



Buddy, 1-year-old, fun-loving Rottie

There's not much that's notable in Buddy's background; no papers, blue ribbons, 'elite' bloodlines. Buddy's most notable quality is that he's about the sweetest and most respectful dog I've ever had the pleasure of knowing - now. Prior to my meeting Buddy, his owners, Camille and 11-year-old daughter Stacey, had a different relationship with him.

When I first met Camille, she and Stacy were living with Buddy in their lovely 2-bedroom apartment. (Contrary to popular belief, large-breed working dogs *can* live happily in smaller spaces.) Camille hadn't gone in search of a Rottweiler for a pet, but a friend-of-a-friend had some puppies, and she took one look, and well, you know how that goes. There's not much cuter than a Rottie pup. Although Camille had dogs throughout her childhood, she didn't have much experience with working dogs, which are bred to be independent and

to, well, work (guard flocks, protect people and property). A working dog can be a wonderful companion, but they can also be dominant if there isn't clear leadership in the household.

As much as Camille and Stacy loved Buddy, they weren't sure how to communicate to him his appropriate place in the 'pack'. Not fully understanding canine behavior or the tendencies of this type of dog, Camille took Buddy's displays of dominance, such as jumping up on her, as signs of affection or interest. She figured that Buddy's 'amorous displays' aimed at the legs of visitors (okay, humping) was because he hadn't been neutered and was hormonal. She thought that when he woke her up in the morning (Buddy slept in Camille's bed) it was because he was happy to be alive and his growing body needed to be fed. Nothing about Camille's assumptions was wrong, exactly. Buddy did have affection for her, he was driven by testosterone, and he was a happy and usually hungry guy. But he also thought he was pack leader. In the canine world, jumping up and humping are generally displays of dominance. In a pack, the leader decides when he eats, and he always eats before the others. So Buddy was just doing what came naturally. The problem was that Buddy was a big boy and when he jumped on people, it was a little scary. Especially for Stacy and her friends. And he pulled on his leash so that walks were unpleasant. And sometimes he'd get downright snarly when he was on leash and saw another dog. Especially another big male dog. With testicles. Yikes – not much scarier than 100 lbs. of pure muscle losing it at the end of a leash. And frankly, Camille didn't appreciate his alarm service at sunrise.

Camille asked me to work with Buddy to help him become an easier dog to have around. My initial focus was actually to work with Camille on speaking the language of leadership in canine-speak. If she was a confident leader, Buddy would respect that and could learn acceptable behaviors toward other people and dogs.

Through leadership exercises such as crate training (dogs are den animals and they love their crates if introduced and used properly. Crates are tremendously helpful tools not only in housebreaking, but also in re-ranking hierarchy of the 'pack'.), and making simple adjustments to the feeding and sleeping arrangements, Camille and Stacy were able to let Buddy know they were in charge. He didn't need to, nor would it be rewarding for him, to step up as top dog – the humans could handle that, thank you very much.

Today, Camille reports that Buddy is a source of joy and companionship (and protection – few people are going to snoop around with a Rottie on the other side of the window) for her and Stacy. And his independent characteristics are evident in his serving as escort and backpack handler for Stacey on daily walks to school.