

What to Say When You Don't Know What to Do AAHA! Denver 2007

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Sound Familiar?

- “How can I get him to stop-----?”
 - “I just have a quick question ---”
 - “I think my dog is alpha”
 - “I know my cat/dog is mad at me/trying to tell me something”
 - “I know he knows better”
-

Problems Might Be -

- Jumping up
- Housesoiling
- Aggression
- Pulling on leash
- Home alone behaviors
- Won't come when called
- In clients' minds – equal level of complexity
- Pet owners want quick fixes and/or
- Believe behavior should be easy to change





Avoid Clients' "Quick-Easy-Fix" Model of the World

- Does a dis-service to you, to the quality of care you provide, to your clients and most importantly the animals
 - Repeated studies have shown people will choose the "cadillac" choice more often than you think
 - Become an advocate for good behavioral care
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Provide Behavioral Care

- Respond to owner's behavior concerns as would medical issues
 - Add to problem list
 - Create action steps
 - Document
 - ✓ Address now, defer, refer, waiver
 - ✓ Discussed this morning
-

What to Say # 1 - BEWARE

- “How can I get him to stop—” question
- Decrease behavior
- By definition – positive or negative punishment
- Punishment as 1st step is seldom the right tool for the job



Dangers of punishment and intimidation

- Intimidation techniques can backfire
- Increases emotional arousal which in turn makes behavior worse
- Cause pet to escalate his threatening behavior
- Next time is even worse
- Doesn't change what pet wants to do



REFOCUS

- “How can I get him to do what I want him to do so I can reinforce the desired behavior”





What To Say # 2

- Can they elicit a competing behavior and reward it?
 - Sit instead of jumping up
 - Come/sit away from window rather than barking
 - Watch the owner
 - Food is often best reward
 - Play also good choice
 - **WARNING** - This may not work with complex problems without additional techniques
-



What To Say # 3

- Prevent the unwanted behavior by managing the pet's environment
 - ✓ Why is this important?
 - ✓ Lack of management allows pet to “practice” /repeat the behavior
 - ✓ Pet gets good at it
 - ✓ Becomes more “automatic” / easily triggered
 - ✓ Harder to change
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What To Say # 3

- Prevent the unwanted behavior by managing the pet's environment
 - ✓ Don't allow contact with the "trigger" (stimuli that elicit the behavior)
 - Confine when visitors come
 - Separate cats/dogs that are fighting
 - Don't allow dog in backyard when kids are playing
 - Block vision through window
 - MANY possibilities depending on the problem
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What To Say # 3

- Prevent the unwanted behavior by managing the pet's environment
 - ✓ Don't allow pet in the location where the problem behavior occurs
 - If soiling/destructive in a particular room – don't allow access
 - If fence running, lunging at window – don't allow in yard/room
 - MANY possibilities depending on the problem

**RECOMMEND CRATING WITH
EXTREME CAUTION**



Misconceptions About Crates

- ❖ Popular literature has misinterpreted and over-interpreted the scientific findings.
- ❖ Canids are 'denning' animals



Misconceptions About Crates

- Dens are used to whelp and raise young
- Adult wolves spend very little time in a den
- No evidence that canids choose to spend 8-10 hours a day in a 'den'



Misconceptions About Crates

- **Crates and dens are not synonymous**
 - Pups become familiar with dens at birth
 - Dogs are often not introduced till much older
 - Dens are not socially isolating, crates are
 - Animal can choose when to leave the den, crates take away choice



Crating Concerns

- ❖ Patronek et al.'s (1996) study found that dogs that spent most of their time during the day confined in crates were at increased risk of relinquishment
- ❖ Crating may mask problems through over-management, not allowing behavior change



Crating Concerns

- Excessive crating interferes with social and activity needs
- Crating dogs with separation anxiety is counter productive and dangerous
 - Physical injuries can happen
- If pup/dog is soiling crate, using a smaller crate is **NOT** the answer
- Some dogs crated 10+ hours/day



Crating Recommendations

- ❖ Crate should be a temporary or short term management option NOT a way of life
- ❖ Supervision and management ARE important, but crates aren't only option



Crating Recommendations

- Introduction must be gradual and positive
 - Must include acclimation to being alone
- Make a gradual transition to no crating



PETSMART

crate training

the right way



Video Training Series • Tape 1



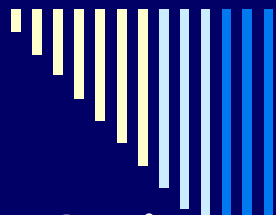
Supplemental tool to PETSMART Pet Training classes.

Authored by Dr. Suzanne Hetts
World Renowned Animal Behaviorist

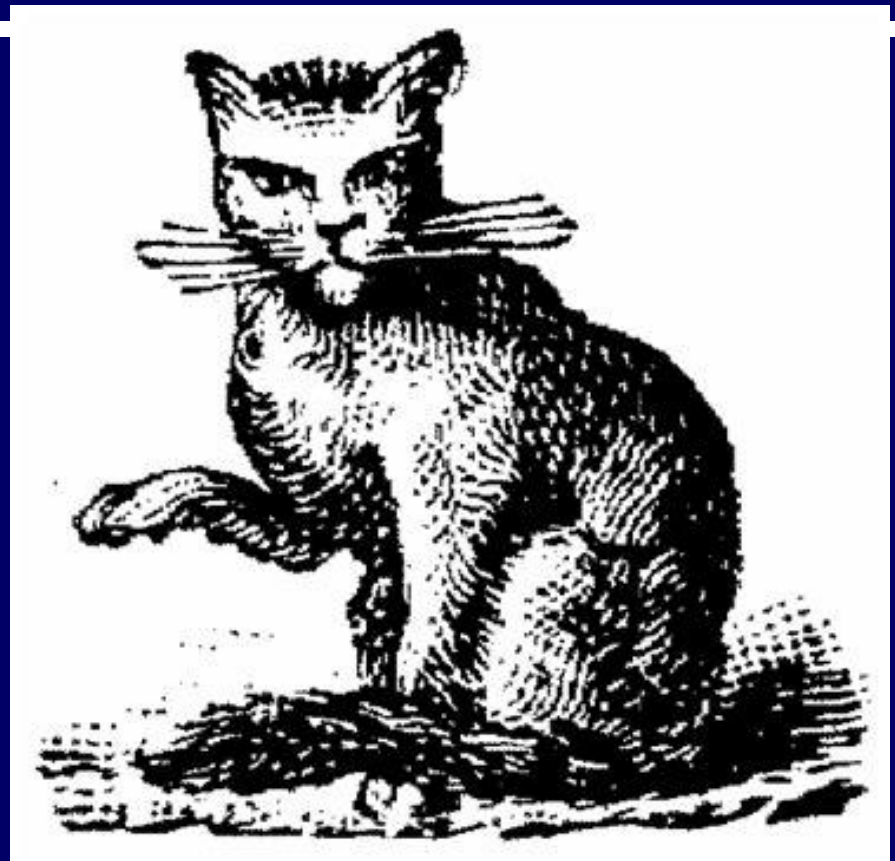
What To Say # 4

- Correct anthropomorphic misinterpretations for the behavior





Spite is not a
cause of behavior
problems!



“Do not meddle in the affairs of cats,
for they are subtle and will pee on your
computer”

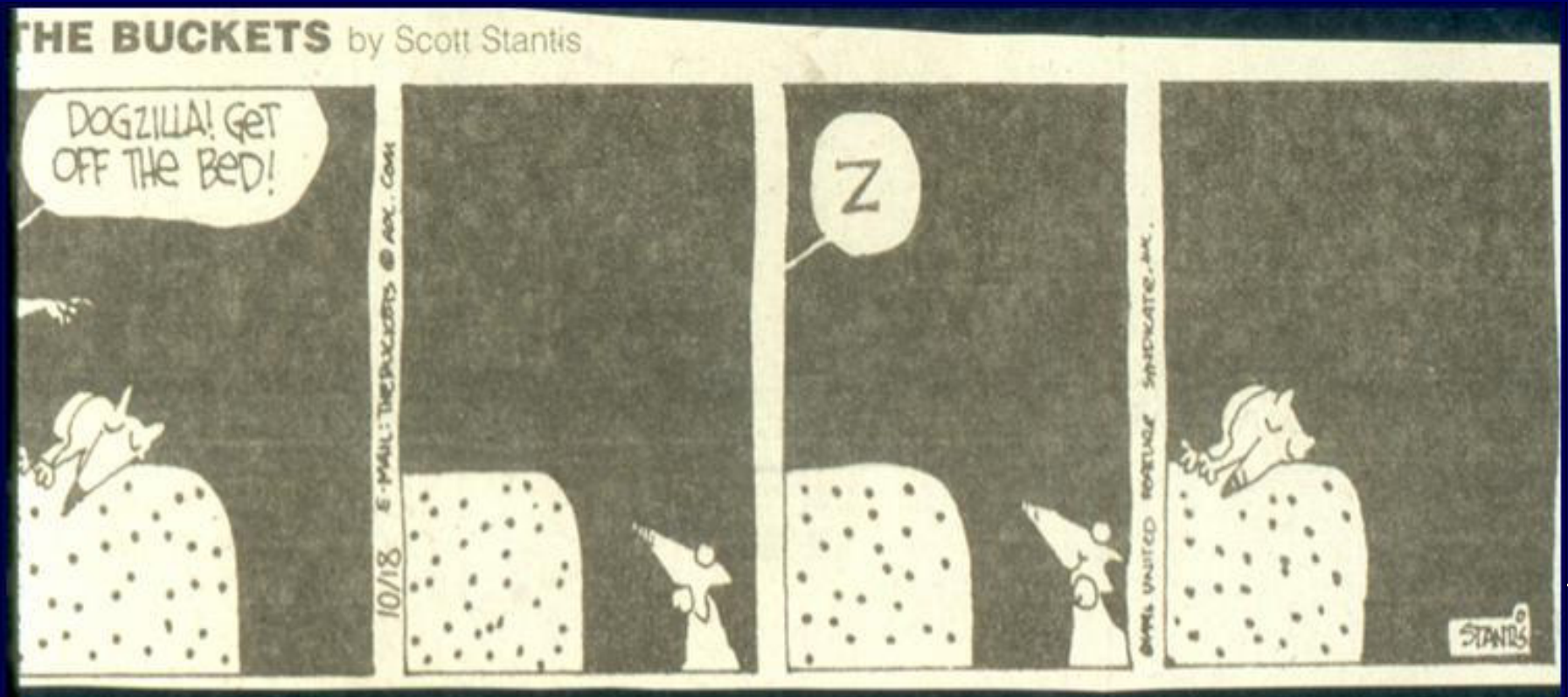
Bruce Graham

Anthropomorphic Misinterpretations

- Pets do not lay around all day plotting elaborate schemes designed to 'get back at us'



- ❖ “He knows better” – pets don’t have a moral sense of right and wrong
- ❖ Pets aren’t always learning what we think they are



FRED BASSET by Alex Graham



❖ Analyzing “guilty looks”

- ❖ Submissive behaviors
- ❖ Goal is to “turn off” (or avoid) threat from owner
- ❖ Pet can make predictions about punishment

What To Say # 5



Pets do what works

To meet a need, accomplish a goal, cope with environment, attain some kind of reinforcement or avoid something unpleasant

What to Say #6

- Are the pet's behavioral needs being met?



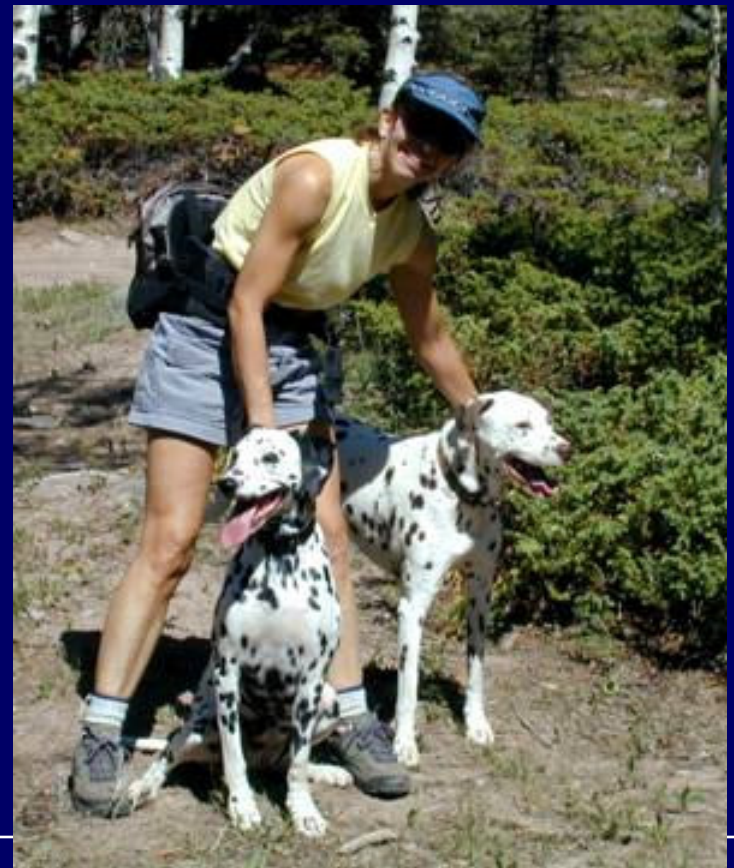


Are the Pet's Behavioral Needs Being Met?

- ✓ 10 month old Lab, destroying landscape
 - ✓ Trainer said nothing hard to chew on
 - ✓ Dogs who spend day in crate
 - ✓ Owners complain about pestering, barking, unruly behaviors
 - ✓ Young cat that “ambushes” owners/other cat, left alone long hours
 - ✓ Failure to use litterbox – box characteristics – go to PerfectLitterbox.com
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Are The Pet's Behavioral Needs Being Met?

- Mentally stimulating environment - training
- Ability to exert control over environment
- Predictable routines



Are The Pet's Behavioral Needs Being Met?

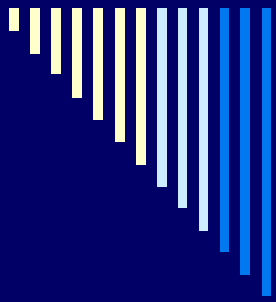
- Play
- Physical exercise
- Social time
- Hiding places
- Perching places for cats
- Protection from recurring stress, anxiety, harassment



What to Say #7

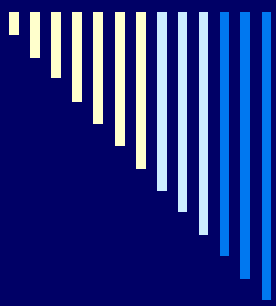
- Clarify “dominance” misinterpretations
- Discussed during 11am talk
- “Labeling” a dog has consequences



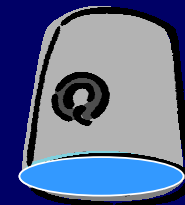


These 7 “What To Says” preceded by
– not a substitute for in-depth,
individual behavior modification
program

Pet Owners' Resources



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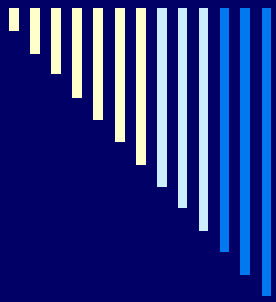


Avoid wasting finite resources by taking a “try this, try that approach”, and not fully evaluating a behavior problem or making a timely referral



What To Say # 8 – When to Refer

- From CVMA Leadership Conference on referrals
 - Standard of care vs. state of the art
 - State of art isn't a weekend course
 - Possess and apply to the case reasonable skills and diligence as is expected in the profession
 - 61% of veterinary schools do not have elective or clinical rotation in behavior
-



When to Refer

- Refer to qualified experts when –
 - Uncertain of diagnosis/treatment
 - Patient repeatedly presents for same problem, despite your treatment
- If you are going to work with in-house first, have clear time frame and criteria for when it's time to refer



When to Refer

- Medication best with concurrent behavior modification
 - Just a reminder –
 - If prescribe meds – have a plan for followup
 - Blood work
 - Progress with behavior change
-



Timeliness of Referring

- Decrease in credibility
 - if suggestions ineffective
 - not mentioning other options to clients
- Liability issues
- Increase owner's frustration
- Exacerbate the problem

DO NO HARM



What to Say #8

- Refer the pet owner
 - To Whom:
 - ✓ CAABs and Veterinary Behaviorists are ONLY ones with required academic training
 - Red Flags
 - ✓ Claim a “license” – is no government licensure
 - ✓ Don’t keep you in the loop
 - ✓ Focus on “pack leader” and “dominance” mythology
 - ✓ Nutrition and medication recommendations without consulting you
-

What About Guarantees?

- Guarantee of results is unethical
 - Marriage counseling analogy
 - No veterinary or human health care professional offers guarantees
 - What voids the “guarantee”
- Guarantee service satisfaction – different





What to Say #8

➤ To Whom:

- ❑ Can provide the best behavioral care for that pet at that time
 - ❑ Might be CAAB, veterinary behaviorist, another veterinarian, trainer
-

What to Say #8

- Training or behavior consultation?
- Clients say “dog needs training”
 - ✓ Classes or private training lessons won’t address housoiling, aggression, separation anxiety, barking, etc.
- If need basic training/ manners, use a CPDT (ccpdt.org)
 - Visit Colo. Booth
- Some PETsMART trainers are also CPDT
- Certification if for *training* skills and knowledge



What to Look for in Basic Training

□ Empower your clients

- Don't allow people or dogs to be 'bullied'
- Not forced into using a technique
- 'Only way'
- Don't allow trainer to take leash

□ Give them 'red flags'

- Choke chains primarily, electronic collars for basic training
- No food
- 'Dominance' / 'pack leader'



- <http://animalbehaviorassociates.com/pdf/dogtrainer.pdf>



Behavior Consulting

- What is process?
 - Dog barking excessively when alone
 - Determine motivation/why
 - Separation anxiety?
 - “Boredom”
 - Play
 - Specific triggers
 - Fear
 - No punishment consequence
 - Interview owner, perhaps observe dog
-



Behavior Consulting

- Use information to analyze and interpret the motivation for the behavior
 - Then create appropriate behavior modification plan
 - Look for someone who is capable of doing this – individual case
 - Not provide “canned solutions”
-



Behavior Consulting Services

- Accompany on a consultation – what to look for
 - Behavior consult, not a private training session
 - Ability to analyze problem
 - Create systematic, relevant plan
 - Written recommendations to owner and veterinarian
 - Communication, able to explain to owners
-



Refer the Pet Owner

➤ How:

- ✓ You would refer to any other specialist
 - ✓ Clients should expect appointment, evaluation, fees
 - ✓ Not “I don’t know if they can help you”, “Call them and see what they can do for you” “See if they can give you some ‘tips’”.
-



Take-Home Messages

❖ Change thinking from:

- ❖ “How can I get him to stop” TO

- ❖ “How can I get him to do what I want him to do so I can reward him”

- ❖ Help them to understand that pets do what works for them, rather than thinking of the pet as rebellious, vindictive, mean-spirited, spiteful, stubborn or ‘dominant’



Take-Home Messages

- ❖ Help clients to understand that punishment, intimidation and force have dangerous consequences.
 - Manage the environment to prevent the behavior from occurring
 - Encourage timely help from professional behaviorists or trainers
 - Develop network of referral resources
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THE END

THANK YOU