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Mirror, Mirror On The Wall

Our animals teach us by reflecting our own emotional and even physical states, so being a keen observer of your dog's reactions can provide insight for both of you in your shared life.



Ellen Kohn has a diverse background in energy healing and spirit to spirit communication. She is a Reiki Master Teacher, Meridian Practitioner and Healing Touch for Animals Practitioner. She has been communicating with animals since childhood. She is a Spiritual Counselor, using psychic tools to read past lives and the seven layers of the aura. She is a certified aromatherapist, works with flower and crystal essences and is a spiritual dowser, using pendulums and dowsing wands in her work. Learn more about Ellen and what her clients say on her website enlightenedanimals.com



Our dogs come into our lives for a myriad of reasons. They're our beloved companions and friends bringing us immeasurable joy and happiness. They remind us to laugh, play and live our lives to the fullest. Reflecting upon these musings, our relationships with our dogs are much deeper than we think, shedding new light upon why they join us as lifelong partners and teachers.

Each dog's connection to his human also manifests a more subtle and energetic kinship: to mirror our own issues, encouraging us to look within and learn the valuable lessons he's showing us. These issues might focus on improving our physical health, enhancing our relationships, developing better coping skills or simply being present in the moment of our day, leaving behind fear or worry. Paying close attention to our dogs' physical, emotional and spiritual health heightens our personal awareness.

For example, your dog may have skin and coat issues. You consult with your conventional veterinarian, who recommends a course of steroids and antibiotics. This protocol might take care of the problem temporarily but then digestive problems ensue as a result of the antibiotics. Since this involves your dog (we take this care very seriously), you pursue the matter further, determined to find another way of resolving these more complicated problems.

Your research opens a new window on health: diet or vaccines might be contributing factors to the skin and new digestive issues. Now you make the decision to work with a holistic practitioner who can assess and evaluate all of your dog's health needs and recommend a natural approach. You might opt for a home cooked diet or choose to feed raw. Perhaps a detox is recommended to clean out the liver, gallbladder or refresh your pup's immune system.



Your Own Health

After a period of time, you notice the new, shiny coat and itch-free skin. You have been so busy caring for your dog that you ignored your own gastric symptoms occurring after meals. Maybe you're agitated by the stress of figuring out his health challenges and have slipped into unhealthy eating patterns, or food cravings are causing your blood sugar to spike and drop.

Hmmm. You're out of balance and it's time to look at your diet and lifestyle. Just like you did for your dog, you seek the answers that help you understand what's happening with your digestion and immune system. You, too, select a natural approach to healing and your health returns vigorously with renewed energy and vibrancy. Your dog's progress can be viewed as a marker for your own situation if you can see how this was "pointed out to you." Taking the time to be honest with yourself while returning

to healthier habits reminds you that the results for you and your dog are tangible and rewarding. And yes, they are parallel healing journeys.

Emotional Mirroring

Mirroring is easy to recognize for emotional issues. Our animals pick up on our emotional state, be it excitement, happiness, joy, fear, frustration or more. They sense our state of mind and will react in kind. Being a keen observer of how your dog is reacting emotionally can provide insight for you to help him work through trying situations while you grow in your own self-awareness. The two of you might be sharing emotional cycles that could be undone with some introspection and perception.

Our dog Simon came from a high-kill shelter where starvation and physical safety were prominent issues. We knew he'd been

abused and malnourished as a young puppy. His fears of men, parks, bikes and even riding in the car were overwhelming. Not coincidentally, I had a horse accident and was pondering whether to give up my favorite sport altogether. Feeling vulnerable and fearful, I was unsure about whether I would be hurt again, so issues of physical safety were paramount to me, too.

Simon mirrored these issues identically. He would freeze with terror when faced with a new situation that threatened his physical safety, almost to the point where he would hunker down and try to hide. Pushing him beyond his comfort zone was completely unproductive; he needed time to process his emotions and work through them at his own pace.

A Gentle Journey

The journey of helping him feel secure and happy was loving and gentle. Empathy was critical, as well as soft and gentle encouragement. I used this same approach with myself, giving myself permission to take my time and not push myself too hard if I felt afraid to ride. Simon showed me the way to help him, which heightened my awareness of what the wounded self felt like. What an epiphany when I looked back at the parallels in our healing! His courage and strength helped me find my own, allowing me to regain my confidence and joy.

On the flipside of fear, our dogs reflect our strengths, too. The dog that exudes charisma and self-assuredness might match a confident person. Human confidence can assist the shy dog in her socialization because her person transmits that confidence to her dog, who then picks up on the emotional component and can "own" it. Similarly, competitive people who partner with compet-

itive dogs enjoy participating in sports together, such as agility, dog shows or Frisbee competitions.

A Different Reflection

A reverse type of mirroring occurs when your dog reflects back something different than you're projecting. When your competition dog doesn't win in the show ring or agility trial, take a closer look at what's actually going on. Does your dog truly love what she's doing or does she fall short of show standards or athletic ability? Maybe she's simply trying to please you, believing that your happiness depends on her performance; her "failure" may not be a failure at all but a statement that she doesn't love her job. There's a difference.

Pause and reflect on what your dog is showing you. Restoring balance to your life will be a rewarding outcome for both of you when you peek in the mirror.

Those of us who acknowledge our "triggers" benefit greatly when our dogs reflect this to us. Our dogs can mimic aggressive or resentful behaviors to such a degree that we're astounded when they demonstrate these behaviors to us. Sometimes it takes our dogs acting out to show us the way. That's an opportune moment to shift our behavior. It all comes back to unconditional love and a non-judgmental perspective for oneself and others to resolve this lesson.

Acceptance

On a spiritual level, we can also appreciate the mirrors our dogs show us. They are deeply rooted in the present, which means they don't worry about the past or the future. Forgiveness is their way of being, which allows them to let go of circumstances or incidents that don't serve their highest good, their soul. Simply put, they know that holding on to anger, fear and unhappiness is not in their best interests and they can usually work through these emotions and stay present. This doesn't mean that they don't grieve when a loved one dies, or that they ignore their feelings. It means that they inherently know how to heal themselves; just like us, they can choose to work through their struggles, facing their pain, and come out on the other side stronger and more resilient with time.

Our dogs know that good food, sleep, play, exercise and joy are key to living a healthy life. Embracing each moment with gratitude for the blessings we share, your mutual challenges can serve as an opportunity for growth. We spend a good deal of our time making sure our dogs have the ingredients for happiness and longevity. Pause and reflect on what your dog is showing you. Restoring balance to your life will be a rewarding outcome for both of you when you peek in the mirror. 🐾

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