



DOG DIALOG

STAYING CALM-ASSERTIVE: ENERGY AS COMMUNICATION

We know from discussions on non-verbal communications that we don't need language to communicate; we may not realize it, but we convey our thoughts and feelings in our posture and gestures, as well as facial expressions. Dogs learn about us by observing our presence or energy, which gives clues to our feelings. Our energy influences how dogs behave around us. You cannot lie to a dog about how you are feeling – he will sense your true feelings by “reading” your energy.

Animals are highly sensitive to the energy we project and react accordingly. Being anxious and excited around a dog is confusing to a dog and presents a challenge to effective communication. Simply changing our energy can impact a dog's behavior; we can say something quietly, but with confidence, just as well as we can say it by raising our voice.

If we project a calm and confident energy in the presence of dogs, they will also remain calm. When we are around dogs, we want to maintain a calm-assertive energy; it means we are quietly in control. Sometimes dogs misbehave – this may be because they don't understand how to react to what you are asking them to do. Don't get frustrated or angry. Dogs do not respond to frustration or anger. They listen better when we are calm and in control of our emotions. In fact, dogs may not listen as well to an emotional person and may become confused by the yelling. Instead, remain calm and in control. If we maintain a calm and assertive state, our dogs will maintain a calm and submissive state. For a dog to be in a calm-submissive state, or to surrender the lead to us, is not a negative trait in dogs. On the contrary, dogs look for (and up to) a strong leader they can follow. However, it is often difficult for people to understand; we need to be confident and open-minded and realize that dogs will listen to our instructions if we take a leadership role and use calm-assertive energy to communicate our expectations to our dogs. Being calm, confident, and in control of our emotions is another lesson we can learn from dogs and use in our interactions with our friends and adults.

- What is the most effective way to get a dog to listen to you?
- Is a calm-submissive state (where the dog surrenders the lead to us) a good or bad trait in a dog?

Objective:

Students will learn that their energy can influence a dog's behavior. They will consider how their own feelings of calm, frustration, anger, anxiety, and excitement affect how they interact with dogs and impact a dog's behavior. When interacting with dogs, it is essential to remain calm and convey a sense of confidence and being “in charge.” This is what we call “calm-assertive.”

Key Words to Highlight:

Calm-Assertive, Project, Impact, Assertive, Submissive/Surrender, Open-Minded