

# How a dog's love can help change the world

I grew up in a home with no pets. Dogs were considered “outside” pets because they were dirty and noisy. Beyond these reasons, the underlying reason my family didn’t have pets was that as immigrants who had seen human suffering and poverty, my parents couldn’t justify the expense required to own a pet when those resources could go to improving a human life. My parents have always instilled in me the sense of responsibility for doing my part to make a difference in the world. The statistics these days are staggering: half the world’s children, one billion of them, are being raised in poverty. Hundreds of millions of children die every year because they don’t have access to clean drinking water, basic health care, and food. Even though I was a child growing up in the west, my upbringing was shaped by the things my parents had seen in India. We were privileged enough to have a comfortable home, plentiful food, and money for entertainment when others had absolutely nothing...not even their own lives. There was no way that spending time, money, or love on a pet made sense when globally, humanity was in crisis.

I’m sure it seems completely normal to most people in this country to have entire stores dedicated to pets. We don’t think anything of the hundreds of dollars spent annually on vet bills, food, toys and other costs. But the way I was raised, this was an atrocity. It wasn’t that animals shouldn’t be cared for or valued, but how could the care of an animal be placed above that of a human being? To this day, even as much as I love animals, I believe that humans come first. It just makes sense. Ultimately, animals can’t be cared for if they don’t have their “person”, and our best bet for improving the conditions of animals comes by first improving the conditions of people.

Because of this perspective, I struggled with my decision to adopt a dog. But after going through four difficult years of medical school, and finishing up my first year in residency, I knew I was starting to fall down a black hole. My life was constant work and study; there was no joy. I felt isolated, overwhelmed, and overworked. I was burned out, and I hadn't even started my career. During those long nights on-call, I had somehow found myself browsing adoptable dogs on the local shelter's website. The furry faces and stories tugged at my heart, until finally something clicked and I just decided to jump all in. I was ready to adopt, and I was going to do it despite what anyone else said. In July of 2006, I walked into the animal shelter and found my heart.



The process usually provides natural results if the males are suffering from premature ejaculation. [viagra cialis generic](#) Generics are often introduced in Canada several years before they are allowed in other countries. [viagra uk unica-web.com](#) cialis levitra viagra The best way to find the right website is to check out what does it actually offer. If you are young and you notice that more and more people are [buy viagra without consultation](#) now able to face proper erections. Seeing Rico was the closest I will ever come to love at first sight. He is one of those dogs with deep, soulful, knowing eyes. He waits until you notice him, and then he looks at you with

raised eyebrows and perked ears. He listens. He understands far more of what I say than I give him credit for, and he communicates with me far more than I have learned to recognize. He is completely invested in every moment, present with every ounce of his being. He trusts completely, loves unconditionally, and expects nothing in return. His favorite thing in the world is to be dried off with a towel, especially when he's not even wet. I can't count the number of times I have been towel drying my hair, bent over with my head toward my knees, only to find his furry face joining in. He has as many facial expressions as anyone I have ever met, and he actually smiles. Sometimes it's a crooked grin, with his right lip hooked on top of his canine tooth. And then sometimes it's the sweetest, saddest, smallest smile, when he is in pain. For Rico, there is no difference between physical and emotional pain. They are the same. And isn't that the truth for all of us?

My experience with Rico has helped me broaden my perspective on being a pet owner. I see that the privilege of owning a dog is only afforded to those of us who already have our basic needs met. We have the luxury to spend extra resources on them, providing them with care and comfort. This is not a wasted experience even though, when compared to human suffering, it might seem so. It is not a wasted experience because it is a relationship in which we practice love. There is no better teacher than a dog, when it comes to loving another. In fact, it is often the only relationship in which many of us learn what it is like to be loved unconditionally. Our dogs don't need us to be anything other than who we are. All they ask is that we be happy, because when we are happy, they are happy.

Rico has helped me understand what it means to be mindful, to forgive, and to enjoy the simple things in life. He has allowed me to practice loving, as well as practice being loved. In doing so, I feel more connected not only to other

human beings, but also to the natural world and all of its organisms. I am very fortunate to live a life so comfortable that I have resources to spare on a pet, a luxury many people will never know. And I do not take this blessing lightly. I accept the responsibility, with the knowledge that all the lessons Rico has helped me learn are so that I can do my small part to help humanity at large. Experiencing love, in any form, can only move us in the right direction. Love is never wasted. I believe that the more we love anything, whether it is an animal, a career, or another person, the better people we become. And we need to become better people in order to change the world. Humans and animals alike are in this together.