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Who's walking who?  
Sharon Bolt

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## About the Author

To date, Sharon Bolt has been interviewed on the Chris Evan's Show on BBC Radio 2, The Independent, The Guardian, The Sunday People, The Sunday Post, The Metro, GMTV, BBC South Today, BBC South East Today, BBC Look North and she was the dog expert in the BBC Documentary "Britain's Most Embarrassing Pets". Her incredible knowledge and remarkable skills have been called upon by over 30 different newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations and she has a regular slot on BBC radio Sussex and Surrey giving advice to numerous listeners' dog dilemmas. Sharon has helped an endless number of people including celebrities and has conducted training for Battersea Dogs and Cats home.

Sharon has produced 4 Puppy and Dog Training DVDs, 3 CDs and 3 E-Books. She offers on-line dog training courses and many other products. For more information please visit [www.good-dogs.co.uk](http://www.good-dogs.co.uk)

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## Who's Walking Who?

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### Introduction

As I sit here looking at my two dogs curled up, resting peacefully together, I marvel at how calm, relaxed and happy they are. It is a very different picture than the one I was led to believe some years ago when they were puppies, when I was told I had done the worst thing possible by getting two brothers from the same litter. Hearing another contented sigh from one of them brings me back to the present where I feel excitement as I imagine the value you are about to receive from the revelations within this book.

My personal story started when my parents got our first dog when I was about five years old. As a child I had an instant love for dogs and looking back I can see that I developed a natural affinity with them too, however life changed dramatically and the real story began when my husband and I decided to get two puppies.

We had both grown up with dogs and it seemed natural for us to get dogs of our own. We chose two eight week old Parson Terriers who were brothers from the same litter. Should you not be familiar with the breed, Parson Terriers are similar to Jack Russells but with longer legs. We had both only ever had one dog and innocently believed that two dogs would mean double the joy!

We brought our puppies home, made them comfortable and attempted to enrol them into a puppy class. I had not realised how popular puppy socialisation classes were and I spoke to about seven different dog trainers because so many of the classes were already full. The trainers all said the same thing to me which was:

*"You have taken on real trouble".*

I was shocked and asked why?

They explained that due to the puppies being blood related they would look at each other for direction before us and as they were males they would fight for the 'top dog' position. They concluded that aggression and nasty fights would result and we would very likely need to move one on. I was distraught and looked at the two bundles of fluff and said, "No way, I could not do that".

Consequently, my mission began to find a natural way of communicating with my two dogs in a way they would really understand, preventing the predictions coming true. I studied, went on courses, researched and most importantly watched the way my two dogs communicated with each other. I soon discovered that although they had some human similarities, they were not human, but pack animals. This for me was like a light going on, it made sense they would communicate in a language different to our own and look for different methods of leadership. I realised the answer was to learn

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### *Introduction (cont'd)*

and demonstrate the qualities they would expect to find in a pack leader, or Alpha, which is the name given to the 'top dog'. I learnt their non-verbal language and how to meet their expectations and I am delighted to report that it has not been necessary to move either of them on. They truly are great friends, they look to us for direction and leadership and are calm, happy dogs that are full of real character.

My aim during this book is to share with you my knowledge, experience and discoveries so that you too can have happy and well balanced dogs. It is information that I have obtained not only through study but predominantly from 'hands on' experience working with my own dogs and with numerous other dogs and their owners. What I will share with you is devised from the amazing results I have witnessed where stressed dogs have changed to calm and balanced animals before my eyes.

The intention is not to give you perfect, robotic dogs, but to empower you with a set of tools to answer the questions your dog may ask and how to deal with situations that may arise. By the end of the book my goal is to give you a good understanding of dog psychology and how to communicate to your dog in a language they really understand.

You are in for a real treat because this method really works and it is so simple, in fact some people say that some areas are obvious when pointed out. Indeed, very often the most simplest and understandable solutions are the most effective in life. At times people say, "I have tried that and it didn't work" however that is because the magic only really happens when you meet all the areas your dog looks for leadership, not just one or two but ALL of them together. Trying to 'fix' one behaviour can be difficult when your dog already sees themselves as the 'boss' in other areas.

Throughout this book you will learn how to put down foundations and consistently meet your dog's needs as their 'pack leader'. You will learn how your dog's mind works, about dog psychology and how this differs from human psychology. This is the key to success and eliminates unwanted behaviours, which manifest because your dog has assumed the 'top dog' position and cannot cope with the pressure this role demands.

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## CHAPTER 1: Understanding Leadership and Pack Mentality

From the beginning, I would like to reassure you that you can still do EVERYTHING you like to do with your dog (as long as it is kind and humane). You can still love and fuss them, have them on your lap or furniture or even in the bed if you wish! The crucial part is that you implement leadership first and that they wait for your command before doing so. It is important that you give a clear message that 'everything is on your terms' and later in the book I will be explaining more about how you can do this in a kind and gentle way.

### Treat the 'Cause' and the 'Symptoms' magically disappear

Prior to teaching humans about leadership and working with dogs, I had a human complementary therapy practice where people would visit with a host of health complaints. One key area I always looked for was 'What was CAUSING the SYMPTOMS' for example, a client may have a skin complaint such as eczema, after running my tests I would often discover that the cause was due to a dairy intolerance. Frequently, I would see clients who suffered from migraines and through further investigation I would often discover that the cause would be due to a dairy intolerance. I would also see clients who complained of digestive disorders and sure enough the culprit could be due to dairy. The point I am making here is the same cause created different symptoms that manifested in different ways. So why am I telling you this? I see the same type of cause and symptom effect happening with humans and dogs. The CAUSE in the vast majority of unwanted behaviours we see in dogs is due to the miscommunication between humans and animals. The symptoms could be anything from pulling on the lead, separation anxiety, incessant barking to aggression. Interestingly and thankfully dogs rarely have all of the symptoms, more commonly I see two or maybe three problem areas.

For example some dogs pull on the lead, jump up and show aggression around food but are not territorial. This means they do not bark incessantly and the postman is safe to deliver the mail!

Other dogs are good on the lead, really gentle around food but will be aggressive with other dogs and/or the postman and bark incessantly. Both scenarios are caused by miscommunication between humans and dogs and as a consequence unwanted behaviours result.

In my complementary health practice, when the clients removed dairy from their diet the symptoms, such as the migraine, eczema or digestive disturbance, magically disappeared. This is exactly what I observe when we learn about dogs' needs and



## **CHAPTER 1: Understanding Leadership and Pack Mentality (cont'd)**

expectations and demonstrate the qualities that are looked for in a pack leader, not in a human way, but in a canine way.

### **Understanding Leadership**

In order to understand why it is essential to demonstrate leadership I would like to start at the beginning by relaying the fact that dogs are not human but 'pack animals'. This misconception is very often the cause of so many unwanted behaviours. It is true that dogs sometimes display similar human characteristics and very often we would feel so much better if they were human! However, as much as we try to humanize them, they are and always will be 'pack animals'.

'Pack animals' have a different set of rules and expectations than humans and speak a different language too. As humans we strive for fairness and equality whereas your dog is not looking for equality, they need to know where they are in the 'pecking order' and seek leadership through non-verbal communication, energy and body language. This is why it is vital to learn about dog psychology which at times is very different from human psychology. It is also the reason I will be concentrating on these differences throughout the book.

### **Pack Mentality**

I have studied our dogs' ancestors, wild dogs and wolves, for insights into pack communication and although our dogs are fully domesticated and not wild wolves there is a great deal to be learnt about pack mentality by studying their behaviours. I see a lot of similar wolf like communication and behaviour with my two dogs.

In the wild the pack leader is called the Alpha, also known as the 'top dog' and consists of an Alpha male and female who leads the gathering. The Alpha pair are usually the strongest and fittest of the group and are responsible for the survival and well-being of the members. They are the decision makers and the ones that are responsible for protecting and providing food for the pack. Pack rules stipulate that only the Alpha male and female are allowed to mate and any lower ranking members wanting to do so, will need to leave the pack and start one of their own.

An Alpha's demeanour is almost regal-like; they have a strong, calm assertive energy, which commands respect from lower ranking members. An Alpha is not aggressive, but composed and firm and expects pack rules and directions to be

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### CHAPTER 1: Understanding Leadership and Pack Mentality (cont'd)

followed. They have a strong and confident approach and everything is done on their terms. They control the pack with a 'no messing' attitude and lower ranking members will be put in their place should they challenge or step out of line. The Alpha has an unspoken authority which lower ranking members respect and gives them comfort and safety, knowing that they have little responsibility other than to assist in the smooth running of the pack.

### Body language and how a pack leader thinks

Whether inside or outside the house, pack leaders have strong mind-sets such as:

- I am the leader and you are the follower.
- I am making all the decisions, I am confident and in charge.
- I am a natural leader, this comes easy to me.

They also have:

- Strong, upright body language, which means head held high, chest forward and shoulders relaxed.
- An air of authority, Alphas are almost regal like with calmness and determination.

The qualities looked for in a pack leader are not dissimilar to human leader characteristics such as:

- Decisiveness
- Strength
- Calm but firm (not a push over)
- Someone who gives clear and concise directions.
- Someone who communicates simply but effectively.
- Someone who rewards when doing a good job.
- Someone who is self-assured and confident.

**CHAPTER 1: Understanding Leadership and Pack Mentality (cont'd)**

- Someone who has presence and easily gains respect and trust.

Some people say to me, "I am not that type of person, I am nervous and I do not have much confidence". The reality is that dogs will only put their trust in people who tick the right boxes and as they are judging the situation by your body language and by what you are feeling, this is something that you need to pay attention to. Before I explain what you can do I would like to tell you more about how your dog experiences your human emotions. Research has proven that different emotions give off different smells, not strong enough for humans to detect but with the heightened sensory ability of dogs they can tell whether a person is feeling a strong or weak emotion, which means a strong or weak energy. This is why people who are frightened of dogs will often get bitten as they give off the 'smell of fear' combined with tense, weak body language, it is a recipe for disaster. Strong, confident dogs make no excuses for weakness or instability.

**How to acquire leadership qualities**

Visualisations or internal 'role play' can often be very helpful when learning empowering beliefs and responses, so try this exercise.

Think of someone you know who is confident and self-assured and easily gains respect and trust from others. It could be a family member, a friend, someone you used to know, someone on the television, someone in line with your religious or non-religious beliefs or someone from your imagination. Have you thought of someone? Now imagine you are them, you may want to close your eyes as it might be easier to get into character. Feel how confident they feel, hear yourself talking confidently like them, see yourself walking like them. Take on their persona completely or a number of different people who demonstrate self-assuredness in different areas.

The key is to manage your feelings. The stronger your positive emotional feelings are the better and the easier it will be for you to be the leader in your relationship with your dog. You may feel a bit silly visualising or role playing at first but no one is watching you, so go for it, and intensify your feelings of confidence and self-assuredness, believe you can achieve anything and that you are invincible. You are now a recipe for success. Repetition is important and the more you do this during the day, the greater your success.

Make a habit of reminding yourself at least once a day the things you have already achieved in your life. This could be your wonderful family, the time you were

**CHAPTER 1: Understanding Leadership and Pack Mentality (cont'd)**

promoted or when you were successful in an interview. It could be when someone gave you a lovely compliment or any other memory where you felt really good about yourself and were unstoppable. You may want to write these memories down and experience how good you feel as you are writing them. If you cannot think of anything, do not worry we are so used to criticizing ourselves it can be a little difficult to begin finding good things. My suggestion is just to start with anything small, the time you visited a sick friend and they were so grateful or the time when someone complimented you or your dog. Start with anything, it does not matter what it is, but once you start you will soon find that more and more memories will pop up out of nowhere until you suddenly realise you are smiling from ear to ear and feeling fantastic.

This is the type of energy that convinces your dog you have the qualities to be a great pack leader. Your job is to convince your dog that you are capable of holding the top position and when this happens, you will see a visible, calm change in them. Dogs who are naturally submissive will hand over the reins very quickly and often instantly, other dogs who are more wilful will be calmer but will still hang on to some areas until they are fully convinced. Once your dog has given up the role, they may challenge from time to time, but providing you continue to meet their expectations with the tools I will be giving you, they will trust and respect you as the pack leader and you will have a happy, relaxed and balanced dog.

**Bringing a new dog or puppy home**

When a puppy or dog comes into your home, as a pack animal they look for a pack leader and where their place is within the pecking order. The pack is you, the people who live in your home and other animals, which means all the adults, children, other dogs and cats. If you have more than one dog, you will notice they find their place in the pecking order through their own communication. Providing there is no bullying or pushy behaviour from one to the other then that is fine and normal in their world. You will notice too that if you have a cat, very often the cat will hold a higher ranking status than the dog and the cat is kept at a respectful distance!

There are two different languages being spoken in a house where there are both humans and dogs. The humans communicate in their human way assuming that dogs understand what they are saying and meaning and the dogs communicate as if they are in a pack and assume the humans understand the signals and what they are saying and meaning. As humans we miss these signals, they go right over our heads, but your dog will assume that the message has been delivered. It is

## **CHAPTER 1: Understanding Leadership and Pack Mentality (cont'd)**

important to remember that dogs are consistently reaffirming their position in the pack and humans either do not realise this or think the message is lovable and cute!

Throughout this book I will be talking about 'leadership' which is different from 'obedience'. Many obedient dogs pull their owners down the street, but with leadership you get a well-balanced and naturally obedient dog.

Something to consider before we start...

Have you ever noticed that homeless people have extremely well behaved and calm dogs? It is very unlikely they have come from the best breeders or are Crufts champions; they are simply led by the person from place to place, ignored a lot of the time and eat when food is available. It is a big contrast to some domesticated dogs that have the best food, plush homes and constant attention, luxuries which often result in stressed dogs ruling the roost and suffering reoccurring health issues. Definitely food for thought!



## **CHAPTER 2: The Walk**

### **Challenges concerning the walk**

One problem area for dog owners is during the walk. The walk is an extremely important activity as it mentally stimulates your dog, it releases pent up energy and is good exercise. Additionally, it is a crucial time when dogs demonstrate their place in the pack.

When you take your dog out for a walk this is a time where you connect as a pack and install who is the leader and who is the follower. Many dog owners choose not to take their dogs out while others put their dogs in the car, drive to the park and let them off the lead straight away to prevent being pulled down the road. I understand the temptation as it is the easier option; the very thought of being pulled down the road, a possible dog attack and eventually arriving home feeling embarrassed, stressed and with a sore arm, it really is not an attractive prospect for anyone!

On numerous occasions I have witnessed stressed dogs change into happy and relaxed dogs just by getting this area right and it has become very clear to me that this is a vital area for showing leadership, as well as releasing nervous and pent up energy. It is why so many dogs will ignore pain inflicted by a collar so they can take that leader position, with them in front and you behind. It is one of the main areas of leadership and although it does require dedicating time to do the training, it is well worth it. By avoiding taking your dog out or putting them in the car and driving straight to the park you are missing out on a major opportunity to convince your dog that you are the pack leader.

### **Getting this right eliminates other areas...**

I remember an owner I visited for a home consultation who had three cats and a Westie dog. The dog had viciously attacked the cats on a few occasions and had left such tension in the house that the cats lived most of the time upstairs, feeling frightened, and the dog downstairs, trying to get at them. The owners were at their wit's end and dreaded another attack happening, so I was called in to save both cat and dog's lives and return sanity to the household!

On the first meeting I explained the areas that her dog looked for leadership and how she could achieve this in a kind and gentle way. I requested that she first work on laying down the foundations of leadership. I returned a week later and asked for the cats to be placed in the small lounge downstairs so that we could put down

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### CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)

boundaries and integrate them all. Looking at the owner's face it was evident that she thought I was mad and that world war three was about to happen!

Before taking the dog into the lounge we took him for a walk so I could release any excitable or pent up energy (from both the dog and the owner!) and clearly demonstrate that the dog was a lower ranking member. We did this by ensuring that he walked calmly on the lead by our side. This also gave me an opportunity to reassure the owner and encourage her to think positively. I asked her to tell me all the wonderful things about her dog and her life, as I knew the recipe for success was to have both dog and owner in a balanced state of mind. The dog responded quickly and favourably on the lead, so we let him off when we got to the fields. He stayed close and always came back when called. When we returned to the house it was evident that we had a relaxed and happy dog. We let him cool down, fed him and it was then a good time to introduce him to the cats.

I asked the owner to go into the lounge and I would bring the dog in whilst still on the lead. We walked in, he saw the cats, averted his gaze (which is a submissive act) and went to lie in his bed. You could have heard a pin drop as well as the owner's jaw hitting the floor! I handed the lead to the owner and she took him out of the room and brought him back in again with the same response. At the end of the consultation I let myself out as the owner was busy stroking a cat one side of her and the dog the other side. It would have certainly made a wonderful photo.

Although this is an astonishing story the point I am making is this. We did not need to do any work with the dog or the cats we just needed to demonstrate that the dog was not in charge. We communicated with the dog during the walk, we drained his nervous energy and had a calm, submissive dog who no longer wanted to kill the cats. The important message from this example is that the owner was able to achieve a dramatic transformation in her dog's behaviour and now lives in harmony with her animals. What was needed was an understanding of what was going on in her dog's mind, for her to take the leadership position and to think positively and relax. You too will be able to achieve these types of results.

### Getting ready for the walk

The first step is to stop any over excitable reaction when taking your dog out, so avoid saying, "walkies" or any other related words your dog connects to the walk. This also means that if your dog reacts, jumps or barks when you get the lead out or when you put your shoes or coat on, you will need to spend some time desensitizing

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### CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)

him. A successful method of achieving this is to get the lead out or put on your coat and shoes throughout the day without any intention of taking your dog out. Now some may think this is cruel or teasing, but what you are doing is breaking the association with the walk which creates over excitement and sometimes manic behaviour. Why do you want to break this association? Because in order for you to communicate to your dog that you are the leader when outside the house you need to avoid him bounding out of the front door. Trying to get through to children or adults who are in an excitable state is extremely difficult to do and it is the same for dogs, so from the outset it is vital to prevent them getting over excited.

To reiterate, you should practice picking the lead up and putting it down and very importantly, take no notice of ANY reaction from your dog. This means do not speak to, look at or touch them. Give no attention to any behaviour and turn around and walk into another room, you will be amazed how quickly your dog will calm down when you do not react to any of their repertoires. Also, you will notice that the excited reaction you get when picking up the lead will decrease and they will calm much more quickly, leaving you with a dog in a much more balanced state of mind to leave your home.

### Pulling on the lead training in the home

The best place to do any training is in the house as it holds the least amount of distractions for your dog and is a great environment to clearly communicate who is the leader. With this in mind, here is a very effective method for dogs that pull on the lead.

Approximately 3 times a day for a period of about 15-20 minutes put your dog on the lead, not because you are taking them out but to walk them around with you in the home. This may seem a bit strange at first but it is a valuable way for you to display that you are the leader and your dog is the follower. For example walk to the kitchen from the living room and make a cup of tea. Then walk into the living room, sit down and drink it before going back to the kitchen to do something else for a while. After a short period go back to the living room, and continue to move back and forth around your house keeping your dog with you on his lead. Simply by doing this you are making the decisions and leading the way.

This is not a time to coax your dog to come with you, a higher ranking dog would not persuade another dog to move, they would move the other dog with their intent and energy. Similarly, you will be giving your dog non-verbal communication that, "I am

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### CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)

the leader, we go where I say, and you are the follower". Your mind-set is, "You are coming with me". Remember dogs live in the moment and will not sit there plotting revenge because you walked into the kitchen when they were sitting comfortably in the lounge!

Remember you must be a strong pack leader and normal human emotions such as feeling sorry for or guilty about gives a weak energy which is not demonstrated by a leader in the world of dogs. When a higher ranking dog wants another dog to move they do not stop and think, "Aaahhhh, I should not disturb them, they look comfortable, I will come back later!"; they move them. Pack leaders make decisions and expect directions and boundaries to be followed.

Can you see already how you are calmly and confidently presenting yourself as a strong leader in a gentle way? Consistency and repetition is the winning combination in all areas with your dog. Stay calm, patient and confident and allow your dog time to let go of the leadership role. For some dogs it is almost instant where others need more convincing.

### What is the best type of lead to use?

The first thing to consider is the lead. I recommend a slip, rope lead placed around the top of the neck, just under the ears. Why? Because this gives you control of the head so you can direct your dog instead of your dog taking charge. I do not recommend harnesses although I understand perfectly well why people use them when dogs pull and nearly choke themselves, but can you see how you would give complete control to a dog that has a harness around their body? Their head, neck and upper body have full range of dictating where they want to go. Remember you will be following the other recommendations we have already discussed at home before even going outside, which will already help you considerably to control your dog on the lead when leaving the home.

### Dogs that are fearful of leads and going out

At this point, it is worth mentioning dogs who are frightened to go out, or freeze when you put the lead on them. Not all dogs get over-excited about the walk and I have seen many dogs that hide. This could be due to a previous traumatic experience outside or for dogs who are frightened of cars, joggers or loud noises. Again, it is essential that you are the pack leader as many walk related behaviours are due to

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### CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)

dogs believing they are in charge. Dogs do not rationalize or have a great understanding of the manmade world we live in, they do not think, "That is just a car that humans use to get to work", or, "That is a car back firing, that happens, no big deal!" When dogs believe themselves to be the leader they are responsible for you and their pack and for some dogs it is just too overwhelming. This can also be a distressing experience for insecure dogs as the lead is associated with going outside which creates fear and unease.

### What to do when your dog is frightened of the lead or going out for a walk

Start by associating that the lead is a good experience. Dogs live in the moment. However, they do associate with the past so you need to associate something good with the lead and usually the answer is food. Should your dog be very frightened of the lead leave it on the floor and put their favourite treat near to or on the lead, gradually move the treat closer to the lead until you are able to put the lead on them. Reward with calm reassurance and good food associations whilst doing so. Leave them to walk around with the lead on and if they freeze, again use a high quality treat to get them to walk with it on. In my experience working with dogs like this, it is evident they very quickly forget they had a problem with the lead as it has now become a really pleasurable experience. In the same way that many dog owners teach their dog to sit and lay down by associating this action with a treat, the same can be done for dogs that have fear of leads.

Once your dog is convinced that you are the pack leader, they will feel safe in your presence, will feel that you will protect them and will look at you for direction and how to react in potentially troubling situations. Once they see that you remain calm and relaxed and you are not upset or frightened when a car goes by for example, then they too will relax. When the pack leader does not have a problem this is the message that is communicated non-verbally to the pack. The great news is your dog does not need to understand about cars or joggers, all they need to know is that you, the decision maker and the one responsible for the pack, are not concerned.

### When standing at the front door getting ready to go out

So picture this, you are now at the front door, take a deep breath and give yourself a few minutes to feel good. You may recall a time when you were on holiday, how beautiful the location was, how the food was wonderful and the weather was



## **CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)**

fantastic. When feeling confident and in high spirits, now is the time to open the door but before you open it remember that it is essential that you go out the door first as you are the leader and your dog is the follower. This is a very clear and concise communication to your dog that you are in charge and the dynamics have changed in the pack. This process is also important as it informs your dog that it is not acceptable to go through entrances before you, preventing them from 'bolting' through any open doors or gates which could jeopardise their safety.

It is very important to keep your thoughts free of past disasters that have happened on the walk and change your expectations from one of dread and 'what ifs' to a positive outlook. Anticipate only good things happening such as meeting great people with balanced dogs and all getting on well together. Visualize your dog walking calmly by your side and looking at you for guidance. Should on any occasion a situation not go to plan do not be disillusioned, but continue to think only positive thoughts the next day. It may take a while for your optimistic beliefs to register and always remember that consistency and repetition is the key to success.

What you will very soon notice is that your dog is naturally calm and ready to go out, you too are naturally calm and expecting only good things to happen and you set off by going out the door first.

### **Dogs that 'Zigzag' and control the walk**

Many dog owners ask, "How do I stop my dog from zigzagging in front of me and smelling and peeing at every lamp post and bush?" My answer is very simple, "Keep a short lead"; this means you loop the lead over so there is not so much lead available to your dog. The reason why this is vital is that you are now in control of your dog, instead of your dog being in control of you. You are also in charge of the sniffing and peeing and remember the main communication you are aiming for on the walk is to connect as a pack and install yourself as the leader. This is what I refer to as 'leadership first and then affection' - the smelling, peeing and letting your dog off the lead is the affection side of the communication. I realise that might seem a bit strict and some people may say, "It is in his breed to sniff or it is natural for him to pee", and of course you would be right. However, this can be done 15 – 20 minutes into the walk, once you have established leadership and your dog is walking calmly by your side. By your dog pulling you to the lamp post and stopping you abruptly while they go and sniff something puts them in the leader position and you as the follower. In your dog's mind it is very simple; there are two positions, a leader or follower. During that first 15 – 20 minutes you lead your dog to every other lamppost

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### CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)

or 3rd or 4th bush (you decide) rather than them leading you. Try to put your human emotions aside, assert yourself as the pack leader and once that message has got through, you can let them sniff the bushes etc. You are not being mean you are speaking their language, consequently resulting in a happy and well balanced dog.

### Dogs that pull on the lead

Should your dog try to pull in front of you, give a quick firm jerk of the lead towards you, rather than upwards. This must not hurt them but gain their attention. You may want to add a firm word such as, "Hey" or "No" to further get their attention. Once you have corrected and got your dog's interest, relax your arm and shoulders. Ensure you have no tension because what you feel transmits down the lead like an electric current. Walk forward, your head held high, chest forward and relax. Resist looking down at your dog anticipating that they will pull. You can at any time stop to gain your composure and remember to breathe!

In the same way you demonstrated in the house, you can stop and change direction at any time, remembering that your thoughts are, "You are coming with me, on my terms". This is a good way to confuse a dog who believes they are making the decisions and help relinquish them of the top dog status, which has caused you both a great deal of stress in the past.

Imagine going on a walk with your dog walking calmly by your side, looking at you for guidance and direction. This is what you can look forward to.

### Letting your dog off the lead

Now let us move on to the stage when you let your dog off the lead. My advice is to only let your dog off when they are responding well and walking by your side on the lead. Until you have communicated to your dog that you are in charge of the walk there is a strong possibility that your dog will do whatever they like when off the lead. Remember letting your dog off the lead is the affection side of the process and leadership needs to be established first.

Now, please do not misunderstand me, it is wonderful to let your dog off the lead, it is so joyful to watch happy and well balanced dogs enjoying their freedom and burning off excess energy. However, this is not an enjoyable experience if you are dreading an incident happening or are anxious that your dog may not come back or will only

**CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)**

do so when they are ready. It is also potentially dangerous for your dog. Pack leaders do what they want, when they want, they come when they want and they go where they want. This is why it is vital to put leadership in place before letting your pet run free, a dog who feels in charge will return on their terms and when they are ready. This may not be true in every situation, some owners say that their dog is much better off than on the lead and I will explain the reasons why this can happen at the end of this chapter. The point I would like to highlight here is if you have a dog that does what he likes when let off the lead it is essential to establish leadership on the lead first.

I recommend using a long training lead (the type that are used when training horses) whilst in the park so you can teach your dog to return when called. By using high quality treats you can communicate what your dog is supposed to do and like all dog training this becomes so much easier once you have established yourself as the pack leader. Sometimes dogs simply have not understood what they are supposed to do, rather than just being naughty.

**There are some key things to remember when your dog is off the lead**

The important things to remember are:

- Your dog keeps his eye on you, rather than you on them. This means you walk ahead and look at them out the corner of your eye. Resist, if possible, the urge to keep calling them to you, just keep walking and they will come after you. Pack members keep an eye on the pack leader and the pack leader does not keep fussing after them.
- Should your dog be ahead of you, turn and walk in the opposite direction, they will soon notice and come running after you. You are again giving the communication, "I am the leader making the decisions and you are the follower".
- A key point to remember is that dogs live in the now, so if they return on the 5th time that you call, they are good dogs. Why? Because they associate in the moment, which means you called them and they came. To punish them will be telling them off for returning. Dogs do not analyse or rationalise, they do not stand there and think, "I was called 5 times, 4 of which I ignored, so

**CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)**

that is why I am being told off", it sounds amusing just imagining they may do that!

I suggest calling them twice and then walk the other way. If your dog comes when they are ready, calmly put them back on the lead and walk changing directions for a while to reaffirm that you are the leader.

It is important to note that research has discovered that when dogs become focused on one sense, such as sight or smell, other senses shut down. This is why many dog owners say their dog goes deaf when they are interested in a smell or focused on someone or something.

Remember if at any time whilst in the park or fields your dog starts to ignore your requests, put them on the lead and walk to heel for 10-15 minutes in the same way you would when walking them to the park. During this time, in order to communicate your message, allow no pulling, sniffing or peeing on their terms, which will further remind them that you are in charge of the walk. After your dog has responded positively you can let them off the lead again, however you rarely need to do this when you have convinced your dog that you are the decision maker and leader.

**How to introduce your dog to another dog and prevent aggressive attacks**

Dog attacks are commonly experienced by many owners and I would like to suggest some guidelines you can follow to help avoid or prevent this.

To begin, you must lead your dog to meet another dog and not allow your dog to pull you frantically with excitable, nervous or dominant energy as this is a recipe for aggressive behaviour. Wait until your dog has a calm energy before you attempt to gradually move forward, should that not be possible, turn and walk in the other direction. It is great to let dogs socialize, however, not all dogs like other dogs in the same way that not all people like other people. I would not force a dog to socialize with other dogs, however, your dog must remain in a calm and submissive mode when around other dogs. This is vital because any other emotional state can very quickly lead to trouble.

## Who's Walking Who?

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### CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)

## How to identify dominant and submissive signals in dogs

So many attacks can be avoided when you are able to recognise dominant and submissive signals in dogs. Looking at posture and different areas of body language enables you to identify when a dog is giving calm, submissive signals or dominant warning signs.

### The signals that show dominance in dogs are:

- A large, confident body posture
- Raised head
- Raised ears
- Large, staring eyes
- Curled, raised lips
- Wrinkled muzzle
- A high raised tail

### The signals that show calm, submission are:

#### Eyes

#### Narrowed or blinking eyes can mean:

- Sociable
- Peace-making
- Surrender or,
- Fear

#### Looking away can mean:

- Peace-making
- Surrender or,
- Fear

#### Ears

#### Flattened ears can mean:

- Sociable



## Who's Walking Who?

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### **CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)**

- Peace-making or,
- Surrender

#### **Totally flattened ears can mean:**

- Surrender or,
- Fear

#### **Flickering ears can mean:**

- Peace making
- Surrender or,
- Fear

### **Mouth**

#### **A drawn back mouth can mean:**

- Sociable
- Peace-making or,
- Surrender
- Forehead

#### **A flat forehead can mean:**

- Surrender

### **Lips**

#### **Lips normally placed can mean:**

- Sociable or,
- Peace-maker

### **Muzzle**

#### **A smooth muzzle can mean:**

- Sociable or,
- Peace-making

## Who's Walking Who?

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### CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)

#### To summarise:

Calm, submission would be indicated by a lowered body posture, which could also be sitting or lying down, with ears back, eyes small, a lowered tail (not curled under as this is fearful) and looking away.

When your dog is in fearful situations where their tail curls under, try to hold the tail up higher, this will send a different message to their brain and put them in a more secure state of mind.

#### Aggressive attacks when on the lead

Should your dog show challenging signals when they are on the lead in the park or an open space, here is how to take control.

The de-sensitising technique:

The moment your dog starts to lunge, bark or snarl at another dog, calmly but assertively turn and walk in the opposite direction leading them with you. Your dog will try to turn their head and continue what they had started so jerk the lead towards you saying a firm, "No" or "Hey" to break their intent. Ensure that their head faces forwards and they are walking beside you. When you have achieved this, which is usually quite quick, turn and walk towards the dog again. The moment your dog starts to lunge, bark or snarl at the other dog you calmly but assertively turn and walk in the opposite direction again leading them with you repeating the whole exercise. What you will quickly find is that you are able to get closer and closer to the other dog until eventually you are able to have a conversation with the other dog owner (providing their dog is not looking for a fight) while your dog patiently waits beside you. This is easier and more effective when the other dog is in a calm, submissive state of mind and either standing still or on the lead.

This is an extremely effective method, which I call a de-sensitising technique and is something I will be referring to throughout. It can be used whenever there is a 'trigger'. What I mean by a 'trigger' is anything that creates an unwanted behaviour in your dog. The 'trigger' could be other dogs, cats, joggers, the postman, cars or anything.

The key to success is to create the scene. For example ask another dog owner (with a submissive dog) to stand still for you in the park so you can use this de-sensitizing method. It will mean going out at times when there are a lot of dog walkers. I can

## Who's Walking Who?

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### CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)

hear you cringing and saying, "I avoid these times as it means trouble", however, the way to overcome unwanted behaviours is to create a controlled setting that sparks the reaction. You can then work with the unwanted behaviour and balance your dog. Avoidance is a great technique too and is effective until we meet an unexpected dog and all hell breaks loose!

You will need an open space so you can turn and walk in the opposite direction. Timing is very important, so turn the moment your dog goes to react, rather than waiting for them to become stressed and then trying to work with them. If you meet another dog where there is not an option to walk in the other direction such as another dog walking towards you in the street, then cross the road or stop and stand back so the other dog can pass. Use the technique of jerking the lead towards you to keep your dog's head looking forward and ensure that you remain calm.

It is confrontational to stare in the eyes of a dog and also a dominant action to be moving forward, which both dogs will be doing if you remain on the same side of the road. This is why so many dogs crouch down or stop as they are assessing each other for dominance and submissiveness signals. If you watch how two dogs greet each other they do not do so head on, but one dog will curve around the other dog and approach from the side.

All aggression training needs to be carried out on the lead as it is very difficult to control the outcome when dogs are off the lead.

When going out on the walk view the whole experience as a wonderful opportunity to work with your dog to make them happy and well balanced. Stay away from dread and 'what ifs' and remember use visualization before you go out and think of happy memories whilst on the walk to keep you in a balanced state of mind.

### Dogs that bark, growl and grumble at other dogs

Some dog owners say, "My dog barks, grumbles and growls sometimes at other dogs but do not worry he is not aggressive". The thing to understand here is that growling and barking is a strong communication to tell another dog to back off, which is fine if the other dog is more submissive. Problems occur when the other dog feels more dominant as this can very quickly turn into a fight. In this instance it would be advisable to correct both dogs: the one that barks, grumbles and growls the moment they start and the other dog when their body language shows dominant signals, again timing is very important here. Correcting is so much easier when the dog is on

## **CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)**

the lead and you can do so with a jerk of the lead combined with a firm, “No” or “Hey”. You can also use the de-sensitising technique, which we discussed earlier, to calm the energy between the dogs. Should the dogs be off the lead, aim to calmly put them back on the lead. At this time if you are panicky and stressed this will add to an already tense atmosphere and is likely to fuel the possibility of an attack.

### **Should a dog attack occur**

It is really good to take the time to integrate the dogs at the ‘scene of the crime’ and what I mean by this is to use the de-sensitising method or jerking of the lead technique combined with a firm, “Hey” or “No” to get their attention. Your aim is to gradually bring the dogs closer together both avoiding eye contact and in a calm state of mind. This may seem a tall order but it is worth spending the time using these methods until they become calm and submissive. More commonly the owner walks away embarrassed and reprimanding their dog which does not resolve the problem. This is an understandable response, however what we have unintentionally created is a dog that is likely to become more aggressive next time as nothing is resolved. On the next occasion they meet another dog it is likely they will associate with the previous attack. In addition we have added our anxiety to the atmosphere (and their association) which further fuels their reaction. This would be a recipe for disaster, but by integrating dogs when an attack has happened, both humans and dogs will be left with a good association.

When integrating at the scene you do not need for the dogs to be best friends or smelling each other, you just need them in a calm, submissive state. Remember to think positive, if you have a fearful, anxious energy it will travel like an electric current down the lead and fill the air and your dog with tension. Should you have a small dog, please resist from picking your dog up as this further fuels the situation and the dog on the floor will try and get at the dog being picked up which can result in both you and your dog being injured.

### **The part you play in balancing your dog**

You are probably already noticing that how you feel and what you think is having a big effect on your dog. If you feel more comfortable keeping your dog on the lead and only letting them off in certain areas, I would highly recommend that is what you do. The worst thing you can do is to let your dog off the lead when you feel anxious because not only will your dog sense your uneasiness but when we dread something

**CHAPTER 2: The Walk (cont'd)**

happening, it usually does. On the other hand, if you let your dog off the lead having reassured yourself that they always come back and having listed in your mind all the wonderful things about them, your energy will be relaxed and your expectations will be in line with what you want. Most importantly, your dog will feel the calm, positive energy from you and they will react accordingly by behaving well and following your commands. You could think about a great holiday you had or a brilliant evening with friends, feeling how good it was, and then let them off. When you are calm and not negatively focusing on what you do not want to happen, you will have created a very good expectation for both you and your dog to have a very enjoyable walk. Remember there is no right or wrong, what is important is that the action that you are taking is in alignment with the thoughts that you are thinking and most importantly, that you feel positive about taking that action.

**Why is my dog aggressive with other dogs on the lead but fine when off the lead?**

This is a regularly asked question and I would like to conclude this section by explaining why some dogs are aggressive with other dogs when on the lead but are fine if they are off the lead in the park. Once again we find the answer by understanding how a dog's mind works. When dogs are in a situation they are not sure about their first choice of avoidance is to run, if that is not possible their next option is to freeze or growl and the last response is to attack. Most dogs use these options in that order which is why so many dogs are much better with other dogs off the lead as their first option to run is available to them. Dogs will avoid confrontation unless they are either a strong, dominant dog or have learnt to attack before being attacked due to association. It is always important to remember that whilst dogs do not live in the past, they do associate with previous experience.



## Who's Walking Who?

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### Some Final Reminders

Let us reiterate what you need to do in order to relieve your dog from their pack leader status. Essentially you need to convince them in all areas they look for leadership that you are the best person for the job. You adopt the body language and non-verbal communication of a pack leader, which means you are almost regal like and aloof and everything is on your terms. You remain calm and assertive in their presence and expect your boundaries to be respected. You are confident, decisive and strong and if this does not feel natural to you, you practice visualisations, imagining you are someone who has these qualities, or you remember a time when you felt invincible and re-live that time. You and your dog will benefit tremendously and with practice this confident way of being, starts to become normal to you. Wherever possible you will ignore attention seeking behaviour, praise good behaviour and use your upright body language with a firm, "No" when putting down boundaries. You understand that the time to talk, stroke or pet your dog is when they are calm and relaxed as this will nurture a healthy state of mind. In the same way you will not pet your dog when they are stressed and act as if nothing is wrong when they are fearful or upset so you do not nurture an imbalanced state of mind. You understand that your dog demonstrates submission by lowering their body, putting their ears back and lowering their tail and that this is a sign of respect, you have not upset or hurt them in any way!

### What you can look forward to when your dog has accepted you as the leader:

#### Imagine this:

You have a calm and balanced dog who is relaxed around food and walks calmly by your side when outside. You have a dog that comes back when called off the lead and who looks at you for direction. You have a dog who alerts you when someone comes to the door and will stop barking when you calmly communicate there is nothing to be concerned about, so they happily step back so you can answer the door. Your dog does not jump up when you arrive home but is pleased to see you, respectfully waiting until they are invited into your personal space. You have a dog that is not aggressive with other dogs but is trusting in your leadership and wants to please the pack leader. You have a happy, well balanced and well-behaved dog.

## Who's Walking Who?

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### *Some Final Reminders (cont'd)*

#### **How will you know when you are not acting like a pack leader?**

Your dog will let you know if you are not meeting expectations as a pack leader and will do so by demonstrating unwanted behaviours and challenging you. No problem, you are empowered to answer any questions they may present and will discover there is one or more of the main areas we have discussed that has been relaxed, which is why they are testing your leadership. The more submissive your dog naturally is, the fewer questions you will be asked.

I encourage you to use your own intuition when working with your dog. You know their character and will discover your own methods that are successful for you individually. You now have the foundations that are required to bring balance to your dog. Also, you have an understanding about dog psychology, which will connect you even more to them, they better watch out because 'you are on to them!'

Be calm, confident and try to relax! Laugh, have fun and enjoy your dog. You can do anything you want with them (as long as it is kind and humane), just remember 'Leadership first and then affection' and watch as their joyful personality shines through.