

## YOU, THE DOG AND THE RELATIONSHIP

### Planning for Success • Owner Responsibilities

Companion, friend, guardian, playmate, listener, worker, hunter, herder, retriever. A dog can be all of these things, or it can be something else. A barker, digger, aggressive, obnoxious, destructive.

How your dog behaves is often the result of how YOU treat your dog. They don't arrive in our houses civilized, but they do arrive with needs, and their needs must be met. Being social animals, they need their pack and social structure.

They need exercise and stimulation...and training, of course. They don't need isolation, boredom, inconsistency, or cruelty.

- **Keep Your Dog Safe From Harm.** Harm from other dogs, other people, the elements. In addition, your dog should FEEL safe with you. She should not feel that she has to decide whether to run away or fight; to be aggressive towards another dog or a person, or to hide. You are the one who takes care of her, and tells her whether and how she should respond. A good example are dog parks. They are great, at times; if too many dogs are playing, or if your dog is acting frightened or aggressive, it's usually best to withdraw. Even something as mundane as the back yard can be a place of danger or a breeder of bad habits, if the dog feels that she has to patrol and defend THE WHOLE THING, and you're not there to reassure her. Always, if other dogs are in the vicinity, or small children are around, extraordinary vigilance is warranted, until you KNOW what your dog's responses will be.
- **Manage The Dog's Environment.** In addition to safety, this means that if the dog chews, find a chew-proof spot for her to stay in if you can't watch her. If she runs away, FIX THE FENCE — or build one. Keep her on a leash in traffic. Try not to blame the dog for being a dog, and start modifying the environment to make her have to be good. As she gets older, you can relax your management.
- **Respect Your Dog as an Animal and as an Individual.** She is not a toy, she's your dog and companion. Forcibly moving her, striking, or pinning her to the ground is likely to lead to problems with your relationship. If a dog sees you as a threat to her safety, she may either "shut down," that is not respond, or become aggressive towards you. She should welcome your touch, not fear it. An inappropriate physical correction can seriously harm or actually destroy your relationship with your dog.
- **Exercise & Stimulate Your Dog.** Especially in adolescence, the only good dog may be a tired one! Because dogs are naturally most active in the morning and evening hours, a run at those times is very appropriate, and will help her relax in between. Throwing the ball in the back yard is good exercise, but also realize that your dog requires mental stimulation as well as physical.

POSITIVELY REINFORCE EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO SEE REPEATED.  
PREVENT OR IGNORE UNDESIRED BEHAVIOR.

## CANINE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Here are the areas we need to manage to assure success as dog owners, handlers and trainers.

- **PLAY** - Dogs love to teach us games. Their favorites tend to be tug of war and keep-away, usually with something we don't want them to have. Games of cooperation — like retrieving

and hide and seek (the person hides - the dog seeks) - are much better!

- **EXERCISE-** It's OUR responsibility to make sure our dogs are given enough exercise. They need to run; if they don't they'll take out their frustrations in all the wrong ways.
- **TOYS-** Many dogs love their toys, some of them too much. We need to make sure we can take stuff away. Possessive dogs should be given a toy when we wish them to have it, rather than when they want to take it. Oftentimes, you can make it a game—take one toy away, give another...or two or three.
- **FOOD-** Food is your most valuable tool—he needs it to live, so you may as well teach him that you are the source of it (and all other good things). If necessary, he should earn it every day, in a variety of ways, like sitting, lying down, begging, doing other tricks, etc.
- **ATTENTION-** Much of the attention the dog receives should be earned, and appropriately delivered. Positive reinforcement—and lots of it—for good behavior, no attention at all for inappropriate behavior.
- **SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS-** The dog should sleep where the owner wants him to. If it's on the bed, it should be at the owner's invitation only, and the dog should get off when told. Run of the house is only appropriate when the dog is capable of handling that much responsibility.
- **TERRITORY-** Giving a dog a yard, and then leaving him there all day is expecting a lot of the poor pooch. No wonder some of them bark—they're trying to tell the owner there's something going on—and the owner isn't keeping up their end! Make sure the dog understands the territory is yours. Be there with her, or bring her in when you can. A secluded fenced yard that blocks off perceived threats—bicycles, other dogs, delivery people, etc.—is often best.

It takes time, love, and commitment to make a good relationship with a dog...as well as  
PATIENCE, PERSISTENCE, AND PRAISE.