

Growing Good Dog People

Ask me what's the most important thing that you can have when you start showing dogs and my answer might surprise you. Obviously, there's the dog, the training and more "show" equipment than you ever imagined. Beyond these obvious material basics, the most advantageous thing to get for yourself is a good mentor. A good mentor is invaluable if you are to quickly learn the "ins and outs" of the dog world and flourish in the sport of dogs

How do you recognize a person who is a good mentor? Let's start with the dictionary definition of mentor and then see how it applies to the sport of dogs.

Our trusty dictionary states that a mentor is, "A counselor or guide," and adds that the person is a, "...tutor or coach." By implication the mentor is well versed in the subject, willing to share his or her collective knowledge and has the mentee's best interests at heart. All of these attributes directly apply to personal development in the dog world.

Beyond a basic definition, what should you look for in an ideal mentor in the world of Weimaraners? First, recognize that mentoring goes a step beyond giving instruction and dumping a lot of facts. Mentoring has the goal of imparting knowledge and developing the mentee. Good mentors have solid advice, vast knowledge and the willingness to give this to others who share their passion for the breed. The goal of a good mentor is not to develop followers but rather to grow knowledgeable individuals who may in turn nurture others.

Mentoring is a long-term nurturing relationship that is done with the best interest of the mentee being of utmost importance. Successful mentoring doesn't happen quickly. Expect that for mentoring to succeed to its fullest potential, that you will spend hours communicating with your mentor. Having rapport with the mentor is essential if the mentoring experience is to succeed. If you don't "click" and have a positive chemistry, it just doesn't work.

Where do you get such a selfless relationship with a knowledgeable person?

Many of us get mentorship from the breeder of our dog. When you get that new puppy from a breeder who you admire, you have an automatic, symbiotic relationship. Good breeders hope for the best for their newly placed puppies and want to contribute to this success. The degree of participation in this relationship can flourish into mentoring.

Good breeders share tons of information with the new puppy owner. The initial relationship is one of transferring information, lots of "how-to's" and basic advice on your behavior with your new dog. All this is well and good and it may bloom into an authentic, full fledged mentorship.

Another source of mentorship are people in the breed who have extensive knowledge and the character and personality to share and develop new people. We all can think of people in dogs who know so much about the breed, how to bring out its best potential and succeed in the sport of dogs. These folks are repositories of facts, "how to" skills, and the ability to apply them. If they are willing to teach and bring along the next generation of stewards of the breed, they make excellent mentors.

To develop yourself as a well rounded, knowledgeable person in the world of Weimaraners getting a good mentor should be high on your networking "to-do" list. Try to develop a relationship with someone you admire for their knowledge, ethics and sportsmanship.

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