



WORK IT OUT TOGETHER

Leash Your Fitness



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and Schmoozer

IT IS JANUARY 1, 2013, and time to take the dreaded scale weigh-in. The holidays are over, but more than just great memories remain. Over the years, many dog owners have written in to say that after the holidays, they — along with their pups — acquired that muffin-top look (and they don't mean cupcakes) from woofing down too many desserts, appetizers, treats and party-tray stuff. Their skinny jeans and their pets' new collars are "just a little too tight," they say. They want to know if there's a place they can go with their dogs to experience workouts together.

The answer is, yes, and it's called Leash Your Fitness (619-822-3296). Dawn Celapino, who has a degree in kinesiology (the study of human and animal movement) and who has been a personal trainer and group fitness instructor for the last 15 years, started Leash Your Fitness in 2009 when, just like those letter writers, she decided that she didn't want to leave her dog (a cairn terrier named Jack) at home when she worked out. Here's what she has to say:

Q: What is Leash Your Fitness?

A: Leash Your Fitness is the only fitness class in San Diego where your dog is your workout partner. We incorporate our furry friends in all of our classes and activities. We feel that fitness should be fun; and everyone has a different view of fun, so we offer many different classes and events.

Q: What teaching and/or first-aid credentials should a pet owner expect the instructor to have when signing up for this type of workout?

A: There is no other class like this in San Diego, but I would suggest looking for an instructor that is CPR certified, doggy first-aid certified, group-fitness certified and has experience working with different fitness levels and an understanding of dogs.

Q: Do you feel that your best workout buddy is your dog?

A: Yes. Your dog will make your workout more fun, because dogs don't care what you wear or what you look like and they will never judge you when you workout. They just want to be with you and get outside and have fun.

Q: Do you have a weigh-in and do you take measurements at the first sign-up for both the dog owner and the dog?

A: No, we do not have a weigh and measure in our regular classes, but we run quarterly "Fitness Challenges" that not only encompass weight and measurements, but test your fitness level as well with different exercises. We did incorporate the dogs in one of our challenges, but it was difficult because we needed a special scale to accommodate the large dogs in our classes.

Q: What kind of exercise can you do with your dog if you are a sedentary person?

A: Walking is the first step. If you have a dog, you should be walking that dog every day. Leaving the dog in the back yard is not an acceptable way to exercise your dog. Daily walks will give you a healthier, better-behaved and happier dog — and you'll be healthier, too.

Q: What is the connection between people and their dogs that makes these classes so desirable?

A: Our classes and events are designed so that the owners are bonding with their dogs the entire time. They are working on their obedience, they are talking to their dogs and they are watching their dogs get fit and healthy. It is so much fun to watch the owners' faces when they see their dogs do something that they didn't know that they could do — like kayak.

Q. Does the age of the dog and/or dog owner matter?

A: Depending on the class or event, age does not usually matter. Our fitness classes are designed so that anyone can do them. Kayaking and yoga are great for any age. I would not recommend an older dog or out-of-shape person to go on one of our longer hikes, but we usually start the season with the easiest hike and people can gauge from there what they can handle. Even our running class has breaks for the slower people/dogs to catch up while the faster people do drills.

Q: Do you have different class levels, and how do you determine the dog's workout?

A: We do not have different class levels. Our classes are designed for all fitness levels. Everyone works at their own pace and nobody is ever left behind. The dog is working with the person the entire time. We incorporate cardio and dog obedience in all of our classes to keep the dog mentally and physically challenged. Many people do not know that mentally challenging your dog will tire them as fast as physically challenging them. So we watch the dog's behavior improve greatly when they regularly attend our classes.

Q: Tell us a few success stories.

A: Many women have lost more than 20 pounds, are stronger and in better shape than they ever have been and one woman ran a marathon for the first time and she is 50. We had a 70-year-old woman who, when she began our classes, had to have me hold her hand. She had a terrible shoulder injury, was afraid of falling and afraid of the other dogs. She got to the point where she was balancing on one leg and doing pushups to the best of her ability and working with Ginger, our class pit bull. ♦

For comments and ideas,
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