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Dogs & Kids: Happy Together

By Gene R. Sower

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Dogs and kids, it's a combination that at it's best can be the stuff of childhood dreams. At it's worst, it can be a source of heartache and pain and even injury. How can you ensure that your child and Man's Best Friend have a loving and safe relationship? Mostly, it's the responsibility of the adults of the house to teach toddlers and even older children that a dog is not a toy. It's a living, breathing creature that feels pain, shame and humiliation as much as love, pride and happiness. A dog that bites a child may only be defending itself the only way it knows how. But to minimize ever having to worry about a parent's worst nightmare, family animal psychologist, Larry Lachman, M.S., offers the following advice:

SAFETY PREVENTION TIPS TO TEACH YOUR CHILD:

Do NOT reach for a dog's head the first time they meet a dog nor excessively rough house around their own dog's head and face.

Do NOT look a dog straight in the eyes, which could be seen as a threat or challenge by the dog.

Do NOT run up frantically to a dog, which may react fearfully and defend itself or jump and bite at the child's face.

Do NOT scream loudly at a dog, which could stress a dog or startle it, causing an aggressive response.

Do NOT bother the dog while it is eating or chewing on a chew toy, which could trigger an aggressive guarding response, especially if the child is under seven years of age, where he/she is looked at by the dog as a competing animal in the pack.

Do NOT hit, kick, slap, ride, or tease the dog in any manner.

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Do NOT leave the child and dog alone until the child is older than 7, and can control its impulses.

Adults Should Take The Time...

To show the child HOW TO POSITIVELY interact and pet the dog under direct supervision.

To show the child how to be a junior dog trainer, and get the dog to sit with a treat, under parental supervision.

To only give the dog attention when the child is also receiving attention so the dog makes a better association with the child.

Following these tips will minimize conflict and teach your child to respect your dog and treat her as a member of the family.

Gene R. Sower

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The Truth About Taking Your Dog To The Dog Park

By Adam Katz

This idea of taking your dog to a dog park is not a good one. Why?

Because:

#1) It's not natural for the dog. We're not talking about human children who need to be socialized with other kids throughout their infancy. Dogs learn dominant and submissive behavior and how to interact with other dogs from 6 to 8 weeks of age. This two week period is called a critical stage, and a small amount of exposure will have a lasting effect on your dog's personality.

When you throw your dog in with all kinds of other dogs (from other packs) the first thing they need to do is establish who's dominant and who's submissive. And yes, they'll tussle to do this, often. If you have two really dominant dogs, they may even fight to the death. Or if another dog gets flushed too quickly, he'll get defensive. And then you have a dog fight on your hands, with hundreds of dogs and owners yelling and running around screaming.... and none of the dogs are trained... and none of the dogs are on leash... and all of the owners don't know anything about dog handling (esp. a fight) but think they know everything. Trust me... it's a bad situation you need to avoid.

#2) Health: They let anyone into those dog parks. And believe you me, you get the types who will find a dog in an alley and before giving it shots (rabies, parvo, etc..) ... they think they're doing a great thing by bringing the dog to the dog park where he can cough, lick and breathe on your dog.

#3) Temperament: Nobody does a temperament test on these dogs before letting them into the park. Duh! You're playing with fire.

So you can see, there are a lot of risks. And just because the dog gets into a dominance scuffle, does not mean that he's a dog fighter. But that's a different issue for another article.

That's all for now, folks! Adam

Adam G. Katz is the author of the book, "Secrets of a Professional Dog Trainer: An Insider's Guide To The Most Jealously Guarded Dog Training Secrets In History." Get a free copy of his report "Games To Play With Your Dog" when you sign up for his free weekly dog training tips e-zine at:

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