

 **Daily Doga Inspirations for you and your dog**

Faith, Hope and Clarity

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Every time I begin an ACT training class, I am reminded of the wonderful people and dogs in my life. Recently, a return client, now 79 years old, came for private coaching with her 72 year old sister, and their beautiful Sheltie, Faith. Pauline knows dogs well, having trained many. Anita, none and openly admits it, but willing to learn. Pauline and Anita need each other and work as a team. Pauline needs a three pronged cane for balance, and Anita cares for a husband with Alzheimer's. The decision to get a dog at 79, "almost 80, as Pauline shares me", was not taken lightly. It never should be. With each other's strengths, they are working together, as a team, to train a lovely little Sheltie, Faith, ensuring that if anything happens, Faith will be resilient and well cared for.

Conversely, I was at a book signing recently, expecting people to have questions. Voila! Someone approached, swinging my book in the air, and announced, "So, what's the difference between Awareness Centered Training and Positive Training?" I'm not about to get into peeing contests at an enjoyable event, or just through hoops of fire. I seldom get daunted either. I smiled, "thanks for asking. What do you think PRBT is?" ACT and Positive Reward Based Training (PRBT) work together. You need to be aware of yourself, your dog (or dogs), and what your intention is before you can use PRBT effectively. Positive training is not the cure all, anymore then ACT. Effectively is the operative word with clarity, timing and reliability. I was reminded of wisdom of the older sisters and the ego of the young or discontent. We have a choice where to expend our energy ... read on ...

Clearly, there is a difference between faith (believing), hope (expectation) and clarity (clear, coherent, intelligible). White the smirk off your face, I know it's usually "charity." I chose "clarity." Clarity would make a good dog name because dogs bring clarity to our lives (behavior, communication, awareness). Before they can do this, we need to be clear about moments when we make choices about ourselves and theirs! It is no surprise to me when people say, "I have this dog and wow, too much energy for me, what was I thinking?" I have no idea, "What were you thinking?"

Dogs reflect our behaviors like *living in a house of mirrors*. The energy they put out varies as much as our individual lifestyles and personalities. We have a choice how we extend our energy to others, and how to teach dogs the difference between reactivity, playing, walking and relaxing. Dogs can learn easily, if we integrate the teaching into our daily living and learning, thus Awareness Centered Training.

What is your dog doing right now? Do you know? Are you aware when they are watching you, running like lunatics at the dog park, day care? One of the biggest conundrums I run into wherever I go with a dog is someone letting their dog float into my dog's face. Resolution: Teach your dog how to become bullet-proof when someone walks up behind, around, pounces, jumps, and/or a dog walks by. We do social set-ups in training class that are focused, managed and safe, teaching the dogs, and humans, that just because we are walking near or by a dog, doesn't mean you have carte blanche to get tangled up in their space. We teach them when it time to "explore" or not. This is called learning.

A joyful easy way to think about training our dogs is to not get “tangled up” in right or wrong, this technique or that, but a friendly and relatable approach that works well for you and the dog. Being aware of what we want our dogs to do, where, when and for how long takes awareness and practice. Pay attention! Keep a peripheral eye on them and others. If the dog offers a likable behavior, wags their tails, SNAPSHOT that behavior with a “Yes, Good Sit.” If you are getting dizzy, time to take a time-out and calm down.

How we communicate when conflict arises (with any species) can influence our relationships, our environments, and our dog’s response to learning. It is not enough to read [Awareness Centered Training](#) or 500 educational books, we must engage with our dogs (ourselves/others) in practice – DAILY. Over time, ineffective and annoying behaviors and human habits are replaced with effective ones.

Practicing something requires taking a challenge, making mistakes and learning from them. Next time, you will possess the clarity of knowing. Try these for a start:

- 1. Increase Awareness:** Is your current training / relationship style with your dog working? If not, try something different. Any step away from a habit, learning how to say “STOP” to yourself, or out loud to the dog, will help to change the energy (zap) long enough to create change (breathing and sit).
- 2. Check your Intention:** Before training, walking or playing with the dog, decide how you feel today. What’s your energy level like. What do you want from the dog? What time of day is it?
- 3. Keep it Safe and Relatable:** Resistance meets with resistance (lunging dog), and energy meets with energy. Maintaining calm, centered attitude, with respectful and clear delivery of intent to the dog (be calm and we’ll go out the door to walk) takes practice but works! I do it with three dogs. Want to go “explore”, then you need to “stand calmly for a moment.”
- 4. Notice and Direct Energy:** Getting to know ourselves and our dogs is the key to changing behaviors. Knowing when our dogs are more or less active, when we are, and arranging better times and ways to direct energy into safe and positive outlets works! Even after a long day, taking the dog for a walk, learn to say “Stop” to that person with the leash floating dog, eyes bugged out, coming at you like a whirling dervish. Calm your dog’s energy down before releasing to the park, pack of dogs or anywhere.
- 5. Practice:** Change (patterns and habits) take place gradually. Remember the Grid in ACT (Gradually increase or decrease delivery (treats / praise), distance, duration, diversity, distraction (how much, how long), and discrimination. Dogs are not born knowing the difference between play now, not then. They need to be taught, just like us AND in each room and place, from every posture, sitting, lying down, swinging from a chandelier or flexing over a fitness ball.

Integrative daily training is empowering and powerful - [Awareness Centered Training – ACT now.](#)

Enjoy the Journey ... breathing in ... ah-ha!