



**StubbyDog™**  
Rediscover the pit bull.

## The Healing Power of the Pit Bull

*Family with two autistic children discovers how they could help pit bulls and how pit bulls could help them*

*By Jennyfer Keohane*

As a child I grew up in east New York. My daily walk to school was littered with crack vials and syringes. It was a common to see dog fighters and drug dealers with pit bulls; drugs, violence and dealing seemed to go hand and hand.

Who would've thought that almost 20 years later this kid from the ghetto would be running a pit bull rescue in Texas?

### ***How it All Started***

When I moved away in college, I needed a hobby to distract me from the culture shock of leaving my concrete jungle. I decided to work with animals and volunteer for a local rescue. At first it was wildlife and reptiles. Then one day while in Petco, I met up with dog rescuers and started working with canines. By this time I was a mom of two boys, Isaiah and Charles. They were three years apart and they both were diagnosed as autistic. They have Asperger's Syndrome, which means they're functioning but they have several issues with social behaviors, and they have trouble sitting still for their teachers.

Charles had a lot of problems with his behavior including impulse control, and Isaiah had gone into a regression. He was removed from his homeroom class and transferred to a class for kids with special needs. Isaiah stopped recognizing letters, numbers and colors. When he was at his worst, he lost bowel control and had horrible acid reflux from stress. As a result, I had to quit my job as a DJ and give up my application to go to police academy. I wanted to get my children a dog but I wasn't sure how that would work with their personalities because my boys can be emotionally distant.

Or at least that's what I thought before we got Bosier.

### ***A Pit Bull Named Bosier***

Bosier was a red nose American Staffordshire terrier who was found furless and covered in sores on a highway in Grand Prairie, Texas. He was barely growing his fur back and under the care of another rescuer when I met him. As weeks passed, I began to develop a relationship with this dog. Although I was normally apprehensive of pit bulls, I wasn't fearful of him because I just saw a dog that loved everyone around him no matter what. I lived two blocks from the vet he was seeing, so I volunteered to take him in as my foster.





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I brought Bosier home and the boys seemed to take interest. Charles asked me what type of dog he was; when I told him that Bosier was pit bull, Charles seemed to just shake it off. This wasn't abnormal behavior of a child with his condition.

As the weeks went by I noticed that unlike with other dogs, the boys seemed to take a liking to Bosier—and he didn't seem to mind either! In fact, the dog that had been in treatment for almost a year was finally growing his fur back and perking up. The boys would come home and climb into Bosier's crate, and the three would take a nap or watch cartoons. At one point I asked my oldest son why they seemed so close to this dog. He said, "Bosier knows what it's like to be looked at as weird or different. People treat us badly and he knows how it feels." I was stunned.

From that moment forward, we decided to foster pit bulls.

The next dog we fostered was a momma dog named Kisses who came with nine sick pups. The boys would take Kisses for a walk around the block every day with their dad trailing behind them.

One day Charles came in laughing. It turns out one of the local bullies who had teased him for being a "freak" was walking down the sidewalk the opposite direction as them when he saw the boys. Kisses looked at him and the bully decided he had something better to do. I had never seen my son feel so empowered.

Three months later we started our pit bull rescue: Brooklyn's Home for Unwanted Bullies, Inc.

## ***Happy Endings***

It's been almost eight years since we opened our door, and we've saved 250 dogs. Our life has turned into a simple fairy tale. Today Charles is in high school and Isaiah is beginning junior high. Both of my sons are mainstreamed and are in regular education classes. Charles plays the baritone in his school choir and Isaiah, the little 7-year-old boy who had forgotten how to read and screamed when you touched him, is now a trumpet player in the band. This year both boys went to competition and came back with first place in their divisions. They're the same boys who hated to be touched, and now they come home everyday from school tell me about their day. No one would believe these were the same children who would throw up meals at the thought of going to school or cried when they got their hair cut.



My sons are both on the honor roll, and they both have regular sleepovers with the dogs and attend parties. I think they've progressed so far because they've had the chance to work with pit bulls—the same dogs who know what it's like to be looked at as weird or different, who have been treated badly by people and who know how it feels. The boys take them for walks and play fetch with them, and that's helped their socialization.

I owe all of their progress to one special dog: a pit bill named Bosier (who, by the way, was adopted to an amazing family and who also has lived happily ever after).