

## **GO FOR THE OLD**

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Ever thought of adopting an older dog? You may after you read this.

If you or someone you know is about to adopt a dog there are things that must be considered before making such an important decision. Questions you should ask yourself are: Do I truly have time for a dog? What is my lifestyle like? Why do I want a dog? Where will I get training? What breed is best for my personality?

As a canine behavior expert I am often called upon to fix problems that are 100% preventable. If most owners better assessed their lifestyles, personalities, and abilities I could quickly be out of work. Getting a young, high energy dog may seem like a good idea for a family lesson, but the hour and a half of exercise needed each day can quickly get overlooked. When exercise stops, problems start and the story repeats itself time and time again. There is a reason that rescues and shelters have so many dogs between 8-12 mos of age. The newness has worn off and the realities of what a puppy really needs has set in.

Your brain is also working against you here. The brain releases a hormone when when we look at the cute features - especially the big, soft eyes of a puppy. The hormone makes us more maternal and it's the same hormone released when mom's breast feed their babies. It's called oxytosin and it's job is making us emotionally connect with our young. You must understand this so you can still make an intellectually sound decision staring that 10 week old boxer puppy in the face. Hormones are telling you to take him home so.....

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The truth is very few people in today's society have the time for a dog. Even fewer people have the time needed for a puppy. There has to be an answer for dog lovers who want a dog but don't have the time needed. **Older dogs.** Older dogs give you all the great dog stuff without all the hard dog work. Older dogs need less of everything and are full of the dog love we crave. They are less inclined to be dominant or controlling and once they know the rules of the house they usually fit right in.

You actually can teach an old dog new tricks and contrary to cultural beliefs old dogs are easier to train than young dogs. A perfect example of this was my best dog to date named Sabrina, a ten year old German Shepherd. Sabrina had a bit of a strong presence but I am assuming she ran her household based on her energy. Within a week she had settled right in to the rules of my house. She ended up going on my consultations like Cesar's "Daddy" and her wisdom was a big part of my success. I could stand her in front of a dog that wanted to kill her and she could care less. Her presence alone was enough to calm most dogs.

As amazing as she was I fully believe she was a giant handfull when she was young. Age calms animals and as much as we think having a young, excited dog is fun - it's also a great deal of work.

If you are considering a dog I strongly urge you to take a look at a group of dogs you may have overlooked. Help an older dog find a home and you have a friend for life who would prefer to give than take, sit than jump, shake than growl, lick than bite and sleep than cause trouble. Talk about more for less.

Sabrina, you were a blessing and you are truly missed.

