



## **People Empowerment Program ( ... or how to teach your dog to love, honor and obey you!)**

Many dogs think their position is up at the top of the pack...as the leader. When that pack is a human family, this is not good. In order to elevate your own status and lower the dog's, the dog must learn to respect and obey you. You don't have to be physically strong to accomplish this. Instead, you control the dog's life by his access to resources...the important stuff of life. The following are suggestions to help you adjust your dog's rank in your "pack." For major problems consider using all of them, for more minor problems you can pick and choose or vary the areas you control.

### **Attention**

...your most important tool. Dogs need to interact with the rest of their "pack." Every time you touch your dog, you are reinforcing the behavior that is happening at that moment - whether that's whining, barking or shaking from fear. Use your praise wisely! Do not pet, stroke or touch your dog unless he does something to deserve it - like sit, down, etc. And ask him to sit each time he wishes some attention - make him earn your praise.

Your dog should allow you to groom him at your will. Often dogs who seem to like attention actually only like it when THEY want it. Make it pleasant, but do brush him, check his teeth, trim his nails and generally manipulate him to your satisfaction, not his.

### **Food**

He needs to know who is doing all the hunting in this family! Feed him twice a day, and have him watch while you put the food into his bowl. If he has growled when someone goes near his food, hand feed him at least the first few handfuls. Occasionally, prepare his bowl of food, then wait until you have eaten something (or appeared to) before you feed him. Or prepare his food and hand feed him something much better while he's eating.

### **Territory**

- Control your environment - the yard, house and deck area. If your dog spends his days barking at people walking by the yard or at dogs on the ground below "his" deck, you'll never stop bad behavior. You have to control the territory - keep him inside during the day, or build a solid fence that he cannot see through.
- Attach a leash to your dog's flat or leather collar (not to a "choke" chain), and have him drag it around the house. This gives him a sense of your control...and it gives you an invaluable tool when your dog misbehaves. Without going near the dog, you can grab or step on the leash quickly, saying "NO" at the same time. The length of the leash can vary with the dog's problem....dogs that run away

need a long (10 foot) light nylon leash; dogs that jump up on people or objects can use a shorter leash. You can do the same thing outside, but use a 15 to 30 foot leash.

- Another indoor controller is a "tie-down." Attach a 3/8 inch chain to the wall, using an eyebolt and latch. Bicycle chain is a good choice, because it usually is covered in rubber and won't damage items. Attach the other end to the dog. Place it in a well-used area, like a kitchen or family room, and put a comfortable blanket or pillow on the floor for the dog to lie on. This is where he gets to munch on a "chewy". He can't interact with you, but you can with him. It takes control away from the dog....but does not replace it with anything bad (if the dog begins to get possessive of his "place," move it every couple of days - or eliminate it and arrange for professional help). Only use tie-downs when you are home, and please don't tie your dog outside. That actually creates aggression and never solves problems.
- Restrict his access to doorways and thresholds and don't allow to precede you into or out of a room whenever he wants to, that's an alpha behavior. Whoever controls the doorway controls the territory. Teach him "wait" to stop at doorways and "move" when he's lying at the threshold. You don't have to go through every doorway first (what a pain that would be!), but you should make sure he obeys your strictures to stop.

### **Sleeping Arrangements**

- High places are often seen as desirable to dogs and so are places where guardians rest. Keep your dog off your bed, couches and chairs. If you must have him on the bed, then make SURE he gets off cheerfully every time you ask. If he has EVER growled at you from a piece of furniture, he should be banished from all of them.
- Crate or confine your dog at night, and when he cannot be watched. He doesn't need run of the house any more than a 2 year old child does! Every once in a while, move his bed or actually sit in it...just to make sure it is really yours.

### **Toys and Play**

- Pick up all the dog's toys and put them where he cannot get to them. Allow him to have one, two or more at a time, and when he's finished with them, put them back. No tug of war games, no rough-housing unless you win. Don't let him play "keep-away" with your objects, unless you can retrieve them easily (the indoor leash comes in very handy here!) Make sure he gets enough exercise - for big dogs, three miles a day is reasonable. Smaller dogs need less. Exercised dogs get into less trouble. Dogs are naturally most active in the morning and evening hours, and can learn to sleep through the day - which is handy for working guardians.
- Play lots of ball, any retrieving game if he'll do it. Make obedience work fun. Praise any good behavior, using your voice and petting. Don't reinforce bad behavior at all.

### **General**

- Try not to lose your temper with your dog. You need to be in control (or at least appear to be!)

- Hold at least two obedience sessions every day. Each session should be approximately 5-10 minutes, and should end on a successful note, even if you have to backtrack to make the dog complete an exercise well. If your dog has not gone to a class, take him. If your dog is trained well enough, have him hold a "down" position for 15 to 30 minutes per day. Though this seems like a great deal of work, most of these techniques can be worked into a normal day and become routine. It's our experience that most dogs adjust nicely after a time and learn to be polite, well-behaved members of their family.

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