

What's All the Fuss About Positive Communication?

Peaceful Paws was founded on the belief that humans and dogs can co-exist in peace, and that communication between the two does not need to include physical intimidation and punishment. We'd like to convince you that positive is the way to go, too! Join us as we separate fact from fiction, and lead the way toward a kinder, gentler way to interact with your best friend!



But Shouldn't I Be Alpha? I Need to Be Alpha.

No, you really don't. In fact, David Mech, who coined the term "alpha" back in the 1960s based on his study of wolves in the wild, has declared that the concept is erroneous. There is no pack alpha. Instead, there is a breeding pair and their offspring, who form the pack. So it's more of a parent/child relationship. Why not try to be a good parent/leader instead? Communicate your expectations clearly, encourage your dog to do what you want, and give them structure and routine.

Which One of My Dogs Is Dominant? Which Is Submissive?

At Peaceful Paws, we don't like to put a label on our dogs and then treat them differently. Plus, we think dominance is a trait that dogs assume or discard depending on the circumstances. Spot may be dominant in the kitchen on Tues with Missy and Fluffy, while Missy may be dominant on Friday in the living room when she doesn't want to be disturbed during her nap. So in any given situation where one dog is dominant, the other(s) are submissive and vice versa. It's all OK. We'd rather learn each dog's quirks and communication preferences and go from there. Don't worry about dominance or submission, just consider the behavior you want from them.

So Should I Eat First, Walk Through the Door First, etc?

Sure, if you'd like. It's your house, your rules. Your dogs should respect your preferences, should you have any. But if you want them to eat first because it's more convenient, that's fine too. It's about R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Forget this silly notion that dogs are constantly plotting to overthrow you as leader of their pack. Dog brains run more along the lines of food=good sit=treat.

They Do It on TV.

As our mothers used to say: If your friends jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge, would you jump too? Of course they do it on TV. They do everything on TV. If you're looking for positive role models, watch Victoria Stillwell's *It's Me or the Dog* on Animal Planet or *Pitbulls & Paroles* on Animal Planet as well. Both feature positive training. Tia Torres runs the largest pit bull rescue in the world and both she and her Parole employees use positive communication with the pit bulls in their care. If they can do it, you can do it. Don't give in to peer pressure. We believe in you!!!

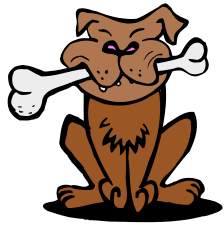
But All I Hear About Is Alpha/Dominance. This Is Different. Why?

Well, it sure has been popular lately. But there are many of us who believe in positive communication, and we're here to tell you that we've got a better relationship with our dogs for it. It's easy to default to a physical correction to stop a behavior you don't want. Why not take a few minutes and figure out how to get what you want without force? For a long time, people believed the world was flat. They held fast to that belief despite evidence to the contrary. Alpha/dominance seems to be going through a similar process. We've got evidence to prove that positive training works, we're just waiting for the rest of the world to accept it. Be a thinker! Join the movement!



How Do I Establish Pack Order?

In wolf packs, the old idea of a rigid pack order has been disproved by the very men who originally postulated that theory. They now realize that pack order is fluid and dependent upon the situation and members involved. Here's the thing: You already control all of the resources that are important: food, water and pee/poop schedule. You're not part of the pack. As for the dogs in your family, if you want to establish pack order because there is a problem, consult with a professional to figure out how best to work things out. Otherwise, let them work it out. Even better, start figuring out how each dog learns best, what works for each individual, and work it out.



So What If a Little Leash Pop Gets My Dog to Pay Attention?

For just a bit more effort, you can get your dog to listen to you without resorting to physical corrections. Even if you argue that it doesn't hurt them, it's completely unnecessary if you just take a minute or two to find a different way. Of course, it may be *easier* to just give that leash a pop, but there are a hundred other ways to get what you want. Figure out another way. Love your dog, respect your dog.

I Want My Dog to Love Me for Me, not Work for Treats.

Think of it this way: You wouldn't be quite so happy to go to work every day if you weren't getting paid. Food is the great motivator. Why not use it to motivate your best friend?? If you want to fade out the treats slowly once the behavior is established, feel free. But don't be a grinch with the food, buddy. Be generous. Share your wealth. This is your friend, not your enemy, not your prisoner. It's OK to motivate your friend using something they like.

Positive Communication Q & A



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