

Training Tip Tuesday: Motivation

You train hard. Day in and day out, you practice heeling, sitting, laying down. And after a while; you're bored. You don't look forward to training as much as you used to. It seems like more of a chore and less of a pleasure.

Have you ever thought this? Has your dog?

Training should be fun, novel, inspiring! If you don't laugh, hard, at least once during your session – you're doing something wrong.

So how do you get it back? What do you do when training just isn't fun anymore...?

If you're really burned out – you may need to just take a break for a few days. Do something fun; go for a hike, play a game. Ban all cues from your vocabulary for a few days and just enjoy spending time together.

Don't take an all or nothing approach. Sometimes 'good enough' really is Good. Enough! Look for (and reward!) all the little good things your dog does during the day; whether they were cued or not. If your dog is sitting right now- praise him! Laying down? Good job! That means he's not jumping on you or stealing things from the counter! Celebrate little successes. Success builds confidence. Confidence inspires!

Set goals. Pick something to work towards. Having a tangible objective to work towards can help motivate progress; Canine Good Citizen, BA in CLASS skills, Level 1, 2, 3, Trick dog title, - there are many choices out there. If you think your dog 'can't possible earn a title in something' – think again! Many of these titles are attainable by everyone – if you need help or guidance, just ask!

Make sure you are using the 'right' reward. What you use is only as good as your dog thinks it is! Just because you think that piece of steak is the best thing in the world; doesn't mean your dog agrees! Let your dog help you select what HE wants to work for. Offer him something HE thinks is valuable.

Make sure you are using the right method. (I could write a paper on this topic alone!) Just because a technique worked for your last dog, or your neighbor's dog, or that dog on TV – doesn't mean it will work for you! Even a technique that worked 6 months ago, may now be failing you. If you aren't getting results; look at your dog. Is he happy? Is he enjoying his time with you? Or is he frustrated and scared? Does he truly understand what is being asked or is he afraid of getting in trouble again? Always keep an open mind, and be ready to adjust your plan to help your dog succeed.

Journal; really. Write down your training adventures. Make a note of triumphs and frustrations. When you are having one of those days, when it just doesn't seem to be going well at all; flip back through the pages and look at just how far you've come!

...and lastly – PLAY! If your training routine is just that – a routine.. its time to mix it up. You've all heard me say 'no straight lines!' – practice turns, pace changes, different cues all in a row. Dance, laugh and be silly. And reward your dog's effort with play! Have some fun. Ask for a cue, then have a party! Time spent with you should be a wonderful experience; your dog should look forward to it. Even if you're trying to teach them something; that's no reason you can't do it with a little flair!

The video below is a very condensed training session with Kod. Often these session happen on the trail in the woods, using trees and rocks as training props – but for the sake of making videoing a little easier, we used a smaller area. 😊

https://youtu.be/7by49YgdJ_8