



Dog Talk Weekly

Where we talk about dogs, share stories, solve problems

Issue 11.01.1

Welcome back to another issue of Dog Talk Weekly. I'm glad you're still with me. You're probably wondering where I've been and what happened to the newsletter. Over the past 3 months, I renovated 3 rooms in my house (all by myself) which left no time to do the ezine. At long last, I'm now ready to dive into Dog Talk Weekly.

Thank you for your patience. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Sylvia

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ANNOUNCEMENT: I need your Ideas! Let me know the breed you have or any that you're interested in and I'll use them as Dog of the Week. If you have a story idea, send it along. Just send the details to me through my contact form:

<http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

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## **Feature Article: Can You Own A Dog and Still Have A Social Life?**

If you're anything like me, you probably feel guilty leaving your dog home alone. You take one look into that sad, forlorn face as you leave and you feel bad.

When I worked full time, I seldom enjoyed a social life after hours or on weekends because I felt my dog deserved to have me home. It's a feeling I never overcame. I didn't realize how much having a dog affected me that way until he died.

Suddenly, a huge burden was lifted. I realized I didn't have to stay home anymore. It was such a great feeling that I went on an extended car trip alone for the first time in 16 years. It was wonderful.

Don't get me wrong. I absolutely adored Nikki and was devastated when he died. The grief lasted 4 solid years. We took many trips together. In fact, I didn't go anywhere without him except to work and to shop. The freedom of not having a dog caused me to delay getting another for quite a few years. Not only because of the freedom, but because I was so grief-stricken. I wasn't sure I could go through it again. But I did, twice more.

What I know now is that I didn't have to deprive myself of a social life all those years.

According to one dog book author, your dog is not sitting at home after you leave, fretting over whether or not you'll return, feeling sad and depressed, or anything else. In fact, within moments after you're gone, he or she has moved on to other interests.

It's hard to believe, considering that when you return, the dog is standing at the window, tail wagging and a happy smile to welcome you. You'd think it was the happiest moment in the dog's life. Well, for that instant at least, it is.

How can you overcome the guilt of leaving your dog home alone?

First, remember that dogs do not think like humans do. They are not children, even though they do act like it much of the time.

Next, realize that dogs are not that demanding. They need the bare essentials for survival, and beyond that, companionship on a regular basis. That doesn't mean every minute of the day. You can help ease their 'boredom' by giving them access to a window with lots of activity outside.

If you're planning to be away for any length of time, on a business trip for instance, you probably don't want to put your dog in a kennel. This IS stressful, because it removes the dog from your home where he feels safe and he is more likely to feel abandoned.

Here are other alternatives you can try to keep your dog entertained in your absence, and ease your guilt.

1. Use your dog to enhance your social life. Many people love and admire dogs and will stop anywhere, anytime to say hello and praise your dog. This helps you and your dog. Dogs love attention and socializing just as much as you do. Meeting new people is always a pleasure and for you, it can lead to a developing friendship. Make a trip to the park or a doggy bar in your area as one of your social activities. You never know who you'll meet or how far the encounter will go.
2. If you have children, let them take on more responsibility in caring for the dog. Your dog can teach them many things, including respect for another living being, caring for a dog, compassion and patience.

There is evidence that children who were taught how to properly care for and treat a dog grow up to be less likely to commit violent crimes as adults than those who had a negative experience with dogs. Children who saw that dogs were treated cruelly, neglected or disposed of without a second thought tended to become less compassionate towards others.

3. Seek the help of neighbors you trust or a professional bonded pet sitter. Get to know your neighbors. Find out if they like dogs and if they have their own. Would they be interested in exchanging dog sitting? You do want to be sure you can trust whomever you hire.

The worst thing that can happen is the person is not reliable or caring enough. If they do not have a dog to exchange services, offer something else in return. Perhaps lawn mowing, snow shoveling, hedge trimming, car washing, etc. If you cannot find someone, ask your vet to recommended pet sitters in your area.

These might be neighborhood children hoping to make a few dollars for themselves or real adult pros. Just be sure to check them out with previous or current clients. The most ideal pet sitter is one who will come to your home rather than send your dog elsewhere.

4. Consider seeking the help of a senior in your neighborhood. Many would enjoy the opportunity of caring for a dog on a part time basis while you're away from home. It might not be the best person to ask if your dog is large and not well trained on a leash, but certainly a small to medium sized dog would be fine for a senior to control.
5. Give your dog a positive reinforcement before you leave. If he can associate your departure with a biscuit for instance, he will not feel so bad when you go.
6. If possible, add a doggy door so he has access to the yard whenever he needs it. Just be absolutely certain that the yard is 100% secure, including a locked gate and a fence that he cannot scale or crawl under. The locked gate is especially important. You can never be certain someone (a service person, for instance) won't enter your yard and not close the gate properly.

Also consider that a latch can jiggle open if he jumps on the gate often enough. Some latches just do not always drop down tightly. This is a problem I've experienced and Tyler has escaped. Adding a lock will prevent such potential dangers.

7. Try to arrange your situation so that you can whip home on your lunch break to have some leisure time with your dog. Take him out, play with him. Not only will it benefit your dog by allowing him to relieve himself sooner and get some well-deserved exercise. It will give you a chance to de-stress and relax before diving into another busy pressured afternoon on the job. I did this whenever I lived close enough to home. In 10 minutes I was home and had a good 20 minutes or so to play with my dog. I loved the break.
8. Join local dog agility groups. Your dog can enjoy some fun training exercises. You will both get lots of physical exercise. You are sure to meet other dogs and owners and develop good relationships with them. Make this part of your social life, attending events together.

As you can see, there's no reason for you to feel guilty about leaving your dog alone. In many cases, you don't have to leave him without a companion. You might even consider getting a second dog for this. I did, and it sure made Kobe happy to have Cindy around. In fact, being an aggressive abused dog with lots of issues, Kobe benefited greatly from her presence and became a much calmer and accepting pet.

## **Personal Story: My neighbor's puppy update**

It's not a bad story, but it illustrates how important it is to ensure that you do your research before choosing to get a puppy, or any dog for that matter.

You might recall a few months back when I told you about my neighbor buying a German shepherd puppy. It was an exciting moment for me, I know that. I couldn't wait to see his new companion. He did not disappoint me. Tyson, that's what he named him,

turned out to be quite a character. Although, he sure was nervous and frightened when he first arrived. This was his first home away from his mother and littermates. Of course he was anxious.

Tyler didn't help much because he made Tyson even more nervous. Tyler can be quite an intimidating figure simply by his size and dominance. That was Day 1.

The next day, I was amazed at how much he'd bonded with his owner. He followed at his heels, was happy and playful, and was even obeying sit and come commands with ease. "Now, that's a smart dog," I thought.

It wasn't long before Tyler had scaled the fence to visit with his new neighbor. At first, I wasn't sure what to expect, but was quite pleased to see them romping around together chasing the ball. Of course, Tyler got to it first and really didn't give the puppy much of a second thought.

Every once in awhile, he'd go to him, sniff him, and touch noses. This made the puppy a little nervous, but Tyler's attention was soon right back on the ball.

And that's how it went for the first few days.

Two weeks later, I heard that my neighbor was giving the dog away to a friend. I was shocked. "But he's bonding with you so well in such a short time. He's showing his intelligence. He's certainly fun to have around," I thought.

Apparently, the owner discovered that his girlfriend was allergic to dogs. And so the dog had to go. I was so sad you'd think he were my dog. I felt the puppy's suffering – having gone through the stages of separation only two weeks earlier and now having to do it again.

Last week, the puppy came back for the weekend while his new owner was away. Clearly, he has adjusted very well to his new home, and he seems to be well cared for.

This is one case where the dog got lucky. Very often, they end up in the pound because the new owners have not done their homework. Tyler came from a pound and it's not a pretty place.

Lesson to be learned:

1. Make sure you are ready for the work involved in owning a dog.
2. Make certain no one who will be in the dog's presence is allergic to dogs.

In this case, his girlfriend knew she was allergic to cats but had not been near dogs to find out if they would be a problem as well.

As you know, dogs can be very tempting, especially as puppies. They are cute, full of life, exciting and fun. And if the dog has high intelligence, they can be an absolute joy to train.

Now, I know many of you will frown on what I'm about to say but when I heard that he was getting rid of his 10-week-old puppy, I thought: "I'd get rid of the girlfriend." But that's just me. ☺

## Dog of the Week: Havanese (also Bishon Havanese)

In light of the feature story this week, I thought I'd introduce you to a dog that would probably do well for someone who has a busy lifestyle and little time to care for their dog.



The Havanese (*also called the Bishon Havanais*) is as the name implies, a member of the Bichon family. The Bichon requires intensive grooming but there is no mention of this with the Havanese. Basically, his fur is odorless and does not shed, which is a welcome relief to many dog owners.

The thing that makes this dog so agreeable is his personality. It maintains a puppy-like cheerfulness throughout life and performs some of the most comical antics just to gain attention.

This dog belongs to the lapdog variety, having been a favorite of the Pharaohs in Egypt. It is most often found in the western Mediterranean area. Standard size is between 8 and 11 inches (20-28 cm) and weighing roughly 13 lbs (6 kg.). Its fur is long, silky and slightly wavy. The coloring is

usually white, champaign, gray, gold, and all shades of brown with or without white flecks. The life expectancy of the Havanese is 14-16 years, giving you plenty of wonderful times together.

Common ailments associated with this breed include cataracts in older dogs, eye abnormalities involving the retina with a slow deterioration of the retina leading to blindness.

The Havanese is highly recommended for new dog owners, for people who live alone and for families with children. It loves to swim in summer and take normal walks. You'll have lots of fun teaching this dog how to do tricks, since they are passionate about it.



This picture gives you a good idea of the different colors that you will find in the Havanese.

You can see more images and read more facts about this breed on this site:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Havanese>

Of course, all puppies are cute!

## **Regular Sections:**

### **- Dog Nutrition**

Surprisingly, all dog breeds are highly prone to develop cataracts, even mixed breeds. You might think these are unavoidable, but there is something you can do to try to deter them.

The best approach is to introduce your dog to a toxin-free lifestyle to include a diet of fresh, chemical-free foods and a multivitamin-mineral supplement containing plenty of antioxidants. It is recommended that you be sure your dog gets supplemental Vitamins C and E which are antioxidants that can help prevent cataracts.

The recommended dose is:

- 50 mg for small dogs
- 100 mg for medium dogs
- 200 mg for large dogs
- 300 mg for giant dogs

Also be sure to protect your dog's eyes from coming in contact with car exhaust fumes, bug repellents and household cleaners, lawn pesticides, air fresheners, fabric softeners and laundry detergents.

Never let your dog ride in the car with his head out the window. Apart from the risk of foreign objects lodging in the eye, the resulting inflammation can damage the eyeball.

*Resource: Dr. Earl Mindell's Nutrition and Health For Dogs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2007.*

### **- Dog Care**

It's relatively easy to ignore a dog's teeth and gums, yet they can be a major cause of bacterial infections. Diseased gums, broken and rotting teeth caused by lodged foreign objects or improper dental cleaning can lead to an infection that will spread throughout your dog's internal organs, including the heart.

Ask your vet for instructions on how to properly clean your dog's teeth.

Some breeds are more prone to this problem than others, and it also depends on your dog's chewing habits. Give your dog plenty of rubbery toys that he can squeeze between his teeth and clean out food particles. Such soft toys also help scrape away tartar, a contributing cause of gum infections.

*Resource: Dr. Earl Mindell's Nutrition and Health For Dogs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2007.*

### **- Dog Training**

Problem behavior in dogs sometimes can be directly attributed to something in his environment, even his owners. That's why it will help to examine conditions that might be triggering the bad behavior before deciding on a course of training.

For this instance, let's look at the hyperactive dog – the one that is highly excitable at the drop of a hat. It can be triggered by something as simple as a creaking floor board, water dripping off an eave, or a gust of wind.

Chances are, you or someone in your family is doing (or did) something to bring that out in him. Or he simply inherited it. This could depend on his particular breed. Scientists have learned that terriers, beagles and basenjis are more likely to react to their environment in this manner than cocker spaniels and shelties.

If he did inherit it, you might have a tougher time breaking him of it since it goes against his natural disposition. You are wise, therefore, to choose a dog from breeds other than the ones that seem prone to this behavior.

Another contributor to the hyper-reactive dog is isolation. Puppies that were separated from their parents and peers at an early age frequently develop psychological disturbances. In severe separation cases, it will affect the puppy's ability to learn which causes them to react with fear to other dogs and people. Such puppies are often difficult to train. How the dog reacts to being isolated depends on the breed. Some, like the beagle, becomes fearful while the Scottish terrier become hyperactive.

Always remember that dogs love to socialize, and by separating them for extended periods of time you can do them serious psychological harm that can affect them for life.

If your dog has hyperactive disorder, start by giving him lots of exercise to relieve his pent-up energy. Such exercise should take 30 minutes and involve lots of running and aerobic-type activities every single day. This type of activity will boost the dog's serotonin level which has a calming effect on the dog.

Go through a variety of training methods until you find one that works. There's little point in continuing with one that doesn't because you will continue to get the same results. Try various training leashes such as the head halter and clicker training with treats until you find the best method for your dog.

Finally, when your dog goes hyper, ignore him. Sometimes, giving attention to him in this state simply enforces the behavior.

Resource: *Dogs Behaving Badly, An A-to-Z Guide to Understanding & Curing Behavioral Problems in Dogs*, by Dr. Nicholas Dodman, Bantam Books, 1999.

## **- Dog Games**

### **Time for some fun!**

I have just added a new section to Dog Talk Weekly – Dog Games. You probably already have a lot of fun with your dog playing your own games. Well, in the upcoming issues, I will give you some new ideas on how to not only to play with your dog, but some games that will also be a training exercise.

If your dog loves to play, or maybe he or she needs some encouragement, here is a game to get you started.

Just one quick tip: Remember that these are supposed to be fun, so don't turn them into a major training session. Don't make this exercise too long or too frustrating in the beginning or your dog will just give up.

### **Game: Roll the Ball**

Dogs don't recognize the difference between a game and a learning exercise, so regardless of the fact that this is more of an exercise, your dog will enjoy it.

To play this game, you need a table that you can see under, through, over and around, like card table only more the size of a coffee table. You also need a ball.

The idea of this exercise is for your dog to figure out an alternative way to get t the ball than the direct route, which is what she would normally take – the fastest route. It will work best if the table does not allow your dog to go right under it to retrieve the ball. For small dogs, you might have to find another object or a small stool with space beneath it.

Put the table in an open area so your dog can go all the way around it. While squatting beside your dog, roll the ball under the table. Bend down and look under the table and she probably will follow where you are looking.

Her first instinct will be to go directly along your line of sight, under the table. The idea is for your dog to have to struggle to go this route, i.e.: the table is too low for her to get under.

Next, sit up and look around the table rather than under it. If your dog is paying attention, she will follow where you are looking – around the table. This might take a few tries before she 'gets' it.

The goal is to teach her to use her intelligence to figure things out. When she has made her way around the table to get the ball, let her have fun with it.

I've tried something similar with my Tyler and he was quick to take the hint to follow where I was looking.

In upcoming issues, I will share some other little mind-bending games I play with Tyler.

Resource: *50 Games to Play With Your Dog*, by Suellen Dainty, 2007 Ivy Press Ltd., U.K.

### **- Dog Trivia**

The Doberman pinscher was bred in 1860 by Luis Dobermann from various valiant breeds to protect him as he attended to his duties as a tax collector.

### **- Dog Talk Weekly News**

You probably noticed that throughout this issue I have included the resources that I used for the information provided. This is something I will be doing from now on, but note that in the majority of cases, these books came from my local library. I suggest you check with yours to see if they can provide them for you, if you need them.

The photos, unless otherwise stated, come from the Wikimedia Commons and Wikimedia Encyclopedia sites. In this issue, I have referenced one such resource.

### **Legal Disclaimer**

Please understand that the material provided in Dog Talk Weekly is for your personal information only. The tips and advice provided are to be used at your own discretion. In most cases, it is best to speak with your veterinarian before implementing any of them. The publisher of Dog Talk Weekly makes no claims whatsoever of the accuracy of the materials provided. The material is not meant to replace the professional advice of your veterinarian or other dog care provider or dog trainer.

**Send Your Photos!** Throughout the rest of April and all of May, I invite you to send me your dog photos – the cuter, the better. At the end of May, the members will have a chance to vote on which one they like the best. The winning photo will become the "Dog of the Month". The photo will be displayed on a special "Dog of the Month" page at [http://www.dogtalkweekly.com/dog\\_photo\\_of\\_month.htm](http://www.dogtalkweekly.com/dog_photo_of_month.htm)

Be sure to include a small caption (about as long as that paragraph) giving a few fun details about your dog / photo.

This "Dog of the Month" contest will continue every month throughout the year. At the end of the year, members will have a chance to vote and name the "Dog of the Year" (More details to come)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

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By submitting material to Dog Talk Weekly, you understand that you are giving me the rights to use them as I see fit, including on my web site, in ebooks and in videos. If you do not want to make these rights available to me, please do not send them in.

NOTE – As the original owner, you will still hold the copyright to anything that you send to me for Dog Talk Weekly.

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To protect yourself and me, please only send in your own work. That way we will be absolutely sure. I appreciate your help in this regard.

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I hope you enjoyed this extended issue of Dog Talk Weekly.

If you're like many of us, you probably could use a bit of exercise after all the year-end celebrations. Go... get active and bond with your dog!

Sylvia

P.S.: Don't forget to send me your stories and ideas for upcoming issues of Dog Talk Weekly. Just send them to me through my contact form here:  
<http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

What? You haven't visited the blog yet?  
<http://dogtalkweekly.com/dogblog/>

Did you know you can view Dog Talk Weekly in PDF format online? Simply go to the Archives page where all previous issues are listed. The online version might contain images and other content that is not included in the email version.

**Dog Nutrition** is vital to your dog's life expectancy and quality of life. I've written a book on how to make sure your dog gets a healthy, nutritious diet and avoids many of the

dangers that come with certain foods. Find out more at  
<http://healthydognutritionsecrets.com/healthydogPP1.htm>

**Puppy Parenting Course:** Are you drowning in a sea of questions about raising your puppy the right way? This 24-week course feeds you all the information you need in bite-size portions that you can use during your puppy's early years. Get a free trial today.  
<http://www.dogownersu.com/FreeTrial.htm>

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