The Three Principles of Dog Training

Timing, Motivation, and Consistency

First off, dogs are not people. They do not speak human, nor do they know how to spell words in English, German, or any other language for that matter. Dogs communicate to one another mostly through body language. The verbal barking, whining, and growling mean very little to our canine companions. These principles give you some insight on how your dog thinks and processes information, and a clearer form of communication.

Timing- It is scientifically proven there is only 1.3 seconds on average for a dog to relate cause and effect. 1.3!! This is an extremely short period of time to influence a dog’s behavior whether it is positive or negative.

Example: You are hanging out with your dog at home and your dog is asleep under the kitchen table. You have chicken thawing in the sink. You go to the kitchen to prepare the chicken, but there is no chicken in the sink! The packaging that the chicken comes in is shredded into pieces on the floor, clearly the fault of the dog. You scream “FIDO!” as he jumps to attention (still under the table) you bend over and scold him verbally while shaking your finger in his face. He then cowers away, lowers his head, and tucks his tail confused as to why he is getting screamed at. The conversation in your dog’s mind says “One minute I am a sleep under the table, and the next the human is coming at me with a ton of towering, forward aggression! Your dog relates the scolding to being under the table. After all, that is where your dog was 1.3 seconds ago.

Motivation- Just like people, and every other species on earth, dogs are motivated to do the things they do. They are hungry (motivator) so they eat (action). Chasing the car is fun (motivator) so they chase the car (action). You provide a correction (motivation) for jumping (action) so they stop jumping. As you can see from these three scenarios there are positively stimulating motivators (Positive Motivation) and there are negatively stimulating motivators (Negative motivation).

* Positive Motivation- In order to continue getting our dog to do something we LIKE we are going to mark “GOOD” then positively motivate them through treats, petting, or playing.
* Negative Motivation- In order to prevent our dog from undesired behaviors we are going to mark “NO” then negatively motivate them through a leash POP.

Consistency- This is the most important of the Three Principles! Making sure we are always being consistent in what we are asking of our dog is not only critical to their performance, but also unfair. If our dog is not allowed to jump then it is NEVER allowed to jump and jumping should always be corrected. If every time you mark “GOOD” you need to follow up with a reward. On the other hand, every time you mark “NO” it is your job to follow with a leash pop. If we do not follow through the markers loose value and confuse the dog of what is really expected.

Using proper Timing, Motivation, and Consistency in your day-to-day communication is critical as to whether or not your dog can understand and execute the commands, and rules you are giving them. A trained dog is a happy dog!