

Does your dog or puppy need a nap?

Do you sometimes get frustrated with your dog or puppy because he starts acting inappropriately by grabbing things to play with like your shoes, pillows, the couch, or even you? Dog trainers receive many phone calls from people frustrated with their canine's behavior. They do not understand why after a 2 hour hike with their dog or puppy that he is acting like a wild thing. Sometimes it is as simple as putting them down for a nap. Many people think that exercise and keeping them awake and active makes for a happy pooch. While exercise and mental stimulation are very important to a dog's well being, so is nap time.

When your dog goes for a hike he experiences new smells everywhere, different people and different dogs. This is highly stimulating for him and it is also exhausting. Dogs and puppies can get overtired and over stimulated resulting in behaviors that you do not want. A 12 week old puppy needs 15 to 20 hours of sleep in a 24 hour period. Adult dogs need to sleep 12 to 16 hours per day, with adjustments made for breed, age, and health. That is a lot of sleep! Retrievers or working dog breeds are going to require less sleep than a companion breed like a mastiff. Your puppy will also sleep more during a growth stage. Some breeds are fully grown at a year while others not for two years.

Many dogs have too much stimulus around them. Other animals, kids, and household noises create an atmosphere that is not always conducive to relaxation, so your pet doesn't learn how to rest. You can help him by providing nap times. This is especially important for puppies. When you see your dog start to show some undesirable behavior like racing around the room, playing rougher than normal with you or another pet, grabbing things that are not their toys, your canine needs a nap! Now if you see these behaviors first thing in the morning or right when you get home from work, your dog needs exercise or mental stimulation. If puppies learn how to relax with nap times early on, as adults many will decide to go and take naps when they need to. Most people have seen a grumpy child and heard a parent say "Sorry, he needs a nap". Dogs and puppies get grumpy when they are tired, too. It indicates that they are stressed. You need to provide a safe haven for him. Whether it is a crate, a small room, or a dog bed; provide a space for him that he knows he can fully relax in and take a nap. Every dog is different and each needs different amounts of sleep and exercise.

When dogs are stressed they use chewing to help relieve their stress; similar to a baby with a pacifier. If you give them something to chew on at nap time it will help them reduce their stress level and make for a healthier nap. It is your job to understand your canine companion's behavior to determine when a naptime is needed.