

# My Canine Management & Training Philosophy

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*My Canine Companion, LLC*

I have combined my 30 years as a college professor in the field of communication and my experience as a dog trainer and behavioral consultant, to offer effective science-based canine training and behavioral modification. As such, I apply only **positive reinforcement and “force free” methods** for training and behavior modification. A positive reinforcement approach results in a dog that is excited, happy and willing to participate in the training process. This approach provides positive feedback and reinforcement, opening the communication channel between humans and their canines. The use of positive reinforcement and force free methods enables us to build solid behaviors in our canine companions as well as developing a trusting relationship and bond with them.

Therefore, my training philosophy, approach and methodology does not include the use of shock, pain, choking, fear, and/or physical compulsion in canine management or training. The use of devices that choke, prong, and/or shock pets are unacceptable and counterproductive in training. “Pet correction devices” (such as shock collars) to prevent barking, jumping-up, growling, aggression or any other undesirable canine behavior uses fear as its prime motivation, and can have devastating results.

The following consequences can arise by use of “aversive” training and management methods (meaning something unpleasant or frightening that a dog will try to avoid or escape):

## **Consequences**

**1. Escalation:** If a change in behavior is not seen immediately, often users of aversive tools and techniques may opt to increase the frequency, duration or intensity of the application. This creates a counterproductive situation where your dog simply learns to fear the stimulus, the context, and/or you. It has been scientifically proven that fear and stress caused in such situations can have a significant effect on a dog's well-being due to increasing cortisol levels and heart rate, not to mention the psychological impact. (O’Heare, 2005).

**2. “Shut-Down”:** A dog repeatedly subjected to aversive stimulation may go into a state of “shut down”. This is frequently mistaken for a “trained” dog, as the dog remains subdued and offers few or no behaviors. In extreme cases, dogs may refuse to perform any behavior at all, known as “learned helplessness.” In such cases, dogs may try to isolate themselves to avoid incurring the aversive stimulation. (O’Heare, 2011).

**3. Suppressed Aggression:** The use of aversive stimuli (shock, pain, choking, fear, and/or physical compulsion) can be dangerous in dogs with aggression. This is because the behavior may only be suppressed rather than extinguished, and then resurface later without warning, generally in a more severe manner. When this occurs, the dog (without warning) will suddenly turn and bite his owner or attack someone without provocation.

**4. Redirected Aggression:** Dogs subjected to repeated aversive stimulation may be conditioned to associate the fear and/or pain with certain contextual cues in their environment. As an example, using an aversive sound such as an air horn to interrupt barking risks pairing the owner or trainer with the unpleasant stimulus and, in particular, the hand or arm that is reaching out while using the tool. If the dog feels that flight is not possible, he may instead start reacting aggressively toward any arm or hand movement.

## **The Force-Free Method**

As a Certified Professional Dog Trainer – Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA), Evaluator for A.K.C. S.T.A.R. Puppy, A.K.C. Canine Good Citizen (CGC), and A.K.C. Trick Dog titles, Therapy Dog Evaluator for Therapy Pets Unlimited (TPU), Evaluator for the Pet Professional Guild's (PPG) Pet Ambassador Program, and a member of both the Association of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT) and the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC), I advocate only the use of positive training methods, both personally and professionally, and that all training should be conducted in a manner that encourages your dogs to enjoy the process, which will, in turn, lead them to become more confident and well-adjusted canines. I practice and promote only scientifically researched methods of training and behavior modification that are the least intrusive and most effective in my practice.

## **Bibliography**

O’Heare, J. (2005). *Canine Neuropsychology*. Ottawa, ON: DogPsych Publishing

O’Heare, J. (2011). *Empowerment Training*. Ottawa, ON: BehaveTech Publishing

Pet Professional Guild. (2012). *Guiding Principles*.

Note: This document is in accordance agreement with the *Pet Professional Guild Position Statement on Pet Correction Devices*.