



Destructive Behaviour

Dogs develop destructive behaviour for a variety of reasons. The most common appear to be frustration and boredom; both are manageable with treatment plans. It is important to determine which of these is causing the behaviour BEFORE fully implementing a treatment plan. Start by reflecting on the quantity and quality of exercise and enrichment you are currently providing. If you feel that you are going above and beyond, you may be doing TOO MUCH, and the behaviour may be due to frustration. If feel that you are not as active or stimulating as you should be, it may be boredom. Confirm your suspicion through trial and error. Your dog may also be frustrated because the activities you are providing are not satisfying his/her drive.

Frustration

If frustration is the likely culprit, there are a couple of exercises that may help including time outs and calming toys. Providing adequate 'quiet time' is key in helping dogs who are acting out in frustration. Offering calming toys such as stuffed KONGs, or other food enrichment can make a world of difference. Licking is a calming behaviour for dogs and helps them self-soothe. It is very important NOT to make the food enrichment too challenging, or you may be increasing their frustration. Time outs combined with calming enrichment, music or dog specific diffusers (like Adaptil) tend to help with frustrated dogs.

Determining the trigger (the activity or schedule) of the behaviour is helpful in avoiding it. Try starting a journal and see if there is a pattern, like after every 2-hour walk, your dog starts destroying something; there is likely a correlation between that length of a walk and the destructive behaviour. Try changing the length or type of walks and see if that makes a difference, i.e. changing from a 2 hour on-leash, controlled walk to a 1 hour 'on-leash freedom' sniffing walk. Keep trying new things until you have found the trigger and discovered how to make your dog happy and balanced. Be sure not to change things too quickly, try to change small things, one at a time as to not overwhelm your dog with changes.

Try to find your dog's favourite activity, the one thing/activity he/she cannot live without and try to implement into your daily activities. Some dogs become destructive due to frustration because they are provided a variety of activities, but not being provided the ONE activity they NEED to feel fulfilled.

Boredom

Frustration is one of the reasons dogs can become destructive, another major reason is boredom. Dogs need physical exercise and mental stimulation to maintain a healthy, balanced lifestyle. If they are not receiving adequate stimulation, they create their own. Some dogs do 'zoomies,' some sleep a lot, and some become destructive. The best fix for this type of destructive behaviour is figuring out what drives your dog and practicing that daily. Try to add some variety to the exercises you and your dog do together to keep him/her engaged. Quiet time is equally important in boredom destructive behaviour to ensure the behaviour does not become frustrated destructive behaviour. It is also important to note

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that different breeds have different activity preferences; that may help narrow down the list of activities to start with.

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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