

CRADLING YOUR PUPPY

Possibly the most positive and helpful thing you can do to increase your bond with your puppy is to learn to cradle him/her.

The most important thing to remember is that, although the puppy may resist you a little at first, this *is NOT A DOMINANCE EXERCISE*.

The goal is for you and your puppy to learn an exercise which you will do together EVERY DAY which will calm, reassure, and relax you both. Most puppies quickly decide this is a great time for a nap. You are also establishing a daily routine which will enable you to examine your dog, to look through his fur for bumps or ticks, to look in his ears and mouth, to check his feet. Most importantly, you are dramatically increasing your **BOND** with the pup.

Obviously, as he gets accustomed to being handled in this way, he is far more likely to happily allow you to clean his ears, trim his nails, check the pads of his feet, etc., etc..

The key words here are GENTLENESS and CONSISTENCY. Here's how to get started.

Choose a quiet place in your house and a time of the day when the pup is naturally pretty mellow (just had a good play session so he is tired or just woke up from a nap and is still pretty sleepy).

Decide where you will be most comfortable (on the floor, on your favorite couch, anywhere which will allow you to relax).

Gently pick the puppy up and carefully arrange him on his back on your lap with his head against your chest.

If he struggles to get away, GENTLY restrain him. Use only as much pressure as you need to prevent him from flipping over. TAKE A DEEP BREATH and RELAX. Breathe and believe. He will follow your lead. Do not pet, talk to, or make eye contact with the puppy if he's struggling in your arms, whining, barking or crying. Simply gently tighten up your arms (so puppy can't squirm away), turn your head away and close your eyes. As soon as the puppy relaxes again, praise, pet and make a gentle fuss over the puppy, telling him how good he is. You will also want to have a chew toy on hand to give him something appropriate to chew on, so he doesn't chew on your hands.

Don't do this for too long at first. As soon as the puppy relaxes, praise him quietly and put him gently down.

Slowly increase the time that you hold him. Just be certain that you never release him while he is struggling. It is always your idea to end the cradling session. Ask for just a brief minute of relaxed acceptance and then quietly release him.

The biggest secret to success with this is to **DO IT EVERY DAY**. It will relax both you and your puppy and it will enable you to monitor your puppy's well being.