



OPPORTUNITY
BEHAVIOR **BARKS** TRAINING
SINCE 2003



YOU
LUCKY
DOG

RESOURCE GUIDE

Puppy Socialization

So you got a puppy! Socialization is important, but the pillar of socialization is setting yourself up, as the handler to be a rock for your dog. A person that your dog can trust and look to for information. The jumping-off point for successful socialization is being the one that can provide social support for your pup. Trust is deeply steeped in taking social and environmental responsibility for your dog. It's learning to have a conversation with your dog that encourages exploration, curiosity and also reassurance at its core.

Socialization is also about environmental conditioning- introducing your pup to new textures, places, and life experiences. With respect to interacting with dogs and people, observational learning is where it's at and totally underrated.

WE TEACH THE
THINGS
THAT
MATTER

DOGS WANNA BE
UNDERSTOOD

LET'S GET
BACK ON TRACK

BEHAVE
BETTER
BALANCE

Here's What You Can be Doing Right Now

BUILD A CONFIDENCE COURSE INDOORS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLORATION

Place objects on the ground in your home and - an open trash bag, a purse or book bag, a grocery bag, open box, a trash bag on the floor and cleaning items like a broom. Encourage your dog to explore by luring them with food, tossing some treats near the objects and then lastly, walk up and guide them over and around the course.

WHAT YOU CAN BE DOING OUTSIDE

When outside for leash walks or trail hikes, stop and back up and reward your dog when they come back to you- and feed with treats. If you notice things that your dog is wary of or spooked by- that's a perfect time to provide social reassurance- simply crouch, hold the collar or harness and rub your dog down with firm but massage-ish petting, until you see them be less tense and then continue on your way.

If you are going to jump into off-leash interaction with other dogs or people, the quality of the interaction matters. You want your dog's socialization experience to be predictable. And when there are awkward moments, because there will be, you need to learn how to handle that, and we can help.

Yes, you need to learn how to read body language. And you'll need to learn when to intervene (and yes, there are absolutely appropriate times to do so).

Remember:

- Having your dog greet every dog and human on the street isn't the end all be all of socialization. Focus on quality, not quantity.
- The word "socialization" tends to be a bit misleading because it's so much more than interacting with other living beings. It's about developing neutral or positive associations towards new sounds, environments, or textures, and developing a trust in you as the handler.



Still Struggling? We're Here to Help!

For some of you, your young dog may need the mentoring of solid handlers and older dogs to learn how to slow their roll. And yes for other more sensitive dogs, you need a handler that can help get you out there and reassure you frequently with dogs that are tuned in and respectful of your dog's needs. Quality exposure means being there, being close, and allowing your dog to take in the world around them, as they are ready to do so.

Our trainer-led puppy socials are a great jumping-off point to creating quality experiences, supervised by experienced trainers. And our Private Training program is another trainer-led day of structured learning and carefully curated socialization to bring out the best in your dog. Sometimes socialization just puts too much pressure on a young dog. Sometimes the repetitive off-leash dog experience is amped, frenetic, and worrisome to the dog. Sometimes what people are identifying as, "look, they are so happy", is actually a dog that is anxious and unsupported. And those very dogs with repeat, aroused experiences, can unravel over time. So for those of you with new pups, challenge your pup around the house, and when you adventure outdoors - encourage exploration and don't sweat meeting tons of dogs and people. But tuning in and learning where we can assist them is the highest form of love and helping these little guys navigate a big world.



TRAINER-LED

Puppy Socials



DROP-OFF

Day Training