

# The Ranch Experience



This document contains the notes for all the topics planned for discussion at the Ranch course: *The Ranch Experience*. Please note that Ken constantly updates his seminar presentations to reflect current science knowledge and best practices, thus these notes may not be exactly the same as what you will see live. Additionally, the benefit of attending a live seminar is the flexibility it affords Ken to adapt to questions and attendee interests – for these and other reasons, topics may be added or deleted at the last minute. This is particularly true of the *Ranch Experience* as each course is adapted to the unique mix of skills and experiences of the attendees in each course. The sequence of topics will vary and may not follow the sequence listed in these notes. The majority of this course is hands-on and those aspects of the course are not reflected in these notes.

# Welcome & Course Overview

## Overview

- Welcome
- Housekeeping information
- Basic plan for each day
- Focal topics
  - Foundational Skills
  - Medical Behavior Training
  - Group Training
  - Zoo Skills
  - Teaching & Coaching Skills

## Introductions

- Attendee introductions
- Ken's background

## Resources

- Animal Training
- Don't Shoot the Dog
- Professional Organizations
- Literature about diverse species
- Technical resources

## Personal Philosophy

- Training = Teaching
- Cornerstones of Animal Care
  - Health care
  - Nutrition
  - Environment
  - Behavior management
- Primary Reasons for Training
  - Physical exercise
  - Mental stimulation
  - Cooperative behavior
  - These things directly benefit individual animal and insure that welfare is top priority
  - Key to my philosophy of animal care
- Secondary Reasons for Training
- Ethical foundation

# Foundational Skills (Practical Version)

## Introduction

- Animal observation & reading body language
- Approach and feed
- Stationing & default behaviors
- Introducing the clicker
- Targeting, following, & management behaviors
- Shaping & building behavior
- Errors & mistakes
- Getting it all on cue

## Overview

- Laws of learning are a proven scientific technology
  - We will discuss theory briefly, but primarily focus on skills
- Practical skills are universal:
  - No matter the species
  - Whatever your experience level
  - For all tasks and disciplines
  - We never outgrow them, we can never put them behind us
  - We will practice with games and explore skills with our animals
- We will engage in discussions and answer questions in detail

## Practice vs. Theory

- Science and theory are important – those aspects are dealt with in detail in other courses (TFP & DD).
- Those notes will be provided to you at the end of the week.
- For practical classes I approach teaching foundational skills differently.
- Some of what follows is unique to this course.

## Observe Your Animal

- How does he move? (slow, fast, erratic, smooth, predictable, etc.)
- With whom does he spend his time?
- Where does he like to hang out (where is he most and least comfortable)
- What does he eat, how does he play?
- These early steps are often overlooked
- Don't rush to the training theory
- Know the animal well

## Know the Species/Breed

- Risks?
- Previous human interaction?
- Food?
- Locomotion?
- Other key basics

### Reading Basic Body Language

- Too often, young trainers rush in to start training without paying attention to body language.
- It is seldom discussed or focused on in training theory classes
- Lots of books available on dog, cat, & horse body language – but not the case for most zoo animals.
- But a trainer doesn't need that much detail to know how to respond to what they see.

	Relaxed	Tense
Leaning In	Ready to Train	Ready to Bite
Leaning Away	Ready to Play	Ready to Flee

This may be an oversimplification, but it is something every trainer should be aware of and thinking about.

### Approach and Feed

- Food in a container, trainer at a distance
- Food in a container, trainer gest closer
- Food from a long handled ladle
- Food from a short handled ladle
- Food from hand
- Food from hand, relaxed and without hesitation

### Stationing/Default Behavior

- Platform / Perch
- Specific location
- At front of enclosure
- Specific orientation
- Eye contact
- An essential first step to training

### Introducing a Marker

- What is the magic of a clicker?
  - There is none!
  - It's just a toy noise maker!
- However, markers are a value tool!
  - When used correctly, they mark the precise moment an animal does something you want them to repeat
  - Timing is essential
  - It must be paired with positive reinforcement to have meaning
  - Animals will find something in the environment that indicates that reinforcement is coming, you might as well control it.
- Do not start using a marker until:
  - The animal is approaching you readily
  - The animal is eating reliably and predictably
  - The animal is relaxed or at least comfortable and eager to work. He should be focused on you.

- You are ready to start shaping a particular behavior
- You have practiced and are skilled at using a marker

#### Positive Reinforcement

- Primary reinforcers – inherently reinforcing; satisfy biological need
- Secondary reinforcers – acquire value through association with primary reinforcers
- Timing of reinforcement is key to success

#### Marker Signal (Bridging stimulus)

- Conditioned Reinforcer
- Selecting a marker (bridge)
  - Animal can perceive it
  - Easy to use
  - Easy to replicate
  - Unique to environment
  - No negative association
- Teaching the marker
- Using the Marker
- Practicing the marker
  - Ball bounce game
  - One finger criteria
  - Training games
- Training Games
  - I am a big believer in training games. With my staff, I play dozens of games – each with a different goal (monthly)
  - Developing mechanical skills is essential to being a proficient and effective trainer
    - Clicker use
    - Handling reinforces
    - Observation skills
    - Treat delivery skills
- Is a marker mandatory?
  - It is only a marker – not essential
  - Why some choose not to use one
    - Animal inability to perceive certain markers
    - Learning still takes place
  - Advantages to its use
    - Assists with precision
    - Needed when reinforcement cannot be delivered immediately
  - Works neurologically – classical conditioning

#### Sequence of Behaviors

- There is no correct sequence for training, other than building foundation behaviors first.
- Each program will organize sequence of training based on needs.
- I will share my preferred sequence – but always open to variation as needed.

#### Targeting

- At this point I like to introduce targeting
- First, simple targeting – but with the plan to expand it

- Such a versatile tool
- How to teach it
  - Self exploration – for animals that might naturally sniff
- Guide them to the target – if it is not natural for them

#### Management Behaviors

- Next, it is critical to train behaviors needed to manage the animals under your care, which will differ from program to program.
  - Following
  - Gating / Kenneling
  - Collar / Harness / Halter / Muzzle
  - Leash walking
  - Name recognition / Eye contact
  - Sit / Down

#### Shaping and Building Behavior

- There are many ways to get behavior, targeting is just one of many ways to get behavior.
- Choose the technique most suitable to your animal and to the task you are training.
- No single technique is better than another – they can all be effective.

#### Training & Shaping Techniques

- Scanning (capturing)
- Targeting
- Baiting (luring)
- Modeling (molding)
- Environmental Manipulation
- Mimicry (social facilitation)

#### Pryor's 10 Laws of Shaping

- Raise criteria in small increments
- Train one criterion at a time
- Vary reinforcement before moving to next approximation
- Relax old criteria when introducing new criteria
- Plan ahead
- Don't change trainers in mid-stream
- If a plan doesn't work, change the plan
- Don't stop a session gratuitously
- Regress when behavior deteriorates
- End on a positive note

#### Pryor's 10 Guidelines of Shaping – Updated

- Be prepared before you start
- Ensure success at each step
- Train one criterion at a time
- Relax old criteria when something changes
- If one door closes, find another
- Keep training sessions continuous

- Go back to kindergarten, if necessary
- Keep your attention on your learner
- Stay ahead of your learner
- Quit while you're ahead

#### Dealing with Errors & Mistakes

- Start with an important statement made by B.F. Skinner:
  - Animals don't make mistakes
  - They behave the way they do based on their past experiences in that situation
  - If you want to change an animal's behavior, you need to change what you are doing.
- My advice to young trainers:
  - Ignore the unwanted behavior
  - Set the environment up for success
  - Move on to something else, re-engage the animal and keep session moving
- How about more serious behaviors? Ignoring serious behaviors like aggression, seems dangerous.
  - You can't ignore aggression
  - Serious behaviors require an experienced trainer to intervene and set an appropriate plan
  - What I am sharing today is the basic plan that I give to trainers when they start training
  - Problematic behaviors need to be elevated to a supervisor for appropriate handling
- There are many tools designed to deal with inappropriate behavior – but must be reserved for skilled trainers

#### Stimulus Control

- Discriminative Stimulus ( $S^D$ )
- Choosing a Cue
- Teaching the Cue
  - Train behavior first
  - Add cue only after behavior is reliable
- Reliability should be 90% or higher before cue added
- Then maintain consistency
- Unlikely to get to the point of cueing with most behaviors this week
- Pryor's rules of stimulus control
  1. Behavior occurs when cue is presented
  2. Behavior never occurs in absence of cue
  3. Behavior never occurs in response to another cue
  4. No other behavior occurs on that cue
- Unless all conditions are met, the behavior is not under stimulus control
- Additional rules for some:
  5. Behavior occurs when cue is presented in any location
  6. Behavior will occur when cued by anybody

#### Putting it All Together – 10 Guidelines for Success

- Know the animal and its learning history.
- Approaching and eating are behaviors, start there!
- Build trust through a strong positive reinforcement history!

- Don't betray that trust.
- Focus on basics, they are the foundation for future behaviors.
- Meet the learner where they are!
- Make steady and continuous progress every session.
- Desensitization is an ongoing process that never ends.
- Train for novelty and the unexpected.
- If an error happens repeatedly, change something!

#### Key Foundational Skills

- The essence to successful training
  - Timing
  - Criteria
  - Reinforcement
- Keys to Organizational success:
  - Clear goals
  - Consistency across all staff
  - Animals needs come first – ego should be put aside.



# Husbandry Training: Techniques, Tools, and Practical Applications

## Secrets of Medical Training

### Introduction

- Our focus today is on successful medical training
- Why returning to basic skills is the foundation for success
- Key secrets to training medical behaviors

### Getting Started – The Basics

- Positive Reinforcement based program (assumed, a given)
- Choice – Freedom to participate or not (assumed, a given)
- Criteria – Timing – Reinforcement (assumed, a given)
- Stationing
- Targeting
- Kenneling / Gating
- Recall
- Tactile
- Desensitization / Generalization

### Assumptions

Let's not waste time on basics that are a given for all training – but certainly essential for medical training – these basics can never be overlooked.

- Positive Reinforcement based program
- Choice – Freedom to participate or not
- Criteria – Timing – Reinforcement

### Stationing

- A default behavior – a place to be – when in doubt, do this – behaviors begin and end here:
  - Platform
  - Mat
  - Heel position
  - Eye contact
  - Specific behavior (sit, down, chin rest, etc.)
- Provides comfort to the animal
- Has high reinforcement history
- Allows better access for veterinarian

### Targeting

- Train all types of targeting as they are the building blocks of most medical behaviors
- Basic – Easy place to start, but there are so many more that should be taught
- Complex
  - Extended

- Follow
- Varied types
- Whole body
- Multiple/Simultaneous
- A to B

#### Kenneling/Gating

- Crossing a threshold
- Avoid trapping animal (choice to escape)
- Separation is different than gating

#### Recall

- A key behavior that is often connected to kenneling
- Must be reliable – reinforced well and reinforced often
- Breakdown – often followed by something aversive (going home, being left alone, a medical procedure, etc.)

#### Tactile

- Touch all body parts daily
- Vary type of touch
- Touch with different objects
- Consider smells, sounds, vibrations, temperature, etc.

#### Desensitization

- “Exposure” Training
  - Basic desensitization: exposure below threshold, gradually increased
  - Habituation (passive)
  - Counter-conditioning (active)
- Classical procedure with operant description and focus
- Operant criterion give guidance as to when to proceed
- Generalization vs. Discrimination

#### Generalization

- Practicing generalization
  - Location
  - Distractions: animals, equipment, smells, sounds, people
  - Cue presentation
- Desensitization is a never-ending process

#### Key Secrets to Medical Training Success (Often overlook or never considered)

1. Pre-requisite foundation behaviors must be in place first
2. Good communication
3. Use small approximations
4. Keep sessions fun
5. Trained behaviors are different than non-voluntary exams
6. Train protected contact
7. Teach concept of novelty

8. High ratio of good to bad experiences
9. Over train and under ask

#### Good Communication

- Build strong relationship with veterinary team
- Ask every imaginable question
- Check in Often
- Consistency with team

#### Use Small Approximations

- We get in a hurry to train medical behaviors, but there are no short cuts, take your time
- Desensitize with care – consider both operant and classical aspects
- Consider all aspects of animal experience
  - Sound (volume, frequency, tone, type)
  - Touch (location, pressure, sensation, temperature, equipment)
  - Smell (dilute if needed, consider all tools)
  - Visuals (Movement, size, reflections)
  - Vibrations
  - People (number, clothing)
  - Location
  - Equipment

#### Keep Sessions Fun

- Important for all training
- However, tendency to get serious when training medical behaviors and not make the training fun
- Break up difficult or long approximations with other activities and “easy” behaviors or “active” behaviors
- Use high value reinforcers

#### Trained Behaviors ≠ Non-Voluntary Exam

- Don't use a trained behavior to trick an animal into participation
- Set-ups can be trained
- Impact on relationships is important to consider

#### Train Protected Contact (or Semi-Protected Contact)

- Even the kindest gentlest animal can become aggressive if an exam is painful
- All animals should be taught to work in some form of protected contact
  - Kennel designed for access
  - Work behind fence
  - Muzzles
- Increases vet comfort level and is safer for all

#### Teach Concept of Novelty

- Instead of trying to recreate a procedure precisely, do the opposite. Teach the animal that the procedure will be different every time.
- Teach animal to expect the unexpected

- Particularly helpful for:
  - Blood samples
  - Injections
  - Oral medication
  - Tactile

#### High Ratio of Good to Bad

- Low or no discomfort sessions should far outweigh number of actual medical procedure sessions
- Matching law may be in effect (although that explanation may be debated)
  - Kenneling 10:1
  - Blood taking 100:1
- This is quite individual and is based on reinforcement history.

#### Over Train and Under Ask

- Prepare for the worst possible scenario
- Blood: one stick rule
- Duration – Train
- Number of People much longer
- Practice often

#### Thoughts on Medical Training

- Anything is possible, if the right approach is taken
- Animals must be given choice and the ability to opt out
- Trainers must do a cost/benefit analysis
  - Nervous deer blood sample
  - Diabetic gorilla
- Success depends on:
  - Having solid basics
  - Understanding key secrets

#### The Basics

- R+ based program
- Choice
- Criteria – Timing – Reinforcement
- Stationing
- Targeting
- Kenneling / Gating
- Recall
- Tactile
- Desensitization / Generalization

#### Key Secrets

1. Prerequisite foundation skills
2. Small Approximations
3. Keep it fun
4. Communicate with veterinarian
5. Separate trained vs. non-voluntary exams
6. Train types of protection
7. Teach concept of novelty
8. High ratio of good to bad experiences
9. Over train and under ask

## EXTRA INFO (Not in Presentation)

### Avoiding Shortcuts

- Common mistakes we all make
- Short-cuts are necessary from time to time
- But if we take them, we should have our eyes wide open
- Know the fall out
- The 12 Most Common Errors

### Twelve Most Common Errors

- Looking for the quick fix
- Forgetting that learning is always taking place
- Using voluntary medical behaviors before they are completely trained
- Not using a conditioned reinforcer
- Assuming that desensitization is complete
- Using too many trainers to train one task
- Making assumptions about what an animal likes
- Taking approximations that are too large
- Forgetting the importance of a calm response
- Trying just one more time or pushing for a few extra seconds
- Lack of communication
- Assuming that training can be done by anyone

# Working with Groups of Animals

**Seminar Description** – Often we teach training by focusing on working one-on-one. But how do we train and work with multiple animals at the same time? In this Session Ken will share techniques and knowledge he gained from working in the zoological community, where working with groups of animals was the daily norm. He will translate that knowledge to working with animals of any type. Some of the key concepts that Ken will focus on include stationing, fairness, clicker use, and new animal introductions (a new puppy, shelter dog, a cat to a dog, or any species of animal).

## Overview

- Training Approaches
- Maintenance Techniques
- New Animal Introductions
- Share a current case that we are working on

## One-on-One Training

- Ideal training situations
- Spatial separation
- Physical separation
- Individual training not always the answer

## Group Training

- Changing social situations
- Kenneling: Gating vs. Separation
- What if separation is not possible?

## Stationing

- Location
- Position
- Target
- Choice
- Shuffle

## Fairness

- Animal perception
- All animals are doing something
- Feeding strategies
- Animal indicator
- Goal: Avoid competition (food, attention, toys, etc.)

## Marker Use

- Avoiding confusion
  - Audible
  - Visual
  - Tactile
- Unison Behaviors
  - Group contingent

- Individual

#### New Animal Introductions

- Trained Animals
  - Work cooperatively
  - Reinforcement is contingent on the other
  - Selectively mix, based on social structure & behavior progress
- Biggest Challenge: Natural Aggression
  - Working with animals that have an aggressive history or are pre-disposed to fight
  - In a zoological setting these techniques have worked with big cats, pinnipeds, elephants, zebras, primates, cetaceans, birds & many others
  - Naturally will sometimes fight to the death!
  - Yet, despite instinctive trait, can be taught to live together

# Zoo Skills

## Overview

- Key Skills already discussed
  - Husbandry Training
  - Group Training
- Modes of Contact
  - Protected Contact
  - Trust & Relationship Building
- Interactive Programs
- Recall
- Gating & Shifting
- Enrichment

## Modes of Contact

- Free Contact
- Semi-Protected Contact
- Protected Contact
- Confined Contact
- Hands-off Training
- Remote Training

## Protected Contact Training

- Management tool, not a training technique
- Misconceptions about protected contact
- Controversial in some circles

## Trust & Relationship Building

- Trust and relationships can be built through any type of contact
- Relationships are built on a reinforcement history
- Trust takes time

## Interactive Programs

- Fastest growing type of program
- Not really new
- Challenges of guest/animal encounters

## Recall Signals

- A signal or cue that brings the animal back to the trainer
- Trained to manage an animal more effectively; used to increase either animal or trainer safety
- A behavior not a scientific training tool
- Included in lecture because of frequency of misuse

## Effective Recalls

- When cue sounds, animal should stop everything and come immediately back to trainer (or pre-determined location).
- Most common uses:



- Dog safety when off leash or lost
- Trainer safety with dangerous animals in free contact
- Falconry; Open ocean work with dolphins
- High value or high rate of reinforcement

#### Recall Problems & Challenges

- Not reinforced often or well, thus not reliable
- Used when animal doing something incorrectly, thus aversive
- Followed by end of session or change in activity; can be perceived as aversive
- When used in tough situations, inexperienced trainer can have difficulty in determining proper response.

#### Recall Final Thoughts

- Excellent behavior, useful in multiple situations
- Always be aware of reinforcement and animal perception
- Careful to not misuse

#### Kenneling & Separation

- A key and necessary behavior in managing groups of animals
- Should be a positive experience
- Reinforced well
- Understand the distinction between solo gating and group gating

#### Enrichment

- Behavioral enrichment
- The animal's home
- Environmental conditions
- Social structure
- Habitat configuration
- Enrichment devices
- Timing – operant principles always at work

#### Toys & Devices

- Popular form of enrichment in most zoos
- Enhancing the animal's home
- Natural vs. artificial?
- The better question: is it functioning as desired?
- That is the modern challenge

#### Modern Challenges

- Good news: Enrichment common and best practice for most zoos
- Bad news: Effectiveness not measured or monitored by many
- Reasons:
  - Lack of time & resources
  - Failure to create enrichment goals
  - Lack of understanding of benefits to tracking
  - No training or behavior analysis knowledge

### Shedd's Enrichment Process

- Part of our training mission
- Set regular enrichment goals
- Assign key staff to monitor and improve
- Ongoing project for intern program
- Structured process for developing, approving, and implementing

### Step 1: Defining Goals

- Each new type of enrichment must have a stated goal or purpose. Examples:
  - Use portion of habitat more often (why?)
  - Encourage foraging behavior
  - Develop tree climbing skills
  - Reduce stereotypic behavior
  - Reduce aggression
  - Increase high energy activity (aerobic workout)
  - Encourage play or novel activity

### Step 2: Design & Strategy

- All staff encouraged to be creative and propose ideas and designs
- Designs & ideas go through committee approval and feedback process
- Construct – develop – purchase – acquire
- Human testing
- Structured and controlled testing with animals

### Step 3: Phased Implementation

- Observed, controlled trials
- Each type of enrichment catalogued and given specific set of instructions
  - Species
  - Individuals
  - Habitats
- Categorized
  - Observation only
  - Daytime only – assigned responsibility
  - Nighttime – general responsibility (obs not required)

### Step 4: Evaluation & Redesign

- Ongoing evaluation
  - Safety
  - Efficacy
  - Reassess and redesign
- Monthly menu created
  - Forces re-evaluation
  - Manages for variety
  - Tests safety
  - Re-examines goals and purpose

### Evaluating Efficacy

- Formal ethograms created

- Asks specific questions related to goals
- Asks general questions for background
- Reports generated and evaluated
  - New ethograms created if evaluation poses new question or concern
  - Adjustments made if need
- Re-evaluation crucial to long-term success

#### Examples

- Goal: Get dolphins to use certain area of habitat more frequently
- Reason: Huge area, but guests not able to see animals in that area
- Ethogram: standard data revealed that dolphins rarely used that area.
- Enrichment placement greatly increased one dolphin's use of target area
- Decreased use of area by another dolphin
- Overall goal of increased use was successfully achieved
- Data also indicated that use of that particular toy increased aggression
- It requires in depth analysis to get full picture

#### Enrichment vs. Training

- At Enrichment conferences, it is argued that training is a small part of a good enrichment program
- Trainers, suggest that enrichment is part of a training program
- Timing – operant principles always at work

# Positive Reinforcement with People

## Introduction

- Behavior is based in science
- So many management theories, how do you choose?
- Understand use of positive reinforcement
- How to use redirection for difficult employees, clients, or challenging situations.
- Practical techniques for teaching, supervising, managing, and coaching.

## TAG Teach

- Today I will not focus on TAGTeach
- Teaching with Acoustical Guidance
- Excellent use of training skill for shaping physical skills

## What Makes Good Training So Effective?

Why or how is it possible that trainers are able to work so closely with wild and exotic animals? How do we get such high percentage of cooperation, these animals do what we ask (exactly as we ask more than 98% of the time) – how is that accomplished?

- Positive Reinforcement
- Great Relationships
- Knowledgeable Team
- Clear Goals
- Communication
- Good Timing
- Lack of Punishment
- We have fun

## Conventional Wisdom

- Winning through Intimidation
- Nice Guys Finish Last
- Respect through Aggressive Management
- Show No Fear
- Old fashioned mythology creates bad managers and ineffective leadership styles: short-term gains that don't help create a cohesive or happy staff.

## Modern Approach

- Create a Positive Work Environment
- Building respect through trust
- Accentuate the positive
- Redirect if there are mistakes
- Diverse teams

## Resources

- Whale Done
- Bringing out the Best in People
- The Power of Nice
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
- Power of Positive Parenting
- Crucial Conversations
- I will focus on what I have learned through many years of experience and mistakes!

## Workplace Use of Positive Reinforcement

- Not in our nature – we grow up in a negative world
- Easy to ignore correct behavior and focus on mistakes or problems
- Must make a conscious effort to use positive reinforcement

## ABCs of Behavior

- A = Antecedent (activator or trigger)
- B = Behavior (activity)
- C = Consequences
- Human nature: Focus on trigger and antecedent
- Behavioral model: Focus on the consequences (human nature error is a tendency to criticize)

## 4 Types of Consequences

- No response
- Negative response
- Redirection
- Positive Response

Immediacy is key to effective results

## Focus on Productive Techniques

- “No response” and “Negative Response” common
  - It is easiest to ignore – people want to avoid confrontation
  - We hope it will go away
  - If we must respond there is a tendency to be negative, harsh, critical, or dismissive
- Create resentment and low morale
- Why waste time on ineffective responses?
- “Redirection” and “Positive Responses” best

## Redirection Techniques

- Describe problem or error immediately, clearly and without blame
- Show negative impact
- If appropriate, take blame for not making task clear
- Clearly explain task in detail

- Express continuing confidence and trust in person

### **Redirections Approaches**

- |                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Assume the best                 | <b>Believe</b>                |
| • Understand their Perspective    | <b>Listen</b>                 |
| • “Next time, I suggest . . .”    | <b>Redirect</b>               |
| • Spend time with them            | <b>Understand &amp; Guide</b> |
| • Praise progress and improvement | <b>Positive Reinforcement</b> |

### **Communication**

- One Key to providing reinforcement is communication
- There must be an open line of communication between managers (teachers, parents, coaches) and staff (students kids, learners, clients).
- Create opportunities for communication
  - Be available
  - Seek each other out (accept responsibility)
  - Be receptive
  - Reschedule if emotions are too high

### **Obstacles to Communication**

- Desire to be right! (to be the expert)
- Desire to put other “in their place”
- Desire to avoid conflict
- Desire to place blame
- Our inability to really listen (understand)
- Our emotional investment

### **Communication Solutions**

- Accept responsibility (up or down the ladder)
- Find shared goals
- Divert the pressure (from you and them)
- Keep the conversation alive
- Practice hard conversations with trusted colleagues
- Listen!

### **Session Feedback**

- Avoid interrupting a session unless safety is at risk
- Always assume the best (they have a reason for what they are doing)
- Ask questions to understand their thinking
- Provide feedback that guides them toward discovering the answer themselves when possible
- Use video (when possible) and allow them to self-evaluate
- Allow them time to consider and reflect

## **Positive Reinforcement is Powerful**

- Praise progress, it is a moving target
- Praise people immediately
- Be specific about accomplishment
- Share your feelings about what they did
- Encourage continued good work

## **Obstacles**

- Lack of sincerity
- Human nature to be habitually negative
- Not “cool” in some circles
- Staff don’t know how to receive praise (no practice)
- Punishment works and its easy
- Lack of time with person
- Easy in theory, difficult in practice (at first)

## **Must Personalize Reinforcement**

- Public attention for some, private for others
- Thank you – well done – new task - break
- Watch their responses to your praise
  - Improvement? Good choice
  - Decline? Change reinforcement
- Be observant – watch their behavior
- Ask about what motivates them
- Be aware of what you can/can’t change

## **Techniques & Examples**

- Checklists – structure for reinforcement
- Set obtainable goals & be poised to reinforce
- New task, responsibility, or team
- Acknowledge in meetings (be natural)
- Show off accomplishments to supervisors
- Letters of commendation
- Simple but well-timed “thank you” or “well done”
- Good communication is essential

## **Summary**

- Reinforcement & redirection take practice
- Effective use takes extra effort at first
- YES opens doors, NO closes them
- Discipline creates structure for positive reinforcement (not contradictory)
- You must make staff development (relationships with others) a priority

- Clear communication helps deliver message

#### **A Way of Life**

- Makes a better manager and leader
- The employee can impact his/her boss
- Creates a better life partner
- Develops better parents and children
- Positive reinforcement is life changing!