

# Dogs Anonymous

by Despina Rosales

## Cast Of Characters

Zara, a Doberman

Eddie, a Staffordshire terrier

Tashie, a miniature poodle

Torie, a miniature poodle

Jake, a Jack Russell terrier

Jasmin, a Jack Russell terrier

Jordan, a Jack Russell terrier

Foxie, a Jack Russell terrier

Indira, a Labrador retriever

Kane, a Jack Russell terrier

Spud, a miniature fox terrier

Butch, a Rottweiler

Keena, a bull terrier

Boy, a bichon frisé

Beau, a blue cattle dog

Casper, a red cattle dog

**Zara:** Hello everybody. I'm Zara, the Doberman. I see that we have a lot of newcomers this evening. We'll go around the room, and I want each of you to say your first name, your breed, and something about the problem you're facing. Let's start. [*Zara nods to Eddie.*]

**Eddie:** Hi everyone. My name's Eddie. This is my first time here. I'm a Staffordshire terrier and I can't resist chewing.

**Zara:** What exactly do you like to chew, Eddie?

**Eddie:** Pretty much anything. I've destroyed every single toy my parents have given to me within seconds. I chew shoes - the newer the better. But furniture is my favourite. I chewed up the leg of a chair the other day. [*Eddie bursts into tears.*]

**Zara:** Eddie thanks for sharing that with us. Well done. [*Zara passes a tissue box to Eddie.*] Let's continue around the circle.

**Tashie:** Hello. My name is Tashie. I'm a miniature poodle. My problem is that I'm a shopaholic. I buy myself a new designer outfit every week. Giorgio Armani, Christian Dior, Dogscino, D.O.G.N.Y. And I know that dogs don't even *need* clothes! But, I - I just *have* to have them. [*Tashie puts her muzzle in her paws.*]

**Zara:** Thank you Tashie. [*Zara motions to Torie.*] Would you like to continue?

**Torie:** Hi, I'm Tashie's sister Torie. My problem is that I have an obsession with going to the beauty parlour. Every week I get my nails cut and my fur clipped and brushed. I get ribbons tied onto my ears. And, worst of all, I even... [*She blushes and goes quiet.*]

**Zara:** It's okay Torie, you can say it.

**Torie:** I even...get...a bath. [*All the dogs gasp in horror.*]

**Zara:** Well, it's truly brave of you to admit that to a room full of dogs Torie.

**Torie:** Thanks Zara. I've had this problem for years now. It's a real burden. I mean, I can't even go to the park any more for fear of getting dirty or - even worse - in case other dogs smell the leave-in conditioner and ridicule me.

**Zara:** Soon enough, with some hard work and support from us, you'll be as unbathed, unbrushed and ungroomed as a regular dog likes to be. You'll get there Torie. Now, Jake, would you like to say a few words?

**Jake:** Thanks Zara. Hi, my name's Jake and this is my sister Jasmin.

**Jasmin:** Hi everyone.

**Jake:** We're both Jack Russells. We've been coming to this group for a while now and I've been tackling a problem with curiosity. I have to snoop into everything, wherever I am. If I find food I'll eat it; if I find a toy I'll destroy it. But it's not like I'm looking for anything in particular, I'm just looking. Christmas time is the worst. When I see all those wrapped presents, I have to open them. I don't even care what's in them, all I know is that I must open them all immediately. But, I'm proud to say, I'm improving. The other day when we went to nanna and pop's house I managed to snoop for only three hours instead of my usual five. [*Everyone howls in congratulations.*]

**Jasmin:** I just want to say that I'm really proud of you Jake. [*She gives Jake a sisterly lick on the ear.*] So you all know that I'm Jasmin. My problem is hunting. I'm fanatical about it. I have to hunt anything that moves. I spend hours and hours in the backyard hunting lizards and ants - even ladybirds. And I've been known to hunt my own shadow when nothing else is available.

**Zara:** Thanks Jake and Jasmin. [*Zara motions to Jordan.*] Would you like to say a few words?

**Jordan:** Yes Zara, thanks. I'm Jordan. I'm a Jack Russell terrier too. It's my first time, and thanks everyone for being so welcoming. My problem is tummy rubs - I just can't get enough of them! Whenever I see a human hand, I'm straight on my back for the tummy rub. Worse still, when the rubbing stops I demand more. And more! I just can't help myself. I nudge the human's hand with my nose until they start again.

**Zara:** Thank you Jordan. I must say here that this is a common problem for many, many dogs. We see that kind of thing all the time. [*Zara turns to Foxye.*] Foxye, you've been with us for a while now. Maybe six months?

**Foxye:** Yes, it's been about that long. I'm a Jack Russell as well. I have a problem with escaping. I believe the technical term for it is Houdini Syndrome. Apparently Houdini was a human who could escape from anything - he was famous for it. Well, whatever. The point is, I can't stop escaping. When my parents are home I'm fine, but as soon as they leave, I want to leave too. They keep finding each new escape route and blocking it, but I always find another way out.

**Zara:** Thanks Foxye. Houdini Syndrome is very widespread among Jack Russells. Now, we have a lovely Labrador. Please, tell us what you're here for today.

**Indira:** Hi, I'm Indira. I've a problem with eating - or, at least with what I eat.

**Zara:** A frequently-seen issue for dogs of your breed, Indira. And in fact, we have a specialised group for Labs because there are so many with the same problem you face.

**Indira:** The thing is, it's not just food that I have a problem with - I want to eat everything. Just the other day I ate my mum's mobile phone. Then she got a call and - what do you know - I started ringing!

**Zara:** I think it'd be a good idea to talk to the psychdogologist after this session. [*Indira nods.*] So, Kane, tell the group how you're going.

**Kane:** Well, I'm another Jack Russell and I'm addicted to barking. I just love making a racket. And, frankly, I'm *not* doing very well keeping it under control.

**Zara:** Don't be too hard on yourself, Kane. This is only your second meeting. In fact, because Jack Russells have such a large representation at these groups, often with similar problems with excessive hunting, snooping, digging, escaping and barking - to name a few - we'll soon be starting a group just dedicated to Jack Russell issues. [*She nods at Spud.*] Would you like to say a few words?

**Spud:** Hello, everyone, I'm Spud. I'm a miniature fox terrier and I'm obsessed with tennis balls. If a tennis ball is moving, I must chase it. Actually...I have to admit...it's not just tennis balls. Any ball will do - soccer ball, football, basketball, cannonball. Whatever is being thrown around at the time, I want to catch it. [*He hangs his head.*]

**Zara:** There's nothing to be ashamed of, Spud. Many dogs share this troubling issue. Now, Butch, how are you dealing with your problem?

**Butch:** I'm still finding it very hard to cope with being the only Rottweiler I know who's a scaredy-cat.

**Zara:** To fill you all in, Butch hates to scare people, and because he's a Rottweiler he frightens people all the time.

**Butch:** And I don't even have to do anything. I just have to stand there. When I'm on a walk with my mum, people cross the road when they see me, it makes me want to cry. [*Butch breaks down into sobs. Eddie, who still has the tissue box, passes it to him.*] On top of that, I want to change my name to Walter.

**Zara:** They're interesting identity issues that you're dealing with, Butch. Now, to continue, Keena is a bull terrier and next to her is Boy the bichon frisé. They have an unusual problem. Keena has a compulsion to sit on Boy whenever she hears his name called by their parents. Can you tell us how you're both progressing with the problem?

**Keena:** Things are going okay. Yesterday when mum called Boy I walked over to sit on him, but resisted. That was the first time I've ever been able to do that. [*Everybody yaps in congratulations.*] Thanks, everyone.

**Boy:** Yes, I guess it's one day at a time.

**Zara:** Exactly. It's one day at a time for all of us. Now for the cattle dogs. Would the blue cattle dog like to begin?

**Beau:** G'day, I'm Beau. I can't stop rounding up children and other dogs. I nip at their heels to get them to bunch up.

**Zara:** A common cattle dog issue. I'm sure these sessions will help you with that. Now, finally, the red cattle dog. What's your name?

**Casper:** My name's Casper and my problem is that I feel a deep hostility towards people with hats.

**Zara:** Right. I haven't seen that before. I've had dogs who don't like people with umbrellas, others who don't like people with plastic bags, but never hats. Tell us, did something happen to you as a puppy? Was someone with a hat unkind to you?

**Casper:** No, never. I just can't handle people with hats. Party hats are the worst. They really make me growl.

**Zara:** Okay everyone, *admitting* the problem is step one. You've all done that tonight. We'll have a short break and we'll come back and talk some more about tackling the problem. Puppacinos and dog biscuits are available for those who need refreshment or sustenance, in the back kennels. Thank you.

**NOTE:** *Except for Eddie the Staffordshire terrier and Butch the Rottweiler, all the characters in this play are based on real dogs, both alive and deceased. Also, besides Indira (who doesn't have a problem with food, but her breed - the Labrador - is famous for it) and Tashie and Torie (whose habits are a result of their owners' actions rather than theirs), the issues each dog talks about were or are actual problems for that dog.*