

# The APDT CHRONICLE

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*Breaking Down Walls: Teaching Positive Reinforcement to a Population That Has Never Had It Before*

by Nicole Skeehan, CPDT-KA

*Marley's Fetch Club*

by Marisa Scully, CPDT-KA

*Top Ten Warning Signs of Canine Cancer*

by Dr. Gerald Post

*Ask the Trainer: Considerations Specific to Teaching Group Classes*

by Jamie McKay, CPDT-KSA

## ***Train to Adopt: Humane Guidelines and a Training Program for Dogs in Shelters***

By Sue Sternberg

Booklet (53 pages) and 2 DVDs (69 minutes total)  
Great Dog Productions

Train to Adopt is Sue Sternberg's program for assuring quality of life and improving the adoptability of shelter dogs. I was already familiar with many elements of the program from articles in *The APDT Chronicle of the Dog* and from seeing Sternberg present at conferences, but this set contained some information and strategies that I was not familiar with.

The first third of the book, and the first DVD (which runs about 24 minutes), discuss the quality of life issues faced by shelter dogs, particularly those kennelled for longer than two weeks. Sternberg makes a compelling case for keeping this issue at the forefront of any conversation about animal rescue. The book and DVD contain essentially the same information, but the video makes the more compelling case; some of the footage, particularly that of dogs exhibiting stereotypies, is heart-wrenching to watch.

The rest of the book and the second DVD (45 minutes) outline the training portion of Train to Adopt in clear detail. Sternberg helpfully explains not just how, but *why* these exercises are valuable, and provides vital information on making sure that the behaviors are transferrable to whoever is holding the leash. Although the book describes the exercises in detail and makes good use of photos (which would have benefited from captions in some places, but nicely illustrated the training sequences nonetheless), the DVD provides invaluable additional information, especially from those of us who learn best by watching. It also contains some troubleshooting information that was not present in the booklet. There is one exercise in the book that I do not believe was demonstrated in the DVD (preventing possessiveness, on page 36). This is one Train to Adopt exercise that I had not seen or read about before, and although I am confident I could replicate it based on the printed instructions, it would have been great to see it in action, if only because it is unlike any training exercise I have seen before. I was also not familiar with the parts of the program that recommend shaping games for shelter dogs. This seems like a wonderful idea, and it was my favorite part of the DVD to watch.

Overall, this set is marvelous. I was already a fan of the program, and it's great to know that this resource exists for those who are not aware of it. If I can nitpick, I will admit that some of the music on the DVDs was not my favorite, and I did not find the font of the on-screen text/captions (which sometimes followed along with narration, but other times stood alone) particularly appealing. But it was never unreadable, and for the most part I was glad to have the option to read along with longer pieces of

narration. The captioning was invaluable at times when there was no audio accompanying a training session, because it indicated when behaviors were being marked. This was a great use of this feature.

Although probably outside of the scope of what can be covered in a product of this nature, I would have loved some discussion about how to generate buy-in for a program of this nature in a shelter where other staff members or the leadership are set in their ways, and may not be interested in trying something new. As I said, Sternberg makes a clear and compelling case for both the humane guidelines and the training program laid out in Train to Adopt, but short of getting every person at a shelter to sit down to read and/or watch this, I can imagine these ingrained attitudes being an obstacle to successful implementation of the program.

I would highly recommend this set (and if you don't want to buy the whole set, this visual learner recommends the DVDs) to anyone who works in a shelter and wants to make positive changes in the lives of the dogs in their care.

*Adrienne Hovey is the editor of The APDT Chronicle of the Dog and The Dog Trainer's Resource 3. She owns Fresh Start Dog Training in Philadelphia, providing in-home obedience training and behavior modification for pet dogs, as well as writing and editing services for dog trainers everywhere. She also serves as a basic obedience and puppy class instructor with Pets in Motion in Wayne, Pennsylvania. When she isn't trying to read every dog book ever written, Adrienne enjoys doing K9 Nose Work, Rally obedience and tricks with her Lab, Cruzan. She can be reached at adrienne@apdt.com.*

## ***Awareness Centered Training***

by Maureen Ross

2012, 370 pages, Balboa Press

If you have been looking for an uncomplicated way to train with your dog and enjoy the whole process, this might be your book. *Awareness Centered Training (ACT)* is about fostering and practicing awareness and mindfulness as we live and train with dogs.

Maureen Ross has written a thorough book reviewing a myriad of training, physiological, and psychological concepts as they relate to dog training, the dog, and the trainer. She explains complicated concepts in terms that are easy to understand for the novice and, still provides lots of great insight for the seasoned trainer. From a simple discussion about dog park downsides — my take away: meeting people is fun for you but would you enjoy a biker bar? — to step-by-step instructions for a wide variety of training situations, Ross covers all the basics and a lot more.

Her background combining dog training and behavior with wellness and a focus on the canine-human relationship in all of its facets prepares her well to explain and advocate bringing this relationship to a higher level.

No matter what the concept or issue, the author finds an easy-to-understand and motivating way to introduce the reader to the concept.

Dogs tend to live much more in the here and now than humans. The author demonstrates in an array of case examples how humans often live in an immediate, results-oriented, time-driven, hectic environment that is more focused on the past and the future than the present moment. They tend to transfer this approach to dog training with less than stellar results for both sides. Letting go of stress, hectic, and at times meaningless and repetitive demands on the dogs will lead to much better results.

The author provides many suggestions and opportunities for the trainer and owner to empower themselves and the dog, thereby opening up a world of letting go of what doesn't matter which allows positive and healing energy to flow freely. Sharing a meaningful journey with our canine companions being fully present in the moment opens the doors to a relationship that many dog owners never fully develop.

While dog trainers would likely be familiar with the review of technical terms and methods that provide a good overview for dog owners, every dog trainer can learn to be more aware of the moment, emotions, physical being, and mental framework. In order to build a healthy relationship between the dog and the human, both partners need to be present and fully aware of the other in the moment. *ACT* offers interesting insights into the team relationship, and the author asks the reader to be open to

infinite possibilities learning from each other as long as we can be aware of the very moment we are sharing with our canine partners. The reader is encouraged to learn more about themselves and the canine partner they are working with.

My main critique of the book is that at times the author gets away from the basic idea and delves into technical terms that the dog trainer should know anyhow, and the dog owner probably doesn't need to know. A few book chapters contained some minor spelling and grammar errors which will hopefully be corrected in the second edition.

The book has great concepts for everyone from the novice pet dog owner to the seasoned trainer. The author covers pretty much every aspect of a dog's life from its beginning to finally the loss of the canine companion. This book can serve as a reference guide along the way, and as an important reminder to live, learn, and teach fully present in the here and now. Take a deep breath, and human as well as canine will enjoy a deeper connection.

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