

Me And My Dogs

# Four Classifications of Dog Behavior

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The following classifications of dog behaviors are an attempt to create a framework to communicate with clients. Each behavior profile has a class of behaviors associated with it. The class is not limited to the associated behaviors and dogs of one class can exhibit behaviors of another class. They were selected because they are the most persistent and difficult to extinguish and because many of them are normal instinctive dog behaviors. Unlike most training methods published in popular literature, this class method groups behaviors and addresses them as one problem not as separate ones. This class-based strategy proposes behavior modification that is most effective for that class. Many experts agree that most problem behaviors in dogs can be reduced by providing stimulating activity. In addition to defining classes of behavior, this paper defines types of play. Each class of behaviors has a type of play associated with it that is part of the behavior modification plan. Together, classifications of problem behavior and types play are a starting point in creating a shared language between dog trainers and dog owners to understand 'problem behavior' and to eliminate it.

### **Profiles of Problem Behavior**

The following is a profile of four different classes of problem behavior. It is important to remember that these are very broad classifications. Many dog trainers use these terms among themselves to describe their client's dogs and their own dogs. This discussion is meant to open a dialog first among dog trainers to better define these classifications and second to help dog owners identify and resolve problem behavior. The four classifications begin with a very general statement about the profile, and then a more specific description about the dogs follows. Many of the behaviors identified in one classification can be present in other classifications. Within the framework of this paper, behaviors are classified with only the most descriptive class. For instance, barking can be a problem in all four of the classifications, but excessive barking *defines* the demanding dog. Within all of these classifications, jumping up is an issue, but jumping up *characterizes* the rude dog. Again, these

terms are familiar to dog trainers and some dog owners. This study is an attempt to use them in a more meaningful way.

### **Demanding Dogs**

Demanding dogs are attention seeking. Demanding dogs often lack independence and self confidence. They lack social skills and problem-solving skills. They bark, and they bark, and bark and bark. It's the barking that gets these dogs in trouble. Often called request barking, the dog requests or demands food, attention or play and the dog owner complies to make the barking stop resulting in a dog that lack the skills to do things for herself. It can start as a puppy. Puppy problem solving is barking. Owners who are over indulgent or have no tolerance for the noise will solve problems for them whether it is retrieving a toy or resolving conflicts with other dogs. These puppies grow up to be dogs that don't know how to play on their own or with other dogs. Their world is dependent on their owner.

### **Inadvertent Reinforcement**

An accepted definition of a primary reinforcer is something the dog intrinsically likes. This includes, food, attention and exercise. More specifically, running, jumping, pulling, digging, barking and chewing. These are all things dogs really like to do. Sometimes trainers and behaviorists are asked why does my dog bark. The simple answer is because she likes to. Barking in particular can be self rewarding. If the dog barks to make the mailman go away, it works every time, he drops off the mail and leaves, another reinforcement for the dog. These normal behaviors are so strong it may only take a single trial and reinforcement to establish the possibility that the behavior will occur again.

Often problem behavior is maintained on a partial schedule of reinforcement. The longer the dog continues to seek attention more likely the owner will relent and give it to them. All too many dog owners give in to their dogs out of frustration and desperation. Demanding dogs in particular can drive people crazy. Every time a person picks up the tennis ball and throws it on demand, they are reinforcing the barking and everything else that comes along with it. If on occasion the owner has the determination to out last their dog, there is still a good possibility that the next time they will give in. The reinforcer is so strong the dog will continue trying because getting food, attention, and exercise are very desirable and from the dog's perspective, are worth the effort.

### **Indirect Approach to Behavior Modification**

In instrumental learning we have positive and negative reinforcement and positive and negative punishment. (Positive is giving reinforcement or punishment and negative is taking away reinforcement or punishment.) As we have said, primary reinforcers are things that dogs intrinsically like. An indirect approach to modify the behavior is more psychological than physical. To do this the owner withdraws all attention and shuns the dog. Dogs are highly social animals and they do not like to be ignored. Dog owners who can turn their backs on their dogs, essentially shift the burden of responsibility to their dogs. Domestic dogs depend on their person to provide food, shelter and affection. The dog is the one who needs to be responsible to their owner if they want to know where their next meal is coming from. There is no doubt, they get the message quickly.

Turn your back and walk away from your dog (don't look back) just a few times and your dog will be at your side in no time. A super nanny uses this technique to get children to bed. She gives them hugs and cuddles and walks away. Every time they get out of bed, no talk, no eye contact, just pick them up and put them right back in. This technique works on dogs too. It is amazing how quickly a dog will

respond when we break eye contact or isolate them. Dogs do not like to be 'shunned' even for short periods of time. Turning or walking away is effective in everything from nipping and jumping up to getting them to come. Used correctly, this technique has immediate results.

## **Demanding Dogs**

The irony of demanding dogs is while they are all attention seeking, many of them are object focused more than handler focused. What this means is they will bark and beg for attention but when they are given attention, they often redirect it to toys or the outdoors. Because dog owners have given in to their demanding dogs since they were puppies, they are now dependent on them for all their mental and physical activity. To stop the barking, stop rewarding it with attention or letting them outside and closing the door behind them. *It is better to go outside with them and exercise on a regular basis **before** the barking starts.* High drive dogs are most often guilty of being called demanding when they don't get enough exercise. These dogs need vigorous exercise in the morning and in the evening.

Another major problem with demanding dogs is their lack of independence and problem-solving skills. From an early age these dogs have barked for everything they needed. Instead of teaching young dogs to do things for themselves, dog owners who do not know any better find lost toys for them, retrieve balls from hard to get spots and carry them over rough ground and through tight spaces. Often times instead of physical activity they give the dog chew toys, treats or petting. The result is an overweight dog who cannot solve its own problems.

## **Supervised Play**

To solve these problems, demanding dogs should have *supervised play*. This is play that is directed or facilitated by the dog owner. In Bruce Fogel's 1990 Book The Dogs Mind he recommends "We should stimulate the dogs mind in similar ways to those in which it is naturally stimulated, [and] channel this energy into useful activities which he divides into nose work, problem solving, learning and balance." Such activities include finding and retrieving hidden objects, digging for treasure, running, jumping and playing with other dogs. For the demanding dog, it gives them the activity they demand and the problem solving they need. Hunting is not an activity that is limited to the field or in the woods. It can be done in the backyard or even in the house. The process is what is important. Dogs can actively hunt following their noses to find all sorts of objects indoors or outdoors. The activity is self rewarding so it is a primary reinforcer. Dogs like to hunt because it gives them the opportunity to run, jump, dig, bark and chew. If the hunt is outside on a leash they get to pull too!

There are several dog toys available that can be filled with food. To make help make each hunt novel, try getting one for each day of the week. With the dog watching, fill the toy with food. If it is a Kong™ type toy cover the openings with low fat peanut butter or snack cheese. Put your dog out of sight and hide the toy. To make the game more interesting, put a string on the toy and drag it. Start at the point where the dog will begin the hunt. Do loops and turns around the house or the yard to encourage the dog to track the scent. Then hide it near by where the dog can get it themselves. It is okay for the dog owner to help but do not do it for him. Once the dog finds the toy, let them have it. As the dog gets better at the game, make it more difficult. For hunting in the yard or in the woods, get a life size stuffed animal and soak it in chicken or beef broth. Even better, go to the pet store and ask for the shavings from the rodent cages, soak them in water for a few days, drain the water from the shavings then saturate the toy rabbit or squirrel with it, dogs love it!

## **Rude Dogs**

Rude dogs are space invaders. If they don't get what they want, they try to take it. They are master counter surfers, trash pickers and thieves. They jump, pull and push. It is the rude dog that is the most persistent jumper. They jump up on people, furniture, windows and doors. Unlike the demanding dog who will bark or nudge for attention, the rude dog does not ask, he will just jump up into your lap without warning. They are also the most persistent leash pullers. They just ignore their handler and take off to the end of the leash and keep on pulling. Rude dogs beg for food and will steal your sandwich if you turn your back on them. Rude dogs can be impatient and push their way out of their crates and through doors. They will invade your space and will knock you over to do it.

Rude dogs come in all breeds. Sometimes people who own dogs like Golden Retrievers or Poodles don't recognize that their dog is being rude because the breed is considered well mannered. But many times, it is those 'well mannered' breeds that are the rudest because their behavior is not recognized or corrected. Suzanne Clothier in her article on rude dogs and dealing with aggression, "[He Just Wants to Say Hi!](#)" writes "Anyone can recognize that a dog lunging and snarling is being rude. Far too few folks recognize that simply getting into another dogs space – however sweetly and quietly is just as rude in the world of dogs." (Clothier 2000. Say Hi) Clothier goes on to say "My experience has been that it is the owners of breeds considered non-aggressive that cause most problems in dog-to-dog interactions simply by being unaware their dog is rude." (Clothier 2000. Say Hi). It is the rude dog's victim that is unfairly reprimanded because of their response to the offending behavior. Dog owners need to look beyond the breed to identify rude dogs and to modify their behavior.

## **Normal Dog Behavior**

Why are some dogs rude? “Virtually all-natural dog behaviors ... eating food items within reach, jumping up to access faces, settling disputes with threat displays, establishing contact with strange dogs, ... leaning into steady pressure against their necks... are all considered by humans to be behavior problems.” (Donaldson 2005 Culture Clash, pg. 97) This does not mean that all dogs are naturally rude, it means that some dogs do not know how to behave in human society. The behaviors in this class of problem dog behavior we consider rude, but are all normal dog behaviors. *Begging, jumping and pulling are so persistent because they are normal dog behavior.* Okay, so it’s normal behavior, now what, live with it? NO, to modify these behaviors, let’s take a novel approach and look at them as a single problem with a common solution, avoidance learning. Instead of continuously correcting the problem, in just a few trials, avoidance learning sufficiently impresses on the dog that they should avoid the behavior in the future.

### **Avoidance Learning**

Avoidance learning uses negative reinforcement to surprise or startle a dog. Dogs learn to avoid aversives such as loud noises by not misbehaving. Don’t let the words *negative* and *aversion* discourage you from reading on. Avoidance learning is very effective with rude dogs because this class of behaviors is the most persistent and the least resistant to extinction. Such behaviors; pulling and jumping are so innate that dogs are willing to endure even pain and punishment to continue. In addition, these behaviors are often reinforced on an intermittent schedule by sneaky rude dogs. How it works is, a dog is startled by the owner or the environment in a way that gets their immediate attention. The attention getting event gets their attention and prepares them for learning. The instruction takes place instantly and permanently.

### **Startle Response**

“The object of canine punishment should be to reveal your power, not to inflict pain... Dogs intimidate each other. They can startle each other and induce fear... These are the better types of punishment to use as negative reinforcers of behavior.” (Fogel 1990 Dog’s Mind, pg. 103) Startling a dog, or a person for that matter, gets their attention and facilitates learning. When a dog is misbehaving, a quick, loud unexpected “No!” will get them to quit immediately. The key here is quick, loud and unexpected. This is the answer to the question, how do you get your dog to come when they are chasing a squirrel, deer, rabbit... what ever. Keep an air horn in a convenient spot, when the dog runs off, just a quick short blast will stop them in their tracks. Once they stop, **immediately**, tell them to come. Timing is everything. If the dog is not called as soon as you get their attention, they will refocus back on the squirrel and continue the chase. This is why so many dogs do not respond to “No!” anymore. They hear it all the time and it is not followed up with being told the correct behavior. The startle response is a form of negative reinforcement and avoidance learning

Steven Lindsay gives examples of an avoidance training in his Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training: Adaptation and Learning. Lindsay recommends avoidance training as a way to teach persistent leash pullers not to pull. When a dog goes to the end of a tight leash the handler is to stop, give a quick tug back and immediately drop the leash loose. If the dog maintains the loose leash then the walk continues. After several trials the dog learns that pulling on the leash will stop the walk and be corrected with a tug but the loose leash is rewarded with walking. In time, the handler can drop the leash loose to cue the dog that the correction (tug) is coming. If the correction was sufficiently attention getting, the dog will take the cue and stop pulling.

Avoidance learning is especially effective when the dog owner is not there. Rude dogs are sneaky and get into mischief when their owners are not watching, so the correction must come from the environment. This is where avoidance training gets to be fun. For jumping up, try booby trapping countertops and tables with cans full of coins or rocks. Set the cans up so when your dog knocks them over it creates a loud crash when they hit the floor. “Several things happen during such training, both external cues (the table and tempting food), internal cues (the desire to jump up for food) and the behavior of jumping itself are all associatively linked with the startling event.” (Lindsay 2000, Adaptation pg 292) Motion sensors with alarms are available that you can put on the trash can, laundry basket and door knobs. The rude dog will be so surprised it will end his crime wave forever.

### **Appropriate Play**

Rude dogs need to learn *appropriate play*. With the popularity of doggie day cares, there are an increasing number of studies and publications on play behavior in dogs. Defining appropriate play is outside the scope of this article, it is however sufficient to say that bullying, mounting and fighting are not appropriate. To correct these behaviors try using a time out and add the element of surprise to make it even more effective. This is another time the air horn comes in handy. The small ones are nice because they can fit in your pocket. Sound the horn to break up inappropriate play or fighting, quickly grab the offending dog and put him in time out. After only 5 to 10 minutes, if the dog is quiet, let him out and closely monitor him. With each offense put him back in time out. Rude dogs should engage in appropriate play daily.

If it is not possible to play with other dogs, time outs are also effective for misbehavior while playing with people. Again, it is the element of surprise that makes negative reinforcement so effective. In this case we are removing play which is the reinforcer. If a dog is being rude, nipping or jumping, just say something short and loud like Ouch! or No! leave the room and close the door behind you. Be as abrupt and loud as possible so he will remember it the next time. The attention getting event *must be sufficiently aversive* that they will avoid it in the future. It is also important to always link the rude behavior (jumping) with the warning (No!) and the attention getting event (leaving the room). After just a few trials the dog will avoid jumping or stop jumping when he hears No! If not storm out of the room.

## **Busy Dogs**

Before defining busy dogs, it is important to say what busy dogs are not. They are not neurotic or hyper. They are busy, they are always doing something. Sometimes they do the same thing over and over or they could go from one activity to the next non-stop. Within this framework, busy dogs don't run around constantly getting into trouble, busy dogs are very methodical and focused in their activities. Activities include licking objects, sucking toys, chewing sticks, chasing balls and digging holes. If a dog is licking, sucking or chewing on themselves, they are not busy within this context; they need the attention of a vet. Busy dogs can also be nervous or fearful. They are not comfortable in crowds or with loud noises such as storms. These dogs also tend to be loners. They function well in a pack, but they would rather be by themselves most of the time. The busy behavior is often the way they self-manage their fears.

## **Neoteny**

The classifications of problem behavior discussed in this paper are groupings of adolescent behaviors that persist into adulthood. Once identified, acceptable behaviors can be sorted into their proper sequence and unwanted behaviors eliminated. "The evolutionary process whereby an animal retains its youthful characters as an adult is called neoteny. The idea that the dogs evolved neotenually was proposed originally by Bolk (1926) on the basis of morphology." (Coppinger 1995. Evolution of Working Dogs. Pg 38) It theorizes that in the domestic dog's evolution from wolves, their predatory behavior patterns were interrupted or truncated. For instance, in the **orient > eye-stalk > chase > grab-bite > kill-bite > dissect > consume** a working border collies' pattern is now **orient > eye-stalk > chase where** the eye-stalk is exaggerated and the grab-bite > kill-bite is eliminated. Grab-bite and kill-bite in a border collie working sheep would be considered a fault and

the dog would not be bred. Neoteny is interesting because it describes the domestic dog as a wolf stuck in adolescence. “The adolescent shows, in varying frequencies, both neonatal and adult motor patterns. What is important here is that the neonate cannot chew and the adult cannot suck, but the adolescent can and often does both. When an animal mixes neonatal and adult behavior in non-functional sequences, the result is often called ‘play’. Learning takes place when an animal rearranges the motor patterns into functional sequences.” (Coppinger 1995 Evolution of Working Dogs. pg 40)

This theory is fascinating because it leads to an understanding of the origin of so many irksome dog behaviors. “Over a thousand generations, natural predatory aggression in dogs has been channeled into stalking, pointing, herding and digging. These behaviors, together with shaking, carrying, guarding and burying, all manifest themselves in what could be called biologically dead-end behaviors in domestic dogs.” (Fogel 1990. Dogs Mind, pg 138) The majority of dogs today do not have a way to express their innate skills even in a modified form. The problem is then compounded by dog owners who use punishment to correct these unwanted behaviors. Busy dogs are nervous and fearful, even the mildest punishment is disturbing to them. It can even make the problem worse. Remember, most busy behaviors are the result of self-management of stress.

Even worse is when owners inadvertently reinforce the wrong behaviors by giving into their dog’s persistent demands. Instead of giving dogs an opportunity plays and exercise on a regular basis, dogs often bark, beg or bite to get what they want. Unfortunately, this behavior gets reinforced with petting or a treat instead of stimulating activity. It is this pattern of dogs looking for something to do, and owner’s incorrect response that leads to so many problems.

## **Busy Dogs**

Stephen Budiansky “The interesting thing about breed characteristic behaviors in dogs is that they are removed entirely from their original, purposeful context ... These behaviors very much resemble the juvenile patterns of play in which bits and pieces of adult behavior chasing, ...stalking, mouthing objects, biting and grabbing – are run through a seemingly meaningless order and without any immediate purpose.” (Budiansky 2000. The Truth, pg 45). In this quote, Budiansky is discussing Mixed – Up Instincts, but this is a good definition and explanation for the behaviors of busy dogs. Is it possible that busy dogs are playing a piece of the predatory sequence over and over? They chase, mouth and chew seemingly without end. When they are not behaving in this way, they are nervous. Busy dogs should not be punished for their activity. They are typically sensitive and punishment can worsen the problem. Unfortunately, some busy dogs are diagnosed as hyperactive and are medicated. This class of dogs need to have understanding, acceptance and something to do.

Busy behaviors can fall into two categories, annoying and really annoying. If the annoying behavior is not harmful to the dog, people or objects, then consider doing nothing. If the behavior is harmful to the dog, other dogs, people or objects then it should be modified. The most common strategy is to train an incompatible behavior. This would be something the dog could not possibly do at the same time as the unwanted behavior. It is not possible to lay down and chase, mouth a toy and mouth and arm, or chew a bone and chew a chair leg all at the same time. Another strategy is *focused play*. Focused play is when a person is the focus dog play. Dog sports like agility, frisbee and hunting are examples of focused play. For the busy dog it is an opportunity to work through the predatory sequence instead of a single piece of it over and over. Frisbee for example is orient > eye/stalk > chase > bite. Breeds of dogs specialize in different parts of the sequence so chose a sport that is

compatible with that breed. Although it is unlikely to 'cure' the busy dog, focused play is a positive way to relieve much of their stress and give them something meaningful to do.

### **Focused Play**

Focused play is when the dog owner focuses the dog in complex play. Dog sports like hunting, agility, and Frisbee™ are examples of focused play. It gives the busy dog an opportunity to work through the predatory sequence instead of a single piece of it over and over. A busy dog that chases everything that moves could benefit by being led through the entire sequence by playing fetch. First, let him choose what he wants to play with so he can *orient* to it. Then take it from him and show it to him, tease him with it to get him to really *eye* it. Pretend like you are going to throw it, but don't. Show it to him again, get him to *stalk* it. Throw it, let him *chase* it, *grab* it and *bite* it. An inexperienced dog may not bring it back and instead run away to *dissect* and *consume*. We want to eliminate dissect and consume in most domestic dogs, so you have a second toy ready to start the sequence over. Try to get as close as possible to your dog, help him *orient* to the toy you have then quickly move him to eye > stalk > chase. Then pick up the first toy, put it in your pocket and repeat the sequence.

## **Spoiled Dogs**

Spoiled dogs are easy to identify, but difficult to treat. It is the owners of these dogs that overindulge them and many of them don't see a problem unless they or someone else gets seriously bitten. The problem with the owners of spoiled dogs is that they are so emotionally invested in their *children* they often displace their own feelings on the dog. They treat their dogs like children and dress them in cloths and feed them people food. Food is a huge issue with these dogs. Some owners go so far as to cook for their dogs every night. Spoiled dogs can even persuade their way into their owner's favorite chair or even their beds. They are given everything and don't know how to tolerate frustration. They often run away and don't come when called. Spoiled dogs' behavioral problems often start with whining, barking and nipping then escalate to growling, snapping and biting. Help usually is not asked for until the problem is out of control and "teaching dogs to tolerate disappointment is not always fun for owners, just as raising children is hard work." (McConnell 2002. The Other End, pg 163)

## **Normal Dog Behavior**

Puppies are wonderful creatures. They are playful and cute, warm and fuzzy. Most people say "ahhhh" when they see a puppy playing and want to pick it up and hold it. Humans are drawn to puppies just as they are drawn to babies. We love them and want to take care of them. But just as babies grow up to be toddlers and adolescents, so do puppies. Children are to babies as dogs are to puppies. However, you would not raise your children like dogs, so why raise dogs like children? Many dog owners consider their dogs their children. There is a quote that says 'Dogs are for people who don't have children'. To expect childlike behaviors from dogs is unfair and most of the time, sets the dog up for failure. Dogs are dogs and should be treated like dogs. "The point is that we often replace what is normal and correct for a canine with what we perceive to fair or reasonable for a

human. This is where the trouble starts.” (Clothier 1996. Relationship, pg 6) What is normal behavior for a dog? Ian Dunbar, “Chewing, digging, barking, eliminating and greeting owners are all normal, natural and necessary canine behaviors.” (Dunbar 1996. Old Tricks, pg 59) This is what dogs do. When we get a dog, we often have dreams that the dog will play nicely with us during the day and lay quietly next to us in the evening. Although it is very possible, there is a lot of work that must go into training the dog owner and the dog. Again, Ian Dunbar, “Since it is the owners who often consider normal dog behavior irksome and inappropriate, the onus lies with owners to teach dogs how to appropriately express their basic doggy nature within the domestic setting.” (Dunbar 1996. Old Tricks, pg 62) In most cases this takes much more than a basic obedience class.

Puppies are amazing creatures. Most people say “Aw” when they see a puppy and want to pick it up and hold it. Humans are drawn to puppies just as they are drawn to babies. The behaviorist, Patricia McConnell Ph.D. is my favorite reference on this topic. She points out the puppies have large foreheads and big round eyes like a baby’s. As humans our brains are hard-wired to care for babies and easily generalize this to puppies. In her popular book, The Other End of The Leash, McConnell says “if you’re not the kind of person who loves to cater to your dogs, it might be tempting to laugh at people who do. But our tendency to be nurturing is not to be sneezed at; without it we’d be extinct. But as with everything else, if it’s misplaced or excessive, it can create a problem.”

So, what is the problem? Dog ownership has been linked to lower blood pressure and cholesterol. People who walk their dogs also get more exercise and have more social interactions. Dog owners on average have less stress which reduces many health risks. Great for people, but this discussion is about dogs. Dogs that are spoiled or overindulged are often fed improperly and don't get enough exercise so they tend to be overweight and have health problems. They can also be aggressive. Dog trainers and behaviorists have seen countless clients that cannot sit without their dog in their lap. When the dog is removed it bites. How many other people leave the room rather than push the dog off the couch or bed? Maybe you do, your dog is not spoiled and would never bite you, right. Try it. Force your dog off the couch today, if he snaps, you have a problem.

### **Pancreatitis**

Many spoiled dogs are fed improperly. This includes but is not limited to table food. Generally, what happens is the dog does not eat for some reason. The dog owner becomes concerned and adds bacon or hamburger grease to their food. Later when the dog does not eat that, they feed them chicken or meat. Soon the dog learns that they will be fed more and more exotic foods if they don't eat. The dog owner gets stuck in a spiral of increasing demands by their dogs that sometimes results in food aggression or pancreatitis. Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas. Symptoms include abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea; depression and decreased appetite or lack of appetite. In severe cases of pancreatitis there may be signs of shock or total collapse. High fat diets are a common cause of chronic pancreatitis but a dog can get acute pancreatitis from a single episode of eating fat trimmed from a pork chop or steak. Chronic pancreatitis can result in acute pancreatitis because the dog is already sick and won't eat, and then the owner adds bacon grease to its food and makes matters worse.

## **Spoiled Dogs**

The problem with spoiled dogs is many of their owners overindulges the dog. They take pride in it. “My baby is so spoiled, but look how cute she is, smooch, smooch”. They don’t think they have a problem, until the day the dog bites them. “If you want your dog to be a polite house dog who is part of your family, then you need to raise her as you would any youngster and teach her how to tolerate not always getting what she wants the instant that she wants it.” (McConnell 2002. *The Other End*. Pg 36 -37) This quote is from Patricia McConnell’s very popular book, *The Other End of The Lease*. McConnell explains why we do what we do around dogs in terms we can understand. As trainers and behaviorists, we need to affirm owners of spoiled dogs for them for the loving relationship and teach them how to gain control. The average American household spends about \$1,400.00 a year to care for their dog, some spend much more than that. McConnell would not criticize anyone for buying an expensive bed for their dog, but she is clear that the human needs to be head of household. “If you’re not the kind of person who loves to cater to your dogs, it might be tempting to laugh at people who do. But our tendency to be nurturing is not to be sneezed at; without it we’d be extinct. But as with everything else, if it’s misplaced or excessive, it can create a problem.” (McConnell 2002. *The Other End*. Pg 164)

The common solution for spoiled dogs is the *nothing in life is free* method. This requires owners make their dogs work (sit, lay down, wait, etc.) for everything they get. It empowers the dog owner and is very effective in some situations. In the case of the spoiled dog, however, it may be too difficult for the *mom or dad* to set rules and enforce them on a consistent basis. Remember, these misbehaviors were the caused by over indulgence and by the time many of these people ask for help it has been continued out of fear. There are many documented cases of dog owners who were *afraid not to give to their dogs*, no matter how small they were. Trainers and behaviorist have multiple

stories of people who got bit by their little dog while it was sitting in their lap, or people who had to cook for their dog otherwise it wouldn't eat. Sounds crazy, but it's a real problem and it's becoming more common.

Let's return to Patricia McConnell for a solution that is effective and appealing to owners of spoiled dog. She writes;

“How you respond to dog you depends partly on his age. Just like people, younger dogs haven't yet learned how to control their emotions and desires, and it's up to us to help them. A lot of young dogs don't want petting or attention as much as they want activity, and they come up to their owners to get a game started. Of course, this is when many of us pet our dogs instead of going outside and playing with them. We're tired, and we finally got a chance to sit down, and we don't want to get up right then. So we pet our dog instead, gradually teaching her that although she can't get the exercise that she needs, at least she can mug us for a massage. The solution here is simple, although not necessarily easy. If you have a young healthy dog, especially one who sleeps in a crate all day long, then either get yourself outside and exercise with your dog or find someone else to do it for you.” (McConnell 2002. The Other End. Pg 165)

Over indulgent dog owners would have no difficulties spending more time playing with their dogs or indulging them even more by hiring a dog walker or bringing them to a doggie day care. Obviously, there is more work to do here than just dropping them off at day care, but it is a good place to start. Recommend a program that has small play groups. It will reduce some or all of the separation anxiety that spoiled dogs and their owners have. As a dog trainer, it will make your job easier if the dog and the owner get socialized. Then, look at all aspects of their relationship and know the client's willingness to use various techniques before you begin training.

In addition to supervised play with the dog owner or at day care, *independent play* is also important. Independent play is where the dog plays all by themselves. Many dogs don't know how to do this especially spoiled dogs. A great solution is a toy filled with their food. It will also help solve the problem of the dog not eating dog food. A common problem with spoiled dogs is that they will not eat

dry dog food and their owners will feed them people food instead. There are lots of toys on the market that the owner can put kibble in with a little peanut butter or soft cheese and the dog will play as they eat. Other suggestions for independent play are soft squeaky toys or puzzles. To rebuild trust and positively reinforce the command come, the owner should periodically check in with their dog, take the toy away, look at it, admire it and give it back. The dog will love the toy and the owner even more.