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Science of bonding between human and dog.

The most unique aspect of canine behavior, the ability to form a strong emotional attachment to humans (workable acceptance - trust).

However, in order for a dog to truly bond - the dog have to be socialized from an early age (starting at 6 weeks or from the day of arrival) and intruded to all scenarios in their new owners living territory.

The most crucial time for dogs to form attachments to humans must occur while they are young 6 – 16 weeks old.

Socialization start at the breeder (handling and feeding puppies) during the third week of a puppy's life.

Realize without close and personal involvement with young dogs – such dogs will eventually experience difficulty in the bonding process.

Totally un-socialized dogs are rare and usually only appear among feral animals.

Neglect, abuse or mistreatment can weaken the human/dog bond. In "some" cases humans can be successful in re-establishing those bonds with TLC.

There are four stages recognized in re-socialization:

Stage one.

Escape – unsure flight stage.

This stage is characterized by an extreme show of fear and distrust upon sight of a human – this dog want nothing to do with you - nothing.

Usually if such a puppy or dog is confined it tries desperately to escape by digging, pawing or jumping into the air.

If escape is impossible the dog will then resort to retreat.

It finds a corner farthest from you then crouches, cowers, pants, trembles, salivates defecates and/or urinates.

The period of time for such a dog to learn to accept the presence of a human can take up to a month.

During this time you need to be patient and be willing to work with the animal.

When working with extreme cases of un-socialized dogs it is important to learn proper body language.

Do not stare.

It is best to simply ignore the animal and let the dog adjust to human presence.

Stomping feet, sudden movement or stepping towards the dog can trigger a frantic "escape mode" response.

Confining the dog to a small room or area reduces the stress level and assists the dog in coping with this stage.

Recommendations of sitting on the floor maybe reading a book and generally ignoring the animal will help the dog to overcome his fear of humans.

There is no substitute for time, patience or knowledge. Once the dog learns to accept a human presence the next phase may begin.

Stage two.

The avoidance stage.

This is characterized by the dog accepting a human presence.

Once the dog has learned this acceptance it will no longer bolt or flee.

This stage is usually accompanied by the dog exhibition of avoidance tactics while still keeping the human within sight.

When dealing with a dog at this stage avoid direct eye contact or threatening moves.

If pressured the dog will easily revert back to the escape stage.

Usually a small amount of direction will be tolerated such as compliance with the command of entering or exiting a room.

But such obedience is usually only exhibited if the dog feels no threat from the human.

Most often a subtle change in distance between dog and human will be noticed.

As the dog begins to feel more comfortable the space between human and dog will begin to shrink.

The next phase will then immediately follow.

Stage three.

Approach stage.

Several months may pass before the dog will consistently and easily allow a human to approach or step up and approach the human.

If stared at or made to feel uncomfortable in other ways the animal will appear to revert back to the previous stage.

During this stage the dog may follow the human.

If the dog voluntarily will come close and touches a human, it is usually the dog approaching behind a human and touching with a gentle nose or paw to the back of legs or back of arms of the human.

It is important to understand that during this stage patience is crucial.

Any attempt to dominate an un-socialized dog or display any type of aggression or over affection will set the whole process of socialization back to almost the beginning.

Allowing the dog to approach at its own pace will help to ensure success.

During the approach stage it may be possible to actually handle the dog – holding out a hand – feeding a morsel of “dry wors or biltong” from the hand and possible touching the head or scratching the ears.

This must be accomplished with extreme caution, however.

Usually the dog is stiff and unresponsive to touch – ready for flight.

An insecure dog feels most comfortable out of the direct line of human vision.

During this period there is some danger that a dog (adult) might become aggressive as it attempts to dominate the situation.

If this happens guidance may be required from an experienced canine behavioral specialist.

Stage four.

Socialization stage.

The last stage, the dog will finally approach with wagging tail and without fear. There is no longer any display of aggression and or fear.

At this stage dogs can be seriously trained in obedience, agility or other canine disciplines – walking free and following the commands.

Sometimes the road to socialization can seem full of setbacks and crossroads.

Dealing effectively with issues of socialization requires patience.

Keeping a journal with notes detailing the dog's behavior will help the owner track progress.

Keeping accurate details of the dog's posture and response to outside stimuli will also prove helpful if professional guidance is required.

The experience of working with un-socialized or poorly socialized dogs can be tremendously satisfying.

There's nothing like the feeling of success after days, weeks or months of patient work. In the end, perhaps the larger reward does not belong to the dog.

You are compensated by the increased understanding of our loving companions!

Learning about a dog is always worth the effort and our lives are enriched by the experience – for such a dog you may also have a very special love in your heart.

Realize this dog will see you as a god.

Looking and reading body language.

When dealing with any dog especially a un- socialized or abused dog or neglected puppy, it is important to understand the importance of the dog's body language.

Sometimes some pups and dogs are just unsocial do not fuss with me ... do not hold or scratch me ... will tolerate your presence in their vicinity but not approach you – sporadically after time will come within in hand range but always back away.

This is a challenge – and once you won trust over this will be a phenomenal dog to have and will protect you and yours with its life.

Knowledge of this topic will help an individual to adjust their own demeanor in order to help with the behavior modification of dogs.

Dogs show dominance over other dogs in a variety of ways.

Realizing again that APBT are animals and not humans - unknowingly an individual may also imitate these types of behaviors setting up a pattern of a human - canine misunderstanding.

Hands on the dog's head or back demonstrates dominance in canine opinion.

With an un-socialized dog placing hands in these areas might and usually will increase initial fear.

Hands softly stroking underneath the head – the chin or neck, between the front legs, or the sides of the body indicate friendliness to the dog.

Any time stroking or handling occurs it is wise to use soft, soothing, even tones of the voice and avoid direct eye contact.

Quick movements of any sort should be avoided for obvious reasons.

Also it is not a good idea to stand at full height over the dog.

This is interpreted as a show of dominance and can set up a feeling of intimidation.

Dogs will sometimes react to intimidation with a show of aggression or with flight.

Grabbing and holding a dog's neck is also interpreted as an indication of human dominance and might result in undesirable behavior.

Timid dogs or those lacking in confidence already respect the human as dominant.

Over-enforcing this recognition by unwittingly using body language that confuses the dog will provoke a flight or fight reflex.

There are no procedures which can guarantee overnight success.

As a dog slowly gains confidence in himself and in his trainer and will increasingly become more responsive.

A well-trained dog is one who places himself Beta (second) after the owner.

These dogs will take direction and command from the trainer and consider the trainer the master.

In canine behavior modification this is the key fact that allows the human to triumph and success to be ensured.