

How To Be Your Dog's Alpha All The Time

Dogs communicate to each other through the use of body commands, not verbal commands. The mother dog will use her body to lead her pups and any vocalization that she gives is usually a low and guttural growl. Many of my clients, when confronted with a dog that is excited, whether it is good excitement (happy that you are home) or bad (trying to bite your neighbor) make the following mistakes:

#1: Using Multiple Commands:

If your dog has not responded to your initial command, guaranteed he is not going to respond to the next five commands. Your dog has 'tuned you out' and any verbalization you continue to make will be continually ignored. Remember, the pack leader uses body language not verbalization to get what he wants. If your dog is jumping at the door or on someone at the door, don't keep commanding him to sit, physically stop him from jumping with a collar and leash or use your body and block the door.

The Alpha dog will stand tall in front of an object, facing a pack member, making direct eye contact and using his body language to tell the pack member to back off. As your dog's Alpha you should stand tall in front of the door or the person, stare and don't allow your dog to approach in that manner. Vocalization is not needed but if you want to say "No" using a low and guttural voice this should also stop your dog. If your dog is still not responding, and he may have the knowledge that he has 'worn you down before'. Place your leash on your collar and correct. Do not praise for obedience or if your dog calms down at this point, that will make him going into that excited behavior again.

Also, you don't need to use verbal praise all of the time. Dogs do not cheer when another responds to a body gesture. While some dogs do require verbal praise as encouragement when training, many dogs become too excited when praised and try to match their owner's voice excitement with either barking or jumping. A simple pat or touch by you as handler is all that is needed most of the time.

#2: Raising their Voices:

When a pack leader reprimands a pup, it is a low guttural growl, not a high pitched bark. A high pitched sound shows excitement, so if you are yelling at your dog, all that you are really doing is exciting your dog. Now, you can use a high pitched voice for praise but remember we don't want to overexcite your dog. Many dogs become stimulated too easily so if you are trying to instill calmness, do not use your voice for praise but your hands as reinforcement, by way of a simple pat or gentle touch.

#3: Responding to excitement or frenzy in your dog with #1 or #2 above:

If your dog is excited do not acknowledge it by yelling commands above the barking. Let me translate a typical situation that happens daily as your dog views it: You come home from work and your dog is barking and jumping on you. Your reaction is to tell him ok or praise him or yell a command to sit, loud enough so he can hear it above his barking: Dog translation: bark louder and get more excited.

Luckily for me, every day I have the opportunity to watch dogs interact with each other. And I have seen how dogs correct each other and how an Alpha dog reacts with other dogs when this happens. When a young pup is jumping on an Alpha dog, the Alpha dog stands tall sometimes turning his head from the puppy in the opposite direction. His head, ears and tail are raised high, the Alpha dog makes no eye contact and his hair down his back is hackled.

If the puppy does not stop acting obnoxiously there is a quick, low guttural growl with a snap, sometimes making contact with his teeth. At this point the puppy usually walks away or hits the ground, rolling over and showing submission. The excitement has ended and each goes about their business.

How should you respond to your dog jumping on you? Like an Alpha dog would. Stand tall with your eyes facing the ceiling; turn your back towards him if he is jumping towards your face. Make no eye contact and say nothing; if your dog continues and he will because his previous experience has taught him that you will give in, grab your leash and place it on the dog's neck (slip it over his head like a noose) and correct.

Say nothing, when your dog is calmly sitting, simply walk away from him and do not pet or praise. Remember, the Alpha dog will walk away and go about his business. Keep the leash in your hands as you walk away so if he jumps on you as you turn your back to leave him, correct. This correction should be meaningful enough to make your dog lay down in submission.

Conclusion:

Being the Alpha or the dominant pack leader does not depend on size or strength, the pack leader is the strongest in his own head. The pack leader is calm and confident all of the time and rarely vocalizes; in order to be the pack leader you must imitate how a 'canine' pack leader reacts and interacts with his pack 100% of the time. The pack leader is not influenced by outside stimuli or by feelings or emotions of his pack members. The pack leader treats each pack member the same and does not take into account previous experiences of a new pack member.