

MY DOGS RULE MY LIFE—AND I LOVE IT!

You may *think* you're the master, but your dogs know who's truly in charge. **PEGGY DREXLER, PH.D.**, explores the sneaky ways your pets can upend your world and change your outlook.

I'll say it: My dogs have me under their big, floppy paws. So much so that I often wonder, *Do I own them or do they own me?* I couldn't have predicted this current state of puppy affairs. Neither my husband nor I grew up with pets. In fact, several years ago I tried to console a friend who'd recently lost a dog, but I struggled to find the right words. "If you feel that bad, go get another one," I wanted to say. I just didn't get how deep the attachment could be.

Now, though, my husband and I have both fallen head over heels, and there's no turning back. With the adoption of our third yellow Lab, dogs officially outnumber people in our house. There's Polly, smart and stubborn, and Dorothy, unfailingly polite. Then there's Hank, the baby, who reminds me of Clifford the Big Red Dog in size, gentleness, and all-around goofiness. Like the most brilliant bosses, these three have trained my husband and me to give them exactly what they need, while leaving us grateful for the opportunity to please them.

Drexler's dogs take a break from bossing her around.