



BROKEN SPIRIT

I was speaking with a woman the other day who was concerned that training her dog might “break her spirit.” Her dog is loving and funny, and the woman didn’t want to do anything that would change that. She was concerned that training and, in particular, behavioral modification would change her dog’s personality.

She had in her mind a picture of her dog completely subjugated with her head lowered to the ground and following her like a robot without any will or joie de vivre. If you’ve met our dog, Rover, or our clients’ dogs, you’d know instantly how completely opposite the reality is. Rover has a sparkling gleam in his mischievous eye, a happy wiggle when he sees ANYONE he knows, and a never-ending joy for living. He is not in the least broken, and we work Rover pretty hard at times.

Some people do call us to help perfect their techniques with commands or walking. They aren’t really dealing with problems per se. But the majority of our clients, like the woman I spoke with, want our help to solve problems.

When things aren’t going well in the human/canine relationship, there is often frustration and stress. Usually both people and dogs feel the effects. So, what does happen when we work with people and their dogs? That’s a great and interesting question.

The first thing we do is establish mutual respect and trust. The dogs need to learn to respect the people and trust their guidance, and the people need to learn to respect the dogs and trust that they can learn. It’s important that people understand that dogs actually want to please their owners, and why.

Once there is mutual respect and trust, the next step is clearing up the communication between people and their dogs. We act as translators, human to canine and canine to human. We actually teach the people how to speak canine. Once we have everyone speaking the same language, we work on the actual issues.

Frequently the issues start to fall away pretty quickly once there is respect and the communication is clear. As the issues get resolved, the relationship improves. There are smiles on the faces of the people because their dogs are responding, and there is joy in the dogs because they are getting praised instead of scolded.

There are no broken spirits, and bonds are often stronger than ever before.

We worked with a couple who had not been able to pet their dog in over a year. Every time they tried, he became hyper and mouthy. By the end of the session, they were able to pet him as he calmly accepted their affection. They were amazed and their dog was happy. It was a WOW moment for them, and it was one of those moments that reminded me of why I love this job so much.

Do you want help with your dog? Or do you have a friend who might need help? We can help without breaking anything, spirit or otherwise. Give us a call. We love helping people to have great relationships with their dogs. You know our mantra: *Happy Dogs = Happy Families*.

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