

Got my Mojo walking

by *Sandra J. Hartley, MPE, EdD*

Fourteen years ago, I was given a walking regimen that was absolutely fail-proof -- a mandatory, no questions asked, have to do it walking plan -- twice a day.

It was 1999. I was holding a piece of living fluff called Mojo (little joy) whom the breeder described as a Bichon-Shitzu. A dog! At that size, she had some difficulty organizing her legs and going forward in a straight line. She wanted to lie on her back, be cuddly, get tummy rubs, and chew on things.

Then ‘having to go’ happened. Mojo would suddenly find herself in the back yard, often alone, and soon she learned to ‘go’ outside. Within a week or two, the world at large beckoned. She learned that when the leash came out, we were going for a walk. From that point on, 365 days a year, rain or shine, snow, sleet, or -38C, ‘walkies’ were on the daily menu.

We have done a lot of walking! Two walks a day x 365 days x 14 years adds up to more than 5,000 walking events. If I had kept a log of the pace, distance covered, or minutes per walk, I could tell you how much energy I burned. Alas, it didn’t seem important at the time. Mojo’s statistics are also unrecorded – how many fire hydrants? How many sniffs? How many mud puddles crossed? How many dogs did we meet? How many poop bags used? Frizbees caught?

The important number is this one: it happened every day, and for that, I am indebted to Mojo, my main motivator for fitness first thing in the morning. I would never have walked that much or that regularly without her need ‘to go’. And other things get done along the way. My day gets organized and I get a few cell phone calls made to boot.



Mojo is whining a lot lately, and seems to be wanting something all the time. She is clearly aging, so friends and family encouraged me to have her checked out at her ripe old age of 81 dog years. All she did was impress the vet with superior marks on all the lab results and x-rays. Seems she is simply not getting enough walking to please her.

It is a big commitment but an inspiration to have such a loyal walking companion -- one who skips, sniffs, and gallops her way through life. We anticipate many more ‘walkies’ ahead.

About the Author

Sandra J. Hartley is Professor Emeritus, Researcher in Exercise Motivation and Gerontology, University of Alberta, and Life member of ALCOA.