

TRAIN WITHOUT PAIN OR FEAR

by

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The choice of training without inflicting pain or fear on another being was a conscious decision by DOGSmart. We had to actively seek out alternatives by getting an education in how dogs learn. (Burch, Bailey) The pleasure centre in the brain has to be activated for dogs to learn. Lure/Reward training (Dunbar) and Clicker training (Skinner, Pryor) are 2 types of positive reinforcement training that are not based on fear or punishment.

People have been told that they need to train by physically dominating and “correcting” a dog through physical punishment. They may use their hand, a leash, a choke chain, a pinch collar, e-collar/shock collar or even a head halter, harness or plain collar. Any tool can be punishing. Using physical punishment can be detrimental to the physical and mental health of any being.

We, at DOGSmart, do not use choke chains, pinch collars, shock collars and even martingales (1/4 chokes). The very nature of their physical designs and the corresponding mental mindset encourages physical punishment. Compulsive training is not new nor is it science based. It has, by its history and tradition, legitimized physical punishment. It is a tradition of abuse that has been passed on since dogs domesticated themselves. (Coppinger) It is founded in the belief that dogs need to be broken of their bad or stubborn behaviours. It is training with the emphasis on what the dog did wrong. Does this work? Does physical punishment decrease the behaviour the dog is doing? At what cost? This method of punishment requires pin point accuracy in timing, duration and level of intensity. Few humans outside of a laboratory have this skill. If it is truly a correction it should also instruct as to what behaviour you wanted the dog to do, otherwise it is abuse.

We, dog owners, do not live in a laboratory. Dog owners/guardians definitions of what behaviour they want to get rid of are very vague. Often they are mixed messages. The dog may jump up and be petted when you want you to, but not when you don't want to. Is a “sit” understood as a sit beside or sit at a distance or a sit if they are in another room? Should the dog be punished for not understanding that sit while you are jumping up or running around is still a “Sit”? Do we physically punish someone trying to learn a second language?

The action of choking stops either air to the lungs or blood to the brain. It also involves some whiplash to the spine. These devices give the human permission and encouragement to use these punishments. For people using pinch collars they have been told they are more humane for the dog as less pressure is required to “correct” the dog. I have seen dogs with open sores on their necks where the points of the pinch have gone through their skin. I don't think that is more humane.

Operant conditioning, “clicker training” is science based training (Pryor) using a clicker (mechanical device that makes a click sound) paired with a reward. The dog learns to offer behaviours and the human gets to let the dog know when they choose the right one. Already we are communicating on a different level –at both ends of the leash. Yes, the reward is food. People who think they must use force need to know that once the behaviour has been taught in various combinations food is replaced with other rewards such as tugging, playing, petting, praise or permission to do something the dog wants to do.

Teaching, using operant conditioning, is rewarding for both parties. Operant conditioning is as old as Skinner and as new as TAG teaching and it is scientifically proven to work outside any laboratory. We train without pain or fear at DOGSmart Training Systems.