

DRIVE !

To my wonderful puppy families,

Over time, it seems that several of the same questions are asked again and again. It makes sense then to do my best to answer them to all of you.

Having read the Monks' books and others, most of you seem to be fairly well informed on matters such as crate training, feeding, and setting consistent boundaries. If you are not there are plenty of books available and even many articles on the Internet which cover these topics.

Over the years, I have developed patterns of training that work for me with my pups. The first thing I do, is to realize that the time between when my pup is eight weeks old and sixteen weeks old is the time where I want to schedule my time, so that I have time to devote to him. After sixteen weeks, the puppy's teeth start coming in, their growth accelerates, they cease being so focused on you, and like many adolescents, their attention is divided. Sixteen weeks is typically the time when young pup decides not to come when called. Though socialization and reinforcement can continue, it is difficult to teach new things to your pup between the ages of sixteen weeks and ten months. There is good news however, because at ten months, whatever you taught your pup early on, will return.

Teaching a young pup is very rewarding. From eight weeks, I simply start feeding my pup his kibble dog food by hand. It takes him a little bit to understand that food comes from my hand instead of a dish. Sometimes it takes more than a day. Though it is better if you can do each of his three feedings by hand, if you only get one meal in by hand a day and the other meals in his dish, that is still good. As the pup catches on, I teach him not to mouth, by withhold the food in my hand until he licks gently. I do this by simply holding my hand where he can reach it, but with my palm closed so that the food is unavailable until he behaves. As he learns proper eating, then I teach "sit". Words are not the necessary part. From sit, I teach focus, that is that he must not only sit, but he must look into my eyes. Next I can teach "down" using my hand with the food to guide him into the down position. Soon he can learn stay, stand, come, heel, all using the food in my hand to guide. With heeling I can ask more, teaching him to look up at me as he heels. With furniture or a wall as a guide, I can teach him to sit straight when I stop. It is all happy and quick, no more than five minutes a session. You will be amazed at what your pup can learn. Basically, anything you want your adult dog to know, your pup can learn, using positive reinforcement only and no corrections. (corrections are, however important when your pup transgresses a behavioral rule: getting in the trash, chasing the cat, biting your hands, making a mess in the house, basically for any behavior you never want to see again).

At sixteen weeks, however, he may find other things that he thinks are more interesting. For me, the one command I insist upon is the come. He must come. So that first time he chooses to not come when I call, we get out the long line and practice learning that he must come. This may save his life later on as a dog must learn to come when called no matter what.

The other area I hear a lot about is biting. "My puppy bites my hands." The feeding by hand exercise will help with this. But there is something else you must understand. That is DRIVE.

DRIVE. What is it?

Drive is the I-wantsies. It is motivation. You will hear talk of Toy Drive, Play Drive, Fight Drive, Pack Drive. These terms are used to simply say that a dog who has them is motivated to play with toys, motivated to play, motivated when pressed to fight, motivated to want to be with his pack. Drive is what we want in our dogs if we want to do anything with them.

For over one hundred years, through selective breeding, drive has been bred into the German Shepherd. In general, the higher the drive, the easier it is to train a dog. A dog with motivation, is easy to train. With people who do not understand this, you will often hear the word, "hyper". A dog with drive but with no direction, is going to create his own direction and to the human what appears to be meaningless activity is termed, "Hyper". So how do you take this Drive and turn it into something that work for you?

To illustrate we have a short movie clip of Indy. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqY1Ag6IbFO> It is a clip of Indy chasing a tennis ball through a flock of chickens. As the chickens scatter in every direction, Indy never once looks at them. Her focus is entirely on the ball.

This illustrates drive. Indy has been conditioned since a puppy to have drive for the toy. Though we think of a dog having drive to chase chickens, because she has no experience chasing chickens, she goes for the toy instead. Because I control the toy (even more effective with a tug as a tug never leaves my possession), I have control of the dog. The toys are mine. I do not leave them with the dogs. The dogs know that the toy is connected with me. I make it move, I make it come alive, I make the game. Because Indy has a good foundation, even with a flock of chickens, she is focused on me and on the game.

But what do we typically see? In dogs raised randomly, we see dogs who chase cats, squirrels, cars, children, even dogs who chase shadows and light beams. With puppies, they are biting our legs, our arms, our bathrobe, jumping at the laundry as we carry it up the stairs. Drive undirected can be a major pain. But with direction, it is the key to having a well trained dog.

You have all seen a dog go into drive chasing a squirrel. The owners call and call but the dog seems not to hear them. Typically once a mature dog enters drive, their brain tunes out all else. It is difficult without a lot of training to get them to respond. This can appear to be stubbornness, but it comes from a different source. In actuality, much of it comes from the eyes and through the eyes to the brain. When your pup looks at something with that hard stare, she is going into drive. At that point, she is absorbed, or fixated, and does not hear you. The easiest thing to do when raising a pup to prevent this condition is a) control the environment, and b) distract your pup once she starts fixating.

To control the environment, I do several things with my pups. The first is obvious, which is to choose their environment for them. That is, I do not let my pups run free unsupervised. This is where the advantage of a kennel run comes in. In the kennel run, the environment is controlled. Where I live there are lots of fun things for a dog to chase, but because their physical environment is controlled, they do not encounter those things, cats, squirrels, deer, turkeys, chickens, without my being present to channel that natural drive to something I can control.

This leads me to the second thing I do with my pups. I condition them to have drive for something which I control. This is either a ball or a tug, or both. In other words, by having them delight in the fun of a game with me and a toy, they soon go into drive at the sight of the toy. To make the toy exciting, make it move. Your puppy is motivated by movement. Understand this and make it work for you. I also

make sure that they do not have the opportunity to play with the toy without me. Though they can have other toys and doggie bones to chew on, the best toy is mine and only comes out when we are going to play together. At the end of our game, away it goes to where only I can get it. The pup learns that he needs me in order to play. I control their environment such that they grow up thinking that I am the most fun thing ever. With this established, when I am out walking my dog and we encounter something that might otherwise put him into drive, such as a deer, I can quickly distract him and pull him back to me for a game with the toy. That drive then quickly channels back to something I can control reinforcing the brain waves I want in my dog and extinguishing those which are undesirable.

In dog training, there is something else which is helpful to know about drive. Obedience is drive's opposing force. Picture a see saw with drive on one seat and obedience on the other. In the happy well trained dog, the two are in balance. But for our obedient, restful house dogs, we often want obedience to be dominant. As you train your pup in a non distracting environment, then when you are out in the great big world, where distractions come, you can quickly reduce the drive that kicks in, by doing some obedience exercises. Picture your young dog who knows to look at you for a treat. When you see another dog across the street, even before your pup sees him, offer her your word for "watch me", it might be as simple as her name, and when she turns to look at you, praise and treat. Another trick is to take a few quick turns so that she has to run to keep up with you. Pretty soon, when she sees another dog, she will look at you, hoping for a treat. Right there when that happens, you have succeeded in breaking the chain and redirecting her to you. Praise and treat and reinforce with consistency.

Keep in mind that it is your pup's decision to focus on you that you are rewarding. This is different than bribing the pup to ignore something by giving a treat. Whatever behavior you reward, you will of course get more of that behavior, so be careful to not try to distract the pup with food in such a way that you are rewarding an unwanted behavior. You are seeking to reinforce your pup's good decision so the treat must come only after the choice to focus on you has been made by the pup.

Sometimes my puppy families mention other areas where they think their pup is "stubborn". Is she biting your hands? Looking her in the eye, growling, or rolling her over are rather threatening postures to take on a pup. She is drawn to movement. The more your hands move, the more she is going to want to bite them. One exercise I have found to help is this. Put the pup beside you, if necessary, keeping her there with a leash, then start to pet her, stroking her head down her back neck with your hand, talking to her calmly. She will likely turn her head to bite your hand. At that moment, without missing a beat, pull down hard on the scruff on the back of her neck, saying, "No." Keep it calm. She might yelp which is fine. Then proceed to continue to stroke her, very calmly. The calm on your part is crucial as calming energy must come from you.

Finally, when pup is just plain stubborn, likely it is time for a nap. Put her in her crate. Most likely you both need a break.

All in all, overpowering a German Shepherd simply does not work. They need to be taught using consistency and patience. In most situations, in the situation itself, it is difficult to train. It is better when you find a problem, to set the situation up and train then. For example, if pup grabs a hanging shirt sleeve when you are carrying the laundry basket, hurrying to get ready to go someplace, it is going to be difficult to work that out. But with the problem named, come back at a time when you are not rushed, set up a situation where you are carrying something that you don't want her to have and then

have a plan on how to deal with it. Frankly, with a puppy, I would probably elect to make sure that no shirt sleeves were hanging out when I carried laundry. As with human toddlers, sometimes it is simply best to recognize their developmental age. Another alternative would be to make sure she has a hard toy in her mouth and hence can't bite something else without first letting that go. You can be creative.

All in all, with your little pup, keep in mind the picture you want for the behavior of your adult dog, then build that into your pup now. Overall, our dogs want to please us, but sometimes we can be so confusing to their canine minds.

Finally, have fun and enjoy your puppy. The love you give him or her will be returned to you a hundred fold.

And if you have any questions, be sure to call,

208-818-3099

Elizabeth