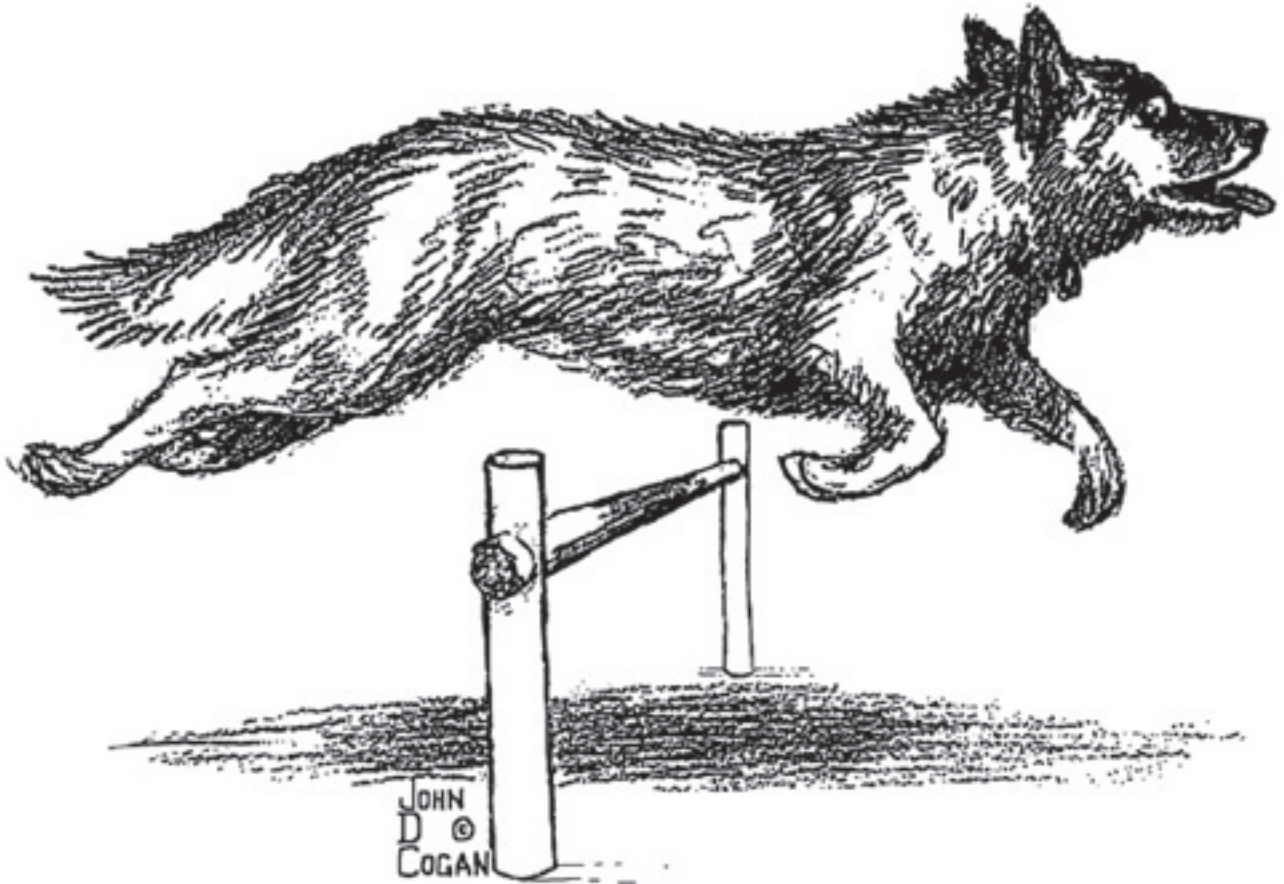


Belle's Trial

Teacher's Activity Book



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INTRODUCTION

This activity book compliments *Belle's Trial*, a novel written from a dog's point of view, which empowers children ages 8-12 to face the challenges brought on by making decisions to do the right thing and learn discipline.

The activities and discussion questions provide thought provoking opportunities for children to interact with their parents, teachers, classmates, and friends about issues raised in the novel. They provide ways to foster understanding and develop tools that can help people make positive changes at a personal and community level. Parents, teachers and other youth leaders will find practical tools for helping children overcome the impact of negative behaviors that, if left unchanged, could create lifelong scars.

The activities and discussion questions can be used as enrichment exercises in the classroom or home school setting, in small counseling group discussions, around the dinner table, in youth gatherings at houses of worship, and among youth related civic organizations that promote community involvement.

About the Book:

Belle's Trial

by Connie Gotsch

Illustrated by: John Cogan

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Belle wishes she didn't understand people language, especially words like sit, stay, and come. Those commands take the fun out of being a pet. Worse, Belle's owner Darcy is so busy with school, soccer, and singing that she hardly has time to play with Belle. In search of fun, Belle digs out of the yard, knocks over waste baskets, and encourages Darcy's other dog Buster into all kinds of mischief. Darcy's furious parents threaten to find a new home for the disobedient dog.

Darcy enrolls Belle in agility training to teach her discipline. Determined to stay with her beloved mistress, Belle takes on the challenging sport, discovering along the way that discipline means far more than an angry word. It means coping with Big Toby, her former tormentor, and keeping an eye out for Bonehead, Toby's cruel father, and mastering the terrifying agility obstacle, the teeter totter.

Can she focus her new found discipline to overcome her fear and succeed?

CHAPTER 1

The Great Escape

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Belle heard the police sirens, it made her scared. What sounds make you scared, and why do they scare you?
2. Do you have a friend who tries to give you good advice like Buster gives Belle? How do you feel about the advice your friend gives you?
3. Belle knew she shouldn't dig holes, but she dug one under some branches because she thought the humans wouldn't find it. Have you ever done something you knew was wrong, but you thought you could get away with it? If so, what did you do, and what happened?
4. What Belle loves to do most is to run. What do you love to do?
5. Belle talked Buster into jumping over the grill, but Buster crashed into the grill. Then he and Buster ate the lamb on the grill. What do you think made them decide to eat the meat? What other choices could they have made instead?
6. Belle loved running free outside the yard. She liked thinking through challenges that faced her without others telling her what to do. How do you like to handle challenges in your life?
7. Belle finally talked Buster into helping her dig under the fence by tempting him with the idea of a swim and catching a turtle to eat. When other people try to talk you into doing things you know you shouldn't do, what do they tempt you with?

ACTIVITY

Cut up a piece of paper into 10 strips. Write on each strip one thing that you or someone in your family loves to do, such as going skiing, going to a movie, or eating at your favorite restaurant. Put the strips of paper into a bowl.

On another sheet of paper make a list of things you could ask people in your family to do that you know aren't right. For example: Eat all the cookies in the cookie jar. Go outside to play before you do your chores and homework. Call friends on the phone and tell them a lie about someone you don't like. Take money from your mom's purse.

Sit down with your family and play a game using the list and the strips of paper. Choose one person to be it. Everyone will try to convince the person who's it to do something wrong. Have one person read a sentence from the list of temptations, such as "Eat all the cookies in the cookie jar." Have another person draw a strip of paper from the bowl. It might say "Going skiing." Everyone will use what is written on the paper to try and tempt the person to eat all the cookies. They might say, "If you eat all the cookies in the cookie jar, you can go skiing." For one minute, everyone will try to convince the person to eat all the cookies. When the minute is up, talk about how hard it was for the person who was it to do the right thing. What worked best to keep them strong? Did they give in and agree to eat all the cookies? If so, what made them give in? How could they handle the situation differently next time? Choose another person to be it, and play the game all over again.

CHAPTER 2

A Nasty Surprise

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Buster and Belle saw Big Toby at Aunt Ellen's house, he looked different. What do you think caused Big Toby to change?
2. Painter seemed to enjoy what he was doing with Big Toby on the dog agility course even when Big Toby scolding him for making a mistake. How do you feel when you get scolded?
3. Aunt Ellen reminded Big Toby to say "Wrong" instead of "No, bad dog," when Painter made a mistake. Which do you think feels better to Painter, and why do you think so?
4. Uncle Jim and Aunt Ellen took Big Toby in as a foster child because they couldn't have children of their own. What do you think it means to be a foster child? How would you feel if you were foster child?
5. Belle thought Big Toby must be hurting Painter to make him win a prize for doing dog agility. But when he smelled Painter, he found no evidence of cuts. Why do you think it was hard for Belle to understand that Painter wasn't being hurt?
6. Why do you think Big Toby likes Uncle Jim even though he's firm and, at first, wasn't used to being around pets?
7. If you were a dog, what would you like about the dog agility course? What would make you feel scared about the course?

ACTIVITY

Ask your parents to help you find a dog agility course nearby. Go with your parents to watch dogs learn how to use the course. If you think you and your pet would enjoy it, try out the course and see how fast your dog can master it with your help.

CHAPTER 3

A Big Mess

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Belle dug out of her yard, she thought she smelled Darcy, but Buster talked her out of believing her own nose. Now she knows she was right. Have you ever thought you were right about something, but you let someone talk you out of it? How did you feel, and what happened?

2. Misty knew she had tempted the dogs by daring them to chase her on the teeter totter. When Belle got hurt on the teeter totter, Misty acted innocent. Whose fault do you think it was that the dogs chased Misty?

3. Has anyone ever dared you to do something that wasn't safe? What did you do about it?

4. Darcy and Big Toby apologized to each other for getting mad at each other. Have you ever apologized to someone or had someone apologize to you? What happened afterwards?

5. Why do you think Darcy had a hard time taking suggestions from Big Toby on how to work with Belle on the dog ability course?

6. Belle was afraid to try the teeter totter because she had been hurt on it. What do you do when you're afraid to try something that scared you?

7. Belle smelled Bonehead and knew he was close by, but she couldn't get the humans to understand what she knew. How could you get an adult's attention if you knew something that was important for them to know?

8. Do you think Belle would do a good job on the agility course without a leash? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY

Pretend you are a spy, learning all you can about what an enemy is trying to do to hurt your country. You return to your boss to explain the danger, but your boss doesn't take it seriously. List as many ways of communicating the problem to make your boss listen as you can think of. When you need to get your parents' or your teacher's attention about something important, try one of the things on your list and see how well it works.



CHAPTER 4

Life: Complete Confusion

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you have done something that got you in trouble and you think you will be punished, what do you do? Do you try to talk yourself out of being punished? Do you act sad? What works best for you?
2. How do you know that Bob and Margaret like Belle even though they were mad at her for continuing to dig out of the yard and didn't know what to do to make her stop?
3. Darcy agreed to join 4-H so she could do dog agility. What do you know about 4-H clubs? Do you know anyone who belongs to 4-H?
4. Darcy is willing to take on more responsibility by joining 4-H to work with Belle on dog agility. Do you think she is taking on more responsibility than she can handle? What advice would you give to Darcy if she asked your opinion?
5. Belle wasn't sure what self-discipline meant. She was confused because she wasn't getting punished. What does self-discipline mean to you? How do you discipline yourself?
6. Belle will behave better if she has a job to do, Margaret says. Then she won't get bored and get in trouble. Do you do better when you have a job to do? What works best to keep you from being bored?

ACTIVITY

Go to <http://www.4-h.org> and see what you can learn about 4-H clubs. Some things you will discover are that 4-H was started in 1902 to make public school education more connected to country life. It was also meant to help adults more willingly learn about new agricultural techniques from their 4-H children. Since then, 4-H has grown and widened its purpose to include science, engineering and technology as well as healthy living and citizenship. If you don't already belong to a 4-H Club, ask your parents if you can visit one. Then you can decide if it's something you would like to do. If you are already in 4-H, ask your teacher if you can talk to your class about what you have learned in 4-H.



CHAPTER 5

Off on the Wrong Paw

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Darcy thinks it's kind of scary to try something new. How do you feel about trying something new? What makes it easier for you?
2. Big Toby gets to stay with Aunt Ellen and Uncle Jim, but things are different. Every time Painter barks, people get scared and want to call the police. Has something ever happened in your life that changed the way people acted around you? If so, how did that make you feel?
3. Toby introduced Darcy to J.J. Rogers of the 4-H Pooch Patrol. What did he say to introduce them to each other? Do you think he did a good job? Why or why not?
4. When Belle met J.J.'s dog, Cheri, it brought back bad memories of how Cheri once treated Belle when she lived with Bonehead. Now Cheri treats Belle nicely. Why do you think Cheri changed the way she acted?
5. Belle was having so much fun showing off what she could do on the agility course that she didn't watch for other dogs and almost caused a serious accident. Have you been in a situation where someone was not careful and almost caused an accident? If so, what happened?



6. Darcy didn't want to be around Big Toby. She had so many bad memories about him. Was Toby trying to be mean to Darcy on the agility course, or was he trying to help? What makes you think so?

7. Belle didn't like being led around the agility course by Darcy. She wanted to run free on her own. She didn't want Darcy to be the boss. Are there some times when it's wise to let someone else be the boss? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY

Get a large plastic container that is at least one foot deep, the larger the better. Fill it with dirt. Then buy some root vegetable seeds such as carrots, beets and onions. Make a plan of where you will plant the seeds so your container is well organized. Then plant the seeds according to your plan and water them. Notice that if someone else decided to plant seeds anywhere, the plants would grow all over the place without any good order. That's what happens when people don't listen to the boss; things get all mixed up. Keep watering the seeds and watch them sprout into plants. When they are ready to harvest, select a few for each meal, and have fun eating them as a family.

CHAPTER 6

Between a Porcupine and a Prickle Bush

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Belle curled up on her blanket and tried to hear what Bob, Margaret and Darcy were talking about, but she couldn't make out the conversation. She was afraid they were going to send her to a new home. Have you ever lain awake at night, listening to adult voices and trying to understand what they were saying? How did it make you feel?
2. Darcy sang a song to Belle as she thought about getting to know Toby better, a suggestion Margaret made to her. Do you have a song you sing when you're worried, sad or happy about something? How does it make you feel so sing that song?
3. Sometimes it's hard to get along with people in our own family, and we wish they weren't part of our family. Now that Big Toby lives with Aunt Ellen and Uncle Jim, Darcy must think of him as part of her family. What advice would you give her on how to get along with Big Toby?
4. Belle listened to Darcy and Big Toby talk about what life was like when Big Toby lived with Bonehead. She realized there were a lot of similarities between her life before she was rescued and Big Toby's life before he went to live with Uncle Jim and Aunt Ellen. What do you think was similar about their lives before they were rescued?
5. Sometimes it takes just one person to show someone how to change. Darcy taught Belle how to change, and Sergeant Reeves helped Big Toby learn to act better. Who has helped you to make good changes in your life?
6. Once Darcy and Big Toby talked, and Darcy understood better what Big Toby had been through, they got along better. Sometimes it helps you to really listen to people you don't get along with. What are some ways you can show people that you are really listening to them?
7. Belle is afraid of the teeter-totter, but she tries it when Darcy asks her to. She gets scared, jumps off, and plows into Buster. Have you ever tried something even if it made you scared? What happened? Did your reactions almost hurt someone?

ACTIVITY

Play the Listening Game. With your family or a group of friends, sit in a circle. Have one person face the person next to him or her while still maintaining the shape of the big circle. Set a timer for two minutes. Have one person talk about something they did that was fun while the other person listens. After two minutes, reset the timer and have the listener become the talker. When the timer goes off, everyone will face the center of the circle. Each person will take turns telling what they remember about what the other person said. See how it feels to be really listened to.

CHAPTER 7

Frustration

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Bob used toilet plungers to make weave poles for a back yard dog agility course. What creative things have you or someone you know used to make something you needed?
2. Margaret wanted Darcy to have her lights out at 9:30 p.m. so she would get enough sleep. At first, Darcy wasn't happy about that until she realized her mom was right. How do you feel when your parents tell you to go to bed before you've done everything you want to do? Did you ever realize they were right about something they made you do?
3. Belle let herself get distracted by Buster and missed a weave pole. Have you ever let yourself be distracted so that you made a mistake? If so, what happened, and how did you handle it?
4. When Belle went inside for supper, she thought about looking for chicken skins in the trash, but she had promised Buster she would behave. So she didn't give into the temptation to raid the trash can. How do you handle it when you want to do something you have promised someone that you wouldn't do?
5. When Belle realized Darcy might give up singing so she wouldn't be so tired, Belle decided she would do everything Darcy told her to do on the dog agility course. But she was so afraid of the teeter-totter that she couldn't do it right. Have you ever been so afraid of something that no matter how much you wanted to do it, you couldn't? How did you deal with your fear?
6. J.J. told Belle that the more she practiced the teeter-totter the less afraid she would be. Belle didn't agree. She figured she would never get used to it. If you were Belle's owner, how would you help her understand that she needs to keep practicing?
7. Belle was excited when she learned Darcy would train her to run the agility course without a lead. She wanted to start practicing right away, but it was Buster's turn to try the agility course. Waiting while he took his turn made Belle upset, especially when Buster didn't seem to care about agility. When is it hard for you to wait your turn? Have you ever had a hard time giving someone else a turn when their attitude didn't seem right to you? If so, how did you handle it?

ACTIVITY

Form two teams. Line up in two lines, representing Team A and Team B. Give the first person in each line a large potato. They must get down on all fours and push the potato with their nose across the floor for about 10 feet, then pick up the potato, run back to their line and hand it to the next person on their team. Have team members work hard to encourage the person who is pushing the potato. Have someone monitor each team to keep track of any unkind or impatient things team members say. People who say anything negative or act out in negative ways make their team lose 1 point. Teams earn points for everything they say that is positive and helpful. The winning team has the most points. Afterwards, talk about how it felt to hear the positive and negative comments when you were the one pushing the potato with your nose.

CHAPTER 8

Almost, But No Dog Biscuit

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Toby suggested making one of the jumps a trap to see if Belle could listen carefully and only take an obstacle on command. Listening that carefully can take lots of concentration. Do you think you would be focused enough to do that if you were a dog? Why or why not? Can you focus that intently on human tasks? What makes it hard for you to focus?

2. When Belle thought about how much fun Painter, Misty, Buster and she would have playing at supper time, she forgot to focus on what she was supposed to do. As a result, she fell into the creek. Has something like that ever happened to you? What did it feel like?

3. Buster did well on the agility course when Toby took him, because Toby ran faster than Darcy. Sometimes people do things differently than other people, and it makes it easier for us to learn and succeed. How do you learn best?

4. When Darcy made a mistake by having Belle jump over the A-frame when it was a trap, she apologized to Belle, and Belle forgave her. How do you act when other people make mistakes, then apologize? How do other people act when you make a mistake and apologize?

5. When Belle smelled Bonehead trying to cross the creek, she warned Buster and Painter. They worked well with Toby and Darcy to make sure the humans were safe. Do you think their training on the agility course helped them work together well in the face of danger? Why or why not?

6. Bonehead keeps trying to bother Toby, Darcy, Belle and her animal friends. Have you ever had someone try to follow you and cause trouble for you? If that ever happened to you, who could you ask for help?

ACTIVITY

Belle told Painter that dogs who herd others try hard to defend the people and animals for whom they are responsible. Different kinds of dogs are especially good at certain tasks. Identify at least five different kinds of dogs and find out what they're really good at doing. Make a list of things that you and each of your friends are good at doing. Recognize that we each have different talents and skills. As you work together, practice using each others' talents and skills to help all of you reach your goals faster and better. Take time to discuss what you discovered about yourselves and your friends.



CHAPTER 9

Discovery

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When the police came, they couldn't find Bonehead, and there was nothing else they could do to help. Have you ever been in a situation where you asked for help from people you thought could help you, but they couldn't? If so, how did you feel, and what did you do?
2. Belle felt upset because she hadn't been able to catch Bonehead, leaving Darcy and Toby in danger. Have you ever tried to do something and failed? Did you ever try to help someone, but it didn't work out? What did you think about afterwards?
3. Misty tells Belle to stop moping around about not catching Bonehead. She tries to get Belle to play ball. Have you ever tried to help someone who was upset by getting them to do something else? If so, what did you do, and how did it work?
4. Misty recognized that Belle had successfully woven through barriers similar to weave poles. When Belle checked to see if she really had done that, Misty swiped the ball from her. Do you think Misty was being mean, or was she trying to teach Belle something? Why do you think that?
5. When Belle realized that weaving was like herding cows, she suddenly understood how to handle the weave poles because herding animals was something she did naturally well. What are some things you do naturally well? How did you discover you were good at them?
6. Though dogs and cats are often enemies, Misty and Belle discovered they cared about each other a lot. Have you ever had a friend who was so different from you that it could have been more normal for you not to be friends? What drew you to that person?

ACTIVITY

Without telling anyone what you are doing, take a look at the people around you – in your neighborhood, classroom, club, or even in our family. Choose someone who seems so different from you that you think you could never be friends with them. Maybe they have completely different interests than you do. Maybe they speak a different language, come from a different country, or have a different type of family than yours. Maybe they seem smarter or less smart than you. Maybe they wear clothes that are sloppier or much nicer than yours. Maybe they have a physical problem that makes it hard for them to walk or do other things well.

Decide to say something friendly to that person every day. Keep a daily journal of what you say to them and how they react. If they need help sometime, offer your help without being pushy. Write down what happens. Keep the journal for two weeks and see how the person responds to you every day. You might discover some wonderful things about the person that you never would have noticed otherwise. You might even become friends. You might discover that you and the other person are not a good match, but you may have learned things about them that you admire. After your two-week experiment is over, tell an adult you trust about what you did and what you learned.

CHAPTER 10

Stumble

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Darcy got up early to finish reading an English story for class. She was getting so involved in different activities that she was running out of time to finish her school work. Have you ever felt so busy that you couldn't get everything done? How did that make you feel? What did you do about it?
2. At the Jamboree, Belle worried that she wouldn't handle the teeter-totter well or hear Darcy's comments over the noise. Do you ever worry about how you're going to do before an event that's important to you? Have you found a way to handle your worries successfully? If so, what works for you?
3. Painter learned some things about the agility course from Belle, and he performed well. That made Belle proud. How do you feel when you show someone how to do something and they do it well? When you help someone, do you sometimes learn something from them as well? How do you think your teachers feel when they teach you something and you learn to do it well?
4. Belle disobeyed Darcy to help Painter go to the right place on the agility course. Painter obeyed Belle. Do you think Belle should have disobeyed Darcy? Why or why not?
5. Belle thinks Dr. Wilson is a sour dog treat because he insists that dogs obey the rules. Do you think she's right about Dr. Wilson? Why do you think that?
6. When it was Belle's turn to do the agility course, she did some things well and made some silly mistakes. Sometimes her mind went blank. She refused to do the teeter-totter. When you are taking a test or doing something that makes you worried, how do you keep your mind focused so you do the best job you can?
7. Toby lost his allowance for a week when he forgot to take out the garbage, but he wasn't mad at Uncle Jim for being so stern with him. What do you think about the way Toby handled losing his allowance?
8. Belle was beginning to learn about discipline by practicing on the agility course. Cheri told her that discipline is learning something so well that when something goes wrong, you fix it on the spot. She also told Belle that discipline means knowing what you can do within the rules. Do you agree with that description of discipline? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY

Put on your reporter's cap. Take a notebook and pen or pencil and interview your school's physical education teacher. Ask why discipline is important in sports, and ask how the teacher helps students to learn discipline. See if the teacher will tell you about how he or she learned to be disciplined. Ask about mistakes the teacher made as a student and, even as an adult, while learning and practicing discipline. Ask the teacher to give you some good examples of how students discipline themselves and how it helps them to succeed.

Then write an article about what you learned from the interview. If your school has a newspaper, see if you can get your article published in the newspaper. If not, ask your teacher if you can turn in your article for extra credit.

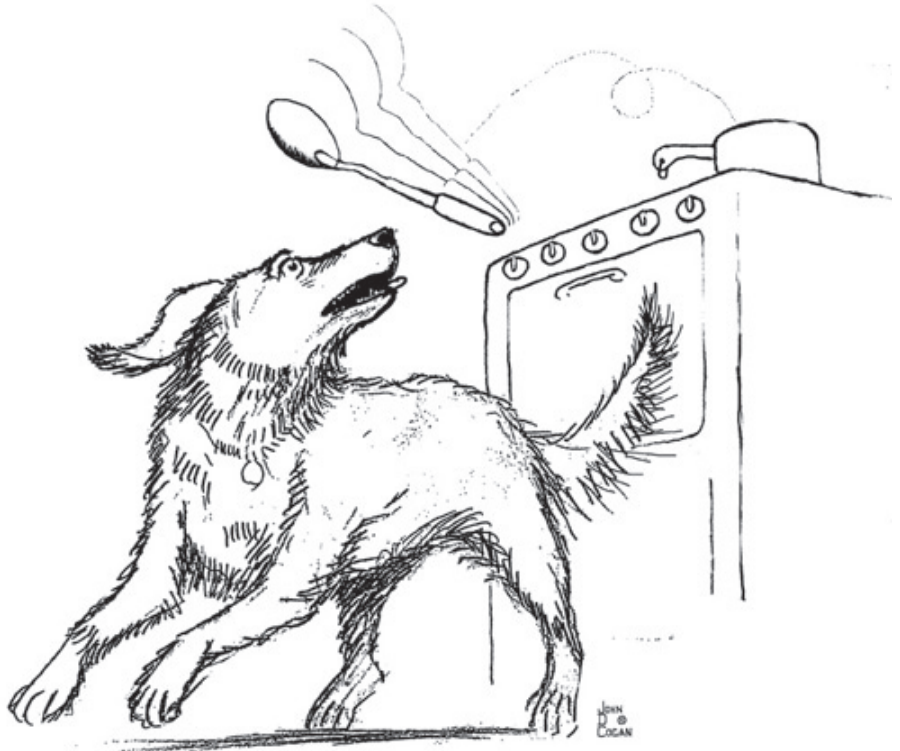
CHAPTER 11

Choices

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Belle let herself get distracted from what Dr. Wilson was saying by thinking about the teeter-totter. Have you ever let yourself get distracted so you didn't hear all the instructions? If so, what happened?

2. Belle had trouble concentrating on the course because things kept distracting her, from Uncle Jim calling her a stupid dog to her own prancing on the dog walk when she showed off to the audience. All her mistakes made her feel like she could never be successful at agility. Do you think she was right? Have you ever felt like a failure when you made mistakes? What did you do about it?



3. Painter told Belle she had a rotten attitude about thinking she couldn't do agility because she could always do what she wanted to do when she felt like doing it. Do you think Painter was right? Why or why not?

4. Belle told Buster that he does the agility course well when he runs with Toby, but he doesn't try very hard when he runs with Darcy. She told him he needs to try because Darcy wants him to. Buster doesn't like what Belle said. How would you feel if you were Buster?

5. Buster and Belle challenged each other to do better on the agility course. Have you ever had someone challenge you to do better? What kinds of changes did you see in your life as a result of the challenge?

6. When Darcy decides to drop karate for awhile so she has more time to get other things done, Uncle Jim thinks she is making the wrong decision. Do you think Darcy should give up karate? Why or why not? Have you ever made a choice that displeased a friend, a relative, or someone in your immediate family?

7. Why do you think Uncle Jim keeps calling Belle a stupid dog? Have people called you names before? How did you react to that name calling?

ACTIVITY

Play this word game with your friends or family members. Write a list of things that each of you has trouble doing. Maybe you're thinking about giving up on doing the difficult thing because it's hard or scary. After you make that list, take turns challenging each other. One person will say, for example, "I challenge you to study your spelling words harder so you get a better grade." The person who is challenged will reply, "I can't," then focus on how the words make them feel inside. Have them change the words to "I don't know how yet," and focus on how those words make them feel. After everybody has had a turn, talk about the challenges you face. Do they seem a little more possible when you say, "I don't know how yet?" Brainstorm how you can help each other learn to tackle the things that challenge you a little better.

CHAPTER 12

Disaster!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Misty told Belle she couldn't win because she hated the teeter-totter too much. That made Belle mad, and she announced that she would try to win the entire 4-H agility show. Do you think Belle is biting off more than she can chew? How do you feel when people tell you that you can't do something?
2. Uncle Jim was reading the newspaper while Darcy and Toby set up the agility course. Then he offered to time the dogs as they ran the course. Do you think Uncle Jim had fun being the timer? Why do you think he offered to do it?
3. Misty really bugs Belle when she says things like, "Told you Painter was going to win." Are there people in your life who bug you? What do they do or say that bugs you? How do you control yourself when people bug you so you don't do or say something you might regret later?
4. How do you think Belle felt about being on the tab instead of running free?
5. When Darcy kept Belle on the tab and the teeter-totter was the trap, Belle beat everyone else's time. Then she got a little cocky. Painter told her she needed to win gracefully. How could Belle have acted to be more graceful about winning?
6. When Buster beat both Belle and Painter off tab, Belle sulked. Is it Belle's competitive spirit that makes her want to win, or do you think there is another reason why she's upset that Buster beat her? If so, what do you think that other reason might be?
7. Painter was confident of his ability to do the teeter-totter. When he got to the top, he barked, "That's how you do it, Belle." But when the board dropped, he lost his balance and landed on his front legs wrong. What could he have done differently so he would not have hurt himself?

ACTIVITY

Gather some large stones and pile them up until you have a pile at least one foot high. Have it slope on each end. Find some cardboard and cover the stones with it to make a ramp. Gather several toy cars. Practice racing them up and down the ramp. Do it when you carefully focus on the task and when you let yourself get distracted. Have someone time you to see how fast you can make the cars go over the ramp when you are focused and how fast you can do it when you let yourself get distracted.

Make two columns on a piece of paper. One column should say "Focused," and the other should say, "Distracted." Write down your results and compare them. Have some of your friends and family members try it too. Write their focused and distracted times on the paper as well. See how the time differs for each run. You probably will notice that you have a faster time on the runs when you are focused.

CHAPTER 13

Standing In

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Belle blames herself for Painter's accident on the teeter-totter. Do you think it was Belle's fault? Why or why not?
2. Buster thinks they should run the best 4-H agility show race they can and be happy with that. Belle thinks they should pay attention to how they are trying to win. Who do you think is right and why?
3. Misty stopped taunting the dogs when Painter got hurt. Do you think she felt like she might have helped to cause Painter's injury? Why or why not?
4. When Buster volunteered to take Painter's place in the agility show, Uncle Jim had to decide if he was willing to have two dogs in the house, both Buster and Painter. How hard to you think it was for Uncle Jim to agree to let Buster stay at his house for awhile?
5. Did it surprise you that Toby agreed to take care of both Painter and Buster and pick up their dog poop? Why do you think Toby is acting more responsible?
6. Buster gave Belle some advice about how to behave when he said, "Learn from what happened. Don't brag and get others worked up. Just go about your business doing what you want to do." Do you think that is good advice? Why or why not?
7. Belle doesn't want to leave Buster at Uncle Jim's house. She is worried about what will happen if Bonehead tries to approach Uncle Jim's house again. Why else do you think Belle doesn't want to leave Buster?

ACTIVITY

Ask your parents if you can visit a veterinarian's office. See if the vet will let you volunteer to spend time with animals who must stay there while they undergo treatment or while their owners are out of town. They miss their owners and would enjoy having someone pet and play with them. Learn what you can about taking care of animals while you are at the vet's. The animals will understand that you care about them. You might help them heal faster and feel less sad about missing their owners.



CHAPTER 14

Waiting

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. While Belle waits at home alone until Darcy and Margaret return, she entertains herself in the yard. She begins to understand that rules are based on common sense, but she still has a hard time understanding why it is important to step on a contact zone or sit on a table until she is called. Do you sometimes have a hard time understanding why some rules are important? What rules don't make sense to you?
2. When Belle tossed a branch high and it hit a flower pot on the porch, she was afraid she might have broken the flower pot. Have you ever done something that broke something belonging to someone else? How did you feel, and what did you do about it?
3. When Belle doesn't mess up the yard, Darcy thinks it may be time to let her use the doggy door and come inside. Margaret isn't sure Belle is ready for that. Belle wants to show her that she is ready and that she has learned to settle down. How could you show adults in your life that you are ready to handle more privileges?
4. Belle knew that tomorrow was the big competition, but today she was content to rest with friends who loved her. How do you feel when you can relax with people who care about you? Why do you think it feels so good?
5. Painter wanted to chase after the raccoon like Buster did, but the vet told him not to run on his broken paw. Have you ever been hurt and had to stay quiet without running or playing until you got well? If so, how did you handle it?
6. How do you think the raccoon felt when Buster chased it? What would you have done if you were the raccoon?
7. Belle is still worried that Bonehead might show up. Do you think she's ready to handle the challenge if Bonehead does appear? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY

Imagine that you will be staying home alone for awhile. Make a list of all the things you can think of to do that will keep you out of trouble. Give the list a title such as, "Safe Things to Do When I'm Home Alone." E-mail copies of the list to your friends. Check with them later to see if they were able to use any of your tips or if they have other tips to add to the list.

CHAPTER 15

My Choice

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Belle was nervous when she entered the 4-H building. Do you think it helped her to hear Darcy say, "I love you, Belle"? Why or why not.
2. Belle discovered that she would be in the medium sized category along with Buster and Cheri. How does it feel when you compete against your friends? Does that make it harder or easier?
3. When Painter smelled Bonehead in the bleachers, he ran after him. Bonehead stomped on Painter's paws, causing him to fall. Bonehead is acting like a bully. Have you ever known bullies? How do they act? What can you do to protect yourself from them?
4. When Belle saw that Bonehead was escaping and that he had hurt Darcy, Belle began herding him into a stall where police were able to capture him. Dr. Wilson seemed unhappy with Belle, Buster and Painter. Belle was sure she and Buster would be disqualified from the competition. Do you think Belle did the right thing? Why or why not?
5. Darcy told her mom that Belle did the right thing by running after Bonehead even if it looked wrong. Belle had learned to think for herself and to make good decisions. Was there ever a time when you made a good decision that seemed to go against the rules? What happened, and what did you do?
6. How do you think Belle felt when Dr. Wilson called her a remarkable little dog and told her she could stay in the race?
7. Because Bonehead caused Darcy to sprain her ankle, Darcy could not run in the race with Belle. She had to let Belle race off tab while she walked behind, giving her commands. Belle knew if she paid attention, she could do it. How would you feel if you were Belle?

ACTIVITY

Have your teacher or your parents arrange for a police officer to come talk with your class or your club about how to respond in case of an emergency such as when Bonehead tried to kidnap Toby. Pay close attention to what the officer says. Then ask him what guidelines he would recommend for starting a student-run safety group to help in case of an emergency.

CHAPTER 16

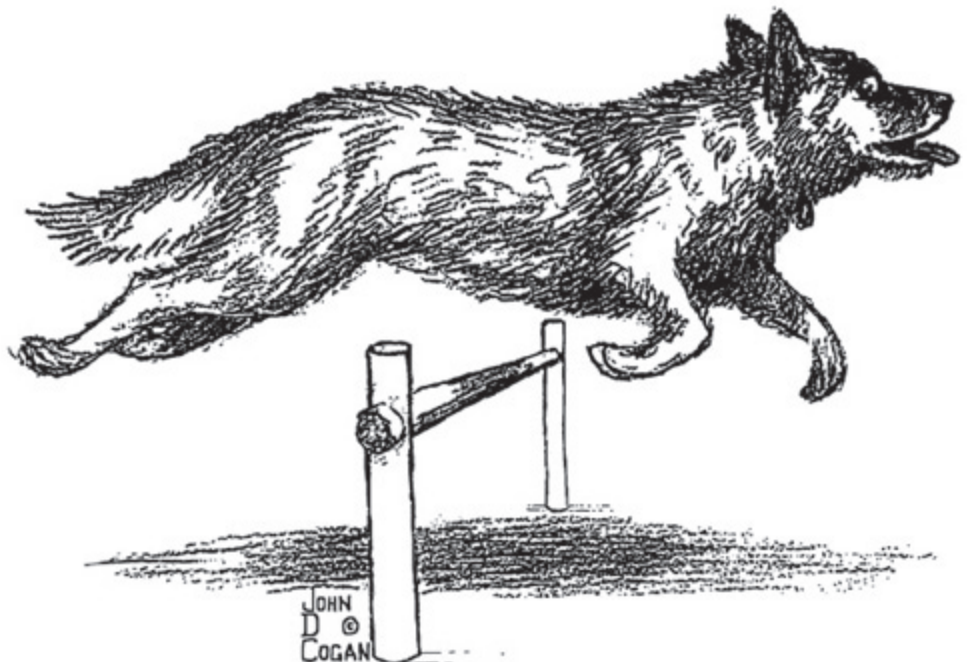
Giving it My All

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Darcy took off Belle's tab on the 4-H agility course, Belle's vision blurred as her nervousness rose. Cheri called out to her, "Concentrate," and that helped Belle. What helps you concentrate on the task ahead?
2. When Belle felt elation instead of concentration, she missed the contact zone on the A-frame. Then she almost lost focus when she called herself stupid for making that mistake. Even so, she pulled herself together and returned to being focused. If you were Belle, what would you tell yourself to make sure you kept your mind in focus?
3. When Belle's hind paw hit the rim of the tire, she said to herself, "Dog piles!" What do you say to yourself when you make a mistake? What else could you say that would be more encouraging?
4. Belle thought she had done a bad job, but Cheri complimented her for getting back into focus after making a mistake. Do you sometimes think you did a worse job than you really did? Lots of people are too critical of themselves. Why do you think we are so hard on ourselves?
5. When Buster told Belle that the final round would give everyone a new chance, Belle worried she would not be able to handle the teeter-totter well. When is it a good thing to worry? When does worrying make it harder for you to do well?

ACTIVITY

Go to a competition, whether it's a basketball, football, baseball, or volleyball game, a rodeo or some other event. Watch how the athletes focus on their tasks. Do they sit alone while they wait to play? Do they talk to each other? Does the coach tell them something? When they are on the court, how do they act? Imagine what you would do to prepare for a competition. After the event is over, ask your parents to arrange for you to talk with the coach. Ask the coach what he or she does and says to help team members be focused and ready to compete. Ask what team members can do to get themselves ready for competition. Take that advice and see how you can apply it to your own life.



CHAPTER 17

Facing the Trial

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Darcy, J.J. and Toby shook hands before the competition. The dogs touched noses. How do you or your friends greet other athletes at the beginning of a competition to show good sportsmanship?
2. When Darcy told Belle she would like to win but it was okay if she didn't, how do you think it made Belle feel? How would you feel if someone told you that?
3. Belle was surprised how good Buster looked for the competition. His black coat was more beautiful than Belle had ever seen it. Who do you think made Buster's fur look so nice? How much time do you think it takes to get a dog looking good for a competition? Have you ever taken care of an animal and placed it in competition?
4. When Belle got Darcy out of a jam after Darcy gave her the wrong command, Belle didn't get mad at Darcy. And Darcy apologized to Belle and praised her. Belle felt energized by helping her human. When you work together so you all do your best, it's part of good team work. Sometimes that means keeping someone else from making a mistake, and sometimes it means that other team members help you avoid an error. What would you enjoy most about being part of a good team? What do you think would be most challenging about being on a good team?
5. When Belle emerged from the tunnel, she expected Darcy to be there, but Darcy had sprained her ankle again. Even so, Belle kept her head and listened to Darcy's next command. Belle took a deep breath to help her concentrate. Have you ever tried to take a deep breath to help you concentrate? Why do you think that might help you?
6. Belle was so focused on the teeter-totter that she climbed into stillness. Have you ever been so focused that you felt the stillness? What was that like for you?
7. When Belle asked Cheri how she felt about coming in second, Cheri was okay with it. She recognized that state fair competition lay ahead, and they both had a new chance to show how well they could perform. Do you think you could be as gracious as Cheri was when you talked to the winner? How do you think Belle handled the situation when she told Cheri, "My turn this time. Yours next, maybe"? If you had been in Belle's shoes, what would you have said?

ACTIVITY

Find some board games that you like to play. Invite friends over and take turns playing different games. When you win, practice being a gracious winner. When you lose, practice being a good loser. Watch to see how well your friends practice good sportsmanship. Talk with each other about how it feels when people are good sports and how it feels when they're not.