

## Barks, Purrs, Tweets, Neighs...Pets Speak Love in Many Ways

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Throughout my life I have always loved animals, and my house has always been filled with them. We've had cats, dogs, lizards, mice, guinea pigs, hamsters, fish – you name it. However, I've never had a bond with any of my pets that has been as strong as the bond I have with my dog August. August is a gold-colored Shi-Tzu that I've had for three years. We were able to adopt him from a farm after my previous dog passed away.

As soon as we arrived at the farm, I was covered in a litter of puppies. Some might say all of them looked the same, but one dog stood out to me: August. He wasn't quite as energetic as the rest. In fact, he was very calm and quiet; he even stopped to sleep a few times. I know it's cliché, but it was love at first sight. I knew August was the one I wanted to take home (even though I totally would've taken all of them).

When we arrived at home, August had just woken up from a long nap in the car. That nap must've given him a lot of energy because he was full of it when we pulled the dog toys out. He played fetch, investigated my cat, and covered me with kisses. I fell in love with him the first day we met. Over time August and I developed a stronger bond – one that would be eternal. We sleet next to one another every night, and we wake up next to each other every day. I take him on walks everyday in the summer, and I feed him treats when he's being good (which is all the time). I am completely aware of my love for August, and I think August knows I love him, too. But how am I supposed to know whether or not August loves me just as much? After all, dogs can't talk – or can they?

The answer is simple: August communicates with me in his own way. Although he can't speak English, I've learned what certain actions mean. For example, I know that

he has to go potty when he whines. I also know that when he rings the bell in my kitchen, he wants a treat. When he stomps his feet and snorts, he wants his toy. But most importantly, I know that August loves me by the way he treats me. He is patient with me when I'm getting ready and he hasn't gone potty yet, he's always gentle when he licks my face, he reaches for me to pick him up like a baby, and he runs to me with excitement when I get home from school.

I know that these communication signals are exclusive to me for several reasons: (1) August won't kiss my mom; even if she asks him for a kiss, (2) August runs away from my brother, and (3) August won't listen to anyone but me. I know that he only communicates with me in those ways, which is how I know that he loves me.

Throughout the past three years, August and I have learned to communicate with one another in ways you would think impossible. From giving me kisses to being patient to listening to me, August has developed a love for me that I know will never fade, and I have gained a friend for life. I guess it really is "barks, purrs, tweets, neighs...pets speak love in many ways."