

The Leader of the Pack!

Starting Your New Dog Off on the “Right Paw”

Karen E. Nowak

Making the most of the first few days of life with your new dog can avoid undesirable behavior in the future. The first and most important thing to remember is, you're setting a precedent for future behavior from the moment your dog walks into your home.

To them you are the new pack. New litter-mates. Dogs quickly read how the pack is set up. You being the “leader of the pack” needs to be clear from the start. If you don't take responsibility for your role in the relationship, a dog will take the opportunity for you.

Right now love and affection are important but leadership is crucial, no matter the breed of dog. Setting up positive dynamics from the start gives a dog a sense of security.

Pressure is taken off a traumatized dog when the human is the clear leader. If you feel bad for your dog, you are sending a message they don't understand. They just sense something is wrong. Be understanding in your approach; give them the sense of order they thrive on.

Alone Time

Your dog will most likely be alone during its lifetime. Spending time together during the first days with them is very important. But so is introducing alone time in a safe environment. Do this regularly,



building to when you will be gone all day.

Your language and intent count. “I will be right back. I promise. Your safe” or any other language that you are trying to reassure them about this bad thing of being left alone does the opposite. They take your lead in seeing this as a bad thing.

Approaching separation as part of your routine makes it easier when established from the get go. WE contribute to what they grow to find acceptable. We feed separation anxiety when anxious ourselves. There is no room for guilt.

Saying, “Hi, I'm home!” like it's the most natural thing in the world from day one is important. Remember you are setting up it being natural for you to come and go. In older and rescue animals, as well as puppies and kittens, flower essences will help ease them into time alone.

Remember they will get through these first few days. Your confidence is important. It is hard to listen to a puppy cry or see your dog sad because you are leaving. It is also important how you handle it.

It is natural for them to be

alone at times. Not giving in through word or deed, is being loving. It contributes to creating and emotionally balanced adult dog.

Rescue Dogs

First and foremost remember: It was an experience they went through, not who they are. They are with you now and unless you continue abusing them, they are NOT AN ABUSED ANIMAL in the present. Your dog will let whatever they are able to go, if you do.

Referring to them as your “rescue and/or abused dog” keeps alive that you feel sorry for them and want others to also. Again, it was an experience they went through, not who they are.

Letting the past go creates a space for love and security to thrive. Telling an animal they are fine now and trying to make up for their past, sends a message that they don't understand.

They will, in their own time, open their hearts to feeling your love. You can't reassure them into feeling love. You can only continue to feel it and let them find it on their own.

Be gentle with them, be compassionate, but don't enable them by keeping something alive that is no longer happening. Set

boundaries like you would for any other dog. Build over time being alone, in a safe and secure environment, same as any other dog.

The only way to change what they have known is to get through those first months and maybe years while they, in their own wisdom, figure it out. Believe in them; love them. But don't victimize them.

Alternative healing and flower essences can help an animal that has had traumatic experiences. The sooner you see, feel, and treat them as a happy, healthy, emotionally whole dog the sooner they feel, and begin to act like one.

Shift Your Perspective

Seeing the dog only from a human perspective leaves a lot for the dog to figure out on its own. Many do. And, get creative in what they see acceptable in your home. It isn't as hard as it sounds. You are meant to be the head dog in their eyes. But you have to see yourself that way and behave accordingly.

A good leader isn't harsh, but reprimands, sets clear boundaries is loving and kind. Someone your dog wants to be with. A good leader will not feel guilty for a clear reprimand thinking they have hurt the dogs feelings. That isn't how it works in the pack.

Points To Remember

Leadership: Be pack leader and take responsibility for your role in the relationship.

Lots of Exercise: Ensure your dog receives enough exercise for their energy level. It's a stress reliever.

Set Clear Boundaries: Use positive reinforcement, divert from unwanted behavior. Praise reinforces the behavior you want. Reprimand only if needed.

Safe Space When Left Alone: Use a crate, single room, outside run etc. Too much too soon can

be overwhelming leading to inappropriate release of stress.

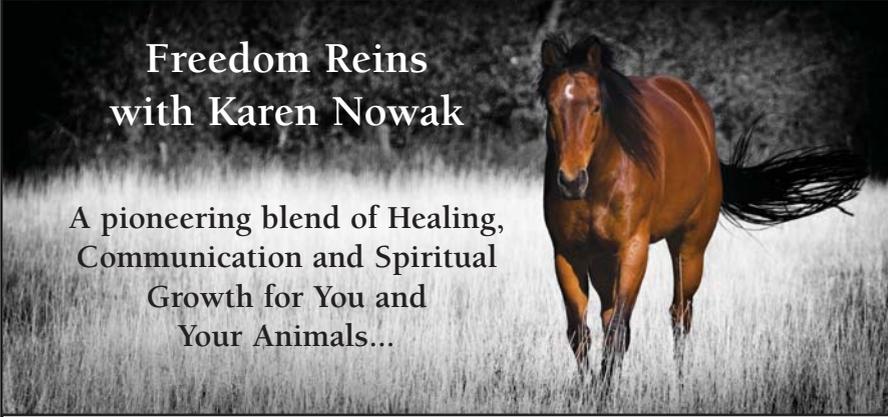
Research Pack Behavior: It is how your dog processes information. You are their new pack. Establish your position from day one.

Establish Your Position in the Pack Immediately: No matter how cute they are they all have the ability to use aggression to get what they want. It could save

someone from being hurt.

Following these guidelines you lay a solid foundation for your relationship to flourish and your dog to be secure, no matter their background. Strong leadership and rank in the pack matters. ■

Karen E. Nowak is an animal communicator, author, lecturer and alternative healer for both humans and animals. Visit her at FreedomReinsllc.com for more info.



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