

Review of *Life skills for puppies*, from Ranny Green, www.seattlekennelclub.org

"Life Skills for Puppies," by Helen Zulch and Daniel Mills. Hubble & Hattie. \$24.95.

This is one of those wow books you love to get your hands on, wishing it had been available when you brought a puppy into your house.

Not all puppies are wired the same because of genetics and early socialization or lack thereof by the breeder.

"Life Skills" is designed to coax the very best out of the owner, complementing text and photos beautifully and leaving little doubt about the author's tips.

Renowned trainer Jean Donaldson likes it, too. In the foreword, she says, "Puppy owners' time and energy are finite but the stakes are high, so these resources must be allocated carefully. Of the many virtues of 'Life Skills,' the choices the authors make about what to include and what to omit are the most genius."

And the authors note in the Introduction, "The philosophy behind this book is not to protect your pup from the stresses of daily life, but rather to teach him to be resilient so that he can cope with whatever the world throws at him. Life happens; he needs to be able to deal with it."

Chapters deal with developing confidence, handling surprises, tolerating touch, self-control, learning to be calm, following the rules, the art of listening, practicing good manners, making the right choices and "I have the right to be a dog and to express my opinion politely."

The authors, members of the Animal Behavior Clinic at the University of Lincoln, England, focus on the psyche of both the owner and the animal here, cutting right to the key components for developing a sound, respectful relationship between owner and puppy.

In that context, after serving up 10 life skills for puppies, they turn the tables a bit at the end with a thought-provoking chapter entitled, "I Hope My Person Remembers That . . ."

Some of those basics here are: Dogs are not machines (they make mistakes and like to explore rule boundaries); dogs have feelings; dogs need to be taught patiently and calmly; dogs don't understand English, so people need to understand dog; dogs are not malicious, they simply do what works for them; dogs are not motivated by dominance, but like to work with friends; dogs are very observant and are learning all the time.

"Life Skills" is all about prioritizing ground rules, training consistency and establishing what's important while integrating the puppy into the household and the outside world.

Its vibrant packaging, resilient, can-do spirit and earthy delivery combine to make this resource a must for all new puppy owners.