



# The Other End of the Leash: Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs

*Patricia B. McConnell*

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## **The Other End of the Leash: Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs** Patricia B. McConnell

*The Other End of the Leash* shares a revolutionary, new perspective on our relationship with dogs, focusing on *our* behavior in comparison with that of dogs. An applied animal behaviorist and dog trainer with more than twenty years experience, Dr. Patricia McConnell looks at humans as just another interesting species, and muses about why we behave the way we do around our dogs, how dogs might interpret our behavior, and how to interact with our dogs in ways that bring out the best in our four-legged friends.

After all, although humans and dogs share a remarkable relationship that is unique in the animal world, we are still two entirely different species, each shaped by our individual evolutionary heritage. Quite simply, humans are primates and dogs are canids (like wolves, coyotes, and foxes). Since we each speak a different native tongue, a lot gets lost in the translation.

*The Other End of the Leash* demonstrates how even the slightest changes in your voice and the way you stand can help your dog understand what you want. Once you start to think about your own behavior from the perspective of your dog, you'll understand why much of what appears to be doggy-disobedience is simply a case of miscommunication. Inside you will learn

- How to use your voice so that your dog is more likely to do what you ask.
- Why “getting dominance” over your dog is a bad idea.
- Why “rough and tumble primate play” can lead to trouble—and how to play with your dog in ways that are fun and keep him out of trouble.
- How dogs and humans share personality types—and why most dogs want to live with benevolent leaders rather than “alphawannabees!”

In her own insightful, compelling style, Patricia McConnell combines wonderful true stories about people and dogs with a new, accessible scientific perspective on how they should behave around each other. This is a book that strives to help you make the most of life with your dog, and to prevent problems that might arise in that most rewarding of relationships.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **The Other End of the Leash: Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs Details**

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Patricia B. McConnell**

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## **From Reader Review The Other End of the Leash: Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs for online ebook**

### **Miles says**

Reading this book will change the way you interact with dogs, and for the better.

We have a ~2 year old pit corso, Ramona, who was sometimes slow to respond to our input, though it was clear that she wanted to please. After modifying my behavior around her based on McConnell's advice, Ramona's response is near instantaneous, cheerful, and confident.

Note that I started, and finished, this book yesterday and am already speaking in the past tense regarding results. Basically, I started with my changed behavior yesterday as I was reading, and the difference in Ramona's behavior was immediately noticeable.

One of the more revelatory aspects of this book was showing the disconnect between what I thought my words and body language were conveying, and how they're perceived by the dog. For instance, I like to pet Ramona on the head -- who doesn't like to pet their dog on the head, right? -- which, it turns out, dogs hate. And sure enough, once I knew what to pay attention to, I notice a very subtle flinch from Ramona when I extend my open hand over her head. And building on that information, a later recommendation makes perfect sense: when I'm at my desk working and Ramona nudges me for attention, 2 quick pats on the head accompanied by "enough" in a low, monotonic voice followed by folding my arms and looking away, immediately conveys to Ramona that I want to be left alone at the moment, and she does exactly that.

Experienced dog handlers and trainers will probably snort at my naiveté but for a well-intentioned but clueless dog owner, this stuff feels like magic.

And the beauty of all this is that none of my changed behavior involves any of the "alpha" or "dominant" crap that so many dog trainers peddle. McConnell devotes an entire chapter to the takedown of this philosophy and recommends assuming the role of the benevolent leader instead. No threats or intimidation or punishment, just respect, consistency, clarity, and rewarding good behavior.

Obviously I've only had time to scratch the surface of what this book has to offer, but the immediate positive results of my efforts so far have made me a believer.

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### **Anneliese says**

this is one of my all time favorite books. i love the way P.M. writes, including anecdotes and then going through to explain the details of what she thinks about it. i think everyone who owns a dog should read this book.

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### **Shirley says**

I'd read anything she writes. She's a wonderful writer and I can never learn enough about dogs.

## **Michelle says**

This book is part dog training manual, part dog psychology book, part human psychology book. I learned a LOT from Patricia McConnell. She's come highly recommended by most of the dog communities I'm in and while I've had the book for some time and started it any number of times, I didn't really get around to reading it until just after the new year. If anyone wants to delve more into why YOU act the way you do around your dogs and why your dog reacts the way it does to the often unconscious (and confused) signals you make, this is the book to read. It really got me thinking and as such, my walks with my dog are even better and she's looking to me even more than before I read it

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## **Stringy says**

What a great book, a must for everyone with a dog in their family. McConnell explores how dogs and humans have a lot in common but are separated by our different languages. She explains how you can communicate in a way that any canine can understand, and put that to practical use with your pet.

I like her down-to-earth admissions that even the best dog-trainers sometimes repeat commands and raise their voices, even though they know it doesn't work. It's just a very natural behaviour for primates! Her stories about her own dogs and families she's worked with are great too. And I appreciated her nuanced discussion of 'the concept formerly known as dominance', which I know is a loaded topic.

I've already started using blocking with my pup and he responds to it much better than my previous paw-waving. That makes me confident that McConnell's other recommendations will work well too. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants a family companion with good manners, and has an interest in how dogs see the world.

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## **Donna says**

I learned a few things from the book about my interactions with my dog, but mostly, it is not a very engaging read. I couldn't finish it.

I could not get over the author's short, but frequent, quips to remind us how qualified she is to be writing about the subject at hand. OKAY, we get it! You got a PhD! Let's leave it alone now. Chances are, people already acknowledge your qualifications if they picked up your book...

The other major problem I had with this book is that it focuses too much on the behaviors of other primates. Yes, we're all interrelated, but I wanted to read a book about the relationships between dogs and humans. If I wanted to know about the science behind all primates, I would have picked up a biology textbook.

If you're a dog lover and want to know more about what's going on in your dog's head, I'm sure there are other books that are more enjoyable to read and more informative.

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## Anita says

For anyone who is serious about training their dog, this is a good book. I did not agree with McConnell's view of man, and her behavioral psychology got a little much when applied to people, but when reading for the purpose of behavioral training for dogs, it is very worth while.

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## Nicole says

This book was recommended to me by the folks at HART (Homeless Animal Rescue Team). It describes the differences and similarities in how primates and canines communicate and how understanding these differences can help you train and communicate with your dog. Each chapter starts off with an anecdote from the author's personal experience as an animal behaviorist and dog trainer followed by an explanation of what went wrong or right as the case may be. This book is well researched and somewhat academic but it's done in an entertaining and interesting way (those without dogs might still enjoy the stories and research on animal behavior). There is even a section on pedomorphism. The basic dog books like "Dogs for Dummies" are useful for getting started as a dog owner, but The Other End of the Leash answers a lot of the whys. They also recommended Good Owners, Great Dogs but I haven't gotten to it yet.

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## Bilgi says

It is one of the most exciting books I've ever read on dog training/behaviour. So exciting that I had to refrain myself to go further and read few pages (if not the whole title) in advance in following chapters; Or yet going backward to previous pages to find back a beautifully written description of a dog expression and check it on my dog's face. Thus it was a very enjoyable back and forth reading that I never wanted to end. When came to the end, I was relieved finding many more insights and wonderful reading suggestions at the reference section.

To me it's a book for multiple reading. It's one of the greatest books to understand your dog/s, other dogs and in general other mammals and humans as primates. Some may find the passages on humans and other mammals too long and out of the context; but myself on the contrary I enjoyed them fairly for giving me a perspective for the similarities and differences between dogs and humans. McConnell guided me on what to expect from my dog and more importantly what not to expect, and what my dog expects from me. It's a good book for both scientific minded people as well as for more sentimental dog lovers. It has wisdom, it has deep knowledge, it has love and compassion and it has cautious scientific approach. It doesn't offer though clear cut formulas for dog training that you can find in some other books of McConnell (namely: Family Friendly Dog Training) but even better it gives you the basic and complete understanding of your best friend's mind (or its best approximate). After all what else do we need other than a deep understanding for a happy companionship? Thank you McConnell.

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## Susan says

Fantastic book on dog behavior and human relationships with our pets. This book was very helpful to me as the owner of a high-maintenance, intelligent herding dog. It helped me think about my dog in a new way--as a competent animal trying to communicate with me rather than an object to be trained. The book addresses differences between the way humans communicate as compared with the way dogs communicate and makes

plenty of practical suggestions on how to create a more functional relationship with your dog. It also discusses common themes like dominance and pack order, but it's not the same old, same old information you've heard before. This is not a training book. It is a book that aims to get us as humans to think differently about our relationships with dogs. For me, it accomplished that goal.

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### **Tina says**

I had been struggling with the idea of "training " my golden retriever puppy. I had been reading everything in sight because I wanted to do the "right" thing and in the process have a well behaved dog. It came as a surprise to me that , as educated as I thought I was becoming , problems still snuck in. Ms. McConnell's book completely changed my way of thinking . I now relish the challenge of trying to communicate in a very loving but firm way with my dog. ....just like I would with my children . The difference is that dogs have their own language. Not only do they have to learn to deal with us but it is our duty to learn what they say, as well. I feel much more relieved and patient and I can honestly say that my 6 month old puppy is responding beautifully. This book is a life saver or should I say dog saver!

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### **michelle says**

This book came highly recommended as "readable" and "literary" (even on the back cover!). I found it to be anything but. Her use of cutesy comparisons was irritating and seemed to hide whatever useful scientific information she was meant to be presenting. Based on the reviews and my desire to have a great relationship with my dog, I slogged through until ...

The last straw was her description of a trip to southern Texas to record jockeys who spoke only Spanish. After an offensive, stereotyping description of her Hispanic guide as some kind of gangster Cheech, she compared herself to Jane Goodall for surviving her encounter with the (presumably Mexican) jockeys. I stopped reading altogether and I'm thrilled that I got this book from the library instead of paying one nickel for this garbage.

I get that she was saying we're all primates and that the book was supposed to instruct me, a primate, on how to relate to my canid companion, but her writing was too self-laudatory, cutesy and then offensively clueless. For as far as I got in the book, my most valuable lesson was that my dog is more highly evolved than *homo sapien sapien* because he won't discriminate against another dog just because the other dog has a different color coat or a bark that's not quite like his own. I'll do better to learn lessons from him instead of Patricia McConnell. Yuck.

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### **Craig says**

The Other End of the Leash is more about communicating with dogs than how to train them. Patricia McConnell masterfully explains how as primates we are consistently unaware of the signals we are sending to our four legged friends. In our defense it isn't willful ignorance; humans just communicate differently. Things like eye contact, shaking hands and hugging, which are signs of affection among humans, are seen as rude and aggressive to dogs. Similarly we tend to disregard things like blinking and breathing which dogs consider clear signs to how they are feeling.

My biggest complaint was the book's focus on herding dogs almost to the exclusion of all others. This is obviously the type of dog Patricia spends most of her time with, but it would have been more helpful for sections contrasting the body language of different breeds.

This is probably the easiest and best book to read if you want to understand dogs' behavior. It is well organized, clear and has a number of examples. While it doesn't replace the advice of a professional behaviorist it will definitely be helpful in your daily dealings with your pets. If you're looking to understand why your dog acts like he does, or convince a family member the dog isn't ignoring him out of malice, this is a great read.

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### **Jen says**

In progress but so far everything in this book has really helped me out with understanding how my dog thinks. I learned how to get her to be on a stay, and that's something that we have been working on for a long time! So far this is an easy to apply read and really recommend for anyone who has a dog or is thinking about becoming a dog owner.

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### **Celia says**

This was a fascinating book about the psychology of dogs, but based on a much more scientific approach than Cesar Millan's version of dog psychology. This is not so much a training manual, but part advice, part memoir, part comedy - I found the difference between a primate approach and a dog approach to things so interesting, and Patricia McConnell is a very engaging writer. I loved all her anecdotes about sheep herding. As someone who has owned a dog in the past, and hopes to do so again in the future, I think this will really affect the way I approach my relationship with dogs in the future.

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### **Jennifer (aka EM) says**

This is animal behavioural science, not dog whispering, and it should be required reading for everyone who has a dog, is thinking of getting a dog, or is at all interested in dogs. It's a necessary antidote or at least counterpoint to the "wolf pack/dominance" school of dog training.

The book is structured to compare and contrast primate (including human) behaviours and their underlying meaning with canine (wolf and dog) behaviours. McConnell itemizes and then analyzes the natural behaviours that people, as primates, exhibit and how these are sometimes at odds with those of dogs, sometimes lead to exactly the *opposite* response one is trying to achieve, and sometimes are downright cruel.

Everything from hugging, to looking at, to talking to your dog -- behaviours that are so ubiquitous and natural among humans, but which are often utterly confusing or even off-putting to your canine friend.

Read the book just for this, and you will have many a-ha insights.

But it is the discussion of dominance - status - aggression that I hope people pay most attention to. The theme runs throughout most of the book, and the topic is covered in detail in several chapters. McConnell

does a good, diplomatic but thorough, job in dismantling the *au courant* pack leadership dog training ideology, and explains how its underlying premise is flawed, fundamentally mislabelling dogs as wolves. She then persuades us of the stronger, kinder, evidence-based and more effective value of positive training (reinforcement/reward).

And, she doesn't throw out the baby with the bathwater - which is important. Like the behaviourist she is, she gently corrects and provides alternative, well-reasoned approaches that have a better chance at being effective.

The problem with training based on dogs-as-wolves stems from their deeply flawed theory that because dogs are descended directly from wolves (true), they therefore behave like wolves (not true; or at least, not true in some very specific and important ways). The dogs-as-wolves theory goes on to make a lot of assumptions about what dominance is, how it is displayed in wolf packs, how dominance (or rather, status) is achieved in wolf packs and most precisely, how adult wolves correct their pups. The gap between these already erroneous beliefs is then further widened when the assumptions are transposed to dogs, and becomes actually dangerous (McConnell uses the term "violent") when these assumptions are used to derive training practices for dogs.

McConnell does an outstanding job here at peeling back the layers of misconceptions - including the pervasive ones that relate to how wolves discipline their young (fact: by very sharp, quick nips at their muzzles as a last resort after ignoring them hasn't worked; fiction: by pinning them or by shaking them by the scruff of their neck) and how so-called pack leaders behave (even, who pack leaders are and what that really means).

She acknowledges the controversy within the dog training world about these issues, right down to terminology: dominance, aggression, status, discipline -- now an unholy mess of poor and misunderstood definitions and assumptions, no longer having much to do with the evolutionary biological facts and causing not just confusion, but out-and-out harm to animals.

Dominance-aggression? Incredibly rare, she says; a misapplication of two terms that are already poorly defined to a wide range of behaviours that may not be either (i.e., a dominance display or an aggressive one). Not only does she acknowledge the high-profile controversies, but she examines both sides of some of the practices that have emerged, including for example the "dogs shouldn't walk through the door first" principle that many hold as sacrosanct. (On this, she says there is some relevance to dogs of who goes through the door first, but it's not about who is the pack leader.)

The chapters looking at pack leadership versus benevolent leadership are insightful, well-articulated and - I would hope - eye-opening to those whose only frame of reference for the role that humans play in their dogs' lives is shaped by TV celebrities and trainers telling us we must assume the role of pack leader.

She details some truly tragic cases where owners have received training advice, applied it blindly not knowing any better, and ended up with incredibly damaged dogs, some of whom simply could not be rehabilitated. But she also tells heartwarming, beautiful and inspiring stories of where a simple readjustment based on a more complete understanding of the behaviour has resulted in a strengthened human-canine bond and - most importantly - happy, healthy dogs and people.

She talks a lot about her own dogs - Border Collies and Great Pyrenees. You will fall in love with them.

She outlines why behaviour is the primary and most important consideration in selecting a dog that's right for you - and not necessarily breed.

She recognizes individual differences, even - and especially - within breeds. At the same time, she

understands the intricate, inextricable link between genetics and environment in creating behaviour. She uses a great simile to explain it that will stick with me: *"Asking if the behaviour of either one of us is "genetic" or "environmental" is like asking if bread is formed by the ingredients or by the process by which you put them together."*

McConnell is a scientist - rigorous, analytical - and an unabashed dog lover who admits to spending long nights, every night, spooning with her dogs. She loves them unreservedly. That is what leaps off this page, like a Border Collie in a field of sheep: her intellect and her emotion, well-balanced and devoted to supporting the healthy, happy human-canine bond.

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### **Amanda says**

I got a puppy recently. It's the first dog of my own I've ever had, and the only one that wasn't a farm dog. I've quickly realized how easy it is to form terrible habits that could lead to a spoiled and insecure dog.

This book was recommended by our dog trainer, and it is awesome. If you have a dog, if you're thinking of getting a dog, if you spend time around dogs, or if you'd just like to read about primate-canine communication, this is the book. It is really educational for dog owners, but is also written in an engaging and heartwarming style. Yes, a dog training manual can make you cry.

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### **Stef says**

I really enjoyed this book. It is so weird because I have read so many puppy books, but Charlie is really more dog than puppy now, and it is time i face facts! I no longer have any use on the "how-to" books, and i want a more thoughtful perspective of dog/human interaction which before, to be honest, i couldn't really understand these books until owning a dog.

In this book, the author compares the social structure of dogs as they have descended from wolves to the social structure of humans which have descended from chimpanzees.

There is no doubt that dogs and humans are compatible, but actually there are a lot of things incompatible about our species and understanding this can help your relationship with your dog. For example, humans show affection and comfort by hugging. Chimpanzees in the wild will actually clutch each other in fear if they are threatened. Meanwhile, Rover sees this "hug" as a display of dominance and views it as a threat if given by a strange dog. There is an interesting section of photos in the book showing smiling humans and hugging miserable dogs. However, Rover will tolerate it since you keep filling his bowl. Still, the majority of bites to children are in the face...because they are hugging them. yikes!

I hug charlie, I saw his reflection in the oven door, and he didn't look unhappy or happy, it was if he zoned out and waited for it to be over.

I read this book cover to cover.

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### **Sara says**

I got this after some trying experiences with my adolescent pooch. I'm a few chapters in and already I feel much more able to communicate effectively with her. We've been working this week on coming when called, and have seen a big difference. She discusses the role of body language in communicating with dogs. Last night as usual Kaia was trying to sniff my dinner plate, while I was sitting on the floor, and I just leaned forward a little bit towards her to assert my dominance and she turned away. The author writes about how our natural communication behavior as primates does not correspond with canines' natural communication behavior. So far, highly recommended.

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### **Straw says**

4 1/2 for this one..I am desperate to understand how to communicate with my dog and this book sets the stage for that. I'm a snotty academic with a Master's in Anthro. so, I also love the fact that an individual with a background in ethology is describing not only canine behavior but our own primate actions/reactions. I'll definitely be reading her other books.

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