



The Conversation Begins

The voice was so quiet and soothing that it didn't startle Jeff this time. He looked around but knew he was the only one there. "Who said that?" There was no answer. He knew this time he wasn't imagining anything. Both times he had heard the voice while he was disciplining Smudge. He thought for a moment, and feeling more than a little foolish, asked aloud, "Am I doing something wrong?"

As he awaited any kind of a response, Courtney, who was sound asleep (so he thought) near the fireplace, slowly lifted her head and gazed directly into Jeff's eyes. He gazed back with a curious and puzzled look on his face and asked the preposterous question, "Did you say that?"

No, I thought it, came the reply.

Jeff froze for a moment. "This *cannot* be happening, your mouth is not moving and you're a dog!"

My mouth doesn't need to move. Besides everyone knows dogs can't talk.

"I KNOW, so what is this?"

This is communicating.

"Okay, okay, if you can communicate to me, how come you never did before? Can all dogs do this? How can I hear your voice if your not speaking?"

With the patience of a saint Courtney responded, *We communicate through our minds, not our mouths. Most people don't hear us because they are not listening. Many people do hear us, but don't realize that we're actually communicating*

with them. They just act on the ideas that we send them without realizing that the thought originated from us. How many times have you looked at me and asked me if I needed to go outside to the bathroom without any physical cue from me? And how many times did you praise yourself because you were right when I did have to go? How many times have you gotten up from whatever you were doing and decided that I must be hungry and it was time to feed me? We send you our thoughts and you act on them when you receive them.

Jeff replied incredulously, “So you’re controlling our minds?”

No, you’re hearing our thoughts and acting upon them. People do that with other people all the time. You’re just not aware that you’re doing it. How many times have you been thinking about a friend you haven’t spoken to in ages and not too long after, your phone rings and it’s him?

“You’re right, I guess it does happen all the time, but we just write it off to coincidence.”

There is no such thing as coincidence.

“Why can I hear your voice so clearly now?”

I’m not sure myself, but maybe because this is an important subject.

“What subject? Is Smudge the subject? Both times I have heard you I was trying to teach Smudge a lesson, and you seemed to disagree with my actions.”

I think it is a much broader subject than just Smudge. Maybe this is an opportunity to set the record straight on how to “train” dogs.

“Am I hearing a sarcastic tone to the word “train”? Is that a bone of contention with you?”

Very funny. I have always loved your sense of humor. The word “train” doesn’t fit. You potty train your children, but do you train them to behave well? Do you train them to walk or to talk? Are they trained to have good manners and to be polite?

“Well, we say potty training, but all the rest of it we say we’re teaching. We teach them good manners and to be polite and so on. But they’re kids; we teach them to speak our language so they can understand all of the other things that we are trying to teach them. We can’t do that with dogs; they can’t speak.”

Thank you for making my point. We can’t speak your verbal language, but if you were to teach us in our language what you want, we would be more than happy to do it. Listen, Jeff, you as humans brought us into your lives and your homes. We didn’t volunteer for this. We are not capable of communicating to you through your verbal language, but we can learn what it is you would like for us to do if we are taught in a way that we understand.

“So *we* need to learn *your* language because you can’t learn ours. No wonder I am having so much trouble training, I mean teaching Smudge.”

Ah yes, teaching. Thank you, but I don’t mind the terminology that much; I just wanted to make a point.

“It might be hard to teach an old human new tricks. So about Smudge—wait, where is he?” Jeff was so engrossed with this conversation he had forgotten about Smudge. He went on a search, afraid of what he might find. After a few minutes of wandering from room to room, he finally spotted Smudge sound asleep, nestled in a pile of Mickey’s dirty clothes with hardened Superman toothpaste across his face. Jeff looked at him with new eyes. As cute as he has always been, he now saw a certain helplessness about him that he had never noticed before. He began to realize that he expected Smudge to figure out what was expected of him on his own. Quietly, he stepped out of the room and walked back to the family room where he found Courtney pleasantly sleeping with what seemed to be a smile on her face.