

March 2011
Issue 16

ANIMAL COMMUNICATION NEWSLETTER



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What makes animal communication work?

A combination of things: a receptive, willing animal participating in a conversation with a receptive, willing person. Sometimes my work is relating and receiving straightforward messages or discussing health issues.

Other times, a session focuses on problem solving. Here are a couple of recent situations that illustrate the collaborative experience between an animal and a person with the help of a communicator. It is important to realize that animals, just like people, are not robots. Some will immediately comply with your request because that is their nature, while others may want to contribute their input to the solution. Sometimes it's just a matter of clarifying exactly what you want from someone and other times it is mutual compromise and collaboration that results in a favorable outcome.

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Margo F and Zeus



My first conversation with Margo was about Katie, her Bearded Collie, who was having some health issues. Throughout our talk, someone else kept popping into the conversation. Margo identified that personality as her other dog, Zeus. She said, "Zeus is a little Bischon with a BIG personality." She asked me to tell him that he would get his turn in his own appointment, and that right now we needed to focus on Katie's health. With that explanation, Zeus graciously backed off and just listened.

The next week we spoke to Zeus. Zeus is 11 years old and had always been leash aggressive to dogs and people, but only when he was with Margo. Zeus was playful and nonaggressive at doggie day care, the kennel, the groomer, and displayed good social skills when Margo wasn't around Zeus. During these times he was, in his words, "off duty". He was also often, but not always, very appropriate on leash around small, white dogs, but he was always aggressive with medium and large dogs. Zeus communicated very clearly that this 11-year behavior was to protect Margo from all dogs and people. He saw this as his job.

We first explained to Zeus that it was Margo's desire for Zeus to choose a different job. In Margo's words, "Zeus questioned every behavior change we asked for and was very clear that he would need a lot of help learning the new behavior since he had practiced "warrior dog" behavior for 11 years. I started using clicker training as well as releasing him from his leash when he was around small, white, non-aggressive dogs with the command "go play". He caught on very quickly and generalized to non-white dogs as well as medium sized dogs very quickly. Within less than a month, he had, in his words, adopted his new job of being "friendly dog".

He continues to have issues with some dogs and always remembers them and immediately reverts to old behavior when he sees them. However, he now calms within seconds rather than minutes and occasionally will, with my help, ignore them totally. In general, he has worked very hard at being "friendly dog". Our walks are now fun rather than a chore and he is clearly very proud of himself. He loves to have Cindy check in with him and tell him what a wonderful dog he is and, of course, he agrees and also always reminds her how cute he is!"

Over a series of sessions, we addressed his reaction to people working around the condos; people suddenly entering an elevator, and people wanting to pet him on their walks. Zeus was active in the behavioral planning, offering many ways to help him change his old habits. In every situation Margo and Zeus worked as a team, problem solving and determining exactly what she wanted him to do and what he needed from Margo to create these changes.

Ah-ra Cho and Ever

Ah-ra Cho and her dog Ever have been longtime clients of mine from Seoul, South Korea. Sometimes we have e-mail consults and sometimes, in spite of a 13-hour time difference, we talk on the phone. Ah-ra called because she was leaving to go on vacation and Ever was going to stay with her parents. He had done this at other times and really enjoyed spending time with them. They previously owned a pub and Ever went there with them every day, enjoying the social life and a celebrity status. He was friendly and appropriate with the patrons. Ah-ra's parents now own a restaurant and Ever had been very distressed with the transition. He barked incessantly, disturbing the guests and disrupting work for her parents and their employees. He had become so noisy that they often shut the door to the storage room where he stayed. Ah-ra called me because if he didn't change his behavior, the only option would be for him to stay home alone for the long hours while her parents worked. Ever greeted me with alarm, "What's going on? Why can't I see my friends? It is so noisy! I'm frightened! I'm afraid I will be forgotten!" Ever explained that he was afraid he would be forgotten when shut in the storage area and that is why he barked and barked. He said that occasionally Ah-ra's mom would burst into the room, grab something from the shelves, and rush back out "forgetting him again". Ah-ra translated that statement to her mom who confirmed that she did frequently burst into the room and rush back out. Ever was very



distressed. I first explained the differences between the pub and the restaurant, and that his “job” at the restaurant would be different. Instead of greeting the patrons, he could keep an eye on everyone working in the kitchen. He would now be the “kitchen manager”.

Ever requested that the door stay open so that he could watch what was going on. Ah-ra and her mom agreed that they could tether Ever in the room with his bed and food and water. That way he could watch the activity in the kitchen and be assured that he had not been forgotten. Ever also requested a small cardboard box that he could choose to get in to take a nap. He wanted a contained and quiet setting and the cardboard box would muffle the sounds. He explained that the kitchen clatter and shouted instructions were unsettling to him. He interpreted the kitchen noise as a constant emergency happening, and that in all the excitement, his people would leave him behind. We explained that the emotional voices were not about danger, but rather about preparing meals for people who are hungry and in a hurry.

Ah-ra set him up with all of his requests and he immediately settled down. She later e-mailed me from her vacation and said that her parents reported that Ever had stopped all the barking and seemed quite relaxed as he watched them from his cardboard box. Ah-ra’s father took Ever on errands so that he could see all of his old friends from his pub days in the village.

Ah-ra and Ever and Margo and Zeus demonstrate how effective problem solving can be when both parties are engaged in the process.

Tell Us What you Think

Is the appointment scheduling site login easy to use? Do you find enough flexibility in the time slots available? Is there any service that I don't offer that you would like to see? Please take a moment or two and take this online [survey](#). I appreciate your time!

Do-It-Yourself Animal Communication My new CD is now available. It's called “Talk to Your Animals in a Language They Understand”. This is the most basic and simple part of animal communication, and if practiced, can resolve lots of problems before they even occur. The cost is \$12 (price includes shipping and handling) and you can pay by paypal - use the button below and don't forget to include your address.



Crate Use Let's talk about the overuse of crates. I have talked to quite a few miserable dogs recently who have brought my attention to how many long hours dogs spend in crates.

Kim Brophey, animal behaviorist, instructor at AB Tech college and Association of Pet Dog Trainers” trainer of the year” speaks out about ”the general, profound over-confinement for pet dogs”. In Kim’s class “The 21st century Dog”, she addresses the issue of breed specific behaviors. For example, a herding dog has been bred to work an 18 hour day moving sheep. This “job” involves problem solving skills as well as physical stamina. That dog, confined to a small apartment, will very quickly become frustrated, neurotic and potentially destructive. All dogs need access to nature, exercise, and stimulating experiences.

In our busy lives, many of us have forgotten our more primal nature and the renewal that comes from being out in nature. Having a dog, for some, has become a management issue. Many dogs spend 8 to 9 hours a day in their crate and then are released for a couple hours in the evening. They are sometimes offered exercise, sometimes just released into the backyard, and then are returned to their crates for the night. This is terribly unfair. Think about the situation from the dog's perspective. They are in a small space; they're looking at the same static view; they cannot move around to stretch, look out the window, or change locations in the house. Instead they are locked into a small box. Some dogs tell me that they are barely hanging on to their sanity. A friend of mine suggested the perfect metaphor. She said, “it's like sitting in the center seat on the airplane, with the movie system broken, your iPod doesn't work, and the bathrooms are out of order. Imagine doing that day after day.

Crates were originally intended as a training tool for house training. The intention was to put the young dog in a crate for a good night's sleep and then be able to take them directly outside to go to the bathroom before they had the opportunity to do it in the house. Once the pup learned that behavior, often the crate door was left open or discarded. It seems that now crates have become a daytime management tool.

There are many other options for leaving your dog at home while you go to work. Most dogs, once they are out of the puppy stage, are completely happy to just hang out in your house without doing anything destructive. However, for some dogs more control is needed. How about installing a few sturdy dog gates to separate your kitchen from the rest of the house. Dog-proof your kitchen and leave them with their bed and water while you're gone for the day. Once they've mastered that area, it might be possible to open one of the gates and extend their home area. Ultimately the goal would be to give your dog freedom to live in your house and to move around. That way even if you cannot fit a good healthy walk into your daily schedule, at least your dog has been able to flex his muscles, stretch, wander around in your house and stare out the window.

