

A Little Voices BIG Choices Story

DON'T PULL MY TAIL

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[Retlaw and Walter lying in bed- -glimpse of dog's tail to right of page. Most of puppy is out of frame.]

"What's the point of having a tail if you can't pull it?"

Retlaw had been grumpier than usual ever since Walter had gotten...

...a puppy!

“Why would you want a dog anyway? They’re just a ball of fluff- -they’re all fur...they have pointy teeth, they make silly noises and make a mess when they eat and drink...”

"And...you have to do all this extra stuff."

[Retlaw lounging in bed describing puppy with a thought bubble of the puppy above his head.. In Walter's thought bubble- -it's Retlaw not the puppy.]

Walter is getting dressed.]

[Responsibility Circle Chart]

"Taking care of a puppy is a BIG responsibility" Walter's parents had told him. And he reminded Retlaw.

"I loathe responsibility, it's very bad for me" groaned Retlaw.

"I love dogs..." an exasperated Walter replied.

But Walter was starting to see Retlaw's point about responsibility- -the new puppy had already been a lot of work.

["Puppy's Shoes" empathy graphic showing steps of empathy: thinking, feeling, and acting]

Now the puppy had to go out for his morning walk and Retlaw refused to get out of bed.

"Let's Go!" yelled Walter

"I'm comfortable," whined Retlaw

"Put yourself in the puppy's shoes, he hasn't gone out yet!"

"Puppies wear shoes?!"

Walter sighed and grabbed a leash and a book.

[Exercise paw prints on a path showing benefits of exercise: healthy body, mental stimulation, socialization, teaching, exploration, bonding.]

When they got to the end of the driveway, Retlaw stopped. "Okay, we walked. Let's go back inside."

"But he hasn't even gone to the bathroom yet!" Walter exclaimed.

"Details," said Retlaw, "Let's go play a game."

Walter's frustration with Retlaw was growing. Finally the puppy went to the bathroom...

“Wait! Don't clean it up! Wouldn't it be delightfully rotten if it got on someone's shoes?” Retlaw giggled.

"Unless it was my shoes."

Walter picked up the puppy's mess. He knew in order to have a clean neighborhood, he needed to clean up.

[Circle illustration showing houses all around the neighborhood; half of image is clean and flourishing, the other is dirty with illustrations on the globe emphasizing how to be a considerate global citizen and good neighbor.]

[Puppy and Walter growth chart for eating properly]

"It's 8 o'clock somewhere, let's eat!" shouted Retlaw

"We have to feed the puppy first." reasoned
Walter

"I have an idea! Just give him some of your
breakfast! Human food can make dogs feel rotten-
-just like me!"

[Bar graph showing the better manners you have, the more fun stuff you get to do]

"Jump! Jump!" Retlaw commanded.

Walter spun around, spilling the cup of dog food.
"That's not how you teach dogs manners!"

"Who needs manners when you have mischief!
That's so much more fun!" said Retlaw

"But if the puppy can't behave properly, he won't be able to go anywhere with us. He will be miserable."

"Exactly!" said Retlaw "Marvelously miserable, just like me."

[Checklist]

Walter checked his chore chart.

"Walk the dog?" said Walter

"Affirmative" confirmed Retlaw

"Clean up dog poop?" asked Walter

"Unfortunately, yes." asked Retlaw

"Feed the pup?" asked Walter

"If you call that food..." Retlaw said under his breath

"Training?" asked Walter

"Yup" said Retlaw

Walter checked off the last chore.

"It's plaaaaayyyy time!!!"

Walter, Retlaw, and the puppy ran outside.

"I'm glad your parents put playtime on the list. With all your chores, we almost forgot to let loose. Let's put it at the top for tomorrow."

Walter didn't care where it came on the list. He was enjoying the moment.

Until...

[Spot illustrations of an afternoon of playtime with the puppy.]

MUUUUUUUDDDDDD!!!

[Two-page spread of the puppy in the mud covered from nose to tail]

[Two-page spread of the puppy in the mud covered from nose to tail]

You know what that means....

"But a bath wasn't even on the list for today!" cried Retlaw "No fair! you're adding extra chores"

Retlaw wasn't wrong, Walter thought. It wasn't on the list.

But something in the pit of his stomach told him it was the right thing to do.

And Walter reflected, because he knew that responsibility comes unexpectedly at any time, in any place.

He felt like it was a big decision and he had done the right thing.

Until...

["Bathtime!!!"] written in bubbles over a Walter giving the puppy a bath, water everywhere. Water droplets have steps to making a good decision including reflection, gut feeling, and age-appropriate reasoning.]

WAAATTERRRR!!!!

[Two-page spread of the puppy shaking off the water and creating a mess of puddles in the bathroom with an exhausted Walter. Puppy is very proud of himself.]

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Walter took one loooooooooooooong breath in. And let another loooooooooooooong breath out.

"Responsibility is a lot of work," he thought.

He was exhausted and now had *more* cleaning to do.

And he realized his day was not just filled with responsibility, but was full of...

[Walter cleaning the floor. In water bubbles surrounding him are spot illustrations of all the responsibilities he had that day]

[Puppy and Retlaw cuddled up napping.]

Love.