

HYDRAN -PROTEAN SIDE EFFECTS , THE DEAD DOG RULE , AND THE LIMA PRINCIPLE

Aversive procedures are legitimate and valuable tools for controlling undesirable behavior, but such techniques can be rapidly debauched into a form that substantially complicates matters. Technically, punishment results when established control expectancies are disconfirmed, for example, when the trainer discontinues an attractive or aversive contingency. Punishment occurs when the dog recognizes that some previously successful action no longer controls the occurrence of some attractive or aversive event. Severe and sustained aversive stimulations in the absence of options to escape (e.g., beating) are of no use in dog training and for whatever reasons such nasty actions are performed they are likely to foster a far worse problem.

Just as chopping off the mythical Hydra's head only caused her to sprout more monstrous and threatening replacements growing out of the severed stump, the use of inappropriate physical punishment, restraint, and manhandling may only serve to stimulate autoprotective behavior and initiate various unanticipated vicious-circle effects. In such cases, the escalation of conflict and aversive arousal evoked by severe physical punishment may cause difficult behaviors to transform into even worse forms, especially in cases where the root causes of the problem are left unresolved. Homer's story of Proteus illustrates other aspects of potential harm wrought by inappropriate punishment and interactive conflict. For ancient seekers wishing to foresee the future, the water divinity had to be seized and held tightly as he morphed through a frightful array of threatening forms, until he finally gave in and returned to his normal form to give prophecy. The myth has obvious positive implications related to the constructive use of response prevention and blocking techniques, but more importantly with respect to the present topic, the myth resonates symbolically with the adverse effects of interactive struggles and tensions around points of conflict where the future is left uncertain until the conflict is resolved. Actions that emerge in the context of persistent conflictive exchange are often highly reactive and pose many significant training challenges and risks. Further, as a result of a history of contentious interaction, dogs and people may gradually lose their capacity for mutual attraction and tolerance, becoming increasingly ambivalent, intolerant of uncertainty, and reactive toward the ordinary losses and risks associated with social exchange. Instead of engaging in friendly cooperation, the owner and dog may engage one another as adversaries in the process of morphing a veritable pantheon of adjustment problems out of the toxic conflict dynamics that bind them together.

All variation in canine social behavior develops in the context of coping styles emerging in various ways around interactive conflict. As such, the intersection of human and canine control vectors define the field of interactive possibility. Only by working through conflict by holding protean advantage-seeking efforts at bay and by opening a space of fair exchange and mutual appreciation around conflict situations can the other be perceived as a cooperator rather than a dominator or exploiter. With the restoration of normal exchange, the unifying relations and governance needed to promote an adaptive

coping style can be pursued as a harmonious social space is extended over the field of conflict situations.

Despite obvious limitations and risks, aversive procedures are a necessary aspect of dog training and behavior-problem solving that cannot be neglected or substituted for (e.g., by drugs) when competent inhibitory control over highly motivated behavior is being established. These procedures are of great value in the context of basic training, the treatment of adjustment problems, and the integration of secure attachments. To maximize the benefits and to minimize the adverse effects of training procedures that compel dogs to act or not act in particular ways, two general guidelines appear to be useful: the least intrusive and minimally aversive (LIMA) principle and the dead-dog rule. The LIMA principle addresses the excesses and abuses that might arise when aversive or intrusive dog-training procedures are implemented. As such, it applies to both positive and negative punishment, and covers procedures that generate states of emotional pain and deprivation (e.g., long-term cold shouldering, crate confinement/isolation, and various restraint techniques). The LIMA principle entails that trainers use the least intrusive and minimally aversive technique likely to succeed in achieving a training objective with minimal risk of producing adverse side effects. Essentially, the LIMA principle is a competency criterion, since only competent trainers possessing the necessary know-how can make the required assessments and have the skills needed to ensure that the least intrusive and aversive procedure is in fact used. To speak of the effective and humane use of dog training procedures in the absence of competency criterion borders on the ridiculous. Accordingly, incompetent uses of attractive and aversive motivational stimuli to modify dog behavior are liable to produce harmful effects that violate the dog's interests and breach the trust of the responsible dog owners seeking help.

A second general guideline that promotes the effective use of training procedures is the dead-dog rule, which recommends that training criteria and objectives be defined in terms that a dead dog cannot satisfy (see Dead-dog Rule in Volume 2, Chapter 2). In essence, the dead-dog rule is a complementary logic for framing the LIMA principle. By converting training goals into affirmative statements and identifying objectives that can be achieved only by a live dog, the resultant perspective is biased toward reward-based training efforts. For example, instead of training a dog not to bite (dead dogs do not bite), the dog is trained to be friendly and trusting, that is, to show affectionate, cooperative, and playful behavior incompatible with aggression—behavior that a dead dog cannot do. In the case of aversive motivational stimuli used in the context of aversive inhibitory control, the training objective is best described in terms of positive behavioral change that places the primary emphasis on escape-avoidance adjustments and the establishment of a training space, based on the acquisition of predictive information and a socially acceptable escape-to-safety response that result in reward. When properly performed, all training is reward based insofar as the dog learns how to control attractive and aversive events while negotiating conflict. In the context of reward-based training, the dead-dog rule and the LIMA principle provide general guidelines for the use of attractive and aversive motivational stimuli to modify dog behavior (see Compliance in Volume 2, Chapter 2). When aversive procedures are used, the trainer should possess an objective rationale and the skills necessary to implement the procedures safely and effectively. The suppression of behavior by means of inhibitory procedures is appropriate and useful when regulating behavior governed by an excitatory imbalance and impulsivity but only to the extent that it is performed in the context of coordinated reward-based activities aimed at filling the void.

Cynopraxic trainers acknowledge and respect the dog's preference for pleasure by advocating the use of procedures that utilize reward and minimize punishment. However, to train a dog to a reasonable degree of reliability, the use of both attractive and aversive motivational incentives is an inescapable fact of life. In an important sense, reward and punishment are not properties of motivational stimuli or evoked attractive or aversive states but rather flow from the dog's ability to produce outcomes that either meet or exceed prediction-control expectancies. Training is not about making dogs feel good or bad—rather it is about enabling them to adapt well