

## UNDERSTANDING DOG BEHAVIOR

### “Too Bad” – A Consequence



The goal of this handout is to give you a clear way of correcting your dog for an undesirable behavior. The reason why words like “NO” and “OFF” do not work is because we typically haven’t established rules or meaning behind these words. Usually such commands are backed up with lots of useless bad emotion. A simple reward system for a dog, just as with children, is to look, touch, or talk to the dog (be it nicely or angrily). A good example of this reward system is when a dog jumps up. What we see most people do when the dog jumps up is to push down on the dog while looking at him and yelling “NO” or “OFF.” The dog then hits the deck only to reload and jump right back up again. This then becomes the cycle. The question is asked, “Why does my dog keep jumping up on me?” and we would answer, “It is because you keep rewarding the behavior.”

With this reward system in mind, let’s now look at a correction. You will need some supplies. First, you will need a snap buckle similar to what is on the end of your leash. Second, you will need some thin, lightweight nylon rope or clothesline. Attach a ten-foot section of the line to the snap buckle and hook it to your dog’s collar. We will now refer to this as a long line. Try NOT to use the leash you use to walk the dog. The leash must hold value later in our training. Any time you are with your dog in the house, he must wear the long line. **Do not leave it on your dog while you are not in the house and do not use it outside unless told to do so by your instructor.**

The use of the long line allows you to correct the dog without using the simple reward system. When the dog displays an undesirable behavior (i.e. jumps up on a counter, steals an item, barks at passersby in front of the house, digs in trash, hops up on furniture uninvited, or jumps up on a guest) pick up the end of the long line. Immediately turn away and walk toward a crate or designated room with your back to your dog. As soon as you feel tension in the long line, say in a very sweet tone, “Too bad,” and place the dog in the area you have chosen for timeouts. Note: do not turn to look at your dog and coax him to come with you. **The dog is to remain in timeout for twenty minutes the first week and two minutes thereafter.**

It’s important that the timeout clock does not start until the dog is settled and quiet. If the dog barks or cries, the clock is reset. When the timeout has expired, let your dog out and ignore him for two minutes. When and if he repeats the same undesirable behavior, repeat the “Too Bad” process even if it occurs within the first two minutes of being released from timeout. Dogs learn in cycles of four or six. If you correct your dog four to six times for the same negative behavior, then you have established a rule that your dog will understand.

**It is very important that you do not display any emotion before, during, or after the correction. This only confuses the learning process.** Remember that we are training a command and we don’t want to intimidate the dog. The command should mean removal of reward and separation from the pack. As long as we never use emotion then it will not make the timeout area a bad area and therefore not a punishment. It is also important that we are consistent in our corrections as this is the only way the rules are established.