



help your
CITY DOG
flourish

INTRODUCE YOUR BEST BUD TO URBAN LIFE ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME TO LOWER HIS STRESS.

by CAROL LEA BENJAMIN
photos ADAM ALBRIGHT



Years ago, after living in the suburbs for a few years, I moved back to the city with my golden retriever, Oliver. He had been my demo dog, a working stiff who went along with me on my training jobs. I always left time between appointments for him to swim or run, and together we knew every pond, lake, and river, and every park where he could run until his tongue was hanging out. This was the pattern of our days, alternating work and play. What would happen when we moved into the city? How would he feel? How would he cope? To my utter surprise, Oliver loved the city. He adored all the smells, the fantastic number of other dogs, our late-night runs, and, perhaps most of all, the deli on the next block where as soon as they saw him, they'd scoop all the meat from under the slicer and hand it to him. Life was good. He was a happy dog.

But not every dog responds to the city that way. Some need a little time and a little help to get them to see the joys of urban living. Suppose you, too, have moved from suburbia or you have adopted an adolescent or adult dog who stresses out over jackhammers (and who wouldn't?) or doesn't like to ride on an elevator.

For the first issue (or any street-borne problems), do two things. Remove your dog's attention from the frightening stimulus by asking him to perform some of his favorite behaviors—spin, high-five, shake, or speak. With his attention on doing fun things, he will momentarily forget the kid running by, the passing bus, the whatever. Give him a special treat or other favorite reward for being able to perform these behaviors with the dreaded distraction nearby. Good dog!

After he performs his tricks, or if he is too distracted to do them, guide him away and around the corner to give him a break.



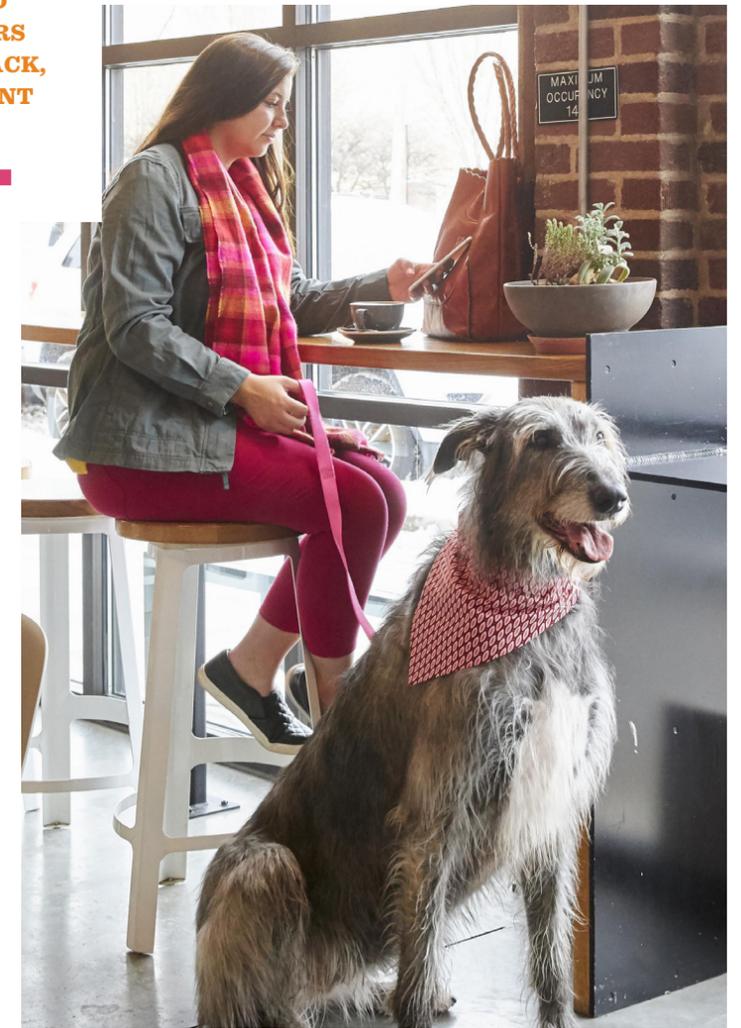


KNOWING WHEN YOUR DOG IS FEELING OVERWHELMED REQUIRES YOUR ATTENTION. YOU MIGHT NOTICE A TUCKED TAIL, EARS PINNED BACK, A HESITANT WALK.

Alternate between main streets and side streets, exposing him to a more and then less hectic environment. Is there a dog-friendly business nearby, a dry cleaner, hardware store, bank? Pop in to really get out of the noise. Ask your dog to sit. Give him a treat, count three chimpanzees, head back out. Exposing him to noise a little at a time with quieter breaks in between will help him be braver today than he was yesterday. And that's always a win!

Suppose your dog is afraid of the elevator, that strange little room that magically lets you out in a different place. No problem. Toss some fun into the mix. Ride one floor, ask your dog to sit in the elevator, and treat and praise him for doing so. As soon as you reach the ground floor, head outside the elevator and toss him a treat for his bravery. If there's a pocket park nearby, perhaps you two can play a game of catch, your dog safely on leash if the park isn't enclosed. After his walk, reverse the procedure. Have him sit for treats and praise on the way up and play his favorite game as soon as you get inside your apartment. Soon the elevator can become the trip to a good time instead of a place to be fearful.

In any environment, positive-reinforcement training helps a dog feel stress-free. When he knows a few simple cues, you have a way to communicate with him for his safety and your sanity. Plus, it gives him the feeling that things are doable and familiar, that he can cope. When signs of fear or stress pop up, even a simple "Let's go!" cue can help your dog feel like a can-do canine.



CITY DOG PETIQUETTE by SANDY ROBINS

Certified dog trainer and behavior counselor Mikkel Becker offers these tips to help your pooch adapt to an urban lifestyle.

SOUNDS

Honking horns and sirens can be scary, especially when exacerbated by crowded sidewalks. Condition your dog to these sounds by playing typical city noises at a low volume at home during mealtimes and play sessions.

SMELLS

Urban areas come with food trucks. Plus, dogs eat things they find on the ground. Cues like "leave it" and "drop it" followed by a treat for complying are key behaviors to train to keep your pup from enjoying the city's sidewalk smorgasbord.

CLOSE QUARTERS

Training your dog to walk politely on leash and to heel beside you will reduce the likelihood of your pooch tripping someone in crowded areas. A properly fitted front-clip harness may help deter a city dog from pulling while you are practicing.

POTTY STOPS

Use a "potty" cue that your dog already knows to clue him in that it's OK to pee and poop on the sidewalk—even if it feels and smells different than grass. Carry treats to reward your dog for his eliminations—and poo bags for cleaning up.

BARKING

Walking your dog before leaving him home alone means he'll be more likely to snooze than bark. Distraction toys such as puzzles can also help a dog refocus during your absence. Consider playing calming music to help him relax.



Knowing when your dog is feeling overwhelmed requires your attention. You might notice a tucked tail, ears pinned back, a hesitant walk. Find a quiet place to sit and take a break—most cities have parks of all sizes—and ask your dog to jump up on the bench beside you (being cautious about slatted benches that may trap pads or feet), leaning against you. Taking deep breaths and giving him calm attention and special treats will help him relax. After a few minutes you'll both be feeling much better.

Now it's time for a little game. Hide a food treat right on the other side of the bench and ask him to find it or, if you're in a really private or enclosed space and his recall is foolproof, you can play a game of fetch or catch.

Life can be complicated, busy, and noisy in a city, and sometimes it can seem overwhelming. Happily, there are ways dogs and humans can help each other to feel good, as we always have done since we first got together so long ago.



SWIPING RIGHT ON ROVER

by SANDY ROBINS

What kind of dog should you pick to join you downtown?

- **“DOGS WHO LIVE IN CITIES NEED TO HAVE** a ‘bombproof’ temperament,” says Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, DACVA, DACVB, cofounder of the Center for Canine Behavior. “They need to be stable and patient, which means having no anxiety or fear aggression. Such dogs are less likely to bark and disturb others.”
- **“DON’T EQUATE SIZE WITH TEMPERAMENT,** Dodman says. “Bigger dogs who are well-exercised often have laid-back personalities,” he says. “They can be quite happy as couch potatoes.”
- **IF YOU PLAN TO ADOPT AN ADULT DOG,** check to see how nervous he is before signing the paperwork. Talk to the shelter volunteers, who know a lot about the behavior of dogs in their care. Then spend 15 minutes alone in a room with him: petting, playing, and giving treats. Suddenly stand up and walk out of the room, leaving the dog alone—which is the canine version of a test for humans developed by psychologist Mary Ainsworth. A stable dog will walk to the door, then go back to the toys or settle down, Dodman says.
- **“BARKING IN SOCIAL SETTINGS** often indicates an anxious or fearful dog and is a cardinal sign of separation anxiety,” Dodman says. “If a dog has one phobia, he may have more, such as a fear of people. If a dog is fear-aggressive, it could pose a big issue in a busy, populated area.”
- **AS FAR AS PUPPIES GO,** the truth is you can’t tell with any certainty what an 8-week-old puppy will grow up to be, says Lisa Radosta, DVM, DACVB. “The only thing you can assess with some certainty at that age is fear,” she says. “If a puppy is fearful, he is likely to be fearful when he gets older.”