

Lead Nature's Way and Banish Your Dog's Problem Behavior Forever!

How It All Started

My name is Doug Poynter and for the last 20 years I've been working with dogs and their owners here in my hometown of Richmond, Virginia and around the country solving K9 Behavior problems.

Realistically, you've probably never heard of me. That's because until about 3 years ago I was focusing on my corporate career, coaching and training people. During that time the only way you and your dog could work with me was by vet referral. Or from someone who had worked with me before. I got clients strictly by word-of-mouth.

I would get the cases that other trainers were unable to solve: Dogs with separation anxiety, fear, inappropriate barking, aggression, out of control behavior.

And I got a reputation for being able to solve behavior problems that other trainers couldn't. I can remember being in a client's house helping her with her out of control Airedale when her phone rang. She answered it and said, "Hey can you call me back. The dog whisperer is here." This was 20 years ago, well before Cesar Milan was on TV!

My very first client was a breeder of American Staffordshire Terriers (The AKC name for an American Pit Bull Terrier).

She had a young female that couldn't keep weight on because she spent all day obsessively chasing her tail. This breeder had tried everything and could not get her to stop. As a result she was "bag of bones" skinny.

Pam asked me if I thought I could solve the problem. She knew I had a coaching and training background, having been a tennis teaching professional and also a sales trainer in the corporate world. I was also talking with Pam about getting a dog and shared the research I had done on training dogs. So in her desperation to fix the problem, she approached me.

So I took Tawny to my home and started to work on the problem. It took me one day to stop her from chasing her tail and redirect her focus. With that success I had an inkling that I could do more.

Friends at work would approach me about issues with their dogs and I would give suggestions/advice that seemed to be helpful.

Along the way my vet became aware of my work solving K9 Behavior problems and he asked me if I was interested in taking on a special client.

A couple were in danger of being evicted from their apartment because their Beagle was howling...he had separation anxiety so bad that they couldn't even leave the room he was in much less the apartment.

They had sent him to a boot camp of one of Richmond's best-known trainers. This trainer had sent him back, uncured. My vet told me the trainer said, "that dog is nuts!" He asked me if I would be willing to try.

Of course my answer was, "yes!"

I called the owners and in fact met with them several times by phone, never in person. I walked them through the protocols I had discovered through my research. My corporate work, training people to sell over the phone helped me in explaining the step-by-step approach you need to cure separation anxiety.

Separation anxiety is simple to cure, but it's not easy. The work is tedious and time consuming. But I was able to get them going on the exercises and they were diligent!

We met by phone 3 or 4 times and then Sonia sent me an email along with a photo of their dog sound asleep on his dog bed.

Sonia told me that for the first time in over 6 months she and her husband had been able to go out to dinner and Barney had slept the entire time on his dog bed. They knew this because they had set up a camcorder and watched the video when they got back. (This was before Smart Phones!) Barney's separation anxiety was cured in less than a month and with only phone sessions!

As a result of this work I was referred another client, Laura who had a pit bull named Luke. (Luke and Laura!) Luke had gotten thrown out of the apartment building Laura lived in. He was rowdy and out of control and ran through the hallways jumping on residents.

He wasn't trying to hurt anyone, but this was back in the day when pit bulls were still considered "evil" dogs, so Luke was out!

Laura had taken Luke to a boarding kennel until she could find another place to live or could get Luke trained to behave so they could stay. That's where I came in.

When I got to the kennel the lady who ran operations told me that Luke had tried to "attack" her. Apparently someone was moving a Jack Russell Terrier from one run to another at the same time Luke was being moved. The Jack Russell barked at Luke who lunged just as this lady was walking between the dogs.

I asked her if it were possible that Luke was reacting to the other dog and not her. She looked like she was considering that idea, but not convinced as she told me to "be careful" going into the exercise pen to meet him.

When I got there Laura was in the pen with Luke, who was as goofy a pit bull as any I'd seen, definitely not a biter! We started to work immediately and I gave Luke some structure in his life and his owner some training and techniques she could use to get Luke back into the good graces of her landlord.

Claire Pollard who runs Friends United w/The Richmond Shelter (F.U.R.S.) and kept her rescue dogs at the same kennel saw me working with Luke. She asked me if I would be willing to work with her new adopters.

One of the dirty little secrets of the rescue world is that many dogs are adopted and then returned back to the shelter. Usually for the same behavior problems that got them turned into the shelter to begin with.

Claire asked me if I would be willing to create a class for people who rescued a F.U.R.S. dog. Again my answer was a resounding, "Yes!"

So I created the New Adopter's class and taught that for 5 years. During that time F.U.R.S. saw its returns of adopted dogs go down from over 20% to under 1%. During that time I also took care of doing the Behavioral Rehab for any adopted dogs that had "issues" in their new homes.

Now all of this sounds great and wonderful but I didn't always have this knowledge. I've always loved dogs but as a kid couldn't have one because of allergies, which I fortunately outgrew. So my dogs were the neighborhood dogs.

Back in those days it was not unusual for dogs to freely roam. Now I'm not saying that was better, but dogs seemed to be better adjusted when they weren't cooped up.

Admittedly, more dogs got hit by cars. There also didn't seem to be as many behavior problems. My theory on that is that roaming the neighborhood resulted in far more exercise. And tired dogs are usually good dogs.

I can remember one of "my" neighborhood dogs was named Suzi. And one day she was lying in the grass sleeping in our front yard. I was about 8 at the time and I was glad to see her, so I ran and jumped on her to hug her. And when I did, she bit me in the face. I ran inside crying. "Mom, Suzy bit me!"

Now my Mom did the best thing anyone could do. She asked me what I did to Suzy. When I told her she told me in no uncertain terms that you never jump on a dog and definitely you never bother a sleeping dog. It wasn't Suzy's fault.

Nowadays, there would be a lawsuit and the dog would be impounded, but because of my Mom's explanation, I did not end up being afraid of dogs. I realized there were consequences to my behavior and Suzy's reaction was a normal dog reaction to being jumped on. My real world education in dog behavior didn't end there however.

When I was finally able to get my own dog as an adult, there was a definitive moment that I can look back on that started all of this.

My first dog Ruger was an American Staffordshire Terrier, which is simply an AKC name for an American Pit Bull Terrier. This was about twenty-five years ago. He was the sweetest dog

you could ever meet, but that didn't stop people from giving me the evil eye when I walked him.

Twenty-five years ago everyone thought that pit bulls were evil dogs. Thankfully today most people know better. In fact since then, I've worked with hundreds of dogs and with the exception of one case, never even been mildly threatened by a pit bull.

Well imagine my surprise when I gave my sweet tempered dog a leg bone...a real bone with meat on it. As he was lying on his dog bed chewing it, I got up off of my couch and when I walked near him I heard a ferocious growl. Like nothing I'd ever heard before.

Now I knew him to be a sweet dog, but I'd be lying if I told you that all the newspaper headlines didn't flash through my mind in an instant.

What to do? What caused this? Was he a safe dog to keep? Would it happen again? How could I make this stop?

For an evening I was in a state of mental torment about what to do. It was then that I decided to begin studying dog behavior and figure out what caused this so I could fix it.

A training mentor of mine told me, "Its just behavior. Most people get too worked up about stuff like this. Relax. It can be fixed."

So I read and learned everything I could on dog behavior. What I found out is that I created the problem!

Once I figured out what my part was in the equation and remedied it, Ruger quickly went back to being the sweet dog he'd always been. I have to admit though that for a time I was at my wits end.

Now if you are like I was and you love your dog, but you don't love the behavior or if you're at your wit's end as I was with my sweet dog who sounded vicious or if you don't why the behavior is happening or what's causing it, but you just want it to stop then keep reading!

The Back Story-Dog Behavior

Most people don't want an obedience champion. It takes a huge amount of work to get that. Most people just want a dog that listens and obeys and is reasonably calm, comes when called and is easy to live with.

In this E-book I will teach you the secret to understanding your dog's motivation and behavior- what makes your dog tick And I'll show you how your behavior changes your dog's behavior.

I'm going to show you the difference between dominance and leadership and why it matters. I'm going to show you what real leadership is and what it isn't and the role the wolf pack plays in how we should relate to our dogs.

And I'm going to show you what determines who's in charge in your dog/owner relationship and how that affects your dog's behavior. So lets get started!

For quite some time we had "old school" dog training that was based on dominance...we must dominant our dogs if we want to be in charge and get our dogs to behave.

Especially if we had working dogs. Dogs that had the drive to work were supposed to be dominant themselves and so we had to dominate **them** in order to be in charge.

This was very popular 40 years ago. Actually the dominance theme has permeated dog training throughout history. And by the way, many of the old school Masters advocate some pretty harsh methods for both training and solving behavior problems.

I just read one "interesting solution" for dogs that dig holes in the yard. This dog trainer recommended filling the hole with water and then dunking the dog's head in the filled hole until the dog is on the verge of suffocating. And then he recommended you do that every day for 4 days whether the dog dug another hole or not.

He claimed this would make the sight/smell of freshly dug earth so repugnant that the dog would not dig again.

He's probably right, but at what price to your relationship with your dog?

Another suggestion to correct housetraining issues was to verbally scold and switch or spank the dog and then hold his nose close to the mess he made.

People are still doing this and it might make the dog not want to "do his business" in the house. Although I can't see how a dog can put 2 and 2 together and gather that the reason "I'm being punished" is because I went inside!"

But I'll tell you what it does teach the dog. Not to eliminate near you! Why? It's dangerous! "You're going to switch me or spank me or worse yet rub my nose in it!"

I've had more than one potential client tell me during a discovery session that he or she had a stupid dog. "Why do you say that?"

They then tell me that they walk their dog for an hour and it won't go. They bring it back into the house and it runs away from them into another room and promptly relieves itself all over the rug or floor.

I always ask if they have punished the dog for housetraining mistakes and if they have ever pushed the dog's nose near or in the mess. The answer is unfailingly "yes."

He doesn't want to relieve himself near you! He's afraid!

Where did all this uncivilized stuff come from? Well I have a theory: Studies on wolf behavior that show the dominance that Alpha Males need to exhibit to hold on to the control of the pack.

There was a seminal book written close to 50 years ago by the man who is regarded as the world's foremost authority on wolves, David Mech. The book is "The Wolf: The Ecology and Behavior of an Endangered Species."

In it Mech describes much of wolf and pack behavior and clearly outlines how the leaders of wolf packs maintain leadership by dominating lower wolves.

Now the reality is that our dogs are so close to wolves DNA-wise that the differences are almost unrecognizable. Our pets are essentially evolved wolves.

Over time many training methods have mimicked what we “know” about wolves with our dogs. We have attempted to be dominant just like an Alpha Male must.

What is the maneuver we most associate with wolf dominance. The Alpha Roll, right? Roll a wolf/dog on it's side and hold it there as a corrective measure. We have a vision of one wolf pinning another to maintain dominance.

This maneuver became popular in training 35-40 years ago. We've also seen it recently on TV. It works for wolves so it must work for our dogs, right?

There's only one problem. All this dominance stuff attributed to wolves by the experts, even Mech, is wrong! Dead wrong!

Ok, Doug who the hell do you think you are to tell the world's foremost authority on wolves that he's wrong about wolf behavior?

Well it's not me saying it's wrong. It's Dave Mech himself. Nowadays Mech himself says that his book was one of the causes of this inaccurate theory of dominance in a wolf pack.

The problem is that all of the studies on wolves back then generally were lacking real-world knowledge, meaning first-hand, close-up experience with wolves in nature.

The studies on wolf behavior, including Mech's book (by his own admission) were based on a previous study of *captive* wolves.

Wolves that were captured from the wild and then put into an enclosure together. So this was not a real environment. The stress of being captured and being trapped in a pen (Wolves are constantly moving in the wild) along with being enclosed with a bunch of strange wolves created lots of stress...and lots of dominant behavior.

These animals fought and a dominant or stronger wolf emerged, known as the Alpha. This study of captive wolves is where we got most of what we thought was accurate info about

wolves and by extension where I believe the theories on dominance in dog training and behavior came from.

Now I'm about to teach you a Natural Way to lead your dog that's based on **real world** wolf behavior. This information also comes from Mech, but it's based on a study he did of the wolves on Ellesmere Island, which is in Canada above the Arctic Circle.

Because there were no humans on the island and therefore no trapping or hunting of them, the wolves there were not afraid of people.

Mech was able to actually infiltrate the pack and observe wolf behavior first hand in the wild. In one of his papers on the Ellesmere wolves, Mech says in the 16 summers he observed the wolves he never saw a behavior that would be determined to dominant. Not one.

The behavior that we most associate with wolf dominance, the Alpha Roll or the pinning of a subordinate wolf on it's back, wasn't dominant at all. The lower wolf would voluntarily roll over on its back and the upper wolf would merely stand over it. There was no force.

Over the time that Mech studied the wolves of Ellesmere Island he made a key discovery. A wolf pack is a family! It consists of Mom, Dad and their pups and sometimes stray wolves that hook up with the pack every now and then.

Wolves stay with the pack for 2 or 3 years until they run off and mate with another wolf and then start their own pack.

There is no fighting on the part of the Alpha Male to maintain leadership of the pack...why? Well he's Dad, he has the ultimate authority!

As a matter of fact Mech doesn't even call the lead male and lead female "Alpha." He calls them the Breeding male and the Breeding female.

This is contrary to everything we previously thought we knew about wolves. We assumed that the Alpha Male - Breeding Male had to be bigger, stronger and badder then the rest of the wolves so he could stay lead in the pack...and the younger males would always be challenging him for dominance.

As long as he was stronger then he would retain control of the pack...as soon as a stronger male defeated him he would relinquish control and probably go off and die.

But this theory again is based on a group of wolves that was not a true pack...and its this theory of dominance that I believe formed the basis of a good deal of our dog training and dealing with behavior issues. "He'll behave as soon as he knows that I'm dominant."

The wolf theory is inaccurate and so is the corresponding theory on our pet and working dogs. Dominance is **NOT** it with wolves and neither is it with our pet and working dogs. So what is "it"? How do we keep control? How do we solve behavior problems? If it's not dominance then what is it?

What It Is

Wolves are many times bringing down prey that is quite a bit larger than they are. So they have to work together to make the kill. If they don't work together then they don't eat! So there is incentive for them to get along!

Each wolf plays a role in the hunt and the kill. If the younger males in the pack were stimulated to try and kill the Alpha Male, then the hunt would never succeed and a whole bunch of wolves would starve. But that doesn't normally happen. Why?

So the question is, if not fighting, how or what is used to maintain leadership?

In a wolf pack the Breeding/Alpha Male is the one who initiates or leads the hunt, the most crucial activity in a wolf's life.

When its time to go hunting, the Alpha Male gets up and goes and the rest of the "team" or family follows. He doesn't go check to make sure everyone is ready. He just goes and the rest follow.

When traveling to get to the hunt if some of the younger more exuberant males get ahead of the pack, there is no correction from the Alpha Male. He ignores this behavior and just continues on with the job at hand.

If the younger males get too far ahead and as a result miss a turn the pack takes, then it's up to them to find their way back to the pack. The pack doesn't go and look for them. Wolves learn on their own what works and doesn't work.

Now how can we use this to cure behavior problems in our pet dogs, which if you remember are extremely close to wolves DNA-wise? So close that for all intents and purposes they are evolved or civilized wolves.

The principal I'm about share with you is crucial. Most if not all K9 behavior problems exist in an environment where the human owners do not hold the leadership position relative to the dog(s) in the house.

So we need to understand how to be the true Alpha or more correctly the Leader where our pet dogs are concerned. Now listen to this because this is key: in the wolf and dog world whoever initiates activity is in charge. And whoever follows is below. THIS is where control lies.

This is the difference between Dominance and Leadership. Dominance is physical and there is very little need for it in the pack/family (If you remember a wolf pack is a family).

Dominance occurred when individual wolves were taken from the wild and put in an enclosure with a bunch of other non-related individuals. For wolves this was like being thrown onto a battlefield. War can only be won with Dominance. Dominance is too much for the family or pack. It's rarely needed.

And so it is with our dogs. Your pack or family includes your pet dog. Even if your dog has been "captured" and thrown into your pack, meaning a rescue dog, you have the choice. Do I make this a dominance battleground where there is a constant challenge or my dog is so beaten down emotionally that she has no joy or exuberance?

Or do I choose Leadership and have my dog be a part of my family? Clearly the positives of Leadership outweigh the negatives of Dominance when it comes to solving behavior problems and maintaining a great relationship with your dog.

Let's Do It

SO how do you do it? Well we're doing to mimic wolves. YOU need to initiate activity with your dog, not the other way around.

Remember back if you will the first time your dog nudged your hand with her nose to get attention. Or pawed at your leg. Or went to the backdoor and barked to be let out. Or just stood in front of you and barked.

The first time this stuff happened, your dog was saying in dog language, "You're my leader, please give me some attention!"

Most owners see this behavior and think it's cute and so they give their dog what it wants. Unfortunately when you do this what you're saying back to your dog **in dog language** is, "No you're **MY** leader!"

Why? Because your dog attempted to initiate activity with you and you followed. Do you see?

YOU initiate with your dog. When it's time to walk, you take him out. Don't wait until he's pawing your leg. And when you walk you lead the walk.

I remember I was out one day and saw a lady walking her little dog, who was barking uncontrollably. At everything! I asked her if she wanted me to help her. I walked over and she handed the dog to me and I started walking with her dog beside me, not in front of me.

He immediately calmed down. Why? I was leading the walk. We walked where I walked him. When he was out in front of his owner from a dog perspective they were walking where he wanted to walk.

When he's leading he has to "deal with the world." Why? He's in charge. When I'm out in front I'm in charge and he can relax. Which is why he stopped barking.

I didn't have to do anything to him, nor punishment, no real corrections. Just lead him.

I then showed her how to walk him with a loose leash and have him walk beside, not in front. And he calmed down for her as well!

If you want to pet your dog, make him come to you or sit to be petted. When you do this then you are leading these transactions! When you exhibit Leadership characteristics it allows your dog to relax and calm.

And make no mistake, if you don't lead, your dog will. Why? Dogs need a team and a leader. That's how they have survived since the beginning. If we understand this and act like that leader then we have foundation for solving your dog's behavior problems forever.

WE as humans initiate activity and when our dog attempts to initiate we are not going to follow. If you want to provide your dog attention make it an activity that you initiate!

Remember the key to a healthy, problem-free relationship with your dog is for you to be the leader and your dog to be the follower!

When putting together a plan for Better Behavior these are the steps that you will need to follow:

FIRST

A key to having a problem-free relationship with your dog is getting her enough exercise. Dog's that are not exercised are far more susceptible to having behavior problems.

Its just like if kids are stuck in the house for extended periods of time. It's more likely there will be a fight when there is energy building up that has nowhere to go.

Hyped up dogs are more likely to act out and dissipate energy. So in order to prevent this you need to have a structured exercise program that is convenient for you and that you can work daily.

Here's a tip for you. YOU must be in charge of your dog's exercise, YOU initiate it and you lead it!

SECOND

The second thing you need for a problem free relationship with your dog is what we just talked about: The leadership position.

Without you and every member of your human family leading your dog then you create the environment where your dog doesn't have to listen to you. Or obey you.

If your dog is a natural leader-type and you don't assume leadership there is the potential your dog can get very pushy with people and other dogs. I've seen dogs that have guarding abilities and tendencies that can bite if they are not led properly.

So you **HAVE** to be the leader! It is an absolute key and necessity to banishing your dog's problem behavior forever!

THIRD

Now the next thing you are going to need is an understanding of the power of rewards. Rewards are far more important than corrections. When you understand how effective a powerful reward system is, then you will begin to see that corrections become guidelines: "No, don't go over there, go here instead."

Learning how to extinguish behavior you want to stop/end goes hand in hand with rewarding the behavior that you want to continue. And when you learn that you'll begin to see how you have actually rewarded the very behavior you want to stop!

Fourth

Next you need to "employ" your dog. Your dog needs a job! And for this you need be able to teach your dog obedience. The word "obedience" is a noun. The verb is "obey."

When you can have your dog performing obedience for you then he is obeying you, which means you are in charge...and as we know when you are in charge you're the leader...and when you're the leader it's far less likely that you will see problem behavior from your dog. This is his "job." To work for you!

FIFTH

Finally you need the Behavioral Rehab that either desensitizes or reconditions and re-associates your dog to new behavior. You need to teach your dog a new behavior that replaces the old, bad behavior!

To find out more about wolves and wolf behavior go to <https://davemech.org/>

If you would like to discuss your dog's behavior and what can be done to change it, then contact me. I offer a Discovery Session at no cost, where we will discuss what's going on with your dog and his or her behavior. I'll ask you questions so I can see where you and/or your family are in relation to your dog. And I can also learn a lot about your dog in this session and then I can determine if I can help you. If so, I will describe what that would consist of and look like.

There is no commitment or cost involved with the Discovery Session, so if you would like to sign up just email or call me and I'm happy to help!