

Advice on dogs, life and love



ask dog lady

Dear Dog Lady,

A dear friend from the dog park is finally taking the big step and separating from her husband. She's been unhappy in the marriage for a while. She's moving hundreds of miles away. I thought the dog would be staying behind with her husband who also comes to the dog park but today I learned the dog, Tizzy, is going with her.

My own dog whimpers with joy when he knows Tizzy's around. He loves seeing her. He chases with Tizzy and explores with her around the park. This morning, we had to say goodbye. I felt on the verge of tears for my dog and me. Tizzy is such a big part of the weekly routine. Will my dog notice Tizzy's absence? Do dogs have dog friends?

—Laura

Dear Laura, dogs are buddies for life. Smells cement them. They remember canine compadres that have sniffed and been sniffed in harmony. They can easily slip back into a roving relationship even after the alliance has lain dormant for awhile. Dogs are social creatures. And we should do everything we can to encourage them to pal around with other dogs because their hearts and souls are truly with their own kind.

Your dog might look for Tizzy in the dog park but he will play with any other dog that shows interest. Tizzy will become a happy blast from the past whenever the two dogs come together again.

Dear Dog Lady,

We just rescued a Westie and Yorkie (terriers—West Highland white and Yorkshire) who were crated most of their one-year existence. They have been with us for two weeks and seem to be adjusting to their new environment. They have been together since pups so we opted to keep them together when we took them. They have never had any type of training so we're finding it a bit challenging to find some type of structure and order in the house. My question is can two dogs be trained at the same time or do I need to separate them? Also is there a pattern of training com-

mands I need to follow? Do I teach them to "stay" first or "come?" What's the best approach?

—Ralph

Dear Ralph, the benefit of training each dog individually is the bond each forms with you. These terriers have been welded together in the same crate for a year so they are thicker than Crazy Glue. They are their own pack, which means they follow each other while you are simply the Guy Who Brought Us To A Nice Place And Gives Us Food. You have to ascend to the top of the heap and become the Guy Who Rocks Our World.

Make sure you spend time individually with each terrier, training, walking, and playing. Doesn't matter whether you teach "sit," or "stay," or "come" first. All of the commands are important. These guys are smart. Make sure you have great treats (small niblets of dried liver are best) to reward as you begin training and you should do just fine. In every training session, make sure you go over the entire list of elementary exercises. Praise each dog wildly when each correctly goes through the drill. And congratulations for rescuing these sweethearts.

Dear Dog Lady,

We recently adopted a one-and-one-half-year-old male cock-a-poodle. We have one problem with him. We usually throw our dirty clothes on the floor in a bathroom closet. My dog, in the middle of the night, when everyone is asleep in the household, seems to pick out a piece of clothing (mostly female/male underwear) and chew holes in them. Needless to say, we are running low on underwear. Why does the dog do this? We have hit him with the piece of clothes he chews (not hard), but he seems to go right back to the same habit. Now, he even chews holes in any kind of clothing he finds on the floor. Could you give us some advice on how to stop the dog from chewing clothes? I know you will recommend not to keep any clothes on the floor. But sometimes, in a hurry, we forget to do that.

—Barbara

Dear Barbara, chewing intimates is a love thing, a loneliness thing, an anxiety thing, a wanting-to-be-close-to-you thing. Dog Lady answers your letter because there are a couple of lessons here: Do not hit your dog—ever. With anything. Dogs don't get what the whack means and the empty, cowardly punishment is shameful and hurtful. Do not swat your dog again.

Also, we who are more evolved must do everything we can to help our dogs become more successful at living with us. This means we must pick up dirty clothes so as not to cause temptation for the dog yearning to chew. No excuses.

Got a question? Write askdoglady@gmail.com.