

In Praise of Older Dogs

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What is an "older dog?" That phrase is somewhat subjective. In my case, I intend it to mean "a senior citizen dog." In the case of this article, I intend the definition to be "adult dog."

Generally, most people want a puppy, especially if they are not familiar and experienced with adult dogs. Puppies are wonderful. You can experience the joy of the puppy character and watch them grow into adulthood. But depending on the breed, a puppy may be a handful. They may need to be housebroken. They will probably go through a "chew everything" phase. And they have endless energy which is sometimes hard to deal with.

I personally prefer rescue dogs as they are usually very loving dogs that need and deserve homes. Dogs are given to shelters for many reasons and most of those reasons are not good. A person or family may just get tired of having a dog. A dog may have belonged to a child which goes off to college. A person or family may move to a new residence where dogs are not allowed. And I am sure there are many other "reasons" why dogs are given up to a shelter or worse yet, simply euthanized.

If you really "have a dog" rather than "own" a dog, you will probably never give up a dog except for extreme reasons. You "have" children. You do not "own" them. You "own" a car, a house, or any other inanimate object. I presume that people would not move to a residence that does not allow children and have to give up their children because of the move. I would hope that people who "have" dog(s) would not purposely make a lifestyle change that would necessitate giving up their dog(s).

The bottom line is that people give up dogs for a wide variety of reasons and seldom are those reasons the fault of the dog. Yes, a person or family may have chosen a very inappropriate breed for their situation. That is due to inadequate research on the nature of the breed.

The personality displayed at a shelter should not deter a person from giving a home to an adult dog. Many are scared and/or terrorized never having been in a shelter environment. The noise, the odors can affect the dog as well as the hope to see a face he/she recognizes across the bars. At best, they are confused. At worst, they may be terrified.

In rare cases, a dog may exhibit behavior problems and the person or family may give up the dog because of that. Never mind that the person or family is not willing to invest the time to train the dog and correct the behavior problem.

So if you think that all or most dogs are given up because of non-correctable problems, you are mistaken. Older or adult dogs can offer many advantages and if a rescue, you potentially save a life.

Adult dogs are often at least minimally trained, are usually housebroken, and are usually more mellow and laid back. I find this especially true of our senior citizen friends, but is true of most adult dogs.

When an older dog looks at you, you can see the love in their eyes. Some of the most relaxing times you can experience is just sitting with an older dog's head in your lap. They seem to sense the need for quiet time, and enjoy sharing those quiet moments.

Do consider adopting an older dog for all the practical reasons but mostly because you will receive many years of love and you will save a precious life.