



Hyper-Activity

Most of us are aware of the fact that dogs are social animals. Yet, owners will often house a dog, alone, for days, weeks, months or years, at a time. Often, as a result, the dog develops compulsive behaviors like pacing, circling, destructive chewing and just generally bouncing off the walls. A dog that engages in this type of behavior is seeking stimulation any way it can. Most dogs with this type of problem seem to get overexcited at the possibility of social contact, either with another dog or an owner or visitor. The dog may run in excited circles or jumps on anyone it meets. Most owners find this disconcerting at best. Dogs get labeled "hyperactive" or unmanageable when they exhibit these types of behaviors. Labeling the dog is easier than accepting responsibility for their abnormal behavior.

If your dog is hyperactive, start with one or two of the following suggestions, or jump in and use them all. The more you do, the better the results! Here are the suggestions:

☞ Consider changing your dog's food. Make sure you are not feeding a performance quality food if your dog does not need that level of energy. If you have a healthy adult dog, try an adult "lite" food for a while. Your dog may be reacting to something in a particular food. Food allergies are common in dogs and, like us, the symptoms vary so much that it is impossible, without testing, to rule out allergies as a contributing factor. One final note about food, sugar can cause hyperactivity in children, and most dog foods contain some form of sugar for palatability.

☞ Consider getting another dog if your dog likes other dogs. The value of your dog having social interaction with another dog cannot be overstated. Dogs are pack animals and isolation is extremely hard on them.

☞ Consider making the dog an inside dog, if it is an outside dog. Often, the dog is so lonely if outside by itself, that it becomes over-excited at the prospect of being with you.

☞ Join a club and play with your dog. There are a number of sports that involve dogs today, like agility, earth dog trials, flyball, herding and lure coursing. The exercise will be good for both of you and your dog will LOVE it.

☞ Provide more stimulation in the dog's environment. Invest in some interactive toys, like a "Roll-a-Ball" or "Buster Cube." Tie a heavy rope around a bicycle tire and suspend the tire from a tree for the dog to pull on. If you have a strong but flexible tree limb, tie a rope to it with the ends dangling. The object is for the dog to pull on the rope and for the tire or flexibility of the limb to pull back. In other words the dog can play a pull game without you being involved. They also make a big, hard plastic, red ball that has a plug in it. You can put things in it to make the ball more fun for the dog, for instance, some water, so it rolls erratically when the dog interacts with it, or pebbles so it rattles (not for fearful dogs) when pushed. You may have to teach your dog to enjoy playing with these items but it is well worth the time invested.

☞ **REWARD YOUR DOG WHENEVER IT IS NOT BEING HYPER!** The reward can be food, attention, or anything else the dog wants. Reward the dog frequently for NOT being hyper (when it is being calm) and your dog will start offering that behavior more often.

☞ Spend more time with your dog. Some of that time should be spent in activities that are not "action oriented." If the only time you go around your dog is to walk it, feed it, play ball or Frisbee with it, your dog will be conditioned to react excitedly whenever you are around. Instead, grab a book and a chair when the dog is around and read quietly. Teach the dog to down stay beside you while you do so.

☞ **TRAIN YOUR DOG!** Training stimulates a dog emotionally, mentally and physically. Surprisingly, the training sessions do not have to be long (15 to 20 minutes is fine) to make a difference, although they do need to be on-going. Learn about clicker training. Then, after your dog learns the basic commands, start teaching it tricks. Clicker training is easy to learn, almost impossible to make training mistakes with, and gives your dog some control over its in training sessions.

Be patient, these suggestions are highly effective but do take time to work. The problem did not develop overnight and will not be resolved overnight.

One final note, you should probably have your dog checked out by a veterinarian to make sure that nothing is physically wrong with your dog that could be causing the problem. Although rare, it is possible that you could be misinterpreting serious symptoms as hyperactivity and it is better to be safe than sorry.