



DOG TRAINING

Helping you and your dog become best friends for life.

BOOK REVIEW – *THE OTHER END OF THE LEASH*, BY PATRICIA MCCONNELL, PHD

SUGGESTED AUDIENCE: Dog lovers wanting to improve the relationship with their dog by understanding how dogs and primates can better communicate with one another.

Back in the early 1990's, when we still lived in Wisconsin and before we got into the pet care business, Paula and I attended several dog training classes with our dogs Gus and Shed. It was not until 1994 that we found Dr. Patricia McConnell and her training school, Dog's Best Friend. This was the first class that all of us, humans and dogs alike, truly enjoyed. Why? Because of Trisha's understanding of how dogs and humans communicate and her emphasis on rewarding good behavior. Now the world can benefit from her knowledge in her new book, *The Other End Of The Leash*.

The Other End Of The Leash is an information-packed, yet readable book. In it you will learn how to have an improved relationship with your dog through better communication. As a scientist who has studied both primate and canine communication systems, Dr. McConnell has a keen understanding of where the communication between humans and dogs often breaks down, creating frustration and stress for both species. For example, she explains how simple innate greeting patterns of both species can cause conflict. We know that when two people meet, the polite thing to do is to make direct eye contact and walk straight toward one another smiling. However, as Dr. McConnell notes: "The oh-so-polite primate approach is appallingly rude in canine society. You might as well urinate on a dog's head." The fact is direct eye contact and a direct approach is very confrontational to a dog.

Dr. McConnell also emphasizes how dogs primarily communicate visually, while humans are a very verbal species. The picture she paints of the frustrated chimp, jumping up and down, waving their hands, and screeching repeatedly is only a slight exaggeration of the frustrated human, saying "sit, sit, sit, ahhhh please sit" while displaying countless bits of body language. Primates, including humans, "...have a tendency to repeat notes when we're excited, to use loud noises to impress others, and to thrash around whatever is in our paw if we're frustrated. This behavior has no small effect on our interactions with dogs, who in spite of some barks and growls, mostly communicate visually, get quiet rather than noisy to impress others, and are too busy standing on their paws to do much else with them." With these fundamental differences, it's amazing we can communicate with our dogs at all.

While Trisha's book will certainly enlighten you, it will also move you. Her description of her relationships with her own animals leaves no doubt about her love and commitment. Reading her recollection of how her beloved Luke was almost hit by a car and the passing of her little Border Collie Misty had me very near tears.

FAVORITE QUOTES: "If humans are understandably a bit slow at responding to the visual signals that our dogs are sending, we are downright dense about the signals that we generate ourselves."

"Forcing dogs into 'submission' and screaming in their face is a great way to elicit defensive aggression. It makes sense that a dog would bite, or at least threaten to, in this context. Within their social framework, you're acting like a lunatic."

"It seems very human to stay fixated on the negative: 'No!' seems to come out of our mouths as easily as breathing. But saying no doesn't teach a dog what *to* do, and it keeps the attention focused on it and nothing else."

I highly recommend *The Other End Of The Leash* for anyone with a dog in their life.