

The following is a true story of one puppy dog's experience. In the first 14 months of his life with his new family, Parker has been through a great deal. And so have his owners. We will explore what went wrong and how it could have been effectively changed and corrected at a very early age, rather than waiting until 14 months of age and trying to fix by now a serious problem.

Shawn and Darlene picked up their puppy at 12 weeks on a bright and sunny day, in the Okanagan. This was their first dog, and they went home with a contented feeling looking forward to a bright future with their new puppy, whom they had decided to call Parker.

Shawn and Darlene wanted to do right by their new puppy. And it's so many new puppy owners do they enrolled their dog in obedience classes. Now, Parker was an interesting little dog. Full of fun, full of energy and ready to enjoy life to its fullest.

When people would come to the door, he would show his pleasure at meeting them by jumping and bouncing on them. When he met dogs on the street, he would lunge at them in an effort to play.

The months went by, and instead of getting better in obedience class, he seemed to be getting worse. He was definitely getting larger and stronger for now, he was nine months old.

We should mention here that the class he was attending did not believe in using choker chains. The trainer insisted that they were cruel, and that they only used flat collars for training in her classes. Consequently, this was not enough control for this boisterous and willful young man. When Shawn would take him for walks now, he was still lunging pulling and tugging and he was that much larger and stronger. When he met another dog on the street, his behavior had gotten that much worse.

Shawn had discussed this with the trainer on several occasions. The trainer indicated to him that he should cross the street and avoid the other dog and other people if Parker's behavior was still a problem. So, with faith in his trainer's teaching, this is what Shawn continued to do for the next four months.

He had no way of knowing that the information he was getting was not suitable for this particular dog and further had no way of knowing that he should perhaps discuss the behavior issues with his breeder.

In the early part of September of this year, Shawn did call us regarding the showing portion of Parker's contract. We entered Parker in a show at the end of September. And when we arrived at the coast for the show Sean brought Parker to us.

Parker's arrival was to say the least a very interesting situation. Upon reaching down to pet him, he growled and snapped. Undaunted, we asked that Sean put him in his crate and leave him with us. Surely, he was just out of his element, and would settle down

shortly. Well, needless to say, it went from bad to worse. He did not settle down shortly. He got worse. In order to put him out for the 11 p.m. exercise the crate had to be physically taken and placed in the exercise pen, the door opened and to return him to the crate, he had to be herded into it, and the door slammed shut.

That four-day show weekend was a total loss for Parker he was not shown. Now his owners admitted that they were beside themselves, as to what to do with this dog. They love him dearly, however, they could no longer trust him, with strangers and other dogs. I suggested that they send the dog back up country with me for re-training. This was anything but a popular suggestion, as I would not be bringing the dog to the kennel for about three weeks, before coming down to the next show. They did however, understand the necessity to re-training this dog immediately.

Parker arrived in Armstrong, thoroughly disoriented and confused. We settled him in and began orienting him to the kennel routine. He did not fit into the kennel routine well at all. He did not want to go outside. He cried in his crate. He growled at any person or dog walking past his crate. He was truly in a sorry-looking state in a sorry state.

On the evening of the second day we attempted to introduce Parker to Sherry. It did not go well, as you can imagine. While he did not draw blood, it was not because he didn't try. What saved both Sherry and Jamie from having to bandage their hands, was their quick reflexes. At this point, Parker did, trust me and I had fortunately put a choke collar on him, prior to a tempting the introductions.

When he tried to bite Sherry, a good correction was issued along with a very stern verbal reprimand of BE Nice. Yes the correction shocked him, but I am not sure that it was not the stern be nice, that he found the most forceful. Sherry approached him again, and he turned to look at me maintaining eye contact with me the whole time she was petting him. We repeated this process with Jamie. For the next several days, he was introduced to as many people as possible and positively reinforced with the BE NICE in a very pleasant voice, unless he showed signs of reverting to the previous behavior in which case the very stern voice and the chocker was used. Further positive reinforcement was provided for good BE NICE in the form of his favorite food.

We were able to get him out side with other dogs, and his behavior improved daily. When we left for the show at the end of the three weeks, we had a fairly stable dog. He was entered in that show. However we opted not to show him as we were still not certain that he could take a strange judge approaching and touching him all over.

Rather, we opted to use the show situation to solidify the retraining process that had been started. So for the next four days we walked the show building, handing treats to absolute total strangers and asking them if they would feed our dog.

As it turns out, Parker is a very quick study. At the end of day two at the show Parker had learned that people were really cool. He was walking up to every stranger, that he past looking for food, treats and to be petted. He was now jumping up on people gently

nuzzling with children, and stepping out confidently in crowds. The question remained would the re-training hold when he got home?

The long and short of it is that the retraining did hold and Parker was entered a the show six weeks later. During the six weeks his home life behavior was substantially improved. His public outings were normal and enjoyable. Company could come and go with far less jumping and hopping.

The weekend of his first actual show came, and he has done us all proud. He was chosen first in his class, winner's dog and best of winners, for three points. The next day, he was chosen first in his class, winner's dog, best of winners, and best of breed. And when shown in the group, he garnered a third place win. On Saturday, when stacked on the table in the group for the judge to go over him, I set him up and stepped 3 ft. away from him. He was standing there completely a lone while the judge went over him-he did not move a muscle. His re-training was complete. It is now up to its owner, to keep it up. And they will continue to have a loving and trustworthy companion for the next 12 years.

So do please remember this, sometimes in our effort to be so good to our pets, we do them a huge disservice and end up being responsible for creating our own behavior problems, in our pets. Your pet will only be as socially acceptable as you train it to be. Dogs do need to know where the boundaries of acceptability are. And they do need to know that there are consequences for bad behavior. Always remember that there must be rewards for good behavior. Given the choice between stern reprimand and excited praise a dog will always move towards pleasing you and being the recipient of excited praise.