

LIVE LIFE INTENTIONALLY

A Dog's Life – Long and Happy



Other than food, she wasn't possessive, so I know she wouldn't mind my sharing her tips for a long and happy life.

Ask for what you want. From her head suddenly appearing under your hand (right there, yes, yes,

scratch it right there) to the "let me in" bark outside the door, Cali never played guessing games. Your best chance of getting what you want or need is to come right out and ask. Hint:

JUNE WAS A MONTH OF MILESTONES.

First, I had a big birthday. One of those birthdays that either triggers deep, introspective thinking or creates the perfect opportunity to pull out those bottles of good wine that were waiting for a special occasion.

So we were enjoying the wine, when a few weeks later our sixteen year-old dog Cali announced it was time to let her go. A dog who long ago perfected the art of getting her needs met, it was no surprise that to the very end she was clear on what she wanted.

And so the introspective thinking started. As we hung out with our memories, as we talked about life with Cali, and in between the tears, it became obvious: she'd cracked the happy-life code we mere humans endlessly wrestle with. She knew how to squeeze every ounce of joy out of a day, never got hooked on a *should* or a *shouldn't*, and never, ever wasted a smidgen of energy worrying if her fur looked good.

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most of the time, you won't find it necessary to be as loud as she was. You can, however, try barking.

Eat when you're hungry. You'll have more energy, lower your cranky quotient, and never again be distracted by the conversation your stomach wants to have. If you don't have easy access to food when you need it, find the person who does have

food and try *I'm going to stand here and look at you with my most pathetic "I'm starving" expression.*

Choose your friends well. At two years old, off to the shelter she went to choose a new family member. No matter that the humans found the dog *they* wanted, Cali was single-mindedly focused on choosing the companion *she* wanted. Her choice, Ivy, turned out to be the perfect pick and her best friend to the end. Wherever you find your friends, be sure you're surrounding yourself with the people you truly enjoy in your life.

Savor your experiences. If ever I needed to see *enjoy the moment* modeled, it was watching Cali roll in the snow, jump in the creek next to our running trail, or chase a squirrel across the back yard. If those activities aren't calling to you (although you might want to give one a whirl just for the heck of it), find the one that does and throw yourself into it with wild abandon.

Sleep when you're tired. You might not need 20 hours a day, but you do know when you're not well-rested. A good stretch followed by a belly rub is the perfect prelude to bedtime. And don't forget your naps. Sunny spots work particularly well.

Be spontaneous. Slowed down by arthritis, Cali would plod along, moving slightly faster than a turtle. Then every so often, with a burst of energy coming from who knows where, she'd tear through the house like a five year-old dog. Routines and structures are great at keeping you in the flow and making things easier. But every now and then, a good dose of spontaneity knocks the cobwebs loose, gets your creative juices flowing, and is just plain fun.

Stay open to change. Sometimes, the very thing you think will ruin everything turns out to be an unexpectedly pleasant surprise. Like Gems, the cat. Perhaps it was Gems' insis-

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tence that they be friends, or Cali's realization that resistance was only making her miserable. Within months of Gems' arrival they could be found within a few feet of each other, engaged in their favorite pastime: synchronized sleeping. Next time you find yourself resisting change, make friends with the cat.

Express your feelings. Tail wagging, body wriggling with excitement, or trembling through a thunderstorm ... what's your way of expressing yourself?

I can't promise that implementing Cali's tips will catapult you into a series of blissful moments where everything you want magically appears. That may need to wait until your next life – if you're lucky enough to come back as my pet. But if you take her advice, it certainly will help you live your day the way you want to live your life. |



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