TEACHING YOUR PUPPY TO SHARE

Resource guarding is the technical term for a dog's possessiveness about anything she likes. We humans learn early in life that sharing is the polite thing to do. We often expect dogs to understand this and think we should be able to handle a dog's toys or food as a matter of course. But protecting favorite things is completely natural for a dog.

If your dog growls when you reach for her chewie, she is not being bad. She is just being a dog. That said, it is altogether possible to teach your dog to be okay with sharing.

WHY TEACH YOUR PUPPY TO SHARE?

For everyone's safety. Possessiveness may be normal in dogs, but it is safer if you can take your dog's Kong or food bowl when you need to.

THINGS DOGS TEND TO GET POSSESSIVE ABOUT:

Food bowls (full or empty)

Chewies, pig's ears, greenies

Tennis balls

Kongs (especially ones stuffed with food)

Squeaky toys, stuffed toys

Dog beds

Crates

The prime spot on the couch

HOW TO WORK ON IT.

EXERCISE 1. For a few days, hand-feed your puppy. Sit with your puppy while she eats. Put a handful of kibble in the bowl. When the bowl is empty, put in another handful until she has eaten her entire meal.

EXERCISE 2. While your puppy is eating, approach her bowl and toss a small treat on the floor or into the bowl. This will teach her to feel good about you being close to her food bowl.

When your puppy wags her tail and/or looks up at you expectantly as you approach her food bowl, move on to exercise 3.

EXERCISE 3. Approach your puppy's bowl, take it away, give her something even better than what she was eating, and then give her the bowl back. This will teach her to look forward to you taking her food bowl.

TRAINING TIP:

Whenever you pick up your puppy's food bowl, whether to fill it or to clean it after her meals, offer her a treat.

TROUBLESHOOTING:

If your puppy grabs something you don't want her to have, don't immediately take it away. Instead, find a yummy treat. Tell your puppy, "Drop it," then offer the treat in exchange for the forbidden item. This will prevent struggles in the future.

© 2016 HAPPY DOG INSTITUTE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. HAPPYDOGINSTITUTE.COM