

# MINDSET

they were not conditioned that there are consequences for quitting before the job is done. I want to hedge my bets in both real life and in competition. I want a dog that has

This article is not a true training

article as much as it is an introduction to a way of life with your Bouvier. I've seen many emails over the years from people having problems with their pups or young adult Bouviers, especially young males Bouvs. I constantly shake my head, bewildered at why people allow their dogs to behave like spoiled brats. I see dogs pulling people down, lunging at other dogs, chasing squirrels and in general acting like spoiled rotten children....

**TRAINING METHODOLOGY:** In watching, cataloging and evaluating other training methods and ideas, I see trainers pushing motivational training to the nth degree. I don't believe there can be training without some type of motivation; be it food reward, toy reward or, as in herding, reward by allowing the dog to control/push on stock. Many confuse bribery with motivation. My problem with training is that the trainer, be it a novice or professional training sometimes gets confused as to what they are actually doing. Are they rewarding, motivating or bribing? But the bottom line to all training is the quest to produce a dog that is driven, wants to learn, wants to work, and works consistently and predictably under pressure. We all want an intense, focused dog.

In creating the "perfect" dog we, as trainers, utilize a variety of methods. Many use food treats to create intensity of focus. In a hungry dog this will work part of the time, for a short time, but only when the dog is hungry and working under limited distractions and controlled conditions. It will also work if the dog has innate intensity for what it's doing. But on many treats and toys fall way short of getting what we need for intensity and focus. We want a dog that doesn't quit when training becomes more intense. I understand the reasoning behind many training methods, though at times I don't agree with the methodology. Motivational and Reward training I agree with. I do not like Bribery. I truly believe the old saying that, "for every action there is an opposing reaction". One of those reactions comes in a dog that has never known boundaries because its entire training revolves around bribery, e.g., do this task and you'll be rewarded with "fill in the blank", with no consequences for NOT doing the requested task; other than no food or toy. This type of training does not gain me the *mindset* I want in a dog. It doesn't gain me a dog that thinks about consequences if it doesn't do the task requested. Many dogs that are pushed in real life to work under adverse conditions might quit if

## *Building that foundation.*

*work ethic* and will work under intense pressure.

Mindset is a lifestyle. It is not obedience training, per se,

but it is molding the dog's temperament and attitude and giving them boundaries. The result of this lifestyle is an obedient dog, a dog that appears to the world to have been born with innate manners. My dogs don't know what "sit" means. They don't have a formal heel command though they are trained or being trained to an advanced level in herding. But they have manners. In general I do not intimidate them and they are not afraid to make a decision and act on it. Nor are they afraid to make a mistake. They are focused and task oriented. I strive to create a mentally confident, mentally stable and mentally willing partner that can work under tremendous pressure without loss of those mental qualities. Toys and food may be utilized for motivation or reward but my dogs get fed their full feeding every night. Toys and food are NOT the key to training in real life. They HELP in training. They are *tools* in training. They can be utilized for sport training and have proven to be extremely effective tools. But they don't train a *mindset*. This is proven a hundredfold by all those dogs that end up in rescue because they are incorrigible even though they go through obedience after obedience class. It is heard in the very words the owners speak, "But he was such a willing puppy. I taught him to sit with just a treat and to come with a treat. Now, he won't come and chases squirrels and killed the neighbor's cat when he ran out the front door!".

There is a difference in a dog being obedience trained and being obedient. As a lifestyle, being obedient does not involve micromanaging every step the dog takes. As a lifestyle it does involve a tremendous amount of interaction between human and canine. It involves the person and dog being aware of their surroundings and how they affect each other. It involves using those surroundings to your advantage in creating a good companion and good citizen. *It also involves the human to be aware of the difference in "making" a dog behave and the person taking ownership of the dog's behavior or "making it the dog's choice" to behave and the dog taking ownership of its own behavior.* There is a huge difference in philosophy and psychology in the two. Yes, you can have a good mindset in a dog that lives in a kennel (not inside the home). But, it still involves the dog interacting with its human and knowing the human expects and will only accept respectful behavior from the dog. I expect my daughter to treat me with respect though we may still have differences of

opinion. I expect the same from my dog, though we may still have differences of opinion. I expect to be cherished and loved by both my daughter and by my dog. It's pretty much that simple.

I am not an alpha personality. Never have been and never will be. I don't dominate my child or my dogs. Both are allowed to make their own choices in life (and suffer the consequences). I put a good foundation on both and then expect them to use that foundation to make good choices without my interference. The difference is that my dog just has to make the choices I WANT him to make and LIKE it. :o)

My foundation concerns controlling the environment to make things either hard and/or uncomfortable for the dog if he makes a bad choice. The opposite is true for making the right choice. I make things easy and/or comfortable in return for making good choices. It's a simple philosophy that has a huge psychological impact.

I am a strong willed person (sometimes at work referred to as stubborn). I believe in right and wrong. I think I have strong morals and ethics. But, even as a cop (my job) I am not an alpha personality. If needed, I CAN escalate my response to a situation to whatever is needed to handle the matter-at-hand. I expect my daughter and my dogs to do and be the same way. So that is what I TEACH. That is how I LIVE. Again, it is a mindset revolving around a lifestyle.

The reason I am explaining ME, is because some people believe you may have to use extreme methods or go to extremes to control a dog with high drive. Some of this may be true, partially true or a myth. Just depends on the innate character of the dog, environment and training (whether good or bad). But that high drive puppy just depends on YOU to mold his world and teach him what is expected of him. The "high drive" isn't really an issue in a puppy so why does it BECOME an issue later? YOU determine what the end character is for that puppy. YOU determine whether he grows into a respectful companion you can control. As he grows it is YOU that determines how he will meet life and how he will respond to... YOU.

I may have a strong hand in managing the actions of my dog but I don't dominate them, I don't use extremes (my definition of extreme). I set boundaries that are black and white at first and may become grey as the dog matures and understands more. I communicate and train the dog to have a specific mindset. I want and train for a dog that is "soft minded", e.g., respectful and readily responds to control from the handler, as compared to a dog that is "hard minded", e.g., ignores, shows disrespect to the handler and is hard to control. I train for intensity in the dog but that doesn't mean I don't have a respectful companion.

**RESPECT:** My first priority for developing mindset is RESPECT. Respect has to be mutual. I respect my dog and his opinion and I demand the same respect in return. I am NOT trying to wipe out my dog's independence. I don't want the dog to stop "talking" to me and "communicating" with me. I don't want a robot with one-way communication. I want the dog to constantly tell me what he is thinking, whether he agrees with me or not. Our partnership IS a two-way street. I *may* overrule a dog's opinion but they KNOW they can discuss any given situation with me. This is NOT to be interpreted as I allow the dog to "argue". That is never allowed. But telling me you think I'm wrong is allowed, as long as you reasonably DO what I have commanded. In herding, it is often a sad fact that the handler cannot think/respond/command as swiftly as action is needed. The dog learns the human is slow in response to any given situation and reasonably takes matters into their own paws. All "herding folk" understand "selective disobedience". Your dog is right and you are wrong. You let a thwarted command slide because the second you utter the command you know you are wrong and the dog doesn't take the command but does the right thing. This may sound confusing to some trainers but it is a fact of life in herding. But, the dog isn't allowed to be disobedient. They are being allowed to communicate. A quiet, "no" marker given at the first wrong step the dog takes will allow you to overrule the dog and for the dog to take your command whether you are right or wrong. And, of course, this may result in you shooting yourself in the foot in many trialing situations. :o) But, this lifestyle allows having selective disobedience for selective situations while the handler maintains total control of the dog.

In garnering respect from my dog, I make the dog respect my lifestyle. I walk through doors, gates, down a hallway, etc., ahead of the dog... first. I don't worry about the dog charging through and knocking me over because my lifestyle dictates I lead and the dog follows and/or asks permission before walking through a doorway or in front of me. We don't fight over food. It's my food and I'm giving it to you. Period. The dog is NOT allowed to be possessive over food. There is no "command" given to "hold" the dog while I walk through a door or give him food. He's not told to down or sit or wait. I expect SELF-CONTROL from my dog. I don't expect to have to keep him under some command all his life. He



*Cori Shaye, my daughter, giving treats to the cats and dog. "Go" respects Cori and is patiently waiting her turn though she pokes at Cori to hurry up and give her a treat.*

is TAUGHT self-control then expected to exhibit it. He respectfully waits to be ALLOWED or given PERMISSION to go through the door or eat his food. On lead the dog doesn't pull me where he wants to go. The leash is loose and he lets me dictate our direction of travel. Off leash the dog is taught respect for what is important to me. My cats, stock, squirrels, etc. are not for him to terrorize. They are not to be chased and killed on his whim. He is taught to ignore them without having to be commanded to down or stay or be put on leash to gain control. The dog is allowed to travel freely about the property with the understanding that he will not wreck havoc. I work toward a mindset that will allow this type of lifestyle. That doesn't mean the same dog will not go varmint hunting with me at night and have to engage a coon or varmint of some sort. I'm not taking anything OUT of the dog. It is simple respect for my lifestyle and what is acceptable behavior in any given situation.

### **WORK ETHIC**

The 2nd priority of a mindset is what I call "work ethic". Work ethic is defined as the ability to continue "working" under increasing amounts of pressure without the dog quitting under pressure. Pretty simple. I don't quit when the job gets tough and I don't expect my dogs to either. MY mindset (and my dogs') is that I have no option other than to keep trying to succeed at whatever we are doing. The definition of success is definitely subjective. An example for me is that if I'm fighting with someone and trying to contain them, success may simply be staying in one piece until help arrives. Success may also be cuffing and detaining that person all by my lonesome. But the situation dictates how I define success. Same applies with the dogs. If I ask my dog to move cattle into pens and the cattle are fighting the dog I might have to reevaluate my definition of success as defined by the dog's capabilities versus how bad the cattle are. So, you see, my Mindset is always to succeed and for my dog to THINK he has also succeeded, whatever the actual outcome may be. Over a period of time this leads to a mindset in the dog that they CAN always succeed and they will continue to work under increasing amounts of pressure, e.g., work ethic.

Many highly trained obedience dogs have had their problem solving abilities stripped from their mental makeup. Many of them are "literally" tied to their handler by an invisible umbilical cord between handler and dog. They look good when competing. They appear happy and totally focused on pleasing their handler. They stare unabashedly into their handler's face while doing a magnificent obedience routine. But when their small world is shaken up they fall apart because they cannot "think" for themselves. They have been given commands their whole lives for every step they take. Their dependence on the handler is all consuming. Their success is dependent on a

controlled environment. How on earth is a Bouvier going to take down and fight a bad guy if he cannot work without his handler telling him every step to take? So, I'm back to helping the dog live a lifestyle and have a mindset that allows for the best of all worlds, you to be in control when you need to be and the dog to have enough self-confidence to work without you micromanaging him.

Many times I talk with handlers that believe their dog is responsible and has work ethic. They tell the dog to down so the handler can proceed through a door. Then they release the dog from the down command and the dog races through the door to follow their handler. This dog isn't showing respect. It's responding to an obedience command. This dog is not exhibiting self-control. The handler is maintaining control over the dog. Many handlers don't "see" they are "holding" the dog by downing him. I consider it a show of respect for the dog to patiently wait for "permission" to walk through that door behind me. *Let the dog take responsibility for its actions instead of you being responsible for every move the dog makes.* The handler is "micromanaging" the dog with the Down command. They are not allowing the dog to make the "choice" to wait for the handler to proceed through the doorway ahead of the dog. The dog shows no "respect" for the handler, only obedience. This is Obedience vs. being obedient/lifestyle.

Just another note on work ethic. I see people "let" their dogs run freely back to the crate after working. In MY book, unless there is a command given (go get in your crate) then you are ALLOWING the dog to ESCAPE from work. I don't know how many times I have dealt with a dog thinking that if they go back to their mom or the car they won't have to work, e.g., remain and work under pressure. It's a work ethic issue. The dog THINKS it can quit if it runs "home". I don't ASK my dogs to stay with me. I don't COMMAND them to stay with me. My LIFESTYLE demands a mindset where the dog CHOOSES to stay with me (under ANY circumstances) until I TELL them they can leave. WORK ETHIC comes from a MINDSET that is learned/shaped WITH your LIFESTYLE.

When training dogs there are many mindsets. There is no "one" way to train. There are many correct and appropriate ways to train. It totally depends on what the handler wants as an end product. For ME, I want my dog to ask permission before doing a lot of different things. I want the dog to understand that it has freedom to DO many things but that all life revolves around whether or not "I" give or have given permission. In living a lifestyle the dog learns what is expected and tolerated and what is completely out-of-bounds. *(The lifestyle actually "patterns" the dog to present specific behavior in specific situations and to have a specific mindset, e.g., wait to walk through a doorway until given permission or not chase that*

cat.) The first time one of my pups tried to race through an open door it lost about an inch of muzzle length as the door hit him in the nose. He was waaaaaay more careful about racing through the doorway the next time. No words were spoken. No command given. It was an accident that door hit him in the nose! Honest! As time and training proceed the dog learns to wait until given permission to go through the door. This training readily transfers to gates, the vehicle, crate (getting out or in), etc. Even on leash it was the same routine. Then doors and gates were left open and the dog is expected to stay on their side of the door while I go in and out of the house, or car, or arena, whatever. A lifestyle that leads to the specific mindset I want.

Most of the dogs we have, at some time in their lifetime, are used to hunt varmints. They may be used to hunt coons at night or any other varmint we choose. But it is not tolerated that they chase those same animals unless permission is given. I have had cats actually cross the arena and rub on my dogs when I'm working stock. Stupid cats, yes. But the dog WILL ignore them. Client dogs that kill cats at home yet here ignore them when with me. Why? Respect for me and work ethic because my lifestyle demands it. If you leave your job to chase a cat, I consider that poor work ethic. It is not tolerated. Thus, they are never allowed to do it. Period. I don't correct them for chasing cats. I correct them for leaving their job. My mindset. My lifestyle.

**DOWN & RECALL** In creating this mindset in my dogs there are only a couple of absolute commands that I demand my dog do instantly. Obedience. They are a Down and a Recall.

I know that if the dog loses its self-control (chasing stock, cats, squirrels, etc., I KNOW I can "stop all motion" if I Down the dog. It's an *absolute command*. This allows a break in the dog's concentration and allows me to regain control of the dog in any given situation.

A Recall is because *a-n-y-t-i-m-e* I call the dog they had better move Heaven and Earth to get to me. A down doesn't help me if I need help from the dog and I need them wherever I am RIGHT NOW! So the Recall is an absolute. Get your butt to me NOW! Again, this is a non-negotiable command that is integrated into my lifestyle. I NEVER utter the word Down or Here (my command for come) without a way to correct and make the dog obey the command. Period. I am ALWAYS prepared to backup my commands with consequences. I may teach the command by motivating the dog to come to me or by any other method I choose. But once the dog knows the command and understands what is expected the command becomes an absolute that I NEVER allow to slide.

In TRAINING a mindset on a dog that has been left with me to train, it may take 6 months or more to teach the dog Respect, Work Ethic, an absolute Down and an

absolute Recall. Depending on the dog (age, maturity, previous training or bad training) it may take over a year. This is under all kinds of distraction and in areas where there is no "controlled" environment. That "absolute" control and work ethic comes when the dog learns the "lifestyle" I have described. Teaching a dog to work under increasingly adverse conditions takes time... takes confidence... takes trust... Getting a dog to where they NEVER consider quitting under ANY adverse conditions takes a strong psychological hold over the dog. It takes a *mindset* in the dog. Teaching the dog they have NO OPTION other than to work, takes the same time, patience, confidence and trust from the dog. It takes a *mindset*. Once you have this you have the world by the tail. You have a dog that respects you, works for you, takes a ton of pressure and keeps on ticking... and has the confidence to work for you in whatever endeavor you choose. It gives you a confident, happy, outgoing dog that will not only stay with you but leave your side to work confidently. Why? Mindset! It BUILDS confidence and intensity in the dog!

*Mindset.* If you want a dog that is a great companion, whether for work or just to hang with, the greatest joy is achieved through having a mindset and lifestyle that dictates respect for and from both parties. Dog and Human alike. What is your lifestyle?

#### *Patisms*

- *Train the dog to believe it has no other option other than the option that is given. "Mindset"*
- *Training is NOT a matter of training an exercise; it's a matter of training a mindset. If a dog has the "mindset" that it does NOT have the option to refuse or NOT obey a command; the dog will always "try" to do what you have commanded.*
- *A recall is not trained by training the dog to come. It is trained by the dog KNOWING it has NO other option but to come. "Mindset".*
- *ALL training is a matter of MAKING or LETTING the dog work. If you MAKE a dog work then you will always have to make it. If you LET a dog work then you will never have to make it.*