

KATHY KOPELLIS McLEOD The dog behaviour consultant helps us understand our canine companions



LEARN TO SPEAK WITH YOUR DOG

Many owners are under the mistaken belief that they need to act like a drill sergeant to make dogs behave, but this only serves to harm the relationship

THE one thing I've found that dog owners frequently tell me they want to know is how to get into their dog's head and understand their unique language. It makes complete sense to be able to break through the language barrier and accurately read what your dog is telling you. We owe it to them to take the time and effort to learn what is really going on in their head and what we can do to make them happier individuals.

These tips are a good kick-start in strengthening your relationship with your dog and helping your confidence grow.

AVOID PUNISHMENT

Cruel and unwarranted punishment can affect your dog for the rest of its life.

Owners who know how to communicate with their dogs really don't have a need for punishment. They use a proactive approach and intervene to prevent inappropriate behaviour rather than punishing the dog after it has behaved badly.

Dogs that are punished often operate on a fear of doing the wrong thing, which is likely to lead to

miscommunication between you and your dog.

The repercussions of such treatment can sometimes last a lifetime - particularly if you treat a sensitive individual in such a manner. These dogs don't have the same bounce-back ability as their more confident counterparts but it is still not justified to treat your friend with your brawn.

BE PATIENT

Impatience can dent your connection with your best friend. If you lose patience when your dog is not behaving as you would like it to, instead of inhibiting your dog's learning, consider that your dog doesn't clearly understand what it is you want from them.

Be clear with what it is you want.

Observe that your dog is receptive to offering a behaviour "at that moment in time" and help them out if they're not conducive to learning if stress or arousal are involved.

By learning how to read your dog and to communicate in a way that they will understand, you'll never be impatient with your dog again.

BE A LEADER

Just like us, dogs need to feel secure to be truly happy, which means they need to feel confident that you are the leader and they can count on you to take control of matters.

As in our world, dogs respond well to an astute leader who applies ethical training principles, is keenly

perceptive and avoids using bullying and scare tactics.

With consistent guidance dogs are not put in a situation where they are left to decide how to behave; instead, they know how to behave because you have taught them and you are stepping up for them when they need you most.

ADDRESS PROBLEMS

Dogs won't correct their behaviour on their own. Behaviour problems don't often improve on their own especially with those dogs with deep-rooted issues. If left alone, a badly behaved dog will get better at behaving badly.

The old saying that prevention is better than cure is certainly true with your dog, and it's best that behaviour problems are addressed as early as possible in your dog's life. Your dog won't necessarily grow out of a particular issue, but it might grow into it - especially if it doesn't get some productive help from you.

COMMUNICATE

To master your dog, you must first master its language. Learning what their unique language means will make observing your dog not only fascinating but will open up the flood gates to a whole new level of understanding between you and your dog.

Most dog owners don't know what their dog is really trying to communicate, but why risk damaging your relationship with your dog when you can simply and easily learn to "speak dog". Knowing how to read your dog's body language is the difference between a well-behaved dog and a mischievous pet likely to develop bad habits.

USE HUMANE ALTERNATIVES

The theory of dominance is outdated. For years dog owners have been made to believe that they should show their dog who is boss in order to have an obedient dog. They've been advised to use harsh methods in order to become the "boss", which only serves to damage the relationship, trust and bond between you and your dog.

What a relief to know that you don't have to act like a drill sergeant to help your dog when there are humane and intelligent alternatives, such as learning to speak the same language so your dog understands your commands and what is expected of them.

EASE STRESS

Less stress equals better learning. The key to a successful and happy relationship with your dog is to set them up for success. When your dog is relaxed and focused they're free to think without the consequence of intimidation and punishment, making the process a much smarter way to train.

Take care of the decision making for your dog and open the gateway for clear thinking without the burden of stress. This step alone will be a remarkable breakthrough in enriching your dog's life.

For more help, my book *Watch My Manners* has been called a dog owners' manual, giving valuable insight into what makes your dog tick as well as teaching you how to read the signs and motions dogs use to communicate.

Visit www.kathysdogtraining.com.au for further information about dog behaviour and training and while you're there, sign up to receive some free dog training tips. Check out Kathy's newly released dates for her popular monthly Intensive Dog Workshop designed for reactive dogs and catch up on Kathy's previous HOME articles.

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