Hooray for Sentient Beings!

A Dog's View of Happiness

Cooper Robinson

as told to

John Noll

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To Mommy . . .

for cooking eggs for breakfast, letting me sleep on the bed, and for having faith in my survival when I was young. (And, for suggesting the title.)

. . . and the rest of my family - Diana, Mark, Rick, Matt - for making life so much fun, and for retrieving my squishy ball from under the couch.

Preface

This is the preface.

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Introduction

My name is Cooper Robinson. I live at the edge of the Great Plains, near the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. I have lots and lots of toys, a doggy door, a yard with squirrels and birds, and a family who think I'm the greatest thing in the world. Am I lucky? You bet! But I like to think there is more involved than just luck; there a things a dog does naturally that, given the right circumstances, ensure a happy result. In this book, I'm going to tell you about these things, in hope that you can use them to ensure your own happy outcomes.

One

Enthusiasm

I like to run. Sometimes, I just go out my doggy door and run as fast as I can in circles around the back lawn. When I go out for a walk, I run from one end of my leash to the other, as fast as I can go.

One day last winter, I escaped through the garage when John and Mommy were unloading their gear after a ski trip. I ran as fast as I could across the street, ignoring their calls for me to come back. I knew I was being naughty, but after three hours in the car on mountain roads (not my favorite activity) I needed to blow off some steam. I ran, full speed, all the down to the end of the street. Then I ran as fast as I could go back up the street. I passed John on my way, and instead of yelling at me, he just laughed. Why? I think he was won over by my single-minded pursuit of pure four-legged racing

dog speed. I like to run!

I like to run. And I like to go for walks. When someone says "walk" I pay attention, I jump up and down, I look for my leash, I'm ready to go! I think people like to take me for walks, simply because I like to go for walks so much.

I don't like to ride in the car. But I don't like being left home alone either. So when someone gets ready to go somewhere in the car, I run out to the garage too. I sit in the front seat if I can, and look out the window. If I see a dog (or a coyote!) I'm ready to bark.

I like to play. When someone wants to play with me, all they have to do is say "where's Hippo?" When I want to play with someone, I get Hippo and shake him enthusiastically; usually that's enough to get a game of tug going.

Have you ever bought something you probably didn't need, but were convinced to do so anyway by the salesperson's enthusiasm for his product? Did you ever go somewhere or do something you weren't really interested in, but went along anyway because your companion was so enthusiastic about the idea?

On the other hand, have you ever tried to do something or go somewhere with someone who didn't want to, and made it know by his body language and facial expressions? That can turn a pleasant outing into a trial for sure.

People respond to enthusiasm. It's infectious. It

makes you feel good when someone around you is enthusiastic, and it makes you feel good when you are enthusiastic yourself.

Be enthusiastic. Run full blast! After all, you never know when you'll get a chance to escape, so why not make the most of the opportunity? And when you have to ride in the car, make the best of that too. Moping or being sour isn't going to make it any more enjoyable, so why not act enthusiastically, even if you don't feel enthusiastic? You might find out that you become enthusiastic just by acting that way.

Two

Perseverence

Once Mommy's friend cut a hole in the wall of the basement, and installed a door so I could go in and out whenever I wanted. It was strange at first; in the past, people would open the doors for me, otherwise I was supposed to stay on one side. Now, I had to learn to open my own door. But I'm a pretty smart dog, so after watching my frog disappear through the door a few times, I got the hang of it, and now I'm the master of two domains: inside and outside.

How would you get a broom through such a small opening? You'd probably grab it by the handle and push it through, handle first. Dogs do things differently: our paws are made for running and scratching, not grasping, so we tend to pick things up with our teeth. Fortunately, a broom has nice soft bristles at the end, just right for

biting. So I just grab the broom by the bristles, and drag it through my doggy door backwards.

I've taken a lot of stuff outside that way: a bag of gift wrap bows, a computer mouse and keyboard, a bedsheet. I've even tried to drag a computer monitor off it's desk (monitors have convenient leashes), but fortunately Mommy foiled that effort before it crashed down on top of me. Shoes are a piece of cake: just grab them by the laces and go. It took me awhile to figure out how to get Frog through the door, though; I'm used to carrying him in my mouth sideways, but he doesn't fit that way.

You might consider many of these accomplishments to be naughty. (One day I ripped all the insulation from the basement wall.) Certainly, computer peripherals, sheets, and wrapping paper don't belong on the backyard lawn. But no one was truly angry with me for doing these things. The reason? People admire perseverance, especially in the face of obstacles. Like I said at the beginning, what's easy for a human is a lot harder for a dog, so while Mommy didn't really appreciate having her gift bows spread across the back yard lawn, she could certainly appreciate my industriousness.

People appreciate persistence in the face of adversity. Great people - Ghandi, Sir Edmund Hillary, Martin Luther King - are admired as much for their unwavering pursuit of a goal in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles as for their final achievements.

But perseverence isn't really about gaining admira-

tion. It's about achieving one's objective, whether it's growing a successful company, raising bright kids, or getting Frog into the backyard on a sunny day. If Frog doesn't fit through the door on the first try, back up, run around in a circle once or twice, and try again. Do this enough times, and you will find out how he does fit throught the door.

Three

The Value of Play

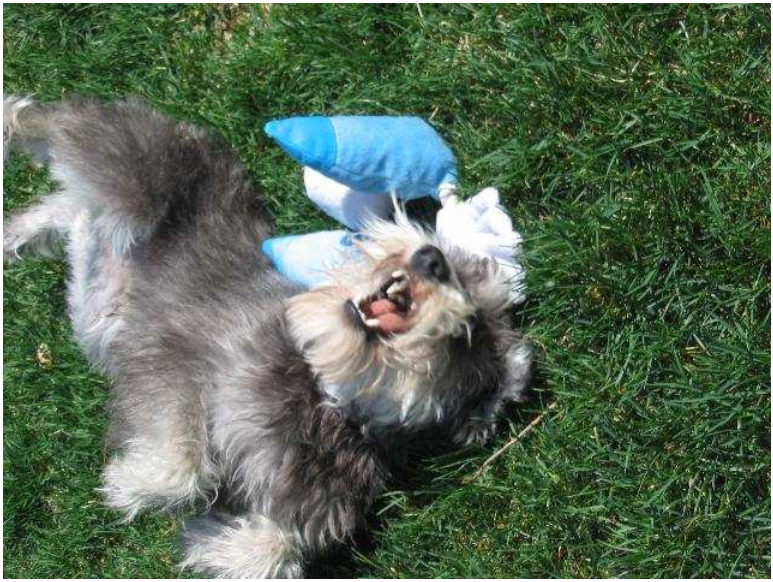
The dog with the most toys can always use another.

I'm a lucky dog. I have a back yard, a doggy door, a whole basement full of stuff, and a nice warm comforter to sleep on.

I also have toys. Lots of them. I have an orange bunny with floppy ears, a green frog that makes frog noises when you shake him, a grey cow that looks like a hippopotamus and is almost as big as me, a fish that makes bubbly noises when you squeeze it, a green ball that giggles when you roll it, and a small squishy ball that squeeks when you bite it. I used to have a squirrel too, but I chewed it's eyes until they came off so Mommy took it away from me. I have a ball with a tail that I like to chase through the snow in the mountains.

I leave my toys scattered around the house and the

backyard so there's always something to play with when the mood strikes. Mommy keeps a basket full of other toys for me, too, so there's a constant variety of doggy amusements at my house.



Four

Loyalty

A chapter on loyalty.

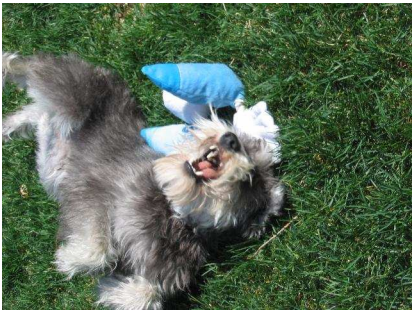
Five

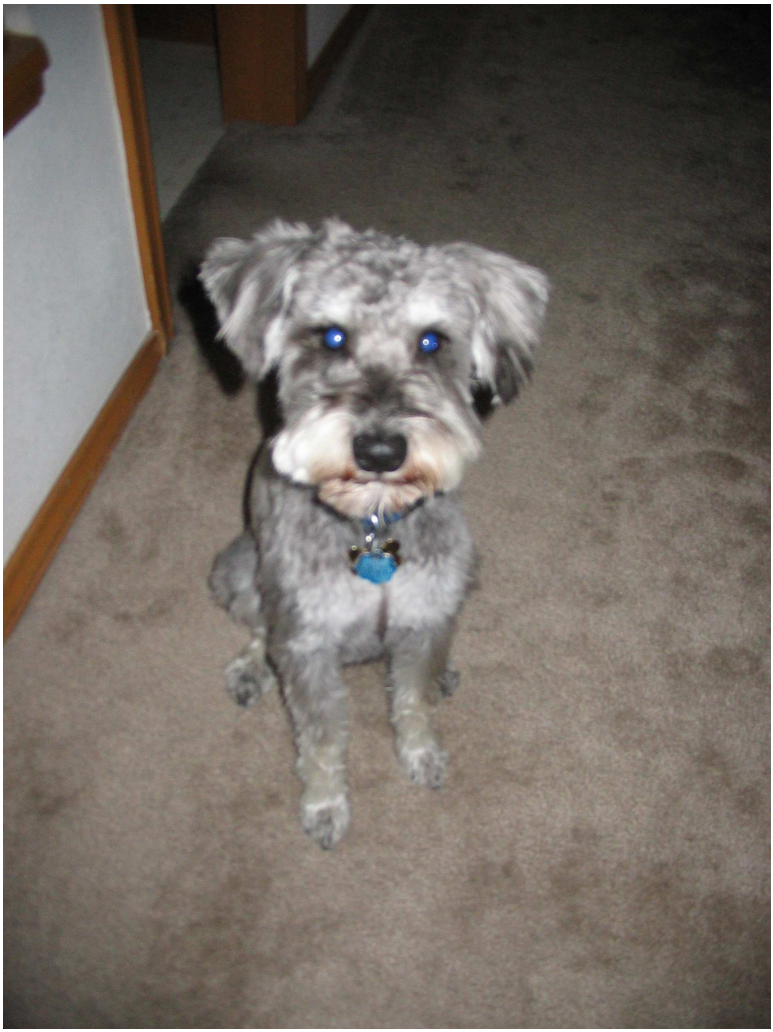
Curiosity

I am a curious dog.

Six

Integrity





HORIZON
ORGANIC
Fat Free Yogurt
Plain

Seven

Live in the Moment

. . . because you never know when the garage door will be open again. Besides, the past is over, and the future's not here yet, man. All you really have is today. And your memories, so make sure they are good ones.

7. Live in the Moment

Epilogue

I had a difficult beginning, or so I've been told. I was about three months old when my family brought me home one summer about three years ago, and I was scared. Where was I? Who were these people? Why didn't they leave me alone? But these are typical experiences for a puppy, and I soon got over them. Unfortunately, I also soon got very sick, so sick I had to go to doggy intensive care. My doctor didn't give me much chance to survive, but my family had faith, and I think their love and attention and dedication helped me pull through. I got better, and came home.

Then I ran out into the street. I like to run out into the street, because it's fun and it's naughty and I just like to run. I also have friends that live across the street, and they like to bark at me, and I like to bark at them. But the street can be dangerous, especially in the afternoon when cars are taking their people home from work. I got

hit by one, and ended up back in doggy intensive care.

Of course, I pulled through; how could I not? I got well, and Mommy enrolled me in something called Puppy Class. It was fun: I got to learn some tricks, eat treats, and play with other puppies. But one of them sat on me and hurt my knee, so I had to limp around for several months afterward.

I guess I had a rough beginning; if I were one to dwell on such things, I might conclude my early experiences shaped my approach to life. But I don't have time for that, because life is happening now. Maybe when I'm too old to run up and down the stairs every time I hear a squirrel in the back yard, I'll lie on the floor and think about it. But now, there's so much to do. It's like that song from the musical Bye Bye Birdie; here's my version:

> There are squirrels
> just ripe to be barked at
> And there's toys
> all ready to chew
> I'm alive
> and I'm gonna show it
> I've got a lot of livin' to do.

About the Author

Cooper Robinson lives near Boulder, Colorado with his people and a big basket full of toys. He has a back yard with birds and squirrels, and lots of friends in the neighborhood. He rides in the car, goes on walks, and likes both snow and water. He sleeps on Mommy's bed.