



Free Days With George: Learning Life's Little Lessons from One Very Big Dog

Colin Campbell

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A heartwarming, true story about George, a rescue dog who helps his owner rediscover love and happiness. *Marley & Me* meets *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *The Art of Racing in the Rain*--get your tissues ready, animal lovers!

After Colin Campbell went on a short business trip abroad, he returned home to discover his wife of many years had moved out. No explanations. No second chances. She was gone and wasn't coming back. Shocked and heartbroken, Colin fell into a spiral of depression and loneliness.

Soon after, a friend told Colin about a dog in need of rescue—a neglected 140-pound Newfoundland Landseer, a breed renowned for its friendly nature and remarkable swimming abilities. Colin adopted the traumatized dog, brought him home and named him George. Both man and dog were heartbroken and lacking trust, but together, they learned how to share a space, how to socialize, and most of all, how to overcome their bad experiences. At the same time, Colin relived childhood memories of his beloved grandfather, a decorated war hero and a man who gave him hope when he needed it most.

Then everything changed. Colin was offered a great new job in Los Angeles, California. He took George with him and the pair began a new life together on the sunny beaches around L.A. George became a fixture in his Hermosa Beach neighborhood, attracting attention and giving affection to everyone he met, warming hearts both young and old. Meanwhile, Colin headed to the beach to rekindle his love for surfing, but when George encountered the ocean and a surfboard for the first time, he did a surprising thing—he jumped right on the board. Through surfing, George and Colin began a life-altering adventure and a deep healing process that brought them back to life. As their story took them to exciting new heights, Colin learned how to follow George's lead, discovering that he may have rescued George but that in the end, it was George who rescued him.

Free Days with George is an uplifting, inspirational story about the healing power of animals, and about leaving the past behind to embrace love, hope and happiness.

From the Hardcover edition.

Free Days With George: Learning Life's Little Lessons from One Very Big Dog Details

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Samantha says

Simply Awesome!!! I loved this book! It was so heartwarming and inspiring. I wasn't to sure at first when I read about the surfing but this book is about so much more! If you are an animal lover this is a book you need to read! I would love to meet George

Ron says

i>

"A free day is when you spend a whole day doing the things you love to do - like building sand castles, flying kites or going swimming. And when you do those things with the people you love who love you, you don't grow old that day. It's a free day."

This charmer of a book certainly expresses the greater-than-fond memories that Colin Campbell shared with his big dog, George. I'd also call it a thank you for giving him a reason to enjoy life again. That's funny to say because the life typically saved would be the dog's. Sometimes, it's both. Campbell did rescue George, but guess what? Campbell rescued George too. I think a lot of people can identify with that. A dog (cat, horse – insert your pet here) will give us all they got and ask for very little in return. In this case, Colin needed companionship. George needed love and understanding.

Let me tell you one thing about George that explains it all. He has this "heart" as big as his body, and his body is a big one. I've never owned a dog that weighs 140+ pounds, but a few years back I took care of a friend's Mastiff for a weekend. Giant dog meets small house. Picture a horse in a shed. I made the mistake of play-wrestling with him that first day. Holy crap. "Easy boy", I yelled as he jumped straight up, and then bounded off in a looping circle that instantly rearranged my living room. First and last time for that. But I got such a kick out of walking him down the street as the rubberneckers nearly drove off the road to get a second look. My cat hid under a bed for a full 24 hours, before saying "the hell with it", and lay down in the hall. The mastiff wouldn't pass. He looked at him, then at me with eyes that said, "help!" Gosh, I still laugh about that. Just goes to show that even a very big dog can have his uncertainties.

George has some uncertainties too, born from an unknown past of possible abuse, but like most dogs that end up in a good place, he proved resilient. I liked that so much. It was the heart of a journey that also proved to change a man's life.

Read this book if you need a pick me up. Read it if you love a pet. Read it for a "free day".

Thank you to my friend Liz for recommending this book months ago!

David Arnold says

Move over Marley and Me; Free Days with George is the next great story for readers of all ages. No matter what your upbringing, age or demographic, this story will start you thinking about what a "free day" would mean to you.

The story makes you think about what are the most important thing in your life! What are you missing and what are you going to do to bring them into your life? It could be as simple as finding more time for you and your spouse, your family or taking your dog for a walk. The idea of Free Days is so open for personal interpretation, that there are no wrong answers, only opportunities to add fun and joy to your life and with those you love.

Sarah Doherty says

This was such a heart-warming and unique book. Whether you are a dog-owner/dog-lover or not, this is one to be enjoyed. Can't believe this is Campbell's first book! I thoroughly enjoyed every bit of it and did not want the stories of George to end.

Kristi.Wallacerogers.Com says

Inspirational on how a man and a dog came together to move on after traumatic experiences in both their lives...and learned what it meant to appreciate 'free days'.

Elyse Walters says

I'm in Florida visiting -home is Northern California. I've been to a few beaches here in Saint Petersburg, but yesterday was especially fun when we spent the entire day at the only dog beach with my daughters Chihuahua named 'Lunchbox'... and a couple of her friends. Dogs of all sizes were running happy, some great ocean swimmers, others looking for lunch handouts.

Families were relaxing under rainbow colored umbrellas, or some like me, were walking the long strip of the beach in my swim suit soaking up the sun, and getting a little fried.

Reading "Free Days With George".....Learning Life Lessons from One Very Big Dog, by d Colin Campbell....is a wonderful page turning heartwarming true story.... a PERFECT DELIGHTFUL BEACH READ!!!

At the beginning of this story, Colin shares about Jane....the woman he married with so much love, admiration, and passion for her...that I was in 'aw' of Colin. Right away, I saw Colin as a man with a huge heart - a man that wouldn't hurt a fly- yet I was worried for him. It took Jane longer to fall in love with Colin. I found their relationship interesting...I 'saw' the early red flags...but hoped I was wrong. I wasn't, Jane left George. She was cold and ruthless about it too. Shame on Jane!

Colin didn't do very well after Jane left.. (his job was steady and he remained productive, so that was good), but he was suffering from the shocking loss of Jane... Depression increased...but a year in therapy helped

tremendously.

Plus, Colin's friend Matt kept urging him to get a dog. Having a dog in the house - even the first night - before 'any' bonding, Colin began to feel less lonely.

Colin became the owner of Kong...(changed his name to GEORGE which better fit his personality). Besides, it was the 140 pound Newfoundland Landseer's 'personal- choice'. George was the name he responded to!!! Being a rescue dog...having been neglected - maybe abused - took extra time and care to build trust. Colin enrolled George in Obedience School. At first he couldn't follow directions at all. But...then when it was suggested that Colin physically demonstrate his love---emotionally show George that he loved him with lots of hugs-- George responded more.

George didn't come from a 'hugging' family ... but he talks about his grandfather,(reflecting back), with so much love, it's heartwarming as can be. His grandfathers love was a strong lifetime influence on him. What *I* loved ... is not only was his grandfather a war hero... but he was a TOP NOTCH GRANDFATHER HERO! It's clear to me that when an adult inspires a young person in their life -- teaches them gently -- guides them-- empowers them-- engage their curiosity--which respect unconditional love. shows interest in them, gets involved with their interests, ...wonderful human beings 'blossom' like Colin. Colin's only crime was being a faithful husband who loved his wife - perhaps a little blind to his wife's inner needs -but he didn't do a damn thing wrong.

Colin was living in Toronto at this time....when his company transferred him to Los Angeles California. It was a perfect fit...for both he and George ...(both Ocean lovers) ...

They moved to Hermosa Beach...(where my nephews, and cousins live - and sister next door in Manhattan Beach). Surf City...California Dreaming fun! Volleyball on the beach.. and tanned bodies! "The rumors and legends of beautiful California girls are all true, and many of these women, often wear tiny bikinis." (laughing...hey, no pressure or anything, girls).

It was so much fun to read about the enjoyment Colin and George --the big Newf--were having in the ocean. George started pulling a kid on a surfer board --- It was hilarious!!!!

Colin had been a lifeguard at Rissers Beach in Nova Scotia, when he had been a teenager. (not a surfer beach) -- However he was introduced to the surfboard as part of his lifeguard training. Ocean paddling to save a needed unconscious victim. ..

But....having a 'board'... and being a teen, it only took a matter of time until he figured out a way to surf -- he just waited for a stormy day with big waves (nothing like California....but perfect for a beginner)...and taught himself to surf.

Living in California - Colin and George - with the ocean, their new surfing partnership, their 'love-connection', and how they saved each other, is an inspiring uplifting story.

Oh my... The photos of George are sooooo BEAUTIFUL too!!!

As one kid on the beach said to Colin, (after he watched *George* surf)....
"Dude, your dog is rad!"

Thank You Random House, Netgalley, and Colin Campell. (YOU & GEORGE ROCK)

Liz says

Sometimes I feel like I should come equipped with a sign...

Warning: I can talk about my dogs for hours. Be careful what you ask!

Naturally, reading this story made me think about my own two Newfs so am I going to talk about them now? You bet. And I have no shame.

When a friend brought this book to my attention, I was beyond excited to find a story about a Newf and his person. Colin Campbell is not a writer by profession but he doesn't need to be because his love and devotion toward George is beautiful to behold. Their story is simple: A heartbroken man. A 140-pound, abandoned, dispirited dog. And they saved each other in every possible way. The life lessons that Colin learns from George, that we all can learn from dogs, make so much sense that it's amazing how often we forget: Get out and experience life. Give love away every single day. Like George, "Live brightly and beautifully – every single day."

I lost count of the times I paused to read an excerpt to my husband because there was something that we could 100% identify with. Let me first say that Newfoundlands are big. Mine are 140 and 130 lbs, and most of the time they are the biggest dogs in the room (except for the time we met an Irish Wolfhound at the vet clinic). So it's not an attempt at boasting to say that they draw a lot of attention – many times they are truly the biggest dogs that people have ever seen.

Colin's experiences with George had us laughing pretty hard because they are so spot-on.

It was next to impossible to walk even a few blocks without being stopped and George being fussed over. Almost everybody noticed him. From as far as half a block away I'd hear "Oh my god! He's beautiful!" and "What kind of dog is he?"

True story! And I don't hate that.

*"What kind of dog is he?" "A Newfoundland."
"How much does he weigh?" "One hundred forty pounds."
"Does he eat a lot?" "Surprisingly, not really."*

Also true, a nearly word for word a conversation I have had countless times and I never get tired of it.

Yes, I'm biased. And yes, they are the most loving, sensitive, loyal, goofy and vibrant creatures in the world! That's why anyone who knows me will understand that there's no way I could rate this book any less than five stars.

Rebecca McNutt says

I won a copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

Free Days with George is unlike any other dog story. It was funny, hopeful, interesting and nostalgic, with an unlikely but strong friendship. Colin's wife has left him, and he finds solace in a huge but friendly Newfoundland dog who happens to love surfing. Combining this with intriguing WWII photographs, this

book is an unforgettable memoir and a story that anyone will enjoy reading.

Elisabeth Manley says

3.5. This was a fluffy (pun intended) and uplifting read about a man and his great big Newfoundland dog George. It follows a year's period in which the author goes through an unexpected divorce, saves a rescue dog, moves to California for work, and proceeds to be saved right back by George's love. The happiest and most exciting parts are definitely the doggy obedience school part and the surfing competition part. I read the second half of the book with my own furry girl beside me and couldn't stop hugging her, she probably thinks I'm crazy now.

Teena in Toronto says

I love reading books about animals and that's why this one caught my eye.

When Colin's marriage unexpectedly ended, he was heartbroken and became depressed. A friend eventually suggested that he get a dog to keep him company. He found a 140-pound Newfoundland Landseer in need of home on a pet finder site online and adopted him and named him George. George had had a traumatic life up to that point and wasn't very trusting, especially of men. Over time, the two helped heal each other.

When Colin was offered a job in Los Angeles, he and George moved from Toronto to a new life there. Growing up in Nova Scotia (that's where I'm originally from), Colin had been a surfer. When he tried surfing on a beach near his home, he was surprised when George jumped in the water after him (the first time George had been near water) and tried to "save" him (his doggy instincts had kicked in). Despite trying to get George to stay on the beach, George stayed in the water with Colin and started jumping on the surfboard, catching waves, with Colin paddling behind. Thus began their surfing weekends and even doggy surfing competitions.

I enjoyed this book. The story starts out sad with Colin's marriage breaking down but it ends happily with he and George making a life together and having adventures. I liked the writing style ... I found it flowed well. It was like having a conversation with Colin and he was telling me their story. There are lots of great pictures in the back of the book.

The title comes from something Colin's beloved grandfather used to say ... "A free day is when you spend a whole day doing the things you love to do. And when you do those things with people you love who love you, you don't grow old that day. It's a free day."

After two years in Los Angeles, Colin and George moved back to Toronto. I'll be keeping an eye out for them ... George will be hard to miss!

Blog review post: <http://www.teenaintoronto.com/2017/04...>

Ann Marie (Lit•Wit•Wine•Dine) says

Full disclosure: I own a Newf. Therefore, there was little to no chance this book was getting less than five stars no matter what. But I'm happy to say those five stars are well-deserved! I read this book in less than a day. It's a fast-feel good read and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Colin Campbell was a man who'd hit a rough spot in life. His wife, the love of his life, left him suddenly and with no explanation. Truly devastated, he buried himself in work and picked up a few bad habits. He was still having a great deal of difficulty moving on when, months later, a coworker suggested he get a dog. Fortunately for all involved, this coworker was quite persistent (a role I myself have played many times), pointing him to Petfinder to find his doggie love match. And there he finds Kong (a name change was obviously in his future), a one hundred forty pound Landseer Newfoundland who'd had his own share of bad luck. Everything was about to change for both of them.

Without giving too many details of the story, I'll say it's a beautiful one, told with humor and honesty. The classic who-saved-who story that happens so frequently in rescue mixed with some very George/Colin-specific elements that are quite unique! I thought I knew what a "free day" was but I'll never again hear the expression without thinking of how it is defined in this book, as told to the author by his beloved grandfather. I highly recommend this book, especially to dog lovers.

And for those of you who are not fortunate enough to own an oofa-newf, and who may think the author is exaggerating in his telling of George's compulsion to "save" everyone in the water, here is a little video of my girl Belle. (She's ashamed of her short haircut so please, if you see her, don't mention it.) In it she is "saving" Jerry, the Labrador Retriever who DOES NOT NEED SAVING. Labs, as you may know, are very competent swimmers. It's a little long so if you want to fast forward, the "BIG RESCUE" comes at about 20 seconds prior to the end.

5/5 stars

Many thanks to Penguin Random House Canada, via NetGalley, for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Kelly says

I am a 16-year veteran independent bookseller; I read constantly. Critically, for myself, customers & the reading public. "Free Days with George" is in hardcover currently & without pause, I highly-recommend this memoir to anyone! Colin Campbell's writing is crisp, unsentimental & yet brimming with the joy & pain that is human existence- now & in our past generations. Indeed, "Free Days with George" proves that it is not the destination but the journey which truly matters in a life. We must strive towards happiness and, as Campbell's war veteran grandfather taught him (& now, the reader) cherish joyful, content "free days." Campbell reveals the alchemy of joining his battered post-divorce life and, that of an abandoned Newfoundland dog. George. A broken spirit, be it a product of neglect, divorce, abandonment, or war, can be recreated and healed with joy & care. Campbell's rescue of/by George is funny, vivacious love story that is certain to impact hearts & minds. George is a star of unique capabilities; the surfing, goofy, devoted, hilarious life he leads with his 'dad' will be entrenched in your memory. Colin Campbell's "Free Days with

George" is set in Toronto and, the beaches of Nova Scotia & California. Written with wisdom, humour, sorrow, and love, Colin & George eloquently remind readers to savour 'our own moments' & "free days." A gift.

Onceinablue moon says

Living at one of the rare off leash dog beaches I LOVED this story. Everyday my border collies run and play with dozens of dogs, including a big newfy. This book is sweet, touching, with laugh out loud funny moments. yes, I am glossing over colins life and focusing on George, because George has the power to heal. The photos will melt any beach loving animal owner to the quick! Delightful book!

John Mousseau says

Great story that will resonate well with anyone whose rescued a dog or is an animal lover in general. We all know the impact pets have on our lives and this book captures that magic beautifully. Destined to be a best seller!

Ruthie says

Looking for a "feel good" book? This is an uplifting novel about finding the joy in life. It is about the bond between dog and man, about the true nature of dogs, about discovering what is truly important in life and cherishing it. Colin Campbell also introduces us to "Free Days". Free Days are a concept taught to him by his grandfather, a WWII hero. I won't give away the full details about this delightful idea, but after reading just the prologue, and certainly after reading the book, you will find yourself actively seeking out and cherishing your own "Free Days".

The bond between an animal and it's owner can be powerfully strong. There are times when it can truly be lifesaving. Some think dogs will love anyone who feeds and shelters them. It's not always that simple. For proof, meet George.

George is a rescue dog. A massive, 6 foot long, 140 pound, afraid of men, probably abused, Newfoundland rescue dog. Life has not been kind to George in his short time on Earth. Colin is a successful marketing exec. living in Toronto. Recently life has not been too kind to Colin. Colin finds George and decides to take him home. Their journey begins. What happens next is a rocky endeavor, as these two have to learn to trust - one another and others, to work (and play) together and apart, and most importantly, to find joy in the everyday once again. The voyage is what makes this book shine-the path to the rediscovery of joy for both Colin and George.

George is a remarkable dog-proud, friendly, gentle, protective and intuitive. He attracts friends and admirers wherever he goes, most notably when he hits the beach. That's because when Colin is transferred to California, George, being a dog bred for ocean rescues, learns to surf! It is in the ocean, on a board that George and Colin find it all - the trust, the bond and most of all the purest joy. They also win a few trophies...

This is not a long book but it packs a big punch. Fair warning - this book will make you want to run out and adopt a dog. It will make you want to adopt a BIG dog! You will never forget George-and you will never forget the concept of Free Days. These are two gifts that Colin Campbell gives the reader - free with purchase!!

N.B. There are some great pix in the book but for even better and more recent shots the author has an Instagram called colintown which features George in his everyday life, including George with various feline and canine friends. There is also a Facebook page : freedayswithgeorge.

Thanks to Colin Campbell and Doubleday Canada for an advanced readers copy!
