



# Your Pet Guardian Inventory

A brief guide to considering  
the important questions  
about you, your pet, and  
your relationship.

by Alexandria Brown, Ph.D.



Downstay

## What is this Pet Guardian inventory?

This inventory is intended to encourage you to think about how your behaviors, your motives, and your history impact your relationship with your pet today. You've probably never considered these questions directly, although the issues that surround them may contribute to your pet's behavioral repertoire.

## Why is this important?

We enter every relationship with individual temperaments and life experiences of our own. These are learned, but are often reinforced by our cultural beliefs and expectations so often that they feel like second nature. As in many human relationships, our relationships with animals can be heavily influenced by what you've had, what you didn't have, what you want to repair, and what you want to repeat.

Considering these questions may seem straightforward at times, but consider how other people might answer differently. My hope is that by recognizing your own beliefs and assumptions around your relationship with your animal, you can take note of your challenges and start to map the changes you'd like to make.

## How should I use this?

As you read through these questions and begin thinking about the answers, circle the 2-3 that are the most difficult, most surprising, or most interesting to answer. These will contain clues to what is the most significant to you in your relationship with your animal. Likewise, these often shed light on the root cause behind many pet behavior challenges.

My hope is that this inventory will help you become more self-aware of your personal attachment style and how that might affect you and your pet's quality of life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Brown'.

Alexandria Brown, Ph.D.



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### **The Inventory: 10 Questions to Ask Yourself About Your Relationship With Your Pet**

1. Of the following action words, which one makes you the most comfortable with your human friends? If you have them, which one makes you the most comfortable with your children or other young relatives? Which one makes you the most comfortable in your relationship with your pet?  
To Give | To Receive | To Ask | To Take | To Refuse
2. How would you describe the relationships toward animals in your family growing up? (e.g., comfortable, shameful, distant, fearful, loving...)
3. What were the dominant messages toward pets and animals in general with which you grew up?
4. How comfortable are you in communicating your wants to your human friends and partners? How comfortable are you communicating your wants to your pet?
5. Do you sometimes feel jealousy when your pet seems to prefer another person over you, their primary caregiver? Do you wonder if they love you as much as you love them? What makes you feel that way?
6. Have you ever fought with a spouse or partner over a pet? What was the fight about? How do you feel about it now?
7. Why did you get a pet? What need were you trying to meet?
8. What would you like to feel when you spend time with your pet? (i.e. softness, closeness, comfort, connection, dominance, freedom, love, pride, safety, fun, power, attention...)
9. What is a hard conversation for you to have around the topic of pets? How do you feel? What is the story there?
10. What is a strength that you bring to your relationships with other humans? Do you bring that same strength to your relationship with your pet? Why or why not?