

"Charlie Ate Our Sofa!"
Patti Anderson
Plymouth, Minnesota, U.S.A.

KoKo had been "speed dating" for about a month after her kennel mate passed suddenly from heart failure. She was a very particular red and white Siberian Husky that had come from a rescue four years earlier to live with us in Minnesota.

KoKo's response to the huskies she had met were varied, from totally ignoring them to hiding under the coffee table. She fell in love with Charlie the second she saw this handsome black and white guy with the twinkling blue eyes. He was thrilled with her too, so her newfound friend came home with us that day.

Charlie was three and had grown up on five acres with another dog, where they both ran free on their property almost every day and were kenneled at night. His people at the time were going to have a baby and didn't feel they had the time for Charlie, so they decided to re-home him.

"C-dog" (our nickname for him) was outgoing, loved people of all types and other dogs, but had never been inside a house or exposed to other stimuli. So, he was overwhelmed and anxious about quite a few things. It manifested via his mouth with lots of chewing, vocalizing and ingesting any and everything in sight, including: a patio umbrella, cowboy boots and our sofa! We almost invited the emergency vet to Thanksgiving that first year because of frequent trips there. Early on we found that we had to supervise Charlie closely, especially in the house.

As a competitive sprint musher for seven years out in Washington State, I knew huskies and their passion to run. Charlie was off to the dog park regularly, and had lots of walks and play time in our fenced in yard with our three other dogs. He breezed through four levels of positive reinforcement obedience classes, "woo-woosing" a lot. At home he chewed constantly on Kongs and other chew toys, keeping his mouth very busy.

It was one summer night, ten months since Charile arrived, when my husband and I went to a movie and tragedy almost struck. The two huskies were in their indoor/outdoor kennel housed in the garage, and we came home to find that Charlie had eaten a sled dog harness. He had gotten up on his hind legs, stuck his paw out of the chain link door, and reached a hook about seven feet high with the racing harnesses on it. He pawed one down, and scooped it under the door, ingesting half of the webbing and 13 metal buckles. It was a miracle that the vet was able to save him without surgery.

The next day on a walk with just the two of us, I sat down on the curb, hugged "C-dog" and cried. With all of my dog knowledge and advice from dog savvy friends, I didn't know how to help Charlie. Desperation energy must have been sent out into the universe, because the very next day I saw a flier for something called "Tellington TTouch®". "Why not take it? It can't hurt," I thought, so Charlie and I went to a half day workshop with Sage Lewis, and a seed of hope was planted!

We were hooked! Later that month Charlie and I attended a two-day workshop with Sage that had fewer dogs and people in it, so he and I spent lots of quality time

together. For the first time, I felt a true connection with Charlie after almost a year of intensely working with him. It is hard to put into words what transpired between us by the second day of the workshop. At the time it felt like a fusion of our spirits, gazing into each other's souls even if just for a moment.

Charlie responded well to all things TTouch, especially mouth work! His transformation was gradual (as was mine) over the next year. After that first year, Charlie was "sofa free" the rest of his life, achieving physical and emotional balance. TTouch was more than a method or a tool in the toolbox. It became a way of life for me, and I became a practitioner. With the animals I live with, and those I am privileged to work with, TTouch is the gift that keeps on giving. My heart is filled with gratitude!