

Puppy Socialization

Providing Healthy Early Social Development

Raising a puppy who is a friendly companion and enjoyable pet is largely dependent on the social care and education provided to the puppy during the first 12 months of life.

➤ **Lack of socialization or bad experiences at a young age have long term negative effects.**

Fearfulness, aggression, and a variety of behavior problems can result from a lack of positive socialization experiences as a puppy. It is important at the earliest age possible to regularly provide controlled social situations which bolster confidence and teach acceptable social behavior.

➤ **Puppies need many positive experiences with all types of people**

Even friendly puppies need introduced to all types of people so they will learn to behave appropriately. For a puppy who is already shy or fearful it is doubly important, as these traits worsen with age if not overcome as a puppy.

An excellent way to socialize is to take your pet out to meet people armed with a bag of puppy kibble or small treats. When you meet someone new have the person give your puppy a treat. The puppy will learn to associate new friends and an outstretched hand with something positive. Once the puppy has learned to sit on command, new friends can ask the puppy to sit before giving the treat. This teaches a polite greeting and discourages jumping up on people.

Introduce your puppy to adults, teens, children, and babies of both sexes and varied nationalities, personalities, and appearances. If there are no children at home, it is very important to frequently go to places with children and invite children to your home for visits. Be sure to supervise closely to prevent anything that might hurt or upset the puppy.

➤ **Puppies need positive experiences with other pets**

Supervised socialization of puppies with other dogs is critical to develop good manners around other dogs as an adult. Puppies should also be introduced at an early age to a friendly cat and any other type of pet possible. Ideal animals to socialize with are healthy, vaccinated, parasite-free pets who have a gentle, friendly personality toward puppies.

➤ **Puppies need early exposure to varied environments, objects, and procedures**

It is important to gently educate puppies about things they will encounter and build up their confidence at an early age. Expose them early and repeatedly to things like cars, vacuum sweepers, alarm clocks, children playing, sirens, airplanes, elevators, crowds of people, etc. Teach them to accept bathing, grooming, trimming their nails, brushing their teeth, cleaning their ears and eyes, and being handled and examined. Failure to teach these things early results in a dog who is much more difficult to handle or take places when they are older.

➤ **Reward appropriate responses and patiently ignore fear, anxiety, or other negative behaviors**

If your puppy is fearful or anxious, provide more frequent but milder experiences with lots of reward, and gradually build up to more intense situations. Give treats and praise for non-fearful responses. ***Never console the pet by picking them up or petting them or giving treats while they are exhibiting fearful behavior***, since you would be rewarding the very response you are trying to eliminate. Instead ignore fearfulness and model a calm attitude to show your pet that whatever is causing him or her anxiety is no big deal, and wait patiently for them to learn the lesson.

➤ **Puppy Classes, Doggie Daycare, a bath or groom, and veterinary visits provide excellent social opportunities**

Once your puppy has received some basic vaccines, we will provide you with a pass to Puppy Class, a complimentary first day of Doggie Daycare, a night of boarding including Pampered Pet Playtime, and a gift card for \$5 off a bath or groom.