**5 WAYS TO SOCIALIZE YOR NEW DOG**

All dogs are social creatures. That is why they have enjoyed living with humans for so long! Whether your new dog is young or mature, they will benefit (and hopefully enjoy) socializing with others.

Before you begin however, it is important to know what and how much your dog is comfortable with. *Socializing* does not mean just throwing your dog in to new circumstances and letting them “deal” with it, it is instead, *desensitizing* them to many different people, places and things. When socializing your dog to new things begin from a distance. Gradually get closer to the stimuli give your dog a treat (or 2!) and encourage your dog in a “jolly” voice. Allow the dog to investigate and if your dog is comfortable and **relaxed**, have the people your dog meets offer him a treat. If your dog is not comfortable, the treats need to come from you only. Use a silly, jolly tone of voice and give treats. If the situation is overwhelming to your dog **back away until he is relaxed** again. From this point, start over trying to build the dog’s confidence and gradually get closer to the stimuli. *The goal is to get your dog comfortable and confident around stimuli that were previously frightening or uncomfortable to him.*

There are many good ways to socialize your dog but you should pick the ways that are appropriate for your particular dog.

1. Dog parks/Dog Day Care/Dog Friend Walks - If your dog enjoys the company of other dogs then dog parks and well-run dog day care facilities can be fantastic for him. If you are choosing to go to a dog park make sure your dog has a good grasp of “come” before you ever take him off leash. Make sure the day care does not have too many dogs in one area and is supervised by a knowledgeable staff at all times. If your dog is, let's say "choosey" about his dog friends and off-leash areas are not for him, start by taking your dog and the potential new friend for a leashed walk together first and see how they respond to each other. Even most dogs that "don't like other dogs" are able to have 1 or 2 close doggy friends they can play with respectfully.

1. Walk your dog in busy neighborhoods so that he can come in contact with other people, dogs and street noises. Always bring delicious treats to help desensitize your dog to these things. While you are there, sit at a coffee shop or out door café. Again, making sure your dog is comfortable in this environment. Do not make him sit there if he is in any way nervous or scared.
2. Walk your dog past playgrounds/playfields and give him lots of treats for keeping his composure around moving children and balls. If your dog is uncomfortable or reacting (barking, jumping, lunging) on the leash then you need to get more distance until your dog can be calm.
3. Enroll in a good, positive based obedience class where your dog can practice his impulse control and learn to focus on YOU in a controlled environment.
4. Take your dog with you! Dogs like to be with us – the more he gets to hang out with you and go places with you, the happier (and more social) he will be!

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