



Absolute Dogs.

SECRETS TO RAISING A PUPPY

The AbsoluteDogs Way

Surviving Puppyhood

 absolute-dogs.com

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MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Management is your ability to create safety and predictability in the environment so that your puppy is unable to make undesirable choices in behaviour.

CRATES/EX-PENS/SAFE PUPPY PROOFED SPACE

Crates and Ex-Pens allow us to work on several different things:

- Supports toilet training
- Encourages the quality and quantity (17-20 hours of sleep) every puppy needs
- Provides a safe space for your puppy when you cannot supervise



PUPPY LINE DRAGGING WHEN LOOSE AND SUPERVISED

Having your puppy drag a line allows you to quickly and efficiently step on the lead to prevent your puppy from doing undesirable behaviours. This also helps to avoid a negative association with their collar being grabbed.



GATED COMMUNITY

Gates that restrict access to areas so that rehearsal of problem behaviour is reduced or eliminated.

Prevents

- Multi-dog issues when introducing a puppy and gives older dogs their own space. Allows for gradual integration.
- Counter-surfing.
- Jumping when visitors or family arrives home.

In any situation, before allowing your puppy access to the environment, ask yourself:

- With the environment set up this way, can my puppy access anything they could potentially chew or grab?
- Can my puppy access a person if they walk in through a door and potentially jump on them?
- Can my puppy go to see something (dog, person, animal) freely? Do I have any way of getting them back if verbal cues or sounds do not get them to return to me? (i.e., longline, etc.)

Assume if something is “just out of reach” that it is actually very “in reach” for a persistent puppy.

ARE MY PUPPY'S BEHAVIOURAL WELLNESS NEEDS BEING MET?

In order to answer this question, we must first be aware of what our puppy's behavioural wellness needs are.



MENTAL ENRICHMENT (GAMES/ENRICHMENT)

All dogs are contrafreeloaders. What that means is that they enjoy interacting with their food rather than simply having access to the food (i.e., A dog would prefer to chase their food rather than simply eat it out of a bowl). Providing our puppy with opportunities for mental enrichment can be just as, if not more so, exhausting than physical exercise.



WAYS TO PROVIDE MENTAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Playing Games
- Snuffle Mats
- Calm Mat
- Stuffed Kongs
- Scatter Feeding
- Frozen Snacks
- Interactive Puzzle
- Toys
- Stuffed Frozen Beef Trachea
- Scent Work
- Balance Paths (Obstacle Courses)
- Hide and Seek



When using a food toy that can be stuffed, there are some foods you can use to provide a diverse diet to your puppy, which can really be essential to avoiding a tummy that can be overly sensitive to new foods being introduced. Having them on a probiotic can also help during any food transitions or introductions.

FOODS THAT YOUR PUPPY CAN ENJOY SAFELY AS A SNACK

- Apples (no seeds)
- Carrots
- Honeydew
- Pineapple
- Bananas
- Cauliflower
- Lettuces
- Pork
- Beef
- Celery
- Mango
- Potatoes
- Beets
- Cheese
- Oatmeal
- Pineapple
- Blackberries
- Chicken & Turkey
- Oranges (no rind)
- Plums
- Blueberries
- Cottage Cheese
- Pasta
- Pumpkin
- Broccoli
- Cucumbers
- Peaches (no pits)
- Rib Bones (raw)
- Brussels Sprouts
- Eggs
- Peanut Butter (no xylitol)
- Salmon

**Note: This list is just an example of what you can safely provide your puppy with for a snack within the toys that can be stuffed with food. There are other foods you can feed, and we encourage you to research extensively before adding anything new to your puppy's diet.*

PHYSICAL EXERCISE/GAMES/FITNESS

Often, the priority for exercising a dog falls on walking. With your puppy, there are so many ways to provide your puppy with exercise that doesn't allow rehearsal of undesirable behaviours. As long as your puppy isn't practicing pulling on lead, getting over excited when they see other dogs or people, etc. walking is a great way to burn that excess energy off. Let's talk about how you can set your puppy up for success for a walk.

OPTION 1

Play games with your puppy prior to the walk, with a focus on engagement and fun.

Your puppy's energy level shouldn't be at its highest level when you start your walk.



Check out our Sexier than a Squirrel Challenge for games that focus on engagement/disengagement. Only play games that do not get your puppy TOO excited. Experiment with what works for your puppy.

OPTION 2

Start as you mean to go on. Make sure that your puppy is with you every step of the way. All walks as a puppy should be training walks, meant to instil the behaviour you'd like to see as an adult.

If your puppy is unfocused and unable to respond to your cues or is pulling/balking on lead, they need more games, less walks until you've prepared them at home and in the garden.



OPTION 3

Initial walks should be short and sweet so that success is guaranteed! Gradually increase the distance, or reduce the distance, depending on your puppy's success rate. 10 yards down the path is success! Go home and celebrate!



OPTION 4

If at any point you feel your walks are full of struggling more than fun and teamwork, take a break from your walks. We call this Ditch the Walk.

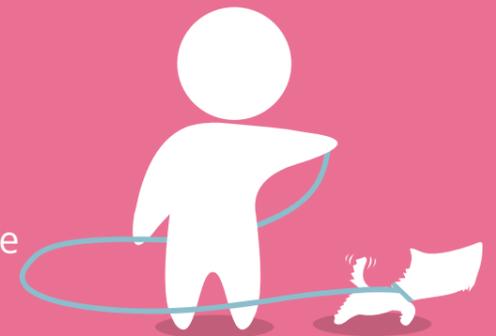
It doesn't mean forever; however, you do not want your puppy to keep practicing this behaviour.



Train what you want at home through powerful games and then return to the walk when you are confident your puppy can handle it, applying the "short walks first" rule!

OPTION 5

Another great way to provide your puppy with walking opportunities and OFF LEASH FREEDOM from the very start is to attach a longline on your puppy and take them for a walk in a safe location where if you've dropped the line you can easily step on it to prevent bogging off. Reward your puppy for any unprompted check ins where they look to you for information. Reward close to you and play games throughout the entire off leash experience. Having these opportunities will make obtaining off leash freedom with your puppy as they mature much easier!



Other ways to exercise your puppy include:



- 1) Playing games by tossing the food for them to chase.



- 2) Playing retrieve games. Our Gundog course has everything you need for an amazing retrieve.



- 3) Tug for short periods of time dispersed with calm games, like our Boundary Games

Any time you're playing tug games, present the toy horizontally to guarantee your puppy will grab it correctly.

Do not dangle it vertically, as an uncoordinated mouth may accidentally nick you with a milk tooth.



- 4) Luring positions – using food placed at their mouth, lure them into a sit, down, stand, spin, and repeat in a random pattern. This encourages body awareness and confidence building, while also working plenty of muscle groups! (No cues needed)



- 5) Practice restrained recalls throughout the house 3-4x. Don't overdo it as puppies tire easily! Keep the enthusiasm and responsiveness high!



- 6) Playing any games that work your puppy's brain! Believe it or not, that's a form of mental exercise and can be more exhausting than physical exercise.



- 7) Keep exercise short and sweet (15-20 minutes, sometimes even less) and then give your puppy a break by giving them an opportunity to engage in a passive calming activity (see mental enrichment above).



- 8) Set up an obstacle course that isn't too high (nothing taller than your puppy!).

This is a great way to grow confidence and optimism, preparing your puppy to adapt to all kinds of different surfaces, and more! Your puppy will have fun and its great socialisation! Have fun in the home or in your garden.

Walks are lovely when you have a well-behaved companion. You've got this and you and your puppy are going to have so much fun expanding where and how far you can adventure! No matter what your goals, be creative in your journey to get there. Set your puppy up for success. If, at any point, it feels like a struggle, re-evaluate your game plan and try a different approach. What does that mean? Instead of going for walks that have you frustrated and uncertain... Do something fun with your puppy that helps to boost your relationship, like playing easier games that keep your puppy engaged and focused on you. Not sure which games to play?

Our NBN Core Programme is a great course with easy, relationship boosting games... Also, don't forget to check out our YouTube channel for free, fun content.

Which brings us to... Managing your Relationship Bank Account...

RELATIONSHIP – RELATIONSHIP BANK ACCOUNT



Your relationship is going to be the most powerful tool in your toolbox with your puppy. Without relationship, it can be difficult to see progress. Without relationship, it can be hard to see or even desire real-life results.

Your Relationship Bank Account is something you want to assess and re-evaluate anytime there is a struggle. How can you put more deposits rather than withdrawals into you and your puppy's relationship bank account?

Deposit Examples

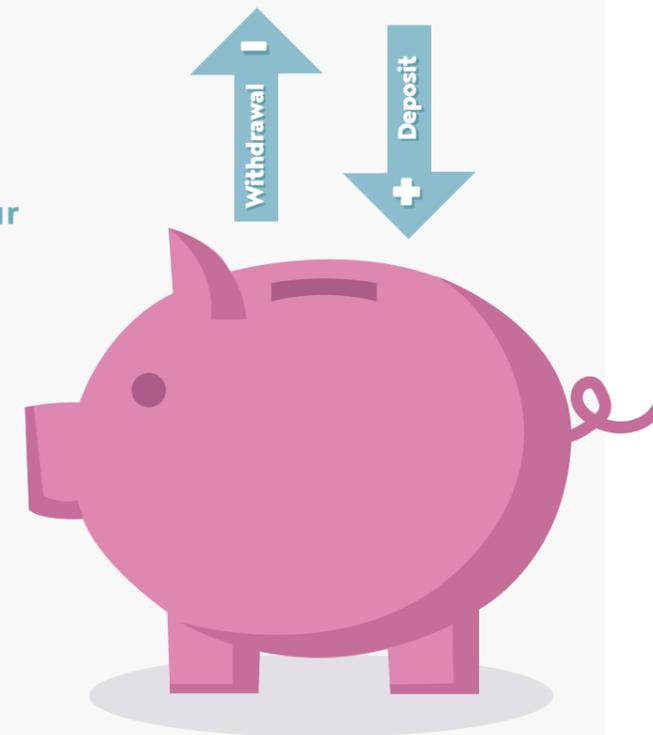
Wonderful interactions that help your puppy feel safe and certain with you

- Reward your Puppy for Toileting Outside
- Reward your Puppy for Calm Behaviour
- Reward your Puppy for Walking with You
- Reward your Puppy for Resting Calmly on their Bed
- Reward your Puppy for Calmness in their Crate
- Reward your Puppy for Coming when Called
- Reward your Puppy for Chewing on an Appropriate Toy through verbal praise or by tossing a yummy treat their way

Withdrawal Examples

Unnecessary actions that damage your relationship with your puppy

- Scolding your Puppy for an Accident
- Yelling at your puppy for barking
- Yanking and tugging on the lead when your puppy unavoidably gets excited by the world around them
- Smacking their crate to get them to quiet down
- Telling your puppy off when they finally come back after you've called for them in panic for several minutes



Correction and punishment can damage your relationship with your puppy. All of the bad choices they make, all of the mistakes they make, and every behaviour that they have that is undesirable only happens because they do not realize they're doing anything wrong. Most of the behaviour is natural puppy behaviour. To guard your puppy's optimism, and to cultivate an amazing relationship, provide your puppy with structure through Management (see above) and being clear in communicating when they are doing something correctly.

When your puppy does something that isn't okay (like ripping at a rug or barking and biting near your face), put them away and think about what you can do to make sure that the behaviour doesn't happen again. For the examples used, you may want to remove the rug or access to the rug. You may want to promise to be more vigilant and proactively provide your puppy with healthier alternatives. Perhaps they'll have a puppy line on from now on so that you can redirect them to a more appropriate activity and then reward them for making successful choices.

For the barking and biting near your face, you'll be more mindful and won't place your face where they have access. Perhaps you will think on why they are barking and biting... Can you set them up for more success by providing more opportunities for sleep? Perhaps your puppy needs to work more on calmness in their training rather than the more exciting toy games or games that encourage more speed and arousal. You've got this!

NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Nutrition and Health can play a significant role in your puppy's health. A puppy that has chronic tummy upset or that is struggling with a parasite will have find it more difficult to choose calm over frustration.

What are some great supplements to start your puppy on as soon as they come home? In the first several weeks of their life with you, puppies are going to experience so many changes, both environmentally, physically, as well as nutritionally.

Most often when puppies are brought home, their diet gets changed. It's important in the early weeks to introduce different foods (see the mental enrichment section of this resource) to provide them with a diverse and varied diet. It isn't uncommon during this process for a little bit of tummy upset to occur.

Here are three highly recommended supplements that your puppy can benefit from right away.

Rescue-K9

- Supercharged, fast-acting stool firming Fibres and Clay to improve the bulk, consistency and regularity of stools (Healthy Stool = Happy Gut!) and bind toxins,
- Multiple strains of probiotic in an industry-leading combination for the love of dogs,
- Prebiotics to further nurture the gut microbiome,
- Energy source to support the cells of the digestive tract.
- Each packet comes with 10 sachets to use whenever you need to!
- Not every day use but rather for those days that things just aren't looking up in the poo department for your pup!



[Get Rescue-K9](#)

Calm-K9

- 3-Step multi-targeted approach to dog behaviour transformation.
- High-quality natural ingredients - Made with mood-boosting Tryptophan, a gut supporting probiotic, soothing L-glutamic Acid, and calming Passiflora and Lemon Balm.
- Ongoing support - CALM-K9 can be given on an ongoing basis to support them through life's unexpected events and to support your training and lifelong relationship!
- Rapid Acting - Some changes seen straight away, others taking 50 days.
- Helps all dogs - Whatever the breed, age or size of your dog.
- Works with any diet - just add one scoop per day.
- Great for dogs of all ages, including puppies at 8 weeks of age, and helps to calm without any adverse side effects.



[Get Calm-K9](#)

Probio-K9

- Multiple strains of probiotic in an industry-leading combination for the love of dogs
- Prebiotics to further nurture the gut microbiome
- Stool Forming Fibres and Clay to improve the bulk, consistency and regularity of stools (Healthy Stool = Happy Gut!) and bind toxins
- Immune-boosting Beta Glucans supporting faecal consistency and reducing odour
- Great for everyday use and will help to support your puppy's tummy!



[Get Probio-K9](#)

Always be aware if your puppy is struggling despite all of your best efforts in any way behaviorally that something physical could be at play, and that includes their gut health!

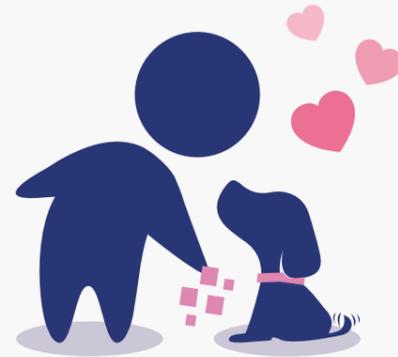
Check out <http://www.a-ok9.com/quiz> to see what will work best for your puppy.

CLARITY AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

When introducing verbal cues, make sure that the behaviour you are naming has already reached a fluent stage. (i.e., Don't say "Puppy, Come!" unless you are confident that they will immediately come to you.



Reward generously, variably, and unpredictably. Your generosity will pay off tenfold as your puppy matures and then you can start requiring more effort to get the reward. This is how you'll fade food. Provide a variety of reinforcement opportunities, including toys, food, playing with you, and other things that your dog enjoys (like running, sniffing, etc!) Be unpredictable in that they never quite know when the reinforcement might be available, and yet they will work hard to get it! If your puppy's behaviour is slowing down, or they aren't responding as fast as you want, up your generosity! Being selective about what you reward comes later!



Instead of using negative language, like "No!" or "Stop" focus on providing your puppy with clear language you know they understand through a history of responsiveness in many locations. Just your kitchen or living area doesn't count! If your puppy is doing something they shouldn't, ask yourself how the environment allowed them access? Is there something you can tweak? Instead of "No", ask them for a behaviour that prevents them from doing the undesirable behaviour. For example, your puppy wants to chase the cat. Instead, ask them to go to their bed or to do an instant down!

Be clear and consistent with your cues. Do not repeat yourself. If your puppy isn't responsive in one environment, it doesn't mean they're stubborn, only that they're not prepared yet! This just means you've taken them into a situation they aren't ready for, so you need to go back to an easier environment or an easier game. When giving cues, accept that no response is not a failure, but instead information. Instead of repeating, try to do an easier task.



Rehearse the games and the strategies you want to implement out in the world as much as you can at home until it becomes fluid and both you and your dog are responding via muscle memory. This includes how you'll respond to situations out on a walk (both verbally and or physically). This means that when you provide your puppy with body language cues or verbal cues in those moments when you're out on an adventure with them, they are less likely to hesitate because you have practiced so diligently. Your communication is clear because you've both rehearsed it so well.



The greatest pleasure of a dog is that you may make a fool of yourself with him, and not only will he not scold you, but he will make a fool of himself, too

Samuel Butler

When using hand signal, be purposeful and deliberate. If your hands are moving quickly or moving in a way that is tentative or unclear, your puppy will struggle. Be sure about your hand signal and make sure its clean and clear. For example, if you want to signal a sit by extending an upraised palm in an upward motion toward your dog, make sure that you do so deliberately (not too fast, not too slow), that your motion is consistent, and that you do not hesitate mid-way. What are your shoulders, direction of your chest and feet, and how cleanly your arms are moving, telling your puppy? Vide-ing is an excellent way to determine where the communication may be failing. It isn't anyone's fault! Just information and an opportunity for growing your knowledge.



When your puppy does something correctly, say "Yes" right when they do it, and always follow up with food reinforcement. This will encourage them to do whatever it is that they were doing again, over and over! If they are doing something that you want them to do again, simply toss the food so that they need to get up and get it so they have a chance to offer the behaviour again. This can be a fun game to play! If it's a behaviour that they did that was in motion and you want them to return to you for the food, feed them to mouth directly or drop the food directly in front or beside you and point it out to them. For example, a puppy saw the cat and did not immediately go to chase the cat! Woohoo! Say "Yes" and then reward close to you so that they do not accidentally move toward the cat which might get them too excited and set them up for failure.



ACTIVE REST

Did you know that puppies should be getting approximately 17-20 hours of sleep a day?

IS MY PUPPY GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

A great alternating schedule to follow is:

The Components of a Puppy's Daily Schedule

Sleep (1-2 hours in a safe, calm zone like a crate or ex-pen, or a puppy proofed small area where your puppy won't have toileting accidents)

This is the priority! When in doubt, encourage your puppy to sleep a bit more.



Toilet Training opportunities. After sleep comes an opportunity to toilet. Otherwise, make sure that throughout the day, your puppy has opportunities to toilet anytime they've been active playing or training for more than 10-15 minutes, they have napped for any amount of time, had access to food or water within the last half hour, have been awake for more than 30-45 minutes even if they've been calm, etc.

Providing your puppy with everything we've discussed in this resource for mental and physical exercise. Mental exercise encourages rehearsal of calm, whereas physical exercise can provide a more intensive outlet. Both should be balanced appropriately and if you find that your puppy tends more toward excitement than calm, provide more mental enrichment opportunities and make sure that any physical activities encourage focus and clear thinking – such as obstacle courses (balance paths) or training games that alternate between excitement and calm (Bed Games/Boundary Games and games that require running or intense focus).

Provide your puppy with opportunities for mental enrichment. These opportunities will last anywhere from 10 minutes to 60 minutes. It's important that physical exercise is sandwiched with opportunities for mental enrichment and sleep so that your puppy learns to regulate their arousal and emotions in a healthy way.



Mental Enrichment opportunities will help to encourage your puppy to self-soothe, will help in preparing them for more alone time, and will also encourage them to rehearse calm behaviour.

VISUAL SCHEDULE (as an example)

SLEEP (NIGHT TIME) (4-6 HOURS, gradually increase as your puppy matures)
TOILETING OPPORTUNITY (5-10 MINUTES)
PHYSICAL ENRICHMENT/EXERCISE - PLAYING GAMES (20 MINUTES)
TOILETING OPPORTUNITY (5-10 MINUTES)
PHYSICAL ENRICHMENT/EXERCISE - PLAYING GAMES (20 MINUTES)
MENTAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITY WITH OPPORTUNITY FOR REST / SLEEP IN A QUIET SPACE (2 HOURS)
SLEEP (NIGHT TIME) (4-6 HOURS, gradually increase as your puppy matures)
TOILETING OPPORTUNITY (5-10 MINUTES)
PHYSICAL ENRICHMENT/EXERCISE - PLAYING GAMES (20 MINUTES)

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TOILETING OPPORTUNITY (5-10 MINUTES)
MENTAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITY WITH OPPORTUNITY FOR REST / SLEEP IN A QUIET SPACE (2 HOURS)
END OF DAY

TANTRUMS (WITCHING HOUR SOLUTIONS)

If in the morning and at a consistent time in the evening your sweet, innocent puppy becomes a partying, crazy, wild creature that you do not recognize... (Where did your sweet puppy go?) don't worry! It's completely normal. Typically, it indicates that their schedule may need to be modified to layer in more mental enrichment opportunities and sleep opportunities. They are just overstimulated and aren't sure what to do with that crazy energy that has nowhere else to go.

Tweak your schedule and re-assess. Your observations and dedication to providing your puppy with all of their behavioural wellness needs will pay off in the long run.

INTERACTIONS WITH DOGS AND PEOPLE

As you navigate puppyhood, interactions with the world around your puppy are bound to occur. They are unavoidable. You can prepare your puppy for those interactions through training games to reshape their brain to have appropriate responses and by managing their access to the world around them so that they do not rehearse undesirable behaviours.

An element of socialization is that when it comes to your relationship with your puppy, you are singularly the most important person in their life or your family is most valuable as a family unit. Everything and everyone else should be perceived as a non-event, as something that is out there, that's cool, that might even be fun on occasion as a distraction conquered, and yet is not as valuable as YOU are.

That includes other dogs and people. Interactions will happen. It's your job, as your puppy's advocate, to cultivate the appropriate interactions. However, don't stress if something happens and it didn't go quite the way you may have wanted it to... In fact, as long as you are proactive in focusing on training for the situation, rather than in the situation, you will set your puppy up for success in how they perceive and want to interact with the world.

If your puppy is struggling, distance and taking a step back is truly your friend, and the best strategy. Too much exposure can overload your puppy... and really, the secret to great socialisation, is being able to listen to your puppy, reshape their brain through games, and approach their journey acknowledging it will be unique to their needs. The journey you will have together will be incomparable, and so, so very special.

The goal for socialization and experiencing the world, is that your puppy acknowledges that people and other dogs do exist, that they aren't scary, and that they are none of their business. They

are non-events. A non-event simply means that they're not a big deal. Rewarding your puppy for being aware and choosing you (meaning that distraction isn't important right now!) can feel magical, especially when your puppy begins to make that choice on their own everywhere and anywhere.

THE CONCEPT OF DISENGAGEMENT: "IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS"

People can exist...

- and they don't need to be jumped on.
- and they don't have to give your puppy attention.
- without being intrusive or in your puppy's personal space.
- and your puppy can disengage.

Dogs can exist and be acknowledged...

- without interaction having to take place.
- in a way that is comfortable and safe for your puppy and that can mean distance.
- without risking a bad experience that will far outweigh 100 other positive experiences.
- and your puppy can disengage.

You and your puppy's navigation of the world and the many experiences it has to offer will be organic, bespoke to you and your dog, and the partnership that you share together. If your puppy is aware that people exist, that dogs exist, and that they're not scary, or not over-exciting, and they can focus on YOU, that's pretty powerful. That is why disengagement as a concept is essential to appropriate socialisation. It's kind of awesome when the world is a pretty cool place, and yet you, your puppy's best friend, are way cooler.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AS MY PUPPY GROWS

(8 – 16 Weeks Old)

Your puppy's behaviour will change as they age and mature. It's all part of the process as they navigate different psychological developmental stages. At 8 weeks old, your puppy will sleep all of the time and won't seem so difficult (except the toilet training aspect!). However, even two weeks later you will have a more active, more engaged puppy that suddenly realizes that other things exist in the world.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

During the first 8 weeks of your dog's life with you (8 weeks – 16 weeks) your puppy's brain is changing and being reshaped constantly (this happens even after the 16-week time frame).

It isn't strange to suddenly have a bitey puppy at 12 weeks because teething is occurring... It also isn't strange to have a puppy that suddenly decides to wander off rather than stay with you once they get closer to 16 weeks of age and start realizing the world can reinforce them, much of the time faster than you can (think other dogs, other people, etc giving attention to your puppy if they are somehow able to access them).

Also, during the 12–16-week timeframe some puppies experience more overwhelm and feel less certain about new events. This

is a time where you want to focus on boosting your puppy's confidence at home, and in the garden, and working in low distraction environments on games that will continue to encourage that confidence and optimism to grow. This isn't the time to take your puppy anywhere and everywhere to expose them to a million things, so much so that you won't be able to identify what is actually causing them to hesitate.

Teeth start coming in and that creates frustration behaviours and irritability. Be patient with your puppy during these time frames and really ramp up on mental enrichment opportunities and games that will help them through the areas they are struggling in. This includes focusing on calmness! Calmness is KING! And a calm dog is better able to adapt, change, flex, and make great decisions.

Fall in love with a dog, and in many ways you enter a new orbit, a universe that features not just new colors but new rituals, new rules, a new way of experiencing attachment.

Caroline Knapp





 **Absolute Dogs.**