

I do not know another animal quite like a dog

(about the work with „man’s best friend“ through
the eyes of an animal trainer)



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English translation of Czech original

Just a small introduction for the English version

The book, that you have just opened, is an English translation of my third book published in the Czech Republic. So from time to time in the text I mention the previous two, which were not fully translated into English. But you don't have to worry. You will find the mentioned parts of these books in English on my web www.trainingisdialogue.com, section Free download. And besides I tried to make my third book understandable even for those, who approach any of my texts for the very first time. I believe you will enjoy the book and I wish you a pleasant experience reading it.

For more information about my work including my online courses follow my web www.trainingisdialogue.com.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This book was not planned and I wrote it more or less unintentionally. One evening I sat down and started writing impulsively – a text, that was intended to be originally just an e-mail answer for one person. But suddenly the few paragraphs became a full page, so I wanted to write a Facebook post. Nevertheless my hands and fingers kept writing on and on. when I had finished a couple of pages I had more new topics about why dogs so different from other animals, I thought I will just write another book. From this moment on my family and I could expect months, when my free time would be allocated to writing. So above all I thank my family, especially my wife, for their supportive presence. Without them I wouldn't write this book and none of my work would be possible. I thank the publishing house Plot for their quick decision in style: "Yes, Franta, we will publish that!" And out of my animal training teachers my biggest thank you this time goes to Gabby Harris, who inspired me for lots of thoughts that appeared in the book. She also helped me a lot with translation of the text. My big thank you goes to everybody, who have read, complemented and challenged the whole text. Lenka Blachová for comments and discussion about dog ethology, Jakub Beran for his remarks and huge knowledge of literature for trainers, Míša Čermáková for a valuable point of view of a "normal experienced dog person" and former colleagues from the zoo Lucka Průšová, Klára Vodičková and Markéta Lukavská for checking the examples with our mutual charges. A very big thank you to everybody!

I also thank everybody, who allowed me use examples from their lives and their dogs, who showed they are unique animals –Martina and Roník, Míša with Annie, Markéta with Benji, Karolína with Matthew, Katka with Tazzík, Eva with Růženka, Zuzka with Charka and Pája with Berry and Bady. I thank all the dogs I have and I share my life with and who enabled me to see, how exceptional dogs are – Rozárka, Verunka, Kazan 1 to 4 and Atík. I also thank all the zoo animals, due to them I could experience positive training in the clear crystalic form, when your partner in training is an independent creature. Mainly Sancho, Jonatán and Pepina, Eliška, Deny, Esmeralda, Manuela, Amálka, Diký, Uršula, Babeta, Artuš, Donald, Pedro, Diego, Harry, Safira, Ovistiti, Itampol, Dind'a, Umco, Taušken... and the list could be much longer.

I am grateful to Zoo Praha, where I have spent 20 years of my life, including 10 seasons as an animal trainer, for the exceptional experiences I had. At the same time I declare that the examples, I have chosen for the book, are carefully selected as not to reveal any secrets from the zoo backstage. Most of the things I present here have been already published in my training books or are a part of thesis of my students (see the listed literature). The rest is routinely presented during public performances and programmes for children. My intention was to use examples with the animals from the shows, although I had the possibility to train with other zoo

animals in the back area of the facility. I wouldn't consider it fair to use their examples in my private book.

And last but not least I thank all of you, who have been participating in my events for so many years. Due to you and for you I could write this book. So enjoy it!



PREFACE

“Hurry, go and pet him, he is waiting for it!” An eager father encourages his little son at the fence of the petting zoo. The reason being a whole bunch of goats, sheep and other farm “beings” just came running to them – including a male llama, whose fluffy woolly coat resembles a plush toy. But not everything is as it looks. None of these animals, including the llama, came to be touched and cuddled. This little herd comes running many times a day, if they see somebody, who could represent a possibility of getting food. They are used to being fed by the visitors. They are not anxious to be petted. And just now the little boy presented him with an unknown hand in the middle of his forehead. That is something the llama did not expect and his reaction is an instant: “Spit!” A llama spit with pieces of chewed food landed in the faces of both the boy. His dad shouts “You spoiled beast!” The father reacts automatically and slaps the llama on his nose, the animal, who dared to reject the favour of the lord of all the living beings.

When I encounter scenes like this, I always think, why are people so arrogant? How can they be so sure, that every animal automatically craves for their touch, although it has never seen them before? Who gave them the right to treat the animals like judge of the Supreme Court, expecting

the animals will automatically respect and honour? Who says that we are the highest rank above all the animals and that we just need to move our pinky and every living creature shall fulfil our wishes, with his reward being only our propitious satisfaction? Was it Darwin, who taught us this, does it come from religion or is it just normal human arrogance?

For 10 years I worked as a trainer in the Zoo and after some years of “zoo-practice” I started to work not only with exotic animals but also with dogs. I have probably found the answer for myself. The animal, who each and every day supports our feeling of absolute supremacy with his devotion and tolerance is the dog! Many people, who start training “non-dog” animals after previous training of dogs, experience a big surprise. How come the parrot can peck the hand, that brought him a reward? Why did the minipig hit their calf after making two mistakes during the training? Why don't the animals want to be caressed by a person, unless they have some months or even years of mutual experience and have created a bond? How come there is no animal reading human gestures and does not foresee what the human wishes? How is it possible, that after a transition from dogs to exotic animals a person falls from the position of the lord of all the living beings to the level, where the animals takes him as somebody equal and if you want to manage them, it is you, who has to adjust to them?

I was lucky to go the opposite way in my professional career – from non-dog animals to dogs. And so each and every day I am amazed by the exceptional dog devotion and tolerance. Due to these dog characteristics a lot of the doggie parents will never know, what kind of a mistake in training they just made, while another animal would not hesitate to lay into them. But these exceptional characteristics do not always make the training with our furry buddies easier. On the contrary – sometimes they might mess it up. And in this case frustration and unfulfilled expectation builds up on both ends of the human/dog dialogue. I have seen way too much of these sad examples in the dog world.

I am a promoter of positive reinforcement training and in the framework of my job as a trainer of zoo animals I have created and introduced some methodologies and procedures. From time to time, after these have been evaluated by experts in our training field I get recognition for them. But the most true and strict committee are the trained animals themselves. And amongst those the dogs have a special position. I am very happy to see this positive style of work spreading in the world of dogs and their owners and handlers. But it makes me very sad if I see non-respecting characteristics and mindless copying of methods, used by zoo trainers, bring life frustration to the dog.. I can see a dog like that living a lonely life, maybe surrounded by treats of different values, but without his “hooman”. So I simply had to write this book. I wrote it, because I have the feeling, that I owe it to the dogs.

We will quickly go through the whole methodology of positive reinforcement training in the parts, where, as I feel from my animal trainer's point of view, it can get pretty twisted by the exceptional dog's devotion and tolerance. But please, I beg you do not take this book as an overview of generally recognised scientific procedures and dogmas. **Take it more as a personal opinion and attitude of somebody, who is one of those helping to create this science and who, from the point of view of this science, stands in awe facing the exceptions, that the "man's best friend" can show us. This book does not deny the use of positive training methods with dogs. The aim is to bear in mind the dog's special traits.** To forget about these would be a terrible mistake. You might agree with me that training a dog can be in many ways very simple, but in others, much more complicated, than training a non-dog animal. And you too might see it the same way, the fact I am convinced about more and more every year. **There is no animal that can be compared to a dog!**

INTRODUCTION

THE PECULIAR HONZA FAIRY TALE



Back in the times, when my mom used to read me bedtime stories –traditional Czech fairy tales, the most usual duo of heroes were these two – the village youngster Honza, who was seeking his happiness in the world and the magical grandpa, who can help him find it. Even though our life is no fairy tale, we can always pretend. We all know fairy tales are not just to entertain, but their main task is to present a moral. So let’s look at one fairy tale now. Honza has left his home village and is on his way to meet the world. And behold, there is the magical grandpa, sitting by the road and he starts talking with Honza. As it happens in the fairy tales, Honza maybe gives the old man a piece of pie and grandpa all of a sudden asks: “Honza, would you like to marry a princess?” At this moment there are three possible answers. One - a polite and well behaved Honza, who is interested in a princess, will say: “Yes, grandpa, I would like to! What should I do to make it happen?” Two, another Honza, who is keen to explore the world and therefore, at this moment in time, the princess holds no interest for him, and so he says: “No thank you, grandpa. Goodbye.” And three, Honza, who is badly behaved and momentarily poor and starving and and in need of the princess, will grab the old man by his neck and become carried away by the sudden opportunity. He will yell: “You have a princess, you coffin dodger? Shut up and bring her in immediately!”

If you are an animal trainer in the zoo and if you are trying to bond with a new animal, something similar can happen to you. You can experience any of these possibilities. You are in the similar situation as the magical grandpa. You are offering a rare opportunity to the animal – earn a reward through work. And of course, it is in your best interest, that the animal reacts like the first, well behaved and motivated Honza. But if the motivation of the animal is not good, it will react like the second Honza, who takes off interested in his own things. But if you overdo the motivation and you haven't managed to set the basics of communication in place with the animal, the outcome for you is like for the magic grandpa with the third Honza – the aggressor.

Lets quickly head back into the fairy tale and pretend there is a fourth possibility. "Honza, would you like to marry a princess?" asks the magical grandpa. "I don't need a princess, grandpa. But at this moment and I love you so much, that if you wish, I will try to marry her just for you!" says a wide-eyed Honza. Does this young man seem strange to you too? Do you have a feeling this is not a normal human reaction? You are right this is not even a normal animal reaction. But what if the Honza is the descendant of hundreds of generations of Honzas, who were allowed to get married and have children only in the case they showed endless devotion to the authorities? What if the happiness of the magic grandpa was and is of the highest importance and meaning of life? This reaction might not be natural for humans or animals, but it could be (and often is) a dog's reaction. The reason is the exceptional dog's devotion to people and their tolerance to human faults. These traits in a dog cannot be equalled in any other animal. Although we love these dog traits and they seem normal to us, they can create confusion in the positive training fairy tale. And if the magical grandpa doesn't see it in Honza – if the trainer does not see it in the dog, if he thinks he is facing an independent and actually a selfish being, the outcome of the story might not be a happy end at all.

TRAINING IS A DIALOGUE CONSISTING OF FIVE WORDS

The method I use with dogs and non-dogs is the so-called positive reinforcement training. It is a great method to use when working with any animal. And with the wild species it is in fact the only method that can be used when training a more complicated behaviour. The positive reinforcement training from my point of view is a constant repetition of a dialogue consisting of five words in various forms:

- 1) Animal says: "I want work." (Ideally expressing it through a relaxed body position, which helps him not to lose self control)
- 2) Trainer replies: "Here is your work." (Giving the animal an impulse to work)
- 3) Animal replies: "I am working." (By doing the behaviour)

- 4) Trainer says: "You are doing it correctly." (By giving the "bridge" signal, a confirmation of correctly carried out behaviour and approaching reward. A typical bridge for instance is the sound of a clicker or whistle, but it can be many things.)
- 5) "And now we shall both celebrate." (Is something they actually both say, the trainer giving the reward and the animal consuming it)

When the animal uses the reward, it will ask for more work and which is the first word of the next dialogue. The trainer gives an impulse, the animal does his work... etc. These five words in different shapes, repeated in the same succession can in practice take maybe just a few minutes. But the basic is that it is always the animal who has the first say, not the human. By letting the animal start the whole dialogue of the positive reinforcement training we are setting him up for the desired role – just like the fairy tale Honza, he is asking for a job. ("What should I do, grandpa?") Us, the trainers, are in a role of somebody, who is offering the animal a chance. If this would be done differently, if we didn't give the animal space to say "I want to work," we could easily fall from the role of a trainer into the role of a dictator forcing the animal to work. And the outcome could be a collapse of the positive training. Something like the magical grandpa stepping in the way of unprepared Honza and telling him: "Honza, you will now change all your plans and you will do as I say. Don't think, don't ask, listen, and in the end I will give you..." but the magical grandpa might not have the chance to finish, because the up-to-now-free Honza felt pressure and restriction and quickly ran away. Grandpa-dictator should be happy he did not get a punch, even if he wanted to give Honza a princess to marry.

But be cautious. The flight or fight reaction to grandpa-dictator would be with the first three Honzas, who are not interested in grandpa's opinion and are concerned about their own interests. The fourth, strangely devoted Honza would happily stop and his reaction to grandpa's sentence: "Don't think, don't ask, listen..." would be: "Yes, grandpa, I will happily obey you. What do wish from me?"

I don't know, how it is with you, but the fourth Honza complicates things for me so much. With his devotion and eagerness he makes grandpa think everything works perfectly for the two of them and that Honza will become the king in the end. Grandpa will be satisfied with himself and he will stop being cautious... and all of a sudden the whole fairy tale about Honza finding happiness will fall apart. Honza will not understand a lot of the tasks, which were supposed to give him a lesson. He will not be too keen to kill the princess-eating dragon, unless grandpa will give him a command to do so. He will just stare at grandpa and will not use his own initiative to win the princess. The reason being simply the fact, that he does not want the princess. In his case a real functioning reward at the end of a training dialogue is missing. The reward, that gives sense to the training, and drives the process.

This fairy tale is tragic for Honza in another way. If grandpa does not see that Honza is not-princess-motivated and in fact just pathologically devoted to him, Grandpa will create a devastated and desperate Honza. Honza will strive to make grandpa happy, but grandpa will never express his satisfaction. From grandpa's point of view Honza doesn't need it. It is the princess he is interested in, isn't it? And he will get her in the end... but in fact he never wanted that. He did everything only because of grandpa. But grandpa, who is sure he did everything he could for him, just went away to another fairy tale. And after all the struggling Honza is left alone with the princess he did not want, and without grandpa, who was the only reason he did everything. He left without even telling Honza for all his hard work: "You made me happy, my boy." And that was the only thing this strange Honza wanted. That is a rather sad ending of a fairy tale, don't you think? And it is the main fault of the magical grandpa, who just couldn't see. Aka the trainer, who didn't bear in mind one of the basics of positive training. That it is the trained subject, the dog, who determines what is, a reward and what isn't.

Why am I elaborating on this strange and sad fairy tale? During last years I have been seeing it at different dog training facilities. Like the magical grandpas we decided to do the best for our dogs. So we decided to use a special method to help us – the most humane training method, that was tested on many animal species – positive reinforcement training. But although we mean only the best, sometimes we forget to ask the dogs. Just like grandpa was absolutely sure that Honza must yearn for the princess and never listened to what Honza was practically yelling into his face, the same way with our dogs we sometimes miss the signs. The treat for a good behaviour doesn't have to be the best reward for them. For some of the dogs eating the treat is just an extra task and these devoted dogs are waiting for another reward – Us, the trainers. If their wish is not fulfilled, they will live a sad life surrounded by treats they did not wish for.

I am not trying to convince you, that all dogs have this level of devotion. It would mean denying each and every one being individual. It would also rob the trainer of their obligation to observe the animal. But I do say the dogs, out of all the animals, have the biggest tendency to be so devoted. And we have to bear this in mind. Because if the animal we face is behaving like the strangely devoted Honza, then the simple equation of positive training in the style "tit for tat" is getting quite complicated.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE REWARD

As we mentioned above, the positive reinforcement training is in fact a dialogue of the human and the animal, consisting of five words. Practically this dialogue starts from the beginning, with the animal saying “I want work”. In actual fact, the energy, that gives rise to the whole training process, is the animal’s interest in the reward. So if the trainer is engaging with a new animal, we always start with the reward, and only after that we create the bridge, then the behaviour and in the end the cue. The bridge (for instance the sound of the clicker), will only make sense if the animal is interested in the reward (. A sound like that really means “the upcoming thing will make you happy”. Later the bridge automatically has the meaning “because you did the right behaviour” and in the end “you do not have to keep trying”. So the whole bridge (resp. terminant bridge^{1*}) before a functioning reward says: “you are getting a reward for doing the right behaviour and you do not have to continue trying”. The moment we have this functioning bridge - thanks to the functioning reward - we can use the it to show the animal the desired behaviour. And if the animal offers this desired behaviour, we can teach him it works only after a particular cue.

Only the first interaction from the training dialogue “I want work” is created continuously. It can actually be the first behaviour that the animal offers to the trainer, is rewarded and later this behaviour becomes a way to ask for work (we will go through that in the last chapter). So let’s do a repetition of the five basic interactions that create a dialogue of the positive training. Only this time it will be in a more professional (and mainly shorter) variety.

- 1) Default behaviour (“I want work,” says the animal. In Czech I would call it “first step for the animal” or “zero variety behaviour” based on the situation)
- 2) Cue (“Here is your work,” says the trainer)
- 3) Behaviour (“I am working,” says the animal)
- 4) Bridge (“You are doing it correctly,” says the trainer)
- 5) Reward (“Let’s celebrate,” the trainer gives, the animal consumes)

^{1*} There are other types of bridges. We will mention those in the next chapter. But the terminant bridge meaning “you are getting a reward, because you have done the right behaviour, you don’t have to continue” is the first and basic one the animal understands during the training.

Let's have an example. I had the honour to train one fox for the show in the zoo. His name was Deny. The given dialogue between human and animal can in his case be for instance that he sits on the right side of the trainer (default behaviour – "I want work"), the trainer moves his right hand (cue – "here is your work"), Deny dashes off to find a leather knot, that hangs on a rope, finds it and pulls on it (behaviour – "I am working"), the trainer clicks the clicker (bridge- "you are doing it right") and gives Deny a piece of raw chicken meat (reward – let's celebrate). But without the chicken in the end none of this would work. When we were starting our work with Deny, it would be sufficient, if he accepted the chicken from us (step 5 – reward). Then, before giving him the meat, we started clicking (bridge – step 4). As soon as he understood what the clicker means, we are able to use it to create different behaviours (step 3). This includes the one, where he asks for work by sitting down (default behaviour – step 1). The very last part was explaining to him, that he will get the reward for his behaviour only in the case he gets the cue from us. **We created the whole communication backwards, starting with the reward.** Because by engaging the animal receives a reward and because the reward in the end gives the drive to the whole process, we shall now proceed from the reward to the bridge, then to the behaviour, to the cue and the first interaction of the dialogue ("I want work") We shall see, how the meaning of all these words can change in the moment, when the exceptional dog traits enter the process. Because these dog traits that change positive training so much, are I believe a result of a **dog's devotion to man and tolerance of human faults**, we shall look at their influence of every interaction of our training dialogue separately.^{2*}

^{2*} Maybe it will be convenient to do a little thinking in this place – where do the "dog's devotion" and "dog's tolerance come from? We could write about other domesticated animals having a higher level of tolerance towards insensitive handling/behaviour from people and that such tolerance of not so sensitive handling is a part of domestication. The ones who had a problem with it simply had no chance to reproduce in human care. By my opinion imperfect training methods had a big impact on forming of the character and temperament of some breeds. Who knows, maybe, if our ancestors would use modern training methods thousands of years ago, we might be still having wolves instead of domestic dogs... But that is probably strong fiction.

So that is about tolerance. But where did that dog's devotion come from? We can again talk about where is the dividing line between the ordinary pack behaviour and the thing we call devotion. We could discuss, if dog's devotion was really a part of artificial selection or just a by-product. Did man really domesticate and create the dog, or did the dogs actually - to a certain level – do the domestication and creation themselves? We could discuss about those things and it could fill many pages. I am just not sure what it would be good for.



The book is my personal view of dog's oddities in the world of modern animal training. And dog's tolerance and devotion are two traits, which influence the application of positive training irrespective of where they come from. Yes, I do realize that saying a dog is "tolerant and devoted" means some level of humanizing, but the aim of this book is to move from science to humanity. Science and humanity should not stand against each other. We just cannot mistake one for another. So let's take this book rather like one about humanity. As a personal view of one human being of the science, he helps to create himself.

DOG'S DEVOTION AND REWARDS

During my practical lessons I like to say, that the dog is probably the only animal in the world, which can see the eating of his reward as the next task. I see dogs go for a treat in their human's hand like they have been starving for a hundred years, yet the same dogs pays no attention to a treat from somebody else. Or they just examine it and will not eat it. It is even more typical with a toy. The same toy loses it's attractiveness as soon as it is in somebody else's hands. No, in this case I am not speaking about the so-called contrafreeloading, the effect, when a reward earned by work is more attractive than reward gained effortlessly, without work. That would appear in other animal species as well and would look different. This is something else entirely. It seems the dog sees eating of the treat or playing with the toy as another task he is supposed to fulfil. How can he see the difference? Simply so that the non-functioning reward makes non-functioning whole the rest of our five word training dialogue.

Let's pretend – for comparison – that we have two animals. One would be the above mentioned fox Deny and the other one a hypothetical very diligent and devoted dog, who sees the eating of the treat as his next task. We shall be teaching them the same behaviour. On the word "seek" they should run off from the trainer, find a rubber chicken placed somewhere in the area and touch it. By the way, that is a behaviour Deny really knows and he even does some manipulation with the toy. So the whole five word dialogue should in this case look like this:

- 1) The animal sits in front of the handler, waiting for the task (Default behaviour, "I want work," says the animal)
- 2) "Seek" (Cue, Here is your work," says the trainer)
- 3) The animal looks for the rubber chicken, finds it (Behaviour, "I am working," says the animal)
- 4) Sound of the clicker (Bridge, "You are doing it correctly," says the trainer)
- 5) Treat (Reward, "Let's celebrate," the trainer gives, the animal consumes)

Let's start with the fox. Deny is a young energetic male who loves food. He also knows the clicker as a bridge and can start the dialogue by sitting down in front of the trainer. So we have the last three interactions from the five part dialogue (I want work, you are doing it correctly, reward). Now we want to create the cue and behaviour. We can start with throwing the chicken on the ground and the natural behaviour of the fox would be to go and investigate the toy. In this instance the clicker clicks and the reward goes flying close to the chicken. The fox will touch the toy several times to hear the bridge, confirming he is right, and to get the reward. The rubber chicken for him becomes a simple "food wending machine button". And after a while it is so



intense, we need to throw some food for Deny in the opposite direction to be able to take the toy back without a fight. Otherwise he would not give up the chicken, his food button. For Denny the situation works is such that the cue, the chance to have work for a reward, is the rubber chicken itself. We would like to get it in the form where he understands, that his real chance is the trainers word "seek". So I can start the second training by saying "seek" and after this word I throw away the chicken. Deny will naturally run after it and we repeat the same process as during the first training. When I succeed to get the toy back (I have to throw some food to the side, if I want to have the toy amicably), I will repeat it a couple of times. After several repetitions of the process, when after the word "seek" the toy goes flying, I will leave the chicken where it landed, and use the rattler (we use it in our working place for recalling animals) to call Deny to me. Close to me I will give Deny some quick and simple tasks to keep him from running to the chicken and then suddenly I will tell him "seek". That will remind Deny, that there is his rubber chicken close by, his food button. So the fox runs to it, touches it, the clicker sounds... But now I don't throw the food close to the toy, but half way back to me. To get the food the fox must leave the toy. Now he is closer to me than to the chicken, so I succeed to call him to me, after he eats the food. He will not run away to crazily press his "chicken food vending machine". The fox will come upon my call, he gets the reward, a few tasks and then the word "seek" remind him, that there is the chicken button. But for the food reward he is coming back to me. Gradually we get to the point, where Deny will sit in front of me, waiting for the reward, to the moment the cue "seek" comes. As soon as "seek" sounds, he will go to find the chicken to touch it, hear the bridge and come back to me for his reward. There he will remain sitting (default behaviour), until another cue comes. To manage this I will have to do a lot of rewarding the fox close to me (so he

would not run off to press the toy – the food button). I will also have to stand so far from the chicken, so it will pay off, to expect the reward from me, than to press the toy. But at the same time I have to be so close to the toy to enable him to find it. Meaning it would be interesting for him to go and look for it after the “seek” cue. To find the right balance of rewards and distances will not be easy, so Deny will probably run off to the toy without my command. And it will be up to me to decide if I consider it right or not. If I decide it is ok, I risk he will be constantly running off without the command. If I decide against, I risk he will be so disappointed he will stop trying. The whole process is basically about **setting and correctly balancing the chances for a reward** so Deny always chooses the chance, which is more clear and lucrative for him. Then whole thing is about the **chances for the animal, not about the trainer’s wishes.**

But now –let’s swap the fox Deny for a heavily devoted dog, who does eat the treats, but in fact considers them a next task. His goal and highest reward is his “hooman’s” satisfaction. I repeat again that not all dogs are like that, but I have seen a few. How will the whole training dialogue change with a dog like this? The bridge, before then treat will not say: “You are getting a treat, because you have done the right behaviour and you don’t have to try anymore.” It is saying: “Now your task is to eat a treat, run for it to make your daddy happy.” If the trainer doesn’t recognize this difference and continues the work as was the case with Deny, the training will probably look like this: The dog sits in front of the handler (he knows this, he understood his daddy likes this) and the handler drops the chicken toy. The dog will naturally sniff it and at this moment the clicker sounds and calls him to another task – to eat the treat. So the dog runs back, sits facing the trainer and eats the treat. “Yay,” says the trainer, “everything is going according to plan.” So he throws the chicken again, but this time the dog does not react to it at all. He has sniffed it already, so why should he do it again? He will rather stay close to his daddy in case he is given another treat-task? “Is the dog dumb, or what?” The handler wonders and tries to make it simpler. He takes the toy in his hand, says “seek” right away, to be sure, and sticks it under the dog’s nose. The dog touches it - the clicker sounds and calls the dog to the task “eat the reward”. So the trainer, happy with the minor success, throws the rubber chicken on the ground and right away says “seek”. But the dog remains sitting, waiting for the click. Why should he go anywhere, he has already sniffed the toy. “SEEEK” The handler raises his voice in desperation, not knowing what else he can do. And the dog feels there is a problem somewhere, disturbs his sit and starts trying to find something, to calm his daddy down and make him happy. He runs around, tries all kinds of things and all of a sudden he touches the chicken and the clicker sounds – asking him to fulfil the task “eat the treat”. But the most important thing is, his daddy seems to be satisfied now. The human has calmed down, he is even happy and that is of the most importance for him. So as a result we have a dog, who really starts looking for the chicken after the word “seek”. But **it was necessary to raise voice, express dissatisfaction**, to make him do

it. As a contrast to the positively working Deny this dog not even once tried to run to the toy out of his own will, or offer anything up to the moment he felt there was a problem. The clicker for him meant “eat the treat, it is your task.” And the word “seek” meant “start doing something quickly, or you have a problem”.

Even in this case we have the desired behaviour. It emerged despite of all the training mistakes, which would surely discourage a non-dog animal from any work. But this was a dog, and a devoted dog, and so he persisted. Dog’s owner can be happy and he doesn’t have a hint the things are not what he thinks they are. Maybe he has a feeling his dog is a bit dumb and lazy. But in fact the dog is simply devoted, and far from being stupid or lazy.

In other cases because of the very devoted dog the desired behaviour does not emerge at all. If, for instance, we are not able to teach the dog to transfer from the target^{3*} or hand signal to a verbal cue, it can be a sign for us, that his effort is not aimed at the treat, even if he eagerly goes for it after the click. A dog like that may not be working for food, but out of his devotion to his people. But the essential thing is that due to the dog’s devotion **the training is not positive reinforcement (R+), but negative reinforcement (R-).**

FOUR POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES AND THE DOGS AMONG THEM

Just to be on the safe side, let’s remember the basics of operant conditioning. What does it mean? Operant learning means to “learn from the consequences of own behaviour”. Another rule is, that every behaviour falls into the ABC trio - **A (antecedent), B (behaviour), C (consequence)**. No behaviour exists by itself, there is always a specific antecedent and after it a specific consequence. And this consequence decides if this behaviour is likely to repeat itself (it has been reinforced) or likely not to repeat itself (it has been suppressed or punished). **Reinforcement or punishment can be positive or negative.** Positive/Negative does not mean good/bad, but it merely means something has been added / disappeared from the system. It can be clearly seen in this chart (see next page):

^{3*} Target is a training tool the animal is supposed to touch with a part of his body or approach it to a certain distance. With the help of target we teach mainly body positions that can later be done only on a verbal cue, without target.

	(Reinforcement, R) Prognosis- the behaviour will be reinforced, the probability increases	(Punishment, P) Prognosis- the behaviour will be suppressed, the probability decreases
Something has been added (positive, +)	Positive reinforcement (R+): The creature <u>receives</u> something <u>pleasant</u>	Positive punishment (P+): The creature <u>loses</u> something <u>unpleasant</u>
Something disappeared (negative, -)	Negative reinforcement (R-): The creature gets <u>rid of</u> something <u>unpleasant</u>	Negative punishment (P-): The creature <u>loses</u> something <u>pleasant</u>

Classical positive reinforcement is the case, when a seal jumps on his stone and gets a fish which increases his desire to jump on the stone. Negative reinforcement is when a horse, lead by then halter, turns the right way and at that exact moment the leader stops pulling the halter which increases the chance of the horse turning when he feels the pressure of the halter in the future. Positive punishment for the cow is when she touches the electric fence in the pasture and she gets a small electric shock which results in her hesitance to touch the fence in the future. Negative punishment for a parrot is a moment, when he pecks the hand that offered him a nut and the hand disappears – with the nut which results in him not pecking the hand in the future.

All the four consequences are something then animal experiences during his life. It is naive to think, we can prepare his life as a “walk through positive reinforcement”. Another rule of modern training says that **not the trainer, but the reaction of the animal decides what is a reinforcement and what is punishment**. So for instance according to the situation a same touch of the hand on the body of the dog can play the role of a positive reinforcer (if it means praise and precedes a play or another reward), but also a positive punishment (if it breaks the dog’s concentration in work or if the dog is scared – in this case even the best meant touch is the final drop which sends him running). And a touch like that doesn’t have to differ in intensity and in both cases the reason can be the same – to reward the dog and make him happy. But the reactions and the result can be different.

But why should we distinguish if the dog works with positive or negative reinforcement, if both up the probability of the behaviour happening? Because both the principles have their own rules. Above we demonstrated, that the animal in the **positive reinforcement** mode will consider the **cue his chance** and will be more creative. Due to that the training will go faster and

we will be able to train relatively complicated behaviours. With **negative reinforcement** the animal sees the **cue as his duty** or necessity. Due to that the creativity and energy invested in the training by the animal, will be somewhat less in the negative reinforcement than in positive reinforcement. With negative reinforcement we will also have a problem trying to create more complicated behaviour and to incorporate word cue. Well, if you are not real masters of negative reinforcement or if your animal is extremely devoted and tolerant... But we can talk about that later, in the chapter about cue.

But there are more things connected. In my first book ("Training is a dialogue", abbreviated translation can be downloaded for free at www.trainingisdialogue.com) I examine the deep subtext of positive and negative reinforcement. If we see positive reinforcement in the way that an animal doesn't miss anything and is not suffering in any way, gains something extra with the reward (like the fairy tale Honza, who had enough of everything, but got a princess), his inner feeling changes from "normal" to "bliss". This new delightful feeling created by the reward is on the physiological level caused by the "happy" hormones, endorphins. The rising level of these endorphins in the body of the dog will never reach the upper limit during the training, **So an animal in the positive mode can always feel a bit better!** And because there is no threat of punishment, the animal will try to make his happy feeling a little better. And because there is no limit in the concentration of the said hormones, there is not a limit in the effort the animal invests into the training. And if there is no limit in the effort, the animal in positive reinforcement invests more into the training than his trainer. In the end **the animal carries the responsibility for the result of the training. His own active interest pushes the whole training process forward** and the trainer just shows him the way to the goal. As is demonstrated in the chart (see next page).

As we see in the chart, the negative reinforcement is quite different. **In the negative reinforcement, where the goal of the animal is to get rid of the problem, it is not about his inner feeling going from normal to bliss, but from problems to normal.** So it is not about rising the level of endorphins, but about lowering the level of stress hormones, like cortisol. And because it is lowering, not rising, **in negative reinforcement there is a limit that can be reached.** After that it is not possible to go any further. The limit is the physiological minimum of cortisol and other stress hormones. (we can simplify it by saying, although it is not exact, cortisol = 0). If cortisol is zero, the animal has no reason to work. So it gives **only so much energy into the process to lower the cortisol to zero.** Due to this the trainer in the negative reinforcement mode must give more effort into the process. With this effort he has to get the animal into a disturbed state, so they can be motivated to return to the normal state – to the cortisol level = 0.

GOAL	CREATE NEW BEHAVIOUR	
Methodology	POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT	NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT
Definition	The animal is doing a behaviour to gain something (like reward)	The animal is doing a behaviour to get rid of something (like pressure)
Goal from the animal's point of view	Gain the reward	Get rid of pressure
What feeling does the animal want? (normal state / bliss)	Bliss	Normal state
Goal from the hormones in the animal's body point of view (endorphins/cortisol, +/-)	Endorphins +	Cortisol -
Existing limit in hormones? (yes/no)	No	Yes, if cortisol = 0
Existing limit in the animal's effort? (yes/no)	No	Yes, if cortisol = 0
Who puts in more effort in the result? (man/animal)	Animal	Man
Who is more interested in the created behaviour and takes on responsibility for it? (man/animal)	Animal	Man

Remember the example with the rubber chicken, where the trainer had to use stronger voice to make the dog work. With this higher effort **the trainer in negative reinforcement takes on responsibility for the outcome of the training** and the animal hands him this responsibility willingly. Very often the behaviour created by this kind of training is of no interest for the animal, his goal is only to lower the cortisol level and be ok.

But there is something even trickier about negative reinforcement training. The animals don't have to get rid of their problems and thus lower the level of cortisol only by doing the desired behaviour! Depending on their possibilities they can relieve themselves just by flying away, they can get used to the pressure or they can just tread on the trainer... there are many possibilities. In non-dog animal species **negative reinforcement training methods work well only in**

places, where the animals have a limited possibility to escape. Horse in a round corral, on a halter or saddled, a parrot in a cage, circus tigers in a round cage. But to restrain the animal by space is not enough. At the same time it is necessary to think well not to overdo the pressure and force the animal to react – to attack. So it is good to have someone or something prepared for the possibility a problem can occur to fend off the attack of the animal. Negative reinforcement (or let's call it training by pressure) is simply not an easy thing.

While with other non-dog animals it is necessary to somehow restrain the animal in space during negative reinforcement, with the dog this is happening by the thousands of years old inner **bond with men**. His dog devotion often functions in the same way as the circus tiger's cage. It does not let him leave the space and forces him to bear the pressure and adjust to it. I am not talking anymore about the seemingly positive reward training for rewards that are not rewarding, but obligatory. I am talking about situations, where the owner without any training education can force his dog by shouting and yelling to crawl from free space to his master for a slap across the back. The fact, that a number of dogs can do this voluntarily for their owner is for an animal trainer an incredible and in this case a very sad thing, that can't be seen with any other animal species. I personally see it as a result of thousands of years of being tied to humans. I don't know any other animal that would do it for a man! It is sad, but the person, who in this situation took the advantage of the incredible dog's devotion, is convinced he is the lord of all the living things. We could only wish he tries to behave like this for instance only to a miniature pig – his throne of the ruler of the Universe would be shaken!

THE DOG'S STRANGE R-

Maybe at this moment a lot of people are asking the question, how can we reward a dog who considers his biggest goal the satisfaction of his daddy, while he considers treats and toys to be just another task. Well it might be a surprise coming from me.... **praise can be a reward too.** That is something we kind of forgot about in the era of positive training. While most of non-dog animals are not interested in the praise of the trainer (or they have to learn what it means - like the secondary reinforcer), for the dog it can play a rewarding role without being paired with a treat. **But to be happy with praise is not a must for the dog!** It simply is a possibility. Whether the dog repeats the behaviour after the praise will show us, what the reality is. Technically the problem is the difficulty of administering the right dose of praise during training, which makes it more difficult to train using it. But if we use praise in the right place in the training dialogue, the dog can see it as a great reward.

The other possibility is to realize, that we are using negative reinforcement and to **push the rules of negative reinforcement a little bit**. The chart above, if you look at R- (negative reinforcement) does not have to start with animal going from minus to zero, meaning from problem to normal. What if the normal, the basic state for a very devoted dog in the presence of man, would be just **the pure happiness of being together, without any conditions? And what if this pure happiness of being together and everything being ok, was the best thing this dog could have and what he aims for? In this case we would be going from normal to bliss in this version of R- .**

What would this mean in practice? In front of us we would have a very devoted dog, who is the happy if he can just be with his satisfied human without any demands or conditions. They are simply together. They feel fine, in the “here and now” moment, when everything is done, solved, daddy is satisfied... That would be the moment of bliss for such a dog. But suddenly we have something that is interrupting this moment. Daddy has got some kind of a demand. No problem, no tragedy, simply there is some work, that has to be done and after it is finished, they will be happily together again. After the work and after fulfilling the task, they will be together again without demands and conditions in the “state of bliss”. If it would be like this, then the whole process of such R- would work more with endorphins than with cortisol (presuming the trainer uses only a moderate and delicate pressure with his demands) etc... Everything would go approximately the same with R+ with just the borders being pushed a little. To wrap it up, **in the moment, when the basic state would be just the pure happiness of being together, the difference between negative and positive reinforcement is starting to fade...** although there is one difference. **While with positive reinforcement we can create a good relationship between a man and an animal, a good negative reinforcement needs to have this relationship beforehand, to live from it. And with dogs as an animal his relationship and ties with his owner have been created through domestication for thousands of years of natural selection. The difference between positive and negative reinforcement can be much more complicated, than it seems, in many of them.** At least from my point of view of an animal trainer.



INNER AND OUTER (intrinsic and extrinsic) MOTIVATION

There is one more beautiful thing about these moments, when the difference between the positive and negative reinforcement starts to fade. The motivation to work comes from the **inside of the animal**, not the outside. You don't have to find any material reward for the animal to work for you the animal finds the reward within itself. In psychology it is called intrinsic motivation. But it does not happen just so. **If the animal should work for his inner motivation, you have to earn it.**

Even the trainers of non-dog animals strive for the animal working for their inner, not outer or extrinsic motivation. Usually we start with the outer motivation, most frequently being the treats. The non-dog animal is not interested in anything else at the beginning. So in everyday training we not only give the animal a lot of these rewards and chances to win them, but we also give him other life necessities, and most important among this is the so-called control. The need of control is one of the basic needs of every living thing, including humans. IT doesn't mean that the creature wants to control everyone and everything around himself. It is more a sense of control in his own life. The possibility to influence what is happening to him ^{4*}. If we give the

4* What is control and the so-called primary reinforcers (basic life needs) you can find in my first book „Training Is a Dialogue“, translation of abbreviated version can be downloaded free of charge at www.trainingisdialogue.com.
www.trainingisdialogue.com

animal this kind of a control, he will find safety, rules, happiness and activities... And after a long time of systematic and sensitive work and of course after many outer rewards we can reach the point, when maybe even the non-dog animal likes us and starts being interested in our wishes. He will work with us on the basis of our relationship. Every animal trainer, who reaches this stage with his non-dog animal, has my respect. Through one lifetime of animal partner he reached the stage the humankind managed to do with the dogs in thousands of years. **But from my point of view just a dog (and I emphasize that not automatically every dog) can work with man on the basis of his inner motivation from the first moment they meet.**



But beware, you also have to bear in mind what my great friend and teacher Gabby Harris says: **“Outer motivation kills inner motivation.”** Let’s say I have an animal that simply enjoys my caress. And I will decide to make it even better, so I will reward the caress with a treat. What is going to happen? A pleasant caress and rapport of two beings can change into a light touch and running for the treat. The beautiful inner feeling is gone, and what remains is emptiness in the head, even if the stomach is full. We know something similar with children, whose parents want to make up the lack of time and love with presents. The child is surrounded with wealth, but it misses something inside and doesn’t know where to find it. The same **“loneliness among many treats”** can be created in the head of a dog who used to have the gift to work just for the feeling of pleasure from mutual work. But his owner did not see this wonderful dog trait and only

exchanged the work for treats. And it is logical an animal like that will soon give up on inner motivation.

Remember once more the strangely devoted Honza from the fairy tale in the beginning of the chapter, who liked the magical grandpa from the beginning and struggled to win the princess only because grandpa wanted it. What if this Honza will never experience grandpa's praise or any expression of feelings and all the time he will be getting magical purses, food bringing napkins and princesses? The things he didn't want are the only things he is getting from the grandpa. After some time Honza heavily gives up on the thought that grandpa may like him and starts being interested only in the things he can get. His inner motivation changes to an outer one and Honza becomes a rather shallow and maybe a nervous and angry selfish person, seeing the grandpa only as a way to gain wealth. If at the fairy tale's end grandpa will expect gratitude and relationship from Honza, he is probably not getting it. This chance was there at the beginning, but it is gone now. It does not mean that grandpa's gifts were something bad, he just **forgot to add himself and that was the main thing the devoted Honza wanted.**

If at the beginning of the fairy tale the magical grandpa hadn't met the super devoted Honza, but just a plain guy, it would have been something totally different. The normal independent Honza, who really wished to have these gifts, could maybe through them start to like grandpa. This second and totally normal Honza, who proceeds from outer to inner motivation, functions like most non-dog animals and a lot of dogs. The first strange one started like a devoted being with inner motivation and ended as a selfish man with outer motivation, behaves like some of the dogs, where the owner failed to see their dog's exceptionality. **So I beg you, I never want to hear you say, that all dogs are selfish! In many cases it is not true. But the truth is, we can make them selfish with our blindness!**

WHAT DOGS TOLERATE, AND REWARDS

Chasing the fleeing goal

While the dog's devotion made a pretty mess in the rewards, a dog's tolerance and respect for people may be the reason we don't notice the two kinds of punishments we inadvertently use with the dogs. Any non-dog animal would teach us a lesson. Let's have an example. It is quite common with dogs, but I cannot imagine using it with any zoo animal with which I have had the chance to work. This method is leading with a treat or luring. The dog has the trainer's hand holding a treat in front of his nose. The hand is fleeing and the dog is following the hand. In this way the dog is guided to the position or place that the trainer wants. The treat is gradually faded from this process and eventually the dog follows an empty hand. In the end he understands, that what he is doing is the rewarded behavior and the trainer can pair it with a cue. What do you think? Does luring contain only parts of positive reinforcement? Let us check our table of reinforcements and punishments once more.

	(Reinforcement, R) Prognosis- the behaviour will be reinforced, the probability increases	(Punishment, P) Prognosis- the behaviour will be suppressed, the probability decreases
Something has been added (positive, +)	Positive reinforcement (R+): The learner <u>receives</u> something <u>pleasant</u>	Positive punishment (P+): The learner <u>receives</u> something <u>unpleasant</u>
Something disappeared (negative, -)	Negative reinforcement (R-): The learner gets <u>rid of</u> something <u>unpleasant</u>	Negative punishment (P-): The learner <u>loses</u> something <u>pleasant</u>

Let us imagine the process of luring once again. The dog chases the fleeing treat – so you see, that the chase for the treat is in fact a negative punishment – although he gets the reward in the end. There was food, the dog came near, but the food ran away a little bit. He almost had it, but he lost it. Coming near meant he lost it. So he got a negative punishment and this, as we know, lowers the chance for the behavior occurring again. So how come the dog did not give up? The treat in the human hand is sooo tempting. So he is not deterred by the first failure and he tries one more step, and another, and another... If I would be working with a minipig instead of a dog, there are three possible scenarios.

- 1) The pig gives up (That probably won't happen, the pigs are always ready to eat.)
- 2) The pig will speed up, so it catches the treat. The moment it gets the treat it will probably take it including the fingers of the trainer and it will do it as fast as possible, so the treat doesn't get away again.
- 3) The pig stops going for the hand, but it will turn against the owner of the evil escaping hand. And that is the trainer. It will poke his calf, he will drop the treat and the pig has a plan for next time on how to get rid of luring? Attack the lurer. As you see, in all three cases the pig was just trying to get the treat, it wasn't thinking about it's actions.

And that is the reason why, as a trainer of non-dog animals, I am always fascinated when watching a dog, which has his nose jammed in the palm of a human hand full of treats and zig-zags in between his trainers legs. Not only does he not bite the trainer's fingers off, he sometimes even understands what behaviour he is supposed to do. In some behaviours with correct implementation luring is a very effective tool when used with dogs. I must say that besides the dog I have not met another animal, where the luring method would work so well. If I imagine myself in the place of dog, I wouldn't know how my feet work, if I had my face buried in a cake.

That does not mean that the luring method is always okay with the dogs. It is very much dependent on the way it is carried out as well as on the temperament of the dog. While some dogs are able to learn this way (and I have to repeat it is a sign of utmost tolerance), others might bite your fingers. And many dogs do not even understand what behaviour they are doing. Some of them also give up, if luring is done in an insensitive way. I have detailed how a dog can be confused and disgusted by exercises done by luring in my book "Training Is a Dialogue". So I think that the dogs tolerance is not a reason for us to expect always success when training our dog this way. With some it works, with some it does not. It depends both on the dog and the trainer. Luring has it's shortcomings and many dogs let us miss that only thanks to their endless tolerance.



You will have it, when you deserve it

Another typical situation from dog training fascinates me, when I compare it with training of non-dog animals. This is when a trainer is rewarding with treats that the trainer has in a heap at his side. The dog has the food within his reach, but he is doing the tasks the trainer asks him to do. When he does what he should he receives only one little piece taken from the heap that is right at his nose. I will not say this is impossible when training non-dog animals. But to be able to put food within the reach of a non-dog animal and expect the animal not to eat it just like that, I would have to make sure of at least one of the following:

1) The animal is actually not motivated to work for food, but as a result of the motivation within. To make it simple – he likes to train with me and food is just something extra.

2) The animal is absolutely sure he will get the reward, he has no problem with his tasks and the level of his success is high. Ideally there is one default behaviour in his repertoire (we have mentioned that). This behaviour is never a mistake and it gives him the feeling of security. Thanks to his long time experience with the training he can cope with failure. He simply does not steal from me, as he is sure, that all the treats will be his anyway.

3) Stealing treats does not pay off. For instance because there are different kinds of food of different quality in the heap, and the trainer picks out the most attractive to reward the animal. Or it is physically difficult to bend down, so it pays off to wait, until the trainer hands him up the treat (that would be the example for the giraffe).



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4) For some reason the animal is afraid to take the food from the heap. Maybe he is not sure about his surroundings and needs to have his head up all the time, to be able to look around (typical for timid predators). Worse – he does not eat from the heap, because he is afraid of some article or creature close to the food. And the worst scenario is he is afraid of the trainer.

Reasons 1 plus 2 (inner motivation and high success rate of the training + the ability to work in spite of failure) are in fact the ideal we strive for in the training. On the contrary reasons 3 plus 4 are a sign of problems and the situation, when the animal does not take the food can easily end. For instance the animal gets really hungry, or he stops being afraid. And if up to now he was afraid of the trainer, who is protecting the food, he really wants the food or is hungry if their training and relationship are not on a very high level and if the animal is stronger than the trainer... in that case I wish lots of luck to this person in this scenario..

For comparison



Let us look at two cases of the animal's self-control around food. The first one will be our llama Sancho, a male alpaca. When I was working at the zoo, I did shows for the public with him. Sancho was the only animal we worked with, who had no problem helping himself to the treats in the treat bag.

Trainers have the treats in an open bag on their right side and Sancho's head is just on the level above it. It is not natural for a llama, who is a grazing animal, to see food right under his nose and not to take it. If it was not be a llama in positive training but simply an animal somewhere on a farm, the farmer would just chase him away from food that was not meant for him. But a llama like that would not stay away from the food only, but also from the farmer. The farmers usually have no need for positive training. But we

need it. So we cannot afford to chase away Sancho or any other animal during the show. The animal is supposed to stay close to us, not stealing the treats from the open bag. This problem of

two opposing behaviours for the llama (being close to the food and not taking it) can be solved with a carefully chosen default behaviour. I have to repeat – default behaviour is a behaviour that somehow pays off the animal, even without a cue from the trainer. It makes the training more secure. We will talk more about it in the following chapters. Our Sancho has been taught this default behaviour – if he wants a reward or a simple task leading to a reward, it is sufficient, if he stands on the trainer's left side and looks straight ahead or to the left (as shown in the picture). This is the way Sancho begins the training dialogue saying - "I want work". He also returns to our left side in the situation where he tries to do the task but fails. So this position is his one he can confidently take as there is no risk of making a mistake and it says "I want work". From the above mentioned conditions we meet No. 2 – Sancho will have a high level of success and can be sure he will gain the reward through his work. It would be great if he could fulfil No. 1 too – work for inner motivation and as a result of our relationship. But to have that with a llama is not an easy and quick process.

Let's imagine today is the day, when Sancho is craving some vegetables (maybe because yesterday he had only hay and granules, due to the nutrition plan). Maybe this will motivate him to stick his head into the treat bag. And in that case the trainer can only do one thing – cover the bag with his hand. This is the way I made it too to make it difficult for him (Rule No. 3) and make it is easier for him to go to my left side. When he tried to go into the pouch, it also seemed to be an extra signal, that today the atmosphere is going to be rather tense between us two, due to his yearning for food. So I will have to reward this default behaviour on my left side much more, than I usually do during quiet atmosphere days. Plus on this day I will not try to train complicated novelties, where Sancho would make a lot of mistakes. Today is simply not the right day for that. If I would punish Sancho for trying to empty my treat bag (see No. 4 – being afraid of the trainer), it is possible our conflict would be so big, it could ruin the whole training. I should rather quickly forget this possibility.

As you see, the basic thing was to **observe, how much is Sancho motivated by food** (or we could call it "greedy") and set the possibility for him to gain his reward in another way, than treat bag robbery. **Setting the opportunity played the main role, while my authority had only a minor role.** And even this little piece of my authority had to be supported with Sancho having the possibility to get his reward in another way. I strongly tried to avoid positive punishment, so it would not ruin the training process. If the animal was an even bigger ungulate, perhaps the first steps of the training and teaching the default behaviour would take place in a protected environment with a barrier such as a rail between us. It would enable me to step back a bit during Sancho's attack on my treat bag, creating negative punishment – which means I avoided the positive punishment.

And now let's look at the dog, whose handler sat down during the training and placed a handful of treats on the floor on his side. The dog sits facing the handler a couple of ten centimetres from the food, and waits for his task. To make it more interesting, let's say the training method this time will be freeshaping. This means the dog should offer behaviour and the handler clicks and rewards in the moment the dog is successful. In fact freeshaping resembles the well known game of "hot and cold", with the only difference that after every click there is a reward. To make it more difficult for the dog, let's say the handler "makes short work of it" and besides that he is not very skilled in freeshaping, and so due to this style of work his dog often makes mistakes. And so off they go. The dog is trying, he offered something for the first time. But the something was not "it". He tried a second time and again it didn't lead him anywhere... He tried five times and nothing. So he is giving up and looks at the handler. "Come on! Try it, don't be lazy!" says the handler – and he has just ruined the dog's effort for a default behaviour (like when Sancho comes to the left side) The dog didn't have the chance to use the default behaviour, so he is trying again and nothing. So again he tries to questioningly look at his human and when he is again told to continue working, he tries to sniff the treats. "Don't you even try to think about it!" comes a sharp exclamation. And so he is dawdling around again, tries to work and in the end he manages to achieve something, so a click and treat follow. That would be the better version. There is the possibility he will not succeed, so no click and after useless trials he will bury his nose in the ground. He will start sniffing, because that is his strategy to escape futile work. Can you see the imbalance between this dog and Sancho? The dog, no matter if he worked with internal or external motivation, had minimum success. Once he was chased away from the food, he was not allowed to use any default behaviour. He started being so nervous, he had to start sniffing to vent his feelings... and despite that there was no conflict between the dog and his handler. **But it doesn't mean the dog could not internally experience the same frustration, that Sancho would have long ago expressed by spitting, kicking and putting his head in the treat bag!** The dog may be experiencing the same thing, but because of his huge dog tolerance of human mistakes he did not express it openly. And his handler still thinks that he is a great trainer.

Does this story tell us, that putting our treats close to the dog during the training is not good? That is not what I wanted to say. I just wanted to say that even if the dog forgives us doesn't mean he feels good. His huge tolerance is blindfolding us, so we don't see the things which another animal would make very visible. **And so due to this tolerance it would be better to watch not only the visible things, but think about the things that may be going on under the surface.**

Tolerance of failure

The above mentioned example leads to another instance, where dogs often forgive and keep their feelings to themselves. This includes a high number of failed trials during one training session. The truth is that the dog is a predator, so he has a certain disposition to tolerate more failure during work. If the average hunting success of a certain predator in the wild is for instance 1 : 7, it means, he has to chase the prey an average of seven times to hunt it down. If the predator would give up after failing for the first time, he would starve to death. Different predators in nature have differing hunting success rates and this plays out in their training. From my experience and from what my colleagues have told me, the polar bear is very tolerant of failures, while his close relative, the brown bear, is not so patient. We can find the explanation in their different ways of getting food in the wild. The brown bear feeds on berries for the majority of the year. The berries really won't run away

In contrast to carnivores we have the herbivores. For instance if Sancho is a llama, it is not natural at all for his food to be jumping away from him forcing him to bite the air when grazing. This passes on to the training – if he fails and does not gain the reward, he is disappointed much sooner than the predator. But it doesn't mean we have to always give him a reward for every tiny success and avoid having him use his brain. He can be taught too that the reward does not come always and for everything. We can teach him to be patient and resilient to failure. For this we use a variable system of rewarding, including the aforementioned default behaviour and other procedures. Even the non-dog trainers want to have animals, that are resilient to failure. We don't want to have an animal that is stressed by any little defeat. We are training it in a way, that we extend the limits of a "calm animal". If we would cause a high level of stress by creating a situation with too many failures for the animal, it could mean even putting the person with the rewards in danger of bodily harm. For that reason we never create panic in the non-dog animal on purpose. We don't count on his tolerance and respect for us. That is something only the dog would allow us to do (and that is a pity), but it does not mean that he does not feel frustration deep inside.

Painful end of the training session

Among the things that the dog tolerates that could cost us our health and safety with a non-dog animal, is the ruthless ending of training sessions. A lot of trainers of sea mammals (and not only those) know the so-called end of the session aggression. The sea lion male, who was great during the performance, waving at the spectators, kissing his trainer and all in all resembling a plush

toy, all of a sudden attacks his trainer, as the trainer tries to leave. From the animal's point of view? It is no wonder. The trainer was **trying to run away with the remaining treats**, creating negative punishment.

Positive training creates a chance for the animal to earn his reward. We have said that many times. As the trainer leaves, it is the moment this chance disappears. The animal, especially the one that is big, strong and very, very motivated, has the logical need to keep this chance just where it is.



In a number of cases the trigger can be the so-called end of session cue, the signal that the session now ends. This signal can be the real signal “end”, but the animal is often able to pick it up in the predictable last exercise of the performance. For instance our Sancho knows a lot of exercises, and the trainers swap them with a certain variety. There is some variation with one exception and that is the “goodbye bow”. That is always the last behaviour. The moment I prepared to present him the cue for the bow during the performance, Sancho would become tense, start to salivate to spit and at times even spit which is a sign of agitation. It is his nerves working, because he feels the upcoming “end of all chances”. That is why we tried to make him see, that the “goodbye bow” does not mean the end of all his chances. The bow remained the last thing Sancho did in front of the audience, but it was not the last thing he was rewarded for doing. After going backstage he has a jackpot of treats prepared in his pen. but for a long time we could see anyway Sancho was nervous during the bow.

Good trainers of non-dog animals are careful with their end of the sessions, even though their systems may be different. There is a great variety of training session endings in many marine mammal training facilities and they are noticed in training records to control, which of the patterns was used last time. This all is to avoid predictability, which causes expectation, and could trigger an attack on the trainer. Some facilities have a standard end of session signal, but after it there is always a surprise gift. For instance - a paper bag with goodies for primates, which remains hidden for the primate to find and unwrap. Simply - a package with a surprise in the end. The animal can tell by the signal, that it will get his last reward, but the size and secret of "what it will be" makes the end of the training session a most interesting and welcome part.

And now let's look at a typical end of session with a dog, who works eagerly, one task after another, reward after reward, everything running smoothly, everything is super good... and all of a sudden "Bang, end, finish, get in the car, we are through with this!" Even if the dog is not attacking us, it does not mean he hasn't the same things going on in his head as go on in the head of the attacking sea lion bull. But he managed, because of you, because he is a dog and he tolerates human faults. But it doesn't mean he is not feeling anything. That is the reason I am trying to end the training session with a dog at least with some sensitivity, not as much as with a sea lion bull but some careful planning is part of my agenda.

Let's stop and quickly think about what we saw in the part about dog devotion. What if the dog is functioning basically on the principle of this strange dog type of negative reinforcement, where the highest goal is the happy being together with their people without any tasks or conditions? In that case the end of the session would be super news, translated as "great, you achieved your goal". But the thing you achieved would have to be a **pleasant time together**, not being closed in the kennel with his human walking away. That would be the same unpleasant end of session as mentioned above.

STORIES ABOUT DOGS AND NON-DOGS

Before we end the chapter about rewards, we will compare three real cases, where the animal was being trained to stop his aggression towards other animals or people. In all of them reward and of course trainers stepping in to play a role. I hope you will clearly see the difference between dogs and non-dogs.

The story of an aggressive non-dog

In the zoo I was honoured to train some Harris hawks, beautiful and intelligent birds of prey. One of them was a strong young male named Diego. I was the one in charge of his introduction to training. In the training facility space of the there were other animals and among them was the often mentioned llama male Sancho. During one of the first training sessions with Diego I took him out to stretch his wings and Sancho calmly came to sniff his new neighbour. Diego attacked with his talons and chased Sancho away. This episode was repeated some minutes later and although it seemed harmless, it gave Diego a clue, how to treat things that frightened him. Simply attack and chase the new and unknown thing away. From this moment Diego started using this successful strategy with other animals – the porcupine and the fox male Deny. His strongest aggression was still aimed at Sancho, with whom it all started. His attacks came from a bigger and bigger distance. We needed to stop this unpleasant trend.



To stop his aggression, I needed to repeatedly and slowly introduce Diego to all the animals, which were a target for his attacks. I needed to provide him the message that: “They are not a danger for you! You do not have to attack them, you can always fly away. Flying away means you will be secure and it means you will get a reward.” We started with Sancho, because here the problem with Diego was the most severe. I took Diego on the glove, as the falconers do it. We stood a distance from Sancho, where Diego was aware of Sancho but far enough that he did not

feel he had to attack him because he could watch him.. From this distance we gradually came closer. If Diego looked at Sancho, I stopped and didn't go closer. If he looked away from Sancho and looked at me, he got a piece of raw chicken and we stepped away from Sancho. Plus I curved my arm a little under my body, so he was shaded away from Sancho. Thanks to his self control Diego gained control of the situation and a reward. Later I dared to let Diego off the glove close to Sancho, but kept him under control with the creance on both legs. It didn't play the role of a dog leash. , I could not pull Diego away using the ?. It was just to be sure – that if Diego did attack Sancho, I could stop him and eliminate possible injury. I put Diego on a perch close to Sancho's pen and stayed behind him. At first Diego was watching Sancho and in the moment he looked away from him to me, I offered my hand with a reward for him to fly on. Diego flew away from Sancho to me - got his reward and I shaded him again with my body. With this training Diego's tendency to attack Sancho quickly got weaker. We used the same technique with the fox male Deny. The creance on Diego was once again just a safety measure. I haven't pulled it once during the training. If I would have to do that, because the hawk would attack unexpectedly, I knew that I would have been proceeding too fast with the training and that the "enemies" needed to be further away from each other. The line wasn't there to teach Diego how to behave and using it repeatedly would only ruin the process. I myself was there only as a reward feeder and a safety giving wall. **From Diego's point of view it was not about my will at all.**

I have used this technique in similar situations with other non-dog animals. For instance if one of our pigs would react aggressively to strange animals, while we walked the strange animal closer to the pig, the moment the pig would look at it, the helper with the strange animal would stop advancing. If the pig would look at the trainer, the helper would move away with the strange animal and the pig would get his reward and possibly also move further away. If, instead of attacking, the pig was scared and so hid behind his trainer, we would protect the pig by having the second trainer leave with the strange animal, and we would shade the pig with our body and the treat would be only the third in the line of reinforcers. In another case we could work with the aggression by walking parallel with the strange animal in such a distance, that the pig would be able to follow the subject but not attack it, and would be simultaneously getting rewards for looking away from it. In any case we would try to prevent the pig's attack, which would mean the trainer would have to stop the pig by the leash. The risk that presented was that the pig could be so nervous he could aim his attack at the trainer. Yes, if the attack occurs, the leash can help to stop it and protect the animals. But using it will regress the training and that is why the trainer will do everything to avoid using it. And the trainer will think a lot about the reward – for both the cases, the pig and Diego. It must be good enough for the animal to work for it, but not too good. If it was too good, Diego and the pig could let the strange animal come closer, but this

is because it is motivated by the reward, and the risk here is that they would be happy to have the great reward, however – after they eat it, because distance is closer, it could mean a fight.

As you see, the will of the trainer was of no interest for the trained non-dog animal. Even if the trainer prepared and managed the whole process, in the training he was merely a feeder and safety barrier for his animals. Their decision was a decision of a free creature. It is possible, that after months of intensive training the pig and Diego will see something more in their trainer – the source of security, control, somebody, who communicates. And in this moment a bond appears, as it happened (at least I hope so) with our animals. But the training process itself was not based on a relationship. **The bond was created through the training - the training was not gaining from the bond.** In practical lessons with the dogs we often use the same system of training and it often works. Well, it works in the case the dog is solving his problem himself, like the pig and Diego, and needs only support from the handler. **But if the dog is solving the problem “for both”, in this instance the situation changes.** Like in the case of Martina and Roník.



Roník and Martina – the story of dog’s devotion and negative reinforcement



Roník (Ron) is a beautiful and strong pitbull and dogo argentino cross, that his owner Martina got as a rescue. In the beginning there were no problems. He was friendly, particularly with people, no matter if it was a man, woman or a child. But gradually aggression appeared – towards a specific subject – a woman in a red jacket. Nobody knows where it came from. But one thing is certain. Roník started to lunge at other women and after some time at children. He never bit anybody and we are not sure if he would because from the first growl (without biting) Martina would have him on a leash and with a muzzle, if needed. With every new lunge she kept Roník further and further away from people and that was stressful for her during their walks together.

When I saw them at the practical lessons for the first time, their problem resembled the aggression of the minipig. A big strong animal on the end of the leash is seemingly solving his own problems and gets his rewards, if he is able to not attack. Martina was trying her best to work methodically as a professional animal trainer, but things were not improving. The lunging

was still there, although it was quite short. Also, the moment, Roník stopped at the end of the leash, he turned right back to his “mama” to have a reward for stopping. As soon as he ate the treat, he turned back to his staged attack and everything repeated. No matter how good the work at distance from the helper was, the results were not coming as fast as we expected. We tried our best to work with positive training, but the moment, another person unexpectedly entered the room and Ron barked at him, Martina would say something that the majority of Czech dogs hear many times everyday – and often without effect. A simple “Ron, no!” This shouting, that would make things worse in the case of the pig and Diego, seemed to bring relief to Roník. He turned his back to the trespasser with no problem, and being practically satisfied he looked at Martina with a question - what should he do now. This dog was visibly not solving his own problem with people. He didn’t mind people at all. If he was afraid of people, he would not turn his back on them at this distance. He was solving what he considered to be a problem for his mama. He was chasing the trespassers away from her, because he took her work with the treats as a confirmation she wants it that way. Most of the treats came just a second after he chased the person away. From Martina’s point of view it was for his calming down, but from his point of view it was probably a reward for his work – protecting them both. The pause was not long enough for Ron to see the treat as a reward for calming down.

True, bad timing of the reward after the attack could up the level of aggression in Diego and the pig... but they couldn’t be easily told off. If I would jerk their leash or use other pressure, it would be a shock for them. Yes, maybe they would stop their attacks. But surely they would not be so relieved if the trainer took the responsibility and started acting himself. Unlike them Roník was not working for treats. Treats only confirmed his wrong judgement. This dog was working for his beloved mama in this strange dog negative reinforcement, when everything aims to the end goal “being together in peace and happiness”. And this peace and happiness was up to now granted by Ron, who chased away the trespassers from their mutual space. He simply had it all wrong up until the moment Martina told him “you don’t have to take care of this. It is my job.” Why hasn’t it worked in their normal life? The reason is, for a message to work, if **it aims at mutual peace - it has to be told peacefully**. She can’t say: “My nerves are on the run and I am not satisfied with you.” She must say only: “this is my job, I don’t want this from you.” And that was exactly the way it was said at the practical lessons, when everything was under control. But anyway, if from now we would solve everything by shouting and telling Roník what he shouldn’t do, he couldn’t be nice for long. **He needed to know also what he should do**. What is his rule when meeting a strange person and where is Martina’s rule.

We found out Roník does not have a command that would enable Martina to **get in front of the dog**. That was the reason why Ron was standing in front of Martina during the conflict, and

taking on responsibility to solve the problem with the stranger. So Martina had homework for next time. Teach Roník the command “Stop”. The dog would remain standing, he will wait for his owner to pass him and shade him from the stranger. (We will talk a couple of times about this behaviour, that is not oriented to the reward, but to the relief). The second necessary thing was to pass the management of the whole training process from me to Martina. And do it the way that Roník would see and be sure, that Martina is not only managing him, but also the strange person approaching them. That **he doesn't have to take care of the two of them**, that his job is only the treats and happiness of being together.

From now on all the movement of the helpers, coming in and out, passing and anything, that was happening as methodically as before, started only when Martina said aloud to the helper (and in that way to Ron also, because he was watching it) loudly “we can”. In the case Ron would decide to lunge forward anyway and try to solve the situation, Martina just said in a quiet but firm voice “stop” and calmly go to Ron and stand in front of him. No punishing, no competing with the dog for a dominant position, but just take on the responsibility, thus enabling him to relax. That was exactly what Ron needed. And usually no other animal but the dog has this need.

Annie and Míša – the story of dog's tolerance and negative punishment

Annie also came to the first practical lesson with a problem we could label “the dog is aggressive”. But aggression can vary and Annie soon showed us her kind is quite specific. In fact it didn't take long to see it. Annie is an extremely friendly young dachshund. She greets all people with big affection and often is meeting dogs with the same happiness. That left Míša wondering how is it possible, that during the hunting events or at the training facility Annie all of a sudden lunges at other dogs, who wander close to her. It would be a short attack. The dog would “yell” at the intruder, without ever biting him, and then returns to Míša and soon does this all over again.

We both thought the source of this behaviour was an attack by another dog. This has happened to Annie twice. The truth is, she didn't display the behaviour until after the attacks. In this case it could be fear aggression and the training could look very similar to what we did with the pig. We would provide Annie a safe place, where she can always avoid the incoming dog. We would give her the possibility to stop the dog with a stare, instead of having to lunge at him. We would work with her stress level and watch carefully, if she is ready or not... all in all a method, which was successfully used many times with many other dogs. But in this case the situation actually got worse. The longer the training went, the more nervous Annie was. We tried a similar technique



like with Roník – Míša will clearly take on the responsibility to protect them both. That would work, if Annie wasn't protecting herself, but both of them. It didn't work either. This little doggie, who sometimes behaved like the friend of the whole world, was getting worse during the training that was supposed to get him used to dogs.

At the beginning of the third session I said: "I must confess, that I am not sure, what the ideal way tforward is. This is not about herself being afraid or trying to take on responsibility for both of you. Well let's try once more, we might see something." And we did. This time Annie clearly

hated the dog. It was as though she turned into a little dragon, during the first and second session. “Míša, have you changed something for this session?” I asked. “Yes, I took better treats, she loves those. So we hit the target. The better the treats were, the more aggressive Annie was to the dogs around her. Maybe her aggression started from being afraid, but in the process of eliminating fear and food rewards it became “resource guarding”. Now we realized that the situations, where Annie acts like a buddy with all the dogs and the situations, where she wildly attacks, differ in one important thing. Annie was dog aggressive only when she had the idea, that Míša has treats. And the more attractive the treat was, the meaner was Annie’s protecting it.

If Annie was not a dog but the above mentioned minipig or hawk, at this moment I would use abundance of food. Maybe even overfeed her, so the value of the treats would be as low as possible. That would partially calm her down. In the next training we would proceed very carefully, the criteria not being the distance from the animal helper, but the attractivity of the source he is guarding. In any case I would take care not to be a barrier between the non-dog animal and his rewards. Never step between the pig and his food!

But Annie is not a pig, she is a dog. Plus she loves her mama very much and they have a great rapport. So we tried to do it in another way. “You know what? Put your treat bag over there on the bench and let Annie see it. Show her you don’t have anything with you and go away from the bench. And then you will be returning to the treats. We shall put the dog that Annie yelled at so many times at a reasonable distance. We will try to pass her in a way to avoid a conflict this time (so we will pass her at quite a distance). If you will manage to do this in a calm way, reward Annie with the treats that you came back to. If Annie lunges, then simply turn around and lead her away from the treats. So she will have a break from the other dog, but this time she is not getting the treats. And we will try again in a while, knowing that the helper dog was too close, we will position her further away.”

If you stop to think about this problem, you can see it is not only about positive reinforcement. Yes, there was a reward at the end of the trail Annie has to pass. But Annie knew about this reward beforehand, so she was kind of rewarded already. She knew exactly where she was going, she would be just taking it. What provided her the required information about the behaviour we want was the negative punishment in the moment she lunged at the other dog. This negative punishment was going away from the treats that were almost within her reach. At the same time there was negative reinforcement – the careful work with the distance from the other dog. Nevertheless the most important illuminating component was the mentioned negative punishment. Míša used her authority and physical strength and stepped in between Annie and her food. And behold, the dog didn’t start to hate her and hasn’t attacked her mama.

She came, she understood and next time she adjusted her behaviour. I would never imagine anything like that with non-dog animals in the zoo. With the hawk, who is much weaker than me, I could probably protect the food and hold the bird on my glove. But in the next training I would have difficulties getting him on my hand. If he did come on the hand, he would probably try to avoid the line being fastened to his feet. He would try to remain free in his movement, so he could fly to his food whenever he wanted. And if I tried it the same way to step in between an adult minipig and his food, please, God, protect my calves. The pig would swipe me away like any other obstacle. And it could be the same with a big sea lion, a wild ungulate... in fact every big, strong and wild animal, which is not a dog.

The course of action Miša and Annie took shows the wonderful dog's tolerance of people. And it worked great and Annie learned something. I am not saying I should use this method with every dog. The fact, than Annie, unlike the pig, will not attack, doesn't mean that deep inside she is not having the same feelings that cause the pig to attack. That is the reason we started with all the other techniques based on positive reinforcement. But while nothing of this worked, the negative punishment did. And that worked thanks to the wonderful dog's tolerance and in this case also thanks to the love the dog had with his human.

CHAPTER 2:

BRIDGE

As children - did you ever play "Hunt the thimble" game? ^{1*} This game in many aspects resembles positive reinforcement training of animals – although of course there are some differences. The main difference is that during the game no rewards are given for partial success, unlike in animal training. Yes, maybe some kind of reward comes in the very end, when you hear "boiling hot", but the players are usually happy with just the feeling of being successful. The other difference is how often the message of being successful / unsuccessful appears in the game and in the training. This will be discussed now.

In the child game of "hot and cold" the players have three signals to show the player how successful they are: cold, warm and hot. If we should name them according to trainer's terminology, "cold" would be a no reward marker, "warm" is the keep going bridge and "hot" is the terminal bridge. We will chat a lot about the exact meaning of this a little later. For the moment we will say just that if you are a non-dog trainer, you will probably use just the terminal bridge ("hot!") and that will be sufficient. So if the game would be played in the style of zoo animal training, it would look like this: "Hot!" (reward), "Hot!" (reward), "Hot!" (reward). Experienced trainers of non-dog animals, who manage to have more complex communication system and more importantly have a good relationship with their animals, can have the training as follows: "Warm warm, warm, hot!" (reward). "Warm, warm, cold, hot!" (reward). "Warm, hot!" (reward). Even if the communication is this complex system, the trainer will adjust his demands to minimise "cold" messages. Otherwise the whole non-dog training could end in disaster.

Let us return to our childhood years. What did you yourself hear during this game? The version that I remember was mostly "cold, cold, cold, cold, cold, warm, cold..." I remember that if I was the one searching it often got on my nerves. However, if I was in the role of the navigator, whose job it is to let the searcher fumble around, I felt a mischievous happiness. I was happy someone is trying, and that he wants to succeed sooo much and I am letting providing the entertainment. I was happy that I have my friend in my power, and he has a reason not to give up and I use that reason to boost my ego. Seeing it in retrospect, it was a pretty childish behaviour.

^{1*} In Czech R we play a game called hunt the thimble. Somebody hides a thimble and then a seeker is set to look for it. They are promoted with three words only. WARM if they are getting close to the object and COLD if they are moving away from it. And finally word HOT or BOILING HOT when they found it.

So no wonder that as a trainer of non-dog animals I was surprised to see games in the dog training in the style: “Cold, cold, cold, cold...”, and the dog didn’t give up. I said to myself, “This is something only people and dogs are able to do.”. But I never expected to see what essentially translates as: “ Cold, cold, cold, DON’T EVEN TRY THIS, OR I WILL KICK YOU! Cold, cold, DON’T TRY THIS, OR...!” That the dogs continued to participate exceeded all my expectations. My opinion is that this is something not even people would bear. Only some dogs (and definitely not all!) would be willing to do something like that for us.

Some theory as a foundation

First of all for the sake of this chapter let’s make it clear what we see as a bridge signal. As can be derived from the English expression, this signal creates a bridge, a connection between the animal and his trainer. It is not a message to tell the animal what it should do, but it is an indication of how successful he is. For this chapter we will recognise four categories, all of which in some way appeared in our examples from the children’s game.

- 1) **Terminal bridge (“hot!” in the game)** – a bridge, which actually says three things at once: a) you are getting a reward, b) because you did the right thing, c) you don’t have to continue. The animal learns these three messages gradually, as he is getting to understand the terminal bridge. Let’s say you are teaching the clicker to the pig. This means you are just clicking and for every click the piggy gets a treat. The first message he will understand is that the click means “you are getting a reward”. He will usually only find later that it is paired with his correct behaviour and that he should be trying actively to generate the click. Nevertheless, as soon as he knows that he needs to do something to earn the click, the reaction “you don’t have to continue” comes automatically after the click. As soon as he hears the click, the non-dog animal will stop working, and expect the reward.
- 2) **Keep going bridge (“warm” in the game)** – this bridge in fact says: “keep going, you are on the right path”. The role is to ensure that the animal keeps going during a longer task even though there has been no “terminal bridge” as yet. The bridge indicates that the animal is getting nearer the desired behaviour and he will reach it. The principle is not to give the final reward (for instance a treat) right after the “keep going” bridge, but always after the final terminal bridge. Let’s say a keep going bridge for a dog could be the word “yees” and the terminal bridge simply a clicker. In that case the signals during the training could be: “Yees, yees, yees”, click (reward). But never “yees, yees” with a

reward. If we did this, the “yes” or keep going bridge would become a terminal bridge, replacing the clicker.

- 3) **No reward marker, NRM (“cold” in the game)** – a signal meaning that the animal is doing a behaviour that will not lead him to success and thus he is just wasting his energy. With non-dog animals it is not often used in the beginning of training and most of the non-dog pupils never get introduced to it their whole life. It is a signal which doesn’t mean any threat for the animal and leaves it up to him, if he wants to react or not. If the animal doesn’t react to the NRM, there is no punishment. The worse that can happen is his fruitless effort.
- 4) **Delta cue (this does not happen in the game, but it could sound like DON’T EVEN TRY THIS, OR I WILL SHOW YOU! or DON’T TRY THIS, OR...!).** This signal is really very rare in non-dog animal training and basically it means a suspended sentence. There is a problem in using it. It damages the trainer / animal relationship and the risk of aggression becomes higher. Especially if it means “this is your last chance, or I will punish you!” Whether it is a positive or negative punishment (see the previous chapter) the risk is always there.

Some trainers recognize and precisely use other sophisticated bridges. From the above mentioned they differ in certain details which are unrecognizable for an amateur, but can be essential for the animal. For some trainers there is only one bridge and that is the terminal bridge. The above mentioned as roughly categorized “according to Šusta’s opinion”. The topic of this book is not to create definitions and categories. Not even the animal play by those. On the contrary - if we move away from the exact definitions from the human point of view to the animal side... in that moment the bridges can become one big mess.

DOG’S TOLERANCE AND BRIDGE – or LOST IN TRANSLATION

While I am writing this book we have a Staffordshire terrier puppy growing up at our home. Her name is Verunka. And even though I don’t train with her as often as I did with her older buddy Rozárka a long time ago, when Verunka was five months old I realized she has no problem distinguishing between all four above mentioned bridges. Terminal bridge – clicker. Keep going bridge – “sooo” or “more”. No reward marker – “nooo”. Delta cue – “leave it!” I have never planned to use these four words. They simply evolved in the flow of our days together. And the puppy obviously understood all of them.

“How is it possible that with this puppy I am easily using signals I wouldn’t even think of considering when working with non-dog animals?” I had to think about this. And I realized one thing – in my job in the zoo I usually didn’t dare to risk using three of those four bridges. I wasn’t sure at all, if **the animals would understand the meaning of the mentioned signals the same way as I do**. I was not



sure with Verunka either, but because she is a dog, so without really thinking about it I just risked it. The same way most people would do it.

The reason, why **most trainers of exotic animals use only the terminal bridge** is maybe the fact, that the terminal bridge with non-dog animals is practically **impossible to “get lost in translation”**. If I click the clicker and give a reward after that (and if the animal is interested in this reward and really works because of it), it will always mean “you are getting food”. If the animal tries at least a little bit to earn the click and functions operatively (meaning that he realizes what he is doing relative to the consequences), the message I am delivering is “because you did a successful behaviour, you don’t have to carry on”. If there is a way to confuse the terminal bridge with an animal, who wants food, in the worst case it will become a recall. The clicker clicks and the clicker-wise animal comes running. Even in this case the click actually meant at the minimum “you are getting a reward, leave everything”. Confusing the message is simply not such a big deal. It is a **message about the animal, about his behaviour and about the reward. It is not about the trainer** and in no way does it put the trainer and the animal in opposition. Because the terminal bridge is **so anonymous**, even if it gets

really messed up in the animal's understanding, it should not endanger the **relationship between the trainer and his pupil**.

Let's have a look at how the non-dog animal can understand the other three bridges and how easily a food-motivated hard worker can get into conflict with the trainer. Let's start with the innocent "warm, warm", the **keep going bridge**. Our biggest wish and ideal is to make sure that this bridge is good news for the animal. He should understand it as: "Super, I am doing well, I will keep on trying for a little while longer and then I will reach the goal". But what if his perception of this message is: "I am doing well, but he refuses to give me my reward and makes me work longer"?! If the animal interprets the keep going bridge this way, in this moment the trainer becomes just an annoying obstacle between the animal and his rewards. He is no longer the magical grandpa from the first chapter, who helps the fairy-tale hero gain all the pleasures of this world. In the eyes of the animal the trainer becomes an evil sorcerer, who keeps him from taking his well-earned reward and keeps on making up more tasks. If the bridge was understood this way, it is not just a message about the animal and his behaviour. **It would also be a message about the trainer**, his will and his strength protecting the rewards from the animal. What if the animal decides to test this strength? As soon as the keep-going bridge sounds, he will take the treats from the treat-bag using his strength? After all, from his point of view he has done well, so why not?

Now to the next bridge, the no-reward marker. In the children's game the no-reward marker (NRM) means the least popular "cold, cold". In the ideal case this too should be a message to the animal about his performance. It should spare his energy and lead him away from the wrong path, so his further effort would not be wasted. In the end the word "cold" works the same way in the game. It will stop the player in time, before he invests pointless effort going in the wrong direction and helps him find the way, where he will hear "warm, warm". What if the player **invested too much effort**? What if he hasn't heard any signal for a long time, he is lost and desperate and yearns to hear any confirmation that he hasn't been doing the whole thing to no avail?! He would need so much to hear "hot" or at least "warm", but then, after a long period of hard work he hears only "cold". This really causes him to become annoyed. Maybe he now needs to let off steam and vent his anger. And who is close by? The frustrated animal is closest to the trainer. And if the trainer even has food in his treat bag, that caused the animal to try so hard and now found out he doesn't know how to get the food, the trainer's popularity and the role of a benefactor can easily crack. Again he becomes just an annoying obstacle between the animal and the food. And if the animal's effort ended at "cold" again, he might stop trying remove the trainer-obstacle simply using his strength. In this case the signal, which should have helped by saying "don't waste your energy on this" became a message "ha ha, poor you, I am not giving you anything for this." So in **some sense it is again a message about the trainer**, his will and his strength protecting the rewards. The strength that would make the animal, who wants the rewards, work even more. Instead of the animal simply taking the reward. As you see, the no reward marker can

be lost in translation in the same way as the keep going bridge, and it just might be more dangerous with stronger animals.

The last type of bridge is in a category by itself. This is the delta cue mentioned above, and means “this is your last chance”. This signal, whether it is misinterpreted or not, is never a message only about the animal and his behaviour. It is always primarily the message about the trainer and his will. It sets boundaries for the animal, boundaries the animal is not allowed to cross. It tells the animal he is dangerously close to the boundary. Who set the boundary? Yes, it is the trainer. This is his boundary. And if I say once to the animal facing me: “You hit my boundary, I will not let you pass it,” then I must realize the animal will more than likely try to break it, at least once. And I must be really able to protect the boundary.

Let’s have a break from the dog training and look at delta cues which we, people, use in our everyday life. “Honziík, we are going home. Honziík, end your play, we have to go. Honziík. Honziík...” still no reaction. And suddenly the name changes from “Honziík, Honziík” to “JAN!” and Honziík instantly reacts. He knows that if his mom uses this name, the next thing coming will be a slap. In a similar way many parents use the help of a delta cue if they need to get their children out of the bathtub. “Kids, get out of the tub before I count to three! One, two...” At this moment three things can happen. One is that around the word “two” the children jump out of the tub and are rather well-behaved for some time. To have this outcome you need three things:

- 1) The children are sure some really unpleasant consequence will come after “three”.
- 2) Bathing in the tub is not so important and special for the children to motivate them to face a conflict.
- 3) The parent is counting slowly enough so the kids have time to fulfil his demand.

If these three above mentioned things don’t apply, it is quite possible the parent’s attempt to use the delta cue will look different: “Kids, I am counting to three. One, two, three... So what now?” And the children will answer: “Four, five, six...” This will happen, if the children know, that after counting to three the parent will do nothing (the first condition was not fulfilled). But there is a third possibility. “Kids, get out of the tub before I count to three! One, two...” And in this moment an angry child stands up in the tub and yells: “Don’t say it!” This can happen in the case that the child really experienced what could happen, if the parent counts to three. But either he cannot get out of the tub quickly enough or the bath is something so wonderful for him he will not give it up without a fight. (So the second or the third condition isn’t fulfilled). The conditions are such, that it is better or easier for him to resist the boundaries set by his parents than to try to obey. Something similar can happen after a delta cue in training, if the trained animal’s motivation to continue is too powerful or if he hasn’t enough time to do fulfil the wishes of the trainer. If his body disposition shows clearly that the

trainer has no ability to maintain his boundary... then it is probably better, if the trainer honourably retreats. Next time he has to put things together in such a way he will not have to use the delta cue and there would be no fight.

As you see, using all the four signals instead of using just the terminal bridge can be kind of risky for a trainer of non-dog animals. A very good trainer with a perfect timing, a sense for training and



knowledge of his animal can create a keep-going bridge and no reward marker so that they represent **just a message about the animal and his behaviour**, and without creating conflict with the animal. If this works, then both the bridges can be valuable. In the case of the delta cue however, **even with the best effort it will always be a message about the trainer, his will and his enforced boundaries for the animal, and therefore, about the conflicting interests of the trainer and the animal.** That is probably the main reason, why a positive trainer of non-dog animals tries his best to avoid this signal.

DOG'S DEVOTION AND BRIDGE

Devotion and terminal bridge

We have gone through four basic types of bridges and shown how an animal can misinterpret their meaning. All the correct or incorrect interpretations were always from the point of view of an animal

who **wants a reward**. But what if he doesn't work for a reward and sees it, as we have shown, as the next task to be fulfilled? What if it is a dog, who functions in the style of the super devoted Honza from the first chapter? In this case the whole situation gets even more complicated.

At my theoretical seminars I often show positive training with the help of a volunteer. The system is simple. Somebody volunteers and he will be getting treats (usually pieces of chocolate) for his good work and in the end he will receive a prize of a clicker for the whole exercise. We start with the person being seemingly fed "for nothing", but before every bite I will click. As soon as it seems there is a connection in his brain between the click and the food, I might for instance touch his right hand with a target and click and reward. After a couple of repetitions, I will put the target close to the front of the hand and most of the volunteers will move their hand to the target. There will be a touch, click and reward. In the next round I can lift the target higher above the volunteer. He wants the reward, which comes for touching the target, so he keeps following the target with his hand further and further. The click sound after each touch works as a terminal bridge and tells him: "You are getting your reward, because you did the successful behaviour

There is a very interesting difference between how small children and adults react to this game. Especially if the adults are armed forces people. If you lift up the target for a child, he will reach with his hand to touch it. If you click in this moment, he usually stops touching it at once and happily goes for the chocolate. If I do the same with a uniformed man, who didn't even volunteer, but was chosen by his commanding officer, he will not stop after the click. He will fulfil his task, reach for the target and hold it. For the child the click really means not only "you did the correct thing and you will get your reward," but also "you don't have to continue". For the soldier the message ends at "you did it correctly". Not finishing his work after the click is something he will not even think about. Unlike the child he wasn't trying because he wanted to eat the chocolate at the end, he didn't come for the reward. He was appointed his job by a higher force and he is doing the given task. And this actually resembles some dogs I had the honour to know. The breeds and the individuals of these breeds that were **born with a predisposition to work**.

When I, a non-dog trainer, entered the world of dog people, I experienced some things that baffled me and I could not understand why it worked. One of those things was the dogs, which behaved like the soldiers during the game – after the clicker sounds, they continue doing their task without demanding their reward. The most typical example was the version of clicking and not rewarding during a long exercise. The dog, who was up to that point used to receiving a treat after every click, does a very, very long session of heel-work or another long duration exercise and during that hears the assuring click, click, click. But he doesn't even try to turn his head to the treats, but continues working all the way to the very end where he hears a double click and gets his final reward in whatever form. If I tried something similar with any zoo animal I have met in training, this would not work. First he

would try to get his reward after the click and if he did not succeed, he would not trust the clicker any more. Instead of waiting for the click, the animal would watch my hand with the treats, because the movement of the hand would be a much more meaningful bridge (the so-called clicking with the treat bag I mention in my books “Training Is a Dialogue” and Training Is In the Head”) Worse scenario would be the animal gives up on the training and stops working. And the worst case would be (again for instance with the pigs) that clicking without rewards would cause my animal pupils to be angry and aggressive. So how come there are dogs, who haven’t got a problem working this way – without the reward coming right after the click?

Simply put, they actually do not understand the clicker, so it doesn’t bother them at all. But it is often evident they do understand, but they don’t demand the reward. In my opinion, the reason is those devoted dogs (and not all are like that) are actually getting the most important reward after the click. **But the reward is “invisible and in dog’s style”**. If we use science vocabulary – the style is **inner motivation**, we have mentioned that before. Let’s say there is a dog in heel position, who is quite happy with a treat and he doesn’t see it as his task, nevertheless his owner’s satisfaction is of the utmost importance for him. What will the clicker tell such a dog? The same thing we have mentioned so many times: “You are getting a reward, because your behaviour is successful and you don’t have to continue.” But why should he stop? Just to take the treat? What if he has already had the reward, that is so important for him specifically? What if that is simply knowing he is doing the right thing and his human is happy? An extra treat is not a bad bonus, but a dog like that will happily keep it for later. He already has the more important reward - his daddy’s satisfaction. Besides a treat would disturb him in his work, the work for which he was born, being the correct example of his breed. The work that makes his human happy and the time spent together is the best thing a dog of this type can wish for. This specific dog is simply functioning in the special dog’s negative reinforcement manner which I have mentioned before. Maybe with the difference he does not consider his treats a task, but something needless, that keeps him from working. Who knows, maybe it is really just like that in his dog head (and none of us can see inside).

An expert on positive training could object that in advanced animal training you can see such a clicking without rewards too. An example could be some trainings with sea mammals, sometimes with elephants, parrots or apes, when a trainer uses the whistle or clicks and instead of a reward he gives the animal another task. Yes, that is true. And if you see something like that and the non-dog animal can perform like that without the slightest sign of feeling betrayed, it means you are watching real masters of their profession. In this case it is the use of the so-called secondary reinforcer. For instance it can be like this – the task, that followed the terminal bridge, is an easy one for the animal, and because it can be a simple short way to the reward, it was rewarding for itself. Even that terminal bridge without a reward can bring a pleasant feeling to the animal in that moment. And thus it can be used (but very carefully) as a reward in itself. It takes a long time before you build something like this with a non-

dog animal. Practical life often shows you, that something, that can work as a secondary reinforce for one trainer does not have to work at all for a same animal with a different trainer. It often takes long years of relationship and effort, before a trainer earns a privilege like this. Important thing is that at the end of a training full of secondary reinforcers there must be some primary reinforcers (see the previous chapter) which would be the end goal of all the effort. Without it none of the previous secondary reinforcers would make sense.

How does this differ from the situation of a dog, who is having empty clicks during a long exercise? In my opinion – very much. Unlike the examples of secondary reinforcers with non-dog animals in this case the trainer did not have to give another cue after the bridge without a reward. You just click for him and he continues the same work, maybe because he knows this is the required thing. And that is enough for him. He is not working only for himself and for his benefit - he is working for the team “me and my human”. In my opinion this is a beautiful and exceptional trait that makes some dogs (but not all of them) so different from other animals. So please, do not ask for this as if it was something automatic. On the contrary – cherish the fact if they are like that! The exceptional dog’s devotion they have, if they are working “for both”, certainly deserves that.

Dog’s devotion and keep going bridge

“Yaaay, gooo, good boy, hooraaay!” Those are the sounds that accompany almost every positive reinforcement training session. All this exciting cheering creates a unique atmosphere and is the soul of the positive training. The participants are used to it. Usually they are very surprised, if they come to zoo trainers and find out that much of the training is practical and about quiet concentration. “Don’t you praise the animals at all, or what?” they ask, being surprised. Oh yes, we do praise them – if they like it and if it is useful. But the problem is, it is usually not something they would be interested in. It is not natural for them to be interested in our opinion. And let’s be sincere – is this interest automatically something natural for our dogs?

I have been in the environment of dog training facilities for some years now and I have seen different approaches to this cheering. There are dogs, who find the cheering “Yaaay, great!” a confirmation of their correct behaviour and it causes them to continue their work with new strength and spirit. With some dogs it is almost dangerous to use praise like this, because in that moment they will stop working and they only want to be happy and jump. There are also dogs that use the praise to push the te finish. The cheering and praising keeps them working and if it stops, it is like a heavy rock, instantly stopping the momentum if the handler quiets down. They will do everything, unless there is no sign of playfulness, happiness from the handler. Like cattle, who only bend their heads and go wherever it is being pushed. Why are there such different reactions to the handler’s cheering?

From my point of view it depends not only on the mentality of the dogs, but also on the way of cheering as well as the timing the people use when cheering. Let's say we have a dog, who is quite okay with cheering like this, but the treat or toy in the end are definitely more to his liking. If a dog like this learns that words and tone of voice like this come before the terminal bridge (clicker, for instance), which is followed by the desired end reward, he can see the handlers cheering as a confirmation of correct behaviour leading to the goal. It really becomes a functional "keep going bridge".^{2*} Through such a functioning keep-going bridge the active dog is receiving the message he needs to hear. "Of course, you are doing it the right way! Don't worry and go on, there will be a big reward in the end!" A keep-going bridge like this is damn useful in dog sports, where you cannot reward in the middle of the activity.

^{2*} In this part we could easily get lost in technical terminology and discussions if this is a keep going bridge or a secondary reinforce... But that would just create a bigger confusion. Here, in the chapter about bridges we shall see it as a keep going bridge, because it is the role it is playing in this case.

But let's say we have another dog, his biggest goal is his handlers satisfaction and him and his handler being happy together. A dog like that doesn't need confirmation that he is on the right track to the treat – he just received so much more: his daddy is happy! Thus, according to the logic of positive reinforcement training, the work is done and it is time to enjoy the reward..^{3*} In this case the dog's devotion and his love for his human transforms the keep-going bridge into the final terminal bridge. The dog's love and devotion gave the word "warm" another meaning. It now means "hot".

Both previous cases had one thing in common. The happy cheering of the handler came at the exact moment when the dog was still full of enthusiasm to work. He was not giving up, maybe he just needed some confirmation that he was on the right track. But what if the dog is starting to tire out? What if more work is just too much for him, but the handler just needs to push him to the goal without using treats? In that case – what can this "Yaaay, gooo, good boy, hooraaaay!" mean for him? Maybe we just realized, what cheering for the runners at a race looks like. Let's imagine an athlete named Karel, who is participating in a 5 kilometre run for the first time and not good in pacing himself. To date he only took part in shorter and faster races, but for some reason he is now in a different race – and he is yet to find out, how difficult and demanding it is. The first couple of rounds he is running at a pace he is used to. He is ahead of the group and his friends cheer: "Karel is a star! Karel is our star! Karel is the best!" Karel is full of energy and the cheering is confirmation for him that he is doing well. So he keeps the fast pace... and suddenly his muscles start tightening up. Karel slows down, moves his legs with difficulty and his competitors start to catch up. His friends react: "Karel, don't slow down, you can do it!" This helps Karel to pick up his strength, maybe he is a bit flattered the people believe in him. He starts to stretch his hurting legs, but his competitors simply catch up. "Go, Karel! Go, Karel!" The cheering is beginning to transform into a directive command. The finish at last, but the competitors are passing Karel, who is dead tired. "Karel, you have to! For your people, for your country! You owe it to us!" The desperate calls from the stands sound like the cracking of a whip. The only thing Karel wants now is to collapse behind the finish line, where all this will come to an end. He slowly crawls there and lies there without any desire to ever participate in a race of this nature again. Hundreds of people in the stands stopped yelling their demands to trying to which remind him of his obligations to them. What a relief. Maybe after some time Karel will try to find out his placement. But now he does not give a damn. He just wants to have some peace.

^{3*} Maybe you are asking yourself why this dog is not continuing his work after praise like the dog, who had a click without reward during heelwork. Well, the reason might be the click during heelwork might be something beneficial, but it doesn't add emotions and invitation to play into the process. To cheer in a situation, when a dog is doing some behaviour on command – that is an emotional reward and that, according to the logics of positive training ends the previous "training dialogue" and to start a new dialogue we will need a next cue.

Just notice, that the cheering from the stands confirmed he was doing everything right, when Karel was running at top speed. It was a keep-going bridge like the one we want to have with the animals. The more he was losing his strength, the more aggressive the encouragement was from the fans. The spectators took the responsibility for Karel's performance on the track. "We shall push you there, even if you don't want to go!" In spite of the rising pressure Karel cared less for the result. He stopped doing it to gain something for himself. It stopped being a positive reinforcement. He just wanted to please and to have peace. The power, that was pushing him forward, wasn't his will, but the will of the spectators. And I have a feeling it wasn't very pleasant for him.

It can be quite similar with dogs performing in training or in a competition, that includes a long succession of exercises. If they are starting to tire, their handler pushes them to the end with their happy cheering. **The dog doesn't speak Czech and so does not know what the words mean.** But he can read emotions quite well. So they can interpret the same "Yaaay, good boy" not to mean "Karel is the star" but rather "Karel, you have to, you owe it to us!!!" Maybe you think the athlete from the example wouldn't even make it to the finish without the intensive cheering. But how willing is he now to repeat the race? How willing will he be to use the required pace with enthusiasm in the future? And mainly – why was the cheering so aggressive in the end? Because **he was not ready** for the five kilometres! He has never been in a race like that and he had no idea what to expect. If he had been prepared, there would only be the "Karel is a star!" cheering. The only correct keep going bridge in my opinion.

At this point I would like to once again compare dogs with the non-dog animals., In my experience I cannot imagine a single non-dog animal I have trained, who I could put under pressure with my cheering and push it to finish the exercise without them becoming tired and giving up. I was lucky, because there are no rules in the zoo, which would prevent me from giving the reward, a break, using a jackpot, utilising competition training, and many other motivational elements. Luckily I could use all of these tools. It doesn't mean the trainers of non-dog animals never use emotions. But we are very careful the animal would interpret them to mean "Karel is the star! Karel is the best!" If the non-dog animal would understand the trainer's message in positive training as "You have to! You have your obligations!" it could react in the style "I don't have to! I don't owe you anything!" The fact, that some of the dogs (not all of them) probably feel these obligations, is again one of their wonderful qualities that deserve admiration.

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4* Maybe you think you can see exotic animals in circuses and other places who work if you up pressure. But I am talking about "pressure by word and through inner bond", not about pressure done with a whip or other tools. I am talking about situations, where the trainer thinks he is rewarding but in reality he is creating pressure by his urging – so about pressure you cannot see from the outside, but the more it can be felt internally.

Dog's devotion and negative bridges

In this chapter we shall look at the word a trainer uses to tell the animal "you are not doing it right". As we have already said, there are two messages that say "no". But the meaning is different. "No reward marker" (NRM, in the children's game "cold") and "delta cue" (it is not used in the game, but it would be something like "don't even try this, or...")

NRM ("cold") is just a message about fruitless effort of the animal. In the ideal scenario it would be a tool that will save his strength and stop him doing something useless that is just a waste of effort. The message is directed at something the animal is doing, not what the trainer is doing and should be helpful to the animal. So it should not come too often or be scary. And the main point – there should be a "yes" with every "no" – an alternative that directs the animal to what it should be doing. These are conditions for a good NRM for animals, who work for a treat or a toy at the end of the task, so as a result of external motivation.

And now let's imagine a dog, that does not work for a treat, but does everything just for his handler. What does this described NRM mean for him? It means "you don't have to do this for me, I don't need it from you." During the years I have seen a lot of dogs in a variety of scenarios, where I was sure that everything they did, including attacking, they did for their handler only. And the owner, who didn't understand and treated them like their end goal was just food, managed to turn it into quite a problem. On the other side, those, who can see this motivation in their dog and know how to use the right time and right way to tell him "I don't want this from you, just let go", probably gave their dog the best feedback possible. But we will go through that in the real life examples.

the delta cue is something different. As we have said already, the delta cue is never just a message about the animal and his behaviour. It is mainly about the trainer and the boundaries he sets and wants to protect. To use the delta cue correctly is a work of art. And with non-dog animals it would often be such a risk, that it isn't even worth trying. At the same time with the dogs most of us (including me) use the delta cue almost daily. Such a delta cue is the ordinary "No". Only a very few would be afraid to say such a simple word to the dog, because we can't imagine it could turn against us. Even though such cases do exist. I know one case, when the dog attacked his owner after the word "No". The reason for that was bad timing and consequences that had been happening every day. Every day, if the dog growled at anything in his surroundings, the owner loudly cried out "No!" and at the same time jerked the leash. The word "No!" inevitably became an advance on pain, created by the jerk of the leash. There was no time to do any behaviour after the word. As soon as it came, it was certain pain that followed. This performance means the delta cue is no longer a "last chance signal". After it sounded, the dog

didn't have even a split second to adjust his behaviour in any way. If the owner used this system while he was behind his dogs back, he had been safe. But one day the "No!" came in a situation, while they were face to face just a couple of centimetres apart. And I will let you guess, what happened.

There is a general belief that if we show the animal how strong we are, it ups our value in the eyes of the animal and we become the leaders and dominators. But (as I write in my book "Training is a dialogue") the leader and dominator are two different roles and they are often played by two different individuals in the animal communities. Dominator is the one managing resources using his strength and forces the others to be obedient. He is self-appointed. The others just accepted his position. The leader is the one going his own way and the others choose to follow him, because they consider it to be the best. The leader did not appoint himself, he was chosen by his followers.

But what has the delta cue and the use with dogs to do with all of this? Quite a lot. As we have said, the delta cue is information about the trainer, about his will, his boundaries and his strength to protect them. What if the trainer uses the delta cue against dog to mark his (trainer's) boundaries, but than he is not able to protect them? In that case the logical outcome is the trainer is neither a dominator nor a leader in the eyes of the dog. On the other hand – if he can preserve the boundaries in a human -dog confrontation, he is certainly a good dominator. But does it mean he also gains the role of a leader in the dog's eyes? It means the dog would have to think and say to himself: "Yeah, what a macho and how strong he is! He is stronger than me, so he can take care of me. I want to follow him. Be my leader, oh, human!" But the thing is (as again I write in my book "Training is a dialogue") the dog usually doesn't think about past events. What we teach him he learns the best HERE and NOW. And in the moment the "No!" sounded, HERE and NOW the man and the dog were facing each other like rivals. And this is definitely not a situation that automatically ensures the dog will appreciate the qualities and strength of the human instead of taking care of himself.

To make a long story short: Being able to oppose the will of your dog is not the thing that will make you the leader. The dog would not only have to be very devoted, he would have to be very reflective, with the ability to go back in his thinking. Now lets look at the cases, when the handler together with his dog cannot **oppose somebody else's will**? In the moment another person enters their world and pushes the handler and his dog to do something the handler doesn't believe in? The dog sees his daddy being nervous, he sees a third party as the source of this nervousness and also sees, his daddy is becoming somebody different under the pressure of this person. Somebody strange made him do something he does not believe in with his dog! Can such

a handler be a dominator for his dog? Yes, he still can, if he can beat the dog on the command of this third party. But can he be a leader for the dog - can he present security for the dog? My personal opinion is he cannot. In my practical lessons, I have seen situations, where **the dog saw his owner succumb to the will of another person in a critical situation**. He saw his owner not being able to give a delta cue to the surrounding environment. That he is not able to set his boundaries and protect them against the world. And so his dog starts to protect them for him. The dog took on the role of the leader and dominator in their duo. He had to, because from his point of view his own human needed it. He was not strong enough, so the dog gave him his strength. But it might be the opposite with other dogs, who stop to believe in the security of the “me and my human” duo. They start being afraid and flee the situations ruled by a third party. That is the reason I think **the delta cue and protecting boundaries against your own dog doesn't automatically make you a leader. It is much more important to show the dog you can protect your boundaries** against the surrounding world yourselves. This brings a much bigger probability you will become the leader in your duo. At least this is my opinion.

Before we finish this small chapter about the delta cue, let me mix it up a little bit. Nothing is ever black and white and it is only people, who categorize, not nature. Remember the story about Martina and Roník in the previous chapter. There was the word “Stop”, which came out as the best solution in critical situations, which brought desired peace to the dog, what did that mean for Roník? Was it just a cue for behaviour? Or was it a NRM, which told him: “Thank you but I don't need any protection from you, don't try to solve it.” Or was it a delta cue saying: “I am not letting you cross this boundary!” I must say I cannot decide, which one it was. But I know one thing for sure. Roník doesn't care about categories. He didn't have to fit in a box. He just needed to have a message that the things around are none of his business. Martina managed to use not only the training but her whole behaviour to convince him she does not need any protection. She can take care of herself and protect her boundaries alone. And so she became a good leader for Roník. Maybe even a dominator. But this time it would be a dominator, whose power is based more on recognition from the surroundings than on strength. She became both a leader and a dominator for Roník. She deserved her position and she got it without violence.

As you can see not only the dog's tolerance but mainly the dog's devotion can mess up the simple signals of the four basic bridges. Is it a reason not to use them with dogs? Definitely not. But it is a reason to use them carefully, precisely and most importantly, truthfully. I am convinced that a correctly used “no” can make a dog's life easier in many situations. Especially if he is not working for a reward, but he is trying to please his owner, fulfil his dog calling. We have to distinguish well which “no” we are just saying. If it means only “cold”, or “this is my boundary and I am not letting you cross it”. To pick the right “no” and to pass the correct message means you have to

think about the dog. And the dog deserves us thinking about him. He is thinking about his human – and more intensively than any other animal in the world. At least I am more and more convinced about that every year.

THE STORIES ABOUT DOGS AND NON-DOGS

Dog's devotion and "negative bridge"

As we have said, it is quite difficult to find a positive non-dog trainer, who could precisely and clearly use other bridges than just the "hot" (meaning terminal bridge). Trainers like this do exist and their vocabulary of communication with animals is much richer. One of these people is for instance Dr. Jenifer A. Zeligs from California State University. During the training of seals that live in her research centre she is not afraid to say not only "warm, warm", but even "cold, cold". And it is evident it helps the seals. But in order to have this system functioning, Jenifer created very precise and exact rules on how to use these messages for the seals. She uses her own special names for them. For instance she terms a soft and delicate way to say "cold" is a redirection stimulus. (More information in ZELIGS J. A. 2014: *Animal Training 101*. Mill City Press, Minneapolis, 318 pp.)



What is this signal about the animal's mistake based on? First of all this "no" can be used only if the animal knows the correct alternative and so choose this to hear "yes" – which ideally will be followed by a reward. It is just one short stop for the animal, which would otherwise go in the wrong direction. But then the animal corrects itself at once and gets a confirmation, that this time the choice is correct. Jenifer uses different bridges with a great success if she is teaching the

seals new things. For instance if the seal should find out by himself he is supposed to go to a certain place in the open run – during his searching he hears: “Yes, yes, yes, yes, no, yes, yes, yes, no, super!” (reward) The reward – a fish – after every “super” is the end goal, which is what the seal is aiming for. So the word “no” shortened the way to it. It helped him the same way as “yes” and “super”.

And now let’s go back to dog training. Something similar to what Jennifer does, can be used in similar situations with the dogs. For instance in shaping (to be precise in so-called free-shaping). I use it with my staffie Verunka and in my opinion it helps. If the dog is looking for the right answer and it is clear he is off right track, I say “no” and Verunka will go to the basic position in front of me. From there she gets the task in a simplified version, so she can succeed. (Sometime, depending on the situation, she gets the reward right away for going to the basic position). It is true this is in some details different to Jennifer’s version (the main difference being the dog returns to the basic position, so we have a default behaviour, instead of maybe going back only a step) but the meaning is very similar. In a similar way the word “no” can help, when we are trying to get rid of superstitious behaviour. If a dog is barking during an exercise, when he shouldn’t be barking, and we just wait for him to stop, he will probably be barking more for some time. The reason being this behaviour is more natural for him than the exercise. And if the dog is not sure why he didn’t get the reward, **the behaviour where he is sure of himself, will be stronger**. But if he hears a calm and non-aggressive “no” in the NRM sense, which serves to stop him at the beginning of his fruitless effort (And if the owner breaks eye contact and maybe stands sideways) a lot of the dogs will be quiet and will move to in front of the handler with a “what now” question. In this moment he is assured that this quieting down is good and he gets a task he can manage without barking. He calms down during this one and we can go on working together on eliminating the superstitious behaviour.

Both dog examples have one basic thing in common with Jennifer’s seals. Both the dogs and the seals were working for a reward at the end of the task. They did not do it for their handler. It was a training lesson and the topic of the lesson was a new exercise. Besides (and that is quite an important, difference to Jennifer’s version) the dogs didn’t get the treat right away after sitting down, but maybe **three seconds later** (or right away they received an easier more manageable task). It was simply an element of a clear and precise training. But what if we implement such a system into everyday **life, outside the training lesson**? That is a good question.

Benji and Markéta - story of dog's devotion and negative bridge



I met Markéta and Benji, a black Cocker Spaniel cross, in one of our practical lessons. Benji was one of the very active dogs, who could not take their eyes off his owner while they were training together. As soon as he understood that now they are training, he would start precisely fulfilling all the tasks. And if the task wasn't clear, he would try to find out what it was that Markéta wanted. Later we realized that this was the problem during their walks. Benji had the habit of lunging at men who walked quickly past them, if he was on the leash. It got much worse at dusk. Markéta was solving this problem methodically, but it was achieving success. When Benji lunged, Markéta said calmly but clearly the word "no" (without jerking the leash). On this word he instantly stopped and sat in front of Markéta. And he received a treat as a reward for correcting himself. This plan seemed to be logical, but it didn't lead to the desired outcome. It was the other way around. Why?

I was asking Markéta: "Are you sure he doesn't see the word 'no' as a recall command?" That can be tested quite easily. Markéta will prepare her treat bag, give Benji a couple of tasks for a reward and during the exercises, without any connection with a strange man or anything else she says "no". And Benji runs to her at top speed, sits and expects a reward. "But this is strange, I tell him 'no' so many times in normal life, if he is not supposed to do something. And he never runs to get a reward," Markéta is thinking. "Why does he see it like this during the walks?" Maybe Markéta doesn't have a treat bag hanging by her waist in normal life. As soon as the first treat comes out, Benji stiffens, his eyes popping out, and he starts working. He even offers behaviours. The question is, if he does it for the rewards. We agreed with Markéta that the treat

is a symbol of “now we are working, start offering something”. And while the treat bag was out, Benji was working and working and offering and offering. “And what if you put the treat bag away, so Benji can see it, and Benji’s reward will now be just a stroke?” The treat bag went away, Benji was stroked and all of a sudden we had a dog, who was calmly walking on leash, almost smiling and wagging his tail. I try to come near as the “bad strange man” and Benji did start running to me. At that moment Markéta does what she is used to doing - “No” – and Benji stops. But instead of the sit in front of her, he walks on and passes me curving, as if to say: “Ok, no, well, I made a mistake, that happens...” At the end of the walk he got a pat, wagged his tail and we went on.

It was clear now that Benji was working under the influence of the treats, and so offering behaviours. Unfortunately one was lunging at people. He probably wasn’t afraid of the people, he didn’t see them as a threat. But in his state, where he was working and didn’t know what to do, these strange people were the only possible stimulus. A sort of target, he could aim at and gain something from Markéta for doing so. And the word “no” became an exercise with reward. A simple and rewarded recall, the dog coerced by his attack on the men. Why doesn’t the same happen with Jenifer’s seals? Unlike Benji on his walk in their lessons their work and cues for it are ready – they never have to look for it. It is the same if I do shaping with Verunka, there is no aggression. It is in the middle of a training session, and Verunka will remain sitting in the basic position (default behaviour) for at least three seconds and often she will get an easier task instead of a treat for it. But Benji had nothing to do during the walks (It was a walk for Markéta, but for him it was a session for treats) plus he got the reward at once after the behaviour modification sit, without the short break.

But now, when the treats were gone, Benji spent his walks with Markéta in the special dog’s negative reinforcement, where the happiness together is the biggest goal and there is only so much work for everything to “be ok”. At that time it was fine he had nothing to do, having nothing to do in such a state means that now we are just enjoying ourselves. And the NRM word “no” now meant only “I don’t want this from you, don’t solve this problem, this is nothing”. This is simply a little-big dog special quality.

Matthew and Karolína – story of dog’s devotion and terminal bridge



For some years we are doing show trainings with my friend, show judge Míša Čermáková. It is training for people, who want to succeed at shows with their dogs. They want to bring out the best from their dogs, teach them to show as best they can and very often they want the dog to gain lost confidence in show environment. The group of dogs who come for the evening lessons is very colourful. From little Bichons and tiny Terriers to Cavaliers, Ridgebacks and Great Danes. With some it goes quickly, more slowly with others and it doesn't always depend on the breed. If I look at the participants at the beginning of the lesson and I see a Border Collie, I could say to myself: "She will get it in a couple of seconds," but I could be very wrong. Exactly that was Matthew. He was very clever, being a Border Collie, but so devoted it was not exactly simple to work with him.

Matthew came with a seemingly simple concern – he should learn to walk nicely in the show ring. It meant trotting around with his mama Karolína, without pulling or lagging, ideally to keep a level top-line and look forward. "That is easy," you would say. Yes, the whole show presentation is basically just two easy things – run nicely around the ring and present themselves standing for the judge (and let the judge touch them). A Border Collie should manage two exercises like that in one evening. Especially with a working dog like Matthew, who is doing Obedience with Karolína as well as are preparing for Flyball and much more at only nine

months of age. But that was the problem. Just to run or stand was too easy in his Border Collie mind. His eyes were shining: "Is that all? Should I do something else? Shouldn't I look in your eyes nicely? We are doing eye contact all the time and now it is training time. So I must work, offer and look into your eyes. No doubt about that!"

It wasn't easy to explain to him, that he should only be running. Many other dogs, including the little Toy Terrier or the Miniature Bullterrier understood, but Matthew kept passing Karolína, closing her in and keeping eye contact. "Karolína, please, let me take him for a moment, I will try to teach him with a target," I dared to ask the owner to let me have the dog, which is something I don't do. "This cannot be difficult," I kept saying to myself. I got the treats and with them I should logically have Matthew... but he didn't want to take treats from me. If Karolína sent him to me, he was willing to touch the target once and maybe eat one treat, but then he went back to his mama. It didn't look like he was afraid. Simply – the treats from me were not the same as the same treats from Karolína. So we arrived! We have a dog, who is functioning like the strangely devoted and eager Honza from the first chapter. This creature is not working for treats, but for the satisfaction of his human. So it is no surprise he couldn't understand what the Miniature Bullterrier beside him is already just polishing. This Bullterrier is working for treats and we treat him accordingly. Matthew functions differently – for the satisfaction of his human. And so we must treat him in a different way.

And Matthew became the first dog in my practice that made me tell his owner: "Put away your treats in a way he would see that you don't have them and then just click and don't reward." Well, to be honest, it was Karolína who came up with that, when she came to the lesson the next week – she said this way works better. And it was true. For this simple task of trotting calmly beside his handler, looking forward and not making up anything, the clicking without treats was the best for Matthew. At that moment the clicking became a simple message that the action he was doing makes Karolína happy. There was no need to invent anything else. They were simply here, calm and happy together. Maybe the best situation this Border Collie could wish for. But if we needed Matthew to be active and think and offer, Karolína would put her treat bag to her waist and every click was followed by a treat. The not because Matthew was eager for treats but because the treats signalled "now we are working, thinking and offering".

One interesting comment. Matthew was not Karolína's first Border Collie. On the contrary, at that time he lived with two older dogs of the same breed. I often saw them together with Karolína at different events and I know what they were capable of. But he was the only one out of those three and Karolína's first, whose strong devotion made us change standard positive training procedures. He made us understand a clicker for him is not a message about a treat, but

mainly about the opinion and satisfaction of his handler. And this book is exactly about dogs like this and for their owners.

BEHAVIOUR

Do you know this joke? A fresh university graduate starts his first job and his new boss is instructing him: "Here is a broom and you will sweep the hall." "What do you mean," the graduate objects: "I am a university graduate!" "Oh, I forgot, so I will show you first how it is done," replied his boss.

If we compare animal training and the work of an employee we will find many similarities. For instance the "tit for tat" exchange – the animal does a behaviour (like the employee does his job) to get his reward (the employee gets his salary). As with the employee the animal needs to see a reasonable ratio of the work and reward. It is not only the case of receiving more energy by having the treat than he used doing the behaviour. It is also the question of the assigned job being in accordance with the social status and qualities of the employee – for the animal it is his place in the hierarchy. And the task must not mean any physical or psychological harm. Most of the employees will also refuse to do a job, which could mean bodily harm to them (if they have the choice).

Let's go a little bit further in comparing the animal in training and the work of an employee. What will the company employee in Prague (the capital of Czech Republic), with a lot of job offers, do if he is not satisfied with his job? He will not slave and he will go off to find another job. The relationship between him and his boss is the relationship of two free beings, who agreed to cooperate for some time and to the benefit of both sides. A good training relationship with an animal in the zoo should be similar. At least in the beginning of the cooperation the only bond between the trainer and the animal is mutual benefit.

But what will a company employee from a Middle-of-Nowhere village do, if there is no other work around? Or the employee, who has inviolable obligations to his company? He will bear having a low salary and humiliating health harming job. His is linked with his company in a way that **he cannot leave**. Well, if the employee from the Middle-of-Nowhere village would be brave enough, maybe he could leave. At the cost of nerves and big drama he will leave the moment the situation in the job is really unbearable. Even if it is difficult, he might be able to do it after all. To end the disadvantageous connection with his company is still easier for the employee from the Middle-of-Nowhere village, than for many dogs who can not to end a bond with an exploiting owner. Reason being that unlike the dog the Middle-of-Nowhere village employee is not connected with his company by thousands of years of history and intentional selection.

BALANCE INDEX IN THE GROUP OR DEAL EXCHANGE



Ten years back we prepared a performance with a group of lemur kata. The biggest challenge was one trainer had to manage to evenly distribute tasks and rewards in a group of sometimes as many as ten male lemurs. If you think the lemurs would just patiently wait at their stations until it was their turn, you would be very mistaken. Lemurs, like all other normal wild animals, are not at all interested in the will and wishes of the ruler of the universe. They haven't read any books about humans being the master of all living things and in their run they are free. But they might like to have the treats in the treat bag that the trainer has and they try to figure out how to get them. If they find out it is not possible to steal the treats, they start to think about how

they can earn them. There are ten lemurs and only one source **so competition is inevitable**. The lemurs just start to “make deals”. What does making deals look like in the human world? The ones who are on solid ground get the best deals. And it is totally the same with lemurs.

What does a good deal mean? It is not only about how much you get for doing the job. An important thing could be if you know the job well so it is easy for you. If you don't have to think much to do the job, you may agree on a smaller reward – it is easy peasy for you. Of course it is not only the mental side, it depends on the physical demands too. And last but not least there are the dangers of the deal (physical, financial or others) that might be decisive for you. If it is a new business and there are no guarantees that you will not get hurt, an experienced routine worker may pass it on to the newbies. Let them prove themselves and take the risk. Only after everything is clear, will the routine worker possibly step in.

Believe it or not, our lemurs use the same logic. This enabled us to prepare a methodology that was later called the Index of Balance, IB. The main idea used the deal distribution as described with the human employees. The chance the particular lemur will do his behaviour in the given time is based on the following four variables:

- 1) If he knows the behaviour (K, knows).
- 2) How big is the expected reward (R, reward).
- 3) How difficult the behaviour is for him, for instance how far he is from the source of the rewards. (D, difficulty).
- 4) How big the danger is, mainly the danger to be assaulted by other members of the group (PA – potential to be assaulted).

The four variables have been given numerical values (see appendix) Because it is based on logic that the lemur will do the behaviour the more he knows it (K) and the bigger reward he expects (R),. On the other hand the difficulty (D) and risk (PA), lower the probability. We simply calculated it $IB = (K \cdot R) / (D \cdot PA)$. The number we got for every lemur was always the highest for the dominant individual for the duration of the performance. The other members of the group were lower in number which was in accordance that lemur's social status.

The form of IB model for group training

$$IB = (K \times R) / (D \times PA)$$

K – Does it KNOW the behavior?

- 0 – not at all
- 1 – only basic steps
- 2 – knows, but not under „stimulus control“
- 3 – behavior is under „stimulus control“

R – expected REWARD (In fact the R is relative according to the hierarchy position of the animal)

- 0 – no reward
- 1 – not the favorite food
- 2 – ordinary part of daily feed ration
- 3 – ordinary reward (not common in the daily feed ration)
- 4 – „bonus“ – for us „weak jackpot“

← INCREASING PROBABILITY →



SPECIFIC FOR PARTICULAR



INFLUENCES WHOLE THE SHOW (or TRAINING)



D – DIFFICULTY (also control over resources)

- 1 – zero (very high control)
- 2 – small (high, but not the maximum of control)
- 3 – middle (middle control)
- 4 – high (small control)
- 5 – extremely difficult or impossible (no control over resources)

PA – POTENTIAL to be ASSAULTED

- 1 – no potential
- 2 – only if conditions will change
- 3 – actual, but very small
- 4 – actual and big
- 5 – actually „deadly threatened“

← DECREASING PROBABILITY →

Rules of using IB model:

- 1) Every behaviour of every animal must be understood to be a part of a complex group behavior. We are training the group, not only one individual.
- 2) This group behavior stays and falls with trainer's control over the dominant member and even small, almost insignificant changes in our control over the dominant animal will lead to bigger changes in subordinate members of the group. When seeing trouble in behavior of any submissive lemur, this is often caused by loss of our control over the dominant animal.
- 3) To have a well-balanced group behavior **IB has to be the highest for the dominant animal and decrease for the rest of group with their decreasing hierarchy status.** If

the IB for more submissive animals is higher than for more dominant animals, this will probably lead to less effectively maintained group behavior.

4) We can establish 4 variables directly influencing the success of each behavior. Where two of them (K, R) increase and two (PA, D) decrease the probability that the behavior will be maintained. Two of them (K, D) are also specific for each behavior in the show, but the other two (R, PA) are more specific for the animal than for the behavior. That is why the actual value of R and PA will influence every behavior of each animal during the show.

5) All the actual values of those variables for each animal we can simply identify from a group behavior, where the highest number of group members can participate in one moment (we say the behavior has "the highest capacity"). For example when positioning lemurs around trainer there is capacity or in other words a total of 6 participating animals in one moment. In a behavior where there is one animal participating, say for example the lemur closing himself inside the transport box there is a capacity of only 1 animal.

To be clear I will present an example. At the beginning of the performance the trainer enters the



indoor cage and six lemurs will sit around him. Pancho, Motorka, Ovistiti, Itampolo, Jeník (black lemur) and Sancho (an old lemur with the same name as the llama which we spoke about already). If we let them compete for the reward, only Pancho would win and the others would run away and maybe even get hurt in the fight. More importantly – no one else but Pancho will ever receive the reward. If I want to have all the lemurs working together, I have to distribute the rewards in a way that works. I take it that all the lemurs know how to sit in their places (the same K), they expect the same reward (they have the same R). In this calm situation there is a small probability of attack (same low PA). So the thing that makes the difference must be the difficulty and

distance from the source (D). With a clever placing of lemurs at the right distance from the trainer and on different branches we create a situation where Pancho has the highest number (9) and so he will leave the other five animals alone. Their deals are simply worse and he has got the best one.

The whole performance was about ten minutes long and the lemurs did a variety of behaviours including distance jumping, hanging their head down from a rope, rotating in the air on a improvised line, solving puzzles and closing themselves in a pet carrier. If Pancho was doing his task, there was no need to “give a deal” to another lemur. Who would like to take away the job from the number one in the group anyway? But if for instance Ovistiti (number two in the group) would be getting “his deal”, we had to give Pancho a deal that was more interesting from Pancho’s point of view. An activity with a higher IB value. If I wanted to give a job to Itampolo (3 - 4 in the hierarchy) I would have to give a better job to Pancho, Ovistiti and Motorek at the same time. And you don’t want to know what I would have to do to enable Šošolík, the outsider of the group at that time, to work for a while. For most of the performance he was just sitting aside and waiting for leftovers. The moment something new appeared in the run that was a promise of food and danger. For example, an undisciplined visitor with food in his hand was Šošolík’s moment. The fear of a strange and untested source made the experienced lemurs let Šošolík have a go at it and watch from a distance to see the new threat was going to kill him.

The Index of Balance in the group (IB) proved itself to be the way to manage the training of whole groups of animals. We used the same method with deers, wild horses, sea lions in two different zoos and macaques in a research institute. In all these places the system helped. If there was a problem, it was enough if the trainer or keeper calculated the IB index for the members of the group at the time the problem occurred. If he found that the dominant individual had a lower IB than the subordinate individual this usually was a problem and the situation had to be changed to ensure that the IB value was in accordance with the position of the individuals in the group. Simply to make sure that the old dogs receive the best deals^{1*}.

^{1*} The calculation of the index of balance is done in detail in my first book “Training Is a Dialogue”, you can find the abbreviated version on www.trainingisdialogue.com. In professional circle of animal trainers it was published in magazine Wellspring, see the list of literature: SUSTA 2011: *Balance Index for Group Behaviors – A Mathematical Way of Finding “Where is the Trouble”*. Wellspring3,4/12 (2011), the ABMA magazine: 24-31.

Dog's devotion and IB index

Of course the logic of the index of balance works with the dogs as well. We have used it when an owner was trying to work with a whole group of dogs at once or when there were problems in a multi-dog household. A typical example is a situation, when two bitches get along fine at home, if they are at home alone and without their owner. As soon as the owner returns, there is competition and tension between the dogs. At this point the lower positioned bitch receives favour from the owner (gets a higher value IB), and the result is conflict. A typical example is also the story of Bounty, Twixie and Tereza in my first book ("Training is a dialogue"), where I explain the methodology of the index of balance in detail.

On the other hand groups of dogs have a lot of specialities in this area. I have in mind the attributes inherited from their wild ancestors, for instance different levels of managing different tasks by different individuals, the different role of males and females, the ability to function and even sacrifice themselves for the good of the pack and so on. A certain analogue of these can be found with many social animals. I do not mean the different inbred traits of breeds (for example the some breeds have an ability to cooperate in hunting and others are more competitive or dogs bred for protection). These can be easily understood.

The very strange thing about the training of a group of dogs is the owner often tries but fails to recognize the dominant individual. "Both obey in the same way. When we train, they both function well, and if we are at home, there is no conflict. So how can I identify the dominator to do it correctly and give him the higher index?" I get this question often. Usually I have two answers. The first and basic is: "If you don't have a problem at home, then don't look for it. Be happy you have nothing to solve and don't worry." And the second answer: "If you want to see which one of the dogs is more dominant, you can see with food. Give them just one bowl of food. Which one will eat?" "I know that for sure. That would be Brit!" This could be the answer. "Brit always eats all Alan's food and Alan even steps aside. But I don't have a feeling Brit would be the leader of the pack in our home. He usually watches to see what Alan will do."

In the case, the owner of Brit and Alan totally misunderstood two definitions. Dominator and leader are two different roles. Yes, sometimes an animal can be both, but often this is not the case. From the point of view of science a dominator is the one, who controls the resources, so he has better food, sleeps in a better place and so on. If an individual has the role of a dominator, he has to have some sort of supremacy. But that alone is not enough. The other individuals have to allow him the right to own the resources. If we realize this, a dominator in a group of well-behaved dogs can be a naughty puppy. The one going in everybody else's bowl and annoying them and they tolerate it, simply because the puppy is of age that this kind of his behaviour is

still tolerated. But his **role of a dominator** (even if a dominator because his age allows him to be stupid and annoying) has nothing to do with the role of a leader. While the dominator is the one who is self-elected and has as such imposed his role on the others, the leader was elected by the others and they voluntarily follow him. Leader is the one the whole group follows. The above-mentioned index of balance (IB) doesn't work with a leader (by the way. It is much more difficult to identify a leader in a group of animals than a dominator). Index works only with the role of a dominator, the one who enforces the best access to resources.

"Fine," somebody might say, "let's say that because Brit claims the little bowl with food we establish he is the dominator in relationship with Alan. But how come they both obey so well without me having to solve their relationship?" The reason is Brit and Alan are not that motivated to work for treats during the training. Yes, they might be getting them as a reward, but their handlers will and authority plays a big role. This is something I could definitely not use in the group of lemurs. The lemurs worked in the mode of positive reinforcement and the goal of their effort was the raisins in my pocket. The access to the raisins made them compete, that was the direction of all the deals we generated in accordance with their social hierarchy. Brit and Alan function in this special dog's negative reinforcement? What if the treat isn't the main motivation, what if the goal is mutual happiness in the shape of "Brit, Alan and daddy are happy to be together?" Yes, in that case they will be functioning separately for themselves during the training. In this case you cannot steal deals because you cannot earn more. This happiness of being together when everything is done and all tasks are fulfilled cannot be given in bigger or smaller amounts. This is simply not a deal, where you try to earn as much reward as possible with as little work as possible. So with Brit and Alan you recognize the dominator only in the moment, when the bowl of food is placed on the floor. But you cannot see it if they are working for their owner.

A dog's devotion to his owner can disrupt the index of balance IB in one more way. According to the rules you can use it only if the members of the group are competing for the same resource. With the lemurs it was the treat bag with the raisins, with sea lions it is the bucket of fish, the macaques in the research institute had a bag of biscuits. But how will it look with dogs in the training facility if each one has his own handler? In this case each one of them has his own source of rewards – and this doesn't have to be food, it can be a toy, a pat, anything. Plus some of these dogs will function in the positive mode and some in the special dog's negative mode I have illustrated. While these dogs work with their handlers, there is no use measuring the IB. The conditions are not met, everyone is working for their own rewards, their resources are not the same. But give these dogs have one common mystery resource apart from their handler and up to this point will cause unexpected things to happen. It could be a toy with a strange hiding

person that the dogs are supposed to find, a common agility parcours or simply just treats from a complete stranger. In this moment it is a common resource for all of them and it is very probably possible there will be relations and hierarchy that occur that nobody knew existed. This is another special thing about dogs in comparison with non-dog animals – their devotion to their owner can hide what happens between them and other dogs – keeps it covered and invisible for a long time.

DOG'S TOLERANCE AND INDEX OF BALANCE

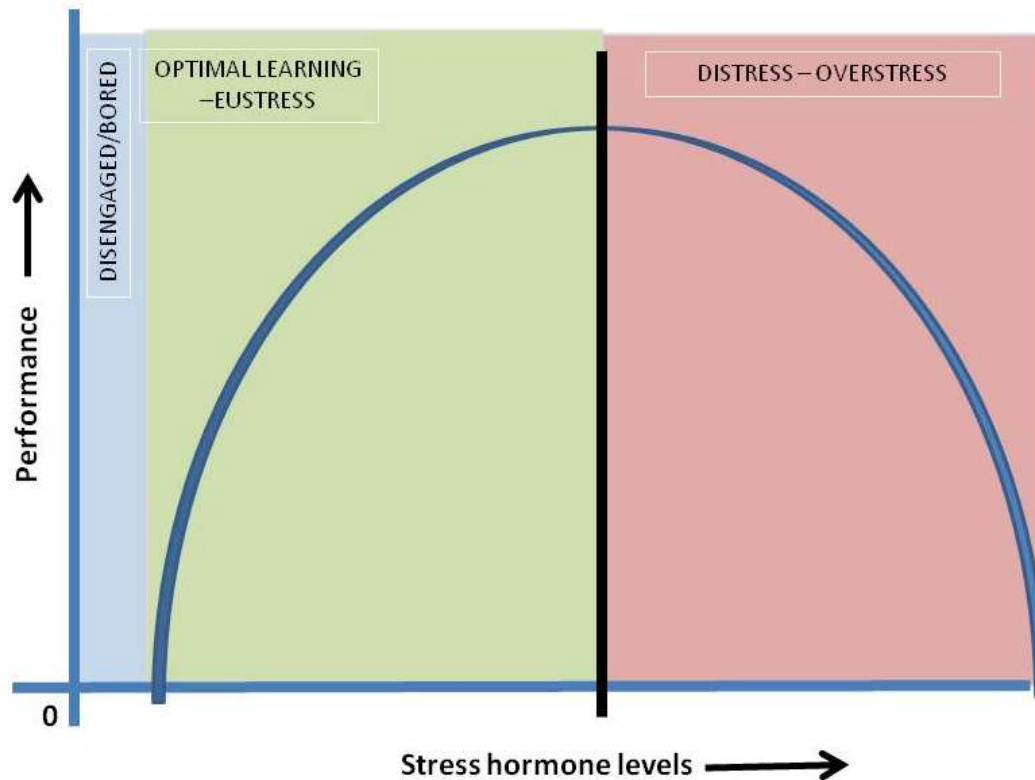
Do you know, what happened in the group of lemurs the moment we accidentally broke the IB rules? For instance - if Pancho got a task with a lower IB, than the lower positioned Ovistiti was doing? Yes, your guess is right. Pancho lunged at Ovistiti and chased him away. Anyway it didn't bother Pancho. From his point of view he only rectified the injustice and now – let's go on. But from this moment Ovistiti was clearly more careful. And do you know, what would happen in the group of sea lions if the trainer would clearly do something in favour of the weaker female against the dominant male? The male wouldn't even have time to attack the female – the female would probably refuse to cooperate in such an unjust training and leave. Please notice, that in both the cases the dominant individual is in no way suffering because of the trainer's mistake. Either he will correct the mistake by his attack or the "unjustly in favour" weaker individual will correct it. But will it be the same with dogs? The point is that with the sea lions or the lemurs it is not possible for the trainer to use his authority and say: "No, no, you naughty sea lion (lemur)! A good sea lion (lemur) doesn't growl at his buddy!" Our will doesn't mean anything to them. These animals communicate freely in their group. But if I have two dogs, who really train for treats, want them and I create an unbalance between them? The dominant individual will try to correct this by chasing the weaker away and he will hear from me: "Don't do that, no, bad dog!" He will try it a couple of times and he will find out this is not allowed, so he will stop doing it. It this dog changes work for rewards into the strange dog's R- in the style of the peculiar Honza, in the end it will be probably alright. But if he stays in the positive mode and has to control himself, while one social injustice is followed by another, we can ask ourselves the classical question I have heard so often: "What happened with the older dog, he looks so troubled and he is not happy about the training any more?" Well, the happy training became a self-control thing and one big injustice for the dog hierarchy. The dog is forbidden to solve it himself (unlike the animals in the zoo) and so in his endless dog's tolerance he just bears the situation. But the downcast feeling inside accumulates. It would certainly help to adjust the training so this dog has a higher IB than the subordinate individual.



During my years in the zoo I experienced only once the dominant individual would not deal with the unjust behaviour of the trainer by himself, but went away to suffer quietly. It was the attribute of the South American coati named Dind'a. For some years we did the coati performance in their display as in the case of the lemurs. It wasn't a male group, but a mixed group of both males and females. Dind'a was clearly a dominant male and he controlled all the food. If you put a couple of bowls with food on the ground, Dind'a would always take the one closest to him and when he picked out and ate the best pieces, he went to take the goodies from the bowls of the other members of the group. And they would politely step aside. Also during the performance Dind'a was the one, who owned most of the work and the rewards for it. But even if Dind'a was a dominator, with the ladies he was a gentleman. Yes, everyone stepped away from the bowls, but if I rewarded the females with handfuls of nuts during the training, when it was Dind'a, who should get the reward, he didn't attack anybody. With a suffering expression he left the training and went to sulk into the depths of his coati house. He came out after a minute or so later and if I wouldn't correct my mistake and didn't give him a job with the highest IB at once, he would leave again. And this time he might stay away for good. He wouldn't dare to chase the females away from my hands, but he **seemed deeply hurt by this injustice towards the hierarchy**. Dind'a was the only non-dog animal from all those I knew, who showed a similar tolerance of the trainer's "social injustice" as a dog. Dind'a did however let me see sooner and much more clearly how he felt, unlike many dogs, who carry and accumulate their feelings inside.

STRESS – THE EVER PRESENT PLAYER ON THE FIELD

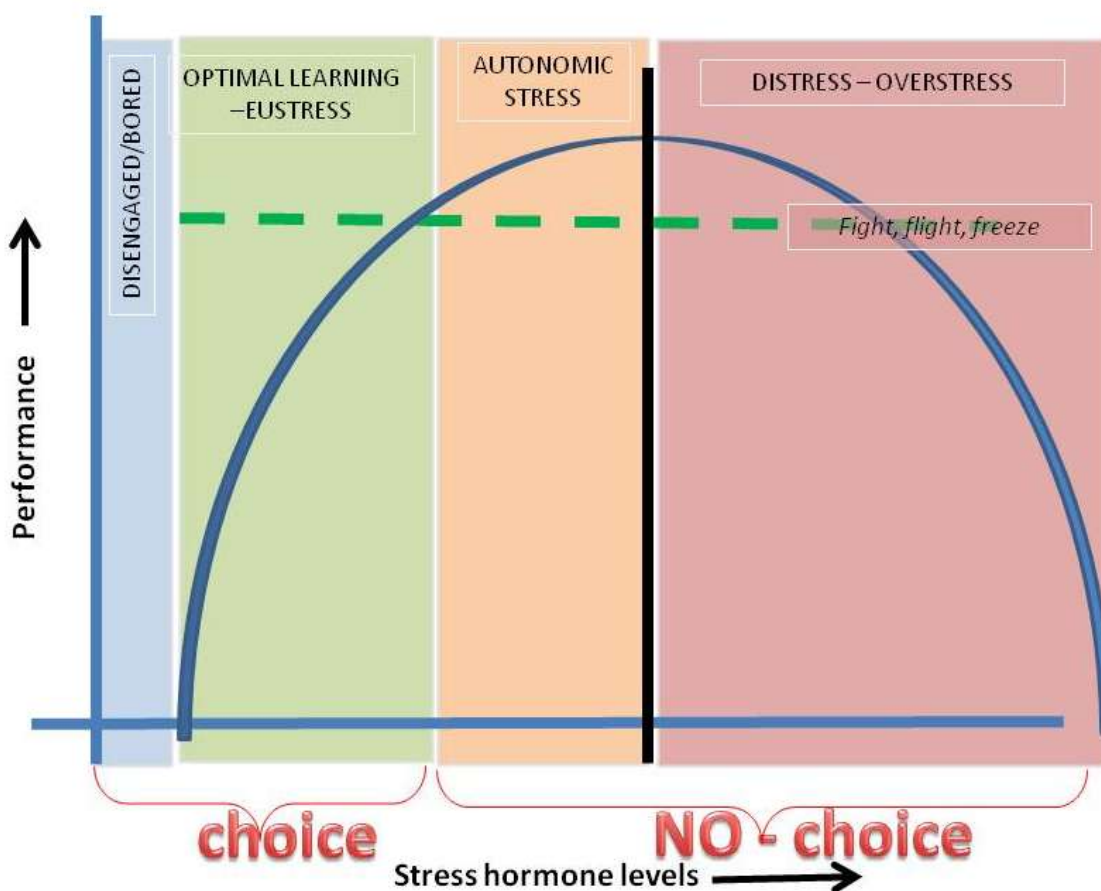
In both my previous books (see websites.trainingisdialogue.com) I have covered the theme of stress during training. From my point of view it is one of the most important things when you communicate with the animal. Stress influences whether the animal will understand you, how long he can go on working and often what his reaction is like after the cue. Stress is a sort of gray eminence, which is in everything and will influence anything during the training. But unlike the gray eminence from the human world, stress will usually let itself show openly. And mainly – we can work with it in a way that it will work for us.



Mainly because in the previous books (“Training is a dialogue” and “Training is in the head”) I have written so much about stress, I will just shortly go through the basics (more you can find on webside www.trainingisdialogue.com). Let’s look at the so-called Yerkes-Dodson’s curve. Stress is actually the reaction of the organism to pressure. And it is not at all true that all stress is harmful. This is exactly what the Yerkes-Dodson’s curve shows. The first phase of the stress reaction is the so-called **eustress**, so a time when the performance of the animal under pressure (plus the growing level of stress hormones) is growing. During eustress the animal is able to “think” about things and control himself. The people are in eustress most of their lives and we might even enjoy it – it is the phase when our body produces adrenalin, the blood flows in our veins and we feel this is the real life. If I go jogging, I do it because I want to experience eustress. When a child is unpacking his presents under the Christmas tree, it is usually quite high in eustress. Under the level of eustress, it is actually boring. But as the pressure on the animal increases (or it gets longer), his performance in eustress is gradually weaker and it transforms into so-called **distress**. Distress is the phase where the performance of the animal drops. But it doesn’t drop because the animal calms down. Rather because physically he is in a state of collapse. An animal in distress cannot control himself, he doesn’t react to voice cues, he is simply trying to survive. With the dog the distress shows itself similarly as it does with other animals – bulging eyes, panting, often shaking, legs giving way, sometimes even collapsing on the ground. Some explain this situation as the dog finally understanding and succumbing to the will of the

leader. But that is a mistake. The organism of the dog in the situation of distress simply cannot go on fighting. That is all. No more, no less.

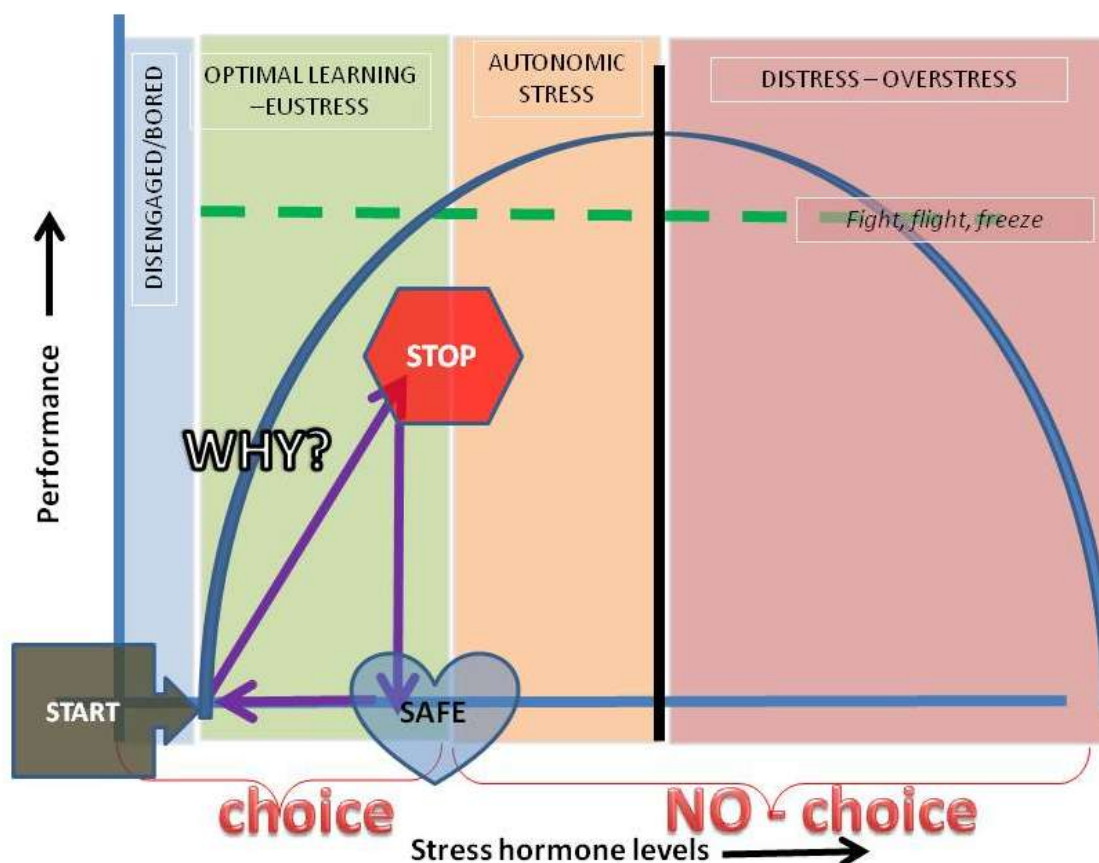
In the modern animal training with operant conditioning (where, as we said, the animal learns from the consequence of his own behaviour) **we always try to keep the animal in eustress**. In eustress only he can perceive himself and learn from his actions. But it is not enough to stay in eustress. You must not cross the imaginary line close to the top of eustress, the so-called line **FFF (fight, flight, freeze)**. That is the line, when the performance of the animal still goes up, but he doesn't listen to cues.



The Czech dog people call the crossing of the FFF line simply: "He is overexcited". In practice it means the dog is thrashing about on the end of the leash, trying to run away or attack the intruder and he doesn't listen to the handler. The dog can get overexcited when he sees another dog behind the fence. Another time he can get overexcited if he sees the helper during protection training, if he hears shooting, if he sees a running game... But a lot of dogs can get overexcited by a couple of unsuccessful training trials in a row. To keep the dog under this threshold we have to pay attention to his signals and give him the opportunity to inform us about his inner feelings.

Ask him and ourselves four basic questions and if he is able to answer these we will keep our training under the FFF line.

We are talking about four **questions of the so-called Stress triangle the dog needs to have answers to** - **START** (How will I, a dog, show I am ready and prepared to take the load), **STOP** (How will I, a dog, show my stress hormone level is too close to FFF and we have to stop, or I cannot control myself), **SAFE PLACE** (In what place or body position will I, a dog, calm down, slow my performance and lower the stress hormone level), **WHY** (What is the reason of this training, what will I gain). The first three questions (**START**, **STOP**, **SAFE PLACE**) have their place on Yerkes-Dodson's curve. Ideally a calm and relaxed animal gives the signal **START**, he says **STOP** close to the FFF line and he looks for a **SAFE PLACE** when his stress hormones are high and his performance drops. If he lowers his stress hormone level and be relaxed, he will ask to have **START** again and so on. If we connect these three points on the curve, which actually show the ideal inner state of the animal, we get a triangle. Me and my friend Gabby Harris (the co-author of this concept) started calling it "the stress triangle".



In my former working place in the zoo all our work with non-dog animals was based on giving them answers to all those questions all the time. What will I do if I want to make a gray parrot used to a new object? It was unthinkable I would just put a big pine cone in his cage in the office.

The gray parrots are very conservative and if something he is not happy about suddenly appeared in his home he would be pretty nervous from this time on. Maybe he even wouldn't be able to past the cone to get to his water bowl, so he would go thirsty. Our parrot would even pluck his feathers or peck his own leg only because there was an unexpected and unwanted gift in his cage. He had to get used to his new toy outside the cage. But not very far from it, so he can return inside in case of crisis. The cage was his SAFE PLACE and that cannot be disturbed. Not even people would feel safe in a house, where suddenly a ghost appeared.



Our African gray parrot, let's call him Artuš, was getting to know his new toys on the open door of his cage. It looked like this: We open the door and Artuš comes out and sits on their left edge. In those years we came to an agreement (or rather we practiced that) that if he got on the left side, he is saying "I am ready" So he declares START. For me as a trainer it is a signal I can take "the terrible pine cone" to a reasonable distance and if Artuš will stay at his place, I will confirm

his correct behaviour with a terminal bridge (see previous chapter) and put the cone away. And a reward comes for all of this. If the parrot had a feeling “the terrible pine cone” is flying at him too fast, he will simply move a step to the right. This is a signal for me to stop the training for a while and put the cone away. (but no reward for Artuš this time, there is no reason to give it.) We continued only after the parrot moved back to the left side of the door by himself saying this way clearly START the next training. So how did Artuš answer the questions of the stress triangle? START – Artuš stands on the left side of the cage door. STOP – Artuš moves even one step to the right. SAFE PLACE – in the cage. The safe place is also on the door of the cage anywhere but the left side. Until Artuš himself returns back to the left side of the door, he has time off in the training. The question WHY – because of the rewards from the hand of his trainer. But no reward in the world could make him voluntarily face danger. If he didn’t have answers for START, STOP and SAFE PLACE, then there is no use to answer WHY. The need of control (one of the primary reinforcers, see previous chapter) is more important than food.

All other animals that are used in zoo performances have their ways to ask for START, STOP, and SAFE PLACE and they have reason WHY they should cooperate. It is a mutual agreement between the trainers and the animals. The trainer’s obligation, basic words that will be heard sound many times during the training. It is to safeguard the animals in training to prevent them crossing the imaginary line of FFF, beyond which they would lose control of themselves. With many of them it could be actually pretty painful experience for us.

DOG’S TOLERANCE AND THE STRESS TRIANGLE

While the zoo animal trainers are trying to avoid the imaginary FFF line by all means, a lot of dog people don’t even think about it. On the contrary – for a better performance in work or competitions they use different ways to get the dogs close to this “breaking point” and losing self-control. When I met the dog people for the first time after working with non-dog animals, it was almost beyond belief for me, that somebody lets a dog bark and get overexcited before the performance, because then he is faster and more dynamic. I cannot imagine I would do that with the already mentioned fox Deny. If Deny is close to the FFF line due to the trainer’s bad work, he will pull on the trainer’s trousers with his teeth. His predecessor Eliška alerted my colleague right away by biting her hand. Why are we not afraid of something like this in the case of a working German shepherd? Why is it possible with dogs to “let’s create a drive and then we shall correct it”? If you want to stay friends with a sea lion, you have to do the exact opposite. **“First we will train the behaviour precisely and when he knows how to do it and works without mistakes, we can up his drive.”**

The answer to why this system works with the dogs is probably their huge tolerance of people. Even if they cross the FFF line there still is a constant law, something like the eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt never bite your master, even if you are on the brink insanity." And we, people, automatically rely on this law. But those, who expect it to be in the heads of non-animals as well would be very surprised when meeting reality.

You can overshoot the FFF line in many different ways during training, and sometimes it may seem quite innocent. Sometimes the trainer might think how nicely he is playing with the animal and how happy they are together... and suddenly bam! – a hoof, snout, tooth or a sharp nose digs into his unprepared body. And only because the trainer made his animal too excited or made him do too many high energy behaviours one after another. We know the so-called play aggression, aggression emerging due to the loss of self control as a result of too much energetic play. This can appear with other animals who excite quickly, for instance dolphins y. The animal may not be climbing the stress ladder only because he is afraid, but also because he is doing a demanding task. success in this training can be a great feeling, but the risk is there. We know that from the kids – they are having fun with the parent, he is tickling them, doing funny things, the child is laughing, yelling, being wild... and suddenly it is too much. If the fun is too intense, the child's body cannot bear it anymore and then comes crying. With non-dog animals the risk of being too wild with fun is losing self-control and they will do something they wouldn't normally do – like ramming into the trainer at full speed.



The demanding performance and “heating up” that can carry the animal over the critical threshold doesn’t have to be just a game. Every task or behaviour the animal is supposed to do, requires certain energy and effort from him and so he continues up his stress ladder. We are talking about high energy and low energy behaviours (I write about them in detail in the last chapter of the book “Training is in the head”) The difference is that the high energy performance pushes the animal up to the FFF line on Yerkes-Dodson’s curve (even if a reward follows after the behaviour), while low energy behaviour connected with a reward following the behaviour pushes the animal down to calmness. A wise trainer combines high energy and low energy behaviour so the animal does not pass the threshold. For instance the already mentioned llama Sancho shouldn’t jump over the obstacle three times in a row, because this is behaviour from the high energy category. Also he should never ever run across the stage twice in a row without the trainer adding a low energy behaviour in between (like standing on a wooden platform or coming to the heel position) If we didn’t stick to this rule, Sancho would lose control over himself and could easily kick the trainer, who he sees as the source of his wrong. Maybe now the reader wonders, but the racehorses and parour horses don’t have a rule like that and nothing happens. But we cannot compare these horses with Sancho. They are not running for a reward, it is not the power of positive training pushing them forward. Their behaviour is motivated with a completely different principle.

But I do know about one example we can compare with Sancho. If we are looking for a situation, where highly motivated animals are jumping over obstacles and function according to the principles of positive reinforcement, we have dog parour – agility. The dogs, whose performance is motivated by different rewards, offers maximum performance. They fulfil one task after another. And we definitely cannot say there would be a balance of high and low energy behaviour. They have to invest their maximum into the run. From the non-dog trainer’s point of view it is no surprise that the dog sometimes loses control in the middle of his run, starts to bark, rotate, tear the grass with his teeth, sniff or he just leaves the parour. But to aim his frustration towards his own handler, that is really something exceptional. I don’t say it does not happen I have seen some agility people with bruises. But if I compare it with the way it could be with a non-dog, the frequency of such situations is very low.

Even more than I did it with Sancho the trainers of sea lions have to think about the combination of high and low energy behaviour. Especially if they have a session in the water with a sea lion male. Very high energy behaviour is for instance when the animal pushes into the feet of the trainer and moves him around the pool, or if the trainer holds his back flippers and is pulled across the pool. Behaviour like that could be compared with weight pulling in dog sports, when a pitbull pulls a carriage on rails weighing a couple hundred kilograms. But there are differences. If there is an experienced trainer working with the sea lion, he will always have variability in this exercise, so the sea lion never knows how long it will take. And besides, as soon as the sea lion hears the whistle bridge and swims to the edge for his reward, the experienced trainer will let him rest, using many simple low energy exercises. Before he lets the sea lion pull him across the pool again, he needs to know the pinniped has come down from the imaginary stress hill back towards the base. Would we think similarly about the training of the pitbull who has just pulled the carriage on the rails to the finish? Some would, some wouldn't. Many dog owners don't use the system of high and low energy behaviour at all and yet the worst that happens is the pitbull runs around and is reluctant to go for another trial. With the sea lion it could be worse.



Insensitive work with high energy behaviour is not the only way an animal can increase to a higher stress level than we would like. In a similar way the stress of the animal can be affected by too many repetitions of something the animal has not learned yet or when the animal makes too many mistakes. If I work with a non-dog, my goal is not to let him grope in the dark and to lead him to the goal in a way that provides him a lot of success. In fact that is the first rule of Karen Pryor's ten laws of shaping. (Pryor K. 1999, Don't Shoot the Dog) The first rule says to us:

Raise criteria in increments small enough so that the subject always has a realistic chance of reinforcement. It is not only the question of setting moderate criteria, but also adding tasks the animal is familiar with into the training session. For instance in my previous job, the piggy Jonda (Jonatán) was trained scent detection. When training I had to hide the scent article in a way that would enable him finding it. After three “sniffing” exercises a couple of completely different tasks would be included. Tasks that Jonda knew and would not have to use too much of his piggy brain to succeed. He can switch off for a time and calm down before he has to continue thinking. Once I got carried away and used the style of work that is standard with dogs. I have sent Jonda off to the scent, he got there, marked, click, reward, heel position, sent off to a changed situation, click, reward, heel position, sent off again... the long repeating combination of a new task and high energy behaviour interspersed with only a sending to a new place (that was far away and a behaviour he didn't know very well). Simply my trainer stupidity. This went on for about four minutes in a row and suddenly I felt the pig fang on my calf. Jomnda, who has been running under my command to hell and back for a couple of minutes with effort that is not meant for a pig so he clearly let me know he really is not a dog. Jonda's right fang is over ten centimetres long – I was happy he just slightly ran it over my calf. I didn't need any more reminders.

Nevertheless dogs during training are commonly working in a system, which is much more complicated than the mentioned training with Jonatan, when it comes to not having success and using energy. Yet it is very rare a dog would remind his handler like Jonda: “I am no longer doing that; my head is not coping anymore.” Some dogs just clench their teeth and keep on working and I have to admire that. Some of them start barking and bark for a very, very long time. And many dogs use some kind of escape strategy in the situation that the pig solved by running his



fang across my calf. Dog escape strategies I have seen include sniffing the ground, endless scratching their neck and I know one dog who pretended to poop. But none of them solved their concerns by directing their frustration at their owner. A parrot would peck you in this situation, a porcupine would lift his quills, the fox would bite your pants. Be happy to have your dogs.

DEFAULT BEHAVIOUR – OR “I WANT A SAFE BET”

With the need to have the success rate as high as possible during the training of non-dogs to eliminate the crossing of FFF line there is a concept termed “default behaviour”. Well managed default behaviour with non-dog animals can be the essential safeguard of the trainer’s safety and the training success. For the animal it is a way to prevent frustration, and it means security. It is a lifeline in the sea of unsuccessful trials. To be short it is behaviour, where the animal never makes a mistake even if he offers the default without a cue. In practice it may look like this: Jonda the pig, the one I spoke about a while ago, is in the middle of training with me and he would like to earn some treats with his work. He does not hesitate and as a well- behaved piggy he will ask for work by coming to a heel position by my left leg. Nobody told him to do this, but it is his way of saying: “Franta, I want to do something.” It is definitely nicer than if he would poke my leg with his fangs. So I should reply politely: “Here is some work for you.” Maybe by sending him to find the above mentioned scent article. Jonda goes to find it (saying “I am working”) and as soon as he finds it, I should tell him with the clicker “you are doing it right” and then give him the reward. This five word dialogue is the basis of positive reinforcement training, as is written in the first chapter. But let’s say that this time I made a methodological mistake and I put the scent article among four other unscented articles. And evidently this was too difficult for Jonda. For a while he is searching, turning the articles over and due to my stupidity he will distribute the scent on his hooves all over the place – so he is not able to find the target article. At that moment it is too much for Jonda. He ends all his effort and he comes back to me, not to scold me, but to come to my left leg again. The same default behaviour he used when he initially asked for work is now his way of trying to find security. This heel position is simply something that always pays off, if all his work was so far not successful. And I have to react by clicking for his choice and rewarding him. I am happy he did it – it is better than a nudging my leg out of frustration. I reward him, throw some treats on the ground and when he comes to my left leg again, we will do a couple of easy tasks. And only after that we will try to work with the scent again, but this time I will prepare the work better.

On the imaginary stress triangle Jonda’s heel position meant START at the beginning, but after some time of unsuccessful work he said STOP and came back to my leg to look for a SAFE PLACE where he has certainty that he will earn his reward. It is demanding for the trainer, if the same body position means a different message according to the context. It is not always easy to read the message correctly. So with some zoo animals we had a couple of different **default behaviours (DB) that could be called small, medium and big**. The one needing it the most was Sancho the llama, who we have mentioned so many times. His small DB (you could actually see just like START) was looking at the trainer. Medium DB (can function as START, also as STOP

and SAFE PLACE) is the same thing Jonda has, come to the trainer's left side. And the big DB (which is just STOP and SAFE PLACE) is going to a distant wood platform which was placed at the back wall of the stage. If Sancho decided to go to this place in the middle of the training or during the performance, nobody is allowed to stop him. On the contrary, the trainers are happy about it and Sancho gets some alone time there before the trainer approaches him with a reward and another task.

The medium and big DB is even more important with a big sea lion male in the moment when he doesn't understand what he is supposed to be doing and at the same time he really wants the fish in the trainer's bucket. He weighs over 200 kilos, the trainer hardly 80. The trainer has the fish, the sea lion wants it. He has tried to earn it by doing the exercise, but for some reason it doesn't work. (He was making mistakes, but he doesn't know that.) So he just lost his patience. Luckily he has learned a DB, or it would be a very unpleasant equity: 200 kilos of sea lion vigorously snatching 3 kilos of fish from 80 kilos of trainer. No discussion. The chance of the trainer saving the fish equals zero. But if the sea lion knows a medium DB, he will try to solve the situation without violence by, for instance, facing the trainer and waiting. Most experienced trainers will understand and will react in a similar way I did with Jonatán. But if the trainer is not exactly a skilled one and doesn't understand what the animal says, there might be even a big DB – the sea lion goes to his rock and expects a fish reward for his good behaviour and new instructions thereafter. And for a contrast – let's imagine a border collie, whose owner is waiting tens of seconds with a clicker in his hand and treats by his waist for the dog to offer exactly the behaviour he wants to click and reward. But the poor animal cannot read his mind and has no clue what the trainer decided to train. And so he tries on and on, one unsuccessful trial after another. He has tried ten, fifteen times... and no click and no success. And because this border collie hasn't learned DB, he keeps on working until he is desperate and starts barking and biting the turf. Maybe he will even run away. But to take the treat, he rightfully deserves "for the effort", using violence – that is something a border collie, unlike a sea lion, won't do. But it doesn't mean the dog is not experiencing the same feeling inside that the sea lion shows very clearly. So what do you think – aren't dogs wonderful, how much they forgive us?!

DOG'S DEVOTION AND THE STRESS TRIANGLE

As you have probably noticed in the previous chapters, that while the dog's tolerance makes it easier for us, affording us our mistakes without penalty, a dog's devotion, on the other hand, means a commitment for people. Because we are working with stress, it is the biggest commitment of all. It means the trainer must manage his own stress, or rather be "calm for both". How come? Let us look at the stress triangle once more. The zone of eustress under the

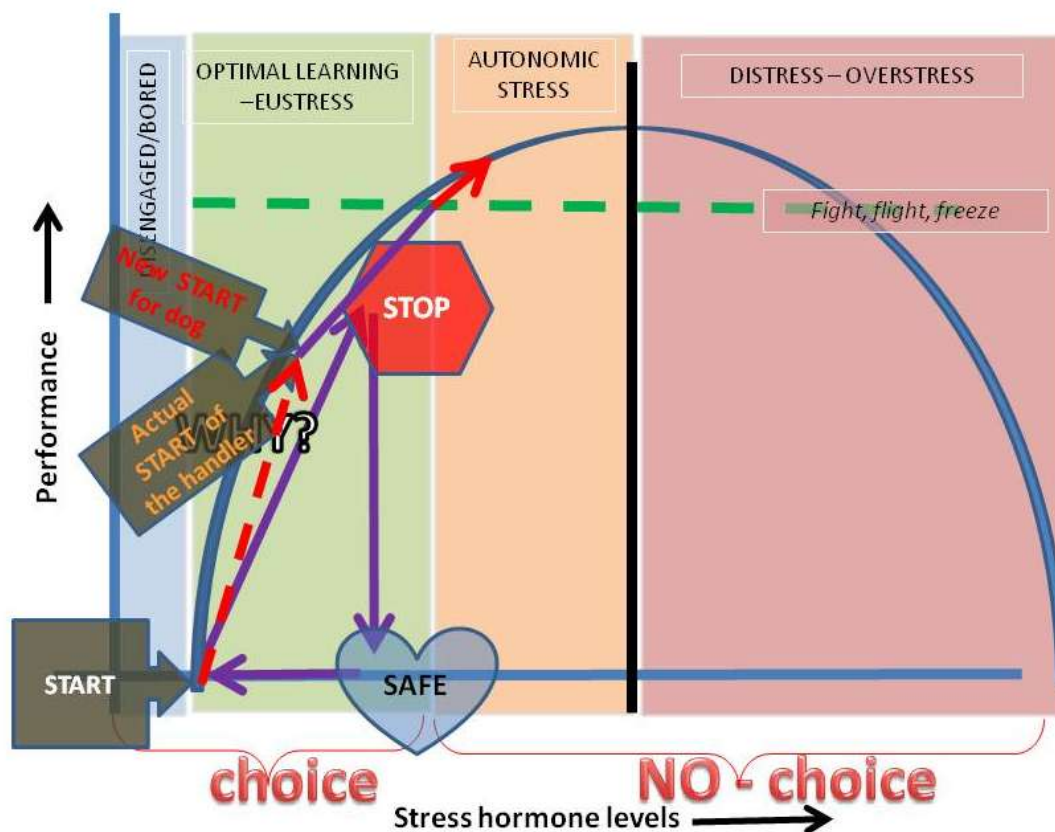
FFF line where the animal has the possibility of choice and he where he has no problem with operant learning is not exactly big. Yes. On the other hand it is this zone where most of the animals are trying to live at all times... but still there is no room to waste. So logically we need to use this space as productively as possible. The distance between START and STOP, so the moments, when the animal ask for the training to begin (START) and when it ends it (STOP), will determine the window of time that the animal is able to work. It determines the pressure the animal is able to bear. If the animal should bear as much as possible, or better –work as long as possible, we need to have the points as far away as possible. Ideally - the whole width of the zone where we want to operate. The animal always says STOP close to the FFF line, this position does not change. The change is with the START. In normal language: “To have the animal in the training as long as possible, before it asks for a pause, **in the beginning it has to be psychically as relaxed as possible.** Close to the stress hill bottom.”

As a trainer of non-dog animals I can do a lot. I will not let the animal get hungry (because hunger is stress), I will ensure the needed welfare (good conditions and peace), I will take care of his health. During the training I will ensure the animal is calm by teaching him DB well. And I will be careful especially the one he uses to ask for START is nothing that could excite him too much. That is the reason our pigs and llama ask for START by standing quietly on our left side, the parrot - by going to the left side of his cage door, the skunk looking up at us, the fox by sitting down. None of them asks for START by yelling and jumping on the trainer. We do not want them to overdo anything later. I was always focusing on their condition as much as I could.

But what about my own condition, the human condition? Where is my START in training? Am I in the same place on the stress hill that I expect the animals to be? And does this have an effect on the animal?

Yes, it does have an effect. a big effect - especially if we are trying to train our own dog. Let's imagine a trainer, who came to pass some working test with his dog. Everything has been well trained, the dog is ok, but the handler's head is full of doubts and worries. “Oh my God, the judge is this man again! What did I do to deserve that?! He will make us look like idiots again! It took so much effort. I had to get up at four in the morning and for no good, if this character is here again?” Of let's imagine a dog mama on the start of an agility parkour, competing for the team at European Championship. “I cannot disappoint the girls. Everybody is watching. If we have a stupid out and spoil it for everybody, it will be awful!” Stories like those run in the heads of people and if the dog is not a psychic, he has no chance to read them. But although the content of the story remains hidden for the dog, the impact on the handler is very obvious. A story like that in the head brings stress. A person with a dramatic story in the head starts to have signs of

stress. He is sweating, breathes rapidly, his hand, holding the leash, is shaking, he is hunched over. The dog doesn't have to be a psychic to read a clear message: "We have a problem." A man knows the problem is only in his head but for the dog the problem is real. Look, daddy is behaving like the problem is standing right in front of them. And because the dog and his human are a team, the dog leaves his calm START position and joins his handler. You cannot expect him to be hanging out and be cool, if his daddy is evidently preparing to fight for his life! The fact that the fight is happening only in his daddy's head and not in the real world is something the dog cannot see and he never will.



The problem is that as soon as the dog's stress level is the same as his handler's (or even higher), his distance from FFF becomes critically smaller. And what is the effect of this on his work? The dog will need a break sooner than he would have in training. The only reason being his handler, who clearly has a problem.

The dog's devotion can function also in another way. He will take on a task from the handler that will automatically catapult him over FFF. The dog is so devoted and wants to please so much that he will not ask for a STOP (a non-dog animal would have done it a long time ago) and so all of a sudden he is over the FFF, losing control. At the dog show he will growl at the judge, during agility he will make a banal mistake that would never occur during the training, and so on. It is

not his fault at all – it is his dog devotion. The dog has let himself be pushed into things where he was over his head and he didn't show it in time. Unfortunately, even if he is innocent, his handler sees it differently. The handler is devastated by failure and will think: "The ungrateful beast let me soak in it and ruined everything. What a selfish dog!" This is quite a sad story for me. Do you see the huge barrier that is a misunderstanding?

Of course we cannot say the level of stress in the non-dog animal trainer wouldn't have any impact on them. It definitely does. From my experience the birds of prey are extremely sensitive to the mood of people. If you are not calm, they don't want to sit on your glove and wait or they might not fly to your hand at all. The one who lives in his story in his head during the training and spoils the mood with dark thoughts gets a spit from the llama. And the saliva on his cheek will usually bring the trainer back to reality. And you can find similar parallels with most of the animals in my former working place. But there is one big difference when compared with a dog. These animals heighten the stress level just "for themselves", not for the "animal-human" team. They just react to the real fact that a nervous trainer is no longer their SAFE PLACE. A stressed trainer makes mistakes, he provides no security for the animals. His communication is bad and he pays no attention to the animal's signals. He is unreliable. He doesn't support them on their training journey the way they need support. He is **not serving them correctly, if he is in stress**. And that is a reason why they animals are nervous. They are not taking on his stress, they are just reacting to it from the position of an independent being. Their stress level is not getting higher to serve the trainer, because they don't serve anybody. Definitely not as much as the dog's devotion affects him.

THE STORIES OF DOGS AND NON-DOGS

Tazzík and Katka

I have two female dogs at home. Rozárka and Verunka. Those who come to my seminars or follow my website or Facebook page would have seen them multiple times in photos or videos. But hardly anyone from my seminar students has seen them in real life. Both girls have their jobs – which is to perform for children at schools and nursery schools. There they demonstrate various things and I would say they are quite good at it, as they are in training. I don't take them to my dog seminars because I like to fully focus on other people's dogs. Why? Not because I would not trust my dogs. In actual fact, I don't trust myself in these situations? I am kind of unsure if in the moments we need to promote ourselves in front of the dog people I would be able to be as cool and calm as I am with the children in nursery schools, training at home or how I used to manage myself with wild animals in the zoo. And I know one thing for sure. If I



am not able to stay calm and cool, both the girls will surely show me. They are a litmus paper for my stress. They would show me that your own dog, among all other animals, has his specific privileges and difficulties. And that the connection and bond we have can turn the whole of positive reinforcement training into a pretty mess.

And I have a good reason to be careful. During my travels around the Czech and Slovak Republic I often witness a very similar scenario. There is this professional dog trainer, who can always give a good advice, strange dogs love him and he has no problem training them with bigger success than their owners. But his own dog have some special problem – in spite of the abilities and experience of his owner. Quite a lot of dogs whose owners are positive reinforcement dog trainers are nervous, sometimes even hyperactive. Plus very often these trainer's dogs have a problem with dogs around them. What is the possible reason? It is definitely not the owner being incapable. In that case the owner, a professional trainer, wouldn't train other people's dogs so well and his results wouldn't be the way they are. In my opinion the frequent nervousness of the trainer's dogs is the outcome of the burden both the dog and his human have to carry – but it is only the man who logically understands. It is difficult to be an example for so many people around and risk I will by a chance show them something imperfect with my own dog. And it is difficult for the dog to be a show-case of their owner's work. Only the owner knows how important it is for the dog to provide a good performance. Dog will probably notice his

owner is strangely uptight in front of the audience. And so he joins his tension... and maybe he will find a target in his surrounding he considers to be the source of their common nervousness.

The burden of many of the trainer's dogs I have described - is a burden they carry without understanding. This is something I want to spare my dogs. I admire every professional trainer, who can rise above everything in front of his clients and function with his dog as if they were just training. I am simply not so sure about myself in these situations. And if I want to show my audience something I do with my dogs, I will video it during our training in private.

But some are very brave. Like Katka, who has been the organizer of my seminars and practical lessons for many years. She always joins the participants, her clients, with her Australian shepherd Tazzík. This is unusual even for organizers. It is also unusual that I see an owner and his dog on the other side of the country and instantly recognize who their teacher is. But I have experienced that a couple of times with people, who went to Katka, and I always enjoyed their work. I know Katka and Tazzík can do a lot of things. But the training was often influenced by Tazzík's nervousness. It often happened during their work Tazzík started barking and he couldn't stop. Typically this happened if Katka gave him too many tasks that he could not do so well and if he didn't get the reward he expected in between them. With his expression and style of work he sometimes reminded me of a kamikaze pilot – determined to jump head first into anything “for his country” without thinking what will happen to him or if he is ready for it. And as he often wasn't ready, the result of training like this was a dead end that resulted in Tazzík's barking.

What to do with that? The commonly chosen answer: “Don't let the dog think, make him work. Others have managed, so he must too. So he should be able to do this? So repeat it and in the end he will cope.” This advice and similar solutions were used, but it did not solve anything. On the contrary – Tazzík's barking got worse. It was as if he was trying to say something. Perhaps: “I am not a model case and I am not Superman. I am a normal dog, I have my peculiarities and needs and I need a tailor made system.” And so Katka started to look for this system.

My second book “Training Is In the Head” has a very complicated last chapter. This chapter is named *Little Things That Move the Mountain* (you can find a free translation on www.trainingisdialogue.com) It contains all kinds of tricks and little adjustments to keep a non-dog animal under the imaginary critical stress line (so FFF). At the beginning it says: “Whoever doesn't feel like reading this chapter can just skip it”. Many readers did. The reason is their dogs, unlike non-dog animals, forgive them these little nuances and mistakes in training. But Katka went through this chapter very thoroughly and at the next practical training she demanded: “I need to train ‘Sancho's pallet’ (meaning big default behaviour) from the last chapter with Tazzík

and also zero variety behaviour (middle DB) and I need to learn how to swap high and low energy behaviour. And yes, I also need to learn LRS (the method of trainer's reaction to the animal's mistake, which was originally developed for killer whale training). And if that is not enough, we will think of something else." And so Tazzík became probably the first dog in my practice whose owner learned to use all the "little things that move the mountain". Tazzík stopped being a kamikaze, who dives unprepared into anything, but he learned to show himself he is ready for his work by sitting by Katka's leg. Using this behaviour we could tell he was calm enough and he could be directed into the next task. Katka learned to combine difficult and easy tasks for him, so he could stop barking and continue to improve. They even had the so-called big default behaviour (they called it Sancho's pallet – like in the book) which became Tazzík's signal "I have had enough so I need to stop for a while". "Sancho's pallet" is when Tazzík lies down in front of Katka spontaneously. They even started to use an LRS in training. This seemingly complicated system evidently served Tazzík well. During the practical lessons he stopped barking and he was progressing well. I can attest to the fact that he calmed down a lot. But I think this calming down was not the result of the training system of using the lot of "little things that move the mountain" only. In my opinion the main reason was Katka learned to spare Tazzík the task of carrying the burden of "the professional trainer's dog". She stopped expecting that he will do the same as others and more. She started seeing him as a dog, who needed her help and that his barking it was his asking for that help. And she learned to say to herself and her clients and other authorities: "We are like this with Tazz, because it is the best for him." And if you ask me – this is probably the main reason for the success.

CHAPTER FOUR:

STIMULUS

There is a cruel joke in one of the episodes of the famous Monty Python's Flying Circus. Luckily the starring animal was a plush one. "Let me introduce to you the magical flying cat! This magical flying cat will, on my command, fly through the air across the whole TV studio and land in the bucket filled with water." This is the claim of the cat whisperer. "Well, that is incredible," says the TV host, "and the cat can do that herself?" "No, I will just fling her," answers the cat whisperer, holding the cat by her tail and spinning her around. As there is a cat in this joke, it is a cruel joke for us. We feel the irony when a man is handling the animal like a piece of rag, claiming the action he did himself to be a voluntary action of the animal. Somewhere in our subconscious we all know a real live cat would scratch this man and the action of scratching would be her protecting her free will with all her energy. For the next show this "cat whisperer" would probably have to get another cat, because this one would not let him catch her. If she would allow him to lure her to him (or if she would be so stupid to come herself), she couldn't expect anything nice. In the system of ABC analysis (see chapter one) A (stimulus) would be calling the cat, B (behaviour) would be the cat coming and C (consequence) would be all the following suffering – so a positive punishment. It is clear that the cat couldn't willingly let this happen again!

Did you ever think about how much dogs tolerate in similar situations? How many times do dogs come voluntarily for pain and punishment that they must have expected? And even if they experienced this scenario before, they would put up with it again and again? However, unlike the Monty Python's audience feeling the discomfort of the cat, This kind of treatment by dog people towards their dogs is often considered to be very normal. It is believed that compliance is the automatic dog's duty. And who knows, maybe dogs are one of a few animal species who see it like that.

COMMANDS AS PUNISHMENT

Let's look at a classic situation from the life of an ordinary man and his dog. An elderly pensioner spends the summer in his cottage on the bank of small Czech river. 50 metres from his garden is a weir. During the summer it is a busy place, with canoes coming in one after another (In the Czech Republic a favourite pastime to enjoy in your holidays is to go downstream in a canoe). This is not only a lot of fun for the passersby but also for the young retriever, who came to the

cottage with the man. The boat traffic and pedestrians definitely provide is more fun than sitting with the elderly man in front of the little house. There is no fence around the garden and from the front door you can see what is happening by the river. The dog leaves the home a couple of times during the day to join the canoe people to have some fun with them.

Every time the elderly man finds out the dog has vanished from the garden he shouts from the top of his lungs: "Brit! What are you doing there?! Come on!" And at that moment Brit will fall on his tummy and crawl back to his owner – He will do this very slowly and send a lot of signals that are supposed to calm down his owner. When he comes to him, he gets a proper blow across his back and an explanation: "What did I tell you? Where are you supposed to be!?" For good measure he will slap him once more. Now the owner considers his educational lesson to be finished and clear. He expects Brit not to do it again in the future.

The visitor who saw all this cannot help himself and asks: "Why don't you put up a fence, so he cannot run away?" "He knows too well where he is supposed to be," hence the answer. "Haven't you seen how ashamed he was when he returned to me?" But the dog was not ashamed for his behaviour. He was only trying to calm down his angry owner regardless of what made him angry. He might not have an idea at all it is connected with his own dog behaviour. He simply sees his owner is angry so he starts to calm him down – he crouches, slows down, starts licking his lips etc. Sorry to say his owner doesn't see that and so we have here almost the same irony we did in the case of Monty Python's flying cat. The man is convinced he taught his animal something while all the people around who have a brain in their head must see the huge abyss between what the man thinks and the reality for his animal. The difference to Monty Python skit is that now nobody is laughing and for many onlookers what they note might be quite normal. And there is one more difference – while Monty Python's cat would not let them catch her any more, Brit is coming to receive his certain punishment again and again. Day after day, for the whole July season. When the visitor comes back in August, he will see Brit tied to a chain and he will hear the explanation: "That cunning scoundrel always waited till I wasn't looking and then he ran off to the weir. You would have to beat the stubbornness out of him. And he will keep on doing it. Out of spite!"

We will not go through the ABC analysis of the situation again, probably all the readers could manage to do that themselves. We would see the paradox that for his stay at the river (he probably doesn't realize he is "at the river", he is simply playing) he has a recall – which wouldn't be a problem by itself. The real problem comes after many seconds after the recall – he gets a bashing for obeying the command and coming. Probably with every other animal this procedure that is repeated day after day would lead to the scenario, when the animal still keeps

running away, but doesn't let himself to be caught. Maybe he will even start to run in the opposite direction when his owner calls. Maybe this animal would stay out of reach from his owner the whole day, because that bash across his back came for only one reason from his animal view – "I was too close to my owner". Just this retriever Brit, like many other dogs, obediently comes several times a day to pick up his supposed "educational" two bashes across his back. As if there was no other option. It is as though he is connected in this wide and open space to his human and torturer in and the connection cannot be broken.

How this whole model defies all logic of any animal training we will understand if we return back to the information from the first chapter. We said that there are two ways to make the animal do something – positive reinforcement (R+) and negative reinforcement (R-). In positive reinforcement the animal is working to get some kind of a reward in the end. There is a dialogue between him and his trainer which consists of five words: "I want work" (says the animal) – "Here you are" (says the trainer by giving a signal) – "I am working" (says the animal with his behaviour) – "You are doing it right" (says the trainer by giving a bridge) – reward (from the trainer, the animal uses it).

On the contrary in the negative reinforcement the animal uses his behaviour to get rid of something unpleasant. Now I really have in mind the classical negative reinforcement when the animal works to get rid of a problem. Not the special "dog's modification" we spoke about in the previous chapters. If we would transfer the classical negative reinforcement into a dialogue between a man and an animal, it would look something like this: "Your problem is starting" (says man by giving a **command / stimulus**) – "So I will avoid it" (says the animal with his **behaviour**) – "Ok, you managed so I will leave you alone" (says man by removing the problem as the **consequence** of the dog's behaviour) A very simple example of classical negative reinforcement is work with the leash – handler will pull the leash, like a small advance that the pulling can be stronger (command / stimulus)... and the dog stops or changes the direction (behaviour) according to the handlers wish. And from that moment there is no more pulling (consequence)

Let's look back at our retriever Brit at the moment he is at the river and hears his owner's command to return. Does he obey under the influence of positive reinforcement, with the promise of a reward? He would have to be a masochist, who is happy to get a bash over his back. Is it negative reinforcement in the style "If you come, you won't get a beating?" That is not the case either – he got a beating because he did come! So what makes him to go and voluntarily take the beating? Where does this recall fit in all the equations of positive and negative reinforcement? From my point of view the only thing that can explain it is the strange negative

reinforcement in dog's style – do everything to have a satisfied daddy. This dog will let himself get hurt on a command and without physical pressure just because in the end he wants his owner to be satisfied. He is not punished for being at the weir; he just got a command “your master wishes that you will experience pain”. And I must say again I do not know an animal beside a dog that would obey such a command. A note - not all dogs are like that (logically).



DOG'S TOLERANCE AND STIMULUS

The world of positive training is in many ways different to the traditional way of training animals. One is what their followers must focus on and what they must train themselves to become a good positive trainer or good traditional trainer. An experienced positive reinforcement trainer usually has excellent timing with the clicker or when using another bridge. He has well synchronized hands while clicking – rewarding, and can adjust his work rhythm to the rhythm of the animal. If he is even more experienced, he knows how to work with the distance from the animal, length of the session etc. So from physical quantities the **positive trainer's domain are the speed (or rhythm), distance and direction**. But the same positive reinforcement trainer usually has a problem (at least I do) with using his own strength against the animal. No wonder. The positive reinforcement trainer does not use his strength to influence

the animal's behaviour, but he uses a different means to redirect the strength of the animal. The correct dosage of his own strength, the ability to up the intensity and in a split second remove all of it – that is the domain of negative reinforcement, the work with pressure. For us, positive trainers, it is much easier to teach the dog loose leash walking by rewarding him for endurance in the distance of two steps from the trainer. But to teach him only by stopping him forcefully if he pulls and release the tugging in the moment he corrects himself – that is work of art for us.

The truth is the systematic positive approach is a thing in the modern times. Traditional art of training animals was based more on pressure, the correct timing of that, gradation, full focus on the animal. I am repeating I am speaking about the “art” of animal training, because if someone is using pressure and at the same time he can explain to the animal what he wants without stressing or hurting him, then, by my opinion, he is an artist. Negative reinforcement and work with pressure is much more demanding than to “click and treat” in positive training.

This difference between positive and negative reinforcement is something even people who have no experience with either of those feel. We can tell by the names the followers of these styles get from their environment. The one who clips a treat bag to his waist, takes a clicker in his hand and stands in front of any species of animal is only rarely called the “animal whisperer”. With the treats and clicker he is simply a trainer and the audience see his performance as something he doesn't have to be gifted from God in order to achieve. For this he needs just a lot of time spent polishing all his skills and a lot of books he has to read. But the one who can communicate with the animal only through pressure and his body strength - that is the one who often gains the title of a “whisperer”. Maybe because he does things which an ordinary person without the gift from God would never dare to do. Well, he wouldn't dare, if the animal in question wasn't a dog.

Notice how different the tools are for positive training and for traditional dog training. At my former working place in the zoo right behind the door of the office we had a whole collection of clickers and targets, each of them hanging below the sign with the name of an animal. The clicker is meant to say to the animal he did something correctly. The target calls the animal to the trainer (that is why most of the targets in this collection rattle) and the animal touches it when he comes to it. If a trainer is to touch the animal with the target, he will do it very carefully. Don't even think about hitting him with it! Transport boxes for animals that are used during the show have a window in the back and through it the animal is rewarded for staying in the box. And the most important property of these boxes is you can open them quickly and let the animal out, if he doesn't feel comfortable inside. For a few animals in the show we have leashes and harnesses. Harness are designed so the animal hardly feels it at all. The leashes are the flexi type, because

we don't want the animal to hit the end if it is not absolutely necessary. As you see all these tools work so they don't create a conflict between the trainer and the animal. So the trainer doesn't have to use his own strength unless absolutely necessary. And we always hope it will not be necessary.

All the mentioned tools for non-dog animals are so "non-conflict" so it wouldn't be tempting to use strength in a critical situation. Many years ago I was visiting my colleagues in San Diego Zoo and they let me take a cheetah on a leash. This was a normal three meter leash and on the end was a standard leather dog collar around the neck of the cheetah. I had the leash in my hand and after a couple of seconds the cheetah decided to go somewhere where nobody wanted to follow him – and my hand automatically did what a hand does with a leash that has a dog on the other end – I pulled to make the cheetah come back. "Oh my God, Franta, what are you doing?" was the shocked reaction of my San Diego colleague and she snatched the leash from my hand, let it hang loose and redirected the cheetah by calling him with the use of a target. Only in that moment I fully realized I am not holding a dog on a leash, even if the animal had on him the tools we use for dogs.



You must agree the traditional tools for traditional training differ a lot from the positive training ones. The leash enables us to stop the dog and define space within which he may move. The muzzle prevents him from biting strange dogs and people, including his owner. There is a huge variety of collars and 90 % of them we would not dare to use on zooanimals. From very thin leather collars to chain and choke collars, not speaking about spike and shock collars. As you see most of traditional training tools does not try to avoid conflict with the dog. Their use is sort of based on the conflict. And this brings a question to mind: "Are these tools meant to give the animal a stimulus or to punish the animal?" Answering these questions is not easy. I personally don't see a difference in the tool but in the way who uses them and how they are used. Even an ordinary leash can serve as an extension of the hand of the trainer, giving the dog an intelligent stimulus, but it can also become the tool of revenge serving somebody to let off steam and "cure his ego".

Let's take a little detour from positive reinforcement training to traditional training.

Traditionally: "We use the recall in this way: we use the command 'come' and after a second we pull the leash to make the dog come." This is seemingly simple and logical that makes many of the users happy. However, after this process, not everybody listens what traditional dog trainers will say needs doing after this step: "If the dog fulfils the task, let the leash slack and praise the dog." Most of the people don't bother with this step. "Why? The dog came, problem solved why bother anymore?" But this process is actually much more important for the dog to learn recall the correctly than the first sentence. If a professional uses this manual for the leash, his action is on the spot. It fits the A (stimulus), B (behaviour), C (consequence). A (stimulus) - calling "come" and if there is no reaction, then the correct "informative" pull on the leash. B (behaviour) - the dog will start walking by himself in the direction of the pulling, C (consequence) - the pull on his neck disappears at once (negative reinforcement) and the dog gets a praise in a way he will enjoy and it will in a sense (positive reinforcement). If a handler is able to teach this, he must be fully focused on the dog at all times. If he is not focused on the dog he cannot stop the pulling the moment the dog cooperates. He has to be very conscious of his strength not to jerk the leash too much after the word "come", because in that case the dog might fear this word in the future. And he also has to have a relationship with the dog where the praise is meaningful to him. So in truth one can teach it in this and I don't deny you could teach recall even to a non-dog animal this way. But just as a matter of interest, if I imagine teaching the recall to some of the minipigs I have known... I can imagine maybe one team of a keeper and a little sow where it would be possible. But in this team the sow loves her keeper very much, much more than anybody else. I do not believe that anyone else besides the beloved keeper could use this procedure with the sow.

So how come this simple procedure can work even for people, who don't have the required trainer skill? A common owner would follow the manual for work with the leash this way: A (stimulus) – "I will yell 'come' and at the same time I will jerk the leash to show him, who is in charge!" B (behaviour) – "I will pull the dog to me." C (consequence) – "The dog is here, I made it. Why should I stroke him? That is no good. I will rather push on his butt now to make him sit. See? He is sitting!" But I hope every reader sees by now that the B (behaviour) and C (consequence) has nothing to do with the dog's own behaviour! Actually the dog isn't doing anything actively, he is just bearing ABC that the handler has done on the dog completely by himself. It is in fact one big punishment (nobody knows for what) that the dog cannot avoid and just blindly accepts. Well, to be honest, there are dogs that have the idea to run off after the handler's warning "come" in order that they avoid the "punishment by choking on the leash". If the dog has this idea, he would really come but he is crouching and begging with all his body not to be dragged by the leash. If you watch it looks terrible... but the dog did come. So his daddy is satisfied that he was able to teach him the recall. He has a proof that this is correct and that is the way it should be done. But his dog is not obeying his command, he is avoiding punishment. If there was a mini pig on the other end of the leash or the cheetah from San Diego Zoo, they would make him drop this idea pretty quickly. They would show him he should not mistake stimulus and punishment for one another. That only a dog is one of the few animals who would tolerate this... and then again they would not always tolerate it.

DOG'S DEVOTION AND STIMULUS

In my former working area we had many rules for communication with animals during the show and training sessions. For instance if you were going to do anything with the mini pigs, you would whistle loudly. Before we used this, if the pigs noticed us walking across the area, they would loudly squeal to make us give them food or another training lesson and the quiet area became a big "squealing field". When the pigs understood that their chance comes after the sound of the whistle, they saved their effort for that time. Another rule was that if you went to train Sancho the llama, you have to call him when coming to his run. Sancho also never got his reward from another place than the treat bag that the trainer had at his waist or from a special bowl. And so it was a rule that when Sancho was out of his pen and just grazing, nobody walked around him with the treat bag at his waist. If you needed to pass him with a treat bag, you would carry it in your hand, and not have it at your waist.

Both mentioned cases have their reason – let the animal know when his training session starts or the opposite – let him know that the things that are happening around are not meant for him.

From the animal's point of view it is a message "now you have a chance to earn a reward". It is similar to the French TV show Fort Boyard when the whole team waits in front of the treasure chamber if the well-known jingle sounds and gold coins will start pouring into the well. In that moment everybody does their best to get as much money as possible before the end signal comes. The same as the non-dog animals from the show are able to relax and live their lives outside their training. But with the **beginning of the session signal** they mobilize all their abilities to gain everything this short chance offers.

Thanks to the fact these non-dog animals have got the day clearly divided in the training time and out of training time, they sometimes look like two-faced creatures. Especially the many times mentioned llama Sancho who doesn't pay any attention to trainers for most of the day (if the rules are kept), he just grazes around. But as soon as his name sounds and he sees the well-known treat bag on the waist of his trainer he will speed up from zero to a hundred in one second. From this moment he is ready to listen to the trainer's stimulus – which is the signal that the llama has a chance to earn a reward. If these signals occurred outside the training lesson, Sancho would either ignore them or he would half-heartedly try and earn a reward, but failure would immediately result in him ending the effort. It doesn't mean Sancho would not obey the trainer outside the training session. He reacts even without the treat bag on the trainer's waist, but he responds without rewards. Outside the training we communicate with him using negative reinforcement – so with a body position, hand signals and looking at him. The only things we want from Sancho out of training times are very simple– to stop, to get out of the way or to back up from somewhere. Sensitive negative reinforcement is enough to achieve this. The **beginning of the training lessons** for the show animals comes almost "out of the blue", however, it is different with the end of the session. Initially we did not use the end of session cue at our working place in the zoo. We tried to sort of "fade" the ending. It usually ended by leading the animal to his pen or cage and throwing around a lot of food as an end jackpot. After the food scattering, the animal starts to search for the food, it takes him a lot of time, and the scattered food does not run away so he will transfer from the "now I am working" mode to "I am grazing". For instance for Sancho we would leave as much as half of the rewards for the ending, so the same amount that he got for the previous exercises. While the animal calmly forages for the treats, the trainer, without having anything interesting on him, slowly **exits the animal's world**.

In the chapter about rewards I wrote how tricky the end of the session can be with non-dog animals and how it can be even dangerous to mark it with a signal (the mentioned end of session cue). The bigger, stronger and food-greedy our animal is, the more problematic this moment is because of the emotions it can bring. The message is an - impending loss – exactly like when the competitors in Fort Boyard have only a few seconds in the end of all their toil and effort and they

need to leave quickly... however, the competitors know there are so many gold coins left in the well they haven't managed to retrieve. They know about them, they almost had them but they are now never able to get to them. End, finish, period... one could kill for that! So big marine mammals sometime really kill after the end of session cue. Or they will at least attack. The trainer is the one who is trying to escape with their treasure and they know that because they have been signalled of the intent with the the end of session cue. As we said before, this is the reason why in some facilities they end the sessions in several different ways, and take care not to end it in a predictable fashion or in the same way on recurring occasions. In other facilities they send the animal away to a place where it receives a surprise present (for instance a paper bag that it can unpack while the trainer leaves). If the animal doesn't get a surprise present, it will at the very least least receive a big jackpot on the ground, exactly like the one Sancho receives. The trainers bring something into the animal world and thanks to that the animal will allow us to leave. And if we don't have a reward any more the animal has no need to stop us. Now he doesn't need us anymore.

But it is different with a dog. Well, at least in our home. Especially my younger dog Verunka has learned a clear signal - "I don't have treats" with me showing my empty hands. After this signal she stops trying to get more treats. But unlike many non-dog animals her obedience doesn't end with the end of the lesson. What she learned with treats during training, she will do out of the training without them. She is like the peculiar Honza from the first chapter who will work to make the magical grandpa happy even if there is no chance to gain the princess. Out of training we have the special dog's negative reinforcement, where the standard is the happy being together here and now, without any demands. So we could say that for Verunka the end of the session doesn't mean the "end of the opportunity to receive anything" but just "now it is not about treats, but about the two of us". Unlike the show animals **I am not leaving Verunka after the end of the training. I will be present in her dog-world till the end of her days. The end of the lesson is just a transition from outer to inner motivation.** Instead of "something from the treat bag" I will be giving her "something from withinme". And I must not forget this something from within me.

You may be asking why we don't eliminate the treats with a dog like Verunka. Maybe they are not necessary at all. Believe me, it is not like that. Without treats or rewards she is interested in, I would not be able to teach her a lot of things. It would be too difficult methodologically. I need rewards to have the five words in the five-word dialogue and to be able to communicate using the dialogue. Whole communication starts with the reward that is interesting for the animal (we showed that in the first chapter). Yes, I could explain to her some of the basic things even without rewards, even if it took longer. But as soon as Verunka should start shaping, be creative

and offer any behaviour, than you best have the reward the dog is really interested in and tries to earn it. In other words – treats and other rewards as training tools are great. I am however certain that they are not the highest priority for Verunka and I am happy about that. I am glad that I am not just a walking treat-bag for her. I am something more. Well, I am trying – it is my goal, both in and outside formal training - to be like that.



BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

Living with devoted dogs is in some aspects more complicated than with other animals because the training lesson of a devoted dog never ends. Instead then rules change. At least this is how I feel. It means the dog is paying attention to his human all the time and everything what the person experiences internally has an effect on his dog. If the owner cannot handle his psychological side, he can unintentionally give the dog signals all his life for something he doesn't even want. Yes, it is true I had to work on my psychic state even with zoo animals. In my opinion for instance Harris hawks are extremely sensitive to moods. If you come to them with your head full of worries, then they will not come to your glove at all and they will not let you take them out of their cage, or they will act very nervously and protect the food they receive. If you will think about your own troubles during a session with a big parrot (for instance a

cockatoo) he might jump off his perch and perhaps go somewhere to destroy a piece of wood. Llama (and I am pretty sure about that from my own experience) will literally spit on your worries, he will not cooperate and won't even take food from some people. If the trainer is nervous and has his head full of troubles, the fox will be running around him, she will not do her exercises and maybe she will nip at his trousers. To make a long story short – all the non-dog animals I knew are sensitive to the psychological state of their trainer. And so a good trainer will leave his worries for later, to be present physically and psychologically for his animal for the couple of minutes the training takes. To be with it here and now. He can solve his human problems after the session ends.

All the above mentioned non-dog animals I have met react to the personal problems of the trainer in a similar way – **they refuse to have anything in common with them.** “I am not coming to you, I will stay in my world. I will come when you calm down!” And for the time before the trainer puts his worries aside these animals have their own fun and their own world where they don't need us. It is really a big exception if the non-dog animal reacted like: “What can I do to make you calm down? How can I solve your problem?” Something like this happens with the zoo animals only after years of bonding. And if a relationship like this happens, it is something wonderful and it is an exception created by hard work, and the colleagues of this trainer can only be jealous.

During the years of practice I have seen many examples when a dog was solving his owner's problems out of his devotion. There are stories when a man is waiting weeks for a medical diagnosis and during this time, when he fears for his life, his dog stays as close to him as possible every second of the day. As soon as this person, full of fear inside, sits down, the dog will press himself to him as if comforting him. There are dogs that attack particular relatives of their owner or groups of people without a visible cause... and then you find out they just express their owner's internal well-hidden aversion towards these people. I have seen dogs that play the role of babies in families without children and react with crying to every separation from their mama... and it is not their crying. The crying belongs to the owner. A dog that starts to unexpectedly attack approaching people the moment his owner is ill or when her doctor changes her medication. Dog chasing visitors out of the office. The visitors his mama may smile at but actually they keep her from her work and this causes problems for her. There are a lot of stories like that in the dog world and though they seem to be magical, there is no magic in them.

Let's return to the stress and the stress triangle. If you realize how sensitive the senses of the dog are it must be clear for us that he can very easily read the stress and nervousness of his owner. If we are living a sad story in our head, our body starts to crouch, breathing is shallow

and rapid, we sweat etc. A nervous person must have a different smell for the dog due to the production of stress hormones. The dogs can feel this because his senses are so sharp. If we count in the shaking hand holding the tight leash and through it this shaking is transferred to the dog's neck it is a lot of signals about **how** the person feels. But it is true the signals don't tell anything about **why** he feels like that. Human stress doesn't come out of something clearly visible it comes from the stories in our heads. And that is a reason a lot of the dogs can interpret these incorrectly and try to solve things for their human, in a manner that the human didn't want. And so it happens that a big dog will chase a passerby because his mama is not feeling well today and she is thinking about her partner problems. And this poor stranger had nothing to do with mamma's concerns at all.

The dog is definitely not the only animal that senses stress and personal problems of their trainer. A lot of species sense them. In my experience the dog is the only one out of the few animals that can see the signs of stress as a signal to solve something. He can see them as something what is his business as well; it is not somebody else's business he should stay away from. The reason might be that the ideal state of a devoted dog (unlike all other animals) is not only "be OK", but "**be OK with my human**". And if his human is not OK, for the devoted dog it is a problem of the couple where he is the second half.

All these reasons make me think that the training session of a devoted dog actually never ends. When you put away the treats - only the rules change from the positive method to the special "negative method of dog's love and devotion".

REAL LIFE STORY - THIS IS NOT A COMMAND, IT IS JUST A MESSAGE

Eva and Růženka

I admit that it is possible that the previous chapter might have been quite depressing for some of you. "So I am never going to be free from the dog? He is following me continuously, scanning my mood, reading it incorrectly and then he will try to solve what he shouldn't be solving? If this is the case then man's best friend is the biggest stalker and a chain on my leg! I don't want anything like this to be with me!" This is what the reader could think. I would like to assure you not all the dogs are like this. also, the a dog, who is trying to solve his owners problems is not bad, he is great. He noticed something that his owner has not noticed. Through the behaviour of the dog the owner will realize his own problem and instead of closing his eyes he will solve it. This is beneficial not only for the dog, but for his daddy too.

The whole thing about the dog being a "scanner-of-human-mood" brings us to another question – how to tell to the dog that my worries are just mine and he should not be solving them? How do I tell him that what is in front of us and what we are both looking at is ok and has no connection with the problems in my head? Let's look at a typical example: A man gets up at four in the morning to be in time at the dog show. They need to be successful so the female dog gets a breeding licence. They are standing in the show ring. The owner has not had enough sleep and has a head full of stories: how much money and effort this thing has cost him, how much he needs to have the breeding licence and about the nasty things the lady that he met at the ring said about his dog. He is so nervous he is stiff. And his dog senses it all. Sshe can feel it, she cannot see what is happening in her daddy's head. And so she connects his nervousness with the the surroundings - the show specifics in the area or the judge himself. The judge is coming, her daddy is very uneasy... so the dog logically thinks that the approaching man must be dangerous. And the dog reacts – she either shrinks from the judge, or she tries to chase him away from her nervous owner. What made her attack was not her fright. It was her owner's fright. And he will be worse after this episode and the following time, evenworse. How to tell the female she should let him keep his worries to himself and percieve the judge simply as a stranger, who just came to have a look?

In the book "Training Is a Dialogue" (abbreviated translation on trainingisdialogue.com) I write about the "promise" (you can find it there under "feedback signals", but I stopped using this expression, because the meaning is not accurate). The promise is different from a simple command in many ways. It does not tell the animal "do this". It does not even hint that "now you have the chance to earn your reward, if you do this". A promise is just a message about what is

going on or will be going on. It is just a message about what will happen. It is literally a promise that the thing that is coming will happen according to a specific scenario and it will not hurt him. These promises have an important place for instance in the moment the owner is leaving the house and so needs to tell the dog, who is staying behind, that he is not leaving forever. He will be gone for just a couple of hours and then he will come back. For the dog this is not simple to understand if the person is leaving for just a while or forever. The owner simply leaves and many dogs start to panic and become desperate until their daddy comes home again. So the dog has developed a strategy to call daddy and to ensure he will return – The dog believes that the trick is - you just have to act up at the door. But if you manage to leave and give the dog a message you are coming back, the same dog can throw his acting out away and not try to solve anything. He gets a message the owner is coming back! We have used the “promise” technique many times in our practical lessons for situations like when the dog is meeting a stranger, who suddenly appears from behind a corner. The dog learns to understand that the owners word “man” in a no-problem situation. It serves as a promise . It says that there is somebody coming and this person will not hurt you. We also trained this for a “promise of a no-problem jogger”. We started in an open space where then dog saw the jogger from a distance. Later we started to use the same word to draw the dog’s attention to a helper waiting behind a corner. The helper would calmly come out after the word “man”. For the dog the word “man” meant “ there is coming a harmless person and you don’t have to do anything”. The word provided the dog time to prepare for the situation and this enabled the dog the ability cope with the situation calmly. In the next steps we sped up and in the end there was no word, just strangers jumping out from behind the corners. At this point the dog knew how to cope with it calmly. The promise during the training was just a tool for the dog to be able learn to calm himself. And when he knew how to do that, no promise was required.

The promise worked very similarly during when training the dog to meet strange dogs or training for a show judge check up. We can have an example of Růženka, a golden retriever. I met them at our show trainings. where at this training, I work together with a show judge and we teach dogs, who had poor experiences at past shows to return to the show ring without worries. Růženka was one of them. After a bad experience she was anxious and shy around the judge and kept, backing away from him. In the training I had the job of impersonating the judge. For two evenings we trained touching her and we worked according to the stress management rules. We had a problem moving to the next step. While another animal would maybe even manage to learn to open his mouth, Růženka would back away unexpectedly all the time. Sometimes she was OK and in a second she got spooked and backed away before I even had time to bend down to her. It was as though there was something under the surface what we couldn’t

see. So we had to have a thorough look at the owner Eva. We finally realized what dictated the successful and failed trials. It was the way Eva was giving the signal we can start.



In my practical lessons I am trying to make the owner manage everything – particularly if we are working on anxiety issues. I will chat with them and together we will agree on how the training will proceed. Sometimes we will even train with a plush toy. But it is the owner, who says: “Now we shall go on, now we stop, now we can continue”. The reason being not only the owner learns to use it later, after the lessons are over, but also the dog needs to see him as someone, who manages the situation. So it would be clear for the dog he or his daddy is not under pressure of some “tyrant Franta (me)” but on the contrary – Franta is obeying the instructions of the owner. The word the owner uses to start every following trial becomes the “promise” for the dog, so essentially a message that this will be ok and occur exactly the way it has been trained .

In this case we were not careful about the promise. We forgot to pay attention to how Eve said it. We did not pay attention to the emotion and the message she was delivering about herself. We have been so focused on the dog we forgot about what is happening with the person. “So Eva, can I start?” I was saying impatiently. “If you think so, so maybe you can. So maybe NOW?” was the timid answer. And in this moment Růženka backed away. “Ok, so this doesn’t work. You know what, I will not rush you, maybe we could use another helper and you start when you are really sure.” Eva took a pause and thought: “Růženka has got her breeding licence, we actually don’t have to go to another show. I will probably not have an ideal moment with Růženka being

calm and ok... So I will just say it in a moment I feel is the best in this situation. It cannot get worse." She stood up, calmed down and with a voice, that was confident this she simply said "now"... and the dog was calm and let herself be touched as though nothing was wrong. At the end of the evening there was a queue of people, pretending they were judges, to touch Růženka. She was calmly accepting this, because Eva's "now" was the message she needed to hear. A message saying nothing bad is going to happen and that her owner has got all the people around under control. This time it was the message that Eva is confident about what she is saying and doing. She is not under pressure and she rules the situation.

The aforesaid is the the difference between a command/cue and a promise. The most important thing being **the promise must never (or at least as far as possible be broken**. You have to keep what you promised. Whether it is a promise that the approaching dog will not bite my dog or that I will be back from my journey beyond the door soon and before the dog becomes afraid, that the running man will stop the moment it is needed or that the judge will not cross the agreed upon line. All those are promises and promises have to be kept. The other thing that make the difference is that **through the promise we give a message to the dog about ourselves**. What we feel like, what we think about the whole situation. With the tone and rhythm of the voice, with our body language, all those serve to give a message to the dog. **So in fact it is not a message about the expectation we have of the dog's behaviour, but mainly about the situation and the human attitude towards the situation**. This makes it different from the command / cue which describes the expected behaviour of the dog regardless of the situation and us.

And do you know what the biggest "joke" is? Even if I use the promise during my practical lessons more and more and with a great success, I have never used it with any non-dog animal with which I have worked. The reason was maybe that my opinion and attitude in the situation were usually never interesting for them.

ANOTHER STORY FROM PRACTICE – DOGS TOLERANCE AND CUES

Rozárka, Verunka and me

In many facilities where big and potentially dangerous animals are trained they practice the so-called emergency recall. It is a kind of safety measure "the last chance red button", something you can rely on if everything else fails. What does it mean? The name gives a hint, it means we can recall the animal from any situation and in every level of stress. It is a calling signal which is

so strong and so powerfully -rooted in the animal's psyche that the animal will react to it automatically regardless of any situation. To really make it an automatic reaction without the animal thinking if it will pay off, such an emergency recall is based on a conditioned reflex.

Here we should mention the difference between classical (Pavlovian) conditioning and operant conditioning. Let's start with operant, because actually so far the whole book refers to operant conditioning. With operant conditioning the animal learns from the consequences of his own behaviour. He does something, realizes, what he has done and if he received what he needed, he will probably do it again next time.(so the behavior was reinforced). If he wasn't successful, the probability of the repeating of the behaviour will decrease. We have gone through that at the beginning of the book. And in the chapter about stress you learned that if an animal is to learn something operantly, he cannot cross the imaginary FFF line. If he crosses it he stops sensing himself, like we say if we are very stressed: "I don't know what I am doing, I am totally beside myself."

On the other side classical conditioning is something what teaches us (simplified) a thoughtless reaction. Connecting a new impulse with the one the animal already knows pairs them together and the result is the animal reacts to a formerly insignificant thing as if it was a known signal. Classical example is Pavlov's experiment with the bell. Experimental device rang and following that the dog got food. After some repetitions the dog started salivating with the sound of the bell. His behaviour was automatic and couldn't be influenced by his will. And that is the way the emergency recall should work. The animal should react to it without thinking and automatically come regardless of how agitated or focused it is on some activity.

For this reason the way an emergency recall is created with marine mammals and other non-dog animals is based as much as possible on conditioned reflex and the training is done similarly like Pavlov's experiment using the sound of the bell. The only difference is the food being extremely interesting. The trainer of the sea lion prepares a very good and attractive reward and takes a specific whistle the sea lion has not heard yet during the training. He whistles and gives the whole reward to the animal right away. Regardless of what the sea lion was just doing. After several repetitions this specific whistle becomes an extremely strong Pavlovian bell. It means "you are getting an extremely good reward". And no matter from what direction it sounds, the animal comes sprinting to the source of the sound.

If we want the emergency recall to function, it must be repeated regularly. For instance we do something like the sea lion is training with one person and another trainer blows the whistle for emergency recall from the distance of several tens of metres. The sea lion will stop in the middle of his work and quickly swims for his big reward. Emergency recall has got top priority above

any work the sea lion was doing. It is the highest trump card. If it works well, it can save lives. But at the same moment everybody hopes the situation to use it “for real” will never come

Let’s imagine a following situation. The orca (back in the times when there was swimming with orcas) pulls the trainer under water during the show. His colleague on the shore will sound the emergency recall and the orca will let go of the poor man and quickly swims to the source of the signal. There he will immediately get a huge reward that matches this behaviour and the shaken trainer quickly climbs out of the water. He is alive, saved thanks to the well-trained automatic reaction to the emergency recall. But what was the orca rewarded for? Was he doing anything during this automatic recall? Yes, he was just drowning the trainer. The trainer is alive and that is the most important thing. But the orca was reinforced for “trainer drowning” and the chance he will do it again has grown. The cue for the emergency recall, if it was trained in the above mentioned manner, actually becomes a kind of “megaclicker”. And that is also a reason it is not used with every minor problem, but only in cases where is is the question of saving the trainer’s life, simply in situations where obeying this recall is more important than reinforcing unwanted behaviour of the animal. And using it is not the end of the job. The opposite – it has only started – the trainer is alive and the orca will be trained for a long time in a manner that will lower the chance of drowning the trainer in the future.

But let’s leave the orca and dolphin shows very quickly now and return to the Czech republic. Or maybe straight to my home. More than ten years ago we brought the puppy Rozárka to our home in Prague. Like the proper Staffordshire bullterrier, she was like lightning and it was very difficult to let her off a leash in the maze of blocks of flats, sidewalks and mainly streets full of cars. Actually an emergency recall like that would come in handy. Let’s say during our walk among the tall buildings Rozárka sees a jackdaw and decides to chase it. The bird flies away across the street just when there is a car coming and Rozárka, who is “deaf and blind” to anything rational in this moment decides to run straight into the road. She would probably not react to a normal recall, she is too agitated and focused on the jackdaw. So I would now use the emergency recall like with the orca... Oh! I realized this is the pathway to hell. Calling the orca with this conditioned reflex can mean reinforcing her behaviour with a super strong clicker. And it will be the same with Rozárka. It means the whole walkies can be one big bird chasing situation and one overfed Rozárka. On the other hand, something based on a conditioned reflex that Rozárka would do automatically could be handy. How to do that? Well, if I don’t want the conditioned reflex with treats, I will do it without them. And the strength of her reaction will not be done by lots of treats but as a result of many repetitions. Because this is also a way to create a certain version of a conditioned reflex. By repeating something again and again like a rhyme.

So I started to teach the command “stop” to Rozárka. At the beginning with a leash. For instance we went home from the subway station and Rozárka was trotting in front of me on a long leash. In that moment I clearly said “stop” and in about a second I used the leash to stop her. Not with a jerk, that was no punishment. The leash was my prolonged hand and with the help of it I did what I needed from Rozárka by manipulating her body. I stopped her. Even I stopped on the spot while Rozárka, like a proper staffie puppy at first pulled against the leash. Then she found out she cannot go further, relaxed her muscles and in that moment I said “good girl, let’s go” and we both went on. And we did this short exercise without any treats maybe ten times during our short walk. “Stop” – after a second I will stop her with the leash – Rozárka will loosen her muscles – “good girl, let’s go” – and we continue walking. Why am I not using treats? I don’t want Rozárka to return to me for a treat. Plus I want this to be the simplest automatic thing where Rozárka won’t be using her creativity. Unlike all the other exercises I was teaching her at that time I just want her to switch off her brain and muscles and stop on the spot.



With more and more repetitions this rhyme became more and more automatic. Soon we reached the stage when Rozárka heard the word “stop” and stopped without the use of the leash. And after some time she would wait on the spot and wait until I came to her. In practice we would use that many times. If Rozárka flushed a deer on the edge of the Milíčov forest (close to Prague), if she went to meet a dog that looked like trouble, if she dashed across the street to meet my children. On many occasions the “stop” was much safer than the trained recall – Rozárka does

not have to take her eyes off the thing she is interested in and so she doesn't lose control (and that is very important especially if the interesting thing was a dog she with whom she has to have a conversation– a nice or a nasty one). The word “stop” became the red button for us, the button you press in the moment when you are losing contact. Thanks to the fact she learned it as a conditioned reflex she reacted to it more or less automatically. And as soon as she reacted it renewed the connection between me and wide-eyed Rozárka and I could use the usual recall (that she learned operantly). This “stop” was the only activity Rozárka learned without treats and as a conditioned reflex. And thanks to then fact it was without treats I didn't have to be afraid I will increase the probability of unwanted behaviour (unlike the normal emergency recall). No, of course it wasn't really 100 % (nothing is, even the classical emergency recall isn't) but it was stable enough to work in the situations when nothing else would work. Hurray, we did it!

This might bring out the question – if there are all those benefits, why don't we teach the same version of “emergency behaviour” with “non-dog animals”? Why is this conditioned reflex based on a big reward if it means I risk the behaviour getting worse? The answer is simple and complicated. The simple one is that it is difficult to put a leash on a sea lion (not mentioning a dolphin or an orca whale). So ok, why not take it as the cheetah on the leash in then San Diego Zoo? Because he doesn't forgive the mistakes like a dog. And during the training of stopping on the leash you can make many mistakes, even if it looks easy. What if I say “stop” and instead of careful stopping I will jerk the leash? Then the word is an advance on a painful punishment and the cheetah could react very unpleasantly after some repetitions. What if I say “stop” and not only jerk the leash, but I will not give the one second pause to enable the animal to stop by itself? In this case the word “stop” is connected with the painful punishment right away and I cannot rule out that in the animal's head it itself will hurt. The simple rhyme “stop” – stop the dog after a second – he relaxes – I will praise a loosen the leash – we go forward, is in fact a very sensitive thing that requires full focus on the animal and the leash in my hand. If I do it like this, I am like the traditional trainer. And to be one I have to be very sensitive. Otherways I will spoil the relationship between me and the animal, teach him to be afraid of heelwork and myself.

Because this version of stopping through a conditioned reflex is so difficult, I have never used it in my work with zooanimals (though I was taking some of them on the leash). But I did use it with Rozárka. And the younger one, Verunka, learned it as one of the first things when she came to us. Many people, who attended my practical lessons solved their problem with this automatic “stop” (remember Martina and Roník on the beginning of this book). If this thing is learned correctly, it really works. But I used this training with all the possible mistakes only with dogs, because of their huge tolerance of our human imperfection.

THIRD STORY FROM PRACTICE – DOG’S DEVOTION AND CUES

Zuzka and Charka



The problem of Zuzka and her border terrier Charka were in fact very much like many other stories I mention in this book. Another case of a dog who can't tell when the training session starts and when it stops. And so he is working when nobody is asking him to. And because there is never enough of stories like that and this one had a particular magic in it, let me present it to you..

I met both on a practical lesson in Brno. Around the room there were five dogs with their owners. Four dogs were lying down, tired due to the long wait for me (The motorway D1 was not at it's best that day), while one little and cute borderterrier was very alert. Similar to her owner. Both of them were as far from the other dogs as possible and their time together looked like this: Charka was sitting in front of Zuzka with all her muscles tense and an expression "what now" on her face, while Zuzka was very tense and nervous as a result of the worry about what Charka would do next. Charka, who didn't gain anything from the tense waiting –but she did do something! She looked around at the dogs and if any of them moved too quickly or emitted even the smallest sound, she instantly transformed from a cute plush toy into a dragon. She pulled on her leash, barred her teeth and roared. Zuzka reacted by pulling on the leash... and at the moment of pulling, Charka became a cute plush toy again, politely sitting in front of Zuzka, where she received her reward. After eating her reward Charka commenced her tense waiting once more. Waiting to see what may happen. At this point Zuzka had become even more afraid of what she might do. Charka, waited in vain for a few seconds (a long time for a border terrier) and then, predictably did something. To be exact, she repeated the same scene so she could earn her reward once more, and thereafter, she started her tense waiting once more.

This case reminds us of Benji and Markéta from the chapter about bridges as the central concept is really similar. The dog, who offers behaviour outside the formal training lesson in an effort to earn the treats. And when the offering is not successful, he will focus on something in his surroundings and lunge at it which will cause a reaction from the person which will provide him the opportunity to obey, after which he will receive his reward. Charka was probably unafraid of the dogs around her. If she had been, she would not have turned her back to them so quickly. Charka was different from Benji in one way. She was much faster. Even training with her was like a hundred metre sprint for Zuzka. It was still the same five word dialogue – "I want work – here you are – I am working – you are doing it right - reward". But these five words took about two seconds and if Charka didn't get more work after those two seconds, she found it herself.

"I know I am too slow for her," admitted Zuzka. But this doesn't have to be a problem. Yes, Charka is a sprinter and it is not easy to keep up with her. But the fastest sprints are on the shortest tracks. If Zuzka and Charka are supposed to run this sprint together, the length must be adjusted according to the slower partner – and that would be Zuzka. The solution is to clearly communicate with this dog that the task is now finished and it is time to take a rest.

To train the solution, the first thing we did was to set a clear signal for the beginning of the lesson and the end of the lesson. Up until that point the signal for Charka had been if Zuzka had a treat bag around her waist or not. So we used that. Zuzka was told to give Charka rewards only

from the treat bag – so as not to confuse her. The clipping the treat bag on and off became a simple message. On means “start” and off means “finish”. To add to this, Zuzka established a word and gesture marking the beginning of the lesson and a different one for the end of the lesson. This new signal about the beginning of the lesson was prior to clipping on the treat bag while the new one about the end came prior to taking it off. So Charka started to learn when the work for treats – and offering different exercises – starts and when it ends.

The question is; : “Will this simple solution be enough?” It won’t. Charka is such a hard worker the end of the lesson will not come for free. If she would weighed an extra hundred kilos and she was a male sea lion, we would be generating different complicated processes so she would let us end the lesson. But because she is a dog, we will just transfer the positive reinforcement and trying to get more treats into simple “being fine together without treetts”. Simply put, they would generate the special dog’s negative reinforcement when the two are just together and so feel fine. So after Zuzka claims the end of the lesson and puts away the treat bag, she will just cuddle Charka and “be with her”.

Even this would not be enough, if we didn’t adjust Zuzka’s body language. Charka was reading her every movement and often her interpretation wasn’t correct. She had it the same with the place in the room. For instance if Chakra found herself facing a dog while sitting in front of Zuzka, it would almost certain result in an attack on the other dog. This set up was either saying to her “protect us” or maybe just “your work is over there”. To make her sit facing you with her back to the dogs meant peace only for a short time – until Charka started feeling the need to work. There was peace when Zuzka sat with Charka and the dogs sideways- dogs being on one and Charka on the other side of Zuzka.- It was as if this positioning meant: “They are my responsibility and not yours. I know about them and they don’t bother me. So you can just drop on the floor and I will give you some cuddles.”

It took about 45 minutes for me to finish the other dogs training and I wanted to work with Zuzka and Charka again. “So, shall we continue, Zuzka?” I asked. “Well, but she fell asleep!” That was a smiley and satisfied answer. Charka finally understood in a room full of dogs, that all her work is finished and she can fall asleep. She needed a message about the beginning and the end of the lesson, a total change of her and Zuzka’s resting position and most importantly we needed her owner to stop expecting only the worst from her and blame herself for it. In the middle of strange dogs it was now just the two of them, together and calm.

CHAPTER FIVE:

“I WANT WORK”

So now our book is slowly coming to the end. Out of the five words of the training dialogue we have gone through four in detail and we have only one last thing left. The little word that can have big consequences is the animal's **expression of being prepared and willing**. A little yet important part that is often forgotten.

Let's go through the whole dialogue of the trainer and his pupil in positive training once more for the last time. The animal says “I want work” and the trainer answers “Here you are” by giving him the impulse to work. The animal says “I am working” by doing the behaviour and the trainer says “you are doing it right” (by using some kind of bridge). And in the end reward comes. So to make it short “I want work – cue – behaviour – bridge – reward. And if we are starting this dialogue with a new animal, which has no experience at all with training, we start from the end. First we must find a reward that will motivate him. If we know he is interested in the reward, it gives sense to use a bridge before rewarding. If we have a bridge, we can mark the desired behaviour. And if the animal offers behaviour, then we can teach him the cue after which the behaviour pays off – so in fact the cue is communicating his chance to get the reward. And because this dialogue is built from the end in the book we also proceeded from the reward to the impulse.

But how does this little phrase “I want work” work? Does the animal learn it as the last thing? No, this word is present in the dialogue all the time. Even when we are still looking for the ideal reward to motivate the animal. But the form of this word can change accordingly to what the animal can do and also what his trainer needs.

Let's look at a hypothetical case from a zoo. For instance training with a chimpanzee. A chimpanzee is very clever and a fast learner. He knows a lot of things before his keeper even starts to teach him anything. For instance how to stretch out his hands to anybody who could have something yummy for him. And he begs and gets it. Is this the best thing to start the training with?

And so the keeper sits at the enclosure and on the other side there is the chimpanzee waiting, full of expectations. The bars will divide the keeper and the chimpanzee during the training. It is called protected contact. The chimpanzee sees a cup full of pieces of fruit beside the keeper, so he happily reaches for it. At this moment he doesn't know any other way to obtain his food and sitting at the bars and reaching out with his hand is the way he has, to date said “I want work”.

To be honest, he doesn't want the work yet, it is just about the food... So let's say it means "I want". And let us be happy he even wants anything. And so the keeper gives him his first reward. The chimpanzee is happy it worked and stretches his hand through the bars again. He still doesn't know the proper way how to get his reward and a while ago this worked. The keeper needs to teach him a better behaviour and hasn't even introduced the bridge. So now he will click a couple of times and reward the chimpanzee right away. The ape is a clever guy and after just a few repetitions he will connect the click with the food.

So now we need to teach the chimpanzee another suitable behaviour to make him stop begging during the training. So the keeper has prepared a tool to redirect the begging. It can be a target in the form of a colourful disc with a handle, which can be fastened on the bars. But for now the keeper is holding it out of chimpanzees reach. The chimpanzee is stretching his hand to the goodies, but because he cannot reach them he at least touches the target and in this moment the clicker sounds (the chimpanzee now understands the meaning) and the reward comes. This is repeated a couple of times and suddenly we have a chimpanzee who instead of stretching his hands through the bars to the keeper holds the handle of the target to earn his reward. The handle actually became the button of the food slot machine – "if you want a reward, press the button". It is more than enough in one training session. The chimpanzee gets a big jackpot in the end and the keeper leaves, while the ape feeds.

For the next training session the keeper fastens the handle on the contact bar in advance so the chimpanzee can hold it anytime. The Chimpanzee enters the enclosure and after some unsuccessful trials to obtain food by begging (a habit is a habit) he notices the handle and he touches it. He hears the bridge, gets his reward and from now on he knows how to earn his reward. He slowly stops putting his hands through the bars and rather grabs the handle of the target which he even holds it for some time. Holding the target becomes the basic position for feeding. With the same method, but now it goes much faster, the keeper can make the chimpanzee hold the second target with his other hand and from this moment on we have an ape that is politely sitting at the



bars, holding the handles with both his hands and receiving the rewards through the contact bars directly into his mouth.

Maybe you are saying to yourself that this is boring and that the keeper could have taught him some funny tricks. It is an ape and they like to ape. So it would not be a problem to encourage him to show his shoulder, show his foot, scratch his head... why are we wasting time with some handles and this whole basic feeding position thing? Because through it the chimpanzee will talk to us and we shall talk to him. The moment he grabs both handles it will be an important message for us. "I am ready to work, I am a willing and thinking being ready for operant conditioning. Only now, when then chimpanzee knows the basic position will the keeper teach him more things. The mentioned showing of the shoulder (maybe with another target), opening the mouth, pressing his chest or belly on the bars and so on. Holding the handles will not be seen just like "I want food" but also like "give me a task". So if the chimpanzee knows more behaviours, it will look like this: Hold the handles – reward, another hold – cue to show shoulder – chimpanzee shows the shoulder – reward, another hold – cue to open mouth – the chimpanzee opened his mouth and the keeper checked his teeth – reward, another hold - reward, when is still holding - cue for something else... and so on. An animal like this will be calm, most of the training time he will be successful and if the keeper drops a tool or needs to do something else for a moment his student will simply wait with both hands on the handles. He doesn't have to rush, he doesn't have to fear for his reward – he is doing something he is confident about. From the perspective of the stress triangle (see the chapter about behaviour) the chimpanzee says START with this holding (I am ready to work), but at the same time it is also a SAFE PLACE for him (if I don't know what to do, I will just hold the handles and nothing goes wrong) and in some cases it can even be his STOP (I cannot cope with the new task, so I will just hold then handles and they will leave me alone). Those handles on the contact bars keep the chimpanzee under the FFF line during the training if the keeper uses them correctly. Holding on to these became something we mentioned in this book many times: default behavior, DB ^{8*}

^{8*} In more advanced training the animal can have a couple of different default behaviours (BD), each of them meaning something else. In terminology I used in the book "Training Is In the Head" I call them Small, medium and big DB, the big DB is used solely for STOP and SAFE PLACE (everything is explained in the translated chapter of the book on www.treiningisdialogue.com) Remember the example with Tazzik in the chapter about behaviour – his medium DB, he used to say START with and sometime he used it for SAFE PLACE, was sitting down by Katka's leg. His big DB, when he asked STOP, was to lie down. He was not rewarded for that, he just got a pause and break from Katka's demands.

What would the training look like if the keeper gets carried away by the magic of new tricks and skips the step of creating the default behaviour? Something like this: after some weeks of teaching new tricks the trainer sits down by the cage with the tools and the chimpanzee will at once try to push his hands through. "We said you don't do this," says the keeper and he asks the chimpanzee to "show the shoulder". The chimpanzee shows the shoulder, gets a reward and as soon as he eats it he will stick his hands through the bars again. "I will wait till you take them out," says the keeper with the aim not to reward the chimpanzees begging (without realizing this begging inadvertently became default behaviour) The chimpanzee is trying to push through his palms and when he sees this doesn't work, he starts to offer. Without the keeper asking him to. He will offer his shoulder, if nothing happens, he will open his mouth, show his foot... He starts to offer behaviour in a high frequency, like a "jet-mouse". But this way he also makes a lot of mistakes and starts to become frustrated. The more tricks the chimpanzee offers, the more mistakes he makes – and even if we can say in the end he knows and showed quite a lot, this is not exactly what we wanted. Frustration from so many fails means the chimpanzee will maybe spit at his keeper or kick the cage bars or he will lash out at another chimpanzee, who was watching from behind. Maybe he will not be stable enough in the learned positions, because if he doesn't hear the bridge right after he offered something, so he will try to offer something else. His training will be one big uncertainty. He has no basis that would make him certain. And notice that among the list of possible reactions to this uncertainty are those aimed against other animals or people. And that is something the dogs do very scarcely, even if they are in same frustration state.^{9*}

^{9*} We have to say not every trainer uses DB intentionally. There is a lot of those, who don't use it in their work and replace it with a very careful setting of criteria and great trainer's sensitivity. In any case a training with the use of DB is more calm and sure and is longer and more successful.

DOG'S TOLERANCE AND DEFAULT BEHAVIOUR

With the boom of positive style dog training it is unfortunately possible to see many dogs who behave similarly to the “hectically offering” chimpanzee from the second example. Dogs, who know a lot of dog tricks but they have no endurance in any of them. Their training is paired with a many hectic offering and failures. This creates frustration with barking. The fun together – and that is what positive training should be about – becomes a bit of suffering for the owner that includes loud barking. The owners of the loud dogs are asking themselves: “Where am I making a mistake?” They made exactly the same mistake as the chimpanzee keeper. From the very beginning people get carried away because it is easy to teach new tricks with the clicker and treats. They get addicted to the magic of free-shaping, - which is essentially the training variety of the kid’s game “Find the thimble”. They advance very quickly without having mastered the basics. Their training dialogue consists of five words too, but the word “I want work” doesn’t serve the purpose, because it is just accidental. Just remember what holding the handles means for the chimpanzee. Initially it was just a feeding place but later he used it to communicate with his trainer. He was able to use them when he was ready (START). He was also able to use them to find certainty. That is, if he didn’t understand what the trainer wanted (SAFE PLACE) and he was also able to say STOP by using them, in a situation where he didn’t want to continue any more. Due to the fact he could communicate with his trainer in this way he stayed below the critical stress line called FFF. If he didn’t have this possibility, he could redirect his frustration against the trainer.

And now back to the dogs. Can you imagine the feverishly offering dog after many unsuccessful trials taking out his frustration on his trainer? Imagine that instead of barking he would just jump and bite the trainer’s leg? Yes, we could imagine that. And I have seen it once during my practice. But if this happens, it is a huge exception, extremely rare compared with similar cases I have seen with non-dog animals. There have been a couple of hoofs flying around me, teeth in my trousers or a beak pinning my fingers. It was never anything really serious, but it is just the right reminder to make you realize the animal in front of you is not the “ever-tolerant” dog, who forgives the trainer for the frustration they are suffering.

Does it mean that the dog can cope with his training without frustration? Definitely not. It is quite possible that the dogs who suffer in appropriately managed training can experience the same feelings that could make the non-dog animal turn against their trainer. But their frustration might explode in another direction rather than against their trainer. It is possible that such a frustrated dog will attack another dog. But much more often he will use another “escape strategy”. He may start sniffing, or he will scratch himself endlessly. Some dogs, who

find it very difficult to cope, start tearing pieces of turf with their teeth. There can be many different reactions but they are hardly ever directed against their trainers. It definitely doesn't mean we should dare to do anything to our dogs. We should try to understand what they are trying to tell us and give them the tools to do so. Because unlike the non-dog animals they often don't tell us about their feelings during the training clearly enough. ^{10*}

DOG'S DEVOTION AND "I WANT WORK"

In this book I have mentioned many things that surprised me as a non-dog animal trainer when I came to the dog people society. There is one I haven't mentioned yet – eye contact. If some of my dog friends watched me during my work with zoo animals, they would sometimes ask where I am looking all the time. "Why are you staring into the ground like you are not involved? Don't you confuse the animal like that?" That is the usual reaction of experienced dog trainers. And I have to answer that my eye activity is exactly the opposite. There are animals who will not take food from you unless you break eye contact. The great example is again Sancho the llama, the one we talked about so many times. As we know from the previous chapters, his basic position that he uses to ask for work was taught so that he would have no eye contact with the trainer at all. He is positioning himself at his trainer's left-hand side. Plus I usually wanted him to look away from me. I used to carry my treats on my right side on the level of Sancho's head and he couldn't take them just like that. He could easily have seen me as competition for his food and eye contact would have exacerbated that. If Sancho fulfilled his task during the show and I was to reward him, I lowered my eyes and that was what enabled him to come and obtain the food. If I would offer him his reward and look in his eyes, he wouldn't come to get it and maybe he would even spit at me.

^{10*} Are you asking yourself, what would be the ideal DB for a dog? I am successfully using the sit front, which the dog does of his own will, without command, to show he is ready. But you can choose whatever. It can be coming to heel, show stand, I saw going in between the legs of the handler. But let it be something simple, what the dog is able to do without command many times during the training and it is not physically demanding – without the possibility to physically escalate.

It would be the same with the above mentioned chimpanzee during the training at the bars of the cage. If his keeper would be staring in his eyes through the bars from the distance of half a meter, the chimpanzee wouldn't stay in the training for a long time. Direct eye contact means conflict with most primates. Some big apes (for instance male gorillas) have eye contact as the basis of their ritual combats. The rule being the one who breaks eye contact first is the loser. That is also the reason primates are so sensitive to a "staring" at a camera lens and sometime they have even been known to attack it.

The chimpanzee I used as an example is a species that is our closest relative. That brings a question: How much do people look for direct eye contact with each other? If I should talk about myself I am not a big fan. I don't like it if a stranger stares right in my eyes and does not divert his stare. Maybe deep inside me there is the gorilla male during a ritual combat. I am much better with eye contact with a member of the opposite sex. And it is true a long look in the eyes many years ago was the start of my relationship and marriage. This looking in the eyes was something extremely pleasant I would like to have going on forever. I am just wondering why it was pleasant and what was the meaning of that look? Was I trying to use this look in the eye to tell this girl something about myself? No, I wasn't telling anything with my eyes. I was looking for something in her eyes. Maybe that is the difference between a pleasant and unpleasant look in the eye. I am not looking for anything in the eyes of a strange man, who is staring closely into my eyes. We are probably sending one another a message "I am the macho!" Our eyes are talking about ourselves and we are forcing this message onto our opponent. But if I look in the eyes of somebody, who is interesting for me, I will look for a message about the other person. I am not saying anything about myself, I am asking about them.

So I have been asking myself for a long time, how is it possible that eye contact is established as a signal "I want work"? So as a message that should talk about the dog himself? Is it because for the dogs the eye contact is different, not like for all the other animal species? Yes and no. On one side the dogs are similar to people. Many dog fights start with a "bad look" into each other's eyes. It seems it is the same as the stare of a stranger for me. On the other side with the 'dog-man' communication the look in the eyes can have a meaning. As many experiments have shown the dog can work with human attention and redirect it to what he needs. And he can use eye contact for that. You know the situation during a family get together, when the dog walks around everybody who has food in his hand, finds the "weak link" and will stare at him so long that this person succumbs? And he is not only looking in the eyes. As soon as the person returns the look, the dog often looks at the thing he wants – in this case the food in the hand. In practical lessons with the topic of fear and aggression I have seen one interesting thing I haven't seen with non-dog animals – there is a problem approaching the dog and instead of looking at the problem the

dog is looking in his owner's eyes. As soon as he returns the look, the dog will quickly look at the problem and back again. The masters of situations like this are border collies. What if, using this method, they are saying: "Man, there is a problem, look at it!" It is quite possible it is just like that, because a lot of those "look-in-my-eyes" ones will calm down the moment their owner looks in the same direction and shows he sees the thing and it does not bother him. The dog sees the human has seen! And if the owner is not influenced by what he saw and is calm all the time the dog will often calm down as well. The owner who tries to ignore it and not to look towards the problem his dog is showing him will often make the dog even more nervous. From my experience it is very important for the dog to see the owner acknowledge they have seen the potential threat and are okay, and very different to the owner who timidly pretends and is trying to tell the dog I am okay without acknowledging the concern. To tell the dog "I am calm and ok" or "I have seen it and I ma calm and ok with it" are two very different messages.

But back to the training. Is the dog really the exceptional being, who can say to his owner by looking into his eyes: "I want work to earn my treat"? And what should a look like that be like? To all intents and purposes, that look is similar to the one the dog uses to beg for food at the family gathering. He will do eye contact and then redirect it to the subject of his interest – to the food. The message "I want work to get the treats from your treat bag" would look something like the dog who makes eye contact as soon as the owner clips the treat bag to his waist and if the owner reacts to his eye contact, he will look at the treat bag and back. Yes, I know looks like that.

But I also know different types of eye contact. Long stares into the eyes of the owner that are more intense the more tense the situation is. There are dogs which have this stare just by nature – like Matthew from the chapter about bridges. The dog who wasn't really interested in treats and the one (one of the very few in my practice) being clicked without rewards. Did this dog's eyes really speak about himself? Or was it the case where he used the stare to look for a message from his partner, like it is with people? Was it really the message "I want work" or a question "What work do you want me to do, my master?"

To recognize what the dogs are trying to tell us with their eyes is not so easy. Are they talking about themselves or are they asking us? And how is it with some dogs who refuse to make eye contact and have to intentionally learn it, because it is a requirement in some dog sports? I don't dare to try and answer that question yet. There are a lot of different dogs and each one is an original. But I must say that as a trainer of non-dog animals I find it easier to work with dogs which move their look from the eyes of the trainer to the treat bag. With those I am almost certain they work for a reward and the training will go on smoothly like with an animal in the zoo. With those, who devotedly stare into the eyes of their owners with the expression "what

can I do for you” we often have to look for another way, different from the one I am used to with the zoo animals. And so we often have to break our eye contact for their own good. These dogs sort of fall in the category of the strangely devoted fairytale Honza, who will work till he drops - as long as the magical grandpa is watching him. I have met some hard-working dogs whose owners were asking: “What can I do to give this dog a rest?” And solving it was often quite easy: “Stop looking into his eyes!” Only after eye contact was interrupted was the dog was able to relax and be at peace, just being himself.

After all the contemplations I have to ask myself a question: What do we, people, want to see in these dog’s eyes during eye contact, which we demand in so many dog activities? Do we want to read the message “I am ready,” or the question “What is your wish, my master?” And if it supposed to be the question “What is your wish, my master?” **are we, as people, mentally ready for positive training?** Doesn’t this aim to have eye contact with the dog mean we have **the human need for superiority** and the wish to have all animals as our devoted servants? Maybe that after some history of using artificial selection with their breeding, the result will be that all dogs will naturally stare into our eyes, trying to find the answer to their question: “What is your wish, my master?” If we manage to do this with our dogs, we will have to take in consideration that it is a handicap for positive training. And we will have to come up with a special system of positive training, different from the one for the other species, which would suit these super devoted dogs. For now not all of them are like that and probably will never be. But already now I have to say I don’t know any other animal that could work with eye contact like the dog.

A STORY FROM PRACTICE – ABOUT A DOG’S TOLERANCE AND DEFAULT BEHAVIOUR

Berry and Pája

Agility is a beautiful dog sport I have the honour to experience and learn more and more about the discipline. A dog camp at the Czech Agricultural University was no exception. One of the participants was Pája with Berry and Bady, two Entlebucher Mountain Dog males. These chubby boys seemingly didn’t fit among all the border collies and shelties at the obstacle course. But that was an illusion. What looked like a chubby boy was a muscular guy and a ball of energy able to tear through the course with amazing speed. But this energy in Pája’s Entlebucher boys often burst into something other than a fast and precise run. To be honest the Entlebucher can deliver a loud sharp bark if he is excited and you don’t have to ask him to comply. You could get used to

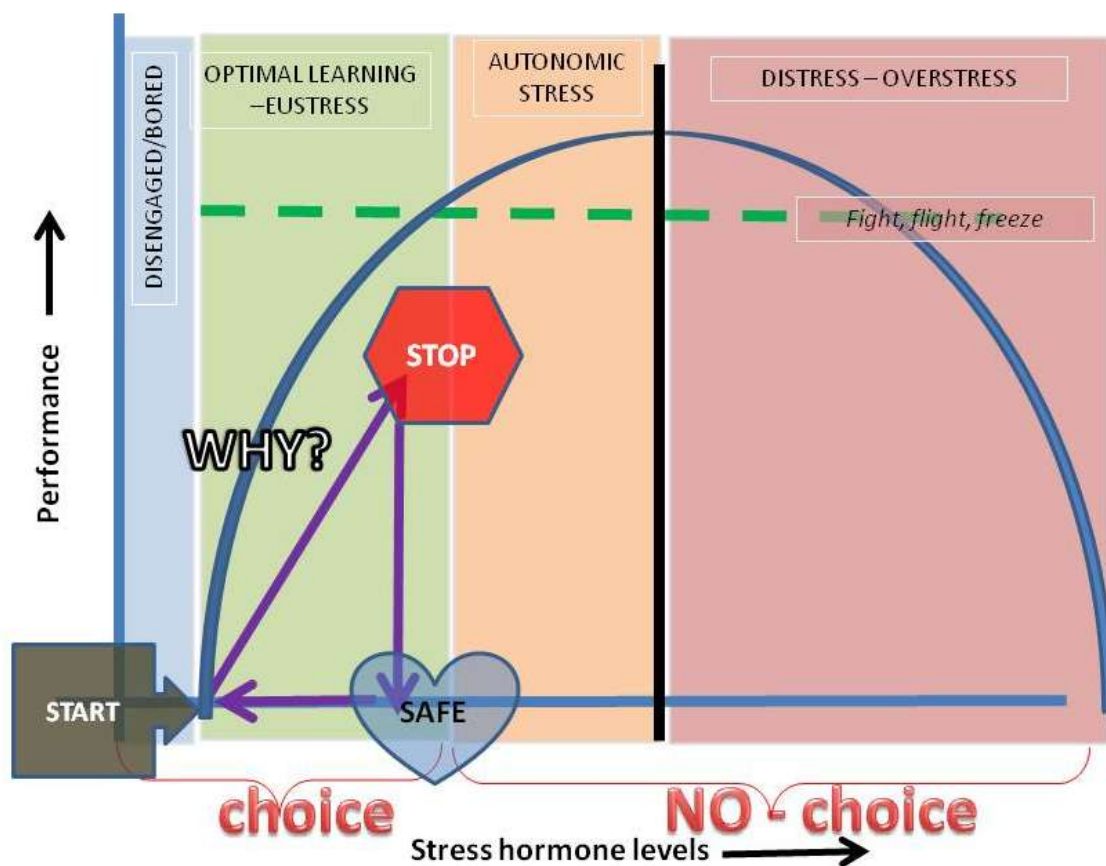
something like this during the run, if it didn't mean anything. . But we found out that the bark does mean something.



“The younger one, Berry, is looking forward to the run so much, that when we come near the start, he cannot control himself anymore. He is running around me, biting the leash, and jumping the obstacles without being asked. If I try to calm him down with a nose touch (a simple exercise, where the dog touches your palm with his nose), he will bark during that. And my experience is that if he behaves like that before the start, we often disqualify ourselves. The beginning after the start he is quiet. Then he starts to bark and suddenly he is making a mistake. I try to send him to the obstacle once more, so he would correct himself, but he falls into a cycle, making one mistake after another and in the end he is just offering behaviours and barking loudly. I know that if he is going to the start quietly, the runs are better. But on the other hand when he starts quietly he is not so fast. I am happy he has got drive at the start but if he has drive, he often makes a mistake. What should I do with that?”

It is a common practise for the dogs to move and bark to inspire the required drive before the competition. The body warms up, the lungs properly expand. It is not dissimilar to sportsmen who stretch before their performance. But something else may be going on with the dog. What is happening with the animal in our imaginary stress triangle? A properly “warmed-up” dog is

going up from the standstill to the critical FFF line – before the performance. Then the start comes and the dog, which is already close to losing self-control, is doing something that pushes him ever closer and closer to the FFF line. He is gradually losing concentration and self-control. If there is a demand in this moment for something the dog cannot do automatically and he would have to think about it, he doesn't have the capacity to think. And so he makes a mistake. And that is not something that makes the situation easier for him. The repeating of the same task without a second of relaxing makes him cross the FFF line and there he cannot think at all. But if a psychically relaxed dog runs out on the course, he will get to the critical limit of stress later or not at all. On the other side it is true that due to the lower level of eustress his performance could be worse.



Even among human sportsmen we can find ones that “bark” before their performance and head to the point of losing self-control. We know it well from athletics – the discus throwers, who have to accumulate maximum strength within a few seconds. If a properly excited athlete comes to his trial, with swollen veins and almost foaming mouth, you can be pretty sure he will put huge strength in his performance. But if the athlete is not able to calm down and concentrate for a split second before his throw, he will probably make a technical mistake and all the strength will be good for nothing.

Pája's Berry needed to learn something like that. Yes, it is good to exercise and get your blood flowing before the performance. But then Berry must calm down at least for a moment and concentrate so he won't make a mistake. And so we started to train automatic sit front with Berry. It was supposed to play the same role as the handles on the cage bars played for the chimpanzee. Like his own answer for START, STOP and the SAFE PLACE. Far away from the obstacle course, where the dog was calm, Pája went through a range of exercises for treats with him. Then she stopped telling him anything and waited, to see what he would offer. If he offered a sit, there was a click and reward. We continued on and we got to the part where the dog offered a sit and as a result was given a simple task. He would easily fulfil that and got his reward. Pája did not give him all the treats from her hand, she threw some of them to the side on the ground to check, and see if after eating them and he would return to her. They very quickly got to a place where the dog automatically sat down without a command and he could stay in the sit if he wanted to ask for work (START). But also if the task was too difficult and he couldn't do it (SAFE PLACE).

This automatic sit front became a way for the dog to calm himself quickly and concentrate. If he is sitting, it means there is no working and it means he is not going up the stress triangle to the FFF. And because he did it himself, without a command, he learned to moderate his own psychological state in the moment where he needed to concentrate. Then it was time to try out the same system before the course and it looked like the dog understood this very quickly. He looked at the course and expressed how much he wants to run by sitting down in front of Pája. He got "start" and so on. This system worked even with a ready and excited dog and helped us to solve the problems on the course too. If Berry made a mistake and there was a probability he would head into the uncontrolled barking, he was given a second for the sit front and after participating in this behaviour he was concentrated and cool and able to correct his mistake.

The last day came and there was a "real" competition. Pája and Berry were full of energy and prepared and we made our way to the start. The dog sat down beautifully by himself, and stayed. Then they began the run. For the first half of the course everything is ideal and he was even running quietly... but then it was time for the slalom. Berry made a mistake, Pája sent him again, another mistake and Berry started to bark... and suddenly he sat down, calmed down and from that moment on he went on precisely. "Great!" I tell them at the finish. "Disqualified!" says the judge, who is standing beside me. "How come?" I ask naively. And again I showed I am an animal trainer and I don't know all the rules of dog sports. "Because he stopped working on the course and that means disqualification," was the answer. "You didn't know that the day before yesterday, when I was making up the strategy for you?" I asked. "I knew that from the beginning, but it didn't seem so important. Ok we will be disqualified a couple of times. But the main thing

is we will enjoy the course and none of us will be nervous to do something that should be fun for both of us. When Berry finds out he is the most important thing for me during the run, not the win, he will be fine and there will be less disqualifications. And the dog is the main thing, not the competition.” This is what I call a champion’s answer. How about you?

CONCLUSION

SOCIALISING VS. TEACHING

Many times I have heard the sentence “the dog has learned tricks, but he is not well socialised”. This sentence actually means that learned behaviour and good behaviour are not the same. And I have to agree. For me they are really not. But what does it mean to be well socialised? With learning we are quite certain – basically it is learning the correct behaviour after a specific signal. But being well socialised? I have five children and two dogs at home and all of them need to have manners to operate effectively in lives. My answer to the question – what does it mean to be appropriately socialised? – It is to integrate a live being into a family of other live beings which belong to him and to which he belongs. It is a very complicated and sensitive message saying: “This is us and this is you – you are one of us. You have your role here with us, a role that fulfils your existence and fate in this living group-organism which consists of many live beings.” If we provide a role, it also means setting limits and borders. None of the roles of the members of the common family are unlimited. Everybody has their particular job and limited rights. These roles have to be clearly defined and all the members of the given family have to understand them so they can operate in relation to the roles of everybody else. If the roles of the members of the given family would not have their limits, it would simply be an accidental gathering of independent individuals. Each of them going their own way in an effort to get the “treat at the end of everything”. Each of these individuals with his treat in the middle of such a group is actually very much alone. And I think that the dogs are not here to be alone. The nature of the majority of dogs is not just to hunt for food, but to have a role. To be “in it together” with us. To have their place in our families.

. So, when we integrate dogs into our group, **we inform them mainly about ourselves.** If we tell him “You belong to us”, we have to tell them **who we are in relationship with them.** And if I tell him “This is your role in our group,” then I have to show him **what my role is.** Whether I like it or not, when integrating another into my unit, **I have to take responsibility for who I am so that I can create a bond between us.** And that is much more difficult than teaching tricks, which can be done only with a treat for the correct result. During teaching, at least the basic one, I am not giving out of myself, I give just out of my treat bag.

It is a sad reality that the socialising in the mainstream dog world is considered to be mainly leash jerking and showing “who is the master”. And it is considered that the firmer the alpha demeanour the better. Let the human strength be seen! As if every dog was born with the deep craving inside to start a revolution against human superiority. As if every puppy coming to his

new family was automatically a secret agent of superpower “Mother Nature” who is just waiting for an opportunity to hurt the family and take over the rule. As if our human task was to stop this planned dog revolution. Many dog owners use this strength and showing “who is the master” with a dog, which is supposed to stop and win over a human trespasser. If such a dog succumbs to the strength of his owner, does this mean the owner is physically stronger than the dog? In that case he must be much stronger than the trespasser who loses in the combat with the dog. What does this strong man need the dog for? Why doesn't he destroy the trespasser himself? Essentially, he dog could finish off his owner the same way he protects him from the trespasser. But what if the dog's devotion and tolerance prevent him from doing this? As you can see, if we look into the socialising with force in more detail, we will see many things that defy logic. The reason is that when socialising with the use of force should not be the most important thing. The main role should be played by feelings, intuition and self-control of the human side. And mainly working on ourselves maybe more than with the animal.

I think anyway that we cannot separate the socialising from the teaching and that they will always mix in some ratio. Yes, we have extremes when a dog is perfectly integrated into his family and so has a perfect upbringing without learning a single command. And we know many dogs who can do dozens of tricks for a treat and toys but they struggle to find a role in the dog – owner relationship. Their horizon is so endless and the borders so far away they can never fulfil their role. And they seem to ask: “What else should I do to make us a two-member team?” This is the strange extreme (luckily not so common) that creates a bad impression of positive training. And it is a pity. The culprit is not the positive training as such. The dog just didn't get THE something yet, something a dog needs from us, while a non-dog animal usually does well without it.

From time to time an opponent of positive training will say that this “way of exchanging behaviour for food” works only in the sterile environment of sea lion pools, where the trainer controls every given fish and is the only source of entertainment for the animals. It is very sad that this argument is mainly used by people, who have never trained sea lions. I really hope that with this book I have shown that the positive training of non-dog animals is not about exploiting them using hunger or controlling their every step. The “non-dog” training is not about controlling every fish and source of entertainment in their area (in that case it wouldn't be possible to do research projects with sea lions and dolphins in the open sea. One example among many). For me the basic difference between dogs and “non-dogs” is that a non-dog animal will not ask the trainer - What is my role in your life?. It is an independent and distinctive being. The training offers an opportunity to do something extra. A non-dog animal, at least initially, will work for his own benefit. You are just going through “learning how to get

something extra". But this learning slowly starts to incorporate socialising in the sense of "if you try to attack the trainer, he will leave" and some other rules. By these rules we are trying to avoid conflicts and establish boundaries that we would probably not be able to protect anyway if we needed to. So day by day, training session after training session, a relationship is formed between the trainer and non-dog animal and the outer motivation is slowly joined by the inner one. In the end and after some years (sometimes never) we have a relationship of two beings that is seemingly as functional as the dog and his owner. But in reality they still are two independent individuals that have bonded through years of work together and a common goal. But it is rarely a partnership, where the animal works for the man because it is his role, his fate and his predestination that he has evolved to fulfil. If you want to experience something like that, get a dog. And don't just teach him how to react to different signals and so he can achieve a predictable benefit. Work on his socialising, show him who you are, who he is, be clear on your individual roles relative to each other. Show him how you belong to each other. Forget the common concept that socialising is just an obedience drill and a showing of physical power. Socialising means to give the animal something from myself. That something that cannot be weighed or measured, but it is there. And if you manage to do that (and there is no guarantee you will), please, be grateful to your dog for the fact that you could experience something like that as a result of your relationship with him. Something only one animal in the world can give you. Because I am more and more convinced with every year I spend with dog people - I don't know an animal that would be equal to a dog.



AFTERWORD

NOTHING IS BLACK AND WHITE

We reached the end of another book, where I have used a lot of categories, comparisons and sometimes graphs and tables for the sake of better understanding. But remember, please, that nature does not play in the categories, comparisons, graphs and tables. And the dogs, like us, humans, are a part of nature. Nothing is black and white, it is just easier to understand as black and white. And that is the only reason I wrote it so “black and white”. To make the thoughts and ideas in it more understandable.

Maybe you have asked yourself a question during the reading of this book: “Does my dog belong into the same group as the peculiar devoted fairy-tale Honza. Or does he behave like an independent and psychically free non-dog animal motivated by food?” None of it is exact. Your dog is your dog and he has something from each of the two categories. He is an original mixture of both – and this mixture changes every second according to the situation. Well, everything is relative, no two situations are the same and everybody has his price. Even the peculiar devoted fairy-tale Honza would probably try to get the princess and stop being focused on grandpa’s opinion, if the princess would transform into Miss Universe in front of his eyes and shehe may even start to bake cakes. So the same dog could be working for treats in one type of situation and at some other time he would be working more just for your sake. It means that in training and out of training we shouldn’t be blind. It is good to see the ratio of the devoted Honza and independent animal in your dog in the given moment. Because the devoted Honza and independent animal present two different elements, different possibilities for the trainer and different viewpoints. And this book was about those elements, possibilities and viewpoints. The book you have just read wasn’t about your dog – he is not in any book, he is in your home. Read him as carefully as you have read this book. Or maybe even more carefully. I wish you lots of luck together!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

RNDr. František Šusta, PhD. (born on 31. 1. 1976) studied biology and geography at Faculty of Science, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic and made his PhD. at Faculty of Environmental Sciences of Czech University of Life Sciences. He has been working as Animal Training Specialist in the Prague Zoo between 2008-2017. He was the first Czech to become member of the Animal Behaviour Management Alliance (ABMA) and International Marine Animal Trainers' Association (IMATA). In 2016, as holder of five different ABMA awards, he became the holder of the largest collection of awards granted by that worldwide association of professional animal trainers .

Before starting his career of animal trainer in the zoo, he had founded the Zaobzor o.s. association in 2007, to propagate dog-fancier education at schools. Since 2012, he has been leading very popular workshops and practical lessons particularly for dog, horse and parrot owners interested in positive reinforcement training.

He is the author of four books on animal training: "Training is dialogue ... in which your dog also has a say" (2014), "Training is in head - yours and also animal's" (2016), "I do not know another animal quite like a dog " (2017), "Dogshow is a game" (Čermáková, Šusta, 2019). His books became bestsellers in the Czech Republic. Translations of some important chapters you can find in Free Download section of his web trainingisdialogue.com. František has also written dozens of professional, scientific and popularizing articles as well. As a father of five children, skilled teacher and ex-member of Czech youth athletic representation he likes to explain animal training principles on examples from family life, sport and school.

More about František Šusta you can find on his website www.trainingisdialogue.com