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## New Audiobook from Professor Ellen Furlong

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WGLT Interview with Ellen Furlong, September 29, 2020

Ellen Furlong: We know for example that there are these motivational differences that I was tracking in my dog track within breed differences. So we know that terriers as a general group have different personality traits than spaniels so terriers tend to be more stubborn and spaniels tend to be a little more pliant and really want to work closely and collaboratively with humans and this seems to be probably because of their breed history so what they were bred for. So terriers were bred to work independently uh to go down holes and kill rodents and things uh where spaniels were bred to work collaboratively with a person out hunting.

Darnysa Mitchell: And in your audio book, you said comparing humans with dogs are like comparing apples to oranges what do you mean by that.

Furlong: So a lot of people ask me when they first hear what I do you know how smart are dogs and they really want to know dogs are as smart as like a four year old child or something and that's really a problematic way to think about it because dogs have different kinds of problems that they need to solve and do. So the comparing you know the kinds of world that a dog lives in to the kind of world a human lives in are two very different things. Some problems that dogs need to encounter you know they live in this world of smells right and that's a very different world than the world we live in. so if we were say to compare ourselves to dogs on a smelling path we would look totally ridiculous and you know incapable of doing anything because they are so much better than us but if we were to compare dogs to a language path they would look utterly more ridiculous like they can't do anything.

Mitchell: I was looking at the Wesleyan Dog Sciences site, and I came across this quote that I found pretty interesting it said by studying the minds of our canine companions we can learn not only about how they think in reason but a little more about how we as humans think in reason as well. How so?

Furlong: That's a really interesting thesis because of their long evolutionary history with humans so we can see essentially the things that matter the most to humans in many ways are reflected back to us in dogs because we have selectively bred them for these purposes over thousands of years. So for example we know that social cues are really important for humans navigating social relationships and dogs now have been bred over many thousands of years to pick up on such emotional cues that humans give off. So a lot of time looking at what the dogs are doing and what kind of problems we've bred dogs to solve can tell us more about our own selves.

Mitchell: I came across a story months ago, that talked about how dogs are being used to sniff out covid-19. You just kind of what are your thoughts on that like why dogs?

Furlong: Dogs have incredible noses and I know that a lot of people know that dogs are good at smelling things but I don't think people understand just how good they are. So their noses are something like 10-100 thousand times more sensitive than ours are. Just to put this in perspective they can sniff out one pair of dirty socks in a pile of two million dirty socks. So they have pretty amazing senses of smell. One of the first times people discovered that dogs were good at diagnosing people with an illness is when a dog kept sniffing his owners leg at one spot where she had a mole and she finally went into the doctor and

the doctor said she had melanoma and so her dog had been telling her for like months that she had melanoma on her leg and so researchers at that point really became interested in this and now they've discovered that dogs can even smell melanoma on a band aid that someone was wearing. So their so good at detecting all kinds of scents that we just can't even envision I'm not so sure about that with covid but you know diagnosing with cancer for example they can be sensitive and more accurate than the other tests on the market.

Mitchell: What's your favorite tip or life hack when it comes to training dogs?

Furlong: Training should always be fun and it should be fun for the owner it should be fun for the dog. If the owner is getting frustrated chances are the dog is getting frustrated and you should take a break. The other thing I think people miss out on going back to something I was talking about earlier with their sense of smell. That a sense of smell is so hugely important for dogs uh you also want to be sure you can give your dog a chance to do that sniffing which is really important for their mental health and for them to be happy is to really be able to sort of sniff things and get the essentially their version of the morning news right? (laughs) What happened out here over night.