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15% OFF****Campo '76 Mini-Reunion**

Submitted by Kim Fielding



Campolindo High School's Class of 1976 held a mini-reunion on October 1st at Kim Hall Fielding's home. The evening included a Tuscan feast, music from the '70s, and lots of laughter. The event was so successful that a follow-up evening will be forthcoming. If you are a member of the Class of '76 and wish to make sure you are receiving class information via the distribution list, contact Kim at (650) 948-6601.

Photo provided

**Lamorinda's
Religious Services****Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, 433 Moraga Way, Orinda**

Regular Worship Schedule
8:15 a.m. Traditions Worship
9:15 a.m. Coffee Fellowship
9:40 a.m. Education for all Ages
10:45 a.m. Celebrations Worship
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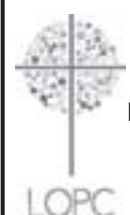
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Value of Diagnostic Tests

Mona Miller, DVM

Frequently I am asked what purpose is served by performing diagnostic tests on a patient with symptoms of illness. It surprises me because it seems so clear to me that, like human diseases, some veterinary diseases can be easy to diagnose and some can be difficult. It also surprises me when the comment comes up "But my dog/cat has never been sick a day in his life" as if that is insurance that he never will be sick. Similarly, comments about how old a pet is and why bother running "all these expensive tests since he'll only live a couple more years" catch me off-guard.

I encourage my clients to not make assumptions, especially when it comes to matters of diagnostic possibilities, treatment plans and cost, just as I should not make assumptions about my clients. There is huge variation among people as to what is affordable and reasonable. It is the vet's job to provide information, options and guidance to their clients. It is the client's responsibility to inform their vet of their limitations. Thus, from the partnership of vet-client, good health decisions can be made for pets. These decisions should fit within a framework of the client's lifestyle, philosophical ideals and morals, and budget.

Generally, veterinarians take a step-wise approach to diagnostics, starting with a wide view to gain as much broad information as possible and narrowing the tests as results in-

dicade. This often correlates with a financial step-wise approach, starting with relatively less expensive blood, urine, fecal tests and radiographs. It also pairs with a less invasive physiological approach to the pet. The majority of pets can have blood, urine and radiographs taken without sedation or anesthesia. More specific tests can often also be performed while the pet is awake, such as culture of an abscess or ultrasound; although occasionally sedation is recommended for these. Tests that require sedation or anesthesia are often put higher on the diagnostic ladder, such as biopsy procedures, advanced imaging such as CT or MRI scans, or exploratory surgery.

The broad overview approach allows for the veterinarian to uncover abnormalities that might provide a quick diagnosis. Just as importantly, this allows for normal findings to be uncovered. For example, for a cat who is drinking and urinating in larger volumes, a simple and fairly comprehensive blood and urine test can reveal whether diabetes mellitus is present while eliminating thyroid, liver and kidney disease all in one step.

On occasion, just as in human medicine, broad-based diagnostics do not provide the diagnosis, and the test field narrows. More specific tests might be indicated - for example, checking for tick-borne disease, or bacterial presence with a culture/sensitivity, or looking into the interior structure of the liver with ultrasound.

Sometimes clients wonder "why were all those tests run when they didn't show anything?" As I tell my clients, if I had the crystal ball and knew what their pet's disease was, I'd know what test to run to diagnose it! It is important to go through the process of screening for the more common, more easily diagnosed diseases so that nothing is missed, before jumping into too narrow of a test. Additionally, information gathered regarding normal organ function in that patient will affect an overall treatment plan and prognosis.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her young son, two cats and Luka a new puppy. She has worked at Four Seasons Animal Hospital in Lafayette since moving here in 2001. She attended Cal as an undergrad, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reached at Four Seasons, 938-7700, or by email to Mona5DVM@aol.com.

Step-Parenting Pitfalls

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

These days many children have a step-parent, and there are important considerations in making the new family unit work well. Some parents expect their children to make an easy adjustment to a new person in their household and do not provide much help for them. Their thinking may go somewhat like this: "I'm happier in my life now so my children will naturally benefit from my new contentment." Or, "My children are lucky to have such a wonderful new (step-mom or step-dad). Or, perhaps, "Thank goodness, now I'll have some help getting Ryan to behave better and do well in school."

One family I worked with had an exceptionally difficult time managing the introduction of a stepfather. Howard married May when her son was ten and daughter was fourteen. The children's father lived in a different state and had only occasional contact with them. May had trouble controlling her headstrong daughter, Dorian, even before she married Howard. Dorian cut class, didn't study, and experimented with drugs. When Howard came along, he decided the problem was that May was too lenient, so he compensated by being extremely firm. In response, Dorian acted out even more; she was caught shoplifting twice and began sneaking out of the house. Howard was constantly angry at Dorian. May resented Howard's interference, while Howard resented not being appreciated and respected. And John, the ten

year-old, was adversely affected too since everyone around him at home was unhappy and frustrated.

Our work together included couples and family sessions. May needed to be the one to discipline Dorian. She could accept and request input from Howard behind the scenes, very discreetly, and never in front of the children. Obviously this couple needed to work together. Dorian naturally was not going to respond to Howard's attempts to discipline her when they hadn't even established a bond or much of a relationship. It helps to put yourself in your child's shoes and realize that you, too, would resent interference in your life from someone whom you consider to be an outsider.

Howard's job was to build a good relationship with both children however he could, and to realize that this would take time. He needed to stifle his negative reactions as much as possible and provide only positive, reassuring messages to the children. In other words, he could ignore their misbehavior, let May deal with it, and instead catch them in the act of doing anything positive. He needed to spend time with each child, having fun and sharing experiences, before he could be accepted by them as a full-fledged parent. Basically, Howard had to first become an adult friend to them. I have had many people tell me that it took until they were grown, with families of their own, to really appreciate their step-parent (and sometimes this is true for natural parents too!)

Being a patient and non-reactive step-parent can be hard to put into practice. Sometimes the biological parent will lean on the step-parent for discipline back-up, thereby placing him in a precarious position. Or the step-parent will find it impossible to practice restraint in the face of blatant disregard or defiance from the children. It is natural to feel hurt and resentful if your efforts and good intentions are being scorned. But it helps to put your own feelings aside and to have a specific plan in mind for developing a solid relationship with your step-children. You may not feel that you have enough control at first, but ultimately you have the ability to be a very significant person in their lives.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. Contact her at 925-376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com. Her new book, *Treat Your Partner Like a Dog: How to Breed a Better Relationship* is available on www.amazon.com and at Orinda Books.