

Dog Talk Academy

ENRICHING YOUR DOG'S LIFE

Is your dog getting enough out of life?
Are his physical, mental and social needs being met?

Given our increasingly busy lifestyles we worry that our dogs will suffer from boredom, anxiety or worse. Many of us are in search of ways to allow our dogs to fulfill their natural instincts and drives safely and appropriately. Others are seeking to curb or prevent unwanted behaviors.

Many dog behavior problems are actually normal dog behaviors!

We have expected dogs to stop being dogs, curb their natural instincts regarding the ways they interact with humans and other dogs. Instead we expect them to understand this foreign world of ours - and to value the same things we do, such as furniture, carpet and our well manicured lawns.

There are patterns in the reasons why dog behavior problems are occurring. One dog behavior that often arises is under stimulation. We leave our dogs alone for an entire workday, with only a squeaky toy for company, and we are surprised when the dog helps himself to a more interesting activity such as dissecting the couch, removing the wallpaper or excavating the back yard.

We need to engage our dogs with challenges, training games and puzzles - in order to find or earn dinner, for example. Your dog's dinner can be stuffed into a Kong toy and hidden somewhere in the house or yard. The hunt is on! Dinner now becomes more interesting.

Imagine that your dog has a fuel tank full of energy, and each time you help your dog burn up some of that energy with a game, exercise or mental challenge, there is little fuel left for chewing the molding or chasing the cat.

Dogs that live in under stimulated environments often begin to display abnormal behavior patterns or compulsive, repetitive behaviors. These are behaviors such as pacing and excessive grooming. Many times the solution is simple: enrichment.

What is enrichment and how can it make a difference in the lives of the dogs we have chosen as companions?

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To enrich your dog's life is to make it fuller, more meaningful and more rewarding.

Dog's social needs may be highest on the list. Isolation from the pack can be devastating for a dog and it can lead to behavior problems. Social interactions must include time with members of the dog's human pack as well as members of his own species.

The time you spend with your dog - training, playing games, walking or just being couch potatoes together will help fulfill his social needs.

Visits to an off-leash dog park, play dates with his favorite friends, going to a doggie day care and living in a multiple dog household will help keep a dog's canine social skills well tuned. When dogs are isolated from their own species they often seem overwhelmed in the presence of dogs, no longer know how to behave appropriately, lack confidence and can act intimidated, fearful, defensive and even aggressive.

Working with a dog trainer can help address these issues and...

Give your dog his doggy time back!

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