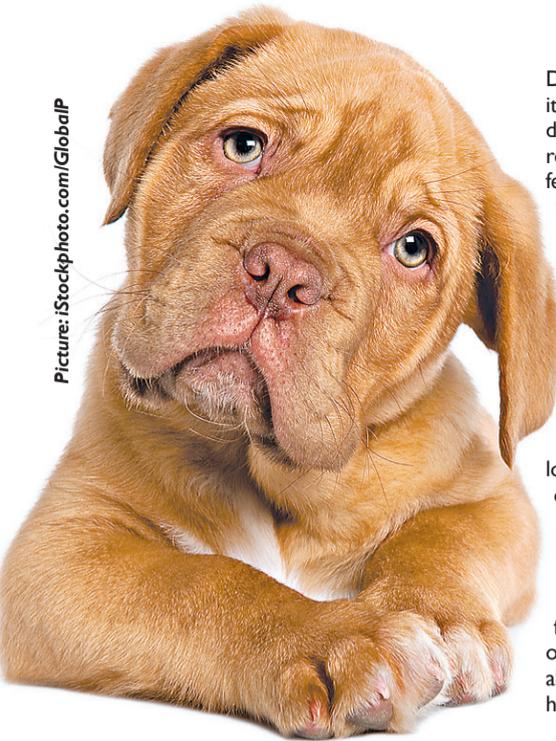


KATHY  
KOPELLIS  
MCLEOD



*The respected WA dog behaviour consultant helps us understand our canine companions*

Picture: iStockphoto.com/GlobalP



Decide on the level of risk in keeping the dog. Is it better to be proactive and prevent a potentially dangerous situation that you could come to regret? While you can't always control how you feel, you can control your response to those feelings.

Whether you control those emotions, or allow them to control you, is your decision. Do not mouse-wheel guilt. Accept what cannot be changed. Do not give in to guilt and self-punishment. Do not deny yourself the joy of a new companion to share your life with.

Negative conversations with ourselves prevent us from thinking clearly. Pets can be one of life's greatest joys. Self-imposed punishment can be loneliness. Pets have a way of enriching the quality of life. There are so many dogs seeking a loving environment and people to share their lives with. Harsh techniques in "training" your dog, and not being vocal enough to question them, can result in guilt. If someone tries to persuade you to use fear as a training technique, or justifies the use of force, don't hesitate to question them. Think about this very carefully. Why would you consider hurting your dog in the name of training?

### SELF-JUDGMENT

We are often too harsh on ourselves. We compare ourself and our dog with others only to be left with feelings of inadequacy, disappointment, etc.

We put undue pressure on ourselves with non-productive, even damaging, thoughts. All dogs, like their owners, are different. Failure to understand this leads to unfair judgment of your dog as well as to your own capability as a dog owner.

If you were spoilt in your relationship with your previous pet, try to see your new dog as a golden opportunity to learn more about behaviour. There is always an interesting lesson to learn.

Don't imagine the worst. This has the potential to affect quality of the owner's as well as the dog's life. It may lead to not getting out and about. It delays socialisation. You could then feel bad, as you're not doing the right thing by your dog.

Consciously adopting an upbeat perspective can help break the habit of thinking in self-defeating ways.

Think about how often we all have conversations in the privacy of your own mind. How often are they good?

Avoid having the emphasis on the negative or on what's wrong. Consider how often things go right and take sensible steps to move forward.

Shun the feelings of unworthiness and sense of failure about having another dog. Don't focus on past negative experiences. Don't question if it's something you're doing that you seem to attract dogs with issues.

What are the lessons you learnt from your previous dog? Could they be patience, tolerance, understanding, etc? Put these new-found skills (thanks to your previous dog) to good use. Even if your next dog has issues, there's much you can do to help.

It cannot be underestimated how much of an emotional impact our pets have on our life. How our experiences with them affect us and even change the course of our life.

**Kathy Kopellis McLeod**

\* Visit [www.kathysdogtraining.com.au](http://www.kathysdogtraining.com.au) to check out Kathy's final dates for her Intensive Dog workshops for 2012 designed for reactive dogs. While you're there, sign up to receive Kathy's free dog training tips.

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