

Positive Dog Training - good for owners too!



A young man wanting to learn how to become a dog trainer came out to observe my dog training classes, among others, to see the different styles of training that are out there. While watching the advanced class training for the first level of competitive obedience, the fun, relaxed environment in the air was unmistakable. We were encouraging our dogs, encouraging each other and laughing at our mistakes. Before leaving, the young man remarked that the 'energy was incredible'.

Since converting to positive training I have noticed the same thing – the energy is amazing. There are less frustrated trainers, more encouragement of each other, and less suspicion towards the dogs.

What is the difference that the young man noticed that makes this training so incredible? An interesting theory came to me while reading about human psychology and priming experiments.

A trained psychologist at Yale University named John Bargh created Scrambled Sentence Tests for priming experiments. In one study by Bargh and Mark Chen at New York University they created 2 Scrambled Sentence tests, one was scattered with words like 'aggressively', 'bold', 'rude' and 'disturb'. The other sentences were scattered with words like 'polite', 'courteous' and 'patiently'.

After taking the test they timed how long it took subjects to interrupt the person running the experiment during a conversation. They assumed the differences would be slight, and

set a time limit of ten minutes. On average, people primed with rude words interrupted after 5 minutes; 82% of people primed with polite words never interrupted at all!

In another experiment by Bargh, people primed with words relating to old age actually walked slower while leaving after taking the scrambled sentence test. It is amazing what an effect a few words can have on our brain.

In positive training we are always noticing and rewarding the good, redirecting and teaching an incompatible behaviour for the unwanted behaviour, discussing the importance of clear communication, and setting our dogs up for success. Imagine what that kind of training can do for your relationship with your dog,

It is no surprise that the positive training environment creates an atmosphere where people are encouraging each other – they are relaxed and having fun!

As it turns out, positive training is not only good for the dogs, it's good for the owners too!