

Self-Control



Initiating Questions:

How many of you have pets at home? How many of you have ever had a behavior problem with your pet? If so, what have you done to remedy the problem? Have you ever gotten angry at your pets, because they didn't listen? Have you ever yelled at them or hit them out of frustration?

Description:

Students will learn about positive training methods to teach their pets (mainly dogs & cats) how to behave properly. Students will learn about options to control their pet's behavior.

Materials:

Clicker or other device to make noise, like a bell.
Human Treats – jelly beans, M&M's or other small candies.

Procedure:

1. Begin lesson with initiating questions above or choose some questions of your own. Emphasize the importance of being patient with your pets. Explain that it is upsetting to us when someone isn't patient with us. Ask students how they feel when their parents yell at them or their teacher singles them out. Your pet will only become frustrated, scared and confused if you don't exercise patience with them.
2. State that it isn't fair to get angry at your pet if he/she does something wrong and you haven't trained them to do the proper thing. Tell the students that today they will learn three concepts to teach their pet in a positive and healthy way.
3. The first concept (write on the board): **All living things repeat behaviors that are rewarding and avoid behaviors that are not.** Explain to students that many times we only want to correct our pets for what they do wrong and we ignore what they do right. Ask students to list some behaviors they repeat because of the rewards attached.
4. Give an example by complimenting a student in the room. Make them feel really

good about themselves. Point out humans too, are more likely to perform better if they are reinforced in a positive way.

5. The second concept (write on the board): **Your pet already knows just about everything you are going to teach him.** Ask students, does your dog know how to sit, lie down, walk by your side etc.? Explain that with training you are simply associating a word in English to something they already now how to do.
6. The third concept (write on the board): **Learning should be fun, not painful!** Ask the students if they would rather learn their spelling words by writing them until they had cramps in their fingers or would they rather make a game of it. Learning is always better if you're making it fun! Your pet is going to shut down if training is harsh or boring.
7. Tell the kids you're going to play a little game to demonstrate "positive reinforcement" using the concepts above. The only thing is we have to pretend that one of us cannot speak English—just like your pet. This exercise will help to show you how frustrating it can be to the animal if they don't understand you! This will help the students to understand how an animal might feel.
8. Select two students to come to the front of the room. One of them will be the trainer and the other will be the "person" being trained. Tell them that you are going to give the trainer an index card with a "command." Tell the class that the trainer cannot talk or use hand motions to the person being trained but only reinforce what they are doing right by "clicking" a clicker or other noisemaker.
9. Suggestions for commands to put on index cards are: turn out the light, do three jumping jacks, open the door, write an "X" on the board, write your name on the board. Come up with some ideas of you own.
10. Give the trainer a clicker or a bell, and small candy rewards. On an index card indicate the behavior you want performed by the person. Mark index card from suggestions above or come up with ideas of your own.
11. Tell the trainer that each time their student makes a move in the "right" direction they should reinforce with a clicking noise and a candy treat. Eventually the student will perform the action by following the positive feedback.
12. Ask trainer and trainee if it was difficult to communicate. Were they frustrated? Did the trainer make learning fun? Ask them if they can see how an animal might have difficulty understanding. (Repeat exercise with other pairs of students)

This lesson was provided by the Humane Society of Broward County. We offer a variety of free education programs! Please call 954-266-6848 for more information.



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