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The Importance of being ALPHA

By Deborah Harr

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We see it all the time, and they are easily pegged in a room full of people. The ALPHA!

It was most unexpected yesterday when I got to view this up front, personal and far from comfortable.

A friend and their family were traveling for Christmas and asked my daughter to go over to feed their dogs for the week until they arrived back from the holiday. We both tend to spoil our dogs; they are members of the family. They eat when we eat, go where we go and get lots of love and attention each day. Leaving these "attention hounds" at home for a week didn't seem like a very good idea to me. Silly me, suggested rather than my daughter visiting them each day, it would be better to bring them here for the week.

The dogs walk with our two daughters together all the time, so they were not strangers and they all played well together. So what could possibly be the harm in having four large, male dogs at our home for the week?

The Alpha's---that's what.

Cadman—a purebred black lab, a follower and mine. He gave up within his first week of joining our family of ever holding the Alpha position and has gladly gone on to simply live each day chasing birds and being a sniffer.

Moose -a mutt rescued from the pound. 145 pounds of Pyrenees mix. In our home is 100% Alpha between the two. He is an anger management dog. Moose gladly joined the family and promptly took over the Alpha role.

Buddy -one of our visitors, an Australian Shepard/Blue Healer mix. He is pure Alpha in his house, even though he is deaf. No one is allowed to eat until he has selected the bowl he wants. No one is allowed to go through a door until he has passed through. No one is allowed to drink from his water dish ever, PERIOD! Did I mention this Alpha is deaf?

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Prince -one of our visitors, a purebred Australian Shepard. His role in life is to tend to Buddy and his special needs due to deafness.

Sadly, I discovered there is a difference between being on lead and free-run of the home (which I knew would exist to some extent). The two Alphas spend the day arguing out the top position. It was most funny. If one would lie down—the other Alpha would wait for them to get good and comfortable and then challenge them for the position.

They each drink from the others water dish—looking at each other as if smiling from ear to ear at how they could "take over" the others territory.

We have two cats, which prior to this were members of the household, quite ignored by the dogs. Our visitors also have a resident cat, which is also ignored by the dogs. But no, you get two Alphas together and the poor cats turn into "leadership skills". The cats win every time, but you could never tell that to the two alphas.

The whole day was spent in ALPHA ARGUMENT with those two, while Cadman and Prince had a most enjoyable day chasing each other or catching balls. But the two Alphas spent the day "on the prowl". Puffing out their chests and proving their position as the ALPHA.

No blood was shed and no wounds were inflicted. But both of them spent their day in having to prove who they were and how they were better than each other. Last night they all slept hard and sound. I guess spending the day proving who you are wore them down.

What about the other two? They slept curled up in a king size booty bag together, happily, peacefully and most content.

We got up this morning and have found the Alphas had not figured it out and in the past four hours have already worked themselves up into a battled frenzy—the other two have eaten their oatmeal and gone about playing with each other in joy.

Hmmm, is there a lesson here? Not that everyone should be a follower because we all need a "leader"—but dang, does everyone have to spend every waking moment of the day trying to prove their ALPHA ROLE?

Find your place in what it is that you do. Perform your position to the best of your ability and let all those "ALPHAS" feel the heat and the burden to be on the top of the chain.

It was in watching these four boys interact yesterday that it became clear. The Alphas are so worried about "losing their power" that they never realized the joy in life around them

Deborah Harr has been a motivational speaker and business coach since 1986. Specializing in supporting new leaders and professionals in making a successful transition from Corporate Office to Home Office. "Anyone can become a success if they dedicate themselves and apply a working system. To learn more about Deborah visit <http://www.nonipearls.com>

Raising A Puppy: Who Is The Boss?

By Michael Colucci

Raising a puppy could be as difficult as raising a child. The only consolation you'd have is that you won't need to buy diapers. However, you'd have to settle for "crap land mines" if you haven't trained your dog very well.

Your dogs may have impregnated another dog or just come home pregnant, but you won't have any problems with its puppies. In fact you can even sell those puppies. Whereas when your teenager has impregnated someone or comes home pregnant, you'll have lots of moral dilemmas at hand.

Raising a puppy has got its similarities with raising a child. In fact, one could even consider that raising a puppy could be the training ground for you raising your own child in the future. Both of them would involve responsibilities, although the latter one involves more. Raising a puppy will help you learn how to be more responsible as well.

Just like a child, you'd love your dog to be a great companion and dependable as well. To make this happen, you'd have to realize that raising properly with proper training and proper owner attitude is the right way. One of the things that you could do is show the dog that you are the boss.

Showing your dog that you are the boss or alpha male will work because your dog always thinks that you are a pack member. That is how dogs view relationship with owners. In the world of a pack, there is always an alpha male.

That alpha male is always the leader that dogs will respect and follow. That alpha dog is like the mayor of our city. The alpha dog is the most powerful among the pack and makes him respected.

That is how your relationship with your dog should be like. Show the dog that you are the boss or alpha male while they are still puppies. If you are not able to show that you are the alpha male, the dog may become aggressive knowing that he or she is free from the powerful leader.

You wouldn't want your puppy growing up to be a brat would you? Just think about it, how you would feel if your puppy is taking over your space or makes you walk him around hours or times you'd hate. They may even bite you in the worst cases.

However, to establish your Alpha male status with your dog, you wouldn't have to lower yourself to their level. You wouldn't have to resolve to physical aggression such as biting or fighting your dog. There are peaceful ways out there to show your dominance.

Dogs will even be happier submitting to a master. After all, that is how they were bred throughout time. They will even gain a sense of security and confidence from following a leader.

To establish you as a good pack leader without being too aggressive try to see things in the alpha male's point of view. The person can establish him or herself as a good leader by projecting strength through the use of a steady and deep voice, giving rewards when good behavior is present and

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reacting nonchalant toward situations that makes a dog nervous. To reinforce that you are the leader you should try to make the dog have a lower submissive position.

These things may seem a bit harsh for some. But in reality, that's how things work. Even when raising a child too. You would need to show that you are a person to be respected to command leadership. This training will only be for a time only, and after that time, you and your dog will have a great time together.

Michael Colucci is a technical writer for

– A site that offers free advise

and resources on dog training.



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