By **Karen Rosenberg**

A Harmonious Co-Existence
Training Your Companion for Harmony, Not Perfection

As I approach the ten year anniversary of my pet sitting and dog walking business I've been taking some time to reflect on what I've learned over the years.

As you might imagine, I've met a great number of families with dogs, cats and other small animals. One of the most commonly asked questions has been whether cats and dogs can get along well enough to live under the same roof. My answer is almost always yes. However, it all depends on how well you create a habitat for each of them and allow them to co-exist in harmony.

For example, my cats are allowed up on furniture. Naturally it is hard, if not impossible, to prevent them from jumping on counters and dressers anyway, but also because if my chihuahua decides to play chase my cat has

an escape by jumping up where Chi-Chi cannot reach him. It's amazing, isn't it, how at one moment they go nose-to-nose and sit side-by-side and the next moment one is chasing the other. Those instincts cannot be changed but by making certain allowances I let them live happily together.

And, isn't this how family life should be? Each and every individual, and I consider pets individuals, should be allowed to express themselves, be content, happy and get excused for their weaknesses and rewarded for their good behaviors.

Another typical situation that causes strife for many families is a dog with separation anxiety. Every time you leave a room too quickly or leave the house he gets anxious and marks your favorite chair. Sound familiar? Crate training is often an effective solution for anxious dogs. By creating a safe haven in a crate where pooch can

be comfortable and happy when you are gone you reduce his anxiety and eliminate accidents. Engaging a professional trainer who can help you not only crate train the correct way, but also find other manageable ways to help your family and reduce the anxiety level of your dog is a smart idea. Until then be mindful of your dog's weakness and let him go with you when you leave a room. It asks for a little bit of consideration from you but it is doable and you also eliminate the accidents.

If you find yourself getting frustrated or upset on a regular basis about a particular behavior in your dog, it is probably time to seek help. Remember nobody is perfect, including our dogs. Often times just a few tweaks suggested by a professional, in as little as one professional training session, is all it takes to restore harmony with your family's four-legged companion. The goal should be to find manageable ways to live with your dog(s), and be happy together at home and/or in the community (e.g. with neighbors, your dog walker, other dogs). It's not about creating the stereotypical 'perfect' dog, but training a dog for you and your family to all live harmoniously. The road leading to that goal is as important as the result and the trainers at KSR Pet Care can help you find the perfect balance.
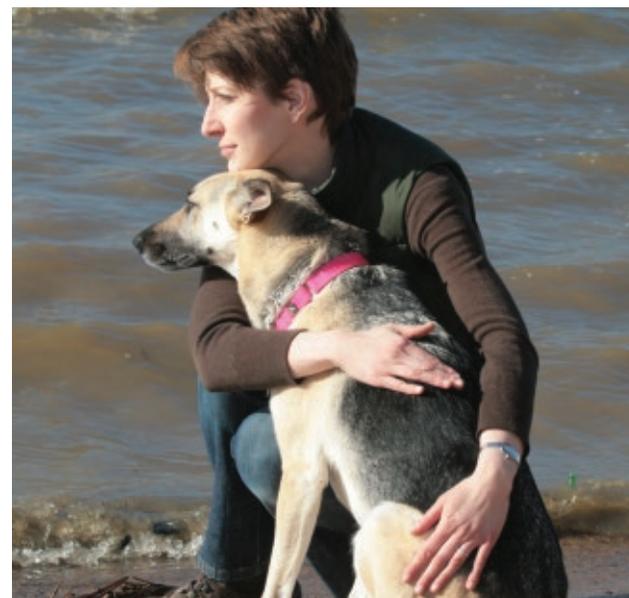
Karen Rosenberg, owner and founder of KSR Pet Care LLC pictured with her rescue, Lexi. Karen strives for harmony rather than perfection with her pets.

"The most important part of treating separation anxiety is teaching your puppy or dog that it is not a bad thing to be alone, and that they are safe without you around. A mix of more exercise, holistic calming remedies, basic training, alone time for both you and the dog when you are at home, and keeping to a strict schedule can make all the difference in the world. To prevent dogs from developing separation anxiety I will almost always recommend crate training from day one for them to have a 'safe space' that is comfortable and consistent. Playing 'crate games', feeding meals in the crate, having them sleep in the crate, so they associate the crate with relaxation as well as fun, and above all, not using the crate as a punishment will set your dog up for long term success."
- Kathryn Anwyll,
Lead Trainer at KSR Pet Care

Karen Rosenberg is the owner and founder of KSR Pet Care LLC, home-based in McLean but servicing a larger region including Falls Church, Vienna, Fairfax, N-Arlington, Oakton. KSR Pet Care offers dog walking, pet sitting and overnights as well as dog training private lessons and group classes. For more info visit **ksrpetcare.com**