

One Plus Two Makes Three and a Happy Family

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This story begins when Diane's husband, Denis, gifted her with a puppy for Valentine's Day about nine years ago. Diane picked out Ling Ling, a Shih-Tzu. The little puppy was shipped to San Diego, California from a breeder in Arkansas at ten weeks old. From the start, Ling Ling connected deeply with Diane and they were ideal companions for each other. Ling Ling seemed naturally inclined to be well behaved, loved her life, and enjoyed being the only dog member of the family. This co-sympathetic arrangement went on for seven years until drama entered into their lives in the form of a cute rescued Pomeranian named Amber. Amber had been brought to the South Bay shelter with one eye hanging out. She received the veterinary care she needed was spayed, and then sent into the foster care system to prepare her for adoption. Things did not go smoothly there for the exuberant Amber.

ONE PLUS TWO~

Diane met Amber when she was a short-term foster in the home of a friend. Unfortunately, she could only stay there temporarily due to the fact that the friend fostering her had four dogs of her own. They tried other foster homes but, for some reason, Amber just didn't fit in any of them. Clearly, her behavior was trying the patience of dedicated foster volunteers and she wasn't popular with other dogs in their care either. Over time Amber was in danger of drifting in the rescue system with fewer and fewer opportunities for adoption. Diane didn't really need or want a second dog, but she also could not bear to watch little Amber be relocated from one

foster home to another, so she bravely adopted her. These excerpts from the transcript of Amber's consult with me on December 31, 2012, nine months after her adoption, reveals so much of her beautiful heart and soul. She was around two or three years old.

BN: Hello Amber, this is Brigitte the One Who Listens. Diane has asked me to communicate with you and find out all about you.

Amber: *I am AMBER, I am AMBER, I love being Amber. I am Am-be-rr.*

BN: What have you come in to do?

Amber: *I have come in to be very beautiful. I am a BEAUTIFUL DOG. I love, love, love to be groooomed. I love it. I love having my toes PAINTED. I got my toes painted. (Note: With former owner.)*

BN: What are you teaching?

Amber: *I teach LOVE. I am all, all, all about LOVE.*

BN: Yes, you are. What happened before the shelter and Diane?

Amber: *Nothing happened. I was cared for. (Not eventful.)*

BN: And then what happened?

Amber: *I got away. I ran off. I did, I did. (Then she never could get back home.)*

BN: ...What does Diane need to know she doesn't already know?

Amber: *I am scared of LOSING her. I am, I am, I am.*

BN: Well, that won't happen. Diane and Denis are your forever people and home. Diane will always watch you and look for you. You are micro-chipped. That means if you ever get lost they can easily find Diane and call her on the telephone. You are

very safe now, and identified. No losing Amber ever again.

BN: How do you feel about Ling Ling

Amber: *ADORE LING LING. SHE IS THE BEST, the BEST.*

The treasured and poised “only one” Ling Ling, at seven, found herself paired with this young, rather rough and tumble street urchin with one eye. Though Amber loved her, she was very needy, went everywhere, got into everything, and had no manners. She enthusiastically pushed Ling Ling around and made a mess of her peaceful and agreeable life. Returning Amber into the rescue system never was an option, but Diane was at a loss about how to improve the situation. She saw how stressful life had become for Ling Ling, so ten days after Amber’s consult she brought her in to give her a voice and find a solution to her dilemma.

Excerpt of January 9, 2013 Session transcript with Ling Ling when I asked her how she felt about Amber:

Ling Ling: *Just needs manners. Amber has NO MANNERS.* (Looked straight at Diane while she communicated this.)

BN: What do you need Amber to know?

Ling Ling: *I’m senior, I’m senior.* (BN: In age and as number one, first arrived.)

BN: Okay and then...

Ling Ling: *Diane is mine too. Diane is mine too. Amber has no manners when it comes to Diane.*

BN: What would you like Diane to teach Amber?

Ling Ling: *OBEDIENCE. She is NOT, NOT obedient.*

BN: Okay, will do. And what else?

Ling Ling: *Treats aren't just for her. She is RUDE with treats.*

BN: I'll have Diane make her sit and give you treats first. And what else?

Ling Ling: *That's all. That's all.*

I was relieved to learn that Ling Ling's problems with Amber didn't run deep. She wasn't opposed to her presence altogether, which was good news for Diane. Ling Ling had no trouble pointing out exactly what it was about the new dog's behavior that bothered her and why. They were all things that Diane could address with Amber. I explained how to make it clear to little Amber that Ling Ling is the number one, first arrived, senior dog by treating her as number one, with perks and privileges. Diane, like most people who adopt a new family member, want to make them feel at home and provide them with all the attention they crave; however, these good intentions hadn't produced the positive results she anticipated. The new dog simply got more needy and more pushy (hogging her for attention and treats) at Ling Ling's expense. To save herself and become a welcome family member, Amber finally had to learn basic obedience, period.

As Ling Ling wisely identified and pointed out, good manners (obedience training) is the foundation of a pleasurable, positive relationship with people and other dogs. If people sometimes don't know this fact, I've found most dogs are very aware of it and they are the first to point out a lack of manners as an issue with another dog. From all points of view, Amber, in her desire to "belong", behaved in a desperate, frantic way and constantly overreached for treats or attention from Diane. A fruitful discussion followed. She needed to learn how to be a team player.

As usual, I followed up the consult a month later for an update on the situation. Diane, a quick study, had driven home

the point with new behavior rules for Amber to follow. This was her forever home and she was her forever person, but she clearly established that Ling Ling was “first arrived”, and “number one”, and to be respected and taught her how to do this.

Diane understood the issues Ling Ling had been having and had implemented the recommended changes, which resulted in the situation gradually balancing itself out. Amber remained a tomboy, but she learned the rules and, more importantly, knew that Diane expected her to respect them. Ling Ling, more at ease with her new, better behaved, adoring companion started to play and interact with her.

Diane's response via email February 10, 2013 following our consult with Ling Ling.

“Yes, I have seen big changes in both dogs. Ling Ling LOVES that I am aware of Amber's lack of manners. And Amber has learned that she needs to be more polite. It's getting better everyday. Your session brought us all closer. I feel more connected to the individuality of each dog.”

Furthermore, both dogs were getting fresh air and plenty of exercise during their regular romps on Fiesta Island (a dog off-leash space on San Diego bay). These visits to open spaces had initially proven to be a challenge for Amber, who needed to acclimate to such a new experience. This is how she felt about her outings in that first consult:

BN: Do you like going to Fiesta Island with Diane and Ling Ling?

Amber: *I'd rather stay home. I am a dog that likes to stay home.*

BN: Do you enjoy your walks there?

Amber: *I like to be where Diane is. That's all.*

BN: Do you understand this is your forever home.

Amber: Yes.

BN: And that Diane is your forever person?

Amber: *Need to find out. Need to find out.*

In time she did find out and gained confidence. Her outings into the world with Diane and Ling Ling on Fiesta Island got more and more fun and enjoyable.

This family's story doesn't end here, however. No one knew at that point that active little Amber would one day be another dog's ticket to his wonderful, forever home. Therein lies the continuation and silver lining in this story of upheaval and mayhem.

Suddenly, during the year Ling Ling turned nine, she put a stop to playing with Amber. It appears she decided it was time to turn the page and be the dignified, senior dog that she had become. Amber lost her doggie playmate entirely and turned to focusing all of her attention on Diane. In Diane's own words:

"She would try to engage me in play from the time I got home from work at night until I went to bed at midnight. My husband would wake in the middle of the night to find dog toys scattered throughout the house and Amber wandering around looking for someone to play with. She desperately needed a playmate!"

ONE PLUS TWO MAKES THREE ~

Diane began looking online for a third addition to their family. She sought a small dog that hadn't been overly vaccinated during his or her journey through the system, and

was young enough for Amber. She spotted a white and grey merle Chihuahua male with one blue eye, one brown, who was three years old, unneutered, and had only been given basic starter health care in rural Louisiana. The owner, a breeder, couldn't manage any longer because of her poor health and was re-homing a few of her dogs that she would not be able to show or breed. Diane felt an immediate connection with this little Chihuahua nicknamed Sterlini and agreed to have him shipped to her, at her cost, as soon as possible. He would be neutered well before he made the trip.

Frustratingly, inertia bogged down the adoption. All parties were willing, but the breeder's poor health and fuzzy thinking made the drive to and from the airport a real hardship for her. Finally, after four long months of waiting, Sterlini (now renamed Sterling) was on his way to catch the flight to San Diego, but things did not go as planned yet again. Diane explains:

"The day he was shipped I woke up early feeling something was wrong. It turned out they put him on a different flight and a different airline that got into SD much earlier. The breeder failed to tell me (she had the flu and just drove home and went to bed without calling me). I called the airline to see if the flight was on time and they told me he wasn't on the flight. I called the breeder and she gave me the updated flight info...poor Sterling was sitting at luggage claim for three hours! Thank God the baggage check people took him into the office and gave him water and food while he waited for us. The airline personnel were upset with me, but it was really the breeder who dropped the ball. Ugh! But Sterling looked happy at that point...he was in his carrier eating kibble and drinking water. I think he thought he was going somewhere with the breeder and poor baby was just patiently waiting for her...

Until he came to live with us at age three, Sterling never left his home, the breeder, or his pack of dogs, except for one or two vet visits. Needless to say, he was scared to death

when we brought him to our condominium! New faces, an elevator, a harness and leash (he had never worn or walked with one), new dogs, new smells, rules, etc! I never saw a dog so stressed in my life. He wouldn't eat and had diarrhea from all the changes. We used Flower Essences which worked like a miracle to help Sterling at least trust me, but he was still very scared and wouldn't eat. That's when I called you."

This is what Sterling shared with us in my office on February 22, 2015, when, he had been with Diane for a few weeks:

BN: Hello Sterling! This is Brigitte the One Who Listens. Diane loves and cares about you and she has brought you here so we can get to know you better.

Sterling: *I am so HAPPY HERE. Here is QUIET. Here is calm, here I can RELAX. I am very, very RELAXED HERE. I LOVE IT HERE.*

BN: Welcome little Sterling. All is good here for you. That is why Diane brought you.

BN: What have you come in to do?

Sterling: *TO BE WITH. I LOVE, LOVE L-O-V-E TO BE WITH. WITH, WITH, WITH. It is very important for me to be with.* (Translation: Be in a close relationship with a person.)

BN: What do you teach?

Sterling: *I LOVE, LOVE, LOVE. I AM ALL ABOUT L-O-V-E.*

BN: I see that. You are very smart too. Handsome and smart. How can Diane help you acclimate?

Sterling: *SLOW DOWN. She needs to SLOW DOWN AND TELL THE OTHER DOGS TO SLOW DOWN. Everyone moves, moves, moves, all, all the time. I need them all to slow down. SLOW, SLOW, SLOW.*

BN: How do you feel about Amber?

Sterling: *Okay...intimidating. Amber is intimidating.*

BN: And Ling Ling?

Sterling: *Okay.*

I then explained to him why the breeder couldn't keep him and tried her best to find a good home for him with Diane.

Sterling: *I just need more time. I'm exhausted. Never been away from home, never went anywhere. Just stayed home. Very DULL, very BORED. Very ROUTINE. I'm ready for NEW, NEW, NEW!*

BN: Okay. How do you feel inside?

Sterling: *Confused. I'm confused.*

BN: Well, Diane is an active lady. She will slowly but surely take you with her to new places and do fun things. Diane and Denis are a very good home.

Then I tuned in to Amber at home.

Amber: *I am so so so HAPPY. I am so Happy. I'm SO SO HAPPY. Love, love, love.*

BN: How do you feel about Sterling?

Amber: *Don't. He is uncooperative. Uncooperative.* (Didn't want to play with her...)

BN: Well, you have to let him get used to you, Ling Ling, Diane and Denis, and your home. He comes from far away.

When I tuned in with Ling Ling she replied she felt he was okay and added she felt very secure. No issues there.

With Sterling, Diane faced the exact opposite situation than the one Amber had brought into the home. Amber thrived on a high energy environment from the get go, but Sterling withered

in it. She truly could not imagine how absolutely mind numbingly slow and boring his past home had been. I felt the ambient inertia through his communication about it. Sterling's life, from the start, was a routine with no variety or mental stimulation. Most of the time the breeder barely had enough energy to get through her day and didn't interact much with her dogs. They were fed and given water, but left up to their own devices in an enclosed environment all day. He wasn't even potty trained. This little dog needed time to adjust to a livelier pace and for everyone to slow down to a more "southerly" tempo, especially Amber who had immediately tried to engage him in her signature rough play. Because he was exhausted and overwhelmed by the adjustment demands made upon him, Sterling had shut down and stopped eating.

Pro-active by nature, Diane made the needed changes right away. She made sure everyone slowed down for Sterling and gave him a chance to catch up.

The following is Diane's update at three days after the consult:

"We've already noticed changes in Sterling...slowing down and lots of cuddling is helping him to adjust and realize this is his forever home. He is teaching me a thing or two about RELAXING! LOL, he's on my lap as I type this. The food problem is improving also!

Here is her update a month after our consult:

"Sterling is doing well and blossoming each day. He is such a cuddle bug, I'm trying to cuddle with him a couple times a day...He is very sweet and smart...we started training classes and he is learning quickly, especially for a Chihuahua, which are notoriously difficult to train. Sterling and Amber have been playing rough. I think he may be a bit too rough, even for my tough girl Amber. I'm keeping an eye so he doesn't push her too hard. He is building a strong, stocky body from the raw

food, exercise and play. I'm still having to kennel him in the day because he can't be trusted not to urinate and defecate in the house. He's learning and hasn't had an accident since last week, but he still can't be trusted unsupervised. I'll be training him to use the doggie door to the patio, as soon as he catches on he won't need to be kenneled."

Diane's dogs are different from each other in breed and temperament, yet they turned out to be well suited for each other once we learned, from their perspective, how to best facilitate their individual adjustment processes. Ling Ling is clearly, and always, the first arrived, senior dog to the others. Amber had to learn essential boundaries and doggie manners; and Sterling's loving, intelligent, cuddle-bug nature was slowly set free to bloom and blossom in an emotionally rich environment. Diane did not know the day she brought Amber home, that this fluffy, one eyed, street urchin of a dog would be the catalyst for a third, wonderful addition to their family who would further enhance the quality of her life with his sweet, affectionate personality.

Diane's most recent update of January 5, 2016:

"After we met with you and I SLOWED DOWN Sterling began to blossom and continues to blossom to this day almost a year later. Amber and Sterling play constantly and Amber no longer bugs Mamma at night! Sterling loves walks on Fiesta Island and Sunset Cliffs. Small town boy living the uptown life! Both dogs love Sterling and neither feels threatened by him although Ling Ling did put him in his place a few times lol. He fits perfectly into our lives."

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