

# A Puppy Dog Tale of Appreciation

By Mary Jo Shaffer



Having raised three wonderful kids with my husband, we are now empty nesters. After the initial glow of being free and no longer responsible for the day-to-day care and well being of my children wore off, I quickly realized that I really miss hearing the pitter-patter of tiny feet, cuddling with a little one, and delighting in watching a baby grow up. So my husband and I decided to take the plunge and just do it—adopt a puppy that is.

After a trip to our local animal shelter to "just look," we came home with a five-week old, six-pound bundle of joy that we named Manny. An unlikely mix of beagle and lab, Manny was a roly-poly little boy with short black hair, floppy ears and deep, dark eyes. Seven weeks and eight pounds later I'm thinking that I forgot about pointy little teeth that are

teething, potty training accidents and the unrelenting allure of paper—books, magazines, toilet tissue, etc.—that for some reason *must* to be shredded (and Manny is just the guy to do it).

When I was complaining to a dear, wise friend about the new addition to our family and expressing my fear of having made a mistake, she simply said, "*Why don't you think about what he is here to teach you?*" (One thing I have learned for sure is not to leave my books on the floor.) Taking her advice to heart, I have been watching my little guy with new eyes. And when I saw him emerge from underneath a cupboard the other day with a dust bunny attached to his nose, I finally got it. After Manny snorted the dust ball off, he jumped around it and then playfully batted it with his paw, delighted with his new find.

***What I realized is that Manny really appreciates the ordinary. He isn't waiting around for something special to come along and make him happy, he just IS happy because everything is a marvel to Manny. Everything is already special.***

A lot has been written lately about gratitude, and rightly so. Gratitude is a very important part of the process of manifesting your heart's desires, because if you are not grateful for what you have, it is hard to attract **more** into your life. But the forerunner to gratitude is appreciation. And before you can appreciate anything you have to notice it. The key to appreciation is noticing in the present moment,

so practice noticing, being in a constant state of awareness...just like Manny.

The art of appreciation is a simple two-step process. First you notice something, for instance, your computer. Then you elevate that noticing by focusing on the positive aspects of it. In the case of your computer, you may concentrate on how it is a great source of entertainment, enjoyment or employment. Keep focusing on all of the good things about it and get your senses involved. Lightly run your fingertips across the keyboard, hear the rhythmic hum of the fan, take a deep breath and slowly exhale as you feel yourself happily working on it. Then experience and enjoy a deeper and deeper sensation of appreciation as it builds up in your body. Anything in your life or surrounding you right now can be a source of appreciation. A loved one, a friend, a stranger. Your golf clubs, your tennis racket, your running shoes. Your kitchen, your bedroom, your bathroom. Your car, your bike, your skates. Your favorite pen. An inspiring sunrise. A gorgeous sunset. A beloved pet.

***By plugging into appreciation, by noticing and focusing on the positive as often as you can, you will be vibrating in harmony with appreciation and attracting more and more of the things that you want into your life.***

Complete the manifesting cycle by feeling gratitude for all that you already have and all that you intend to manifest.

As for me, I have to admit that I am not to the point where I am appreciating dust bunnies yet, but there's a little puppy dog tail that I'm appreciating more and more every day.

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