

## SOME FEEDBACK TO THE CESAR MILLAN DEBATE

*I got this intelligent, thoughtful and respectful commentary from a dedicated lady to whom I had already written once after the first Cesar Millan debate. I appreciate the time and consideration that went into her comments.*

Dear Tracie - I know you are really really busy, but I hope you read this and I am honored to get a reply from you especially after a few weeks (or is it just many days!?).

I will certainly listen to your podcast again -- I believe I've saved it on my itunes file -- when I have the time to devote to it. And I apologize if I seemed to have a kneejerk reaction to criticism about the Dog Whisperer. So many people who do criticize him seriously do NOT "get it." And he has been subject to criticism by people who mention the same episodes, as if he has not progressed since then.

You mentioned Cesar Millan's need for continued growth -- and I believe that he has stated several times that he is continually learning. I see his techniques, while remaining essentially the same, growing and evolving to include many aspects of other types of training. I think he has used positive reinforcement in the past, but he has learned to show that in a more obvious way.

Besides being a big fan of Cesar Millan's (and the "ambassador" title which some people have used is not a "self-appointed one" but is an actual title that means some of us belong to a group that tried to go out of our way to spread the word about someone whose philosophy we support and who we believe does a good and necessary thing for animals.

Many of the people I know who are fans and supporters of the Dog Whisperer, and who were undoubtedly some of the people who commented on your program, are themselves professionals in the dog world -- accredited trainers, no-kill shelter managers, breed rescue managers, groomers, specialists in legal aspects of issues such as breed specific legislation, veterinary students, and others. Many of us are simply dog owners who have found a good way to relate to our animals.

As I said, I was using some of the same methods Cesar has demonstrated to rehabilitate my rescue dog's extreme food aggression. I am reminded of how much she respects me even today, when I reached into her bowl and took some treats from her to give to one of my shier cats. Eve wasn't even the least bit concerned.

For the most part, we (my sister and I) practice using Cesar's "calm assertive attitude" and try to keep our energy focused and calm so that we don't pass along negative energy to our animals. I have first hand experience about how negative energy influences cats and have learned so much about staying calm around them.

I am also a great fan of the Dogtown series on National Geographic -- and I see some similarities between them and Cesar, although they do use much more positive reinforcement methods and treat-based training. On the other hand, they have time on

their side and Cesar is usually working with dogs who are already with families who have botched their dog's training in some fashion, making their lives and their dogs' lives miserable. I do think that circumstances dictate the method that needs to be used. And I think that sometimes borrowing and improving on the old fashioned ways are not necessarily bad.

I listened to a podcast of an interview of Temple Grandin -- was that with you? -- in which she stated that she thought Cesar was very good in dealing with aggressive dogs but all wrong when dealing with frightened or shy dogs. The way she spoke about Cesar seemed to me very different from the comments made by Dr. Yin, who did not seem to have much good to say about Cesar. Professor Grandin had made a thorough study of the Dog Whisperer episodes, it seems, and found both good and bad in them. I have to tell you that Temple Grandin is one of my heroes! And I thoroughly enjoyed the interview and could understand her criticism of Cesar in a way that I could not understand the criticism of others.

It has been three years since the American Humane Association and HSUS asked Nat Geo to remove the Dog Whisperer from their programming. Obviously, Nat Geo decided not to do that -- and I think if Cesar were really giving bad advice, the show would, in fact, have been cancelled. I have noticed that Cesar is also making some simple changes in vocabulary -- since people have such a negative reaction to the term "dominant," he now uses terms like "in charge" or "leadership" -- which mean the same thing but are more politically correct.

I do hope that you are able to bring Cesar Millan to your program for an interview. I will be eager to hear it. I did enjoy your program even if I did disagree with a lot of what I heard.

I also would like to let you know that I am a participant in our local animal shelter's Open Paw program sponsored by the ASPCA's Mission Orange, the program that hopes to see an end to the euthanasia of healthy animals. The ASPCA uses positive reinforcement, which is something I am eager to learn to increase my own repertoire of techniques to help animals overcome problem behaviors. So while I am a strong Cesar supporter, I do agree with him that "all ways are good so long as they do not harm the dog." Which is not a bad principle to apply to life in general!

Again, thanks for your answer and for your explanation.

Respectfully,

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