



Cesar Millan, DOG WHISPERER

Never work against Mother Nature;
always work with her.

by Sandra Murphy

Cesar Millan learned the benefits of collaborating with nature from his mentor grandfather, and continues to rely on this commonsense approach to life, including in his work with dogs. Years of in-depth research and observations have guided the development of his training philosophies, which are broadcast in 110 countries via his *Dog Whisperer* series, now in its seventh season on the National Geographic Channel.

"I believe it is important to be as

educated about your passion as you can be," says Millan, a certified trainer and bestselling author on the subject. "I listen to every perspective and point of view. Every system of belief about dog behavior can have something important to contribute. The fun part of my job is teaching pet owners to create balanced and healthy relationships within the home," he continues. "Often, the human can't see how their behavior is affecting the dog."

Millan's website tells the story of his original "Aha!" moment. It was while working with actress Jada Pinkett (now Smith) and her dog that he first realized he was not training dogs, but people. "We both achieved confidence through weeks and weeks of hands-on training practice, based on the body language she expressed, the thoughts she focused on and the energy she projected when she was with her dogs," Millan relates. "I knew then that this would be my new challenge and my mission—training people to understand how to communicate with their dogs."

In a nutshell, he believes that dog training is something created by humans, but that dog psychology—what he tries to get his clients to practice first and foremost—is created by Mother Nature. *Natural Awakenings* asked Millan to summarize the cornerstones of his approach.

First on the list of essentials is exercise. For a dog, exercise is more than just a walk—it's a chance to use stored energy and see new sights. It's also a so-



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Lewter offers holistic treatments and routine veterinary care in a setting focused on educating pet owners about alternative treatments and provides personalized consultations and treatment plans tailored to the individual needs of the pet. She embraces acupuncture and herbs to treat common health conditions such as allergies, skin problems, ear problems and other immune conditions without the use of drugs.

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cial event. "A proper walk exercises the dog not just physically, but also mentally. Practice a properly disciplined walk for a minimum of 30 to 45 minutes a day," Millan advises. "You can visit a dog park later for play and affection."

Second in importance is discipline.

Discipline is about realizing the order of the pack—defining which one is the decision-maker—and is not to be confused with punishment. "Dogs have found themselves in an odd predicament by living with humans," explains Millan. "In the wild, dogs have a leader, work for food and travel with the pack. When we bring them into our world, we need to help them achieve balance by fulfilling their needs as nature intended. This means maintaining your calm, assertive pack leadership."

The third part of achieving mutual understanding is affection. "We tend to give affection, affection, affection," says Millan. "It can lead to bad outcomes if not balanced with exercise and discipline."

Exercise is especially important to remember for small dogs that are

No matter the age, there is always something new to be learned—by both the dog and the human.



frequently carried around, sometimes termed "handbag hounds". Following the lead of some high-profile celebrities, the popularity of these dogs is on the rise, with unfortunate consequences for the animals. As owners tire of the responsibility, dogs are turned in at shelters, some barely able to walk, due to muscle loss or lack of muscle development, because they have been off their feet far too much.

"A dog is not a toy or an accessory. A dog is a living creature, and when you adopt one, your commitment is for the extent of their life," Millan advises. "The decision to adopt a dog should be treated with the same careful attention you use to decide where to live, whether or not to have children or if you wish to be married. This choice is just as life-changing and just as fulfilling as any other major life decision."

Millan's most important personal relationships are with his two sons and two dogs. One of his favorite books is Wayne Dyer's *The Power of Intention*. "We create our own outcomes," Millan says, "and I have found this principle can be applied to all the relationships in our life."

"Dogs are instinctually intelligent and live in the present. Being in the moment is probably the single most important lesson they can teach us," Millan remarks. "Never stop maintaining or growing a dog's balance. They communicate and glide through life based on energy; I am always inspired by that gift."

For more information, visit CesarsWay.com.

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petnews



New Dog Park at Warm Hearth Village

Warm Hearth Village, a non-profit community for seniors, in Blacksburg, celebrated the grand opening of its new fenced dog park last month. The event was marked by an official "leash-cutting ceremony," during which organizers thanked Eagle Scout Ryan Ellingston, who created the park as part of a service project. "The dog park is a wonderful addition to Warm Hearth Village and in keeping with the overall commitment to providing open green spaces where residents can interact and enjoy the outdoors," said Robbie Hickerson, director of housing for Warm Hearth Village. The dog park is conveniently located on the field across from the WWII Memorial Park and adjacent to Hollyhill Place neighborhood on Warm Hearth Drive.

Warm Hearth Village is located at 2603 Warm Hearth Dr., Blacksburg. For more information, call 540-552-9176 or visit Retire.org.



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Leonard is an intuitive animal communicator who combines traditional veterinary medicine with holistic principles and alternative healing modalities to honor and embrace the natural healing qualities of animals. Hands-on attention to detail and thorough evaluation and recommendations for the overall holistic wellness of animals are the foundation of Leonard's practice.

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