



But I've Tried Everything....Really!

As a Behavioural Dog Trainer I am often called in as a last resort, when all else has failed. Then clients tell me the dog needs to 'be fixed' or else it's going to be surrendered or worse still, put to sleep. Talk about pressure! They tell me that they've 'tried everything' and that the dog is stubborn, un-trainable, naughty, dominant or downright evil.

Often my clients receive advice from breeders, vets, groomers, friends, family and colleagues. You've heard it before, "My Uncle Bob used to breed German Shepherds and HE Says that they are stubborn, dominant and that they should be hit on the nose when they bite as puppies or you'll never be the 'alpha'.....blah blah blah". Although these individuals may be well-meaning they are not behavioural trainers and often do more harm than good. Often some of the harm is permanent and un-fixable.

Often my clients *have* tried a myriad of things in an effort to change their dog's behaviour. Among other things they may have tried yelling, smacking, time-outs, bribing, rewarding, punishing etc. Normally the problem is what I call the scatter-gun approach. The scattergun approach is best described as randomly firing bullets into the air, hoping that one or two reach the intended target. In reality, most bullets fall harmlessly to the ground. No one method has been consistently applied and followed through.

I often liken training and behavioural modification to asking someone who doesn't know how to cook to bake a Sponge Cake without the aid of a recipe. They will go to the pantry and grab the ingredients they 'think' go into a sponge cake. They may even get some of the ingredients right but they will almost certainly get some wrong. As we all know, unless you have the right ingredients in the right quantity, mixed in the right order, then cooked at the right temperature you are NOT going to get a sponge cake! If you want to know how to cook a sponge cake ask a chef or look up the recipe in a book written by a chef. Dog training and behavioural modification is no different.

For successful behavioural modification to take place it is necessary to undergo a step by step program, designed and implemented by a behavioural trainer.



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The program must be strictly adhered to and consistently applied. Anything less will surely result in failure to achieve the desired outcome, and then you'll be back where you started.

If you really want to change your dog's behaviour then you must first be willing to change your OWN behaviour. Once you change your behaviour, your dog will learn new ways to respond to you. It reminds me of the old saying 'If nothing changes, nothing changes!' If you are unwilling, or unable to change your own behaviour then behavioural modification is probably not going to work for you.

Of course, the best way to deal with any behavioural problem is to not let it develop in the first place. Early socialisation and training will help you to achieve this. Don't wait until you have a problem, be proactive and ensure problems never happen!