

The Life of *Riley*



Your Dog's Perfect Day
AND HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

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Is your dog happy?

Ever wonder what your dog needs to be happy? Sure, lots of love, food, and a soft, warm place to sleep are vital aspects for a dog's well-being. But, those basics only add up to a portion of a dog's overall happiness. **There's so much more.**

How does your dog spend their time?

How do they interact with the world and how do they interact with you?

The answers to each of these questions play a vital role in your dog's happiness.



Diane Garrod, a well-respected and certified dog-training professional, explains that there is a mix of things that comprises a dog's ideal day. The ideal day consists of 4 key elements: Relaxation and sleep; sensory and toy play, enrichment and problem-solving; and physical stimulation and exercise.

Garrod's research discovered a few key elements that create a dog's ideal day:



50%

Relaxation &
Sleep



20%

Sensory & Toy
Play



20%

Enrichment &
Problem-solving



10%

Physical Stimulation
& Exercise

How to maximize your dog's happiness

Of the four elements listed above, let's consider Relaxation & Sleep to be the easiest part. A place to rest that's soft, warm, and safe. *Check!*

Now, we can focus on the remaining three elements that compose your dog's ideal day.

You can make the most of physical activity, problem-solving, and bonding by understanding your dog's behavior and motivation.

To “listen” to your dog, you’ll need to:



1. BE SURE YOUR DOG IS
COMFORTABLE BEING A DOG



2. UNDERSTAND THE
NEEDS OF THE BREED



3. BOND WITH YOUR
DOG



WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A DOG TO FEEL COMFORTABLE BEING A DOG?

In a humans world, dogs can worry about doing something wrong, because their behaviors are often misunderstood, overlooked, or anthropomorphized (when you assign human motivation to your canine companion).

Basically, it's when humans interfere, we may unknowingly create unnecessary behavior issues for our dogs.

1. Don't underestimate your dog's need to sniff while on walks.

Take sniffing or growling for instance. Both of these are natural, but often misinterpreted behaviors for dogs. If your dog stops to sniff the ground while walking, it's not because he's being stubborn to move along with you – he's actually picking up important information about the world through his nose.

Dogs' sense of smell is enormously greater than humans. They "see" the world through their nose like we "see" the world through our eyes. So when your dog sniffs at a bush or a telephone pole, he's learning which other dogs have been there previously and when they walked past. If you deprive dogs of sniffing on walks, you are taking away one of the most critical things that contribute to your dog's joy and fulfillment in life.



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What dogs most need is the freedom to use their noses.

Patricia B. McConnell PhD,
CAAB

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2. Learn to read your dog's body language

Let's consider another common misinterpretation. A dog might growl while playing a game of tug, or in play with other dogs at a park. Often, we mistake the play growl for something more serious and correct it, ultimately discouraging our dogs' perfectly acceptable behavior. We do a disservice to our dogs without having a good understanding of natural dog behaviors and body language. If we choose to live with dogs, we need to learn to speak dog, so we don't inadvertently punish them for being themselves.

Of course, there are times when growling is not in play, so it's critical that you know how to tell the difference. It would be unfair to a dog to be punished for play growling and that could lead to a broken relationship with the dog not trusting you as its human. On the other hand, aggressive growling must be addressed properly to prevent unwanted behaviors escalating out of hand.

To be the best steward for your dog's happiness, it's equally important to understand and reward good behavior as it is to recognize and deter bad behavior. Furthermore, we advocate getting to the bottom of bad behavior so you can protect your dog from others, and others from your dog.

3. Is it play or something more serious? Understanding body language: why do dogs bite?

Victoria Stilwell, one of the world's most recognized and respected dog trainers and a co-founder of the national Dog Bite Prevention conference series, has a wealth of knowledge on the subject of dog behavior. She identifies the following as reasons why dogs bite:

- Dogs bite as a reaction to a stressful situation.
- They may be scared or threatened.
- To protect themselves, their puppies, or their owners.
- They're not feeling well or if they're startled.
- They may nip or bite during play (which is why rough play should be avoided to ensure you don't overly excite your animal)

UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF THE BREED



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Herding breeds need a job to do or high levels of daily activity.

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Dogs are bred for a variety of reasons, some for simple companionship while others for specific purposes such as herding, hunting, retrieving and guarding. Each individual dog has its own unique needs, and furthermore, not all individuals within breeds follow the norm for its breed.

Choosing the right breed for your lifestyle can contribute significantly to your dog's quality of life and contentment, not to mention the success of your relationship. For example, a herding breed, such as a Border Collie, needs a job to do. He might not fare well cooped up in a small apartment, unless you can provide him with significant daily physical and mental stimulation through outside activities. On the other hand, if you lead a fairly sedentary lifestyle, a breed that's happy to chill on the sofa with you while watching TV, such as a Bulldog, might be the perfect fit. Still, it's important to note that all dogs require daily exercise, even if it's just a light stroll to check p-mail.

BOND WITH YOUR DOG

You can begin simply by spending time together. And, during that time, give your dog your full attention. Teach your dog, play with your dog, and you'll learn how to navigate your world, together.

Dr. Marty Becker, better known as “America’s Veterinarian”, founded Fear Free, LLC, one of the single most transformative initiatives in the history of companion animal practice, with over 21,000 veterinary and pet professionals committed to becoming Fear Free certified. The Fear Free mission is “to prevent and alleviate fear, anxiety and stress in pets by inspiring and educating the people who care for them.”



Dr. Becker says this about the subject of what dogs need:

Whether dogs are young, adult, or elderly, new to the home or a long-time family member, they need to spend time with us to create and maintain an emotional bond.

Becker continues with several valuable suggestions for bonding with your dog.

1. Spending time together



Let your dog hang out in your office while you're working from home or let him follow you from room to room as you do things around the house.

Throw a ball for him as you do yard work.

Go for walks with him and put your phone away as you walk together. Watch what your dog is interested in and talk to him about it. He won't understand most of the words but he understands your interest.

Don't forget to spend some quiet time touching each other. Touch is just as important for dogs as it is for us. Encourage your dog to cuddle up next to you as you read or relax. As you do, rub his ears, massage his neck, or stroke his back. It's good for both of you.

2. Training your dog



The phrase dog training is a misnomer; it is really dog and owner training. When training your dog, you learn how to best communicate with him, and he learns how to understand you. Because a good relationship requires communication, training is a vital part of that process.

Training teaches your dog how to live with you. You can set rules and boundaries so that life together is less stressful. Rather than reprimand him for making the 'wrong' choice, redirect the actions you prefer he not do (jump on the bed, for example) and reward those actions you like (lie down on your own bed next to the bed).

3. Playtime



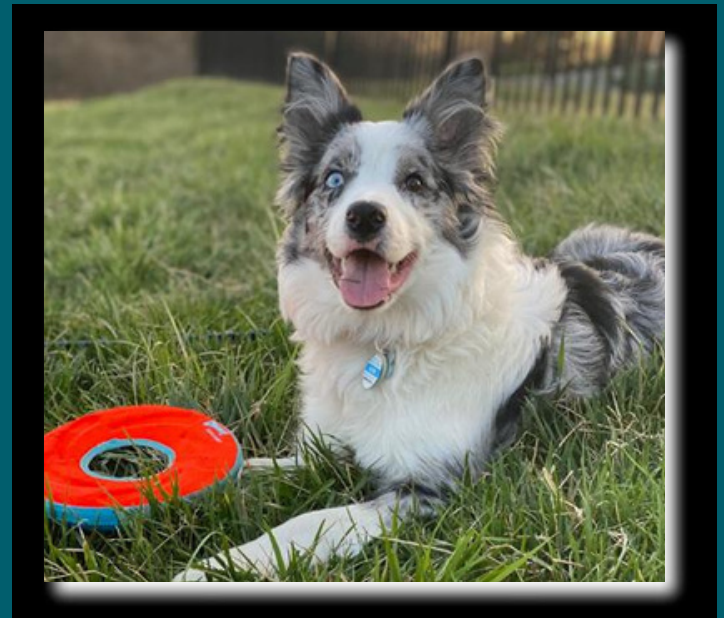
Play is so important to both people and dogs it's hard to emphasize it enough. Play is exercise and keeps the body moving. Play relieves stress—and yes, dogs feel stress, too. Play makes us laugh and helps build communication skills.

As you play with your puppy or dog, pay attention to what games he likes. It won't be any fun if he doesn't like a particular game even if you do. Some dogs love to retrieve while others don't. Many dogs like hide and seek games, but other dogs may never figure out the excitement of them. Discover what games you both enjoy.

The perfect day takes work

OK, this all feels like work. And it is, but it's rewarding and entirely worth it! If you have dogs or want to bring a dog into your home, it's your responsibility to provide your dog with what it needs in order to live a happy and fulfilled life with you. The resulting relationship you create with your dog will be one that you cherish for many years to come.

Susan Garrett, recognized as a leading educator of dog trainers and one of the world's most successful dog agility competitors, dog trainers, and owner of 'Say Yes Dog Training, Inc.' has this to say about the subject of what a dog needs:



"If you work long hours or you can't make it home during the day, invest in a dog walking service rather than pee-pee pads on the floor or dog door exiting to a human-less back yard. Sure dogs can "tolerate" just about any lifestyle . . . but they deserve better than just *any* lifestyle. It isn't finances that makes the biggest difference in the life of a dog, it is your investment of your time and attention."

What's next?

Your Dog's Perfect Day = The Life of Riley

The Life of Riley provides professional resources, expert dog trainers, dog walkers, and care providers to help you achieve the perfect day for your dog. We strengthen relationships between animals and their people, based on four principles: education, communication, mutual respect, and fun.

Our mission is to keep you bonded forever, so you can do all the things you want to do, together.

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