****

**Contingent Puppy Play: Lessons Learned in Tug**

One of the first things I do with a new puppy is to play tug. While on my knees, I will get the pup engaged in a game of tug for a few seconds before gently pulling the toy from her mouth.

Next, I will turn away from her and slap the toy on the ground to get her to chase it and engage the tug once more. After 3 or 4 repetitions of this game, I start my new puppy's dog training journey with me.

Here is where I add the first “contingency” to playing with me. After I have pulled the toy away from the puppy, I hold it close to my chest and wait for the young pup to offer a response that will cause me to start the game again. At first, all the puppy would need to do is to NOT jump at the toy or bark. The first “change” from the puppy creates a fun response in me to slap the ground with toy cuing “get it!”

Soon I grow the puppy’s response. I wait for her to think more, offer something different, such as backing away before I once again slap the toy on the floor for the pup to play again. Very quickly I will up the ante and wait until I get a “sit” or a “down”. A first “choice” in training by the puppy!  Soon I will pick one to focus on: “sit” or a “down”. I won't start the fun tug game until the puppy offers their "start up position".

All of this occurs in a matter of minutes. So within a few moments of entering my life, this puppy already understands her first game of drive and control.