

will welcome a new French Bulldog puppy into my household in nine weeks. Hariette, my six-year-old Broholmer, and I lost Albear, my animal-assisted therapy and service dog.

Albear was the fifth generation canine to be raised and trained according to the Social Cognitive Animal Training (SCAT) model I developed back in the day.



How to raise the perfect dog using a foolproof method

by Gaby Dufresne-Cyr

What is SCAT?

The social cognitive learning theory (SCL) is an acquisition process described by Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura in 1989. Bandura merged social and cognitive learning theories after experimenting with parent-child versus parent-stranger interactions.

It is hard to say if John Bowlby's attachment theory influenced Bandura. Still, one thing is sure: social cognitive learning impacts attachment and vice versa. SCL is a triangular model linked by three bidirectional determinants: social, cognitive, and environmental. If one directional component fails, the entire learning system ceases to function.

Relating SCL to dog training

Dogs develop similarly to humans by experiencing phases of development. The most important one is the critical period of social development. Dogs require four to eight weeks of experiential learning to consolidate their social abilities. After eight weeks, the phase slowly starts to close. Socialization ends at sixteen weeks.

During socialization, expose your dog to the stimuli it will experience during adulthood; this includes exposure to living organisms such as people of all shapes and sizes, animals, non-living things, noises, and odours. There is a lot of work to do in very little time. Although the breeder significantly impacts socialization, pet caregivers must plan.



SCAT socialization protocol

Your socialization plan should include the following options. Still, you should not be limited to them because each family has different requirements and expectations for their dog. The steps, however, are tried, tested, and proven.

You must access various people, animals, situations, and places to socialize your dog. Make sure you have rewards and water when conducting your sessions. The critical factor to remember is not the length or quantity of exposure; it is the quality. Please do not overdo it; overexposure might backfire later.

- Bring the dog outside and reward (R+) it with food, play, or affection for relaxed behaviour.
- Find a well-adjusted adult dog and allow them to interact. The adult might growl, show its teeth, and air snap. Controlled aggression is typical behaviour puppies must learn.
- Introduce cats or other animals. R+ positive interactions.
- Play sounds such as sirens, alarms, gunshots (for hunting dogs), and baby cries by incrementally increasing the volume.
- Visit your downtown area weekly and R+ good behaviour.
- Visit the groomer and veterinarian clinic without using the service. R+ relaxed behaviour.
- Present your puppy with toys, brain games, and enrichment. The more diverse, the better.
- Start training simple behaviours without using lures, such as name, sit, touch, and come.
- Desensitize gear: leashes, collars, harnesses, clothing, etc.
- Have guests over, yet do not overdo it; puppies require much sleep to grow.
- Walk, run, and play with your puppy.
- Teach how to go up and down stairs to develop muscle mass. R+ when they step up or down.
- Place your dog in strange situations and R+ good behaviour.
- Take a puppy class that does not use lures (food bribes).

If you teach your dog how to learn, your pet will offer you behaviours you never thought possible. I promise you will reach Albear, Hariette, Mandu, and George's level of performance. Training will be a breeze, but, more importantly, the trust between you and your dog will be unshakable.



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Gaby Dufresne-Cyr is a distinguished dog trainer, behaviourist, and an accomplished author renowned for her insightful and informative publications. With a deep understanding of canine behaviour and a passion for sharing her knowledge with others, Gaby has written several acclaimed books that have become essential resources for pet caregivers.

