



How To Use The Reverse Dog Training Method To Get Maximum Results

By Eric R. Letendre

www.AmazingDogTrainingMan.com

www.BayStateDogTraining.com

Just some of what you'll learn from this book...

Learn how to use The Reverse Dog Training Method, a revolutionary system developed by The Amazing Dog Training Man

The number ONE Success Secret you need to know to have a well behaved dog

How to use the M.U.T.T. Method to fix any behavior problem

Why you should never use a choke chain

What "Successive Approximation" is and how you can use it to train your dog

Motivational giant Zig Zigler's famous "Ham Story" and how it applies to dog training

How to use the "Bagel Technique" to stop your dog from stealing food off the counter

A clever way to stop you dog from begging at the table

Four subtle, BUT ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL steps that every dog owner can follow to teach their dog that they are the pack leader

How to teach your dog to Come On Command using the Spring Loaded Recall Exercise

How to train you dog in only ten minutes a day

Two forms of exercise that can eliminate up to 75% of problem behavior

The #1 training secret German dog trainers use to get maximum results

What your dog needs to know before you give any command

Yes, you can teach an old dog new tricks

Eric has a terrific sense of humor that makes his classes fun and enjoyable. At the Potter League for Animals, his classes are always well-attended, with both the two legged and four legged participants learning a lot. Eric uses positive reinforcement techniques, and has a commitment to help every family understand their dog's special needs and traits.

We see the results of Eric's teaching style and commitment every day. If you want to be best friends with your dog and have the best life long relationship with your dog, don't hesitate to sign up for a class at American Canine.

Christie Smith
Executive Director
Potter League for Animals

I thought my dog "Kimmy" was a candidate for Canine ADHD before I went to American Canine. No, she is well-behaved, obedient, and comes on command. She is also an American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen. It is all due to the training she received at American Canine.

Sarah Arruda
Veterinary Technician
Anchor Animal Hospital

I am the "Director of Operations" at the Potter League for Animals in Middletown, RI. Since Eric Letendre, from American Canine, had been coming to the Potter League, we have seen an increase in adoptions and a decrease in returned dogs to the shelter. His style and great sense of humor during obedience class keeps bringing adopters back and spreading the word about positive reinforcement.

The dogs that are adopted from the Potter League may be rescued strays or dogs that have been voluntarily surrendered for adoption. How important is obedience training? Extremely important! Eric shows you one of the best ways for you to establish a relationship with your new dog, and to begin to develop a bond through obedience training. A class taught by Eric is full of positive reinforcement, lots of praise, and fun for both you and your dog. We hope Eric will help us train here at Potter's for a long time, helping our new adopters.

Pearl Gonzalez
Director of Operations
Potter League for Animals

Eric is very easy to understand. He explains the training techniques clearly and simply. He offers encouragement for the owner as well as the dog.

He is very helpful in addressing the individual problems unique to your dog. Eric always has good suggestions that work. The class is fun!

Kiki Mitchell
Middletown, RI

Clients that we have recommended to the American Canine facility have come back with nothing but great results.

Dr. Jim Lunig, DVM
Spinnaker Veterinary Clinic

Eric's years of "positive" dog training methods have remedied many behavior problems with our dogs – making them more likely to be adopted. We often recommend obedience classes at American Canine to promote continuing good doggy conduct in our dogs after they find homes, to assure that they remain well-mannered members of their new family. American Canine has been extremely generous in donating time and much needed funds to our organization. We are grateful for all the American Canine does for placing paws.

Patty Garber
Placing Paws
Board of Directors

When we got our first puppy, she was out of control. Going to American Canine's puppy class has helped us out tremendously, and most of all, gave us a better understanding of how our pup thinks. I was amazed that I could learn how to train my dog. Eric's patience and training brings understanding our out of control puppy to the forefront. Thank you, Eric!

Paul Ferreira & Family
Fall River, MA

I refer all of my clients with puppies and problem pets to Eric Letendre. I've been impressed with the excellent results I've seen. You worked wonders with Tazz (our hospital pit bull with the big goofy ears.) Thank you for the excellent advice and service you provide.

Dr. Kim Wadsworth
DVM
Anchor Animal Hospital

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The Amazing Dog Training Man

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Introduction

What you are about to read are the dog training secrets that were passed on to me by a master dog trainer. The story you are about to read happened to me, a once confused and frustrated dog owner. I say once confused and frustrated. I met a man that cleared up all of my misunderstandings about dogs and dog training. I will share with you everything that I learned from him. During all of my meetings with this man, I took excellent notes. I have put the notes into this book to help you with your dog. By the time you finish reading this book you will no longer be confused about your dog's behavior.

One thing that I learned about The Amazing Dog Training Man while I was working with him is that he will do everything he can to help you train your dog. He has FREE video training clips that you can watch on his website that will help you train your dog. When I was training with him, my wife could not come to any of the lessons. I wasn't sure if I would pass along what he was teaching me correctly.

Here is what he said: "No problem, go to my website and she can watch the training video clips see exactly how it is done!" He also has a free on line mini dog training course that accompanies this book. You can get the free clips and the mini-course at his website, www.AmazingDogTrainingMan.com. You'll also find some great articles there for you to read.

Here's my story.

Bruce Manchester
Westport, MA
March 2003

Chapter One

My First Dog...How It Almost Turned Into A Disaster I felt confused, frustrated, and embarrassed to bring my dog to an obedience class

I moved to Westport, MA about three years ago. I was living in Tolland, CT working for a large insurance company in Hartford when I got a transfer to Providence. I was lucky enough to find Westport, located about twenty miles south of Providence. Westport is a quaint, beautiful, little seaside town tucked right between New Bedford and Fall River. When we moved out here, my wife and I agreed to get our daughter a dog once everything was settled. Three years had passed and my daughter had patiently waited for her dog. I have to admit, I was looking forward to getting a dog, but I was just a little concerned about my abilities. I had never had a dog and wanted to make sure that we had enough time to spend with him.

One Sunday afternoon my little family loaded into the car and drove off to the local shelter. When we arrived, the shelter employees showed us around. After spending about thirty minutes looking at dogs of all sizes and shapes my daughter decided on a unique mid sized dog of about thirty five pounds. The shelter employee told us that the dog was a beagle/chow/shepherd mix. After spending a few minutes with the dog, my daughter had her heart set on him. We filled out the necessary paperwork, gave the shelter a donation, and we were on our way.

The ride home was exciting. My daughter was smiling from ear to ear and my wife even looked happy about the new addition. We spent most of Sunday walking with our new dog on the beach and trying to decide on a name for him. My daughter suggested every name that she had ever heard in a Disney movie. She wanted to call him Simba, Mickey, Goofy, and on and on. My wife added that when she was a little girl, her dog's name was Peanuts. Everyone seemed to like that name, so we agreed that our new dog would be Peanuts. Everything seemed so easy that first day, everyone was happy. As you will discover in the next few minutes, it didn't stay that way. What started out as a happy beginning went quickly downhill.

The first signs of trouble cropped up that evening. We decided that we would let Peanuts sleep in the kitchen, but as soon as the lights went out, Peanuts started to howl and bark. We

figured that he would stop after a few minutes, but no such luck. Peanuts went on for about forty five minutes until my wife and I couldn't take it anymore. We let him into our room where he quickly made himself at home on our bed. My wife said she thought she had heard somewhere that you were not supposed to let the dog on the bed. I told her that anything that kept him quiet was fine with me. Our daughter had school in the morning and we could not let him keep us up all night.

What happened over the next few weeks is a blur. I don't know how to describe it. What started off so good was quickly becoming a nightmare. Peanuts was wrecking our lives. He was causing so much trouble that my wife and I were starting to argue with each other. We quickly learned that Peanuts loved to steal anything off the counters or coffee table. He would steal tissues, pens, eye glass cases, the TV changer, anything that was left there. He also had a terrible habit of chewing everything that he could get his mouth around. The corners of our tables and chairs were ruined, creating a lot of tension between my wife and me. Taking him for a walk was almost impossible. He would pull me in every direction and there was no way that my daughter would be able to handle him. I could not believe that a little thirty five pound dog could pull so hard. Our backyard had holes all over it, and if that wasn't bad enough, Peanuts was not housebroken. He would go anytime and any place he chose.

The tough part was that he could be a great little pet at times. He was very lovable and my daughter was crazy about him. Before things got too out of control, I decided to call the shelter and ask for some advice. They must know how to handle these dogs.

When I called the shelter the people that I spoke to were very helpful and tried to give me as much information as they could. They told me that I should get a crate and use it; they also said that maybe a choke chain would help. After speaking to them, I headed right off to the local pet store to purchase the necessary equipment.

When I put the choke chain on Peanuts it did not seem to do very much good. When we walked, he pulled so hard on the choke chain that I could hear him struggling to breathe. The crate was an even bigger disaster. Whenever I tried to put him in the crate, he would fight and resist me. Once I finally got him in it, he would not stop barking, howling, and scratching at the door. Everything we tried seemed to backfire on us. It was starting to feel hopeless. But I did not want to give up.

I figured my next step would be to enroll Peanuts in an obedience class. Looking through the phone book, I found a dog training school that was not too far away. I called and signed up for a class that was starting in a few days.

The class didn't exactly go as I thought it would. On the first day, the instructor rudely informed me that my dog was unruly and badly behaved. I didn't need her to tell me that. After all, that's why we had signed up for the class in the first place. After I had been told that my dog was not well-behaved, the instructor said that she was going to put a choke chain on my dog. When I told her that we had already tried that, she informed that I was not using it correctly. The class started and needless to say, I was thoroughly embarrassed by the end of it. Peanuts was awful, he would not stop pulling and barking. I was yelled at by the instructor more than once to control my dog. I didn't understand what she thought I was doing. Of course I was trying to control my dog, that's why I was there. But instead of giving me advice, I was berated in front of everyone. At the end of class I waited patiently so I could ask the instructor a few questions.

When she saw me waiting I got the feeling that I was facing the principal, just like when I was a kid. The look on her face was not pleasant. I quickly asked her about some behavior problems that I was experiencing. The instructor informed me that whenever Peanuts was doing

something I didn't like, I had to show him that I was the boss, or as she referred to it, the "Alpha".

"How do I do that," I asked?

"It's simple," she replied. "Grab your dog by the scruff of the neck and shake him while loudly saying **NO**." If that didn't work she advised me to do what is called an "Alpha rollover".

She decided to demonstrate on Peanuts. She grabbed him with both hands on either side of the neck. She lifted his front paws off the ground and flipped him onto his back. It happened so fast that the poor little guy didn't know what hit him. As she was demonstrating she told me that this is what the alpha dog does to subordinates in the wild.

Then something strange happened. Peanuts began to fight her and tried biting her hands while she held him down. The more he fought the harder she fought back to keep him under control. The situation continued to escalate until Peanuts and the trainer were in what looked like mortal combat. The trainer finally let go, but not before getting bit. I was horrified as I stood there looking at what had just happened. I was at a complete loss for words. I asked the trainer what she would like me to do. She said that Peanuts was highly dominant and dangerous. She then told me that I would have to come in for some private lessons; just Peanuts, the instructor, and me.

I left the training class feeling crushed. Peanuts did a lot of things that we did not like, but we never felt that he was dangerous or a threat. There was no way I would have a dangerous dog around my family. I thought the training class was the solution, but now, in just an hour's time, I felt like things had gone from bad to worse.

A week later I showed up for the private lesson. The instructor told me that we needed to teach Peanuts who the boss was. She said we would accomplish this by using a prong collar. She showed me what it looked like and I was more than a little uncomfortable. It was like some kind of torture device. It was a steel collar with spikes coming out every few inches. She put the prong collar on Peanuts and I was apprehensive about what might happen next.

Peanuts was a mischievous dog that had definitely thrown a monkey wrench into my quiet life, but overall he was a good little guy. The instructor took the leash from me and commanded Peanuts to sit. Before I knew what was happening she had yanked on the leash and Peanuts yelped from the correction. When Peanuts still refused to sit, she yanked again. I could see that Peanuts was stressed. He was starting to pant and his eyes were wide open. He had a scared and confused look on his face. When Peanuts continued to refuse to sit, she yanked on the leash a third time. Peanuts now started his revolt. He grabbed the leash with his mouth and started pulling back. This really made the instructor livid; she grabbed the leash with both hands and lifted Peanuts off the ground. I could only watch in horror as Peanuts was just hanging there, and I knew that this could not be right. I immediately told her to put Peanuts down and give him back to me.

What happened next is still a blur. When Peanuts regained his footing he attempted to bite the instructor. She lifted him off the ground until he almost passed out. When she finally put him down, he was too disoriented to put up a fight. I quickly took Peanuts from her and made for the door. As I was leaving the instructor told me that I had a dangerous and dominant dog. She added that I should have him put down. As I drove home I could not bear the thought of bringing him back to her for more training. At the same time, things needed to change. I could not put my family at risk. I didn't know what to do. Did I just drive right to the vet's office, or continue to try and train him?

On the way home, I made a quick detour to the town beach. I thought maybe a walk would help and I could think things over. I took Peanuts out of the car and we started off toward the dunes. I had thought for sure that obedience school would be the answer to my problems. Instead, it seemed to only make matters worse. While walking, I noticed a woman and her dog about a quarter of a mile down the beach.

As I watched, I could see that her dog was off leash, running in the water, chasing sticks that she was throwing. At one point, I even saw her dog do some commands before she released the stick. She gave her dog a command to lie down and the dog dove into the position. Then she told the dog to sit and the dog popped up so fast I thought he was going to launch straight up at least three feet. I think she then told her dog to stay because when she threw the stick her dog didn't budge. A few seconds later she made some kind of gesture and her dog raced off after the stick. I watched in envy, wishing that I could let Peanuts run and play in the water like that. At one point her dog noticed Peanuts and started to run straight for him. Peanuts was only too happy to greet the other dog, but then the most amazing thing happened. The strange dog was within twenty feet of us when the woman yelled out the dog's name and commanded him to come. I watched in awe as the dog came to a full stop, turned, and trotted back to his owner.

If only I had that kind of control over Peanuts, if he would just listen to me a little I know that things would get better. Maybe she was a dog trainer. Maybe she could show me how to control my dog like she does hers. Even a little help would be better than the disaster of a training class that I went through. I decided that I was going to approach her and ask for some help.

"Hello," I called out, a little tentatively.

"Hi," she responded, friendly enough it seemed.

"Can I ask you a few questions?" I was feeling more comfortable now.

"Sure you can," she replied.

I then introduced Peanuts and myself. I told her how impressed I was with her dog. I added that I really thought it was incredible how she could let her dog off leash and call him back to her. When I asked if she trained dogs, she said no, she didn't. She also added that her dog had been out of control as a puppy.

"But he's so well behaved," I said, amazed. How could an out of control puppy turn into such an obedient dog?

Then she told me about a man that she had met when her dog was just a few months old, and she added, he was an amazing dog trainer. He showed her all the little known secrets of dog training. After just five lessons with this man she had all the information she needed to train her dog, and just a few weeks later she and her dog had a great relationship.

Excitedly, I asked if she could tell me how to contact this guy. She said that she had his card in her car. As we walked back towards her car I asked if she thought this guy could help me with my dog.

"His training is different," she said. "The training program that he developed is something he calls *The Reverse Dog Training Method*."

"Reverse dog training method," I asked, a little confused.

"Yes," she replied. "The success of any training is not dependent on the dog it's really dependent on the owner. You'll see once you start to work with him, he makes things very clear and easy to understand."

"Can I ask you one more question," still not completely sure I was getting it.

"Sure," she said.

“Will this guy also help me with all the other problems that I am having? My dog is chewing, digging, peeing in the house, you name it and my dog is doing it.”

“Yes, absolutely. He has a unique way of showing dog owners how to deal with all those problems. He will show you what he likes to call the *M.U.T.T. Method* for dealing with behavior problems.”

When we arrived at her car she handed me his card. When I looked at it I was surprised. Here’s all the card said, his phone number was on the back:



I thanked her and started back for my car. As I walked I felt a glimmer of hope. Maybe this guy can help me. Maybe we will be able to keep Peanuts. At the same time, I felt confused. Reverse training method? Fix behavior problems using a mutt method? What did it all mean? Either way, I was going to call this guy as soon as I got home.

Chapter Two

How It Changed Everything

You can learn how to train your dog using a simple, easy, and effective training system. You'll discover how to use The Amazing Dog Training Man's very unique Reverse Dog Training Method.

Now, I must admit, I was starting to have some serious doubts. When I called the number on the card I got an answering machine saying someone would get back to me shortly. A few hours later I received a phone call. It was a pleasant sounding lady, letting me know that Eric would meet me at *The Barn* restaurant in Adamsville, RI for our first lesson. She said to just tell any of the waitresses that I was there to see Eric. They would point him out for me.

After I hung up the phone I could not help the weird feeling I had about all of this. Why would a dog trainer meet me at a restaurant for our first lesson? Don't get me wrong, *The Barn* is one of my all time favorite restaurants. I discovered it shortly after moving to Westport. It's a quaint little place, tucked away in a remote corner of Rhode Island. The staff is friendly and the food is fantastic. In fact, if you ever find yourself in this part of the world, I highly recommend stopping in. They only serve breakfast though, so make sure you get there early. But back to my story, I still couldn't understand why I was meeting a dog trainer in a restaurant.

When I arrived at *The Barn* at the designated time, I asked the waitress if she knew of a dog trainer named Eric? She pointed him out and I walked towards his table. I have to be honest here, I was not too impressed by what I saw. He looked kind of young to be some kind of dog training guru. And, dressed in baggy shorts and sandals, he looked more like he was heading to the beach than a dog training lesson.

After shaking his hand I sat down and ordered some coffee and toast.

"So, I'm a little curious," I began after the waitress had taken our order. "Why are we meeting in a restaurant? I'm not quite sure how is this going to help train my dog? How we can we possibly train Peanuts without him being here?"

"Would you like to know the secret to having a well-behaved dog?" Eric asked.

I nodded my head.

“It’s very simple,” he said, taking a sip of his coffee. “But the simple things in life, for some reason, always seem the most difficult to do. Let me give you some examples. Losing weight really is simple, don’t eat as much. If you want to feel better mentally and physically, it’s easy, exercise. What do you do if you want to have more money in your bank account? Don’t spend as much, right? Anyways, I’m getting off topic here.” He paused again, letting some of this sink in. “Basically, what I’m trying to say is that the simple things aren’t always easy. But, before I digress again, here is the ultimate success secret for a well behaved dog.”

My eyes were now wide, waiting for some great truth to come from his lips.

“If you want a good dog, you have to learn how to become a good dog owner.” He sat back, taking another sip of coffee, waiting for my reaction.

“That’s it?” I asked him. I was waiting for something more; more complicated, more profound. It couldn’t be as easy as that.

“Yes. That really is all there is to it. You see, I know that my card says The Amazing Dog Training Man, but what it should really say is The Amazing People Training Man. Most dog trainers are really good at instructing the dog, but it is really the owners that need the training. What I am going to do over the next few weeks is show you how to get great results with your dog. I’m not going to train your dog, you are. I am going to train you to train your dog. Understand?”

“I think so,” I replied, not really sure, but willing to give it a try.

“A successful relationship with your dog requires you, the owner, to take some steps,” Eric began to explain. “If these steps are followed, they should help you and Peanuts have a great relationship. Any dog training program that you take part in with your dog should be fun, safe and easy.”

I completely agreed, especially after that disastrous first training class Peanuts and I had been through. I continued to listen.

“Let’s face it, we all lead busy lives. Any kind of routine that is difficult or hard to do probably won’t be followed. That is why I have developed a dog training program designed to give you all of the above; a fun, safe, easy, and effective way to train your dog. It is also a program that will help you learn how to deal with behavior problems. Does all this sound OK so far?” Eric asked.

I nodded my head.

“Good. Before we start I want to make it clear that I put most of the attention on you. I call it the Reverse Dog Training Method for a reason. Most dog training programs focus on the dog. I focus on the owner. That is one of the reasons that I use the word Reverse.” He paused to take a few bites of his breakfast. “I developed the Reverse Dog Training Method after studying many dog owners and trainers,” he continued, “and it is a completely different approach to dog training.”

Here is an explanation of what the Reverse Dog Training Method stands for:

R= Responsibility: Taking responsibility for your dog’s behavior and training

E=Easy: Having a dog should be fun. A training program should be easy and fun.

V=Viewpoint: An effective training program is established by looking at training through the dog’s P.O.V. (Point Of View)

E=Effective: The training program needs to be effective

R=Reward: Reward training based on the principles of behavior.

S=Safe: Safe training method that does not harm the dog.

E=Efficient: Training must accomplish the desired results efficiently (in just ten minute sessions)

“So, once you understand the Reverse Dog Training Method you will begin to look at the whole training process differently.”

“Alright, when do we start?”

He smiled at my enthusiasm. “We’ll start training soon enough, but I still need to explain a few other important things.”

“Okay,” I said, sitting back in my chair, ready for more.

Then Eric took out a piece of paper and a pen. He drew a line down the middle of the paper and put plus signs on one side and minus signs on the other. I wasn’t sure exactly what I was supposed to be looking at.

He began to explain his drawing. “Positive and negative experiences have a lasting effect on the dog. One theory of mine is what I like to call the chalk board theory. Imagine that there is a large chalk board in front of you with a line drawn down the middle. Label one side positive, and draw little plus signs next to it. Label the other side of the chalk board negative with little minus signs next to it.” Now his drawing made a little more sense.

He continued, “Every experience and interaction that you have with Peanuts will place either a plus or minus sign on the board. So, every time you do something positive with him...you give him a treat...a pat on the head...throw a ball, that is a plus sign on the chalk board. Every time you do something negative to Peanuts like scold him...slap him on the butt...give a leash correction, you will put a minus sign on the board. Do you understand so far?”

“Yes, I think so,” I replied. “When we do something good with Peanuts, he gets pluses, for everything bad we do, he gets minuses. Is that right?”

“You’ve got it!” said Eric. “If your chalk board has more minuses than pluses you have big problems. You want a chalk board filled with pluses, so that when you do have to do something negative, it will not have a detrimental effect on your dog.”

Positive	Negative
++++	-
++	- -
+++++	-
+++	
+++++++	-
+++++	
+++	
+++++++	-
+++++++	
+++	

“Here’s another way to look at it. This is an excellent way that I heard it explained to me once: Think of the relationship between you and your dog as a checking account. In this case we’ll call it Peanut’s social account. Imagine all the different interactions between you and Peanuts. Every positive experience between you and Peanuts is a deposit in his social account. Every negative experience is a withdrawal from Peanut’s social account.”

I nodded my head.

“What happens if there are more withdrawals than deposits from your checking account at home?” Eric asked.

“I bounce a check,” I answered.

“Right,” Eric said with a smile. “Is your bank very happy when this happens?”

“No,” I responded quickly.

“Right, and what happens if you keep doing it?” Eric kept pressing on. Before I could even answer he said, “If you keep doing it, you will ruin the relationship you have with your bank.”

“Wow!” I was amazed. “This would work with my wife and daughter too.”

“Yes, the best way to fix any relationship is to focus on deposits and minimize withdrawals.”

“I think I’m going to go buy my wife some flowers,” I said with a grin on my face.

“Great idea, but for now let’s get back to Peanuts.” He continued, “Your bank becomes aggressive. First it’s minor, but if it happens again and again, the bank eventually becomes more and more aggressive, until finally the relationship between you and your bank comes to an end. With your dog we want to make sure that when you do need to make a withdrawal, you have made enough deposits that the relationship doesn’t bounce like a bad check.” Eric said, sitting back and taking a sip of his coffee.

“Alright, I’ve got it. I will focus on making deposits.”

“Great! Now, do you know why so many new dog owners have problems with their dogs?” Eric asked when he put his coffee cup down.

“Well, I guess I have an idea,” I began, a little hesitantly.

“Let me explain one of the biggest problems,” said Eric, and he started to go into more detail.

“Confusion is probably the biggest problem faced by new dog owners. I see the look of frustration on the faces of dog owners coming through my doors very often when they decide to bring their little terror in for training. The sad fact is that confusion and frustration often lead to anger. Anger often leads to punishment. Punishment often leads to problems between the dog and owner. Once the relationship between the dog and owner goes sour, things quickly disintegrate.”

I could tell that he was genuinely troubled when this happened.

“Over the next few weeks,” he went on, “I’ll show you how to develop a great relationship with your dog. I am not a guy that is going to regurgitate the same old theories and methods that you read in most dog training books. Instead, I am going to explain the reasoning behind why I train the way I do, and why you should apply the same methods. I am a trainer in the trenches week after week working with real dog owners that have real behavior problems. I spend a great deal of time working in animal shelters. All the time that I have spent working with shelter dogs has taught me to condense training and deliver it with as little fluff as possible. Working in a shelter you have to become efficient and effective. You don’t have a lot of time.

“Many dog owners simply do not understand why their dogs behave a certain way. They become confused and it is my job to clear up the confusion and help them to train and understand their dog.”

I took all of this in. After a moment, eager to get started, I asked, “What are we going to do today?”

“Today you are going to learn The Reverse Dog Training Method. Like I mentioned before, it is a training program that I developed with the typical dog owner in mind. Believe me, when you learn The Reverse Dog Training Method, you’ll look at dog training very differently.”

“Sounds great. Let’s get started,” I said.

As I sat there with my toast getting cold, Eric asked me another question. “Do you know what the biggest mistake dog owners make with their dogs?”

I shook my head.

“The biggest mistake dog owners make is that they expect dogs to think like humans. The definition of anthropomorphism is when we humans attribute human characteristics to plants, animals, or objects, and unfortunately, most dog owners are guilty of this. Instead, we have to learn to think like our dogs, because they truly are not capable of thinking like us. It’s not fair to put all the blame on our dogs when they don’t respond the way we want them to. The blame has to be put squarely on our shoulders. Once you take that responsibility, once you decide that it is your job to think like a dog, then and only then, will you get a trained dog. If you keep blaming the dog, you’re guaranteed to continue having problems.”

“Wait a minute,” I exclaimed. “I didn’t teach my dog to bite or jump.”

“I’m sure you didn’t intentionally teach your dog,” said Eric, “but we are getting ahead of ourselves. I promise I will make things very clear to you in the next few minutes. Before we go on though, remember what I said about success in dog training. In order to have a good dog, you have to learn how to become a good dog owner. Very simple, but very true.”

After the waitress came by to refill our coffee cups he continued. “Alright, let me explain a little further. As dog owners, we need to set our dogs up for success. Unfortunately, we usually set them up for failure. For example, giving a young pup too much freedom is setting him up for failure. The puppy is going to chew on anything and everything, he is going to pee and poop anywhere and everywhere, he is going to knock things over, steal items off the coffee table, and in general make us mad. By taking some simple steps we can make a few changes and always try to set the pup up for success. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” I answered, thinking about what he just said. “By making a few changes around the house, I can probably alleviate a lot of the problems we are having with Peanuts.”

“Before we get into the four steps of the Reverse Dog Training Method, I want to go over what I think are the five biggest myths about dog training.

“You see,” said Eric, “New dog owners become confused about what is the best way to train their dog because there are so many dog training myths out there.”

This came straight from my notes:

Here are the top five:

The 5 biggest myths about dog training

There are many myths surrounding dogs and dog training. The five biggest myths regarding training are:

1. Never train a dog until six months of age.
2. Never use food to train a dog.
3. Always train a dog using a choke chain.
4. Never play tug-o-war with your dog.
5. Dogs will calm down after they are neutered.

These myths have been floating around for so long they are considered dog training laws in some circles. Eric explained each one in detail to me, and why I would want to ignore much of what I had heard about training. One myth that he did leave out was housetraining. He said he would cover that one later, but just for the record; no, never push your dog's nose in his own mess if he has gone on your floor.

Myth #1

Age has always been a big concern for traditional dog trainers. Conventional wisdom said that a dog could not start their training until six months of age because the methods being used were too harsh for a young puppy. A new dog owner would be told that they had to wait until the dog was six months old. This is a huge, huge mistake. Waiting until your dog is six months old only allows your dog to develop behaviors that could have been prevented, not to mention the fact that early socialization is crucial for a dog's development.

What is the poor dog owner supposed to do? Sit there and watch as their dog destroys the house? At six months old, does the dog magically start to learn? No. Here is some of the best advice you can take. As soon as you get your dog, start training, preferably in a good puppy class. If you go to Eric's website, www.AmazingDogTrainingMan.com, you can read his special report, "The Consumer's Guide To Choosing A Dog Trainer". A good puppy class will show you how to housetrain your puppy, they will let your puppy socialize with other puppies, and they will help you with obedience training.

Myth #2

Food should never be used in training. That is the second biggest myth. Dog trainers have told dog owners that their dog should perform the command because the owner is "alpha". Don't listen to it. The absolute best way to train a dog is to use reward-based methods. In the long run, your dog will be a better dog because of it.

The whole alpha theory has been blown out of proportion. A dog is like every other creature on the face of this earth. Dogs either work to get something or they work to avoid something. Your dog is working to get a reward or your dog is working to avoid a correction, period. When used properly, food can be a great way to train your dog. It speeds up the training process. Food helps you motivate your dog. Without some type of positive motivation, you need to resort to negative motivation. Negative motivation always has side effects.

Myth #3

Choke chains are not only a big myth but they are a sad myth. Choke chains are a very bad training tool. Trainers have collapsed dog's tracheas by using choke chains. Dogs have been strangled by their trainers for not performing a command.

A much better piece of equipment is the gentle leader head collar. Gentle leaders have been called power steering for dogs. In fact, the great thing about gentle leaders is that they work as soon as you put them on. They work by controlling your dog's head, not your dog's body, much the same way as a horse bridle.

Another problem with choke chains is that they trigger your dog's opposition reflex. Anytime you apply pressure, whether it is mental or physical, you are triggering your dog's opposition reflex. Here is a little experiment for you to try. Call your dog over and push down on his shoulders. Most dogs will resist and lock up. The harder you push, the more the dog resists. This is opposition reflex. It happens every time you put the choke chain on and pull back.

Myth #4

"Never Play Tug-O-War" has always been a huge myth dog owners have been ordered to follow. How many times have you been told to never, under any circumstance, play tug-o-war? Tug-o-war is one of the best games that you can play with your dog. It is a great way for you to structure the relationship, and it is a great reinforcer. You can use it to reward for obedience.

The most important point to remember when you are playing tug is this: always, always win the tug game. We will go into detail a little later, but remember to always get the tug toy back from your dog at the end of the game. One of the big reasons that tug is such a great game is that it gives the owner control over the most dangerous part of the dog; his teeth and jaws. By playing tug on a daily basis, your dog will learn to have a soft mouth and to drop anything that he is holding onto.

It is not a matter of never doing certain activities with your dog, it is a matter of controlling what you do with him. If you cannot control the game when you are playing, don't play the game.

Myth #5

Dog owners have always been told that neutering a dog will calm him down. Many dog owners have been very disappointed to find that after the surgery, they did not get the expected results; the dog was not any calmer. Spaying and neutering your dog is a good thing to do, but in most cases it will do nothing to calm him down.

When a dog is out of control, it usually has more to do with not getting sufficient exercise and/or it has more to do with little or no training. The neutering theory probably became popular to entice more dog owners to have their dogs neutered, but in most cases, you will not see a dramatic change in your dog's behavior.

Please let's make one point very, very clear: Unless you are a professional breeder, you should have your dog spayed or neutered. Breeding in the United States is awful. Not because of the professionals, but because of the back yard breeders. All too often dogs are bred with no forethought put into it. This leads to all sorts of problems.

Eric took a sip of coffee. "If you are going to successfully train Peanuts using the Reverse Dog Training Method, then you have to eliminate these myths from your thinking. Confusion over the topic of dog training has led these myths to become truths with some dog owners and dog trainers.

"In order for you to get maximum results from your training, it would be best to take a fresh look at what I share with you over the next few weeks. The only goal I have when helping a dog owner is to get results. There is no reason to hang on to old theories and opinions about dog training. Many times, when we start to believe in a certain way of doing things, it can be difficult to see from a different perspective.

"The training methods I am going to share with you are not old, worn out opinions. They are tried and tested methods that will help you get maximum results in a lot less time. The other great thing is that none of this training relies on hurting Peanuts. Negative reinforcement and punishment always, always have side effects. These side effects will have a long term impact on the dog and on your relationship with him."

Chapter Three

M.O.B. Rules – How to use M.O.B. Rules to eliminate housetraining issues, stop chewing, and possibly save your dog's life.

“Any questions,” Eric asked after going through the five myths with me.

“No. So far, so good,” I replied, anxious to hear more.

“So becoming a good dog owner is easy. All you have to do is follow four simple steps. Here they are,” and Eric listed them.

1. Good management skills
2. Exercise
3. Structure
4. Influencing behavior

“This is the first part of the Reverse Dog Training Method. Once you understand, follow, and apply the four steps you will be on your way to becoming that good dog owner. So, for today's lesson, I'll give you a detailed explanation of each one. Let's start with good management skills.

“Good management skills are crucial when you first bring a dog into your home. Your dog does not understand the rules of the house yet. It is your job to teach them to him. However, in order to successfully teach him the rules of the house, you need to be with him every second. Think of the dog as if he was a small child. You can't let a small child out of your sight for a moment. The same holds true for dogs. They must constantly be watched over. I know this sounds like a big job, and it is, but in order for Peanuts to learn, you must be right there the second he decides to pee on the carpet or chew the sides of your coffee table.”

“I can't be with him every second of the day,” I said, concerned that maybe there was no solution for Peanuts.

“I never said you had to be,” Eric replied, as he smiled at the look on my face.

“How am I going to keep an eye on him every second?” I asked.

Eric went on to explain. “A lot of dogs get into trouble when the owner is not home. We leave the house and come home to find a deposit on the rug or our favorite pair of shoes torn up. That is when we feel like punishing the dog. If we punish him long after the behavior has occurred, we only confuse him. In fact, we can sometimes make behavior problems worse by punishing after the fact.

“Here is a typical example: Say you leave the house for an hour. While you are gone Peanuts decides to destroy the TV changer. You come home and find the TV changer in a hundred pieces. At this point you are angry and you know he did it. You call him over, show him the TV changer, and scold him. Maybe he’s made you so angry that you grab him by the scruff of the neck and physically scold him.

“What you have to realize is that Peanuts does not understand why he is being punished. He only knows that you are upset.”

“Wait a minute,” I interrupted. “My dog knows he did something wrong, he always acts like he is sorry after I yell at him.”

Eric responded to this calmly, as if he had heard it a thousand times before. “Peanuts knows that you are upset, what he doesn’t know is why you are upset. I could go over your house right now and yell at him, chances are he will act like he has done something wrong. In fact, let me ask you a question. What if you were to walk into your house and yell at Peanuts and he really had done nothing wrong? How would he act?”

“I don’t know,” I answered, thinking about what Eric had just said.

“Peanuts would act the same way.”

“You’re right, he probably would,” I agreed. I had never thought about it before.

“Then how does he know why is being yelled at?” Eric asked patiently.

I thought about this for a second, and then slowly answered, “I guess he wouldn’t know.”

“Okay, now we’re getting somewhere,” Eric said. “Peanuts doesn’t understand why he is getting scolded. Because of that, there is a strong chance that he would associate the punishment with your arrival home. You walk in the door and he gets scolded. Now, whenever you leave the house, what is he probably going to think?”

A little unsure of the answer, I ventured a guess, “That when I come back home he is going to be punished?”

“Correct! Peanuts will think that when you walk back through the door he is going to get punished. If that is what he is thinking, he will probably become anxious. Do you know what a dog does when he is stressed or anxious?” Eric asked.

“Chews!” I exclaimed.

“Right!” Eric said. “The other problem is that Peanut’s nervous system speeds up. When the nervous system speeds up, guess what happens?”

I thought for a moment, but I couldn’t come up with the answer. “I don’t know,” I said. I had never been very good in biology.

“The digestive system also speeds up, which means your dog will have to relieve himself.”

A grin spread across my face. “I get it,” I said.

“So let’s go over this again, just to make sure you are clear. Punishment after the fact only confuses the dog, and in some cases can make the behavior problem worse. The only time you can punish Peanuts and not confuse him is when you catch him doing the behavior that you want to stop.” Eric looked at me pretty intently. It seemed clear that this was a very important point.

“OK,” I said. “I understand that I can’t come home and yell at him. It makes sense that I would just confuse him and make matters worse, but how do I stop him from doing all those bad things when I’m not there?” I still didn’t know how to solve the problem of him chewing, and stealing, and going to the bathroom all over the house when we weren’t home.

“Simple,” Eric replied. “You just need to learn how to effectively manage Peanut’s behavior. Like a small child, you need to be there to watch his every move. I know that sounds like a lot of work,” he stopped for a moment when he saw my expression, but then he continued, “It is at first, but it gets better. And, there are some tools that you can use to make life easier on you. Let me explain to you how to effectively manage Peanut’s behavior. In fact, you can eliminate many of the problems that you are experiencing once you learn good management skills.”

“I can?” I asked, not entirely convinced.

“Yes,” he said, sounding very sure. “One of the best management tools is a crate. When Peanuts is in the crate you are managing his behavior when you are not there. The great thing about a crate is that you can speed up the housetraining process and you don’t have to worry about coming home to find your valuables destroyed.”

“Wait a minute,” I interrupted. This was the same advice the shelter had given me and it hadn’t worked. “My dog hates the crate! I have tried and tried but Peanuts will not go in it. I have to wrestle him in there. I finally gave up and don’t even try anymore. I have been keeping him in the bathroom... but he ripped up the linoleum and destroyed the door...” my voice just kind of trailed off. I was embarrassed by Peanut’s behavior and my poor management skills.

Eric seemed to be very understanding about this and continued on, “Most people don’t properly crate train their dogs. We have to make a positive association with the crate. Only after Peanuts has had many positive associations will he willingly go into the crate.”

“How do we make positive associations with the crate?” I asked. I didn’t think I’d ever be able to get Peanuts to accept it.

“It’s easy,” he said. “The first step is to feed all of Peanut’s meals in the crate. We are going to put the food bowl in the back of the crate. The only way Peanuts is going to get his breakfast or dinner is by going into the crate. The next step is to put Peanut’s toys and treats in there. Anytime we are going to give Peanuts a treat or toy he is going to have to go into the crate to get it.” Eric paused for a second to make sure that I understood all of that and then he added an important point. “At this time we do not want to shut the door. Let Peanuts come out of the crate anytime that he wants to.”

“Okay” I answered. That seemed pretty easy advice to follow.

“Now it gets fun,” Eric said with a smile. “You are going to go to the local pet store and buy some Kong toys. A Kong toy is a beehive shaped hard rubber toy with a hollow center. The great thing about the Kong toy is that the hollow center can be stuffed with all kinds of goodies. You are going to call Peanuts over to the crate and in front of it you are going to stuff that Kong toy with some awesome treats.

“Take the Kong toy, and with Peanuts watching you, put some cheese into the Kong. Let him sniff it first but don’t let him have any. Put the cheese in, then wave some other tasty treats in front of Peanuts. Put the treats in, then let him watch as you stuff some more cheese into the Kong. At this point Peanuts should be very excited. While he is watching you, throw the Kong into the crate and close the door before he can get in.”

I looked a little puzzled at this last remark. Why would I want to put this toy in the crate and not Peanuts? Didn’t I want to be able to put Peanuts in the crate?

Eric just kept on with his instructions. “Now Peanuts is on the outside of the crate and he desperately wants to get in. You’re starting to change his mind about the crate. You are now starting to build a desire to go into the crate.”

Wow! Could it really be that easy to change Peanut’s entire opinion? Could I really make Peanuts want to go into his crate?

“After a few minutes open the door and let him go in to grab the Kong, the whole time telling him what a good boy he is. After you have done this a couple of times you are going to tie a piece of string around the Kong toy and tie it to the back of the crate. Now when Peanuts goes into the crate he has to stay in the crate to enjoy the goodies in the Kong.”

I couldn’t believe how much sense this all made. How come the people at the pet store, and especially that last trainer didn’t know this.

Eric continued explaining, “As he develops a tolerance for being in the crate, start to close and latch the crate door for short periods. Over a few days time, keep it closed longer and longer.”

“Wow, that is a great idea,” I said. I was completely in awe. Eric then explained the steps a dog owner needs to know in order to apply good management skills.

Here are the steps that I have from the notes that I took.

Management of behavior is a crucial part of owning a dog. The dog has to earn his freedom over a period of time. Dogs do not have any idea of what is right and what is wrong. We have to teach them. The crate is a great tool to use when we can not watch the dog.

There are many different ways to manage a dog’s behavior. We can use crates, leave a leash on the dog when he is in the house, baby gates, a fenced in area, etc.

As the waitress came by to check on us and give us a refill, Eric reassured me. “As Peanuts gets older the management gets easier. Okay, that’s the first step, good management skills.”

“This all sounds great to me,” I said, but I knew there was still something (or someone) that might throw a monkey wrench into this great plan that Eric was developing for me. A little sheepishly I told him my concerns. “My wife is not a big fan of crates, in fact she thinks it’s cruel and refuses to use one.”

Eric just laughed and shook his head. “I hear that all the time, so let me give you three really good reasons to give your wife why you and every dog owner should use a crate. First, most dogs like a place of their own. It is common to see dogs sleep behind a couch, under a coffee table, or in the corner of the room. Once a dog makes a positive association with a crate, he will often go there all on his own to rest.

“Second, at some point in your dog’s life there is a good chance that he will have to go to the groomers, the vet’s office, or travel. This will require Peanuts to go into a crate. Trust me, it is better to get him used to a crate in the comfort of your own home and in a positive way than it is to wait until he is two years old and forced into a crate by some vet techs or grooming assistants. That would be very stressful to him.

“Third, most young dogs love to chew on anything, including electrical wires. A young dog left out to chew on anything he can get his mouth around has the potential to get harmed. There are plenty of incidents of puppies getting injured or killed by chewing on the wrong

things. So, when someone thinks it's cruel to put a pup in the crate, I think it's cruel to leave the dog with too much freedom. You're just asking for trouble."

"Well, I never thought of it that way" I said. I'll be sure to share those points with my wife.

"No problem," Eric said. "That's why they call me The Amazing Dog Training Man. Do you have any questions about management of behavior, or anything else that we've covered this morning?"

I thought back to everything that he had told me so far. There was so much new information. "Let me just make sure that I have this right," I answered back. "It is my responsibility to know what my dog is doing at all times. If I can't watch Peanuts, I should put him in a crate."

"Great summary," Eric said, seeming pleased with me. "And don't forget, you should also leave a leash on him in the house. This way if he steals anything, you don't have to chase him around. All you have to do is step on the leash. Basically, good management gives your dog some boundaries," finished Eric.

"Okay, I think I've got it. What's next?"

Chapter Four

The Only Good Dog Is A Tired Dog

Two forms of exercise every dog needs. Do these two things and reduce up to 75% of your dog's behavior problems.

“Well, now that we understand management of behavior and how to use confinement to get good results we need to move on to step two. This is an extremely important topic, exercise.”

“Now, the second step in my Reverse Dog Training Method is to give your dog enough exercise. Obedience training can not overcome pent up energy. Many dogs suffer from not receiving enough stimulation.” Eric went on to add, “There are two forms of exercise that every dog needs. Your dog needs a good dose of both physical and mental stimulation. Let's talk about physical exercise first.

“When you physically exercise your dog you need to think aerobic exercise. We need to get Peanut's heart rate up and keep it up. This does two things. First it will keep him in good physical shape. Obesity in dogs is becoming a problem in the United States. Second, by giving Peanuts sustained aerobic exercise, you allow him to burn off the energy that he's been building up all day.”

“What about taking him for a walk?” I asked, even though walking him wasn't a very pleasant experience, it's what I had heard you were supposed to do with your dog for exercise.

“Yes, of course walking your dog is important, but at least four to five times a week you need to let your dog stretch his legs and run,” Eric answered.

“Now some other ways to physically exercise Peanuts are to play retrieving games, tug-of-war, hiking, swimming and jogging. One of the very best ways to exercise your dog is to let him play with other dogs. If you have a friend that has a dog and Peanuts gets along with him, set up some time so they can play together. Dog daycare is also becoming very popular. Most dog daycares are set up to let a number of dogs play in controlled and supervised play sessions,” Eric added.

He continued, “Everyone knows that taking your dog for a walk is a good thing, but taking your dog for a run is even better. When you exercise Peanuts, focus on increasing his heart rate. You really want to get the blood pumping. You want your dog to go aerobic.”

At the look on my face he quickly added, “This doesn’t require you to become an athlete. If you are, great, but if you are like me, I try to make things as easy as possible. Retrieving games are my favorite way to exercise my dogs. I can stand in one spot and have my dogs do all the work.

“Here’s a funny little story for you. My Shetland sheepdog, Sammi, does not like to retrieve but she loves to herd and chase. I can still exercise her with retrieving games though, because she will chase the other dogs when I am throwing the ball for them.

“When it comes to mental activities for Peanuts, there are a number of ways to accomplish this. Doing obedience and teaching him how to do tricks is a great way for you to interact, and at the same time give him a mental workout. There are also some toys that you can leave for Peanuts that will keep him occupied when no one is home. As I said earlier, Kong toys are a great toy to leave behind. Stuff three or four Kong toys and leave them in the crate. Once Peanuts is out of the crate and allowed some freedom in the house, you can leave the stuffed Kong toys hidden all around.

“Remember, your dog needs both physical and mental exercise. If you do both forms of exercise, you can eliminate sixty to seventy five percent of your problem behaviors. Dogs were bred to perform certain tasks. Many of those activities required the dog to use a lot of physical energy. Herding, hunting, and chasing were common activities for the dog to perform. As we moved from the agriculture age into the industrial age, the role of working dogs was greatly reduced. One hundred years ago, a dog was required to work. Today, most dogs will never do the tasks or activities that they were bred for.

“Like I said before, I have a Shetland sheepdog. She was bred to herd sheep and livestock. Right now she is about fifteen years old. She has never herded a single sheep, and I doubt that she ever will. It is my job to make sure that she gets enough exercise. If she receives enough stimulation, she will be able to live in the house with me. If she doesn’t get enough stimulation, then there is a good chance that she will find activities to do on her own like chewing on the furniture, digging holes, ripping the shingles off the house, you get the picture.

“If your dog gets enough physical and mental stimulation you will see many of the behavior problems disappear. Usually, when I have to go to someone’s home to help them with their dog, I can tell within three minutes that the dog doesn’t have a behavior problem, he has an exercise problem.”

“Those all sound like a great ideas,” I said, relieved that walking Peanuts wasn’t the only way to exercise him.

“The other toy that I like to use is a buster cube. A buster cube can be found at most pet stores. If they don’t have them in stock, they can usually order one for you. A buster cube is a square cube that has a hollow center with some compartments on the inside. You can pour Peanut’s food into the cube and shake it up. The food becomes trapped inside. When you put it

on the ground, Peanuts will smell his food in the cube. As he starts to paw at it, some of the food will fall out. This will motivate him to push it some more. It will also keep him occupied and give him a mental workout.”

“Do you know where I can get one of those?” I asked. I definitely would be heading to the pet store today.

“Any pet store should carry them or you can even check on-line,” Eric answered. He added, “Always remember that it is your responsibility to provide Peanuts with enough physical and mental stimulation. If he is bouncing off the walls, there is a good chance that you need to exercise him.”

“I understand,” I replied. I realized that Peanuts had not been getting enough exercise before and made a silent promise to myself to do everything possible, even bring Peanuts to...what was it called...a dog daycare...or whatever Eric had said to solve this problem.

“Okay,” said Eric, eager to get onto the next step, but needing to be sure that I had understood everything so far. “Let’s do a quick recap. So far we have talked about two of the steps that you need to know in order to become a good dog owner. You need to effectively manage Peanut’s behavior and you need to give him enough exercise. Got it?” Eric asked.

“Yes” I answered.

Chapter Five

Follow The Leader

Four Subtle, BUT ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL STEPS that every dog owner can apply to teach their dog that they are the leader of the pack

“Great, let’s move on then to step three of the Reverse Dog Training Method. Now we come to the ethology section of this lecture.” Eric said with a grin.

“Ethology, that’s the study of an animal in its natural environment, right?” I asked, very proud of myself.

Eric seemed impressed. “Very good, yes. A great dog trainer, Patricia McConnell, said that dog training boils down to two parts: Understanding dog ethology and understanding operant conditioning. We will get to operant conditioning in a moment.

“There is a lot of controversy surrounding the whole subject of dogs and wolves. Let me start by saying that dogs are direct descendants of the wolf. I am not going to get into the whole argument that is going on now about that, but what I will say is that your dog has very strong social needs. He enjoys company. That is why wild dogs and wolves form packs. Within the pack, they cooperate to survive. In order for the pack to survive, there has to be social structure. You have dogs or wolves within the pack that are more dominant than others. We want to teach Peanuts that we, the humans within the family pack, are the leaders. This can be accomplished by correctly structuring the relationship.”

“How do we do that?” I asked. I was thinking back to that first training class and hoping that Eric would have a better method than the “Alpha rollover” that had terrified poor Peanuts.

He must have read the expression on my face because he replied, “It’s actually pretty easy, and it doesn’t involve any techniques that would hurt Peanuts.”

That made me feel better.

“First,” he said, “You need to understand that there are four activities that make up your dog’s behavior. You need to control each activity. It is the easiest way to communicate to your dog. Here they are:

1. Playing
2. Sleeping
3. Eating
4. Social contact

“If you can control these activities, you can structure the relationship in a way that your dog will clearly understand that you are the pack leader,” Eric explained.

I recalled to him my past experience. “The last dog trainer that I went to said that I needed to teach Peanuts that I was the pack leader, but she said that the only way I could do that was by using a pinch collar, scruff shaking, and something she called an “Alpha rollover.”

The look on Eric’s face told me that he had heard this before.

“Let me explain a few things to you. For years and years it has been believed and promoted by dog trainers, through books and classes, that in order to teach your dog that we are the pack leaders, we have to get physical with the dog. If you read some of the popular dog training books, they instruct dog owners to use very physical methods such as hitting and Alpha rollovers. This can become dangerous.

“For years, these methods were taught to dog owners. They were told to do Alpha rollovers when they wanted to exert their dominance over the dog. This is dangerous for two reasons. First, a dog always goes into a submissive position voluntarily. If you watch two dogs interacting, you’ll always see the submissive one roll over on his own. Second, when you do an Alpha rollover, you are forcing your dog to become defensive.

“Imagine for a moment that I jumped up from the breakfast table, grabbed you by your shirt, and threw you onto the ground and pinned you there. You would think I was a maniac and probably try to fight back. So, the question is, why would we do this to our dogs? It is a very dangerous technique that can backfire on you quickly. That’s why I discourage all dog owners from doing it.

“Also, you have to be careful when you use the same techniques that dogs use on each other. Dogs communicate through eye contact, body posture, tail carriage, and their ears. All of these things communicate very subtle signals. We don’t have tails. We don’t have hackles. We can’t move our ears. Using the same methods that dogs use on each other can be very dangerous for us because we can’t make all those small, subtle signals that the dogs are able to make. This is why I’m very leery of using the same techniques that dogs use on each other.

“So think about your dog for a second. He does a behavior that you don’t like. You’ve grabbed him, forced him onto his back, and now, if he panics or becomes scared, there is a good chance you are going to get bit.”

“Wow,” I thought. Then I told Eric, “That’s exactly what happened when the other trainer tried to do an Alpha rollover with Peanuts. He freaked out, got scared, and then bit her.” That entire episode had made me very nervous about taking Peanuts back home where he would be around my wife and daughter.

Before he could go on I asked, “So what do I do if my dog growls or snaps at me? Do I just sit there and take it?”

“Well we’re getting a little ahead of ourselves, but just let me say this, anytime you use aggression to deal with aggression, you will escalate aggression.”

Eric went on to explain that aggression is a very involved topic. He added that the best way to deal with aggression is to never let it happen. He said that we want to take steps to condition the dog so aggression is not an option for the dog.

“But we’ll get back to that in a little while. I want to keep on track here. Right now we want your dog to understand that you are in charge, that you control the activities that are important to him.”

I waited as the waitress poured some more coffee. As she walked away, Eric had started talking to a very attractive lady at the next table. He must have known her because he was talking to her about her Jack Russell Terrier. When he finished and looked back at me I asked, “Okay, were do we start.”

“Sorry about that,” he said. “She had an awful problem with her little JRT.”

“What’s a JRT?” I asked him.

“It’s short for Jack Russell Terrier.” Eric leaned in closer to me and said, “That’s a little professional dog lingo for ya. She had an awful jumping and housetraining problem with the little guy, but we fixed it. She told me that he’s doing great.”

“Good... so, back to the whole pack thing, were do we start?”

“Right, right okay,” smiled Eric, pleased with my attentiveness. “The first step in teaching your dog that you’re the boss is simple. You want to start controlling all the games that you play with your dog. Most dogs love to play. They love to pull, tug, jump, chase, be chased, wrestle and rough house. We want to start off by making sure your dog understands that you control the game. So, take for instance retrieving a ball...”

“Yeah,” I said before he could continue. “Peanuts loves to chase after the ball, but once he gets it he won’t give it back. He either runs in the other direction, or he runs circles around me and won’t give it to me.” This had been very frustrating, so much so that I hardly ever threw the ball for him anymore.

“Yes,” he said with a small laugh. I could tell he had dealt with this issue many times. “The big mistake that dog owners make is chasing after the dog. Big, big mistake because now the dog has learned how to get the owner to chase after him, and if there is one thing a dog loves, it’s to be chased.”

Peanuts certainly enjoyed it when I was chasing him for the ball. “So,” I said, “What do I do?”

“You have to make yourself more attractive to the dog. You have to make it so Peanuts wants to bring the ball back to you and drop it.”

OK, that makes sense I thought so I asked, “How do I do that?”

Eric explained easily, “The next time you go to play fetch with Peanuts, you are going to go with two balls. One of those balls is to go into your back pocket. Throw one ball and let Peanuts chase after it. As he goes after the ball, take the one in your back pocket out. Don’t look at Peanuts, don’t talk to him, don’t call him, just stand there and start to throw your ball in the air. Bounce it on the ground, act like your having a great time with your ball. If your daughter is in the yard with you, throw it back and forth with her, but you have to completely ignore Peanuts until Peanuts comes towards you.

“Once Peanuts comes close to you, show him your ball and ask him if he wants it. At this point most dogs will take an interest in your ball. If you do a good job of it, Peanuts will come towards you and drop the ball that he has. Once he does that, throw your ball. When Peanuts tears off after the ball you have just thrown, pick up the one he left behind.”

“I get it,” I said excitedly. “And when he comes back I should do the same thing all over again.”

“Right,” said Eric. “Now you are in control of the retrieving game, not Peanuts. A very simple but effective way to teach him to retrieve and release,” Eric added.

“I never thought of that.”

Eric smiled, “That’s why you’re paying me the big bucks. Anyway, I want to talk to you about tug-o-war. It’s a great game to play with Peanuts and you should start playing it when you get home.”

“Hold on,” I interrupted. “Everyone, and I mean everyone that I talk to has said that I should never, under any circumstances play tug with my dog.”

The look on Eric’s face told me that he was not happy. “Aw, that’s a bunch of rubbish, tug-o-war is a great game and just about everybody should play it with their dog.”

“Really?” I asked, still skeptical, as I took another sip of my coffee.

“Yes, absolutely,” he said emphatically. “But there are some definite rules that need to be followed when it comes to tug.

“You see,” he added, “Dogs love to play tug, they love to use their teeth and jaws. It’s a mistake for us to try and prevent them from doing anything that involves using their teeth and jaws. It’s much better instead to control those activities.”

“Yeah, but doesn’t playing tug encourage aggressive behavior?” I asked.

“The problem with tug is that we can give the dog the wrong signals. You have to remember that we have to communicate with our dogs in a way that they understand. We can’t just ask our dogs to be good, we have to let them know what we want from them by what we do. Let me give you an example of why tug is so misunderstood.”

“Okay,” I said. Everything else he had told me so far this morning had made sense, so I figured I’d give it a shot.

“Tug becomes a problem when we don’t do it right. You see, most people play tug with their dog any way they want. Let me ask you a question. How do you play tug with Peanuts?”

I thought about it for a moment and then answered, “Well, usually Peanuts brings over the tug toy, I grab it and we start playing. We play for a few minutes and then I let go. Peanuts goes off to the corner and plays with the toy by himself.”

“Okay,” he said. “There we go. That’s the problem with most people when they play tug. Your dog comes over to you, you grab the tug toy, and you start playing. Your dog pulls, you pull, you go back and forth for about three minutes, and then you let go.

“Your dog is using his teeth and jaws. In his mind, he’s in a strength game with you. He’s pulling, you’re pulling, and then after a few minutes you let go. You are giving a very clear signal to him that he is physically stronger than you are. As your dog “wins” the game of tug, you go about your day thinking about a thousand other things. He goes off into a corner with his prize and only one thing on his mind, that he just won the game using his teeth and jaws.”

“I think I’m starting to understand,” I said.

“Well, here’s the important part,” and Eric paused to make sure I was paying very close attention. “Most people play tug like this from the time their pups are very young. They do this day after day until one day they see something that scares them.

“For instance, one day your wife is in the kitchen getting some chicken ready for dinner. She accidentally drops a chicken leg on the ground. Peanuts grabs the chicken leg and runs into the corner. You follow because you have to get the chicken leg back.”

“Picture this,” he continues, “Peanuts is now in the corner with a prize that he really wants. Before he has just gone into the corner with a cheap piece of rope that you’ve played tug with. Now he has something really, really valuable. As you approach, Peanuts is already becoming defensive and starts guarding. You approach and he gives you a low growl. When you hear him growl at you, you become angry and in a low tone of voice you say “DON’T YOU GROWL AT ME.” The problem now is that in Peanuts mind, he just growled at you as a warning and you just growled back at him. You’ve now gotten yourself into the middle of a stand off.”

Tug-O-War

Despite what you have heard from all the experts, tug-o-war is a good game to play, ***provided that you can control the game***. Let me repeat that: tug-o-war is a great game to play with your dog provided that you can control the game. If you can’t, do not play it, but if you can, I encourage you to play it and play it often. Dog trainers have thought for a long time that tug-o-war was bad because it made your dog aggressive. There is some truth to that. The problem is that instead of learning how to control and channel the dog’s needs, we stop whatever it is that we do not understand.

Most dog owners that I talk to say that their dogs love to play tug, but they do not play because they have heard that it is bad. I like tug because it gives me control over the most dangerous part of the dog: **his teeth and jaws**. When most people play tug with their dog, the game is almost never played with rules. There are five very important rules to follow when playing tug. If you don’t follow them you could run into problems.

Here is the typical scenario for a tug game: The dog runs toward the owner with a tug toy, the owner can clearly see that the dog wants to play tug. The owner grabs the tug toy and starts to play. The play goes back and forth until the owner gets tired of the game and lets the tug toy go. The owner thinks nothing of what has just happened. But, I want you to look at the game from your dog’s point of view.

Your dog runs up to you with the tug toy and you grab it. Question: Who started the game? Answer: The dog. Now you start to play back and forth, after a few minutes you let it go. Question: Who won the game? Answer: The dog. From your dog’s point of view, he is physically stronger than you. If this happens over and over again, you can develop a big problem. But, if you can make a few minor adjustments, you can use tug-o-war to your advantage. A big advantage, because tug can become a very strong motivator. And when you can motivate, you can teach. The stronger the motivation, the easier it is to teach.

Five Steps Every Dog Owner Should Follow When Playing Tug-O-War

Step #1

Tug toys should always be in your possession. Your dog can have the balls and other toys, but the tug toy is yours. When you are done playing tug you should put the tug toy away. Keep it in a closet or a drawer. I like to use strips of garden hose for tug toys. They are easy to carry, don't cost much, and you can play fetch with them.

Step #2

You should always start the game. Never let your dog initiate the game. When you are ready to play tug, go get the toy and start the game.

Step #3

Have your dog perform a simple command before you start playing tug, and have him do commands during play. Ask your dog to sit or down before playing.

Step#4

If your dog's teeth ever come into contact with your skin, the game is over. Teach your dog that it is a felony for him to put his teeth on your skin.

Step #5

At the end of the game make sure that your dog releases the tug toy for you. You can get your dog to release by holding the tug toy close to your body. If you can tighten up and make sure there is no give, your dog will release. As you are waiting for your dog to release, start to use the words "drop it" or "out".

Eric took a sip of coffee and then continued on. "The next step in controlling your dog's environment involves eating," he said. "Remember, you are trying to communicate with Peanuts in a way that he understands. A very important part of this is to control feeding. Far too many people allow their dogs to eat whenever they want and as much as they want. This is a huge mistake.

"For one thing, there are an awful lot of obese dogs in the United States. Furthermore, it gives the wrong signal to him. By controlling the food, you give a clear signal that you are in charge. So, the first thing you want to do when you go home is put Peanuts on a strict feeding schedule."

He looked over his coffee at me. "What do you do now for feeding?"

Unsure why but feeling slightly embarrassed, I replied, "I let him eat whenever he wants to. We put out a bowl of food in the morning and let him eat all day long."

"Not anymore, OK," Eric said, pretty seriously.

"All right," I agreed, not sure how well this would go over with the rest of the family though.

"How is your dog's appetite," he asked.

"Not too good, actually. He picks at his food and doesn't really seem to eat too much. Now that you mention it, one of my concerns about using treats to train him is that they would not work because he seems like he could take them or leave them."

“I can see why you would be concerned that was a problem, but don’t worry, I have the solution for you,” Eric said. “It’s not good that Peanuts only picks at his food,” he continued. “He should always have an appetite.”

Okay, I understand that, but I asked him, “Why is controlling the food so important?”

Eric replied, “Leadership within the pack is the only way that the other members can understand that in order to survive as a pack, they must work together. So, if you study a pack of wolves or dogs, you’ll see that there are signals that go on between the members.

“When a dog comes into a human household, he has no understanding about what is expected of him. He is just going to do what comes naturally. He is also going to try and figure out where he fits in. If the dog has a dominant temperament and there are no clear signals from his human family, it could become a disaster. Conversely, if the dog is a submissive type and is receiving no clear leadership signals from his humans, he may become confused and feel like he has to take a leadership role. This can also lead to problems. That kind of dog is not cut out to be a leader, and becomes highly stressed. Separation problems, housetraining, and chewing are all behaviors that could stem from that.

“So, we need to give very clear signals and boundaries. One of the best ways to do that is to control Peanut’s food. By controlling the food, you are showing that you are in charge. By allowing him a short period of time to eat, and not leaving the food out all day, you let him know that you are the pack leader.”

“What should I do to make sure that I’m in control of the food,” I asked, not really sure exactly what Eric meant.

“The sit, stay command is the best thing to do. We will start to have Peanuts do a short ten to fifteen second sit, stay before each meal. You will also limit the amount of time that you will leave the food out. I would leave the food out for a short period, say ten minutes. He should be finished with his meal within that amount of time,” Eric answered.

A little sheepish again, I said “Can I just mention something?”

Eric seemed to know what was coming next. “Sure,” he replied.

“My wife is not going to like this.” There, I had said it.

He didn’t seem taken aback at all. He just said, “I know this is hard for a lot of people, I see it all the time in my classes...but my dog needs more than ten minutes...but my dog likes to pick at his food...but my dog will starve if I don’t leave the food out. I’ll tell you what I tell them, and you’ll have two choices to give your wife.

“Number one, you can keep doing what you’re doing now and keep your fingers crossed that Peanuts will get better, or two, you can listen to me, The Amazing Dog Training Man, a guy that has years and years of experience, has worked with thousands of dogs and their owners, and only wants the best for you both. Trust me, if you take my advice, you have a much better chance of keeping Peanuts, because from what you’ve told me, if things don’t change, there is a good chance that you are going to have to get rid of him.”

When he put it that way, I knew there was no other choice, I was just going to have to go home and tell my wife that this was the way things had to be done.

Next I asked, “Where is the best place to feed Peanuts?”

Eric answered, “Kitchens are where ninety five percent of all dogs are fed. This is both good and bad. It’s good, because he should get used to eating where there is a lot of activity. It’s bad if he ever shows any signs of aggression. If that ever happens, you need to put the food in a quiet place where he will not be disturbed.

“Ideally, you want Peanuts to get used to humans being around while he is eating. This is a good thing. Since he’s young, we will start to do some food bowl exercises. We want to make sure that Peanuts is always a good dog when food is around. Because you have a child, there is a good chance that kids will be over the house, so, we want to make him bombproof with food. Kids always seem to have a boloney sandwich or a bag of Fritos in their hands. The last thing we want is for Peanuts to growl, snap, or bite when kids are around.

“So, by controlling the food right from the beginning, he starts to get the right signals. One of the best ways to communicate to Peanuts that you are in control is to have him do some food bowl exercises. A great one is to make him do a sit, stay before each meal. I can’t emphasize the importance of controlling his food enough,” Eric said, emphatically.

With still a few questions in my mind about how else to control Peanut’s food, I asked “What is the best age to start doing these food bowl exercises with him?”

“Great question,” said Eric. “Everyone should start doing food bowl exercise with their dog when he is a puppy. In fact, the earlier the better. You see, puppies are very impressionable. It is much easier for a pup than for a two year old dog to have a human sticking his hand in the food bowl.”

Eric went on to say, “Dogs that are defensive around their food bowls are very difficult to deal with. At that point they have formed behaviors that can be very challenging to overcome. So, to prevent that, what we want to do is to stick our hands in the food bowl while he is eating. Swirl your hand around the bowl, pick up a handful of food and let him eat from your hand. Those are two great exercises to do.

“Also, take away the food bowl while Peanuts is eating. When you take it away, put some cheese on the top and then give it back to him. This is a great way for Peanuts to learn that it is actually good when you take away the food bowl. You took it away and when he got it back, it was even better than before.”

“Well, what if he won’t let me take the bowl away, or put my hand anywhere near it. What should I do then?” I asked. Eric was definitely making his point about how important it was for Peanuts to be a good boy around his food.

“Get professional help right away. Don’t ever try to deal with aggressive behavior on your own. When you engage an aggressive dog there is a good chance that you are only going to make it worse. What a lot of people don’t understand is that aggressive behavior is always triggered by something. When we deal with aggressive behavior we need to find out what that trigger is.

“A dog that is aggressive around his food bowl feels defensive. So, what we need to try and do is help the dog to not feel so defensive. Most people make the mistake of trying to deal with aggressive behavior by becoming aggressive themselves. Whenever you use aggression to combat aggression, there is a good chance that you are going to escalate aggression.

“Picture this, if two guys in a bar are yelling at one another, it’s pretty easy to imagine the situation escalating as they get louder and louder. Pretty soon they are going to start throwing punches. The same holds true with Peanuts. If he growls at you and you yell or threaten him in return, you are only reinforcing his defensive feelings. We need to take a much different approach.

“Also, I cannot say this strongly enough. Children should always be supervised around your dog, at all times.” He looked me straight in the eye, and said again, very seriously, “I want you to remember that. Your child, or any of her friends, should never, under any circumstances, ever be left alone with Peanuts. There should always be some parental supervision.”

“Okay then,” he said in a lighter tone. “Now when it comes to helping out with the food, you and your wife should be the only ones doing the exercise with the food bowl. Your daughter can help out by doing the sit, stay command. Have your daughter tell Peanuts to sit and stay and then either you or your wife can put the bowl on the floor. You can then have your daughter ‘release’ Peanuts from the stay.

“We will learn more about that later on when we start doing obedience with Peanuts. But for now, that’s how your daughter can help out. Always try to have your daughter interact with Peanuts in a calm, positive way. Children tend to get dogs excited. They move fast and have high pitched little voices. When you add those together, it makes a lot of dogs get excited. What we want right now from Peanuts is calm behavior.”

“Thanks Eric, this is great,” I said. I was learning so much but I had one more question on my mind. “I was told that I should feed my dog at the exact same time everyday. Is that good advice?” I asked.

Eric shook his head. “I wouldn’t recommend that,” he said.

I looked at him slightly puzzled. That wasn’t the answer I was expecting. “No? Why not?” I asked. It seemed to make sense to me.

His response was, “Feed your dog at different times everyday, and don’t let your dog figure out a schedule.”

I still didn’t understand so I pushed further. “We were told by our vet that we should feed same time everyday,” I said.

“OK, here’s the deal. Let me tell you why you should mix it up for Peanuts,” Eric replied. He continued, “Let’s say that you feed him everyday at 5:30PM when you come home from work. Everyday for two years he gets his meal at 5:30PM. Then, one day on your way home you get a flat tire. You don’t get home until 6:45PM. Peanuts has been sitting there waiting for his meal since 5:30 PM and you did not deliver. Trust me, this can lead to problems. He may become anxious and start to chew, regress with his housetraining, or he may become vocal.

“It is much better to just feed at different times. If your dog was in the wild he would not be on a set schedule. He would really never know when his next meal was coming. By changing up the schedule, Peanuts will be much more stable and be better equipped to deal with changes in his environment that may crop up from time to time.”

Well with that cleared up, I decided right then that Peanuts would definitely not be eating at 5:30PM every night. I was pretty sure our neighbors would not appreciate a barking dog, and I didn’t want to give Peanuts any kind of reason to tear up the house.

As the waitress came back to check on us, we moved onto the third step of structure, sleeping. What do the experts say about sleeping? Eric helped clear up a few misconceptions I had on that topic too.

As we got back into our conversation, Eric started out by saying, “Never is a word that I use sparingly when it comes to dog training and behavior. When it comes to the topic of sleeping, all the so called experts will tell you that you should never, under any circumstances, allow your dog to sleep on the bed with you.”

He continued on, “If you haven’t got the picture yet, I have something a little different to say. I always tell dog owners that it is completely up to them. If the thought of letting the dog sleep on the bed with you is gross, then don’t do it. If you like having the dog at the foot of your bed, then let him up.”

He paused for a second to let this sink in and then added, “I will say this though. If your dog ever, and I mean ever, shows even the slightest sign of aggression, then he has to lose all bed privileges. At this point in time, he also cannot be allowed on the furniture.

“When a dog shows aggression around sleeping areas, you have to take swift and immediate action. In a lot of households, the owners will allow the dog way too much latitude when it comes to this. If you ever see any signs of aggression, do not allow Peanuts back on the bed.

“But, on the other hand, if he has no problem getting off the bed or furniture when you tell him to, and you enjoy having him there, then let him stay.”

Boy was I relieved to hear that letting him up on our bed was not nearly as horrible as we had been led to believe. At least that was one problem we did not have to work on. I had a few other questions for Eric though about sleeping.

“What else do I need to know about sleeping?” I asked.

“Sleeping is one of Peanut’s most basic needs. He has to do it. Where he sleeps is important. In the pack, a dog’s personal space is part of their communication about who is in charge. So, as a general rule of thumb, I always advise new puppy owners to teach their dog to sleep in their crate,” said Eric, adding some more cream to his coffee.

“Wait a minute,” I said. “I thought you just said it was okay for Peanuts to sleep on the bed with us.” Now I was getting confused again.

Eric understood my confusion and said to me, “Yes, but in the beginning, he should learn to sleep on his own. If Peanuts becomes dependant on sleeping in the bed with you it will be very difficult down the road. So, the best thing to do is start by having him sleep in the crate.

“Don’t let him out of the crate if he starts to cry. If you open the door to the crate while he is crying, he will learn that vocal behavior will get the crate door open. It is much better to wait it out and open the door once he’s stopped.

“As Peanuts gets older and more confident and housebroken, you can let him sleep else where. In my household, it seems that all of my dogs have a favorite place to sleep. With my dogs, they sleep all over. Sammi, my oldest, tends to move around. Izzy, the youngest, stays in one spot the whole night.

“It is interesting to watch the pack dynamics when it comes to sleeping. Jimmy is one of my younger dogs. He likes to hop up on a soft couch and snooze. Suede, who is the most dominant in the pack, will sometimes let Jimmy know that he wants his space. He will stand over him and raised his tail and ears. He doesn’t have to growl or threaten. He just uses his body language. Sometimes Jimmy tries to ignore him, but he always eventually gets the picture and hops off the couch.”

“Wow, that’s really interesting. So what you’re saying is that the pack leader gets the most comfortable spots.” I was definitely intrigued by this pack leader, social structure stuff.

“Yes,” Eric replied, then he went on to point out, “But there are times when one of the lower ranking pack members won’t give up his spot. At this point Suede starts to exert a little more pressure. He will growl and start to raise his lips. It could escalate to a fight if I allowed it. But it’s a great example to clearly show you in a real life pack how the most dominant member can get what he wants.”

“Where should I allow Peanuts to sleep now?” I asked.

I had already guessed what Eric’s answer would be and I was right when he said, “For now, until Peanuts starts to show better behavior, I would have him sleep in the crate. As we progress with the training, you can start to let him sleep in other places. But, for now, the crate.”

That's what I was afraid of. But then I remembered all those great ways Eric taught me earlier over breakfast to get Peanuts to like his crate. It didn't seem so hopeless.

Still being unsure about Peanut's behavior after that awful training session we went through, I had to ask Eric, "What do I do if my dog ever growls at me while he's on the couch?"

"Well, never reach in there and try to take him off the couch by his collar," he advised. Then he told me something that would definitely keep me from reaching for Peanut's collar. He said, "About thirty percent of all the dog bites that happen in the United States happen when someone reaches for a dog's collar."

OK, so leave the collar out of it, but I still wondered how I was to go about getting a growling dog off a couch he clearly wanted to stay on.

Before I could even ask, Eric said, "So, if Peanuts growls at you, don't reach for his collar, and it is also not a good idea to scream at him to get off. In a situation like that, the best course of action is to use a little bribery."

"Bribery?" I asked, not sure if I had heard correctly.

"Bribe him off the couch," Eric repeated. "A little later I'm going to explain to you why bribery does not work long term, but in emergency situations, a little bribery can be very useful.

"So, what you want to do is call Peanuts off the couch with a little bribe. Go get a treat or his favorite toy. Once he comes over to you, put his leash on. You are now going to start letting him drag the leash around when he's in the house."

"Why's that?" I asked.

"You see," Eric told me, "When a leash is on Peanuts, it gives you a level of control that you wouldn't have if it was off. Now when he jumps up on the couch, if he starts to growl at you, all you have to do is reach for the leash, provided he's not lying right on top of it. When you get the leash in your hands, there is some distance between you and your dog, a safety zone. Now you can say Good Dog, OFF. If he doesn't get off, you simply turn away while holding on to the leash and walk away. Since you're still holding onto the leash, it will pull him off the couch in a non confrontational manner."

All this dog growling...don't reach for the collar...keep a leash on at all times was making me just a little nervous. I didn't want to make any more mistakes with Peanuts, and I certainly didn't want to do anything that was going to promote any kind of aggressive behavior, so just to clear things up, I asked Eric, "When is it okay to allow Peanuts on the couch?"

He told me, "Off is the word that Peanuts needs to understand. When you give the command and he jumps off without you having to grab the leash, and there is no aggression on his part, it's OK for Peanuts to be on the couch. It is very important for Peanuts to understand that you, and not he, controls the sleeping and resting areas.

"In all the time that I have been working with dogs, I have observed that sleeping areas are one of the first places that you see signs of aggression. If Peanuts doesn't understand that you are in charge of the sleeping areas, it is a clear signal to him that he can take charge of other activities like eating, and playing.

"So, once you see that Peanuts is responding to your command of OFF, then you can start to invite him up on the couch. Once he lays down and is comfortable, give him the command OFF. If Peanuts jumps off, he has passed the test," Eric finished.

"That seems a little cruel," I said, picturing poor little Peanuts, getting all comfortable, and then deliberately being told to get OFF.

"How is that?" Eric asked.

“Well,” I said, and then I started to tell Eric what I had just been imagining. “Poor little Peanuts jumps up on the couch, gets comfortable, and then I tell him to get off. It just doesn’t seem fair.”

Eric was nonplussed. “I guess you can look at it that way,” he said. “But I would much rather have my dog understand the word OFF and put him through a little discomfort than see him bite someone because they were about to sit on my couch.”

When it was put that way all I could say was, “Good point!”

We moved onto the fourth and final part of structure, teaching your dog that you’re the pack leader. I was amazed at all the new insights Eric had given me already, and we were still only at our first lesson, over breakfast.

“Your dog must understand that you control the social contact,” Eric began, but before he could finish I interrupted.

“I don’t understand,” I said. “I have to control how much I pet my dog?” This was never going to work for my daughter.

“No, let me explain,” said Eric. “Let me first explain what social contact is and why it’s so important for Peanuts.

“Social contact is one of your dog’s strongest needs. It is a way that dogs communicate, and when it comes to their human owners, it is a way for them to get attention. I have probably explained to you enough times that dogs are pack animals. In order for them to survive, they need to get along. They have to hunt, reproduce, eat, and sleep together, but they also have to play with one another. Through play, they can learn a lot of their social skills for later in life.

“If you ever watch puppies play, they are actually learning a lot. They learn different positions like play bowing, and they learn how to use their teeth and jaws. When puppies are playing, if one bites too hard, the other puppy will usually squeal and run away, ending the game. The pup that bit too hard has now learned that if he wants to play, he will have to inhibit the strength of his bite.

“Now when Peanuts came into your household, he still had those same social needs. What a lot of dogs learn is that they can get their owner’s attention by doing different behaviors. A lot of dogs love to go up to their owner, usually while he is drinking a cup of coffee, and slap the owner with his paw. The owner now jumps up and pays attention to the dog.”

I was starting to get the picture. “Oh yeah, a lot of time when I’m sitting down, watching a football game, Peanuts will come up to me and start to slap me with his paw.”

“What do you do at that moment?” Eric asked.

“Well,” I said, thinking for a second. “I start to pet him and talk to him.”

“Okay,” said Eric. “Now look at it from Peanut’s point of view. He came up, slapped you with his paw, and you gave him attention. Now, whenever Peanuts is bored, all he has to do is go up to you and demand your attention.”

“Peanuts likes to paw at me. I didn’t realize I was sending him the wrong message by petting him then. What can I do to stop it, because sometimes it is at an inconvenient time,” I asked, eager to hear Eric’s solution.

“Control is what you need to have,” replied Eric. “You need to step up and take control of the situation.”

“Yeah, now that we’re talking about it, it is kind of annoying.”

“I bet,” sympathized Eric. He went on, “So instead of letting him demand attention from you, we are going to switch things around a little. First you are not going to give him your attention when he slaps you with his paw. When you see Peanuts approach, I want you to give

him a simple command like sit or down. Now instead of just petting him when he wants your attention, you're going to make him work for it. If he doesn't do the command, completely ignore him. This way he'll start to learn that attention is given on your terms, not his.

"It is also important for you to understand that when it comes to attention, there are two types, positive and negative. A lot of dogs learn that they can get attention by doing what we consider negative behaviors. If your dog jumps up on the counter... if he steals some underwear... if he's chewing on a pen, what do we do?"

"Well I guess everybody yells at him," I answered.

"Right," grinned Eric. "All the behaviors that we don't like get him attention. When he is being a good dog, lying in the corner, what do we do?" Eric asked.

"Ignore him," I said, the realization of what Eric had just gone over sinking in. Had we really been teaching Peanuts to be a bad boy? I really wanted to fix this problem so I asked Eric, "Are there any exercises that I should do help with this?"

He answered, "Obedience training is always the best place to start. We will get into the basics at a future date, because for now I just want you to understand how Peanuts thinks and how to communicate with him.

"There are some great submissive positions that you can practice with Peanuts. Always go easy when you are handling your dog, if you see any signs of discomfort, ease up. Some times it is very easy for him, sometimes it is difficult. The first thing you want to do is see if you can get Peanuts to roll over on his side. While he is there, gently pet him and get him to relax, once he is relaxed, see if you can roll him over onto his back. Once he is there, you can look at his ears... tail... pat him on the belly.

"This is the most submissive position you can get Peanuts into. When he is in this position there are chemical changes in the brain that take place that will make him more submissive to you. Remember, we don't want to push it at this point. We just want Peanuts to relax and accept it. As time goes on, he will allow you to do this with less and less fuss. Once he is on his back, you will also want to play with his paws and even take out a nail clipper."

"Is this something we can all do with him, even our daughter?" I asked. I remembered how Eric said she shouldn't do the food bowl exercises with him.

"Practice these exercises with all members of the family," Eric said. "At this point though, I wouldn't have any friends help, but as Peanuts starts to understand and accept them, you can do it more often with other people.

"Remember that social contact is one of the most important aspects of a dog's life we need to make sure that it is done on our terms. Oh, and one other thing," Eric said.

"What's that?" I asked.

"You also want to make sure Peanuts accepts human forms of social contact," replied Eric.

"What do you mean?" I was a little confused. I wasn't sure what Eric meant by human forms.

"Well," he began, "What's the first thing that any kid does when they see a dog?"

"I guess they want to pet it," I answered, although I wasn't sure if that was exactly the answer he was looking for.

"Yes," he agreed, "And they also want to throw their arms around the dog and hug it," he finished.

"Yes, you're right," I said slowly, thinking about it. "My daughter is always hugging any dog she can get her arms around. Is this a bad thing?"

“It can be if the dog is not used to it,” Eric said, surprising me. “A lot of people don’t understand that hugging is not a natural act for dogs. In fact, most dogs become quite defensive when someone hugs them. A lot of kids are bitten every year because they try to hug dogs.”

“That could be a serious problem. Our daughter always has friends over. I’d hate for anything to happen to any of the children. What can we do?” I asked.

“Well, we want to start hugging Peanuts and doing things that kids like to do to dogs,” Eric answered. “Starting today, I want you to hug Peanuts at least five times a day. While you’re hugging him, I want you to feed him little bits of cheese, so that it becomes something he enjoys.”

“OK, so far I don’t think we’ll have a problem with social contact, but what if the steps I’m taking aren’t working?” I didn’t even know what social contact for dogs meant before this morning, but I was beginning to realize how important it was.

“Consistent attention on your part should bring everything together for you, but if that isn’t working out, you may have to keep a leash on him in the house, just like we may have to because of the furniture situation. With a leash on, you can always gain control over his behavior.

“If Peanuts starts to paw at you or try to engage you in chase games, all you have to do is take the leash. If you try to go after him or if you try to physically scold him, there is a good chance he is going to win. So, by taking the leash, you can secure it to a back tie like a door knob on the other side of a closed door, or you can step on it and wait for calm behavior.

“Only by doing either one of these steps can you ignore the behavior that you don’t like and wait for the good behaviors that you do like. To give you an example, let’s say you’re stepping on the leash and Peanuts is fighting and squirming at the end of it. All you have to do is simply wait. Once he calms down he is now displaying a behavior that you like and he can now get your attention. Give him a gentle pat on the head and tell him what a good boy he is. Then you can give him his freedom back.

“This is a great way to teach Peanuts that you are the pack leader. If you try to out and out fight him, he is going to win every time, and you are only going to become more and more frustrated,” Eric finished.

“How long do I have to do this for? The leash in the house, the food bowl exercises, the social contact exercises?” I was wondering how much time this would take.

“Voice control is when you will know,” was Eric’s answer. “When Peanuts understands by the tone of your voice, that’s when you will not have to use the leash as much, or have to do the rest of the exercises on a regular basis.

“With my dogs, all I have to do is tell them OFF, and they jump off the couch. All I have to do is lower my voice if they start to do something that I don’t want them to do. As time goes on and as Peanuts matures, you’ll see how much easier it becomes. These activities are very simple activities that you can easily incorporate into your daily routine.

“I would say that for the rest of his life, you should hug and roll him over every once in a while. You want to make sure that he is always accepting of these things. A dog that is getting older, or a dog that has a physical problem may show some signs of aggression when you are doing this,” Eric added.

“Like what?” I asked.

He said, “If Peanuts ever develops a hip problem, or any other physical problem, he may get a little grumpy. The first time you’ll probably see it is when you are doing some handling

exercises. Say for instance, that you are trying to get him to roll over, but he seems like he doesn't want to. That may be a sign that you should take him to the vet for a check up."

Chapter Six

How to teach you dog to do obedience commands by using the principles of positive reinforcement

“Now that you’re starting to get an understanding of the basics, I want to move onto step four of my Reverse Dog Training Method, influencing behavior,” said Eric. “I teach obedience training uses a method called Positive Reinforcement. It doesn’t involve choke chains or pinch collars.”

“Why is this the best way to train Peanuts?” I asked.

“Effective training can be accomplished by using proven, effective, positive reinforcement training methods. The beauty of positive reinforcement is that it has no side effects. The biggest problem with positive reinforcement is getting your timing right. Many times when we are training we reward the wrong behavior.

“For example, I have seen dog owners call their dogs to them. When the dog gets to the owner, the owner reaches into his pocket...pulls out a treat...breaks a piece off...and gives it to the dog. The problem with this scenario is that by the time the food reaches the dog, the dog has probably done at least three or four other behaviors.

“When the dog got to the owner, he waited while the owner was reaching into his pocket. While waiting, the dog sniffed the ground... looked at another dog...sat down. By the time the food reached the dog, the dog had already forgotten about the command come.

“When using food, it is crucial that you work on your timing, and that you reward the right behavior. As we go along, I will discuss other important points to remember when you’re using food.”

We talked for a moment about Peanut's training which led me to another question that had been on my mind.

"What about using punishment when I'm training?" I asked. I already had some ideas of my own, after my other training experience, but Eric went on to explain about punishment in detail.

"Anger is usually the main motivation behind punishment. When you decide to use punishment, it is best if you have a clear head and you are not just getting back at your dog because you are angry. As I mentioned with positive reinforcement, your timing has to be perfect. It has to be even better when you are using punishment, because punishment has negative side effects.

"I am not opposed to using punishment, it can be a very effective way to change behavior. When I do decide to use punishment though, I always try to keep a clear head and make sure that I have weighed all the consequences."

Eric continued, "Some questions to ask before using punishment are; Can I manage the dog's behavior instead? If I don't use some form of punishment, will the dog be harmed or possibly get killed?..."

"Whoa, wait a minute...what do you mean get harmed or get killed?" I asked.

"If my only option is to use punishment to stop my dog from running out into the road in front of a car, then I will use it."

"Oh, OK, I get it now," I said.

"The other question I will also ask myself before I use punishment is; Before I use punishment, is there another alternative? Only after I have asked myself those questions will I consider using punishment.

"Punishment is not a totally bad thing, in fact there are certain circumstances where punishment, if used correctly, can be very effective."

"You said earlier that there could be some problems associated with punishment. Can you tell me what they are?" I asked.

"Well, there are two major problems. When using punishment you run the risk of what I call cross associations, and you develop the dog's tolerance level. Let's look at the cross associations first," Eric said, pausing for a moment.

"When I first started training, I would hand every dog owner a pinch or choke collar as they came into class," Eric began. "Wait a minute, I see that look on your face. Remember, I started training dogs a long time ago. My methods have changed since the early days. As I go on, you'll see why."

He continued, "At the beginning of the six week session I would watch as eight to ten nice, happy dogs walked into class, and six weeks later I would watch eight to ten angry and potentially aggressive dogs walk out. It always bothered me.

"The problem was with the collars. Let me give you an example. When you walk into a room of dogs with your dog on leash, the first thing that your dog will do is pull. Most dogs get excited at the sight of another dog and want to investigate. As your dog pulls towards the other dogs you start to give your dog a correction for pulling. You think you are correcting the pulling, but your dog could associate the correction with whatever he is looking at.

"Your dog is looking at another dog and feels the pain of the correction. If this happens enough times, over a period of a few weeks, you could develop an aggression problem.

"Some so-called real world trainers will tell you that I am full of B.S. I have had these geniuses tell me that I can't be sure that the dog is associating the pain of the correction with the

sight of another dog. I was even informed by one idiot trainer that dogs do not feel pain, a comment so stupid it didn't even merit a response, but back to cross associations.

"Here is a question that you have to ask. If your dog sits, barks, and raises his paw all at the same time and you give the dog a treat, which behavior are you rewarding? You can't be sure. Now, ask yourself this, what is the side effect of giving your dog a treat for doing three commands at once? My answer is that it may take a little longer to teach the behavior.

"Effective training requires me to try and pinpoint and reward the specific behavior that I am trying to train. Now, let's use the same thoughts with corrections. If your dog is looking at another dog and pulling at the same time, if you give a leash correction, which behavior are you correcting, and what are the possible side effects of the correction?

"You have to be very careful about what associations your dog may be making with the correction. You could develop serious aggression problems. This is a problem you don't have to worry about when you use positive reinforcement."

Eric went on to cover the second problem with using punishment, developing the dog's tolerance level.

He explained, "Developing a tolerance to the level of the correction is another huge problem. Traditional training methods usually start with a choke collar to train the dog. When a choke collar loses its effectiveness, they then switch to prong or pinch collars, when they no longer work, they switch to shock collars. When the shock collar doesn't work, the dog's neck is sprayed with water to make the shock much stronger. The dog's tolerance level continues to grow. In order to get a reaction from the dog, the level of correction needs to get bigger and bigger.

"I often tell the story of training in the martial arts as a kid. When I started we would learn how to block using our forearms. My buddy Mike and I would practice for hours. When we first started with our training, any kind of blow to my legs or forearms would hurt. After a few months, we developed a level of tolerance, and could withstand harder and harder blows. The same holds true with using choke, pinch, or shock collars on your dog. Over a period of months, or even years, the dog will develop a tolerance and frustrate the trainer, who doesn't know how to use more positive methods."

Eric waited patiently while I finished taking my notes, and then went on to ask me a question. "What is Mother Nature's recipe for punishment?"

I thought about the question, but I had no idea. I waited to hear what Eric had to say. He took another sip of his coffee and began.

"When I decide to use punishment, I use what I call Mother Nature's recipe for punishment. Mother Nature uses punishment to teach us that fire will burn...that we can't breathe underwater...and that gravity works every time.

"I forget who said it, but I know someone once said that we can find the answers to our questions when we study nature. A big problem that I faced in my training career was when and if I should use punishment. My first discovery was that punishment can be very effective. I didn't particularly like the fact that punishment was effective, but there was no denying it. If I was going to use punishment at all in my training, I wanted to learn as much as I could about it.

"I looked at how nature doles out punishment and that is where I found my answers. When I made a study of punishment and how to properly use it, the most important thing that I learned is this: In order for punishment to be effective, four steps have to happen every time. If one of the four steps does not happen, the punishment will lose its effectiveness. You also have

to make sure that the dog associates the punishment with the behavior, and does not associate the punishment with the punisher.

“Let me give you an example: When you drive down the road and see a police officer, I will assume that you do what about ninety percent of the population does. You slow down and check your speed. We do this because we have been pulled over for speeding before. The problem is that when you are punished for speeding the punishment does not stop the behavior. It only temporarily suppresses it. If speeding tickets were effective, we would not speed. Ask yourself this question: Have you ever been pulled over for speeding? If you said yes, now ask yourself this: Did it stop you from ever speeding again? Your answer is probably no. A speeding ticket only gets you to slow down for a while.

“Here is the unique thing about punishment when it is not used correctly. We learn how to get good at avoiding it. I have a friend who loves to drive fast. Guess what he has in his car? The most up-to-date radar detector. How does this apply to dogs? Let me give you an example: How about a dog that likes to steal food off of the counter. We see the dog stealing, and we yell and maybe punish the dog, using some physical method. What has the dog learned? Your dog has learned to not steal food off the counter in your presence. When you leave the room the dog will continue to steal the food. Your dog has effectively learned to associate the punishment with you, not the behavior.

“Here are the four steps that you need to follow when you are using punishment. I will explain each one in detail at a later training session, but for now, I want you just to know what they are. Make sure you write them down.”

1. Big
2. Consistent
3. Punishment has to be associated with the behavior
4. Cannot be associated with the punisher

Chapter Seven

Driving Lessons

The #1 secret German dog trainers use to get maximum results

After I had finished writing, Eric smiled at me and said, “There is one more major topic you need to be familiar with before we start obedience training.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“You need to understand the concept of drives,” he said.

“Drives?” I had no idea what he meant by that.

“Yes, drives,” Eric repeated. The he went on to say, “Dogs respond to body language and tone of voice. Every dog has three primary drives: Pack Drive, Prey Drive, and Defense Drive. These are your dog’s desire to work within a pack, to chase, and to defend himself. You’ll see these drives more pronounced in some dogs. Take for example a border collie; they have a very, very strong prey drive.”

“Yeah,” I said, remembering some shows I had seen on TV. “I saw a lot of border collies on the animal channel doing a lot of different activities.”

“Yes, border collies have an intense prey drive, that’s why they make such good agility dogs. The reason we have to understand the concept of drives is simple, it is one of the best ways to communicate with our dogs in a way that they understand, especially when we are teaching obedience. That’s why I’m going over it right now. I want you to understand this before we start training.

“Your dog will never understand the human language, except for the words we teach him. What your dog does understand is tone of voice and body posture. What does Peanut do around your daughter when she is excited and starts talking in a high tone of voice?” Eric asked me.

“Oh man, Peanut gets all excited. He comes from across the yard to tackle her sometimes,” I recalled, with a smile on my face.

“Right,” said Eric. “She has triggered Peanut’s prey drive through the tone of her voice.”

“I don’t think I quite understand yet,” I said, still a little confused. “How does my tone of voice effect my dog’s drives?”

“Okay,” said Eric, thinking of another example. “Have you ever used a low tone a voice with Peanut?” he asked.

Thinking for a second, “Yeah, once I caught Peanuts up on the counter and yelled at him. I guess my voice was low. When he heard my voice, he jumped off the counter and ran under the table.”

“You put your dog in defense drive. What if I was to get up from the table and lean over you right now, and get my face about three inches from yours? How would that make you feel?” Eric asked.

I didn’t have to think too hard. “I’d feel like you were nuts,” I said quickly.

“Right, but wouldn’t you also feel a little defensive?” Eric questioned further.

“Sure I would.”

“OK, now what if I began yelling at you and cursing you while you sat there? How would you feel then?”

“I’d get mad at you,” I replied, actually starting to feel a little defensive.

“Right. My tone of voice or my body posture would put you in defense drive.

That’s what happens with our dogs. They respond to our tone of voice and our body posture. If our tone and posture is wrong, they are going to have a hard time doing the command. Think of it as non-verbal communication.” Eric finished.

I think I got it. I was writing as fast as I could. When Eric saw that I was finished with my notes, he continued.

“Let me break down each drive to give you a better understanding. I’ll start with pack drive. What is pack drive? Pack drive is your dog’s desire to work with his pack, or in our case his owner. It is a strong behavior in some breeds. You see it in German shepherds, labs, goldens, and collies. It’s a little different when it comes to terriers and hounds.

“Why is that?” I asked.

Eric went on to explain, “Dogs were bred for specific reasons. Today, we don’t get a dog for the task he was bred for, we usually go on looks. A hound was required to put his nose down and sniff, a terrier was required to go into holes after rodents.

“So, when we’re working a dog in pack drive, it is important to understand that we need to use an even tone of voice and we need to stand erect. This body language puts the dog into pack drive. Pack drive can be very useful when we are teaching a dog to walk on leash.

“It is also important to understand that when we are working with a dog that has a low pack drive, we need to do everything we can to get the dog to work better. Take a chow for example. A chow does not have a lot of pack drive. The best way to develop a stronger pack drive is to bond with him. Some good exercises for this are playing, going for car rides, taking long hikes in the woods, and hand feeding every meal. When you’re doing this, it is very important to make sure that all these things are being done by the person who is trying to develop the stronger bond and stronger pack drive.

After I had finished writing, Eric said “Moving right along, what is prey drive?”

He answered this question himself. “Prey drive is the dog’s desire to chase and hunt. A dog with a strong prey drive can be easy to train, because they have a strong interest in games like fetch and tug.

“So, you put your dog in prey drive by using a high pitched tone of voice and by crouching down close to the ground or by lying on the ground.”

“Lying on the ground?” I asked.

“Yeah. Have you ever lied on the ground with Peanuts?” Eric asked me.

“Sure I have,” I answered. “He goes nuts.”

Eric went on to explain, “Right, prey drive is the dog’s desire to chase, pounce, and hunt. So, this is the best drive to get him to come when called. When we start to teach Peanuts to ‘Come’, we are going to make sure that you’re always low to the ground and that you’re using a high pitched voice. This gives Peanuts the right signals.

A lot of dog owners give their dogs the wrong signals when they do this command.”

“How’s that?” I asked.

“Have you ever seen a guy call his dog? Most of the time they use a low, growly voice. They also lean forward. This instantly gives the wrong signals to the dog, and he has a hard time completing the command.”

“I think I’m starting to get it,” I said.

“Great! OK we have one drive left. What is defense drive? Defense drive is a little more complex. What you have to understand about defense drive is that it is divided into two categories. You have fight and flight. Just like you learned in school, in dangerous situations you have two options; you can fight or you can run like hell.

“So, what you need to understand about a dog’s defense drive is that he could respond either way. When we were talking about hugging, remember how I said that Peanuts could bite if hugged? asked Eric.

“Yes,” I answered.

“What I want you to understand,” he continued, “about defense drive is that it has more to do with confidence than anything else. If a dog has a strong fight drive it doesn’t necessarily make the dog mean, it shows that he is confident. Let’s get back to the topic of hugging. A dog that has a strong fight drive is confident, which means he may accept hugging willingly. A dog with a strong flight drive may bite because he feels cornered. So, we want to pay attention to that as we are training. One of the best things to remember is that if Peanuts does do anything that resembles a bite, you want to look at your body posture. Did you do anything to put him in defense drive?

“Peanuts goes into defense drive when you use a low tone of voice and when you lean into him. Dogs, just like humans, have personal space. We want to make sure that dogs accept us humans in their personal space. Other wise, there could be a bite.

“When would you use defense drive in training?” I asked.

“Good question.” Eric smiled, “With some dogs you can use it on the stay command. You would also put Peanuts into defense drive when he is doing something that you don’t like. If he jumps up on the counter and you loudly and firmly reprimand Peanuts, it is going to put him in defense drive.

“So, to go over the drives, your dog is in pack drive when you are standing up straight and using an even tone of voice, he is in prey drive when you are bending down and using a high pitched tone of voice, and he is in defense drive when you are leaning in and using a low tone of voice.

“You have to remember to be conscious of this as you are training. If your verbal and non-verbal communication don’t match up it, will be difficult and confusing for him. Also remember, that with defense drive, response might be different depending on the dog’s personality.”

“I think I understand drives better now, but I’m still a little unsure, how do I use drives to train Peanuts?” I just wanted to be sure I had gotten all of this correct.

“Well, what you want to remember is that your tone of voice and body posture will affect what you are trying to do. If you’re trying to teach Peanuts to come, make sure that you have a

higher tone of voice and don't lean in towards him. Always be aware of this, and make sure that you are giving him clear messages through your tone of voice and body signals.

Chapter Eight

Training Mistakes

Why you may be unintentionally teaching your dog bad behaviors and how to stop it

“There is one more small point I want to get across this morning before we finish up,” Eric added. “I want to talk briefly about reinforcement. There are two kinds of reinforcement.”

Writing all this down in my note book, I asked, “What are they?”

“They are called intentional and unintentional reinforcement,” Eric answered. Pausing for a second to give me a chance to finish writing, he continued, “reinforcement occurs when we intentionally reward, but it also occurs when we unintentionally reward a behavior.

“Many times when I am working with a new dog owner, I explain that a lot of the behavior problems that they are experiencing are the direct result of them rewarding the dog. I go on to explain that they have been unintentionally rewarding the dog’s behavior.

“I see it happen the most with jumping and puppy biting or mouthy behavior. This is the typical scenario: The owner walks in the door. Junior, the seven month old lab jumps on the owner. The owner pushes Junior off and says to stop jumping. Junior, not missing a beat, comes right back at the owner. Pretty soon, the owner and Junior are in a wrestling match. The owner, by this time, is very upset. Junior, by this time, is having a blast. Even though we want the dog to stop jumping, we are teaching him to continue jumping by paying attention to the behavior. When you give attention to a behavior, the behavior will continue to thrive.”

I thought carefully for a moment. Was I unintentionally rewarding Peanuts for bad behaviors? For some reason, I was pretty sure I had been. That was going to change. I was curious to know a little more about why the results would be the same, so I asked Eric, “Why does it have the same results?”

Eric was ready with an answer. He told me, “Laws of reinforcement work when we mean to reward a behavior, and they work when we don’t mean to reward a behavior. Think of it this way. The law of gravity works all of the time. If you are on the roof of a house and intentionally jump, gravity is going to work. If you trip while up on the roof and fall, gravity still

works. It works every time. You didn't mean to fall off the roof, but the outcome is the same as if you intentionally jumped. The same thing happens with the laws of reinforcement. A behavior will be reinforced whether you mean to reward it or if you unintentionally reward it.

"Let me give you a real life example involving Peanuts. Let's say Peanuts walks past a laundry basket, sees a pair of socks, grabs them, and starts to run like hell around the house. You, your wife, and your daughter see that Peanuts has the socks, so you all take off after him. Peanuts, who is ecstatic because everybody is chasing him, runs around the coffee table, dining room table, and ends up underneath your bed. This is the most fun he's had all day, and it is a classic example of unintentional reinforcement. You didn't mean to, but you just reinforced the stealing behavior. Now when Peanuts is bored and looking for some action, all he needs to do is grab something."

"What am I supposed to do when that happens?" I asked Eric. "Let him run all over the house with the socks in his mouth?"

"No. You set up the situation so you will not unintentionally reinforce the behavior. Simply leave a leash on Peanuts when he's in the house. Now when he steals something and starts to run, you can step on the leash, prevent the chase game, and there will be no unintentional reinforcement.

"From now on, pay close attention to your actions when you are working with Peanuts. If he is doing a behavior that you do not like, examine what you are doing. If you are unintentionally rewarding the behavior, start to make changes. A little later I will show you how to apply the M.U.T.T. method for dealing with problem behavior. But for now, just start to pay attention to your actions.

"I think I've probably overwhelmed you with information this morning, but it's very important that you understand everything we covered. The better you understand your dog, the easier it will be to train him and achieve the results you're looking for.

"Before we leave, I just need to give you a list of the equipment you'll need for our first class."

I sat there, expecting a long list, but this is all Eric told me to bring:

Leash
Collar
Treats

"A leash is the first thing you'll need, and I recommend six foot leads when you're training. I also like leather leads because they are much easier on the hands than a nylon or chain one. Six feet is ideal because it will give you enough room to work with Peanuts. Most people make the mistake of using a short leash which puts the handler off balance.

"When it comes to collars, I use just a flat buckle collar that you always have on your dog anyway. I don't use choke or pinch collars when I'm working a dog. If you start with a choke or pinch collar, there is a good chance that you are going to have it on your dog for the rest of his life. So I start and end with a flat buckle collar.

"As far as food goes, you want to make sure that when you start training you are using something that Peanuts really likes. Don't show up next week with a handful of your dog's kibble. Bring the good stuff...cheese...hot dogs...Sausages, you know what I mean. Just cut it up into bite size pieces and put it in a plastic baggie or small container.

“I have one other request. Don’t give Peanuts breakfast. I want him to be good and hungry. This way he’ll be motivated to work for the treats. We’ll meet next week, same day, same time at Gooseberry Island,” said Eric, referring to the small, uninhabited island, connected to Westport by a small causeway.

“Well, thanks Eric,” I said, eager to get home and start applying some of this new information. “I just have one other thing that’s been on my mind since we started talking.”

“After listening to all the great things you had to say this morning, I don’t understand why people still train using such harsh methods.” I said. I just didn’t get it, if there was a better way, how come all trainers didn’t use it?

“Well, have you ever heard of the motivational speaker Zig Ziglar?” Eric asked me.

“No, I haven’t,” I told him.

“Zig is a great teacher and has some great stories to drive his points home. One of my favorites is the ham story.”

“The ham story?” I asked, wondering what was coming next.

“It’s a story about this guy who just recently got married. On the couple’s first formal dinner, he is in the kitchen helping his wife prepare the dinner when he see her lop off the end of the ham and throw it in the trash.

“Amazed and perplexed, he asks her why she just did that? She responds by saying that is what her mom always did when she cooked a ham. Well, why did she do it, the dumbfounded husband asks. The wife answers by saying, I don’t know. The husband says, well let’s call her and find out why. They get mom on the phone and ask her why she always lopped off the end of the ham. She answers by saying, I don’t know, that’s the way my mom always did it. After they hang up with mom, they get on the phone with grandma. Once they have her on the phone, they ask her why she always lopped off the end of the ham. She answers by saying that her pan was too small to fit the ham.

“When you think about the story, it’s funny to think about how much ham ended up in the trash because no one would ask a simple question. Dog training has been done the same way over the years because no one asks questions. Trainers are shown one method and that’s what they use. That’s why harsh methods have survived for so long.”

The waitresses were clearing up, and it was time to go. I gathered up my notes and thanked Eric for his time. I was looking forward to our first training session next week. I got into my car and pulled out of the parking lot.

I was so deep in thought with all these new ideas for Peanuts that I almost missed Perry’s Bakery. My daughter would throw a fit if I didn’t bring her home one of Perry’s famous cinnamon sticks. Seriously, if you ever come to Westport, you have got to stop in. It’s out of the way, but so worth it. While I was there I also grabbed a coffee for my wife, and then was on my way home.

Chapter Nine

The First Lesson

Putting the Reverse Dog Training Method to work

What a beautiful day. As I drove to Gooseberry Island and looked over at the ocean, I couldn't help but notice the color. It was an amazing turquoise blue. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, and I thought I spotted a few sailboats off in the distance. The day was so clear that I could almost see the houses on Cuttyhunk Island. What a perfect day. It must be a good omen. I parked my car in the small, sandy lot on Gooseberry Island and got out. I was excited and nervous. Today was Peanut's first training lesson with Eric, The Amazing Dog Training Man. After last week's breakfast, I rushed home, eager to give my wife and daughter the fantastic news. I had high hopes for Peanuts. Now, though, with the actual training day here, I began to feel a little nervous. It had all sounded so good last week, but was it too good to be true? What if I just couldn't get Peanuts to listen? I took a couple of deep breaths, and then let Peanuts out of the car and brought him over to meet Eric.

Eric, in shorts and sandals again, looking more like he was going to the beach than to a dog training lesson, gave us a friendly greeting. He shook my hand and bent down to pet Peanuts.

"OK," he said. "Let's get started. I have an appointment with my jet ski later on this afternoon."

"The first thing we are going to teach Peanuts is control, and then attention." Eric started out by saying. "You see how Peanuts is pulling you all over the place? We have to get control of him while he's on the leash. To give him a command while he's pulling like that is just a waste of breath."

I thought for sure we were not off to a very good beginning. Getting control seemed like a reasonable place to start. I wasn't having very much luck getting physical control over my dog, but Eric mentioned something about attention. What did he mean by that?

"It is important to control your dog mentally and not physically," Eric said, interrupting my thoughts. "Results happen much quicker when you learn how to do that. When you try to physically control Peanuts, all you are going to get is resistance. He will be much more reliable,

and you will accomplish obedience training much faster with mental control than if you are always trying to physically control him.

“So, the first step in training is to use something that will persuade Peanuts into doing what we want. I like to use food as opposed to toys when I’m training because it allows your dog to focus better. When you use a ball or tug toy, it usually over excites him and makes it hard to focus. Food has a calming effect, and it will allow you and your dog to accomplish much more.

“Once you have control over Peanuts, we are going to get him to pay attention. There is no need to give him a command if you don’t have his attention. When you take the leash make sure that you don’t wrap yourself up in it. Try to relax when you’re working him, and plant your feet firmly on the ground. Do you have any questions?” Eric asked.

Trying to take it all in, I said, “Yeah, I’m still a little concerned about using food. I guess it was the last instructor. She scared the heck out of me about training with food. She said that it was just a way to bribe the dog and that I’d always need it.

“After our meeting last week, I went home and really thought about all that you told me. I understand the benefits of training with food instead of punishment, but how do I use food properly?”

Eric just smiled and explained, “Behavior can be influenced by using rewards. The problem with food is that most people do not understand the principles of behavior. Many people do use it to bribe their dog into doing obedience.

“What we want to do is reward behavior. There is a difference, and we want to make sure that we are always rewarding and not bribing. In the beginning, we do bribe the dog a little bit, but as your dog learns, we will use the food to reward.

“The problem with bribes is that they only work for so long. Once the dog figures out the bribe, he will start to hold out for better and better bribes. Let’s say that your dog gets loose in the back yard. Most dog owners run inside and grab a box of dog biscuits. Once they have the box, they start to shake it and try to get the dog’s attention. Once the dog looks at them they say ‘Want a cookie?’ The dog, knowing what the box of dog cookies looks like, comes running over. That is an example of bribing your dog.

“After a few days, your dog will learn that you are trying to bribe him just to get him in the house. When your dog has figured out that when he comes over to get a cookie he is going to have to go in the house, he will start to ignore your bribes. It’s at this point that a lot of dog owners start to use better and better bribes.”

“What is the biggest mistake I can make using food?” I asked. I guess I was pretty unsure of my abilities at this point, and wanted to make sure I had all my bases covered.

“Behavior is influenced by consequences,” Eric told me. “When we are training a dog, we want to use food to reward the right behaviors. The biggest problem that I see with dog owners using food is that their timing is off. When you reward, you want to make sure that the right behavior is being rewarded. You see, if you’re off even a split second, your dog could get the wrong idea.

“I once watched a lady teach her dog how to turn his head,” he said with a laugh. “Her dog was very interested in the other dogs in class with him. When she said ‘sit’, he would look at the other dog the second he sat. She always gave him his reward after he turned his head. By the end of the first class, he thought he was getting the treat for turning his head. Pretty soon, every time the owner said ‘sit’, the dog turned his head.

“So, you can see that when we’re training, we need to make sure that we are right on the money when it comes to rewarding. When your dog does a command, make sure that you don’t have to reach into your pocket...pull out a treat...break off a piece...and then hand it to him. If you do that, your dog will be completely confused about what we are trying to teach him,” Eric finished.

“OK, I think I understand about the importance of timing, but could you explain a little bit more about the bribes and rewards. I don’t think I’m totally clear on that. What exactly is the difference between rewards and bribes?” I asked.

“That’s a great question,” Eric said. “When you show your dog a treat and then ask him to do a behavior, you are bribing him. If your dog does a behavior, and then you take out a treat and give it to him, it is a reward. Is that clearer?” Eric asked.

“Let me see if I’ve got this straight,” I said. “You’re telling me that it all has to do with whether I give the dog the treat before or after the behavior occurs.”

Eric smiled, “That’s right. Let’s say you give your dog the command ‘come’. But, before you say the command, you are waving around a big fat dog biscuit for Peanuts to see. You are trying to bribe him into doing the command. That is a bribe, and bribes only work for a short period of time.

“What we want is for you to say ‘Peanuts come’. Then, when Peanuts gets to you, you reach into your pocket and give him the reward.”

“Well how do we get the dog to do the command if he doesn’t understand it?” I asked.

“When it comes to the command come, we have to set the dog up to be successful. We’ll get to that later,” Eric said with a grin. “For now, do you understand how bribes and rewards work?”

“Yeah, now I get it. If I ask my daughter to clean her room and she says no, and then I say, ‘if you clean your room I’ll get you some ice cream,’ that’s a bribe.”

“Right,” Eric agreed. “But if your daughter cleans her room on her own, you can tell her at that moment that you’re bringing her out for ice cream. Now you will have rewarded her behavior.”

“I think I understand,” I said.

“OK then, now we’re ready to teach your dog one of the most important behaviors. In fact, I’ll go so far as to say that if we don’t teach this behavior, our obedience training will be junk,” Eric said emphatically.

“What is it?” I asked, very curious. What could be the most important behavior to teach?

“Attention,” he answered. “Learning can not happen without attention. If you showed up for a lesson and were talking on your cell phone every two minutes, I would get in my truck and drive away. I need your full attention to teach you how to train your dog. Your dog needs to pay attention to you when you are giving a command.

“In all the years that I have been training dogs, I can say without reservation that about eighty percent of obedience problems are not obedience problems, they are attention problems.

“In my classes, I have watched dog owners give the command ‘sit’ over and over again. Usually, the dog owner will keep raising his voice. ‘Sit, Sit, Sit, Sit, SIT, **SIT SSSIIIIITTTT**. Raising your voice won’t always get your dog’s attention. A lot of the time our dogs have learned to completely tune us out.

“So, we want to make sure that before we ever give a command, we have our dog’s attention. Do you understand?”

“Yes, but how do we know if we have it?” I wasn’t sure how to tell if Peanuts was really paying attention to me.

“We want them looking at us,” Eric told me. “In fact, we want them to make eye contact. Once we have eye contact we know that we have the dog’s attention. So, before you give a command you always need to be sure you have your dog’s attention.”

“Before we start to actually teach our dogs how to sit, lie down, stay, and all that good stuff, we need to start teaching the dog to pay attention when we say his or her name. When I teach a dog attention, I don’t use any words other than the dog’s name. When I say the dog’s name, ‘Peanuts,’ I want the dog to look at me and give me it’s complete attention.

“Once I have its attention, I can get him to sit, lie down, to come, to walk, and to stay. When you can’t get your dog’s attention, it is very difficult to do anything else with him. Like I said before, about eighty percent of your obedience problems are really attention problems. When your dog isn’t doing a behavior for you, there is a good chance it is because he is not paying attention to you.”

Sounds simple enough, I thought. “How do I teach Peanuts to pay attention to me? Right now, his mind is everywhere,” I told Eric.

“Let me explain a couple of different attention exercises for you to work on. The first one that I like to do is to just say the dog’s name. The dog looks up at me because I am holding a treat by my face. I want you to understand it is not so much that he is working for the food, but that I am motivating him to look up to me. We use the food to motivate behavior. This is very important.

“OK, this is how it works. What I am going to do is hold the treat up by my face...and then as the dog looks at me...I am going to drop a treat on the ground, right next to the dog...the dog grabs it...I say the dog’s name... ‘Peanuts’... the dog looks up... and I drop another treat, on the other side of him...he grabs it. Do you get the picture?” Eric asked.

“Now, you are probably wondering, why does this weirdo want me to drop treats on the ground when my dog looks at me? If you hold the treat up by your face then drop it on the ground, and you say the dog’s name, while he is grabbing the treat, the next place he will look is back up at you! Peanuts is going to look back at you and think, ‘Hey that was pretty good!’ and then you say ‘good dog,’ and drop another one, and he grabs it. He’s thinking ‘Do you have another one?’ And you’re like, ‘Sure, just keep paying attention to me.’ It is important to remember that you only drop the treat when the dog is looking right at you.”

Eric waited while I made some notes in my notebook.

He continued on when I had finished. “Next, you want to see if you can work on increasing the amount of time that Peanuts stays focused on you. At first you get maybe two seconds of attention, then you give him the treat. Eventually you want to see if you can get five seconds, then eight seconds, and then ten seconds, and so on.

“See how long you can get your dog to look at you. I timed my dog Sammi once, and I can get Sammi to do almost a minute and thirty seconds straight without moving, while I’m just sitting there looking at her!

“When you get that kind of attention, it is easy to get the dog to do anything you want him to. Now I want you stand up straight. I want you to say Peanut’s name, hold the treat up by your face, and see if you can get five seconds of attention.

“It is important to practice this every day. When you give your dog some treats... when you feed him breakfast...dinner...anything like that. See if you can get eye contact from him

first. See if you can get him to look right at you. Once you can get your dog's attention, you're going to work on the three basic commands: sit, down and stand."

Eric paused for a second to catch his breath. His enthusiasm was contagious. He wasn't finished with the day's lesson though. As soon as I had finished writing in my notebook he said, "You are going to learn how to teach some basics, like sit, lie down, and stand. Those are the three positions that your dog can be in when he is not moving. You want to have control over all three positions, and before you begin be sure you have some treats; high powered ones that Peanuts really likes.

"Before you actually start teaching Peanuts specific commands, you need to learn how to hold the leash properly. A lot of times when we have a big strong dog, we tend to wrap the leash around our hands. If you do this, you won't have the control you need. The most important thing to remember when you have a dog on leash is to try to make sure that the leash always stays nice and loose.

"What I want you to do is put your right thumb through the loop, then I want you to put both hands together at about waist level. As your dog walks away from you, you will pull him back and then let the leash go slack. If Peanuts starts to tug, pull back, and let the leash go slack again. You should be able to stand with your dog on the leash beside you and hold a cup of coffee without spilling it."

Yeah right, I thought. No chance of that happening yet. But I promised myself we would make that one of our goals.

"Why don't you work on the pull-back-let-loose routine until you and Peanuts can stand still side-by-side," Eric instructed. "Good, good!" he said, as he watched our progress. "That's it, now you can give him a little praise, 'Good boy,' 'Good dog.' You don't want to praise too enthusiastically, because you want him to stay focused and not get excited to the point where he is jumping all over the place!

"Remember, loop on your right thumb...both hands together at waist level...stand up...don't move...don't walk...just plant your feet...try to get a nice loose leash. Go ahead, keep working on it.

"Pull back and let loose...pull back and let loose. Remember, if your dog starts to pull, bring him right back and let the leash go slack. Good! Now praise your dog."

I relaxed a little, I was starting to get the hang of it. This was kind of fun.

"As I was saying," Eric continued, "you are trying to get control over Peanut's behavior. If there is any tension between you and your dog, you are going to lose control. When he starts to go away, you need to pull back. As soon as your dog is back, let the leash go slack.

"The trick is this; don't let Peanuts get too far away from you. If he gets too far, he gains momentum, then you have to haul him back if he hasn't already pulled you off your feet. In the end you want to have your hands about a foot away from your dog's collar.

"Remember, whenever you have Peanuts on a leash, you want to make sure that you stay in control of his behavior. A lot of times owners hate going to the vet because their dog goes absolutely ballistic, right? What you want to do is to make sure that you have control, no matter where you go; dog training class, vet's office, friend's house, you should be able to have your dog nice and relaxed and under your control.

"Okay, try it again one more time."

After we had made a little more progress and I gained better control of Peanuts on leash, Eric said we were ready to move on.

“We’ll begin with the Sit and the Down, and then get to the Stand command,” Eric said. “When I first start training a dog, I use a food lure to get the dog to be in the position that I want. The treat acts as a prompt.

“Without a prompt it is difficult to get your dog to do anything. I don’t use force. I don’t force a dog unless I absolutely have to. I don’t force him into sit or down or stand. The reason is that whenever you use force, you get resistance. Do you remember talking about opposition reflex at breakfast last week? You apply pressure...you get resistance. Have you ever tried to force your dog into a down, ever tried to push him? It doesn’t work at all. It’s much better to use the treat as a lure.

“What we want to do is make sure that we never trigger the opposition reflex. We want to make sure that the dog does everything easily and smoothly for us. I always start by using a food lure, and I am going to be honest with you, it is a bribe. You start off bribing your dog.

“In the beginning, you always have to bribe to get the desired behavior. However, I will show you how to switch from bribes to rewards as we go along with the training.

“First, we are going to do a sit and a down. Hold the treat right on top of the dog’s nose. You have to hold it there, because if you don’t, Peanuts is not going to stay focused. If I hold the lure away from him, and say, ‘down, down,’ the dog will just keep looking up at the lure.

“What you want to do is bring the treat to the top of the dog’s nose, say, ‘sit’ while moving the lure back over the dog’s head. If it is at the right height and back far enough, Peanuts will go into a sit! Once he has gone into a sit, you quickly praise him and give him the treat.

“Then you want to see if you can lower Peanuts into a down. Now, holding the lure slightly in front of your dog’s nose, say ‘down,’ while lowering the lure to the floor. Try some sits, then see if you can lower him into a down.

Peanuts and I worked for a few minutes on sit. He was actually getting the hang of it. Then we tried going from sit to down. Now the problems started. I just couldn’t get Peanuts to lie down. “What am I doing wrong?” I asked Eric, confused.

“While I’ve been watching you, I noticed a few things. You’re doing a great job with sit, by the way, but one of the reasons that you’re having trouble getting Peanuts into a down position may be that you are pulling the treat away from him.

“Sometimes your dog can be a little nervous about doing a command, especially a down, because it is a submissive position. Peanuts may feel kind of vulnerable. Also, the down position may be difficult for large dogs because they can’t figure out what to do with their large paws. Additionally, if you’re working on a bare floor a shorthaired dog may find the down position cold.

“When the treat is not enough, no matter how big or how small he is, try using successive approximation.

“Successive approximation is just a fancy term for breaking down a command into little, teeny, tiny steps. For example, we want the dog to go into a down, but I noticed that Peanuts starts to bail when he gets about half way there. So, what we’re going to do is reward Peanuts when he gets about half way into the down, before he bails.

“On the next try, we’re going to reward again for going half way. On the next try we’re going to ask for a little more. We’ll see if we can get him to go three quarters of the way down. If he does that, we’ll see if we can get him to go all the way down. Does that make sense?” Eric asked.

“Yeah, I get it. I couldn’t just expect my daughter to wake up one day and be able to ride a bike. First she had to learn to ride a tricycle, then she moved on to a regular bike but with training wheels, and then eventually, she was able to ride without the training wheels. Is that an example of...what was that big word?”

“Successive approximation. You’ve got it. That’s exactly what we’re going to do with Peanuts. One little step at a time.”

I paused for a minute. This seemed to make a lot more sense than putting some kind of collar my dog that looked like a torture device and physically try to force him to do what I said.

Eric continued, “Once you get your dog into a sit, and then into a down, you want to see if you can get your dog to come back up to a sit. You are going to tell your dog ‘sit, ‘down,’ and then ‘sit’ again.

“So, this time, what I want you to do, using the food lure, is have Peanuts sit, then go into his down, now, once he is down, lift the lure up over his nose to get him back into the sit position.”

We tried this a few times. Peanuts was still not going all the way down, but I noticed on each attempt, he was getting closer and closer to the floor. He had no problem though following the lure back into his sit position.

“Great job,” Eric said. “You guys are making really good progress. The next step is to see if you can get him to go into a stand. Keeping your dog’s attention, say ‘stand,’ and pull the lure back toward the side of your leg. This is the last position you can teach him when he is not moving.

“When you practice the sit, down, and stand commands at home, be sure you vary the routine. After the sit, if your dog goes into a down without you asking for it, it may be because this is the usual routine and he wants to please you. Dogs always try to anticipate commands.

“When you are practicing with Peanuts, you want to make sure that in addition to the food lures, you also praise him. When you praise, you should praise enthusiastically enough for your dog to get excited. Not so much that you lose control and attention though.

“A lot of times, during my classes when I say, ‘Okay, go ahead and praise your dogs,’ and no offense, but guys are worse at this than girls, I’ll hear an owner say, ‘yea, good dog,’ and casually pat the dog on the head. And do you know what that dog is saying? ‘Big deal.’

“When you praise your dog, don’t be shy. You are not going to get down on the ground and wrestle with him, and I don’t expect you to, but at home, when you praise your dog at the end of an exercise, you should praise him enthusiastically and really get him excited.”

Eric continued to give me some advice on what to do at home while we were practicing our obedience.

“When teaching your dog, don’t do more than ten-minute sessions. Working for no more than ten minutes will let you end on a high point. You always want to end with the dog wanting to do more. This will make the next training session that much more exciting. When you practice, ten minutes is the magic number.

“If you want to do a couple of ten minutes sessions a day, that is even better, but in order to get any results, you must do at least ten minutes a day. I practice twice a day, at breakfast time and dinnertime! I have their food bowls, I work on the behaviors I want to enforce, then I put the food down and let them eat.

“If your dog is really good at a sit, don’t give him a treat every time he does it. Make him do a sit, then a down, then a sit, before you give him the treat. Now your dog has done three behaviors and he has gotten one reward, and that is how you want to start structuring your

reward schedule with Peanuts. Eventually, he'll do all your commands without any food lure at all.

“Well, that about finishes up your first lesson. What do you think? Can you practice ten minutes a day?” Eric asked.

“Definitely,” I replied. I was already encouraged by the progress Peanuts had made that morning. I couldn't wait to go home and practice, so that next week we could learn more.

“Great,” said Eric. “Well, those waves out there are calling to me. I'm off to get my jet ski. We'll get together next week, same time, same place, OK. Don't forget to practice.”

I waved good-bye as he headed off to his truck. Looking out at the ocean, Peanuts and I headed over to the dunes for a nice walk. I couldn't help but imagine what it would be like when I could let Peanuts off leash to run free across the sand and play in that, blue, blue water. We left the island about a half hour later, full of hope.

Chapter Ten

Don't Move

How to teach the "Stay" command in ten minutes or less

It was another beautiful day in Westport. Peanuts and I left for our lesson a little early so we could take a drive around town. He loved going for rides and it was the perfect day for one. Westport is beautiful in the late spring, with all the leaves on the trees and the flowers in bloom. We passed field after field of cows, horses, and goats. Even though Westport is a coastal town, it's actually an agricultural community and the countryside is dotted with many small farms. One of Peanuts favorite activities is to go for a ride past all the animals.

We arrived at Gooseberry Island just in time to see Eric pull up, towing a couple of jet skis. He hopped out of his truck and came over to greet us. I'm proud to admit that I had Peanuts under much better control than last week. Those leash lessons really worked, and by the time Eric reached us, Peanuts was calmly hanging out by my side. He wagged his tail as Eric gave him a few pats, and then it was time to get back to business.

He got right into it. "While you continue to work on the sit, down and stand commands, you will begin to switch your dog from following the food lure to obeying the command with a hand signal. At the end of this lesson we will start working on the stay command. Getting your dog to do a good stay command is a piece of cake and teaching your dog to do a stay only takes minutes. It's not that hard!"

Was he for real? I thought it would be a huge challenge to teach Peanuts to stay, but he had been right with everything else so far.

Eric continued on with our lesson, "Remember, the first thing you want to do when you stand up is get control of your dog. Next, you want his complete attention. Don't give him any command without it. Once he is focused on you, give the sit, down, sit, and stand...see if you can get him to do these commands now."

He watched as I put Peanuts through his paces. We had practiced at least once a day all week and it was showing. Peanuts had no trouble going all the way down, and he was eager and attentive the whole time.

“That’s great,” Eric said. “I can tell you’ve been doing your homework. Next I want you to take a treat out of your pocket and I want you to put it right on top of your dog’s nose for a second. Put it on his nose. Now put it in front of his face. Now start to move it around...up and down...back and forth. Is your dog following it?”

“Yup,” I replied. Peanuts wouldn’t take his eyes off the treat. “Good. Now, go back and forth with it in front of his face. Then go up and down. See how he is following the lure. It is easier for him follow something that he can see than what he can hear. Now I want you to try this: Stand in front of your dog with your arms at your side and say, ‘down’.”

I had no idea what he was getting at, but I followed his instructions anyway. I positioned Peanuts in front of me.

“My guess is he won’t do it,” Eric said, before I could even give the command. “Tell him to sit, or say down, or tell him to stand. Without a lure or a hand signal he’ll probably be totally confused.”

I could tell he was trying to make a point, I just wasn’t sure what it was yet.

He continued, “But if you take a food lure and give these commands, your dog will follow the lure and obey. Is the dog responding to your voice or is your dog responding to the food lure? He is responding because he is following the food lure. “Now you want Peanuts to respond to a hand signal. Put the treat in your left hand, and with your right hand, give the hand signal for sit. When he sits reward him with the treat and ‘good dog.’ You’ll want to reward him every time in the beginning because you’ve made this command a little more difficult.

“This is how you start to make the transition from following the food lure, to following the hand signal. You definitely want to reward, but you are switching from a bribe to a reward. Remember, the problem with bribes is that they only last for so long, and when you bribe a dog, the dog is actually in charge of the situation.

“Think of it this way, if you were trying to bribe me, you might say, ‘Eric, I’ll give you fifty bucks if you don’t say anything about this to anybody.’ My response might be, ‘Give me a hundred and you’ve got a deal.’ Now I have control of the situation, not you. This can very easily escalate, and pretty soon the dog is in charge. Shortly thereafter, the bribes don’t work at all anymore.

“In the beginning when you are training a behavior, you are without doubt bribing the dog, which is why you want to switch to rewarding the dog early on in the training process. Now, instead of bribing, you are going to only give your dog a reward when he does the command without following the food.

“I just had you wave the lure around the front of your dog’s face and you noticed his eyes following it, right? Well, you are getting your dog in the habit of following your hand. All you have to do now is make the transition from lure to hand.”

I was relieved to find out how we were going to phase out the lure. I must admit, I was still a little concerned about Peanuts only doing obedience for food.

Eric continued on with my instructions. “Don’t put the food in your right hand, put it in your left hand or keep it in your pocket. You are going to give the dog an open hand signal for sit. When Peanuts goes into a sit, you reward from that other hand.

“Now you turn your hand over for down. When Peanuts goes into a down position, give him the treat from your left hand. Sit, you give it to him. Down, you give it to him.” He stopped for a minute to watch us.

“Right. That’s it! Now your dog is working for a hand signal,” Eric said enthusiastically. I could tell he was pleased also with the progress Peanuts was making.

“When you first make the transition to hand signals,” Eric continued, “you want high rewards, lots of rewards...sit, reward...down, reward...sit, reward. Once the dog starts to get the hang of following the hand signals, then you start to get him to do more and more commands in a row before rewarding. For instance, try to get two or three behaviors for one reward. Try sit...down...sit...stand, and then reward.

“You have to make the transition from bribes to rewards, otherwise your dog is only going to follow the food. Let’s get back to the example of the loose dog in the back yard. Instead of going to the cupboard and getting the milk bones and shaking the box, hold the box of bones behind your back, then become animated and excited using your ‘let’s play’ tone of voice. When Peanuts comes to you, then reach behind your back, and pull out the box of milk bones.

“You see, now you are rewarding the dog. Whenever you show the food first, you are bribing him. But if you call ‘Peanuts, Peanuts!’ and sound excited, when he comes and you reach in your pocket and give him a treat, you have rewarded the behavior. The difference between the bribe and the reward is slight, but distinct...the bribe comes BEFORE the behavior, the reward comes AFTER.

“You want to make the transition so that your dog responds to your hand signals and not just a food lure. Once your dog starts to work for rewards and not lures, you can change those rewards to praise alone. Praise can take many different forms from playing ball or tug-o-war, to giving a treat, or saying ‘good dog, what a good dog.’

Eric must have thought I was starting to look overwhelmed because he said, “Don’t try too much at one time. For now, I just want you to tell your dog to sit. Open up your hand with your palm facing up, keeping the treat in your left hand. With your palm up, tell Peanuts to sit. When he sits, reward him from your left hand.”

We practiced a few times and Peanuts was starting to follow my hand, and I was getting the hang of giving the signal with my right hand and the reward from my left. It was a little awkward at first, but with each try, it felt more natural.

When Eric felt we were ready he continued, “The down command is a little more difficult. With your palm down, say ‘down.’ Make sure that when the dog goes down, you give him lots of rewards. You only want to say a command a couple of times. If you find yourself saying ‘down...down...down,’ stop. When you repeat a command over, and over, and over, you desensitize the dog to the word.

“When I was a kid my Mom would tell me to clean my room. She would say, ‘clean your room...clean your room...clean your room.’ She would say it over and over. I just got to the point where I tuned her out completely, her saying ‘clean your room’ just didn’t have any affect on me...until my Dad said it. My Dad only had to say it once, there was just something in the tone of his voice and I knew he would follow through, making sure I completed the ‘command’.

“Anyway, you want to give your dog the command down with the hand signal, and if he doesn’t respond after two or three times, take a treat out, and lure him. This is an important point to remember, lure him into a down, and then put the treat back in your pocket! Don’t give it to him, but I do want you to say ‘What a good dog!’ Then, tell your dog down again with the hand signal. If he still doesn’t do it, take the lure back out and say ‘down’, but put it back in your pocket and praise your dog. Only give him the treat when he does it for the hand signal!

“Now I want you and Peanuts to give it a try. I want you to have him sit, then see if you can get him to lie down. If you can, see if you can get him to sit back up. Now, if he is not following your hand signals, as I said, use the food lure, but just don’t give it to him. Say, ‘sit...down...sit,’ with the food lure, then put it in your pocket and praise him.”

He watched us go through the exercises a few times. Peanuts did OK, but I had to use the food lure a few times to get him into his positions. I was getting a little frustrated.

After a few repetitions, Eric said, “You have to remember that you are making a transition here from the dog following a food lure to the dog following an open hand signal. Whenever you make a transition, it is normal for there to be some confusion.

“It’s the same with people. Especially me! Transitions have to be very slow and very well detailed or I get all flustered. You are making a major transition from food to a hand signal, and you must try to make it as easy as possible for your dog.”

That made me feel better, and I resolved to not get frustrated with Peanuts. He was trying his best.

Eric gave us a quick break and I went to my car to get some water. I was more than a little envious of those jet skis on Eric’s trailer. I would have to look into getting one for myself. I just wasn’t sure yet about the best way to broach the subject with my wife. Maybe after we fixed Peanut’s behavior and obedience problems and things weren’t so stressful at home. That would be a pretty powerful motivator!

I walked back over and Eric restarted the lesson. “The last of the three basic commands is stand. Hold your hand in front of your dog’s face then pull it back toward your leg. This is exactly what you did with the lure only now the lure is in your other hand. Again, you may not have instant success, so you’ll have to go back to using the lure, but remember, don’t give it to him, use praise instead. Always keep the rewards coming. Make training fun for your dog. Don’t worry, slowly but surely you’ll be getting rid of the food bribe.

“I have one more word about hand signals for you. When you give your dog a hand signal, exaggerate it. The hand signal for sit is your palm facing the ceiling right in front of his face. To signal down, turn your hand over palm facing down. To signal stand bring your hand straight back. If you exaggerate the hand signal it is easier for the dog to follow it. As the dog starts to learn and recognize it, you can exaggerate less. Remember, repetition is the key to success but in no more than ten minute intervals.”

I worked the stand command with Peanuts for a few minutes, and then we put them all together. I was using the lure less and less. That was encouraging. After we had gone through the exercises a few times, Eric stopped us.

“You’re doing a great job, but now it’s time to move onto the last part of today’s lesson. The stay command is a real piece of cake to teach your dog and that’s a good thing, because I need to leave here in about ten minutes to meet up with a few friends.” Eric looked a little sheepish and added, “I try to take advantage of every nice day in the spring and summer because before you know it, fall seems to be here.”

I couldn’t agree more. I was also eager to finish up and enjoy the rest of the day. Maybe I would take a quick drive over to Dartmouth...just to look at jet skis. I could check out Gem Motorsports, and Bob’s Sea and Ski before my wife got home. It would also be a great chance to socialize Peanuts. Yes...it would be beneficial for the dog.

Eric interrupted my thoughts and brought me back to reality. He was saying, “I take a different approach when I am teaching a dog how to do a stay. A lot of dog trainers try to teach dogs how to do a stay command by physically forcing the dog to stay in one spot. They try to

physically control the dog. Remember, whenever you try to physically control your dog, you are in for a rough ride.

“A better way to teach a dog how to do a stay is to control what the dog wants. Instead of physical control, you want to get mental control. If you put your dog in a sit command, and tell the dog to stay, and then walked in front of him and dropped a big fat hot dog...or a piece of cheese...or a piece of steak, and then told him to stay, what would the dog probably do? He would jump up and run for that hot dog. Your dog right now has no clue about stay, but we’re going to change that.

“Traditionally, if the dog moved from the stay command, we would try to physically force him back. We might say, ‘No, I said stay,’ and we would try to wrestle him back, but the dog has one thing on his mind...get that hot dog! Also, the more you wrestle with him, the more he’ll wrestle back, until you lose control.

“To teach the stay command, you just take a treat, you tell him ‘stay’, and then you put the treat down in front of him. If Peanuts starts to get up, give a quick verbal correction like ‘Ah-ah,’ and take the treat back.

“Put the treat back down on the floor in front of Peanuts, if he gets up, give the verbal correction ‘Ah-ah’, or ‘Hey,’ and put the treat away. The reason I say ‘Ah-ah’ is because the word ‘No’ kind of gets drowned out.

“Remember when I said that if you say something over and over and over, it loses its effect? A lot of times in obedience class, I hear the word No, and I swear the dog thinks it’s his name. ‘Oh, he’s talking to me.’ You say ‘No’, and he thinks, ‘He must be talking to me’ and he gets all excited.

“I suggest you do not use the word No, and instead, use a verbal checking noise, a quick, sharp ‘Ah-ah’ or ‘Hey!’ It will have a much larger effect on the dog.

“To review, tell the dog to stay and put the treat down. If the dog gets up, pull the treat away and give the dog a verbal correction. You will find, after a few tries the dog starts to figure out, ‘Gee, every time I go for the treat, he pulls it away, maybe I should try to wait a second.’

“Finally, your dog will wait for a split second and when he waits for a split second, you pick up the treat and give it to him saying, ‘G-O-O-O-D Dog.’ He gave you the behavior that you wanted. You wanted him to just sit there and relax and not move towards the treat. Believe me, after a few tries Peanuts will get the hang of it.

“Whenever you say ‘stay’ it means don’t move. The first stay that you ever do is the most confusing for your dog. Remember, I told you it would only take about a minute or two to teach. The key to teaching your dog to do a stay command is not controlling the dog, but controlling what the dog wants. He wants that treat, he goes for it, but you control access to it.

“Do you have any questions about the stay command? Eric asked.

“No, I think I’ve got it. I tell Peanuts stay, put the treat down, and if he goes for it, I say Ah-ah, and pick up the treat. I only give him the treat if he stays in place for a few seconds.”

“Very good!” Eric said. “Practice your stay commands twice a day. If you feed your dog at breakfast and you feed him again at dinner, you can practice it then. That is how I do it with my dogs. ‘Stay,’ and the dog doesn’t move, put the food dish down. That night the same thing, ‘stay,’ the dog doesn’t move, put the food dish down. This way you can practice the stay commands at least twice a day.

I just wanted to let you know you’re making good progress, and I can tell you guys are working hard together at home. Keep up the good work, it will be well worth it,” and Eric headed off to his truck to take his jet skis over to the town launch, just down the road.

I told him to have a great afternoon, and Peanuts and I headed for the dunes. He deserved a reward after all his hard work this morning, and I know there is nothing he loves better than to take a walk on the beach.

Chapter Eleven

Let's Go

*Teaching your dog to walk on leash
Don't trigger your dog's "Opposition Reflex"
and you can get him to walk anywhere*

Our beautiful spring had come to a screeching halt, as it was known to do out here on the Southcoast. The past few days had been cold and rainy, and today was no different. Instead of meeting on Goosberry Island, as we had done for the past two lessons, Eric asked us to meet him at American Canine, his actual place of business. It was just up the road, about a mile and a half.

Peanuts and I arrived a few minutes early and he gave us a quick tour. He showed us where the grooming took place, and where he boarded the dogs overnight. I was surprised by how big the runs were. He also showed us where he held his dog daycare sessions. It was amazing to see all those dogs playing together. They seemed like they were having a great time.

I remembered that he had mentioned daycare at our first meeting at The Barn, but I had no idea what to expect. I had never even heard of dog daycare before. But, there it was in front of me, all different kinds of dogs, playing together and having a blast. There was a staff member with them, making sure everyone played nicely and got lots of attention. I would definitely be bringing Peanuts back after his training was done. He loved playing with other dogs, and it would be great when my daughter went back to school and wouldn't be able to spend so much time with him during the day.

We made our way back to the training hall, where Eric taught his obedience classes. "So, this is where the magic happens?" I asked, because after our first few classes and the practice sessions at home, the changes I was starting to see in Peanuts seemed like magic.

Eric laughed and said modestly, "I just give frustrated dog owners a new way of looking at their problems. I give you the tools, but you really do all the work."

"Well, Mr. Amazing Dog Training Man, what's on the agenda for today?"

“Today we are going to get into the fun stuff. We are going to teach your dog to walk on leash. Walking on leash and coming when called are probably the two most difficult commands. Dogs learn from a very early age that pulling is an effective way to get what they want, and when you call them to come back, they learn that their owners cannot run as fast as they can. Therefore, I break down these two difficult commands into two lessons, this week walking on a leash and next week coming when called.

“The first thing you have to understand about teaching your dog to walk on leash is this: Always try to maintain a slack, loose leash. Dogs learn that they can get what they want by pulling. When your dog is a young puppy, and he sees another dog, a person, or a blowing leaf when he’s on leash, what does he do? He pulls. He sees a fire hydrant, a telephone pole, or a bird on the lawn, and he says, ‘Gee, I want to go check that out.’...he pulls, and we just hang on and go for the ride!

“Remember, all behavior is reward driven. If my dog is pulling towards a fire hydrant, what is the reward? The fire hydrant! What is the behavior—pulling! If I allow him to pull me to the fire hydrant, the pulling has just been rewarded, unintentionally. Pulling becomes a problem with a lot of dogs because it is unintentionally rewarded over, and over, and over. The first thing we have to do is to make sure that the dog never pulls on leash.

“The second reason we have such a tough time with pulling is our old friend opposition reflex. Remember that opposition reflex is when you apply pressure and you get counter pressure. If you push down on your dog’s head and shoulders, he will resist and lock up. When you put a leash on your dog and you pull back, he feels that pressure and so he pulls away.

“The opposition reflex works both mentally and physically. Have you ever seen a ‘wet paint – don’t touch’ sign and felt compelled to touch the object to see if it really is wet...mental opposition!

“So, you have to make sure that you don’t ever put your dog into opposition reflex mode when you have him on leash. If the leash is tight, he is going to pull away from you. The trick to teaching a dog to walk on leash is to always keep the leash nice and slack, nice and loose, so that there is no tension between you and your dog.

“The other reason your dog pulls is because he has no idea that he is supposed to be walking at your side. You are going to teach Peanuts that if he stays right at your side, good things will happen.

“The first thing you are going to teach him is to stay on your left side. By the way, it doesn’t really matter if you have your dog on your left or your right side, just so long as you are consistent.

“Start by holding the food lure down by your left leg. Peanuts will follow the food lure and stay at your side. As your dog follows the lure and remains at your side, you reward him, ‘Good dog, good boy.’ If the dog starts to pull, give a tug on the leash and then let it go slack.

“Using this method to teach Peanuts to walk with the leash is one of the reasons why I do not like to use choke chains and pinch collars. If you think about it for second, you can see why pinch and choke collars are not very good training tools. As your dog starts to pull, you tug him back. Perhaps he’s quite rambunctious and you have to use some force to get him back to your side. If you need to keep giving him this correction what happens when you use a pinch or choke collar? Your dog is feeling constant pain.

“If you and I were walking down the street together, and you were right next to me, and I kept punching you in the arm every couple of feet, would you continue to walk next to me? You’d probably think, ‘This guy is a loser,’ and hit me back or, at least get away from me. With

a pinch or choke collar, your dog will want to get away from your side also. Instead of teaching your dog to walk at your side using negative methods, I want you to reward him for being in a good place, right next to you.

“You do not want your dog going from left to right...between your legs...behind you...or in front of you. Therefore, if the dog is on your left side, hold the leash in your right hand. Put the loop of the leash over your right thumb, just like you did before, and then hold the leash at waist level. Have a food lure ready in your left hand. Just like everything else we teach, we start out with a food lure.

“Use the food lure to guide Peanuts. If you try to out-muscle him, you are probably going to lose. As you practice with the lure you’ll see that he is walking nicely and smoothly, no pulling, and you say, ‘That’s a good boy, good dog.’ You are teaching him that walking at your side is a good thing. Now you need to practice turning to your right or turning to your left as you are walking.”

When he finished with these instructions, Eric asked if I had any questions.

“So far, so good,” I replied.

He continued on, “Training your dog should be about eighty percent mental and about twenty percent physical. If you are breaking into a sweat when you are working with your dog, chances are you are doing something wrong.”

I finished writing down my notes, and when I was done he said, “Let’s review what you are going to do. Take the leash in the hand opposite the side that the dog is going to be on. If Peanuts is on your left side, put the leash in your right hand. Now the hand that is closest to him should have the food lure. When you start walking, you are going to let the food lure do the work, not your arms. Practice walking in a straight line back and forth.”

Peanuts and I gave it a shot. Once I got myself situated, it was actually surprisingly easy. Peanuts stayed right by my side. He was very interested in keeping his nose close to that lure. Well, this is great in Eric’s training hall, but would we ever be able to move it out onto the road where there were so many distractions?

“You are teaching your dog that walking by your side is where you want him to be. He follows the food lure; you reward him,” Eric told me. “As he starts to get the hang of it, you can start to raise the lure higher and higher. Remember, the trick to this, as with all his other training, is to fade out that food lure.

“A lot of times, as I am walking with a dog, as long as the dog is looking at me, I will drop the food lure out in front of me, and let the dog get it, but as I do that I also change direction. I will do this again and I will start walking the other way. If the dog is looking up at me, I will drop the food lure out in front of me and change direction again.

“Do you remember the first attention exercise that we did? Remember when I had you stand there, waiting for Peanuts to look up at you and you dropped the treat on the ground and he grabbed it? The reason I had you drop it on the ground is because he would look right back up at you anticipating the next treat. To reinforce this behavior, you start to raise the lure higher and higher until the dog is looking up at your face and then you drop it.”

“What do I do if Peanuts is not paying attention to the lure and doesn’t seem to be motivated by food that day?” I asked. Even though Peanut’s appetite had gotten much better since I stopped leaving his food out all day, there were still times when he just didn’t seem interested in treats.

Eric said, “Whenever you’re training a dog, it is always easier if the dog is motivated by the treat you are offering. If he isn’t, then you have to use your voice. Try to use praise. Pat the side of your leg, and sound excited and pleased when he complies.

“If I was working with Sammi, I would start by telling her, ‘Let’s go Sammi.’ While she is looking at me, I would drop the treat, and then change directions. While she is looking at me, I drop it, and change directions. As you practice walking, hold the lure up by your face, drop it, and then change directions. Then check to see if Peanuts is looking up at you again. Don’t forget to keep the leash nice and slack.”

Peanuts and I practiced some more. I was a little awkward at dropping the treat and changing directions, but we kept trying, and pretty soon I was getting the hang of it. I was able to keep Peanut’s attention on my face for short periods of time, and he seemed to want to stay pretty close to my side.

I asked Eric, “Do you use the command heel or do I add that in at a later stage?”

“You may want to use the heel command later,” Eric told me. “What I use at this point are the words, ‘Let’s go,’ ‘Sammi, let’s go,’ and I start walking with her. The reason I do not use the word heel at this time is because the heel command is a very precise command. When Sammi is looking right up at me, paying total attention to me while we are walking without the food lure, that represents the heel command.

“In the beginning however, you have to think of ‘heel’ as marching. ‘Let’s go’ is just walking, and what you are trying to do right now is just to get your dog to walk with you. Once he starts to learn to walk with you, then you can make it fancy. For now, when you take Peanuts for a walk, it’s just a ‘Let’s go’ command.

“If you are going for a two mile walk, you just say, ‘Let’s go,’ and as long as Peanuts is not pulling, you don’t care what he is doing. You have to let the dog sniff, explore, and do the things that they need to do.

“If you were watching Sammi and I walking down the road, you might say to yourself, ‘She doesn’t look like a really well trained dog,’ because she’d be off sniffing a little in front and a little behind. But, if all of a sudden the leash broke, or if I had to cross the street, or a group of people approached, then I would give Sammi the heel command. At that point I’d want her to focus on me.

“You use the heel command for short bursts, two to five minutes tops. A lot of times when I take my dogs down to the beach I will park across the street. To walk my dogs across the street, I say ‘heel.’ Once we get across the street, and we are on the beach, then I say, ‘Okay, let’s go.’ So really, you are teaching your dog the first of two commands. You are teaching Peanuts a relaxed ‘Let’s go’ command for now. Later you will work on heel.”

We practiced for a few more minutes. My coordination was slowly improving and so was Peanut’s attention to me. I couldn’t believe that I was really teaching him how to walk. I felt for the first time that maybe, just maybe, my daughter would even eventually be able to walk him.

We finished up and Eric gave us some more words of encouragement. Peanuts and I gathered up our things and we headed back to the car. I thought about stopping at Village Video on the way home to pick up a few movies. While I was there, I could also stop in to see Tony and grab a barbeque chicken pie, the best in the area, at Village Pizza. With this weather, it definitely felt like a movie day.

Chapter Twelve

Coming When Called

Teach your dog how to come when called using the Spring Loaded Recall Exercise

The weather had improved and it felt like spring again. It was a windy morning when Peanuts and I headed back to Gooseberry Island. We had been practicing walking all week, I and was finally able to take him for pretty successful walks in our back yard. We still had a ways to go though before we could move it to the streets.

I was looking forward to today's lesson. We would be learning the command "Come." I was curious to see what Eric's method was for getting Peanuts to come back to me instead of running in the opposite direction. We pulled into the parking lot at Gooseberry, and got out of the car to go and greet Eric.

It took quite a while to get to our final destination, a whole fifty feet from where we parked. Peanuts was quite taken with Eric, and as soon as he saw him, he started tugging at the leash. Trying to make a good impression, I took out my bag of goodies and did a few attention exercises with Peanuts. Once I got him to pay attention to me, we practiced our walking with the food lure, dropping the treats and changing directions. After a good five minutes, we finally made it over to Eric, but I was very proud of myself and Peanuts too! I did not get frustrated once, and I refused to let Peanuts pull at all on the leash.

Eric congratulated us when we finally reached him. "Believe me, I know how frustrating it can be, but that was great. Your persistence will pay off in no time. OK, Let's get started. Today we will work on the recall command. I told you last week that this is one of the most difficult commands, but it is also the most important one. Do you know why?"

I thought about it for a moment and said "I don't know for sure, all I know is that it drives me crazy when I let Peanuts outside and then I can't get him to come back in."

"Well," Eric went on to explain, "exercise as I told you at breakfast, is one of the most important things that you can do for your dog. When your dog is allowed off leash, you greatly

improve the quality of his life. You see, when Peanuts is off leash he is free to do what he wants within reason. He can sniff, play, run, and just basically stretch his legs.

“The other great thing about letting him off leash is that if you were to walk down the length of this beach, Peanuts will cover much more ground than you will. So, if you walk a mile, he will probably walk three.

“I think that the absolute best thing you can do for your dog is to teach him to come. Peanuts will have better life, he’ll get more exercise, and it is much safer if for some reason he gets out the front door or off his leash. You need to feel confident that he will come back to you.

“When I first start teaching dog owners the recall command, I always tell them to make sure that they set the dog up to be successful. If you go too fast, or if your dog doesn’t understand the command, there is a good chance that he will fail the exercise.

“If this happens, it’s not the dog’s fault it’s the trainers. So, take your time, teach your dog in a safe environment, or with a long line. When he’s just learning the command, always make sure that you have a way to make him come back. That way he will be successful.

“Confinement is the biggest problem when it comes to the recall command. Most dogs spend the majority of their lives in some type of confinement. They spend their time in a crate...a house...a car...a fenced in yard...a kennel...you get the picture. So, when your dog finally gets loose, the last thing he is thinking about is going back to you.

“The secret to getting Peanuts to come back to you when you call him is to let him develop a sense of freedom. A dog that has some off leash freedom will be much better at coming back than a dog that has never been let off leash or experienced some freedom.”

“OK,” I said. “But how in the world do I dare to let my dog off leash if I don’t know that he will come back to me?”

“That’s a good question and I’m going to explain how to do that in just a moment, but first it’s important that you spend some time letting Peanuts just be a dog. Understand?”

“I guess so,” I answered, still a little unsure about how I was supposed to do that.

“OK, when it comes to letting a dog develop a sense of freedom, the first thing you need to do is get a long line. A fifty to sixty foot long line will work best. Once you have Peanuts on the long line, just let him go as far away from you as he wants. Let him sniff and play and run. Don’t hold on to the long line unless you absolutely have to. What I like to do is just stay close enough to the line to step on it if I have to.”

“OK. Does it matter what I use for the long line?”

“Pet stores sell them, but any fifty to sixty feet of any kind of line or rope will do,” Eric answered. “Now I want to go over the biggest mistake you can make when you are teaching Peanuts to come.”

“Punishment is probably the biggest mistake dog owners make when it comes to teaching the command come. There are two forms of punishment I see used with this command. The first one, which I’ll talk about now, is intentional punishment. The other is unintentional punishment. What usually happens is that the dog does not come back to its owner when they say ‘come.’

“Many times he will look right at the owner and go in the other direction. This, understandably, makes most dog owners very mad. At this point the owner takes off after his dog and starts to chase him through the streets or through his neighbors’ yards. After about a thirty to forty minute chase, the owner finally catches him.

“It is at this point that the owner feels a huge sense of relief for catching him. The dog did not get lost or hit by a car. The owner feels good for a few moments. Then, as he is doubled

over, trying to catch his breath, hoping he doesn't have a heart attack, he remembers the forty minute chase game. The relief is quickly replaced with anger.

"It is at this moment that the owner starts to punish the dog. FLUFFY YOU BAD DOG. DON'T YOU EVER MAKE ME CHASE YOU LIKE THAT AGAIN. BAD DOG. WHEN I GET YOU HOME YOU %^\$#%^\$@#*&^ I GOING TO *&\$%()&^%\$, and on and on.

"The dog has now learned a critical lesson. The next time I get loose, don't the crazy human catch me."

I couldn't help but laugh out loud. I could definitely sympathize with the owner. Peanuts had frustrated me more than a few times with his chase games. But I could also understand what was going through the dog's head now. I can't say I blame him for not wanting to come back when he was called.

"That is just one example of the mistakes I see when owners are trying to teach the recall command. Here is another scenario that I see all the time with dog's that have fenced in yards.

"The dog is out playing in the back yard and Mom starts to call the dog. He's having a great time, so he completely ignores Mom. Mom calls and calls but nothing happens. Junior is still happily sniffing and playing in the back yard.

"Exasperated, Mom finally goes back in the house and grabs a box of cookies. She brings the cookies to the door and starts to shake the box. Junior, who has already made a positive association with the sound of the cookie box, looks up and trots over to Mom to get a cookie. Mom, relieved she finally got his attention, gives Junior a cookie and they go in the house.

"In this situation..."

But before Eric could finish his sentence, I interrupted him. "I know, Mom has bribed the dog."

"Excellent, and do you remember why that is a bribe and not a reward for coming when she called him?" Eric asked.

This was an easy one. We had covered this on our first day of training. I answered, "Because she showed the treat before the behavior. She got the dog to come by offering up a treat before the behavior occurred."

"Exactly, so do you know what will happen in this situation?" Eric asked.

"I have a pretty good idea," I said.

Eric went on to say, "What will happen is that over a period of time, Junior will figure out that Mom is just trying to get him to come in the house. The cookies will work for a while, but pretty soon the bribes will start to wear off. Mom will have to use different bribes, and if Junior really doesn't feel like coming in, he will just ignore the bribe."

"Well, I'll admit," I said. "We are guilty of bribing Peanuts to come in, but I promise, that will stop. Earlier you mentioned unintentionally punishing your dog for coming? I wonder if I've been doing that too. How would I be unintentionally punishing Peanuts?"

"Freedom is very important to your dog." Eric said again. "Your dog loves to run around and have fun. This is what I often see: A new dog owner will take their puppy to the beach or a field. The puppy is young and stays close to the owner. When the owners get close to the ground and makes little cooing noises, the puppy will come running over to the owner. As the puppy starts to grow and become more comfortable with his surroundings, he starts to wander a little farther away from Mom or Dad. Now, when the owner calls the puppy to come over, it takes a little longer.

"What I see a lot at the beach is a dog that is running around having a great time before the owner calls him over. Remember that Junior has been off leash, chasing the sea gulls, eating

dead fish, urinating on things, having a wonderful time. The dog comes running towards the owner, and the first thing the owner does is take out his leash and slap it on his dog. The dog has just learned a very valuable lesson. When they call 'come,' stay away as long as possible because then the fun stops.

"The first thing the owner does when the dog comes to them is take away his freedom. Now, the next time they come to the beach to play, their dog isn't going to come back to them because he's learned through experience that once they get back to their owner, the fun's over."

"Well sure, that makes a lot of sense, but how am I every going to get Peanuts when we have to leave if I can't put the leash on him?" I had no idea how we were going to work around that one.

"That's a great question," Eric said to me. "This is what you have to do. When you are on the beach, you have to practice your recalls. When Peanuts comes over to you, you are going to put his leash on and let him drag it around. Call him over and reward him.

"Let him go back to playing, wait a little while and then do it again. Call him over, reward him and let him go. Now when it is time to leave the beach, you want to get close to Peanut's leash, not him. You see, you don't want him making any connection with you calling him over and taking him off the beach, especially in the beginning.

"Simply walk over to his leash, step on it, and then pick it up. Now you just walk off the beach towards your car. He can make no connection with you calling him and taking away his freedom."

"Will I have to do this forever?" I asked.

"No, just until he understands the command come and is a little older and more mature."

I groaned. "How long does that take?" I asked, not sure if I really wanted to hear the answer.

Eric shrugged his shoulders. "It depends," he said. "It depends on how good you are at training him and how well you bond with him. But in general, after about three to four weeks he should be getting the hang of it."

I breathed a sigh of relief, I had been expecting to hear three to four years. "So I should always come down here with the long line and keep it on him until I start to see some good results."

"Yes," answered Eric. "That would be the best thing to do."

"You said earlier that I needed to set Peanuts up for success. How do I do that?"

"Completing the command is one of the most important steps to remember when it comes to recalls. If your dog doesn't come when you call, you are eventually going to desensitize him to the command.

"I see so many dog owners call 'come...come...come...come,' and their dog just goes in the other direction. The command has no meaning to them. We need to make sure that when we first start teaching the command, we always set the dog up to successfully complete it.

"The first thing we are going to do is play a game that I like to call the spring loaded recall exercise. This little game sets your dog up for success and it is a lot of fun for you and your dog." Eric paused for a minute so I could get out my notebook.

"The spring loaded recall exercise?" I asked, intrigued by the name.

"Yup."

"Great, what else are we going to do?" I asked.

“The second step is keeping a long line on your dog until he really understands the command. We don’t want to make the mistake of calling your dog over and over until he becomes immune to the word.”

“OK. This sounds like it’s going to be fun. Peanuts and I are ready for the spring loaded recall exercise.”

“Excellent,” Eric said. I could tell from his enthusiasm that this was one of his favorite commands to teach. “Fun is what this game is all about. What you need to practice this exercise is a friend to help you and a lot of rewards. You want to turn it into a game.

“We start by having one person hold on to Peanuts by the collar. Now, while I’m holding Peanuts by the collar, you need to come over and get him really excited. You want to get him so excited that he is pulling me. You want him really jumping and pulling. Right when he is at the height of excitement, I want you to run away. Make sure that when you run away he is looking at you. Do you have any questions so far?”

“Nope, I’m right with you.”

“OK, let’s give this a shot. While I’m holding him, go ahead and get him good and excited. That’s it. Now run away.”

I followed his directions, got Peanuts all worked up, and then I started to run.

“When you’re about twenty five feet away, I want you to face him and then I want you to get low to the ground and say ‘Peanuts, come’ in a high pitched tone of voice.”

I reached the spot he wanted me to run to, I crouched down low, and said in the highest voice I could find, “Peanuts, come!”

At that moment, Eric released Peanuts and he came racing toward me. When he got to me, I quickly rewarded him and told him what a great dog he was. Then, The Amazing Dog Training Man came over to where we were and told me that we were going to do it again.

When he reached us, he asked me “Now why did I ask you to get low and use a high pitched voice?”

I thought for a second, mentally scanning my notes for the right answer. Then I remembered something he told me in our first class. I answered “Because we wanted Peanuts in prey drive.”

“Excellent! Remember when we were talking about tone of voice, make sure you have a happy tone of voice. I see this with men especially, you do not want to stand there like John Wayne, and point your finger to the ground, and say, ‘Come...come over here.’ Your dog will slink over to you all right, but you have an unhappy dog.

“Your tone of voice is very important, as is your body language. If you are sitting down in a chair and I come over and stand very close to you and lean down toward you, you will feel uncomfortable. If I lean into your space, the first thing you are going to do is pull away. When you say, ‘Come, Peanuts,’ try to crouch down as if you are both about to play.

“I have one other point,” Eric said. “When Peanuts gets to you, I want you to take his collar before you reward him.”

I didn’t have a problem with that, but I was curious why it was important, so I asked, “Whys that?”

“Well, a lot of dogs like to do what I call drive-bys. A drive-by is when you call your dog and your dog comes racing toward you at about forty miles an hour. As you’re standing there, waiting to reward and praise them, they go right by you, still moving at about forty miles and hour.”

“Yeah, Peanuts has done plenty of drive-bys,” I admitted to Eric. I just never knew there was a name for them.

“So to fix that problem, we want to take the collar when they get to us. It also helps with the keep away game. The keep away game is when they come within three feet of you, then they stay just far enough away to keep you from grabbing them. This can be very frustrating.”

“Oh yeah,” I said with a chuckle. “Peanuts and I have played the keep away game too.”

“Right, so you want to practice the spring loaded recall exercise about three to five times a day. You always want to keep it fun and make it a game. You also want to reward Peanuts when he comes to you.

“Here’s a couple other things to keep in mind when you’re trying to teach Peanuts to come when you call him. The area of influence is an important term to understand when it comes to the recall command. It’s definition is really quite simple. It just refers to how close your dog has to be to you in order for you to influence his behavior.

“When we first start working with a dog, the area of influence is very small. The dog has to be right there next to you in order for you to influence his behavior. As Peanuts gets better at his obedience, the area of influence starts to expand.

“At this point we don’t have very much influence over Peanuts when he is thirty to forty feet away. That’s why we are going to use a long line. With a long line on him, we can now influence his behavior from a distance.”

“Aha, so that’s why the long line is so important.”

“Exactly, so if your dog is thirty feet away and we call him and he doesn’t come back, we can use the long line to make him come without him even realizing what’s happening.

“If your dog does not have a sense of freedom, he is not going to get good at coming back to you. Remember that the dogs that have real problems with coming, real recall problems, are those that never get off the leash. If you want your dog to get good at coming when called, you have to let him develop a sense of freedom.

“You have to make sure that if you want your dog to come it must be a pleasant experience. ‘Come on Peanuts, come, good dog,’ give him a treat, play a game, give him breakfast or dinner, give him some praise. Never call your dog over to you and say, ‘Bad dog.’ If you come home and find your shoes all chewed up, don’t angrily say, ‘Hey, come over here Peanuts, what is this?’ The dog then jumps out of his skin and learns that ‘come’ is not a nice word.

“This is the first part of this exercise. You are teaching your dog that the word ‘come’ means for him to go right to you, where he will get a reward and have fun. When he performs the command well you can practice using the long line.

“Remember, the hardest time to get a dog to come is when he’s distracted, I call it selective hearing. He’s distracted by something else, another dog, a scent, a squirrel and appears not to hear you calling him. This is when you really want him to follow through and we will cover this situation in the next lesson.”

I thanked Eric and asked him where I could go for a long line so we could practice our recalls.

“Any pet store should sell them, but try Animal Instincts in Fall River. They have all sorts of neat animals in there, everything from puppies to iguanas and bunnies to tropical fish. They also have a good selection of training tools and treats,” he answered.

And we were off, with a quick detour to Fall River to find a long line.

Chapter Thirteen

Putting It All Together

Here's what you do once your dog has learned obedience

I left the house about a half hour early for our last class on Gooseberry Island. It was another beautiful day as I pulled into Partners Village Store, a gift shop and café on Main Road in Westport. I wanted to get a Thank You gift for Eric, just a small token of my appreciation for all he had done with Peanuts.

Partners is one of my wife's favorite stores. She says it is the quaintest little gift shop she has ever seen. She is always stopping in there to pick up a birthday, or graduation present. I figured if I couldn't find something at Partners, I'd be out of luck.

I parked the car and rolled down the window for Peanuts saying, "Be a good boy, I'll be right back." I went in through the Dutch door, top half open letting in the warm breeze, and started to look around. I thought maybe a book. I had remembered seeing a lot of books in Eric's office when we had our lesson at American Canine a few weeks ago. I headed over to the book section, hoping something would catch my eye. Then I noticed "Pa And Me" a book by a local author.

Thinking it might be something Eric would be interested in, I picked it up and headed over to the café. I wondered what kind of cookies they had today. They have a kitchen right there where they are always baking cookies, pastries, and breads. They also have incredible home made soups and sandwiches. If you are ever in Westport, I highly recommend stopping in around lunch time. I peeked in the cookie jars they have lined up on the shelf and sure enough, I spotted my favorite kind, peanut butter. I took out a monstrous cookie, these suckers are huge...and soft...and so good! Anyway, I headed over to the register to pay for my purchases.

When it was my turn, the nice lady behind the counter asked if the book was a gift. I was a little surprised by the question, but I told her it was for my dog trainer. She then asked if I

wanted it gift wrapped! Now I know why my wife is always shopping here. I said that would be great, and a few minutes later I was back in my car heading to Gooseberry Island.

I drove slowly over the Westport Bridge, looking at all the boats in the marina and watching a kayaker paddle over to the west branch of the Westport River. The Back Eddy, the best restaurant around for miles, looked like it was getting ready for another busy day. Then I had a great idea. This was our last class. We should do something to celebrate tonight. Dinner at The Back Eddy would be perfect. I'd even ask Eric if he could join us.

In no time at all, I was driving over the causeway and pulling into the small parking lot at Gooseberry Island. Eric was already there. You couldn't miss his truck with the jet skis on the back. Peanuts and I got out of the car and headed over for our last lesson with The Amazing Dog Training Man.

He greeted us with a handshake for me and a couple of pats on the head for Peanuts. "In this lesson we are going to work on all the commands: sit, down, stand, and stay. We will review walking on a loose leash, and then we'll go over recall, the come command.

"We'll start with a warm-up. Be sure Peanut's attention is focused on you. Once you have his attention you can start to give him the command sit, down, or stand using hand signals only. You will reward him, but remember, do not use food as a bribe. Try to give each command only once.

"Praise your dog. Work on the routines: sit, down, sit. Tell him to stay, step away from him, step toward him, then tell him to 'break!' Praise him enthusiastically!"

I put Peanuts through his paces and he performed very well. He had his basics down pretty good by now.

While we were working on stays Eric said, "Don't forget to release the dog from the stay, always release him from that command. Never just walk away from him, always give Peanuts a release word.

"Now, is he doing well with stay? I want you to do a couple of more stays and I want you to try to work up to maybe half a minute or a minute. Remember as Peanuts starts to learn the stay command, you want to increase the length of time he does it and the amount of distance between you.

"At first you stay within four or five feet then you increase it to six to ten feet and then to twenty feet. You also want to walk around Peanuts. You want to challenge him a little bit. Tell him to sit, then tell him stay and step away from him. Step in and tell him 'break.' Again tell him stay and step away. If your dog gets up from a stay, at this point you want to give him a little verbal check.

Peanuts and I did this a few more times. He stayed pretty well when I walked away from him in a straight line, but when I walked around him, he kept popping back up.

"When I work with a dog and say, 'stay,' and then step away from him, the moment he starts to get up, I will give a short verbal correction, 'Hey.' If necessary, I will help him get back into the sit-stay. I will lift up a little bit on his collar and I will squeeze on his hips to put him back into a sit. Then I will try the stay once more and step away again. If he gets up, I step in and I lift gently on his collar and put him right back where I want him. You squeeze right above the tail.

"You definitely do not want to go back into the dog and say, 'Sit...no sit...no come on...sit down right now.' You do not want to get into that type of conversation with him. Give the instruction sit, stay, and step away from him.

“In my classes I notice that most dogs usually start to fall apart right before a minute has elapsed. Right now that is about Peanut’s threshold for a stay. He can learn to hold a three minute sit stay, a five minute down stay, even a half-hour down stay, but it takes time and you must be consistent.

“In the beginning, if you want Peanuts to do a fifteen minute down stay, you have to make sure that you are right there to give him a quick verbal correction, ‘Hey,’ and put him right back into it. Within the next couple of days you can have him doing sit stays for two minutes, no problem. It just takes a little bit of practice. Make sure you are consistent and start to work towards longer stays. If Peanuts is doing a good three minute down stay, start to work towards a five minute down stay, and then a ten minute down stay.

“A great time to practice is when you are actually watching TV. While you are watching TV, put a leash on Peanuts, step on the leash, tell him ‘stay’, watch the TV program, and then at the end say ‘break’, take your foot off the leash and let him get up. Peanuts will learn how to do a half-hour down stay.”

We did a couple more stays and then Eric said, “Good job, let’s move on.”

He continued, “For the next part of this lesson we’ll need your long line.”

I went back to the car to get it. When I came back I said, “Hey, thanks for recommending Animal Instincts. That place is very interesting. I’ve already told my daughter we’d stop in again sometime this week to get Peanuts a toy. She’ll love it there.”

“Yeah, I always see something new every time I stop in. Now to get a really good recall, you need to practice in distracting areas. Most dogs come to their owners inside the house. Ever call Peanuts inside the house? I bet he comes to you no problem, right? When you go outside the house and call your dog, it’s a little different. You find him distracted. There are a lot of things that can grab his attention and then he starts to ignore you. What you want to do is work on the recall command outside making sure that you have some control over your dog’s behavior.

“We’ll start with some loose leash walking and then we’ll try the recalls. Have Peanuts sit by your side, keep the leash loose. Place a food lure on top of his nose and start walking with him back and forth across the parking lot. Remember, the moment he moves away from you to pull him back, or if he’s really rambunctious switch direction on him.”

We walked for a few minutes and the Eric said, “Good, that’s enough for now. Clip the long line on in place of the leash. If you want Peanuts to get good at coming back to you, you really have to practice on a long line. The long line helps you influence his behavior.

“Now, you do not want to use it like a fishing line. Too often the owner will have his dog on the long line and when the dog does not obey a command will haul him in like a fish. Remember opposition reflex. The more you haul the more he’ll resist!

“Attach the long line to Peanut’s collar and let him drag it around. Let him drag it around the parking lot, and then when you call him, or if he gets too far away from you, step on it. Then pick it up, say ‘Peanuts’ and give the command come while you back up all at the same time.

“Back up and draw Peanuts into you. You just want to give a quick, short tug on the line, and then as Peanuts starts to come towards you, let it go! This way as he comes to you, you are able to greet him with open arms and lots of praise.

“Here is an exercise you can practice with your wife or daughter. Have your partner hold the line and let it out about five feet. You step back about another five feet and call Peanuts. It would not surprise me at all if he goes to the one holding the line.

“You do not want Peanuts to make the association that whoever is holding the leash or line is the one he should go to. You want him to come when you say it, not just because you have him on a line.

“Let’s head down to the water so we can practice this on the beach where there are a lot of distractions.”

We all moved closer to the water, Peanuts dragging his long line with him.

“Here’s another little secret,” confided Eric. “I have lots of knots in my long line. The reason for the knots is simple. If my dog is dragging the line around and he starts to take off, I can step on the long line and it catches. The first time I went to the beach and I stepped on my dog’s long line, the whole thing slipped right underneath my flip flop. A knot will catch under your foot and stop your dog.

“The important thing to remember about the recalls is that when you give the come command you want to be sure he follows through with it. Make sure you are not standing in your backyard or at the beach saying, ‘Come Peanuts...come...come over here...come...come!’

“And also, it’s important to remember that you do not want to call Peanuts into you and then clip the leash on him and take him away. When he comes, praise him and let him go back to what he was doing for a minute. Otherwise, he’ll learn very quickly that when you say come it means all his fun is over.”

Peanuts and I practiced our recalls for a few minutes. I would let him go sniff around the edge of the water, then call his name. The first few times I had to give a slight tug on the line, but pretty soon, once he realized I was going to let him go back to his investigating, he would trot over when he heard me call him.

“The other great thing about the long line,” Eric said, “is that you do not have to use a bribe. If you say, ‘Peanuts, come,’ and he does not respond; pick up the end of the line and give a quick tug. ‘Come Peanuts, good boy,’ drop the end of the line, hold out your hands and praise him enthusiastically as he comes to you.

“Try not to repeat the command over and over because like I’ve said before, you’ll start to desensitize him to the word. This is the best time to practice because Peanuts is distracted by the waves...the sea gulls...the rocks...pretty much everything out here.

“Call him, give him a little tug, begin to back up, but when he gets to you, hold his collar and give him a reward. Then let him go again. It is very important to let him go when he comes to you.”

“We have been keeping Peanuts on a long line now every time we go to the beach because we learned last week that he will try swim across the bay to Martha’s Vineyard. There is no recall when he is in the water. He loves those sea gulls, when he sees them, that’s it...a couple of times I had to go get him. The water temperature is not too bad now, but come October....”

Eric just laughed. “That’s why, when you go to the beach, keep him on a long line. If they start to go towards somebody, you can step on the leash, prevent them from going any further and then you can let the leash go again. With the long line, as I said, you can let the dog drag it around. That way the dog kind of just hangs out and does whatever it normally would do. It is not very much fun for you or Peanuts if he’s on a six foot leash when you’re out in an open area.

“We have now covered the basics; sit, down, stand, stay, come, and walking on a loose leash. The important point about obedience training is making sure that you are consistent. Make sure your timing is good. Make sure you are motivating your dog, and make sure you

practice. Practice doesn't require tons and tons of time but you will need to put in at least five or ten minutes a day.

"Incorporate your obedience training into your day-to-day life. When you are feeding Peanuts, while you have the food bowl in your hand, have him do some obedience. Play tug-of-war with him and make him do some obedience. If Peanuts likes going for a car ride and he gets excited at the thought of jumping in the car, make him do a sit or wait before you open the door. If you practice these exercises, pretty soon he will start to perform for you whether you just want him to or you really need him to. That is the whole purpose of obedience training, to get Peanuts to be a welcome member of your family.

"If the lights are off, the stereo is low, and there is nobody around, anybody can get their dog to do a stay then, right? If you have the shades drawn, TV is off, kids are at school, and then you tell the dog to stay...well that's nice, but big deal! What you want to do is have him be able to do a stay when there's someone knocking on the door, the two kids are on top of each other fighting, and the phone is ringing.

"Be consistent, and you should know that eventually maturity will also play a big role in your dog's behavior. As he matures, you'll see big changes. When your dog is a young adolescent you may think he's just too much, he's a handful. And then one day it starts to click, it really does. I can't explain it, but when you are training Peanuts it is weird, because finally one day, you'll suddenly think, 'When did he learn this stuff?' So, hang in there!"

Our lesson was coming to an end, but I could tell that there were still a few things on Eric's mind that he wanted to go over with me. I let Peanuts go off on his own, checking out something about ten yard down the beach. This long line was great. I could keep Peanuts close enough so that if I needed to, I could control him, but I could also let him have a good time.

Chapter Fourteen

The M.U.T.T. Method

A simple and useful method to help you fix any behavior problem

Eric started again, “Okay, now that we have taught Peanuts basic obedience, let’s talk about behavior problems. When I am working with a dog owner, I always like to tell them that teaching their dog to do something for them like sit, down, or come requires positive reinforcement. We want to reward the dog for doing behaviors we like. When we want to stop the dog from doing behaviors we don’t like, it usually requires some form of punishment. Now before I go any further, please let me make something very clear. Punishment can be done without physically harming your dog. Also, if you cannot punish your dog for what ever reason, remember that you can always manage the behavior.”

“I don’t think I quite fully understand,” I said.

Eric continued, “Let’s say Peanuts likes to knock over the garbage can and rummage through it. You can come up with some form of punishment to stop the dog, or you can simply manage it. Put the garbage somewhere where he can’t get it. You can put it in under the sink, put a tight lid on it, what ever. The solution is simple and doesn’t require any punishment.”

“Yeah, that’s what my sister had to do with her dog. She has a little dog named Trixie. Believer it or not, she used to head butt the garbage can to knock it over and eat the leftovers.”

“I believe it,” Eric said laughing, thinking of all the stories dog owners had shared with him over the years about their little monsters.

“Did she put the trash under the sink or in a closet?” he asked.

“No, her boyfriend used a bungee cord to attach it to the wall and keep the lid on tight,” I told him.

“That’s great and it’s a perfect example of good management. I also want to add that what we call behavior problems are only behavior problems from our point of view.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Well, if Peanuts was chewing on a stick would you call that a behavior problem?”

“No,” I answered. “He chews on sticks all the time.”

“Right, now if he chews on your wife’s coffee table would you consider that a behavior problem?”

“Yes, and I know she would too.”

“Do you see?” Eric asked. “Outside a stick has no value to us, but turn a piece of wood into a coffee table and it now has value. His chewing now becomes a behavior problem from our point of view, but not to Peanuts. He’s just chewing another stick. To him, wood is wood. That’s why you have to be careful with punishment and negative reinforcement.”

“I get it now,” I replied. I had never thought of it that way before.

“Do you remember when I told you I didn’t like Alpha rollovers?” Eric asked.

“Sure,” I said. That had been over breakfast at The Barn. I didn’t like Alpha rollovers either.

“Do you also remember when I asked you what you would think of me if I grabbed you and threw you on the ground?”

“Yeah,” I laughed. “I thought you were nuts.”

“Well, think about it from your dog’s point of view. Let’s say Peanuts is chewing on the piece of wood (to him), your coffee table (to you), and you walk into the room, grab your dog, and throw him onto his back.”

I was picturing it in my mind, “I think I’m getting it. My dog would think I’m a crazy man,” I answered.

“Right, and that’s where the whole relationship between the dog and owner starts to break down. The dog’s confused because the crazy man comes into the room and throws him onto his back and yells at him. The dog becomes stressed and starts to chew even more, because that is how they relieve stress. The owner is confused because the Alpha rollover is not working. We have to look at things from our dog’s point of view. We have to communicate with them in a way that they understand.”

“This makes so much sense. I want to write this down. Hang on for a second while I get my notebook. I want my wife to read this,” I said hurriedly, as I started to go back up to my car.

“Hang on a second,” Eric called after me. “You can save some ink on this one. Go to my website www.AmazingDogTrainingMan.com and sign her up for the mini dog training course. There is a lot more information about your dog’s point of view in the course.”

“Great!” I came back over. I still had a few questions now that we were talking about bad behavior. “So how do I deal with some of Peanut’s behavior problems?” I asked.

“Let me explain it this way. I have actually come up with my own, very unique method for dealing with behavior problems. I mentioned it that first day at breakfast. I call it the M.U.T.T. method.

“What is the M.U.T.T. method for dealing with behavior problems? M.U.T.T. is an acronym I developed and it stands for four words, MANAGE, UNDERLYING, TREAT, and TIME.

“The first thing you have to do is remember the acronym, M.U.T.T., every time you’re dealing with a behavior problem. Let me explain each letter.

“M stands for manage the behavior. Management is always used short term. It doesn’t fix the problem, but it will help you and the dog. Do you remember the discussion we had at The Barn when we first met?”

“Yeah, most of it I think.”

“We talked about crates and by using a crate, you can effectively manage your dog’s behavior when you’re not there. It helps to prevent any mistakes when you’re not home. Do you still have your notes from our first meeting?” Eric asked me.

“Yes,” I replied, they were actually in my car. They seemed to go everywhere with me these days.

“Good, just go over those and if you have any questions let me know.”

“Okay,” I said.

“Moving right along, the next letter is U. That stands for Underlying.”

“Underlying?” I asked

“Yes,” Eric answered. “Every behavior problem has an underlying reason. When we are faced with a behavior issue, we need to find out what the underlying problem is. Let’s say Peanuts has a housetraining problem. Some questions to ask yourself are: Have you spent enough time properly teaching him where to go? Is he stressed out by being left alone? Does Peanuts submissive pee? Does he pee when he becomes excited? Is he still very young? Or does he have a physical problem such as a bladder infection?”

“I never thought of it that way. I didn’t realize there might be so many reasons for him going to the bathroom in the house.”

“Right, if the dog has a digging problem let’s think about why the dog is digging. Is the dog frustrated? Is the dog bored? Is the dog hot? Is the dog a terrier?”

“Why would a dog dig if they are hot?” I asked.

“To cool off,” Eric answered.

“Oh, and why if they are a terrier?”

Eric smiled. “The word terrier comes from the Latin word terra, which means earth. Terriers were bred to go after varmints. They love to dig and find rodents in woodpiles and in the ground.”

“I never knew that. I didn’t realize some dogs would dig more than others just because of their breed.”

“Anyway,” continued Eric, “once we discover the underlying problem, it will give us clues as to how to deal with it.”

“Right, that makes sense. Now you said the next letter is ‘T’ which stands for treat. Why would we give the dog treats if they’re doing something wrong?” I needed some more clarification on that point.

“It’s not that kind of treat,” said Eric with a smile. “It’s treat, as in the doctor treating me if I’m sick.”

“Oh, OK I get it, treat the behavior.”

“Right, once we find out what the underlying problem is we want to treat the behavior. Let’s go back to the digging for a second. If the dog is digging because they are hot, move the dog to a cooler place. If the dog is digging because they are frustrated, remove the frustration if you can. If the dog is bored, give the dog more exercise. If it is a terrier, we may have to build the dog a sandbox.”

“A sandbox!” I exclaimed. “Like the one I have for my daughter?”

“That’s right, and actual sandbox. My Belgian Malinois was a terrible digger when he was younger. I had to mark off an area where he could dig. It was in the corner of the yard that we did not use. He would dig big deep holes and I would fill them up every couple of days, then he would dig them all over again.”

“How did you get him to dig in just that spot?” I asked.

“I would bury his favorite toy there, and I would bring him to that spot every time I saw him digging.”

“Did it work?” I asked.

“Absolutely,” Eric answered. “Now the last T in the M.U.T.T. method stands for Time. You have to give it time when you are dealing with a behavior problem. Many behaviors that dogs learn have developed over a period of months, sometimes years. We have to give it some time for behaviors to change.”

“OK,” I said, looking over my notes. “Let me make sure I’ve got this straight. M is for Manage, U is for Underlying, T is for Treat the behavior, and the last T stands for Time. We have to manage the behavior short term,” I continued.

“Sometimes long term also,” Eric added.

“Right,” I said, making a note in my book. “Find out what the underlying problem is, treat the behavior and then give it some time.”

“Excellent,” Eric said. “You take very good notes. I want to spend some more time on the Treat the behavior part of the acronym, but before I do, I also want to add that any time you are dealing with a behavior problem, you have to get a full and thorough vet check first.”

“Why is that?” I asked. How was the vet going to fix my dog’s behavior problem?

“Well,” Eric told me, “if there is a physical problem, all the behavior work in the world isn’t going to help. Remember what I said about housetraining?”

“Yeah.”

“One of the underlying problems that I mentioned could be a bladder infection. There’s no behavior expert in the world that can overcome a physical problem. So, always rule out physical problems before you tackle the behavior problems.”

“Got it,” I said, making a quick note.

“Let’s get back to the T for Treat the behavior. When we first met we talked about the four steps you always have to take before you use punishment.”

“Yes, I have them. Hold on,” I said as I flipped through my notes. When I found the right page I said, “In order to use punishment you have to always follow these four steps:

1. Big
2. Consistent
3. Timing
4. Can’t be associated with the punisher.

“Let me go over each step,” said Eric, “and please keep in mind that if these four steps aren’t followed each time, the punishment will not be as effective.

“So, the first step is big. Whenever some type of punishment happens it has to be big. Let me use the example of a dog in the wild. As a puppy, she comes across a burning log. If she goes up to sniff and investigate, she is going to get burned. It is going to be big, burns hurt like hell.

“This example is great to demonstrate the other steps. It’s also consistent. A fire will burn you every single time. The timing is perfect. As soon as the puppy puts her nose up to it, she will feel the burn. And, it will be associated with what they are doing and it won’t be associated with anyone or anything else.”

“I think I understand but I’m not completely clear on all the steps yet. Can we go through an example with one of Peanut’s problems?”

“Of course,” said Eric. “What behavior problem would you like Peanuts to stop.”

“Stealing food off the table,” I said quickly. This was becoming a big problem at home.

“Alright,” said Eric. “That is actually a very easy problem to fix. I like to use what I call ‘the bagel technique.’

“To fix this behavior problem, you’re going to need a bagel, a piece of string, and a big plastic container filled with empty soda cans.”

“OK,” I said, “None of this makes sense to me, but keep going.”

Eric laughed. He continued, “Most dogs learn that we humans keep all kinds of goodies on the counter. Their little sniffers discover that we have all kinds of yummy stuff, just sitting there on the counter. The first time your dog comes into the kitchen and smells something tasty on the counter he becomes interested. As soon as we leave the kitchen, they jump up on the counter to see what is there.

“They quickly learn that it is something good. So, say you’re making a ham sandwich, you get a phone call, and leave the room. Your dog, with his excellent sense of smell, hops up there and finds your ham sandwich. Being a dog he quickly eats it and is very happy with himself. You come into the room and blow a gasket. You get mad and punish the dog.

“Now you know that your dog is a thief. So, anytime you see your dog go near the counter you are quick to scold him. But here’s the rub. Your dog will only stay away from the counter when you are there. As soon as you leave he is going to make his move. It’s the whole cop scenario all over again. If we see a cop we slow down and pay attention to how fast we are driving. As soon as the cop is gone we speed up again. As long as you’re there, Peanuts won’t try to steal. As soon as you leave, he will make his move.”

“OK, so how do we stop him from stealing?” I asked.

“Simple,” Eric said. “We use the bagel, string, and container filled with soda cans. Here’s what you are going to do. You are going to take the bagel and tie the piece of string to it. You are then going to tie the piece of string to the plastic container. Fill the container with the empty soda cans.

“Then you are going to tell Peanuts – ‘Don’t touch my bagel.’ Now you leave the room and wait. While you are waiting you are going to listen.”

“I think I get what I am listening for,” a slow grin spreading across my face.

“Right,” Eric continued. “Now when Peanuts jumps up on the counter to grab the bagel he’s going to pull the container full of the empty soda cans off the counter also. You see, we have booby trapped the bagel.”

“Yes,” I said, picturing the whole series of events. “He grabs the bagel and the whole thing comes down on top of him.”

“Remember, I said I don’t want to hurt your dog, but I do want him to learn that stealing is not a very fun thing for him to do. So, Peanuts grabs the bagel, the bagel is attached to the plastic container full of empty soda cans the whole thing comes crashing down and Peanuts runs out of the room.

“We’ve done all four steps. It was big, the cans were enough to scare the dog. It was associated with the behavior. Peanuts pulls the bagel and it explodes. And it was not associated with you. You could have been in the next room or ten miles away.”

“Yes, but what about the second step,” I wondered out loud. “You said it has to be consistent.”

“That’s were you come in, my friend,” said Eric with a smile. “You have to make sure that every time Peanuts jumps up on the counter it is booby trapped.”

“I have to do the whole thing again?” I asked.

“Yes,” said Eric. “There is a good chance that he will try to steal again, so you need to make sure that every time you leave the room for a while there is something booby trapped. After about seven consecutive times the behavior will go away. For some dogs, all it takes is once.

“That’s brilliant!” I said.

“I know,” Eric said with a grin, “but here’s the important point. Dogs do not understand right from wrong. Please don’t argue this point with me. They just don’t. They are amoral creatures. It doesn’t make them any less wonderful than before you heard that. They are magnificent creatures, but they don’t understand right and wrong.

“What they do understand is safe and dangerous. It is dangerous to stick your nose to close to the fire. It is dangerous to fall off things. It is dangerous to take food off the counter. Copping?”

“Yes,” I said. “I have another behavior problem for you. What do I do about housetraining?”

“Good question,” Eric said. “I still have a lot more to cover, and I have to head out pretty soon. Housetraining is very easy. If you go to my website www.AmazingDogTrainingMan.com, I have complete instructions that you can print out and keep close by when you’re housetraining. The key is to make sure that every body in the house is being consistent.”

“OK, fair enough. I’ll print that out as soon as I get home. But can you help me with another problem that I have?”

“Sure what is it?” asked Eric.

“Peanuts loves to beg. It drives us crazy. He is always there, begging at dinner time and especially when I have friends over.”

“Begging is easy” Eric told me. “What’s the first step in the M.U.T.T. Method?”

“Manage the behavior,” I answered.

“Right. So what are some management steps?” Eric asked.

I thought for a second. Then I said, “I guess I could put Peanuts in the crate while were eating.”

“That is one option,” said Eric. “You could put Peanuts in a crate, you could put him outside, you could put a leash on him and you could use a baby gate to keep him out of the room.”

“OK, that would work, but I don’t mind if he is around, I just want him to stop bothering us while we are eating.”

“OK, what’s the second step?” Eric questioned further.

“U, for underlying,” I answered.

“Yes,” said Eric. “What do you think some of the underlying reasons might be?”

After a second I said, “My daughter feeds Peanuts from the table.”

“Yes, now we’re getting somewhere. Dogs that are fed from the table are going to beg. So you also need to fix the underlying problem. You need to make sure that your daughter, and anyone else is not giving him food from the table.”

“OK,” I said, thinking that might not be as easy as it sounded.

“What’s the third step?” asked Eric.

“Treat the behavior.”

“Now this is where we are going to do something that your dog will not like.”

“What can we do?” I asked, wondering what his plan was.

“This is easy. You are going to make a concoction loaded with all the hottest stuff you can find.”

“My dog likes Tabasco sauce,” I warned him.

“That’s nice,” Eric said with a smile. “What I’m talking about is a concoction with cayenne pepper, Chinese hot mustard, hot sauce, and anything else you can find that is hot. Now with your concoction in a bowl on the table you are going to sit down and have dinner. While you are eating, if Peanuts comes up to you and begs, you will take a little piece of what you are eating and soak it in the hot concoction. After you have soaked it you will offer it to Peanuts. Peanuts will grab it and quickly learn that begging does not taste too good. You can have everyone at the table do it. After a few days peanuts will stop begging.”

“Wow! That’s great but I don’t know if my wife is going to like it.”

“That’s okay,” said Eric. “Just tell her that she has four choices. She can

1. Put up with the behavior.
2. Manage the behavior by keeping Peanuts in his crate or another room.
3. Use something different like bitter apple or sour grapes, but it might not be hot enough to be effective.
4. Do what I showed you.

“What’s bitter apple and sour grapes?” I asked. I had never heard of them before.

“They’re taste deterrents that you can find in most pet stores. If you feel bad about giving the hot sauce you can use one of those products, but I haven’t had very much luck with them.”

I wrote everything he was saying down. Thinking that no matter what my wife said, I’d be eating dinner with a bowl of hot stuff right next to me. It drove me crazy when Peanuts begged.

Chapter Fifteen

Not All Dog Foods Are Created Equal

It really does make a difference what you feed your dog. It will affect your dog's health and behavior.

Discover some simple steps you can follow to get your dog maximum nutrition

“Well were almost done. I just have one more thing I want to talk to you about,” said Eric.

“What’s that?” I asked. I couldn’t believe there was even more that I had to learn.

“Nutrition,” Eric said simply.

“Nutrition?” I asked, having no idea how that affected my dog.

“Yes,” he continued. “What you feed your dog is very important. Not all dog foods are created equal.”

“OK,” I said and then added, “what does that have to do with training.?”

“Well, I’m going to make this brief, but food can effect behavior. It will also effect how your dog feels and looks. What do you feed Peanuts?”

I had no idea, just his dry kibble. “I don’t know,” I said truthfully. “My wife gets something at the grocery store.”

“Well the first thing you need to understand is that you should look at the ingredients on the label. The label will tell you what’s in the food.”

“Okay what am I looking for?” I asked. I didn’t even read the labels on the food I ate.

“You want to make sure that that it is a meat based dog food. A lot of dog foods will use grains. If the first ingredient on the dog food label is a grain, especially corn, I would not feed it to my dog.”

“Why not?” I asked. If corn was good enough for the pilgrims, wasn’t it good enough for my dog?

“Corn is a very cheap filler,” Eric explained. “A lot of the dog food companies use it. It is also a very hard grain to digest. Humans have about twenty six feet of intestines and we have a hard time digesting corn, ask any septic inspector. Your dog only has about eight feet. If our twenty six feet have a hard time, imagine what only eight feet can do. As far as grains go, I look for rice or oatmeal. Those grains are much easier for your dog to digest.”

“OK, no corn. What else do I look for?” I asked, getting intrigued.

“Well the first ingredient should be meat. Chicken, lamb, and fish are very popular today. Then should come the grains and other ingredients. You should also keep a close eye on what the food is preserved with. Stay away from foods with exothiquin, BHA’s, BHT’s, red dyes, and yellow dyes. You should feed him a food that is preserved with Vitamin E. It might also say it’s preserved with tocopherols.

“Dogs are not carnivores, they are omnivores. Their diet should be made up of meats, grains, and vegetables.”

“What about canned food? Is that any good?” I asked.

“Most canned food is about eighty percent water. With all that water it can work like a laxative on your dog.”

“Ugh, I don’t want that, we have enough problems with houstraining as it is.”

“Yeah, it is also usually made with a very low grade meat. From what I’ve been told, it’s one stop away from the dumpster. So you have to be real careful about canned food.”

“Well I like to give the little guy some variety. It must be boring eating the same old kibble day after day.”

“You can give him your leftovers,” said Eric, catching me off guard.

“What? My vet will kill me. He told me that I should never feed Peanuts any people food.” I told Eric.

“What like steak, leftover chicken, lamb chops that you bring home in a doggie bag?” asked Eric.

“Yeah, I guess that’s what he means,” I answered.

“What if your dog was out in the wild? What do you think he would eat?” Eric asked.

“I don’t know,” I answered. I had never really thought about it.

“I’ll tell you one thing, he wouldn’t be running towards corn fields with his tongue hanging out. Your dog would eat meat. Eating just dog food is actually not good for your dog. Dog food is cooked and that means that a lot of the vitamins have been cooked out of it. Vitamin B and C are sensitive to heat above one hundred and ten degrees. I can guarantee that the food you are feeding is lacking these vitamins and some important minerals as well.

“One of the best things you can do for Peanuts is to add leftovers to his food. Throw in over ripe bananas and apples. Give your dog an egg every once in a while. All of this is good for him.

“Really? You think so?”

“Don’t forget, I’m The Amazing Dog Training Man,” said Eric with a smile. Then he added, “Actually, I have done an awful lot of studying on the topic of nutrition, for both people and dogs. I stand firmly behind everything I’ve said.”

“Wow!” I was looking down at all of my notes. I couldn’t believe our last class was over. I had learned so much over the last six weeks. “Thanks so much,” I told Eric. “You’ve saved this little guy’s life,” I said, calling Peanuts over to us. “A couple of months ago I was at my wit’s end. After my first training class, not with you, I actually contemplated driving straight to my vet’s office to have him put down. I was told that I had a very dangerous dog and I didn’t

think it was safe to bring him back home. Something kept me from going through with it though. There was this voice in the back of my mind that kept saying he was a good little guy, that there had to be a better way. Then we met you!

“Can I tell you something?” I asked. Eric nodded. “My wife thinks I go to see some kind of superhero when I take Peanuts to his lessons. That’s how much better he’s gotten at home. You know, she’s right. You really are The Amazing Dog Training Man. Thanks again for all your help.”

I started to gather Peanuts up to head back to the car, and then I remembered the book. “Hang on a second,” I called over my shoulder. “I have something for you.” I ran to the car to get the gift.

Eric opened the package and his eyes widened. “I’ve been wanting to get this,” he said. “Thank you so much.”

“We just wanted to let you know how much we appreciate all your help,” I said. “In fact, we were going to celebrate Peanut’s graduation tonight. Would you be able to join us for dinner at The Back Eddy?” I asked.

“Sure thing!” Eric said. “That’s one of my favorite restaurants. There’s no where better in the summer. They have the best chowder and stuffies, and my girlfriend, Rachael, would love a night out. Thanks!”

“Six o’clock then. My wife can’t wait to meet you.”

We both went our separate ways, Eric to the town boat launch to go jet skiing, me, home to pick up my family. I thought a day at the beach would be the perfect start to our celebration. Peanuts could play in the water...do a few sits...stays...downs...recalls...go for a nice walk. What a great feeling to have a well trained (well almost, we were still working on it) dog.

Free Stuff Linked To This Book

To help you get the full value from this book,
there is a collection of

FREE EXTRA RESOURCES

Waiting for you at
www.AmazingDogTrainingMan.com

FREE E-Mail Dog Training Mini-Course...extension of the book –
enroll today!

FREE Dog Training Video Clips. See actual demonstrations for many
of the techniques used in this book!

FREE Articles – Housetraining, Leash Walking, Jumping, and related
articles on topics such as Shedding and Nutrition.

...and every other extra resource referred to
in this book

Bonus Chapter

Chapter Sixteen

101 Way To Improve Your Dog's Behavior
A quick reference guide for when you're: in a hurry

101 Ways To Improve Your Dog's Behavior

We believe that in order to have a good dog, you need to learn how to be a good dog owner. When you learn to become a good dog owner, you will find that living with your dog is easier and a lot more fun! This bonus chapter is divided into five parts to help you achieve this goal.

PART I – Management Of Behavior

- 1) Learn how to effectively manage your dog's behavior, especially in your absence.
- 2) Use a crate when you cannot physically be there to watch your dog. Make sure it is big enough for the dog to move around in, and do not overuse the crate.
- 3) When you are home, keep the dog in the room with you. It is extremely important to monitor her behavior.
- 4) Using a baby gate is a great way to keep the dog in the room with you.
- 5) Keep a leash on the dog to help control her. If she gets on the furniture, use the leash to pull her off. If the dog steals something, you can step on the leash to prevent chase games.
- 6) Use a chain leash if your dog likes to chew on the leash. (You will need a leather leash for obedience training.)
- 7) When a baby gate is not available, secure the leash to something sturdy to keep the dog in the room with you.

PART II – Exercise

- 8) There are two ways to exercise your dog – physically and mentally. Make sure you do both.
- 9) Take your dog for a daily walk. Dogs need to get off their property and explore their surroundings using their senses (sight, sound, and smell).
- 10) Make sure your dog gets aerobic exercise. A dog needs to get his heart rate up and blood pumping. This also allows the dog to burn off pent-up energy.
- 11) Retrieving games are a great way for the dog to get aerobic exercise. (Note: Use two balls if the dog does not drop the ball on command.)
- 12) Playing Tug-of-War is a good way for your dog to get exercise and stimulation. Make sure you always win the game.
- 13) Go hiking. This is a great way for you and your dog to get close to nature, enjoy fresh air, and exercise.
- 14) On a hot day, there is no better way to exercise than swimming. Your dog stays cool and gets his daily exercise.
- 15) After some physical exercise, make sure your dog receives some mental stimulation.
- 16) A dog explores his world through his sense of smell. Allow the dog to sniff and investigate his surroundings with his nose.
- 17) Throw a handful of treats into the backyard. This loose form of tracking will keep the dog occupied.
- 18) A stuffed Kong® toy can provide hours of entertainment. Kong® toys are available at most pet stores.
- 19) Stuff the Kong® with peanut butter or cream cheese and pack a few biscuits into them.
- 20) Teaching a dog some tricks is fun and stimulating for the dog.
- 21) Teach your dog to find treats around the house. Hide them behind and underneath the furniture.
- 22) Obedience training requires the dog to think and use her brain. Take five minutes each day to do some training.

PART III – Structure / Leadership

- 23) Dogs are social animals. They are also pack animals. In a pack, there is a leader. Position yourself as the leader.
- 24) Position yourself as a leader in a non-physical manner by controlling the activities, resources and needs of the dog.
- 25) The four most important things to a dog are social contact, playing, food and sleeping. By controlling these activities, you position yourself as the leader.
- 26) Control Tug-of-War games. When playing “tug”, start and finish the game. The most important aspect of “tug” is to always win the game before putting the tug toy away.
- 27) Play retrieving games using two balls. Throw the ball. When the dog returns, play with the second ball. Wait for the dog to drop the first one, and only then throw the second ball for him.
- 28) Control food by feeding twice a day.
- 29) Have the dog perform a five to ten second sit stay before eating.
- 30) Don’t free feed. By feeding twice a day, you position yourself as the leader.
- 31) Whatever the dog doesn’t finish should be picked up and put away.
- 32) Only allow the dog on the bed if he is behaving well.
- 33) If your dog growls or refuses to get off the bed, do not allow him on it.
- 34) Secure a leash to the foot of the bed if your dog gets on in the middle of the night.
- 35) Get the dog his own bed.
- 36) Use social interactions as a way to control behavior. Pet and interact with your dog on your terms.
- 37) Three to four times a week, check your dog’s eyes, ears, teeth and tail.
- 38) Try to get the dog to voluntarily roll over onto his back. Do not force it.
- 39) Spend time hugging your dog. A hug is not a natural thing for a dog. In the wild, the only time a dog will get anything close to a hug is when they are getting ready to mate or fight. Kids love to hug dogs. Teach your dog to like hugs.
- 40) Everything that we do with our dogs has an effect on their behavior. Training is motivating the dog to do something for you.

- 41) Whenever possible, ignore bad behaviors, i.e. jumping. Reinforce good behavior whenever possible, i.e. sitting.
- 42) Reinforce behavior by using treats. Ask the dog to sit, and reward with a tasty treat.
- 43) When you reward a behavior with something the dog wants, the chance of the behavior occurring again improves.
- 44) Using the dog's toys is a great way to strengthen behaviors. Do not throw the ball until the dog performs a simple command like "sit".
- 45) Redirecting behavior is a great thing to do. If your dog starts chewing, redirect the chewing to an acceptable object.
- 46) Punishment should be used sparingly. All things positive should come from you. All things negative should come from the environment.
- 47) Use a Gentle Leader™ to walk your dog.

PART IV – Health & Nutrition

- 48) A bad diet definitely effects behavior. Make sure you feed your dog a quality, premium food.
- 49) When choosing a food, read the label. Familiarize yourself with ingredients.
- 50) Choose a food that uses chicken or lamb meal as opposed to chicken or lamb by-products.
- 51) Foods are usually made with a corn or rice grain source. Corn can be difficult for some dogs to digest. Try a food with rice as the grain source.
- 52) Foods preserved with ethoxyquin, BHA or BHT have been linked to cancer.
- 53) A food preserved naturally with Vitamin E or tocopherols is a better choice.
- 54) Garlic is a great herb to add to your dog's diet. It is a natural antibiotic.
- 55) Cod liver oil is also great to add to your dog's diet. It provides essential Omega fatty acids.
- 56) Supplement your dog's food with a vitamin and mineral mix.
- 57) Take your dog to the Vet for regular checkups.
- 58) If you notice a dramatic change in your dog's behavior, make sure you have a thorough veterinary exam before hiring the services of a trainer or behaviorist.

59) Regular grooming is important. A good groomer will clean the ears, trim the nails, and look for any skin problems.

60) Some dogs need grooming more than others. Cocker Spaniels hair can become thick and matted. This can put the dog in great discomfort and expose them to water and moisture.

61) Keep your dog free from fleas and other parasites.

62) Vacuum your carpets and dog beds on a regular basis. A flea infestation will occur when the fleas reproduce and their eggs hatch in these areas.

63) It is important to take your dog off the property regularly. Many dogs go stir crazy by staying in a fenced in area for too long. Other dogs become frustrated, territorial and may become aggressive.

64) Practice food exchanges with your dog, especially if your dog is becoming a resource guarder.

65) Practice exchanging a tasty treat for their favorite tennis ball. Give them the ball back after they politely drop the ball and eat their treat.

66) Socialize your dog. Dogs are social animals and need contact with humans and other dogs. See if your local obedience trainer offers a dog playgroup.

67) Take your dog to doggie daycare.

PART V – Behavior Problems

A survey of dog owners revealed that when asked what the biggest problems they experienced with their dogs were, they answered jumping, house training, coming when called and chewing.

Jumping

68) Dogs, being social animals, will greet with enthusiasm. A good thing to do is ignore the dog when they jump. Fold your arms, look away and do not talk to the dog. Become a statue.

69) Reward the dog when all four paws are on the ground. Give a treat as soon as the dog relaxes and does not attempt to jump.

70) Do not back up when your dog jumps. Walk into the dog. Do a quick “cha cha” step into the dog, knocking them slightly off balance.

71) Make sure you have a NO JUMP policy. Do not invite the dog to jump on you, and do not allow friends and relatives to permit the dog to jump.

72) Teach young puppies to keep all four paws on the ground. Most jumping problems start when our dogs are small puppies.

73) Put a leash on the dog when guests come over. Step on the leash as your guests come toward the dog. This forces the dog to stay on the ground.

HOUSE TRAINING

74) Crate the dog when you cannot physically be there with her.

75) Make sure the crate is just big enough for the dog to comfortably lie down. If it is too big, the dog will relieve herself in one area and lay down on the other side.

76) Make sure you catch your dog in the act of going. Do not punish after the fact.

77) Immediately bring the dog outside, and reward the dog quickly after they finish going.

78) Check the diet. Canned dog food may work like a laxative on some dogs.

79) Have a fecal and urine examine by a Vet. Rule out any parasites. All physical problems need to be ruled out first.

80) When cleaning up any accidents in the house, make sure the products do not have any ammonia. Ammonia smells like urine to a dog, making the dog go in the same spot.

81) Teach the dog to give you a signal. Put a bell on the door and teach the dog to hit it for a signal.

82) Teach the dog by putting a little peanut butter on the bell. When the dog touches the bell, immediately bring the dog outside. The dog will quickly learn to hit the bell to go outside.

83) Use 50% white vinegar and 50% water to clean the scent. Another excellent product is Nature's Miracle, found in most pet stores.

COMING WHEN CALLED

84) The dog needs to develop a sense of freedom. Without that, the dog will never come.

85) Developing a sense of freedom can be done by bringing the dog to a fenced in ballpark or tennis court.

86) Use a long line. Attach a 30 to 40 foot long line to the dog's collar. If the dog does not respond to your "come" command, use the line to guide the dog back to you.

87) Every time you command, "come", make sure you reward the dog for coming. Use treats, praise, toys, etc.

88) Never call the dog and then punish him. If your dog comes to you and then gets scolded, chances are that he will remember that the next time you call him.

89) Make coming when called a game. The more exciting you make the command “come”, the better the results.

90) You can make it exciting for your dog by getting his attention and running away from him. Dogs love chase games.

91) A fun game to play is the recall game. Have a friend hold your dog’s collar. Get the dog excited and run away while your friend holds the dog. Face the dog and call “come”, at which point your friend lets go of the collar. Reward when the dog gets to you.

CHEWING

92) Limit the number of toys you give your dog. It is difficult for the dog to discriminate between his toys and your belongings.

93) Put peanut butter on your dog’s toys and bitter apple (found in most pet stores) on some of your belongings. Put the toys on the floor and let the dog learn to discriminate between his toys and your things.

94) Manage your dog’s behavior in your absence. Use a crate when you cannot physically be there to watch your dog.

95) Try to catch the dog just as he is about to start chewing, not after he has chewed.

96) Play Tug-of-War with your dog. Many dogs with chewing problems are very oral. Let them use their jaws and teeth on chew toys.

97) Exercise is always a great thing to do with your dog. You need to relieve pent-up energy that your dog stores throughout the day.

98) A great idea is to bring your dog to a doggie daycare, if possible.

99) Another alternative is to hire a pet sitter to come in during the day and take your dog for a walk.

100) Dogs have a physical and psychological need to chew. As a dog owner, you need to provide your dog with outlets so they can use their teeth and jaws.

101) Please spay or neuter your dog!

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Which Of These Myths Have You Heard?

1. Never, under any circumstances should you play tug-o-war – Wrong, you should.
2. Letting your dog sleep on the bed should never be allowed – Says who?
3. Never feed your dog “people food” – What is the doggie bag industry going to do?
4. Wait until your dog is six months old to start training – The absolute worst dog training advice ever given!
5. You can’t teach an old dog new tricks – Or can you?

Dog training expert, Eric Letendre, says that confusion is the number one problems dog owners face today. There is so much advice floating around that new dog and puppy owners become confused, which leads to problems with their dogs. A lot of the advice out there is old and outdated. Much of it relies on outdated and harsh techniques that were used over a hundred years ago.

In his new book, you will learn new and proven training methods using the principles of behavior. In this book, you’ll learn ***The Reverse Dog Training Method*** developed by Eric Letendre. A revolutionary training system, it will show you how to get maximum results the quick and easy way. You’ll also discover his ***M.U.T.T. Method*** for dealing with common behavior problems such as jumping, housetraining, biting and much more.

I refer all my clients with puppies and problem pets to Eric Letendre. I’ve been impressed with the excellent results I’ve see. He worked wonders with Tazz, our hospital pit bull. Thanks for your excellent advice and the service you provide.

Dr. Kim Wadsworth
DVM
Anchor Animal Hospital

Eric Letendre’s positive training is incredible. Through the techniques I have learned, I achieved exactly what I wanted. I now have a dog that everyone loves and wants to be around. She is well behaved and understands specific commands. The training is fun for the dog and practicing is all about rewards. The best thing about the training is that it works!

Sally Schnider
Newport, RI

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