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Are You Enlightened?

Taking your dog for a walk is one of the most *beneficial* and *enlightening* thing we can do as Weimaraner owners.

You follow me when I say that it's "beneficial." Walking the dog gives us physical exercise, we explore our surroundings, we build the human-canine bond and we may interact with other dog walkers and get some social benefits. But what's "enlightening" about walking a dog?

Walking a dog is an activity that allows you to let your mind wander, you can observe and you can gather insight. No one knows how much or how little you are thinking when you and your dog just go for a walk. It's at times like this when there are enlightening lessons to be learned.

I had occasion to be walking my dog through an upscale, shopping district when I was struck by the lightning bolt of insight. I was 50 feet or so behind a woman who was walking a small dog. It was the perfect distance to watch what was unfolding. The little dog was zigzagging on the end of its lead, pulling toward other pedestrians, jumping up and down when someone stopped to pet it. I glanced down at my Weimaraner and gave a look that said, "Don't even begin to think that YOU can get away with that."

As we walked past the shops, many people simply ignored the little dog as if it wasn't there. (It's small and harmless so I don't need to take notice.) Other people stopped to see the dog and gushed about how cute and friendly the dog was. (It's small and harmless so I can have a closer look and have nothing to fear.) Sometimes the lady dog walker would make attempts to correct the dog and other times she would let the behavior continue. When all else failed she simply scooped up the dog and immobilized it in her encircling arms.

I've always been amazed how some owners of very small dogs seem to be oblivious to their dog's bad behavior. The kind of behavior I'm talking about is pulling on a lead like miniature sled dogs, yapping at passersby and not changing their behavior if their human tried to take corrective action. If you were walking a Weimaraner that was exhibiting identical behavior there would be people backing up in fear, crossing the street to avoid the dog or giving you looks of utter disdain. The little dog can get away with it but the big dog can't.

Our Weimaraners carry the burden of all big dogs – their behaviors are magnified just on the basis of their size. We as owners, expect reasonably controlled, civilized behavior when we're in public. Those of us who have achieved this behavioral Nirvana get it through consistency in correcting behavior.

What we should do is just the opposite of what I observed from the lady walking her little dog. She sometimes corrected behavior and sometimes infractions were ignored. The confusing message that the dog gets is that there are no rules.

Consistency in training and reacting to our dog's behavior is not an easy thing to do on a continuing, day in and day out basis. So many times it would be easier to just ignore a behavior but when we do our dogs are sent a message that they can get away with doing what they want as opposed to what we want. Our breed is known for uncanny intelligence for getting what they want. Giving consistent reaction is the only way to effectively communicate what we expect.

The next time you're tempted to turn a blind eye to an unwanted behavior, think of the lady walking the little dog. The image of out of control canine behavior should jar you and convince you of what NOT to do with your Weimaraner.

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