

Celebrity Dog Trainer Is a 'Life Coach for Dogs'

Tamar Geller, a celebrity dog trainer who calls herself a "life coach for dogs," says her difficult childhood shaped her training philosophy.

Posted: May 3, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

Dog trainer Tamar Geller, who got her start training dogs of celebrity clients like saxophonist Kenny G, has written a new book called "The Loved Dog: The Playful, Nonaggressive Way to Teach Your Dog Good Behavior."

But it's Geller's own difficult background – not the difficult dogs of Hollywood's elite – that has shaped her training philosophy.

"I know what it means for a pet to be misunderstood, to be used as a scapegoat in the family dynamic," Geller told USA Today. "I know what it is to live in quiet desperation, to live in uncertainty, where you don't know if you're going to have a home, whether your parent is going to hug you or smack you for the same behavior."

Geller, who calls herself a "life coach for dogs," says her mother, who is now dead, was an "emotional monster," and that her father, who was away from home a lot, did nothing to protect her, she says.

Geller says these betrayals gave her a special affinity for animals – and for the positive training methods that she so strongly advocates. "There are two kinds of leaders, the Saddam Hussein type or the Gandhi type. Both types, people listen to. What kind of dog parent do you want to be?"

Geller's new book is available now.