



Confidence Building

Training

Training dogs provides structure and positive reinforcement that dogs (and people) need to be happy and confident. Dogs want to be good, but don't always know what we expect of them. Providing positive-reinforcement-based training allows dogs to learn how to be 'good dogs' and provides a positive association between you and them. Dogs who understand what is expected of them are happier, more confident and generally better behaved. Examples of opportunities to train your dog using positive reinforcement include but are not limited to: trick training, loose leash walking and boundary and expectation work, which includes things like: before a meal, the dog must sit and wait, and when people come to the door, the dog must be on his bed.

Rewarding 'Good' Choices

Dogs, like people, can make choices that benefit themselves. It is our job as trainers to reinforce the good choices – like sitting politely to be pet by a new person and teach the dog what kind of choices get rewards. Choosing not to come back when called should not get rewarded, but if your dog comes running back when you call them, they should be GREATLY rewarded for making a good choice. This helps them understand that they can make their own choices, but some will get them a reward, and others will not. This is meant to allow the dog to learn to make correct choices by rewarding ALL of the good choices the dog makes. This does not mean they need to get food treats after every good decision, it means that they should be praised verbally, offered a treat or pet. This encourages them to listen even if they know you do not have treats.

Games

Playing games with your dog is another way to improve their confidence as games also involve positive reinforcement for doing fun things! Check out the 'Games to Play with your Dog' resource for some ideas.

Providing the Ability to Say 'No Thank You'

Dogs should have the ability to say 'no thank you' to things that make them uncomfortable. This includes petting, as dogs do not always want physical attention. Always provide your dog with the option to walk away if they are uncomfortable, if you don't, they may turn to their fight or flight response, which could lead to a bite. If the dog looks away or 'fights' when presented with something, it is important to determine why they are uncomfortable, and not push them to accept something before they are ready. This includes things like nail trimmers, leashes, toys and other novel stimulants.

Georgian Triangle Humane Society

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Always ask for 'consent' from your dog before engaging in any activity, this is done by presenting the object (it may be a hand for petting, leash for going on a walk...) to your dog by showing it to them from a short (1 foot) distance away and watching their response. If they look away or exhibit any signs of distress at the object from further than 1 foot, DO NOT MOVE THE OBJECT CLOSER. If they move towards the object they are saying YES, if they look away, they are saying NO THANK YOU, if they don't move, they are saying OK, BUT ASK AGAIN IN A FEW SECONDS TO MAKE SURE I STILL FEEL THE SAME WAY. If your dog says 'ok' or 'no,' try to determine why they are uncomfortable. If it is in response to something like nail trimmers, check out the Desensitizing Resource. If it is response to physical affection, they may be overstimulated, or may just not feel like being pet.

Support:

Our Behaviour Support Team can help to provide resources and tips if you experience concerns in the home environment. With your adoption the GTHS will provide an over the phone consultation in order to provide you with tips and resources to set your new dog up for success. In all cases of dog adoptions, the GTHS recommends hiring a professional dog training or behavioural consultant to ensure your relationship with your new dog starts off on the right paw! A list of local trainers is enclosed in your adoption package.

Our Behaviour Support Team can be reached at behaviour@gths.ca

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