



Non-Confrontational Dominance Program or 'No Free Lunch'

CANINE PARENTING 101

All animals have rules. Dogs are no different. We can't punch the guy who cut us off in traffic and dogs can't bolt outside and bite the mailman. Humans and dogs are social animals and if we don't want to be 'cast out', we must remember what is appropriate. While obedience training (school) is very important, this program is even more so. Parenting your dog in a benevolent way will allow him to be a functioning member of society. It's not too much to ask of your dog to be mindful and practice some restraint.

In this program, all your dog must do is place her rear on the ground and defer to you for a few minutes. (Saying, 'please') This is a simple yet powerful behavior. It allows your dog to have some say in her life. It also increases her self-confidence in a positive way while giving you back control. If you understand how to get what you want from each other in a mutually respectful way, stress is reduced and a peaceful relationship can form. If done correctly, this program works quickly and easily.

Like we have to do, your dog must earn everything she wants from here on out. She does this by quietly and calmly sitting for a few minutes. This includes the following:

- Food and feeding times
- Treats
- Love and attention
- Being able to go outside and coming back in
- Having a leash and collar put on
- Being 'invited' onto the bed or couch (if owner so desires)

Avoid confrontation. If your dog is aggressive to you, this is vital for the success of this program. If your dog is continually put into situations in which she feels the need to defend herself, aggression becomes her default emotion. Avoiding confrontation does not mean your dog is 'winning' over you. It's not about winning and losing, it's about forming a new way to interact which is mutually agreeable to everyone.

Example: If your dog is guarding a rawhide chewie (growling and staring at you) and you back away, your dog has just learned that aggression works quite well. If he wants you to back off all he needs to do is growl. - If your dog guards these things, remove them from his diet altogether. (You can work on it later.)

Have specific feeding times. In the canine world, alpha isn't necessarily the one who is physically strongest or the one who screams the loudest; it's who holds the resources. If your dog has food in his bowl all the time, he's in control of a very valuable resource. You need to be the one who offers food, on the schedule you see fit. Your dog should be offered food only when he sits.

Example: If you ask your dog to sit for his dinner and he doesn't, give him a 'no-reward mark', put the bowl away and try again at the next feeding time -- this is why I feed twice a day. It gives more opportunity to work on the program giving the dog more chances to do the right thing and be rewarded.

(A 'no-reward mark' is not a command. It's a word that lets your dog know he's chosen the wrong option and the human is now going to leave the area. I use "too bad".)

Ignore controlling behavior. Example: If your dog climbs into your lap uninvited, who is the king and who is the throne? If this happens, simply stand up to 'slough' the dog off you then ask for a sit. (The dog must be on the floor at this point.) If the dog sits, you can pet him. Now you have just controlled the situation, not the dog.

If your dog barks in your face for attention, give your 'no-reward mark' and walk away. If the dog continues this pushy and defiant behavior, put the dog away (with the least amount of drama) for a few minutes or until he's calm. Then you can let him out. You may need to do this many times so your dog understands. Your patience will be worth it.

Please remember to acknowledge your dog when he is calm and quiet!
Whatever behavior you pay attention to, your dog will repeat.

No yelling, hitting or leash corrections. Alpha is the one who is calm, confident and wise. The moment you lose your temper is the moment you lose ground. There is a big difference between fear and respect. Fear creates distance, respect reinforces bonding.

Do not take your dog's behavior personally. Even if your dog seems very naughty, it's not directed at you personally. If you don't have proper communication skills between you, being naughty is her only way of being heard. If you feel yourself getting frustrated, put your dog away in her crate with a fun toy and walk away. If you are continually frustrated by your dog's behavior, make a point to understand why she is acting the way she is. It was your choice to start this relationship with your dog, so it is your responsibility to fully understand her. In any great relationship, if you can know and understand one another for who and what they are, peace reigns.

"Behavior is not good or bad in and of itself.
It is our perception of that behavior that makes it so."

Just because we are larger than most dogs does not give us the right to use force. Make no mistake, even a small dog can inflict serious injury. The fact that they so rarely do says much about their power of forgiveness. We should strive to do the same.

"I believe that none of us was born with the right to say, 'You must or I will hurt you.'"
- Monty Roberts

Praise needs to be earned. Praising your dog for every little thing makes the praise uneventful. It's no longer appreciated. If you save the emphatic, "Good girl!" for exceptionally wonderful behavior, your dog will view you as more of a leader.

Please don't spoil your dog. Spoiling your dog really comes down to the owner (parent) not having enough consistency and backbone to do the right thing for that animal. Someone must be the grownup. Don't give that job to your poor dog. It's just too much responsibility and often leads to a stressed out animal who feels in over their head. By giving in to what your dog thinks he needs, you are creating an emotional cripple. Say what you mean and mean what you say. It is vital for the emotional well being of your dog. It's called 'spoil' for a reason.

No high places. High places like the couch or your bed are a way that some dogs use to gain control over others. Block access to these places for at least one month (while

implementing this program). Then, if the dog's behavior has improved you can allow them to be with you on the couch or bed when you ask them to come up.

"Please remember, you can't be the owner you want to be.
You must be the owner your dog needs you to be."

Freedom is to be earned. Example: If your dog won't sit for you at the door to go outside, she has just lost the privilege to run loose in the back yard this time. She is to be put on leash (with you holding the other end) to relieve herself.

Praise your dog! She can have as much love and attention as she earns. Acknowledging her when she does something right will help her understand what behaviors are acceptable and which ones aren't. Even a smile and wink from you means the world to your dog. Never underestimate kindness.

Children feel loved and safe when rules and structure are given to them. Dogs are the same. Each time you want to 'give in' to your dog, think about his mental and emotional well being first. Instant gratification does not equal a happy individual. Having a responsible parent who makes all the difficult decisions in life does.

When you have a dog and/or human child, it's not 'all about you' anymore. As the grown-up, it's your job to take care of that baby and do the right thing even if it seems hard in the moment. Example: If your dog gets 'growly' when she's on your bed, don't let that baby back up there till she learns how to behave appropriately. Even if she's cute, even if she's looking at you with those big eyes and even if she's whining desperately. Be the adult and do right by her. You wouldn't let your human child eat chocolate cake every day for breakfast just because she wants it, so don't let your dog do things that aren't in her best interest either. Trust me, seeing your dog happy, healthy, confident and emotionally stable is worth the all work.

This program contains information from the books **Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Small Animals** by Dr. Karen L. Overall, **Dogs Behaving Badly** by Dr. Nicholas Dodman as well as my own methods.

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