

TRAINING FOR DOGS; THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST

Something very important in all relationships is trust, & this goes for our pets too. Most of you will have heard of the saying 'set them up for success' especially on the training ground. When training your dog trust is very important, especially if you are taking your dog to a new environment. Some environments might be fun & distracting like training at the park. But other environments might be a little scary, like a visit to the vet. The more trust that your dog has with you, the more they will look to you for guidance and listen to you when it's needed.

So how do you build trust so that your relationship is strengthened and that your dog is more likely, and most importantly wants to respond to you?

Firstly you need to possess leadership qualities such as consistency and assertive but fair treatment. Don't be too hard on your dog if they do something wrong, but don't be too soft either! Make sure rules are enforced consistently & with all family members. One of the main reasons that dogs misbehave is because they haven't been trained the correct way to behave. Generally 'naughty dogs' are just dogs that need more training. So is it fair to reprimand or punish your dog for something you have failed to teach him or her? Of course you will usually need to correct the behaviour (I say usually because some behaviours are best ignored) but look at ways you can teach your dog to act in a more appropriate way; such as sitting for attention (instead of jumping up) & only getting pats or attention when they are sitting.

Secondly you need to adopt positive training methods & set your dog up for success so they get it right. If a training technique is too hard or if you are not communicating clearly your dog will become confused. If you lose your cool, then you confuse your dog further and in some cases cause fear, which only breaks a relationship down further. Make sure you reward your dogs efforts even if they haven't quite perfected a command.

Thirdly, socialise your dog on a regular basis. All dogs and puppies need to get out and meet other people and other dogs. Dogs should be walked regularly, be taken out in the car and visiting friends. All puppies should be socialised before 16 weeks of age. Socialised dogs are more confident, adapt to new situations faster, are less likely to develop behaviour problems such as barking and aggression & generally they learn faster because they are more adaptable and not held back by fears and anxieties.