

Nothing in Life is Free **by Lynda Adame**

Nothing In Life Is Free - Behavior Modification

By popular demand I am posting the NILIF behavior modification technique that I had prescribed to me by my veterinary behaviorist. Any mistakes in this are mine, not hers ... and no, I am not familiar with who originally developed the method.

This method is a non-confrontational way of reducing/controlling/preventing dominance or dominance aggression in dogs. In my humble opinion, it's a HECK of a lot safer than the "Alpha Wolf Rollover" that the Monks recommend -- and I recently got a magazine that claims they no longer recommend AWRs because of the potential dangers when misused or used by inexperienced owners. And I'd like to see even an experienced person try to alpha-roll a 120 pound dominant aggressive Akita without getting hurt ... but I digress.

One thing that I like about NILIF is that it's adaptable to ANY dog.

NILIF - Nothing In Life Is Free

1. Avoid circumstances that elicit the aggression -- at least temporarily. Later you'll be able to work on desensitization, but only after you've gotten the dog's cooperation, not resistance.
2. Maintain an aloof attitude toward the dog. This is accomplished quite easily by crating the dog (or isolating it from the family in a small area with a babygate). This crating will be 90% or more of the time for a few weeks. This seemed to make Gypsy much more willing to do ANYTHING I wanted her to when she was out -- she was so thrilled to have ANY attention that she was beside herself.
3. Two-three times a day for 3-5 minutes maximum practice QUICK sits and downs for food. (If you don't know how to train this, go to a class.) You are working for speed and attitude here -- so reward correct behavior generously with praise and food. If your dog

has fear problems, ignore or minimize the need for corrections. Don't make these training sessions a chore -- they should be fast and fun, not a battle. When the dog is IMMEDIATELY and CONSISTENTLY and with ANTICIPATION obeying the commands, she is ready for the meat of the NILIF program.

4. At first, privileges are still restricted, but you'll gradually be able to add privileges. Don't rush things -- if you have a bad day, just go back to the prior level where things were successful and start over. Don't go from confinement/isolation to full house privileges in a day -- keep doors shut, start with limited amount of "free time". (This step is my modification to the program, but it worked for me, so I recommend it.) Gypsy got 20 minutes her first day -- twice.
5. NILIF -- Nothing in life is free. This means the dog must PERFORM to get anything it wants. For Gypsy, because we were trying to reduce dominance that was already present, I chose to use the "down" command because it requires her to throw herself into the most submissive posture available. I have since started peppering "sits" into the program, just to keep her paying attention -- but the dominance problem is long gone, so I'm less concerned with how submissive she is. "Wanna cookie?" -- nothing in life is free, so the dog must "down" on command for the cookie. (BTW - - when you start introducing NILIF, carry food AT ALL TIMES -- you're still rewarding the dog for submitting - this is NONCONFRONTATIONAL. Reward for a LONG time, then wean off food sporadically, but still praise the behavior.) "Wanna go outside?" - dog must "down". "Wanna drink of water?" -- that's right. You're catching on. The dog gets NO freebies. She must *earn* everything -- food (you should see her slam her body on the floor for dinner!), play, petting, water, going out, going for a r-i-d-e, getting T-R-E-A-T-S, coming inside. Gypsy even has to "earn" the right to work on the agility equipment ... partly because I think it helps her attitude ("Ohboyohboyohboy, Alpha-mom made me down, I must be about to do something Good"), and partly because she's so excited to be there that she needs the extra control.

BTW -- there are other non-confrontational ways to establish dominance. Ignore a dog when it tries to initiate play -- and as

soon as it gives up, you initiate the game yourself. Alpha dogs decide when the pack plays, and when it hunts. And I *do* like the idea of teaching a puppy or a dog to roll on its back and accept petting ... but it doesn't have to be a battle.

I support this method wholeheartedly. Gypsy would be dead by now if I hadn't found out about it. So -- it stays in my sig. And whether it works because it changes their behavior and not attitude, or because of the isolation in the beginning or the improved obedience -- I don't really care. It worked for me. I hope it helps a few other people too. I consider it just one more "tool" in my training and behavior modification "toolbox" -- it's not a magic bullet for all problems. I'll happily share it with anyone else who cares. And lots of those who don't. :)

"Wanna cookie? Nothing in life is free." -Lynda Oleksuk
(akitainu@bev.net)