

Do Our Dogs Suffer Us?

Frank Bruni, in the NYTimes ~ March 9, 2026

We like to think of our dogs as reliable geysers of almost unconditional love — and much of the time, they gush accordingly. They sulk when we're leaving the house without them. They exult upon our return, even if it's all of 90 seconds later.

We say “come” and they ... seriously consider it. We say “treat” and they hurry, their fidelity rekindled, their gratitude burning bright.

So it goes with Regan.

But there's another side to her, one that finds me intrusive, annoying, needy. She'll whip her head around and glare at me when I disturb her sleep by getting into or out of bed too noisily.

If I pet her at a moment when that wasn't on her wish list, she'll make a harrumphing sound, and while an animal behaviorist will surely write in to tell me that it means something complicated and atavistic having to do with wolves and packs and yadda yadda yadda, I assure you: She's simply scolding me. Telling me that I should learn to keep my paws to myself. Threatening me with a timeout.

On a walk in the woods, she'll come to an abrupt stop if I take one fork of a trail and she prefers the other, and her bearing — erect, utterly still, eyes drilling a hole into my noncompliant soul — is that of a queen outraged at the denial of her royal prerogative. Her pique is so persuasive that 40 percent of the time, I relent. We go her way. The other 60 percent, we go mine. One of us must be the alpha, and I pay the kibble bill.



I'm not the only one who exasperates her. My friend Kerry was visiting the other day and babbling at her about one thing or another when she clearly wanted some quiet time. She rolled her eyes at him, or at least seemed to.

He snapped the shot you see at left. And it's a reminder: They're animals, not automatons. Pooches, not puppets. Their adoration of us has limits; their indulgence of us, boundaries. They crave our attention, our affection, our scraps. But they'd like to preserve a shred of their dignity.



ITA Board Member Representative Report



Hello ITA Team Members!

JP here again, your board member representative!

The March board meeting included exciting discussions about how to get more financial support for our organization! The ITA staff needs to expand to handle the ever-increasing workload.

Mandy Ojendyk, who has been working remotely on fundraising for ITA since July of 2025, presented some great ideas on getting additional support. Mandy has over 15 years of experience in partnership, development, building strategies and ground outreach. She sees lots of opportunities to build support for ITA since we are such a strong organization.

Mandy compiled a list of 38 local companies that might have potential to become future sponsors/supporters of ITA (*see the list at right*). We will be reaching out to them soon, but here's where YOU come in: Do you work at one of these companies? Or know someone who does? And before you say, "I don't want to ask my company for funds," let me reassure you that is NOT what we're asking. All we need is a contact if you believe they might be open to supporting ITA. It's ok if you aren't sure. Personal connections are incredibly helpful; each of you have your own stories of the impact that our therapy animal partners have on people's lives and mental health. It would help if you could share a few of the experiences you've had with your therapy visits and explain what ITA does.

That's it! If you're open to that idea and have a contact at a company that you think might be supportive, please let us know! You can either email Mandy@therapyanimals.org or, since I'm volunteering more lately, you can also reach out to me: JP@therapyanimals.org.

Last week was officially my last day working for ARUP laboratories, so I'll be adding that company to our list!! Thanks so much!

- JP

The List

1. Overstock.com
2. Zions Bancorporation
3. USANA Health Sciences
4. AlSCO
5. C.R. England
6. Utah Transit Authority
7. O.C. Tanner
8. Primary Residential Mortgage
9. Myriad Genetics
10. Qualtrics
11. Pluralsight
12. Podium
13. Domo
14. Instructure
15. Adobe (Lehi office)
16. eBay (Draper office)
17. Entrata
18. Weave
19. BambooHR
20. Goldman Sachs (SLC office)
21. Morgan Stanley (SLC office)
22. Fidelity Investments (SLC office)
23. Discover Financial Services
24. Autoliv
25. Lifetime Products
26. Young Living
27. Nature's Sunshine Products
28. Salt Lake County
29. State of Utah
30. Vivint Smart Home
31. CH Guenther
32. HealthEquity
33. bioMérieux
34. Backcountry
35. Black Diamond Equipment
36. 1-800 Contacts
37. PetIQ
38. RC Willey



The “3-3-3” Guideline

when adopting a dog

ITA members have accumulated a whole lot of experience in bringing home new canine family members, whether pups or adoptions, and we all know it's always a time of big adjustment for everybody. It's exciting, and you're eager to bond and start sharing the love. But because dogs have no equals in their ability to fall in love with their humans, sometimes we may tend to forget that the sudden change in living situation is especially overwhelming for an animal. A pup will have lost the joys and comforts of his mom and siblings, and a rescue adoptee may have gone through all kinds of trauma that we don't always know about.

How can you best support your new family member during this sensitive time? It can be helpful to employ the 3-3-3 guideline.

What Is “3-3-3?”

This is a helpful rule of thumb for how to settle a dog of any age into their new home. It's a simple roadmap that can help ensure a smooth transition for both the dog and the owner. It also helps set realistic expectations and prevents common mistakes, such as overloading the dog with too much too soon.

Every dog and home and situation is different, of course, but remembering “3-3-3” can still be a good overview of what to focus on and when.

The First 3 DAYS:

Decompressing: Let them take this time to explore their new surroundings, sniff all the interesting scents, and get used to your pres-

ence. Timidity, anxiety and fear are absolutely normal when a new dog arrives. Also failure to eat. Keep everything simple. Offer patience, consistent routine, positive reinforcements, and as much calm and quiet as possible.

Don't overwhelm the dog with too many new people, and make sure they have a calm and quiet space to retreat to as they process this major change.

During that time, your dog may be stressed and overwhelmed. They might sleep a lot, hide, or have accidents even if they are pot-ty-trained.

Be patient and stay positive!

The First 3 WEEKS:

Learning routines: After those first 3 days, you can start training and bonding with your dog.

Take your dog on daily walks and spend time playing. Encourage bonding with treats, tum-my rubs and toys. Start acclimating your dog to being in new environments with you, like the neighborhood and safe public places.

As your dog adjusts to their new home, they will start feeling safer and showing more of their personality. At this point they may even start testing the boundaries, so don't get discouraged if some behavioral difficulties start to appear.

Stay patient and start to work on your basic relationship and the fundamental cues like sit, stay, and come. Short training sessions

(Continued next page)



3-3-3 (cont.)

are more effective and less overwhelming for your dog, so spend just a few minutes at a time teaching and rewarding good behavior.

The First 3 MONTHS:

Bonding, recognizing “home:” It takes awhile for your new dog to realize that he’s now in a loving and forever home, and that he can trust it—and you!

After 3 weeks, your dog should be settling in. They should begin to look to you for guidance and feel comfortable exploring new or scary things, with your encouragement, because they are now feeling safe with you.

Take them to the park, go on car rides, and let them interact with other dogs and people while being mindful of their unique personalities and limitations with strangers. This will help build confidence and strengthen your bond.

Continue with training and socializing, as well as your boundaries and routines.

If your dog needs a little more time to feel comfortable, don’t worry. Dogs that come from challenging backgrounds may need more time than just 3 months to feel settled into their new home, and that’s normal.

Bottom line: the 3-3-3 rule is just a guideline for respecting your dog’s initial need for space, and then their bonding, training, and comfort needs. With patience and love, your dog will settle in their own time as they adjust to their new loving home.



One of our ITA members, Linda Webster, is a board member for Ruff Haven, the only organization in Utah focused solely on providing temporary foster care for pets whose families are facing crisis.

We want to give them a shout out because in these unpredictable times, it’s good to know there are folks out there making sure that people’s beloved companions are receiving comfort and care.

Right now Ruff Haven’s most urgently needed items are:

Collars • Leashes • Muzzles • Blankets
Protein Paste • Dry and wet dog food

We know lots of our members have spare, unused items in their animals’ collections (or a bag of food someone doesn’t like!), so any support would be welcome, and all donations are tax-deductible (Federal Tax ID 85-0838808).

If you have anything to offer, you may just drop it off here at ITA and Linda will make sure it gets to Ruff Haven’s facility.

They are also in need of more short-term foster homes, if you can help in that way!

You can find out lots more on their website:
<https://www.ruffhaven.org>



Dogs in Poetry

ALL DRESSED UP

When I leaned over this morning
to get a closer look at the ants
circling the edge of the sink
in the usual ant parade,
I realized they were much too tiny
to slip on a bathrobe,
read a magazine, or wear a wedding ring.

A dog, on the other hand,
will sometimes allow itself to be dressed up
whenever its owner indulges in a bit
of anthropomorphic skylarking.

Yes, the same creature known
to bolt through a screen door
or dig up a bed of petunias with its nose

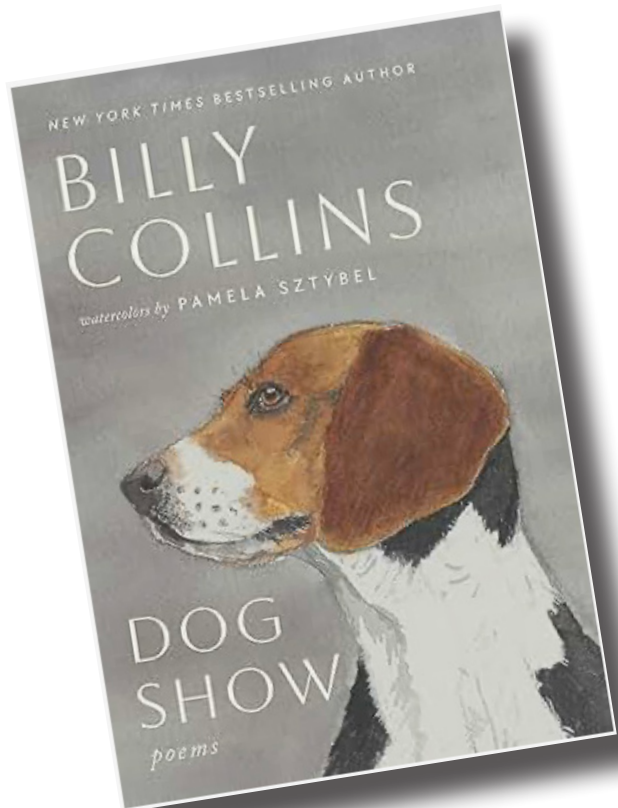
may sit still on occasion,
playing doctor in a white lab coat
or pose chin-strapped to a birthday hat,
candles dancing in the background.

In Colorado, I once saw a dog in a tuxedo
walk down an aisle and give the bride away.

But dogs are happiest on their own,
stepping on their water bowls,
staring up at the mystery of a closed door,
walking from room to room
before making three circles
like the odd number of flowers in a vase.

And I'm happiest every morning
when my dog steers me
into the kitchen were, as I slowly
open yet another can of his food,

we hold our mutual gaze,
me reading his mind and he reading mine.



The Lighter Side

