

When love is not enough

Most people openly admit they love, or at least have great affection, for their pets. Often while gathering information from a client I hear a comment such as,

"I love my dog so much and don't understand why he acts like this." It seems like the nicest, most gentle, nurturing, loving people have dogs with the biggest problems.

Years ago, as a new foster parent for Chatham County Department of Social Services, I was introduced to a great book. It is about parenting extremely difficult children and is titled, *When Love is Not Enough*. The author, Nancy Thomas, is a Therapeutic Parenting Specialist. The following is an excerpt from one of the opening pages of her book:

*"The dog looked at the man and said
"you feed me, you love me, you pet me,
you clean up after me, you must be God."
The cat looked at the man and said
"you feed me, you love me, you pet me,
you clean up after me, I must be God."
—unknown author"*

Nancy goes on to explain that children can develop the same realization as the cat.

Over the years I've learned that dogs can do the same.

The number one factor 99 percent of my clients have in common is, in some way, their dog

the Canine Coach

by Valerie Broadway



doesn't see them as the leader. This is demonstrated by the dog ignoring the owner's commands (especially not coming when called), physically pushing the owner around, and challenging the owner by growling at or even biting them. The dog sees himself as being the one in charge, and the owner as a lower ranking individual. Higher ranking dogs don't feel the need to listen to subordinates.

If a dog or child is running your home, there will be dysfunction. Dogs live in a world of hierarchy. They are always aware of the social order of the group they're in. If they don't perceive someone as being in-charge, then they will think they must take the role. If there is no leadership the dog feels the group is vulnerable to threats.

During most of my coaching sessions the first thing we focus on is teaching people how to communicate to their dog that the humans are in charge. The human must be able to demonstrate that they are not only the leader, but a good leader. The dog needs to know the human will always keep them safe. A good

leader is calm and confident. The dog feeds off this energy and will be much more willing to do what the owner says.

There are two life stages when dogs definitely test their owners; as toddlers and adolescents. If not handled correctly, dogs learn they can get away with the bad behaviors. If nothing changes, these behaviors will continue and likely get worse. The longer the behaviors persist, the more effort and time it will take to correct them.

Dogs must know there are boundaries the leader will never let them cross. If they get away with being pushy, growling, or nipping without consequences, they will continue to do these things. The level of consequence must be meaningful enough to stop the behavior. If it isn't working, then the consequence must be increased to a level that works. Some dogs can be very sensitive and it doesn't take much to make a point with them. Other dogs don't get subtlety, and it can be extremely tough to convince them to change.

Dogs respect who they think is physically the strongest and/or who is the most persistent. Our dogs must believe we are both. When working to stop an unwanted behavior, you must win every time. There are no days off, no moments of weakness, no letting it slide. The appropriate consequence must happen every time the dog exhibits the behavior. If the owner is vigilant, most dogs will completely give up a bad behavior in a day or two. Some people find they have to get out of their comfort zone if their dog requires

firmer corrections.

Dogs learn from patterns and timing. You have about one second to reward or correct a dog and they will match it to the right behavior. Most dogs will not learn something after just one time of correction or reward, but will get it after five or six repetitions. With repetition, most dogs will understand they must stop a certain behavior if they are corrected immediately at the level of consequence that gets their attention.

I recommend people hold their dog on a leash for a day or two when working on an issue. That way the dog can be instantly corrected every time they do the negative behavior. Dogs need direction or they will do what is in their own best interest, is a result of poor impulse control, or comes from a place of fear. Persons who can't give the needed push back will not see positive results. For dogs that have started growling at or biting people, their owners should get help from a professional dog behaviorist or specialist.

Merely having feelings of love is not enough to raise a problem free, respectful dog. However, when love is put into action, through guidance, behavioral-based rewards and consequences, and by always holding your ground, then love most certainly is enough.

Valerie Broadway, *the Canine Coach*, is a dog trainer and behavioral specialist. For information: 919.542.4726 or www.caninecoachingservices.com.



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Read Judy Hogan's newest mystery

On December 1, 2015, *The Sands of Gower: The First Penny Weaver Mystery*, was released under the imprint Hoganvillaea Books. The first two Penny Weaver mysteries published were *Killer Frost* (2012) and *Farm Fresh and Fatal* (2013). They were the sixth and seventh books in the series. Hogan now will publish all fifteen of the Penny Weaver mysteries back to the beginning when Penny meets Kenneth Morgan the Welsh detective in 1991.

Penny begins a new and lively stage of life, her children raised, with a powerful erotic attraction, and the freedom to cross lines that usually hold people apart.

The Sands of Gower is set in a Bed and Breakfast on the Gower peninsula near Swansea, Wales. Penny Weaver, luxuriating in her two-month vacation, is disturbed by the murder of a German guest. Penny's independent, outspoken American lifestyle contrasts with the more conservative ways of the village's pensioners. In the process of solving the crime, Penny and Detective Inspector Kenneth Morgan are powerfully attracted. This, plus the British post-World War II continuing distrust of the Germans, complicates their investigation.

Hogan spent six vacations on the Gower peninsula between 1981 and 1996. One reviewer said: "Distinctive characters, lyrical writing, and an appealing Welsh setting distinguish this charming tale of an introspective poet's unexpected immersion in murder and romance."

The Sands of Gower will be available through Amazon, both as a paperback and as an e-book. The Joyful Jewel, Circle City Books, and Paperbacks Plus will carry it as well. The paperback will sell for \$15. ISBN-13: 978-1515191063. The e-book on Amazon and Smashwords.com is \$2.99. For a signed copy, contact judyhogan@mindspring.com



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