



DOG TRAINING

Helping you and your dog become best friends for life.

BOOK REVIEW: *LIVING WITH KIDS AND DOGS...WITHOUT LOSING YOUR MIND: A PARENT'S GUIDE TO CONTROLLING THE CHAOS*

Colleen Pelar, CPDT and author of *Living with Kids and Dogs...Without Losing Your Mind: A Parent's Guide to Controlling the Chaos*, deserves a huge paw up for her wonderful book. This trainer/author recognized a need for a realistic, down to earth discussion about how to successfully manage the mayhem. Colleen is a Certified Pet Dog Trainer whose focus is on family based classes and she has personally survived the chaos that ensues when trying to raise kids and dogs together.

For many, it is a deeply ingrained belief that kids and dogs belong together and that no childhood is complete without a dog. Reality however is often very different. The simple fact of the matter is that sometimes children and dogs do not mix well. There is much data out there discussing dog bites and children, however very few books give us good, positive solutions. Yes, we all know that you should never leave a child and a dog together unattended, ever. If only it were that simple! Colleen looks at reality and accepts that kids will be kids and dogs will be dogs, and works with that premise. She does a great job in her discussion of solutions to the many problems faced by parents when trying to handle chaotic situations, and helps to lay the foundation so that your child and dog can build a positive relationship.

The chapters are broken down nicely and cover whether or not you should get a dog (if you do not already have one), the fundamentals of assessing the dog you have (if you do already have one), and looking at growth stages of children and the various approaches that you will need at these different ages. Time is spent on teaching your child how to interact appropriately with all dogs and becoming your dog's advocate. Colleen discusses "deal breakers" such as resource guarding and how to prevent bites. She explains the equipment you will need to train and manage your dog, and introduces ideas such as boundary ropes. Also discussed is the difference between your children and their friends and how you should handle situations when your kids have little visitors. Colleen tries to hammer home the idea that this pet, while you may have your children in mind, is ultimately going to be the parent's and thus the parent's responsibility.

The final chapter of *Living with Kids and Dogs...Without Losing Your Mind: A Parent's*

Guide to Controlling the Chaos covers the topic of how to help your children say goodbye to your dog, whether it is because your dog has lived a full life and passed on or if it is because you have made the decision that your dog would be better off in a home that does not have as much activity. I must admit that this chapter put me in tears.

While Colleen does not go into the fundamentals of training with her book, she does give an overview of how to train each behavior she introduces so that the average reader would have the ability to implement these behaviors on their own. She also includes games the kids can do to help them learn how to behave around dogs and exercises for them to assist with training. The author indicates times at which families should seek professional help with their pets. At the end, there is a nice listing of resources for those that want further information or assistance.

The important points of each chapter have been graciously summarized at the end so that you can glance at those first to determine your need for that chapter. This is not a cumbersome book and is one that you can easily read when the little one is down for a nap.

I highly recommend *Living with Kids and Dogs...Without Losing Your Mind*. It is by far one of the best books I have read in a long time, fills a long standing void and is a must have for anyone who has children and dogs living under the same roof. Available at Green Acres for \$16.95.

—Katrina Dutra

Green Acres now offers a special program for people with a dog who are expecting a child or who have recently had a child. Modeled after our very popular K9 Headstart program, this is an individual consultation with one of our Trainer/Behavior Counselors that will give you an opportunity to ask questions and will help you “survive the chaos.” We encourage people to call and make an appointment for a session well in advance of the birth of their child, as a well planned strategy is key. To setup an appointment, call us at 945-6841.

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