

SOCIALIZING YOUR NEW PUPPY

Socializing your new puppy, and setting them up for lifelong success.

So you have brought home your new puppy! How very exciting, and sometimes a little overwhelming.

Where do you start? Is it time to start training already? How do you insure your puppy grows to be a confident and friendly adult? Finding the answers to these questions can be tough in the early stages of bringing a new puppy home. Life has become so exciting! There is just so much to do, such as play with your puppy, and snuggle!

So that you can think about it while you snuggle, I will answer these questions for you;

Training starts right

away. Your puppy is learning with every step that he makes. Socialization has already begun, and will only be strengthened with every day that your pup is with you. There is little time to waste. It is important to understand how your pup is learning, and how he or she thinks. We must start to think about

the social associations that your puppy is making right away. How we guide him from this point on will set the stage for future learning, trust in you, and the rest of the world. There are three main points that you should be considering with every new social interaction that your puppy has. Are you; Setting your puppy up for success? Allowing your puppy to think about the situations he is in? Is your puppy making positive associations? Insuring that you cover these bases, and

answer yes to these three questions should help your puppy to grow into a confident and friendly adult.

Setting your puppy up for success: Allow him to choose to socialize. This is a concept that often goes against our instincts. Often, we are tempted to bring our puppy right into a social situation without considering what he is thinking. This is human nature. We want our puppy to like people, and other animals, so we may bring him right up close and hold him there in place to receive a pat from a new human friend, or sniff noses while greeting a new dog. Many puppies may be more than happy to do this, and may enjoy these interactions. Unfortunately many others, may prefer to observe from a safer distance before coming in for a pat, or a sniff. It is important for us to allow our puppies to do what feels best for them. Allowing your puppy to approach a social being, or situation on his own time, allows him to take in information, and CHOOSE to come in to say hello! This choice is a critical one. The more we allow our puppies to make choices in life, the more confidence we instill in them for when they become adults. Dogs are not unlike us, in that being forced into a situation can often place them somewhere that they are

not emotionally prepared for. In a situation that we, or our puppies are not emotionally prepared for increases adrenalin in the brain. High amounts of adrenalin in the brain makes it difficult to think, and learn. This can be very overwhelming, leaving our puppy with a negative association from this interaction. What we really want are positive associations, feelings of enjoyment! Allowing a puppy to approach when he is ready is very empowering for him, and rewarding once he realizes that it was indeed safe and, maybe even fun to say hello. So, step one, try to allow your puppy to think about the situations he is coming into. Allow him to choose to come forward. You can be the wonderful person who rewards him for making that choice on his own. This makes you the hero who noticed his bravery and who appreciates his efforts. You are now a great, and trust worthy leader!

So now you are allowing your puppy to observe before he, himself, makes the choice to come over and say hello, or check a new situation out. What are you looking for to insure that he is making good choices? When do you reward? What do you do if your pup does not come forward to say hello? In order to answer these questions, it is important to understand what your puppy is thinking about as he observe the person, dog, or situation before he approaches. Your puppy is primarily reading the body language of the other social being(s) in the situation. He is determining if the other being is friendly, and welcoming.....non-threatening. This is a normal, healthy thing for all dogs to do. Unfortunately, we see many adult dogs who skip this step and run right in without thinking. This practice causes problems for your dog later in life as most social beings do not appreciate being bombarded by a stranger. However, if we do not encourage our pups, at an early stage, to observe first, and approach slowly, they

are learning to jump right in....ready or not! So, reading body language and assessing a situation is normal, and healthy. Your pup is looking to greet another being who has soft, inviting body language (visit www.pawsitiveplus.com for body language charts). Someone who is saying, hello, I am friendly and just wants to be your friend. By encouraging our puppies to acknowledge this communication from others prior to greeting keeps them safe, and enjoying happy play sessions throughout his life. If your pup is able to read body language before he approaches, we certainly want to acknowledge this, and reward it! This means he will be safe as he gets older. This will prevent him from running up to an unhappy dog in a dog park, or on the street who will not appreciate his abrupt hello, and may likely retaliate as soon as your pup arrives. This will also help him to learn to give space to your guests, and other dogs who do not necessarily want your dog all over them. We also want to make sure we reward the choice to walk away from those uninviting interactions. This is a good choice, and will help your pup gain the respect of the one who said "no thank you, I need space". This is respectful and bound to help your pup make plenty of good friends throughout his life. most of all, you will gain even more trust from your pup as you keep him safe from potentially bad situations and allow him to stay away when he is being told no....good job puppy parent! (To better understand this concept, visit Grisha Stewart's website, <http://empoweredanimals.com/>, and read about Behaviour Adjustment Training, BAT, with puppies & adult dogs).

One last thing! Certainly not the least, but perhaps the most important. We MUST create positive associations for our dogs in all social situations before we leave them. Fun things must happen in all social situations! It is

important for our puppy to walk away feeling empowered, successful, and happy. Whether your pup chooses to say hello, or not, he must leave with a good taste in his mouth (treat are often the most rewarding for a young pup!)....or a fun game to play. As your pup chooses to say hello, be sure to acknowledge this good choice, and reward with a yummy treat.

Alternatively, should your pup make a healthy choice not to say hello in a situation that was not an ideal one, remember to acknowledge, and reward this as well. In the early stages, before your pup learns to love playing with a tug toy or a ball, a treat is a good idea. It is also quick and does not interrupt the greeting. Otherwise some dogs love the game of fetch or tug as a great reward for making good choices. Have fun with your pup in all social situations. This will leave them wanting to do it again! If they didn't say hello the first time, they are more likely to want to try again, and perhaps say hello the next time. Great job pet parent, you have left your pup wanting more

socialization!

Overall, Stay positive, and have fun with your pet. Socialization is not something we should force upon our pups. Allow them to feel empowered and learn which situations in life are safe, and which ones are not. This will ensure that your pup grows up to be confident in his choices, knows that he has your trust and approval, and to stay out of trouble. Remember, just like it is for us, if you are pushed into something that ends badly, you will not trust the one who pushed you into this situation next time. Nor will you trust the situation, itself. If you have experienced an enjoyable situation on your own terms and walk away feeling good about it, you will undoubtedly want to do it again, and again!

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