

## **Christmas Puppy Driving You NUTS?? Here's Help!**

*by Elaine Pendell, M.Ed, CPT*

He was so cute, you just couldn't resist him. You imagined your kids playing for hours with the little, fun-loving bundle of fur, curling up on the couch with him, or watching him casually chewing a bone while curled up at your feet or on a dog bed. Visions of Lassie danced through your head.

Now the holidays are over and the little guy is screaming all night long, nipping the kids (who no longer want to play with him), disemboweling the furniture, leaving spots on the carpet, scampering off when you call him and ignoring your every command. What can you do?

Raising a puppy isn't much different from raising a child, except that they grow up much faster. You have a responsibility to teach him how to behave, keep his environment safe and socialize him so he grows up to be a well-rounded, friendly dog.

These tips will help you get your puppy under control and on the right track to being a good canine citizen:

- Tie the puppy to you. Get a piece of clothesline about 10 feet long and tie a clip to each end. Clip one end to the puppy's collar, the other end around your waist whenever he's out of his crate. You'll be able to know what he's up to every moment, keep him from inappropriate chewing, stop him if he's having an accident, and he'll learn to walk on a leash and respect you as his leader.
- Buy him a crate. He will learn to accept the crate as his little den. A crate will confine him when he can't be watched, will aid in his housebreaking, give him security at night or at nap time. Introduce it by throwing in a yummy treat and praising him when he goes in. Close the door behind him for only a second or two at first, then increase the time. The crate should be only large enough for him to stand up and turn around to be useful for housebreaking.
- Get a good book on raising a puppy if you haven't raised one for a long time. Training and management methods have changed a lot in recent years as we learn more about dogs, their behavior and how they learn. CDT recommends: ***The Art of Raising A Puppy by The Monks of New***

- Socialize, socialize, socialize! Your puppy needs to be exposed to new people, new dogs, new situations, new surfaces before he's 4 months old or he risks being maladjusted and fearful or aggressive as an adult. Make sure his interactions with new experiences are happy and fun, not scary and stressful.
- Schedule a Private Puppy Consultation in your home. This two hour program is designed to teach you how to train your puppy, care for him, socialize him with people and other dogs and set him up for future learning. And -- it's FUN!
- Remember, he's just a baby. He has to learn house rules. He needs to chew to learn about things in his environment and for dental health. He may not be able to "hold it" all night until he's almost 6 months old. He isn't trained yet, and won't be for some time. Be kind but firm and always consistent.
- Teach children how to behave around the puppy. Don't let them harass him, tease him or hurt him. Children should not discipline a puppy - an adult should be the "pack leader." Always supervise when children are with a dog or puppy and stop inappropriate behavior.
- Remember -- what gets rewarded gets repeated! Praise your puppy for good behavior and avoid petting or giving treats when he's misbehaving. Many people inadvertently reward puppies for bad behavior. For example, distracting him with a treat while he's chewing your slippers may seem like a reward to your dog. Keep in mind that every time you pet, praise or treat your dog, it is a reward for whatever he is doing at the time and he will be likely to do it again.

Raising a puppy takes a commitment of time and energy but if you put the time in now, you will enjoy many years of love and companionship.