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ook at the dog.

I realized that this woman was a good listener but only to humans. Was it because I was the teacher and she the student? Or perhaps she was raised to be polite and listen well to others? I even speculated that it might have been easier for her male family members to give the female instructor less attention so they were able to watch the dog. Hmmmm ... but I digress. I suspect that it was most likely that she was unable to listen to two species at once especially when she did not understand the language of her dog and was not used to looking or listening for what he did or said. It is hard to know for sure but I realized that it was my job to help her see and thus hear her dog. This would help their training and relationship in so many ways once she understood the messages her dog was trying to give her. I knew that if she would miss something as large as, "Hey, Mom, I laid down! Where is my treat?" she was most certainly missing more subtle forms of communication from her dog. If she could learn these then she would have insight on how to support, train and build a much deeper and stronger relationship with her dog.

### Listening To Myself

Listening to yourself is certainly a lesson many of our parents try to instill in us from a young age. But the reality is that our culture tends to stress the opposite. We are taught to be polite and follow certain rules of society. This also applies to our work with clients and dogs. We all can perceive much

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## Do You Hear What I Hear?

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more about a person than our mind can process in a short period of time. This is that "feeling" you get when in the presence of someone that may be untrustworthy or dangerous. We often ignore our "gut" because we are trying to be polite or professional. These are socially acceptable behaviors that tend to suppress our instincts. During my years in retail, these instincts served me well in spotting customers that were not honest or employees that were untrustworthy. Certainly, I am not psychic but I did pay attention when I felt ill at ease with someone.

Early in my dog training career I heard Sue Sternberg speak and she confirmed that this could also be true for dogs. Listening to my body in the presence of a dog could be the difference between a bite or a calm meeting. We are both living creatures that have evolved around each other. We actually have a long history of living with dogs so even though we may not know why, our body often tells us to be cautious. I listen to myself and the dog very closely to determine whether or not our encounter will be close or distant. I also hear what the client says, but it is only additional information that never overrides my first two sources of information—myself and the dog.

This is a difficult position as the socially accepted norm for dog trainers these days is that we can and will handle any dog we meet. I sometime feel that I must prove myself as an authority or a dog lover or some sort of doggie magician. It seems to be a popular position now that the trainer should

come in and take charge of the dog. Many clients need to take the dog and we should know how to handle a dog and how to do so. I don't totally agree that I should pretty much know what to do in a given situation but I must listen to the client involved. Although it is very impressive to me when I choose not to handle a dog, it is often the right and best course of action. It also gives the client an opportunity to explain why they handle the dog at that time. I tell them that he is listening to me and likely won't all out if I opened the door to him. I choose to listen to their dog and that this will ensure that the dog will not be on the list of dogs that have recorded bites that will affect the dog for the rest of his life. The client is also listening to me and usually come to an agreement on how to proceed.

### The Battle With

I am often torn when a client's silence might be interpreted as agreement. I have been told that a client who has been told that a dog should be construed as agreement. For me, listening to the client has been a better decision. I have been a better decision maker when I have something out there that I have taken back. When a client that they purchased a dog from a pet store or have a dog that has a pup's nose in urine, I will express my dissatisfaction. I also do not ignore the client. It is stored to be reviewed. I have gained their trust and I will help the client and