



Why I Believe In an Open Adoption — Not the Perfection Some Dog Rescue Groups Require

Adoption policies of rescue groups typically fall into one of two camps:

The rescue does everything in its power to make sure each animal goes to the perfect family, even if that means a lengthy delay in getting a dog into a forever home. The rescue believes that perfection is not necessary for a home to be loving. The faster an animal gets adopted, the better. Called “open” or “conversation-based” adoptions, a pet goes home with a family after consultation with an adoption counselor.

I am a strong supporter of open adoptions. In a previous article on the topic, my opinions sparked much debate. Feedback from foster families and my own personal experiences this year have made me more sympathetic to those who require perfection, but my mind hasn't changed — I still think that open adoption is the best and most effective way to become a no-kill nation.



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The luckiest mommy in all the world with the luckiest dog! Riggins and me. (Photo by Michelle Cramton)

I know many wonderful and loving pet parents who have taken other routes to get a companion animal, simply because adoption from a rescue group became too hard and/or hurtful of a process.

When you are told you aren't fit to adopt a dog, it is heartbreaking. I know from experience — 11 years ago, I was told by more than one rescue that it would not consider letting me

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adopt a puppy. Reasons ran the gamut from me not being home 24/7 to not being married to my live-in boyfriend. It seemed impossible to find a group that would deem me a suitable dog mom. For those who know me and how I treat my baby boy, Riggins, this doesn't just seem illogical, it seems wrong.

In the past few years, I've had more friends turned down for adoptions by well-meaning rescue groups.



Anne, who has been a loving dog mom to a number of pups and turned down many times by

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rescue groups, and her darling boy Cooper. (Photo by Wendy Newell)

One of my girlfriends is a lovely and talented businesswoman, a single woman with disposable income that she is happy and willing to spend on her dogs. She owns a home with a backyard. With one of her fur babies facing a terminal illness, she made the decision to adopt another family member.

After much research, she found an adorable Lab she wanted to adopt through a rescue group. It all seemed to be going well, until the foster family found out my friend does not have a pool. Apparently, the pup enjoyed the foster family's pool and they felt he should go to a home where he could continue his daily swimming routine.

This was a new one for me. Being refused a pup simply because you don't have a pool?! Let's be honest, I would like a pool, too. Nothing would make me happier than swimming laps in my own backyard instead of having to schlep down to the local recreation center, but that's life. A POOL?! Come on!

My friend turned to a breeder. She now has an adorable Lab puppy who is learning to make the most of his cushy life with a new mom and doggie brother.



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Coco, a Lab mix, hangs out with her two human brothers, whose family was considered unfit by one rescue group. (Photo by Annmarie Levitt)

Another girlfriend also was recently looking for a dog to add to her family. Her husband and two sons had a dog who had died a few years earlier from old age. Although her husband has a full-time job, my friend is a substitute teacher and home early each day, and all day when she isn't working. Her older son is such a dog lover that he spent the summer volunteering for a local rescue group, taking the dogs out for walks and breaks from their kennels.

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There was NO REASON not to see this family as perfect for a pup. Alas, that was not the

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case. They fell in love with a dog and went through a home check with the rescue group. The person who visited them said there would be no issues with the adoption moving forward. Imagine her surprise when she learned the foster mother had said “no” to her family. The reason? My friend worked sometimes and therefore wouldn’t be home all of the time.

I hear this over and over from people who have been refused adoption from an animal rescue group. WHO IS HOME ALL DAY? THE OWNER HAS TO WORK TO FEED THE DOG, DOESN'T HE/SHE? GRRR!



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Terisa, a wonderful dog mom, was turned down by 10 different rescue groups before finding sweet Monkey, who has been part of her family for 3-plus years now. (Photo by Wendy Newell)

To be fair to foster families, they want the best for the dog they have come to love. That is totally understandable. Recently, I had to watch a dog who I had come to love and had taken care of go to a new family, one I didn't feel was the best fit. I had an expectation in my mind, and his new family fell short. I wasn't in a situation where I could veto the move, and if I had been, I have to be honest with myself and admit I would have denied the adoption. Does that make my a hypocrite? Perhaps it does.



Volunteers and staff of Best Friends Animal Society - Los Angeles, which uses a conversation-based adoption policy, celebrate empty shelter kennels at an adoption event. (Photo by Lori Fusaro/courtesy Best Friends Animal Society)

It really is an emotional and polarizing topic. In the past few years, open adoption and even "free" adoption policies have become more accepted by the rescue community. Part of the reason: Research has shown that a high enough percentage of animals placed by conversation-based adoption policies stay safely and happily with their adopted families

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(Maddies Fund at 93 percent and ASPCA at 96 percent are two such studies). If these numbers continue to remain high, open adoption is the right path toward becoming a no-kill nation, and isn't that what we all want?

Let's hear from you, readers. Share your thoughts on "open" adoptions in the comments.

The post Why I Believe In an Open Adoption — Not the Perfection Some Dog Rescue Groups Require appeared first on Dogster.

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