

THE ART OF STUFFING

Stuffing chew toys increases the intrinsic value of them to the dog. It is like getting a bonus DVD with a new computer game. There are multiple, creative ways of stuffing chew toys. Pyramids, Activity Balls and Buster Cubes are good for mental stimulation. You stuff them, and the dog uses energy getting the food out. Be mindful of how much you are feeding. They can hold an entire day's meal. Some dogs will empty an Pyramid in seconds, while others will work at them for hours.

Stuff Kongs with kibble, biscuits and other creative menu items (healthy liver treats, low-fat turkey dogs, cheese). Dab a tiny bit of cheez-wiz or low-fat peanut butter on the ends, enticing them to explore into the crevices of that *cowbone cave*. *Think outside of the box to create your own ideas, while considering caloric intake and health.*



Watch your thoughts; they become words
Watch your words; they become actions
Watch your actions; they become habits
Watch your habits; they become character
Watch your character; it becomes your destiny

*Watch slippers, socks and kid's toys,
or they become mine!*

INSTANT THERAPY FOR YOU AND YOUR DOG

In summary, getting stressed out over chew toy habits is a waste of energy. Taking control of them by teaching the dog what to chew, where to chew and when to chew is proactive and preventative. If your dog develops an undesirable chewing habit later in life, assess the dog's health and lifestyle. Any changes going on that might be affecting your dog's behavior such as a new baby, divorce, death, new job, in-laws moving in and so forth?

Are you (or anyone) reinforcing the chewing (laughing)? If you give more attention to the chewing, then to teaching what to chew, dogs will chew for the attention. It's counter-productive. Being pro-active, by teaching them what to chew and/or a counter behavior, like "watch-me", "sit", "okay, take this chew toy (Kong) is more rewarding.

Being aware that changes affect our dogs too. Consider that if a dog reacts to stress by acting out, it may be time for some personal renewal, a wellness check and time-out.

Dogs are excellent barometers of detecting changes in their environment and in our behavior!

Look to the dog for signs of needing to take-a-deep-breath, relax, release and let go.



THERAPEUTIC CHEWING!

The Art of Chew Toy Stuffing

**Awareness
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Think Outside of the Box ... PUT TOYS IN IT!

WHAT IS A CHEW TOY?

A chew toy is a non-destructible, non-consumable item that gainfully employs your dog in a gratifying and rewarding occupation. It prevents the dog from chewing “unmentionables” and “unacceptables”.

WHAT KIND OF CHEW TOYS?

There are too many quality chew toys on the market. Be a savvy shopper choosing long lasting, safe toys. Chew toys should be made of hard rubber. Pyramids, Activity Balls and Buster Cubes are very hard plastic that can be filled with healthy treats or kibble. Kongs, sterilized cowbones, Tennisbones and the Nylabone products (Galileo, Gumabone, Knots, Dental) are good. Hard rubber balls, big enough so that a St. Bernard cannot swallow it during a catch may work. Stuffed toys need to be of reinforced quality. Otherwise they are not cost effective and unsafe. PLUS, dogs like carrying them in their mouths as a pacifier. If something is in their mouths, their mouths aren't on you. *Be a wise shopper.*

Rawhide, pig, cow ears and feet are fine if sterilized and doled out in moderation. Be mindful that rawhide is a food source of undeterminable ingredients. It is not a good substitute for a nutritional food source or for a voracious chewster. It can be torn into large strips and swallowed, lodging in the dog's digestive tract.

Latex and vinyl are not recommended. Most dogs will tear and devour them in a matter of nanoseconds. It is costly and can be a health hazard if ingested.

THE TOY BOX!

A toy box is recommended to use in the same way you would a child's toy box. Be creative by making one. This can be a central “discovery” and “storage” zone for your dog's toys. Teach them to pick out one or two toys for their day's recreation and put it back later. It gives the dog a J O B.

It is not necessary to give your dog more than a few toys at a time. Doing so may cause over stimulation and/or boredom. You will want to begin slowly to teach your puppy the “Art of Chewing” (what to chew and where to chew). Make this a mental challenge for the pup or dog, and a reward. No free lunch. Ask for a behavior like SIT first or hide the toy for a GO FIND.

CHEW THERAPY AND SHAPING THE BEHAVIOR

Chewing is therapeutic for dogs. They chew out of necessity and they *develop chewing habits*. Puppies chew to massage their gums while teething. Chewing helps to maintain healthy jaws and teeth. Dogs chew to alleviate loneliness, boredom, to relieve anxiety and for pure enjoyment. It is kindred to us watching movies, playing sports, computer games or exercising to de-stress.

It makes common sense to confine puppies for short periods of time while teaching house training guidelines. Introduce your puppy to chew toys at the same time that you introduce them to their crate or safe “time-out” area (see [Crate Haven](#)). Make it a positive experience that will inspire confidence in the pup.

Teach the PUPPY what the ADULT dog should Chew —

Throw in a few healthy, safe chew toys to amuse them. Touch the toys so they hold your scent. This will relax the pup when you need to leave the house. Upon arrival home, release the pup from the crate for greetings and elimination, then excitedly ask her to “find her chew toy” for you, like it is going to “save your life”.

After getting your dog eager about his chew toys, observe and snapshot the moment that he spontaneously picks up his chew toy on his own, rather than an unmentionable. Praise and reward *pronto*. If he confiscates an unacceptable item, say “leave-it” and “sit”. Instantaneously give the appropriate chew toy.

A dog cannot distinguish between a child's stuffed toy and their own until they are taught the difference. **NOTE: Dogs live in context. If you teach them “chewing” in one room, you need to do it in a variety of rooms and other environments.** This takes time and commitment. Children should be supervised while playing with dogs.

Chewing is a natural and basic instinct along with digging, barking, eating, playing, peeing and pooping.

Do many object exchanges: “give me the toy, I'll give you a treat ... drop the toy, I'll give you a tummy rub. Leave it ... okay take it.”

Dogs need to learn what the rules of the game are ... and a respectable & fair pack leader.

This is “chew therapy” in a nutshell. It is effective, time-efficient and pleasurable.