

## MORE ON BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION ISSUES

Before you can ask a dog to do anything for you, you must satisfy the dog's needs first. Once you have addressed your dog's natural needs and instincts, you can bring his focus back on you so he'll pay attention to what you want him to do.

The three primary needs of dogs which we people can fulfill, in order to raise well-adjusted and content animals, are: a physical outlet for energy, companionship with people, and mental stimulation. All dogs have those three needs – whether it's the enormous, mellow Scottish Deerhound or the tiny, effervescent Chihuahua. So even if you aren't experiencing behavior problems you'll be doing your dog a favor by following this advice.

1) A PHYSICAL OUTLET FOR ENERGY is a fundamental need for all dogs, but most of all for the sporty breeds and the terriers. Dogs originally bred to do jobs with or for humans have an inherited drive to work. It is a genetically "hard-wired," inborn desire to "go and do." Dogs like this are often referred to by trainers as a "high drive" dog, and can even come from a breed not associated with working. If these dogs do *not* get a chance to run and play and have a task to burn up some of that energy, their frustration and pent-up energy is going to make it difficult for them to concentrate or settle down. General exercise is a must, but also more specific activities (obedience, agility, Rally-O, retrieving) may have more value to high-drive, high-energy pooches.

2) COMPANIONSHIP - or the chance to spend time by your side - is a profound need for dogs. That close attachment is generally true of certain breeds, to whom it is vitally important to have their person always in sight. It can also be an aspect of an individual dog's personality that is stronger for some than others. If you pay attention to

the signals your dog gives you you'll figure out if you have one of those super-attached dogs who needs more quality and quantity time with you (for example, Scooby Doo needs to be with me at any possible moment but patting or talking to him if I am not looking right at him is not as satisfying as if he has my full attention...seriously, he'll physically or verbally make known his displeasure if my attention is elsewhere when he considers it "his" time. I don't consider it "spoiled," by the way, I look at it as excellent cross-species communication on his part!). "Companionship" can also apply to another dog or even a cat, but generally speaking dogs need to spend time with their people.

3) MENTAL STIMULATION is important for some types of dogs more than others – the herding breeds in particular. For dogs who crave novelty and challenge, anything like interactive play or new sights and sounds can satisfy the dog and tire her out in a healthy way. If you live in the country or use your car a lot, taking the dog with you as often as possible – whether or not she gets out when you do – can burn up a surprising amount of mental energy. Satisfying the need of a dog who craves being engaged mentally is satisfied some of these needs will.

The net result of satisfying a dog's natural needs is that you can then apply straightforward training ideology: reward the good, ignore the bad – or don't allow the opportunity for it to occur. The basics are as simple as reinforcing him when he does what you want - by giving him something you know he really likes, which for many dogs may be a tasty treat, for others it may mean a chance to run free or play with a favorite toy. When there is something you don't want a dog to do, the first thing is to be sure that you aren't giving the dog the opportunity to do this forbidden thing. Every time a dog

“rehearses” a behavior it is self-rewarding: just by doing that behavior the dog is rewarding himself and increasing the likelihood that he’ll do it again. For example, if your dog “counter surfs” then you cannot ever leave any food out in the kitchen; if he digs in the garbage can, it must be put out in an inaccessible location. All of this is covered in Chapter Ten, “Teaching Manners,” as well as throughout the book.