

HUMANE SOCIETY OF INDIANAPOLIS

Nothing In Life Is Free

Does your dog get on the furniture and refuse to get off? Nudge your hand, insisting on being petted or played with? Refuse to come when called? Defend its food bowl or toys from you? If you answered yes to these questions than implementing a Nothing In Life Is Free program may help. NILIF is not a magic pill that will solve a specific behavior problem; rather it's a way of living with your dog that will help him behave better because you set up rules and a consistent structure in your home.

Animals that live in groups, like dogs, establish a social structure within the group. This social structure serves to maintain order, reduce conflict and promote cooperation among members. Practicing NILIF effectively and gently communicates leadership to your dog and everyone in the house is able to take part.

How to practice “Nothing In Life Is Free:”

- ♦ Using positive reinforcement methods, teach your dog a few commands and/or tricks. “Sit,” “Down” and “Stay” are useful commands and “Shake,” “Speak” and “Rollover” are fun tricks to teach your dog.
- ♦ Once your dog knows a few commands, you can begin to practice NILIF. Before you give your dog anything (food, a treat, a walk, a pat on the head) it must first perform one of the commands it has learned; it's his way of saying please.

YOU:

Put your dog's leash on to go for a walk
Feed your dog
Play a game of fetch after work
Rub your dog's belly while watching TV

YOUR DOG:

Must sit until you've put the leash on
Must lie down and stay until you've put the bowl down
Must sit and shake hands each time you throw the toy
Must lie down and rollover before being petted

- ♦ Once you've given the command, don't give your dog what it wants until it does what you want. If it refuses to perform the command, walk away, come back a few minutes later and start again. If your dog refuses to obey the command, be patient and remember that eventually it will have to obey your command in order to get what it wants.
- ♦ Make sure your dog knows the command well and understands what you want before you begin practicing.

The benefits of this technique:

- ♦ Dogs will be dogs, unless they are taught appropriate boundaries. A NILIF free philosophy helps motivate the dog to respond to his owner because he learns that you are in control of the “goodies”. Each of your requests is an opportunity earn something of value to him.
- ♦ Obeying commands helps build a fearful dog's confidence.
- ♦ A NILIF helps you be more consistent with your dog. Setting up house rules and being consistent will provide structure in your dogs environment and both of you will benefit from that.

For more information on how to better the relationship you have with your dog contact the Humane Society of Indianapolis at 876-2173 or behavior@indyhumane.org