

I RESOLVE

A New Year's Conversation to Have With Your Dog

Julia V. McDonough

Hey, you! “Dog Lover” with the glass of egg nog and the epic hangover! Where’s your dog right now? Recovering from your dramatic re-entry at 2AM, during which you discovered the atavistic use of Gaelic cursewords as you stumbled over him in the dark? Well, he’s a dog, he’s over it by now. Call him into the room. Ask him to sit.

Now repeat after me:

“My friend, you may not know this, but we humans find it necessary to demarcate the passage of time with ceremonies and holidays, whose origins are lost in the mists of the past. Today is one of those days, and it is a tradition of my species that on this day we make promises to ourselves about how we will spend the next calendar year. This year, I want to make some promises to you. Because last night at that awful party, as I was trying not to yawn in the face of a person who was describing in painstaking detail her adventures in the world of tax preparation, the singular and overwhelming thought sang out in my mind, as clear and true as the ringing of a church bell: I WOULD RATHER BE HANGING OUT WITH MY DOG RIGHT NOW. You see, my friend, at some point after the champagne toast but before the third White Russian, I realized how much I take you for granted, and how lucky I am to have you in my life. I call myself a ‘dog lover’ but I haven’t really shown it to you lately. So please accept my apologies, and allow me to pledge you thus:

“I RESOLVE to spend more time with you. And by that I don’t mean staring at a computer screen while you nudge me for attention as I absent-mindedly pet you, thinking you don’t realize you’re getting the blow-off. I really *don’t* have to spend three hours on the rec.pets list, debating the meaning of greenish stool or the moral relevance of “The Dog Whisperer”. Next time you seem bored, I’ll get off my butt and we’ll go do something together.

“I RESOLVE to stop asking my friends to don a slicker before they enter the house in case you decide to jump on them after being out in the yard. Instead, I’ll teach you the manners you need to greet people you like in a way we can all enjoy, and you won’t have to be hidden away or yelled at for doing things no one’s effectively told you are inappropriate.

“I RESOLVE to protect you from obnoxious strangers who rush into your face squealing like chipmunks as they gush about how much they “loooooove” Golden Fluffernutt Hounds (insert appropriate breed or type here). Even more importantly, I will stand my ground when they insist on allowing their out of control pushy dog to pull them over to you insisting that “he just wants to be friends”. I’ll make sure that any friends you make are safe and respectful, even if I lose a few popularity points on our walks. We’re *each other’s* friend first. All this time, I’ve counted on *you* to protect *me* from people and dogs who don’t belong in my world. Now it’s my turn to do the same for you.

“I RESOLVE to stop confusing feeding you with loving you. I know how much you adore those jerky strips and barbeque flavored biscuits, but they aren’t doing your health any favors. We’ll still have treats, but they’ll be more conservatively given. Hey, don’t look at me like that; I’m giving up Ben and Jerry’s, too!

“I RESOLVE to train you for real. By mid summer, you will be reliable off leash. It will be a lot of work for both of us, and sometimes we may have to do things we find boring or restrictive, but I want you to have the joy of liberty while I have the peace of mind that good training provides. I’m done making excuses for both of us. This is the year we get serious and find an accomplished trainer to help us meet that goal.

“I RESOLVE to find something you’re good at and then help you get great at it. I know Golden Fluffernutt Hounds love to track. Did you know there’s a tracking club only half an hour from here? Of course not, you’re a dog. But there IS! And we’re joining it. There are all sorts of outlets for talented dogs like yourself, and there are lots of places around

New England where we can learn more about them. If one of their coaches says you're suitable, then we're gonna get you a job and me a hobby. I can't wait!

“My friend of friends, my confidante, my accomplice, my Dog: perhaps last night wasn't the best foot to start off on; especially since that foot landed squarely on your tail. I'm sorry. Let's call us even for the time you ran into the room full of guests shaking a pair of my underwear as if you were worrying a rat. Starting today, let's take on our world together. If you're going to be a good dog, then I'm going to be a better owner than I've been. Let's start by playing ball in the snow for a few minutes. Just let me grab a couple of Advil.”

Julia V. McDonough
©2007 dobermind press
trainer@fortunatek9.com
603-432-K9K9