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WHAT IS POSITIVE TRAINING?

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Positive training is not a scientific term.

The Power of Positive Training

You will not find it in any scientific journals, and you will regularly hear it being mischaracterized by those who do not fully understand it.

When we at Positively refer to the power of positive training or you hear Victoria describe herself as a positive trainer, we are incorporating several philosophies, techniques and levels of awareness on certain misunderstood topics which cumulatively add up to the idea of positive training.

The Four Pillars of Positive Training:

1. The use of *positive reinforcement*

2. Avoiding the use of *intimidation, physical punishment or fear*
3. A comprehension of the often misunderstood concept of *dominance*
4. A commitment to *understanding the canine experience* from the dog's point of view

Together, these four elements comprise the Positively concept of positive training. Without any of them, the philosophy is not complete and is not as powerful and effective in building relationships with your pets based on mutual trust, respect and love.



Pillar #1 – Positive Reinforcement

The use of positive reinforcement methods when teaching your dog has been universally accepted by the behavioral scientific community at large as the most effective, long-lasting, humane dog training method.

In short, *positive reinforcement* means that if you reward a behavior you like, there is a high chance that behavior being repeated. When paired with negative punishment (the removal of something the dog wants like food, attention, toys, or human contact for a short period), a verbal interrupter to redirect negative behavior onto a wanted behavior and to guide

right choices, these methods are a foundational element of the core of positive training. Many school trainers often argue that positive training shows weakness and a lack of leadership, but that the most respected and successful leaders are able to effect change without using force.

Pillar #2 – Avoidance of Punitive Methods

Scientific studies have shown that the use of confrontational, punitive training techniques does not work long term, but actually exacerbates aggressive response and makes dogs even more aggressive. It is a pretty simple concept, but sometimes it can be hard to remember that fighting fire with fire usually results in someone getting burned.

So modern behavioral science weighed in *against compulsion training*, but for many years, scientific journals told us what our instincts have already said: it is more humane to use force. Many who promote old-school training techniques argue that the punishment of an electric shock or a swift kick to a dog's ribs is not particularly damaging. The degrees of punishment, and everyone ultimately must make their own choice regarding how willing to go. But most well-adjusted people would rather avoid doing anything that causes a dog to feel pain or fear if they can help it, regardless of how minimal that punishment may be.

Pillar #3 – Understanding Dominance

The misunderstanding of what dominance is and how it works within the dog world is a major challenge facing our collective ability to develop truly healthy, functional relationships with our dogs. One who has heard a trainer refer to the need for them to be the 'alpha,' 'top dog,' or 'dominant' in order to maintain balance and appropriate chemistry between dog and owner has probably just how widespread this hugely misguided misconception has become in our modern world. Admittedly, in scientific terms the historical understanding of this concept has morphed over the half-century and remains quite complex. In its simplest form, however, the easiest way to understand dominance as it relates to our pet dogs is to assure you that you don't need to be concerned with it as you probably are. *Dogs are not on a course to take over the world*, and they do not even necessarily fall into the commonly assumed hierarchy roles that we assign to them.



Photo by Amber Allen | www.goblinchild.com

The most important dog owner to understand a dog's misbehavior is a result of an attempt at dominance over. To learn more about misunderstood a concept of dominance in my latest book, *Training the Truth About Dogs*, visit the [Truth About Dogs](#) [here](#).

Truly comprehensive applies to the central key to our positive training,

the root cause of a dog's misbehavior as dominance usually leads to a chain of evaded, unconfident, and ultimately unhappy dogs (and owners).

Pillar #4 – Using the Dog's Point of View

You cannot build a strong bond with your dog unless you truly understand how he experiences the world around him, but to do this effectively you must first learn his language and appreciate.

Senses are closely linked to *emotions*, and emotions drive behavior, so it stands to reason that though we are just scratching the surface when it comes to understanding the dog, their senses play an integral part in the dog's experience. Using the senses to help dogs through any behavioral issues they might have is a process called *sensory education*.

Meanwhile, as the more advanced species, it is obviously up to us to learn to *'talk'* our four-legged friends to learn English (or any other language). Doing so will give us the ability to build a stronger relationship and making it easier to find effective positive solutions.

aviors your dog might have.

We have domesticated the dog over many thousands of years, so it is our responsibility to provide the support, confidence and tools they need to thrive and survive in our strange, human world.

Bottom Line

There are many different terms used to describe positive training techniques: positive reinforcement, reward-based, force-free, and more. What proponents of all of these interrelated philosophies have in common is a shared belief that it is much safer, more effective and humane to teach a dog using positive training concepts. The underlying concept is that if you reward a behavior you like, it is more likely that that behavior will increase. Similarly, if you ignore or redirect a behavior you do not like, it is more likely that that behavior will decrease. Combine these concepts with the awareness that dogs are naturally inclined to achieve 'top dog' status, and therefore do not need to be controlled using punishment techniques, and you have the recipe for *positive training*.

Related Reading:

- *The Truth Behind Positive Training*
- *Myths & Truths*
- *What's in a Name?*
- *Positive Method Dog Training: Why to Use It and How It Works*

Tags: *dominance, force-free training, positive reinforcement, positive training, punishment training, reward training*

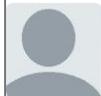
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2 Comments

Victoria Stilwell Positively

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Janet Campbell • 5 months ago

To sum it up, ignore bad behaviour, reward good behaviour. Simple! Tara here is a 14 years old dog and all the things you mentioned have no effect WHATSOEVER! As for timeout, if you put her somewhere she doesn't want to go, she will at least scratch until you let her! I am old enough to remember Barbara Woodhouse, probably the most famous dog trainer of all time, Victoria I am sure will know of her, she was IT in her time! I do feel sorry for the trainer in the video, please review his methods!

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