

Pets As Therapy

- * Pets as therapy visitors needed in all areas to visit nursing homes and hospitals
- * Home study course from \$175.00
- * A generous expense allowance given
- * Pets assessed for suitability

Phone: (02) 9418 4343
 Email: velma@velmaspetsastherapy.com.au
 Web: www.velmaspetsastherapy.com.au



"Our mission is to enrich the lives of people and pets by bringing them together."

So how do we add your canine companion into a meditation practice? James explains, "Get your dog in a comfortable place with you. Place one hand on their chest and your other on their hindquarters. Focus on the breath. Doing this regularly for 10-20 minutes a day, I can guarantee that your dog will start synchronising their breathing with yours."

James believes the benefits to the dog can be varied, from improved health, stress relief to calming an excitable nature. "Any dog trainer will tell you that your state of mind and emotion influences your dog. The calming, authoritative presence that meditation introduces into a dog's life can have a positive impact on an otherwise anxious canine. Beginning with short meditation sessions, an anxious dog begins to relax and chill out for a few minutes at a time. Over the course of several sessions, the amount of time the dog enjoys in meditation with you increases. After a while, you can take on a meditative mindset anywhere and that is often all it takes to calm an anxious dog."

*"Dogs don't simply have Buddha nature:
 There very dogginess is Buddha nature."
 - Judith Adler*

From a dog's perspective, James believes that a closer human animal bond is achieved and a dog will become more malleable to training. "In terms of rapport, there is no better way to build the bond you and your dog share than by sitting together in meditation."

You can find out more on meditating with your dog at www.dogmeditation.com
 James' new book 'How To Meditate With Your Dog' can be purchased through Amazon.com

Enlightenment

Through meditation with your inner dog

Medical research indicates that there are many health benefits to having a pet. Regularly stroking and petting your dog helps to decrease blood pressure in even healthy adults. And people who meditate will happily share their belief in the benefits of a regular practice. So it came as no surprise to hear that there are proponents who believe that you should meditate with your dog.

James Jacobson has been meditating most of his life and regularly teaches meditation across the US. He resides on the Hawaiian Island of Maui with his much loved thirteen year-old Maltese aptly named Maui. James believes that dogs are natural meditators and make for great meditation partners. "Dogs are masters of what I call 'Hound Lounge' the natural state in which dogs spend a good part of their life. It's the zone between half asleep and fully awake. When they hound lounge, dogs are very present and in the moment. They don't feel stress, their anxiety melts away, their body relaxes and they mellow out."

James has written a 'how to guide' for people wanting to de-stress and tap into the benefits of a regular practice with their dogs. "Meditation helps increase focus, improves concentration and creates an overall sense of wellbeing. It was through my normal practice that Maui decided that she wanted to join in. She just naturally hopped onto my lap and made this a regular practice."

Apparently meditating with your dog is easy to learn and James explains that even someone with 'puppy mind' can do it. "Puppy mind is a state where your thoughts are all over the place and you can't focus properly. An analogy I give is that meditation is like looking at a clear blue sky, where you're in a state of tranquillity. A thought or problem will pop into your head-a cloud- and then you move that out of your head, just as a cloud would move across the sky. With more practice, the amount of clouds will lessen and the time you actually in a state of meditative bliss will increase."

Bringing Home Baby

By Danielle Heald

We regularly receive calls and emails from readers seeking advice on behavioural problems with their pets. Three recent queries from readers were seeking advice on how to stop their pets behaving badly as all pets were acting out of character. All of these pets had a common element-a new human baby had been brought into the home. Suddenly routines are changed, the focus is taken off the pet and there are new smells and noises in the house. Even the most well-adjusted and happy pet is going to be impacted by these sudden changes.

There was the female Eclectus who had started plucking her breast feathers. A normally chatty bird, Coco had also stopped talking and was now prone to loud and angry screaming. Another case was Tigger, a Staffy X who had taken to digging up the garden and barking in the evening. We were also contacted by a cat owner who wanted Trudi Thorpe, our resident dog behaviouralist, to fix her cat's problems as it had suddenly become the 'pee monster'. Trudi doesn't actually help people with their cat's behaviour problems but it seemed obvious to all of us as to why this cat had suddenly developed toileting problems.

With Coco the Eclectus, her routine and amount of attention from her human companions had changed dramatically. She had been used to cuddles in the morning before both her owners went off to work. In the evenings she enjoyed 'face time' with both and sat at the dining table for evening meals. Coco had been their surrogate child with regular vocal communication, special treats, interactive play and plenty of attention. All of this changed when twins were brought home. In the two months leading up to the delivery, new Mum-to-be, Leanne, had finished work and was now spending her days at home. "I had to rest and take it easy, being a first pregnancy and having twins, Geoff, my partner and I weren't going to take any chances. It was winter so it was nice to stay inside with Coco. We would watch TV together and she would hang out and be on my shoulder as I did the laundry and cleaning. She was always pretty much Geoff's bird but this time together made her more affectionate and interested in me."

A newborn can be quite a strain on new parents and twins would certainly lessen the amount of time and energy two tired and stressed parents would have to spend with their pet bird. As Geoff explains, "We had read all the books on a new baby and thought we were totally prepared. We didn't expect to have problems with breast feeding, getting the boys to sleep, nappy changes, sleep deprivation and we didn't expect to have problems with Coco."

Coco's world had changed-she no longer had the routine that she was used to. Leanne and Geoff were coping as well as they could with two small boys and what they didn't realise was that Coco wasn't coping at all. A small bunch of downy feathers appeared in the bottom of her cage but went unnoticed, then there was a cluster of red and blue feathers and then some bald patches appeared on her chest. "That's when we got really worried," says Geoff. "We took her straight to our vet and a check-up confirmed that there wasn't anything medically wrong with her. It was us. We hadn't realised that she was under strain and was feeling neglected with not getting the attention she normally received."

Leanne and Geoff have since upped the amount of time that they spend with Coco and have made a concerted effort to include her. "Coco happily sits on my shoulder while I load the seeming endless mounds of washing into the machine. She's my regular morning and afternoon tea companion. We'll sit down together and enjoy a freshly made brew with cheese and crackers. Sometimes I'll have to break this social interaction when the babies awake. About half an hour later I'll hear Coco making a ding ding noise. That's her way of saying it's time for me to microwave my now cold cup of tea."

"A friend of ours who also owns an Eclectus asked me whether or not Coco had an adequate supply of toys. I hadn't even thought of that-the need to have shredding toys, distraction devices or playthings to prevent boredom." Geoff recalls. "So I bought a few-some of which



Have your pet captured in the finest media, both traditional and contemporary.

Pet Portraits

Contact Keith on 0438 296 488 or khchidz@bigpond.net.au



Specializing in intimate reproductions

Work from both live sitting and photos

View others at www.chidzart.com.au/animals.html

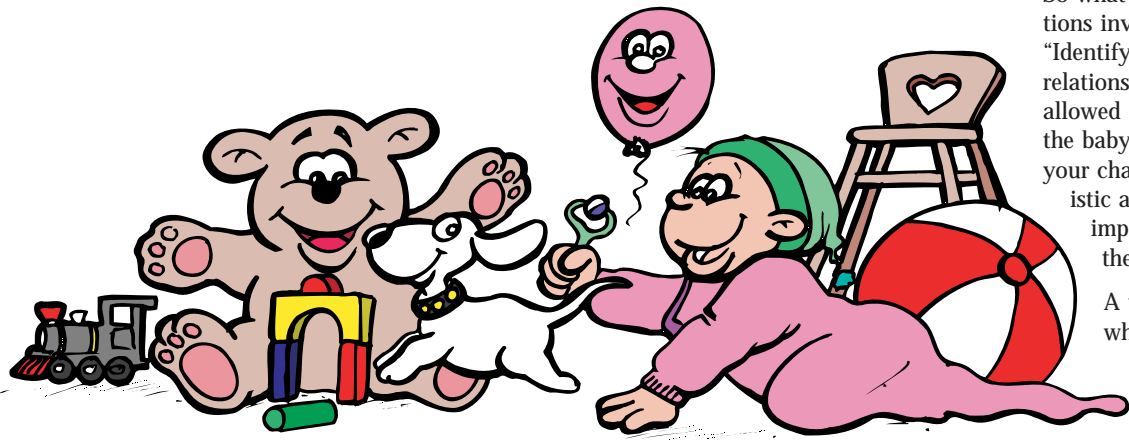
Mammoth Mutts Doggie Stuff

"Cool accessories for medium to large dogs"



Specially made and designed beds that are fully washable.
 Funky collars, leashes and loads of accessories for all your dog's needs.
 Doggie jewelry made to order.
 10% of all sales go to DCH Animal Adoptions
www.dchanimaladoptions.com/
 (Smaller dogs will be catered for upon request)

Phone Vicki James
 (02) 9516 1925, (02) 4889 8986
 or 0422 318 397
 Email: mammothmutts@hotmail.com
 Web: www.mammothmutts.com.au



worked, some were ignored-and also learned to make some up and play with Coco with them as I made them. Her favourite was an unscented toilet paper roll stuffed with unbleached, unscented tissue paper in which I had folded some nuts. An Coco went nuts herself over the paper towel roll which I threaded with untanned, undyed leather strips." Within a few weeks, Coco was back to her old self, the plucking had ended and the feathers grew back.

Tigger was a house-dog, and again a bit of a child substitute. He enjoyed plenty of play-time and was occasionally invited to have petting time on the laps of his owners while watching evening TV. When their baby came home, Tigger was mostly relegated to the backyard. His daily exercise routine stayed the same but access to indoors and attention from his owners dramatically decreased. In frustration and confusion, Tigger's response was to start digging the garden beds. He also took to whining and barking at the back door-probably in a bid to get his owners' attention.

As owner Justin explains, "We got Tigs as a puppy and he went everywhere with us, even on holidays. We had quite the routine with him even up to the birth of our daughter. It all changed for him when Lucy arrived because we suddenly changed." Instead of slowly altering Tigger's routine, Justine and his wife expected their dog to fit in with new rules. "A dog-loving friend of ours pointed out the problem. It really hit home to us when she gave us the parallel of bringing another dog or pet home-we wouldn't have expected Tigs' home life to change overnight if we got another dog."

The email we received from the concerned cat owner confirmed to us that many people inadequately prepare their pet for baby's arrival and even after getting the baby home, don't pay careful attention to their pet's needs. The email we received went a little like this...

Dear Trudi,

My cat is not adapting well to a baby in the home. My little boy Oscar is now three months old and my cat Mishka has taken to spraying on the furniture and regularly pooping on our bed, rugs, and in the bathroom instead of going outside via her cat door. It's all getting too much for me. For the first six weeks of Oscar's life, Mishka paid very little attention to him and stayed away in our upstairs mezzanine. We tried to socialise her with Oscar but she wasn't interested (and we were overwhelmed with becoming new parents so didn't worry too much).

Now the peeing has got brazen and she's doing it right in front of us on a rug that used to be on the mezzanine but is now in the lounge room. Rubbing her nose in it isn't working and so now we're trying to give her more attention. We're tearing our hair out.

Our response was this...

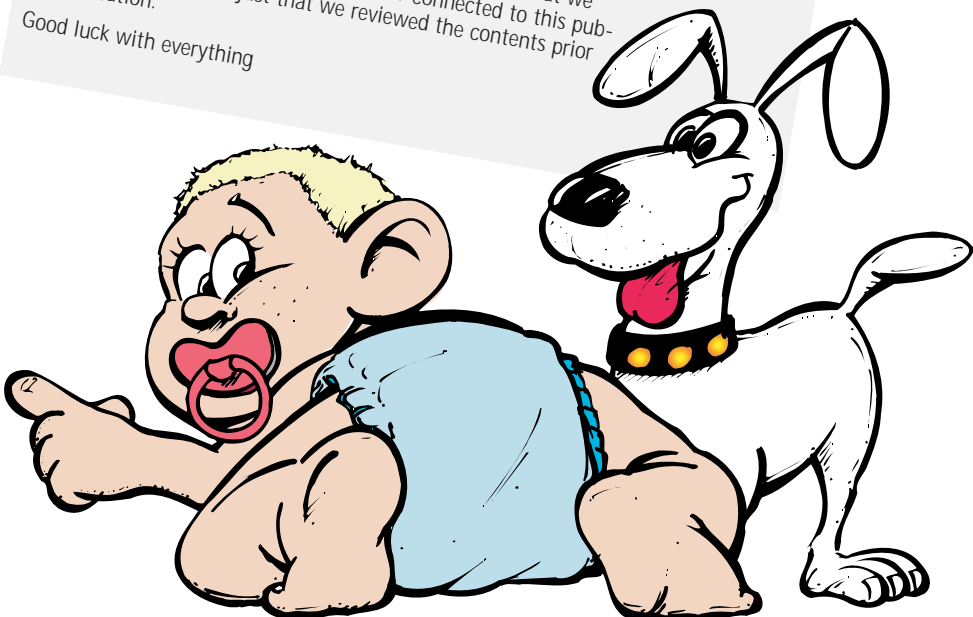
Hi there,

Trudi doesn't deal with cat questions - however there is a very good book you can now get which is called 'Cat Pee Problems Solved' by Dr Joanne Righetti. You can get this from vet clinics and pet stores. Never, never rub your cat's nose in its accidents - this is an outdated and totally useless method (not to mention cruel) and no modern vet or animal behaviouralist would condone or suggest this. Cast your mind two years into the future when you're potty training Oscar. Should he have a night-time accident or miss the potty would you rub his nose in it? No! But you'll praise him in the moments when he does get it right.

Your cat has had some major changes to its routine, attention and lifestyle - you've had nearly nine months to plan for this impending arrival (Oscar), however poor Mishka had no warning and no planning-suddenly your bundle of joy just arrived and everything changed for her. Her defecating isn't out of malice-it's just that she's not coping at the moment.

There are no quick fix solutions to this behaviour-but I feel that the advice in this handy little book will assist. I might add that we (Urban Animal) are in no way affiliated or connected to this publication and its author-just that we reviewed the contents prior to publication.

Good luck with everything



So what can you do to prepare your pet before bringing baby home? For dogs, Trudi's suggestions involve some forward planning especially if your dog's routine is expected to change. "Identify and list the changes that will be made and how a new baby will affect your current relationship with your dog. For instance you may decide that your dog will no longer be allowed on furniture or on the bed. These changes must be worked on well before the arrival of the baby and the more time you take before the baby's arrival, the better. Start implementing your changes slowly and consistently before baby is born and make sure your changes are realistic and fair. If, by the time the baby is brought home, all changes have been positively implemented and maintained, your dog will be in a far better position to accept and enjoy the new 'pack member'."

A tool for overcoming baby cry anxiety in most pets is a CD called 'Sounds Soothing' which has a variety of baby noises-from gentle gurgles to distressed crying. Playing this at different times of the day can desensitise your pet so that when baby arrives and delivers a lungful of ear-splitting, baby bawling, your pet will be less likely to duck and cover.

The CD was developed by two UK based veterinarians, Sarah Heath and Jon Bowen, who work exclusively in behavioural medicine. As Sarah explains, "It was developed in response to the number of problems that we see of dogs and cats finding it stressful living in a home with children and babies. The idea of the CD is to prepare the pet for the noises that are associated with having "little people" in the home since many of these noises, such as crying and screaming, can be potentially threatening from an animal's point of view."

Parrots are creatures of habit-both in the wild and domestically. When the sun comes up it's time to eat and the day is spent foraging for food, interacting, preening and playing with the flock, eating again before the sun goes down then finding a suitable place to perch and sleep. Make radical changes to these daily rituals and you'll have a recipe for a stressed and confused bird.

Parrots in the wild tend to get at least 10-12 hours sleep a night and this amount is necessary for their general well being and crucial in maintaining a healthy immune system. Sleep deprivation can cause fatigue, irritability and lead to feather picking. If your bird is likely to be disturbed by night-time baby activity such as crying and feeding, then you should consider changing the location of the cage-even if the cage is moved to another part of the house just for sleep time.

Cats are more likely to be aloof and tend to want to stay away from a newborn baby. Give them the space they need and they're more likely to adapt to their new housemate. Maintain the same meal times they have come accustomed to and take some time out to lavish affection.

Sounds Soothing RRP is \$49.95.

Available from vets and pet stores. Call 1800 032 139 for nearest stockist.

Here are some tips that will help all members of your household prepare for baby's arrival.

- If your dog doesn't obey commands consistently, seek out basic obedience training for you and him.
- Invite friends with infants to your house so that your pet can interact in a controlled and supervised environment.
- Buy and install a baby gate outside the infant's room so that your pet has limited access but can also see into the room.
- Start wearing baby products to familiarise your pet with changing smells-like baby powder and baby oil if you'll be using this.
- Play specially recorded CDs (like the aforementioned 'Sounds Soothing') that have infant noises to familiarise and desensitise your pet to these new sounds. Make this a positive experience by offering a treat.
- Get a life-sized baby doll and hold it, rock it and walk it around the house to see how your dog reacts. This activity should not be treated like you would with a dog toy. If your dog jumps up and is overly interested in the doll you should correct the behaviour.
- Offer your dog/cat a piece of the newborn's clothing or a blanket she's been wrapped in to sniff before you bring her home.
- When Mum returns from the hospital, have someone else carry the baby in so she can give the dog/cat/bird a warm greeting.
- For at least the first week, keep the dog on a leash when he's around the baby. You'll be able to take control if a problem occurs.
- Incorporate your pet into your daily routine so he doesn't feel left out.
- Never force your pet to go towards baby, instead let your pet take its own time.
- If you anticipate more visitors than normal, set aside a quiet room where your pet will not be disturbed or stressed.
- Train your dog to quietly walk on leash next to the pram. Do this well in advance of baby arriving. Developing a routine will mean your dog will readily accept this new activity. It'll also mean that getting two beings out the door for a walk will be a more simple affair.
- Take time out when baby is sleeping to give your pet some uninterrupted attention from you. If you take the time even to nap with your cat or dog, this will still be seen as meaningful contact and affection.
- Keep in mind that your pet was your first 'baby' and preparing them for your new arrival will lessen the stress on you and them.