



## **How to Play & Explore Feelings Good and Bad: Topic - Puppy / Dog Care** *By Maureen Ross, M.A.*


We live in an age where talk is cheap. We are overwhelmed with chat rooms, pop-ups, too many choices, cell phones and Internet sales (including puppies). Regardless of how your puppy and/or adopted dog joined your family, it is a living being that needs loving care. The following is “one” way to engage the family in talks, good, bad and indifferent, in a safe, non-judgmental environment on family-puppy-dog care.


Set aside a “sacred” and relatively “stress-free” time and place. Dinner is a good option. Set the time, for example, 6:30. Set some “age-appropriate” guidelines for those joining the dinner. Allow people (like working moms, dads, teenagers) to decompress first. During this time, there should be no TV, radio or other distraction playing. Turn off the cell phones, iPods and plasmas.


Puppies and/or dogs should be in a crate or confined area after being fed and taken out for some quality time and exercise. Check the family scheduling chart you have on the frig door. Whose turn is it to walk, feed and put the puppy in a relaxing, safe confinement area?

 **Designate a moderator:** This should be a rotating role. Each member of the family should get a turn at it. Small children will need some gentle guidance, just like puppies.

 **Review the bad stuff first.** Round 1: The moderator asks each person at the table “What happened that was “bad” or “not feel fair” for you today while caring the puppy?”

 **Everybody gets a chance to share,** no matter how young. Everyone has the option to have a “silent” evening. Some days, we simply do not feel like talking. However, if there are issues that the “parents/role models” are aware of ... gently encourage participation.

 **Respect each answer.** You can react to another person’s reply, but you cannot put it down. No giggling or making light of someone’s thoughts.

 **End with the good stuff.** In Round 2, the moderator asks each person, “What happened that was “good” for you today?” Everyone gets a chance to reply.

Have fun with this. You can expand this to other family issues. It’s a great way of connecting with each other at the end of a day and particularly when a new pup has joined your family. This is a family transition. Everyone wants to be appreciated, receive some quality attention, affection and acceptance without scrutiny. Enjoy! You may find that this routine will resolve more than puppy peeing problems. 🐾Maureen