with both humans and dogs, it is in the genetic best interest to try to fit in, and both species may rely on some of the same skills to determine standing within the social group.

McConnell (2002) states that domestic dogs behave as though they see us (humans) as part of their social grouping; we live together, sleep together, eat together, and have conflicts over resources. McConnell claims that humans and dogs are predisposed to having hierarchical social systems because both species need ways of resolving conflicts that arise in group living. When living together, even though we are two different species, we are part of one pack and one social hierarchy.

Pack Leadership

In a dog's world, Millan (2006) asserts that there are only two positions in a relationship, that of leader or follower. All dogs, according to McConnell (2002), are genetically predisposed to look to a leader within the pack. Millan (2006) explains that pack life is easier and less stressful for them when they live within the rules, boundaries, and limitations that the pack leader has set for them. McConnell (2002) states that many people have been advised to be "dominant" over their dogs, and so many people equate dominance with aggression. The irony, according to McConnell, is that dominance is actually a social construct designed to decrease aggression, not to facilitate it. She explains that a hierarchical social system allows conflict resolution without fighting; any individual who truly has a lot of social status has enough power that he or she doesn't need to use force. McConnell describes status as a position or rank within a society, while

dominance describes a relationship among individuals. Millan (2006) reminds us that dominance isn't a moral judgment or an emotional experience, but simply a state of being.

These influential dog trainers and authors suggest that being the type of leader our dogs need us to be is very important for their fulfillment as well as forming a deeply connected relationship (McConnell, 2002; Millan, 2006). This relationship requires willingness and a desire to understand and relate to an other-than-human being, the dog. It also requires from the owner a mindful presence so as to communicate clearly and reap the rewards of being in the immediate moment that dogs appear to live in: stability, letting go, awareness, feeling alive, connecting with others, appreciation of our uniqueness and that of others, and most of all love (McConnell, 2002; Millan, 2006).

Cesar Millan (2006) suggests the only universal language that both humans and dogs speak is the energy that we send out. According to Millan, energy is being who you are and what you are doing at any given moment. In this sense, energy becomes the existential state at any given moment. Millan describes that calm assertive dominance is the ideal energy projection for a leader and believes that a calm assertive leader is relaxed but confident in their control and that leaders in nature must project the most obvious and uncontestable strength. For dogs and humans to truly communicate, the dog must project characteristics of a follower, a calm submissive energy that is relaxed and receptive. Leading a dog on a walk, Millan asserts, is the best way to establish pack leadership. Millan describes it as a primal activity that creates and cements those pack leader-follower bonds. Establishing a pack hierarchy in the home may be as simple as going through doors before a dog, or eating before feeding the dog. Irvine (2004) explains that

it communicates to the dog that the human is the leader of the pack in a language they can understand, that leaders go first.

McConnell (2002) believes that dogs, like humans, rely heavily on visual signals for social communication; they are in tune with the subtle movements that underlie each and every one of our interactions with them. McConnell also adds that dogs are brilliant at perceiving minute changes in our bodies looking for some kind of meaning.

Accordingly, dogs are more aware of our subtle movements than we are of our own. It would be more advantageous to be more mindful as to how we move around our dogs and how they move around us since we are always communicating with our energy and our bodies.

In the human species, speech is the primary form of communication; and most of us are guilty of incessantly talking to our dogs. McConnell (2002) asserts that, obviously, dogs don't speak English or other spoken languages, and the use of synonyms, inconsistent word use, the emotionally charged way that we say words to dogs, order of our words, repetition of our words, and the intricacies of language may all be very confusing for our animals. McConnell claims that what may be perceived as disobedience could very well be communication problems between us and our animals. McConnell describes an unpublished experiment by Hensersky and Murray, two undergraduate students, where different breeds of puppies were tested to see if the dogs paid more attention to sound or vision. The students taught 6½-week-old puppies to sit to both a sound and motion on 4 consecutive days of training. On the 5th day the trainer presented only one signal at a time (McConnell, 2002). In a randomized order, the puppy either saw the trainer's hand move or heard the beep signal. Twenty-three of the 24 puppies

performed better to the hand motion than to the sound, while 1 puppy sat equally well to either. McConnell herself suggests caution when interpreting this experiment as the motion and sound must be coordinated to precisely the same duration. Also, the students had previously given treats from their hand which might predispose the dogs to focus on the hand signal. These are valid criticisms as the study would be more accurately conducted under automated conditions. However, the results do suggest that dogs tend to respond more correctly to hand signals to sit than verbal commands. Perhaps even though we humans are visually-oriented beings, we potentially miss the signals that our dogs are sending us and vice versa.

In another study of attentional state in animals, Call, Brauer, Kaminski, and Tomasello (2003) conducted an experiment examining the sensitivity of dogs to the states of their owners when given a command that forbade them visible food. These states of attention of owners varied between continuous eye contact, turning their backs, engaging in a distracting activity, or leaving the room. The authors found when the owner made eye contact with the dog, they were likely to retrieve less food, sit, and approach the food in a more indirect way. They concluded that dogs perceive eyes as an important component in determining the attentional states of owners. Even the indirect approaches to the food may indicate subordination. The authors hypothesize about the possible mechanisms responsible for the dogs' behavior. One possibility is the presence of specific cues like eye contact. Another more intriguing possibility is that dogs may be able to use their past experiences to derive some knowledge about what humans are capable of seeing or not seeing (Call et al., 2003).

In a more recent study, Schwab and Huber (2006) looked again at varied states of attention between owners to their dogs. According to this study, 16 domestic dogs were tested in a familiar context in a series of 1-min trials on how well they obeyed after being told by their owner to lie down. The dogs were found to behave differently depending on the owner's attention to them. Dogs were given a command either being watched by the owner, reading a book, turning their back, or when leaving the room. Schwab and Huber (2006) found that the dogs sensed and discriminated the attentional states of their owners when deciding to obey a given command, indicating the dogs were judging observable behavioral cues such as eye contact and eye, head, and body orientation from the owners. Schwab and Huber found that owners leaving the room, giving the least quantitative level of attention, had the most adverse effects on dogs' obedience, indicating that being physically present is at least the first prerequisite in communication. Schwab and Huber found again that eye contact with the dogs produced the highest degree of obedience. The authors conclude that giving, processing, understanding, and using cues are probably context dependent. All relationships between the dogs and humans in the study of Schwab and Huber were determined by friendliness and familiarity, so it was assumed that the dogs were not afraid of the owners. Schwab and Huber also suggest that it is plausible that dogs used experiences they have made throughout their lives to judge the attentional state of the humans involved.

Human-Animal Bond

Since it appears dogs are tuned into our feelings and emotions, they may be sensing our emotional state or human affect which expresses our being state. Millan (2006) reminds us that the most important thing to understand about energy is that it is a

language of emotion. According to Millan, that means we as humans don't have to tell our animals that we're sad, tired, excited, or relaxed because they already know exactly how we're feeling. Perhaps these are times when people feel most connected with their dogs because dogs may be able to pick up on the subtleties of our lives.

Lagoni, Butler, and Hetts (1994) state that the bond between animals and humans can run deep and strong fueled by the companionship they have provided to humans; the giving and receiving affection, and the position of nurturance and care-giving that humans hold with their pets. The idea of human-animal bond has been increasingly used to reference the types of relationships people have with their companion animals in the scientific literature. According to Lagoni et al., such relationships involve an emotional attachment and feelings of genuine affection and a responsibility for the well-being of the animal. The concept of human animal bond, according to Tannenbaum (as cited in Chandler, 2005), suggests that a true bond must be a continuous ongoing relationship, a significant benefit to both that is a central aspect to each of their lives, voluntary, bi-directional, and must entitle each being in the bond to respect and benefit in their own right. Truly connecting and bonding with our animals is a much more in-depth process than simply letting them inhabit our homes. There is great potential for these experiences to benefit our psyche and enrich our soul.

Therapeutic Benefits of Forming Relationships With Animals

The fields of medical rehabilitation and psychotherapeutics are tacitly acknowledging the reconnection with nature and formation of relationships with other than human beings as invaluable to physical and psychological healing. Hanselman (2001) reports that many such individuals have had less than positive attachment and

social experiences with attendant lower levels of well-being. Barker, Knisely, McCain, and Best (2005) insist these benefits also appear to extend to those dealing with stressful situations. Daly and Morton (2006) believe the benefits extend to promote the well-being of our children. The anecdotal therapeutic effects that our animals have upon our emotional and physical well-being are numerous. For example, McConnell (2002) asserts that quiet stroking of our pets can significantly change the body's physiology by lowering heart rate and blood pressure through activation of calming and soothing influences. These benefits are also represented in both the medical and psychological literature as reviewed below.

C. C. Wilson (1991) sought to improve on the research on the therapeutic value of pets by looking beyond the usual physiological markers of blood pressure, heart, and respiratory rates with the addition of a noninvasive index of anxiety arousal and stress. Wilson recruited 92 undergraduate students ranging in age from 18 to 39 and collected the usual physiological parameters at baseline as well as a stress and anxiety questionnaire. Subjects were then randomly assigned to complete various tasks including reading aloud, reading quietly, and petting a friendly dog. Between each test session, the anxiety questionnaires were repeated. Wilson concluded that the presence of a pet had a relaxing or anti-anxiety effect similar to structured relaxation activities when put in a stressful environment. Wilson also found that pet interaction, whether active or passive, tends to lower anxiety levels in people. However, the compared cited structured relaxation activity was quiet reading, not a meditative or specific therapeutic activity. Wilson also found that talking to the dog (which was permitted) paradoxically increased

anxiety as compared to reading quietly. There was a minor drop in blood pressure as well but of questionable significance in this normotensive sample (C. C. Wilson, 1991).

Other authors have reported that pets provide social and emotional support in addition to companionship to individuals who may be experiencing stressful or difficult life changes. Bonas, McNicholas, and Collis (2000) reported that because social dynamics between people and their pets are similar in many ways, pets may contribute concepts of social support and nurturance. Bonas et al. propose that many of the closest human relationships exist within families, and it is within the family that pet ownership occurs most frequently. They support these conclusions from a survey of 90 participants which measured the provisions of social relationships from humans and from pets in a comparable way. According Bonas et al., this provides some empirical substance for the hypothesis that what goes on between people and their pets has much in common with social relationships between people.

Because pets are dependent on human care for survival and optimal development, Melson (2003) asserts that companion animals provide the opportunity and motivation to nurture another being. Even children seem to turn to their pets for emotional support by sharing their feelings and talking to them if they are sad, happy, or angry according to Melson and Schwarz (as cited in Melson, 2003). Melson (2003) also states that children's connections with companion animals may enrich understanding of children's perceptual, cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Recent empirical research on children-animal interactions was performed by Daly and Morton (2006) who recently surveyed a group of 155 elementary school children on their relationships with pets. Students were surveyed on preference, ownership,

attachment, and attitude in order to further explore the connection between animal and human. Daly and Morton found that girls were more empathic than boys, and empathy was higher for individuals who were highly attached to their pets, especially dogs and cats. The authors suggest that family involvement in childhood provides nurturing attitudes that lead to close human-pet relationships and empathy. However, this may be better studied in adult pet owners in order to examine the difference in social context of current pet owners who may or may not have grown up with animals.

The use of animals directly in the therapeutic setting began over 30 years ago with popularity rising in the 1980s and 1990s. Catanzaro (2003) identifies and describes four types of animal-facilitated therapy interactions: (a) full-time companions refer to an animal which is trained and placed with an owner on a full-time basis exemplified by support and guide dogs for the blind or disabled, (b) part-time companions which may include pets that come into or visit nursing homes but are the primary responsibility of another individual, (c) mascot pets residing in the therapeutic setting itself such as a psychiatric or nursing home, and (d) “animals as part of the living environment” who are considered part of the community of living things such as on a working farm. Catanzaro further identifies the significant benefits of animal-facilitated therapy that are significant, such as promoting a positive affective state, humor, sense of play, motivation and independence, enhancing feelings of achievement, stimulating a person to be active in care-giving, enhancing social benefits, as well as physical benefits including rate of injury recovery and coping.

Interventions which incorporate care-taking of animals may improve awareness of the consequences of our actions in the environment. Fawcett (2001) explains that they

may especially help us find more appropriate means of empowerment by shifting from dominating and aggressive acts into more gentle and caring actions. The underlying impetus to such intervention effectiveness, states Fawcett, is the human tendency to affiliate with nature and to connect emotionally with non-human species. Kellert (1983) asserts that, as a social species, affiliation with other species may enhance our capacity for bonding, altruism, and sharing. In contrast to humans, Fawcett (2001) asserts, nonhuman animals may often be perceived as accepting, vulnerable, and dependent; such an assumption implies that animals can promote a climate of safety and unconditional positive regard which benefits a therapeutic environment by providing unconditional positive regard. Fawcett further states that interventions that incorporate taking care of animals and their needs may improve awareness of consequences of our actions in the environment, and refocus attempts at empowerment from dominating and aggressive acts into more gentle and caring actions. Unfortunately, Fawcett does not study these concepts experimentally but theorizes upon the results of the work of others.

In another attempt to study the health benefits of animal-assisted therapy, Barker and colleagues (2005) measured stress and immune responses in healthcare professionals following interaction with a therapy dog. Subjects volunteered for this paid study, which included the collection of both salivary and blood samples at baseline and five times after the intervention (Barker et al., 2005). This attempt to collect immune and stress hormones is more invasive but potentially more indicative of physiologic stress than the typically measured heart rate and blood pressure. Both salivary and serum samples of cortisone, sIgA, and lymphocyte proliferation were collected as well as serum levels of epinephrine and norepinephrine. Subjects were scheduled for three study visits at the clinic, which

randomly included 10 minutes of rest (control) and varying amounts of time interacting with the therapy dog (treatment condition). The authors concluded that the physiological data supported effectiveness of the animal-assisted therapy including stress reduction which may occur after as little as 5 minutes of interacting with a therapy dog (Barker et al., 2005). However, the researchers cite the small sample size and variability in interpreting such neuroimmunological data as limitations. Also, 32 subjects started the study and only 20 completed the experiment, which represents a poor retention rate. There was no attempt to isolate the therapy dog from his handler, which may represent another confounding variable. Finally, venipuncture understandably causes discomfort and a potentially confounding stressor.

Parshall (2003) performs a review of the literature in animal-assisted therapy including several of the studies discussed above and concludes that the social support therapy with a dog offers a positive effect with helping patients deal with stress. Patients tended to open up more easily as the dog helped them relax. They visited with the animals, spoke freely, and disclosed painful emotions to animals which they otherwise had difficulty in disclosing to the therapist. Johnson, Meadows, Haubner, and Sevedge (2003) are utilizing therapeutic techniques with dogs in cancer patient treatments. They are also being developed to help patients regain control of their disease process and treatment, and to facilitate quality. Of course, measurement of quality of life in this population is fraught with difficult issues. Baun and McCabe (2003) reported in a recent study how companion animals may even be used in the treatment of patients with Alzheimer's disease to aid in socialization, decrease agitation behaviors, and reduce

stress. However, the collection of data on subjects with cognitive impairments is challenging and many of these results are observations of caregivers and staff.

There are similar programs to the nature and outdoor therapeutic programs that incorporate dogs and pets to facilitate healing. Strimple (2003) discusses how animal training programs in prisons can change the atmosphere and provide meaningful work and training for inmates. He describes how dogs are now being incorporated into prisons from which inmates can receive vocational training and psychological rehabilitation, and unwanted dogs can be saved from destruction and be trained as companion animals for people with various physical needs. The early results of these programs are promising but do not represent empirical research.

However, Hanselman (2001) reported on five adolescents, ages 14 to 17 years old, who participated in a group work program with a cognitive behavioral approach incorporating pet therapy as an adjunct to treatment in anger management. Hanselman argues that people need a combination of relationships from social contacts to close affectionate attachments, and it is therefore reasonable to include pets among significant attachment figures. Baseline and post-intervention testing was performed utilizing a state trait anger scale, the Beck Depression Inventory, and a companion animal bonding scale. Parents were also interviewed as to how they felt their children were working through anger issues. Hanselman found the presence of pets during group meetings increased feelings of happiness, security, and self-worth, and reduced feelings of loneliness, isolation, and stress. The study concludes by stating that pets also serve as a vehicle to facilitate awareness of clients' intimate attachments and attachment behavior. Hanselman suggests future research should obtain information on levels of interpersonal violence

that a youth has witnessed or engaged in which was not allowed in his protocol for reasons of confidentiality. Another limitation was the use of a single group session with measurement immediately prior to and after the meeting. This limits the intervention to a single session and does not provide a control group for comparison.

Therefore, it appears that there are a variety of ways our dogs may be therapeutic, from the most formal cognitive-behaviorally outlined program, to interacting and stroking our animals to reduce stress, to simply being in their presence and interacting with them. Perhaps there are other psychotherapeutic models to consider for self-growth, the reduction of anxiety, and depression that connect nature and people together under the guidance of an empathic and empowering relationship of a professional.

Self as Active Agent of Healing Working With Dogs

Humans have a unique ability to empower themselves with the ability for self-growth and healing. Bohart and Tallman (1999) describe that self-healing refers to the human capacity to repair dysfunctional life pathways, to recover from emotionally injurious experiences, and to change ways of being, behaving, and experiencing so that one moves toward greater coherence and functionality. The model of the client as active self-healer, presented by Bohart and Tallman, suggests the primary healing agent in psychotherapy *is* the client. Bohart and Tallman assert that clients are generative; they are the ones who invest interventions with life, create the effects that interventions are supposed to produce, and actively use these interventions in their own uniquely creative ways. According to Bohart and Tallman, clients heal by blending therapy interventions with their own views of identifying their problems, their own ideas of how to solve them, and solving them within the contexts of their lives. They also suggest that most human

beings generally solve problems on their own, and self-right most of the time without therapist assistance. Therefore, this description of the human capacity for self-righting appears greatly similar to those qualities found in a pack leader, a role necessary for pack animals to develop for the survival and unity of their pack.

The role of the therapist has many facets, according to Bohart and Tallman (1999); they are resource providers, information providers, idea providers, strategy providers, supporters, mentors, and coaches. The therapist is primarily a process expert whose expertise consists of helping clients identify their problems, helping them develop and define potential solution pathways, and ways of attaining that solution (Bohart & Tallman, 1999). The role of the therapist is similar to that of a consultant (Corey, 2008), not unlike McConnell's (2002) dog psychology and training methods which serve to address and redirect an individual's own behaviors creating desired outcomes for their dogs.

The Challenge of a Paradigm Shift

Millan (2006) often states in his books and on his television show, *The Dog Whisperer*, that he “rehabilitates dogs and trains people”; that is, he must work with the human owner teaching leadership qualities, training to assert natural creative energies into productive directions facilitating a change in the dog's behavior. In working with human dog owners to change their dog's behaviors, Millan challenges the humans to shift paradigms. These shifts initiate a cascade of learning and insight: insight into the dog's world and needs, and insights that activate growth and change in the individual as well. Kuhn (1970) reports that the way to learning and change comes through paradigm shifts in the way the person understands and views the world and the nature of the world. Kuhn

goes on to say that this change occurs when the process of problem-solving uncovers anomalies and fundamental shifts in perspective are precipitated.

In the clinical setting, this process is a whole new way of framing the problem, according to Bohart and Tallman (1999). Millan's (2006) paradigm shift concerns relating to dogs in the more primal and natural way of the pack animal. Millan asserts that by becoming the pack leader in relation to your dog further generates an even broader paradigm shift in how you perceive yourself and your role in the natural world. That is, the door opened by a new relationship with your dog becomes generalized to a new door opening onto nature. This new perspective, we believe, reconnects us with our natural world; it is a doorway to personal growth, therapeutic change, and psychological healing.

Millan (2006) teaches that the manner in which we view and interact with our animal companions largely shapes and determines the kind of relationship we ultimately have with them. When humans assume a leadership role and relate to their dogs in a natural way (based on the principles of dog psychology inserting mindfulness and the immediacy of the moment), the relationship between humans and animals becomes significantly more positive. Here, there is the possibility of therapeutic interactions occurring whereby both dogs and humans are more fulfilled in their relationship. Millan implies that after applying his techniques in relating to dogs, individuals may begin to understand themselves better and look at their own behavior in a different light. Millan further states that they may even find themselves changing in the ways they interact with others in their lives because, after all, humans are pack animals too. Millan believes that

animals are put into our lives for a purpose, and that is to teach us lessons and help us become better people.

It would appear that nature and animals have much to teach us as individuals, and the literature generally supports the use of dogs in therapeutic roles. Incorporating these two concepts, mindfulness and the practice of dog psychology in training, produces change in humans as much as dogs. Utilization of the human-dog relationship, as an entrée into the world of nature, opens a new arena of research. This research arena is appropriately placed within the self-as-change-agent framework. With an estimated 68 million dogs in America (Millan, 2006), opportunities for growth and therapeutic benefit indeed may be as close as the family pet.

As examined and discussed, much current research shows the therapeutic benefits of dogs being our companions, alleviating our loneliness, providing social stimulation, and being a friend who is always happy to see you. It would seem, however, this research does not explore the greater connection between naturally bonding with dogs as an other-than-human being, and a reconfirmation of our humanness and connections to self and others. There are some researchers who are beginning to explore the importance of the human animal interaction. Beck (2003) believes that human-animal contact can influence psychological and physiological factors important to our health, but there has been little research on the variables that influence or mediate those health consequences. In addition, he states, little attention has been paid on how to create or alter the animal interactions for the betterment of people as well as their animals. Beck further proposes that we generate an increasing awareness of the potential importance of human-animal and human-nature interaction which would involve scientists from a wide variety of

fields for true interdisciplinary collaborative research. Beck asserts that all future studies of human health should consider the presence or absence of a pet in the home, the nature of this relationship with the pet, and how the occupants interact with other aspects of the living environment as a significant variable.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature for an approach to understanding how clients can act as their own vehicles of change and resolve existential problems related to self-alienation by viewing the dog as part of nature and finding a reconnection to self and others through a mindful interaction with their dog. It began with a basic exploration into the humanistic and existential realms of psychology, including Maslow's (1954) self-actualization, Bohart and Tallman's (1999) model of client as their own agent of change, and most specifically the philosophical constructs of the *having* versus *being* dynamics best described by Fromm (1997).

The review of literature continued with the existential approach of Fromm's (1997) ideas of mindfulness to resolve the problem of alienation through the *being* mode that can be applied to the concepts of ecopsychology; the connection of psychology and ecology through the study of the human psyche's relationship to the environment or nature. Finally, a review of the nature of the dog was explored to present as a valuable avenue and means of reconnecting with nature. Patricia McConnell's (2002) methods specifically target an understanding and interaction with dogs by implementing self-awareness, immediacy of the moment, and an understanding of dog psychology as a means to communicate. By viewing the dog as part of nature, a reconnection of self and to others can be established. This conceptual framework presents a specific approach to

understanding how clients can act as their own vehicles of change and resolve existential problems related to self-alienation by viewing the dog as part of nature and finding a reconnection to self and others through a mindful interaction with their dog.

A growing body of research supports the notion that human-animal interaction may facilitate human wellness in a variety of situations (Johnson, 2003). However, the examination of psychological state and mindfulness which may facilitate these interactions within nature has not been reported in the literature. Through the study of individuals' experiences resulting from natural interactions with their dogs, a new direction for research is explored. This includes the contribution to the literature in the field of applied ecopsychology as the use of dogs within the humanistic-existential context of self as active agent of change. The application of two ideas, clients as their own agents of change and the deliberate facilitation of a more natural relationship with dogs, may allow therapists a more effective approach to facing the existential concerns of alienation from self, other, and nature. Through in-depth analysis of the experiences of the three individuals in this study who have practiced mindful dog training and psychology, I hope to better understand the attitudes and beliefs of these individuals, and specifically, the psychological and emotional changes experienced during and subsequent to their dog training experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The problem underlying this study is the dilemma created by a materialistic society focused primarily on increasing levels of consumption. It assumes that something can be learned by studying alternative ways of *being* through a naturalistic interaction with dogs. Therefore, the purpose of this inquiry was to describe and understand in-depth the experiences of individuals who practice working with their dogs in a mindful or natural way. This chapter describes the design and methodology of the study. The first section of the chapter discusses the rationale for selecting a qualitative single-case study and narrative inquiry approach. The following sections describe in detail the methods used to gather, analyze, and report the data.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do participants describe their experience working with dogs in a natural way?
2. How did these experiences of working with dogs in a natural way influence these individuals' relationships with self, others, and the natural world?

3. How did the result of working with dogs in a natural way provide the larger and more general benefits of happiness and reconnection in the humanistic/existential tradition?

Purposive Sample

In order to study and gain further knowledge about the experiences of connecting to other-than-human beings (dogs) and the effects of facilitating a natural interaction, I purposively selected three individuals who engaged in this type of practice. Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts his belief that the generalizability of a case study is increased by the strategic selection of cases:

When the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given phenomenon, a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy. Even a typical or average case is often not the most rich in information. It is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur. Random samples emphasizing representativeness will seldom be able to produce this kind of insight; it is more appropriate to select some few cases chosen for their validity. (p. 229)

Purposeful sampling, according to Patton (1990), selects information-rich cases for in-depth study. Merriam (2001) identifies purposive sampling as the most frequently used sampling technique in qualitative research. One type of purposive sampling, according to Patton (1990), is criterion, where one sets certain criteria and select cases that meet these criteria.

The information-rich cases that were studied came from individuals who have worked with Patricia McConnell (2002), and her specific methods of dog training. Patricia McConnell, a professor of zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a certified Applied Animal Behaviorist, works with individuals and dogs to help them

cultivate a rewarding relationship. This is accomplished through her emphasis on practicing mindful awareness and the immediacy of the moment.

McConnell (2002) was chosen because of her published work with dogs in this natural way, and her propensity to teach humans to open an often overlooked pathway and re-establish connection and active interaction with their dogs, themselves, and the natural world. An in-depth study of this connection provided much needed information on the experience of self-growth.

In order to delimit the study, participants were selected according to the following criteria. Individuals were initially referred for the inclusion in the study by McConnell (2002) based on her observation of positive change. Three recent students were identified by McConnell as having experienced an observable positive change in sense of self or some sense of self-growth. Dr. McConnell's years of teaching experience with dog owners seeking help with animal behavioral issues prepare her well to be able to assess which of her clients have demonstrated significant positive progress in their increased awareness and understanding of dog psychology. McConnell provided contact information for the three potential study participants and I mailed them an invitation to participate in this study (see Appendix A for invitation). A limited number of participants were selected for this study, specifically three, so the research could focus more on the quality and quantity of information from each individual. The three individuals reviewed the proposal and accepted upon first contact, The informed consent (see Appendix B) was completed prior to interview.

Research Design

Because of the methodology used to examine the experiences of individuals who have directly practiced working with their dog in a natural way and to better understand these changes in sense of self and relation to others, a qualitative research design was chosen. This seemed the most appropriate choice, as a case study, according to Creswell (1994), is one of several methods of qualitative research that intensively studies socially related phenomenon within a group of individuals. Creswell also states that rather than following a rigid protocol to examine variables, case study methods involve an in-depth examination of a single instance or event.

A narrative inquiry provided the ideal process to examine this case study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry as a method that uses the following field texts as data sources: stories, autobiography, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, photos, and life experience. Clandinin and Connelly prefer the term *field texts* over the term *data* because “they are created, neither found nor discovered, by participants and researchers in order to represent aspects of field experience” (p. 92). An understanding of the participants’ experience working with dogs in a natural way was obtained through their stories that included a chronological unfolding of events and turning points. Clandinin and Connelly assert that “life as we come to it and as it comes to others, is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (p. 17). Through a narrative inquiry process, participants were able to share the accounts and experiences they have had with their dogs and to learn how they were impacted as an individual as a result of this process. What type of self-growth

or change in sense of self and how each individual changed can only be described by understanding the journey surrounding the experience.

Self-growth in this study may be more clearly understood for these individuals when evaluating within a three-dimensional space that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe. Each of these individuals had pre-existing relationships and life situations before they worked with their dogs in this manner; therefore growth is qualified differently for each of them. Taking into consideration a multi-dimension approach to understanding an individual is very commonplace in the therapeutic realm. It is important to begin to understand the client as a whole person and not just within the context of their presenting problem.

Three-dimensional space, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), derives from the Deweyan view of experience and includes situation, continuity, and interaction. Clandinin and Connelly assert that this framework for an inquiry allows the exploration of experience to travel “inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within place” (p. 49). This study has temporal dimensions and addresses temporal matters such as preceding events in time that led these individuals to working with dogs. This study has both personal and social perspectives and issues that it explores in this study such as the relationship with their dog and how it influences their relationships with others. This study has specific places or sequence of places that are important to explore in terms of understanding this experience in its entirety: a suburban Midwestern city, taking instructional classes on site at McConnell’s facility, and a place to practice these methods such as their homes and the walk provide important information to explore.

Through these narratives and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space, we can begin to look at what self-growth through working with their dogs means for them based on their specific life situations that take into account their previous social interactions and prior life experiences. From here, we have a deeper understanding of what this experience encompassed for them in a context of the personal and social (interaction); past, present, future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). Clandinin and Connelly describe this inquiry space and process as the essence of growth and is an element in the criteria for judging the value of experience.

Experience is a key term in these diverse inquiries; it is both personal and social, and always present (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly also believe that people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but cannot be understood only as individuals; they are always in relation, always in a social context. Experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences.

Self as Researcher

Merriam (2001) describes four characteristics as key to understanding the nature of qualitative research: the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the process is inductive; the product is richly descriptive; and the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Since understanding is a goal of this research study, the use of the researcher as primary instrument is essential. The human instrument is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, and thus the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data.

As the primary researcher of this project, I have been personally involved with McConnell's (2002) methods and insights into dog psychology. I have implemented her

techniques of mindfulness and presence within the moment on my own dogs. As a result of working with my own dogs in a more natural way by being mindful during our interaction, I have experienced increased awareness and consciousness during the immediate moment of interaction. I feel a calming sense of peace, belonging, and connection to the natural world. This makes me feel more alive and human. It is a phenomenon that I have experienced before as a child growing up on the family farm, riding my horse, and walking on the beach. I continue to look for new ways to find this feeling, this sense of well-being in all that is natural.

My knowledge and background in the field of psychology facilitated a greater understanding of the process of self-change as well as the ability to recognize and articulate it. Additionally, my clinical training as a psychologist has provided me with the essential interviewing skills. These include adept skills to help individuals articulate and draw out the essence of their experiences without influencing or biasing them in any way. It has also proven particularly useful to have the ability to interview and collect narrative data in a way which allows me to clarify and tease out deeper levels of meaning.

As a researcher, I feel connected with the participants in the study. While I have not experienced their unique stories, I find the profound impact of my own experience connects me with a common thread to these cases. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe that as we work within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, we learn to see ourselves in the middle of a nested set of stories--ours and theirs. Walking into the midst of their stories ignited not only a connection with the three interviewees, but also invited a process of self-reflection that reconfirmed my own life experiences and the manner in which my dogs have influenced the shaping of my own life story.

In addition to igniting my own self-reflection, and as I began to understand these individuals and their stories, I experienced a significant degree of empathy. I believe empathy is not only an essential component to be a successful psychotherapist, but also necessary to narrative inquiry and successful access into the lives of each participant.

Data Collection

Data, or field texts, for the study were collected through open-ended interviews and researcher notes that included observations. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) prefer the term field texts over the term data because “they are created, neither found nor discovered, by participants and researchers in order to represent aspects of field experience” (p. 92).

Interviews

Once the participants of this study expressed interest in the project, an open-ended, face-to-face, in-home interview was scheduled. Each interview lasted approximately 2 hours. Eisner (1998) states that interviews do not need to be too formalized of an encounter, or rigid and mechanical in method. He goes on to state that “conducting a good interview is like participating in a good conversation: listening intently and asking questions that focus on concrete examples and feelings rather than on abstract speculations, which are less likely to provide genuinely meaningful information” (Eisner, 1998, p. 183). For this reason, an open-ended interview process (Creswell, 2007) was selected to help put the individual at ease and to also have a framework of questions guiding the information sought. This interview process allowed enough flexibility for

these individuals to share enough of their life stories that surround their experiences with dogs.

Upon arriving at the interview site, written consent for participation in the study was obtained after reviewing with the interviewee the purpose, amount of time anticipated to complete the interview, and plans for use of the information (see Appendix B for informed consent). The interview format included 40 open-ended questions spread over a variety of topics including dog psychology, personal growth, interaction with nature, and relating to others (see Appendix C for interview format). The three interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed (see Appendix D for transcribed interview data).

The open-ended questions during the interview allowed for dialogue to occur between the researcher and each interviewee. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe how the way an interviewer acts, questions, and responds in an interview shapes the relationship and therefore the ways participants respond and give accounts of their experience. Therefore, effort was put forth to establish rapport so as to help the interviewees feel comfortable in sharing their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly also assert that while the direction of the interview is generally governed by the interviewer, a participatory relationship may often be established turning the interview into a form of conversation. Clandinin and Connelly believe that what may appear as an objective tape recording is already an interpretive and contextualized text. What is told, as well as the meaning of what is told, is shaped by the interview relationship. It is contextualized because of the particular circumstances of the interview's origins and setting.

Researcher Notes

As the primary researcher, I took notes during the interview. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind us that all field texts, or data, are selective reconstructions of field experience and thereby embody an interpretive process. Clandinin and Connelly state that “field notes are one of the most important kinds of field texts that allow us both to fall in love with our field and to slip into cool observation, as well as to provide the detail that fills in our memory outline” (p. 104). The interview protocol was a form with ample space to record comments observed about the interviewee’s responses, body language, and covert and overt behavior. Once data had been gathered through the participants’ interviews of their narrative accounts and transcribed, the interviews were returned to the participants for review. Only one of the three participants reviewed the transcribed interview, made clarifications in red ink, and returned it. The other two did not respond to the opportunity to make comments on the transcribed interviews.

Data Analysis

The data to be analyzed from the three personal experiences included the raw data from the interviews, field notes from observations of the interview, and interim text of a re-presentation of data, or a retelling of their stories through the creation of fictional journal entries. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that “field notes combined with journals written of our field experience provide a reflective balance” (p. 104).

Coding the Data and Emergence of Themes

Creswell (2007) discusses that data analysis in a qualitative case study usually consists of preparation and organization of the data for analysis, then reduction of the

data (interview and field note materials) into themes through a process of coding. Creswell (2007) describes an open coding process as reading each sentence and assigning the sentence a code with descriptors in the margins. For this study, highlighters were used to code each line of text in the transcribed interviews and notes. The descriptor codes and highlighted texts were then organized into chunks that formed major organizing themes that spread throughout the interviews and field notes. Themes were identified as prominent features and saturation of the situation, person, or process that at least two of the three interviewees encountered. Six major organizing themes were identified: Context, Intervening Conditions, Interventions, Differences in Relationships with Others, Changes in Self-Awareness, and Spiritual Growth.

Interim Text Composed of Fictional Journal Entries

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss that there are a variety of interim texts built into the inquiry process and describe these texts, or data, as situated in the spaces between field texts and final research texts, emphasizing the reconstruction of the field experience. In this study, alternative data representation was utilized in the form of fictional journal entries as a means to deepen the inquiry process through the use of interim texts. Eisner (1997a) describes alternative data representations as different forms of communication that we do not normally use to represent what we have learned and chosen to present as data. These forms may include stories, pictures, diagrams, maps, theater, demonstrations, and poetry. Alternative data representation is making its way into mainstream qualitative research and peer-reviewed journals. Piercy and Benson (2005) published an article in the *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy* that provided a rationale for utilizing data representations such as creative writing, art, music, performance, and

poetry in qualitative family research. Eisner (1997a) states that these representations are rooted in the nature of knowledge and the relationship between what one knows and how it is represented.

Eisner (1997a) believes the concept of alternative forms of data representation presents an image that acknowledges the variety of ways through which our experience is coded. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that written journals appear to be a natural vehicle of re-presenting the data because they often take on an “intimately reflective puzzling quality” and offer a more in-depth understanding of what these individuals were actually saying and experiencing by involving the researcher on a deeper level of the narrative process and submergence into the data (p. 103).

Specifically, representing the data involved attentive listening, note taking during the initial narration and interview, open questioning, and transcription of the interview data in order to create a representation of experience using the respondents’ own words and phrases to create the fictional journal entries. The fictional journal entries recounted the three interviewees’ experience of working with their dogs in a natural way, chronologically reporting events and turning points of their experience in their entirety. Re-presenting the data into fictional journal entries helped turn disjointed snapshots of the interview data into a streamlined narrative story that would deepen the understanding of experience that these individuals’ shared with their dogs.

The Inquiry Process

Because this is also a narrative inquiry, the data were analyzed for the story these three individuals have to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points that occurred as a result of working with their dogs in a natural way. Working within the

interim text as previously defined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), or fictional journals, allowed for a deeper acquaintance of and immersion into the data. This process gave substance and verified the themes that were previously identified through the coding process. Finally, the core themes were then analyzed in a final cross-case analysis as suggested by Creswell (2007) to look for similarities and differences among the cases.

When attempting to qualify an individual's experiences and sense of self-growth among these three cases, it became challenging to work within the confinements of the initial analysis and themes. Each of the individual's life stories that brought them to the point of working with their dogs was based on previous and current life situation factors and interactions with others that may only be more accurately evaluated through Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space.

Many hours were spent reading and re-reading field texts in order to construct a summarized account of what these individuals experienced with their dogs. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest this increasingly complex process involves constructing a summarized account of what is contained within different sets of field texts. Clandinin and Connelly describe that narrative coding may include "places where actions and events that occurred, story lines that interweave and interconnect, gaps or silences that become apparent, tensions that emerge, and continuities and discontinuities" (p. 130). Clandinin and Connelly also assert that the engagement of this process leads the researcher to hold different field texts in relation to other field texts.

Trustworthiness

Validity in quantitative research tends to rely on strict methodological rules and standards. It becomes difficult to apply these same rules and regulations to qualitative

research because of the social nature of qualitative inquiry (Angen, 2000). Life is fluid, contextual, and relational, which makes it difficult to quantify. Angen states that

if we pay attention to the lifeworld, the realm of our everyday experiences, we will become more attuned to the myriad influences that impinge on human thought, speech, and action and see that we can no longer strive for some unitary truth of human behavior using exclusively reductive, positivist procedures. (p. 3)

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) go so far as to propose a deconstruction of the traditional idea of “validity” by proposing a metaphor of a crystal for qualitative research. They state that a crystal combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality, and angles of approach; in addition, crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. It allows for a deeper understanding of the complex experience being studied and discovered in the process of writing. Framing the study in this way allowed me to deepen my understanding of the participants and the multi-dimensional and individual change processes they have experienced.

Qualitative researchers may foster credibility in their studies by relating and supporting their interpretation and evaluation through multiple types of data. Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation through cross verification from several sources. Eisner (1998) refers to this process as structural corroboration and describes it as “seeking recurrent behaviors or actions that inspire confidence that the events interpreted and appraised are not aberrant or exceptional but are rather characteristic of the situation” (p. 110). This study used multiple methods of data collection that included open-ended interviews and researcher notes that included observations. Patton (1990) discusses that in addition to multiple methods of data collection strengthening validity, multiple methods of analysis are also ideal. Multiple

methods of analysis were also used in this study that included working with interim text of re-presenting the data into fictional journal entries to enhance understanding and depth. This process along with the traditional coding and reduction of data in qualitative research led to the emergence of major themes for analysis. Finally, the inquiry process and analysis delved deeper to include Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) evaluation from a three-dimensional space perspective through a cross-case analysis.

In addition to enhance trustworthiness, each transcribed interview is available for review in Appendix D of this document so that readers themselves may find confidence that the events interpreted and the themes identified in the process of self-growth are not exceptional, but characteristic of the narrative inquiry process.

Generalizability

Traditional research typically involves reducing our findings to text and numbers. The process entails randomly selecting participants from a population so the findings that emerge from the study of the sample can be generalized to the population from which it was selected. Eisner (1998) makes a distinction between naturalistic and formal generalization. "In statistical studies, where formal generalization prevails, samples must be drawn randomly from a population so that the findings that emerge from the study of the sample can be generalized to the population from which it was selected" (p. 103). He goes on to state that although the logic of statistical generalization seems unassailable with respect to the populations from which findings on samples were drawn, that logic does not necessarily apply to other populations; quantitative researchers wind up using their findings in ways that are not unlike the ways in which qualitative researchers use theirs.

What qualitative research yields then is a set of observations or images that facilitates the search and discovery process when examining other situations (Eisner, 1997b). Eisner believes that the qualitative research process is not so different from generalizing practices of quantitative research. What is learned from a narrative inquiry can potentially be generalized to other settings and other similar situations. Eisner describes this process as a ubiquitous aspect of normal generalizing tendencies in life. “We try and make sense out of the situations in and through which we live and to use what we learn to guide us in the future” (p. 104). The instrumental utility of such lessons increases as the story or experience becomes more compact. Eisner proposes that this is the central function of both folktales and proverbs. The story is appreciated for both its interesting narrative and important lesson to be learned. The content that we generalize is not only represented in linguistic form but also framed through skills and images as well.

In qualitative case studies such as this, what is learned about a person’s experience of self-growth from working with their dog may raise our consciousness to features that might be applicable to another’s experience. The stories of experience and aspects of self-growth may not be identical, but they may inspire a deeper look within their story so that we may grow and learn ourselves. Learning from the experience of others is an invaluable human ability. In this respect, generalizing may also mean transferring what has been learned from one situation to another.

Ethics and Institutional Review Board (IRB)

As a researcher, many ethical issues and situations have the potential to arise during data collection, analysis, and completion of any study. To best ensure that the

most ethical behavior during my research was used, I incorporated the following considerations:

1. Obtained IRB approval for this research project.
2. Followed a procedure that ensured participants were voluntary.
3. Obtained signed informed consent documents with each participant that explained the purpose and nature of the study.
4. Protected the anonymity of each participant.
5. Maintained confidentiality of all disclosed information.

Specifically, I adhered to the ethical protocols and principles established by Andrews University Institutional Review Board. I obtained administrative and informed consent before initiating data-gathering activities. The informed consent from each participant was performed via a signed Informed Consent form, a sample of which has been included in Appendix B. All documents were protected for confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants was strictly maintained. The intent of the research was fully disclosed including a discussion of risks and benefits with the participants. They were also assured that all materials and responses would be kept in the strictest confidence and that participation is voluntary. Finally, each participant was provided and signed the appropriate informed consent materials, which included the purpose of the study, role of institution, voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality of all shared information. Pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee and dog in order to avoid any identifying features and provide complete anonymity.

Summary

The first section of the chapter discussed the choice of qualitative design and rationale for selecting a single-case study and narrative inquiry approach to study the experience of interaction with dogs in a natural way. The next sections discussed in detail the methods utilized to gather, analyze, and report the data.

Because of the methodology used to examine the experiences of individuals who have directly practiced working with their dog in a natural way and to better understand these changes in sense of self and relation to others, a qualitative research design was chosen. The three information-rich cases that were studied came from individuals who have worked with Patricia McConnell, Ph.D., and her specific methods of dog training. A narrative inquiry provided the ideal process to examine this case study.

Specifically, data were collected from open-ended interviews and field notes from the interview including behavioral observations. Analysis of the data consisted of traditional qualitative methods identified by Creswell (2007) through a process of coding and reducing the data into major organizing themes. Because this study was also a narrative inquiry, the data were analyzed for the story these three individuals have to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points that occurred as a result of working with dogs in a natural way. A method of alternative data representation in the form of fictional journal entries was utilized to enhance the narrative stories and deepen the understanding of these experiences. Working within this interim text of retelling these stories solidified the identified themes and allowed for a deeper acquaintance of and immersion into the data.

From here, the major themes emerged and started to flow into a streamlined narrative story. Finally, the inquiry process and analysis delved deeper to include Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) evaluation from a three-dimensional space perspective through a cross-case analysis.

Through analysis of these narratives and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space, I began to look at what self-growth through working with dogs meant for these individuals in the context of their lives. By mindfully connecting to ourselves, and interacting with other-than-human beings (specifically dogs) and the natural world, a more meaningful and fulfilling search for joy and happiness may be found.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results of data collected and analyzed from the three interviews. There are three primary sections this chapter discusses: individual analysis across six identified themes, a re-presentation of data in the form of fictional journal entries, and a cross-case analysis. After the transcription of data, the interviews and field notes were coded. Six major themes emerged from the coding of the interview data and field notes: Context, Intervening Conditions, Intervention Strategies, Differences in Relationships With Others, Changes in Self-Awareness, and Spiritual Growth. Fictional journal entries were then created from the interview data and field notes as an interim text to enrich the understanding of experience and to verify the six themes identified. The six core themes then were analyzed in a final cross-case analysis.

Major Themes Within Each Case

Creswell (2007) discusses that data analysis in a qualitative case study usually consists of preparation and organization of the data for analysis, then reduction of the data (interview and field note materials) into themes through a process of coding. The data from field notes and from the transcribed interviews from this study were coded through a process of reading each sentence and then assigning a descriptive code. The

major codes were then turned into themes based on the prominent features and saturation of the situation, person, or process that at least two of the three interviewees encountered. Six major organizing themes were identified in this study: Context, Intervening Conditions, Interventions, Differences in Relationships With Others, Changes in Self-Awareness, and Spiritual Growth. The following outlines each of the three women's stories with respect to the emerged themes.

Jane's Story

Context

Jane has two dogs, Pooka and Ranger, that live with her at her home in an urban Midwestern town. She is a single female approximately in her late 20s. Jane doesn't have a yard, and relies on walking her dogs for exercise. She is very interested in how her dogs feel emotionally inside and tries to promote change through reinforcement. Jane uses mostly positive reinforcement, and does not incorporate negative reinforcement into her dog's training regime. Her long-term background consists of always having dogs while growing up. Recent problems over the past few years have included not knowing much about dogs' motivations and internalizations, as well as experiencing behavioral problems at home with them that have included separation anxiety, inappropriate jumping, prey drive, and dog-to-dog aggression.

Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions for Jane included previous negative experiences at local training facilities that emphasize teaching the dog commands and negative reinforcement. She learned about positive reinforcement at Dog's Best Friend training facility. Jane

watched others communicate with their dogs for a while before she attended with her dog. Learning about positive reinforcement helped her feel like the communication was a partnership rather than dictatorial. It was two way and meaningful for her.

Interventions

Interventions Jane has implemented with her dogs included working with them at home consistently week after week for three or four walks per day. She would only implement positive intervention strategies when working with her dog. She believes punishment can be beneficial, but difficult to use appropriately. For example, when the dog would react aggressively towards other dogs, she would stop, ask the dog to sit and call his name to reward with a treat. It was important for her to not restrict the dog too much, but be able to call out tools when needed and effectively use them.

Jane's approach to effectively utilizing the interventions is one of a nurturing and shaping relationship similar to a mother figure. She states, "It's different though, because they are dogs and not people." It's important to Jane to keep in mind that too much coddling and not enough exercise creates behavioral problems. She believes it's communication with a partner and not dictatorial, so asking for polite behavior rather than demanding it is more effective, as is rewarding desirable behavior rather than punishing undesirable behavior. To implement these strategies, Jane believes it is also necessary to not only be aware and attentive of dogs' behavior but also the person who is working with the dog. Several factors can influence our communication with the dog, such as our stress. By focusing on her breathing, she empties her mind and is present to be aware of her and her dog's behaviors. Another strategy that Jane uses is to deliberately say and think only positive thoughts on the walk. Over time, the interventions and

strategies shifted more from the dog to Jane. What Jane is explicitly describing about strategies to stay in the immediate moment relates to Cohen's (1997) idea of what we are in the immediate moment, which is what we think, feel, and do; it is the only time that nature actually exists or that we can consciously change our relationships.

Differences in Relationships With Others

Some of the differences that Jane saw as a direct result of the interventions impacted her dogs and their behavior directly; she started to see results right away. She did realize, however, that her efforts yielded some successes and lots of failures. Jane's dog no longer has the panic, fear, and aggression about other dogs coming towards him. Her dog doesn't want to be very social, but does not strike out. It's important to Jane for her to feel like she is not just "managing" their behaviors, but really changing the way her dogs feel inside as a result of the positive reinforcement. Jane believes it comes not only from positive reinforcement, but also from being mindful. Jane embraces that change occurs in small increments through positive thinking and reward. The dog's behavior has moved from external to internal, but Jane has also moved from external to internalizing the relationship she has with her dogs. She genuinely cares how they feel inside and has developed empathy for them and awareness of how she interacts with them.

The relational differences for Jane are apparent through cultivating awareness and mindfulness with her dogs as well as others. Jane has learned to live with her dogs in a harmonious way and has developed a good relationship with them. For Jane, it's a different compliance of obedience and is not born out of fear. Jane has learned to problem-solve situations that don't work for her or are not harmonious through repeated trials and analysis of her own failures. Jane is continuing to gain experiences that will

allow her to see behavioral patterns and have the opportunity to problem-solve situations. This process has helped her be more aware and gain knowledge of her dogs' "signals" that they send out to her. These signals are the dogs' means of communication, and she is learning to "speak" their language by reacting more appropriately to them in a language they can understand. This puts her in a leadership position. This process also gives Jane the opportunity to think about her dogs' motivation and communication that are inherent in trying to work with a different species. By being more aware of herself, she can also take the problems that the dogs are experiencing at face value and not exacerbate it with her human problems of stress or anxiety. Jane has learned and become aware that panic goes right down into the leash! The relational difference between Jane and her dogs is that she has moved from understanding her dogs to understanding herself in relation to her dogs.

Jane also has recently changed some of her previously held belief systems, which would suggest that a difference has occurred in her relationship with others even outside of her dogs. I believe she has developed a deeper sense of compassion for people as well as other species. For example, Jane used to advocate for No Kill shelters, and now doesn't. Jane now tries to see the process from their (the dogs') perspective and sees the suffering involved. Jane's compassion has continued to develop by triggering a sense of outreach to working with other dogs. Jane started to volunteer at the local Humane Society by walking pre-adoptable dogs and now volunteers at Dogs' Best Friend as a trainer. Jane has developed personal friendships with co-workers and others she has helped. It has opened up a new world for her, "like tree roots in terms of employment, friends, and beliefs," as she stated.

In Jane's relationships with others, she feels that she is more "tuned into" their physical as well as verbal behavior as a result of keying into her dogs' and her own nonverbal cues. Jane also states that she is keener at understanding their motivations. She asks herself questions like, "Why are you doing this?" "What's going on in your world that is causing this kind of behavior from you?" She believes this type of engagement with others is a much deeper and more psychologically minded kind of thought process of trying to understand the individual with whom she is interacting. These examples suggest that she has deepened her relationships with others. Jane does admit that with humans though, it is much more difficult than with dogs and has not yet broadened this level of relating to other people outside of the dog community. Perhaps in time this will come to encompass all individuals and relationships.

Changes in Self-Awareness

Jane believes her sense of self has definitely changed since her experiences of working with her dogs in a more mindful way. Jane embraces that her relationship with her dogs can help her own self-growth. She believes the motivational and positive experience that her dogs have had in their own growth led her to consider the possibility of her own path of self-growth. Jane states that her own personal goal is better internal regulation. Examples that help her with internal regulation include focusing on her breathing and being in the present moment with her mind. In those moments, she sees herself "in kind of a mirror in relation to her dogs." Jane found just learning to be aware was a really positive change in her life. According to Jane, it can be applied to a variety of situations, such as when she is stressed or feeling depressed. Jane regularly practices awareness and breath work, and finds something to be positive about. From these

examples, the awareness and positive attitude Jane has developed when working with her dogs has begun to be applied in more global areas of her life.

Spiritual Growth

Spiritually, Jane believes that working with her dogs in this way has solidified a concept and belief that dogs communicate with us beyond their physical language. Jane believes there is more, an all-encompassing answer that leads us to why we are all here (including different species) in this benevolent universe. She believes in energies, both physical and emotional; and the universal ties that bind all living things and enable them to grow and reproduce.

Jane states, “Working with someone who is just *being* (mindful and present) is easier to act like that yourself.” Here, it appears that Jane is trying to tap into the “being” mode through the examples of others after her initial exposure working with dogs and embracing the concepts herself. As a result of finding this *being* mode, Jane identifies spiritually and emotionally; there is calm feeling that becomes present. She claims there is also an incredible sense of satisfaction and awe over what she is observing and participating in. Jane describes this feeling of awe and satisfaction as similar to meditation. It is a practice that she is encouraged and motivated to participate in, to attain the peace and calmness in the outside world. Jane states that when she is successful in the outside world, it is a more exhilarating and joyful existence. Her goal is to attain this feeling and awareness all the time. From these examples, it suggests that the openness Jane had with her dogs created a self-awareness and compassion on a much deeper level which impacted and solidified her spiritual path. From these examples, Jane’s presence exemplifies peace, calm, and a joy which permeates through all of her interactions.

Sara's Story

Context

Sarah currently has two dogs that live in her urban Midwestern home. Sarah is a married female approximately in her late 30s with two school-age children. She exercises her two dogs daily in the morning, in addition to treating them holistically as a veterinarian. Sarah describes them as happy and well-adjusted dogs.

As a child, Sarah had dogs growing up with whom she was very close. One dog in particular was a Dachshund Terrier mix named Cookie. Cookie was her best friend; Sarah slept with her every night and taught her tricks such as sit, stay, and come. As Cookie got older, she developed kidney failure and would often pee in her bed. Sarah had a difficult time accepting Cookie's problems, and wanted to be a vet from the age of 11. After Cookie, she had other dogs in the home with problems too, both behavioral and physical, including some aggression, seizure disorders, and congestive heart failure.

After attending vet school, Sarah realized that it wasn't fulfilling enough. She decided to pursue education in Eastern medicine. Sarah described a long desire to get into Eastern medicine from the age of 4 or 5. She felt like she always had a connection with a childhood friend who was Asian. Sarah's mother also lived and traveled in Taiwan for a number of years and she would be fascinated by stories and traditional décor. Sarah embraced Eastern philosophies from an early age and felt "connected" as a child. Sarah recalls lying on the ground as a child and thinking, "I'm at peace with all of this." Her early background was Jewish, but Sarah's family encouraged an open practice of faith. Sarah reports practicing Tai Chi for the past 10 years every morning. In addition, she treats herself with Eastern medicine and acupuncture.

Specifically, and Sarah's previous presenting problem, was her dog named Tesh. While she was at vet school, Sarah took a 5-week-old puppy (coon hound lab mix) home that was to be euthanized. Sarah thought this puppy was beautiful and bonded with the dog before she really knew her. Sarah felt a responsibility and love toward the puppy because the puppy was hers. Sarah went on to say that "You love anyone you get to know well." This dog, Tesh, lived to be 16 years old. Sarah described her as playful and friendly, even brilliant; but she was dominant. Sarah described her as a "sociopath." There is no doubt from these examples that Sarah is in touch with her emotional side and loves others deeply.

Tesh displayed dominant behavior from the time she was a puppy. Sarah described Tesh through elaborate and sometimes emotionally intense storytelling, which she appeared to enjoy immensely. For example, Sarah described that Tesh would run her own mother and the other puppies in the litter away from food at 3 weeks. Tesh was dominant over other dogs in parks and had gotten herself into a few scuffles. At home, Sarah described her ingenious behavior of eating food out of the cupboards and refrigerator regularly. Sarah respected her because she was brilliant, and couldn't get over the things Tesh could do. Sarah felt the dog would look at her and say, "Ha ha." Eventually, this dog developed severe separation anxiety and ate through a wall and dug out of a basement. Sarah felt that hound dogs are hunters, independent, and in need of a job. At that time, she was working, and didn't have a lot of opportunity to spend time with Tesh. As a result, Tesh developed more separation anxiety because Sarah wasn't around. Sarah felt the dog needed more of a challenge, and unfortunately they didn't have smart dog toys or classes other than obedience, such as agility. Sarah dramatically

described as the “worst day of my life” when Tesh learned to open the diaper genie and plundered its contents. Part of her wanted to euthanize or give the dog away at that point, but couldn’t because Tesh was her dog and she felt a sense of loyalty and responsibility towards her.

Sarah’s interview behavior was marked by very fast talking, along with her embellished storytelling, indicating how much she enjoyed telling the story. Sarah had somewhat of a difficult time staying on task and answering questions because she would frequently become distracted by these elaborate but tangential stories, becoming quite excited. Sarah tended to anthropomorphize Tesh quite often and describe Tesh as possessing human traits like “being manipulative.” Nonetheless, there were enduring qualities of the dog and Sara’s emotions and love runs deeply for others.

Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions for Sarah consisted of consulting a pet trainer for an evaluation of Tesh and her problems. On some level, Sarah didn’t think Tesh’s problems were that severe, just challenging. A prominent trainer said Tesh was the most aggressive dominant dog he had ever met. Sarah thought some of the trainer’s tactics were inappropriate, so she started listening on the radio to Tricia (Dr. Patricia McConnell) from Dog’s Best Friend on the way to work Saturday mornings.

Interventions

Interventions that Sarah implemented with her dog as a result of listening to Dr. McConnell (2002) on Saturday mornings were a combination of other trainers’ and Tricia’s own methods, consisting mostly of getting the dog to comply, utilizing a gentle

leader and food as a motivator and reward. While Tesh's external behavior improved dramatically, becoming much more manageable, Sarah still felt that Tesh "knew she was complying because she chose to." In other words, Sarah still felt like the dog "begrudgingly played the obedience game but had no intention of submitting." The dog was still "manipulating her" (according to Sarah). Here, Sarah attributed many human characteristics to the dog, and clearly felt that she changed the external behavior of the dog, but not internal motivation. Was this genuine observation or a personal projection? Sarah used a variety of other methods with Tesh including the natural intervention of the aging process. Aging brought on stiffness for the dog and in particular hip joint troubles. Sarah described how as Tesh aged she became a more tolerant playmate with children.

Differences in Relationships With Others

As Sarah became more knowledgeable of Eastern medicines, she used medications and herbs to regulate and modulate Tesh's behavioral and physical problems, just as she did for herself. It had become an important component of her relationship with the dog to be able to treat her with both Western and Eastern medicine. She felt this was a holistic approach that brought about the best balance possible for the dog. Treating her dog with Eastern medicine only strengthened Sarah's belief in alternative treatments. In addition, Sarah made an effort to regulate her own moods and emotions with Tai Chi and practiced breathing exercises when she walked or interacted with her dog. As Sarah became more trained in Eastern medicine, she became more proficient at regulating herself to prepare for interactions with her own dogs as well as her clients' dogs that she treated through her veterinary practice. Sarah felt this preparation was key to her interaction and the development of relationships with her dogs and others. I believe dogs

became a part of her journey in self-growth and the enhancement of her relationships, but not the cause or result. Sarah's dogs may have acted more as a catalyst or vehicle to help her practice those tools she was already acquiring and using (in part from Eastern medicine) to further her own path and connection to others.

Some other specifics that Sarah experienced with her dog that provided a vehicle for self-growth were intrinsic to Tesh's nature. Sarah felt Tesh was never happy to obey a command, but happy to get food. While their relationship was better, Sarah indicated it was never great; Tesh didn't listen to anyone else because they didn't follow through with her. Sarah valued the relationship with Tesh and learned a great deal through the training, but Tesh was and remained a reluctant trainee throughout her life as described by Sarah. Sarah believed the dog was happy, had a good life, and was creative. Did the dog's fulfillment reach its limitations based on Sara's ability to be fully open to the dog's experience? In other words, was Sara consistently able to be fully present outside of herself for the dog?

This dog made an impression on Sarah's life, but much of it wasn't the result of training and developing a mindful relationship with the dog; it seemed to be an accommodation to the nature of the dog. The manner in which she worked with the dog, in a natural way, later facilitated mindful interaction. Eventually Sarah obtained two new dogs with whom she worked in a similar manner and saw striking and more desirable results. Sarah described that the inherent nature of the dogs was very different. They were people pleasers and enjoyed human company, but nonetheless, they were well behaved. Sarah reports that McConnell's (2002) training methods have really helped her understand more with these dogs than when she was working with Tesh. Sarah describes

that is important to make expectations known to the dogs, it helps them function better. Understanding the dog's motivations and being consistent are also very important. "Good dogs are wonderful and I appreciate my good dogs," Sarah states. From these examples with the next dogs, it may be that Sarah was more able at this point in her life to move outside of herself and be open to the experience of the dog, that is, with expectations, motivations, etc.

There were other and more subtle ways that Sarah was affected by her experiences working with Tesh and later with her two new dogs. Sarah discovered that she began to relate to others in her family in a different manner. Most notably, Tesh helped her with parenting; that is, she felt she became a better parent as a result of the relationship with her dog. Specifically, Sarah developed better problem-solving skills, how to be consistent and follow through, as well as learning to be more patient. Sarah believes it has become much easier for her to express herself concisely to others and articulate her own needs.

Sarah described another noticeable change. She was giving advice to her veterinary clients based upon McConnell's (2002) radio show and the experiences she had with Tesh. Some of this advice was specifically related to Sarah's own experiences such as Tesh's separation anxiety. Sarah found herself better able to connect with her clients because she also had a dog with serious behavioral problems. These problems were often worse than her clients'. In other instances, her clients experienced different issues with their dogs. Even then, Sarah discovered she could better connect with them and offer advice she based upon McConnell's training methods. This mindful training really helped Sarah assist her clients by discussing specific ideas which helped clarify

their understanding of how to best care for the dogs. Sarah stated that she attempted to teach her clients to make their expectations known to their dogs to improve their function. She also helped her clients better understand their dog's motivations. These concepts moved beyond dogs quickly, and Sarah describes being in a position to help her clients begin to apply these concepts more globally as she has. She stated, "Anxious dogs and anxious bosses are very similar."

Sarah's desire was to help animals come into perfect health, which evolved to concern for the health of the owners. This global notion of connection, understanding, and health generalized to her vet practice and deepened her relationships with the dogs she worked with and their owners even further. Sarah described that her clients may not have perfect health, but owners typically want it for their dogs. Sarah encourages people to seek treatment and help themselves when they see how their dogs can be helped and feel better to have a better quality of life. Sarah promotes acupuncture for humans along with their dogs. She sees clients starting to get better and that makes her feel better. Sarah claims to be in awe of the opportunity and the breadth of things that you get to do in helping people and animals and the rewards of seeing them do well and feel better. In addition to helping, she has formed relationships with "wonderful, interesting, and caring people and their pets." Sarah has felt that her journey with the dogs combined with acupuncture really led her down the path into connection with others.

Changes in Self-Awareness

Through increasing her knowledge and experience of Eastern medicines, Sarah used herbs to regulate not only Tesh's behavioral and physical problems but also her own. Being tuned into herself both physically and mentally was important for Sarah so

she could be fully present to help her clients and their dogs. This was not a new concept for Sarah as she had been practicing mindfulness for quite some time throughout her life. In addition to medicinal methods for treatment of her moods and emotions, Sarah also regularly practiced Tai Chi and breathing exercises when she walked or interacted with her dog. As she became more trained in Eastern medicine and philosophy, she described how she became more proficient at regulating herself to prepare for interactions with her own dogs as well as her clients' dogs. Sarah also described breathing in white light through the top of her head and letting it come through her whole body and out her hands, feet, and chest. Sarah clearly identifies the mind and body link required to engage in mindfulness, which she practices during meditation, Tai Chi, interacting with her dog, and her clients. Sarah still, however, demonstrated a nervous energy during the interview that did not suggest the relaxed and calm demeanor she elaborately described. Perhaps the interview was anxiety provoking or she is still possibly in a verbalization phase with difficulty implementing it.

Spiritual Growth

Specific self-growth and spiritual opportunities have taken place as a result of this combined interaction. Sarah has learned about consistency in life and things you do. Sarah has learned and continues to learn so much from animals and people she interacts with. Sarah feels like she is growing all the time and is open to receiving it. It's been a journey that has opened her up to the world and she feels connected to it in a very positive way. The animals help connect Sarah the most; they are "grounding and lifting." When she works with them she feels "connected, calm, and meditative." Sarah is able to feel immensely from them and "her world opens up." Sarah has always had a spiritual

connection and felt that everything is related, but it is much stronger since becoming an adult, going through vet school, practicing Eastern medicine, and working with dogs in her life. Her views relate similarly to a Buddhist philosophy, where all things co-arise dependently with all other things.

Carol's Story

Context

Carol is a middle-aged computer programmer who is currently divorced and lives alone with her dog, an Australian Shepherd rescue named Benny. Carol has owned several Australian Shepherds over the past few years and they have all had the benefit of McConnell's training methods. Carol shared that her religious background is one of a strong Catholic upbringing. She relates this upbringing to her tendency to carry with her a large amount of guilt and responsibility for others' feelings. In an attempt to improve her relationships and emotional well-being, Carol has been attending psychotherapy sessions weekly for 4½ years. Understandably, Carol was reluctant to disclose details from her therapy sessions, but did mention that she was learning to let go of what she cannot control as well as the realization that she cannot control everything.

Carol has had significant behavioral problems with all of her dogs including the most recent, Benny. Behavioral problems with Benny have included separation anxiety, car riding issues, biting, and reactivity at the door when visitors come by. Carol made known that she had certain "expectations" of Benny that he was falling short of. Carol made an "issues" list and put them in order and categories. She expressed that these behavioral problems overwhelmed her to the point that she became very frustrated with her dog's "issues" and devoted much attention and energy in her life to it.

Consistent with the information shared by Carol, I noticed certain behavioral issues during the interview. This included an observation of an anxious and guarded presentation with sometimes fast and pressured speech. Carol appeared to be overwhelmed at times during the interview and often stated how responsible she felt for many things: “I’m responsible for everything in the world!” Carol states that she is seeking a well-balanced life between work, activities, and relationships, but admits that she can become over-focused on her dog or work. In addition, Carol admittedly struggles with emotions, particularly anger. “I don’t cope with being angry. I don’t let myself get angry. I don’t acknowledge it.” I had a strong internal reaction to this individual, sensing her personality as rather fixed or rigid in outlook, style, and adaptability.

Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions have included her vet recommending a consult with McConnell (2002) with her first dog in the early 1990s that carried over to her second and third dogs. Carol has continuously taken classes at Dog’s Best Friend (McConnell’s training center) for training, and as noted previously she has been in personal therapy regularly for the past several years. In addition, Carol practices yoga regularly. She noted that yoga was her first introduction to mindfulness.

Interventions

Some of the specific actions and intervention strategies that Carol has utilized from McConnell (2002) include counter-conditioning for her dog, which Carol described as “counter-conditioning parties” along with formal obedience classes. Carol admits that much of the time it was not successful, and she would piece together parts of the training

program along with her own ideas and solutions. Carol seemed to display some resistance to a full embracing of the methods. For example, Carol describes “knowing him better herself” and “having to ignore what Dr. McConnell is saying at times.” Nonetheless, Carol started giving Benny stuffed “Kongs” and realized he was very food motivated and experienced some success. She wanted him to feel good about situations and become desensitized, so some training problems she resolved on her own by using treats, others she just learned to “manage better.”

Differences in Relationships With Others

Carol has identified positive rewards from her relationship with the dog despite some of the training not being successful. Companionship as well as more of the traditionally therapeutic benefits of having animals was identified. Carol described “laying next to the dog, and feeling like my blood pressure goes down with stroking the dog.” As a result, Carol feels her relationship with her dog has improved. Carol reports that her relationship with her dog is “joyful” and she feels a sense of “connection” to him. Carol describes it as “a fun and rewarding experience with another species.” Carol admitted that she doesn’t necessarily think consciously about what she’s learned from her relationship with her dog; nonetheless, self-growth, albeit not self-reflection, appears to be occurring through the relationship.

Carol describes her strong desire to have a healthy “partnership” with her dog, but at times Carol seems to struggle with maintaining balance in her life between activities and relationships, pouring all of her energy into her dog. For example, Carol stated, “The last six months has been very focused and I keep saying like I’m feeling like I’m one dimensional because all I do is concentrate on this dog and a lot of what I have to talk

about relates to this dog. Other people are worried about what's going on in the world and I'm just worried about his next adventure." She even begins to wonder about her over-focus on the dog's training by asking: "Am I too obsessed?"

Pouring all her efforts into Benny has no doubt left Carol frustrated at times when he does not meet her "expectations." Carol has admitted that she has strong expectations for Benny to behave. While she would like to nurture a "partnership," she finds herself struggling to force it. "It's hard for me to let go all of these issues I'm working on and just let him be a dog, but I do it. I have moments where it's a joy to watch him be a dog. That's the controlling thing for me, it's hard for me to sometimes just relax and let that happen."

With all these efforts and expectations for Benny, Carol undoubtedly has strong feelings that emerge from their interactions. Many of her feelings for Benny are marked by the joy and companionship she receives from him. Some of her expressed emotions towards Benny, however, may not be productive in facilitating a natural interaction with him. She expressed a strong desire to "stop feeling as though I was responsible for everything he did wrong." Carol stated, "I was always mortified if he misbehaved towards another dog. I was horrified and took it so personally." Carol recognized that she couldn't deal with it objectively and that it made her "tense up." While Carol openly admitted some difficulty with managing emotions such as anger, they directly presented themselves while working with Benny. "He's pushed my last button and I'm so angry that I can't cope. I can get so angry that I'm screaming at him. He reads impatience from me and gets stressed and behaves badly."

Some of Carol's strong emotions for Benny may stem from how she views him. Carol states, "When we identify with their responses as in the way that we would as humans respond to things, I think it makes it a little easier to understand where they are coming from." Because Carol appears to be relating to Benny as she does with other humans in her life, it makes adopting an animal-centered perspective more difficult to achieve. Carol may also be displacing her previous relational difficulties onto Benny. For example she stated, "He's never gonna be a child who is gonna grow up and go away from me. He's never going to evolve away from me in the way that our relationships with a significant other might happen or even a friend." In addition, she has drawn conclusions that there are advantages to the separation anxiety that Benny displays. The failure to draw healthy boundaries with her relationship with her dog and other people may be problematic for Carol.

What has begun to emerge for Carol, though, are steps towards establishing healthy boundaries in her relationships. This is evidenced by glimpses and phrases such as "It's no longer all about me and what I want." She also stated that she is working towards not allowing herself to become too emotionally involved when her dog is experiencing a problem. This boundary setting and individuation seems to be an important step for Carol both in her relationship with her dog and others. It may help her adopt an animal-centered perspective and see patterns and dynamics of which she is a part.

Over time, Carol is gaining positive experiences in multiple areas of her life. She reports an increased sense of achievement over the last three dogs and increased self-confidence. Carol appears to be beginning to realize how her own behavior affects her

dog, for example, when she's stressed or yelling. Carol stated that she is learning to take her own emotion out of the situation (or at least learn to contain it better) so she can better understand what is happening, what is motivating the dog to behave in such a manner, and to react appropriately. Carol also displayed a deeper understanding of certain breeds' tendencies to behave in characteristic ways and learn to be more tolerant. Carol is trying to emulate Bekoff's (2002) notion of recognizing the emotional states of animals by focusing her attention towards them; their faces, their eyes, and the ways in which they carry themselves may be used to make strong inferences about what they are feeling. It does seem to be beneficial for her.

Carol has formed some longstanding relationships with individuals as a result of having a dog. Carol has personally gotten to know Dr. McConnell well after working with her throughout the years. Carol also has a good relationship with a friend whom she walks with daily. She identifies "dog people" as a source of social support. Moreover, Carol recognizes she has the potential to change her relationships and interactions with people and mentions striving to guide more and dictate less with her dog and her subordinates at work.

Changing her relationships with others may become possible for Carol as she increases her self-awareness. Carol is trying to be more aware of herself in interactions with other people just as she is with her dog. She states, "I'm trying to be more mindful and present in activities with other people and really engage in a conversation rather than anticipating what I'll say next." She wishes such mindfulness would become second nature and acknowledges how easy to "slip" out of mindfulness. Carol feels like she is

learning, however, and getting better at relating and being mindful of what is going on around her.

Changes in Self-Awareness

This mindfulness is also practiced while engaging in yoga exercises. Carol verbalizes what she would like to happen: to be mindful and have her life line up mentally, physically, and emotionally. Carol is aware of the anxiety and stress she has in her life, and how yoga may be beneficial in relieving some of her symptoms and to help her relax. At times this seems effective for stress management, but Carol also describes the use of yoga as simply exercise when she loses this mind/body connection. The concept of mindfulness may have very well started with her practice of yoga but it is carrying over to working with her dog and interacting with people.

Carol is grasping the idea of trying to project energy that is “calm, assertive, and strong.” She is able to verbalize what mindfulness is and describe how she would like to look at a situation and see what is going on and how she can respond to it. Carol believes it is not a conscious thought but feels connected nonetheless. I think she is trying to express the experience of letting her senses take over to create more awareness and reduce her intellectualizing defensiveness. Hence, Carol is displaying some insight into her progress with her dog in actively changing his behavior as well as with her own self-growth. Carol acknowledges that she still needs to learn how she may influence her dog and their relationship. For an individual who appears to have some difficulty relating to others, Carol appears to be progressing through her active engagement in personal psychotherapy, yoga, and interacting with her dog. Carol appears to have many supports in place to help.

Spiritual Growth

Spirituality may be another emerging dimension for Carol. I get the sense that it may be difficult for Carol to view spirituality without an overlay of Catholicism based on her strong negative feelings regarding the “baggage and guilt” she carries. Carol is able to genuinely articulate relating and connecting to another sentient being, as well as spend more time out in the natural world. She stated, “I definitely would not have gone for that hike without that companion or a dog in my life and spend more time in nature than I would otherwise.” Being a city dweller may impose more difficulties cultivating a relationship with nature in its raw. Nonetheless, when surrounded by nature, Carol states that she finds “peace, joy, and contentment.” Carol remains uncertain, however, whether or not it connects to something larger than herself.

Representation of Data as Journal Entries

Once the themes emerged from the coding process, the interview data and notes were then re-presented as fictional journal entries recounting the three interviewees’ experience of working with their dogs in a natural way. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind us again that alternative data representation is a creative endeavor to enhance the process of analysis by helping us develop a deeper understanding of experience. Fictional journals serve as a natural vehicle for re-presentation and a re-telling of these individuals’ stories. Clandinin and Connelly state, “Journals often take on an intimately reflective puzzling quality” (p. 103). Representing the data in fictional journal entries helped turn disjointed snapshots of the interview data into a streamlined narrative story that deepened the understanding of these individuals’ experience with their dogs. Working within the

interim text, or fictional journals, verified the six identified themes from the coding process and also allowed for a deeper acquaintance of and immersion into the data.

Jane's Journal Entries

May 8th, 2007

I just got back from teaching at Dog's Best Friend tonight. I really enjoy working there a few nights a week. It's amazing, being there two years and what I've learned about dog behavior. It's their way of communicating, and it's our job to problem-solve situations that aren't working. Sometimes it's necessary to think backwards from an outcome, to think using the dog's brain about motivation . . . so interesting. Dogs aren't actors, no pretext, just are. Always looking for benefits, not selfish, just hardwired instinctual mode. Tonight we had two dogs just staring at each other, a heartbeat away from growling or barking. I feel like I've gotten quicker at seeing the visual signals with Pooka and Ranger at home. I'm getting better though at responding automatically to their visual signals.

June 3rd, 2008

We just got back from a walk together, and it was really relaxing and peaceful. I feel lucky how everything has unfolded, especially with Pooka and Ranger as compared to when I first got them. I never thought the two dogs and I would all get along together. Well, we've definitely learned (together) to live together harmoniously and have a good relationship. I guess deep down I knew that I had a connection with them at the Humane Society and everything would work out. I've always had a dog, but there was something special about Ranger. Even though I had no clue what I was getting myself into as an adult with dogs! Dogs are a wonderful thing in our lives though. You can nurture them

and care for them. You have to go on walks and feed them. You know, they serve a mom and dad kind of role.

August 21st, 2008

Ranger had an incident with another dog today and tried to be aggressive towards another dog. We were doing so well practicing, but I guess it's two steps forward and one step back. I kept my cool though . . . and it worked out just fine. I have to look back on the problems that we had!!! Oh my goodness, all the problems with separation anxiety, jumping, excitement, and his incredible prey drive just drove me nuts all the time! I can look back on it now and see how my experiences at the pet store just made things worse with him. Negative reinforcement just did not work at all. Thank goodness I learned about positive reinforcement at Dog's Best Friend. I was just so overwhelmed at first, and I do think it was a good idea to attend myself for a few times. That really seemed to help. Really, it started to all click when I was able to sit there and just focus on what the trainer was doing, actually communicating with their dogs! How novel! It really motivated me to go home and try to work with Ranger. I realized though, it really needs to be consistent work. I remember I would stop, ask him to sit, call his name, and give him a treat whenever he was acting aggressive with other dogs. You know, it really does work! Now, Ranger doesn't have the panic and fear and then aggression (for the most part) about other dogs coming at him. Granted, he still doesn't want them to get close, but he doesn't strike out anymore. Don't get me wrong, we've had many failures but also a lot of successes. And, the cool thing is that you can start to see results right away. He kind of taught me in a way, because he would just throw out all of these behaviors, so we always had stuff to work on. We'll keep plugging away!

September 25th, 2008

There were some people we passed on our walk today that just seemed a little over the top. Always asking their dog to heel; they can't be dogs! I'm definitely not one of those strict or rigid pet owners and don't want to be the kind of owner that makes him heel constantly or punish him for bad behavior. That's just too hard to use correctly and it gets so overabused. I think we have it worked out that I ask of him what I need from him when I need it. That seems to work just fine. I'm mommy, and you gotta do what mommy says because mommy knows. It happens on my cue and if it doesn't then we wait till it does. There's nothing wrong with asking our dogs for polite behavior. I kind of feel like I'm not necessarily just managing his behaviors but actually changing the way he feels inside. Change comes in small increments of positive thinking and rewarding, and I feel I've really learned with Ranger and Pooka. If I make an effort to deliberately only say positive things on walk and be mindful, anything is possible! Of course being mindful and positive turns things around with dogs. Just breathe in and breathe out, be in the moment and aware of what's going on with me. That's my new mantra. Especially if I'm stressed! It's not them, it's me! After all, panic goes right down the leash into the dog. Still working on it. . . . But you know, I've found it to be a really positive change in my life, just being aware. If I feel stressed, just breathe out a bit, breathe in and out. Any situation, doesn't matter what it is, think about something positive that's going on. If you're depressed or dealing with situation, find one good thing you can zero in on.

November 1st, 2008

You know, I think Ranger, Pooka, and I are very similar in many ways. We all have a low frustration for tolerance, need for strong will, and can let problems go. I've

changed a lot since I've had them actually and so have they. A lot of my beliefs have changed. I think I'm a more compassionate person. On my way home from work today, I saw a dog chained up in the terrible heat, and he was so thin! My heart just went out to him. I also don't believe in "No Kill shelters" anymore and used to advocate for it because I think it's cruel. I think I do have more compassion for dogs, and think about their well-being from their perspective. It's a different kind of compassion than before. I was removed if I didn't directly cause suffering, I wouldn't feel guilty. But now, I feel like I really think and care about what's going on in the animal's life. Even what I'm doing is different. Just think, 2 years ago, I didn't even know about Dog's Best Friend, then started to volunteer at the local Humane Society walking pre-adoptable dogs, then volunteered at Dog's Best Friend as assistant trainer, then became trainer. Life just keeps unfolding and taking me on these amazing journeys!

January 4th, 2008

I just got back from the Humane Society and had a really neat experience interacting with the dogs there. Being mindful and positive sure turns things around in life and relationships. I've made some wonderful friendships like the coordinator at the Humane Society too. It feels good when people thank me often for helping them. I enjoy being in a helping role. It feels good. I think all of my friends may be dog people! It's just like this opened up a new world for me, like tree roots in terms of employment and friends and beliefs. With people I tend to look at their motivations more carefully, paying attention to physical and nonverbal language. Why are you doing this? What's going on in your world that's causing this kind of behavior for you? It's amazing to start seeing behaviors of others, like I do with the dogs, and the wheels just start turning! It really

gives an insight and understanding to others. I think just the way I talk to and relate to others, I'm just nicer. Although, I have to admit, with people, relating is harder, more things going on, it's not like dogs who have no agenda. I'm definitely an after person, I've decided. This has been a major life-impacting experience. I think it's made me very aware that I can grow. I see dogs overcome so much and believe I can as well. I do think about my own emotional path and growth. I think the goal is internal regulation.

March 8th, 2008

I feel like the families and dogs that I'm interacting with and helping at the shelter are really making a difference in my life and also theirs. I've realized there are external things that are bigger than each of us as individuals. There is a very big and all-encompassing answer that there is something that informs us why we're here. I believe it includes everything, dogs and people, everything. It's all energy whether physical or emotional. We live in a benevolent universe. I want to try to tap into that as much as possible. Connecting with dogs is easier, no pretext, they just are! You're working with someone who is also being. It's just very calming and peaceful, like you're locked in. It just clicks. I get that feeling with people too occasionally, like I'm locked in when I'm working with them and their dogs. Calm, ahhh . . . Just an incredible sense of satisfaction, and awe. I can't believe its happening, yet it is. You know what it's similar to? It's a feeling exactly like successful meditation. It is harder practicing out in the world because trying to be aware of surroundings and harder to let things go in that same way and still feel secure and safe. I'm trying though. When I go out in the world being more open to it, it's more exhilarating and a lot more joyful. Peaceful and more

calm. End goal: try to think that way all the time. This is where I know I can tap into it and try to practice. Practice. Practice.

Sarah's Journal Entries

March 2nd, 2008

I exercised the dogs a little differently this morning. After I practiced Tai Chi and let the white light in, we went for a long walk together where I practiced my deep breathing. We came home and the dogs were so excited to see the kids. It's so nice to have people-friendly dogs! I saw a dog on our walk this morning that reminded me of Tesh, talk about taking me back! Of all the dogs (and best friends) I've had growing up, Tesh was the most memorable . . . that's for sure! I still remember bringing her home at five weeks old from the lab at vet school. She was dominant even that young! She was a gorgeous dog, and I loved her so much because she was my dog and my responsibility. Oh, but the more I did with her, the more I realized she was a sociopath! I loved that dog, but shouldn't have . . . I guess it's like you love anybody you get to know well.

That dog was never happy to obey a command but happy to get food. I was alpha, but the relationship was never great. She was a happy dog, though, that was for sure, and creative! I laugh thinking about how she used to open the fridge and cupboards and take food. When she ate through the wall, that was not so funny! But the worst, was her getting into diaper genie! I have to say that I definitely respected her because she was brilliant. The things she could do absolutely blew me away. She would look at me as if to say ha ha! She missed her calling being a search and rescue dog. She did need more of a challenge, unfortunately I didn't have smart dog toys or classes available other than obedience; agility had just been invented. I loved her but wanted to kill her! I remember,

that was around the time I started listening to Tricia on the way to work in the morning on Saturday. How time flies! I think it must have been a combo of Tricia's practices and knowing dogs and her eventual slowing down that got me through it! Training her helped, she was a reluctant trainee, but I learned a great deal. That dog definitely made an impression on me and my life, but wasn't the result of training, it was just her nature.

April 5th, 2008

Tesh's nature got me thinking the other day about the other dogs I've had in my life. I've had so many friends that I've shared wonderful experiences with. There was Cookie, my first Dachshund. I remember my mom wouldn't let her sleep in my bed with me anymore because she had kidney failure and would pee in my bed. She passed away when I was 11. I distinctly remember having a difficult time with not being able to help her and feeling sad. That was the first time that I wanted to be a vet. That was my calling. I didn't know it at the time that I would want to practice Eastern medicine, but my path kind of shaped that way all along. I was infatuated with anything Asian because of my Chinese friend growing up! Then I remember the stories and décor my mom would share while she lived in Taiwan. I thought it was so interesting, just a different culture and way of being. So calming and relaxing. She got me interested in practicing Tai Chi, which I faithfully have been doing for 10 years now! Wow, how my life has changed once I found the alternative practitioner to spend time with, and then the coursework after that really set the ball rolling for me and completely changed my view of Western medicine. I think I knew all along, partly because it just wasn't as rewarding as it should have been.

May 9th, 2008

I was having a rough day today with my pain. I acupunctured myself and do feel so much better. I have to remember and keep telling myself how far I've come. Not only for my dogs, but for me personally, the alternative medicine treatments help so much. So I can help others! Regularly doing acupuncture, Tai Chi, and the herbs really regulate me. It's so important to have a good grip on my own moods and emotions when I interact with others. I can smile and feel good when I think about helping my own pets too, kind of giving back to them. As Tesh aged, she became so stiff and was no longer able to be helped by Western medicine. Honestly, she walked so much better after acupuncture treatment! I was skeptical at first, but helping Tesh really strengthened my belief in Eastern medicine practice. I continuously remind myself that Western medicine alone isn't the answer for anyone. It's all about what's wrong and is fear based.

September 15th, 2008

I ran into a friend today who knows Tricia! I found out that they are starting a new toy breed class! I think that's so awesome! I worked with Tricia over the past few months because I wanted to do training with my Chihuahua, and now it's happening. We also chatted and reminisced about our dogs and how helpful her advice has been. It not only helped me personally but I'd pass it along to my clients. The topic of separation anxiety still makes me roll my eyes! I think mainly I help my patients in consoling them that I had it worse! I think I have been more helpful to my clients in regard to behavioral problems. Develop a healthy mind, body, and spirit; that's what it's about. This global notion of well-being isn't just limited to dogs, it's huge and encompasses everyone. Dealing with anxious dogs is a lot like dealing with anxious bosses! I think it really lies

in helping clients make their expectations known to their dogs so they can function better, and help them understand their dog's motivations. I helped Tesh with a combo of Tricia's help, Western and Eastern medicine. Hey! I even became a better parent as a result of Tesh's and Tricia's help! I learned extraordinary patience and never to use physical force. I'm always thinking . . . about what to do, how to follow through, and no means no! I learned that from my dog! It is easier for me to be clearer with people in general and make my expectations known.

December 19th, 2008

I had a client yesterday who I just really feel I helped bring into more perfect health, mind, body, and spirit. It just came together so nicely, and the dog is just doing so much better and is happier. You know, it's ironic, people don't have perfect health, but want it for their dogs. I am encouraging my clients to seek treatment and help themselves when they see how their dogs can be helped and feel better. I encourage humans to do acupuncture along with their dogs! When I see clients starting to get better that makes me feel better. Everyone should want perfect health for everybody. I'm in awe of the opportunity and rewards in helping people and animals do well and feel better. I love forming relationships with wonderful, interesting, and caring people and their wonderful pets. Every animal I meet is wonderful. I've always had wonderful animal patients, but this is more wonderful. You know, it's the journey with the dogs and medicine that really got me down this path to help and connect with others.

February 23rd, 2008

I needed to be better practiced in feeling calm and peaceful today. It's a practice! I was working with a Labrador and just got this headache. I felt like electricity was

running through my body and had to turn the fans and lights off. Even when dogs aren't balanced, I need to try and be. People and dogs need me to be centered and calm and be filled with white light and have it come out of my hands when I put them on him. They love it. I can better feel where the animal hurts. Helping animals is so connecting, calming, and meditative. I get this deep connection, and I am able to read them so well. I just look into their eyes and know if they are happy or not. They have all different kinds of emotions; they get mad, sad, and afraid. I'll feel sad if an animal is sad or in pain. Animals connect you and they ground you. They lift you up. I've always felt this spiritual connection since I was little. Growing up Jewish and taking confirmation classes, they encouraged an openness to use your mind. I always felt connected. I remember lying on the ground as a kid and thinking I'm at peace with all of this. Everything is related and that we are all connected; bugs, rocks, the earth, stars, everything. This is an awesome and rewarding experience. I am constantly growing and learning from the animals and people and it's really grounding and connecting to the world.

Carol's Journal Entries

May 16th, 2008

I took Benny out on a hike, just the two of us. His ears just seemed to go off in every direction! He sees things and hears things that I don't even know about. He always comes back though faithfully every time to just check in with me. I'm fearful of losing my dog, of him getting hurt. Good thing I didn't have kids, I'd be neurotic. Benny will never leave me. There's an advantage to the separation anxiety he has! This dog is more connected to me than any other and he trusts me. We had a long drive home in the car,

but thankfully Benny was so much better with the stuffed Kong, I don't even need to use it anymore. I love taking him now. Not always the case! Tricia really helped with that. I've learned a lot from her about his behavior, but sometimes I just have to ignore her and do my own thing . . . like with the Kong. I just wasn't getting the counter-conditioning thing from her. Don't get me wrong, I love Tricia to pieces and really admire her work. We've made a lot of progress on the top 10 issues list and when I was initially so overwhelmed by his behaviors. It's about connecting with the dog, trying different things, keep going until you hit. With Benny, ultimately, I use a lot of bribery with treats!

May 29th, 2008

I was thinking about how many of my dogs have worked with Tricia, and all three Aussies have. Oh, we've had separation anxiety issues, leash aggression, chasing cars, even with Benny now I'm trying to figure out what motivates him to curb some of that herding behavior. Why do I always get Aussie rescues that need so much work and have so many issues! I adore them though, and it's definitely worth it. Since being divorced I don't have anything else in my life except my dogs. If I didn't have a dog, I couldn't stand life, it would have no purpose. Well at least I don't like living without a dog and the structure of having one; I couldn't cope.

June 19th, 2008

Work was tough today, whew! I just get so frustrated and angry when things don't go right! Bob didn't get the spreadsheet done so it wasn't ready for the presentation, and Julie, well she isn't getting along well with Tom, and it just creates so much stress. I just bury myself in my work. . . .

July 20th, 2008

I had a therapy session today. I can't believe it's been four and a half years since I started seeing Maggie. Well, and that long since Jack and I split up. I processed a lot of feelings. Mainly feeling responsible for everyone else, guilt; I've done it for years. She's also working with me on anger management. Even at Benny, I just get so frustrated sometimes that I find myself yelling at him constantly. I realized that I am capable of getting very angry, but I've learned that if I scream at Benny, it doesn't destroy my relationship with him.

September 21st, 2008

I'm taking Benny over to Tricia's to run around on her farm later today. I'll have to remember to ask her how the new group is doing. It makes me think back when I took Kayla there, the leash aggressiveness was never resolved, just managed by being very careful. If I knew what I know now, she could have come further on her training. I'm responsible for everything in the world. Now with Benny, after he calmed down at obedience, he was a model citizen.

October 22nd, 2008

Okay, today I'll admit was a yoga day where I tried to get in as many sun salutations as possible. There are times when I'm mindful of what I'm doing; today wasn't one of them. I just had so much on my mind from work and what I needed to get done. The separation from the anxiety of daily life is so important. I know it indirectly impacts me at other activities when I'm so stressed. When I'm relaxed, things line up mentally, physically, and it all comes together. Everything drains away. No anxiety and no stress. I'm working at taking this other places!

November 23rd, 2008

Benny was barking and barking at the coffee maker this morning. I wanted to kill him! It was so early. Hmm . . . I just need to keep going and working with him until something speaks to me about how we relate. You're looking at this sentient being and it's not like rules and regulations. It's not like you say what I do and you obey. It's more like we're on this Earth together and we need to figure out how to live happily. I try to project this energy that is calm, assertive, but strong. Look at the situation and what's going on, evaluate the situation, what I would like to have happen, what do I need to have happen, and how am I going to make that happen. Is not conscious thought but feels connected. I have to be able to interpret his responses to me so that I can begin to understand what he sees. I need to pay closer attention to his body language. Tricia is so good at it, she will look at a behavior, a posture, and she'll be able to tell you so much. She is tuned in to how different species learn. I think I can tune into him, definitely at times.

January 24th, 2008

Benny is doing really well. I think his fear is subsiding and now we just need to work on bad manners. I'm having my last counter-conditioning party tonight, the neighbor who I walk with in the morning is coming over. I do want him to feel good about situations and desensitize him a bit. After desensitization work, along with a stuffed Kong, 50-100 times per day, he's just about there, and stopped reacting. He just about lays by the door quietly. I am much better at anticipating redirecting. For a while got away from counter-conditioning and was a little too strict and would get impatient when he would act inappropriately. He reads the stress and behaves badly. Behaviors I didn't

like at first I tried to counter-condition, then yell, then I realized he thinks barking (at whatever) is his job. This is where I am at now. Like with the coffee maker the other morning, It's to alert me to what is going on. I have to understand what motivates his behavior so I can figure out where it fits in and how important it is to correct. I realize this dog is never gonna let me die in a house fire! Aussies are so intuitive. If a behavior is unacceptable, I can learn a better way to help him curb it. And I can learn to be more accepting of his behaviors rather than be dictatorial, so I reframe how I look at problems: shouldn't get angry, not misbehaving. He's doing what he thinks is his job. So how do I help him do his job in a way that's acceptable to both of us? AHHH!

February 25th, 2008

We (Benny and I) went for our walk this morning with Jan, went to the park, and then a hike right after dinner. The most special feeling in the world is when I let him off leash and call him back and he bounds back like I am the most important thing in the world. What more could you want? I mean from a relationship with another species. It's rewarding and gratifying the progress he's made. And, he's a great companion. People do think I'm nuts sometimes with Benny, because I tell them we have so much to work on in our partnership. Hey, you know, I'm a single person living alone, so my relationship with my dog is more of a focus. Right now I'm so focused on Benny I don't do much. I don't have a significant-other relationship right now. I can't imagine what I would be doing right now in my life if I didn't have this relationship with this dog. I could see 12 movies instead of 6. Maybe I would be sleeping in or doing more yoga. I do imagine those things but in reality I can't imagine how my life would feel because it's like he's a child replacement, no he's not like my child at all. I don't know, am I too obsessed with

this dog?! Who would want to live with me and this dog anyway? It is kind of scary and intense with Benny. I can't imagine now what my life would be like if something happened to him or I lost him. I spend a lot of time thinking I want to give him back but I hear from people who have kids that they go through that too. It's probably as intense a relationship as I've had with any human being, but it's a dog so it's different. I love this dog so unequivocally. It's a good feeling. We can't sit down and talk or anything, so it's easier because I get to call all the shots!

March 28th, 2008

Yikes!! Benny! He was difficult and I got upset with him. He just frustrates me sometimes! I put all this effort in, changed my life for this dog. I have expectations about him complying with the rules. This isn't my fault I've learned, and I'm not responsible for this. How can I control it? Today, when he was barking up a storm when Tricia stopped by, I clipped his leash on and put him in the bedroom, that's what happens and I no longer feel personally responsible. I think I kind of relate to people now differently too. I don't consciously sit around and think what I've learned from my relationship with my dog, but I think there are certain things. . . .

April 28th, 2008

I was in the living room later in the day just laying next to Benny and watching the sun go down. You can just feel blood pressure going down with every stroke, and a sense of peace and contentment. It's joyful, sort of a sense of connection. There is pride. Part of the reason I go to this trouble is because I made a commitment and I'm going to make it work, even if I feel like I want to give him back. It's hard for me to let go all of these issues I'm working on and just let him be a dog, but I try to do it. I have moments

where it's a joy to watch him be a dog. That's the controlling thing for me, it's hard for me to sometimes just relax and let that happen. I feel like I'm always looking for training opportunities. That's definitely different for me. I'm better at just being. Most of the time I am task oriented and things have to be done in order to have fun. It's nice relaxing and enjoying the day, not thinking of work. It's kind of like yoga in a way.

May 31st, 2008

This whole notion of relaxing and just being I think has the potential to change relationships and interactions with other people. I do have a good relationship with Jan and our walks in the morning. Dog people are a network that I want to be a part of. Even just other people, I'm trying to be more mindful and present in activities. Really engaging in a conversation rather than anticipating what I'll say next. No room for anxiety or stress! I would like to transfer that to other areas of my life—my job. I would like to bring that sense of peace and contentment into my job. I am trying to bring what I've learned about myself over the last six months to four years into how I live my daily life and how I respond to situations at work. Don't think I'm there yet, maybe in my next journey. I have found out about leadership qualities in myself. People at work have said I'm a strong leader. Funny! I never aspired to be a leader. I'm learning about it in a different way from my childhood. Always thought of it as arbitrary . . . Leader of a pack means something different to me now. Not dictatorial. It's really about throwing ideas out there and helping to shape them and being involved at the front end instead of the back end. I will admit that I'm a workaholic, but that has gotten better. Since I've had the dog, work is now only a piece of what I do. Work fits into a compartment now; Benny does help bring balance to work life.

June 2nd, 2008

We went for another hike, just the two of us tromping through the woods. I think it was about 5.5 miles round trip. I do enjoy spending more time out in nature and feel peace and contentment. I definitely would not have gone for that hike today without a dog in my life, and it would be a lot harder to get myself out there at all. I can't directly say that it gives me more of a connection with birds or other wildlife but it certainly changes the way I structure my life and spend more time in the natural world than I ever would if I didn't have a dog. I'm a city dweller and I've adapted by getting out every day in the natural world and being surrounded by nature. I can't say that it makes me feel part of a bigger world necessarily, or connected to it. It has to though . . . There's a human being in a wonderful relationship with this creature and does that draw out into sort of the natural world and into being a part of nature? I'm learning and growing in therapy and with Benny, too, into the person I want to be. This relationship with this dog plays into it, definitely! I get to practice all my new tricks on my dog; assertiveness, and being angry and finding out the consequences that relationships don't fall apart! One of the most important aspects though is finding balance in your life and balancing between the demands of work, relationships, and being. Mindfulness and being present is coming into more areas of life, not all though, and not all the time yet.

Cross-Case Analysis

Finally, a cross-case analysis was conducted to look for similarities and differences among the cases in each of the six themes of Context, Intervening Conditions, Interventions, Differences in Relationships With Others, Changes in Self-Awareness, and Spiritual Growth. The cross-case analysis looked deeper into the themes and stories that

emerged from each of these three women and attempted to qualify what self-growth meant to each of them and identified patterns of growth that may be common among them. For this reason, it became necessary to delve deeper into each of their stories; understanding each of their specific life situations and relationships encompassing the past, present, and future with their dogs and others they relate to in their lives. Each interviewee accounted within their narrative prior life experiences that have shaped who they were from an early age, before they interacted with their dogs, during their interaction with their dogs, and afterwards. Their stories, perceptions, life experiences, and learning are all intertwined and inter-related into what we can measure as self-growth for each individual and what it specifically means to each of them.

Therefore, self-growth may be more clearly understood for these individuals when evaluating within a three-dimensional space that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) previously describe. This is much like therapists working with clients who move outside of a single dimension or presenting problem and take into consideration a whole individual comprising a multifaceted look at understanding an individual in their entirety. Through these narratives, we can begin to look at what self-growth through working with their dogs means for them based on their specific life situations that take into account their previous social interactions and prior life experiences.

Context

All three women were from relatively the same Midwestern area and all had behavioral problems with their rescued dogs. Each had experiences and some form of connection to animals as a child, but were not solely responsible for their childhood animal's care. They all expressed surprise that it was more difficult to manage as an

adult. All three of them found themselves with significant behavioral situations that overwhelmed their knowledge and coping abilities. Problems encountered were similar in the severity, but differed in manifestations.

Both Jane and Sarah sought some form of conventional training, that is, obedience and command, and each experienced difficulty with that type of training. Such training did not solve the more severe problems or generally improve their getting along with the dogs. Each, however, possessed an inherent desire; a sense of wanting to provide a fulfilling life for their dogs. They also wanted their dog's fulfilled life to provide happiness and contentment in their own lives of being a pet owner and living with an other-than-human being in their home. The negative experiences with conventional training left them believing there was more that could be done to achieve their goals. Carol did not share previous experiences working with other methods and trainers.

All three women worked with Patricia McConnell (2002) and her methods of working with dogs in a natural way. They came to find her through various means: through a veterinarian, word of mouth, and on her radio show. Learning about the dogs' inherent motivations and internalizations seemed to set McConnell's methods apart from conventional training and acted as a catapult for relationships and growth to take place. They all shared common commitments to provide exercise via the walk, to work with their dog every day, as well as openness to McConnell's natural methods of training. However, their dogs' behavioral problems varied. They ranged from dog-dog aggression, to dominant behavior and separation anxiety.

The most significant differences in the Context theme were in the interviewees' backgrounds and life situations. Their ages ranged from the 20s and single, to 30s and

married, to 40s and divorced. Living arrangements varied as well from apartment style in the city to large suburban homes. Other differences included early life experiences.

Sarah had some significant experiences which impressed upon her from an early age what has contributed to the path she has led thus far. Sarah developed a love of animals and a desire to help them from an early age, thus becoming a veterinarian. In addition, her early exposure to Eastern culture was very influential in her life with the practice of Tai Chi and meditation, as well as Eastern approaches to medicine. Carol has also had influential prior experiences of significant relational difficulties. Carol's long-term psychotherapy experiences, however, may have given her an opportunity for self and relational growth with her dog as an important tool. Finally, Jane has probably the most straightforward example of working and establishing a relationship with her dogs from a contextual standpoint because she did not appear to be heavily influenced by her prior experiences or a deep context.

Other differences included occupations as well as personalities. Jane is young and establishing herself as a professional in the community, and building a large social support network around her that includes volunteer time. From observations, Jane appeared to be a calm individual who enjoys interaction with others as well as time by herself and with her dogs. From her interview, Jane enjoys being introspective and reflective. This, perhaps along with her calm disposition, put her in an ideal position to embrace the concepts of mindfulness with her dogs. Sarah, a practicing holistic veterinarian, is committed to helping others and appeared genuinely altruistic. Sarah also seemed to enjoy social interaction with others as well as elaborate storytelling. From the behavioral observations, Sarah appeared very friendly but somewhat anxious. Finally,

Carol is a computer programmer who admits she is struggling with balance in her life and describes herself as a “workaholic.” Carol stated that she feels overwhelmed often and responsible for others’ feelings. She has certain “expectations” in life and about how training should go with her dog. When it didn’t go well with her dog, Carol had much difficulty removing her strong emotions from the interaction. In addition, Carol seems to be struggling with boundary setting in relationships as previously described when relating to her dog. Psychotherapy appears to be helping Carol find a better balance with her life and emotions. Her dog presents as an ideal tool to practice with. Carol’s presentation was much like Sarah’s, somewhat anxious. In addition, Carol was also somewhat guarded during the interview with fast and pressured speech.

Other differences that came up included prior experiences with spirituality. While Jane did not appear to have a strong religious background which is presently influential or active in her life, both Sarah and Carol, with Jewish and Catholic upbringings, respectively, made significant contributions to their adult life. Sarah felt her Jewish background led to more openness and exploration, while Carol felt that Catholicism was overly constraining and had left her with much “baggage” and “guilt” to work through. Based on previous experiences with spirituality, Jane appears the most “ready” to discover spirituality that may not have been previously defined by religiosity, whereas for Sarah her spirituality already seemed largely developed.

Intervening Conditions

The intervening conditions that eventually led to working with Dr. McConnell were all very different, but all their dogs displayed significant problems with behavior including dog aggression and separation anxiety. The primary similarity was two of the

women had dogs with behavioral problems that couldn't be "fixed" through conventional training methods with other trainers. Intervening conditions for Jane involved previous negative experiences at local training facilities that emphasize teaching the dog commands and negative reinforcement. Sarah consulted a pet trainer for an evaluation of Tesh's problems. This trainer told her that Tesh's problems were very severe. Sarah thought these tactics were inappropriate for her and her dog. While Carol had much difficulty in managing her pet's behavioral problems, she didn't report previous experiences with conventional methods. They all came to McConnell via various references: word of mouth (Jane), the radio (Sarah), and through her veterinarian (Carol).

Interventions

All three women found themselves immersed in Dr. McConnell's (2002) methods, either by taking classes at Dog's Best Friend (her training facility), or listening to her on the radio through her show. They all came to embrace Dr. McConnell's notion that all dogs are genetically predisposed to look to a leader within the pack. They all appreciated learning concepts about positive reinforcement and watching others in the class, especially Jane and Carol. It helped them feel like the communication with their dog was a partnership rather than dictatorial; it was two way and meaningful. All three of the women embraced positive intervention strategies and used praise and treats for desired behavior. In addition, all three women took their dogs for daily walks, solidifying the importance of Millan (2006) who believes that leading a dog on a walk is the best way to establish pack leadership. Breath work and positive thinking during the walk helps Jane stay in the moment and create a conscious awareness of her and her dog's behavior on the walk. Both Jane and Sarah largely embrace breath work and its valued benefits.

Sarah also endorsed practicing mindfulness and breath work on the walk. By bringing mindfulness or a conscious awareness to the breath, the individual experiences more of the full benefit of breathing: its full calming, healing, nurturing potential. Bien (2006) states that if you can be fully aware of the sensation of breathing in and out for the space of one breath, then you have brought body and mind together for that length of time, calming the mind and bringing about true presence.

The interviewees differed, however, in how much they have internalized McConnell's (2002) methods, understand and articulate how her methods work, and in the execution or implementation of the specific methods. Jane appears to have gotten the most out of the training; she has successfully established and maintains a relationship with her dogs through McConnell's methods. This includes adopting an animal-centered perspective, understanding dog psychology (interpretation of different behaviors and postures), presenting herself in a calm and assertive manner, and being mindful or present of what is happening during the interaction to shape the desired behavior. Jane is able to articulate these methods well and implement them successfully.

The methods that Sarah gleaned from the radio seem to have enhanced her relationship with her dogs and have helped her help others in her veterinary practice. In comparison to Jane, Sarah articulated and implemented successfully most of McConnell's (2002) methods such as the walk and practicing mindfulness along with setting clear messages, increasing problem-solving skills, and learning to be more patient. I do not sense, however, that Sarah fully embraced the animal-centered perspective by some of her anthropomorphizing comments during the interview. In addition, I wonder if some of the anxiousness I observed during the interview along with the

anthropomorphization of her dog interfered with the implementation of methods for Tesh. Sarah, however, reported much more success with her next two dogs. Nonetheless, Sarah still appears to have created a powerful connection with her dogs, despite not adopting a complete natural interaction with McConnell's methods.

Carol is still largely working to better her relationship with her dog, and continues to take classes. While Carol is able to articulate some of the methods, she still appears to have difficulty embracing some of the concepts and implementing them fully as she described letting her emotions of anger or frustration interfere with the interactions during the interview. Her knowledge of dog psychology appears to be emerging, but she still seems to struggle with adopting an animal-centered perspective and continues to relate to her dog from a human's perspective similar to Sarah. Carol states, though, that she is actively pursuing trying to establish herself as a calm assertive leader; she can definitely see the benefits and continues to practice. In addition, Carol is able to articulate the type of interaction she is striving for and the consistency she would need to implement that type of interaction.

Differences in Relationships With Others

The differences in relationships with others that each interviewee has experienced varied as much as their backgrounds and personalities. They all, however, appeared to reach some measurable sense of enhancement in their relationships with their dogs as well as others in their lives. All three women described a positive outcome as a result of working with their dogs in a natural way, which included adopting an animal-centered perspective, understanding dog psychology (interpretation of different behaviors and postures), presenting themselves in a calm and assertive manner, and being mindful or

present of what is happening during the interaction to shape the desired behavior through positive reinforcement. These individuals took the time to try to understand their dogs as different living species. Trying to communicate, problem solve, and understand another living being impacted each of the interviewees. For Jane, she felt a deepened sense of empathy. The relational difference for her, as she described it, is that she has moved from understanding her dog to understanding herself in relation to her dog. Sarah seemed to already inherently possess the deep empathy towards other beings, but did not experience quite the same results with Tesh as Jane did with her dog, perhaps because Tesh remained a reluctant trainee as Sarah described or perhaps she had difficulty adopting an animal-centered perspective in a calm and mindful manner. It was not until some time later, after Tesh died, and Sarah obtained two new dogs that she worked with in a similar manner utilizing McConnell's methods, which yielded striking and more desirable results. She described the positive relational differences in terms of expectations and understanding motivations.

Like Jane and Sarah, Carol has also identified positive rewards from her relationship with her dog despite some of the training being unsuccessful. These rewards included more of the traditional companionship benefits such as relaxation and decreased blood pressure when sitting next to or petting her dog. Carol reported her relationship with her dog has improved, and she described it as a fun and rewarding experience with another species. Carol stated that it is a joyful experience with a sense of connection to her dog. While Carol stated that she may not consciously think about what she has learned from her relationship with her dog as she previously stated, she seems to have experienced an evident positive relational difference. She continues to move into greater

awareness of these patterns of interaction with continued practice of understanding the dog's psychology and learning how to be calm yet assertive.

All the interviewees achieved some sense of relational difference with other people outside of their dogs as a direct result of working with their dogs in a natural way. Initially, for the interviewees it opened more socialization doors for them and gave them commonalities to share with other people. There is a much deeper sense of relational interaction that has touched each of them. Of course, many of these described relational patterns vary because each individual has her own life situation to apply it to. The similarities lie at deeper levels—a deep enough shift of their awareness from dog, to self, and then to others that their sense of being in the world has changed.

Jane's relational differences with her dog prompted her to develop personal relationships with other people through outreach and volunteering at shelters as well as Dog's Best Friend (Dr. McConnell's training facility). Through networking in these arenas, Jane has developed and strengthened a deeper sense of compassion for dogs and other human beings. One example is Jane volunteering at the local dog shelter. It has also led her to deeper and more psychologically minded ways of living that focus more on understanding each individual with whom she is interacting. She stated that when working with others, she is more keyed in to their body language and motivations. This type of thought process suggests that Jane has deepened her relationships with others. Jane admits, however, that humans are more difficult to understand than dogs. Jane stated that she has not yet applied this more psychological approach to other relationships outside of the dog arena and community. Jane's relational expansion has yet to encompass all individuals and species.

Like Jane, Sarah experienced better positive relations with other people and likely has the largest outreach of the three due to her veterinary practice. Most notably, Tesh helped her with parenting. Sarah believed she was a better parent as the result of her relationship with her dog. Sarah noticed changes immediately in relating to others that were outside the canine arena and community. Sarah felt it was much easier to be “clearer” towards people in her life in general. As with Jane, Sarah learned problem-solving, how to be consistent and follow through, as well as experiencing greater patience when working with others. Sarah already had the community and outreach in place through her veterinarian practice, whereas for Jane it emerged through her initial exposure to working with her dogs.

Sarah began to notice that she was relating differently with her clients. She was able to be more empathic with them because she too had a dog with behavioral problems. Other times, Sarah could connect with them and help them through advice she had learned from Dr. McConnell. Unlike Jane, Sarah’s emotional growth moved outside of the dog community quickly and started to encompass a much deeper and global concept of health for the animals with whom she worked, as well as their owners. Sarah felt a deepened sense of satisfaction in her capacity to help people outside of the pet-owner context, much like many individuals who are involved in the helping professions. This shift was likely the result of her previous experiences, training, and prior connection to animals, which was strengthened through natural methods of working with them. In addition to helping, Sarah has formed relationships with “wonderful, interesting, and caring people and their pets.”

Carol's relational differences appear to be emerging. She finds companionship and participates in social activities with individuals in the dog community that leaves her with a sense of belonging and fulfillment and has made friends within the dog community that she otherwise may not have. In addition, Carol is starting to practice being more "present" in her interactions with others outside of the dog community and expressed a desire in her interview to incorporate this concept into her work environment because she values the benefits. Carol's positive relational experiences with others appear to be largely evolving from the process of therapy and working with her dog. Carol presents herself in a unique position to first "practice" these tools and ways of being with her dog.

Changes in Self-Awareness

All three women expressed a change in self-awareness through increasing their mindfulness and relaxation. All three of them specifically identified the walk with their dogs as an opportunity to practice. Besides working with their dogs, both Sarah and Carol incorporate Eastern methods of increasing mindfulness and relaxation such as Tai Chi and yoga. Jane believed her sense of self had definitely changed since her mindful experiences in working with her dogs. Jane felt this process emerged for her because her own dog's growth was personally motivating to her and led her to think about her own path of self-growth. This transference underscores the belief that her own self-growth will happen. By having a personal goal of improved emotional control, she found that learning to be more aware became a profoundly positive change in her life. This awareness is described by Buddhist philosophy, ecopsychologists, and others. For example, Fromm (1997) states that awareness requires one to concentrate actively, and it is a learned practice. This technique can be applied by Jane to a variety of situations

including stress or depression. Jane practices awareness and breath work, and finds something to be positive about.

Sarah also discusses a desire for better internal regulation of moods and emotions, which would also suggest an increased level of self-awareness for her as well. Sarah uses a combination of tools to facilitate this: meditation, Tai Chi, and practicing her breath work while walking her dogs to create awareness and relaxation. Sarah indicated that for her vet work, having a clear mind and relaxation were of key importance in the success of treating her patients. Most of the language Sarah uses is more spiritual in nature and less psychological and concrete; nonetheless, I do believe she has made gains in self-awareness based on her desires for better internal regulation of moods and emotions.

Carol also appears to have made strides in self-growth, although in less obvious ways. Over time, Carol is gaining positive experiences in multiple areas of her life, mostly through a described sense of achievement promoting increased self confidence. Carol appears to be realizing how her own behavior affects the dog. For example, when she is stressed or yelling, Carol described how she is learning to take her emotion out of the situation (or at least to learn how to contain it better) so she can better understand what is happening, what is motivating the dog to behave in such a manner, and react appropriately. Carol appears to be beginning to understand the concept of awareness, not only through working with her dogs, but through her psychotherapy and yoga practice as well. Carol recognizes the sources of anxiety and stress in her life and is utilizing tools to more effectively manage her anxiety and learn to relax. Carol states that she continues to work on developing a healthy balance in her life. A big plus for Carol is that she is able to verbalize where she would like to go in matters of projecting a calm and assertive energy,

meaning she has internalized many of the concepts of naturally training dogs, which contribute to increased levels of positive self-growth.

Spiritual Growth

The last theme, Spiritual Growth, has impacted all three of the interviewees in some manner. The amount of spiritual growth observed may be dependent upon prior spiritual development. Of the three interviewees, Sarah is the most expressive of spiritual issues. Sarah discussed her feelings of an increased connection to the world and how the animals help to ground her and elevate her mood. When Sarah works with dogs she feels engaged, calm, and meditative. This is an example of Fromm's (1997) *being* mode of existence: a feeling of aliveness and authentic relatedness to the world. While Sarah has always had a spiritual dynamic and felt that everything is related, she feels it is much stronger now.

Jane has also been similarly affected, using descriptors such as connection, calm, and meditative. Spiritually, Jane believes that working with her dogs in this way has solidified a concept and intuition that dogs communicate with us beyond their physical language. Jane now believes "there is more, an all-encompassing answer that leads us to why we're all here (including different species) in this benevolent universe." The openness Jane has with her dogs created a self-awareness and compassion on a deeper level that has impacted and solidified her spiritual path. It is a practice Jane is encouraged and motivated to participate in to attain peace and calmness in her everyday living. Jane's goal then is to attain this feeling and awareness at all times. The transfer of an inner spiritual feeling into a practical practice for living is a significant example of growth.

For Carol, spirituality may be an emerging dimension. For example, Carol does articulate genuine relating and connecting to another sentient being, as well as appreciating more time out in the natural world. However, unlike Jane and Sarah, she does not perceive such natural interactions as enhancements to her spirituality. Perhaps Carol's life as a city dweller makes the connections between nature and spirituality more difficult. Nonetheless, when surrounded by nature, she experiences peace, joy, and contentment; yet she questions whether or not it connects to something larger than herself.

In summary, the cross-case analysis attempted to gain an understanding of who each of these complex individuals really are and what they have experienced in terms of self-growth. The analysis has attempted to identify what those characteristics of their experiences have looked like and draw in commonalities and differences based on the saturation in the data.

Generally, I found that the interviewees all shared some similarities, but by and large their stories and paths of growth are very different and individualistic. What is clear is that each interviewee dearly loves her dogs. They all seem to possess an innate characteristic that they care about their animal, their animal's feelings, and their animal's sense of happiness. They all embody Bekoff's (2002) notion of embracing animals as subjects of a life that deserve compassionate and respectful interaction, by showing concern for their feelings and views of their worlds. They also all have a desire to have a good relationship with their dogs. And, they all sought an expert who could educate them and help them understand their dogs as well as themselves, namely Dr. Patricia

McConnell (2002), after they had unsuccessful attempts with managing their behavioral problems with other trainers through conventional methods.

When looking deeper at these narrative stories and considering Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space, a collective process of change began to emerge from the analysis of the three women's experiences. This process of change emerged from viewing the inquiry space as infinitely open in nature, which is at the heart of Clandinin and Connelly's narrative inquiry. The essence of their three-dimensional inquiry space is to "capture as much as possible this openness of experience" (p. 89). Clandinin and Connelly state, "Our hope is that on balance the idea of a three-dimensional space will open up imaginative possibilities for inquirers, possibilities that might not as easily have been seen without the idea" (p. 89). By analyzing each individual experience and then comparing the experiences within a social context, a collective process of experiences began to emerge as an outline for self-growth. Not all of the participants seemed to start or finish at the same point in time, but all evolved along in a process. In addition, all of the individuals attained different levels of growth qualified by where they were at in terms of past and present situations and relationships in their lives.

The change process appeared to begin with learning about their dogs' behaviors including mannerisms, patterns, and communication. For example, Jane described how her dog would react aggressively towards other dogs, she would stop, ask the dog to sit, and call his name to reward him with a treat. Both Sarah and Carol also described keying in to their dogs' specific undesired behaviors, then creating an opportunity to positively reward them with treats. The process of implementing these interventions created an

awareness of the dyadic nature of the relationship between these women and their dogs. An important shift of focus then occurs from dog interventions to the women's own actions and awareness of self. Jane laughingly expressed that "panic goes right down into the leash!" Sarah expressed that with her next two dogs, she acquired a deeper awareness of learning to be consistent, follow through, be clear and concise, as well as patient. Carol believed that her dog read "impatience from me and gets stressed and behaves badly." This shift initiates a cascade of opportunity for self-growth starting with self-awareness. Once there is increased self-awareness, the individual has the opportunity to practice with her dog and make improvements within that relationship, which all of the women engaged in. All of the women endorsed transferring or the desire to transfer this knowledge of self-awareness to other human relationships. Jane expressed that in her other relationships, she now feels more "tuned in" to others' physical as well as verbal behavior. She also describes being "keener at understanding others' motivations." Sarah described how her acquired tools helped her become a better parent, while Carol stated, "I'm trying to be more mindful and present in activities with other people and really engage in a conversation rather than anticipating what I'll say next." As these women experienced greater satisfaction within themselves and connecting to others, a deeper sense of connection and meaning eventually developed for both Jane and Sarah. Both Jane and Sarah experienced this sense of connection to something larger than themselves and identified it as spiritual in nature, exemplifying Beckoff's (2002) notion that our own nature and spirituality are embodied not only by who we are but also defined by our relationships with other beings.

The process of change is a unique path that is shaped differently for every person. Self-growth is difficult to quantify even in a qualitative process because of the endless intricacies and influences on each of our psyches that shapes who we are at any given point. Nonetheless, through their experiences they have all been affected in different ways and found self-growth at different points through their experiences of building relationships, starting with themselves and their dog. They all appeared to have benefited tremendously in areas related to happiness, reconnecting to self and others. It touches the heart of Fromm's (1997) answer to solving the crisis of existence in the hope of re-establishing a connection to ourselves and others.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to report the results of data collected and analyzed from the three interviews. The three primary sections discussed in this chapter were individual analysis across six identified themes, a re-presentation of data in the form of fictional journal entries, and a cross-case analysis. After the transcription of data, the interviews and field notes were coded. Six major themes emerged from the coding of data: Context, Intervening Conditions, Interventions, Relationships With Others, Self-Awareness, and Spiritual Growth. Fictional journal entries were then created from the interview data and field notes as an interim text to enrich the understanding of experience. Finally, a cross-case analysis was performed to delve deeper into the data and qualify patterns of self-growth both individually and collectively. The findings indicated that each participant demonstrated positive rewards with their dog's training, with their relationship with their dog, and with relationships outside of their dogs. In addition, all of the women endorsed an increase in self-awareness and general happiness. Two of the

women experienced a deepened spiritual connection. However, the amount and area of growth were unique to each individual and likely a result of shaped interactions with others, past experiences, life situations, and individual personality characteristics.

Nonetheless, from their narrative stories, a process of growth began to emerge from their collective experiences that influenced them in terms of happiness, reconnecting to self and others.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

For many, modern Western culture has largely evolved into a society in which the pursuit of material possessions has become a defining principle, and furthermore the pathway that will lead to happiness and fulfillment in life. In contrast, Fromm (1997) challenges this promise of fulfillment through consumption and possession and asserts that it does not lead to well-being. Additionally, Fisher (2009) suggests that this ascendancy of materialism as self-meaning often has the problematic effect of self-alienation and isolation from the natural world. Fromm's (1997) alternative to this crisis of existence engendered by the *having* mode is to regain ourselves through consciousness and awareness, to become more fully human, and to re-establish the essential connections to ourselves, the natural world, and to each other. Fromm (2006) describes this process to the *being* mode as characterized by increased insight into the reality of one's self, of others, and of the world around us. It is what many have called mindfulness.

Before industrialization and modernization, humans were connected to nature through thousands of years of meaningful interactions. Buzzell (2009) proposes that a return to this meaningful interaction with nature can provide significant psychological benefits. This study proposed that dogs represent an extension of nature for humans and provide a means of interaction that help to promote mindfulness. This "natural" way of

interacting with dogs can be defined as being fully present, mindful, and purposeful of the interactions taking place between oneself and a dog. Dogs present a unique pathway because they historically and therapeutically have lived with and worked for humans for thousands of years. By mindfully connecting to ourselves and interacting with other-than-human beings (specifically dogs), it has been suggested that a more fulfilling search for happiness may be found.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the potential psychological benefits related to self-growth through a qualitative case study and narrative inquiry of the experiences of three individuals who sought dog training services under Dr. Patricia McConnell. Specifically, these individuals utilized mindful dog training techniques as instructed by McConnell (2002). This type of work with dogs has the potential to teach humans how to re-establish a connection and active interaction with the natural world.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do participants describe their experience working with dogs in a natural way?
2. How did these experiences of working with dogs in a natural way influence these individuals' relationships with self, others, and the natural world?
3. How did the result of working with dogs in a natural way provide the larger and more general benefits of happiness and reconnection in the humanistic/existential tradition?

Research Design

The methodology utilized in this investigation was a qualitative single-case study that investigated three individuals who experienced the specific phenomenon of working

with their dogs in a natural way. A decision was made to utilize a case study approach to qualitative design because of the presence of socially related phenomenon. Creswell (1994) describes that case study is one of several methods of qualitative research that intensively studies socially related phenomenon within a group of individuals. Creswell further outlines that case study methods involve an in-depth examination of a single instance or event and outline a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results.

A narrative inquiry provided the ideal process to further examine and create a more in-depth understanding of what these individuals experienced in this case study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define this inquiry as a method that uses the following field texts as data sources: stories, autobiography, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, photos, and life experience. Through this narrative inquiry process, participants shared their accounts and experiences with their dogs, and the resulting connection and growth process. The open-ended nature of the interviews in this study allowed the participants to tell their own stories in their own way.

The data analyzed from the three personal experiences included open-ended interviews and my notes including behavioral observations. Interview data and researcher notes were combined and then reduced by a process of coding. Creswell (2007) describes coding as a method of reducing the saturated data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments. The codes were then combined into broader themes. In this study, six core themes emerged: Context, Intervening Conditions, Intervention Strategies, Differences in Relationships With Others, Changes in Self-Awareness, and Spiritual Growth. The raw data then were represented through the creation of fictional

journal entries as a way of retelling these individuals' stories, further supporting the emerged themes. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe this as the essence of growth and an element in the criteria for judging the value of experience. Further analysis of the narrative stories within a three-dimensional context (interaction, continuity, and situation) as outlined by Clandinin and Connelly led to a deeper understanding of each individual's process of self-growth incurred as a result of working with their dogs in a natural way. This was conducted through a final cross-case analysis.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was inspired by three esoteric concepts linked through the published research. These concepts include the following: the humanistic and existential psychological perspective, most specifically the philosophical constructs of the *having* versus *being* dynamics best described by Fromm (1997); ecopsychology which connects psychology with ecology; and finally the concept of the nature of dogs. These concepts present an approach to understanding how clients can act as their own vehicles of change and resolve existential problems related to self-alienation by viewing the dog as part of nature and finding a reconnection to self and others through a mindful interaction with their dog.

Within the humanistic and existential traditions in psychology there are a number of key theorists that include May, Rogers, and Maslow (Bien, 2006; Maslow, 1954; May, 1967; Yalom, 1980). Basic existential and humanistic psychological concepts emphasize the role of the individual, including active participation, motivation for fulfillment of one's potential, and emphasis on self-awareness (Jacobsen, 2007). Modern humanists Bohart and Tallman (1999) have developed a model of therapy in which the primary

agent of change is the client. In this model, clients are generative; *they* are the ones who invest interventions with life, *they* create the intervention effects which are supposed to produce change, and *they* actively use these interventions in their own unique life contexts in creative ways. Bohart and Tallman further suggest that most people solve problems on their own, are self-righting most of the time, and do so without therapist assistance.

However, this capacity and desire to self-right and solve one's own problems requires a certain level of self-awareness. This promotion of self-awareness leads to the final key humanistic psychologist of this case study, Erich Fromm. Fromm (1997) addresses the specific existential dilemma of increasing alienation from self, others, and nature. Fromm posits that two modes of existence have emerged subsequent to industrialization and massive cultural shifts; the *having* mode and the *being* mode. Fromm's alternative to the crisis of existence engendered by the *having* mode is to regain ourselves through consciousness and awareness, become more fully human, and re-establish the essential connection to ourselves, the natural world, and to each other. Fromm identifies this alternative state as the *being* mode. The increase in self-awareness and consciousness occurs when one is fully present in the moment, utilizes one's senses, and concentrates on being deliberate and intentional with every act, or what some also describe as mindfulness.

This mindfulness, as described in the existential tradition, brings forth a second concept outlining the framework of this study, which is ecopsychology. Ecopsychology connects psychology and ecology and provides individuals a way of healing alienation and finding connection in oneself and others through a process of mindfulness within

nature. Roszak (1995) and Cohen (1995), key figures in the ecopsychology movement, insist that changes occur in sense-of-self and relation to others when an individual interacts with nature in a mindful way.

I propose that dogs are an extension of nature and, through interactions that promote mindfulness, a reconnection to ourselves and others can be found. The third and final concept is the nature of the dog which includes the domestication of dogs through history, the evolution of the human-animal bond, and understanding dog psychology. Patricia McConnell (2002) utilizes a specific training methodology that is strongly based upon an appreciation of dog psychology and promotion of this human-animal bond. McConnell is a professor of zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a certified Applied Animal Behaviorist. Dr. McConnell works with individuals and dogs to help them cultivate a rewarding relationship. This is accomplished through her emphasis of practicing mindful awareness and the immediacy of the moment. This “natural way” of interacting with dogs means being fully present, mindful, and purposeful of the interactions taking place between oneself and a dog. It allows the human to cultivate and shape the relationship to benefit both creatures by being fully cognizant of trying to shape the interaction with the dog utilizing a language that a dog understands: dog psychology.

In summary, these concepts of humanistic/existential psychological perspectives including Maslow’s (1954) self-actualization, Bohart and Tallman’s (1999) model of client as their own agent of change, combined with Fromm’s approach of mindfulness to resolve alienation through the *being* mode can all come together and be applied within nature. This specific application of experiencing mindfulness in nature is a major construct of ecopsychology built on the premise of integration with the natural world.

The dog is also part of nature as an other-than-human being. McConnell's (2002) methods specifically teach an understanding and interaction with dogs that implement self-awareness, immediacy of the moment, and understanding dog psychology as a means to communicate. This conceptual framework presents a specific approach to understanding how clients can act as their own vehicles of change and resolve existential problems related to self-alienation by viewing the dog as part of nature and finding a reconnection to self and others through a mindful interaction with their dog.

Results

Six themes emerged from the analysis of data: Context, Intervening Conditions, Interventions, Relationships With Others, Changes in Self-Awareness, and Spiritual Growth. The six themes provide an understanding of who each of these complex individuals really are and what they have experienced in terms of self-growth by drawing in commonalities and differences of their experiences. A re-presentation of data in the form of fictional journal entries was utilized to enhance the narrative stories and deepen the understanding of these experiences. Working within this interim text of retelling these stories, the identified themes were solidified and allowed for deeper acquaintance and immersion into the data.

At this point, the identified major themes were incorporated into a streamlined narrative story. The inquiry process also implemented the perspective of three-dimensional space as described by Clandinin and Connelly through a cross-case analysis.

While the interviewees demonstrated a number of individual differences that led to distinctive stories and paths of growth, there were a number of shared similarities among the group. They all seemed to possess an innate characteristic of caring about their

animal, their animal's feelings, and their animal's sense of happiness. They all embody Bekoff's (2002) notion of embracing animals as subjects of a life that deserve compassionate and respectful interaction. These women desired to understand the feelings of their dogs and how they viewed and interpreted the world around them. They also all have a desire to have a good relationship with their dogs. And finally, they all sought expertise, through Patricia McConnell (2002), to help educate them to better understand their dogs as well as themselves after they had unsuccessful attempts with managing their behavioral problems with other conventional trainers and methods.

In order to examine these narrative stories at a deeper level of understanding, I applied Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) concept of three-dimensional space which at its essence, is to "capture as much as possible this openness of experience" (p. 89). Clandinin and Connelly state, "Our hope is that on balance the idea of a three-dimensional space will open up imaginative possibilities for inquirers, possibilities that might not as easily have been seen without the idea" (p. 89). With this notion, a collective outline of a process of growth emerged from the three women's experiences. I discovered this process after closely examining these individuals' experiences of how they interacted with their dog and others in the context of their current and previous life situations. This application of three-dimensional space created the possibility of how these women may have a shared experience. Despite not starting or finishing at the same point in time, all of the interviewees evolved according to this shared process.

This change process occurred through a progression of events for the interviewees. It appeared to begin with these women learning about their dogs' behaviors including mannerisms, patterns, and communication. The process continued with an

awareness of the dyadic nature of the relationship between themselves and their dog. A shift of focus then occurred from dog interventions to the women's own actions and awareness of themselves initiating a cascade of opportunity for self-growth. Once there was increased self-awareness, the individual had the opportunity to practice with their dog and make improvements within that relationship and expand it onto other human relationships. As these women experienced greater satisfaction within themselves and connecting to others, they felt a deepened sense of connection and meaning in life that was largely spiritual in nature. Both Jane and Sarah endorsed this deepened sense of connection that was spiritual in nature confirming Bekoff's (2002) notion that our own nature and spirituality are embodied not only by who we are but also defined by our relationships with other beings.

I was able to learn more about these women through examination of these three individuals' stories with their dogs and their subsequent self-growth. Specifically, I studied the beliefs and feelings these women hold about their dogs, themselves, their interactions with their dogs, as well as the psychological and emotional changes they experienced during and subsequent to their dog training experiences. These experiences with their dogs clearly enhanced their paths of self-growth albeit in different ways.

The first research question for this study was:

How do participants describe their experience working with dogs in a natural way?

The three women who were interviewed for this study described their experiences working with dogs in a natural way through the identified themes of Context, Intervening Conditions, and Intervention Strategies that emerged from the data analysis. Overall, the

experiences of the interviewees working with their dogs suggest that the women recognized that this type of training was different and more meaningful than previous attempts at conventional training. Each respondent became cognizant of working with her dog in a natural way through the McConnell (2002) method, albeit from different backgrounds, life situations, and differing levels of insight. All of the respondents ultimately described positive experiences from working with their dogs in a natural way.

The women offered information about their backgrounds, previous experiences and life situations that formed the theme of Context. While the interviewees did not explicitly detail their backgrounds in the description of their experiences working with dogs, it is nonetheless key information to better understand how these participants characterize their experiences of working with dogs in a natural way. In general, a snapshot of this background suggests three women of varying ages, previous experiences, and differing personalities from the same geographic Midwestern area and who have struggled with behavioral problems in their rescued dogs.

Early background experiences of these women included some form of connection to animals as children, and expressed revelation that their dogs' behavior was more difficult to manage as an adult. Sarah had some significant experiences which impressed upon her from an early age a love and desire to help animals, thus shaping her path to become a veterinarian. In addition, Sarah's early exposure to Eastern culture was very influential in her life with the practice of Tai Chi and meditation, as well as implementation of Eastern approaches to medicine in her veterinarian practice. In contrast, Carol's influential prior experiences were in the form of relational difficulties. These resulted in long-term psychotherapy experiences which may have given her an

important tool as an opportunity for self and relational growth with her dog. Finally, Jane appeared to have the most straightforward example of working and establishing a relationship with her dogs from a contextual standpoint as she did not appear to be heavily influenced by early experiences.

Personality represents another significant contextual attribute that significantly impacted these women's experiences of working with their dogs in a natural way. From observation, Jane appeared to be a calm individual who enjoys interaction with others as well as time by herself and with her dogs. From her interview, Jane enjoys being introspective and reflective and demonstrates a calm disposition. Sarah, a practicing holistic veterinarian, is committed to helping others and appeared genuinely altruistic. Sarah also seemed to enjoy social interaction with others as well as elaborate storytelling. From behavioral observations, Sarah appeared friendly but somewhat anxious. In contrast, Carol is a computer programmer who admits she is struggling with balance in her life and describes herself as a "workaholic." Carol stated that she feels overwhelmed often and responsible for others' feelings. She has certain "expectations" in life and about how training should go with her dog and had difficulty removing her strong emotions from the interaction.

The current struggles with the behavioral problems in their dogs were distressing for all three women and overwhelmed their knowledge and coping abilities. These problems prompted the women into action and the identified Intervening Conditions theme from the data analysis. These problems led two of the women to explore and experience conventional dog training. Jane and Sarah sought conventional training, that is, obedience and command in nature, and both experienced difficulty with the results.

Jane and Sarah discovered that this type of training did not solve the more severe problems of dog aggression and separation anxiety let alone improve their relationship with their dogs. Each of the women, however, possessed an inherent desire to provide a fulfilling life for their dogs. They also wanted their dogs' content life to provide happiness and gratification in their own lives of being a pet owner and living with an other-than-human being in their home. The negative experiences with conventional training left both Jane and Sarah believing there was more that could be done to achieve their goals. Carol did not share previous experiences working with other methods or previous trainers.

These women discovered McConnell (2002) and her methods of working with dogs in a natural way via various references including: word of mouth (Jane), the radio (Sarah), and through her veterinarian (Carol). Learning about the dogs' inherent motivations and internalizations immediately set McConnell's methods apart from conventional training and acted as the impetus for relationships and growth to take place. The women also shared common commitments to provide exercise via the walk, to work with their dog daily, and a general openness to McConnell's natural methods of training.

Each interviewee explicitly described her own experiences of working with her dogs in a natural way within the theme of Interventions in the data analysis. All three interviewees found themselves immersed in McConnell's (2002) methods once they started her training program and endorsed positive learning experiences. This included direct instruction during classes at Dog's Best Friend or by listening to McConnell on the radio. All of the women embraced McConnell's idea that all dogs are genetically predisposed to look to a leader within the pack, and diligently participate in a daily walk

with their dogs. Specifically, when Jane learned about positive reinforcement, she expressed that this helped her feel like the communication with her dog was a partnership rather than dictatorship. Comparatively, Sarah experienced improvement in the external behavior of her dog, but still felt her dog was “manipulative” and did not believe that a change had occurred in the internal behavior of the dog. She experienced subsequent success, however, with her next two dogs. Finally, Carol admitted that many of the interventions she experienced were not successful until she pieced together parts of the training program along with her own ideas and solutions to experience positive results. Much of this revolved around positive reinforcement through the use of treats.

The interviewees differed in their experiences of working with their dogs in a natural way to the extent in which McConnell’s (2002) methods have been internalized. This was evident by the women’s own words and varying degrees of understanding and articulation of McConnell’s methods as well as the specific execution or implementation of the interventions. Jane may have experienced the greatest results from the training as she has successfully established and maintains a relationship with her dogs through McConnell’s methods. She describes this process as adopting an animal-centered perspective, understanding dog psychology (interpretation of different behaviors and postures), presenting herself in a calm and assertive manner, and being mindful or present of what is happening during the interaction to shape the desired behavior.

Similarly, Sarah’s experiences of learning natural methods from the radio also appear to have improved her relationship with her dogs. Additionally, this training has helped her to help others through the dogs and individuals she works with as a holistic veterinarian. Sarah experienced and described learning skills including to be more

consistent and patient, better problem-solving skills, and more adept at being clear with directions. Carol described her experiences of working with dogs in a natural way as continuing to develop a better relationship with her dog, working to understand his behaviors and motivations, and to be better prepared to react appropriately to them. Carol continues to take classes to help her achieve this. Throughout the interview, Carol described how she aspires to reap the rewards and benefits of mindfulness and awareness for herself through her relationship and working with her dog.

The second research question asked:

How did these experiences of working with dogs in a natural way influence these individuals' relationships with self, others, and the natural world?

The experience of working with dogs in a natural way influenced the three interviewees' relationships with themselves, other beings, and individuals, and impacted how they viewed the natural world. These experiences and influences were established in the theme of Differences in Relationships With Others as described in the data analysis. The differences in relationships with others experienced by each interviewee varied to the same extent as their different backgrounds and personalities. However, they all reported attainment of improved relationships with their dogs as well as with themselves and other people in their lives.

All three women described a positive outcome in the relationship with their dog as a result of working with them in a natural way. This came about through incorporation of the concepts and practices of positive reinforcement, knowledge of the dogs' behaviors and motivations including the dogs' natural demeanor and instincts, and finally mindfulness during these interactions. These three individuals took the time to understand

and value their dogs as different living species. The process of trying to communicate, problem solve, and understand another living being impacted each of the interviewees to a marked degree. For example, Jane expressed a deepened sense of empathy for her dogs and their care as described in her interview. Sarah stated that she only minimally improved the relationship with her dog but gained a deepened sense of understanding some time after the dog had passed way after she had opportunities to work with other dogs. Sarah found better accomplishment with these methods with her next two dogs and subsequently developed better and more positive relationships with them. Finally, Carol's relationship with her dog has improved and continues to evolve as she implements strategies of mindfulness during the interaction and improves awareness.

All of the interviewees achieved some sense of relational difference with others beside their dogs as a direct result of working with their dogs in a natural way. Initially, the three women described increased opportunities for socialization and new commonalities to share with others who shared in their canine experiences. Of course, many of these described relational patterns vary because each individual had their own unique personalities, life experiences, and social networking. Nonetheless, these increased relational experiences instilled a much deeper sense of relational interaction with themselves and others around them.

Initially, the womens' social experiences occurred through increased interaction with other individuals within the canine community engaging in a shared common interest and experience with their dogs. They all expressed positive notions of these social experiences with others, companionship, socialization, and happiness. Some common social situations included daily walks with others and taking classes.

The relational experiences quickly moved to a much deeper and more profound level that impacted each of the participants in a different manner depending on their previous and present life situations and relationships with others. The relational experiences moved each person to contemplate about their sense of being in relation to others, albeit on seemingly different levels. Ultimately, each of the participants reported an increase in joy in their relationships with others.

Pointedly, both Jane and Sarah began to evaluate themselves in relation to others and evolved into a deeper sense of compassion for themselves and other human beings. This resulted in a deeper and more psychologically minded way of living which focuses on better understanding each individual they are interacting with. For example, Jane deepened relationships through community outreach programs and re-evaluated her core belief systems. Sarah was able to expand outside of the canine community to notice changes in her relationships with family members and specifically in parenting situations by providing a consistent presence with clear messages. Sarah also expanded these relational differences in her professional realm with clients as a veterinarian. Perhaps the underlying mechanism here was a deeper foundation of relating and sense of connectedness to encompass a more global concept of health and compassion for the animals and people with whom she worked. Finally, Carol is beginning to be more “present” in her interactions with others outside of the dog community including those in her work environment. She is still largely exploring this concept of relational expansion outside of her dog, and has an expressed desire to continue to move in this direction.

In contrast, the experiences of working with dogs in a natural way did not appear to significantly influence these individuals’ relationship with the natural world. All of the

interviewees did describe participating in a daily outdoor walk with their dogs; however, this was the extent of their outdoor activities. Two of the three women described an increased connection to other beings, both human and non-human. However, the women did not report any specific feelings of connectedness to nature such as trees, streams, mountains, or other aspects of the outdoors.

The third research question asked:

How did the result of working with dogs in a natural way provide the larger and more general benefits of happiness and self-growth as implied by the theories of existential/humanistic psychology and ecopsychology?

The result of working with dogs in a natural way provided benefits of happiness and self-growth to all three of the women primarily through practice and an expressed increase in their self-awareness that prompted them to change the way they relate to themselves, their dogs, and others. This practice and increased self-awareness, or mindfulness, enhanced their relationships and directly led the women to report feelings of increased happiness and fulfillment. This increased self-awareness and focus on relationships is how the outcomes of working with dogs in a natural way provided benefits of happiness within the humanistic and existential realms of psychology. The resulting psychological benefits from working with dogs in a natural way are well demonstrated in the themes of Changes in Self-Awareness and Spiritual Growth.

All of the women reported thoughts of increased awareness, mindfulness, improved relationships, outreach to others, feelings of connectedness, and enhanced spirituality in the humanistic and existentialism traditions. They expressed that these feelings were desirable and felt they had achieved some sense of self-growth as a result

of these feelings. Previous and present life situations impacted how the path of increased self-awareness, enhancement of relationships, and the eventual self-growth developed for each individual. This process was most apparent by how well each of the women was able to embrace and implement McConnell's (2002) methods.

Pointedly, Jane appeared to embrace the training methods of McConnell (2002) with the greatest success and progress in self-growth. She seemed to be able to adopt an animal-centered perspective, understand dog psychology (interpretation of different behaviors and postures), was able to present herself in a calm and assertive manner, and be mindful or present of what was happening during the interaction to shape the desired behavior. She was able to articulate these methods well and the psychological benefits of increased self-awareness, improved relationships, and feelings of connectedness. In addition, she appeared to already inherently possess a calm demeanor with an ability to shift her perspective easily to implement the methods. Jane's process of growth provided the best example of a shift in awareness from the dog to herself and a deepening of connection to all living beings. Jane felt this process emerged for her because her own dog's growth was personally motivating to her and led her to think about her own path of self-growth. This transference likely underscores her belief that the self-growth will happen. By having a personal goal of improved emotional control, she found that learning to be more aware became a profoundly positive change in her life. This awareness is described by Buddhist philosophy, ecopsychologists, and others. For example, Fromm (1997) states that awareness requires one to concentrate actively, and it is a learned practice. Jane was the only participant to overtly express a shift in the

positive experience from her dog to herself. Jane's pathway of self-growth also appeared to be the best example of movement along Maslow's model of self-actualization.

Through her experiences in working with her dogs, Sarah expressed a deepened sense of satisfaction and happiness in her capacity to help people outside of the pet-owner context, much like many individuals who are involved in the helping professions. Sarah already possessed a great love of animals and expressed spiritual beliefs, such as a desire to help and connect with others through her holistic veterinary practice. Sarah discussed her feelings of an increased connection to the world and how the animals help to ground and elevate her mood. When Sarah works with dogs employing McConnell's natural methods of a mindful interaction, she described feeling engaged, calm, and meditative. Within, the humanistic realm, this is an example of Fromm's (1997) *being* mode of existence, a feeling of aliveness and authentic relatedness to the world. Sarah's spiritual dynamic and sense of connection is reportedly much stronger now. This strengthening was likely the result of her previous experiences and connection with animals in conjunction with working with her dog using McConnell's method of increased mindfulness.

Despite this augmented spirituality which led Sarah to report increased happiness and self-growth through feelings of connectedness to others, she initially appeared to make only minimal progress in improving self-awareness. One of her stated goals was a desire for better internal regulation of moods and emotions, which is largely dependent on levels of self-awareness. Sarah had difficulty presenting herself in a calm manner during the interview. This was consistent with descriptions of her reactions to her first dog. For example, Sarah had difficulty adopting an animal-centered perspective and

tended to anthropomorphize the dog. However, her self-awareness did improve as she eventually reported increasing success with her next two dogs. Specifically, she expressed these next two dogs helped her increase in patience, problem-solving, and establishing clear expectations that she transferred to other relationships outside of her dogs. Sarah also appears to better regulate her moods and emotions through reports that during her work as veterinarian, having a clear mind and relaxation were of paramount importance in the success of treating animals. In addition, Sarah actively engages in activities to promote self-awareness, a calm presence, and regulation of moods through meditation, Tai Chi, as well as practicing her breath work while walking her dogs. This work is consistent with the general benefits and increased happiness found within the humanistic/existential psychological traditions.

Carol has also identified positive rewards related to feelings of happiness and well-being from working with her dog despite some of the training being unsuccessful. These rewards included more of the traditional companionship benefits such as relaxation and decreased blood pressure when sitting next to or petting her dog. Carol does feel as though her relationship with her dog has improved and finds the process as joyful and a rewarding experience with another species.

Carol appears to be very much immersed in the process by her continued efforts to take classes with her dog and “practicing” her interactions with him as expressed in her interview. Carol may be beginning to realize how her own behavior affects the dog, for example as she identified when she is stressed or yelling. Carol expressed that she is learning to take her emotion out of the situation (or at least to learn how to contain it better) so she can better understand what is happening, what is motivating the dog to

behave in such a manner, and react appropriately. From these examples, Carol appears to be in the process of beginning to understand the concept of self-awareness, not only through working with her dogs, but also through her psychotherapy and yoga practice. Carol recognizes the sources of anxiety and stress in her life related to work and previous failed relationships and is utilizing tools to more effectively manage her anxiety and learn to relax. Carol continues to work on developing a healthy balance in her life. A positive indicator is that Carol is able to verbalize where she would like to go in matters of projecting a calm and assertive energy, suggesting she has internalized many of the concepts of naturally training dogs, which contribute to increased levels of self-awareness and self-growth. Carol even expressed the benefits of how being more “present” at work is something that she is striving towards.

The observation of Carol moving through a psychological growth process while actively working with a therapist in conjunction with training methods with her dog served as a strong example of Bohart and Tallman’s (1999) concept of client as active agent in therapeutic healing in this study. This self-healing refers to the human capacity to repair dysfunctional life pathways and to change ways of being, behaving, and experiencing so that one moves toward greater coherence and function (Bohart & Tallman, 1999).

The enhancement of spirituality appeared to be closely tied to these participants’ experiences of working with their dogs under McConnell’s (2002) methods and coincided with the improvement in their psychological states of well-being, expressed happiness, and self-growth. All of the participants expressed a feeling of a greater sense of “connection,” “joy” in their lives, and a sense of calming as a result of working with

dogs in a natural way and increasing mindfulness. Again, spiritual enhancement was impacted by prior levels of spirituality development among the three participants. Each, however, experienced some enhancement of their spirituality. A case in point was that Jane felt a deeper connection to living things and expressed a “grounded” feeling. An example of this was Jane’s stated belief in “an all-encompassing answer that leads us to why we’re all here (including different species) in this benevolent universe.” Sarah may have experienced the greatest increase in spiritual development, perhaps because she began with a high level of spirituality development as she described during her interview. Relating to her own animals and those of her clients gives Sarah a deepened sense of “connecting to others.” Sarah described how the animals help “connect” her the most as they are “grounding and lifting.” Sarah is able to feel powerful emotions from them and “her world opens up.” For Carol, spirituality may be an emerging dimension. For example, Carol does articulate genuine relating and connecting to another sentient being, as well as appreciating more time out in the natural world. However, unlike Jane and Sarah, she does not perceive such natural interactions as enhancements to her spirituality. Perhaps Carol’s life as a city dweller makes the connections between nature and spirituality more difficult. Nonetheless, when surrounded by nature, she experiences peace, joy, and contentment; yet she questions whether or not it connects to something larger than herself.

Discussion

This study proposed that dogs are an extension of nature and through a mindful and purposeful interaction with them, a reconnection to self and others can be found along with larger and more general benefits of happiness in the humanistic tradition. The

exploration through a qualitative single-case study provided much needed documentation in the literature to describe and understand in depth the human-dog relationship as a means of entering and practicing the *being* mode. The results of this study assist psychotherapists in providing their clients a direct and practical means of developing new life meanings, addressing the problems of life, and confronting existential issues, all with the accessible modality of the family dog.

The findings from this qualitative case study suggest that potentially one of the greatest connections we can make with others is through animals; perhaps this is because animals offer to us a subjective presence. All of these women possessed a deep and strong desire to bond with their animals and invest their time to help fulfill their dog's needs. They are an "other" to connect to as outlined by Fromm (2006) that the human desire to experience union with others is rooted in the specific conditions of existence that characterize the human species and is one of the strongest motivators of human behavior.

The themes identified in the data analysis were identified through the process described by Creswell (2007) as open coding of the transcribed interviews and field notes. These prominent features characterized the situation, person, or process described in the data. The organizing themes are a useful mechanism to both present the results of the study as well as discuss the implications of the results. I discovered interesting and relevant features of each of the six major organizing themes as generated by each of the three subjects.

The theme of Context was comprised of the information the women offered about their backgrounds, previous experiences, and life situations. While age, personality, and

previous experiences initially may appear unimportant to the process of working with dogs and self-growth, these contextual elements become therapeutically significant in understanding their experiences and growth process. These early background experiences contributed to how each of these women responded to working with their dog in a novel, natural way. Interestingly, Carol seemed to have the most difficulty responding to the process of working with her dog in a mindful way perhaps because she described significant difficulty with early relational experiences prior to these new experiences. This context also helped determine ultimately how each interviewee applied their training experiences. For example, Sarah's previous experiences in a helping profession led her to apply her new self-awareness and self-growth in her holistic veterinarian practice by sharing with her clients the benefits of mindfulness, calmness, and connection.

Personality represents another significant contextual attribute that significantly impacted these women's experiences with their dogs and their ability to embrace increased levels of self-awareness. It has been established that dog pack leadership requires the presence of calm assertive energy. Millan (2006) describes that calm assertive dominance is the ideal energy projection for a leader and that a calm assertive leader is relaxed but confident in their control because leaders in nature must project the most obvious and uncontestable strength.

These three women's personality characteristics varied greatly and influenced how well they were able to assume these pack leadership qualities. Of note, Jane presented a calm demeanor during the interview. Perhaps possession of this quality allowed her to be able to experience increased self-awareness and growth with relative ease because she already possessed useful personality attributes. In contrast, Carol and

Sarah developed calm personality qualities through the process of working with their dogs that required more effort. In addition, I believe coming to this process of working with dogs with high expectations and strong emotions seems to lengthen the journey for attainment of increased self-awareness and mindfulness. As Millan (2006) reminds us, dominance is not a moral judgment or emotional experience but simply a state of being. As therapists, our patients come to us with goals of improved relationships, increased happiness, and a quest for more meaningful lives. I believe that as we become acquainted with them and help them attain their goals, the therapist discovers that each individual presents with different characteristics in their background, prior experience, and personality that influences the path in reaching their goal.

There are common contextual characteristics shared by these women which proved important to the success of embracing natural methods and the experience of positive change. First, all of these women loved their dogs. These women all cared about their animals, their animal's feelings, and their animal's sense of happiness. They all expressed a desire to have a good relationship with their dogs. The interviewees exemplified Bekoff's (2002) notion of embracing animals as subjects of a life that deserve compassionate and respectful interaction, by showing concern for their feelings and views of their world.

In the next identified theme, Intervening Conditions, these women expressed the strong desire to improve the dog's behavior as well as the relationship with their dog. This strong desire coupled with a feeling of "dis-ease" with their companion animals prompted two of the women to seek conventional training methods. They were disappointed to discover that conventional training focused on command and obedience

which did not improve specific behaviors of dog aggression, separation anxiety, or dominant behavior. Additionally, this type of training did not improve the relationship with the dog. In an attempt to “self right” as defined by Bohart and Tallman (1999), these women continued to problem-solve these issues. Eventually, each of the three women discovered Patricia McConnell (2002) through different means. This included formal obedience classes, her broadcasted radio show, and through a veterinarian. The women started to learn McConnell’s method of working with dogs in a natural way. This process included positive reinforcement, a daily walk, and a willingness to incorporate these aspects of training. These training methods included a conscious interaction with their dog by being fully present, mindful, and purposeful; adoption of an animal-centered perspective; knowledge of dog psychology; and a calm but assertive leadership style. I believe this theme represents an important component in the initiative, generativity, and creativity required for these women to seek solutions to their identified problems. Furthermore, these intervening conditions credit the women for being open to a new experience and speak to their readiness for change. As therapists, these qualities are extremely important in determining the success for change with our patients.

In the third identified theme of the study, Interventions, these women actively started to engage in the utilization of McConnell’s (2002) methods. Soon, they began to describe the potential benefits of the relationship with their dogs and reported positive feelings associated with working with their dogs in a natural way. This finding of endorsement of positive experiences is not surprising as I believe one tends to experience positive feelings when gaining benefits.

All of the women embraced the concept that dogs are genetically predisposed to look to a leader within the pack, and diligently participated in a daily walk with their dogs. They also specifically engaged and practiced methods that utilized an understanding of dog psychology including interpretation of different behaviors and postures, adoption of an animal-centered perspective, presentation of a calm assertive manner, and mindfulness of what was happening during the interaction to shape the desired behavior. All the women endorsed that being fully “present” in the immediate moment had the potential to lead to the beneficial and emerging ability to consciously change their relationships. This finding has direct support with Fromm’s (1997) notion that awareness requires one to concentrate actively, and it is a learned practice. Cohen (1997) provides further support by emphasizing that what we are and do in the immediate moment is directly related to what we think, feel, and do. As a result, I believe these women experienced Fromm’s (2006) theoretical *being* mode of existence. This is an important precedent established by this study to illustrate a potential medium through dogs to help individuals attain a mindful state of being. Therapists who work with patients who love and enjoy animals could utilize this method as another strategy to assist in the promotion of mindfulness. Furthermore, this process could lend itself to an extension of therapy outside of the office.

Interestingly, two of the women engaged in breath work in conjunction with walking their dogs to facilitate calmness and awareness. Two of the women also incorporated practices of mindfulness outside of working with their dogs such as Tai Chi, meditation, and yoga. Incorporating many modes of activity to promote mindfulness seemed to help solidify the concepts and deepen the rewards for these interviewees.

Expressed feelings included: engagement, connection, calmness, and joy. These articulated thoughts excitedly demonstrate a clear example of Fromm's (1997) being mode of existence; a feeling of aliveness and authentic relatedness to the world.

While all of the women reported a sense of *being* with increased mindfulness and connection, there did appear to be differences in the extent and duration of successes for each individual. I believe verbal skills and the components of the theme Context were significant factors for this disparity. Specifically, Jane and Sarah expressed feelings describing their connections with their dogs as being well established, while in comparison, Carol identified that she was still in the process of improving this connection.

In a discussion of the theme Changes in Self-Awareness, each of the three women came to embrace a belief that they had attained some heightened level of self-awareness and subsequent self-growth through the implementation of McConnell's (2002) methods. This was demonstrated that through their practice, all of the women expressed feelings of increased self-awareness that prompted them to change the way they relate to themselves, their dogs, and others. This practice and increased self-awareness, or mindfulness, seemed to directly lead the women to report feelings of connectedness, happiness, joy, and fulfillment.

This increase in self-awareness appeared to originate with the women learning more about their dogs' behavior including mannerisms, patterns, and communication. The learning process that took place in this study is directly supported by Bekoff's (2002) notion that when we learn about other animals, we ultimately learn more about ourselves. He maintains this potentially empathic connection is essential and primal. McConnell

(2002) immersed the women into implementation of increased self-awareness because she believes that to effectively be aware and interpret a dog's behavior, one must possess knowledge of the dog's psychology and be self-aware enough to act appropriately in the immediacy of the moment. All three women practiced this intervention technique by specifically employing these principles in their walk with their dogs. Jane articulately expressed an increase of awareness and knowledge of her dogs' "signals" and recognized how they are the dogs' means of communication.

As these women applied specific interventions and strategies with their dogs, awareness began to shift away from the dog and onto themselves as their ability to stay in the moment improved, supporting ecopsychologists Roszak's (1995) and Cohen's (1995) notion that the primary mechanism of self-change is by experiencing nature in an immediate way. For example, Jane learned how necessary it was to not only be aware and attentive of the dogs' behavior but also to be attentive as the person who is working with the dog. Jane pointedly articulates how our stress can easily influence our communication when she expressed that "panic goes right down into the leash!" Jane accomplishes this "better internal regulation" through positive thoughts and breath work. Sarah described how it was important for her to be "tuned into herself both physically and mentally so she could be fully present as a veterinarian to help her clients and their dogs." This concept was not new for Sarah as she had been practicing mindfulness for quite some time in her other activities of yoga and Tai Chi. For the interviewee Carol, self-awareness in the relationship with her dog appears to still be emerging as she described how easily it is to "slip" out of this way of being. However, she does appear to be consciously moving in this direction. For example, she described how her dog "reads her impatience and gets

stressed and behaves badly.” This suggests that Carol is mindful of her role during the interaction even though she has yet to achieve significant success in shaping the dog’s behavior.

These women clearly manifested a paradigm shift from initially only being aware of their dog’s behavior to eventually being aware of their own behavior. This archetypal shift in my study is directly supported by Millan (2006) who describes this process as a cascade of learning and insight; insight into the dog’s world and needs, and insights that activate growth and change in the individual as well. Chard (1994) supports this psychological shift in awareness by stating, “Dogs and cats in particular, lead by example and encourage us to make a psychological shift into a different state of being; their immersion in the here and now draws out the human capacity for simply being” (p. 122).

These reported experiences in my study support that a change process to facilitate self-awareness and a connection to others can take place with dogs. This facilitated self-awareness directly supports Buzzell’s (2009) proposal that a return to meaningful interaction with nature can provide significant psychological benefits. Furthermore, the description of increased self-awareness through working with dogs embraces the key fundamental attributes of humanistic and existential philosophies which are based on the whole person and understanding people by examining their interpersonal relationships, an emphasis on self-awareness, and the concept of the individual as an active participant in their own lives (Jacobsen, 2007). What this means is that therapists now have a new tool to directly teach and facilitate increased self-awareness. Furthermore, this modality lies within mainstream and accepted theoretical orientations that are subscribed to by many therapists. My study supports the concept that therapists may be able to apply mindful

interaction with dogs to a wide range of individuals to better facilitate self-awareness, relationship building, and help clients be more active participants. The potential utility of this is quite broad from children who love animals, to at-risk youths who may benefit from relationship building, to the elderly or youth who would benefit from a facilitated sense of purpose.

Pointedly, these women were not working with therapists in conjunction with the training undertaken with Dr. McConnell and their animals. The interviewees describe increased mindfulness and self-awareness in their own language without facilitation of a therapist. Not only is the practice and problem solving of their dogs' behaviors directly based upon the key concepts of existentialist and humanistic psychology, these individuals engaged in a process that began to actualize their own potential as outlined by pioneers in existential and humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1954; May, 1967; Yalom, 1980). Furthermore, perhaps the most defining therapeutic value of this study is that the women themselves became their own agents of healing as Bohart and Tallman (1999) outline in their comprehensive model of therapy. In this model, clients are generative; that is, *they* are the ones who invest interventions with life, *they* create the intervention effects which are supposed to produce change, and *they* actively use these interventions in their own unique life contexts in creative ways. These women generated their own experiences with the dogs under the guidance of Dr. McConnell, invested time and energy in themselves and in their relationship with their dogs, and implemented the key interventions that produced the eventual described changes.

Now that these women have reported greater self-awareness, the theme Differences in Relationships With Others becomes increasingly important because the

interviewees have developed the ability to make improvements within their relationship with their dog. More importantly, the interviewees are now empowered to apply these same concepts of mindfulness and self-awareness to improve other relationships, including human relationships. All the women endorsed a process of relational evolution that started with their dogs and eventually included enhancement of friendships, new relationships with other dog owners, improvement of work relationships, and greater community involvement. Specifically, Jane's work triggered an outreach to working with dogs as a volunteer at the shelter and she now works as an assistant dog trainer helping others. In terms of communicating with others, Jane expressed feeling more "in tune" with others' physical, verbal, and nonverbal behaviors as well as motivations. She expressed that relating to others has moved to a "deeper level." This generalization has, potentially, a vast implication to help individuals connect to other people and become more involved as a community service member. The cultural implications include the possibility that we may begin to resolve alienation together as a society. This research finding directly supports a solution to Fromm's (1997) crisis of alienation.

Likewise, Sarah also endorsed that her relationships moved to a deeper level despite already working in a helping profession. Specifically, through better problem-solving, learning to be consistent with follow-through, and increased patience, she has engaged in outreach and helped her clients in her veterinary practice make their expectations known to their dogs and helped guide their motivations. This ultimately deepened her relationships with the dogs she worked with and their owners. Perhaps the most profound relational benefit that Sarah experienced was how these new skills helped her ultimately become a better parent. Imagine being able to help patients with mindful

interactions with their dog to parallel parenting techniques that could be implemented immediately in the office. It is challenging to assess consistency, follow-through, and use of calm and assertive language by the parent at home with their children. Through the utilization of dogs, a therapist could potentially produce concrete examples and interactions within the supervised therapeutic setting that otherwise would not be available to the client.

Carol now believes it is possible to change her relationships and interactions with others at work. Specifically at work, she is striving to guide more and dictate less with her subordinates while modeling a “pack leadership” style of communication that involves being calm yet assertive. This would be a beneficial tool for industrial psychologists who promote and teach relational concepts within the workplace. Adopting a “pack leadership” style of communication has tremendous benefits and can be applicable to many of the employed.

All of these women attributed their new sense of outreach and relational interactions to others as originating with the natural work they performed with their dogs. Both Sarah and Jane expressed that it deepened their sense of compassion for themselves, for others, and increased feelings of connectedness. I found that the outreach being performed by these women was quite profound in the community through volunteer work, a helping profession, or through modeling of peaceful and respectful concepts into the workplace. This represents one of the clearest examples in this study of reaching one’s full potential as a human being (Schneider, Bugental, & Pierson, 2001) as well as resolving the bigger cultural dilemma of Fromm’s (1997) crisis of existence.

The final theme, Spiritual Growth, encompasses a culmination of the processes experienced by these individuals beginning with their dogs, themselves, and eventually within the larger community. I am not particularly surprised at the emergence of this as these women reported their experiences to include a spiritual component. Jane and Sarah expressed a deeper sense of life connectedness and meaning-making. They felt an enhanced spiritual experience and feeling of being a part of something larger than themselves, directly supporting Bekoff's (2002) notion that our own nature and spirituality is embodied not only by who we are but also defined by our relationships with other beings. Specifically for Jane, this experience has solidified her spiritual belief system that we are all part of a purposeful benevolent universe. Here is where Jane states that she finds her *being* mode; in the midst of an emotional calm, deep sense of satisfaction, and a spiritual connection. Sarah described her own growth in terms of her "openness to receive" through the interactions and connections with others that is largely spiritual in nature. Spirituality may emerge for Carol as she deepens her connections with others, as she already endorses relating and connecting to her dog as another sentient being. Working with dogs in this natural manner sparked spiritual and soulful feelings for all of the women. This result implies that nature may truly have the capacity to revive our soul. I have little doubt that this research study has led each of these women to channel Fromm's (2006) *being* mode of existence, as they have discovered an increased insight into the reality of themselves, of others, and of the world around them, hence resolving the crisis of alienation.

Intriguingly, the three women did not endorse a conscious increased connection with nature in a more traditional sense (trees, rivers, mountains, or the wilderness) when

specifically asked during the interviews. Perhaps the respondents experienced deepened awareness, relational benefits, and enhanced spirituality exclusively through the interactions with their dogs. It is also possible that the deepened connection to nature occurred on a conscious level. In this study, the dog served as an animal representation of nature, but this assumption could be further explored. Nonetheless, I believe they experienced a deepening of their “Ecological Selves,” which according to Spitzform (2000) is a sense of self which emerges within an ecological context, and is maintained into adulthood by relationships with a wide range of non-human-others because at least two of the women who interacted with their dogs acknowledged their dogs as being part of something larger and outside of the human realm, suggesting they did experience an encounter with nature that was profound. However, none of the women previously relied on nature alone to deepen this connection.

A limitation of this study is that the participants were exclusively female, which may introduce a gender bias. A more balanced sample of females and males would help determine if both sexes experience a similar path of growth through this process. This small case series presents a potential therapeutic mechanism for self-growth which warrants further study and has the potential to benefit a number of clients.

Recommendations for Therapists

While much of the discussion attempted to incorporate therapeutic benefits and specific applications, this section expands on the specific role of the therapist and the benefits of incorporating natural methods of dog training into therapeutic techniques.

Therapists are continuously striving to augment their repertoire of methods and find ways to connect with patients regardless of the modality chosen to relate to their

patients. There are a variety of approaches that have the potential to help patients increase self-growth, improve self-awareness, and enhance relationships with themselves and to others. To many individuals who share their lives with dogs, the animal serves an important role of companion and friend, and is often a source of strength and interest. This study explored the questions as to whether dogs may be able to serve an even greater role to these individuals who seek self-growth as their own agents of healing or through conventional therapy methods.

Therapists who utilize an existential/humanistic approach, and who believe that the patient is the greatest agent of change, may want to consider incorporating a patient's dog directly into therapy. Based on the results of this study, even with a basic knowledge of these natural training methods outlined by Dr. McConnell (2002) that incorporate a mindful, present, and deliberate interaction with a dog, therapists may be able to help guide patients towards alleviating anxiety, improving self-awareness, and enhancing of their relationships with themselves and others in their lives. In addition, therapists who subscribe to behavioral models of treatment may find the use of specific techniques and behavioral interventions in these natural methods of working with dogs. For example, therapists who wish to consider helping patients simply focus on "the walk" with their dogs to effectively retrain anxiety and physical calming problems may find success utilizing this specific intervention based on the results of this study. The walk is a deceptively simple but effective method for dogs and owners to benefit from exercise, discipline, and leadership as well as these above-mentioned psychological benefits.

Furthermore, therapists can incorporate the practice of mindfulness into the therapeutic relationship. Bien (2006) asserts that mindful therapy is both consistent with

and a clear demonstration of humanistic and existential therapies because it values the relationship and the authentic encounter that brings about the healing process. As therapists, one can strive to be more present and aware of these interactions and the immediate moment with our patients. It presents a more genuine encounter and promotes a deeper level of understanding and empathy towards the individuals whom therapists work with. It also has the potential to help our patients with meaning of life and existential issues by helping them to connect to something larger and outside of themselves.

Considering that there are 68 million dogs in the homes of America (Millan, 2006), the canine member of the family is a potentially useful adjunct to therapy. Therapists can teach patients how to cultivate awareness as a means to strengthen feelings of connectedness and better their relations within themselves and with others. In addition, the working sessions with the animals can expand the impact of the hour-long session in the office to practical application and provide an active role for work in the home. An emphasis on this relationship between owner and dog allows the patient to take charge and act as their own healing agent of change outside of the therapy room.

Recommendations for Future Research

As therapists, it is important to find ways our clients can connect with something to deepen their growth. Oftentimes therapy is conducted in isolation of the patient's strengths or interests. While this study focused on increasing awareness of the importance of human-animal, human-nature interaction, additional research may actively recruit participants who are engaged in therapy along with working with their dogs in a natural way. For example, a treatment outcome comparison of two groups of similar patients

undergoing therapy for relational issues, one working with dogs, the other without, might clarify the issues and benefits of human-animal relationships. More specific qualitative research based on the established themes may be indicated through implementation of a scale to measure perceived growth. This procedure may provide a richer measure of growth through pre- and post-testing as well as give a realistic opportunity of how psychotherapy may work in conjunction with utilizing dogs. Additionally, as this study consisted of exclusively female respondents, it would be warranted to research the experiences of males for comparison.

A fundamental question elucidated by this study is the mechanism through which the dog exerts therapeutic benefit. This study explored the representation of dog as an extension of nature and that a deepening of a connection to nature would bring about psychological benefit and self-growth. However, it may be that the dog represents and can be viewed solely as a relational being to aid individuals with the connection to self and others rather than an overt connection to nature that this study attempted to make. While participants expressed a deeper felt connection to all beings, two of them presented that connection as being more of a spiritual awakening than a simple appreciation and deepening sense of a connection to raw nature. Perhaps they are related on a spiritual developmental continuum that warrants further exploration. A comparison of this paradigm to the nature-based conceptual framework of this study would be an ambitious yet pertinent future project examining spiritual development with nature. This type of work would help extend the results of this initial case study and narrative inquiry.

APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Invitation to Participate in the Research Study

April 10th, 2008

Dear dog owner who has worked with Patricia McConnell, Ph.D,

I am a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program in the School of Education at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and am beginning my dissertation. My study will focus on the experiences of dog owners who have worked with Dr. McConnell and her dog training methods. I am specifically interested in investigating those who have had an observable positive change, *in themselves*, or a change in how they *view and relate to others*.

My research team and I have asked Dr. McConnell to forward a letter to you (or provide us with contact information) regarding the marked personal change you incurred while working with Dr. McConnell and your dog. We are inviting you to participate in our study. Your participation will be entirely voluntary and confidential. The study would require that you agree to a face to face interview approximately 2 hours in length where you can narratively account of your experiences. Please refer to the overview for more information about the study. We really feel that your participation will contribute meaningfully to our study and hope that you accept our invitation. Once you accept, we will begin the process by sending you a consent form and then schedule the interview.

Please indicate your decision below and return this letter in the enclosed SASE within the next 7 days after receipt of this invitation. If you would like to contact me for further information, you can reach me at the number or email address listed below. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Dennis Waite, at denniswaite@phoenixconsultation.com.

_____ Yes, I would like to voluntarily be a part of your study and am willing to participate in an interview.

_____ No, I'm sorry I do not wish to be a participant.

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you soon,

Amy Jackson

Email: halfpass@hotmail.com

Phone: (269) 208-0002

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Letter of Informed Consent

**Andrews University
Educational and Counseling Psychology Department
Dissertation Research
Informed Consent Form**

TITLE OF STUDY:

The therapeutic effects upon dog owners who interact with their dogs in a natural way.

PURPOSE:

This study will explore the experiences and meanings of individuals who have had the opportunity to practice mindfulness with their dogs and focus on the relationship between them, and who have specifically experienced a change in their sense of self.

PROCEDURE:

I understand that I will be interviewed and asked to account of my experiences in a narrative form the experiences of this practice with my dogs. The interview will be approximately 2 hours long and face to face at a mutually determined location. This interview will be recorded and transcribed and sent back to me for review. I also understand that no one but the interviewer and her advisor will know my identity. In all other instances a pseudo name will be used.

RISKS:

There are no known risks for participating in this study.

BENEFITS/RESULTS:

I understand that I will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study. I understand that the results may assist therapists and counselors in guiding their clients to easy and practical ways to help themselves with meaning of life and existential issues. I understand that the material collected will be a part of a dissertation.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I may discontinue at any time without penalty or prejudice. I also understand that there is no compensation in return for my participation. My questions about this study and my voluntary participation have been answered in a satisfactory manner and I have received a copy of this consent form. If I have further questions about this study I can contact the researcher, Amy Jackson, at 518 Howard Ave., Saint Joseph, MI 49085, (269) 208-0002 or email her at halfpass@hotmail.com. I have also been told that if I wish to contact the researcher's advisor I may contact Dr. Dennis Waite at Andrews University, Bell Hall, Berrien Springs, MI 49103, (269) 208-2532 or by email at denniswaite@phoenixconsultation.com.

Participant's Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

At: _____

APPENDIX C

OPEN ENDED INTERVIEW FORMAT

Semi-Structured Interview Format

Sample interview questions

General

Tell me about your experience working with McConnell and using her methods of dog training?

What did you learn from working with McConnell's methods that was new for you?

Dog Psychology

Do you think there is a difference between dog psychology and dog training? If so what are those differences?

After having worked with your dog in this new way, how do you have a better understanding of the basic nature of dogs?

How do you feel that you become bonded with your dog after you exercise them in a leadership activity?

What happened when you opened yourself up to dog psychology?

How do you feel after you've worked with your dog being more mindful?

Working with dogs in a natural way involves trying to connect with the dogs mind and natural instincts to help correct unwanted behavior and shape behavior. Have you experienced this? Has it helped you?

One of McConnell's goals is to help humans establish the most rewarding relationship possible with their dogs. Can you attest to that? In what ways? Happier? Healthier?

How do you think the nature of dogs can help us as humans?

How does dog psychology affect you personally?

Personal Growth

At what level did using mindfulness with your dog training impact you as a person?

What did you gain?

What have you learned working with these dog training methods about yourself?

After your initial exposure to these methods of dog training have you had any lasting impacts on your life that have significantly changed you? If so, what would those be?

How does working with your dog in this new type of relationship benefit you? Stress, more compassion, connect with nature more?

How have you changed, what were you like before? Aspects of yourself that were different before and after working with the dog. Describe both.

How does working with dogs allow you to change?

What helps you as a human to let go of material things, stresses, just being. etc.

Has this helped with a being mode of existence for you?

It is suspected that after applying these techniques that you may even begin to understand yourself better; you may look at your own behavior in a different light, and find yourself changing in the ways you interact with your children, spouse or boss, because after all humans are pack animals too. Has that been true of you?

Did you think initially that the problem was lying within your dog? How receptive were you to learning about dog psychology and relating to other than human beings?

Interacting with Nature

How does relating to an other than human being affect you?

Does it make you feel connected to anything? Nature?

Do you regularly interact with nature? What are examples of interacting with nature that you regularly participate in? How does it make you feel? What do you gain?

Has working with your dog brought you closer to Mother Nature?

How does it make you feel to be closer and/or working with something natural? Or relating to the raw essence of nature? What kind of an effect does it have on you? What have you learned?

Can you apply it to other areas of your life?

How can you connect and grow through your dog's link with Mother Nature? Do you believe dogs are linked to Mother Nature? Is there a spiritual link to Mother Nature? Does it affect you spiritually as well? In what way?

Do you feel at one with nature when you interact naturally with your dog?

The language of energy. Have you become more aware of your dog's energy projection? Have you become aware of your own projection of energy? What types of energy do you or your dog emit? What do you strive to emit? How does your dog help or not help you with that?

Energy that you project is a current reflection of your current state of being?

Have you taken on a role of pack leader? Has being a pack leader helped you in any way to learn to be?

Relating to Others

Do you relate to dogs differently now after using these methods and dog psychology?

Do you related to people differently?

McConnell's methods helped you to create a different kind of relationship with your dog. What is the essence of that relationship? Is it anything you think you can transfer in relating to humans?

Describe the relationship you had with your dog before working with your dog and now after. Is it different? how?

Did applying these natural methods help you foster a closer bond with your dog? Has that transferred in any other way?

Do you have a family? Has this impacted how you relate to your husband, kids? Community?

How has working with your dog in a natural way brought about change in the way you behave, interact, relate to others?

Do you feel confident, or have an increased amount of confidence when working with your dog? How can you tell? Do you feel this confidence transfers to other parts of your life and relating to others? How can you tell?

Are you a leader in other areas of your life?

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

Transcribed Interviews

Interview one

Interviewee: This woman I worked for last year for a while, **Julie Hoffman**, is an animal chiropractor, the second animal chiropractor licensed in the world.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: She's 19 miles, not even that, down the road.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And age avoidance is like this talk about being a rock star, the animal communicator is right here and she says "What is up with this place? Why are these people—?"

Interviewer: It's a dog Mecca.

Interviewee: Something, something about it

Interviewer: So how did—tell me I guess how you got into dogs and working with dogs?

Interviewee: I always had—I think we did—always had a dog growing up, but they were part of the family, but it was definitely 70's dog people; got a dog here, got a dog here. One of them lived outside her entire life.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: And he was my first dog of my own when I moved out and I didn't know anything about it. I didn't know anything about dogs, but I didn't know that at that point. I got him and suddenly everything blew up. He had separation anxiety. Now, I didn't know that's what it was called at the time. In a way, I was blessed with my ignorance of it or I'd have been much more frightened. He was leash aggressive. He was dog-dog aggressive off lead and I mean ____ of having him in a terrible environment, so I was all just kind of this cascade of issues.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: With all those things happening, that's how for me I became the after person. I was a before and I was a very definite after. I started

out training him at PetSmart. I didn't know anything about positive reinforcement training, never heard the term. He learned how to sit and heel with a choke chain because we had to buy a choke chain and it didn't occur to me to question that.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: So he went through that class. I started taking him to day care here at Dog's Best Friend—not Dog's Best Friend—Lucky Dogs, that's what it's called, and the guy who owns that business is a former trainer of Dog's Best Friend.

Interviewer: Okay, okay, and that's Dr. McConnell's—

Interviewee: Right, right.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And he suggested I take Pooka to one of their classes. So we went to a beginning class and there was all kind of _____ too. He could not handle being in the classroom with the other dogs. He just barked and barked and barked, and lunged at one dog in the class and I was just mortified. I called the trainer who is Chelsea Whelant, who is the behaviorist at Dog's Best Friend. "Can I leave him home? Can I just come myself?" She said, "Please, please do that!" (Laughter) It was really that experience of just being able to sit there and watch other people working with their dogs and really being able to focus on the trainer and hearing what she had to say that it all started to click.

Interviewer: What was different about that vs. PetSmart?

Interviewee: Everything, everything. There were no choke chains; they are not allowed is one reason. Just that suddenly occurred to me like, "Oh right, yeah that probably does hurt him. I didn't even think about that." Seeing people working with their dogs, like asking for behaviors, actually communicating with them as opposed to, "Give it!" Do I because you're actually being manipulated into doing it was just kind of amazing to me. I went home and worked with him and he's a pretty smart little cookie anyway, but just like that things started to change and his behaviors with other dogs on leash started to turn around. We did it all the time; it was constant work, but it started to turn around.

Interviewer: What did you do specifically with him? So you came home and started applying some of the things that you had heard and learned at the center?

Interviewee: Right. In terms of his aggression issues, we'd be out on a walk and I'd see a dog coming. We would stop, we'd do a sit and I'd call his name. He would look at me and treat. I'd call his name, he'd look at me and treat. Very quickly he'd see a dog and he'd look at me and that's how it's been for years now.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: And he's not leash aggressive, but he does it now as well. If we're walking, and I haven't given him a treat for that in years, but if we see someone, another person even without a dog, he will—
(*Laughter*) So he's a little imitator, but yeah it started to turn around. I then started to volunteer at the local Humane Society walking the pre-adoptable dogs and I did that for three or four years.

Interviewer: Did you use some of the things that you had learned then?

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely with some success and a lot of failure. I mean that's a hugely stressful environment for them.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: It's a hugely stressful environment, but yeah with some success and from there, at that time Chelsea was the behavioral coordinator at the Humane Society.

Interviewer: Oh okay, okay.

Interviewee: And just talking to her one day I said, "You know what? What's up with Dog's Best Friend? Can I be a volunteer?" That's how I started working with them, actually working for them.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Interviewee: Volunteered for maybe three or four years and then became and assistant trainer and now I'm a trainer.

Interviewer: Wow. How often do you work there?

Interviewee: We're on a break right now, but sessions are six weeks in length and I usually have at least—on one night you would teach two classes. So I usually work one or two night a week.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you're able to make a connection and help other people like you were helped?

Interviewee: I do actually, certainly not with everybody, but it happens so much. I encounter people all the time—I mean it's not every day, but it's pretty darn close that when I go outside, I see somebody that I've had in class. People by in large say, "Thank you so much!" Just on my own, I was helping a friend with her new puppy and she sent me an e-mail last week and she said, "I just wanted to let you know that he escaped from the yard the other day and he was running and I went and called him and he actually came to me. Thank you so much!"

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: It's like yeah, that's it.

Interviewer: So do you think there's a definite difference between dog training and dog psychology?

Interviewee: Dog psychology in the sense of working with behavioral issues?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Like relating to them as dogs vs. having them do specific tricks because they're told to and, like you had mentioned before, they are manipulated and they are told to and forced to do something vs. kind of getting into the psyche of who they are as animals?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean I guess I feel like obedience is just almost a word I don't like because it's so very—to me it's just learning how to live together where you both can handle it.

Interviewer: How do you—I guess how do you do that? What is it? What are those—what does it take to learn how to live?

Interviewee: Well, I mean I guess it's different for everybody. I mean some people don't care if their dogs stand at the window and bark and bark and bark at anything and everyone. They don't care. So for them, that's not a problem. For me, that would be a huge problem and I would have to figure out how to solve that in a way that works because I know that blasting an air horn at them or throwing a book at them or screaming at them is not gonna work.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: We know all the studies that show that positive reinforcement works better than anything else. I'm not sure I'm answering your question.

Interviewer: No, I think you are, definitely. I think there's a—I think it's I guess what I'm calling dog psychology and kind of getting into their psyche and solving a problem based on how—what you would like them to work towards or move towards and how to help them get there.

Interviewee: Yeah, it's kind of reverse engineering in a way, trying to be—you know what you want the outcome to be and you have to think backwards using the dog's brain about what's going to motivate them. *[to dog]* Having a problem? Apparently, you are.

What's going to motivate them; and really to me that's the biggest part of dog training, about obedience, and why positive reinforcement works and figuring out their motivation.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you have a better understanding of their nature, like who they are as dogs?

Interviewee: Mmhmm, their own personalities or just dogs in general?

Interviewer: Kind of both, kind of on a hierarchy level. First dog, then species, and then the individual breed, and then their own personality.

Interviewee: Absolutely, certainly on the top most level. They're not all that different. They all do the same sort of things because everything I think we see as behavior is all the way they communicate. So they are all doing the same stuff, just slightly differently. Once you can see that, once that's like second nature to you, then it's easier to, "Oh well, he's clearly stressed and that gives me an idea of what kind of guy he is anyway."

Interviewer: When did you begin to see that you opened yourself up to seeing their behaviors?

Interviewee: Probably I would say a year or two into volunteering for Dog's Best Friend because from that vantage point you're not up in front of the classroom training. You're sitting back and you're supposed to help the people if they have any trouble with their dogs, help quiet the dogs; so you're just sitting back and watching. When you've done it for a while you see the signs and you see a dog

starting to lose it so you can go deal with that situation. When you're noticing two dogs staring at each other and you're a heartbeat away from growling and barking, you just start noticing the patterns and what those signals mean.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: In a way, I don't even notice that I notice it anymore and I think it's that way for a lot of people when they've been doing this for a while. I don't have to really think about opening my mouth and how I'm going to talk to you because I know how to do it. So it's that way with them too now.

Interviewer: So you don't have to think of the mindfulness that you bring towards interacting with them; like a lot of it becomes automatic in just relating to them?

Interviewee: It does, yeah. It doesn't certainly in picking up on their visual signals and that sort of thing. That's just autopilot now.

Interviewer: Is it something you had to work at and that took a while? You had mentioned earlier that it wasn't intuitive.

Interviewee: Right. I think the working at it was just the amount of time I spent doing it week after week after week. In a way, he's been a great teacher for that because he's had so many issues. *(Laughter)* But I think it's absolutely true. It's why I do what I do now because he's been such a time bomb that he would throw behaviors and throw signals all the time out there in the world and I could just, "Okay, we're having a problem now. Gonna see it coming."

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: He's really been a huge help to me in that way. He's the reason why.

Interviewer: How long afterwards did you get—?

Interviewee: I just—this is Pooka and that's Ranger by the way.

Interviewer: Ranger, okay, Ranger, okay, okay.

Interviewee: I just got Ranger in December.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And I never thought I'd be able to have another dog because I didn't think he would allow it.

Interviewer: Mmhmm, and they're buds now?

Interviewee: No, nope. They're not buds. I don't think they ever will be. He doesn't play with dogs and he loves dogs. *(Laughter)* So they don't play or anything like that, but they coexist. We've worked it out.

Interviewer: Did Ranger have any behaviors that you wanted to shape?

Interviewee: Well, you saw a little of it when you walked in. He's a terrible jumper and he's getting better at that although in the house it's really hard. He gets very excited. Out there it's easier. He has an incredible prey drive, which this guy has no prey drive at all.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: None. Maybe if a cat runs away from him, he'll be kind of interested in that, but everything else—squirrels will walk right in front of him, he does not care. *(Laughter)* But that thing is crazy; just these high-pitched squealing yips if he sees a squirrel.

Interviewer: Do you think it's harder to shape their natural instincts?

Interviewee: Infinitely more, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, that's all about operant conditioning. I just don't know how to go at it any other way.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. One of Dr. McConnell's goals is to help humans establish rewarding relationships with their goals. Do you feel like you've reached that with him and Ranger?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Definitely.

Interviewee: And I think I had that with him before I even got into any of the real dog stuff. I mean with that dog there was an immediate connection, just, "You are my dog. You are mine."

Interviewer: How did you come to get him?

Interviewee: Humane Society.

Interviewer: Humane Society, that's right.

Interviewee: Yeah, I walked in and it was at the old Humane Society, which is like a gulag and I walked up to his kennel door and he flopped down on his back and wiggled his legs and I'm like, "Oh, that's my dog." (*Laughter*)

Interviewer: Aww. So how does it affect you? I think that's the—as a therapist, I'm looking at ways, the therapeutic value of doing what you do and what you know about dogs and how does that help you? How has this relationship and process and learning and mindfulness, what has it done for you personally?

Interviewee: I think in terms of my relationships with human beings, I tend to look at their motivation much more than I ever did before and notice even physically what's going on with them too.

Interviewer: Hmm, do you think there are some similar cues between dogs and people?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. Chelsea and I always laugh, "Did you see Dr. Phil? That guy had a total fear of intimacy." (*Laughter*) That's a fear grimace. I know what that looks like! Noticing those kind of physical cues, but actually thinking about, "Why are you doing this? What is going on in your world that's causing this kind of behavior for you?" I didn't really do that before. He and I are very similar in temperament.

Interviewer: In what way? How would you—what are the similarities?

Interviewee: Low frustration tolerance and kind of a need, it's like I need my will to be how I need my will or there's gonna be a problem. He's much worse about it than I am, but he really helped me see that in myself. I mean I thought about it today. I had a little thing going on in my head with, "I just can't let this problem go." We went to the dog park today and he was barking and barking and barking at me about the ball. It was like, "Is this what I sound like?" (*Laughter*) "Is this what it is? Because it's kind of annoying and I should let that go."

They are mirrors, I think. I think that happens for most people whether they've done the same kind of training I've done or not, but they project and see themselves, but I think if you're being really honest about it, that can be extremely helpful.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: I don't have children. I have nephews, but that's about as close as it is. They allow me to nurture and have some sense of order and care in my life that wouldn't be there otherwise.

Interviewer: So with this insight that you have into your own psychology or behavior, what has that allowed you to do with it?

Interviewee: Well, it's made me very aware that I am very aware that I can grow. I'm just cognizant of that fact. I see it happen with dogs all the time. I see their personalities—well not change so much, but I see them able to overcome what for them are very serious issues, serious fears. I think I'm constantly thinking about my own emotional growth, my own path.

Interviewer: Whereas you didn't before necessarily?

Interviewee: Well, I was a lot younger; that probably plays a part in it too. I guess I think about it in a different way. I think I think about it in a more scientific way maybe than I used to rather than, "I hope this works out for me." (*Laughter*) "I hope my life will change somehow." I just think about my own behavior and my own motivations. If I notice I'm not doing things, like if I'm not working hard enough, it's like, "Why are you doing that? What's going on?" Yeah, I guess I think about myself.

Interviewer: So who helps shape your behavior?

Interviewee: Now?

Interviewer: Yeah. I mean not like—do you have—I guess what I'm saying is if you help them shape their behavior, do you have kind of a more internal regulator to help yourself make those changes?

Interviewee: That's always the goal. That's the goal, yeah, to be that self-regulator. In a large way—I heard a woman on the radio today talking about a book she wrote called *Dreaming in Libro* I think it's called and the subtitle is something about how a good dog saved a bad woman or something like that and that's kind of I think how they serve that role too. You have to be home. You have to go on walks. You have to prepare our food. They provide that place that I guess used to be mom and dad. They provide some of that.

Interviewer: How often do you take him out for walks?

Interviewee: Oh, three or four times a day.

Interviewer: You do?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: We don't have yards. I've always lived in an apartment with Pooka, so we've just always walked.

Interviewer: Mmhm. Do you embrace or practice the same pack leadership skills when you walk?

Interviewee: Yeah and I'm leery of that term just because what's his face, Cesar.

Interviewer: Cesar, yeah. *(Laughter)* I understand.

Interviewee: He's not my cup of tea. Yeah, I mean I'm definitely—I'm mommy. You gotta do what mommy says cause mommy knows. We're not strict and rigid about it, but I don't like heeling dogs constantly. You go do what you need to do and we heel just when we need that tool.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: But yeah it happens on my cue and if it doesn't then we wait until it does.

Interviewer: What do you think are some key differences between the techniques of Dr. McConnell and Cesar?

Interviewee: There's a lot. There are things that he says that I absolutely agree with. Dogs don't get enough exercise. We probably do, by in large, coddle our dogs too much. They're not people, they're dogs. To me that doesn't mean you treat them badly; you treat them differently. What I don't like about him and what is a huge difference between his philosophy and **Tricia's** is that he advocates—I'm sure he would never, ever call it this—but he advocates punishment. It's a legitimate training method, it is, but it's incredibly hard to get it right, to do it well, and to do it in proportion. He's advocating putting it in the hands of Joe Blow, who have a hard time getting positive reinforcement training right.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: So that really just tears at my heart that he's got people poking and pinching and pranking on their dogs. It's just frightening to me and I know that people have been hurt by their dogs in response to that and it's frightening. Not to mention, he talks about rehabilitating dogs. Well, he's not. He's managing their behaviors. He's not changing how they feel inside, which I think is very possible to do with a lot of Tricia's methodologies.

Interviewer: And you've seen it definitely in your guys.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He doesn't have that panic and fear and then fear-rated aggression about other dogs coming at him. He doesn't really want them to get that close, but he doesn't have to strike out in that manner anymore.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: So I just—yeah it makes me very sad for all of those dogs out there with their owners tuning into that show. *(Laughter)*

Interviewer: So things that you've learned personally is how to look at what motivates you and regulate your own behavior. Do you think this is something that's, I guess, significantly impacted you; like has been life changing or is it just—I don't want to say a fad or phase, but do you think it's a definite positive self-growth or change in your sense of self?

Interviewee: Yeah, oh yeah. My life is completely different than it was before I got him. When I got him I had no thought that I would want to be a dog trainer or do dog sports. I just wanted a dog and he's opened up this world for me that I mean it's like tree roots basically in terms of employment and friends and beliefs.

Interviewer: Hmm, I'd like to hear more about those.

Interviewee: About the beliefs?

Interviewer: And the friends and kind of what benefits being mindful and aware with yourself has—what doors it's opened up for you as a person in all areas.

Interviewee: It has been all areas, yeah. I'm trying to think if I have any friends that don't have dogs. *(Laughter)* I don't think I do. Two or three of my very close friends are Dog's Best Friend trainers or assistants. So that's just—I mean right there it's a boon. I met Jody because the—Range, the wiggle.

Interviewer: [to dog] Hi!

Interviewee: [to dog] Ranger. [whistles] Good boy, good boy. Because Amy Moore, who owns Dog's Best Friend now said, "Hey, this clinic out in Marshall, this _____ clinic is looking for a receptionist. Why don't you go work out there a couple of days a week?" [to dog] Ranger, you are so rude.

Interviewer: We've got to put this back. (Laughter)

Interviewee: [to dog] I know it's very exciting; it's very exciting isn't it? But you need o settle your body. That's what he does, he stares.

Interviewer: So a lot of friends have the same time of belief system and it's opened up—

Interviewee: I only have one friend who doesn't believe in training a dog.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: That thinks it's wrong; that it doesn't allow them to be the creatures that they are.

Interviewer: (Laughter) Do you visit often?

Interviewee: I do. She's absolutely one of my best friends. I know she thinks what I do is goofy.

Interviewer: Why does she think it's goofy?

Interviewee: Well, I think she thinks that it's cruel to them in a way to ask for polite behavior. [to dog] Ranger Roo. [whistles] Ranger, good boy, good boy.

When her dogs are doing things that annoy her, she gives them rawhides, so they are fat and loud.

Interviewer: They are fat and loud! (Laughter)

Interviewee: That's okay with her, its works fine.

Interviewer: Do you think you relate to people differently?

Interviewee: I know I relate to people with dogs differently.

Interviewer: You do?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I mean—and I’m sure you must do it with your line of expertise, not that I’m an expert, but the wheels start turning when you see behaviors.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Oh that’s gonna be a problem.

Interviewer: You’ve got a good view, you know what I mean.

Interviewee: Oh man. *[to dog]* Down, Ranger. Good boy; that’s a good boy. Oh I lost it. Oh its changed things I believed. I used to be a big advocate of no-kill shelters. I’m not that anymore and that’s come about through this work through—*[to dog]* Ranger Roo. You may end up—

Through this work and through working at the shelter.

Interviewer: What changed your belief about that?

Interviewee: A conversation I listened to. I wasn’t even participating with two other trainers and one of them worked at a shelter and she was talking; she started to cry about a dog that was in this no-kill shelter that had been there for almost two years in a tiny little room. It was pacing and pacing and pacing and pacing and it was stuff that I’d seen at the **Dane** County Humane Society, but they certainly didn’t keep animals that long. I remember just going, “Wow, I’d better not say anything right now because I don’t want to get her mad. I believe differently,” and I started thinking about what she was talking about.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: It just sort of clicked in my head like, “You’re right, I do think that’s kind of cruel.”

Interviewer: So do you think—is there a sense of compassion that’s come more strongly influenced with dogs or people or—?

Interviewee: It’s a different kind of compassion and it’s sometimes hard to talk about with other people, particularly people I don’t know because I’m always worried that it won’t sound compassionate to them, but to say, “Yeah, I think its better that you euthanize a dog rather than keep it pent up like that for five years.”

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: It's that I feel like I'm trying to think from their perspective more than I used to.

Interviewer: Do you think that result it more compassionate for dogs?

Interviewee: I do, I do. I feel like before it was compassion that would leave me feeling guilt-free. I didn't harm that animal. I didn't make that decision. So that was easier for me than I think for other people when they get killed that way than thinking about what is going on in this animal's life.

Interviewer: Hmm. Do you think that's transferred to people at all and like relating to other people, that same sense of compassion and what other people—what it's like to be them?

Interviewee: Yeah, I do. I feel like it comes into play for me most often in my role as a trainer. I have to think about having conversations with people who, "I need to put a shock collar on my dog," and having to really think about how to have that conversation with them where I'm trying to understand what they're going through so I can try to talk to them in a way that they'll get, that they'll see.

Interviewer: What about not necessarily dog-related people, just people?

Interviewee: Just people? *(Laughter)*

Interviewer: Well it could be dog people; not necessarily dog-related subjects.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I can honestly say I try, but it's so much easier for me in that other realm. I can see myself doing it more often more naturally in that realm. When it's non dog-related, I have to work harder at it.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. Is that something that you are mindful of or try to practice?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. *(Laughter)*

Interviewer: Hmm. Tell me about were any of the problems that you initially had with them, did you consider it them and later found out that it was you or your approach to them?

Interviewee: To them being—?

Interviewer: Problems.

Interviewee: Problems.

Interviewer: You had mentioned that he had fear aggression and I mean some of them I think were unhealthy ways of being, but when you initially came to this new method did you think, “Oh, I need to just make my dog do this and he needs to do that,” and have a change of, “Oh, this is about me?”

Interviewee: I definitely became aware that I certainly wasn’t helping, but that I was playing a part in prolonging those issues and with some of it—
[to dog] Ranger, good boy.

He does that if you just want to pet him when he puts four feet on the floor.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: [to dog] That way you won’t be reinforced for being rude. Yeah, dance the wiggle.

Interviewer: [to dog] Yay, that’s a good dog. Aww, that’s a good dog. I know that wiggle. Yes I do. I have a friend too that has that wiggle.

Interviewee: [to dog] Ranger, good boy.

Becoming really aware that I’m gonna panic and something’s gonna happen. It’s just going right down the leash into that dog. That’s been really hard. It’s something I’m still working on. [to dog] Not even. I know what you’re thinking. I know what you are thinking. Good boy.

I’m in that moment trying to—that’s where I find I’m really trying to be consciously mindful of my behavior.

Interviewer: Does that help you deal with—off the leash, does that help you in any other way like with stress or coming back to the same place?

Interviewee: Mmhmm.

Interviewer: How do you do it?

- Interviewee:* A lot of breath work. I know when I'm getting ready to go into a stressful situation or a situation I know is going to be stressful for me either because of how I'm feeling or what I'm about to face, that I take a few minutes and I put up my _____ and I ask for help and all of that. I've found that to be a really positive change in my life, just being aware. I did it today as we went for a walk. I feel myself kind of stressing out a little bit and just *[breathes out]* take it easy or something's gonna annoy me that they're doing that isn't them, it's just me.
- Interviewer:* You know I think one of the things that when you become more mindful and really into dogs, you become more aware of what they do, but also kind of be more aware of what they see too and how that plays in part to the relationship and the dynamics. So that's very cool that that's helped you personally too.
- Interviewee:* Yeah, I have a—my best friend has two small children and we were having a conversation a while ago. You know what? I just decided today I need to be nicer.
- Interviewer:* *(Laughter)*
- Interviewee:* I listen to myself out on walks with my dogs and like, "Come on, let's go!" She's like, "Oh that's how I am with the kids lately. Everything is just snipe, snipe, snipe." Yeah when I set that intention out there and like, "I'm not gonna say anything but positive things today on this walk right now. Let's just get through it without any kind of ah!" and being mindful of that, it totally turns things around. There's a dog training thing about try to get to good as fast as possible.
- Interviewer:* Hmm.
- Interviewee:* And I think about that a lot with any situation.
- Interviewer:* So what does that mean?
- Interviewee:* Trying to get to a place where you can say or feel or think something positive about whatever is going on. In terms of their stuff or working with a client with a dog, "My dog, get down, get down, get down." Its like, "Okay, I think he got down a little further than he did last time. Good boy. Good, let's get to that." Which certainly has an affect on them, but it also has an affect on the person that we're making progress. We're getting somewhere. I'm not failing. I do think about that a lot in my own life, but if I'm depressed or dealing with somebody out there in the world, it's

like, “Okay, what’s the one thing I can zero in on right here and get to the good.”

Interviewer: Hmmm.

Interviewee: It lessens it all overall I think.

Interviewer: You mentioned spiritually, spiritual beliefs. Did you mention spiritual?

Interviewee: No, I don’t know if I did, but it’s covered under that area too. So it’s in there.

Interviewer: I was gonna ask if you wouldn’t mind sharing I guess how it’s changed your belief system or what it is or how dogs fit into that or they don’t?

Interviewee: I think I’ve always had an inkling of this. I mean it wasn’t a brand new concept to me, but it’s certainly been solidified that I think they communicate with us in ways beyond their physical language and certainly talking to a couple of animal communicators, it has just been a mind blowing experience.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. I did both of those, three of them before I got Ranger so it was all about Pooka. He wouldn’t have been comfortable in the environment, physically being there, so I left him here and I went to talk to the communicator. My mother said, “I don’t understand how she can do that if he’s not in the room.” Do you understand how she can do it if he is in the room? (*Laughter*) Does that clear it up for you? But both of them saying things specifically about him that I just—I wanted to believe it anyway, but it left no doubt in my mind. Then going on past dogs and talking about people in my mind. I guess it’s really kind of solidified the idea for me that this isn’t it; there is more. That’s a very big, but all encompassing answer that there’s something that informs why we’re here.

Interviewer: Do you think that’s just for dogs and just for people or is that part of a larger—?

Interviewee: No, I think that’s everything, I think anyway. It’s all energy whether it’s physical or emotional; it’s all energy. I guess I’ve always kind of thought that with my limited knowledge of physics, but just really I think it’s a benevolent—I think we live in a

benevolent universe; that it isn't just a blind eye, but yeah. I'm trying to tap into that as much as possible.

Interviewer: When you relate to dogs, do you feel like you connect more with them in essence?

Interviewee: Yeah, well they have no pretext. The ones who do are highly, highly dangerous. *(Laughter)* So they're just—so I always think that when I see dogs on t.v. or in movies; they're not acting.

Interviewer: *(Laughter)* Not acting.

Interviewee: _____ whatever it is they're doing. It's easier to be that yourself. You're working with someone who is also, being _____. From what people tell me it is more so with horses.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. I think about the same. I mean it's very similar, yeah. In working with them and relating to them, I think it connects you with something that's larger than yourself, for me. It sounds like dogs do that for you. Do you think it encompasses all of the nature, universe, universal types of things when you're relating to them? Do you feel like it—I guess talk to me about the sense that it brings you when you interact from the spiritual perspective.

Interviewee: It's incredibly calming. I should say when I'm training, most of the time I'm not in that headspace just because I'm the person who is responsible for everybody seeing _____.

Interviewer: *(Laughter)* Right, you've got a lot on your shoulders at that time.

Interviewee: Yeah, in those moments, but when I'm trying to work with them one on one, with people one on one with their dogs, or in some instances just with people, you can tell when you're kind of—you can almost hear the click, I'm locked in. Certainly, doing some body work with dogs, it's easy to get there. It's just calm and for me I always have to—I see the visual in my head and it's like there just calm. There's a big blank space in my brain that nothing is happening but that. *[to dog]* Good boy.

With people, it's a little bit harder, but that's because there's always this and embarrassment and all of that stuff.

Interviewer: What do dogs have I guess that makes it easier to connect?

Interviewee: They don't have that. *[to dog]* Ranger Roo. Good boy, can you sit? Ranger. Thanks for listening.

He's hoping he's gonna get something out of that. They don't have that. I mean they are always looking for how it's gonna benefit them, what they're gonna get out of it, but that's not a selfish motive. That's just hardwired instinctual survival mode. It's not selfish in the way that it is with people.

Interviewer: So do you think it's easier—

Interviewee: Good Lord. *[to dog]* Ranger, good boy.

Interviewer: So do you think it's easier to make that connection with something that's a part of nature or closer to nature or more primal in a way?

Interviewee: I do, just for that reason. They don't have an agenda. They're not trying to figure you out. I don't think they're trying to figure out what your motives are. Yeah, they don't have a plan beyond what have you got? *(Laughter)* You got anything?

Interviewer: What feelings does that connection—you mentioned calmness, is there anything else that that connection brings you?

Interviewee: I don't know. I mean there's an incredible sense of satisfaction and awe. I can't believe this is happening and I really do think it is happening.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you get it any other parts of nature? It is similar or different?

Interviewee: It's definitely a feeling of the times when I can really successfully meditate, it's that feeling, exactly. For me it's harder just going out in the world because I'm a little really trying to be aware of my surroundings out there and it's hard for me to just let it go in that same way and feel completely safe and secure. But I feel more of—*[to dog]* Ranger, come on. You're getting tired, yeah.

Interviewer: But you try to take it with you?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That sense of connectiveness?

Interviewee: Yeah, I feel like what I get out of the world when I'm being open to it is more exhilarating and a lot of more joyful I guess. With them it's more peaceful, I think, calm. Calm—it doesn't seem like it.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: Something actually—Jody's actually embodied it. She's really very fun to watch—she does acupuncture—because in her light, in her person, she's like a whirlwind. Even right here, she's like a whirlwind. She's very, "I'm doing this. I'm going here, I'm going there." When you see her doing acupuncture on animal, it's like she's a different person and just being around her almost makes you go to sleep. She is so calm and focused and centered and to me that's like when I feel that light, that's what I picture it. That's what it must look like to other people from the outside.

Interviewer: And that's what you strive for, the being mode?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I mean I think that's—it's gotta be the end goal to try to think that way all the time, but she's much further down the road than I am. She can only do it when she's working on an animal.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you're trying to move that to other areas and dogs help? That relationship and connection that you have and the being mode, the calm, peaceful feeling helps you relate that way to other people?

Interviewee: Yeah, well it's given me a place to start. This is where I know I can tap into it and try to practice basically. It's all about practice, just trying again, trying again, and trying again to see if you can make it work this time.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. They look happy.

Interviewee: She's always happy. He's not; he's never, ever happy.

Interviewer: Well, do you have any questions for me?

Interviewee: I do, I do. I hope this doesn't seem like a weird question, I just don't know if I understand it. How is this gonna work for you?

Interviewer: Do you mind if I stop it?

Interviewee: Oh yeah.

[End of Audio]

Interview two

Interviewee: Distracting. It makes me think of the Princess Bride. Did you ever see the Princess Bride?

Interviewer: I think a long time ago.

Interviewer: They are torturing the guy and they go, “Now be honest. This is for posterity.”

Interviewer: Okay, so tell me about your experience with dogs.

Interviewee: Well, starting when?

Interviewer: Well, you tell me a little bit about these guys and how you acquired them and some of maybe their background and your history with them or how your affection enters in to—maybe way back. What got you interested in dogs?

Interviewee: Being a vet?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Well, when I was a kid my dog was my best friend. She was a daschund terrier mix named Cookie. She slept with me every night and she was my best friend. I mean I could tell her everything and she was afraid of storms and she would push me off the bed when she was scared. She would push, push, push until I fell off the bed. Didn't really do her any good, but I didn't care. Then I thought—she was as old as I was—when I was about 11 or 12, I thought, “You know that saying, ‘You can't reach an old dog new tricks,’ I'm gonna see if that's true. I don't think that's true.”

So I taught her to sit and stay and come and she was really good and then she had kidney failure and my parents put her in a cage in my room at night and I couldn't stand it because she would cry and I'd let her out and she'd jump on my bed and pee. I wouldn't wake them up and I'd change my bed and clean everything off and let her stay there because it was wrong to me for her to be in a cage when she was used to being in my bed. So I just wanted to be a vet always. Then my—

Interviewer: Did you have more dogs growing up or was that—

Interviewee: Well, we did, but they weren't like Cookie. We had a longer daschund and she was older and I really loved her too. She was a

bit troublesome sometimes. We thought it was hilarious, but it wasn't really to our neighbor who she bit. He was chasing me and I was screaming and so she bit him. Back then people didn't do anything. They were like, "Ah yeah, whatever. You shouldn't have been doing that."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And she did bite a jogger in the early days of jogging and we just said, "Well, don't step in our yard then."

Interviewer: (Laughter) It doesn't work that way anymore.

Interviewee: No, not at all. Not at all. We had her until I was in college and when I was in college she had seizures and I didn't know anything then because I was only an undergrad majoring in molecular biology and that didn't do me any good for knowing about animals. I just knew about their cells. Our vet didn't say that there was anything that they could do, so she died of seizures. I was so angry when I got to vet school and found out that Phenobarbital had been around for over 50 years.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: So that was quite distressing. Then we had a Malamute who died when she was three of congenital heart failure. I'm not sure what that was. Sometimes he just talks. He doesn't growl or anything.

Interviewer: No, I didn't think he would. I just heard that.

Interviewee: He wants to play. That's his issue. "Throw the toy for me. Throw the toy for me."

So then when I was in vet school I got a dog and a surgery research dog got pregnant and one of my friends was in the lab, worked in that lab, so she said, "Come here, come here, come here. You've got to take one of these puppies. We all have to take one because they're gonna euthanize them all." So we all took a puppy and we had to hide all the puppies and the mom in a lab far away so that no one could find them. When they were five weeks old, someone told on us and they said they needed to have the mom back. So we had to take the puppies all away when they were only five weeks.

Interviewer: Ohhh.

Interviewee: And mine was extraordinarily dominant. When she was three weeks old, she would stand in the middle of the food dish and the mom and the other puppies would stand at the other end of the run in a huddle while she ate all she wanted. When she was done and walked out, then they could come eat. That was three weeks old. It was unreal. I thought, “What have I done?” Because I picked her up when she was three days old, so I already picked her because she was cute and had different markings than the others.

Interviewer: What breed was she?

Interviewee: Coonhound and Lab.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: She was black and tan. She was the only black and tan. So I had a challenge right there.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: She was extraordinarily dominant and I mean everyone knew she was dominant. Every dog that ever saw her just knew and they would kind of bow down like at the dog parks. Dog parks hadn’t started then, but all of the vet students, we brought our dogs to class and then in the middle we’d take them to the football field to play at lunch time.

Interviewer: Aww.

Interviewee: And no one ever hassled her. She played really well. She loved other dogs a lot. There were 13 puppies in her litter and she just loved other dogs. She just played and played and played.

Interviewer: Did she have any—she was with other female dominant dogs?

Interviewee: No, no, they all knew she was dominant. She only twice had a problem; once was when I was in my small animal medicine rotation and one of my classmates’ dogs who was quite a bit smaller than she was—she was 85 pounds and very thin, and her brothers were all over 100. Huge dogs. This dog kept attacking her every day under the table. It would attack her and attack her and attack her and she just ignored it and ignored it for weeks. Finally, she just had enough because it never would stop attacking her and she just roared like a lion and slammed it down with her paw.

Interviewer: Ohh!

Interviewee: Then the dog never did it again. Then one time we were living in an apartment after I had my oldest daughter and a neighbor was throwing a toy for his dog and then we came out and he goes, "Oh, let me throw the toy for your dog," and he threw his dog's toy for my dog and our dogs had never met before, so she didn't know that my dog was queen of the world.

Interviewer: Ohh.

Interviewee: He threw the toy for my dog and my dog ran and got it and his dog ran at her and went for her and she did the same thing, roar, smack down! And the dog ran away and the guy had to go find her. That was it. Those were the only two times anything ever happened to her. She was really queen of the world.

Interviewer: So why do you say she was a challenge because she was dominant?

Interviewee: She was unbelievably difficult. R.K. Anderson, he is the inventor of the Gentle Leader at he's at the University of Minnesota.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: I did a little bit of work for him, so he said, "I'll come over and evaluate your pets for you." My dog was maybe one at that time and I didn't think she had any problems. She seemed fine to me. I think she was challenging, but I didn't know any better because I was only the kid in the household before. Even though I did stuff and the dog was my best friend, I didn't have to really train her. It's not the same when you're the kid at all.

Interviewer: No, I hear you. I hear you.

Interviewee: So I didn't really know there was a problem. He just said he would come over. So he came over and I think he was inappropriate in his approach to my dog, very inappropriate. I mean he just came up to her and started petting her and then pushed her over and she went GROWL! And he went, "That is the most dominant, aggressive dog I have ever met." And I'm thinking, "You pushed her over," but she didn't bite him. She had great bite inhibition, really great bite inhibition. She never bit.

[dogs barking] Moe, we're not gonna play now. He rarely gets like this, but he's like this now.

Interviewer: It's okay.

Interviewee: [to dog] You feeling kind of nutty?

Interviewer: It's cool outside.

Interviewee: I didn't take him for a bike ride this morning. Usually, I take him for a bike ride, but today we went for a walk instead. So he said, "Write this down right now. I want you to write it down. No attention of any kind unless she obeys the command immediately and happily for the rest of her life!" I thought, "Wow, he really thinks she's bad." Then he said not to feed her for a day and to only feed her by hand when she obeyed a command immediately and happily, which she really never did.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: She never was happy to obey a command.

Interviewer: She wasn't?

Interviewee: Oh no. She was happy to get the food.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: She was really a sociopath. I mean the more I did with her, the more obvious it became and she lived to be almost 16.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: So I got to watch her in a long, long life and her ashes are right up on the mantle there and we really adored her. She was so difficult. We had this brilliant cat at the time who was the perfect cat, truly the perfect cat. Our other cat is in the basement because he has a little issue with them. This cat knew how to do everything and he did things I know—I swear it really looked like he did it on purpose. He taught her how to open the cupboards. What he'd do is he'd go in front of her and go boop, boop, and then open it up and then she'd go get stuff and make a big mess and then he's sit and look.

Interviewer: Could he open them?

Interviewee: Yeah he could open the cupboards. Well they kind of just popped open. So he taught her how to do that. So pretty soon she started eating all of our feed, all of it, and we couldn't keep food. She started eating everything. She developed separation anxiety really, really bad. She also had severe allergies and had to be bathed every

three days to keep her allergies under control and I was doing Western medicine then. So I didn't have the things I have now, where gee, I could have done so many other things and helped all of this. We couldn't keep her in a crate because she developed crate anxiety and she drooled enough that it busted out the bars of the crate.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Interviewee: When that got to be a problem that was horrible. Before that, we kept her in the basement in one of the houses where we lived when I was in school and she ate through the wall because her friend lived next to her and she ate through to her friend. Another place we lived had a dirt basement, but it was a really big, deep basement. She dug out of the basement.

Interviewer: Oh!

Interviewee: She learned to open everything. We were at my mom's house when she learned to open the fridge. What happened was I came upstairs and she was standing there looking in the fridge and the refrigerator was open. It was dark; it was nighttime and there was this light coming from the fridge and it was like just revelation on her face like, "I hit the promised land, wow!" So from then on, she knew how to open the fridge. She figured it out. She just popped it with her paw.

Interviewer: They say that the smartest dogs often get into the most trouble.

Interviewee: This dog was absolutely brilliant, but in a sociopathic way. It was never to please people. Hound dogs are independent and they're hunters.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And they don't really give a rip about us other than we might give them something like whatever they want at the time. Where these guys really enjoy people's company.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: She enjoyed people's company because she might get something out of it. Really that is how she was and she was me as—I was the only alpha to her in the world and I could never physically try to do anything to her because she would go after somebody if they tried to physically do it. She never bit anybody, but my husband

one time—I think the kids were really little or maybe we only had one and I came home and my husband and the dog were rolling around on the floor and screaming at each other. I said, “Stop it, what happened here?” He knew—he was here when R.K. told us all this stuff when she was one. She was probably five at this time.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: She was on the chair and I said, “What did you do?” He goes, “I grabbed her.” I was like, “What are you thinking. You know you can’t grab her. You can’t grab her.” He wanted her off the chair and I said, “I don’t even look at her.” I look away and snap my fingers and point to the ground and she’d get off. Of course, she didn’t take Tim serious. Well, she didn’t take anybody else seriously, except me because I was the only person who ever followed through with her.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: She didn’t hurt him, but they were both screaming and rolling. I mean it was like WWF.

Interviewer: (Laughter) Oh no.

Interviewee: It was horrible.

Interviewer: So what techniques did you—where did you end up going to get help?

Interviewee: Well, R.K. gave me a lot of good stuff to start. I did have a Gentle Leader because he invented it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So, I had a Gentle Leader. I could not have walked her without the Gentle Leader. She just—well, it was amazing to me. The first time I put the Gentle Leader on—before that, I had been walking her and I was like, “Boy is she dumb. Does she not get heel?” She just didn’t seem to get heel at all. The second I put that thing on, she knew heel all along. She heeled perfectly like a little angle and I thought, “Ooh, ooh, she knew it.”

Interviewer: Yup.

Interviewee: So that was really good. I had a videotape that another vet whose clinic I had done an externship at had given me called Sirius Dog Training, S-I-R-I-U-S.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Ian Dunbar I think it was. He's a pretty famous dog training from way back then in the 80's or early 90's and I used his techniques, which are pretty much Tricia's techniques and they're all gentle leader of the pack kind of thing.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: He used treats and I definitely used treats. She was super food motivated. Then I'd listened to Tricia on the radio constantly listening in Wisconsin, constantly every Saturday morning I would listen to her and I had to work every Saturday, so I listened to her on the way to work or on the way home because they played it twice on public radio. So I'd always listen so I'd get really good ideas and it really helped me to deal with my clients. I read her books, but it really helped me to deal with my clients because I could use the information she'd say on the radio and say, "Oh, here's something you can do with separation anxiety," and then we had all the books and we had things that we would copy to hand out to people. We'd say, "Here's a little thing." Also, Karen overall has a really good book. She is a famous veterinary behaviorist and she has a really good book that has steps that you can copy off for clients.

Interviewer: Oh okay.

Interviewee: They're really long though. It's really long and people would go, "Oh, you've gotta be kidding," and I'd say, "Well, let me just make this more concise for you." All she's saying is don't leave them alone if they have separation anxiety and of course, I was quite intimate with separation anxiety because of my dog.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: And other behavior problems because clients would come to me with behavior problems all the time and then I'd tell them about my dog and they'd go, "Now, I don't feel so bad." She was unbelievable. As she got older, she got worse and worse and worse too.

Interviewer: Really? Why do you think that?

Interviewee: She really was a dog who needed a job and I wasn't around. I was working a lot. I couldn't bring her out to farms because she'd get kicked. She didn't have any healthy respect for horses whatsoever. She'd go right up to their butts to eat their poop; I mean right behind their back feet. And then she'd get kicked across the pasture and she'd come right back because she was the kind of dog that was not bothered by pain. It just—huge pain tolerance. She got kicked by a Friesian all the way across a paddock and came right back to eat more poop.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was a friend's horse. With our horses—she was pretty good with our horses, but she just wasn't afraid of them at all. Not that you should be afraid, but just have a respect. She had no respect for horses and cows—I could just see them going after her. Cows, when they get a bee in their bonnet—

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: – they get dangerous and I used to do mixed practice and I did bring her out to a couple of farms and then said, “Oh, that's okay. You can let her eat the retained placenta.” She was just thrilled that she got to eat the retained placenta, but I was afraid she was gonna leap into the cow and get the retained placenta for herself. So she just was challenging and she got worse I think because she developed more separation anxiety because I wasn't around. Well then she learned to open the diaper genie once we had a baby. They are very, very hard for a human being, adult human being to open. You have to push a button, turn something, get it exactly lined up correctly. She learned how to open that thing. Actually, that was the worse day of my life.

Interviewer: Oh no! (*Laughter*)

Interviewee: It was the worst day of my life. My oldest daughter had a broken leg because she slipped in this dog's drool because she drooled a lot when she drank. You know how big dogs are.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: So she slipped in the drool and had broken her leg. Then I had my other child who was a baby at the time. We had just gotten back from the grocery store. They were both wiped out and hungry and I walked down the hungry where I had tied my dog because I couldn't put her in a crate anymore, but I couldn't leave her loose

because she'd eat all of our food. She could open everything. We had locks on our fridge. She'd just rip them off. So I had her tied to my bed and for some reason she wouldn't eat through a rope. I still don't understand that, but she wouldn't and I put the hamper with the cloth diapers out in the hallway because we had white carpet and white walls. I left the diaper genie in the room because it's a diaper genie. Who can get into that?

So not only did she open the diaper genie and smear diarrhea disposable diapers all over my bedroom that had the kind of wooden floor with the cracks in the slats and we barely used those disposables. We'd just gotten back from a trip where we had to use them, but she pulled the bed through the doorway. She tipped it up and pulled it through the doorway, a queen sized bed through a little door in a tiny little ranch house and opened up the diaper hamper with the diarrhea cloth diapers and spread them all over the white carpet and white walls, all over.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Interviewee: You know what? The next—well right after that I went, “Ahhh,” and I took her and I thought, “Okay, I’m either going to strangle her or I’m gonna take her out into the hallway. I can’t strangle her in front of the children.” This is how I was thinking. I mean I was just wacko. I had these two little kids. My thyroid had gone and wasn’t working right at all and I didn’t know it and I had a severe fungal infection throughout my whole body. So I was just a disaster. I took her into the front hallway, put my 30 pound three year old who had a broken leg on top of her and I said, “Don’t let her move.” She said, “What if she moves?” I go, “She won’t,” and she didn’t. She knew that she was at the end of her little doggie rope.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Interviewee: My neighbor came over with the beans and said, “Oh I brought you some beans.” She said, “Oh my gosh, what happened?” And I said, “Carolyn, just go now while you still can.” She said, “No, no, I’ll help you clean up.” I said, “You are not cleaning that up.” She said, “Oh, I’ll take the baby.” The baby wouldn’t go to anybody at that time, she just screamed when someone tried to hold her. So I said, “It’s okay, just check on me in a few hours and make sure I’m still alive.” Those hours are erased from my mind. I have no idea how I cleaned it; no idea. Until my husband came home—

Interviewer: He didn’t see it?

Interviewee: Well, I'd already cleaned it up.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: He goes, "Oh I'm home," and I said, "Will you watch the kids for me now? I'm gonna take the dog to the clinic." He goes, "Why?" and I said, "I'm gonna euthanize her." She'd been horrible I mean for years before this too, but he said, "No you're not." And I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "You'll be really upset if you do that," and I said, "No, I won't. I'll be really upset if don't do this." He said, "What can I do to keep you from doing it?" I said, "Keep her out of my sight." He said, "For how long?" I said, "Forever!"

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: I was so angry, but I was fine after that. I just couldn't even look at her for a while.

Interviewer: So what prevented you from finding another home for her?

Interviewee: Nobody would take her. All the vets I knew would always say, "You still have that dog? You still have that dog? Listen to her stories." Whenever I would go to vet parties, they'd all say, "Jody, Jody, tell us what she did this time." I'd tell them the stories about her and they'd say, "Oh, oh my gosh! Oh my gosh! I can't believe she did that. I can't believe she's still alive. I can't believe you haven't euthanized her." And that time I did want to, but I was really wacko; I mean my thyroid was at zero. I could go for half a block of a walk and then I'd have to lay on the ground for half an hour to be able to move again. I was just a mess. So she was my dog.

Interviewer: So it must have been a pretty powerful relationship. I mean even aside from all the troubles that she caused you.

Interviewee: Yeah. Well she was gorgeous and she was nice to everybody. She was pushy, really pushy, especially with men. She'd jump up on them, but she was really nice. She wasn't a dog like the Samoyed. She didn't want to cuddle and she didn't like any of that, but she was never mean to anybody. She just had—her tail was wagging all of the time. Life was good for her. She thought this was great to go find things to do. She could have been a search and rescue dog. She would have been in seventh heaven. So she searched and rescued other things like how to open the gate in our backyard.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

- Interviewee:* She climbed the fence. She jumped the fence. She dug under the fence and then she learned to pop the gate. We had a latch. So we got a different kind of latch. We thought, “Well, let’s get a different kind that she doesn’t know how to work.” She watched me do it the first time and she went right over and did it with her paw.
- Interviewer:* Wow.
- Interviewee:* We put a new kind on and she did it again. She was brilliant, so we had to respect her because she was brilliant. I just couldn’t get over the things she could do. It just blew me away. She was amazing and she always came back. I mean she would run away if she got off her chain or whatever—we lived out in the country for a while on 50 acres and it was always when we needed to go somewhere, always. I was supposed to go meet a friend downtown to go hear a band. This friend we really had always wanted to hear and he ended up being great, in fact, but just as we were gonna go, she got out. I mean if you open the door, she’d just slide through, this 85 pounds skinny dog, and I’d say, “Come on,” and I’d run the other way. I’d do all those tricks how to get her to come.
- Interviewer:* Right.
- Interviewee:* She’d just look at me and, “Ha, ha, ha.” I mean it really looked like she was saying, “Ha, ha.” She had this little grin on her face and she’d run the other way. So we’d drive around looking for her and she loved to get in the car. It used to be when she was younger and we could just open the car and she’d come and get into the car. Nope, nope, nope. She could run all day long. That night I think she ran for two hours. We were really late going.
- Interviewer:* Wow. So why do you think as she got older that the techniques that you used with her didn’t help her?
- Interviewee:* She needed more of a challenge all of the time. She was brilliant, brilliant. They didn’t have these smart dog toys when she was young and they didn’t have dog classes. I mean the dog classes they had were just obedience. Agility had like just been invented. So she didn’t have these things to do. We did take her up to playgrounds all the time. It was against the law—
- Interviewer:* Right, right.
- Interviewee:* But we still took her to playgrounds and she would run across the bridges, you know the kind that were bumpy and go down and

stuff. She would run up and down slides and up and down steps. She would climb everything. She would do whatever I asked, so she was a brilliant agility dog. She wasn't afraid of anything. Well, she was afraid of something. She was afraid of hot air balloons. She got down on the ground and one went right over our head, you know that big whoosh.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: She got down on the ground and crawled all the way home. It was like a half mile.

Interviewer: Wow, wow.

Interviewee: She crawled. It made me think of early mammals when they were horrible flying beasts in the air you know, but that was it. She wasn't afraid of anything else and she was just always thinking of things to do. I mean when she figured out that fridge, that was something.

Interviewer: That is amazing.

Interviewee: In fact, there was a really—I even have a better story about the fridge. One day I got home and my husband said, “This time she’s gonna die.” I had made her throw up so many times. My brother-in-law lived with us for four years while he was in grad school and he would call me up all the time, “Jody, how do I make her throw up?” and I would tell him. Then he would call me right back and, “How do I make her throw up? She ate it again.”

So I got home once and my husband goes, “This time it’s it. This time she’s gonna die. She ate an entire corn beef brisket and a huge block of cheese.” Because she would pull out the meat drawer and take out what was in the meat drawer and then close it and then close the fridge too. She looked huge. I mean she had a big gut full of corn beef brisket and you could tell. I was like, “Oh no, she’s not gonna die.” By then I’d gone through so many heart attacks of thinking she was gonna die from eating pounds of grease, pounds of grease. That would kill probably ten other dogs all at once. She ate two pounds of grease once.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: That kills dogs like nothing; pancreatitis, they just die. You can’t even save them sometimes when they do stuff like that.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: She never even threw up. She had a stomach of iron. So I wasn't really worried and by this time we'd gone through this so many times, I was like, "Yeah, whatever. She'll be fine." So the next morning she got up out of our room. She always slept in our room, but not on the bed because she was too pushy. My husband couldn't stand having her on the bed anyway. It was a good thing, she was too pushy anyway. But she walked out really quietly, so I got up and followed her. She went into the living room and she went to the stereo. She pulled the stereo away from the wall with her paw and pulled out the block of cheese. She had stashed it.

So she started stashing food. So we started tying her to the dining room table when we were gone. She'd tip it over and pull it into the kitchen and get in the fridge. She broke the dining room table countless times. It's in the basement now. It just has three legs. We just have that as an art table for the kids and we put something else in there.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: So finally, I said, "Let's tie her to the table, that old upright piano that's over 100 years old and is missing a wheel. All of our friends will not move that thing again. They said, "You know we've hurt our backs so many times moving that piano," and I thought, "Let's tie her to the piano. She'll never move the piano," and she didn't because I thought, "Well if she did, then we would hire her out as a piano mover," but she didn't. So that worked. It worked and we gave her a pretty long leash, but it just couldn't reach into the kitchen. So she went all through the whole living room and dining room and the hallway. She could do all of that without reaching the kitchen and she was happy. This was—she was pretty old by then too.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. She slowed down a little bit.

Interviewee: She slowed down. When she was 12 I took her for about a two hour walk with a friend and I really hadn't taken her for that long of a walk in a while and then she got stiff. She developed—had a big tumor in her abdomen and had an ultrasound because I felt it and then I took the x-ray and I got the ultrasound. The ultrasonographer said, "Well you can put her to sleep," because she knew all the stories too and she was like, "Oh my gosh. You're gonna put this dog to sleep aren't you? You finally have an excuse." I said, "No, I'm not!" All I did was change her diet and

that tumor was never a problem. It was huge. It was the size of—almost the size of a basketball. It was the size of a basketball.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Interviewee: It was filled with blood and it was infiltrating her entire liver, just huge, and it hung off the liver. We just told the kids, “Don’t bump her,” and I changed her diet completely and it never bothered her. She lived for three and half more years after that diagnosis, but then she started having hind end trouble after that long walk and that’s when I started taking my acupuncture courses.

Interviewer: Okay, I was gonna ask—

Interviewee: So I started acupuncture her and then she could walk better. Then she started pooping in the house before that, before I started acupuncture her and we were just like, “Yeah, whatever. We’ll just clean it up. I mean she’s our dog.”

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: You know, it’s just like kids. They poop in the house.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: When you’re trying to potty train them. Well, so what and it was solid. So I’d just clean it up and didn’t think anything of it. When I started acupuncture her, that stopped.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: She just started feeling a lot better. Actually, I got one acupuncture treatment before I took the courses because I knew I was going to and I thought, “Well, let’s see how this goes,” and she was good. She got diarrhea, but I think it was because the woman gave her lots of treats. Then I treated her myself and she did really well. In fact, she still—she couldn’t run away anymore, but she would amble away and she always went into neighbors garages to look for the garbage. That was always her thing, garbage dog.

Then she lived until she was almost 16 and then finally one day her front leg went out and then she looked at me like, “Okay, it’s time. I’m done.” But until then she wasn’t. Uh uh. She had things to do.

Interviewer: What a journey!

Interviewee: She killed wildlife. She killed 30 pound woodchucks. She'd run up behind them and just break their necks. They never knew what hit them. She was so fast.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Interviewee: Not when she was really old, but when we lived out in the country.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: Yeah, she was something and she wouldn't drop them either. "You can't have it, uh, uh, uh. That's mine."

Interviewer: Wow, wow. So during the course of the time that you had her, you were familiar with a lot of dog psychology techniques vs. the training when you said that you grew up with?

Interviewee: Right, right.

Interviewer: Obedience, stay types of things and still even in her psyche she was just a very difficult dog, a dominant dog.

Interviewee: Very difficult. A social worker friend said, "That dog is a sociopath."

Interviewer: Something must have been the worthwhile journey to stick with her.

Interviewee: She was my dog. I mean I had picked her out when she was a baby and she was my responsibility and I loved her. I did. I really loved her. I don't know why. Just like you just love anybody you get to know well. I think if everybody got to know somebody really well, they would love them.

Interviewee: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Well, unless they were really awful I guess, but well, she kind of was, but I'd always thought that. I thought, "Gosh, if you just got to know someone really well, you would really love them because that's what happens when you get to know someone really well." I knew her really well and I loved her. Oh and she was great with the kids. That was, I think, the best thing about her when she was old because she was a little older by the time we had the kids and they could do anything to her. She loved any kid. They could stick their fingers up her nose, not that we recommended that, and our

kids didn't, but one of our nieces did actually and she'd just lay there.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: And she loved puppies. Puppies could hang from her jowls and she'd just stand there and wag her tail.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Just a really kind dog to small people and small animals, well not small wild animals, but to dogs and people. She was just good with them and that was a really great thing, and a great swimmer. I used to swim in a lake. We used to live on a lake for a little while, just a few months, and I would swim out to the middle of the lake with her every day. She would just swim and swim and swim. It was really fun. To swim with your dog is really fun. She was so brilliant too; she could learn amazing tricks immediately. She learned to roll over in one try.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Yeah, well because I had a treat. All I did—I had her lay down and she knew that and I just pushed her over and then I gave her the treat. So then I said “roll over” and then she did. Then she started rolling across the room. So she could have more treats. I can't believe she didn't get dizzy.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: But that was her best trick was roll over.

Interviewer: It sounds like she's made a big impression on your life, on your life path.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Compared to other animals and experiences.

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean good dogs are wonderful and I so appreciate my good dogs; so, so, so appreciate them because I have too many other things going on to be able to deal with that anymore. I mean I guess I would if I had to, but I don't want to. I've had that. But she really helped me with parenting immensely. I wouldn't have been nearly as good of a parent, not that I am any great shakes as a parent, but when you have a dog like that, you have to be

extraordinarily patient and never use physical force, ever. You always have to be thinking, “What do I do now? What do I do now?” My kids are not easy either. They’re not like that and now they’re fantastic, but as little kids they were very challenging, especially my younger one; just a pistol. She’s really like that dog.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: She was like that dog. She was thinking all the time, “What can I do now?” and I had to think of things and I had to be so patient and think of ways that—I had to follow through. If I said no, it was no. I learned that from my dog. When I said no, it’s no. I say sit, that means you sit. I say stay, that means you stay. You don’t get up until I say. Well, I had a bad word at that time, which was okay, which I’ll never use again because I say it on the phone and stuff. So now when I say stay, I say “release” because you don’t say “release” in normal conversation.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: I just took one of Tricia’s classes. I mean she wasn’t teaching it, but it was a Dog’s Best Friend, family dog training for the Samoyed and the person who is teaching it is actually a friend of mine. She goes, “Okay, now when it’s time to release a dog just say, ‘Okay’” and I’m like, “Nadia, what are you doing? You don’t say ‘okay’, you say ‘release’ because what if you’re on the phone or you’re talking to somebody else? You’ll say ‘okay’ and then there goes the dog.”

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: So she’s made a big difference in that regard, as like my dog training is so much better and plus I’m just so impressed by everybody else’s dogs and how good they are. All the time, I mean it’s just been so good for my clients I think that I can really understand this and really go over it.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: Then I can talk about things like consistency and why it’s so important because I can apply it to my own life. Everything you ever do in your life, I think everybody—you can use in other ways and it’s gonna be important for your training, whatever that might be, whatever that training is. But I could say things to people like—well, I had some bad bosses. I’m sure you’ve never have.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: But when I've had issues with anxious dogs and my dog had anxiety. I would say, "You know, think about when you go to work and"—it just made me think of my dog, but this applied to my dog, but it was also applying to my job when I would say this to other people about their dogs. "Think about how you feel when you go to work if you have a wacko boss and you go into work and one day they say, 'Do this and I'll reward you,' and the next day you go in and they go, 'Why did you do that for?' and it was the thing they just told you they would reward you for. You'd feel crazy. You'd feel anxious. Your stomach hurts and you go, 'Ooh, I don't know what to do. This person is nuts!' But then you go into work and you have this boss who says, 'Do this, do this, do this and you'll get a raise. Do this, do this, do this, you get fired. You do your job and you get your raise and everybody is happy.'"

Interviewer: And it's consistent and it's predictable.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Expectations are known.

Interviewee: Exactly and so it helped my dog for me to be like that. My kids grew up learning this too. Dogs last. Dogs sit and they go out doors last. That's the way life is and they even say that to our old dog. They go, "Dogs last!" With her it had to be that way. She was 15 and a half and I let her out first once because I felt sorry for her. She was having a hard time walking and I thought, "Oh poor thing. I'll just let her out first." This was 15 and a half years old with lumbosacral stenosis. On the way back, she tried to knock me down, way back in. I'm like, it never stops. You always need consistency and some need it a lot more than others like my younger child and that dog. Her name is Tesh. As far as these dogs, they're prefect.

Interviewer: Did you ever get a chance to take her to classes, dog training?

Interviewee: Did I take her to classes? I'm trying to remember. I don't think I did because she was older by the time there got to be classes around. She was old. In fact, it was hard for her to sit.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Because her hind end was having trouble, but dog parks had just started when she was about five or six and we took her to dog

parks and she was a gem at a dog park. She wouldn't come if there was something really good to do. So what I ended up doing was carrying hot dogs in my pocket.

Interviewer: Hot dogs!

Interviewee: That's what I used to tell clients, "Well, we'll just carry a hotdog in our pocket," but the problem with her was then she would never leave my side.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: I was like, "Go have fun. Go have fun." She's like, "Uh uh, you have a hot dog in your pocket." And I had to give it to her every once in a while and I would let her get so far away and then I would call her and give her the hot dog. I mean I learned—I really learned so much from her about training.

Interviewer: It sounds like it.

Interviewee: She was a really reluctant trainee. She was really reluctant. She only did it under the most dire circumstances, it was if she could really get something great and it had to be really great like a hot dog. Dry food? Ooh. It had to be good, like Tricia always says chicken in your pocket or whatever.

Interviewer: Right, something that's really appeasing to them.

Interviewee: For Moe, he had a lot of allergies, food allergies and diarrhea and stuff, so I would do hard-boiled eggs with him or something like scrambled eggs.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: Yeah, then all the other dogs in class were really jealous because I did take him. I took both of these dogs to class.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Interviewee: I'm trying to remember if I've taken any other dogs to class. I think these are the only ones I have because the Border Collie we had was wacko. We got her—some people dropped her off at the clinic wanting to euthanize her because she had seizures and her brain was so fried by the time—and I just said, "I'll find her a home." I mean I didn't just take her; I said, "I'll find her a home and is that okay?" and they said, "Yeah." But her brain was so

fried. She was only good a few days out of the month and then she was brilliant. This was right after I had the very, very naughty dog.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Actually we still had her and she would look at me like, “What do you want?” I mean the Border Collie went like, “What can I do for you? How can I help you?” and I was like “Oh, a dog that cares what I think, I can’t believe this! This is so great!” I mean the Chihuahua does too, but he’s so little.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: We took him to classes and I actually started a toy breed socialization class because of him, so we did that for two years.

Interviewee: Oh wow.

Interviewee: Started a clinic where I used to work because I thought, “Well, it’s really important. What do we do with these toy breeds?” and they all turn out so—not all—but a lot of them can turn out really nasty and yucky and nippy because people are holding them up by their shoulders and they are not socializing at all.

Interviewer: They get protective of their owners.

Interviewee: I always told the kids, “We’re not gonna have a biting Chihuahua. Don’t you ever play with him with your hands or feet! Always use a toy and if you ever play tug of war, you have to win always.” Actually I didn’t even let them play because they were kind of little then, but my older daughter—he was always submissive to her, but he and my younger daughter duked it out for youngest daughter status.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: Mmhmm. He wanted to be the child and he wanted her to be the dog, but she was gonna be the child. Oh it was ugly for a while, yeah, but they were great with the big dog and my little daughter used to sit on the big dog when she was lying down and the dog would just lay there. In fact, I have a picture of them on the fridge and she’s happy. The dog was happy having the kids around and she’d see the kids and she’d just be so happy. Oh my puppies! She would just kiss them all over. She didn’t kiss me much because I was dominant and she didn’t really like the idea.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: And then you got _____ who will just knock them over. She just used her body the way they take space.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: She would just take space and bump them into walls.

Interviewer: Did the kids ever become alpha with her?

Interviewee: They were puppies. She never did that with the kids ever.

Interviewer: No, no. Oh okay.

Interviewee: The kids were puppies or kids or whatever she thought of them.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: They were her little creatures to take care of. She loved them.

Interviewer: Aww.

Interviewee: Plus they dropped food.

Interviewer: They dropped food!

Interviewee: That started it all. They were in the high chair and they're dropping stuff and she's like, woo hoo! Then she'd just reach up and take it. She could take a bagel so gently they wouldn't even know that she took it until much later and they'd be like, "What happened to my bagel?" and she took it right out of their hands. I'm like, "Don't walk by her with a bagel."

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: So she was very gentle. She would have been a great burglar.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: She would have been great at it. No one would have ever caught her. Plus she was dark and skinny. Well anyway.

Interviewer: Gosh, you had so many animals in your life.

Interviewee: And we had another dog too for just a year. Another one that was dropped off to be euthanized, a big old lab.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Well, we all loved him, but what we got from him was just—he just loved us. He just appreciated us. He was nice. He was an old, really arthritic 110 pound skinny lab, giant chest, the big barrel chest kind. When they bark they go, “Huh! Huh!” Loved to go for walks and we tied our other dog Tesh and him up on a tandem leash and she’d pull him up when he’d fall.

Interviewer: Aww.

Interviewee: So that worked really well.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: He was just thrilled to go for walks and he didn’t like kids smacking him. My kids were super gentle and they never did. They were always gentle. Actually, **Keeley** wasn’t born. The older one she was so gentle. He liked her so much, but my nephew came over and he started smacking him and he went “Mmm,” and I pulled my nephew away quickly because he was sore all over. He couldn’t put up with that.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: But I still want him to bit him. Yeah, so we’ve had a lot of dogs.

Interviewer: It sounds like, is it Tess, the one that—

Interviewee: Tesh.

Interviewer: Tesh.

Interviewee: Tesha girl.

Interviewer: It sounds like she made as far as impact on you, huge, what you got out of the relationship with her and tell me more about that, just you mentioned briefly the different areas; one was your kids. You learned how to be patient and consistent and how you relate to bosses at work and what about, how did—and how it helped you with your clients and relate to them for problems that they had with their dogs.

Interviewee: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: What about—what other personal growth things do you think you got out of that relationship?

Interviewee: Well, I got a lot out of doing my Chinese medicine with her.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Really a lot. In fact, at one point she fell down the stairs when she was 15. She would wait for us every night to go up the stairs, but one night she didn't wait. She kind of lost sense of time after a while and she got a little cognitive dysfunction and she went up and wasn't around and then we're like, "Oh no, where's Tesh?" and then I heard her going up the stairs and I ran and then she fell because she couldn't get up the stairs. There were a lot of stairs there.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: She landed on the bottom and I was just—I felt like my heart just stopped. I thought, what am I gonna do? I'm gonna have to euthanize her. I had given her—she was on all the medicine she could take Western wise at that point, and I'm like, "What can I do? What can I do?" She was curled up in this little heap. Oh duh, I know how to do acupuncture. It just took me a little time in my head to think oh I could do that. So I quick acupunctured her and then she got up and walked away perfectly fine.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: It really made me respect acupuncture a lot, really a lot to see how much it helped her and we got her to stop have fecal incontinence.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: It made her so much more comfortable. She was able to wag her tail again. She was able to walk better. I mean for so long. It was maybe a year and then eventually when that front leg went out that was it, but—

Interviewer: What made you decide to get into Eastern medicine?

Interviewee: I always wanted to.

Interviewer: You did?

Interviewee: When I was four or five my neighbor up the street—well, she wasn't Chinese. She was Vietnamese, but my mom got mixed up about where she was from and she was adopted and we were blood sisters back pre-AIDS.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: She poked me in the finger with some rusty tack or something and luckily I was vaccinated for tetanus and she poked herself in the finger and we were blood sisters. So I always thought of myself as Chinese.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Always and I always thought everything Chinese was interesting and I always wanted to go over there. Plus my mom had lived in Taiwan for a long time. Her dad was in the Army so she had lived in the East a lot and I'd always heard these stories and I always thought it was really neat. My grandparents had stuff from China and Japan all over their house, so I was always really interested.

Then when I got to vet school, my second year of vet school, a few other students and I decided to spend time with this alternative practitioner in the area. He didn't do acupuncture or Chinese medicine, but he did alternative things. He did homeopathy and raw diets and stuff and we didn't like him. He wasn't a very nice guy, not very good ethics, but we learned a lot because he had us read interesting books and then—so we did that once a week for a year with this guy, just two or three other students and I and it really made me think, "I've gotta do this," but I couldn't afford to take acupuncture courses well until I paid off my student loans.

So that was 13 years and then when I paid them off I was like, "Okay, I'm gonna take that money and put it right into classes. I'm gonna start taking them now." So I did.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: And I couldn't be happier. It was a lot harder to do it after all that Western training and especially after doing Western medicine for so long.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Interviewee: Because you get a certain mindset and the scientific mindset is very narrow, very narrow, and I had great professors who—they

were really great, but they really bashed it into our heads that don't believe anything ever and everything has to be a double blinded case-controlled study or it's no good. So even when I'd see things work, even when I saw it work on my own dog, even when I'd see it work on patients, I'd be like, "Wow, that's amazing. It's like a miracle," and I kind of feel shocked and surprised that I wouldn't feel like this is the way it's supposed to be. I'd think, "Wow, that's amazing. How does that happen? Wow!" I'd be like, "Well, it's only one dog or this is only three dogs."

It took me a long time to come to the point that—you know actually Trish, I just saw her last night. She said, "You know Jody, in JAVMA (that's the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association), they have case studies all the time." And I just showed her a journal last night I brought for her so she could see this study on herbs and this crazy mare that I can't believe the woman didn't euthanize before that. It was a vicious, vicious mare that tried to kill anybody who came near it.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Interviewee: Eventually they put her on herbs and after a month, anybody could come up to it and pet it.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Now, it's an event horse. It's just an amazing story.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: She was saying, "Well, they have these case studies all the time, all the time in Western medicine and they like to say, 'No, we don't', but yes they do all the time." And I kept having these amazing results and I thought, "It's not me. It's not just this dog. It's Chinese medicine."

Interviewer: So the more experiences you had, the more it made you believe in it.

Interviewee: Right, well and I wasn't—I'm not somebody who just says because it's tradition its right. There are lot of traditions that are really bad, I mean genital mutilation—bad! So what if people have been doing it for thousands of years. It's bad! So this has been done for thousands of years and its good and I'll say to clients sometimes, "Look how many Chinese people there are."
(Laughter) You know, it's the same culture. They may have gone

through some really horrible things too, but its been around for 5,000 years or more. I mean there's evidence going back to 8,000 years.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: And it was started on animals.

Interviewer: Was it?

Interviewee: Yeah, the emperor's horses.

Interviewer: I didn't know that.

Interviewee: Because if you could fix the emperor's horses, you're pretty great. If you didn't, you got your head chopped off I would assume, but—or something like that, I don't know, drown in _____ or something. Yeah they were more important than people at that time, well the emperor and then the emperor's horses were the tops. So yeah, that's how it got started.

Interviewer: So all this path of self-growth and all these wonderful things that you've gotten out of your relationship with your dog and being a vet, I guess how does that make you feel as a person on your own path?

Interviewee: Like I'm growing all the time. I learn so much from them, all the time. I learn a lot from people, but in a way I think I learn more from dogs because with your own dogs, they are with you all the time. Well, whenever you're home, there they are and you learn things from them. I mean this dog right here, the Chihuahua, he's taught me a ton too. First of all, I never would have gotten a Chihuahua, but I very depressed over my favorite cat, the one who taught my dog how to open up cupboards, dying. You know, I was just thinking about that yesterday actually and feeling like I really miss him. He was the greatest cat even though he taught the dog how to do that, but he was just so funny the way he did. It's like he had a little grin on his face, "Ha, ha, ha."

So we ended up getting him and trading him for some Heartguard, the Chihuahua. The client didn't want all the puppies and I knew the mom pretty well. I'd seen her through her pregnancy and the mom was like the best Chihuahua. I couldn't get over how good she was and he just came trotting up to me like, "Take me home." And I was like, "Does that one have a home?" and she said he does for a few boxes of Heartguard.

Interviewer: Wow. So there he is.

Interviewee: Yeah and my husband was horrified. He couldn't stand the thought of a Chihuahua and the kids were thrilled and I just—it was a really big deal to me that we don't have a bitey Chihuahua because they can be so naughty. So we had to work pretty hard with that and take him to classes and I had to call the place for classes and say, "I really need you to have another small dog in there. Could you please get his brother in? It's really important because what am I gonna do in a class with a bunch of labs and a Chihuahua? That's never gonna work."

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: So they did. They got his brother in the class and then there as a pug in there too, so when they had play time at the end, they'd put the three little dogs in a little enclosed wire area and then the big dogs would run around outside. He's been challenging. I mean I thought he was really perfect and then when he hit social maturity he got a little snotty and we've had some issues with that. The good thing is he's really little. It makes a difference in an 85 pound dog vs. a four pound dog.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: It's so much easier. I mean you can just pick him up. It's so easy! So I feel good about that. Even though he might be difficult for some people, he's not difficult after that dog. He's just not and when I found—one time he started hiding a lot and I thought, "What's wrong with him?" and it took me a few days to figure out, "Oh my gosh, he's in pain!" I always thought he had something wrong with his patella. He's had a little bit of luxating patellas and I don't want surgery on him, so I put him on some herbs and as soon as I put him on herbs—new dog, really, really active, happy, bouncy, playing, all the time; right away, one dose.

Then after he had been on the herbs for maybe four to six months he started getting snotty and peeing on our shoes; not in our shoes, but they were by the door and he peed over by the door all the time and I thought, "What is wrong?" Well, I thought it's winter and it's cold out and there's a lot of snow and I thought, "Well, he doesn't want to go out." So we put him in his crate and he would never pee in his crate, but he'd still pee on our shoes. I thought, "What is going on?" Then it warmed up and he was still doing it and I thought, "You know what?" I think I've overtonified his liver because the liver is in charge of aggression and irritability and

when it's overtonified, when it's too strong or its too hot, they'll get aggressive and irritable.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I thought, "That's it. He's feeling like a little stinker and wants to prove his dominance over everybody."

Interviewer: Territory.

Interviewee: Yeah. So I took him off the herbs and it stopped, stopped right away and he still feels good because he'd been on them long enough that it relieved his pain.

Interviewer: Sure. How does that make you feel to help your animals?

Interviewee: Oh great! And to be able to figure it out—I feel like I'm slow. I feel like really stupid sometimes. I think, "I'm so slow! Why didn't I figure that out right away? Why didn't I figure out that he didn't really need that?" but the way that we're taught, it doesn't tell you that and you kind of have to—well, at least for me I'm sure he never told us that. I didn't think you could overtonify a liver, but I'm sure he's probably said things like that and actually in my last herbal class he did say things like, "Well, if you treat the blood too much, you might get too much damp." He didn't get damp, he just got a little stinker in him. *(Laughter)*

So it makes me feel slow sometimes. I'm just not as fast as I used to be or as I'd like to be I guess sometimes and I think, "Oh, how come I can't figure these things out sometimes?" until it gets to that point?

Interviewer: But you know what? I'm thinking the average person in a relationship with their dog really probably doesn't have as much opportunity to help them in return as much as your knowledge of medicine allows you to reciprocate some of that—some of what they give to us and I'm sure that must feel some kind of rewarding.

Interviewee: Yeah, it is great and you know I think most people don't have perfect health in later lives and they don't even strive for it I don't think. I know a lot of people do and my clients want that for their pets, but they don't necessarily want that for themselves a lot. We're working on that. Lots of times they'll see how well it works for their pet and then they'll say, "You know, I have a sore back. Do you think acupuncture might help me?" I'm like, "Here are a

bunch of name of acupuncturists and all different kinds recommended or that I like and pick one.”

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: So then I see clients starting to get better themselves and that makes me feel—*that* makes me feel really good because of course, I want the animal to feel good, of course. That’s not the whole point though. The whole point is that everyone should want perfect health for everybody. If you are the person who takes care of an animal, you’re their guardian because you *are* their guardian. We live with them. We take care of them. You do it so much better if you’re healthy and I see people putting their emotions on these animals and sometimes I feel like this sick feeling in my stomach. I won’t say that to somebody. I won’t say, “You’re making me sick,” but I can feel how stressed out the animal is by the people being so worried about whatever it is or not taking care of themselves. I see a very select clientele. I don’t see people who don’t care about their pets.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: These people adore their pets, adore them. Why else would they pay for Chinese medicine? But they are not always where they could be. I mean nobody is the best they could be. I mean maybe the Dalai Lama. (*Laughter*)

Interviewer: _____.

Interviewee: Yeah really! And it would be nice if we all could aspire to that, but I just saw someone yesterday actually, a new client. I’m trying to remember her dog. You know what? I remember her better than her dog—oh I remember her dog. Oh my gosh, her dog is so cute. Oh it’s just the cutest. This dog was so cute it was unbelievable.

Interviewer: What was he?

Interviewee: It was a Sharpee, which I know nobody thinks Sharpee’s are cute, but it was a really unusual looking Sharpee. It had really wide set eyes and they were really big a little bit bulgy. Well, it had a cataract in one eye, but it wasn’t because of cataracts; they just were kind of bulgy and really white colored Sharpee, kind of older. He’s old. He’s 11 or 12 and sweet. He was like a golden retriever—well, but not obnoxious.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: He was like a nice, mellow golden retriever and he just came up to me and he was kissing me and kissing me and sniffy, sniffy, and lovey, lovey. Oh what a nice, nice, nice dog; just a gem of a dog and I could see why this woman absolutely adored him and she had a couple of other sharpee's too. But the woman has some pretty serious medical issues herself and she doesn't do anything to take care of them for herself. I mean she takes some medicine, some Western medicines, but she—I said, "Well, would you be willing to cook for him?" because that's something that I always ask and if they're not then I don't push them into it. Then I might say, well you can try a little bit of canned pumpkin to add to their food. That's all I said to her to start with a little canned pumpkin because I thought that would help the dog. Since she's not willing to cook, maybe she could open a can.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: She said, "Yeah, I'd be willing to open a can," but when I said, "Are you willing to cook?" she said, "Oh I don't cook for myself," and I'm thinking, "You have this terrible disease. You would be so much better—" and then she did say at the end of the appointment, she said, "You know he really liked that. That didn't bother him at all! He acted like he didn't even feel them. Maybe I could try it." And I said, "You know, there's a great acupuncturist near you." She lives in a town that's pretty far from here, but I know the acupuncturist near there who is wonderful, just wonderful.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: A doctor from China who was a teacher in China at a medical school and she's just kind. I gave her the number and she put it right in her phone, so I think she might do it.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: She saw how it didn't hurt her dog.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: And I can't say that acupuncture never hurts. Sometimes if there's something acutely a problem, like when I have a sinus infection, yeah it hurts when I put certain needles in.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: But the pain, it doesn't bother me anymore at all, even if the pain doesn't feel the same to me anymore, everything's changed. Chinese medicine has really changed me a lot and seeing the animal's responses to all my patients. The really neat thing is if I see a dog the first time and they're really afraid, really nervous dog, or a supersensitive dog, or they cry when I put the needles in, lots of times then the people say, "Oh its okay, it's okay." I'm like, "Well, I don't necessarily want to say its okay if they're trying to bite me," because then that's saying its okay that they're trying to bite me.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: I'll say, "Well, maybe you can just hold him and say, "Stay. This is good for you." Then usually the next time if it was a dog like that who is a super, super sensitive dog they are really worried because they see lots of times the owner is worried.

Interviewer: Sure, and the dog can pick up on that.

Interviewee: They see the little needles and people are like, "Oh, I've never had acupuncture, I'm kind of nervous." Then the dog will be like, "Ooh, ooh. She's doing that to me, mom; that thing you didn't want!" that kind of thing. When they come in the second time they are like, "Oh, you helped me relax. Do that again."

Interviewer: Really? What percentage of dogs do that?

Interviewee: Oh maybe 90%.

Interviewer: Really? Wow, that's wonderful.

Interviewee: Yeah, cats are different. I know you're not doing cats are you?

Interviewer: You know it really covers the breadth of relationships I think with animals in general and what they can do for us.

Interviewee: They're different. Cats are really different about acupuncture. Cats want it. Cats want it right away.

Interviewer: Even the first time?

Interviewee: The first time. Cats aren't—don't have the same relationship with their people. They love their people and some cats are super, super attached to their people in a dog way, like a golden retriever way even. I know cats that would never eat when their people go out of

town. I mean some cats are like that, but in general cats are themselves. Cats are just themselves and they know what they want all the time. They know what's going to feel good to them. They know what doesn't feel good to them. They want a little bit. They want you to pet them for two seconds and that's enough.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: You know where dogs are like, "Ooh, just be near me!" Not all dogs, but some dogs.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: She was just like herself, but dogs I think feed off of people's emotions a lot more. They're so attached and they suck up people's emotions. They just suck them up and cat's are like, "Hmm, oh yes you want to put needles in me? Okay, I need them right here. Don't you touch my back, but you can put them in my feet all you want." People are like, "You put them in their feet? I can't believe you touched her feet!" I'm like, "She wants it. She knows it's good for her. She knows it's gonna help." Even another vet that I worked with, I saw her cat and she goes, "Jody, how do you have such a good relationship with cats? How do you get cats to do whatever you want them to?" And I'm like, "I'm not getting cats to do what I want them to. I'm doing what they want. It's not me, it's the cats." Cats know what they want. Horses do too.

Interviewer: Hmmm.

Interviewee: Horses know what they want. Now some horses get sucked up in the whole people stuff and that's more like the freaked out horses. I get that more with freaked out horses. I prefer not to see freaked out horses.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: It's dangerous and when the people aren't good with them, it's really no fun, but I've seen a lot of horses that know exactly what they want. They won't get frustrated in a mean way, but just stick the needle in. Don't question yourself, just do it.

Interviewer: How do you—when you're around all these animals, how do you—because a lot of dogs and even horses feed into human emotion, so how do you keep yours in check to really relate to them?

Interviewee: That's easy. That's easy. I've been doing T'ai Chi for about 10 years. Every morning I do—well, it's really Qigong every morning. I acupuncture myself a lot; at least once a week, sometimes three times a week.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: I eat really well and I've been on this diet to keep myself healthy for at least six years now because I was very ill when my youngest child was really little, very, very ill. I could barely move or get out of bed or anything. I had to change my diet completely because nothing else was helping. We did move to a non-moldy house and that helped a lot, but I still couldn't get it under control without changing my diet. Changing my diet and acupuncture has made it easy.

Interviewer: What is it that it instills or brings to you?

Interviewee: I don't hurt. My head doesn't hurt. My thoughts aren't fuzzy. They're not as fast as I'd like, but then that's the age. I'm not painful and I feel calm; not all the time. The only thing that makes me not calm these days are my children. When they are fighting, I don't like them fighting. I really work on it and I breathe when I walk my dog in the morning and I do see this with the Border Collie too when I walk her. I would just breathe in white light through the top of my head and let it come through my whole body and out my hands and out my feet and through my chest and—

Interviewer: Do you think your relationships with animals enhance that feeling or contribute to it; or is that something that you like to bring to the relationship?

Interviewee: Yes. I think to them, but yes they want that. They want me to just be, be and be filled with—I know that sounds really weird, but filled with white light and have it come out my hands and then when I put my hands on him, he loves it, this dog that I'm holding now. But they do, they love that. They love it. Cats really love it. Cats *really* love it. Horses, horses are like understanding. They are like, "Okay, I can talk to you. You know what you're about," if they're not really freaked out.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: But I'm also pretty sensitive to places and I have to work on that and not feel, I've been able to feel like what they're feeling in my body. I didn't really like that too much and horses want me to feel

that a lot, like, “Here, you need to know where I’m sore.” So like my knees will get sore and my shoulders will get sore and my back, but then I’m able to just breathe it out and not feel it anymore. I’ll say, “Okay, that’s just the horse, it’s not me.” I know that sounds really bizarre too, but it helps me to treat them and I don’t get that as much with small animals. I used to get that with daschunds a lot. Well, I grew up with daschund. Plus they always have sore necks and I was in a really bad accident, so I’ve had a sore neck for 16 years. It’s good now. It’s good now. It’s rarely sore, very rarely, but I would just feel an affinity for a sore-necked daschund.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: I mean a lot of the have sore necks, so I just think, “Oh my neck! Oh it’s just the dog.” But I love the way they’ll look at me and think, “Oh, okay, I need to be helped or if I feel tense at all like the person that is in the room with them is a tense kind of person and kind of freaking out about stuff, I just need to just shut off the person for a second. I won’t say anything and I’ll just look at the animal. It’s really more dogs I think that people get freaked out about. Well, they get kind of freaked out about horses too, but that’s more—that can be more challenging. Cat people don’t freak out as much. I don’t know why that is, maybe it’s just the cats that I’ve seen.

Interviewer: Maybe they have more independent relationship with their owners or—

Interviewee: I don’t know. Maybe people that really, really love cats have to be a little calmer.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: I don’t know that; I’m just guessing because I’m trying to think about the clients that I see that have cats. Well, I think they just see that the cats enjoy it, so they are just like, “Oh, oh he’s so excited to come here for his acupuncture. Oh you’re here! I’m so glad you’re here to see him for his acupuncture.” So sometimes I see them at the clinic and sometimes I see them at their homes. Plus they respond so well. Cats respond right away and they don’t even need to have the needles in long, whereas some dogs, especially like a super mellow lab or super mellow kind of dog or birth personalities it’s called might take longer to have an effect and I will say that. I’ll say, “You know the dogs that are really, really mellow and seem not affected by anything, they’re not affected by

anything, so they take longer. We need to do stronger treatments.” I’m a very sensitive kind of person and I hardly need anything to be affected by it, so I have to be sure to tell the people with animals like that.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: “This is a great dog. You have such a nice, mellow dog, so sweet and wonderful, but because he’s so nice and mellow, it takes more. So I might have to do stronger treatments.”

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: And some of the really strong treatments I have to actually go across the room because they bother me so much. Electroacupuncture really bothers me. It makes my body feel shaky and weird, so I have to like cross the room, but luckily those are usually really mellow dogs. So I’ll say, “Can you just sit here with him while I go over here because that machine bothers me. “They are like, “The machine bothers you?” I’m like, “No, no. Go ahead and touch it. You can’t feel a darn thing. It’s just the frequency of the electricity that bothers me.” I turn off watches and stuff like that, so I’m really sensitive to electricity and people never—I’ve never had anybody say they ever felt anything. But I don’t use it that often, but in the kind of dogs that really need it, I do.

Interviewer: What kind of dogs would need it?

Interviewee: Really chronic pain dogs. Dogs with really bad neurologic problems. Dogs who are down in the hind end, paralyzed or just degenerative myelopathy in German Shepherds. I just saw one yesterday. I’ve seen her quite a few times. Oh, she’s a gem of a dog. Oh, I just love her! I just—I don’t think I have a patient that I don’t love. I’m trying to think if I do.

Interviewer: I’m just in awe of the opportunity, the breadth of things that you get to do in helping people and animals. What’s the most rewarding thing?

Interviewee: Well, having them do well and feel well and get better.

Interviewer: The animals?

Interviewee: The animals, yeah, and I love it when the people want to get themselves better too. I just love it! I’ve had people say, “Now that I’m cooking for my dog, now I’m cooking me for me too.” I’m

like, “Yes!” They go, “We eat the same thing. I just make stew and we all eat it. Even the cats eat it.” I had this one client who started making stew for her dog and then the cats are eating the stew and she’s eating the stew.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: It’s stew. I mean it’s not—it’s stew, you know? I mean you just eat it. That’s so nice when people have gone to see acupuncturists too, I just love that. They’ll go, “I went to see Dr. Chi,”—this is one of my favorites and—“I feel so much better. Do you know what? She cleared up my back and now she’s starting to treat my esophagitis. And do you know what? I’m off my medicine for the esophagitis. I was on that for 10 years and now I’m off of it. It’s not bothering me.”

I’m thinking about this one guy in particular and he’s an older guy. He’s a retired guy. He’s in his 70’s. His back stopped hurting. His esophagitis went away. He feels great! And I’m just thrilled because they saw it. Their dog had recently passed away. She’s an ancient Husky, just ancient, probably 15 or 16 and she did very well for a long time, but eventually your chi gives out.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: You only get so much.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: I also have a great relationship with those people and I just think about them and I feel so good. The woman writes poems and she is a spiritual counselor.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Interviewee: Yeah and I learned all about her journey through alcoholism and out of it and their relationship and he’s a dentist. So we can talk about medical things too and tell him how important I think dentistry is and how I’ll still see patients and I’ll go, “You know what? These teeth are rotten, you need to go to your vet and they need to have their teeth cleaned.” They’ll go, “Oh, but she’s too old.” I’ll go, “No. She can’t live like that. How can you eat with a mouth like that?”

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: Do you talk to your mother with a mouth like that? No.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: But I love that. I love forming great relationships with wonderful, interesting, caring people and their wonderful pets. Every animal I meet, every animal I meet is wonderful.

Interviewer: Did you—

Interviewee: The animal part—I’ve always had wonderful animal patients, but this is more wonderful. Doing this is more wonderful.

Interviewer: Did you imagine that this is what you would be doing here at this point on this journey?

Interviewee: I had no idea that it was gonna be like this. I thought I would eventually do acupuncture, but I didn’t know what that meant really and I didn’t know what it would mean for my personal journey or for the patients that I would see or how I would feel so much more connected to the world. I feel so connected in a really positive way through all of this. Animals connect you and they ground you, but not in a pulling you down sense. It’s in a lifting up grounding. It’s like you’re here with these wonderful animals and they just help everything. It’s just so great.

Before I had to just draw their blood and give them shots and figure out what was wrong and it was such a—I was just telling somebody this. It’s fear-based, Western medicine. It’s all about fear, what you might get. You have to do this or you might get cancer. If you don’t do this, then you might get this disease and, “Oh, I bet they have liver failure, and I bet they have this, and I bet they have that,” and now its just, “Let’s bring them into health, into perfect health,” and if they’re pretty healthy already it’s easier.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I do see a lot of animals that they say, “If you don’t fix them now, we’re gonna put them to sleep tomorrow,” and I say, “Well, I’m not gonna fix them in a day or one treatment. You have to give it more time, and you’re gonna have to do stuff and here’s some things.” I did recently see a patient like that. Actually, that patient is getting written up in a journal.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Interviewee: That patient is doing wonderfully. They were ready to put him to sleep. Western diagnosis was put him to sleep. There wasn't anything that could be done and he's doing great, really great. So that's great. I feel like I'm just rambling. I have no idea what I'm even saying.

Interviewer: Talk to me—you had mentioned about feeling connected and grounded.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Earlier you had mentioned that there is a spiritual aspect to it.

Interviewee: Definitely.

Interviewer: And I'm wondering if that's connected to it?

Interviewee: To animals?

Interviewer: Yeah. Talk to me about—

Interviewee: Yeah, well you know how when you look in their eyes and they just look at you and they just—they're just happy. You know dogs aren't always happy. Sure they get mad and they get sad and they're afraid. They have all different kinds of emotions, but when you feel that inside, when you just feel like that light and joy and know that you can help, they look at you like that. People have so many—I mean people do too sometimes, but people have so many other things going on in their heads.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: It's harder to connect like that. It's not impossible. Like with kids, it's really easy. Kids—boom, right away they just come up and hug you and, “Oh, I love you Keeley's mom.” That's my youngest daughter. The kids in her class know me pretty well. But animals just—they are just open with it and they bring that. You can see it in them and you can hear—you know, I'm nothing like **Asia Voigt**, you know that communicator? I'm nothing like that and I would never say I'm a communicator ever; although I've had clients say, “I hear that you know what the animals are thinking. Can you tell me what my animals are thinking?” or, “Do you think I should get another dog?” It's easy to open up to that.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: When everything is just open and you just kind of know things.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: I'm not gonna say I can talk to your dog and tell him to cut it out or anything like that. I would never say that. It wouldn't even occur to me actually. I just think, "Oh" and sometimes I'll start to feel kind of sad if the animal is really sad or in a lot of pain. Then one thing that I do that they've helped me with is I shouldn't say they need an appointment because sometimes I'll just feel really sad and I'll think, "Oh this is so sad. He's in a lot of pain. Oh no, they must have to put him to sleep." Sometimes I'll feel like that at the beginning of the appointment I'll think this is too much, but then when I treat them, then they're like, "Ohh, I feel so much better. Now I can eat." I just saw a dog like that—

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: — who couldn't eat because he has a tumor in his jaw and his jaw is fractured and he was unable to eat for about a week, at all. Every time he would try to eat, his head would shake and he just wouldn't.

Interviewer: Aww.

Interviewee: He was just holding his head really funny and I think he was really nauseous. I don't know why he was nauseous along with the fractured jaw, but he was nauseous. I just knew he was nauseous. Well, part of it was when I felt his pulses; they were wiry, which has to do with liver and it felt like there was a depression at the liver point on the back. So it had to do with liver and I know from Western training that if you have liver disease you feel nauseous. Now, this dog Western-wise didn't have liver disease. His liver enzymes were normal, but putting that together and even though I know he has a fractured jaw and plus I felt nauseous looking at him. He didn't make me nauseous, I just—I could feel like his nausea and when I put the needles in to stop nausea, he got very upset. They were painful because he was nauseous.

Interviewer: Ohh.

Interviewee: He just kind of like, "Er!" He didn't make a noise; he just kind of looked at me, kind of a dirty look. He has a dirty look sometimes, but then he was happy. I put actually kind of a lot of needles and I told the owner, I have to say, "I'm putting kind of a lot of needles in because he has to eat and he's gonna die if he doesn't eat, but

it's a possibility his tumor could grow and I want you to know that because of what I'm doing—I'm not stopping the tumor from growing, I'm just trying to get him to eat." She goes, "No, no, that's all I want." And right away he ate with the needles in. He ate a whole plate full of food.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: Ate it right up, yeah.

Interviewer: How long had it been since he had eaten?

Interviewee: About a week

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: So she was thrilled and actually she just left a message for me this morning and she was gonna put him to sleep yesterday and she said, "I couldn't. He was feeling so good." I saw him two more times after that and—

Interviewer: Will you continue to treat him? Is there anything else you can do?

Interviewee: I'm gonna see him again, yeah. I treated him in the past, but she did a lot of Western treatments with him with his tumor and she was—she's in vet school, and in vet school she really thinks her professors are just gods, you know. They are just the be all and end all and I felt the same way in vet school, well mostly. Maybe a couple of them I didn't. I thought, "You need to take your medication."

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: But it's hard to have two many options sometimes when you're young and you're in school and you're just completely scientific-minded, it's kind of hard. I did treat him maybe once or twice when I really tried—I really wanted him to be on some herbs, but I didn't push her at all because I don't—I'm not the kind of person that likes to tell people what to do, which sometimes people want to be told what to do. It's just hard for me. I want people to make their own choices. I just want to give them options and make sure they make their own choices.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: I said, “Well, I know some herbs that can be really helpful. I’ve treated other dogs with jaw tumors and they’ve done very well with these herbs.” She goes, “Oh no. My professors say, ‘no herbs.’” So she didn’t do any herbs, but she did radiation and surgery. She was thrilled with the radiation and surgery, but then it grew again and then they found the fracture and everything. Then she was telling me, “Oh one of my professors was playing with it and he said, ‘Oh I can feel it rubbing’” and I said, “Oh he kept doing it?”

Interviewer: Ohh.

Interviewee: That makes me sick.

Interviewer: That’s painful.

Interviewee: I can’t even think about that because I can’t stand that. It reminds me—I had a professor when I was in vet school who goes, “See how this hurts when I do this to the dog?” and he kept doing it over and over and showing us and we’re all like, “We all see. Stop.” The dog turned around and bit him and we clapped. He was being a jerk. We all saw that hurt the dog. Don’t keep doing it! Yay dog, bite the guy. *(Laughter)*

Interviewer: Going back to this connection with people and with dogs and feeling connected to the—is it a nature connection? Is it a spiritual? What does it encompass?

Interviewee: I would say spiritual connection.

Interviewer: Spiritual?

Interviewee: Spiritual, yeah. I don’t know if I can put it another way. It just feels like—I’ve always felt like this though. I’ve always felt like everything’s related and that we’re all connected and we—I mean everything.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Bugs, rocks, the earth, the stars, everything. I’ve always felt like that since I was a little kid and I was never taught that.

Interviewer: You weren’t?

Interviewee: No. I grew up Jewish, but I didn’t really start Sunday School until third grade and pretty much what we did was learn Hebrew and

learn songs and learn about the Holocaust, which is horrifying. We didn't really talk so much about—you know a little bit about the Bible such as holidays, but we didn't really talk about stuff like that until tenth grade when I took confirmation class. Then we talked about the talman and studying and seeing that there were lots of different ideas and that you could kind of choose and say, "Well this scholar says this and this scholar says this. What do you think?"

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: I liked that openness that you could just use your own mind, but when I was really little I felt very connected. I remember lying on the ground in my backyard and going, "Ohh, I'm just at peace with all of this."

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: It kinds of feels like it's come back. In the teenage years and the early adult years it's so hard because you're trying to fit into a different culture. You're not just in a family or in a school. You're like in a bigger world and then plus there's all this Western science and it's a lot and the animals lives are in my hands and I felt—when I was doing Western medicine, I was tense a lot because I thought, "Oh if I do the wrong thing, I'll kill them. I've got to do the right thing. I've got to do the right thing. I have to help them." I don't feel like that anymore; not that I don't feel like I want to help them and I don't want to do the right thing, of course I do. But I just feel at ease to just feel it and just to do the right thing and to just trust that my hands are gonna go in the right places and I'll be able to figure it out. It's easy.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: And the animals love it and they feel easy and comfortable and it's so connecting and calming and meditative and it's just connecting. It's such a deep connection. I just think about that Sharpee yesterday and the way he would just look in my eyes. He could only see with one eye too.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: But he'd look and he's just connecting. Well, you know the way they do.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: They are just so happy. It's so nice.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. Really that's the essence of my project, of my dissertation.

Interviewee: Oh, that's great.

Interviewer: That really is and through therapy much like your vehicle is through medicine, is to help people feel better about themselves and their relationships with other people and how in connecting them to something that's larger and to find that, to find that peacefulness, to find that calming and that relaxation.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's exactly the avenue that I'm trying to go.

Interviewee: That's great.

Interviewer: Because my relationships with my animals, horses and dogs, have impacted me in that way and that's something that I am very interested in to help other people find.

Interviewee: That's great.

Interviewer: So yeah it is.

Interviewee: I think it's a lot to—

Interviewer: But you're there, so I'm like—

Interviewee: I feel like it's a lot easier to find doing less invasive things that aren't so tense and fear-based.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: It's just so easy. It's so easy. You know, in the room when I'm treating the patients, the people get calm and they'll even say, they'll go, "Whenever you're here, I feel so calm and relaxed," and if I'm at somebody's house when they have multiple pets, they all fall asleep around us.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: And they'll say, "Look how calm everybody is. Everyone feels so relaxed around you." I'll say, "It's not me really; it's just feeling calm."

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: It's seeing that this animal feels calm and I feel calm, but they all feel calm. It's kind of a place that natural horsemanship wants to get to.

Interviewer: You know I've taken a few lessons from the natural horsemanship person and it's really amazing. I had instantaneous results. I mean you could just see it. You could feel it.

Interviewee: Uh huh, yeah you can.

Interviewer: I'm a traditional militaristic **versage** rider and she taught me to just sink into him and move with him and it was just amazing how much I was inhibiting that movement and that communication and how sensitive they really are and how much—and I have a horse who, he's 17, and we've had a wonderful journey together and as he's gotten older—actually, as a four year old he was a lot easier to ride. He carted me around. He was very kind. He's a thoroughbred off the track who was just really a talented horse that—

Interviewee: Don't you just love that spring-loaded motion?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Oh I just love it. Oh I just get goose bumps thinking about a thoroughbred I used to ride.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And she'd just go boing! boing!

Interviewer: He was—he's a thoroughbred, so they can be hot for—a lot to handle for really novice riders and he was—he just had a heart of gold and he was so willing. So through the years he's progressed and I've progressed and he's progressed and I progress and try to catch up to him. We've learned a lot about each other. The last several years he's gotten more difficult to ride and I think—

Interviewee: Do you think he's painful?

Interviewer: Well, he does have some arthritis.

Interviewee: Yeah, I can get you in touch with some acupuncturists near you.

Interviewer: Oh, I would love to. I would love to. I do have him regularly chiropracted, but I know that's not—

Interviewee: Right, it's still—it's really good, but he maybe needs a little more, now that he's 17.

Interviewer: No, and I would definitely be open to that. I would see my trainer ride him who is just—who is really gifted in working with animals and he doesn't—he willingly works hard. You know, I thought what is it about me and my relationship with him and what am I not doing? And it was really—I really—it was me. It was me. I wasn't riding him the way he really wanted to be ridden.

Interviewee: Yeah. Now that he's a little bit sore, he has more requirements because he's a little bit sore.

Interviewer: Right. Sure, sure, absolutely.

Interviewee: She just knew how to move her body so it wasn't pushing on those sore spots.

Interviewer: Right, right, right, and get him to work around it and really produce because he's trained to about fourth level. I wanted to make it to _____ awards with him, but I didn't. I didn't and he's holding steady right around there.

Interviewee: Good for him.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. But it's been an amazing journey with him and I think I've probably learned the most about—that connection and that relationship with him is more powerful than it is with my dogs definitely, definitely.

Interviewee: It's really different. In fact, I think the most intense relationship I ever had that was the best was with a horse.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: And we only had him—it's hard for me to talk about. We didn't have him for very long. He was owned by a lawyer and she wanted to share him with me. What she said was, "If you would give my other horse his Adequan injections every two weeks and buy the Adequan and just do it, then we can share this horse and I'll pay for everything, which is great because she's the lawyer. She's the

one with the money. I was still paying off my student loans and I just fell in love with him. He was a lot like a horse that I had when I was in high school, but good. (*Laughter*)

She was very challenging. She was a mare and she was young and she hadn't been ridden in ages and even though she was young she had only been ridden a couple of times so she was quite the pistol and his name was buddy and he was just an absolutely gem. He was—you know I can't remember. Was he really an Arab or he was like half Arab? I can't remember. My old horse had been a three quarter, but she looked like a donkey. She had those big ears, but Buddy was just a sweet gem and he was rough boarded on the farthest pasture and the kids and I and my husband, we would all go get him when my husband was around or just the kids. The kids were really little then and we'd go get him and I'd just plop them on his back bareback and I'd walk him back and I never worried. I never worried, ever and the kids were totally comfortable and he had such a natural seats. They sat so straight and yet relaxed.

Interviewer: Hmmm.

Interviewee: When they'd plop up on him, you know they were just straight and relaxed, totally comfortable and he just—I'd just take him back downhill and I never thought there was ever gonna be a problem. I just knew there wouldn't be. But he threw the lawyer maybe more than once and he also threw her little boy and so she sold him, but she rolled like a sack of potatoes on him. She was supposed to be a good rider and I never—when I took—I took hunt seat. I took saddle seat and then I took hunt seat and I was always the worst in my schooling shows in hunt seat, the worst. I was always the worst. I'm not an athletically gifted person and I just thought, "Well, I'm not much of a rider, but so what?" That's not why I do it. I do it because I don't like doing things for that reason. I just like to do it because it feels good.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: and I love the relationship, but when I would ride Buddy and I rode him around in the ring a lot and I thought, "I can't believe I'm going around in a ring like I used to do in lessons when I didn't like it." I always wanted to just jump. I didn't like having to do all the schooling, but I loved it with him. I felt like I didn't do anything and he always knew what I wanted, always. She'd say, "He's non-responsive." I swear I didn't even move my hands and I almost didn't move my legs at all with him.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: He and I just had this connection.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: Such a connection! I would just think, "Okay."

Interviewer: You think and they do it.

Interviewee: Yup. I think we're gonna do a figure eight now and he would do a figure eight.

Interviewer: Yup.

Interviewee: And I would say, "okay, we're gonna go the other way. Okay we're gonna do a tight circle." He would do whatever I thought and I'd say, "We're going to canter now," and that was it.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I didn't do anything. I thought, "I'm not doing anything," and it felt so joyous.

Interviewer: It's a high.

Interviewee: Yeah in him and I because I could see how happy he was.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: And I'm not very big and Molly isn't a lot bigger than me, but she's a bit heavier, but she just rode heavy. She kind of got—she looked like a sack of potatoes on him. So he didn't like that. She kind of hung on him, you know?

Interviewer: Mmhmm. My trainer always used to say, "Less is better. Less is better."

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: So—

Interviewee: And I'd taken lessons starting pretty young and I'd always heard stuff that I never—I couldn't get it. I was too young to be able to understand what they meant. _____, ohh, I didn't like saddle seat. I mean at the time I didn't know any better, but there's so much

they're telling you. "Heels and toes out, hands like this!" You know you have that double reign and you're just doing a million things and it just felt like everything came together. It was just so beautiful and wonderful and then she said, "Well, we're gonna sell him because he threw me. e threw my son. My son thinks he's too big and I don't want him." I said, "Molly, I love him!" My kids—my youngest daughter, the little pistol one, would sit there and pick burrs out of his mane for hours at a time. She'd stand on a stool—

Interviewer: Oh, bless her heart.

Interviewee: And he would just stand there and she would just pick these burrs out. She loves to have a job. She's a person who loves a job. Hours. Two years old. Hours she would pick burrs out of his mane.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: It's because he was rough boarded in the back, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: He was so patient and kind. He was wonderful on the ground. He was always—he was perfect. She said, "Well, you can buy him." I'm like, "Molly, I don't have any money. I have to pay off my student loans." We were still eating rice and beans. I couldn't and my husband said, "You can't spend money on a horse. You can't do that. You can't do that again," because we had to sell the horses we had when my older daughter was one and a half because we couldn't—we got kicked out of the place we were living because we were renting and the woman's son got divorced, so he wanted to live there. So we didn't have a place to keep him so we kept him at a friend's house that was two hours away so we hardly ever got to see him.

They said we couldn't have him because the farmer with the cows had to use the pasture and he didn't like having horses there. Of course, it didn't do anything to those cows, but we ended up having to sell him which just crushed me.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: So I waited—it was like at least five years before—no it was more than that, before we started sharing Buddy and then she was like, "Well, I bought a Shetland pony from the vet school. Now you guys can share him with us." Horrid. They did a lot of experiments on these Shetland ponies and he's a Shetland pony! He was horrid.

Interviewer: Did they sell Buddy then?

Interviewee: They sold Buddy. So we got the Shetland pony and I tried to work with the Shetland pony, but he's way too small for me. So I felt kind of mean riding him, but sometimes I had to because he was so bad. I mean I just had to, but my kids couldn't brush him. They couldn't do anything with him. He was horrible. He was so naughty. We put this friend—my daughter's friend on him because she was like, "Oh, I'm a good rider. I ride all the time." He took off with her. He ran right across the arena and up into the aisle. Luckily there were horses in the aisle so he stopped.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Interviewee: So then I got on him and I said, "You just try. You just try." My feet could almost touch the ground.

Interviewer: Oh no!

Interviewee: Like, "You just try to buck me off you little weasel." I felt angry at that time. I mean she could have really been hurt, the little girl.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And she's not my kid. I feel bad enough if it's my kid, but at least it's my kid. With someone else's kid, you can't do that.

Interviewer: No, no.

Interviewee: I felt horrible.

Interviewer: Do you still—are you still in contact with the pony then or no?

Interviewee: No. Well, we had some other issues with the mom and her son and stuff too, but she was horrible. So my kids have not really been around horses that much and they like horses and they like to ride, but I just don't understand that. I mean when I was that age, that's all I wanted to do. I couldn't even think of doing anything else. All I wanted to do was be around horses.

Interviewer: I didn't get into riding until I was 19.

Interviewee: Really?

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: I drew horses. Starting when I was probably seven or eight, we had some horses down the street a ways and I would sneak into the stable and get on them.

Interviewer: You would?

Interviewee: And my neighbor had a horse, so I'd go out with her to see her horse. My aunt and uncle had horses, so they are the ones that got me the saddle seat lessons. Then my friend in high school just said, "Well, let's buy a horse together." She goes, "You don't have to tell your parents." So I didn't. We just got him from a used horse dealer, \$300. No he was like \$200. We each paid \$100.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Interviewee: We had jobs, so we built a pasture. We just built a pasture in her backyard and I would go over there every day.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: We bought our own hay and we went to the minimum security prison to get our sawdust.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Interviewee: Three high school girls at a men's minimum security prison. Oh my gosh, I can't believe this. Anyway—

Interviewer: I'm gonna stop this.

Interviewee: Sorry.

Interviewer: No, no, no, no. You're fine.

[End of Audio]

Interview three

Interviewee: You know I've had this dog—all three of my dogs have had the benefit of **Tricia's** methods.

Interviewer: Oh okay, okay.

Interviewee: My first dog—

Interviewer: So you've known her for a long time?

Interviewee: Yes, yes. I was—in my married life we had an older who-knows-what that we found, my ex-husband and I found at a gas station.

Interviewer: Aww.

Interviewee: And he was everybody's favorite dog. He was so sweet and so cute and he was a horrible passenger in the car. We actually consulted, at the recommendation of my vet, we consulted with Tricia on his car riding stuff, issues with his car riding.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: So she was really just early getting started then. It was in the probably early 90's, mid-90's that we hooked up with her. It was really funny because the thing that she recommended had to do with counter-conditioning, but I couldn't make it work.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: I couldn't get the timing down in the car and I kept reinforcing his naughty behavior instead of—you know. I just couldn't make it work, but by then I was into a program and sort of piecing together things from her program and came up with my own solution that just worked beautifully for him that—

Interviewer: What did you do?

Interviewee: I started giving him stuffed Kongs, stuffed—

Interviewer: Oh okay.

Interviewee: You know, it's a separation anxiety thing, but I just said, okay, because he was just so food motivated and this dog would do *anything* for food. Honestly, we stuck him in the car with at stuffed Kong and the first time we did it, it was like day and night.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: And over a period of time, very brief time, he became an ideal passenger with or without the Kong.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: So, it's all about connecting—it's sort of like—one of the things I love about Tricia is she's really good at, "If this doesn't work, try this. If this doesn't work try this," and you just keep going until you hit—and I think that that sort of speaks to that—to me, that sort of speaks to how you relate to each other because you're looking at this sentient being and it's not like rules and regulations and you'll do as I say and you'll obey because I want you to obey. It's more like, "No, we're on this earth together and we need to find out how we can live together happily." We all anthropomorphize our emotion anyway. *(Laughter)* You know we do.

Okay, so then the second dog—I decided I just had to have another dog, so we got a rescue dog, an Australian Shepherd rescue and that was '95. She was three and she didn't read a lot of the Aussie books. She really didn't have a strong herding instinct. She's was a lovely dog. I adored her, but she had significant leash reactivity to other dogs.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: She was just—she'd see another dog and she was actually a little aggressive when she was off the leash as well, but it was more snippy behavior, so we worked with Tricia on that. That was one of those things that I really never solved it; I just got it to the point where I could control the situation by being really careful. When I moved here to Madison when my ex-husband and I split up, I got the dogs. *(Laughter)* That was real important, so both dogs moved here. We were living out on 40 acres in the country and we moved both dogs into the city and Kala, she just had to tough it out. I mean I was really sweatin' it and worried and how many of these dogs lived on 40 acres. She hasn't had to confront other dogs. A friend of mine said, "You know what? She's just gonna have to tough it out. This is her new life."

Interviewer: Well, probably the most important thing is being with you too.

Interviewee: Well it really was and she was my dog right from the start and we just got through it. I used a lot of—I did a lot of bribery basically

with treats. You know you see another dog coming across the street and she's fine and she adjusted and she was fine, but she was also 12 when I moved here. So she passed away last summer.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: And I should say, all this time, I started taking classes with Dog's Best Friend.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: With Kayla I took ladder agility classes; not because I had any interest in agility at all, but because Tricia thought that type of activity would help increase, boost her confidence and help.

Not sure how ladder got in that statement—not sure what I was saying, but I'm sure it wasn't ladder!

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: I think if I had been in a different place—if I had known then what I've learned over the years chances are pretty good that she could have come a lot farther on her dog to dog reactivity issues.

Interviewer: Why do you attribute it to you?

Interviewee: Because I'm responsible for everything in the world! *(Laughter)*
Because I think—to me as opposed to her?

Interviewer: Or what do you think you could have done differently?

Interviewee: More relaxed. Stop feeling as though I was responsible for everything she did wrong. Maybe spent more time trying to socialize. You know what I would do is I would go to classes, but we lived on 40 acres and I'm busy. I have a really busy job that keeps me really busy, so you just do what you can. I think mostly though is that I always felt as though I was always mortified if she acted, if she misbehaved toward another dog. I was so horrified and took it so personally that I couldn't really use it constructively and I think that's part of just who I was then vs. who I am now.

Was the above point clear? I was trying to say that I got so involved emotionally in her reactivity that I couldn't deal with it objectively. I think that made me tense up when I saw another dog, and she sensed that and it increased her fear and reactivity.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: So I mean—God, I loved that dog. She died last July at 15.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Yeah she had a good long life. We think she was 15. I mean the person I adopted her from said she was 3 when I got her. She didn't know; they make it up. They don't know! They dogs come in from all over. They don't know how old he is, so we guess. So she sent me a birth date. I stayed it touch—well, I got back in touch with her about a year or two ago and she was in rescue so when I emailed her to tell her that Kayla had passed away; her reply was, "Well, we really don't know if she was 15. She could have been older for all we know."

So I thought okay, well its been a long haul, senior dog has been through all this transition, I'm just gonna take a break. Well, I lasted two weeks.

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: I was online looking for dogs. I couldn't stand life—I felt as though I had no purpose when I didn't have a dog. I just didn't feel that there was—I mean my house was so empty and life was empty. It's not that I don't have friends or activities or things that engage me, it's just that it didn't feel right. I didn't like living without a dog. I was lonely and I always structured my life around the dog walks and the dog activities and I just couldn't cope. So two weeks later I was online emailing _____ going, "I need another dog and I want an Aussie."

Emailing Morna (the ARPH rescue coordinator)

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Two weeks after that I was on my way to Michigan and I picked him up and brought him home.

Interviewer: Okay, where at in Michigan?

Interviewee: He was found in **Bensi** County Michigan and he was being—its mid-Michigan. It's just south of the Little _____ Peninsula on that far eastern edge and he was being fostered in Cadillac.

Benzie County, south of the Leelenau Peninsula, far western edge of the northern lower peninsula.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I think the people who found him and the story is—again, it's always a story, you never know for sure. His story was that these people were out mushroom hunting in the woods and they found him. When they found him it was sort of like they heard this car pull up and then they heard the car pull away and then they saw the dog. So they assumed he'd been dumped in the woods. Who knows; I mean it's total conjecture, but he definitely has _____, so yeah.

Not sure of the exact words, but probably that he has separation anxiety, or maybe just anxiety.

Interviewer: You mentioned when he was at the shelter that some of the issues that he had weren't present at that time?

Interviewee: Well what happened was he went to the shelter. They took him to the Humane Society and I think Peggy, his foster mom is one of the rescue coordinators for Aussie Rescue Mission and she must have a relationship with the shelter so immediately they got in touch with her and she went and picked him up and brought him home. So her experience with him was—well, we pretty much knew—I knew about the separation anxiety. He was really unhappy. She said, "Well, he's unhappy in his crate." She leaves him in the crate with the other dogs and he scratches and yelps and drools all over himself and I knew. I just said, "Separation anxiety. It's gotta be separation anxiety." I didn't think it was the crate at all although not being in the crate did helped me with that a lot.

I think he was really happy at peggy's, but her comment was that he was unhappy in his crate.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: We knew he had car-riding issues, but she took him to the vet, she took him—it wasn't like, "Oh here's my companion that's gonna ride around with me."

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: But the things that she didn't know about were his protectiveness. He's a little bit protective; the sort of reactivity to the door, the

little bit of shyness. He was quite shy around strangers when I first got him. I took him out to Tricia's. I actually know her personally, now over the years I've gotten to know her. We have mutual friends and so she invited me to bring him out to run with her dog and so I took him out there. I'd only had him maybe a week, so he was just—a week and a half, maybe two weeks—and got him out of the car and she came out to greet him and she did all the **Tricia McConnell** side waves and soft voice and he wouldn't even sniff her hand to take the treat. He was so—he was like—she saw it as almost like shut down, he was so frightened. I read a lot into it now. Sometimes I now look back on it and think—

Interviewer: Is he in any of her books?

Interviewee: No, no.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: None of my dogs are.

Interviewer: Okay. (*Laughter*)

Interviewee: So then we just decided it was almost as though—all I can think of is every time I took him some place new he thought I was gonna leave him. I always just assumed that because I had other incidents where I—I took him one day and I thought, “Oh, I’ll take him for a hike in the woods.” He wouldn’t even walk on a leash. He wouldn’t move and I thought, “Oh my God, he doesn’t feel good. What’s wrong?” I finally decided he was just frightened. He was afraid. So that kind of stuff just—I didn’t know how complicated that was gonna be and how all of that fear stuff sort of overrode every activity we did. I mean I had someone—but this time Tricia wasn’t really doing the consultations, so I actually consulted with Dog’s Best Friend, the new person, **Chelsea Whelant** who does them and I asked her to come and help me with the separation anxiety.

By that time, I had figured out that the crate wasn’t working and so I again started my own program that sort of followed Dog’s Best Friend, sort of followed Tricia and just sort of followed what I thought I needed to do. Chelsea came in and we talked about the separation anxiety for maybe five minutes; she was here for an hour, maybe ten, and the rest of the time she was just watching his body language and I think she was really worried that he had the potential to become aggressive. That fear could turn into aggression and she just started really talking through how he was

reacting; how had he changed since I had gotten him and he had gotten a lot more reactive to noises outside, people at the door. So she started encouraging me to do a lot more desensitization, a lot more common conditioning.

Chelsea Wieland, she was at the house for an hour or two (not 10).

Interviewer: And those are like examples at the door?

Interviewee: Yes, at the door. We had parties. I've had counter-conditioning parties and now I'm at the point where I don't believe that he's fearful when people come to the door. He's still reactive, but now I believe we're—I'm trying to turn it into learning his manners, to learning how to be polite at the door and a little less reactive. I mean there was a period where I was afraid that he was gonna bite somebody, that if I opened the door, he'd just lunge out and grab their hand and bite, grab something.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: He's a bit of a nipper. He nipped a painter and I say nip because if he'd wanted to hurt him, he could have.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: He would have hurt him. So let's see, so that's **Benny's** history.

Interviewer: It sounds like you've come a long way with him.

Interviewee: Oh yeah. I mean he's made incredible progress. I mean his confidence level—the first obedience class I took him to, beginning class, he—I had to keep—he was so anxious that if a dog looked at him, he'd bark at them and lunge. He was disruptive. I thought they were going to kick us out. The instructor told me every time he does that to take him out, calm him down and then come back in. I honestly thought they'd kick him out and by the second class meeting he had it figured out so he was comfortable and by the end of that six weeks, I mean he's just a model citizen now when he goes to class.

Interviewer: Wow, wow.

Interviewee: We have lots and lots and lots that we're working on and I say "we" because I mean probably the first animal I've had—I loved **Harlow** and Kayla, but I mean I think people think I'm nut because I think of myself as part of this partnership and I really go, "Oh, we

went here and we went there.” It’s not like, “I went here with my dog.” No, “We went—we went to the dog park.”

Harpo

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Boy he’s just—I don’t know—I was gonna have this really organized thing I was gonna tell you, but it just sort of all mushes together.

Interviewer: No, no.

Interviewee: I sat down about a month after I got him and just made a list of—I made the top 10 issues that I had. I was feeling so overwhelmed by his behaviors that I just wrote them down and put them in order of what I thought was the most importance I had; categories and it was like highest category was the things that truly affected my quality of life and then I went down to things that sort of—that affected his quality of life and I went down to the more gravy train ones.

Interviewer: Right, getting along, living space.

Interviewee: Right and after I did that it was like I could quantify it and then I could see how they interrelated and I never did—I didn’t really follow the list because opportunities present themselves.

Interviewer: What were some of the outlying issues that he had fear of?

Interviewee: One of the top issues was this fear of strangers. One of the top issues was the car riding. The separation anxiety was huge because I was afraid to leave him home alone. I couldn’t leave him in a crate because he was hurting himself. I couldn’t confine him in a room because he’d destroy the door. I couldn’t—oh my God, it was just orchestrating leaving was horrendous. I mean it was just really cramping my style because I felt like I couldn’t go anywhere. So that was really the top issue and that was the one I pulled out and said, “I’m doing nothing but this until I get to the point where I can at least leave and feel comfortable.”

Interviewer: What are some of the key things that you’ve utilized from what you came up with or what Dr. McConnell came up with? What are some things that you think really—that you paid attention to that you really put forth and made happen that really made a difference?

Interviewee: In terms of techniques or in terms of—?

Interviewer: Both.

Interviewee: Food is a big one. (*Laughter*) And I don't think of it as bribery so much as I think of it as being the easiest way to get him to feel good about a context and I mean I get that—I take that right from Tricia. I didn't make that up. I don't know that. I know it now, but I've learned that from Tricia that is like what I wanted to do was make him—in situations that he was in, I wanted him to feel good about them and eating, getting this bits of food stuffed in his mouth or offered to him or presented to him in a Kong I thought was a really good vehicle.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: But with the separation anxiety, the program is you put down a Kong, you step outside the door. You come back in, you pick up the Kong. Well that's only gonna work if your dog is not so anxious that they ignore the Kong.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: So I said, "Well, I have to teach him to love the Kong first." So I started giving him a Kong just for being him. We would be sitting around the house, oh let's stuff a Kong and give it to him. So I wanted him to get to the point where he just felt really good about having, eating this stuffed Kong. Then I started—while I was doing that I was doing this sort of desensitization. I would—you know its nice to work at home for this because I would be working away, I'd come out in the kitchen, I'd pick up my keys, rattle them and set them down and leave. I did that I think—for three days running I think it did that probably 50 to 100 times a day—

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: – before he stopped alerting to the sound of the keys. I had one door I could go out through the door that goes to the basement and garage. I wouldn't dream of leaving by the front door if I had to leave because he just couldn't cope with that. So it was like a combination of what she was talking about—I never really did this step away from the house for two minutes, come back. Step away for five minutes, come back because during all this I had to go places.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: So I that. I did—it's like trying to teach him to be comfortable eating the Kong and then I went ahead—he frequently wouldn't eat it while I was gone, but I just thought, when I get home, I just went ahead and let him have it. If he didn't hurt anything, I let him have it. The whole damage thing that he did—it's not like he went around the house. A lot of dogs, they'll destroy your couch.

The point I never managed to make her is that Trisha encouraged me to take away the kong when I got home; otherwise, it might actually be rewarding him for the wrong thing. She thought it was important that he only get the kong during my absence to keep him busy and distracted. I felt, though, that it was important for him to really learn to love that stuffed kong so I always let him finish it after I got home.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: He spent the entire time I was gone—he'd spend in front of—and he still does. When I go away he's in front of the door that leads to the outside. He lays there and waits for me. Every time a car goes by, he pops up to see if it's me and that's all he does. Sometimes he'll eat the Kong, sometimes he won't. He was—I think he was either worrying at the frame of the door or if something happened outside, if somebody came to the door—I'm not really sure. There's damage around that door frame and I don't know how it happened. It's not happening anymore so, you know.

Interviewer: It sounds like he's come an awful long way.

Interviewee: He's really gained a lot of confidence. I mean he gets it in terms of okay, you're not always gonna leave me. Just the end of January was the logistical nightmare of trying to get outside to shovel the snow. It was huge. It was like I had to make sure he had lots of exercise and then I put a Kong out and now he's fine. I'll go out in the yard. If I don't want him to come with me, he stays in and he just sits and watches me, but that wasn't happening. I was really careful not to go in and out this door at all because this room was brand new and I didn't want wrecking—I thought, "Oh my God if he wrecks one of these brand new windows, I'm gonna have to kill him." (*Laughter*) So I wanted to keep the emphasis in the other room.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: So a lot of it's just that he just—he goes lots and lots and lots of fun places. We go to the dog park at least three or four days a

week. I have regular weekend events out at a friend's house that is a mutual friend of Tricia's, that's how we end up doing things with Tricia is that he goes to agility classes. He's going to—we're doing this K-9, the freestyle. Have you see the musical Freestyle?

Interviewer: No, no.

Interviewee: It's the coolest thing. You learn obedience—it's obedience to music.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Interviewee: But it's very free. There's no—I've never been one to do competition obedience. To me it's boring and tedious.

Interviewer: Is it something that's new?

Interviewee: It's been around for a number of years, but yeah I think it's just becoming more and more popular recently.

Interviewer: Oh that sounds really fascinating.

Interviewee: Well, it'd be a lot more fascinating if I had any sense of rhythm.
(*Laughter*)

Interviewer: You know one of the things that I'm looking at and I'm hearing about your story is that the commitment that you made to him to help him change and just the constant awareness of what he's doing, how he's feeling, what's going on with him, and how consistent and just—I mean that was—and it sounds like that was your job and you did it.

Interviewee: It has been. It's not done yet. It's gotten a lot easier, I will say, and I think—I mean I'm a single person. I live alone, so that certainly probably gives me more of a focus. I think it's still a healthy focus. I worry about that a little bit; am I too obsessed? I mean I am still having a lot of—I do things other than dog things. I do go out for dinner with my friends and go to movies and that kind of thing, but yeah the last six months has been very focused and I keep saying like I'm feeling like I'm one dimensional because all I do is concentrate on this dog and a lot of what I have to talk about relates to this dog.

Interviewer: Like what?

Interviewee: Just in terms of my experiences and what I'm up to and other people are worried about what's going on in the world and I'm just worried about his next adventure. (*Laughter*) But I also feel—more than my other two dogs—I also feel that this relationship has been really life altering, life changing for me.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: I really feel like I've gained a lot of confidence in my abilities and my—I think it has the potential to change my relationships with other people just in terms of the fact that I—its like, I don't know how to describe it. I mean I don't know how to put it into words.

Interviewer: I guess let me ask you this, since you've taken the time to educate yourself on what different cues that he has might mean, does that trigger anything within you, like, "Well I wonder what I'm feeling or thinking or why did I do this? Or why did I react that way?" Does it make you question what behavior you elicit?

Interviewee: Yeah, what a great—yeah, that's a really great question. It does from the perspective of how I can in one context, in one situation immediately get it and recover and in another situation it's like he's pushed my last button and I'm so angry that I can't cope. So yes, it has. It has me looking at—I mean I've always had—I have issues with anger. It's not that I—I don't get over angry, I don't cope with being angry. I don't let myself get angry. I don't acknowledge it. I just, oh. When I go get angry, it's just devastating to me and I have this reaction to anger that I'm like I'm gonna destroy my relationship.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: So yeah, it has made me look at that. It has made me sort of look at—its made me—a lot of things have happened. Number one, I realize that I can get so angry that—not that I'm out of control, because that's not any—out of control implies that I'm somehow abusive. I can get so angry that I'm like screaming at him and I know realize that even when I'm that angry, I haven't destroyed my relationship with this dog and yeah that applies to my relationships in life. So do I question how I react or what—

Interviewer: I think you just gave a good example.

Interviewee: Yeah and a lot of it does center around that and it does center around—its weird. It's like I almost can give myself a pep talk some days. I can be with him some days and we go for a walk in

the neighborhood. This has happened; okay, we went for a walk. I was with a friend. I have a neighbor that I walk with a lot, neighbor dog. Her dog is Daisy. Daisy is a barksy little terrier and she barks when all the other dogs go by. So now Daisy has not learned to bark and lunge when cars go by, which **Benny** does, but somehow Benny has learned to bark at other dogs. When a little terrier barks and lunges, that's one thing.

Interviewer: Right. (*Laughter*)

Interviewee: So that's been kind of an issue for me that I'm trying to work through, but there was one day when he was just really cranked and I don't know if he didn't have enough exercise; I don't know what caused it, but he was just really edgy. It was one of the first spring days. It might have just been that he was getting frustrated because we kept seeing people and seeing dogs and all those herding things that he wanted to do, he couldn't do. I wasn't paying as much attention as I probably should have. I was having this conversation with Anne. He nipped a little girl and it was herding, stalking, that kind of behavior. It was a little girl he knew. He's played with her dog. When she came up and she wanted to pet him, I said, "Let me make sure he's under control," because I knew he was a little edgy, but I didn't catch him in time and I didn't get him under enough control. What he had done was he had laid down. So you think, "Oh, he's laying down, how sweet," but he was crouched.

Interviewer: Oh okay.

Interviewee: And she walked up and he just went and he grabbed her pant leg. I don't know if he actually got skin. He didn't break any. There was no mark. I talked to her mom. She was fine. So what did I do? Pulled him back. Clipped him under his chin as hard as I could. I was so embarrassed that I did that in front of that little girl because, of course, she had no idea, but it happened. So it's like, "Why in that circumstance wasn't I more in tune? What is it that helps me be more in tune?"

Interviewer: When do you find that you are more in tune with him?

Interviewee: I think when I've just had more energy, when I'm less tired, it's not the end of a long work day, when I'm not distracted with other people.

Interviewer: So when you can give him your full attention and you can be aware of what's going on in the moment?

Interviewee:

Right, yeah. So I actually came home and I spent a lot of time online researching what had happened to make sure that I was comfortable that he wasn't be aggressive or fearful; that he was doing just this naughty, herding dog thing. I did a lot of soul searching about where I need to go with his training in terms of maybe the counter-conditioning is—maybe we're past that. Maybe we need to start being a little stricter and learning our manners and I've started work—I actually talked to Tricia about it and she was pretty on board with where I was going. She said, "You know, we were afraid he was gonna be afraid of people. We know he's not afraid of people anymore. He needs to learn his manners." So that's kind of where I'm going next.

I'm still working on all of this—trying to sort through what causes Bennie to do the herding/stalking behavior. I'm much better now at anticipating it and redirecting it. For awhile, I think I went too far in the 'other' direction—away from counter-conditioning and I got a little too strict. By that I mean I started to get impatient when he would pull me toward someone, or otherwise act inappropriately. Of course, he reads that impatience and gets stressed and behaves badly. Now, I am able to anticipate when he might act inappropriately and use my training skills to redirect his behavior.

Interviewer:

Mmhmm.

Interviewee:

I kind of wonder, "Gee, maybe I shouldn't take him for walks with the neighbors," but that's not fair to me because I want to go for walks. I like walking with Anne and Daisy. So I just decided I'm gonna have to balance it a little better when I'm walking. If I want to keep walking, taking Benny for walks with Anne and Daisy, then I just have to learn how to do that. Anne's been through this with me with Commander Kayla, the Bossie Aussie, the old dog.

Interviewer:

Sure.

Interviewee:

I mean we started walking—we didn't start walking where I'd be out on the street and she'd be on the sidewalk because Kayla would lunge at her dog. We taught them to walk together very slowly, so she gets it. She understands what I'm doing and it's great because I just said, "I'm gonna have to be more watchful," and if there's a little kid running towards us, I'll say, "Daisy, run interference," and so it's—

This got a little confused, didn't it? Was trying to say Ann and I first started walking together with Kayla, who used to lunge at

poor little Daisy! We got through that, and Ann has been very understanding with Bennie as well.

Interviewer: When you guys are grooving together what—and your relationship, describe that now. Like what—I guess what feeling do you get out of why you go to this trouble to work with him?

Interviewee: Joy, joy. Sort of a sense of connection. There's pride. It's fun. I think part of it is—I mean part of the reason that I go to this trouble is because I said I would. I mean part of that commitment is I made the commitment, I took him home, and even when I really want to just give him back, I just don't feel that I can do that. I feel like I made this commitment and I'm gonna make it work. Now, I mean if he attacks somebody, that might change. He's not an aggressive dog, so I don't have the issue of, is he dangerous? Is he gonna hurt somebody? I really don't feel that's a concern, but it is—I just get tremendous joy from having that connection with him.

When he is—I mean when I take him out to my friend Harriet's and I take the leash off and he's running up ahead and I call him and he bounds back to me like I'm the most important thing in the world, what more could you want? (*Laughter*) I mean from a relationship with another species? It's just fun; it's rewarding, it's gratifying. I get a tremendous sense of gratification from the progress that he's made and that we've made together. He's a great companion. He'd be better if he was a little better in the car.

Interviewer: (*Laughter*) There's a lot of time to work on that.

Interviewee: I would love to have a dog who wanted to ride in the car with me, but right now I'll settle for a dog who is quiet, who rides in the car with compliance.

Interviewer: You mentioned that either before dogs or specifically before him that you were a different person.

Interviewee: You know, okay, I'll tell ya. I've been in therapy for four years, since my ex and I split up. So there's a lot that's been going on in terms of my own personal growth and I've worked really, really hard on a lot of who I was and who I want to be. So this sort of plays into it.

Interviewer: How?

Interviewee: It's like I get to practice all my new tricks on my dog. (*Laughter*) I get to practice all that assertiveness and being angry and finding out what the consequences of being angry are and all that stuff or maybe aren't.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: So I read that confidentiality thing and took it seriously. So—

Interviewer: No, no, you're great.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you feel like you can transfer in your relationship with him to other people or you kind of mentioned that it's a good practice?

Interviewee: I think so. Let me think about specifics if I can. I think there are things. I don't know that I consciously—I don't sit around and if I'm having a conversation with a friend and think, "Well, this is what I've learned from my relationship with Benny," but I do think it changes the way—even the way I relate to my friends. I think some of the things I've learned is that I can—I have to back up a little. I mean as much as I've changed my whole life for this dog and as much as I'm putting all this effort in, I have expectations about him complying with rules. It's not—I mean you can't—your husband or your friend, you could say, "I expect you to pick up your dirty socks." It's not like that. I mean you can't do that with a dog, but nonetheless, I set expectations and I make sure that he complies with them.

I wasn't very good at that in my marriage at all. I was very much—I almost—I was just one of those people that went along to get along. Just go along to get along and it's easier just to keep your mouth shut and that's not very good for a relationship. I tend to be sort of, "Oh well, whatever you think; whatever you want." I do think learning to sort of the give and take—it's kind of bizarre, but the give and take with this dog maybe in conjunction with the fact that I'm working on these issues has really helped to change the way I relate with my friends in ways.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: I don't have a relationship right now. I haven't even thought about having a relationship. Who the heck would want to live with me and this dog anyway? (*Laughter*) Single suits me just fine right

now, but I think it does change. There part of having just the confidence to say things, to open my mouth. Part of it is having the confidence to realize having a sense of competence around—I mean I’m trying these things and they’re working. I’m learning these things and I’m applying them and I’m seeing these results and I’m doing it sort of—I’m being creative and there’s a whole creative process that’s going on behind the scenes. Yeah, sometimes things aren’t working, but then I just sort of like regroup and try something else.

Yeah, I think—I don’t know how to put it. I don’t know how to quantify it, but I feel like all that stuff applies to everything else I do. It applies to my work life; it applies to my friendships.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you’re more assertive, in other words, looking at something more from a partnership than from a resolution-type thing?

Interviewee: Yeah, it’s a little harder to do it. *(Laughter)* It’s a little harder to do that with your dog.

Interviewer: Do you think I mean it’s something as simple as more compassion because you’re taking into consideration who he is as an individual when you interact with him and just like you do with other people?

Interviewee: Well, you know it’s funny because compassion is an interesting word to use because one of the things I’ve worked on is—yeah, I’m a typical raised Catholic, recovering Catholic. I hope you’re not Catholic, oh my God.

Interviewer: *(Laughter)*

Interviewee: I don’t want to offend you.

Interviewer: No, I’m not.

Interviewee: I was raised Catholic, good old fashioned Catholic guilt and everything that goes wrong in the world is probably my fault and I’m responsible for everybody else’s feeling around me and I have to sort of be very careful because God forbid if I hurt someone’s feeling, I could just destroy them. And responsible for making sure that everybody gets along with everybody. I mean its just all this stuff that I have done over the years, taking responsibility for everything and one of the things I’ve been working on and one of the things that I sort of have been able to do when Benny and I are

in these circumstances where things don't go the way that I want them to or where—you know his reactivity at the door.

Interviewer: And you realize it's not your fault?

Interviewee: It's not my fault. I'm not responsible for this and I can look at what can I control? How can I control it? The only way I can control his behavior is to clip his leash on and put him in the bedroom and that's what happens, but I no longer feel as though I am personally responsible. So that led me to wonder if I change the way I relate to people in that way, like stop taking responsibility. Am I gonna be less compassionate? Does that make me less compassionate?

Interviewer: I think it gives you the opportunity for healthier relationships.

Interviewee: I think it does and I think it gives me the opportunity to feel more compassion because I'm no longer personally responsible for their responses to their life. So yeah, it's been an interesting progression. I'm still working on that compassion thing. I'm still sorting through that a little bit.

Interviewer: Wow, that sounds wonderful, amazing that you got all of this out of your relationship with him.

Interviewee: That and therapy. Don't forget therapy. *(Laughter)*

Interviewer: You had mentioned relating to him as another being and another species, I guess, so talk to me a little bit about that and I guess what relating to another species also contributes, also does for you.

Interviewee: Boy, that's hard. What does that do? I mean obviously, you're an animal person, we anthropomorphize. We look at their responses. Sometimes I don't think that's so bad.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Because I think when we put our own—when we identify with their responses as in the way that we would as human respond to things, I think it sort of makes it a little easier to understand maybe where they're coming from, but that's not the question you asked. The question is more around relating to him as another species.

Interviewer: No, go ahead. Go ahead and develop on that. Do you feel like you have a better understanding of their nature or an individual or a specific species' nature?

Interviewee: Maybe, but I'm not sure. I'm not sure I could describe it. I think about when I'm out and about with him things that he sees and hears and smells that I don't even know about. I was out hiking with a friend yesterday. We were at a park. Everybody was—dogs were leashed and we were just hiking with leashed dogs and they were checking out—sniffing this and sniffing that and my friend commented that they have a much bigger idea of what's going on right now than we do and they do! And they see things.

Sometimes its hard, especially right now its hard for me to let go of all of these “issues” that I'm working on and just let him be him, just let him be a dog, but I do it. I mean I have moments that it's just a joy to just watch him having fun, being a dog. That's usually when we're out in the woods somewhere or we're out at a dog—we're some place where he can be free and off leash and running around and having a good time. But I think a lot of times, right now especially, and maybe just because that's that controlling thing for me, it's hard for me sometimes to just relax and let that happen. I always feel like I'm looking for training opportunities.

Interviewer: Did you feel that way with your other two dogs just because he's—or because this is closer to the journey that you stared with him and hopefully you'll get to that point, but right now that's where you're—?

Interviewee: I think always, I've always been—I'm always afraid of losing my dog. I'm fearful about them getting hurt. I always just say it's a good thing I didn't have kids because they'd be neurotic.
(*Laughter*) I would tie them to the bed until they were 25.

Interviewer: When you do—you had mentioned relaxing and letting things go, does your relationship or any aspect of your relationship help you, with him, help you do that do you think?

Interviewee: I think there's a trust. I think that he really trusts me and I am beginning to trust him in terms of—I've never had a dog who behaves when he's free the way that this dog does. It's not that he doesn't blow me off; we'd be out and I'll call him and he's like, “Oh, in a minute.” But he is really—he is more connected to me than any dog I've ever had. I'd like to joke that there's advantages to that separation anxiety.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: But I really trust when I—also, I have to qualify that because I will not let him off leash in any context where there's a car because he'll chase cars and I cannot stop him.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: That's number 11 on the list of 10. It's there, I know it, and we manage for it, but when we're places that he can be off leash and he disappears for a second, I feel so confident that he will come back to me and look for me and make sure and check in, I've never had a dog that behaved in that way. So there is this trust and I believe that he's really begun to trust me; that he trusts that I will not abandon him, that I will be there for him in a way that he can trust.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. Wow.

Interviewee: Yeah, boy. I mean I know he's a different species; I know he is. We have—there are limitations in the way we communicate. I can't ask him questions.

Interviewer: Do you feel like there's a difference between I guess what typical dog training is and in some of the things that Dr. McConnell and gets you to look at as far as getting into their minds and how they think and what insights they may be able to share as a species?

Interviewee: Oh, you know, I think so because I think—I mean she's had years and years of experience and all that education and I know she looks—she can—I mean if you've never seen her in action—

Interviewer: No, I haven't.

Interviewee: It's phenomenal, it's phenomenal. You should convince her to have you watch her in some kind of consultation because I mean—I've seen her in so many contexts where she'll just look at a behavior that a dog—and a posture. She'll be able to say, oh, blah, blah, blah about this dog. I think as I've watched her and as I do all this reading, I do think it's different than regular dog training because I think that she is really tuned into how different species learn and I think—yes, I think I can tune into him. There are times when I can tune into him. I'm in this freestyle class and this freestyle class is taught by a lovely woman who is—I really like her. She's a very dear woman. She's not as behaviorally oriented in terms of—so she uses words, but she doesn't quite pull it all together.

I mean I've been trained by the best of the best and the first couple of classes I was really going home frustrated because I was feeling a lot of pressure to have Benny be further along. Okay, we would do something twice and then she'd move onto the next thing. And the next week she'd say, "Well, you should be dropping the lure." Dropping the lure? Well he hasn't—and it dawned on me that I really know more about what he knows than she does.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: And I know more about how he learns than she does and I'm more in tune with—and I finally I had to sort of give myself a pep talk and say, "I want to take this class. I want to be in the class. I have to ignore what she's saying about those kind of things." So I finally told her, "I'm not dropping the lure because he's not ready. He doesn't know what I'm asking and I can tell when I'm at home and there's no distractions that he doesn't know what I'm asking him."

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: And she just backed right off of me.

Interviewer: Knowing so much, knowing him better than any trainer and I guess putting aside what you'd like to accomplish with him, as a dog, how does that make you feel that you know this separate species so well; that you have a relationship with him?

Interviewee: It's kind of scary that it's so intense because I can't imagine now what my life would be like if something happened and I lost him. So I mean I spend a lot of time thinking I want to give him back, but, I hear from people who have kids, they go through that too.
(Laughter)

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: And a lot of times, going, "Oh my God, what have I done?" But it's almost scary; it's very intense. I mean I just love this dog so unequivocally.

Interviewer: Is it a good feeling?

Interviewee: Yes, it is a good feeling. It's—

Interviewer: What are some other adjectives that you can think of to describe—

Interviewee: Scary.

Interviewer: No, what it brings to you; scary, love, intense?

Interviewee: I hate to say companionship because that's not really what you were going for, but it is companionship. It's like I can't imagine what I would be doing right now in my life if I didn't have this relationship with this dog.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Sometimes I imagine it and then its kind of—the festival was here, I could have seen 12 movies instead of 6 or I would maybe be going to book reading and signings after work or I'd be sleeping in or doing more yoga. I do imagine those things, but in reality, I can't imagine how my life would feel because it's like—maybe he's a child replacement; I don't know. I don't like to dilute—people say, “Well, he's—this is like my child.” He's not. He's not like my child at all. Maybe it's not as intense. I won't even say that. It's probably as intense a relationship as any I've had with a human being, but it's a relationship with a dog, so its different.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: In some respects it's easier because its not—it's almost like it's easier, but I don't know what the because is. In some respects it's harder. I mean it's harder because we can't sit down and talk. I can't say, “Benny, I know you're frustrated about being the car, but it's the only way we can get out to Harriet's.” We can't have those conversations, but in some respects it's easier because I get to call all the shots. *(Laughter)* He sort of stays—yeah he's progressing, but he always stays—he's never gonna be a child who is gonna grow up and go away from me.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: He's never gonna evolve away from me in the way that our relationship with a significant other might happen or even a friend. So it's almost—I kind of—

Interviewer: Does having a relationship with him, as him being a different species feel like you're more connected to anything that's part of nature?

Interviewee: Well, I think it does. I don't know that I could directly say, “Okay, that gives me more of a connection with birds or other wildlife,”

but it certainly changes the way I structure my life and I spend way more time in the natural world than I ever would if I didn't have a dog; even though I'm a city dweller and my life consists of city walks and I've adapted to that really well. But having him and even having my earlier pets, my Kayla and Harpo, it gets me—I'm out every day. I am in the natural world. Just the sense of being outside in nature and being surrounded by nature and being on hikes where I've seen a fox, I've seen coyotes.

I was out walking with my dogs once years ago on our land when John and I were together and I heard these coyotes. They were like—I mean they were probably from me to that back fence away and it was almost dusk. It was on the trail. I thought there had to be a half dozen of them. I caught a glimpse of them and I'm glad the dogs were leashed because that would not have been a pretty situation.

Interviewer: Right. (*Laughter*)

Interviewee: But having that exposure—those are things that I probably wouldn't experience in my life if I didn't have a dog in my life because I probably would have gone a whole different direction and I don't think—I mean granted it was only a month, but that was pretty obvious. It was pretty obvious to me that without that companion I would not have made the effort to go for a hike.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: I would had to have really worked a lot harder to get myself out into the natural world.

Interviewer: What are some feelings that you have when you're out with him on a hike and you're in nature with him and you see coyotes or you see birds or trees? What do you get out of it?

Interviewee: Well, there's another joy one; definitely joy. Peace. Contentment. A little bit of a sense of being less important maybe; not privileged.

Interviewer: Is it a small—is a spiritual experience in any way or any part of relating to him or being in nature?

Interviewee: Well, it probably is. I don't think of myself—I think I probably am a lot more spiritual than I think of myself being, but its almost like that sort of is happening in the background and I'm not really processing it in ways that I can—you know I have that baggage,

that good old Catholic baggage, so its hard to think of spirituality in other forms or other senses without having that overlay of God.

Interviewer: You know you mentioned in a broad term that being out in nature makes you feel a part of something bigger and you get feelings of peacefulness and joy. In a broad sense of the term spirituality or nature, that might seem like it.

Interviewee: Yeah that does sort of—

Interviewer: Maybe not thinking of it that way, but it does seem to elicit those feelings.

Interviewee: That sense of being—

Interviewer: Does he alone when you're with him help elicit any of those feelings that are similar?

Interviewee: Oh, good question! Yeah, I would say, yeah; that sort of laying on the floor next to the dog and—I mean this is all the stuff that they talk about, your blood pressure goes down when you're stroking the dog, but it is. It's sort of like it—there is this sense of just peace and things being right and contentment. I can't say that it makes me feel like part of a bigger world necessarily right in that kind of a context, but yeah. I mean can you certainly draw this line. There's human being; there's this wonderful relationship with this creature and does that draw out into sort of the natural world and into being a part of nature?

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: It has to. I don't know that I can describe it, but it has to, it just has to. It just has to be—when you can step aside or set aside all of the trappings of living your life and—

Interviewer: Do you feel like you can bring that same sense into the other parts of your life; that peace and contentment and being?

Interviewee: Oh I'd sure like to.
(Laughter)

Interviewee: Especially think about that in terms of my job. I think there are moments when that can happen. I don't think I'm there yet. I think that would be almost sort of a work in progress; that that would be sort of maybe my next journey, my way of—as it becomes less

difficult effort and more fun and more easy and more of just this sort of easy relationship.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: I think that's something that I've sort of tried to venture into, maybe not consciously thinking in terms of Benny, but just sort of tried to bring what I had learned about myself over the last six months to four years into how I live my daily life and how I respond to situations at work. I mean it's sort of—mechanically it happens.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: By that I mean mechanically it happens because I'm a workaholic. I'm one of those people that I could work ten hours a day, I could work twelve hours a day. Since I've been involved and since I've had dogs in my life and specifically since I've had this dog its like work only has to be a piece of what I am and what I do. Just by virtue of having him in my life and the demands that his presence has made on my time, it's like work fits into compartments now. So I work really hard and I still work more than I want to, but I get up and I walk away and I feel very justified and I feel good about it. I don't know if that's a direct answer to your question, but its sort of like the mechanics of sort of starting down that road of getting that sense of peace and balance. And I think it is—its sort of like balance in your life and balancing between demands and work and relationships and just being, just having time to be.

Interviewer: You know what? As we interact with our dogs and we're aware of so much of what they're doing and we're also trying to concentrate of what we're telling that that we don't know we're telling them—

Interviewee: Oh yeah!

Interviewee: – and trying to project this energy that's strong, assertive, but calm and do you feel like you're working towards being mindful of that calmness and that sense of peace and assertiveness projecting to him?

Interviewee: Well yeah.

Interviewer: In other words you mentioned that you reacted a few times that, boy, you thought, "I would have done something differently," and I'm wondering if you're moving towards in those moments or just at every moment that you interact with him, if it's a mindful thing

that when you approach him, “Am I calm? Am I projecting the kind of energy that I want?”

Interviewee: Boy, wouldn't that be nice? (*Laughter*) I think that's a really nice goal and I would love to move in that direction and I am working—I think I would say that I am working on—I don't know that I would use those words, but I think it is very—they are synonymous with the types of things that I'm trying to do in terms of how I interact and how—

Interviewer: What words would you use?

Interviewee: Oh you had to pin me down.

Interviewer: (*Laughter*)

Interviewee: Well I would say just more—mindful is the word. It really is—more mindful of where I am and what is going on around me. It becomes—it almost becomes second nature. I was telling a friend of mine that when he nipped the little girl she was like, “Oh my God! Oh my God! Maybe you better get a muzzle!” Nooo, I don't think I'm getting a muzzle. Not this week anyways. She said, “Well, you don't deserve to have to go through that. You worked so hard with Kayla and now you have another dog where you have to cross the street.”

But it really does—that watchfulness and mindfulness does start to become a little bit second nature and it's easy just to slip out of it, but it becomes easier and easier to me to stay—its like when—I mean like right now I don't have to be mindful particularly, but when we're out and about when I'm with him, when we're doing things, it becomes easier and easier to have—even when I'm thinking of other things or I'm with other people, it's easier and easier to just stay aware of what's going on around us, how he's responding to it.

Summing up the last two pages of dialog—yes, I am more mindful and present in my activities. This is true both in my interactions with Benny, and in my relationships with people. It can be as simple as really engaging in a conversation, rather than anticipating what I'll say next.

Interviewer: Is it a good feeling, being mindful and being present knowing what's going on or is it—?

Interviewee:

It is. It is a good feeling. I do yoga—well, sometimes it's just stretching, and right now I'm not taking a class. The instructor that I really liked, I just can't make it work in my schedule and I haven't found any yoga instructor that I want to work with, so I just do it on my own. I can equate it to that. There's the days where I am doing yoga and I'm doing my yoga and I'm mindful of what I'm doing. It is a really—it's like everything is lining up mentally, physically, and it doesn't matter what the pose is, it's just that it's like I just—its all coming together for me and then there's the times where I've got a half hour between now and the time I have to start work and I'm getting through. Get as many salutations in as you can.

That was sun salutations, a series of yoga poses, as if this was pertinent at all. I read this and think 'blah blah blah'. It feels good to be mindful and present because everything else drains away—the yucky day at work, the leak in my roof, whatever! When I am mindful and present in my activities—whether with Benny, or doing yoga, or having a conversation, I can't be feeling stress and anxiety about other stuff.

Interviewer:

(Laughter)

Interviewee:

It's not yoga at all.

Interviewer:

Right, right.

Interviewee:

I'm already planning my work day and listening to the radio and you know. So it does feel really good and it's sort of very similar to that. It's like where either I'm in a class or I'm not in class, I'm in the yard and I'm just sort of tuned into what he's up to I can read sort of his energy level and sort of think through—are we just having fun out here, are we gonna try to do something? Are we gonna try to learn something? Or we're out walking and someone's coming and he starts to pull me towards them. There's the times when I can get kind of frustrated and yank him back, but most of the time I'm becoming more mindful of—I can almost look at it and say, "Oh, well what's going on here? What do I want to have happen? How am I gonna make it happen? And that's happening; it's like a split second thing that's going on. It's not like conscious thought; it's just happening and it does—it feels really good. It feels really—it just feels connected.

Interviewer:

Hmm, and that's the same feeling or similar that you get in yoga?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, and it's not like I'm standing there going, "Okay, now I will do a forward bend and feel this way." It's just happening.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. Is that something that you seek to take with you to other situations in life?

Interviewee: Yes, yes, because I think I would like to be—when I'm with a friend and we're having lunch and we're having a conversation, it's so easy to not be mindful of that conversation. It's so easy to be thinking of your response.

Interviewer: Sure, sure.

Interviewee: Or to be worrying about the laundry you forgot to take out, whatever, you know, or worrying about work tomorrow. So yes, it is something that—

Interviewer: What do you think it can do for relationships in that instance, being mindful? Like what do you—are there any feelings that come to you in a mindful interaction, like say, with a friend at lunch or to that other person?

Interviewee: I think you can build a stronger connection, sort of a stronger emotional bond. Is this a test?

Interviewer: No.

Interviewee: *(Laughter)* What else? I don't know. I don't know that I could say. What feelings come to me? Just I think—not so much feelings, I think, I think, I think, I think that I'll learn more about that person if I pay attention to them.

Interviewer: No, I think connection and enhancing the relationship and that kind of thing, I think it—for me, I think being mindful makes me present in the moment and relaxes and calms my body so I can attend to what's going on between you and I, that kind of thing.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And I think that's what I get out of it.

Interviewee: Yeah, I like the way you worded that. I find myself—it's really easy to do this at work especially in meetings, you know?

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: You know the big thing now is everybody's supposed to—you're supposed to multitask and I don't multitask. I don't multitask well. You know what? If you're in a meeting and you're checking your e-mail in box, you're not hearing what's happening in the meeting. You can't do both things at the same time.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: So I do bring that and I have actually declined the opportunity. I actually had a manager ask me once to—it was like I was assigned to a new team and we were doing this sort of start of meeting where we were gonna kind of gel as a team and they explained to us what they wanted from us. She was sort of a senior level manager and there was this e-mail that I needed to write to this client. I don't remember the specifics of it, but she says, "Well, why don't you just bring your notepad into the—bring your laptop into the meeting and you can be writing that e-mail while we're talking."

'start up' meeting . . .

Interviewer: (Laughter)

Interviewee: And I looked at her and I said, "I don't think I'll be doing that because I would like to be engaged in the conversation in this meeting and I would like to write a good e-mail and I can't do both at the same time." She said, "Oh, you don't multitask?" I said, "No." (Laughter) I guess I was mindful that day, but yeah it—and I do bring that to work. I'm not sure which is going which way. I don't know if learning to be more mindful in my personal relationships is helping me be more mindful with my dog or if it goes in the reverse or if they don't all feed together.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I mean that mindfulness for me started at yoga practice.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Interviewee: But I can see—I mean I do bring that to Benny and—[dog barking] [to dog] What's the matter bud? When the phone rings, he likes to let me know. [to dog] Is that the phone? I don't hear a thing. Okay, thanks, thanks. Thank you, honey. Good boy, good.

I keep changing the ringer on the phone and then he doesn't pay attention to it for a day and then he figures out the phone is ringing and he barks. *[to dog]* Good boy! Thank you.

Interviewer: So do you think you know the dog's psychology practices vs. just commands and, "I want my dog to do this," and actually working with them cultivates and facilitates that mindfulness?

Interviewee: Yeah I think it does. I think it does in a lot of ways. Part of it is it's no longer all about me and what I want. Part is because—the initial dog training stuff when I first got Harpo, the wonder dog, was the typical push the butt down, jerk up on the leash. I used to go home and think, "But how does he know what I want because I'm doing the same thing no matter what." I'm always potting the leash, but how does he ever understand that when I say the word sit that means something different than some other word I might use? So I think, yeah, it does cultivate mindfulness because it becomes—I have to be able to interpret his responses to me so that I can begin to understand what he sees.

That was 'popping' the leash—it was the term the trainer used way back then. "Pop the leash"

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: So when I'm trying to get him to behave in a certain way—the phone thing. This dog, he barked. He barks when we go into building. I'm gonna work on that because he was so ballistic when the bell rang that I couldn't even begin to control him. Even if had someone ring the bell and I was standing outside, so I just thought, "Okay I'm just giving up on that. Nobody rings the bell." I put the tea kettle on and when it starts to whistle, "Bark, bark, bark!" Okay, so at first I thought I'll try to counter-condition. Well that wasn't working. Then I just got mad and would yell at him. That didn't work. Somewhere along the line and this has only happened in the last month or two, I began to realize that he considers it his job. His job is to alert me and I mean he's an Austrian Shepherd. He needs a job and one of his jobs is to make sure I know what's going on.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: And what I started doing with the tea kettle is I was propping it open so it wouldn't whistle and one day I almost broke a jaw. I went back to my office and forgot about it. The next time I did it, he caught it. He heard it rumbling a little bit and he started to bark.

I thought, “Oh my God, the tea kettle!”

haha—boiled it try (the tea kettle)—not broke a jaw.

Interviewer: So he was reminding you.

Interviewee: Yeah! So what I’ve done now is I just let it whistle and he barks and I thank him. “Okay, Benny I’ve got it. Thank you.” So I had to sort of learn, understand what was motivating his behavior and I don’t think with just commands, with just, “I’m the dominant one and you obey me,” I don’t think you get that. I think—call it what you want, mindfulness or whatever, I had to really try to understand what motivated his behavior so I could figure out where it fits in and how important it is to “correct” it or in that circumstance, I realized this dog is never gonna let me die in a house fire.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: I mean he’s never gonna do that. Same thing with the phone. If the phone starts to ring and before he reacts, I’ll say, “Oh, there’s the phone!” and sometimes he won’t bark at all. It’s like he knows I got it. _____ so weird. They’re so intuitive, you know. Aussies, in particular, seem to be—well Border Collies too I think are intuitive.

What I was trying to say here, and I’m not sure I said it very well, is that I believe being mindful has helped me tune into Bennie to the extent that I can often understand what is motivating a behavior. If it’s a behavior I find unacceptable, I can learn a better way to help him curb it. And, I can learn to be more accepting of his behaviors rather than being dictatorial.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: So I think there’s where the mindfulness came in because I realized that not only I shouldn’t get angry, but I don’t have to get angry because he’s not misbehaving. He’s doing what he thinks is his job. So how do I help him do his job in a way that’s acceptable to both of us? How do I also—as a part of that I benefit from that.

Interviewer: Mmhmm. Is it something that’s also—when it’s in that moment, you’re in that moment with him and you have a series of things, what’s going on? How do I want to react? What am I gonna do? What’s this dynamic about and how you choose to respond to it I guess in that moment because dogs only live in the present.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: And I think that's one of the gifts that they can help us with.

Interviewee: Yeah, they really can because whatever—yeah, it's not like he can think in the future or think back.

Interviewer: Well I mean apart from abuse. That's different.

Interviewee: Right, but yeah they live in the present. It's not like—yeah exactly. This is what's going on right now. The phone is ringing or there's someone at the door or I have to go to the bathroom or whatever.

Interviewer: You mentioned letting go of things earlier. Does knowing that he lives in the present and relating to him in the present moment, does that help you learn to live more in the present and let things go easier or help you in any way?

Interviewee: Probably. See I don't give a lot of thought to these things, so it's a good question. I think it does, yeah. I think I have to say that it does in a lot of ways. I can be really task-oriented and very much obligated-oriented. All these things need to be done before I can have this fun thing or do this and I think, as a result of being with dogs, being with this dog, I have gotten a lot better at just taking advantage of like being—yesterday was my birthday.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness! Happy belated birthday. Mine is the 26th.

Interviewee: Oh really? Oh happy birthday! (*Laughter*) I was out of town all weekend. I came in late Monday night with the intention of being off on my birthday, but once upon a time, birthday or not, I was like, "Oh, this is the last day of my vacation and I've gotta regroup, get some laundry done, I need to go back to work." And I chose to spend the whole day—I picked up Benny went out and I had lunch with a friend and we went out hiking and I don't know if that's what you meant by being in the moment, but that's how I perceived what I was doing yesterday. I was just being—I was having my last vacation day and enjoying it vs.—and I honestly didn't give a moment's thought to work until I set my alarm clock last night and said, "Okay, I'm gonna have to get up and what time do I have to get up in order to be ready for work and what time do I have to be to work?" and God, was that a rude awaking. (*Laughter*)

Interviewer: Do you think that's the same feeling or thing that comes from yoga and meditating and just finding that peace in that moment and not

worrying about other things and just being with him at that moment, in the park, and enjoying it?

Interviewee: I think it is really similar.

This answer should have been YES.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, I do. I think it's really similar and I think what it does when I'm doing yoga and I'm in *that* moment and I'm doing my yoga, I think that separation from the anxiety of your daily life is so critical. I think what it does is it makes me better at all those other things just indirectly because I am more relaxed and I am less anxious about them and I am not stewing about them. Of course, I stew. I mean, yes, do I wake up in the middle of the night and not fall back to sleep because whatever? Of course, but I'm way better at that. It's much easier for me to set aside things that are worrying me that I can't control for example. I do think they are very similar. I think, yeah.

Interviewer: I think as a therapist that's something that I'm looking at to help people with anxiety as a therapeutic tool to bring about this mindfulness; to do it in a way that calms their mind and gets them to relax and be in the moment and not worrying about the future or what's going on here or there.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: And I think it is very similar to yoga and I think it can be a powerful tool to cultivate and be mindful in this relationship with our animals.

Interviewee: Yeah, I do think it all interrelates so much and because I'm a computer programmer, I'm not trained in these areas that you're talking about, but I've spent the last four and half years meeting with a therapist, initially every week and then every couple of weeks and now I'm trying to—its like balancing that big chunk of change for that against things that I might want to spend that chunk of change for. What I've learned from that in terms of letting go of what I can't control and being okay with not being able to control everything; it does, it just all interrelates for me.

Interviewer: You think that transfers to the other parts of your life when you're not doing yoga or not necessarily interacting with him?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it does. Not always, of course, not always, but yes I think there are circumstances in which I'm at work and there's something going on where I can sort of stay involved and stay mindful and sort of not run up the, "Oh my God, this is changing. I can't cope!" That kind of response and just sort of stay with it and be comfortable with it and learn from it and absorb it. Yeah I think it does apply and it applies to relationships with friends and how I schedule my free time. Even learning—of course, I'm not alone am I because I'm home with my dog—but even learning to be more comfortable with my own solitude.

I used to crave solitude when I was married. I just always felt like I needed time alone, but then when I got divorced, it was like, "Oh my God. Nobody wants to do anything. It's Friday night, what am I gonna do? Oh my God!" It took me a long time to get comfortable with that, not only with being alone on Friday night, but with the fact that at the end of a long work week, I'm tired and I'd rather be home. It's just like, "This is what I want to do now." I don't know what that has to do with mindfulness, but—

Interviewer: You know, I think what you're describing is just this journey of self-growth of learning to know yourself better and liking yourself better and then how does that relate to the rest of the world that I live in?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: It sounds like you've been on a wonderful journey that he's been a part of, that other influences have brought you to where you are.

Interviewee: Yeah, it's been quite an amazing few years. I think he has been. I think maybe if I had been—if I had gotten him three years ago I might not have been in a position to be the dog mom I am right now. So it's like maybe I was ready for him and ready to take on this commitment when I got him, but this last six months that I've been with him it feels as though it's partly reinforced all these things that I've been learning about myself and it's also enhanced them. The sense of feeling competence—I can't say—I feel competent. I feel like I'm a competent person and I feel that I'm handling all this stuff competently. Now granted, I mean he was—he's part of that. He wants to trust. He wants to be in whatever way he can, he wants to be a companion and be a good dog and do everything that I want him to do and he really does.

That's sort of where you go back to those traditional methods where it's like you don't really stop and recognize that as well, I

think that I always sort of err on the side if he does something wrong, I don't look at it and say, "Okay, what did I do wrong?" but I look at it and say, "Okay, what happened here? Where did the communication break down and why doesn't he understand what I want?"

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: Let's back up three steps and try something different.

Interviewer: That's pretty amazing relating to them and they're not even human.

Interviewee: I know. I just can't get over—you said you have horses too?

Interviewer: I do.

Interviewee: Oh wow. When I was growing up, of course I thought I had to have a horse, but—

Interviewer: I didn't get involved with horses until I was an adult actually.

Interviewee: Really?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's very much the same kind of partnership that you have with them and amazing. If you stop to pay attention and be mindful of what the interaction can bring to him, to you, and together.

Interviewee: Right, yeah, yeah. That's another species that we certainly have found a way to incorporate—when you think of the roles that they fill, the ways that they help us and the ways that they seem to happily do that, it just blows my mind. What about cats? Do you have cats?

Interviewer: No, just dogs and horses.

Interviewee: Okay, I've been thinking about getting a cat and I just think I have enough on my hands right now.

Interviewer: He might enjoy the companionship.

Interviewee: Oh, I think he might and it's one of the things I thought of in terms of his separation anxiety and also just keeping him happy and entertained when I'm working even though I'm just down the hall, but all in good time. (*Laughter*)

Interviewer: You know my parents had one horse for a while and then they wanted to get him a companion, so they got him a llama, but they hated each other. (*Laughter*)

Interviewee: You know that's always the way that it—yes.

Interviewer: They really did. They didn't find any companionship in the different species, but a lot of cats and dogs do.

Interviewee: They do, yeah.

Interviewer: A lot of them do.

Interviewee: Years ago when we had Harpo, Harpo and I were out walking and we found a cat and he—*[tape ends]*

I must have wanted to tell you about finding Maggie, the cat. I brought her home and she and Harpo became such great friends!

Interviewer: You had mentioned a member of the pack and that that made the difference and I guess what does being a pack involve for you or mean to you and being the leader of that pack?

Interviewee: Ooh, good question. I define pack really loosely because I even think of that in my personal relationships. I think of maybe tribes. Oh, there's the tribe and then there's the extended tribe.

Interviewer: Mmhmm.

Interviewee: What does being a pack member and leader of the pack mean?

Interviewer: Or for you, is that something that you strive to do with him or if you do have other species or even humans, is that something that you seek out with them and/or other people in your life do you think?

Interviewee: In terms of being?

Interviewer: Like the qualities of a leader, that the qualities of a leader have.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: With him you certainly are.

Interviewee: Yeah and I almost feel like being a leader is sort of something that I have to do. People tell me I have strong leadership qualities. I've never aspired to be a leader, at least not consciously. At work they tell me that I have strong leadership qualities, but I don't care, I still don't want to be a leader. (*Laughter*)

Interviewer: Well, you seem to be doing a good job with him.

Interviewee: But it's leadership—I think I'm learning about leadership in that it's different than the way I perceived it in my young adulthood and as a child; maybe because I always thought of leadership as being pretty arbitrary and I think being "the leader of the pack" maybe means something a little different to me now than I would have thought it meant if someone would have asked me five years ago. I think it's not necessarily arbitrary or dictatorial, it's really more about sort of throwing ideas out there and sort of helping to shape them and being involved at the front end instead of the back end.

How does that—you know I do a lot of things in my friendships that are interesting in terms of—well, right now I'm so focused on Benny I don't do as much, but I get together with a group of women that we meet for brunch once a month and oh God. After a while—it started out with a small group and it got bigger and bigger and bigger and just notifying people got to be so overwhelming and I just said, "E-mail. Give me your e-mails and I'll take care of it." So I am the one who coordinates the next—it's not a coordination after all. You send the e-mails or certain other things that I sort of orchestrate to have happen. But I'm only one of obviously a whole—I mean everybody does that to some degree.

Interviewer: But it sounds like there's definitely been a change in meaning for you in how you view it to more of a positive thing.

Interviewee: It is, yeah and I can even say now when people at work say, "You have strong leadership qualities," I can feel good about that instead of feeling like, oh God. (*Laughter*) Because I do see it as positive and I don't see it as that sort of dominating, "Everybody must do as I say because I'm the leader of the pack," mentality at all. I see it more as guiding and shaping.

Interviewer: Do you think—has your—you mentioned that your perception of that has changed. Do you think that your actual interaction has changed in that way?

Interviewee:

I don't know. That's a good question. I don't know. I think it probably has over time. Yeah, I think it has both with people probably and even just the way I've interacted with this guy, with Benny, over time has evolved and that leadership role that I have taken with him has changed a lot. It's really become more of a give and take than my initial sense that I had to immediately fix everything and teach him the right way to do everything. It's really become more of a recognizing where he is in his life and where he is in his understanding of things and then reacting to that and trying to take us both to the next level. So I think it has changed me.

Maybe what I was trying to say here is that I think of leadership as 'guiding' rather than dictating. In some circles, that leader of the pack/dominance theory of dog training has gone by the wayside. I think the dominance theory still seemed too confrontational. But, a good leader will guide you to the right course of action, and then step back and let you find your way. I like to think that, when Bennie and I are "on," that is the kind of leadership role I am playing with him.

Interviewer:

That's very cool. Do you have any questions for me?

[End of Audio]

REFERENCE LIST

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