



The WoofGang Wag Rag



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Free

Demythacizing Pup Psychology

Today's pup culture surrounding dog behavior is steeped in myths that are doing anything *but* promoting greater understanding between our two species. Instead, we distrust and demonize the motivations of our dogs as they jump on us, pull us down the street, rush through the door ahead of us, and curl up comfortably on the couch. It's time to demystify the myths so that we can reestablish trust with our furry best friends.



Madison guarding

The Guarding Myth

Some dogs growl, even bite, when people approach their special person. Chihuahuas are notorious for guarding the lap of their loved one like it was their throne. While it may seem flattering that a dog jealously spurns the contact of others, think of this in the context of the dog guarding his person as he might a desired bone, toy, or location and it seems quite a bit less gallant.

The coveted human must communicate to the dog that access to her is not the dog's to grant or deny. By extracting herself from the dog's company, the human is showing very palpably that she is not the dog's to give. To do this safely, start with the dog on-leash with the leash tethered

to something stable. Have someone approach the coveted person with the dog on her lap. Should the dog show any guarding behaviors (stillness, a hard eye, lifting a lip, growling, or snapping), the person should abruptly rise, letting the dog drop softly to the ground, and walk away out of reach. As little physical contact as possible should be given to the dog while shooing the dog from the lap, as touching could be construed as reinforcing the bad behavior. If the visitor can safely approach the dog at this point, have him offer tasty treats so that future approaches might prove more welcomed.

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\$25 Intro Training Offer

Get a 30-minute introductory basic training session for \$25 or apply it towards a 4-session package and get the 30-minute session FREE! (Offer details based on location.) Call **WoofGang** at **646.345.5116** to make an appointment.

Talkin' Trash on the Street

Dogs who lunge and bark at passing dogs on the street are usually doing so due to fear or anxiety. Giving your dog a correction for her behavior tends to make it worse. A more effective approach is to change her feelings about other dogs from one of fear to one of happy anticipation! Call **WoofGang** at **646.345.5116** for help with your trash-talkin' pooch.

Growing the Bonds

Our pets have become members of the family, working, playing, eating, and sleeping at our sides. **WoofGang** can help you strengthen the bond with your canine family member. Call **646.345.5116** today.

About the Trainer

Dog trainer **Laura Garber**, CPDT, is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and is certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), the first national certification for dog trainers.

Laura has authored articles about dogs and dog behavior in dog-centric magazines and on-line resources.

Laura believes strongly in strengthening the bond between human and companion animal. For this reason, she regards training as an exercise in building relationship rather than obedience. Such an approach promises greater understanding and symbiosis within our family packs.

Log on to www.myWoofGang.com.

Territorial Behavior

Allowing your dog to peer out the window at passers-by can develop into a more dangerous behavior called territorial aggression. Your dog will start to think that it's his barking that's keeping the passing people and dogs away and, over time, this can potentially put your guests at risk.

Call **WoofGang** at **646.345.5116** for help with this dangerous behavior.

Demythacizing Pup Psychology (cont.)

The Protection Myth

Some dogs bark and lunge when passing dogs on the street and their behavior can be worse when they're being walked by a family member. This behavior is often misconstrued as the dog protecting their people from other dogs but this is rarely the motivation. On-leash reactivity is usually an expression of a dog's insecurity around other dogs and frustration that their natural greeting behaviors are being thwarted by the presence of the leash. These insecure dogs often feel more empowered by the company of their family pack rather than the dog walker, which in turn allows them to display a more aggressive behavior. Pet parents often feel that something in their own behavior or handling must be fueling the dog's aggressive behavior and, though this can be a contributing factor, it could simply be the dog's feeling of empowerment in the company of his bonded human family.

A dog may also get snappy or testy with other dogs when those dogs approach their humans in off-leash situations such as at the dog run. This should be evaluated as their guarding a prize possession, similar to the Guarding Myth (above). The best approach is to keep contact with all other dogs very low-key so as not to trigger the behavior in the family dog and to reward the dog with pets and happy vocal encouragements for quiet, non-reactive behavior. *Warning:* If your dog has the potential to do real physical damage to other dogs in these situations, you should not bring him to the dog run!

The Dominance Myth

A great many dogs have a tendency to jump up on people during greeting. They pull on leash and rush through doors ahead of us. If given the opportunity, they'd happily gobble down their meal before we've even tucked ourselves

into our seats. A dominance play? We have no problem assessing a human loved one invading our personal space or pushing out the door first as rude, but give the family member fur and sharp canines and suddenly we see more sinister motives.

We need for our dogs to understand that all the things that they value in their lives are generously granted by us. We control everything and will share richly, provided we are shown polite, respectful behavior.

To do this, take stock of the things that your dog considers valuable in his life: food, petting and affection, going for walks, playing with toys, being on the furniture, even chasing a paper bag blowing in the wind or a squirrel scurrying up a tree. Require polite behavior from your dog in order to earn these life rewards. Build impulse control when putting down his food or going out the door for a walk, and while playing games with him. Incorporate obedience into your day, and insist on four-on-the floor at all times. Finally, teach your dog to loose-leash walk and hold a solid down-stay. These respectful behaviors enrich the ways in which we can share our lives with our dogs.

For this article in its entirety, log on to www.myWoofGang.com.



Ernie is a handsome, playful chap. Oh, he can be a couch potato, too! He's at the Liberty Humane Society waiting for his forever family to find him. Might yours be the one?



Ask Woofie...

Woofie, how do I get my dogs to not be so excited when I come home from a couple of days away? Janet

Hiya, Janet! The trick to getting rid of any undesirable behavior is to train your dog to do a behavior you'd prefer, particularly one that is incompatible with the undesirable one. So, for instance, instead of jumping up on you and generally going wild, wouldn't a polite "sit" be preferable and, more importantly, incompatible with jumping?!

To build this behavior, start by practicing with a training partner. Step on your dog's leash at a length where he could comfortably sit but not jump up. If necessary, cue the "sit", but eventually wait for it to be offered. As the visitor approaches, if your dog breaks the "sit," the visitor backs up. Only when he's back in the "sit" does the visitor move forward again. Do all of this without verbal direction – he will understand the consequences of his actions simply from the visitor's movements. Do many repetitions of this, starting with less exciting people and working towards more exciting people. Have them start pretty low-key, then get more animated as he gets better. Start by having the visitor just giving him treats; it's often easier for him to keep the "sit". Gradually the visitor can do a little petting, offering a treat from the other hand.

Do this same practice when you arrive home. If someone else is home, have them leash the dog to prepare for the exercise. If no one's home, then either approach your dog behind a barrier or baby gate only when he's sitting, or pay no attention to him until he sits quietly.

Hope that helps! Happy training!

Woofie

If you have a question for Woofie, email it to info@mywoofgang.com. Please put "Ask Woofie" in the subject line.