

MERLYN

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

my day as a therapy dog



Tina Elven

Merlyn

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My Day as a Therapy Dog

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To all the wonderful dogs who support us, and who stick by our sides no matter what we're doing; working, relaxing, or just opening the fridge for the 5th time!

Let's embrace the pure patience that dogs are showing us daily.



Hello Children

I'm Merlyn, and I am very pleased to meet you. I hope you are keen to hear about my journey to become a therapy dog and how my first day in the job went.

Before I was a therapy dog and spent my afternoons curled up beside a child and a book, I was



just a bouncy pup with oversized paws and a nose that could sniff out a biscuit from three rooms away.

I lived with my person, who is incredibly kind, patient, and an expert at giving ear rubs.

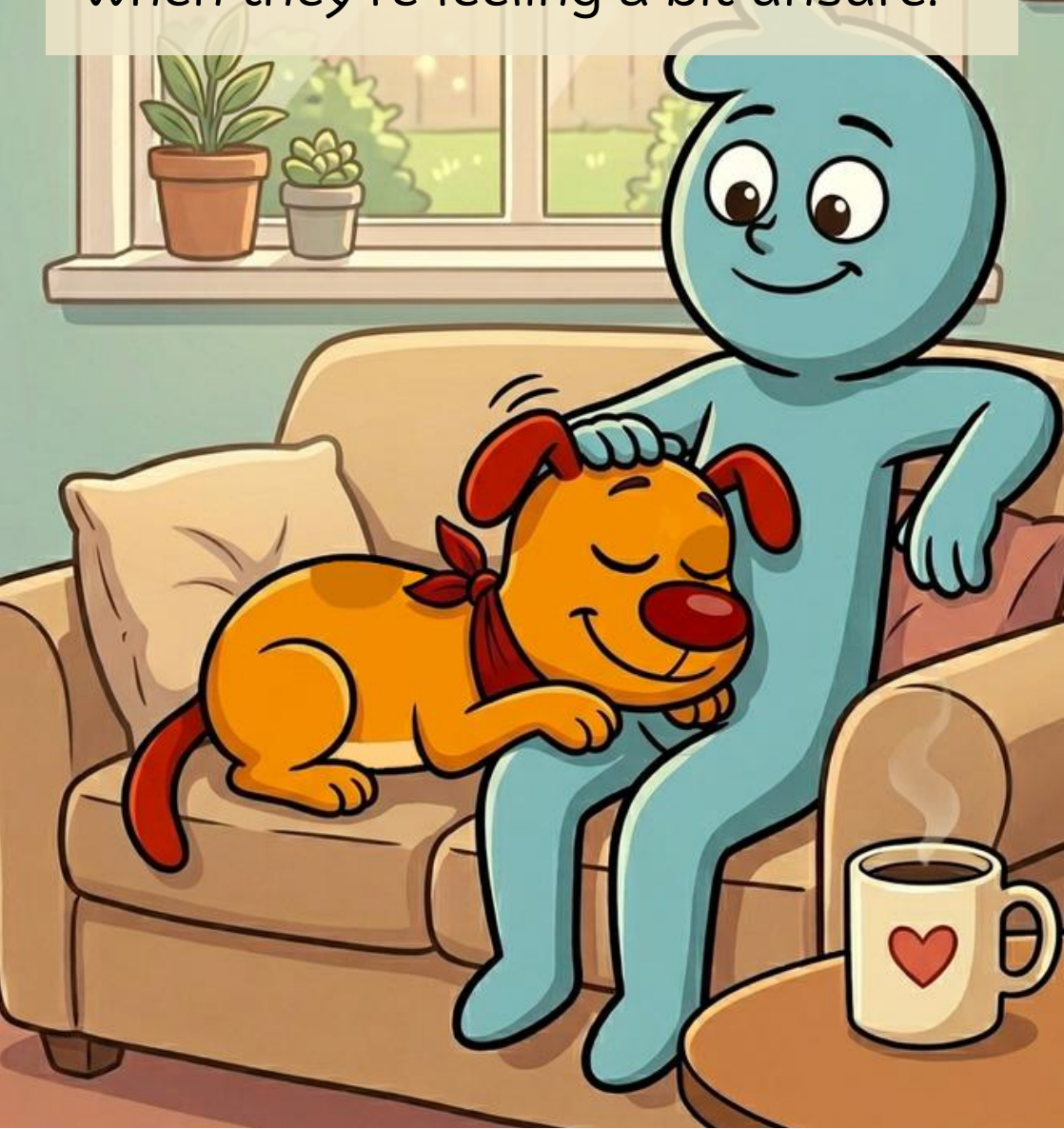
She seemed to see something special in me right from the start. It wasn't just that I was soft and cuddly (though I certainly was), or that I helped people feel safe. It was the way I listened.

I listened to everything; the kettle whistling and the birds singing. But mostly, I listened to people.



One day, while I was sitting quietly beside her on the sofa, my person had an idea.

'I think you would make a wonderful therapy dog,' she said. 'You are gentle, calm, and love being around people, especially when they're feeling a bit unsure.'



My person did some digging on the computer and rang a few people. I did some of my own digging to keep me busy too!



When she had found what she was looking for, shortly afterwards, we went out to a special place, and my training began.

I had to learn how to walk nicely on the lead, even when squirrels darted past.

I practised sitting perfectly still while people stroked my head, and I also learned the very difficult task of not jumping up, even when I was bursting with excitement.

I visited all sorts of places, busy, quiet, and noisy, just to practise being calm. I met adults, children, and even a cat who wasn't fond of dogs. I stayed very polite and didn't bark once. I was good at waiting and letting people come to me when they felt ready.



I was learning fast, and getting yummy biscuits definitely helped!



When I passed all my tests with flying colours, I became an official **therapy dog**.

My person gave me a special badge and a biscuit. I felt proud, but I was very excited about that biscuit!

To be honest, I wasn't entirely sure what 'official' meant, but since it involved cuddles and snacks, I knew it had to be something good.

My person told me that now I have a very important job to do, that together we will go out and help children feel more confident!

A Few Days Later

When we woke up that morning, my person said 'Merlyn, we are going on your first visit today.'

I knew something exciting was happening as my person was talking in a happy voice.

While I took a little nap, my person packed my special bag, the one that holds my blanket, my water bowl, and that very important pouch of biscuits.



When my bag was packed, my person told me it was time to go. So, we hopped into the car, and I settled into my usual spot with my seatbelt on. I love car rides, they always mean something nice is happening.

'Ready for your visit, Merlyn?' my person asked, smiling at me in the mirror. I gave a soft woof and wagged my tail even if I didn't know exactly where we were headed.

When we arrived at the school, I sat up straight. My person gave me a gentle pat, and we got out!



We walked through the school doors together. I stayed close to my person, my tail wagging gently, ready to meet my new friends.

'Now remember,' she said kindly, 'some children might be a little nervous. So, we go slow, we stay calm, and we let them come to you.'

I gave a thoughtful blink to show that I understood. Being calm is my job, just like listening and trying not to steal anyone's sandwich.





Once inside, my person stopped at a door and gave me a little look, the kind that means 'Here we go.'

She opened the door, and we stepped inside. The room was full of children. They all turned to look at me. I gave them my best 'hello' face, ears floppy and soft eyes!

'This is Merlyn,' my person said.
'He's a therapy dog, and he's
come to visit you today.'



A few children gasped. One whispered, 'He's so fluffy!' Another said, 'Can we stroke him?'

My person smiled. 'Merlyn is very calm and gentle.'

Now I had time to really look around, and the room was full of little feet and big eyes. They were all sitting cross-legged on the carpet, whispering and giggling.

My person was telling them all about me. 'Merlyn is a therapy dog. That means he helps people feel calm and happy, especially when they're reading. He's very patient, and he likes listening to stories.'

I gave a small tail wag. That part was true. I do love stories. I don't mind if they're read slowly or if the words get a bit jumbled. I just like being close, hearing the soft voices and watching the pages turn.

Some of the children leaned forward. One little girl whispered, 'Can we read to him?'

My person replied, 'Of course you can, Merlyn loves having stories read to him.'

The children smiled at this.





I looked up at her. She gave me a nod so then I stood up, and walked over to the children, and sat down.

One by one, they reached out. Small hands brushed my fur while I stayed still.

A boy at the front opened a book. He looked nervous, but he glanced at me and smiled.

'I'm going to read to Merlyn,' he said.

The boy opened his book slowly, like it was something precious. His fingers trembled just a little, and he looked down at the first page with a deep breath.

I shuffled closer, resting my chin on his knee. That usually helps. People feel braver when they know someone's listening. He began to read.

'At the edge of the forest,' he said, voice quiet but clear, 'there lived a fox with a very big dream...'



I listened carefully. I always do. I don't care if the words are perfect. The boy paused.

He looked at me. 'Do you like foxes, Merlyn?' he asked. I gave a little wag. Of course I do!

I like foxes, frogs, and flying carpets.

I like stories about anything, really, especially when they're read with courage.



He smiled and kept going. His voice grew stronger with each sentence.

The other children leaned in, listening too. One girl whispered, 'He's really good.'

I saw the boy's shoulders lift a little. Like he'd grown taller just by reading.

By the time he reached the end of the page, he was beaming. I gave his knee a gentle nudge, my way of saying, 'Well done.'

He laughed. 'Merlyn likes it!'



And just like that, the book didn't feel so scary anymore. It felt more like a friend.

As the boy closed his book, the room filled with quiet claps and happy smiles.

Then, from the other side of the circle, a small voice piped up.

'I want to read too,' said a girl with curly hair. She hugged a book to her chest like it was a treasure.



My ears twitched. I turned to look at her. She looked a bit nervous, like a squirrel deciding whether to come down from a tree.

My person smiled. 'Of course you can, sweetheart. Merlyn's ready.'

I padded over and sat beside her. She looked at me, wide-eyed.

'Do you really like stories?' she whispered. I blinked slowly, my way of saying yes.



She opened her book. Her hands were shaking a little, but her voice was steady.

'Once there was a dragon who didn't like to roar...'

I listened, just like before. Every word, every pause, every brave breath. The other children listened too. No one laughed. No one interrupted. They were all wrapped up in the story and in her courage.

By the time she reached the end, her cheeks were pink and her eyes were shining.

'Merlyn liked that one too,' she said, stroking my head.

I gave a happy sigh and rested my head on her lap. She giggled, meaning another reader had found her voice.

This was turning into a real wonderful day!



The room was still full of smiles when the teacher stood up and clapped his hands gently. 'Let's all say a big thank you to Merlyn and his owner for coming to visit us today,' he said.





Then – oh! – my person reached into her pocket and pulled out a biscuit. Not just any biscuit. My favourite kind with chicken!

‘This is for you, Merlyn,’ she said. ‘You’ve been such a good listener.’

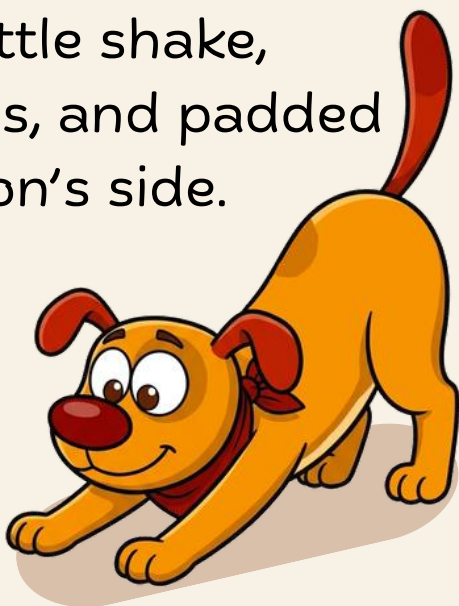
I stood up at once. Tail wagging.
Ears perked. Biscuit accepted with
great care and great joy.

Crunch. Crunch. Delicious.

'Thank you, Merlyn!' the children
chorused, some waving, some still
stroking my ears. I felt very happy
at that moment.

I gave myself a little shake,
stretched my legs, and padded
back to my person's side.

It was time
to go home!



As we walked to the door, I looked back at the children. Some were still waving.

I gave them one last wag. I'd be back. And next time, there'd be more stories to hear, and maybe another biscuit too. We stepped outside into the fresh air.

My person gave me a gentle pat. 'You were brilliant today, Merlyn,' she said. 'Such a good boy.' I puffed out my chest a little. I do like being told I'm brilliant.

But first, priorities. I trotted over to the bushes with great purpose. There was sniffing to be done.



Important sniffing. The kind of sniffing only dogs understand.
I sniffed left. I sniffed right.

Then, after a quick wee (very necessary), I gave the hedge one last sniff for good measure!

She laughed. 'All done?' I gave her a look that said, 'For now.'

Inside the car, I curled up on my cushion. It had been a good day. Stories, strokes, biscuits, and a very fine hedge.

I closed my eyes, I was already dreaming of the next visit.



Thank you for being
part of my journey to
become a Therapy Dog



Writing books is a passion of Tina's and she enjoys constructing stories that, more often than not, contain a therapeutic or self-help message. Tina uses her creative side to weave helpful themes around a magical story as she believes that it is inspiring for a child to follow a beloved character through a challenging situation to an ultimately successful ending.

Merlyn, the Therapy Dog, has a love of stories and biscuits

Merlyn is a bouncy pup with a very special gift, he knows how to listen, so he begins his training to become a therapy dog.

Join Merlyn on his heartwarming first visit at a school. With a soft chin rested on a knee and a wag of his tail, Merlyn shows his new friends that they don't have to be perfect to be brave. This is a charming story about finding your voice and the magic of a furry friend who listens without judgement.

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