

8 Signs Your Dog Needs More From You

How do you know if you're spending enough quality time with your pet? There are 8 subtle, yet clear signs that your canine companion needs more of your time and attention. How to know when it's time to slow down or put aside your phone or tablet and give your pup more TLC.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- When our lives get very hectic and stressful, often the first family member to suffer is the one on four legs
- Making time for your dog each day is beneficial for both you and your pet
- There are several messages dogs send when they're feeling ignored or unloved

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Many of us lead very busy lives, and even when we're home, we often spend big chunks of time on our smartphone, tablet, or computer ... or catching up on household errands and to-do lists.

When life is a whirlwind and stress is a routine part of each day, the family member who most often gets forgotten is the dog. Not only is this a bad deal for our pet, but also for us. After all, there's no better way to de-stress than to spend time with a furry companion!

Here are 8 clear signs that your canine companion needs more of your time and attention.

8 Signs Your Dog Is Feeling Ignored

1. **Your dog is sleeping his life away** — An otherwise healthy young or adult dog who sleeps the day away is bored and in need of physical exercise and playtime, as well as mental stimulation.

Try to set aside an hour a day to focus on your dog. Take walks, head to the dog park, go running together, or play a lively game of fetch. Also consider enrolling your dog in an obedience class or a canine activity like agility or nose work to keep him mentally challenged.

2. **Your dog seems blue** — A healthy dog who is feeling depressed may lose interest in eating or playing, become destructive, have accidents in the house, or stop running to greet you when you come through the door.

Like a sleepy, sluggish dog, a depressed pooch often just needs more quality time with her human.

Get into the habit of spending an uninterrupted hour with your dog each day engaging in physical pursuits, grooming rituals, training exercises, and good old tummy rubs. It will lighten both your moods!

3. **Your dog is getting into mischief around the house** — If your canine companion suddenly starts relieving himself indoors, it could be a sign he's stressed, but there might also be an underlying health problem, so I recommend a visit to your veterinarian to rule out a medical condition.

If he gets a clean bill of health, then it's probably safe to assume he's in need of more of your time and attention. If he's also starting to be destructive or disruptive around the house, it's almost a sure bet he needs more from you.

If part of the problem is that he's alone all day while you work, consider hiring a dog walker to take him out for a stroll mid-day. You might also see if there's a doggy daycare in your area where he could spend a few hours each week interacting with other dogs.

You'll also want to insure he's getting enough daily exercise and mental stimulation to keep him in balance. Remember, a tired dog is a good dog!

4. **Your Pug is getting porky or your Maltese is obese** — Dogs in the wild spend most of their waking hours hunting down their next meal. Dogs in our homes spend most of their awake-time eating what we feed them and looking for a good spot to nap.

The result is an epidemic of overweight and obese canine companions, and we have no one to blame but ourselves.

If you're overfeeding or over-treating your dog as a way to sooth your own guilt over not spending enough time with her, remember that food is a lousy substitute for your time and attention.

5. **Your dog's nails look more like talons** — Overgrown nails are a sure sign your pup probably needs more walks and definitely needs more frequent nail trims. You'd be surprised how many foot problems and other health issues in dogs start with untrimmed nails.
6. **Your dog starts turning up his nose at mealtime** — When a dog stops eating or his appetite drops off noticeably, it's time for a visit to the veterinarian. Usually there's a physical cause for loss of appetite, but some stressed out dogs will also stop eating. Most of us have heard stories of pets refusing to eat while boarded, for example.

If your dog's lagging appetite isn't due to a physical problem, it's most definitely a sign he needs more TLC from his favorite human. Start spending more quality time with your pet and chances are his appetite will increase as his stress level decreases.

7. **Your dog is disobedient** — Dogs naturally want to please their humans, so if your pooch is giving you attitude, it's a good bet you need to spend more time with her. It could be she needs an obedience refresher course, or it's possible you haven't discovered what truly motivates her.

Some breeds are more eager to please than others, so if your dog has an independent nature, you'll need to learn how to get her attention.

8. **Your dog is still not housetrained** — While it's true some dogs are easier to house train than others, an adult dog who has frequent accidents indoors isn't getting the time and attention he needs to learn that all peeing and pooping is done outside. Following a very consistent "time for your walk" routine, crate training as necessary, and positive behavior reinforcement are the keys to success in housetraining.

Sources and References

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