

Summer 2021

# F FORUM

Welcome to Forum — national newsletter of the Canadian Association of Professional Dog Trainers



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## New Book Spotlight

By Jennifer Berg, CPDT-KA

### ***Puppy Socialization: What It Is and How to Do It*** by Marge Rogers and Eileen Anderson

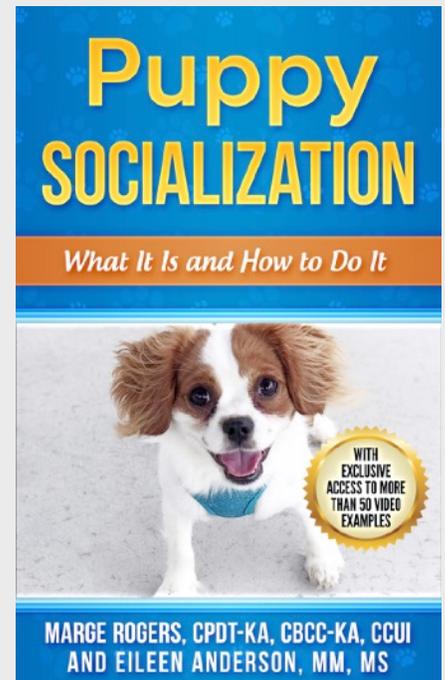
**This book is essential for all dog care professionals and clients**

This cannot be stressed enough. It is especially true as we come out of the pandemic and dogs try to adjust to what could be a very different world for them. While it is targeted at puppies, the content is applicable to helping adolescent and adult dogs that have socialization issues such as anxiety or over-reactive behaviours. This book is a lifesaver, both figuratively and literally since many pandemic dogs could face euthanasia due to behaviour.

It is a great resource for all dog care professionals, both as a stand alone resource for professional development and as a complement to services. It is clearly written, the links to the video examples are very helpful, its scope manages to be comprehensive without being overwhelming, and even seasoned trainers are sure to learn a lot and find plenty of great ideas exploring the book's online Resource List.

**Here is a sneak peek at some sections that might pique your interest:**

- Canine Body Language: The Missing Piece of the Socialization Puzzle
- Common Myths about Puppy Socialization
- Puppy Socialization Checklists: Guidelines, Not Rules
- What Happens If You Expose the Puppy to Things without Using Food or Fun?
- Pet vs. Sports/Competition Dog: Should My Socialization Goals Be Different?
- Video Examples of Building Positive Associations with Household Objects
- If Your Puppy Gets Overwhelmed: Planning for the Unexpected
- Abnormal Fear During the Sensitive Period for Socialization
- Special Cases: Playing Catch-up with Young or Adult Dogs Who Weren't Socialized During the SPS, feral puppies, blind or deaf puppies, service dogs



*[The e-book is available through dogwise.com.](https://www.dogwise.com)*

*CAPDT Members get 10% off from Dogwise.com (Discount Code CAPDT10).*

*If you purchase the book through our newsletter link, the CAPDT receives a much appreciated contribution.*

## This book differs from other books about puppy socialization

Eileen explains, “There are some excellent books out there that cover socialization generally as a part of a bigger book, and also some great, shorter standalone books on socialization, but we didn’t see the comprehensive kind of book that we wanted to see. And that’s what we wrote. We tried to make it for all audiences. We wanted a person who has never even thought about socialization to pick it up and follow the instructions. But we wanted to get the scientific references in the book for our colleagues so that they would know we weren’t just making things up and that we knew what we were talking about. I think the need for and importance of our book is twofold. One, it’s very comprehensive. Two, Marge’s videos show people what you can do with puppies. Marge’s videos make it doable for owners.” ([Click here for an example of the type of instructional videos](#) found in the book.)

Marge sums up the problem and why their book is part of the solution. “Dog owners know socialization is important but they don’t really have a good understanding of what socialization is or how to go about doing it. Often times we trainers are teaching behaviours like Sit, Down, and Come and we’re leaving this important, critical piece in the puppy’s critical behavioural development to the owners who don’t have the understanding or the information to socialize their puppies effectively.”

## Thoughts on puppy classes

Marge and Eileen believe puppy classes should be about socialization and building confidence, particularly by teaching owners how to introduce their puppies to the world. This is done successfully by helping owners understand how to recognize if their puppy is nervous or overwhelmed and what to do about it. The book includes a section that cautions people about classes that are dominance- and aversive-based and gives readers permission to leave such a class because, as Eileen puts it, “nothing good will happen to a puppy in a class like that.”

They strongly believe every puppy class should incorporate canine body language into the curriculum. As Marge explains, “Owners cannot effectively socialize their puppy if they can’t tell if their puppy is a little bit worried or anxious. I would like to see every class for puppies in their sensitive period, and even beyond, incorporate Introduction to Novelty in the curriculum and teach the owners how to do that in a safe and effective way — and how to adjust for a fearful puppy.”

## High praise from dog trainers:

*“I have a feeling this book is going to be read and recommended by heaps of dog professionals and dog lovers who will be eager to spread the word. It’s the perfect resource for everyone who has anything to do with raising well-adjusted, happy puppies, and its publication is good news all around.”*

— Karen B. London, PhD, CAAB, CPDT-KA, author of *Treat Everyone Like a Dog: How a Dog Trainer’s World View Can Improve Your Life*

*“This is the most definitive resource on all things Socialization that you could ever ask for ... a one-stop-shopping book that offers essential information for first time puppy owners and seasoned hobbyists alike.... I will be referring all students and friends to this book from now on. Beautifully done.”*

— Leslie McDevitt, MLA, CDBC, CPDT-KA, Level 2 TAGteach Certified, author of the *Control Unleashed* series

## What veterinarians are saying:

*“I can’t wait to incorporate this resource into staff training at our veterinary hospital.”*

— Dr. Cathy Kreis, DVM, Medical Director, Appalachian New River Veterinary Associates

*“The explanations and instructions use sound science-based information and are broken down into manageable easy to read and understand steps. In addition, they’ve also included invaluable resources in the way of video and photo links to help the reader learn all about dog body language and see real-life training in action. These links will absolutely take your learning experience to the next level.”*

— Alanna Lowry, DVM

Another important component is play between the owner and their puppy. Marge thinks this is an under-used item in some of the puppy classes she has seen. “If we only practice skills and behaviours when the puppy is calm, we’re only teaching him to respond when he’s calm. But what happens when he sees a squirrel or his favourite person? His heart rate increases, his respiration increases, his body releases adrenaline. These are the same things that happen when he plays. So we can incorporate that into our puppy training classes and teach the puppy the skills to respond during that increased arousal level. Play is also another tool to assess how our puppy is doing while we’re socializing him because play and fear are generally incompatible. If a puppy can’t play in an environment, that is information. Why can’t he play? One of the things we discovered through our research is that puppies who play with their owners are typically more confident than puppies who don’t. One-on-one play with your dog is a great relationship builder, too.”

### **What about puppies being raised to be service dogs or to compete in dog sports?**

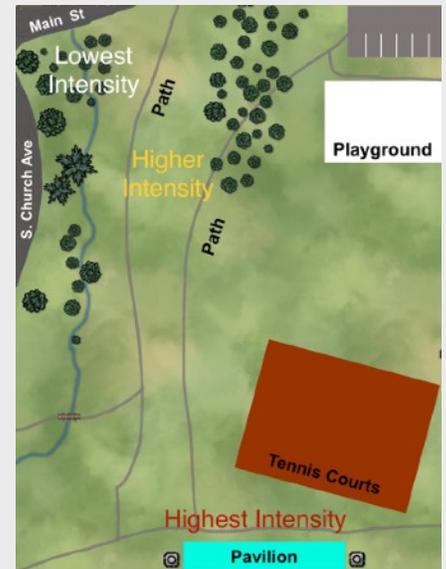
Eileen and Marge are concerned about a trend of people not wanting their puppies to interact with other people or get comfortable with them because they’re thinking of their puppy’s ability to focus later on. Marge points out that whether its assisting their owner or doing a dog sport, “The dog needs to be comfortable in order to focus on their job. Any dog is going to have trouble doing their job if they don’t feel safe.”

Eileen reiterates, “Without positive exposure to other people, there is a good chance your puppy will be wary of strangers later in life. Your dog cannot do public work if they are petrified, although sometimes people try to do it. We do recommend that puppy owners get their dog comfortable with stuff in the socialization period. It’s a training issue later to teach your dog to focus on you. We don’t want the puppy focusing on you because they are scared of everything else.”

### **Helping fearful adolescent and adult dogs**

This book is useful for helping fearful and adolescent dogs, with some modifications. “You do what we’ve told you to do in this book, but it [the dog’s progress] will go way, way slower. Because now the dog’s default response is not happy curiosity or even neutral. It’s likely fear. And the help of a skilled professional is probably necessary.” (p. 425)

The science supports this. (References and resources are plentiful in the book.) And both authors also know this to be true from their own



(Above) Image from Chapter 6: Socialization Away from Home.

Excerpt: “Choose a location within the park where most of the activity will be in front of you, not all around you. As you read your puppy’s body language, you may increase intensity that same day or on later visits. Only increase intensity as your puppy shows you he is relaxed and happy and ready for more.” (p.314)

*“Remember: it’s a human tendency to want to show the world your puppy, but that is not the same as showing your puppy the world! Resist the temptation to let your puppy become a magnet for human attention. The last thing you want to do is let him get overwhelmed and frightened.”*

*(p.353, Chapter 6: Socialization Away from Home)*

experiences raising extremely fearful dogs, which incidentally led both to become cross-over trainers. For Marge, it was a very fearful adolescent Rhodesian Ridgeback rescue.

“He was just under 6 months of age and he was so fearful I didn’t even get to touch him the first time I met him. He was so cautious. Before I started on my behaviour track I was like ‘Well, I’m a dog trainer and I’m going to fix him.’ Well, there wasn’t anything to fix because he wasn’t broken; he was just afraid. I’m a crossover trainer so I learned how to train with traditional methods and some of those traditional methods made him worse. I mean to the point where he actually evacuated his bowels once. And then when I started crossing over and learning about behaviour, oh my gosh, I would cry myself to sleep for what I did to that dog. I finally realized that I had to forgive myself at some point and move on. I learned so much from those dogs and they literally changed the course of my life as I learned how to help them. I still loved my dogs when I trained with those older methods but when I learned that they weren’t necessary — that my dog didn’t have to evacuate his bowels to be near a child with a basketball — I wanted to tell people. Because I didn’t know about it at the time.”

Eileen’s experience working with extremely fearful dogs began when she adopted Summer, a 10 month old adolescent from a shelter. “That’s how I started getting into dog training because I realized quickly that I was in over my head. Summer was aggressive to my smaller dog, she could jump the fence, she chewed everything. I had been lucky with previous dogs, but she’s the one that challenged me to learn a whole lot more [and eventually become a cross-over trainer]. But I never, ever blame owners who are using aversive tools. I know that they love their dogs. I loved my dog just as much when I finally broke down and put the prong collar on her. I was doing it because it was the only thing offered to me that might fix the problem that I had at that time.”

Marge and Eileen are passionate about sharing what they’ve learned. “Eileen and I kind of grew up together in the training world,” Marge explains. “We each were like ‘Oh my gosh! We have to tell other people because they love their dogs, too, and they’ll want to know that they don’t have to do this!’”

More information about the book and the authors can be found at [The Puppy Socialization Project website](#)



*“We hear people saying ‘Why are we doing this? I’ve never had to do this before and my dogs were fine.’ That idea comes from people who were lucky or perhaps had genetically sound dogs of friendly breeds. As well, twenty years ago some dogs socialized themselves because they had a lot more freedom than they do now. Our recommendation is to stack the deck in your favour. You don’t know which puppy you have: a fearful one or one that is going to be naturally gregarious and fine with everything.”*

*— Eileen Anderson*