

Title: Lounging at 40 Miles Per Hour

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Author: Robert Malinn

Lounging at 40 Miles Per Hour

The American Kennel club should probably remove greyhounds from its list of dog breeds.

I love dogs and I love greyhounds, but any of you ... most of you, who have spent more than five minutes with one of these curious couch potatoes will know that virtually everything about them is different than any other dog breed.

Every greyhound owner I've spoken to has heard the complete list of things their dog resembles or mimics.

You've all likely heard deer, a cat in a dog-like body, an alien, a hyena, a horse, and in the case of my grey, who stylishly wears orange and dark brown stripes, a jungle cat.

I can't count on two hands the number of times a toddler has yelled to their parent, "It's a tiger!"

I adopted Boone back in August of 2020.

Immediately, I saw he not only looked like a tiger but walked like one too.

His back muscles rose high behind his perked ears and high slithering tail as he slinked around the hardwood of my apartment, barely making a sound.

He's 100 pounds, with kind eyes and a goofy grin that greets me with enthusiasm at the door each day.

Like most greyhounds, he doesn't bark.

A grey's quiet nature is one of the many reasons they make some of the best city dogs.

They're relaxed, and some might say lazy, clocking 18-20 hours of sleep a day.

And Boone is no exception, but he is exceptional.

Before I adopted Boone, I had been in a year and a half long back and forth over the prospect of adopting a dog. I didn't know much about greyhounds then.

I thought they were hyper.

Greyhounds are the gentlest and quietest companions you'll ever come across.

I thought they were aggressive.

They're sensitive and affectionate.

Ultimately, I wanted a companion I would care for and provide a loving home.

Each grey has their funny habits that we as greyhound owners discover as their remarkable personalities slowly unfold over time. I'm sure some of these will sound familiar to you, but while Boone doesn't bark, he does laugh, and he likes to do so when he plays pranks. He enjoys hiding the remote from my roommate and me. We watch in humor-induced shock and awe as he cackles with a wild grin and wide-set brown eyes as we look desperately.

The trick is to keep an eye on his tail. The closer you get to the prize, the less he can contain his excitement. Like most greys, he'll often sleep with his eyes wide open, his tongue out, and occasionally he'll put all fours up in the air, staging

a death scene that would put any high school production of Romeo and Juliet to shame.

Before all of this, I was unsure of even adopting, not because of the kind of companion I'd wind up with, but because of the type of human I'd be.

During that time, I had severe depression and anxiety. It was under question whether I'd be able to dedicate myself to providing the dedication and care to a new member of my family when I felt I needed to focus on myself first. I had made leaps and bounds of progress through therapy, but I still had my reservations.

Unsure but fixated, I took a drive from Boston to New Hampshire, where I went to a greyhound rescue. I was mesmerized by the dedication and protective nature of the greyhound rescue community.

These dogs needed homes, but the application process was rigorous, involving many legal documents, letters of reference, on-site house checks, and visitation requirements in the weeks before adoption.

These hurdles boosted my confidence in applying. Applying with Fast Friends meant that the miracle workers who run this organization would know my character, daily routine, profession, and my ability and willingness to love and care for one of their rescues properly. They were strict enough that I felt if I was enough in their eyes, I was enough to take on this new responsibility.

I worked closely with a dedicated member of the Fast Friends family, Angela. She asked me everything about myself and what I was looking for in a companion. At the top of my list, I said I wanted a compassionate member of my family.

She had a melancholy smile, looking down. "I'm going to show you three dogs, but I already know who you'll pick," she said. I chuckled, not knowing what to expect.

When the second dog came through the door, I lit up. This greyhound was incredibly gentle, even polite, in a borderline human way. He was majestic (and still is). Kindly, he approached me with caution. I understood Angela's sad smile from earlier. "I love them all equally, but he's my favorite," she said.

When I learned she was the one to give him his name, Boone; I told her that it was clear how much he loved her and that I would be keeping the name she chose, promising I would be sure to bring him by for visits whenever possible.

Welling up a bit, Angela smiled and said, "You lucked out. There are over seventy dogs here, and he's the only one I'd trust alone in a room with a rabbit. Take good care of him." She was right. I was and am still consistently taken aback by his calm and loving demeanor. I learned a great deal about his history.

Boone used to be a racer, living on a Florida racetrack. His racing name was "Oya Paw Paw," a silly and cute name for a sport that is anything but silly or cute. I'm not here to speak about my personal beliefs about dog racing, but the realities behind this practice are relevant to the world they know first.

You see, almost every greyhound you'll meet is a former racer. It's what greyhounds are bred for, apart from chasing rabbits. From about four to six months old, they are separated from their mothers and sent to live in track environments. They are the only dog breed to spend their first several years interacting more with their breed than humans.

This unique isolation among their own means unique challenges to adopting a grey. When I brought Boone home, he had never seen stairs before. There was a short set of steps to the entrance to my building.

Shaking and pulling back, Boone instead opted to clear the steps with a five and a half foot vertical. Suddenly the kid's classic Air Bud felt more like a documentary than something penned by Disney screenwriters.

After the stairs, I learned Boone was suspicious of hardwood floors, something familiar among greyhounds. For the first few weeks, he and I played a game where the floor was lava, and the blankets I set down were the islands he used to navigate safely throughout my apartment.

Navigating these new challenges all required patience, compassion, and above all else, a sense of humor. Boone and I worked through all of these challenges together. His success was my success. As he gained confidence, I brimmed with that same newfound confidence.

Greyhounds are an anxious breed, but the beauty of this is that you get to work through this challenge with them, building a

bond you'll cherish forever. As the proud human of a loving grey, I've had the privilege of watching Boone reveal a tremendous amount of himself and his personality over time.

I've learned more about myself as I've learned about him. One of the best things those struggling with depression and anxiety can do is stay organized and scheduled. Greyhounds have an incredible sense of time, down to the minute.

During my first visit to Fast Friends, Tom, a regular volunteer, brought me to the main area and told me to check the time on my phone.

It was 12:28 PM. "Two minutes," he said, crossing his arms with a self-assured grin.

"Two minutes, and what?" I asked.

"Oh, you'll see."

Remember, greyhounds rarely ever bark, but I learned at 12:30 PM Eastern Standard Time that they love to "roo," a howl they partake in communally when they're around other greyhounds.

Perfectly in sync, I heard over seventy greys rooing like wolves ritualistically howling at the moon.

That sense of time doesn't go away for greyhounds. They'll bring it wherever they are and whoever gives them the love they deserve.

Boone will sprint into the room to make intense eye contact and let out a whine if I am one minute behind any part of his daily schedule.

He keeps me accountable and gives me a sense of purpose. I worry less about myself than I used to. My priority is to be the best version of myself to dedicate myself to ensuring Boone is the best version of himself.

He has given me back the confidence that had felt lost, gifted assurance once veiled by my anxiety, and has helped me find meaning where I felt hollow. I'm more present, attentive, and compassionate because of him. I'm not here to tell you that adopting a dog will change your life in all the right ways, but it will unquestionably change your life and outlook.

You don't have to adopt, but there are other ways to help if you're not willing to make the jump just yet. I implore you to foster a greyhound, adopt, visit, volunteer, and spend time with these remarkable companions.

Before taking Boone home, Angela had me sign many forms and documents, but the one I appreciated the most was called "A Dog's Bill of Rights," a poem by Carolyn Krause. At Fast Friends, they make you swear on it that you'll abide by these rights if you're taking home one of their rescues.

I won't recite Ms. Krause's beautiful words in total, but I will, if I may, share just a few lines that stood out. "I have the right to give and receive unconditional love. I have the right to a life that is beyond mere survival. I have the right to fresh air and green grass. I have the right to be foolish and silly and make my person laugh. I have the right to be forgiven, die with dignity, and be remembered well."

I can't bear the thought of those final lines of A Dog's Bill of Rights, but I will say that I have and will continue to uphold every line. Boone is and has brought out the best in me. I'm grateful to and for him every day. I don't know what my life would look like precisely without him, but I know that it would

be less full, less purposeful, and less filled with the love we now both enjoy.

I'll leave you with a fact about greyhounds that will lead to a cheesy anecdote that I don't for a minute regret mentioning; they have the largest heart of any dog breed. They have the fastest heartbeat and the quickest stride. If there's one thing that will happen faster than the time it takes them to place first with the other breeds at the dog park, it's time they'll take to make you fall in love with these fast friends.

Thank you.