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## Consolidating or destroying your relationship with your dog?

**How often do you see dog owners take their dogs to the dog park, the dog pulling them all the way, and when they arrive, these people just turn their dog loose to play with the other dogs?**

**And then they complain about their dog ignoring them....!**

### The dynamics of *all* relationships

No relationships exist in a vacuum. Marriages and human friendships included. And the relationship you have with your dog (or could or should have) is most certainly included here!

Relationships are built by the two parties mutually satisfying certain emotional needs in the other party. The nature of the relationship completely depends on those needs!

If they include sexual and other intimate needs, we often refer to it as "marriage", or "long-term relationship", when we talk about humans.

Also friendships are built on mutual need satisfaction, but they rarely include sexual needs. No friendship will continue if only one party gets value from the relationship. This does not mean that both parties have to get the same out of the relationship. But it does mean that either party must have *something of value* in return for his/investment of time and attention. It is really no different from the necessity of all sustainable business to incorporate the concept of win-win.

Family relationships are no different. In the moment nothing is gained for the teenager from the relationship, you have the well-known "rebellion", which parents have great difficulty understanding, because they invested "so much" in their care for their kid. However, what matters is not what they gave or give – but how the other party can use what it receives to satisfy his/her own needs. If what you give is not what the receiver needs, the gift has no value. The needs of a teenager are certainly not the same as those of a child.

The same goes for a dog.

## **What is important for the dog?**

The dog's needs are, in many ways, similar to human needs, although some of the specifics in the details are different.

Just as for a teenager, fundamental mundane necessities, like food, drink, shelter, etc., might be important, seen with rational eyes. But that's *not* how the teenager experiences it! Young humans have other things at the top of their agenda for what is important to them!

Dogs are the same. Sure, they need food, water, shelter, etc. – but you cannot use any of those needs to build a relationship with your dog!

It is the **emotional needs** that matter the most here. For the dog, that would be things like:

- Do you provide a pack it can feel being a valued member of? Do you provide play and fun?
- Do you provide some clear social structure in that pack? Do you provide simple and firm rules?
- Do you provide admirable leadership for that pack? Do you provide mental stimulation and personal development?

Please think very carefully about those questions and their answers. You might want to use the teenage parallel if you want to comprehend why so many teenagers have so many problems with their parents... Answering "yes" to all those questions does take a serious time commitment – and some serious action that only few parents take – and yet fewer dog owners....

Making the long story very short: If you satisfy those needs for your dog, you will be its hero! It will bond to you, and it will adore you.

And, if you don't, it will have no reason for caring about *you*....

As explained in greater detail in one of my seminars (on video as "[The Dog's Social Behavior](#)"), these needs are the driving mechanisms behind the dog's social instincts – which regulate its interaction with you, other humans, and other dogs. The simple proof that these instincts are more important for the dog than food and water is this: When you do tap into these instincts and make yourself an excellent pack leader for your dog, it will be happy to leave food alone when you request it, even when it is hungry, and even if you do not in any way at all use force or violence!

The satisfaction of those social needs is the key to your relationship with your dog.

## **The common misperceptions and mistakes**

Without judging the morality in the following illustration, please think about what kind of impact it would have on a marriage if the wife did not want to have sex with

her husband but instead took him down to the local brothel so he could satisfy his sexual needs there, leaving her free of that obligation....

How long time would you think such a marriage could last?

Wouldn't the wife be legitimately concerned that the husband would start bonding with one of those girls that satisfied his needs – and one day come back and ask for a divorce?

I know you know the answer. But try now to use that same logic on a dog owner who takes her dog down to the dog park every day – and lets it goof around and play and have all the fun in the world with those other dogs.

What chances will such an owner have of making this dog see *her* as a great companion it would die for maintaining the relationship with?

You might say that I can't be serious about recommending that you do not let your dog play with other dogs.... And you are right; that's not what I am recommending. It would correspond to not allowing a husband to ever have any kind of contact with other women.

But I do most definitely do recommend that you are very careful about making sure that the vast majority of fun in your dog's life, and most definitely the most important fun it has, should be linked directly to *you*, by being provided by you in such a way that the dog will see *you* as the great provider of this fun.

If that's too much to ask of you, then your hopes of bonding with your dog are simply unrealistic.

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