

Submission and fear are two different things. Dominance is misunderstood.

Submission is genetic – one is either a born follower or a confident leader. Confidence does not mean dominance, although the confident member may control resources important to him/her. Generally, a confident dog is more stable and less reactive and dangerous.

What you see on TV are dogs that are reactive, because they are either stressed or fearful. Force, corrections, intimidation and flooding = forcing the dog into stressful situations with no way out, don't make a dog more submissive (deference is voluntary, not forced), but lead to paralyzing fear. The dog, because continuously corrected, has learned to not express fear any longer. That is a far cry from a well-behaved dog. The problem is not solved, but suppressed.

Dogs treated with autocratic coercion either rebel or shut down! A true whisperer understands how dogs learn. One aspect is observational learning, coined by world-renowned psychologist Albert Bandura, Ph.D. He states that the environment causes behavior and vice versa. Younger, less experienced group members follow the examples of experienced, older ones. And because humans are a domesticated dog's immediate social group, they try as best they can to observe, and learn from us to survive and thrive. Most dogs would prefer to observe and learn from other, more experienced dogs, because same species communication and rituals are easier. But the fact is that many companion pooches don't have that option.

Behavioral laws are valid for all social species. As my dog's human leader, I lead by example. What am I teaching her, if my approaches cause her fear and pain? Punitive correction trainers reiterate the importance of respect; emphasize that trust and respect are two different things and that it is respect the owner has to aim for. I say that respect and trust go hand in paw. To be a respected leader, one has to prove to the dog that he/she is safe when the environment changes. If you ask your dog to surrender control, you better keep him safe. Physically and emotionally; which translates into diminishing fear and panic - done through protection, gentle desensitization, patient training and teaching operant conditioned coping skills.

Respect without trust is not possible. What dominance trainers call respect is nothing but superficial, collar-corrected and forced obedience.

Horses follow Monty Roberts because he offers them safety – doing the same for our dogs is to truly whisper.

Slivia Jay
www.silvia4dogs.com