

Kathleen Gilley and her husband travel around the US in their RV doing shows with their greyhounds. The dogs do tricks and "dance" ...

Let us review a little. From weaning until you go away for schooling, at probably a year and a half, you eat, grow, and run around with your siblings. When you go away to begin your racing career, you get your own "apartment," in a large housing development. No one is allowed in your bed but you, and when you are in there, no one can touch you, without plenty of warning.

Someone hears a vehicle drive up, or the kennel door being unlocked. The light switches are flipped on. The loud mouths in residence, and there always are some, begin to bark or howl. You are wide awake by the time the human opens your door to turn you out. A Greyhound has never been touched while he was asleep.

You eat when you are fed, usually on a strict schedule. No one asks if you are hungry or what you want to eat. You are never told not to eat any food within your reach. No one ever touches your bowl while you are eating. You are not to be disturbed because it is important you clean your plate.

You are not asked if you have to "go outside." You are placed in a turn out pen and it isn't long before you get the idea of what you are supposed to do while you are out there. Unless you really get out of hand, you may chase, rough house and put your feet on everyone and every thing else. The only humans you know are the "waiters" who feed you, and the "restroom attendants" who turn you out to go to the bathroom. Respect people? Surely, you jest.

No one comes into or goes out of your kennel without your knowledge. You are all seeing; all knowing. There are no surprises, day in and day out. The only thing it is ever hoped you will do is win, place, or show, and that you don't have much control over. It is in your blood, it is in your heart, it is in your fate--, or it is not.

And when it is not, then suddenly you are expected to be a civilized person in a fur coat. But people don't realize you may not even speak English. Some of you don't even know your names, because you didn't need to. You were not asked or told to do anything as an individual; you were always part of the "condo association"; the sorority or fraternity and everyone did everything together, as a group or pack. The only time you did anything as an individual is when you schooled or raced, and even then, You Were Not Alone.

In my "mobile abode," the Greyhounds each have several unique names, but they also have a single common name: it is Everybody. We continue to do things as a group, pack or as we are affectionately known in-house, by Kathleen's Husband, "The Thundering Herd."

Back to those who have not been permanently homed. Suddenly, he is expected to behave himself in places he's never been taught how to act. He is expected to take responsibility for saying when he needs to go outside, to come when he is called, not to get on some or all of the furniture, and to not eat food off counters and tables. He is dropped in a world that is not his, and totally without warning, at that.

Almost everything he does is wrong. Suddenly he is a minority. Now he is just a pet. He is unemployed, in a place where people expect him to know the rules and the schedule, even when there aren't any. (How many times have you heard someone say, "He won't tell me when he has to go out." What kind of schedule is that?) Have you heard the joke about the dog who says, "My name is No-No Bad Dog. What's yours?" To me that is not even funny. All the protective barriers are gone. There is no more warning before something happens. There is no more strength in numbers. He wakes up with a monster human face two inches from his. (With some people's breath, this could scare Godzilla.) Why

should he not, believe that this "someone," who has crept up on him, isn't going to eat him for lunch? (I really do have to ask you ladies to consider how you would react if someone you barely knew crawled up on you while you were asleep?) No, I will not ask for any male input.

Now he is left alone, for the first time in his life, in a strange place, with no idea of what will happen or how long it will be before someone comes to him again. If he is not crated, he may go through walls, windows or over fences, desperately seeking something familiar, something with which to reconnect his life. If he does get free, he will find the familiarity, within himself: the adrenaline high, the wind in his ears, the blood pulsing and racing through his heart once again--until he crashes into a car.

Often, the first contact with his new family is punishment, something he's never had before, something he doesn't understand now, especially in the middle of the rest of the chaos. And worst of all, what are the most common human reactions to misbehavior? We live in a violent society, where the answer to any irritation is a slap, punch, kick, whip, or rub your nose in it. Under these circumstances, sometimes I think any successful adoption is a miracle.

He is, in effect, expected to have all the manners of at least a six-year old child. But, how many of you would leave an unfamiliar six-year old human alone and loose in your home for hours at a time and not expect to find who knows what when you got back? Consider that if you did, you could be brought up on charges of child abuse, neglect, and endangerment. Yet, people do this to Greyhounds and this is often the reason for so many returns.

How many dogs have been returned because they did not know how to tell the adopter when they had to go out? How many for jumping on people, getting on furniture, counter surfing, separation anxiety, or defensive actions due to being startled or hurt (aka growling or biting)? So, let's understand: Sometimes it is the dog's "fault" he cannot fit in. He is not equipped with the social skills of a six-year old human. But you can help him.

Basically, adoption programs can be divided into two types. There are those who have access to their adoptee before placement and those who do not.

If you have access to your dogs before adoption, either through a holding kennel situation or foster home program, the behavior modification and training can begin at once and extend into the new home. If the adoption program is demand and supply, most of your counseling and advice will be done over the phone and through handouts. Now, remember, 50% of the world is illiterate and the other 50% can't remember what they read five minutes ago. Both the dog and the new family must come to an agreement on the rules of the house. The problem on the human side is they cannot be expected to know how to communicate what they like and do not like. Humans are extremely limited in their responses to distressing situations: curse it, beat it, kill it, nuke it, or get rid of it.

All the things you do for these Greyhounds: the neutering, teeth cleaning, the worming, the tick panels, the collar and leash, the book--that's all real nice. (My first Greyhound didn't even have a rabies shot.) However, what John Q. Public wants is a dog that does not jump up on him or his family, leaves the food on the counter, walks on a lead, and does not growl when told to move over.

Is this too much to ask? From what I have gathered so far, the worst things often happen to a Greyhound after he is adopted. Those of you with access to your dogs before placement could solve these problems before hand to a large extent. Both groups could offer humane solutions to fosters or owners when they do crop up.

An adoptable Greyhound must understand what discipline is--the cause and effect part. He must understand that certain behavior, like jumping on people is NEVER to be tolerated. To let the average

human have first crack at disciplining a Greyhound, when they don't even know how to raise their own young, is foolhardy at best.

First the philosophy: Pain and fear teach distrust, alienation, and prevent bonding. A dog that runs from you cannot be disciplined until you have cornered him. At that point, he will wet his pants in fear or cause you pain before he thinks you will cause him some: flight or fight.

Our goal is to take the behavior we know he will never need, (which might endanger his life, like counter surfing), or that he finds rewarding, and we do not, and change the pay off, without pain or fear. We are permitted to aggravate, irritate, annoy, disturb, fluster, harass, startle, embarrass, distract, and pull a few rude surprises.

Teaching a Greyhound what discipline means, is the best tool you can equip him with for his new life. Then you must equip his family so they will pick up the squirt bottle and not the belt. Being a family pet is no easy job, but you can increase the odds of him not getting pink slipped.

Remember two things. Not all methods have the same effect. I cannot use the juice bottle on Chubby; she has never tasted something she didn't like. I cannot use the slightest neck scruff on Waco, because she cries big crocodile tears at the top of her lungs. Next, and most important: You must counsel your adoptees that these methods are not to be used by children. Children have no business disciplining anything. Some of these tools will give absolute power and you remember that absolute power corrupts absolutely. I have seen it turn even the mildest child into a raging tyrant.

I do have an opinion about humans, regardless of age, who receive punishment from a Greyhound. The ones who get bitten are the ones who break a Greyhound's rules. There is no such thing as an unprovoked bite from a sane, sound of body and temperament Greyhound.

If you are adopting out freaks, spooks, or dogs in chronic pain, in the hopes of Saving Them All, I have nothing to say to you. The question is who understands what counts as provocation? Not only does it vary from dog to dog, but it just might be the timid one rather than the big know-it-all, who has the most rules--who is the most easily provoked.

Often what constitutes provocation is not even perceived as such. One thing every Greyhound should be tested for is nipping. Nipping is not the same as aggressive biting, but few people know or care about the difference; it must be stopped. Put him on a leash and prance around for about 50 feet while squealing, giggling, and waving your arms. Hey, every one of mine, save Mouse Tail, took the "bait," which meant I got pinched in the pants for behaving like fun prey. I immediately and dispassionately dispensed the neck scruff and off we went again. Some learned the first time; none took more than four times. I would give you a free Prance, Squeal, and Giggle demo, but I recently had knee surgery.

Ready for the nuts and bolts? Sorry, one more story. A GPA chapter head, greeted us somberly the day before our performance. She asked I accompany her to a meeting of foster families. "I'm getting dogs returned for simple behavior problems and I want you to help me read them the riot act about fixing these things while they still have the dog."

Before the meeting started, I turned to the closest person and asked, "How is your foster doing?" "Oh, he's just wonderful! He likes to jump on me but that's just his way of showing he loves me." Is NOT, is NOT, and it doesn't matter anyway! Jumping on people is dangerous and unacceptable to most novice humans. Most of all, it is dangerous to the dog and his future. Know how to cure jumping in one second? Put your foot on the leash.

There are three ways the average person will respond to being jumped on: 1. Knee him in the chest. 2. Stomp his back toes. 3. Return the dog/get rid of it. Whether you have a foster program in place, or you are dealing with an irate owner on the phone, impress upon the first group, they are doing the dog harm not good. To the owner, tell him the problem can be alleviated in three days with a little diligence and a few "nuts and bolts." The most important thing you can do at this point is have answers (that's plural.)

Here are some methods for handling the common problems of jumping up, nipping, counter surfing, moving over when asked, getting on furniture you don't want him to, begging at the table, barking, roughhousing, harassing the cat, or eating your rhododendron. There are two important things you must remember when teaching a Greyhound to--or not to do something: You must respect his intelligence enough to believe he can learn, or cease and desist, and more importantly, you or his owner, must be smarter than he is.

There are things these methods have in common:

1. They are inexpensive. Have plenty of them around, located in strategic places.
2. They should solve the problem after no more than six applications. If they don't, someone is using it incorrectly or it is not the appropriate tool for this Greyhound.
3. There are several that are silent. You should be too. That means, don't say a word, just DO IT!

THE SQUIRT BOTTLE

The squirt bottle is usually just a good old plant-misting, trigger-operated, inexpensive plastic bottle. Purchase several at any garden section in a discount store. Have them abundantly sprinkled about your abode. They must only contain pure, fresh, potable water. Adjust it for a nice piercing stream. The strength of this tool is that it is perfectly silent and can be used around sleeping babies, husbands who work shifts, and while you are on the phone. It is your duty to find the anatomical location he despises being squirted the most. May I suggest the back of the neck, between the toes and in the tail? Usually it takes three squirts the first time; after that, either one squirt, or a threat to do so.

The one in your car insures that your Long Tail will stay out of your lap while you are driving. If you put him in the back seat, he will stay there if you learn to use the rear view mirror to point and shoot by. He will learn not to stick his head out the window, not to bark at other dogs on the street, not to lick or put his feet on the windows and to stop "nesting" before you need a new upholstery job.

In your kitchen, he will learn not to put his nose where it does not belong and not to wipe it off on the woodwork if he does get to the frosting bowl. By the door, he will learn not to jump on you when you enter and he will learn to keep his feet on the ground should anyone else come in. (Ditto for all doors a guest may use for access.)

In the dining room, this is the quiet, no nonsense way to insist that he keep his nose out of everyone's plate. Unless someone laughs, you won't even disturb the dinner conversation.

In the bedroom, TV room, den, or where ever you put him to bed, this is a great method by which to teach someone that whining and barking is not acceptable.

One of the most unusual and effective uses I witnessed was in an adoption kennel. The House Mouth got the bottle hung on the front of his crate. He promptly quieted himself, went to the back and laid down.

If you have to make use of a house sitter, arm them with this innocuous, harmless weapon. Do not leave it up to them how to discipline your Hound when he pulls his “the cat is away” stuff.

If you are out of doors, you have two additional alternatives for the Greyhound Gardener. One is a bigger, squeeze-type bottle with a longer range and more volume. One man who reported his dog immune to the squirt bottle found a plastic ketchup squeezer a highly suitable substitute. When he chose to give a lesson on how paws prints do not belong on white fences, it only took three times.

The best story came from a lady who borrowed her son’s super-soaker to keep by the kitchen window overlooking the back yard. Guess who only got caught digging holes once?

SHAKE CAN/POPCORN SHAKER

To make an average shake can, dig a soda or beer container out of the garbage without the neighbors seeing you. Put a couple of rocks in it and tape it shut. To make a super shaker, find an old-fashioned tin can, like soups and fruit juices come in. Wait until your husband or son is working on his (not your) car, snowmobile, motorbike or lawn mower. Quietly help yourself to five or so nuts, bolts or washers. If you get caught, use ten pennies. The can is to be shaken at or behind a miscreant three times in rapid succession. The best timing is two seconds before he mugs your mother-in-law.

If he intends to give you a big wet or muddy hug, start shaking your weapon when he is no closer than six feet and do not stop until he does. If he decides the next person in sight will become the object of his affection, shake the can behind him before he gets his front feet air born. He will turn and look at you and you will praise him. Should he decide to continue where he left off, repeat your performance. He will get the picture in a maximum of three times or you will need to change your choice of tools.

One whack of the can on the top of his crate usually insures instant silence. Two whacks on the cutting board mean your Greyhound won’t need rhinoplasty. Three shakes at he who thinks you are the one who should sleep or sit on the floor will end the discussion immediately and without a growl or hiss. The shake can is truly the method of choice in a situation where there is any chance of an aggressive reaction.

The drawback of the shake can is that it may be too loud for a sound-sensitive dog. Fear not. A softer sound can be arranged. Instead of a can, dig through the garbage (again) for that small, plastic container that held margarine, cream cheese or chip dip. Please wash it before proceeding. Add one hand full of unpopped popcorn kernels and some tape to keep the lid in place.

Shake cans should be liberally placed around the house to defend guests, peanut butter sandwiches, potted plants, or your laundry from being sorted in an unauthorized manner.

Again, this is an excellent choice for teaching car manners. He will stay out of your lap, in the back seat, or off the dashboard. Don’t be yelling; there is enough noise already. He may also cease yelping, whining and pacing in the car.

Both the shake can and the squirt bottle (i.e., a clean sun tan lotion container of water) can be tucked in your hip pack and used as a defensive weapon to protect your prized possession from the neighborhood bully.

THE JUICE BOTTLE

The best juice bottle is made from one of those little demo bottles, with a flip top lid. They are used to hold samples of cream rinse, hand lotion or other gunk, and sold in grocery stores. Wash thoroughly before proceeding.

You may only use harmless, edible liquids. You may not use anything that would cause pain, i.e., hot sauce. You may use things that do not taste good without sugar. Unsweetened citrus fruit juice of any kind might do the job. (Just the thought of unsweetened grapefruit juice makes puckering sensations.) Any you-mix-'em powdered drinks will do; however, Kool-Aid will make his mouth a funny color. Gatorade is already mixed and truly revolting.

Then there are things that don't taste good even though they make the food they are packed in flavorful. Sauerkraut juice or dill pickle juice fall into this category. Vinegar, white or brown has more uses than just a health remedy. Coffee or tea is not recommended unless it is decaf.

Do not underestimate the power of booze: rum, vermouth, gin, vodka, or any after dinner liqueur. It is not recommended to use red wine, crème de menthe or sloe gin with a white dog. Red wine might encourage rumors of his just having consumed your mailperson; crème de menthe may have the health department thinking he has contracted some ghastly jungle fever. It is probably wise to forget beer; I have never met a Greyhound who didn't lust after that refreshment.

Although no more than a quarter of a teaspoon will go in his mouth, if you have ethical or religious objections to booze, you may brew your own concoction from your spice rack. Take a small amount of water and add a teaspoon of one of the following extracts: Vanilla, almond, maple or anise. Taste it. If it tastes bad, then it is good. Fill your bottle.

The drawback of "juicing" is that you must be close enough, when the crime is being committed, to stick the bottle beside his lips and pointed toward the front of his mouth. The advantage is that one little squeeze will bring instantaneous, near-miraculous results. If your mixture is the correct one, you will only have to actually use the juice bottle about four times. After that, faking it, threatening to use it, or just showing him the bottle will be just as effective.

Carried on the street, this is one of the finest methods to control dog aggression or unseemly interest in you neighbor's cat. (Of course he is on a leash, silly. Just pull him to you and administer the appropriate dosage.) It is great for whining, barking, stool eating, nipping, or refusing to let go of the dishtowel.

Warnings: If you juice him and he licks the droplets off his toes, you do not have the correct formula. A juice bottle can fit unobtrusively in your shirt pocket or handbag, when you go to the vet. Never carry it in your back pocket!

NECK SCRUFF WITH MEAN TALKING

The neck scruff is what mama dog did to baby dog when he got too rough with his brothers and sisters or wouldn't lighten up on her when she asked nicely. All dogs seem to understand this as a disciplinary method instinctively.

The scruff is the loose skin on the back of the neck, located between the withers and the ears. One grasps the skin, not the dog, with two fingers and a thumb (more if the breed is other than a Greyhound), and shakes the skin, not the dog, four times. Since the head does not move, there is no chance of "shaken baby" syndrome. You are not allowed to pinch and if you have those long fake fingernails do not use this method at all, unless you promise to wear gloves.

The neck scruff is to be accompanied by evil-sounding threats, made firmly but not loudly. Eye contact is essential, as in “Listen up! This is your mother speaking!” Hissing and growling at the “scrufee” is permitted and highly recommended.

Your list of “or else” consequences must be dire, but not believable by nosey body bystanders. If, for example, you live in Florida, Louisiana or the Texas coast, you must not threaten to feed him to the ‘gators. You may advise him in a most ominous tone that you know his name and you know where he lives. I have spoken with mine about being cinnamon sugared and served for breakfast, forced to sleep on their own bed, or horror or horrors, walked across a patch of wet grass.

This method of discipline is only to be used on those with whom you have an intimate relationship. (On the other hand, it is very useful in the turn out pen where everyone is muzzled.) A dog who does not agree with your idea of the chain of command will express this with his pearly whites. Overly sensitive dogs will throw themselves on the ground or simply open their mouths and emit a glass-splintering shriek.

Neck scruffing is good for playing too rough whether it is with another family member or one of your own prized appendages. It works for getting caught with one’s nose where it oughtn’t to be. I like it for anything that someone doesn’t take my word for the second time. Repetitive guest molestation, eyeing the cat box, uncalled for slurpy licking at 2:00 a.m. or drinking from an unauthorized container can all be handled with a civilized neck scruffing.

Neck scruffing should not be used on a squealer or anyone that runs from you. This is neither a pain nor a fright tool. It should be moderately humiliating, embarrassing and distressing to his dignity.

AROMA THERAPY

For aroma therapy, you will require a plastic bottle, ideally the size of the average antacid container. It needs to have a flip-top cap. Fill it a half to a third full with paper towels, cotton balls, toilet paper or nose blowers.

Add a small amount of noxious smelling liquid. None should leak out when your bottle is turned upside down. The fumes must be offensive to your dog, but not toxic. Some possibilities are perfumes, aftershaves, colognes, toilet water (not that kind), vinegar, greasy cold remedies you are suppose to rub on your chest, pepto bismol, calamine lotion, or those mouthwashes that give you medicine breath.

This method was originally designed for a lady in a wheel chair who was concerned about being greeted with excessive exuberance by her son’s dogs. He would come home, let them in from the yard and they would go bananas, vying for her affection. Armed with her aroma therapy bottle, she could keep them at bay (like garlic to a vampire) until they settled down and could behave more civilly.

The next use came when a lady complained her dog only lifted his leg on one side of her favorite chair. We hung three plastic bags over the arm, at six-inch intervals, each with its own offensive-smelling contents. It solved the problem.

Another dog chose only a certain corner of the breakfast nook to leave a puddle. Aromatic land mines were placed on the perimeter and fortunately no other site appealed as a substitute.

Note: There are scads of commercial preparations available at pet supply stores or in catalogs. Non-staining repellents exist to keep dogs off the furniture, out of your garden or prevent nose graffiti on glass doors or full length mirrors.

DOUBLE-SIDED TAPE, BALLOONS, MOUSE TRAP/CLAPPER and NON-SKID STRIPS

Double-sided tape, at least 1-inch wide is an excellent deterrent to the counter surfer. (You know how Greyhounds are sensitive to stuff on the bottom of their feet.) They should find your use of this technique quite disgusting.

Many obedience instructors also advise an early warning defense system, made from a series of shake cans, tied together with thread. Thread is used so that when the cans, that are set along the edge of the counter, are disturbed and come domino-ing down, your Hound cannot get tangled.

Balloons can make a nice addition to your disciplinary repertoire, if you do not have a sound-shy dog. Booby trap your garbage can. (There are things in most garbage that could kill him.) Using a small mousetrap, baited with a balloon and thoroughly covered by a protective layer will discourage your family recycler.

If he gets on the sofa or a chair that you do not want him on, place a balloon(s) underneath the seat cushion(s), or lay them on top, under a light blanket. Ditto the bed, if you or your significant other think three or more is a crowd or that he sneaks up there during the day. I understand the crackle of two-liter soda bottles (sans caps so the air can escape when he puts his weight upon them) can be equally annoying to him. Be sure to remove before guests arrive.

Here is an excellent way to solve long nails and gouge marks if you have a 'Hound who scratches on the door or beside it. Unlike other methods, this is not designed to stop him. It is only designed to protect the wood or glass. We all know that respecting privacy is not one of a Greyhounds' stronger suits. There have been reports that this method allowed the taking of one's shower with the door closed.

At the nearest hardware or home improvement store, purchase strips of the material mounted on stairs to make them non-skid. They come in sizes from stair-step wide to designer kind that can be stuck to the shower floor. They have a self-adhesive backing and black sand-like finish. These non-skid strips really do a beautiful job keeping nails smooth and short.

Some dogs will even change the foot they use to scratch with when the nails get short enough. That means eight less nails to trim next time.

The bottom line is this: If you have chosen a normal, happy, fun-loving Greyhound, there is almost no behavior problem that cannot be solved in a humane, clear, firm, painless and fear-free manner.

"The Dancing Greyhounds are a non-political entity! As such, they can only accept invitations from pro or neutral groups."