

friends inside. Everyone is happy to see him and the receptionist even slips him a treat. He is not put on the cold, slippery table because his owner first puts a towel on the table. When he gets the needle he hardly notices before his friend the Vet is giving him a big hug.

If this pattern is allowed to continue, which pup (A or B) is more likely to be anxious or frightened when in the future he is confronted with a new person or situation?

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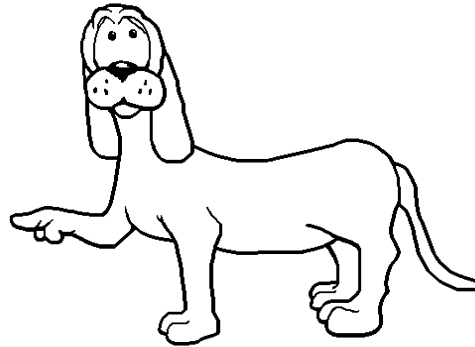
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This pamphlet is part of TSURO DOG TRAINING's "Puppy Education Program" series.

## ***Discover the Pleasure of Owning a Well Trained Dog***

### **Socializing Your Puppy**



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## The Critical Socialization Period

Most people bring their new puppy home at or around seven weeks. It is important that, when pup arrives in our home, we continue with the lessons begun by his mother and litter mates. The puppy's basic needs at this stage are for **human socialization, a substitute for mother, and some early reward-based training**. If puppy were to grow up in his "natural environment," Mother would begin teaching him life lessons, and socializing him to the world around them. Since you are taking over for Mother, this is now your job. His first new social experience will be meeting and learning about his new family and home. After several days, think of all the different types of people, other animals, places and things that he may be exposed to, and start introducing him to as many as possible in a positive, non-threatening manner.

One of the most famous books on dog behavior, "Genetics and the Social Behavior of the Dog" by Scott and Fuller, identifies certain critical periods of growth and development. The critical socialization period was identified as being between three and twelve weeks of age. *It was shown that if there was no human contact at all until after 12 weeks, a puppy cannot be fully socialized, will avoid human contact, and will be very difficult to train.*

Socialization that has started during this critical period **must be continued** or you end up with an under-socialized dog; one that is fine with you and your family, but not good around anyone new. It takes an under-socialized dog much longer to make friends and trust people.

The following suggestions are offered as ways to facilitate the socialization process. A word of caution is also in order and has to do with the fact

that really young puppies may lack immunity to certain diseases. Until he has had all his immunization shots, he does face the increased risk of contracting a contagious disease if proper care is not taken. If you prevent exposure to strange dogs, dogs that are not healthy, and areas where other dogs have left their waste, you will greatly lower the risk. Please check with your veterinarian for advice regarding how the activities can be carried out with safety and common sense in mind.

Several days after you bring puppy home would be a good time to invite some people over to make friends. Provide everyone with puppy treats and let everyone take turns hand-feeding and getting puppy to sit for treats, etc. Keep in mind that puppy will tire easily, so keep the puppy party short. Over the next couple of weeks arrange for other visits from a variety of people and in place of all those treats, start substituting affection petting and praise.

Once you begin to take puppy for walks, bring his food along with you. Instead of putting his food in a bowl and putting it down on the floor, measure out his daily rations and put it in a plastic bag that you can carry around with you. When the puppy does anything you like, reach in the bag and give him a couple pieces of food. You can also feed him as you walk him. Every five to fifteen paces you can give him a piece of his dinner. When you do this, you are combining two essential activities that you have to do anyway. Each time you meet someone on your walk that you would like puppy to meet, give them some of the food to give to the puppy. They can get him to sit for the food, and then give it to him along with positive attention. The puppy is learning what a pleasure it is to meet new people and that the polite way to greet them is to sit. At the end of the day if you have any of his food left, put it in a bowl and let him finish it.

By doing a lot of hand feeding, we are teaching him to be careful around human hands. There is a lot of truth to the expression, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you."

Socialization is one of the answers to preventing many different problems. *Early training, and teaching him how to behave as you expose him to new experiences, are an important part of that process. Learning simple "obedience commands" adds so much to your relationship and makes life together much more enjoyable.*

Let me illustrate the importance of socialization in an example we can all appreciate. We have two pups (A & B); both are about 12 weeks old. Pup A has had very little social contact with anything beyond his back yard. Today he is going to go to the vet for his "shots." He has never been in the car before except for the trip home from the breeder. He really does not like the car and he gets quite sick. He arrives at the Vet's and is rushed inside where he is confronted with all kinds of weird sounds and smells and is held tightly with no chance to check out the surroundings. He then is taken to a room and plopped on a cold, slippery metal table. Someone he does not know proceeds to handle him all over and the ultimate injustice happens when he is stuck with a needle.

Pup B, on the other hand, has been given a lot of social exposure. He has progressed to the point where he likes going for car rides and has come to enjoy meeting new people. He has already met the Vet in a getting-acquainted meeting a couple days after he left the breeder's, and everyone made such a fuss over him!! (Some even gave him treats.)

This day as they pull in to the Vet's 15 minutes early, he eagerly looks forward to meeting his