Appendix E: Conversation Guide for Owner-Veterinarian Discussions

Effective collaboration is the heartbeat of The Coerenza Approach. This guide provides structured prompts and sample language to help owners and veterinarians move beyond rushed, transactional visits into meaningful, whole-dog conversations. Use it to prepare for appointments, guide discussions, or train veterinary teams. The goal is shared understanding, aligned goals, and a plan that honors both clinical expertise and the owner's intimate daily knowledge of their dog.

Opening the Conversation — Setting the Stage for Partnership

Veterinarian (suggested opening):

"Thank you for coming in today. I know caring for [Dog's Name] is a big part of your life, and I want us to work together as true partners. Rather than focusing only on today's concern, let's look at the whole picture—how [Dog's Name] moves through the day, what brings joy, what creates stress, and how we can support every part of their well-being. We'll use The Coerenza Approach framework: Exercise, Enrichment, Environment, Nutrition, and [Dog's Name]'s role in your family. Your observations are essential. Where would you like to begin, or shall I walk us through each area?"

Owner preparation tip: Bring a short written log or photos/videos of daily routines, home environment, and any behaviors you've noticed. Note energy patterns, sleep quality, interactions with family, and any changes since the last visit.

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Pillar-by-Pillar Discussion Prompts

Exercise

Owner prompts to share:

- "Here's what a typical day of activity looks like for [Dog's Name]..."
- "I've noticed [more/less] energy in the mornings/evenings, or reluctance on walks lately."
- "We've been skipping walks when it rains or when schedules get busy—what impact might that have?"

Veterinarian prompts:

- "Given [Dog's Name]'s age/breed/orthopedic findings, what forms of exercise would be most beneficial and safest right now?"
- "How does current activity level connect to the weight we discussed or the behavior changes you're seeing?"

Enrichment

Owner prompts:

- "[Dog's Name] seems to get into trouble when left alone or during quiet times—chewing, barking, or pacing. Could this be boredom?"
- "We do basic obedience, but I'd love ideas for more engaging mental work that fits our lifestyle."

Veterinarian prompts:

- "Mental stimulation is just as important as physical exercise for preventing anxiety and unwanted behaviors. What opportunities does [Dog's Name] currently have to problem-solve or use their natural instincts?"
- "Many dogs create their own (often destructive) enrichment when we don't provide appropriate outlets. Let's build a simple daily enrichment menu together."

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Environment

Owner prompts:

- "Our hardwood floors seem slippery—[Dog's Name] hesitates or slips sometimes. Could that be contributing to stiffness?"
- "The crate is in the laundry room. [Dog's Name] seems to prefer being near us even when resting."

Veterinarian prompts:

- "Let's look at the home through [Dog's Name]'s eyes. What surfaces, sounds, temperatures, or spaces might be creating subtle stress or physical challenge?"
- "Small environmental changes—runners, a new resting spot, white noise, or visual barriers—often produce surprisingly large improvements in comfort and behavior."

Nutrition

Owner prompts:

- "We're feeding [brand/amount]. I've heard conflicting things online about grain-free, raw, or fresh diets. What does the evidence actually say for [Dog's Name]?"
- "[Dog's Name]'s coat seems dull lately / stools are inconsistent / energy crashes in the afternoon. Could diet be playing a role?"

Veterinarian prompts:

- "Nutrition is foundational. Let's review what [Dog's Name] is actually eating—including treats and table scraps—and match it precisely to their age, weight goals, and any medical needs. I'll explain the 'why' behind any recommendations."
- "Trends come and go. We'll focus on what the science supports for long-term health and make changes gradually with clear monitoring."

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Role & Responsibility (The Dog's Place in the Family)

Owner prompts:

- "We love [Dog's Name] so much, but sometimes it feels like we're just managing problems rather than enjoying each other. How can we make [Dog's Name] feel more like a true family member?"
- "The kids want to help, but rules aren't consistent. [Dog's Name] seems confused or anxious at times."

Veterinarian prompts:

- "A dog's emotional well-being is deeply tied to their sense of belonging and predictable role in the family. How is [Dog's Name] currently participating in daily life? Are there simple rituals or 'jobs' we can add that give purpose and reduce anxiety?"
- "Consistent, positive leadership from every family member is one of the most powerful behavioral interventions we have. Let's create a simple family agreement around greetings, boundaries, and inclusion."

Closing the Visit — Building Commitment and Next Steps

Veterinarian (suggested closing):

"Today we've looked at [Dog's Name] as a whole dog—not just symptoms. The Coerenza Care Plan we've started gives us a roadmap across all five pillars. Your daily observations and consistent follow-through are what will make the real difference. I'm here as your partner. Let's schedule the first check-in in four to six weeks so we can celebrate progress and adjust together. You're not alone in this. [Dog's Name] is lucky to have you advocating so thoughtfully."

Owner tip: Leave with clear action items written down, the completed or partially completed Coerenza Care Plan (Appendix B), and a sense of hope and partnership rather than overwhelm.

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Building Trust Over Time

Remember the core strategies that strengthen the owner-veterinarian relationship:

1. Active, non-judgmental listening on both sides.
2. Clear, jargon-free explanations with the “why” behind every recommendation.
3. Written or visual take-home materials (these appendices are perfect for this).
4. Regular follow-up and genuine celebration of small wins.
5. Mutual respect: Owners bring irreplaceable daily insight; veterinarians bring clinical expertise and perspective.

When owners and veterinarians truly collaborate using a shared framework like The Coerenza Approach, dogs don’t just receive better care—they thrive. And the humans who love them rediscover the joy, clarity, and deep partnership that makes dog ownership one of life’s greatest gifts.

Use these tools. Share them. Build the movement.

5 Pillars - 1 Partnership

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