

relationships

CHARLIE AND ME: HOW WE FINALLY FELL IN LOVE

I may not be Charlie's mom, or his hero, but I know I've earned a place in his heart

by Amy Paturel | Sunday, November 16, 2014

When my husband Brandon and I take a walk, I hold Charlie's leash. I feed him, stroke his belly and give him treats. But Brandon is his hero. When he leaves, even for a minute, our loving beagle whimpers in distress. The thing is, Charlie isn't Brandon's dog. He isn't my dog either. Charlie was a gift from my husband to his late wife.

"After she died, he camped out by the door, waiting for her to come home," said Brandon. "He stayed there for three weeks."

I didn't need a pet shrink to tell me Charlie had abandonment issues. When he was a puppy, his life changed overnight. Instead of near-constant attention, Charlie spent his days locked in a crate. Alone. At night, Brandon drowned his sorrows in beer while Charlie cuddled up next to him.

When I met Brandon and Charlie two years later, Brandon was in better shape, but Charlie spent his days in lockdown while Brandon worked. The first time I met Charlie, he ran circles around me. From that moment, I knew he was a handful. I also knew I was smitten.

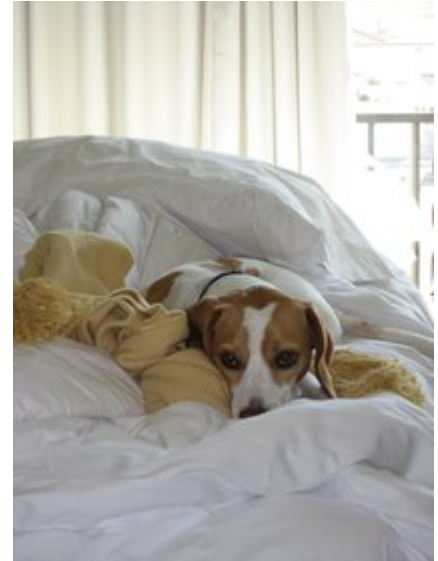
I had dogs when I was young, but none warmed me up. In my 20s and 30s, I didn't want a dog tying me down, sleeping in my bed and shedding everywhere. But, I missed the undeniable benefit of having someone (or, rather, *something*) love me unconditionally and not talk back.

Perhaps that's why I volunteered to watch Charlie when Brandon scheduled a trip to New York. Sure, I wanted to impress Brandon, but I also wanted to bond with his dog. Maybe he'd see me as a sort of stepmom, I thought.

Or not.

Seconds after Brandon left my apartment, Charlie raced to the door whimpering. I could almost hear him crying, "I want my mommy ... and if I can't have my mommy, I want my daddy. But I don't want YOU!"

I figured he would tire out. Instead, his howling got progressively worse—piercing, horrible wails. The neighbors probably thought I was torturing him. On the contrary, I gave him access to my king-size bed 24/7, played with him and cuddled with him on the couch. He still wasn't happy.



Charlie in his natural habitat.

Charlie and Me: How We Finally Fell in Love · Purple Clover. <http://www.purpleclover.com/relationships/3467-charlie-me-how-w...>
Despite Charlie's antics, when Brandon returned from his trip, I tried to save his hide from a life behind bars. Charlie had a proclivity for clawing carpet, jumping on couches and gnawing tables, so I understood Brandon's apprehension about creating a crate-free world. But this was my moment—my chance to prove I had a role in Charlie's life, too.

"Why don't you leave him in the bedroom during the day?" I asked. "If he gets into trouble, you can put him back in the crate."

So we did a test run. Brandon put chewables out of reach. He covered the bed with blankets and closed doors. When we came home an hour later, the house was quiet. I ran upstairs, opened the bedroom door and scanned the room. I couldn't find Charlie. Soon I discovered him on the bed burrowed inside a mess of blankets. When he peeked out from his cozy fort, he looked at me as if to say, "Can't you see I'm sleeping?"

So Charlie met the challenge and together we convinced Brandon to free him from his cage. During the following year, Charlie had a few accidents, but he never destroyed anything.

Brandon and I are married now and have three children together—all boys, plus Charlie—a blended family bursting with testosterone. Of course, the older I get, and the closer my hubby and I come to an empty nest, the more I view Charlie's licking, loyalty and unconditional love as a lifeline, not a nuisance.

Even though Charlie now has free rein of the house, he stays buried in blankets on Brandon's side of the bed. When Brandon comes home after a long day, Charlie follows him—not me. He obeys Brandon—not me. And when Brandon leaves the house, Charlie whines.

I may not be Charlie's mom, or his hero, but I know I've earned a place in his heart. He always runs to the front door when I come home. When he's hungry, scared, or Brandon has just disciplined him, he seeks me for comfort. And recently, on a night when I slept alone because Brandon was sick, Charlie wandered into the guest room and jumped into bed next to me to keep me warm.

So yes, we've redefined Charlie's family, but he seems to be doing just fine, even without a pet shrink. Me? I occasionally suffer from a bruised ego, and like any good husband, Brandon tries to be the Band-Aid.

On a rare morning when I had an early appointment, he called me immediately, claiming that Charlie whined as soon as I left.

"You're kidding me," I said. "He did?"

"No, he didn't," Brandon replied. "But I did. Doesn't that count?"

FROM AROUND THE WEB

Sponsored Links by Taboola

New Policy - If You Drive 50 mi/day or Less You Better Read This...

[Provide-Insurance.com](#)

Dave Ramsey's Surprising Take on Paying Off Mortgage

[Bills.com](#)

Must-Have Products Being Sold for Next to Nothing

QuiBids

Wrestling Took Its Toll on These 13 Passed Warriors

ThePostGame

Best 5 Credit Cards with No Interest to Help You Get out of Debt

Next Advisor

That's Bananas! Common Foods That Cause Migraines.

Remedy Health

Annette Funicello Dies of Multiple Sclerosis Symptoms

Lifescrypt

The 3 Biggest Lies Employers Tell Their Workers

Monster

FROM OUR PARTNERS



The Most Amazing Photos: Moments Before ... And After



50 Famous Love Quotes



Kris Humphries Reacts To Kim's Nude Photos



Kate An William Coming To NYC

Sponsored by SheKnows

NO COMMENTS

WANT TO LEAVE A COMMENT? LOGIN OR SIGN UP