



# Unleashed

## Purely Positive Training for Pets and Their People St. Michael Veterinary Clinic The Name Game

How well does your dog know his/her name? Will “Fido” look at you when you call out? What if “Fido’s” outside? What if “Fido” is chasing a squirrel? Does “Fido” think his name means “No, Fido! Bad Dog!” Teaching your dog to respond to his/her owner should be your dog’s favorite thing to do. Ensuring your dog’s willingness and eagerness to give you attention is easy when you employ basic behavior modification techniques. Getting reliable, quick response can be taught by playing a simple game. Start when your dog is inattentive to you. In a pleasant and “up” tone of voice, call your dog’s name. Say your dog’s name only once. This is important. If you have to say “Fido, Fido, Fido”, your dog is learning to ignore the first attempt. After you call out your dog’s name, a fun and exciting reward will be given. Be creative. Don’t fall into the trap of saying “Fido” and then giving your dog a biscuit. Say his/her name and then fall to the floor, laughing and wrestling. Say his/her name and then grab the leash and go for a walk. Say his/her name and go for a walk. Say his/her name and then hand over a piece of chicken from last night’s dinner. Remember to say the name first and THEN engage in the activity. Your dog will soon learn to associate his/her name with all the payoffs that are so important to a happy life. Once your dog is anticipating the reward about 85 percent of the time, you’re ready for Stage Two. At this point, call your dog’s name. If your dog looks at you, then engage in the rewarding activity. If your dog

does NOT look at you after you call his/her name, pick up a toy and start playing with a toy by yourself and really have fun with it! You could also pick up the leash and go for a brief little walk without him/her. This lets your dog know he/she missed something. Don't give in if your dog tries to engage you at this point. Wait until he/she is neutral and then try again. In no time, you'll have a dog anxiously awaiting the magic word, "Fido"!

### **How to Make Toys Fun!**

The toys themselves are the key. Every puppy should have a Kong, Puzzle Toys, Snuffle Mats, a tug toy (rope or ring) and squeaky toys. These are toys that will keep your dog busy when you can't be there. They are interactive toys; they will entice and stimulate your dog. You can make these toys more enticing with some easy and quick adjustments. For example, get out that electric drill that's collecting dust in your garage and drill a couple of small holes in your dog's nylabone. Then, fill these holes with something smelling and tasty, like peanut butter or cheez whiz. Your dog will spend the afternoon hunting down that treat. You could also boil your dog's Nylabone or bone in beef bouillon. Make sure that your dog does not always have the same old toys in front of him/her. Rotate them so that after a couple of days, when you bring out that tasty bone, it's a new experience. Always remember to praise your dog when he/she is playing with or chewing on his/her own toys. Make sure that these toys are given as rewards and are readily available to your dog. They should not be used when your dog is into something you don't want him/her into. In other words, don't bring out the buster cube as a bribe if your dog has one of your favorite slippers in his/her mouth. Oh, and one last thing – play with your dog! It's why you have him/her. Enjoy!