

***Info shared by Pitbull SA.***

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***Concept of socializing.***

**Socialization and habituation of puppies.**

Objective: To habituate your puppy/dog to different types of people (race, gender and age), places (buildings and sounds), and other animals so they will not show fear to these things.

It is essential to socialize a puppy between 4 and 18 weeks of age as it is as critical to a puppy's health as vaccinations and worming are to their physical health.

This is a dog's critical socialization period, allowing room for some individual variability.

It is during this time that they are open to new and different experiences.

What they are not exposed to during this critical time frame, they will be more likely to fear later in life.

This does not mean that because they were exposed to something they will never fear it, but it does decrease the chances of this occurring.

A puppy class is not adequate enough socialization for your puppy. All puppies need to be safely exposed to as many different places, people, environments and situations as possible without over stimulating them and causing stress.

This is even more critical for the puppy that shows signs of insecurity, shyness or fearfulness.

It is essential especially if the dog is to be a working or show competitive dog.

Avoid.

There is a fine line to cross as one is always worried about bringing a puppy out into public especially if they have not completed their vaccinations.

Places to avoid are places where there is a large number of dogs congregating such as dog shows and dog parks.

There is a higher risk of picking up diseases such as the dreaded parvo virus from these areas.

Overwhelming your puppy with too many people or things at once.

Introducing children:

If you are introducing your puppy to children start off with a positive and rewarding experience for them.

The key is to go slow (under supervision) so as not to overwhelm the puppy with too many people at one time.

Start with an older child one at a time – under supervision.

And especially a well-mannered child that does not fuss when the puppy bites, scratches or licks them.

**Introducing new situations:**

Remember to take treats with so as to give positive rewards to different situations.

Making every place you go to a positive experience.

Allow the puppy to investigate and observe things at his own pace.

Watch and judge how the puppy is feeling.

If the puppy shows fear take a note of where he is and what has triggered that fear, so as to work on a plan to help him overcome that fear.

Never force a puppy to confront its fears as this can make a bad situation even worse.

Use a joyful puppy voice coax the puppy on.

When he relaxes reward him with a treat.

Exposing the puppy to different size vehicle, bicycle, motor bikes, and workshop and daily household sounds.

Walking up and down flights of stairs, different surfaces.

Seasonal items are also an ideal to introduce to puppies things such as jackets, umbrellas, hats, scarves, gloves and balaclavas.

Taking a puppy to the vet for checkups is also recommended so as not to cause fear later on.

Socializing with different ages.