

NOTHING IN LIFE IS FREE: GAINING AND MAINTAINING CONTROL HUMANELY (aka NILIF)

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Dominance rolls, alpha rolls, harsh corrections in order to gain control of your dog and show him "who calls the shots" are a thing of the past. Instead of force, humans can use ignoring certain behaviors and having the dog work for privileges to teach the dog that humans are in charge.

This is not a substitution for behavioral work and should only be used on dogs in good health and of stable temperament with no major behavioral issues. If you have any questions regarding your dog's behavior, seek professional advice before beginning a NILIF program. But for the average dog, this program is valuable.

Do you do things like leave food down all day for your dog? Give in and play when he jumps on you and get frustrated when he jumps on you just before you go out for dinner? Do you allow your dog to get away with undesired manners like barking for attention or acting up when it is time to go for walks? Does your dog run roughshod over you? Not good. It is time to get serious and begin NILIF'ing.

Many undesired behaviors are learned out of demanding attention. For example, dog jumps on you, you pat him, dog is more likely to jump for attention the next time he wants it from you. Other dogs may poke, bark in your face, etc. The key is the dog is in control of the situation when he gets the attention he demands. Not good. He is also developing undesired behaviors, not because he is bad, but because you are reinforcing them. It is time to stop this. Since the dog is doing this for attention, you are going to deny him that attention. Walk away. Totally ignore the dog. You can give him as much attention as you want as long as it is by your rules and not his. Now, encourage your dog to come to you and sit. If all four feet remain on the floor, he can get attention. If he starts that undesired barking or jumping or mouthing, walk away. Be consistent and be fair. Maintain your composure and level of being in charge. Dogs that are confused about who is in control are more likely to act out.

When first beginning a NILIF program the dog may get a bit confused. "Hey, this always worked in the past!" Chances are he will now try in earnest to get your attention. He will burst, explode and the behavior will get worse – or as I call it – The Storm Before the Calm. Hold your ground and do not give in. Giving in at any time is going to encourage the undesired behavior to continue. "See, I finally broke you down!"

Think of it as a toddler throwing tantrums and always getting what he wants. First time child sees something he wants and starts to fuss, mom gives in. She has just started the cycle of "If I fuss, I will get it." Next time mom ignored the fussing, the child escalates a bit. Mom gives in and child realizes "Gee, I got her to break down." The next time, the child will work even harder to get mom to give in if she does not crack immediately. The more mom breaks down, the more the child will throw that tantrum. If mom puts her foot

down and ignores the tantrum, the child will escalate it trying to get his own way again. She may have to endure hours of screaming, kicking feet, tears, wailing, throwing things, even the child gagging and possibly even vomiting as he works up that frenzy. Eventually, the child will stop. The tantrum just does not work any more. Yelling, or even pushing the child away is not what he is looking for, but it is something and a sign that mom is breaking. You need to totally turn off to the tantrum and endure it. As long as a child is not hurting himself, others, or breaking things, tantrums can often be allowed to run their course with children. This is very similar with dogs. For some dogs, attention is attention - be it positive or negative. Use the denial of any attention instead. Endure the extinction period and things will improve if everyone in the house is consistent. Again, you can give all the attention you want to the dog as long as it is by YOUR RULES and not his!

You as the human have the power, but you are also empowering the dog to learn self-control. Again, do you just give in to your dog? Does he get food and play for free and there is no "currency" he has to pay with to get it? Change that. You have the power; you are in control - not him. Simple things like making him "work" or "pay" for things can help reestablish who is in charge. Insist the dog sits before he gets to eat. If he sits automatically, regain control by having him down. If he takes a few bites and walks away, dinner is over until the next meal (feed your dog two meals a day). You control the food. He does not decide when mealtimes are - you do. Does your dog get up on your bed or furniture when he feels like it? Change. He has to now wait until he is given a command to come up. Before play and during play, stop the dog and have him work, teach him tricks like "Shake" "Play Dead" "Take a Bow." If he does this, he can continue to play with you. If not, the game is over. The dog is given power in his own right. If he does what you ask, he gets what he wants. He is in control to an extent. **But you are determining the outcome and what has to be done in order for that to occur. Sort of like a paycheck. You do what you are supposed to and when you are supposed to, your pay continues, your job continues. Failure to do this and your job may very well end as does that pay check!**

With your dog no longer in charge of the house, you will have to make more of an effort to engage in play and socialize. But it is worth it. NILIF does not mean denial of attention or play, it just means that the balance of power has shifted and the human is back in charge.