

We're exceptional, not the exception

By Sarah Sobanski

You're not special.

Yes, you, my friend, are as plain and simple as the rest of us. I'm sure you're a beautiful person, but honestly, we're all beautiful people.

Let that sink in for a minute. It's hard to come to terms with ? I certainly don't like being ordinary. When common sense isn't so common anymore, we need to take a minute to even the playing field. The same one that is flat, and that we're all standing level on.

I just finished writing my fourth awareness story explaining to the public why not to leave pets in cars in the summer. Four out of five years that I have been pursuing my career, I have had to write that story. The first year I didn't think it actually needed to be told. I thought there was no way that people still left pets or children in their cars. I'm a little wiser now, and I'm sure reporters with many more years under their belts have written this same story more times than that.

There aren't many things that make me want to yell off a cliff about the stupidity of the human race ? calling climate change a theory, inequality, war ? but seeing the same story appear over and over again in an easily fixable pattern is one of them.

While working last week I saw a small elderly dog get left in a truck while his owners went to the farmers' market. Not five minutes later, a man walked by with two leashed hip-high dogs to the same farmers' market. The poor older dog sat in the truck for 20 minutes before a member of our office went to the market to find them and tell them to get their dog ? otherwise it would have been crowbar time.

The only reason that I can think of that would allow people to believe that they can leave their pets in their cars, at this point, is that they believe that they are somehow an exception. I imagine their voices in some arrogant, condescending tone rationalizing the situation in some ridiculous way; my dog is actually part fish, he can breathe through the humidity in the car or my vehicle is actually a fridge, my cat doesn't even notice. Or the less delusional; I know how long an animal can be in the car and I didn't mean to be gone that long.

Not leaving your pet or child in the car on a hot summer's day isn't a rule akin to turning the water off when you're brushing your teeth. You can't sometimes do it and sometimes not. You can't forget. Just don't do it.

It's common sense, or maybe it's common decency. I hope that common decency is a little less dead than common sense. If they're both on their last legs, let's support them both.

It kills me because Canadians are so known for their self-deprecating politeness. It also kills me because I have two dogs at home; a 15-year-old black lab who is sassier than I am, and a six-year-old golden retriever who stands taller than me on his back legs and growl-purrs. Yes, all dog-lovers will gush about their pets when given the chance ? again, not an exception over here.

Maybe telling this story this way will make people listen. If not, I should list a few other hard line rules while I'm at it.

Don't use poison ivy for tinder. Always check your blind spots when turning. If the person coming behind you is going to get a door in the face if you don't make the effort to reach back and hold it, hold it. Everyone should recycle.

In all seriousness, please don't leave your pets or children in the car. Alternatively, if you see an animal or child left unattended in a vehicle where they might suffocate, call the authorities. You could save a life.