

Good dog, bad dog

■ BY HARRY KALAJIAN

Your dog's genes are inherited from its parents, and some traits are passed down from its grandparents. Although owners don't realize it, we unintentionally contribute to or subtract from our dogs' inherited behavioral characteristics. The good or bad mistakes we've contributed during a puppy's growth will be displayed as it gets older.

If from day one you notice your dog is exhibiting dominance behavior, you must address it right away. When dominance behavior is not addressed, your dog with time will always challenge you. If it gets away with challenging you once, it will challenge you again and again. If the dog exhibits a positive behavior, reward it with something it likes or enjoys. That doesn't mean giving treats always; it could be taking your dog out for a walk or throwing its ball in play.

It is normal when you first start obedience training that your dog will rebel and fight you, for many reasons. One reason is that it doesn't understand right away what's expected of it. The second reason is that it doesn't want you to control it, which leads to fighting with you. If your dog wins during this early training period, you must be persistent. Otherwise it will always challenge you. Dominance behavior does not change as dogs get older, so don't brush it off, show you are the leader.

By being patient and persistent, you can overcome any bad behavior. (Do not use bribery by using treats.) The guidance of a professional dog trainer will give you insights on what to do.

The bad behavior your dog exhibits will multiply if you don't address it. I don't mean put a Band-Aid on it. I mean find the cause or reason. Correct or modify from the core of the behavioral issue. Sometimes it's a combination of reasons, and in cases like that find the common denominator. Address it and work firmly and positively, unless a negative response is needed.

What that means is simply if your dog is showing teeth aggressively or trying to bite you or has bitten you, firmly correct it by holding your pup to the ground. It will fight you for a few seconds and then give in. Once that happens, praise your pup and then release it. Depending upon the aggression stage, age and breed of your dog, you will have to repeat the submission if it exhibits the aggressive behavior again. It may take up to six repetitions



before your dog realizes you're not going to tolerate that type of behavior.

Always get a professional to help and guide you when aggression is the issue. Always start at a young age to prevent your dog from developing aggression issues. Obedience is very important.

Make sure the behavior is rooted in genetics and not something you have instilled in the dog, i.e., man-made behavior. Most bad behavior can be eliminated with simple obedience training to establish where the dog fits in the hierarchy of the home.

Any behavior, good or bad, can be altered or modified when a dog is young, so don't wait, thinking the problem will go away as the dog gets older. It does not. If you have a dog that jumps on people from happiness, the fault is on both you the owner and the people it jumps on. People love seeing a cute dog, and they can easily overexcite it, causing the dog to go nuts jumping on them. The owner's fault is in not making the necessary correction to stop the jumping. Your dog should sit and get petted or at least stay standing while being petted but not jumping on people.

Have a woof woof of a month.

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