

My Therapist's Dog: Lessons In Unconditional Love - Diana Wells

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Diana Wells's intriguing exploration into the rewards of relationships--both the canine and human varieties--begins when she reluctantly starts seeing a psychologist, Beth, during a difficult time in her life. With no insurance to pay for counseling, a barter is arranged in which the client becomes part-time caretaker to the therapist's dog, Luggs, a sweet, clumsy black Labrador retriever. As Wells examines her past--her peripatetic childhood, her eccentric family, her grief over the deaths of loved ones--Luggs provides a bridge between therapist and patient. Dog lover by nature, historian by trade, Wells finds herself curious about the connections that dogs and humans have shared for centuries--and what these bonds tell us about our own psyches. Wells observes that training a dog has much in common with the therapeutic techniques her psychologist employs. Looking into recent experiments that have proved dogs better at interpreting human behavior than chimps or wolves, Wells explores the subtleties of her own relationship with dogs. Increasingly she finds herself agreeing with Diogenes, the original Greek cynic (the word cynic comes from the greek kuon, meaning ""dog""), who said that unless we think like dogs, happiness will elude us. Wells analyzes what we name our dogs, how we breed them, how we've explored the wilderness with them, the kinds of literature we write about them, why we love them, and, most important, what we can learn from them. When an unexpected illness befalls Beth, Luggs comforts the two women, and his devotion helps Wells come to accept that relationships--despite the possibility of hurt and pain--are what life is all about.

Author: Wells, Diana Publisher: Algonquin Books Illustration: N
Language: ENG Title: My Therapist's Dog: Lessons in Unconditional Love Pages: 00000 (Encrypted EPUB) On Sale: 2004-01-06 SKU-13/ISBN: 9781565123717 Category: Biography & Autobiography : Social Scientists & Psychologist

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