When Love *Is* Enough

Our family has adopted two golden retrievers over the last 12 years. In 2006, we brought Amber—a spunky little puppy, full of fun— home from the Colorado Golden Retriever Rescue Center. We drove to Golden, Colorado to meet her. Within 3 minutes, Amber had snuggled up to my leg where I stroked her silky red fur and spoke in hushed tones, "You're a pretty little girl." Mary, the center's executive director remarked, "She's already bonded to you…"

And so it was. Love *was* enough. Within minutes, Amber **had** bonded to her new family.

Having worked full time in the field of attachment since 1992, the irony of all this was not of course lost on me, despite a well-deserved reputation as *Slow-Learner Extraordinaire*. (The term, *extraordinaire*, is as you know from the French, a language I grew to love many years ago while spending a highly educational year-long clinical training program in Paris.

Paris, **Texas**.

Anyway, "How could beautiful little Amber—who had been abused and tied to a chain in the back yard, then shuffled from kennel to kennel throughout her young life—be so effortlessly bonded to new caregivers?"

It dawned on me that so many first-time adoptive parents expect a similar seamless transition to love and bonding with **their** new child. Regarding complex adoptive youngsters, we are way too familiar with the frustration, anger, and grief that unrealistic expectations belch out time and again.

So, what is it that produces such a stark contrast between an abused Golden Retriever and an abused child? I mean, what **precisely** is the difference?

Is it for example dissimilarities in the limbic structures of a dog brain and a human brain? No? What's that? You say we've all been taught in Anatomy and Physiology 101 that the limbic system (which processes emotion) is virtually identical in all mammal brains? Hmm…

OK, well it **must** be that the answer rests within the pre-frontal cortex (PFC). I mean, clearly **that's** the key, inasmuch as the human PFC is massively more sophisticated and evolved than its counterpart in the canine. But wait, isn't the root of all mayhem in complex human trauma centered in the right-hemispheric amygdala? And isn't the amygdala, after all, within the limbic system? But again, aren't the limbic systems of puppies and people the same?

I'm richly confused. Should've never left True-Value Hardware…

Right. It seems I have research to do here. And maybe, just maybe, some skull-duggery (no pun intended) within a patented outside-the-box thought matrix will help us figure out some new ways of reaching complex children.

So, stay tuned. Looks as if I have more nights with the laptop out on the cot in the garage. My wife may not join me there, but Amber will.

After all, with her, love **is** enough.