

Dr. Oakley says....

When do we start training? Why do we train our pets? Is it necessary? Let's discuss!

When? The day you bring your wonderful new addition home. As a young puppy or kitten our moms and littermates would be constantly teaching us boundaries and limitations. When we leave them, we need your love, kindness, patience AND rules. As much as I hate to admit it, we are rather like children in that spoiling us, can make us unpleasant.

This goes into the why we train our pets. Ask Laurel, our veterinary technician. I hope she doesn't get mad at me for sharing this, but she has been raising a puppy and experiencing some "attitude." Laurel has really nice cats that are very sweet and loving. She has always worked with them to keep them from becoming afraid of people or anxious. Raising them went so well, she decided to get a puppy. She got a sweet little puppy, Rozzie, who was always a really good little girl....and then she became a teenager! She's still sweet, but pushing limits and is expressing her dislike of certain things. Dr. Z chuckled to see Laurel's frustration at her sweet little dog's challenge. He has experienced the frustration himself! But, I must admit, Laurel rose to the challenge. Rozzie started coming to work with Laurel and spending lots of time exercising and socializing with others, both people and animals. She would be crated during appointments, which she complained about loudly and often! Later, she would be rewarded for her silence and compliance. I have to brag on her here, she is truly nice to have around now! Nice and trustworthy with people and other animals. She waits for Laurel's cue instead of making snap judgements herself. If Laurel says it's ok, then she thinks it is too. She and Laurel are best friends! I think that is the "why." Why train? Because then you get to take your relationship with your pet to a completely higher level. For me, before I trusted the Z's, I was terrified to bike with them. Trucks driving past really scared me! We worked together and I learned that they will always look out for me; now I love biking with them. It's a great time for me and it seems to be for them too!

So, great relationships are nice, but are they necessary? Most of you out there are active and social people. Many of you would like to take your pets with you to other people's houses when you visit, to parks, to Petco, to groomers and yes, even to the vet. Once you have this level of trust between you and your pet, these things become possible and even easier! If they fully trust you and your protection of them, they won't feel a need to growl at the park when people ride by or at the groomer when the scary clippers start or at the vet's when he/she needs to examine them.

So, the first time, the very first time, your pet starts to growl at any of these places don't tell them "It's okay? You're okay!" because they are not. They are feeling scared or threatened and they need to hear you tell them "No!" because you are in charge. You will keep them safe and they need to trust your judgement. Run, don't walk to get a trainer to help you work on this relationship. The more your pet trusts you, the happier it will be and the safer everyone else will too!

Peace...and no growling 😊

Dr. Oakley