

## Holistic Care for Dogs

### Holistic Cures to Calm Your Dog While Traveling

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Dakota starts whining with anticipation when owner Vicki Lowrimore steers into the driveway of a center for emotionally disturbed teenagers. The 8-year-old Siberian Husky can hardly wait before dragging Lowrimore toward the gymnasium, where groups of teens wait for their monthly pet-therapy visit.

The shaggy gray-and-white Husky is one of the most popular dogs in the Charleston (South Carolina) Dog Training Club's pet-therapy program, and hasn't slowed down since he lost his sight.

Dakota represents a special friend to teens in the sex-offenders program offered at the center, a confidante who will never spill any secrets or be judgmental. For seniors in day-care centers or nursing homes, Dakota is a role model who shows them disabilities can be overcome.

But the Husky's first pet-therapy patient was Lowrimore, who, more than eight years ago, struggled to come to terms with the death of her best friend in a car crash. "I wasn't relating well to people," she recalls. "I was having a real hard time with it so I decided to get a dog."

Lowrimore, who lives in Summerville, South Carolina, first acquired a German Shepherd-Husky mix from the local shelter, but the dog died of distemper just two weeks later. Then came Dakota.

"I waited about a month and then I decided to get a Siberian Husky," Lowrimore says. "I didn't know anything about dogs, so I got one from a breeder and brought him home. I don't think I could have picked a better breed. First of all, he's just beautiful. Everybody would want to stop and ask me about him and pet him. He just loved it, because he's a real people dog. That really helped me out, and I took him everywhere I went. I adored him from the start."

Lowrimore acquired two more dogs – Baby, a Rottweiler, and Rex, a Belgian Sheepdog – and took all three to the Charleston Dog Training Club for obedience training. There she learned about the club's pet-therapy program, which takes animals and their owners into hospitals, nursing homes, psychiatric facilities and adult day-care centers to interact with patients and residents.

Dakota's even-tempered personality made him a favorite among teenagers in psychological treatment and sex-offenders programs. "A lot of the kids like him because he's the calmest of the dogs," Lowrimore says. "He loves to get in your face and have you pet him, and he gives you kisses. He's always a happy, upbeat dog."

Dakota lost one eye in a puppyhood accident. Lowrimore learned he lost sight in his remaining eye when Dakota awoke from a nap one day and began bumping into the furniture. The culprit was hereditary glaucoma. Intravenous and other drug therapies were unsuccessful.