

Tale of Two Golden Girls

Part 1: The Dog

It was a Tuesday night in October about 8pm. I was waiting for my daughter, Darci to arrive home. She was expected hours ago so, as a protective mama bear, I gave her a call. "We stopped to go shopping. Will be there soon", she said. Happy to wind down after a long work day, I put on my pjs and started making myself a cup of tea. As I turned to greet her, all I saw was this adorable little 8 week old golden retriever puppy cupped in her hands!

My jaw dropped in bewilderment. "Surprise" she said as the wee thing was placed in my arms. "What have you done?"... "I thought you needed a friend to keep you company". The shock on my face was so clear that her friend that was in tow had a look of absolute fear on her face.

Let me be clear, I love dogs especially puppies but (I thought) I was at a stage in my life that I did not want the responsibility or to be tided down by a dog. As I processed what was happening, Darci carted in a dog crate, new bed, food, bowl and of course, lots of doggie toys. Instantly, my house was unmistakably all-things-puppy. As quickly as she came in, she left not giving time to truly object. Smart move...

Puppy and I spent a few hours bonding, setting up shop and establishing a few rules. About 11pm., I put her in her new freshly outfitted crate, covered it in a blanket and said Good Night. Instantly, the crying became. Having had dogs before, I knew this was a really tough stage but I was determined to get through it. Two hours later, I cracked. I didn't let her out but I did sit beside the crate until 2am. When I thought she had finally settled, I tried to sneak out of the room but she woke and was noisier than before. At 3am I crawled out of the room on my hands and knees and finally made it to my bed. Within 10min, I could hear her crying again. I didn't give in but neither one of us slept that night - or the next night- or the next night.

In the meantime, I had come to terms with the fact she was here to stay and I needed a name. After a laundry list of suggests and possibilities, we decided "Sexi Lexi" was fitting. Lexi was a typical puppy. She soaked up all the affection that was offered with great excitement. She played for a bit then had a long nap. No wonder she was tired as she had not slept for 3 nights. I was beyond exhausted. Night 4 started with the usual determination but by midnight I caved... Lexi joined me in bed and we both went straight to sleep. Don't judge me. I gave it a valiant effort!

Lexi became part of my routine and our life in short order as puppies so often do. I was surprised at how quickly I adjusted to the new responsibilities of scheduled pee breaks even in the middle of the night, 3 walks a day, playtime, training time and lots of cuddles of course. Suddenly, she was a part of me - my heart easily found plenty of room for this precious little thing.

Darci came with her dog Louie everyday to visit. It's funny how quickly a New Normal can be established. Life passed. Christmas came and went with lots of new toys, puppy training started in January then in no time spring was in the air.

But by late April, I was concerned that Lexi was still so small and thin. She seemed to want to sleep more and was observing life instead of joining in. We tried to up her food to fatten her up a little but she was eating less, not more. She was also drinking very little water. In May, during our morning walks, she suddenly started to just stop and sit. Maybe growing pain I thought so I gave her a moment to rest before we continued. But I knew in my gut something was wrong. But ones brain plays tricks on you - She came from a breeder so it must be my imagination or something simple.

One day, we were only 5 minutes into an evening walk and I had to carry her home. Lexy had also started to hunch her back when walking, stretching from her neck when she was getting up and seemed “tippy”. This is the Only way to explain it. Her back feet landed in a straight line; there was no space between them as she walked. Her stance was like a triangle instead of a square. Her head was getting boney and her eyes had dark brown rings around them. My heart was breaking for her so I booked a vet appointment.

She was definitely under weight but initial blood work did not show anything untoward. The vet recommended hip xrays but this would require sedating her. I agreed. I went to collect her later in the day and the vet put the xrays up on the screen. Now I’m no expert but I immediately could see there was a problem. I remember saying “Crap”, and the vet saying “Yup, I’m sorry”. Stage 4 double hip dysplasia I was told. The worst possible diagnosis.

The vet said they would send me an email with a menu of options but the short story went as follows:

- 1) give her back to the breeder who would put her down
- 2) Give her medication to manage the pain but she would probably dislocate a hip in 3-6 months and I would have to put her down
- 3) A “bandaid” surgery for \$6000 that would reduce the pain, give her limited mobility and an unknown life span
- 4) A whopping \$12,000 worth of double hip replacement. They would do one hip now that would take about 6 months to heal before they could do the second hip. So... a full year of treatment and recovery for both of us! She would have to be confined to a crate during the entire time. We know how well that was going to go. And...Oh, by the way, blood infects are common and that would most likely kill her.

I was in shock to say the least. I gathered up my babe and headed out the clinic asap. I know the vet was surprised I did not book an appointment immediately but I needed time to think. And Lexi needed some time to rest after a very stressful day. I cried all the way home.

Family conversation confirmed we were not prepared to spend \$12,000. Nor were we prepared to put Lexi or ourselves through the process when the outcome was bleak. After a few days to collect myself, I was on a mission to find other options.

Some personal history is important here. My kids were both sickly as young kids - sore throats, chest infections, ear infections, constant running noses. We were in and out of the Doctors office constantly. Lots of antibiotics and sleepless nights. I felt like a failure as mother. Then I met a Lady at my kids school that introduced me to Alternative health care options. Sue had experienced similar issues with her kids and was equally scared and frustrated. As a result, she had started training to be a Natural practitioner. I was happy to listen and began to take her advise. I changed the kids diets, began giving them natural supplements and homeopathic remedies. Within 3 months, we saw a profound change in both kids. More than 25 years later, Sue and I are great friends and nature medicine is our primary method of staying healthy and treating illness. Please understand - I continue to have a great relationship with my medical doctor. I firmly believe there is a time and place for traditional medical treatment.

Back to Lexi - I had immediately researched chiropractors for dogs and found a local gal by the

name of Christy that was happy to work on Lexi. She confirmed the vets diagnosis and determined Lexi also had spine curvature. Swell... more good news. I agreed to weekly appointments for Lexi to try and help manage the pain. With tears running down my face, I also went to the dog daycare facility the Lexi went to once or twice a week and for training classes. I told the gals about Lexi and, like me, they were heartbroken. They all loved Lexi and knew how loving and special she was. Lindsey, one of the workers asked if I knew about "gold bead treatment". Nope, this was news to me. She was good enough to print me off some information and gave me the name and number of a Veterinary clinic about an hour north of us that had a German doctor that did the procedure. I spent 2 days researching gold bead treatment on the internet. It was mostly used in Europe and a little bit in the US but not in Canada.

I got home from work on Thursday and Lexi was clearly struggling. I had to make some decisions - do I put her on pain medication that will also damage her organs? Should I reconsider the surgery or give her back to the breeder as the vet had suggested? NO, No way! So I made the call the the clinic up north. As I look back now, it all felt very divinely guided.

It was late in the day so the receptionist had gone, but the owner, Barbara, picked up the phone herself. I explained the situation and who had recommended me to her clinic. She said be here tomorrow morning at 10am. Barbara was kind and gentle with Lexi. She said, "Lexi would be an excellent candidate for the procedure. Let me call Dr. Wolters." Dr. Wolters said he was available to do the procedure on Lexi next Wednesday and the cost would be \$1200 plus 2 more xrays to make sure the front joints were ok at a cost of about \$200. This would be a one-time treatment. Hell yes I said! What did I have to lose? - everything actually - Lexi. As it turned out, Lexi's front joints were intact and in good health. A bit of good news was such a relief and I took it as a sign that I was on the right path. As we left the office that Friday morning, we ran into Lindsey who was there with one of her dogs. She was excited to see us there and was also very encouraging.

I had Lexi at the clinic by 9am on Wednesday. The drive up was a little nerve racking. I had asked a lot of questions but realized I still did not really know what to expect. It was a leap of faith. Not everyone understood my choice but the people that really mattered to me were wholeheartedly supportive so off we went into the unknown again. Barbara was there to greet us and said they would call when Lexi was ready to go home later in the day. I was back on the road by 9:15am. I can not deny there were doubts but I trusted by gut and faith.

I was at work when the clinic called. It was about 1:30pm and they said everything went well and Lexi is ready to go home. I was surprised it was so early in the day but also thrilled. I grabbed Darci and we headed out to collect my wee angel. We had no idea what to expect. How would Lexi be? How long would it take her to recover? When would we see an improvement if any? What would her quality of life be? Would we ever be about to go for long walks in the woods again which we both dearly loved?

When we arrived, they brought Lexi out on her leach. She was clearly still under the influence of the anesthetic but walking on her own. Due to her smaller than average size, Dr. Wolters did not want to give additional drugs to speed up the process and asked that we give her the time that she needed for the anesthetic to wear off naturally. Lexi walked out to the truck. Darci lifted her in and she fell asleep instantly. Sadly, we had missed Dr. Wolters but were given instructions and information about the procedure, her recovery and her rehab over the next 8 weeks.

Each of Lexi's flat hip bones were shaven to the skin about 2x4 inches. Within each space, Lexi had 3 blood spots where the gold beads had been injected through an needle (tube). Dr. Chidiac included Dr. Wolters email address if I had any questions. She also stated he was anxious to talk

to me to ensure I understood what he had done and the recovery process. Darci and I were so happy to see that the process was minimally invasive and that Lexi was walking that we really did not have too many questions. We carried Lexi into the house to her “throne” - the foot stool in the family room that had become her safe and comfortable place over the past month.

Lexi slept soundly until about 10 pm. I helped her down but made her walk outside for her evening pee then off to bed we went. She slept through the night soundly but was ready to get down by morning. Again out for a pee but straight to her throne where she slept for most of the day. I stayed home with her on Thursday. Family and friends were in for short visits but she didn't make too much effort to greet them. However, about 4pm - 24 hours since arriving home - she woke and wanted to go out. Much to my delight, she walked out, had a drink of water, eat a little food and then spent a few minutes just stretching on the back deck. Then for the first time in months, Lexi seemed happy, playful, wanting attention, wanting to play. It was a beautifully sunny day in late July 2018. Just sat on the grass and let her come and go as she pleased. It was easy to see that she was testing her legs and I think, realizing she was no longer in great pain. We were careful to restrict her activity until the weekend, but by Saturday, she was once again exploring the yard and very verbal, a trait Lexi had possessed since she was a pup but had lost over the past few months.

There was a number of obvious changes in her body structure by the end of the weekend. Although we still had to help her get up, she was no longer stretching from her neck to initiate movement, her back was beginning to flatten out and she was starting to settle onto her back feet. Previously, she would look like a cat with an arched or hunched back and much of her weight was on her front shoulders and front feet. I now suspect to minimize the pain. By Sunday afternoon, she could get up and down on her own, was not as “tippy” and was FINALLY having a bowel movement. Again, I'm assuming due to a reduction in pain. We were overjoyed by her progress but remained cautiously optimistic.

I had arranged for another chiropractor treatment for Lexi on Monday a week earlier before I even knew that she was to have the gold bead acupuncture. I was unsure if I should take her but wanted Christy's assessment. Lexi walked into the office and Kristy could see a difference immediately. She was excited, very interested and amazed at the change in Lexi. Lexi was still out of alignment and her spine was still twisted but Christy was thrilled at the change in Lexi's movement and demeanor. We agreed to treatments once a week until the first of September and would evaluate her condition and needs then.

Lexi made daily progress physically and emotionally. Within 2 weeks, she was playing with the other dogs, swimming in the pool, taking short walks twice a day, eating, putting on weight and had completely changed her stance. Although it was minimal, I could, for the first time in months, see her hind legs squaring up with about an inch of distance between her feet. She was gradually not tipping over and was starting to run a little. About mid August, she jumped up on her throne by herself! My heart stopped for a second waiting for some sign of pain but there was none. It took her about 3 months before she stopped asking for help to get up completely. By early September we changed her Chiro appointments to every 2 weeks then once a month come December. Lexi now goes every month for a check up and adjustment to her alignment as needed. She no longer has spine curvature, her front and rear joints are mostly normal depending on her activity level. Lexi started back to daycare once a week in October! She and everyone at daycare were to happy. They kept her in with the puppies under close supervision for several months but now she is in the regular area often twice a week. Yes she comes home exhausted but very happy to have been able to play with her friends.