

Tethering – Making the connection

By Laura Tyler

When you first bring that cute little puppy home, he's absolutely perfect! Some of the comments we regularly hear are:

He's just perfect!
He sleeps all night long!
He doesn't chew on anything!
He follows me everywhere!
He stays in the yard!
He doesn't dig!
He doesn't bark!

Then after just a short time things start to unravel. He's running all over the house. He's not potty trained. He chews on ANYTHING! He barks and runs away and jumps on everybody and everything. Sound familiar?

So what happened to that perfect puppy? For one thing he started growing and thinking for himself. His brain is developing and he is learning to explore his environment and make decisions based on what works and what doesn't. And you might have made the assumption that he was so good you didn't need to teach him the rules of living with your family. Now he's independent to make up the rules himself.

All the cute little behaviors he exhibited when he was nine weeks old have now turned into behaviors that are not suitable for your home and family. He is no longer that nine week-old Lab puppy that jumped up tail wagging greeting you with licks and little puppy kisses. It was so endearing at the time. Now that he's six months old, he's knocking you down at the door, using the children for bowling pins, your table legs as chew toys and you can't leave him alone ANYWHERE! HELP!!!!

Make a connection between you and your dog. Tethering means connecting one end of the leash to his collar and the other end to your waist. Strap on a fanny pack or treat pouch packed with chew bones and treats. Your hands are free to work in the yard, wash the dishes, do laundry, do homework, watch TV etc.....

Your dog learns his place is to be with you, under supervision, interacting with you, his guardian. And you have the opportunity to continuously reinforce behavior that you like! You have the opportunity to stop behavior that you don't like and redirect his attention to a suitable activity.

Now he's safe from chewing things you don't want chewed. If he barks at the door you can hush him up right after the first "woof" instead of chasing him all over the house or yelling at him from another room. And he can let you know if it's time to go outside to do his business. You continuously show him what acceptable behavior is. He can't get in trouble. And most of all he learns to look to you for leadership. Try it you'll like it!

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