

## **The Golden Rule**

My parents taught me that the Golden Rule applied to all creatures. It is a good thing to remember anytime you interact, or are unable to interact as much as you would like with your animal.

Some easy things to do for mental stimulation are: walk your dog (one hour daily, for mental health not just physical); try to vary the route so it does not become boring; go to a park or even shopping centers for mental stimulation. Car rides (take the dog on short errands) but be careful of the heat and always have water available. Spill proof water bowls are handy and available at most pet stores.

Provide activities for your dog while you are away:

- Use food toys such as the buster cube, treat ball, (you can put your dog's breakfast in it) or Kong toy (add cream cheese, peanut butter, or a dog biscuit inside or the saucer toy with a biscuit. There are all kinds of toys that hide treats all available at your local pet store.
- Gather together a collection of at least 30 toys (buy one or two a paycheck). To store, use two boxes (or bags). Label one new and one used.
- Put out three toys for three days, then pick up those toys put them in the used box. Put out three new toys for the next three days. When all the toys are in the used box, dump it back into the box labeled new and start all over. This provides the dog with thirty days of new and exciting toys (you may leave out a bonus toy if your dog has a favorite). Dogs are just like kids -- they get bored with their toys if they are available all the time.

### **Activity Packs**

- I provide activity packs for my dogs when I have a busy schedule. These packs are put in plain paper bags and contain various items, such as toys, treats, and different fun things. You either twist the top of the bag, or tie it with a small piece of cotton string.
- Warning: Paper bags will never be safe in the house again and these packs will create a bit of a mess (torn paper bags), but your dog will have a blast and will have something besides your plants and lawn furniture to shred.

- Training: Follow these steps to train your dog to use the activity get your pack ready and just before you leave put it on the ground in your dog's sight and say "go play" (you can use any word, just be consistent). Show the dog the bag (the first few times make sure the bag contains food treats, so the dog is encouraged by the smell). If your dog is hesitant encourage him to open the bag. You may even have to open the bag for him the first few times. Gradually move the bag further and further away. Now depending on your dog you may start to hide the bag. Some dogs, will hunt for the bag; others may not. If your dog is very persistent, you can lengthen the game by hiding it in more and more difficult places. If you return and the bag is where you hid it, then you need to scale things back a bit.

#### Fun & Games

- Last but not least, play with your dog and have fun together. Do things to keep your dog physically and mentally active.
- Teach the dog to retrieve (start with a favorite toy). Once the dog learns to "get" his toy, then use different objects. Just give them a name. Remember the commercial, where the dog retrieves a beer from the fridge?
- You might like to get involved with a dog sport such as, tracking, herding, carting, obedience, flyball, or agility, just to name a few. I can not stress the importance of training your dog to be a well behaved member of the household. Believe it or not, a 20-minute down-stay takes a lot of energy on the dog's, part. Some dogs and their owners get a lot out of doing therapy visits to area nursing homes, children group homes, or hospitals.

**A well trained dog is a happy dog! Enjoy each other!**