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PUPPY SOCIALIZATION: The most important thing you can do for a puppy! Invest in your puppy's future now! Enroll your puppy in a great Puppy Socialization Class and practice socialization skills at home each and every day!

The ideal time to start socializing a puppy to new sights, sounds and people outside the home and immediate family is around 9 weeks of age and at least 10 days after the puppy's first set of vaccinations. Socialization should not be delayed and it cannot be achieved solely in the home environment. A puppy must learn to see and accept the world!

Many families are so pleased with their sweet puppy's behavior that they take a "wait and see" attitude and they put off going to puppy classes or actively working to socialize their puppies. This can be a very regretful mistake and lead to serious lifelong behavioral problems that may significantly affect the quality of life for both dog and family.

A very important socialization window to prevent serious behavioral problems later in life begins to close by 12-16 weeks of age. Time is of the essence! Waiting to "think about it" or "see if we need it" may be too late! **EVERY PUPPY NEEDS THIS SOCIALIZATION FOR A SAFE, SECURE AND HAPPY FUTURE!**

Proper socialization is just as important as vaccination for young puppies. More dogs die from behavioral problems than all the infectious disease combined! Socialization is "vaccination" against life threatening behavioral disorders so please do not delay!

The most common reason adult dogs are euthanized or relinquished to shelters is due to behavioral problems. Sadly most of these behavioral problems could have been prevented with some time and effort and proper puppy socialization. It is a tragic statistic and epidemic!

Many people believe shelter and rescued dogs with fearful, anxious or aggressive behaviors were previously abused. While this is possible, the majority of these dogs were not abused but their behavioral health was neglected because they were not properly socialized when they were under 4 months of age.

Many families tragically discover the need to socialize once their dog or puppy is a bit older. Although some socialization can still be achieved, it will be much more difficult, much more time consuming, and much less effective if started later in life.

Proper and proactive socialization is an active process that requires preparation and planning. Socialization is NOT simply about exposure to new people and things. It must involve making the exposures fun and positive. To be successful the puppy needs more than a neutral response, the puppy really needs to ENJOY the process!

Effort must also be made to prevent the socialization exposures from being scary and overwhelming which can be very detrimental and remembered for a lifetime! Socialization must not be a fearful or flooding experience!

AVOID PUTTING A PUPPY INTO A SITUATION FOR WHICH IT IS NOT READY:

- Let the puppy acclimate to a new environment by staying clear of the "action" when first arriving. Keep distance until the puppy is ready and relaxed.
- Let the puppy first observe crowds or new things at a non-stressful distance
- **BE PRO-ACTIVE!!** Assume that a puppy may be fearful of something new, don't wait for signs of fear to show. Use treats liberally to PREVENT a fear response. Make a positive association right from the start as new people and things are slowly introduced!

- Watch the puppy's body language at all times! Ask us for help if you need help learning to read body language. Head turns, stiff bodies, lip licks, whale eyes, submissive belly exposures, submissive urination, arched backs, tail tucks and more can all be signs of fear!
- If signs of stress are noted, the puppy needs an advocate to make the situation less scary by moving farther away.
- Young Puppies should be positively and patiently exposed to a few new things each and every day!
- Large or strange looking objects can be scary. People in uniforms, people who are wearing various apparel (hats, coats, boots, sunglasses, etc.), people with different body shapes, people in wheelchairs or with canes, and people with wobbly or wavering gates; can all be scary.
- Offer treats liberally when a puppy first sees someone or something unfamiliar.

SOCIALIZATION AND EXPOSURE TO NEW THINGS SHOULD BE AN ACTIVE AND LIFELONG PROCESS:

- The process is crucial and needs to be started as early as possible between 8-16 weeks of age, the earlier you start the better!
- If the process is not continued and practiced after 16 weeks of age, the puppy can still become fearful as an adolescent or adult dog. The process and what has been previously learned should be continually practiced and perfected.
- It is MUCH more difficult to START to socialize a puppy after 12 weeks of age because this puppy will lack early positive foundation memories.
- Puppies periodically go through some fear periods as they develop and will need continuous positive exposures during these episodes.
- After the socialization period is over at 16 weeks, strive for at least 3-4 new experiences or repeated positive exposures each week. This can easily be done with daily walks through the neighborhood. Continued practice is needed to keep socialization skills healthy.

START BY ACCLIMATING TO COLLAR, HARNESS & LEASH

Collars—should be made of leather or nylon. We do not recommend the use of choke or prong collars for any dog. Fit should be snug but not tight and adjusted frequently for growth. Two fingers should be able to slip under the collar but the collar should be snug enough not to be pulled off. Collars can be worn the majority of the day with supervision to allow the puppy to acclimate.

Harness—Harnesses are made to clip leashes on the back or front of the harness. For less pulling, consider a front clip harness such as the “Easy Walk “Harness or the “Freedom Harness”. Fit should be snug so that the puppy cannot walk out of it. Harness use should be limited to a few hours a day. We do not recommend leaving harnesses on all the time as puppies may chew them. Prolonged wear may also lead to irritation and chafing around chest and elbows

Collar and Harness Introductions may produce the following reactions:

Puppy may freeze or act unable to walk.
 Puppy may scratch or roll around trying to rub the harness or collar off.
 Some puppies may have no reaction at all!

Be proactive and positive! No matter how the puppy reacts, every time the collar is put on or taken off, the puppy should receive a small treat. We want more than a neutral reaction to the harness or collar! We want to condition a positive emotional response of

joy to being handled and fitted with a collar or harness! Create the puppy's trust now with these simple fittings and you can use this trust to build other things later like tolerance and even enjoyment of veterinary exams, nail trims, teeth brushing, etc.

We want a positive association to be created for the puppy for when:

It is being reached for
It is being touched
Collars and Harnesses are put on
Wearing Collars or Harnesses
While attaching the leash
Removing the leash, collar or harnesses.

The collar can be put on the puppy prior to meals and games and removed after eating or playing. If the puppy has a negative reaction, just ignore him, it is usually short lived. Once the puppy settles, engage with a toy or give a treat to associate a positive emotion to wearing the collar or harness.

Once the puppy accepts the collar or harness, add the leash

Treat each time you hook and unhook the leash.
Allow the pup to drag the leash as it remains engaged and playing with a person.
Don't leave it hooked on unattended.
Encourage the puppy to follow by picking up the leash, patting your leg, talking sweetly.
When the puppy follows, give a small treat.
If the puppy pulls, stop and wait. The instant the pup turns back to you, reward with a treat.
Avoid pulling, yanking, or dragging the puppy as this may induce fear & create a negative association to the leash.

ONCE A PUPPY HAS LEARNED HOW TO HANDLE COLLAR, HARNESS AND LEASH, IT IS TIME TO TAKE SOCIALIZATION "ON THE ROAD"! HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- Be sure your puppy is current on its puppy vaccination schedule and undergoing proper preventative and strategic parasite treatment protocols prescribed by your veterinarian.
- You may begin at about 9 weeks of age or after at least 10 days of a puppy's first vaccinations. Be sure to stay on schedule for your pup's follow up vaccinations and parasite protection.
- Stay on asphalt or concrete surfaces; avoid grassy areas where other dogs may defecate leaving behind contagious parasites and viruses.
- Avoid areas frequented by many unknown dogs such as pet stores and dog parks to avoid exposure to contagious diseases until the puppy's vaccination series is fully complete at about 4 months of age.
- Avoid being around puppies who are not current on vaccinations and dewormings
- Take a variety of pea-sized super tasty treats.
- Bring the puppy's favorite toy!
- A hungry puppy will be more interested and willing to take the food treats.
- Remember to water, a bowl, a collar or harness, and a 6 foot leash (avoid retractable leashes)
- Learn to read dog body language and be aware of your puppy's body language, be an advocate if your puppy is frightened! If you need help with this just ask us!
- Be proactive with treats! Offer them before the puppy shows signs of fear.

- Situations and exposures should be controlled. Increase distance when needed to avoid the puppy becoming overwhelmed.
- Have fun and make sure the puppy does too!

WHAT TO DO IF A PUPPY BECOMES FEARFUL?

- If you have recognized or suspect something that will trigger fear in a puppy you can change that response with a process called desensitization. Through gradual exposure at a distance or intensity that does not evoke a fear response to the puppy, along with food treats that change the puppy's emotional response; the puppy gradually acclimates to the scary person place or thing. Yummy food can change the emotional response of a puppy from an unpleasant one to a pleasant emotion and memory.
- If a puppy suddenly stops taking treats or starts grabbing roughly at treats, it is a sign that the puppy is too anxious and the exposure to the scary thing or person is progressing too rapidly. Take a break, let the puppy have a good relaxed and happy experience and then restart the exposure at a great distance that does not cause fear.

STEPS TO DESENSITIZE A PUPPY TO SOMETHING FEARFUL:

- Identify the fear inducing object, person, place, or thing
- Be able to reproduce the stimulus and control the distance or intensity so that you can take gradual desensitization steps with the puppy
- Find a non-stressful starting point where the puppy is relaxed enough to happily take food treats
- Use treats liberally. If the puppy is afraid, drop a handful of small, soft, tasty treats on the ground right in front of him.
- Allow the puppy to investigate at his own pace. Keep tension off the leash, don't pull or force the pup forward.
- Avoid both coddling and reprimanding the puppy. How humans react can have a profound impact on the puppy's future response to frightening stimuli.
- Telling a pup it is "OK" or coddling in a high pitched voice can make future responses more intense. This can become a predictor that something bad is about to happen.
- The safest and best bet is to let food do the talking!

THINGS TO DO AND SEE WITH YOUR PUPPY!

Puppies should be exposed to many new and different things between the ages of 9 to 16 weeks! New Environments, People, Animals, Surfaces, Sounds, and Things need positive and gradual exposures at this age that is most accepting of new things!

- **ENVIRONMENTS**—expose to rural and suburban areas, car rides, and drive through windows. Schedule some "fun visits" to groomers and veterinary hospitals without anything scary like a bath, nail trim, or shots being done.
- **PEOPLE**—have the puppy meet all kinds of people doing all kinds of things; adults, elderly people, kids, babies, short, tall, loud, singing, crying, laughing shouting, and wearing uniforms, hats, boots, coats, and sunglasses. Never force a puppy to interact with a child, or leave a puppy unattended with a child. Teach children not to grab or hug but to pet with one hand down the back or on the chest. Remember to give treats BEFORE all interactions, don't wait for fear responses, and be proactive!

At the first sight of a new person:

- * Give several small food treats, this will teach the pup to look at its handler when meeting new people.

- * Give the puppy a cue, such as, "Say Hello"
- * Have the new person give a treat. If it is a child, have the child drop the food on the ground.
- * Let the puppy spend 15-30 seconds with the person then call back and give a break
- * Reward the puppy with treat or toy for coming back to the handler.

If exposing the puppy to crowds, it is important to control the puppy's distance from the crowd

- * Stay on the outskirts initially, and then partake in short sessions of walking through the crowd.
 - * At each step of the process the puppy should receive numerous small treats.
 - * During these busy social experiences the handler's focus should remain on the puppy at all times!
- **ANIMALS**—other puppies, dogs, cats, squirrels, rabbits, birds, ducks
 - * Sometimes the sight of other animals causes fear or high arousal, teach the pup to focus on the handler
 - * At the sight of a dog, squirrel, or other new animal give treats!
 - * Be animated and upbeat to keep interest on the handler
 - * If the puppy is too interested in the new animal, move a distance away, offer a treat/toy, create a visual barrier
 - **SURFACES**—smooth, slick, wobbly (especially weight scales), rough, concrete, asphalt, gravel, sand, metal, mulch, dirt, grass, water, ice, grates, etc.
 - * Toss treats on the surface to encourage the puppy to explore on its own pace!
 - * Make exposures to uncomfortable surfaces short and use favorite treats.
 - * When exposing to high surfaces use care, avoid falling
 - **SOUNDS**—Thunderstorms, fireworks, children playing, babies crying, dogs barking, animal noises, household items (vacuum, kitchen appliances), traffic, lawn equipment, construction noises, etc.

We recommend using commercially available recordings designed to expose puppies to a variety of sounds. A recording helps you control the volume and control the intensity so that you can gradually accustom the puppy to the sound. Ask us for recommendations or examples of good CDs. Check the Internet for downloadable sounds.

 - * A sound CD can be played continuously at a volume that does not induce fear and gradually increased or can be played at meal times or during play sessions to create a positive association.
 - * Start every session back at a very low volume
 - * The goal is to never have the puppy frightened by the sounds
 - * Watch for any signs of fear and adjust the volume if necessary.
 - * If the puppy is having fun and not fazed by the sounds, gradually increase the volume.
 - * Remember to still start the next session at a low volume again.
 - **NOVEL ITEMS**—boxes, bikes, cars, wheelchairs, strollers, children's toys, umbrellas, ironing boards, vacuum cleaners, brooms, and more!!

The time and energy spent socializing a puppy at this very special age will pay huge dividends and help that puppy develop normal behavioral health for a bright future. It will set the stage for the puppy to then move on to learning polite behaviors and good manners.

Enrolling in well run puppy class with an instructor who has received a science based education on dog training on puppy socialization is highly recommended. The Puppy Start Right Program is one of the best puppy programs in the nation and was developed by the amazing faculty of the Karen Pryor Academy for Animal Behavior and Training. A class with an excellent curriculum and with an instructor with in depth scientific knowledge on animal behavior and learning is the best way to get expert guidance and ensure a great experience for a puppy. Be sure the class has stringent vaccination and parasite protection protocols and is run in a clean facility.

If your puppy is showing signs of discomfort or fear in the class, ask the instructor for help! If your puppy is still not able to have a good experience in class, ask your veterinarian for help! Puppy classes should be fun and positive experiences. If your puppy is not thriving in a well-run class, your puppy may have a problem that requires immediate medical or behavioral help.