



The WoofGang Wag Rag



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Free

Inadvertently Reinforced Bad Behaviors

Now here's an alarming fact: Every interaction you have with your dog results in his learning something, whether you intentionally meant to train him *or not!* In a young dog, this is especially significant, since he has less of a history with you and so each interaction has a greater impact.

So what are the most common unintentionally trained bad behaviors?! See if these sound familiar...

The Rude Greeter

Your dog is a social butterfly. He just loves jumping up to give kisses, and, while some people greet him with open arms, others push him away. And the trouble is he's getting more exuberant with each passing day.

So how did he learn that? It's a natural behavior for dogs to sniff faces as part of their greeting ritual, but the problem is that it's *not* part of *our* greeting ritual. The behavior is then encouraged by those people who enjoy bouncy dogs and give them lots of love and pets while they're leaping up on them. Strangely enough, though, even those people who don't like a jumping dog often contribute to the problem by pushing them off with their hands. Touch is very reinforcing and so even touch used in an attempt

to push away the dog will likely encourage the behavior.

And how do you fix it? For starters, you need to use some management techniques to get the ball rolling in the right direction. With your dog on leash, step on his leash at a distance from him where he can sit or stand comfortably but where he cannot jump up. Recruit a friend to help you with the exercise. Have your friend stand 10 feet or so away with some treats in his hand and have him play with the treats a bit in order to keep your dog focused on the game. Now here's the key: *WAIT* for your dog to offer a sit. *Don't ask for it.* I've found that dogs tend to learn better when they do their own problem-solving. When we give them the answer, they seem to need us to keep giving them the answer time and time again. So wait for a sit and, this first time, that wait could take quite a while! As soon as your dog's butt hits the ground, your friend should start to walk slowly toward you. If your dog stands up, your friend should immediately start to back away. When pup sits again, your friend proceeds forward. While your friend may feel like a human yoyo,
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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.

Nutrition Note

Hyper, unfocused, out-of-control dogs may have an extremely high level of cereal foods such as wheat, corn, or corn meal. www.myWoofGang.com has hints on diet and nutrition for your canine companion.

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.

Growing the Bonds

Our pets have become members of the family, working, playing, eating, and sleeping at our sides. To ensure that we live together harmoniously, both human and canine family members must learn each other's needs and limits. **WoofGang** wants to help you strengthen the bond with your canine family member. Call today at 646.345.5116.

Inadvertently Reinforced Bad Behaviors (cont.)

your dog is being taught impulse control – that the things he wants in life will only be granted to him for polite behavior. A valuable life lesson!

The Demand Barker

You're walking with your dog when you run into a friend. You stop to chat and your dog sits quietly beside you and waits. After a while, he gets impatient and fidgety, tired of the boring human chatter, and he starts to bark and jump on you, eager to resume the journey. To buy yourself a little more time, you give your pup some treats in an effort to quiet him. Now you've noticed that he starts barking and jumping on you almost immediately when you meet people on the street.

So how did he learn that?

Unfortunately this one is the most common and the most insidious. The pitfall is that the good behavior is so easily overlooked but the bad behavior is overt and annoying and rather hard to ignore. In the example, when your dog was sitting quietly and patiently, his behavior went unnoticed and unappreciated. When he became impatient and demanding, his behavior was rewarded with hush money.

And how do you fix it? This is another time when you should step on your dog's leash at a distance from him where he can sit or stand comfortably but where he cannot jump up. Cue him to sit and start giving him little pieces of treats, first fairly frequently, then increasing the duration between treats. We're working on building his patience. Should your dog bark at you, give him a time-out by turning your back on him (with your foot still on the leash) and ignoring him, only turning to face him when he's quiet.

In these early practices, stop along the street without conversing with anyone. You'll need to devote your full attention to these early exercises. As he gets better, recruit

friends to join you, as having other people around changes the exercise for you *and* for him. You will be somewhat distracted at first and a friend will understand this and not expect you to carry on a complete conversation.

Soon, you'll be ready for prime time!

A final note: If his demand behavior includes mouthing, nipping at hands or clothes, then consider using a head collar (like a Gentle Leader, a Halti, or a Snoot Loop) which will give you more control of his head and allow you to zip his mouth shut when needed.

The Sock Stealer

Your pup seems to have a knack for stealing your most sensitive things – socks, slippers, underwear, and the like. Even more annoying, it becomes a frustrating game of keep-away with you chasing him in circles and now it's happening daily...

The Party Pooper

You've settled down to watch a little TV, having just returned from your pup's last potty break for the night, when your dog comes darting out from behind the couch and starts running in the crazy circles you recognize as his post-poop victory laps. You know that he knows he's being bad, since otherwise he wouldn't be seeking out hiding places for the dirty deed...

The Upshot

When troublesome behaviors worsen, turn a critical eye to what might be inadvertently reinforcing them. Investigate management techniques (the leash can be a great tool) that will help inhibit the bad behavior while alternate behaviors are shaped. Finally, envision what you'd rather your dog do than the behavior he's chosen – for instance, sitting rather than jumping up – and help him find his way to being a better dog!

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



Ask Woofie...

Woofie, we are concerned about something that started yesterday. In the morning, Rocky had his final vaccine shots. Then in the afternoon, he got groomed as well. According to the groomer, he was irritated at first, but then was fine. However, since he came back from the groomer, he has been urinating very frequently. Sometimes, he is not even stopping to urinate, but is urinating while walking. One time, he looked at the pad as if he was going to go there to urinate, but never made it in time. There are times he does make it to the pad, though. Let me point out that we have not been giving him any extra water and he is urinating when he is not been given any water. He does not seem anxious nor has his regular behavior changed overall. Unfortunately, the problem is compounded by the fact that he only occasionally urinates outside when walked, but this did not start yesterday. Anyway, we are concerned and would welcome any suggestions that you have. The only idea I have is that somehow he is mad that he got groomed. But he is not showing it by his other behavior, though. **Dehara Hiya, Debora!** Rest assured, it's NOT because Rocky is angry about being groomed. There are a couple of possibilities though... perhaps his vaccinations are making him retain water or something has upset his urinary tract. He might have gotten a urinary tract infection (UTI) along the way. If he continues to urinate with such frequency, you should take him to the vet. He may have a UTI which would require medication. Even after the condition is medicated, Rocky may continue to break his houstraining of going on the wee-wee pad because he has gotten into a bad habit. So he'll need a houstraining refresher course, with stricter supervision and crating when you can't supervise. Remember to continue rewarding him richly for going in the right place. Hope that helps! **Waafie**