

## 'Nothing in Life is Free'

### 'Nothing in Life is Free'- Melissa Bain

'Nothing in Life is Free' is a programme that can be used to help teach dogs how to be better prepared to live in a human society. The 'Learn to Earn' programme follows similar principles.

### Advantages of NILIF

- It will help improve your dog's behaviour and teach him/her to learn to trust and accept the lead of his/her owners.
- It is a technique that almost everyone (regardless of age, size, or personality type) can do.
- It is non-confrontational and should not put people or dogs at risk.
- It helps build a dog's confidence by providing clear rules and enjoyable outcomes for good behaviour. Having your dog consistently follow your commands at home in low stress situations makes it easier for him/her to follow commands when he/she is distracted, anxious or may be aggressive.
- NILIF uses only **positive reward-based training** to teach these valuable lessons.

### When might you use NILIF?

#### Pushy dogs

NILIF helps teach dogs good manners. Many dogs learn how to get the things they want, like petting, food, being played with or getting treats, by being affectionate, but pushy. They paw at people, jump on people, push their way into a situation or even bark and whine to get attention. NILIF is like teaching a child to say 'please' and 'thank you'.

## **Fearful dogs**

NILIF helps make your dog's life more predictable and offers him/her lots of chances to earn good things; this can help lower his/her anxiety. It also teaches him/her to trust you, which helps build his/her confidence and provides a sense of security

## **Aggression toward family members**

NILIF requires that your dog works for everything he/she wants. This is a safe and non-confrontational way for the people in the household to establish reliability and control over the valuable resources in the house, such as food, toys and attention from favourite people. It is also a way in which the dog learns a consistent manner of interacting with people.

## **Aggression toward other people or dogs**

NILIF helps establish that you are in control of the situation, and establishes a rule that your dog should always be prepared to follow your instruction to get something he/she wants. It also helps your dog to pay closer attention to you.

## The rules of NILIF

### 1 Your dog must 'work' for all the 'good things' in life.

**Work** = obey a command the dog knows well.

Commands you may want to use include the basics like 'sit', 'down' and 'stay', or you may choose to have your dog do some more complicated tricks like shake hands, rollover, wave or 'play dead'. Anything you can teach your dog is fair game.

If your dog does not already know commands well you must teach him/her a few commands/tricks before you begin NILIF – having a number of commands means that he/she cannot predict which action you will ask him/her to do at any given time and stops him/her stealing back the initiative. Use only positive reinforcement methods to teach commands. Speak to your veterinary surgeon about positive reinforcement training/selecting a trainer.

**Good things** = anything your dog wants or likes. Examples are:

- Being fed
- Getting treats
- Being petted
- Being greeted
- Having his/her lead put on or taken off
- Having doors opened to come inside or go outside
- Being invited up on furniture
- Being played with
- Being brushed
- Being spoken to
- Having his/her belly rubbed
- Having a ball thrown to fetch
- Going in or out of the car

Greeting a guest.

## 2 Pushy, demanding behaviour is ignored.

**Pushy, demanding behaviour** = anything your dog does to get your attention or 'make' you do something for him/her. Examples are:

- Whining
- Pawing
- Nudging
- Mouthing
- Jumping on you
- Staring at you
- Barking at you.

**Ignored** = no attention AT ALL. Scolding, saying 'NO', pushing the dog away or giving a command are all forms of attention. Instead, you should turn your back on your dog or even walk away, without saying anything. Wait until he/she is leaving you alone to give him/her the opportunity to earn something good.

## 3 Give the command only once.

**Once** = if your dog does not do what you want him/her to do, then he/she gets no reward. If he/she doesn't obey, walk away, turn your back on him/her or just ignore him/her. In a minute or so give him/her another chance to earn something good.

## 4 Everyone in the household and anyone who interacts

**with your dog on a regular basis must follow the NILIF rules.**

**Everyone** = spouses, significant others, dog walkers, neighbours who drop by every day and supervised children.

Dogs often view children as either playmates or individuals they can control. NILIF teaches dogs to view children as leaders who are in control, just like the adults in the family.

## 5 Be patient, especially in the beginning.

It may take your dog a little while before he/ she realizes that he/she really, truly has to work for the things he/she wants. After all, up until this point many things, if not everything, in life was free!

### An example of NILIF in action

It's your first day of using NILIF and you're ready to take your dog for a walk.

1. You pick up his lead and he comes running over to you.
2. You tell him, 'Fido, sit.'
3. Fido is so excited that instead of sitting he runs around you wiggling and wagging his tail and jumping at the lead in your hand.
4. You don't repeat the command, nor scold him, nor push him away when he jumps up. You just calmly put the lead down and walk away.
5. In a minute, you walk back to the lead and pick it up again.
6. Again, Fido runs over and is too excited to listen to your command.
7. You repeat this procedure (get the lead, give the command, Fido is too excited so you walk away) 10 times before Fido finally sits.
8. When he sits you clip on the lead, praise him and take him for a nice long walk.

The next day when it's Fido's walk time it may take 6 tries before he sits to have his lead put on. By the end of the first week of NILIF Fido is sitting automatically when you pick up his lead, and you are both happy!

### Resources and references

Campbell WE (1999) *Behavior Problems in Dogs, 3rd edn*. Dogwise Publishing Wenatchee, Washington

Voith VL and Borchelt PL (1996) Separation anxiety in dogs. In: *Readings in Companion Animal Behavior*, ed. VL Voith and PL Borchelt, pp. 124–139. Veterinary Learning Systems, Trenton, New Jersey