Transcript: Calm Your Daily Stress Podcast

Do Dogs Hold the Secret to Happiness with Michelle Waitzman

https://therelaxationlounge.info

Michelle Waitzman

Denise (2): [00:00:00] Hi there. It's Denise Eckert and love coming on here and sharing different ideas and techniques to create a better lifestyle for yourself. And today I have Michelle Waitzman, and she's an author, a writer, and communications trainer.

She lives in Toronto, Canada with her husband and two rescue dogs. So welcome, Michelle.

Michelle (2): Thank you. It's good to be here.

Denise (2): Now, I understand you wrote a book called Learn to be as Happy as Your Dog. Now, what inspired you to do that?

Michelle (2): Having two dogs, like you said, I think most of us who have dogs have this experience where you notice how little it takes to make them happy.

And, you wonder what's so different about the way they approach life that, that they can be happy most of the time when we have to go out of our way, really, to feel happy about anything. I wanted to dig into that and do some research and say, okay, what makes dogs happy? What can we learn [00:01:00] from that?

How can we be as happy as our dogs?

Denise (2): That's cool. You know what? We can learn so much from animals if we just take the time and just slow down and, just enjoy their company and feel their love. And I've got a kitten, so I'm not in the same boat. I've got like sometimes very small amounts of patience, but things are getting better.

So now what makes dogs so much happier than humans?

Michelle (2): Dogs, first of all spend most of their time dealing with what's in front of them. Humans the research shows that humans spend about 50 percent of their time either thinking about things that are going to happen in the future or things that happened already in the past.

So half the time we're not even paying attention to what's happening, immediately, but dogs do. They pay attention to what's happening and if something good is happening they notice and if something bad is [00:02:00] happening they deal with immediately and don't carry it with them for days or weeks or the rest of their life.

Denise (2): Now, how do dogs deal with stress?

Michelle (2): They deal with it in several ways. They have a good communication system, dog to dog where if something is bothering them, they can show it without escalating too much. I have a chapter in the book called Bark, Don't Bite and I think it's something we can all learn where, the moment something is starting to get under your skin, send a message, a little growl.

To whoever is bothering you or to deal with whatever is bothering you because we tend to be polite about it and ignore it or suppress it or just deal with it internally and then it gets worse and it gets worse and quite possibly the person who's causing [00:03:00] you stress isn't even aware that you're stressed about something and then you explode, right?

You have a big meltdown at them over something they didn't even know was a problem because you didn't say it when you could have just barked You bite their head off.

Denise (2): Yeah, so true now I can't see us starting to growl at each other, but are there other ways that we can make that we're uncomfortable or something's triggering us known to the people around us?

Michelle (2): Yeah, absolutely. And I think the first obvious way is to tell them, to have open conversations with people, especially, within your household because that's where people sort of tiptoe around each other a lot of the time. I also think making your boundaries clear and that can come up a lot at work,

your supervisor or boss or whoever keeps asking you to do this little bit more and this little bit more [00:04:00] and eventually it's all too much and you get burnt out. Sitting down when it starts to seem like a problem and saying, let's figure out what the priorities are what, yes, I understand that you want me to add these new things to my list of things to do, what can come off the list that isn't as important or isn't as big a hurry?

So having those conversations early on helps, and also having conversations that aren't a blaming match. So addressing the problem as its own unique thing and not a result of the other person being a bad person, because then they get defensive. So if you can address the problem without being blamey about it, that's always more constructive, more likely to go somewhere.

Denise (2): That's so true, because I don't know, I went through a thing yesterday, I was working at this job, and [00:05:00] it feels like I'm making a career finishing this job. And I had someone working with me and I don't know, I can't remember what I said, but I snapped and then I just turned around and I said, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to snap at you.

It's this job that's pissing me off.

Michelle (2): Exactly. Exactly. And but if you hadn't stopped in and caught yourself doing that, then the other person would have thought, wow, she really hates me. Yeah. And it would have damaged any future conversation with that person.

Denise (2): And he was funny too, cause he's I didn't really take it that way, thanks for saying that because a lot of times we've just had enough and we spark and we shouldn't, I don't know, we shouldn't look bad upon ourselves because we sparked.

It should be, okay, let's step back. Let's figure out what's going on here and what's really going on. There's a little couple layers here. It's not this, it's not that. Okay. So it's just. The length of time that this job was [00:06:00] taking was pissing me off and

Michelle (2): yeah,

Denise (2): exactly and sometimes

Michelle (2): the thing you end up yelling about is not the thing that's really bothering you.

Denise (2): Yeah, exactly. So what's one thing listeners can do today to boost their happiness?

Michelle (2): One thing they can do is get outside, go for a walk. Dogs go for a walk every single day and it is as important for their mental health as it is for their physical health. Because it allows them to feel like part of the world.

It reminds them that there's more out there than, their bed or whatever it is that they look at most of the time. And for us, a lot of us sit in front of screens all day. And to go out into the world, preferably somewhere in nature where you see trees, step on some grass, breathe some fresh air, whatever.

And that does an enormous amount of help for our mental state, it just [00:07:00] takes us out of the things that are wheeling around in our brains and says, okay, there's a whole big world out there. Your little problem that you've been focusing on all morning, maybe isn't the end of the world.

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Michelle (2): Be As Happy As Your Dog, and the book is really the subtitle is Sixteen Dog Tested Ways to Be Happier Using Positive Psychology, and positive psychology is the science of helping you thrive in life, being happy, successful, content.

And so it's a really low stress book, because I know a lot of people look at self help books and they think, Oh, this is going to be work, right? This is, I'm going to have to change everything about my life. I'm going to have to reset my schedule and embark on a program. But this is not like that. There are 16 chapters.

Every chapter has a bunch of suggestions. Take the ones that work for your life. Leave the ones that don't.

Denise (2): That's the thing. [00:08:00] When you do have that many suggestions, you take what you need at the moment. And then, a couple months down the road, life changes and something else might, resonate with you at that point.

Michelle (2): Exactly.

Denise (2): Now, we are going to wrap this up. What are the last words of wisdoms you want to leave with the audience today?

Michelle (2): I think if you have a dog, start paying more attention to how they handle stuff in life. They're happy about the same stuff every day. The same meal, the same walk the same cuddles from you.

And they know how to appreciate things. So if you can take the same attitude, appreciate every good thing in your life, then you're gonna feel a lot less stressed about the bad things because it'll balance out better.

Denise (2): Yeah. And that's the thing. We take things so seriously and we prioritize the wrong things.

Michelle (2): Absolutely.

Denise (2): [00:09:00] Yeah. Prioritize

Michelle (2): the good stuff.

Denise (2): Yeah. Exactly. And you know what? Work and work and your career are not on the top of the list all the time. Yeah.

Michelle (2): No, there are a lot more important things like your health, your mental health, your family, your friends.

Denise: So Michelle, I understand you have a newsletter that you share with people with great information. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Michelle: Sure. It's called Dogs and Happiness. So it supports be as happy as your dog. And every month I send out a newsletter with happiness tips and a little interesting tidbits about dog behavior.

Denise: Awesome. So yes, I will be putting that information wherever you're watching or listening. So to get your monthly happiness tips, that's the place to go.

Denise (2): And so wherever you're watching or listening to this, I will be putting Michelle's information there. So if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out and ask Michelle questions. And there will be a link as [00:10:00] well to buy the book. So if you're interested, buy the book. So now leaving you a gentle reminder to slow down and enjoy life and I'll see you in the next episode.