

7 things you (probably) don't know about your dog trainer

Any dog trainer will tell you that the most common comment we get when we tell people what we do for a living is: "Fabulous!! You get to play with puppies all day!". While it's true that puppies are a BIG perk in this line of work, there's a lot more to our day than that! Although if you know someone who is hiring a puppy cuddler, please tell me where to send my application, I'm willing to moonlight.

Here are some things you might not know about your dog trainer:

We think about you and your dog long after you leave the office. Like, a lot. More than one sleepless night has been spent trying to find the right words to comfort a client who is feeling hopeless, searching the internet and our home libraries for a solution to a tricky problem, and emailing our peers to pick their brains. Updates from past students brighten our day more than you know.

We don't have all the answers but we usually know where to find them. I know a lot about dogs, but no one can know it all. I will honestly tell you if I don't know the answer to your question and then I will dig in and find it for you! This is where having a good network is handy. I'm so grateful for my crew of fellow trainers who are willing to share their expertise and opinions with me!

We have strong stomachs. Not vet-level strong, but there isn't a lot that makes us queasy. Puke, blood, wounds, infections, slobber, scars, every form of dog poop imaginable (and some you don't dare imagine), it's all part of the job. Our hearts may hurt sometimes, but our stomachs rarely do.

We may not recognise you in the supermarket but we can spot your dog in a crowd. It's nothing personal! During most appointments we are focused on your dog's body language and reading their feedback, so we become really familiar with him. Years after you've taken a class with us we may recognise your pup's spotted toes (hi, Freckles!) at the park but draw a blank on your name. Please don't be offended if we know you as "Dotty's Mum". It's not an insult!

We don't take your dog's behaviour personally. No need to apologise when they pee on our shoes or growl at us. Dogs will be dogs and we wouldn't be doing this if we didn't love them in all their dogginess!

We're proud of you. Really, really proud. Anyone who tries earnestly to get the very best from their dog and to make their dogs' life fun, interesting and really enjoys being with them, gets an A* in my eyes, I love the people who approach training with enthusiasm and a hopeful attitude, no matter what their timing on the clicker is or how many training manuals they have read. Commitment and patience matter more. Your dog succeeds when you believe in him, know that we believe in **you!**

We truly do this for love. A rare few land a TV deal or publish a best selling book. Most of us do this because it is our passion, not for the piles of money (oh, if only the banks took slobber and fur deposits!). A trainer's best day is the one where we see a student have a breakthrough or watch a dog overcome a hurdle. Learning something new about canine brains, celebrating a client's achievement, getting an email that says "we did it!"; those are the moments we live for, (although we do still have pay our bills)

Of course I can't speak for ALL trainers, but I know that these things are true for me and the wonderful trainers and assistants that have come through the FIDO doors. We are all grateful every day to have this fabulous career and the honour of working with you and your dogs