



## **A Tired Dog Is A Good Dog- Or Is It?**

### **The difference between tired and over tired.**

Imagine your state of mind while going for a nice relaxing walk on a sunny day. You may come home refreshed and ready to start a new project. Now, think about a time when you didn't sleep well and then had a long busy day at work. You may remember being more irritable, quick to overreact, foggy brained or maybe even hyper as you reached over tiredness. This is like how your dog acts when they have had too much emotional, mental, and physical stimulation. A tired puppy taking a nap may provide a reprieve from sharp teeth and busy antics, but an over tired dog can lead to increased vocalizations and anxious behavior such as jumping, mouthing/biting, pacing, panting and destructive chewing.

While physical exercise is essential to the health and wellbeing, of our dogs, the amount of exercise needed is specific to the individual dog. We need to remember exercise alone is not a solution for problem behaviors. The general recommendation is an hour of play time and exercise each day to sufficiently keep dogs in a good state of physical fitness. How we exercise our dogs is critical to their physical and emotional wellbeing as is our relationship with them.

High arousal activities, while providing exercise, can release high levels of adrenaline. Adrenaline can affect behavior in both humans and dogs. Physical exercise can give off a temporary high and this can show up as overstimulation at home, during training, or even while visiting a friend's house. You may notice your dog paces, whines, or barks incessantly, they might jump on you at random times or become mouthy, often showing dilated pupils. Sometimes they might stare at you or fixate on something like the cat or other dogs on walks. These are all signs of high arousal and highly aroused dogs are stressed dogs. Stress affects our dogs just as it affects us.

High arousal activities like playing fetch over and over, rough housing, chasing the kids, and play sessions that are too long should be avoided. Never allow your dog to chase a laser pointer as this triggers prey drive that's never fulfilled. This can create obsessive compulsive behaviors and can cause reactivity to flash of light such as the reflection of your phone. Continuous highly physical activities increase your dog's stamina which creates a dog that requires more and more exercise to satiate them. Soon you will find yourself with a dog that requires several hours of physical activity and will run you ragged.

**So, what do we do with a dog that has too much energy or displays over aroused behavior?**



- Use mental stimulation instead of trying to wear out your dog physically.
- Instead of a run at the dog park, consider going for a sniffy walk in a new area. Allow the dog to seek out good smells, pause with them and when they offer automatic focus, continue on the walk.
- Teach your dog a new cue or behavior. Tricks are great for this.
- Play Find It! - Hide treats or toys. You can toss them around the room initially and work up to hiding the treats in more difficult places.
- Have your dog forage for their meal using puzzle toys or stuffed KONGs.
- Work on impulse control with a Wait cue.
- Teach your dog that relaxing is a great thing with Settle and Place.
- Reward any behavior that resembles calm.

If your dog takes part in high arousal, highly physical activities, we recommend rest days to allow the stress levels in the dog's body to decrease. Keep play sessions short with training or another mental stimulation activity in between. Try to end your play session while your dog is still eager to play and only start play when your dog is doing something you want like laying calmly or chewing on an appropriate toy.

If you are working on calming an overly excited dog, private lessons may be best to help your dog succeed with learning a new way to be calm and relaxed. It's our goal to help you be better together and enjoy the time you have with your dog.

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