

# Cynology: The Study of Dogs with Brandon McMillan

## Ologies Podcast

### May 28, 2018

Heeeey! It's ol' Poddy von DadWard with another episode of *Ologies*. Hi, it's Alie Ward. So, quick question, who doesn't love a dog? If you are like, [nyeh] me, then just go! Shoo! Go on, git!

That's right, this episode is all about the beasts that live on your couch; your, just drooling, very very hairy best friend. I love dogs so much I've cried about it. I've cried about it! Probably so have you.

So, before we get really into it, I just want to say a quick thanks to all the folks on Patreon, who support this show, [Patreon.com/Ologies](https://patreon.com/Ologies). Also, to all the folks who cover their bods with t-shirts and such, all available at [Ologiesmerch.com](https://ologiesmerch.com). Y'all support the show. Thank you for zero-dollars-supporting just by reviewing on iTunes or Stitcher. So, as I write this on a holiday weekend, hey, *Ologies* is number fifteen in the Apple Podcasts Science Charts, which is huge, and crazy, and wonderful. Also, you know, like a dog tearing through your bathroom garbage and eating things, I read all of your reviews, like a fucking creep. And just to prove I read them, I read you one every week. This week's, Rich the Beach says:

*This is fast becoming one of my favorite podcasts. It's hard to imagine that you can get so into a podcast about trees or bees, but this gets me every time. I look at the subject, and I'm like, trees! Dendrology? Okay, that sounds boring. And then an hour later I'm riveted to the seat and listening intently.*

Thanks Rich the Beach! I love it when people are like, "Am I gonna like this topic?" and then they're like, "I love this topic!" That's why I make the show!

Okay, let's get into it, dogs, dogs, d-dogs dogs dogs dogs. Real quick, the word cynology, it comes from the Greek for cynos, which means dog. Boom. It's pretty rare to hear cynology in English. People don't use it much, but it is a real word. And it usually means a canine specialist, from a breeder, to maybe a show judge, or a professional dog handler. So, it checks out. And a dog, by the way, if you're like, "what exactly is a dog?" species; *canis familiaris*, which I find to be adorable. Family's right in the name!

Dogs share a common ancestor with wolves. Some historians think dogs were domesticated from this common ancestor over 35,000 years ago. Us and dogs, we go way back. Now, I've known this ologist's work for so many years, and I've watched his TV show about dog training. And, we both work on Saturday morning educational TV shows, shout out to *Innovation Nation* and *Lucky Dog*. I'm sorry for swearing already, which I don't do on your show.

I've been a fan for years, and this year we were at the *Daytime Emmys*, and he was nominated, and we were sitting next to each other, and his category was literally the last to be announced in a four-hour ceremony. All of our feet hurt, everyone was hungry, but we all stuck it out, and he won! It was his third Emmy. We were all so excited! He gave a heartfelt speech, dedicating it to the shelter dogs who didn't make it out, and everyone almost cried their mascara off. I was like, [goofy corny

*voice*] “Come on dude, I’m wearing fake lashes, what are you doin’ to me?” And then, at the afterparty I cornered him and I was like, “Hey, cynology. What do you think? Please be on my podcast? Please?” and he was like, “Sure!”, and I was like, “YES!”

So, Wikipedia has called him “Dog trainer to the stars,” having calmed down and charm-schooled the pups of Ellen DeGeneres, and Don Cheadle, and Kate Hudson, and Rhonda Rousey, and our mutual pal, Chris Hardwick, who loves him. This ologist lives and works on a huge ranch full of dogs. It is my heaven. He invited me up to the ranch to record, and y’all, it was like Charlie about to go meet Willy Wonka. I was like, [*high pitched voice, excited breathing*] oh ga! uh!

I arrived, I met his personal, tiny dog Lulu, and Utah, who appears to be a small werewolf, as well as a bunch of dogs getting rehabbed, and one skittish, emaciated, and kind of droopy-faced fox hound named Betsy, who’d just been sprung from the shelter the day before. By the way, this ologist is super tall, well over six feet tall, very tan from being outdoors, and is great with both big dogs and super tiny ones, which was really adorable to watch.

Now, I thought this episode would be like, “Aren’t dogs goofballs?” but in tone, I’ll be honest, this interview is kinda less clown whistles and giggles, and slightly more cocktail party mixed with Sarah McLachlan SPCA commercial. You’ll learn about his own fascinating, are-you-kidding-me backstory, and where dogs come from, and why they love us, and how to calm down your anxious pup. More about emotional service animals, and of course, the rescue-versus-breeder debate. So please, sit, stay, for a man you know as @animalbrandon online. He is a field behaviorist and thus a cynologist, Brandon McMillan.

[*Intro Music*]

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**Brandon McMillan:** One, two...one, two...alright.

**Alie Ward:** You’re rolling.

**Brandon:** I’m rolling.

**Alie:** Yay!

**Brandon:** Oh, we’re actually on?

**Alie:** Well, yeah, but we’ll cut around it. [*Alie and Brandon laugh.*]

**Brandon:** This is where I gotta turn on the filter?

**Alie:** [*laughing*]Yeah, this is where you stop confessing to murders and swearing.

**Brandon:** [*laughing*] Exactly.

**Aside:** JK, as discussed already, I said the F word, so... Sorry, Mom. Okay, so let's get right into it.

**Alie:** So, you are technically a cynologist, but you specialize in animal behavior across the board, right?

**Brandon:** Yeah. Cynology, I guess, you can call me that. I just call myself an animal behaviorist. Believe it or not, in the animal world there's two kinds of experts. You have what we call the book smarts experts, these are people that went to school, they studied in books, and this is why you go to a university and you get a degree. And the other half of the field that I'm in, the other half of the expert, we call them the field experts. And these are the people that actually go out and they work with animals all day.

I grew up in the circus. My entire family were all wild animal trainers. I never read a book on animals my entire life. If you read a book about animal science from, like, the 1930s, it's all been debunked in the 1950s. And then the ones in the 1950s have been debunked in the '70s. And the '70s... you know what I'm saying?

**Aside:** So apparently dog science is subject to trends and tweaks, not unlike your uncle's mustache, and the rise and fall of denim crotches. But I checked into this and Brandon knows his stuff. It's been all over the place. Like, in 1848 a dude named W. N. Hutchinson published a book with a quick and snappy title. It was called *Dog Breaking: The Most Expeditious, Certain, and Easy Method, Whether Great Excellence or Only Mediocrity Be Required, With Odds and Ends for Those Who Love the Dog and the Gun*. How 1848 is that? Also, dog breaking??? Get bent, W.N. Hutchinson! Fast forward to the 1940s, when dog trainer Blanche Sanders, a cool, kind of Katherine Hepburn, be-trousered gal, was known for her catch-phrase, "Command, jerk, praise!" And I unearthed this 1946 YouTube time capsule called *Training You to Train Your Dog*.

[Audio from YouTube video: "To be blunt about it, men, you'll get top-drawer information in this series. Not just some nonsense dreamed up by a self-styled expert who gets giddy about every little doggie in a window."]

Leash jerks and throw-chains kinda stayed the norm. And then in the 1970s, there was a group of monks in upstate New York who had a best-selling book about establishing dominance over your dog. It was based on the theory that wolves live in packs so you have to be alpha, but studies have since shown that wild wolves actually have a way more chill family existence, with the mom and the dad wolf sharing leadership. Way fewer power struggles. Which is sad and crazy, when you're like, man, I wish our culture was as civilized as wild wolves.

Anyway, beating your dog into submission, as it turns out, monks, can make them dangerously aggressive, probably pretty emo. They're probably on Tumbler being like, "My dad sucks!" In contrast to say, Blanche Sanders' "Command, jerk, praise" Brandon's

go to is “control, train, treat.” But he never got certified with that, he just developed it from working with animals from the time he was but a wee pup.

**Brandon:** So especially this day and age you have... There’s a big misconception. A lot of people think that to be a dog trainer that you have to be what’s called a ‘certified dog trainer.’ Certified dog training just became a big thing in the past, like, ten, twelve years. Certified dog trainer was never a thing when I was growing up. Certified dog training became a thing when the internet really exploded. And the people that created these certifications, they’re not even dog trainers, they’re just businessmen. But all the old-school dog trainers refused to become certified because ‘I will never take a certification course from somebody who is not a top expert in the field themselves.’

**Aside:** I looked into this, and there are approximately one bazillion schools offering dog training certificates, costing up to \$6,000 for some courses. So, odds are that some trainers of trainers are less experienced and in it for the money. So, do your own research if this is a field you’re considering.

Now, how did Brandon learn all of this stuff? By growing up with a totally normal, not unusual childhood at all. Totally run-of-the-mill.... [*stifled enthusiasm for comedic irony*] Nothing to see here!

**Alie:** Now, you grew up around the circus, and I’ve seen pictures. You posted a picture on Mother’s Day of, I think, your mom holding a tiger cub. What was that like? How did your parents get into it? And what were some of your early memories working with animals?

**Brandon:** My father got into it. I’m first generation American on my father’s side, and he’s from the UK. And this is post-World War II. Times were tough in England, it’s not like the modern-day England we see, just booming economy and technology. After WWII, especially up in the north where my family’s from, we’re from a town called Workington, which is about 10 miles south of the Scottish border, and it was very poor. It was so poor after post-war that, basically, there was a lot of crime in the street, a lot of stealing, a lot of begging. And what was happening is, my father was actually debating what should he do, should he go into the military, or should he do something else?

The circus happened to be in town and he went to the circus. He was mesmerized by the lion trainer. His name was Gunther Gebel-Williams, who was the most famous lion tamer from the 1950s into about the 1970s, into the 80s. And my father was so mesmerized by him he jumped on a train and became an apprentice for him at 15 years old.

**Alie:** Oh my god! He’s like, “Byyyeeeeee! See ya!”

**Brandon:** Yeah. Exactly.

**Aside:** I was like, maybe I should see what this guy looked like. I pictured someone in a mustache, wearing like, a wool, three-piece suit and a monocle. Incorrect! Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god! Oh the majesty! Gunther Gebel-Williams image search returns are deeply gratifying photos of just a lemon-juice blonde, sun-kissed, demigod, wearing bespangled, flared spandex pants and a matching vest, hold the shirt! Not needed here! He looks like wholesome, sexy Billy Idol, but with a cheetah draped around his neck. And if there's one thing you can learn from looking at him, dude could get some tail, and I'm not just talking about elephants.

So, I this dude swung through my post-war town, I would hop onto a circus wagon so hard I would break it. Brandon's dad was like, "This dude is cool, I'm in, this is my new career. Workington? I'm out."

**Brandon:** Well there was nothing going on in northern England at that time. He's like, I'm either gonna grow up here and become nothing, or... I wanna see the world. My father always said the same thing that I said, because I ran away from home at 15. And I say I wasn't running away from something, I was running *to* something. My father, basically, after about 7 to 10 years of apprenticing with him, he became a tiger trainer himself. And Ringling Brothers, this was back in the late 60s, early 70s, Ringling Brothers recruited him for his own act.

**Alie:** Oh my god!

**Brandon:** And by the way, this was before the circus was controversial. In fact, the circus was cool back then.

**Alie:** So when you ran away at 15, were you running away *from* the circus, in a stint?

**Brandon:** No, no. My family was out of the circus by then. No, I ran away... I wasn't meant to be at home. I'm like that caged bird. The second you left the cage open I was out of there. Yeah. And it wasn't a bad thing, I lived in Hawaii for almost 4 years.

**Alie:** Whoa!

**Brandon:** That's a great place to live when you don't have a home.

**Alie:** Yeah, it's very temperate.

**Brandon:** Yeah, it's great.

**Aside:** So, side note, I thought I would find some cute statistics and just pop 'em in here on maybe a van-dwellers' sub-Reddit about surfers who live in VW's on the north shore and have a better life expectancy than more traditional American lifestyles. But then, to the contrary, I fell down a rabbit hole reading about Hawaii's homelessness epidemic and a bill to classify homelessness as a medical condition, and one man saying

“I don’t have a house, but I’m not homeless. This island is my home, and this public land should serve the people. Everyone here has a home. It’s Hawaii.” And then I started crying reading that.

But anyway, Brandon said that Hawaiians taught him everything he needed to know, including how to shark dive. You may have also seen Brandon on *Shark Week*. And in essence, Brandon’s story of liberation went from feeling like a bird fleeing captivity in adolescence at 15, to an adulthood of being dangled, *in a steel cage*, confronting great white sharks. Super norm-core sequence of events. One through-line in his life, clearly, animals.

**Alie:** So, when you started training animals, how old were you? You did that before you left for Hawaii, before you kind of went off on your own.

**Brandon:** Oh yeah, no, I used to prep the animals for my father’s act. I grew up with tigers in our backyard. We had lions, we had grizzly bears, we had elephants, we had primates. We had some hoof stock. We had some reptiles. We had some reptiles. We were true animal trainers.

And so by the time I was 15 years old I already had more experience than half the trainers in the industry that were 40 and 50. And so after I ran away, when I was 19, my uncle found me in Hawaii. He brought me back to California. He had one of the biggest companies out here, they were called *Hollywood Animals*. They did a lot of animals for movies over the years.

**Aside:** Remember the tiger from *The Hangover*?

*[dialogue from movie]*

*Alan: Phil, do not go in the bathroom!*

*Phil: Will you put on some pants?*

*Alan: Phil, there is a TIGER in the bathroom!*

*Stu: What’s going on?*

*Alan, yelling: THERE’S A JUNGLE CAT IN THE BATHROOM!*

Yeah, that was *Hollywood Animals*.

**Brandon:** By the time I was 19, he gave me an option, “Listen, you’re joining the military or you’re coming to India with me because we’re doing a movie over there right now.” And I was actually thinking about going into the military because my grandfather was a World War II veteran. I was literally signing the paperwork, and he stopped the pen right there.

**Alie:** Oh my god!

**Brandon:** He was like, "I was trying to hint to you, you little [*"rrnnt"* – *avoiding swearing*]. He was like, "You're coming to India with me, we're doing a movie." It took me about 3 months to learn his animals. He had a pride of lions, he had a few tigers, he had some leopards, he had some grizzly bears, he had elephants, he had some zebra. It took me about 3 or 4 months to learn his animals. I had to slowly-but-surely acclimate myself to them so they wouldn't keep coming after me. I had to enter each of the cages, and eventually they don't look at you as prey, they look at you as one of their own.

**Alie:** Oh my god! Do you do it a little by little, like 'Hi guys, it's me again'?

**Brandon:** You know, believe it or not, when it comes to wild animals, they're all the same. It's not what you do that's gonna help you survive, it's what you don't do. So, when you're dealing with predators for example, the worse thing you can do is turn your back.

**Aside:** [*Shuddering breath followed by slowed-down, shuddering breath*]

**Brandon:** If a predator is actually facing you and running towards you, believe it or not the best thing you can do is run towards it.

**Alie:** And look big, right?

**Brandon:** Yes, predators are not used to getting stalked themselves.

**Alie:** Do you take any of this knowledge and wisdom with animal behavior and apply it to your own life?

**Brandon:** Yes.

**Alie:** Like when you're in a business meeting and someone's trying to screw you over, are you like, "Oh, I'm not gonna back down." [*laughs*]

**Brandon:** A hundred percent. I do it with people, because you have to remember, everyone you're talking to in the world, they're just like you. In my opinion they're no smarter than you, they're no better than you. Everyone is human. We all bleed, we all have emotion. So yeah, I apply the exact same theories to humans too.

**Alie:** At what point did you go from training tigers for movies and being in India, and you've traveled all over the world, you're trained in how to survive in the bush... At what point did you say, 'Rescuing dogs, that's gonna be my deal.'?

**Brandon:** It was a slow process. I can't say there's one moment that changed it all. It was basic evolution. When I joined my uncle's company *Hollywood Animals*, he had every animal, and when you have a wild animal company, you always have a pack of dogs. And the

reason why is because every commercial, every movie, every advertisement, whether it's a magazine, there's always dogs. Not every movie has a tiger.

**Alie:** Right.

**Aside:** I just want you to know that there's an entire Wikipedia page called *Films About Tigers*, which would lead you to believe that there are a lot, but there's only 27 entries! Maybe someone started this and was like, "Who's ever gonna look at this page?" and then just gave up too soon though. The answer is me. I'm looking at it. And I love it.

**Brandon:** That's what his company was known for, but believe it or not the dogs were working way more than the tigers ever were.

**Alie:** Oh, I bet yeah.

**Brandon:** We were always working, I forget exactly what year it was, I believe I was in my early 20s, I must have been like maybe 21, 22. With any dog pack you always have, we called it our "basics." In other words, we have our goldens, our labs, our retrievers, our shepherds, our rotties. These are the most common dogs you'll ever see in a movie or commercial. As time goes on of course, dogs unfortunately don't live forever.

**Alie:** [*slowed, sad moan of grief*]

**Brandon:** So next thing you know, our rottweiler, she hit 14 and she passed away on us. My uncle's old school. He said we gotta go to the breeder and get a new one. At the time I was living in an apartment right in West Los Angeles. I was about a block away from the shelter, and I could hear these dogs just barking all day and all night. I went in there a couple times just out of curiosity because I was old school too back then. I found the shelters to be a place that, you know... We were lied to. We were lied to from the 1950's. People always told us that shelter dogs are damaged goods. Shelter dogs have only the worst of the worst.

You walk in there and you're surrounded by all these dogs that you were taught to be afraid of your entire life, and suddenly they walk up to your face and kiss you. I found a rottweiler in there, her name was Raven. I went to my uncle and said, "Why are we going to go to a breeder when we can get this female? She's great. She's about a year-and-a-half. I promise you, I won't let you down. Let me just rescue her." He was like, "Shelter dogs are damaged goods, they're the worst of the worst." He was old-school. And I said okay I'll put my job on the line. I knew I wasn't going to get fired.

**Alie:** [*laughs*] Like literal nepotism!

**Aside:** Nepotism, side note, is derived from the Italian for nephew. Because popes and bishops were like, "Well shoot, I'm not allowed to procreate and have sons, so I'll



give this cool thing to a different younger male, such as my nephew!" [*happy harp strum*] So, despite his uncle being dubious, Brandon went back to the shelter.

**Brandon:** I rescued her. He was telling me not to, I just went ahead and pulled her. I'm like, "There. There's your new dog for the company." It took me about 2 or 3 months to train her and she went on to become one of our best rottweilers at the company. I changed his mind right there. From there, as the years went on, other dogs were passing away, and we replaced our goldens, and our labs, and our shepherds, and our Jack Russells.

Next thing you know we had a full pack of dogs that were all from the shelter. In this process, I started reading about the statistics of shelter dogs, just in America alone. Back in those days it was more like 2 million dogs a year were euthanized because they couldn't find homes in the shelter systems. Thankfully that number has dropped this day and age, but it's still pushing a million. It's debatable too because shelters are not required to keep numbers on their euthanizations, so it's all an average.

**Alie:** Oh! I thought that they would have to have spreadsheets!

**Brandon:** No, not the euthanizations, because some shelters euthanize so fast. There's some shelters, they euthanize will euthanize a dog the second it comes in.

**Alie:** Oh my god!

**Brandon:** If they see any aggression they won't even give it a chance. So that dog won't even be on the record, won't even be on the books.

**Alie:** It'll just go.

**Brandon:** Yes.

**Alie:** God, that's so sad.

**Aside:** I'm so sorry, I didn't know that this episode would be such a heart-tugger! [*cry-speaking*] I didn't anticipate it! [*clip from Sarah McLachlan song Angel, "In the arms of the angel, far awaaaaaaay from here..."*]

**Brandon:** When I started reading about these statistics, I'm thinking to myself, we have an epidemic here in America that most people don't even know about. It's become this underground warrior club of us that basically have to fight behind the scenes and we don't get a lot of recognition for it. I lucked out. I got recognition for it for being a lone ranger. I got a show from it. I'm one in a million.

**Alie:** Yeah. You mentioned that your uncle didn't have a lot of faith in this rottweiler. What do you think about shelter dogs being damaged goods, and what have you noticed in trying to train them or in looking at their behavior versus, you know, breeder puppies

that you get as soon as they're weaned? What challenges do shelter dogs have and what advantages do they have?

**Brandon:** Well, you have to understand a shelter dog is basically someone's trash. I'm using that metaphorically. It's basically, someone threw them out. They screwed this animal up as much as they possibly could and then finally the last straw was, "Get in that shelter, get out of my life." You have to remember, you're dealing with a lot of residue from the past, from someone else's irresponsible behavior, or just basically uneducated behavior, because a lot of people don't realize how easy dogs are to train. They might be high energy or they might have different personality traits, but dogs are actually very easy to train.

Now, the biggest drawbacks of a shelter dog... I will say this, they're not a blank slate, like a puppy. A puppy is a blank slate. That is a great thing to have training-wise, but you have to remember most shelter dogs you're going to get, they're going to be past the destructive point, past the chewing, past that age where it's a lot of work. A lot of shelter dogs, you're talking... There's very few that are going to be under a year. We're talking, most of them are going to be a year, 2 years, 3 years. And believe it or not, it's a lot easier to deal with a dog after they've hit that year mark because a puppy, - when you're talking about a 6 to 8-week old puppy - you're talking, like, 24-hour care. You're not going to sleep for the first week or two, I promise you.

Because everyone has this idea, this fantasyland of like, rolling in this green grass with puppies all over them. [*Alie laughing*] I'm like, yeah! Until you bring them back to your house, it's chewing everything, it is just releasing all of its body fluids everywhere in your house. Yeah, say goodbye to your grandma's rug, your favorite chair is going to look like a Nyla-bone on its side. There's a lot of drawbacks to having a puppy from a breeder.

The bottom line is, any dog is going to be work. That's where the lines come together. You have your pros and cons of both, but regardless, you're going to have to train both. You're going to have to train a puppy. And, by the way, you're going to make mistakes with the puppy. Everybody always has this idea, "Oh, it's a puppy so it doesn't have any history." Well, you're never guaranteed because... There's two basic laws when it comes to animal behavior. It's called the nature versus nurture law. That's a common phrase we all understand. That means there's some things we teach the animal, and there's some things the animal automatically in its personality traits, kind of wrapped up in their DNA.

**Aside:** I read a bunch of canine biology articles and I'm going to boil it down for you. So yes, it is nature and nurture, genetics and experience that contribute to a dog's personality and abilities, which has led dogs to different jobs. Like, stubby-legged doxies used to charge into badger holes like, "Bitches watch out!" and they were so good at that. And Yorkies were bred to be tiny and accompany miners in small places to eat

the rats. Poodles were bog dogs. They were good at navigating the water to pick up hunters' dead ducks.

And even the queen's corgis once had the job of herding geese, hence they are very short. So today we rely on apps and robots to do shit for us, but back then it was like, "I need an animal with a gangly face and no tail, and bowed arms for the purpose of finding and biting the village witches." And they were like, "Cool! Here you go, we bred you a new dog for that."

**Brandon:** Now, here's the best part of a shelter dog. Most shelter dogs are some sort of mix. When you have a mix, you're creating new genetics. New genetics is much healthier than a purebred. Purebreds are very expensive. Purebreds especially, the more pure the dog, especially the more popular of the purebreds - for example a lot of your shepherds, a lot of your goldens, a lot of your labs - they come with a laundry list of health problems. And the reason why is because there's such high demand for these breeds... especially this day and age, the French Bulldogs are VERY popular. And the more popular the dog, the more of the demand that breeders are going to be out there breeding these dogs. I call them Pez dispensers, that's what I call the females. I call them that because that's exactly what these females are doing. [*sounds of rapid laser blasts*] These breeders are literally turning these females into Pez dispensers. Their only job is to produce babies, produce puppies. And it's sad.

**Alie** Oh hell no.

**Brandon:** Now you have an entire litter of dogs with a lot of health problems because you're not taking brand new genetics and mixing. You're taking the same dogs in the same region of the state and you're breeding those same dogs together and they're all distant cousins.

**Alie** Oy-yoy-yoy.

**Brandon:** This is why hip dysplasia is so prominent in German shepherds this day and age. This is why French bulldogs have every health problem under the sun.

**Aside:** Frenchie problems include, but are not limited to: deafness, laryngeal collapse, hairy eyelids, screwtails, and heat stress. They also commonly have giant heads and narrow birth canals so they have to be delivered by c-section. They are deeply, ridiculously cute, but that salad of selected, purebred genetics isn't always the healthiest.

**Brandon:** Shelter dogs, because they're not... even when you see a pure shelter dog, a lot of times it's got a little bit of a mix in it. That little bit of a mix makes it 10 times healthier. That right there saves you a fortune in the long run. The dog lives a happier, healthy life.

**Alie:** [laughing] I hadn't thought about it in those economics. That you're going to be going to the vet less.

**Brandon:** Oh yeah, because a lot of people have this idea, it's pure-bred, it's beautiful, this and that. I said, "You know what's not beautiful? Your credit card at the end of the month because you're taking that thing to the vet constantly." Allergies...

**Alie:** I hadn't even thought about that.

**Brandon:** Oh yeah. It's very common.

**Alie:** You said training a dog is very easy. It's definitely very easy for you because you grew up in a crazy, idyllic circus life where you got to learn a lot of this stuff. When you're trying to explain it to someone who is not as, say, masterful as you, what do you think is the easiest thing about training a dog? What are the fundamentals?

**Brandon:** Okay, so I tell people dog training is just like martial arts. For anyone who's done martial arts, even if you haven't done martial arts...

**Aside:** I have not done martial arts.

**Brandon:** Martial arts is a very simple theory of technique and conditioning. That's it. I've been a student of several martial arts my entire life and it wasn't until I was older that I understood how easy martial arts really is, that I started applying it to my animal training techniques. If you were to join, I don't know if you know kickboxing, but if you don't...

**Alie:** I do not [laughing]... yet.

**Brandon:** If you were to go into a kickboxing class right now, it would only take that instructor an hour or two to teach you the theory of 'here's how you punch.' After the class, you now have the technique, I get it. Conditioning takes weeks and months if not years. That's what gets you fast at it. That's what gets you in 'combat mode' where you can actually use it in a practical, real-life situation. There's no difference between martial arts and dog training.

Dog training is the same thing. I can teach anybody a technique on how to teach a dog to lie down. Whether I'm teaching a human or whether I'm teaching a dog, if I'm teaching a dog to lie down, all I do is I teach the dog to lie down. It only takes the dog about an hour to truly understand, "Oh, I get it, you want me to lie down." Now I'm not saying the dog's gonna be great at it. You can say it 20 times and the dog might only do it 1 or 2 times, but guess what? The technique is in their arsenal of training now.

The conditioning, that's where most people fail, because, you have to understand, people have this idea of they'll just go to a dog trainer and the dog trainer says, "Okay,

we're going to get your dog to stay." After that one hour, the family of the dog is like, "This is amazing! I taught my dog to stay!" But that's where they end it, right there. They don't condition the dog. If you don't condition your animal, your dog is barely going to be trained. There's trained, and there's well-trained. Conditioning is what makes the animal well trained. I want you to teach your dog that stay, every day, 3 times a day just for 5 minutes. It's like muscle memory. Remember the Karate Kid?

**Alie:** I do!

**Brandon:** Remember wax on, wax off?

**Alie:** Sure do! *[clip from Karate Kid]*

*Daniel: Wax on, wax off.*

*Mr. Miyagi: Wax on, wax on, eh, wax on! Wax off!"*

**Brandon:** Why did he do that?

**Alie:** He got so good at it without even realizing it!

**Brandon:** Yes! He was teaching his body muscle memory. Whenever he actually started teaching him the theory, I think it was, was he teaching him karate?

**Alie:** I think so.

**Brandon:** Karate Kid, right?

**Aside:** *[audio of a man saying "that's Karate"]*

**Brandon:** That's all he wanted to do, he wanted to teach him muscle memory. And it's the exact same thing with animal training. It's just conditioning. I'm gonna teach your dog a sit, now your dog has the technique, YOU have to condition your animal, okay? I, as a trainer, can teach your dog the sit, but I can't move into your house for the next six months and keep teaching the sit.

**Alie:** That's a higher fee, I imagine. *[laughs]*

**Brandon:** Yes. Exactly.

**Alie:** When you're doing your show, how long does it take for you to train certain dogs?

**Aside:** By the way, during parts of this interview, there was a tiny chihuahua in my lap and I loved it.

**Alie:** Hi you! *[to dog named Lulu]*

**Brandon:** Lulu... Lulu, am I gonna have to kick you out of here?

**Alie:** *[In little girl voice]* Lulu is so cute!

How long would you say it takes you to train a dog from shelter to like, you're now home-ready, you know where to go potty, you know what furniture to go on and which ones you should stay off? How long should that process take?

**Brandon:** It depends on the dog. Dogs are just like humans. You have you're A students, and you have your average students, and every once in a while you have your D students, unfortunately, which we just try to edge them up to a C+. Every dog is different.

So, I always say this, here's the best I way always describe. People are always under the mindset... they say there are certain dogs that are just smarter than others. I say that's completely false, and here's why I say that. It's not that any dog is smarter than the next. I say there's response time. Response time is really what you're seeing. So for example, you have your main dogs that we always think of, like, our most intelligent breeds, border collies, Aussie shepherds, German shepherds, Labradors.

**Alie:** Aren't poodles smart?

**Brandon:** Poodles are very smart, yeah. There's a lot that I'm missing here.

**Alie:** *[babytalking]* And they're so cute.

**Brandon:** All you're seeing is response time. In reality, a Lhasa Apso or a Pekingese, which are not known to be, you know... I don't want to throw any breeds under the bus, I know there's a lot of people listening right now.

**Alie:** They're... not playing chess.

**Brandon:** But, of hundreds of breeds, there's like the top 10, the Pekingese generally is not making the top 10 or top 50. But, it doesn't mean that a Pekingese cannot learn everything a German shepherd or a border collie can learn. It just means the response time is not as quick.

Think about a computer, you have a 2018 MacBook and a 2003 MacBook. They both *kinda* do the same thing, type a letter the same... They both kind of do the same thing, BUT this one's a little slower. It does not mean they're not as intelligent, it just means response time, that's all we're talking about.

**Alie:** Do you have a favorite breed? Do people ask you that a lot?

**Brandon:** Uh. The one you're petting right now. No. *[laughs]*

**Alie:** Awwwwww! This little nugget?

**Brandon:** No, I have my top 5 that I like to train and it's mainly because of what we were just talking about, response time. I like training dogs for not only a purpose, but I like training them for a job. I love seeing dogs work, especially when they're working in the original jobs that they were originally bred for. For example, you saw outside I had that Bloodhound mix. I just got her yesterday, but I'll probably do some nose work with her, and nose work means you're teaching the dog to use their nose and teaching them actual scent kind of games, fun stuff they can do with their nose.

If you can actually work an animal and identify what they were originally bred for, those are the kind of dogs I like working. Like the golden retrievers, the Labrador retrievers, I LOVE teaching them service dog techniques because retrievers like picking things up off the ground and handing it to people. I train them for people in wheelchairs.

**Aside:** So, Brandon, alongside a military dog trainer named Mike Herstik, started Argus Service Dogs, and it's a non-profit that trains service animals for disabled veterans, many of whom were hit by improvised explosive devices and are just learning to walk on prosthetics. And yes, I watched some videos about how these dogs brought independence and true joy back to veterans' lives, and yes, I cried again, okay???

**Brandon:** Now when you have prosthetics it's very difficult to reach down to the ground to pick up your keys, your sunglasses, or your hat. These dogs are trained to pick up the objects for them.

**Alie:** And they're good at that, they're bred for that.

**Brandon:** I prefer the retrievers, because now I'm teaching a dog to use their natural instincts, that's why it's called the retriever. They were originally bred to assist the hunter when they shoot the water fowl.

**Alie:** Right, and go grab that duck.

**Brandon:** Yep! Furthermore, and the reason why retrievers were the ideal dog is because goldens and labs are known to have a very soft grip.

**Alie:** Is that what the egg test is?

**Brandon:** Yes.

**Aside:** So, Google 'dogs + egg test.' Highly recommended. Although I do need to have a word with people who attempted this with a raw egg in their carpeted rumpus rooms. Like, no! Don't! Don't do that.

**Brandon:** You can teach any dog to retrieve, okay? You can do it with pit bulls, you can do it with rottweilers. The problem is, you try it with a rottweiler with your sunglasses? You

might not want to try your expensive sunglasses because they're gonna retrieve it for you, they'll bring it back to you, but they might clamp down on it too hard.

**Alie:** Yeah, you're like, "oh don't pick up my baby!" [*in slow-mo: Don't pick up my baby!*]

**Brandon:** Exactly. I find the same with the pit bulls, I find the same way with a lot of the... like a mastiff for example. They just can't help it. But the retrievers, that's what their original job was. They would have these retrievers go out and bring the water fowl back. They would literally... it's almost like a 4-year old, just grabbing your hand, come this way.

**Alie:** [*soft sigh of 'aw'*]

**Brandon:** Yeah, these are natural talents the dog has. Same with the shepherds, the shepherds are working dogs. Same with the border collies, even though they're a herder, they're a working dog. They need a job, so I love breeds like that, I love German shepherds, I love border collies, I love Jack Russells. These are dogs that were meant to work, they're meant to thrive on a job. And if you don't give them a job, that's where the behavior problems come in.

**Alie:** Right, they need something to do.

**Brandon:** Yes. I'll give you the best example of the modern-day working dog. There's very few breeds out there left in the world that are bred specifically for work, because we have technology that does all the jobs they did in the past.

**Alie:** Right, we got robots.

**Brandon:** Well yeah. We have exterminators, that's why we don't need Jack Russells anymore. That's why the schipperke below you right now, they are outdated because we now have Terminix come into our house...

**Alie:** [*laughing*] Oh, right.

**Brandon:** ... and getting rid of our rats, you know? I prefer a schipperke but... But you have what's called the Belgian Malinois, you ever heard of that breed?

**Alie:** No! That sounds like a souffle!

**Brandon:** Okay, so the Belgian Malinois, I'll give you one guess where it's from...

**Alie:** Uuummmm...

**Aside:** I did some research on this, and it turns out... it's Belgium.

**Brandon:** It's a military police dog. This is when you see the K-9 units? It looks like a copper, brownish German shepherd with a black face.



**Alie:** Oh!

**Brandon:** People think it's a German shepherd, it's actually a Belgian shepherd. And so what they did was they capitalized on this dog's high energy, and they found out this dog is so high energy, all it wants to do is have a ball. That's all it wants. Like, "I need that ball!" Almost like an addiction. So what these military and law enforcement trainers figured out years ago, they said, "This dog, basically, it doesn't work for food, it works for one thing, its favorite ball." So now, what they do is they take the ball and they hide it. And now they train the dog to become explosive detection, contraband detection. This is why these dogs are trained so well because the dog, all it thinks about all day is that ball.

**Alie:** *[laughing]* It's just obsessed!

**Brandon:** It wants that ball, and that's why they're a working dog because basically they're so, just... they want that ball so bad. Whatever toy it is they're kind of fixed on, they're addicted to. Basically, that's why they're such good workers.

**Alie:** Oh, that's so cute.

**Brandon:** Dogs noses are much more reliable than any machine out there in the world. Scent hounds? Like a bloodhound? Oh yeah, it'll put a Belgian Malinois to shame. *[laughs]*

**Alie:** That's so crazy. That must be so confusing for them all the time. It must be like hearing 10 different playlists going all the time because you're smelling everything!

**Brandon:** Well that's why hounds are very difficult to train.

**Alie:** Because they're so distracted?

**Brandon:** Yes. For example, people always call me with hounds, like bloodhounds or a beagle.

**Alie:** Or Basset hounds?

**Brandon:** Oh yeah. And they say, "My dog doesn't listen to me." And so I say, "Okay bring it over." And they bring it over, and I'm like, "Oh, that's why, you could have told me that over the phone. Your dog is a hound." Their sense of smell it literally... I don't know exactly what the numbers are. Maybe you could find this? You're good at that kind of stuff.

**Alie:** Yeah. *[laughs]*

**Aside:** So, a little cursory research revealed that humans have about 5 million scent receptors, but bloodhounds have 300 million. And the long ears and that chin-waddle, the blugie-blu-blu-blu-bloob, that's called a dewlap. And they help sweep scents toward the nose, so there's a lot of reasons to be happy you don't have a flappy neck, but smelling bus farts would be the main one.

**Brandon:** It's crazy how much more powerful their sense of smell is. Which is why they're the number one dog for homicide detection, because they can find a body out in the woods miles away.

**Alie:** Damn!

**Brandon:** I mean once you get a little, just a trickle of a scent of what they're actually looking for, they can track it for miles.

**Alie:** Is that how you're going to train Betsy? You're like, "I hid a body for you. Find it!"

**Brandon:** Well... you won't see that on *Lucky Dog*. [Alie laughs] I don't think we'll find a dead body, but we'll figure something out.

**Aside:** Do not hold your breath for that spinoff. And stupid question, but with all this species he's trained to get to his current career, are dogs his favorite animal, or is there a sneaky one he likes more?

**Brandon:** Dogs have stolen my heart. I'll put it that way. Yeah, dogs, they've made me a better person. They've taught me a lot about myself, and they've taught me a lot about human nature. There's a yin and a yang of human nature. They teach me on how, just, vicious human beings can be because I see this in the shelter. I have to pick these dogs up from the rubble. I have to pick these dogs up from the rubble, they're physically defeated, they're mentally defeated, they're psychologically defeated, there's nothing left. They collapse when they get to the ranch here.

But there's the other side of the yin and the yang, that it also tells me there's, you know, there's hope for humanity because there's also an army of people out there that are trying to help these dogs. That right there, there's no other animal in the world that I can think of that really does that to you like a dog. Basically, they stare at your soul and they're like, "Help me."

**Alie:** [baby voice] I know. [Replayed at much slower speed] I know.

**Brandon:** So yeah, you've got Lulu on your lap right now. She was pretty much... she was the template, the foundation of the show.

**Aside:** Just FYI, 13-year old Lulu, still in my lap, but it's easy to forget because she weighs about as much as a mango. Now, Brandon saw her around 2011, and she was already a little older for an adoptable dog, like 4 or 5 back then, which is a lot in dog years. And then, you know, even more when you multiply it by L.A. years.

**Brandon:** She was in a shelter and she was... I saw her there every day when I was going and she was there for probably about 3 or 4 months. She's a Chihuahua... [pronounces as 'chi-wow-wah']

**Aside:** Side note, I used to think the most fun way of pronouncing this breed was 'chi-hoo-a-hoo-a,' but after hearing New Jersey-born Brandon pronounce it, I have determined that his is the best and the most endearing.

**Brandon:** Chihuahuas are very common in the shelters. They get overlooked very often. Finally, it was down to our last day and I said, 'What's going on with that Chihuahua? She seems so sweet, she seems so cute...' this and that. They were like, "No one has any interest." So, I rescued her thinking... Actually, I drove probably about a mile away, and I was in rush-hour traffic, and I was thinking about her. I made a U-turn. I went back and I got her. You know, a little dog like this... Who'd have thought that, here's, me, I'm 6-foot-3 and you'd think I'd have like the rottweilers and the pit bulls, and the Chihuahua is what I roll with [*Alie laughs*].

So yeah, dogs do that to humans, you know? There're so many stories that you hear of an animal helping a human out. There're so many stories of people going through cancer, whether they survived or not, they said the dog was with me the entire time. That doesn't happen with a crocodile. You know what I'm saying?

**Alie:** [*laughs*] Sure does not. No one's like, "My pet rooster got me through chemo."

**Brandon:** [*laughs*] Exactly!

**Alie:** Not so much. I'm sure once or twice.

**Aside:** Just wanna say I've researched and there have been many emotional support roosters. As well as peacocks, pot-bellied pigs, therapy turkeys, some spiders... not all of those species care, however, if you're like, going through a breakup. They're like, "I'm a turkey, what are you... why are you hugging me?"

**Brandon:** But dogs understand human emotion. They understand, especially the more they hang around us. And this comes with a mix of their sense of smell. They understand there's chemical changes going on in our body which is why they can detect diabetes. They can detect a blood sugar drop. They can detect cancer. They can detect a seizure about to happen. They can detect pretty much anything in our bodies that our noses, our weak little human noses cannot detect. We don't even know we have diabetes, or are about to have a seizure, and suddenly the dog starts changing its behavior 10 minutes before a seizure. Next thing you know, you have a seizure and people say, "your dog is actually identifying... it's indicating on you." I don't know of another animal that does this, and I've worked with 'em all.

**Alie:** Does it change the way you look at yourself as, like... Do you have to see yourself as the alpha of this pack? And do you see alpha behaviors and beta behaviors in groups and apply that to humans at all?

**Brandon:** Not really. Believe it or not, I'm not that egotistical to be the alpha male in a group. [*Alie laughs*] Honestly, the loudest one in the room is the weakest, in my opinion.

**Alie:** Ahh... I've never heard that.

**Brandon:** No, I'm usually... Honestly, I'm pretty much a loner.

**Aside:** [*Clip of Pee-Wee Herman, "I'm a loner, Dottie... a rebel."*]

**Alie:** Lone wolf. [*laughs*]

**Brandon:** Yeah, I don't like hanging out in big groups of people. I don't like...so I'm kind of a lone ranger in life.

**Alie:** Mm-hmm, and also you have 10 friends on the property right now. They're all very hairy and small, but... Do you think that dogs are important for people who have introversion or who are lonelier? That's one thing about dogs I feel like they are so valued for, because a lot of times in life we don't get unconditional love the way that we get it from a dog. Do you know what I mean? Your dog does not care what kind of car you drive. [*laughs*]

**Brandon:** Absolutely. You know, people are seeing... you know, the emotional support dogs?

**Alie:** Yeah, yeah.

**Brandon:** Yeah, so that became very popular in the past 10 years. Now, emotional support dogs have been around for thousands of years. This is where the original lapdogs came from. Like a Maltese, for example, that was one of the true original lap dogs. And so, it was to provide comfort and emotional support to somebody who just needed a companion. In the past 10, 12 years emotional support animals have also had a resurgence. Everyone's like, 'it's the new word of the decade' and I'm like that's just actually an old word that's been around since the biblical times.

And the reason why it's become very popular is because people are seeing more and more... I see it all the time, for example, with autistic kids. I work a lot with autistic kids, train a lot of service dogs for them. We train these dogs to do all kinds of tasks, but the most important thing that these dogs offer these kids are emotional support. Because a lot of these kids, whether they're autistic, or they just have anxiety, or they're just very shy and they just can't open up to the world, the dog does not see them with a disability or a condition. They don't see you as any different than anybody else. They're seeing everything but the surface. Dogs are like the ultimate poker player, they can read tells, they know what you're thinking.

**Aside:** So yes, dogs have evolved to care. Even chimpanzees don't follow a human gaze or pointing like domesticated dogs do. The whites of human eyes, they're called

sclera, and they were adapted and evolved to communicate with other humans. We have these non-pigmented sclerae and small irises in our eyes so we can tell where each other's eyeballs are moving and if we're averting a gaze because we're shady. And dogs are capable of following that in ways that even chimps can't. So evolutionary speaking, this helps dogs predict, like, "Okay, you're looking at a microwave. That must mean you're about to pick up the Hot Pocket. Some steamy ham may soon drop on the floor. I'm watching what you're doing, I got this." Now on the topic of hot things dropping, let's get to your questions!

**Alie:** One question, and I got a lot of questions from the Patreon page. Are you ready for a rapid-fire round?

**Brandon:** Yeah, go. *[laughs]*

**Alie:** Okay.

**Brandon:** They better be easy to answer. Go. *[laughs]*

**Alie:** Laura Mulligan [phonetic] wants to know: Why are dogs always just ready to party?

**Brandon:** Party, like what, in your house?

**Alie:** Just hang. Why are dogs always so down to hang?

**Brandon:** Well, I mean they're dogs. Dogs are really social creatures. Well, put it this way, here's what I cannot answer, and this is the million-dollar question I have for anybody, why do dogs love to play underneath your feet?

**Alie:** I don't know.

**Brandon:** I have a massive ranch here. I have a big training yard they can run around there all day, but when I go down there they choose to play right underneath my feet.

**Alie:** I'll look into that.

**Brandon:** I dunno why they love to party, but dogs... you know they're party animals. *[laughs]*

**Aside:** You know, I started looking into the origin of 'party animal,' and it seems to have sprung up in the late 1970's on *Saturday Night Live*. But pre-dating that is a usage in the 1920's when people who loved to drink and just carouse around were called, quite aptly, 'party hounds'. *[clip from song, Who Let the Dogs Out: Who let the dogs out?! Hoo! Hoo, hoo, hoo!]*

**Alie:** Topher Mendoza, [ph.] Michael Shea, and Anthony Stohl [ph.] all have the same question: Why do puppies or puppy paws smell so good, like corn chips or Fritos? Have you ever smelled dog feet?

**Brandon:** Yeah! I don't know, there's certain odors... First of all, believe it or not, dogs sweat through their paws.

**Alie:** Oh they do!

**Brandon:** Yes, so that might be one of the theories.

**Alie:** That's their b.o.

**Brandon:** Yeah.

**Alie:** Okay.

**Brandon:** Yeah, so that could be.

**Aside:** It seems like well, okay, if a dog eats grain, it's gonna sweat out Frito dew. But actually, it's due to paw-dwelling yeast that happens to smell like corn. So it doesn't make it any less delicious. Well, m-maybe it does, but... it's still cute.

**Alie:** Michael Satumbaga wants to know: Can an old dog really learn new tricks? And then his follow up question along with Evan Simkowitz [ph.] was: Does my dog really love me as much as I love them? So, can they learn new tricks, and do they love us?

**Brandon:** Can an old dog learn new tricks?

**Alie:** Yes.

**Brandon:** Yes, absolutely. There's a big misconception, they always say, you know, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. I would 100% disagree, and the reason why I disagree is because I train old dogs here at the ranch all the time from the shelter. You just can't teach them as fast. Think about a sponge. You got a dry sponge and a wet sponge. The dry sponge is a puppy...

Okay, I'll talk in your terms. Think about 2 computers, think about 2 hard drives. You have a brand-new hard drive; empty. And you have an old hard drive that is full of information that you need to kind of like, move things around, eliminate a few things here...

**Alie:** Right, you gotta defragment.

**Brandon;** Yes. Now, the new hard drive retains information very quickly and you can just load it up quick. The old hard drive, yes, you can still put information on there, it's just not as fast.

**Alie:** Okay, and do dogs love us?

**Brandon:** Of course!

**Alie:** Okay, just checking.

**Brandon:** Who would ask that?

**Alie:** Uh, I... I think we doubt it. There's no way my dog can love me as much as it seems like it loves me, is what a lot of people think. Maybe people just need to come to terms with how lovable they are.

**Brandon:** Yeah, but you have to remember, our form of love and dogs' form of love is much different. We require love out of, like, a want. Dogs require love out of need.

**Alie:** Because they're dependent on us in some way?

**Brandon:** Of course! We've domesticated these animals to the point where they are dependent on everything they must survive with, and love is one of those actual survival skills. I'm a firm believer of that.

**Alie:** I love that, though!

**Brandon:** Well it's true! It's true. If you just give your dog the basic needs, the basic necessities, and you don't ever pet it and love it, it's gonna have social problems.

**Alie:** Right. You gotta love your dog and they gotta love you back.

**Brandon:** Yes. That's part of the basics that it needs.

**Aside:** So, go pet your dang dog, right now! Or if you're like me you can pet someone else's dog, even if you don't know the people, and they're just at the next table over at brunch, and you're like, "Look, it's a friendly dog, it's not my fault that it's cute and in public. That's on you."

**Alie:** Jacob Huwell [ph.] wants to know: Am I ruining my 9-month old puppy by letting her sleep in the bed with me?

**Brandon:** Absolutely not. I let all my dogs sleep in the bed. [*Alie laughs*] The only time I ever have an issue with that... and this is just me, the only time I ever have an issue with a dog sleeping in the bed or getting on the couch is if they get possessive over it.

**Alie:** Okay.

**Brandon:** You tell 'em to get off and now they're growling at you. That's where the buck ends. But as far as dogs sleeping in the bed, you kidding me? [*Alie laughs*] I got 9 dogs in the bed here, you know. I find myself sleeping in the fetal position up near the pillow area. [*laughs*]

**Alie:** Because there really are 10 dogs on the property and then you have more in the kennels.

**Brandon:** That's just what you saw.

**Alie:** Right. *[in baby voice]* Gyuh! You're so lucky! Dustin Mills wants to know: Do dogs enjoy hugs? I'm gonna guess that's a yes?

**Brandon:** Yeah, but it's different. Not like a hug... I'll put it this way, I would not agree with a dog liking a hug like we like to hug where you're talking chest to chest. That might make a dog feel a little bit uncomfortable because it's very unorthodox. But, as far as a side-saddle hug or something like that... They like more petting. Now, there's a lot of debate whether they like being pet on the head, but there is one thing you can't deny. Dogs like a nice long, firm stroke. They don't like a trickle touch, that's almost annoying. They like a firm, long stroke from shoulders all the way to tail.

**Alie:** Oh! Like a firm paintbrush all the way down making a skunk stripe.

**Brandon:** Yes, and there's also been a lot of scientific evidence that not only petting dog lowers their stress and anxiety, but it also lowers ours. So, petting a dog is actually a win-win for everybody.

**Alie:** I need a dog, yesterday.

**Aside:** So why this may be, some studies suggest that a bonding hormone called oxytocin is released when you snugg a pup. Now this is the same chemical that your body pumps out after you nut - that's scientific term - or when you have a newborn baby. And evidently, it has a lot of physiological and psychological benefits. And now I'm just dreaming of a world where doctors prescribe mutts, and health insurance-covered chew toys!

**Alie:** "That's Weird" wants to know" What do dogs dream about when they're making those cute little whines in their sleep?

**Brandon:** Chasing rabbits. *[laughs]*

**Alie:** Yep. *[laughs]*

*[Name obscured by laughter]* wants to know: Why do some dogs kick their leg really fast when you itch a certain part of their body?

**Brandon:** We all have our spots. We all have our spots. *[laughs]* I'll tell you a little secret of me right now, I love getting massages because I'm tall and I'm very athletic and my back always takes a beating. I have herniated disks all through my back and I'm always in pain. There's one spot right at the top of the butt where it meets the back, you could dig



your elbows in there so hard and I swear I would start kicking my leg like a dog, just *nnngggghhh*.

**Alie:** *[laughing]*

**Brandon:** For some reason it's my spot, and I think it's cause it's a spot that I can't get myself, I just can't get any leverage for it. So, yeah, sometimes it's the area they really can't touch.

**Alie:** I think that's them saying, "Oh, dat's da stuff!"

Mara Spensieri wants to know: What breed is best for cat people, aka low maintenance and very lazy dogs? What's the best kind of dog for someone who's used to having cats? Like, what is a dog that's the most similar to a cat?

**Brandon:** Uummm... I would say the Shiba Inu.

**Alie:** Oh really?

**Brandon:** Oh yeah, anybody who has a Shiba Inu... Anyone listening right now, I promise you, just tell them to tweet you, and they will. We call those the cat dog.

**Alie:** Really?!

**Brandon:** Oh yeah.

**Alie:** And they look like foxes also!

**Brandon:** Oh, they're gorgeous, yeah. Very difficult to train. VERY difficult, very feral, very cat-like.

**Alie:** Do they knock stuff off of shelves? Like, 'boop'?

**Brandon:** Uh, yeah, probably. They're known for not listening. A lot of people think when they have a Shiba Inu, if they're not experienced with the breed, they think that the dog is deaf.

**Alie:** Oh my god! It's that much, like, "Talk to the paw."

**Brandon:** Yes.

**Alie:** Like, "Don't even look at me."

**Brandon:** Yeah.

**Alie:** Oh, that's hilarious.

**Brandon:** Dog trainers make a lot of money off those dogs, *[laughs]* because you're constantly calling 'em back.

**Alie:** Jimmy Griebler wants to know: What's the strangest crossbreed you've ever seen?

**Brandon:** Years ago I saw a corgi and a, I wanna say it was a Cane Corso, which is a LARGE, very large, pit bull-type breed.

**Alie:** Oh Jesus!

**Brandon:** Yeah, we're talking like 80, 90 pounds, but then it was mixed with a corgi. So, it had these legs that were... I wanna say these things were probably 4 inches tall, and they bowed out almost like a sea lion. And it walked like a sea lion. So it had this long body with these 4-inch legs, and it had this GIANT, giant shoulders and head. I mean, it looked like something out of *Beetlejuice*, like you just combined these two animals. *[laughs]*

**Alie:** *[laughs]* That's the best!

**Brandon:** Yeah, I've seen some pretty cool mixes out there, but yeah, that was definitely the weirdest one. And he was sweet as could be. People looked at him... If you just saw a headshot, you're thinking to yourself, man that's a big pit bull! And all of the sudden you see the whole body and you're like, what happened?

**Alie:** What was his name, do you remember?

**Brandon:** I forget his name, but I did train him.

**Alie:** God, I hope it has an Instagram account. If it has an Instagram account you better let me know.

**Brandon:** Yeah.

**Aside:** In trying to track down an Instagram account, I failed. I straight up failed. But I did end up scrolling through a lot of cor-pit, pit-g, cor-bull hashtags, and I can say, 12 out of 10, would waste precious many minutes of my life doing that again.

**Alie:** Mads Clement, Jen Durbin and Dave Miller [ph.] all wanted to know a little bit about emotional support dogs, what your thoughts are in people registering them, whether or not that privilege is being abused? And if you are looking for an emotional support dog, what the best kind of dog would be?

**Brandon:** Okay, an emotional support animal... A lot of people, they get emotional support animals confused with service dogs. Let me just explain, there's 3 categories of 'technically' service dogs. So, you have emotional support, you have therapy dog, and you have service dog. Now there's a massive difference between each one. Emotional support

animals require no training. Zero. Now, this is where the problem lies. This is where I put my foot down because the biggest problem is, they can go into areas that you can have service dogs or other animals. For example, emotional support animals, or ESAs as we call them, they're allowed to go into planes and fly with... This is why you see a lot of dogs on planes. Most of them are not service dogs, they're emotional support animals.

The biggest problem is, all you have to do is you have to get a note from your doctor. I'm not discrediting these people or denying the fact that they need this animal because they don't want to take drugs. That's good, that's a great thing. But, I think there should be strict guidelines that these people should have to train their dogs, at least some sort of basic standards; basic obedience, good canine citizen test, something that says this dog is qualified to go into public places and be around other dogs, and safely around children, and stuff like that.

The biggest problem is, you have everybody registering their dogs and they bring them into planes, and now we're seeing a lot more problems. We're seeing a lot of these emotional support animals that are biting people, they're attacking other dogs.

**Aside:** So last year, a Southwest passenger was bitten by another passenger's support dog. And Delta Airlines has also recently cracked down. They require ESA animal owners to sign a voucher essentially saying, "My support animal won't fuck anyone up". But I think we can all agree that the problems are somewhat rare, and when there's an animal on a flight, everyone gets so stoked!

Take, for example, Daniel Turducken Stinkerbutt, who recently accompanied his owner, a PTSD sufferer, on a flight. By the way, he's a duck. Everyone loved it. Daniel Turducken Stinkerbutt the duck was decked out in tiny red flappy shoes, wearing a Captain America diaper. Honestly, I feel airlines should charge more for flights with diapered waterfowl on them. Do it. I'm there. First in line. But, not all emotional support dogs are service animals. Those are kind of leveled-up.

**Brandon:** That is the difference between an emotional support dog and a service dog. A service dog, they come with high level training. We're talking 6 months to a year, to even 2 years sometimes. And the service dog, that's part of our testing we do. We test it around other dogs, test it around kids, test it around all kinds of environments to make sure this dog will NEVER bite a kid. It will never bite another animal. It won't cause a problem. So yes, do I think people are abusing it in this day and age? Absolutely, 100%. And this is the hard part, it's hard to filter out, 'okay this is one of the good guys, this is one of the bad guys, this woman is doing it right, and this one's abusing it.' So there needs to be some sort of standardized test to say this is an emotional support animal and it has to pass these guidelines.

**Alie:** I had a ton of patrons on Patreon ask me what to do their dog has anxiety? And are we just more aware of dog anxiety, or is it becoming more prevalent? But what do you do if your dog seems like an anxious pup?

**Brandon:** I think anxiety is the same today as it was 30, 40 years ago. It's just people are identifying it now. You gotta remember, I think the reason why it's become such a big thing nowadays is because dogs are part of the family. There's an old saying that we say in the dog world, dogs went from the farm, to the backyard, to the house, to the couch, to the bed. This is the chronological order of events. This is how the dog has evolved in our families.

So yeah, sure, back in the 1950s dogs had anxiety, but we didn't notice because they were stuck in the back yard in the doghouse so we didn't notice. It hasn't been until recent times that we've started seeing the dogs with heavy anxiety because now they're just living in our homes, on our couches, in our beds, you know what I'm saying?

I think the anxiety is the same nowadays as it always was. Now, there are ways to help it. You're never going to eliminate it, but there are ways to help it. I actually use this product now, it's called Solliquin, and also something called Calm, it's a supplement. Stuff like that works. There's also what's called compression shirts, those are a big help sometimes. There's also music boxes. These music boxes, what they do is they... I guess they've found out, I haven't read the exact science behind it but I have them here, I've tested them out on probably about 500 dogs over the years. I'm actually a fan.

**Alie:** Really?

**Brandon:** Yeah. Let's say of 100 dogs, it works on about, I'd say, 25 of them, which is a good number. Because you gotta remember, you're not gonna ever get 100 percent.

**Aside:** So when Brandon said music boxes, I thought he meant this, [*audio of music box playing Harry Potter theme*] which is tinny, and kinda creepy, and it seems annoying if your ears pick up, like everything. But, I did a little digging, and it's more like a Bluetooth speaker with spa jams. Like this sample from *Relax My Dog* on YouTube, which has over a million plays [*gentle, soothing electronic keyboard music*]. So either a few owners use it A LOT, or it's not uncommon for dogs to need just a little bit of help chilling out.

**Brandon:** Anxiety, it's inside them. There's something going on inside them, the reason why they have anxiety. It's just like humans. And so, there's all kinds of stuff on the market that could help their dog. Now here's what I will say about helping your dog with anxiety, there's something I do all the time on the show, and I do it in training videos. I don't stop at one product. In other words, if I try one product and I say, "Oh, it's not working," I don't eliminate that product and try something else, and eliminate that product and try something else, and so on and so forth.

What I do is what I call the layered system, the layered training system. If I don't see a result off that one product, I keep them on that product and I layer another one on. And I keep stacking things on until I find the combination of what works, because believe it or not you can try one product and eliminate it, and you might strike out, but sometimes you have the combination of 3 or 4 of those things and it works.

**Alie:** Really? So, like maybe melatonin's involved or magnesium, or things like that, depends on what's...

**Brandon:** It could be a music box and a Thundershirt, you know what I'm saying? It could be the combination of both that actually you see the best results. So I always say, it's called the layered approach. It's almost like a Rubik's Cube, 'Oh, there we go! I found the formula with these 2 combined, or these 4 combined.'

**Alie:** And you just unlock it. And you know what? Summer's coming up, what do you do for fireworks? I know that there's so many dogs in shelters after fireworks cuz they freak out.

**Brandon:** Oh god, yeah, I wish I had the magic code for that. Look, fireworks, it's just like thunder. It's scary to wild animals, and you have to remember, domestic dogs, they're one step away from a wild animal. Everything we see our domestic dogs do, the traits came from the wild animal. Wolves are just as scared of fireworks and just as scared of thunder as domesticated dogs. It's an instinct.

**Aside:** Oh man, just thinking about a bunch of scared raccoons, clinging to trees on the Fourth of July, oh man, I'm gonna cry again! Oh shit!

**Alie:** But you should keep your dog somewhere safe during fireworks season?

**Brandon:** Oh absolutely! Now believe it or not, there's 2 days of the year where the shelters are the most populated. And I'm not talking about human populated, I'm talking about dog populated, and that is the 5<sup>th</sup> of July and the 1<sup>st</sup> of January. And the reason why is because a lot of people go out to whatever, a fireworks show, and they just leave their dog in the backyard. The dog starts freaking out when they hear the booms everywhere, and the dog will do anything to save its own life. It will dig under the fence, or jump over a 6-foot fence. It's amazing what they can actually do when they're scared. And so, the 5<sup>th</sup> of July everyone is out there looking for their dog.

**Alie:** Yeah, I feel like in the summer I see posts more on social media, like around there.

**Brandon:** You'll see a lot, yeah. I always try to remind people of that, especially when you get around that week of the Fourth of July, just, even if you have to crate your dog, just keep it safe. I'm usually not a big fan of crates. Typically I use crates for crate training as far as housebreaking. That's kinda where it ends. But if we're talking about saving a dog's

life, yeah, I'm saying crate him for the Fourth of July. Your dog won't hate you, don't worry.

**Alie:** [laughs] Your dog is like, "Never again will I trust you!"

**Brandon:** [laughs] Exactly.

**Alie:** Okay, the last 2 questions I ask every Ologist, what do you dislike about your job or your work as a cynologist? What's the most annoying thing? Is it picking up poop? Is it lint rolling? Is it scheduling? Is it billing? What is it?

**Brandon:** I guess the most annoying thing about my job is whenever I'm done training an animal, believe it or not, no news is good news. I like the idea of no news is good news because that means everything's working. What irks me the most, and it ticks me off more than anything is when I spend all this time training an animal, I put all this time and energy - and I donate a lot of training to people who can't afford it. The only thing I ask is make sure it sticks; I don't want to see you back here. And if they didn't take the time to do it, you know what I'm saying? "Oh, I was busy, I didn't..." Listen, here's the reality, dog training is just like a daily diet. You can get the gym membership, but you have to actually go to the gym.

A lot of people, when they get an animal and they start having problems with it, all they wanna do is they want to pay a dog trainer to take care of their problems. That's not how it works. You're paying me and I'm showing you. Because if you're not going to put the time or the effort into your own animal, I'm not gonna call you back. And so I make sure people know that.

A lot of people, believe it or not, get pissed off when I say, "Look, I want you to buy my book." And they're like, "Oh, it's all about the money, huh?" And I say, "Okay, let me tell you something. You have an animal, it's gonna live the next 13 to 15 years. If you can't spend \$17, where you can have a reference book and say "oh, let me see here, this is how you teach a dog to stop counter-surfing," this and that... It's a reference book. If you can't sit there and spend a week of your life reading it and spend \$17.99, when you just paid \$2,000 for this purebred dog, you bought it a \$300 bed, you bought it some little jacket that it probably won't wear, we live in Southern California, but you're not going to invest \$17 and spend a week reading that book? You don't deserve that animal.

**Alie:** Right. It's a textbook!

**Brandon:** Yes. It's just like having a kid. If you're not gonna read up on how to raise a child, read up on how to teach your child a few things, you do not deserve that kid. This is basic parenting, whether it's a kid or it's a dog. This is why I always tell people education is very important, whether you read my book or someone else's book, read something that will give you the basic information. If you're the kind of person that just says, "Oh, I

want to just pay someone for my problems,” just go ahead and find another home for your dog right now.

**Alie:** Get a robot dog!

**Brandon:** Exactly.

**Alie:** Okay, so what is the best thing about dogs? What do you love the most about your work?

**Brandon:** Not only saving the dog’s life, but I see it all the time, people say ‘you saved my life too.’ My job as a trainer and a rescuer, I love seeing both sides of the coin. I love seeing the dog’s life change. I love seeing how they came out of their shell. For example, that bloodhound mix you saw outside, this is Day 1 for her. Technically she came last night, but this is true Day 1 for her. You’re seeing she’s a little timid, her tail’s tucked, she wanted no part of it. Come back here in a month. You’re going to see her do a full 180, she’ll be the most popular dog here at the ranch.

And that’s what we do. We change lives. I love changing the dog’s life, but then there’s another side to that. The woman that she’s going to, that I have in mind, or that I think she’s going to, she’s over the moon about it, and it’s gonna change her life. A lot of these people that I train dogs for, they’ve lost something. Whether they lost a dog, or they lost a family member, or they lost a part of their life that they’re not gonna get back, these dogs are almost like a new chapter for them. It’s a whole new chapter of life.

They’re gonna look back and say, “That was the best period of my life. That golden retriever I had, that bloodhound, that Jack Russell, that little Chihuahua that I had, it was the best dog I ever had.” And that’s what I say about every dog I’ve ever had in my entire life. That was the best dog I’ve ever had. And I keep saying it. Honestly, they’re all the best. There’s that saying... I love saying, “Who has the best dog in the world? We all do.”

**Alie:** Aww! That’s so sweet!

**Aside:** Uh... just heads up here. Ummm...maybe, I might be talking about myself in this next question.

**Alie:** What if you’re so into dogs you’re afraid that you’re not going to be a good enough owner? Does that ever happen?

**Brandon:** Yeah, I mean... That’s a hard one to answer. That’s the million-dollar question. Just to be honest, I don’t know if I’d be a good father... for humans. If I ever have a kid... I always ask myself that. I’ve had a million people be like, “No, you’d be a great dad because...”

**Alie:** [Interrupting] You'd be a great dad!

**Brandon:** Well see, you sound like everybody else! [Alie laughs] I don't know the answer to that, going back to the dog. I don't know the answer to, "what if they're not going to be a good dog parent?" You don't know until you try. What I will say is, I wouldn't get the dog unless you are dedicated to, "I'm gonna give this thing every single thing it needs. I'm gonna give this animal all the love, all the training, all the education, everything it needs in life."

**Aside:** So perhaps one day you'll see Ol' Dad Ward on *Lucky Dog*, and yes I will 100% start sobbing when Brandon changes the dog's collar from a red "in training" one to a green one, meaning "this dog is yours." Oh man! Oh, water works!

**Brandon:** See? This is why we gotta get you on season 7. [laughs]

**Alie:** [laughs] I know, seriously. I'm so in. Thank you so much for doing this!

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To learn more about Brandon McMillan, you can go to [CanineMinded.com](http://CanineMinded.com) and there are links to his [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). He's [@animalbrandon](#) on Instagram, and his book, once again, is called, *Lucky Dog Lessons*. I purchased it, even though I don't have a dog. So if you have a dog, it's worth it even more. Go get it. *Lucky Dog* is on Saturday mornings on CBS. You can check your local listings. And as long as we're talking about it, so is my science show, *Henry Ford's Innovation Nation with Mo Rocca*. It's a long title, it's a great show, no swear words.

*Ologies* is on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) @Ologies. I'm on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) @AlieWard. And for shirts, and dad hats, and pins, and totes, and baby clothes, you can head to [OlogiesMerch.com](http://OlogiesMerch.com). Thank you, Shannon Feltus and Boni Dutch for running that! And you can join the [Ologies Facebook Group](#). Thank you, Erin Talbert and Hannah Lipow for adminning that. Thank you to the patrons who keep the podcast going. You can [join up](#) for as little as 25 cents an episode, and you get to hear what episodes are coming up next, and you can submit your questions. You also allow me to pay the incredible Steven Ray Morris to help me edit all this together. He is the best, I owe him a basket of puppies, and by puppies I probably mean cats or dinosaurs. Let's be honest, he knows his brand. The theme song was written and performed by Nick Thorburn of the band Islands, which is a very good band in case you want to check them out.

Now, if you stick around to the end of the show, you know I tell you a little secret to say thanks for sticking through the credits, and this week, I'm gonna tell you a secret. I don't have a dog, clearly, all I want is a dog, and my family and friends know how much I want a dog that this past Christmas my parents were cruising past [*mechanical movement sounds in the background*] a thrift store, and saw a mechanical robot dog named Biscuit, and purchased it for me for Christmas. [*sound of robot dog panting*] That is Biscuit, "Biscuit!" [*more panting and sounds of robot dog moving*]. It's the size of a normal dog, and it's mechanical, and it's covered in fur, and you can hug it like a normal dog. It's *Westworld* as HELL.



And my secret is, A, that I own Biscuit [*laughs*], who responds to you when you pet him. And also [*sound of Biscuit groaning*], can you even, you guys?? It was the best purchase ever!! And I hug Biscuit, and Biscuit has been sitting next to me this whole time I recorded this episode. [*laughing*] When my parents bought it they were like, "Our daughter would love this! All she wants is a dog." I think the owners of the Snowline Hospice Thrift Store near my parents' home were like, "Oh! How old is your daughter?" and they had to be like, "Oh, she's... she's in her 30's. She's a grown-ass woman. I own Biscuit. [*Biscuit groans*] He loves me.

Okay, continue to ask smart people stupid questions. Berbye.

[*Outro Music*]

*Transcribed by Wendy Fick in Iowa City, IA, your mostly harmless, but occasionally embarrassing, crazy aunt who likes to quote from Monty Python movies and isn't ashamed to dance to the muzak in grocery store aisles.*

Some links which perhaps you'll enjoy:

[Brandon on "Ellen"](#)

[Info on Brandon's dad](#)

[Please please gaze upon Gunther Gebel-Williams](#)

[The article about Hawaii that also made me cry](#)

[Blanche Saunders movie about dogs OMG Y'ALL](#)

[Monks with dogs](#) (don't always have the answers.)

[Wait, what IS a dog?](#)

[Nepotism has a fun origin though!](#)

[It's ARGUS service dogs but I said ANGUS. Urrrgh. Sorry!](#)

[I cried at this Argus video](#)

[What was your dog bred to do?](#)

[Uhhhh, French bulldogs are maybe a little dicey](#)

[Which dogs can smell bus farts the best?](#)

[Animals that people have tried to bring on planes](#)

[The whites of your eyes are the windows to your poker hand](#)

[Dogs and oxytocin](#) (not oxycontin)

[Don't let your ESA pup bite a child's face, hnnnkay?](#)

[Doggo relax music](#)

“My my! You, my dear compatriot, are indeed a [party hound!](#)”

“I’m a loner, Dottie. A rebel” is from the world’s best movie, [Pee-Wee’s Big Adventure](#).

Who let the dogs out? [Baha Men](#) did.

*For comments and inquires on this or other transcripts, please contact [OlogiteEmily@gmail.com](mailto:OlogiteEmily@gmail.com)*