

How to greet other dogs on the street

Written by By Sam Mazzota King Syndicate
Friday, 26 April 2024 00:00

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I adopted a sweet but somewhat rambunctious little mutt, "Karla," who is about 13 months old. The problem is that she wants to jump and bark at other dogs when we're out for a walk. How can I calm her down? — Jen in Duluth, Georgia

DEAR JEN: Reactivity is natural behavior for a puppy that loves to play with other dogs, but of course, it's not desirable behavior. Jumping and barking can trigger an aggressive response from some dogs, or stress out other dogs. It can scare humans.

Fortunately, it's a behavior that you can moderate with a specific, daily training regime that will teach Karla to stay calm on the leash.

First, gather your tools: A sturdy leash that is about 5 feet long (no retractable leashes allowed), a harness and a pocketful of Karla's favorite treats, cut into tiny pieces. I recommend the harness over a collar because it allows you to strongly control Karla if she starts jumping, without risking an injury to her throat.

Next, teach and reinforce three crucial commands: sit, stay and heel. From the moment you put on Karla's harness and leash, to when you take them off at the end of the walk, she needs to follow your commands. Karla should sit calmly while you attach and remove the leash. During the walk, she should remain next to you, with a little slack in the leash. If she starts to tug ahead, stop, command her to sit and, once she sits, start off again, giving the command "heel."

Keep the training positive, and remember that it will take time and consistency. As she learns what you expect from her, Karla will become a great walking companion.

Readers, how do you keep your dog calm on a walk? Let us know at ask@pawscorner.com.

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