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## Top 10 Ways to Naturally Become Your Dog's Pack Leader<sup>©</sup>

In the dog world, you are either the leader or a follower. Someone has to be the leader; this is just the way dogs are hard-wired. If you're not the leader in your dog's eyes, your dog is naturally going to take over the position, even if he would rather just relax and be a dog. When the dog becomes the leader and takes charge, we begin to see behavioral issues such as jumping on people, relentless barking, aggression, fearfulness, separation anxiety, eliminating in the house, barking and lunging on the leash, and many others.

The first step in rehabilitating your dog is establishing **you** as your dog's leader. Leadership requires patience, consistency, and a calm and confident energy.

The pack leader's job is to PROTECT and PROVIDE. Begin with these 10 strategies to naturally teach your dog that you are in charge.

- #1 **Communicate with your dog in his language.** Dogs can learn vocabulary words, but they don't generally understand sentences and paragraphs. When we talk to our dogs, what they pick up is the tone and energy we use in communicating, and our body language, but not our words. In the wild, the leader doesn't lecture, cajole, or yell at the pack members. He corrects unwanted behavior by growling and even biting; then he moves on.
- #2 **Go through doorways first.** As the leader, your job is to protect. Whoever goes through the door first when you and your dog leave the house, and when you come back in, is in the position to detect danger first. That's the leader's job! You never know what might be lurking just outside your front door.
- #3 **Don't comfort your dog when he is nervous or fearful.** This may feel counterintuitive because it's our nature to reach out and console another being who is scared. But when we quietly murmur, "It's okay honey, Mommy will protect you it's all right ... good boy ... shhhh ... good boy," what we're teaching our dogs is that it's GOOD to be afraid. We're rewarding a fearful state of mind. Most fearful dogs are the way they are because we've nurtured their fear and taught them they are right to be afraid.
- #4 **Correct dominant behavior.** Pack members are not allowed to dominate other pack members. Dominant behaviors include jumping on, growling, humping, bumping, and putting their neck or body over the back of another dog. Dominant behavior is generally

preceded by excitement, and may be followed by aggression. If play is becoming too rough, and the dogs get into a dominance contest, it can quickly escalate to aggression and a fight.

- #5 ***Walk your dog, the proper way.*** If you let your dog walk ahead of you, or worse, tow you down the street at the end of the leash, you are putting your dog in the leadership position. The leader's job is to protect and provide. When you walk your dog, have him walk beside or behind you, never in front.
- #6 ***Walk...rest ... then feed.*** Most people think the purpose of the walk is to get exercise. Exercise is a great side benefit, but in the dog's psyche, and from a leadership perspective, the purpose of the walk is to *look for food*. Dogs are a traveling species; in the wild they have to walk to find food. To demonstrate your leadership ... remember, the leader's job is to protect and PROVIDE ... walk your dog first, let him rest, then feed him. When you do, your dog will see you as the leader.
- #7 ***Have your dog sleep in your room with you.*** Pack members sleep with their leader. A dog that is left downstairs all night, while everyone else is upstairs sleeping, is left to protect the first floor. What does that make the dog? The LEADER. Once your dog is sleeping in your room, she can relax and leave the leader's job to the leader ... YOU.
- #8 ***Claim the things that belong to YOU.*** What belongs to you? Everything! The floors, the furniture, the dog toys, the dog food bowl, the dog food. Everything. We share a lot of these things with our dog, but we have to remember, and teach the dog to understand, that he doesn't actually own anything. He is not allowed to take things without permission, or guard them as his own.
- #9 ***Teach your dog your rules.*** Remember, it's your house! This is "teaching," not "training." Teach your dog in a calm manner.
- #10 ***Project a calm energy.*** Dogs will only follow a calm leader. If you do this, you will change your dog. It's all about energy, and remaining calm. Creating some space in our minds so we don't react with anger and frustration. If you get angry or yell at your dogs, they will see you as unstable pack members, certainly not as leaders. In the dog's world, you are either the leader or a follower. So if YOU'RE not the leader, guess who is?

***"Humans are the only species that will follow an unstable leader."***

And a Bonus ...

- #11 ***Take care of yourself.*** If you are tired, stressed out, depressed, eating a lousy diet, out of shape, drinking too much alcohol, not drinking enough water, angry at your spouse or your kids ... how can you be an effective leader for your dog? Your dog is extraordinarily sensitive to your energy. If your energy is weak, your dog sees you as weak. WEAK does not equal LEADER. CALM CONFIDENCE EQUALS LEADERSHIP.