As soon as you bring a puppy or dog into your home on your first day together, this puppy or dog is looking to you and your entire family unit as their new pack. Everyone in the human pack should now assume a new role as pack leader to your dog. This means you are now responsible for establishing clear and consistent boundaries and rules, as well as enforcing consequences for poor decisions made by your dog. Effective leaders also provide their dogs with plenty of exercise and ways to improve their socialization skills. I elaborate on exercise, discipline and affection during my training sessions.

Cesar Millan says that 60% of a dog’s day should consist of exercise. Think about that…..over half of a dog’s day should involve some form of exercise. That’s a lot! But, that’s how much exercise dogs require in order to live a balanced life. I like to break this 60% down by recommending 2 to 3 structured walks every day - rain or shine. A structured walk is when the pack leader and the dog walk side by side in the ‘heel’ position. Every decision is made by the pack leader, including when and where to stop for a potty break. Otherwise, if we leave this decision up to the dog, he or she will choose to stop every 10 feet. Then, who is leading whom?

Another way to provide exercise for your dog is to arrange playdates with other dogs in the neighborhood or take them to doggie day care or a dog park. This is usually fun, but sometimes stressful, for the dog. It’s a great way for them to burn off some pent up energy. Remember, this unstructured play time should never replace the structured walk, but sometimes, it’s all that our human schedules will allow.

Dog training is another way to exercise your dog. This gives them a mental and physical work out. Dogs love to learn new things just like we do. Teach them a new trick or behavior. This is where I come in and can help you train your dog. It’s amazing what we can teach them to do. It just requires patience and a lot of consistent and successful repetitions through positive reinforcement training.

When you choose Canine Concierge as your dog training service, I help you communicate effectively with your dog by helping you understand dog behavior and how to read their body language and energy. I also help you to be the calm and assertive leader your dog needs. Your energy and body language are free tools that are available 24/7. Once you have mastered these tools, teaching a dog a new skill becomes fun and rewarding not only for your dog, but for you too!

When adding a new dog to your existing pack, sometimes it doesn’t go as planned. Sometimes, it can get really ugly where the dominant dog of the pack becomes very aggressive with the newcomer. That’s when I get the 911 phone call. I have dealt with many cases where the client didn’t realize that one of their dog’s ‘somewhat’ dominant behavior was really the issue. Below is a story, told by my client, about how he overcame the aggression between his 3 dogs when he introduced his 8 week old puppy to his existing pack.

“I have 3 small dogs: Shelby, 7 years old, Jet, 6 years old, and Hatch, 2 year old. They are all Teddy Bears (Bichon and Shih Tzu mix). When I added Hatch to the pack, Shelby wanted to kill Hatch! So, I called Susan with Canine Concierge, who was recommended by my vet’s office, Detroit/Dover Animal Hospital. Susan explained to me after a demonstration, that Shelby had to be corrected right at the moment of aggression and even before! This was done by constant daily work with Shelby and Hatch. Jet stayed out of the battle. The day was broken down into approximately 4 segments of 15-20 minutes of working on this one problem. Early and stern corrections were key, with many hours of practice! Corrections were simple and straight forward. “Shelby NO!” and me blocking her from getting at Hatch was very effective and worked every time. It was clear that she wanted to be the alpha dog, which needed to be toned down. After many hours of corrections, she learned to rid herself of this aggressive behavior and accept Hatch as part of the pack.

Another point of contention was dealing with space. While Shelby was on the couch, I would put Hatch on the couch with me. When we moved closer to Shelby, I would give her a correction as soon as any sign of aggression was noted. After many hours of training like this, they now lay side by side peacefully.

The same method of stern corrections was applied to getting their treats. As they were about to get a treat, if Shelby showed any signs of taking the treat or being aggressive towards Hatch, it was a loud and stern “Shelby No!’ Again, this too took hours of work, but they now line up side by side and take their treats one at a time without any aggression or stealing treats.

Lastly, while playing fetch, Shelby would pay more attention to snapping at Hatch while chasing the toy. While getting the toy and returning it to me, she would growl and go after Hatch. Big problem! My tactics, which Susan explained to me, was to get Shelby to play the game and leave Hatch alone. Again, timing the corrections and getting in between Shelby and Hatch while facing Shelby was the answer. This took the most work as Shelby was very competitive. Susan explained that this was Shelby’s most valuable resource. This took approximately 3 months of daily work. It takes a large commitment on the pet owner’s time and patience! The good news is that they now play fetch all the time and whoever gets to the toy first, gets it and brings it back to me without any aggression!”

