

# **LOVE, RESPECT, AND TRUST**

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Love, respect, and trust are, in my opinion, the three most important elements in any relationship, regardless of what species one belongs to. These three elements are the fundamental components with which we work.

Love is the most valuable element in a relationship. It creates happiness, safety, comfort, and security within a relationship. Unfortunately, love has very little to do with a canine being command responsive to a handler.

Respect, on the other hand, is the key element within a canine-human relationship that makes it a working relationship. I do not want people to associate the word “respect” with “fear” and “constant discipline;” that is not what I am talking about. When I allude to “respect,” it is in the sense of appreciation towards communication between the handler and the dog due to the handler’s quality guidance. The handler is certainly viewed as one of alpha status and therefore a dominant figure; however, the handler is also thought of by the canine as a true friend. That is what separates a quality handler from a straight-up disciplinarian.

One has to earn a canine’s respect. To prove oneself to a dog can be very difficult at times. I find that people tend to treat dogs like people. People often attempt to use various training methods that the dog does not interpret the way they wanted the dog to absorb it. If the handler cannot prove to the canine that he or she can give the canine the proper guidance necessary to do what the handler is requesting, then the dog will take its own advice!

Communicating with a canine can be very challenging for many people. Some people have innate abilities to communicate with canines, while others have to work very hard at it. I can guide one successfully down the road to having a happy, respectful, and responsive companion. Dogs use their incredible instinctive senses to reason and solve situations. Handlers must understand and navigate the dog’s instincts while working with dogs. If we do not, then their senses will more than likely be at odds with our agenda in their use. In order to make progress, one must understand a dog’s “language” when working with a dog.

The two species in this relationship do not speak the same language and I do my best to be the translator. I have worked with thousands of dogs in my life, and whether the issues stem from genetically predisposed behaviors, environmental sensitivities, or experience, enhancing your relationship with your dog in the sense of pack function, through quality mechanical and emotional communication that you have honed as the handler, will earn the respect of the dog. If there is a person that a canine looks to for guidance and authority, that dog will make much wiser decisions around the clock.

Dogs are what I call a total package creature. This means that you must have a high-quality level of handling to gain a valued level of respect. Once a handler starts demanding work from the dog, the dog will constantly be looking for flaws at all times for the handler to make. They will do this especially with people that they have a history of disobeying.

Prime times when handlers need to be on their toes are when they first try assuming control of the canine and when distractions occur, both of which can occur at the same time. If not on their toes, the handler will never have control of the canine when these instances arise. This is important to gain respect from the canine if the handler performs well. Canines look for excuses not to listen to a handler who has not yet received respect from them. The more respect the handler gains, the less the dog tests the handler. With dogs, it is the little things that count. Again, they are looking for excuses, so do the best to not let them find any!

Many canines find their excuses for not listening inside the home. This is because people naturally get more comfortable and let their guard down at home. When one works outside and the dog is placed on a Sit-Stay from ten feet away with no leash on, the handler remains very aware of the dog's attitude and environment.

In comparison, placing the dog on a Sit-Stay in the living room, five feet away from the handler, the handler may become complacent. Outside, the handler remains on top of things due to the risk of greater danger, whereas inside, when the dog breaks the Sit-Stay, the handler might allow it, owing to a long day of work and wanting to unwind, knowing that the dog is safe. To the person, it may not seem like a big deal. But this is when the dog takes its cheat sheet out and puts a check on the handler in the "They Cannot Control Me" category. Make sure that if a command is given that it is followed through from start to finish. If the handler is not in the mood or lacks the energy to follow through with a command, the handler will give the dog a message signifying a lack of control and lack of importance.

If the handler is viewed by the canine only as a boss it might be a working relationship, but not necessarily a happy one. We have to approach the dog as a friend who is trying to help successfully complete a task through trial-and-error learning. The rules that the handler creates along the way should be viewed as such by the dog, though thought more of as guidance. This strictly depends on how well the handler can communicate with the canine.

Canines like to do things well. The ideal handler can keep the canine's mind on the task at hand. This is accomplished through quality handling. While remaining positive, if the handler can keep the dog thinking about what the handler wants it to be thinking about, then the canine is more likely to remain positive as well. If the dog is not in a positive state it is much more likely to get there based on the handler's continued shining attitude. Using my methods, the handler will maximize this needed connection. To achieve a more personal relationship with the canine, the handler must respect the canine outside of *The*

*Fundamentals* as much as the handler expects respect from the canine and that loving bond.

When working with love and respect, one has to really take the canine's individualism into account. A handler must walk a fine line down the road of love and respect. If one is too compassionate, the canine will run all over the handler, and if one is too firm, the canine will shut down. This, generally, is how to look at it, but each personality will teeter slightly one way or the other, usually causing the handler to teach the canine according to its personality.

Trust is the last component used in making my methods work. Trust is the progressive element of the relationship. This component requires both love and respect. Many people believe that their dogs trust them but I cannot tell you the number of times I have been in the woods and we come across a bear and the dog runs to me instead of the owner. Rather heartwarming for me—not so much for the owner, but then again, there have been times when the owner ran to me too!

If you think about us humans, how many people do you respect that you do not trust? In my book, the answer should be zero. Well, a canine feels the same way. If we have a loving connection with the dog, the trust tends to come faster once respect is earned. I find the trust factor to be the most difficult component in the canine and handler relationship.

As you develop these aspects to your relationship with your dog the bond between the two of you will run greater than you can imagine. Really! Greater than you can imagine!