The Happy Dog Training Academy

Bad Behaviour Explained

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The first thing with a new dog be it a puppy or older dog, is to give them a solid start with some dog training. Training your pet is just not enough, teaching them to sit, walk to heel, or not jump up. You should consider the bigger picture. Especially with unwelcome behaviours. Let’s have a look at some of the common reasons for dog’s bad behaviour.

Mental Stimulation or more the lack of.

In order to maintain a well-mannered dog, you should consider the mental exercise. Very often owners report to me within our training classes, the dogs are exhausted after the class, despite not running around as they would in a normal day. Mental Stimulation is as much if not more tiring as physical exercise. Simple things like giving your dog a reason to search for food by hiding some treats in the garden and have them search for them, will enrich there day and give great exercise. It will also eliminate boredom.

Not Enough Exercise.

A twenty-minute walk on the lead is not sufficient for most dogs, dogs need to be off the lead to run free. Games like fetch, running after a ball, or frisbee. Unless you have a big garden for them to run in, but that will not eliminate social behaviour.

Genetic Problems.

A lot of research has been done over the years covering the genetic behaviour issues. They can range from aggression to hypersensitivity, inherited from the parents. Getting a puppy is just so fraught with potential problems, that really should not happen, some Breeders do take great care and responsibility ensuring puppies have the best genetics possible. Looking into the parents and grandparent’s genetic history, is very difficult for any new owners, in fact there is nothing on the pedigree certificate that will give you any indication of temperament, especially to the beginner, novice pet owner. There are a few signals on the pedigree, one of the tests for a show dog is temperament, this is the only indication that this has been a show dog. If there are any, Red names on the pedigree this is a small indication that a temperament test has been performed on the dog. Seeing both parents can give you a small indication as well. Puppies can get their behaviour from parent’s grandparents over many generations. Should you be getting a puppy of mixed breeding you may only be able to see the parent dog’s, and in many cases, you will only see the female.

Health And Behaviour.

There are many health problems which can course your dog to have temperament issues. More common than you think. When you dog is not feeling to well, they have no way of telling you. But may get cranky. Health problems could be, dental, arthritis, hip dysplasia, epilepsy, ear infections skin allergies to name just a few. Should your dog suddenly become cranky, or aggressive and you can not think why contact your veterinary clinic.

Environment

Probably the most behaviour problems come about because of environment. The lack of consistency is very confusing for your dog and can cause anxiety. Also, you are rewarding if it is inconsistently given. If you want your dog not to do something, be consistent by making that clear to him in a kind manner. If your dog, for example sitting take time to practice sitting with positive reinforcement (providing something your dog likes such as treats or play toy immediately) ignore your dog completely if he jumps up. Ignoring your dog means no talking, touching, or eye contact all are forms of attention and can reinforce the behaviour you do not wont. Cross your arms, turn your back, and ignore your dog until all four paws are on the floor. Then ask for the sit again. repeat this until your dog goes into the sit first time asked. Of course, this is assuming you dog have been taught the sit command. If your dog has a behaviour problem, look first at how you are responding. It may well be your rewarding or reinforcing the bad behaviour.

With attention, you may even have trained your dog to perform that behaviour unwittingly. Another example of a reinforced bad behaviour is barking. Dog barks, you yell, dog thinks you are barking along, look at the attention you have given. So, the dog barks more, you scold more, dog barks more, and on and on it goes.

Having a consistent set of boundaries and consistent rules in your house helps your dog understand that the environment is predictable. It also shows your dog that you provide guidance, leadership, and access to all the good stuff. Take the time to teach your dog rules using patience and positive reinforcement. Teaching your dog not to jump up, or training to eliminate any undesirable behaviour, takes patience, consistency, and knowing what to ignore and what to reward.

Misunderstanding Behaviour.

Normal dogs bark, pull on leash, roll in dead things, jump up to greet people, guard food and bones (to a degree), growl when they are threatened, chew whatever they can get their mouths on, nip, protect property or their family, herd, chase small animals. All of these "nuisance" behaviours are perfectly natural parts of a dog's repertoire and vary depending on breed.

You should look to find a dog breed that is compatible with your lifestyle. It is simply unfair to get a Bull mastiff and be shocked when he barks at strangers approaching your home. These dogs have been bred for thousands of years to be guard dogs. Siberian huskies and northern breeds may not be reliable off leash and may kill small animals. Border collies might herd your children. Dachshunds are known to bark a lot. These traits are due to selective breeding to perform a job or are natural canine behaviour. Sometimes you can train an alternative behaviour, and sometimes you can only subdue it. Depending on how genetically hardwired the behaviour is.

Routine.

Changing the routine can be very stressful for your dog and can cause them to act out of character. Just like us, dogs need a sense of security. Drastic changes in environment or routine can really throw them off, causing manger anxiety that is commonly expressed as problem behaviour. Moving to a new house often causes a lapse in house training, among other issues. A change in work schedule can confuse your dog and bring on separation anxiety, and a new pet or child joining the family can also be very stressful. In all these cases, be patient with your dog and guide him through the struggle with kindness while he adjusts to the changes.

Food.

Switching your dog to a poorer quality or less suitable food may also cause him to act inappropriately. Diet has a huge influence on behaviour (this goes back to health influencing behaviour). Switching your dog's diet to something that is of poor quality or that does not agree with him may change how the dog acts. Always feed your dog a high-quality food and change foods gradually over a week or so.

Socialization

Socialization is the process of providing your puppy, with controlled exposure to other dogs, people of all types, sounds, surfaces, and new experiences. Dogs need to be socialized to the human world starting as young puppies and continuing throughout their lives. The period from 3-16 weeks of age is the most critical socialization period. This time lays a foundation for a balanced dog. If a puppy does not get proper socialization during its critical period, it can grow up into a shy, fearful, or aggressive adult. A well-run puppy or socialization class can be a fun way to start your dog's socialization skills. Many are run at veterinary clinics.

A dog that has been well socialized can develop behaviour problems after negative experiences. Being attacked by other dogs or teased by children when out in the yard are occurrences that can affect your dog's behaviour negatively. A poor experience at the vet, training class, or groomer can do the same. Be selective about where you take your dog to socialize and which professionals you trust to handle your dog. I would also advise against leaving your dog alone in the garden, as you never know what could happen.

Adolescence

It is a normal behaviour for dogs to go through several periods, which can only be explained as Adolescence.

As your dog’s brain develops over the years, it is normal for changes in behaviour to occur. If your normally attentive puppy suddenly decides not to do simple commands one day, do not panic. It is normal for puppies to go through several periods as their brains develop. The first generally occurs somewhere around 8-12 weeks of age and another period occurs around 7 or 9 months. Depending on the breed and bloodlines of your dog, your dog may experience more or fewer periods. Do not panic, just let your puppy go through this phase. You may want to avoid going to the vet, training class, groomer, or new places for a few weeks until your puppy is back to his normal behaviour. If during one of these periods you stress out, and force your dog into doing the training, he already knows well, the impact on your dog could be overwhelming. it will in print on the dog, forcing you to use different techniques, to retain them. So, rather than trying to force work just take a step back in your training. Go back to the first steps and bring your dog back to normal working standards.

Adolescence starts at about 6 months of age and usually continues to 12 to 18 months. Adolescence is when most dogs are turned over to shelters. This is a period when puppies start testing their world and their boundaries. A previously "good" dog may become a nightmare. Continued obedience training, maintaining structure and boundaries, patience, and skilled management are all essential practices during this phase. Management means setting up the environment so that the dog does not get a chance to do "naughty" things. This may include techniques like crating the dog when you cannot supervise directly. It is at this age when you should fall back on the training structure you were taught at a good training school. Going back to the first step in training and move through each step, reinforcing the training. This way you will bring your dog back to their normal behaviour.