

CHLOE

In 2002 a tiny, four-legged teacher bounced into my life. Chloe was a Yellow Labrador and Golden Retriever cross who showed me what real self-love looked like. Only eight weeks old, she was my first puppy, and I was enthusiastic about teaching her the basics. House-breaking and Sit came first, then Down, Stay, and Back (out of the cupboard or fridge – I kinda *had* to throw that one in). She learned fast, thinking that all the commands were very fun games.

Our hours together on the hill in my backyard taught me some of *her* basics, too. “Take time to stop and eat the flowers.” “Walk softly, and carry a big stick – in your mouth.” And “The grass is really a big salad bar.” With that groundwork laid, my biggest lesson was about to come.

One wall in my bedroom held a full length mirror. I walked by it a dozen or more times a day, every time I entered or left the room. Each pass was an opportunity for quick self scrutiny. Like a frog I once saw on Animal Planet, who flung out its tongue and snatched a bug so fast that I couldn’t see it happen until it had been replayed in slow motion, my mind flung out tiny lashes of judgment with such speed that I couldn’t see how they diminished my self esteem. “I look fat.” “Bad hair day.” “New wrinkles.” “Would a face lift really be so politically incorrect?”

Then one day as Chloe and I left the bedroom, she noticed herself in the mirror for the first time. Her reaction was simple: She paused, gave her little face a quick lick, right on the mirror, and walked on.

I was stunned. With one quick lick of her puppy tongue, Chloe had caused the frog tongue of my mind to be replayed to me in slow motion. For the first time, I saw

what it had been doing. It had *not* been using my mirror to help me look or feel better, but to reinforce a self-image and baseline feeling of “not good enough.”

Chloe’s puppy mind, on the other hand, had no self-rejection. She met herself with the same open-hearted love and acceptance she offered to everyone, unconditionally. For weeks, until her interest moved on to other things, she continued to respond to herself as the love that she was—the same love that we all are—with a quick lick on the mirror.

Martia Nelson, life coach and author of "Coming Home: The Return to True Self," helps you reclaim your true self and a life that makes your soul sing. Get your FREE mp3 at www.MartiaNelson.com . Copyright ©2008 Martia Nelson, all rights reserved.

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