

# the scoop

EDITOR JULIE IMEL DISHES THE NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW

## All I really need to know I learned from my dog

As I bid farewell to 2012 and usher in a new year full of new possibilities, I won't be declaring New Year's Resolutions. For me, I know they just don't work. Every year I resolve to stop eating so much candy; to join a yoga class; and to read more books — all of which are good ideas. But every year, life gets in the way, and by mid-January I feel like a miserable excuse for a human being.

Oh, how very Type A of me; I know.

So instead of starting off the new year by setting myself up for failure and then berating myself for failing, I'd rather work on self-improvement all year long. I think about this often; not just as the year comes to a close. Before I fall asleep at night, I wonder, "How can I get more done and be more efficient? How can I be a better daughter, sister, friend and co-worker? And, this one is really important: how can I find the time to bake more cookies damn it?"

In the last few weeks, the answer to a lot of my questions has been right at my feet all along. *I need to be more like my dog.*

Yep. You read it right. I need to be more like Sophie.

Now, before you get lost in the world's greatest eye roll, hear me out. I have some solid reasons why my cocker spaniel holds the keys to success for me. As she approaches her 16th birthday on Feb. 1, I've come to realize there's a lot of wisdom wrapped up in that furry little body, and it's high time I started paying attention. Here's a few things I'm picking up from the pooch:

### 1. Need something? Just ask.

Sophie is deaf in both ears and she can't see well any more, but when she needs something — anything — I know about it. Why? Well, it's not because I'm psychic (that would be a whole other column). It's because she makes no bones (pun intended) about what she wants and/or needs. There are no cryptic messages with dogs. Their communication is straightforward and simple. I need to learn to ask for help when I need it and not feel like less of a person

because I need some back-up once in a while.

**2. Keep going — no matter what.** I've never seen perseverance like Sophie's. She has had a litany of serious health problems, which started when she was age 8. She's had both ear canals removed due to a chronic and painful problem with recurring polyps. She's arthritic. She requires frequent baths in medicated shampoo to deal with her dermatitis. She's been in renal failure since June and receives fluid injections every other day in addition to taking a laundry list of medications. And none of it fazes her. I've always said that if she is in pain or has a poor quality of life, I'll make one of the hardest decisions of my life and do what's best for her, and there were several times this year that I was preparing to make that call. But Sophie's spirit hasn't waned. She's not in pain and she wants to be here. There's still more chicken and rice to be had, and she still wants to give her kitten a kiss goodnight before bed. Sophie keeps going no matter what, and so should I.

### 3. Completely accept what comes your way.

Dogs are OK no matter what. There's no fretting over minutia. They just drive on. I want to be that way, too.

**4. Know when to put your paw down.** If somebody is pushing too hard, put a stop to it and don't ask forgiveness. I'm going to put my paw, I mean foot, down more often, too.

**5. Tired? Go to sleep.** This one sounds totally obvious, but think about it: how often do you push yourself beyond your physical means to get it all done? Probably all the time. And the result is fatigue, burnout and a crabtastic outlook on life. For goodness sake, take a nap once in a while. And take your dog with you.

**6. Love life.** Sophie is the happiest creature on earth. Her tail never stops wagging. She gets up in it to win it every day. We should all love life the way she does.

Happy New Year, everybody! May we all be a little more like our best friends in 2013.

That's the scoop. Thanks for reading, and I'll meet you here again next year.



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