



CHAPTER 3

The Three Un-Dogmas

Meditation, in some form, is practiced in most major religions. But since this book is non-dogmatic, we will look at the three un-dogmas that turn spontaneous meditation into deliberate meditation.

The three un-dogmas are: intention, belief, and synergy.

Maui looked up from her spot on the center of the floor, where I would have to step over her in order to go just about anywhere. Her ears twitched as if she caught the scent of something interesting. But then she just yawned, shook her head, and slipped back into hound-lounge.

Maui doesn't need to study about meditation. It's part of dog nature.

INTENTION

Dogs are masters of intention.

Maui stretched, shook her head, and sniffed the air. Then she stood up, bouncy and ready for action. She trotted over to where I sat and narrowed her brown eyes at the couch as if it were part of a conspiracy to hide her bliss-disc—which it was. I hide the disc under there to save my throwing arm.

I scratched behind her ears. "What are you after, girl?"

Maui looked at me, then at the couch. She turned her head to the side and poked her little nose in the slim space between the floor and the couch.

She caught the scent. She knew it was there. She reached out a paw and clawed at the disc.

"Maui, stop," I said, trying to distract her. "Here, girl, want a treat?"

I pulled a liver snack from the snack jar I keep on the counter, waved it in the air while

holding my breath because, to be perfectly honest, the liver snack didn't smell all that appealing to my human nose.

Maui ignored me, and reached her paw further under the couch.

I tossed her the treat. She gulped it up and went right back to mining under the couch for her bliss-disc, growling this time.

I'd lost and I knew it.

"All right, girl," I said. I slid a magazine under the couch, behind the disc, and pushed the disc out.

Maui yelped in excitement. I threw the disc across the room, and it smacked into her water bowl.

Oh well, Maui was happy. She'd gotten the object of her intention.

Intention is willful purpose. It is what makes Maui relentless in getting her bliss-disc—or her liver snacks, or whatever her heart desires.

How to Meditate with Your Dog

When we sit with the intention to meditate—when we make meditation our *conscious choice*—we focus all of our energy toward this end.

Take for example the force of the summer sun. We can feel its heat against our skin.

Focused energy is more powerful still. That same sunlight focused through a magnifying glass can burn a name into a piece of wood.

Similarly, when we focus energy through intention, we magnify the effect of meditation.

BELIEF

Maui has taught me more about the power of belief than I could ever have learned on my own.

Maui is usually the smallest adult dog at the local dog park. But she doesn't act it.

At first, I thought it was because she didn't know she was small, that somehow this fact escaped her awareness.

I've come to realize that she does know that she's shorter than the rest of the dogs. She just

doesn't believe it. More accurately, she doesn't let her diminutive size influence her belief that she is the biggest, bossiest, most alpha-esque dog in the park—anyone with a Chihuahua can attest to that.

She dominates Labradors and Poodles alike. It's not, I'm convinced, that these other dogs have no conception of the size difference. It's because Maui believes in her ability so strongly that it causes the other dogs to believe it, too.

The power of belief can transform us—or it can be our biggest obstacle in achieving our goals.

Sure, we can set intention, but if we don't believe that we can achieve the object of that intention, we never will.

I subscribe to the "fake it 'til you make it" school of belief—it's immediate and it works.

Even if we are not bursting with the belief that we can meditate right away, we can take a lesson from Maui, and act as if we are. We make "I believe" a goal in progress. Don't settle on "I sort of believe," or "I want to believe."

Try this little experiment. Say the words "I *think* I can," and notice how you feel. Then take a breath, and say, "I *know* I can."

Feel the difference?

This sense of *knowing* that we can meditate is one that we cultivate as we continue our practice.

Each time we sit, we set our intention to meditate. We then tell ourselves that we believe we can do it. Over time, that belief becomes real.

SYNERGY

Humans and dogs are symbiotic. We've relied on dogs for over 14,000 years as hunting partners, security guards, and friends. Dogs, too, have relied on us as protectors, providers of food, and as companions. Our lives would be immeasurably less if we, as species, were without each other.

We are so connected that when we sit together in meditation something happens called physiological synchrony. Physiological synchrony is a term coined by researchers to reference the

interconnection between emotions and body responses. When we connect with another being, our nervous systems begin to mimic one another. As we meditate with our dogs, our two breathing patterns come into synch, both our heartbeats slow, our nervous systems come into rhythm.

This happens each time Maui and I meditate, and it happens without conscious effort.

This process forms the basis of what we call synergy.

Synergy in meditation is sparked when two or more entities come together united in a single intention, sharing their combined belief.

Whether the intention is prayer, raising money for an animal shelter, or challenging political policy, the effect of two or more entities gathered together is greater than their efforts individually.

I've meditated with people all over the world, with like-minded friends, with famous gurus, even with a group on Capitol Hill.

In each case, I found that the energy of meditating in a group was exponentially more

powerful than when I meditated alone. Meditating in a group magnifies the sense of connection, not only to one another, but also to the collective energy of the universe.

Maui ran to me, dropped the bliss-disc at my feet, and cocked her head to the side. Her ears poked out in question, as if she could sniff my hesitation in the use of "collective energy of the universe."

"I'm not sure how else to describe it, Maui," I said. "Everyone has a different name for the creative force—God, Collective Consciousness, Higher Power, The Universe. I'm trying to be diplomatic."

Maui wagged her tail, and then yapped at the bliss-disc. I tossed it for her again—toward a chair. But that didn't seem to matter to her. She chased it anyway.

Because synergy is so powerful, I've always preferred to meditate with a group.

However, groups are difficult to schedule. Unless I was visiting a contemplative community

or at a retreat, getting a group together to meditate daily was so challenging that I resigned myself to having to meditate alone.

Then, I had an insight.

I joked to a friend that since dogs are natural meditators, they would make the best meditation partners.

She laughed.

But I knew it was true. Dogs embody non-judgment and unconditional love—traits many people think of when they envision a spiritually attuned being.

Dogs have few, if any, scheduling conflicts. They enjoy being with us, and are almost always willing participants.

I realized then that I didn't need to meditate alone after all—I had Maui.

In the years since, meditation has become a daily ritual for Maui and me. If for some reason I forget to meditate, Maui ambles into our meditation room and sits on my chair to remind me.

How to Meditate with Your Dog

In that way, and many others, Maui has become my personal meditation guru.

If you have a dog, then you have a meditation guru, too.

To unleash it, all you need is to set your intention, believe, connect with your dog, and ask her to teach you.

Just the Bones

The Three Un-dogmas

To turn spontaneous meditation into deliberate meditation, use the three undogmas:

- ❦ **Intention** is the willful purpose or conscious choice that we bring to an action or state.
- ❦ **Belief** is the practice of knowing something to be true.
- ❦ **Synergy** in meditation is the law of "where two or more are gathered," meaning that when two or more entities are united in intention and belief, their efforts are exponentially more powerful than their individual efforts.

*"All knowledge, the totality of all questions
and all answers is contained in the dog."*

~ Franz Kafka, Philosopher