

DOG LIFE

What makes a happy dog?

BY HARRY KALAJIAN

Do you ever wonder if your dog is happy? There are many definitions of happiness and the level of happiness for each dog is contributed to by many factors. Their owner's lifestyle, their environment and what they were exposed to during their early development are key. There are dogs that are happy with just the smallest amount of activity, while others have (and need) a greater amount. What a dog has been shown from day one, and continuously after that, will dictate the level of activity needed to maintain their happiness.

All dogs love to be mentally stimulated through play. Stimulating your dog's mind to do or perform certain tasks keeps their mind active and focused. If you only throw a ball, a Frisbee or take them to the park for play, you are not stimulating your dog's mind, only creating an obsession to chase and catch and rumble with others.

That's fine and there is nothing wrong with it; however, that becomes their focal point for happiness. That is why they become obsessed when you show them a ball, a Frisbee or when you're approaching the dog park (dog parks are not a good place to take your dog for many reasons).

A dog is happiest spending time with their owner and engaging in something they do together. Going for walks is not only good for your dog, but also for you. Your walks should be a cross between structured ones, implementing obedience, and leisure walks without your dog pulling. This will activate and heighten his senses, in both the structured and leisure walks. Change your route and go to different places so neither one of you get bored.

You might wonder what the difference is between a walk with you and going to the dog park. While both will tire a dog out

at times, at a dog park they are building up endurance. The 20 minute park play will turn to 45 minutes, and progressively longer and longer. Before you know it, your dog has built up a stronger physical endurance.

If your dog needs obedience training, that also is a great way to engage with your dog. A professional training school can also offer different avenues to take part in with your dog. There is precision obedience, military/police agility, search and rescue, trick training, scent discrimination ... and the list goes on.

The more you engage with your dog, the more activities you engage in together, the happier they will be.

During the Christmas holidays be careful with your dog; they will get into and break things out of curiosity. Keep them away from certain plants such as the poinsettia, mistletoe, holly and others as they are poisonous to dogs. Watch out for ribbons, hanging ornaments and the hooks used, tinsel, lights and more.

Always remember ... training isn't hard, as long as you are willing to put in the time and follow my formula to have success; patience, persistence, consistency and repetition. If you still fail, it's on you, not your dog. You didn't stick to the formula. Have a woof woof of a month.

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Signs That Show Your Dog Loves You



- 1  **Wags his/her tail around you!**
- 2  **Sleeps With you!**
- 3  **Yawns with you!**
- 4  **Makes Eye Contact with you!**
- 5  **Big welcome!**
- 6  **Leans against you**
- 7  **cuddling!**
- 8  **Stealing your clothes!**