



THE DOGGY DIGEST

TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

The Importance of Advocating for Your Dog

Advocating is something we do without thinking about it...most of the time. We advocate for people, children, beliefs, and petitions. Have you ever thought about advocating for your dog? That's right, even our dogs need an advocate. Dogs do not speak English and most of the other beings around them do not speak the same language they do either.

Here are some examples of situations you may find yourself in, where being your dog's advocate will build up your trust account with him:

1. **Your dog is uncomfortable with strangers, men, children, or people using medical equipment, wearing hats, or sunglasses.** Under-socialization is a common problem for many dogs. People forget to socialize their puppies with strangers, children (especially under the age of 7); and people with different gaits due to crutches, canes, wheelchairs, and many other reasons.
2. **When your dog is no longer having fun at the dog park.** If everyone else's dogs are all smiles and your dog is hiding under the nearest bench, wearing an invisible "kick me" sign, or seeking refuge between your legs, it is time to leave. The ole' 'they will work it out' adage is not going to work. Leave the dog park before your dog stops having a good time; take him for a nice walk instead. Being harassed is not fun for any species.
3. **Face-to-face greetings on or off-leash with other dogs.** Some dogs, just like people, can be genetically predisposed to fear or have had a negative experience that contributes to their behavior. Advocating for your dog in this situation can be as simple as body blocking another dog's encounter, as you explain what you are doing to the other dog's human.
4. **Advocating for your dog's breed.** Unfortunately, our dogs do not get to select their breed, and the media has a field day with many of them. Educate yourself on your dog's breed; get sound training and learn what responsible guardianship is.
5. **The trainer you have signed up with whips out shock collars (E collars or Pulse collars are the same things) or other outdated equipment.** If your trainer expects you to use harsh outdated methods, stand up for your dog and find a trainer who takes a more scientific approach through positive reinforcement- which is also kinder and gentler.
6. **Your veterinarian recommends a treatment plan you are uncomfortable with.** Second opinions are perfectly fine, and should never be dissuaded.

Our first line of defense is learning how to say 'No'. That is right; just say 'No!' We are taught all of our lives that saying 'no' is rude...and who likes rude people? Let's look at the word 'No' in a different light. When dogs are afraid they will typically do one of two things; they will go into fight mode, or they will go into flight mode. This can vary quite a bit. Fight mode can look like something as mild as a growl, or as severe as a lunge and a snap; even worse, it could end in a bite. Flight mode can be a freezing and stiffening posture or the dog may drag his owner away trying to escape.

In either of these situations, the phrase 'No' can prevent a bite, allow the dog to stay relaxed, and even save the dog's life. The word 'No' has so much power, it will cause even a small child to stop in their tracks.

Another favorite phrase of mine is 'Stop! Danger!' This gives clear instruction with an explanation in 2 seconds. This allows the oncoming person or person with a dog in tow to reconsider a potentially thoughtless action, such as allowing an accidental encounter between two dogs. Their dog may be a social butterfly but it doesn't mean yours is.

Advocating for your dog is crucial when dealing with dogs who have behavioral issues from jumping to fearfulness. The more clear and direct you can be, the more likely people will take you seriously. More importantly, your dog is less likely to feel as if he has to take matters into his own paws, or teeth. Sound training with a kind and gentle methods will help while you are in this management phase. It is different for every dog, guardian, and family. It takes time and it takes patience.

Until next time, keep it pawsitive!