

Dog training is no exception. Several years ago, and all of a sudden, my husband and I were facing behavior issues with our dog that began at the loss of another pet. Sabre, our ten-month-old English Mastiff, turned into Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. One minute she loved you, and the next she wanted to chomp your hand off. We looked for answers and interviewed many trainers. What we found was frustration. Everyone said something different. We even had one trainer say he was coming in a bite suit and it wouldn't be pretty. Well, he lasted all of one visit as Sabre wasn't having him in her house! Needless to say, I had to help her, and I had to learn why our adorable puppy suddenly changed.

Research began. I studied all I could, but it just made me more confused. There had to be a solution. To top off my frustrations with Sabre, it was 2008 and the economy was not in a great place. My career over the previous twenty-plus years had been as a professional chef. From owning and operating an event company, a bakery, and working at a local university, it was now time to follow the deep-rooted passion I had of working with dogs. Sabre gave me the reason to take the plunge, as I wanted so desperately to help her, and with what I learned I was finally able to make a difference in Sabre's life.

I learned that dog training was too generalized. I found that ironic, as dogs don't generalize well; however, many training programs were generalizing their training. You either had a good dog, a dominant dog, or an aggressive dog. There wasn't any consistent information on dogs that fell between these categories. Sabre didn't fit any of those stereotypes, so I was left still searching. I became a certified dog trainer through the Certificate Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), and Training Canines LLC was born.

As part of my quest for answers, I explored many aspects of dog training, one of which was working with shelter and rescue dogs. To my surprise, many dogs that are surrendered are eight to nine months of age and many are the breed deemed most popular by the American Kennel Club (AKC): the Labrador Retriever. I would hear common complaints, and it seemed to me that many of the problems would have been easily avoided if the owners had just done a little more training when the puppies were young. My focus then began to concentrate on puppies. How they learn, what they learn, and what we could do to avoid or change temperament problems that were surfacing at the eight- to nine-month mark, which was around the same age Sabre's issues showed up. I wondered whether her problems really began due to grief at the death of our other dog or whether it was a disconnect from puppyhood.

The only way to get true answers was to start with the puppies as early as possible. We began to work with breeders who would let us bring the mother and puppies to our facility when the puppies were ten days old. We studied litter after litter, puppy after puppy, and the Empowered Puppy Program was born. Since that time, we have raised and placed hundreds of puppies that have proven early puppy development is the key to happy, healthy puppies and adult dogs.

With every litter we continue to marvel at how smart puppies are. What they can be taught is absolutely amazing. With this book we want to share with you some of our top tips that will truly make a difference in your and your puppy's lives.