

Building a Better Relationship With Your Dog

The day that I received my new Cara Doberman puppy I knew that I was in love. What a precious package of joy, however, she was not near as enamored with me as I was with her. Within several days I noticed how aloof she appeared at times. I seemed to desire her attention and affection much more than she cared about mine. I had never seen this behavior in such a young puppy. She reminded me of a young teenager that thought she was ready to move out and get her own apartment.

I contacted Ray Carlisle and asked his advice. The solution he offered was very simple, made perfect sense and really worked. For lack of a better term, I will call it the abandonment exercise. This exercise should be done in a totally fenced in area such as a large ballfield or tennis court. It should not be done in an area the dog is familiar with such as your backyard.



Take the puppy to the area by yourself; do not take any other dogs or people along for the ride. Park your car so that it cannot be seen from the area you will be taking the puppy to but that you can keep an eye on the puppy, perhaps behind some bushes or up a hill. Make sure all gates are closed and walk the puppy inside the enclosed area, preferably with the puppy off leash. Sit down in the grass and totally ignore the puppy. If the puppy wanders away, immediately get up and run out the closest gate, shut it behind you and quickly disappear. Do not stop even if the puppy attempts to follow, just shut the gate and quietly make your way back to your car. It is important the puppy does not see you go to the car.

If the puppy will not wander away while you are sitting in the grass, then after ten minutes or so, throw several small treats out away from you. Once the puppy becomes engrossed in the food, quickly depart.

It is important that you do not return back to the enclosure until after your puppy is sure he has been abandoned. This will take different periods of time depending on the individual dog. The puppy **MUST BE ABSOLUTELY FRANTIC**. This may be exhibited by barking, screaming, racing the fence line, attempting to climb the fence or running in circles. Do not return to the puppy in less than fifteen minutes regardless of his behavior. It may take as long as thirty to forty-five minutes if the puppy is very independent.



If possible, return via a different gate than you departed and circle behind the puppy so that it does not see you. Walk back normally and remain calm. When the puppy sees you, it should literally go insane with unrestrained and total joy. It may attempt to grab clothing, jump all over you or squeal with delight. Calmly praise; do not act overly exuberant. Remember you are establishing that the dog will always need you and that you do not need him. After several minutes of calm praising, turn and walk away without saying anything. It is important you remain silent. The puppy should readily follow and be worried that you may again be leaving. Silently have the puppy follow you to your car.

In the rare circumstance that you returned to the confined puppy and it does not run to you with unrestrained and grateful joy, then you must immediately turn and walk away as fast as possible, again closing the gate behind you. You must leave the puppy for at least one hour or until he is extremely agitated and worried.

This exercise should be repeated whenever aloofness rears its ugly head. It is even more successful if done in a variety of locations. I used it five times and it totally changed the relationship between the dog and myself. It did not create separation anxiety because my dog had already been taught to remain calm in a kennel crate. It did create a dog that had a clear picture that I was the benevolent leader and she was dependent on me for survival. It also helped to teach my dog to come when called since she now desired to be with me.

I will always be grateful to Ray Carlisle for helping me to raise a better dog. Initially he furnished me with a wonderfully bred animal then he helped give me the tools to raise it properly.

