



Four life lessons from my dog

Meet Dizzy. Dizzy is my 12-year old, five pound Maltese. I raised Dizzy since she was a pup and she has filled my life with love and happiness. I named her *Dizzy* because of her boundless energy; when she was young she made you dizzy just watching her run around. Even today, as an older dog, she has more energy than a pack of Mentos and a two-liter of Diet Coke.

Not a day goes by that she doesn't sprint and zigzag at full speed across the floor to release some of that happy-dog energy. Dog lovers out there know the true joy of having these furry companions as a part of our families; they cheer you up when you need it, they keep you company and some (the smarter ones) even do chores around the house. Unfortunately, Dizzy is too small to fetch the paper or guard my home but I have seen some admirable traits surface that I think we can all learn from. I compiled a list of my top four observations I picked up from watching Dizzy over the years.

1. If you're happy, let it show

I usually walk in the door on Thursday or Friday evenings after a long week of travel greeted by a bouncing, pawing ball of fluff reaching for my kneecap. No matter how late it is, no matter the time of year,

no matter what she is doing at the time, she breaks free and sprints at full speed to the door to greet me, wanting nothing more than to be picked up and to cover my face in smelly dog kisses. It has become a ritual I look forward to every week. Dizzy has never missed a day of greeting me upon my return from the road. She does it, not because she has to and not because I conditioned her to do it, she does it because it is how she shows unconditional love and happiness.

What an important trait... Happiness is infectious and its symptoms are highly contagious. Happy people make other people happy. A positive attitude can make the difference between promotion and passed over. How many people do you know who say they are happy but never crack a smile or let it show? Many walk around all day and look like someone just beamed them with a baseball. Dizzy shows us that happiness is more about what you do than what you say. After all, happiness is just a word without the actions to show others you are what you feel.

2. Be clear about what you want, and when in doubt, overcommunicate

Mealtime for Dizzy is a chorus of high pitched barks that can almost be deciphered into English:

***BARK** – “Hey, I’m hungry!”*

***BARK** – “What’s for dinner?”*

***BARK** – “I told you I’m hungry, right?”*

***BARK** – “It’s dinner time!”*

***BARK** – “That smells great! Can I have it right now?”*

...and on and on and on...

Dizzy makes it very clear what she wants. In her own way, she lets us know she's hungry and it's time to eat. She clearly articulates her needs and lets us know how I can help remedy the situation.

In the workplace, many of us assume others know what I want which causes confusion, ambiguity and misunderstanding. And while we cannot and should not gruffly bark out demands, clarity of communication is paramount, and when in doubt, *over communicate* (if that's even possible).

3. Say thank you

Like all dogs, Dizzy loves treats, walks, naps and mealtime (as you can tell from above). She has a wonderful habit of subtly saying thank you after I do something she likes. It may be as simple as a look, a snuggle or one of her famous stinky face licks but Dizzy takes the time to say thank you when I do something nice for her. It is nothing big; just a little something to let us know she appreciates what I did.

How many times has a coworker, manager or team member done something nice for you? Did you take it for granted and chalk it up as part of their job or did you stop and say thank you? Like Dizzy, it doesn't need to be anything big: a soda from the soda machine, a smile and a handshake or just a quick thank you email to let the other person know that you appreciate what he or she has done for you. All good deeds deserve to be recognized. My only recommendation: unlike Dizzy, avoid licking your co-workers faces as a show of thanks (now there's a topic for a future blog post!).

4. Stay open and positive to new opportunities

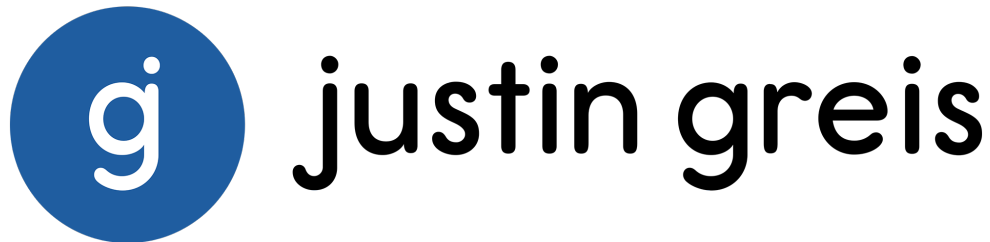
Whether it's someone at the door, going for a walk in the park or taking a ride in the car, Dizzy is always excited about the prospect of new opportunities. She will jump with excitement in nervous anticipation about the new thing she gets to do. She is eager and positive in the face of the unknown. I have always admired Dizzy's ability to embrace change with a positive attitude.

So many of us fear change when change is so good! Change represents new opportunities that should be embraced, not feared. New jobs, new business ventures, new ideas, new technology! New anything... Change is constant and we can either shut ourselves off from it and pretend it doesn't impact us – in which case I would be writing about my pet hermit crab – or we can be like Dizzy and treat every opportunity like there's a big pile of treats waiting for us wherever we are going.

In conclusion...

I do not believe these traits are unique to Dizzy. Many, if not all, dogs exhibit these traits but sometimes they are overlooked or taken for granted as inherent to the species. It is a good reminder to all of us to be *happy*, be *clear*, be *grateful* and be *open*. It's amazing what one can learn from the role models and mentors all around us; even if she is a five pound Maltese named Dizzy.





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