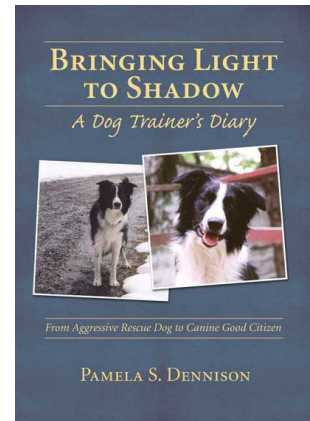


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Bringing Light to Shadow: A Dog Trainer's Diary

by Pamela S. Dennison, Dogwise Publishing. Reprinted with permission.



May 1 - Day 339

Today Gets The “HOLY SMOKES” Award!!!

Carolyn and Lois (our “guest dog bait” person) were in the big field and Shadow and I were outside of the fence. We did some competition heeling and I allowed him to go visit. Carolyn hand fed him, Lois threw food. We did some get back outs. There was no reaction to Lois, so after 10 minutes, Carolyn and Lois came outside the fence. Shadow was fine. We ended the session.

For the next session, Carolyn was sitting in a chair under the tree and Lois was standing next to her. We approached and Shadow did some nice lie downs for food. Then Carolyn fed Shadow and petted him all over his body. Numerous times! Shadow was sniffing her and rubbing himself on her legs like a cat does. He walked away from Carolyn, returned to her and she continued to pet him without the use of food. She also did some TTouch on him. He was so incredibly relaxed, it was beyond wonderful. I WAS SO CHOKED UP, I STARTED CRYING!

As if that wasn't enough, Lois asked him for lie downs and he responded wonderfully. Then, John came up out of nowhere and got down on his knees and Shadow kissed his face (John has a beard and so does Jim—Shadow likes beards), and then he fed him. This was a new thing for him in many respects:

1. Someone approaching that he didn't see coming
2. Someone was kneeling on the ground
3. One new person
4. Carolyn petting him all over and doing TTouch
5. Being completely and totally 100 percent relaxed for BOTH sessions!

Lois said that she couldn't sense any reason to be afraid or nervous about him—she felt only calm vibes from him and she thought he was quite wonderful. He has been super the rest of the day. I am tickled beyond belief with his progress!

May 3 – Day 341

Incredibly Enough, AN EVEN BETTER DAY!!!!

The Breakfast Club class. Shadow and I went into the big field and Eileen, John and Carolyn followed separately. People coming out of nowhere are a new context for him but he was fine. He jumped on them a little bit, but it was very soft and gentle jumping, not his usual high speed ramming of his front feet into your abdomen (so he can get a kick out of hearing you go “Oomph!”). I wanted to start desensitizing him to what John Q. Public might do, so I had them wave their arms in weird ways once he had approached them and was lying down. He was quite calm for this and just looked at everyone quizzically. Then Shadow went wading in the baby pool. There were cookies at the bottom and he stuck his head in the water and was blowing bubbles! Very funny!

For the next context, Carolyn was sitting, John and Eileen were kneeling, and I was standing. We were all feeding and Carolyn was petting him—he was fine. Carolyn started to teach Shadow to balance a cookie on his nose and then catch it!!!! To do this, she gave him one cookie to keep his head still and put another one on his nose!!!! HE WAS COMPLETELY CALM about her hands approaching his head AND when she was done, he waited patiently for her to do it again! She repeated this at least 12 times. When he was successful in catching the cookie, we all cheered and applauded AND HE DIDN'T GET NERVOUS!!! THEN, EILEEN AND JOHN BOTH PET HIM AND HE

WAS FINE!!!! This was a first—everyone petting him.

For the third session we did more of the same—petting and balancing the cookie game. I did some tricks with him. During this session, Carolyn was in a chair, John and I were both kneeling. After 15 minutes he saw some goats and went toward them. Luckily they were fenced in and after about one minute he came roaring back to me without me having to call him!!!! He was aroused by the goats but recovered quickly. I tried to get his focus for competition stuff but he couldn't do it. We continued for awhile and then put him away for a few minutes.

He was calm from the outset of the first session and it continued all the way through. I am proud of him, and proud of me, for not rushing after the success we had on May 1. It was tempting, but I held myself in check! I am very careful to change each context slightly rather than dramatically. I am watching his tail a bit more and we are waiting for it to lower before throwing balls or food. He is doing a phenomenally great job!

Good Doggie and Good Pam! Shadow is really turning the corner here into normalcy. Proud, elated, rapturous, exhilarated, happy, thrilled, euphoric, doesn't describe how I am feeling!

May 4 – Day 342

Here are two emails I received from Ted Turner today:

Your "Holy Smokes" awards are becoming legendary. It's great to see that by sticking to the basic principles of patience, perseverance, and positives, an animal this far in the hole is now climbing Everest. No doubt, he's there already, and learning to like people again. In the big picture, you've turned this animal completely around very quickly. You are truly a savior!

Outstanding stuff! Very impressive, Pam. I have yet to run into someone with your determination and commitment. The videos are excellent. I don't know if you've had a chance to compare his current mannerisms with the first video but it is remarkable.

My email back to Ted:

Thanks for the kind words!!! They truly mean so very much to me! Be well and I hope to hear from you soon! And thank you again for the "clicks." Praise is a HUGE reinforcer for me.

May 5 – Day 343

Took the boys to a pet fair. Lisa P. was standing about 15 feet away. I fed Shadow and kept his attention on me—his mouth was soft. I told Lisa to get some food for Shadow to greet her. As she was reaching for some, his mouth became very tight, the look in his eyes was funny, and his nose got big even though she was nowhere near him. I asked him "do you have to pee—what is the matter?" as I looked around to see what might be bothering him. I couldn't find anything amiss and he ran into his crate in the van. I have no idea what was bothering him. I was calm, so it wasn't me sending him fearful signals.

I had him stay in the van for about 20 minutes, then brought him out again, and he was fine. Had him visit Lisa with a lie-down and she tossed him food. He was pretty calm. I didn't want to push it by letting her pet him because of his previous reaction. After a few minutes of Lisa feeding him, I put him back in the van. I left the van door open so he could see Lisa and he stayed completely calm.

I think he did great overall—tons of people and dogs were there and a dog across the parking lot was barking the entire day. Shadow was really tired all night.

Good Pam! For again, not pushing Shadow beyond his limits! It is so tempting to push the envelope and rush the process.

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