

Holistic Training and Behavior Modification

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Behavior issues such as destructive chewing, lack of attention, aggression and generalized irritability can be addressed and resolved with a fresh food diet and positive reinforcement training techniques. Working as a Canine Behavior Modification Consultant, for the last 13 years, I have observed a direct correlation between behavior and diet. Often, when basic nutritional feeding regimens are implemented in conjunction with positive reinforcement training methods, your dog can overcome annoying and problematic behavior issues. My goal is to promote a healthy and harmonious relationship, between people and their K-9 companions.

When working with a new client, I am interested in the dogs' behavior and health history. Both are essential in creating a program unique to each dogs' individual needs. A complete background including diet, vaccination history, and current environmental stressors are recorded and analyzed prior to developing an individualized treatment plan to address the problematic behaviors. Exercise patterns and time spent alone or a change in ones' work schedule are all factors to be considered when determining the cause of a specific behavior issue. Health issues such as hypothyroid, hypoglycemia, hyperglycemia, arthritis, hip dysplasia, and allergies are often overlooked when identifying the root cause of a particular behavior problem. Many of these problems can be resolved through a diet change. Understanding our dogs as a whole is the key to preventing frustration and building rewarding relationships.

Positive reinforcement training is based on the theory that when a behavior is followed by an immediate reward, that behavior is more likely to occur again. For example, your puppy sits, you give her a treat and the likelihood of getting her to sit again has just increased. Positive reinforcement requires the generous use of food and play during training sessions and classes. Treats that are high in protein and low in sugar or carbohydrates are most effective. Dried fruits, string cheese, and meat treats such as jerky or nitrate free hot dogs mixed together make an excellent doggy training mix.

A fresh food diet which includes raw bones, meat, vegetables, fruit and yogurt, enhances the immune system, feeds the brain, cleans teeth, exercises back, neck and jaw muscles, and helps to quiet the mind. Many anxiety and stress related behaviors in dogs are their way of filling in the 8 plus hours they spend alone; tearing up trash, eating the stuffing out of the couch, chewing on curtains and carpet, digging holes in the yard, chasing the cat, and barking. However, chewing on a nice raw knucklebone provides your dog an opportunity to exercise his teeth and jaws, back and neck. This translates into a great whole body workout and the house, ultimately, is left intact. Appropriate chewing, relieves stress and calms anxiety related behaviors.

Attention deficit is a very real issue with dogs of any age. A fresh food diet, which is low in carbohydrates and high in animal protein and fat, can help resolve these issues. High quality proteins and fat promote healthy brain development and support brain activity. I recommend feeding a variety of meat types to ensure sufficient amounts of the Essential Fatty Acids and amino acids. A mix of meats might include a combination of beef, lamb, venison, chicken and turkey.

Aggression is a multi-faceted and complex issue I am frequently asked to evaluate. There are many types of aggression, and for the purposes of this article I will be addressing pain related aggression. Dogs in pain can become irritable and are frequently labeled as aggressive. Often these dogs lash out in an aggressive display when bumped by other dogs. One purpose of this display is to get the other dog to move away from the tender area. For these animals I recommend a thorough veterinarian exam. These animals respond well to chiropractic adjustments in combination with acupuncture treatments. Dog's spines can become easily misaligned and a chiropractic adjustment by a properly trained veterinarian can make a wonderful difference for your dog and decrease these displays of aggression.

Positive reinforcement training is vital to a respectful and loving relationship with our dogs. The joy of a healthy, happy dog as a companion is unequalled for those of us who cherish the company of our dogs. Feeding them properly is essential to our dog's mental and physical well-being. Understanding and addressing these needs establishes you as the benevolent leader of your pack.

Kathy Harrison has been committed to promoting positive training methods for 13 years and is a member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers. Kathy enjoys the challenge of identifying and resolving aggression problem and promotes feeding a fresh food diet.