

## Raising Successful Children... Making Lola a good dog

By Susan Collins

A few months ago two dear friends of mine came to stay in my house. I was thrilled to have them until I realized that having them meant having another dog—in addition to my two.

Their Lola is a lovely prancy, plummy-tailed little fox who, after only a week, had peed and pooped in every room, and yipped in loud brain-piercing shrill tones at every guest and mailman. And yes, the pleasure of their company was beginning to tarnish.

Until one morning at breakfast I called a conference. "For me to enjoy having you all here, we've got to align on making Lola a good dog." And I analyzed for them what I thought her problems were—like an inconsistent walk schedule, cans and wrappers left in the kitchen trash with enticing fragrances of turkey and tuna, and her late afternoon habit of filling up on my rabbit's food. And I also outlined the solutions I had in mind.

For Lola to succeed, we all had to change. We would have to walk three dogs morning and night. We would have to take meat-flavored trash directly outside as we cleaned up after meals. We would have to put the bunny food up high whenever we let the dogs out in the yard so Lola couldn't fill up on high-fibered pellets and luscious papaya peelings. After our numerous grumblings and personal misgivings over the changes we would have to make,

we all committed to making Lola a good dog.

The next few days were challenging, but we consistently anticipated, and avoided, situations that would make Lola fail, check-listing ourselves as we left the kitchen or planned our outings and evenings. And, despite the inconvenience and extra-consciousness it took, we all did a good job. Our new routine was established and we adults were sticking to it.

Lola responded to our changes. Yes, she still sniffed the trash thoroughly after each meal, but with no tempting aromas or tasty tid-bit rewards, she left the can unopened and upright. Yes, Lola still immediately trotted over to where the rabbit food used to be, but after numerous fruitless efforts and the regular strong scent of bunny-food wafting down from up much too high for her to reach, she napped in the sun. And, yes, it seemed to rain every night before bedtime, the time we agreed Lola and the other dogs should be walked, but that was the plan and we followed through...with umbrellas.

But the rewards were well worth it. Each morning we inspected every rug and corner in the house—a very large house I might add—and there were no presents from Lola. And when we returned home and re-entered the kitchen, there were no more shredded-trash pickups to be done. Consistently the Big News at breakfast was Lola is a good dog.

There were rewards for Lola too. Now she enjoyed daily pats instead of snarls, abundant affections instead of annoyances, regular "you're a Good Dog"

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instead of bad. At dinner we relished her successes, and ours. And Lola's tailed wagged as if to say... "You are good people too."

*Susan Collins, author of Our Children Are Watching: 10 Skills For Leading the Next Generation to Success, spent fifteen years "shadowing" successful people, literally following around corporate heads, outstanding educators and coaches, inventors, entertainers and artists. She discovered they were all using the same ten skills. After fifteen more years of teaching The Technology of Success at American Express, IBM, and Florida Power & Light, now Susan is teaching these success skills to parents and teachers as well. For information on her books, tapes and seminars, call Our Children Are Watching 305-892-2702.*