

Twenty  
1 min sessions

## LEADERSHIP

'Who is in charge' in your house is determined by the outcome of many social interactions between you and your dog. This leadership plan is designed to make sure that you are in charge, but WITHOUT the use of direct confrontation or punishment – which can promote behavior problems. Your dog may feel the most secure if he knows what to expect and can reliably look to you for leadership and direction, without wariness about possible physical punishments. For this reason, avoid use of shock collars, pinch, prong or choke collars. Use the flat collar and leash or Gentle Leader and leash to ensure that he responds as you request and can't decide just to ignore you.

If you are in a strong leadership role, it will be apparent in the majority of interactions between you and your dog. In other words, the dog will respond to you more than you respond to the dog. All interactions between you and the dog should result in a predictable sequence of "you request, the dog responds, and you reward the dog". A Nothing In Life Is Free approach can help accomplish this. Ask your dog to sit, or lie down before getting any attention from you – before you pay attention to him, pet him, play with him, let him outside, or feed him. Use the Target Hand as we practiced to build eager and willing compliance to your requests. Carry food with you at all times over the next few weeks so that you are always prepared to reward desired responses. Twenty 1-minute sessions will be more effective than one 20-minute session. Ask for these responses in every room of the house, and at all times of day.

Be aware of what you are giving the dog in terms of eye contact, voice, petting, and develop an 'on' and 'off' switch in yourself so that you are not casually giving away the very things that will motivate your dog to try to please you. Be sure that you are only 'on' when you want to be – when YOU are the initiator, and when he is listening to and following your direction. It is equally important that you do not respond to your dog's attention seeking, needy, pushy or assertive behaviors. Any response from you (eye contact, your voice, your touch) reinforces these behaviors and puts him in charge of you -- i.e. he asked you to pet him and you did! He asked for the treat and you gave it! This flip flopping -sometimes you are in the leadership role and sometimes he is in the leadership role - can contribute to anxiety in dogs.

Frequently ask for and reward relaxed and compliant behaviors such as long quiet down stays. To do this, start in a quiet setting, and ask your dog sit or lie down and 'stay'. Take one step back, then instantly return to your dog and deliver a food reward and quiet verbal praise only (no petting). Immediately ask the dog to stay again, take one step back and return immediately to deliver the food reward and quiet verbal praise. Repeat this several times more, and then release the dog from the 'stay', in a very clear, but neutral manner. We don't want the dog looking forward to getting up – which will happen if you are very happy and excited about your release cue- but we do want him to learn to wait for the release. Waiting to be released helps build impulse control and teaches him to look to you for guidance and leadership. Gradually increase the distance you move from him OR the time interval before you return to give him the food reward as SEPARATE steps. Reward your dog much more often in distracting environments. If you find that he is breaking the stay before you get back to him, then you are asking for too much –reward him more quickly and/or don't move so far away from him. Using these techniques, work on 'stay' every day, gradually building the amount of time your dog can be left and the distance you are from him until he can remain in a quiet stay for up to 30 minutes while you eat dinner, watch TV or read a book.

Instead of correcting your dog for undesired behaviors, try to set him up for success by asking him to do something specific instead that is incompatible with the undesired behavior. For example if he jumps on people when they arrive at the door, repeatedly saying 'no' does not give him enough information to know what TO do, which can contribute to anxiety. Instead, ask him to sit and stay BEFORE he starts to jump, rewarding him instantly with praise and a food treat when he complies. Keep him in the sit-stay or at your side in a heel position until the initial excitement has passed, then release him in a neutral manner. This approach teaches your dog specific greeting manners. In this way, he still learns what you want, but all interactions coming from you result in that predictable sequence of request, response and reward.