

DISCIPLINE, EXERCISE & AFFECTION—

HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR STRUGGLING CANINE RELATIONSHIP

© KYLE WARREN DOGS

Many dog owners have a difficult time developing a successful and happy authoritative relationship with their dog. Like many veteran dog owners and parents should agree—some kids or dogs are simply easier than others.

This section is not intended to solve all of your issues but to give you the understanding of what framework most often is successful in working with dogs, particularly ones that clearly care more about their own agenda. We need to keep the dog on the earning system. This is such common sense but so often a challenge to follow through with. I like to break down our time spent with the dog into three main categories: Discipline, Exercise, and Affection.

Discipline is defined as our structured time, command time with the dog. Commands such as Sit, Stay, Come, Heel, No, and Take-a-break. If you express that either exercise or affection is more important than discipline, the dog will not prioritize your needs for control and safety at times when it's misbehaving due to the anticipation of fun endeavors and interactions. In other words, we would be rewarding the dog for bad behavior.

A handler needs to create grade levels of challenges that are just above what they have previously accomplished, so these stimulating times become more manageable since they are more within the current sphere of the function of the dog. Easier said than done but true nonetheless.

Understand that exercise and affection can always and should always be a part of the disciplinary time. The time spent just needs to be organized in such a manner that the dog is going to feel that you are the priority when it comes to decision-making.

Exercise is defined as the time that we are mentally and physically expending the energy the dog has. Different dogs and different breeds have different requirement levels for exercise. Most likely half the time or more your dog is driving you nuts, if it's not a puppy, then it's because it has some energy to burn.

People feel at a loss when trying to do everything they need and the dog needs. For example, people need to be able to control their dog and not be dragged by their dog to the park but their dog really needs a good blowout before they go to work in the morning. What to do? Yes, it sure is a challenge. This challenge becomes more digestible by developing a daily plan with your trainer. I know your dog needs the exercise and, more times than not, people feel that it's easier to live with their dog if it gets that run in and just deal with being dragged.

Let's not forget! We, loving dog owners, get an intrinsic reward in watching our dogs run and play. That is what dogs should do! We love it! However, depending on how it all goes down will influence what happens the rest of the time. Finding the path and balance

requires good planning and follow-through so your training process does not reach premature peaks in success, or you are making your training timetable much longer because of challenges you, the handler, are creating.

Affection is defined as exactly that! Love exchange. This is the reason we all seek out a dog. We desire to give love and receive love from our dog. We do not acquire dogs so we can discipline them or acquire them so we can spend minutes or hours a day getting them tired. We acquire dogs for the relationship that a dog can offer us humans. Us humans, like dogs, love—love. To have the best relationship with your dog, love is always a must.

Going forward, please keep these three elements in mind and how they help organize your relationship and plan with your dog. A person will struggle to achieve living with a happy, responsive dog without all three parts. It's up to you to apply them in a manner that will help you attain your goal.