

PAWSITIVE TIMES

A newsletter for folks who love their dogs!

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THE GAME OF TUG

*Healthy playing
or encouraging “dominance” ?*

Ever been told that playing tug with your dog can make him “dominant”? This myth has been perpetuated for years by both trainers and owners who, unfortunately, are missing out on both a fun activity with their dogs as well as a wonderful training opportunity. Most dogs love a rowdy game of tug, it’s a great way to burn off some excess energy, and a chance to teach your dog some desired behaviors by “playing by the rules”.



The most important rule of playing tug with your dog is *you* control the game. You are the one who gets the toy out, gives it to your dog, and it’s you who ends the game. Offer the toy to him, saying “Take It!”. If he jumps for the toy, or tries to grab it, say “Oops!” and hide the toy behind your back. Offer it to him again...you may even wait for him to sit...and say “Take It!” When he takes the toy in his mouth nicely, tug side-to-side (up and down may cause spinal injury) at a level of force appropriate for your dog’s size and personality. If your dog growls, don’t worry...it’s all part of the fun! When it’s time for you to “win” the game, offer your dog a treat and say “Give!”. He will have to drop the toy to get the treat...after he eats it, offer him the toy again and say “Take It!”. Practice “Give!” and “Take It!” several times each play session. Soon

you will be able to eliminate the treat as your dog learns that dropping the toy leads to another game of tug. And if your dog occasionally “wins”, that’s ok too...he’s learned that giving the toy to you will start the game all over again.

If you feel your dog is getting too aroused and playing too roughly, give him a “time out”. Cheerfully say “Oops! Time Out!”, and put the toy away...you can bring it back out a few minutes later if you want to play again.

Older kids can play tug with a dog as well, but the game should always be supervised by the dog’s owner.

So go ahead...grab that rope toy, call your dog and just see how much fun the two of you have been missing! 🐾

TRAINING TIPS

- Using food to reward your dog is the fastest way to teach new behaviors
- Train when your dog is hungry
- Use training treats that are yummy (if you were hungry, would you work harder for saltines or a slice of pizza?)...try cheese, meatballs, hot dogs, Vienna sausages, chicken
- Your dog will work hard for *teeney weeney bits* of these foods, but if you are worried about your dog gaining weight, cut back his food proportionately at mealtime on days when you 🐾

“My dog is worried about the economy because Alpo is up to \$3 a can. That’s almost \$21 in dog money.”

Joe Weinstein



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IT'S MINE!!!



A natural behavior, but "resource guarding" can be dangerous

A dog who defends his food in the wild has a higher chance of survival than a dog who gives up his food easily. Resource guarding is a normal and appropriate canine behavior, but not when it is directed toward humans.

Most dogs learn to give up their prized possessions to their owners nicely, but some aggressively guard their resources, whether it be a bowl of food, rawhide chew, favorite toy, a location, or even guarding their owner from other people. Upon approaching a dog in possession of food or an object, resource guarding behaviors include tensing of the body, a glare directed toward you, freezing, a snarl, faster consumption of food, growling, carrying the item away from you, a snap, or a bite.

Resource guarders may be perfectly well-behaved companions, only showing aggression when a coveted possession is involved. The aggression has nothing to do with "dominance". Guarding behavior is seen in submissive dogs as well. Prevention is always the best way to avoid behavior problems, and an experienced trainer can show you how to teach your puppy to share *before* problems arise.

Generalized food guarding (including food-like items like rawhides, pig ears, chew hooves) is the most common type of resource guarding. It is perhaps the most dangerous as well, as it is difficult for us to control this resource at all times. A toddler who drops a pretzel and is reaching for it could be bitten if a dog decides to assert ownership rights.

The bad news is that if you have a dog who is a resource guarder, you have a serious problem. The good news is that with the help of a qualified trainer or behaviorist, and a strong owner commitment to change a dog's behavior, most dogs can be helped, and some completely rehabilitated through a resource guarding rehabilitation program. 🐾

MORE ARTICLES

If you enjoy the short articles appearing in PAWSITIVE TIMES, writer/trainer Susan Sarubin also writes feature articles for local and national dog publications. An article on running with your dog will appear in the February issue of *The Whole Dog Journal*, and one on housetraining will be in the spring edition of *Baltimore Dog*



Pawsitive Fit, LLC Puppy & Dog Training



Positive Methods for a Happy Best Friend

Pawsitive Fit offers private, in-home instruction in the Greater Baltimore area for people and their dogs. We are committed to using methods of positive reinforcement and reward, replacing the old-fashioned use of punishment, force and coercion. With individualized training programs tailored to your needs, Pawsitive Fit teaches you to effectively communicate with your dog, encouraging a relationship based on mutual trust and respect, and to have fun together while training.

Whether you need basic Good Manners training for your puppy or dog, or help with a specific behavioral problem, Pawsitive Fit can help. With flexible training options and scheduling times, our services are designed to meet the needs of busy clients who understand the importance of training their best friend.

For more information about our training and services, visit www.pawsitivefit.com

Happy training!

Susan Sarubin
Owner & Trainer
Pawsitive Fit, LLC

