



I AM THE KID WHISPERER!

I consider myself to be a kid whisperer. I enjoy working with young children and I know that I am really good with kids and I feel confident in class with them. This wasn't always the case and I have worked on class control and discipline over the years. After a decade of trial and error, I am confident that I can take on a difficult class or a class with a difficult student and turn it around. I started training teachers several years ago and I found it extremely hard to put into words exactly what it is that I do to get kids to behave the way I want them to in my classroom.

My favourite Sunday pastime is drinking my coffee while watching The Dog Whisperer. As I watched Cesar Millan teach owners how to handle difficult dogs, it occurred to me that many of his techniques are the same as the ones I use in class and although dogs and kids are not the same, our theories more or less are.

At the beginning of the school year I forget the word discipline, which I associate more with punishment, and I focus on training. We need to train our young learners how to behave in class. They need their teacher to tell them what behaviours are acceptable and appropriate and we must work with them to achieve class control.

As I prepared this talk, I researched Cesar Millan and his theories and I found several quotes that I think can be directly applied to teaching and class control. Let's take a look!

Cesar says - "One of the biggest mistakes that dog owners can make is assuming their dogs feel and think like people do."

Karen says - "One of the biggest mistakes that **TEACHERS** can make is assuming their **KIDS** feel and think like **ADULTS** do."

-It's essential to remember that our students are just children. Children don't think and act like adults. It is not normal behaviour for a Spanish child to speak English, sit still, not shout, wait their turn, etc... All of these behaviours need to be learned and practised in the classroom. Teachers shouldn't expect these behaviours; teachers should train their children to behave in these ways.

Be the pack leader!!!

Cesar Millan talks a lot on his show about the importance of the pack leader. I believe that the teacher is the pack leader in the classroom.

Cesar says - "It's the job of the pack leader to provide **PROTECTION** and **DIRECTION**. Establishing and enforcing **RULES**, **BOUNDARIES** and **LIMITATIONS** is how they provide direction to their pack"

Karen says - "It's the job of the **TEACHER** to provide **PROTECTION** and **DIRECTION**. Establishing and enforcing **RULES**, **BOUNDARIES** and **LIMITATIONS** is how they provide direction to their **STUDENTS**"



RULES – refer to what the student's are or aren't allowed to do in class

-What are your rules? What do you want from your students? What are the behaviours of the children in your ideal classroom?

BOUNDARIES – control where a student can or can't go

-Students need to know that there are areas of the classroom that they are not allowed into unless permission is granted by the teacher. They need to know that they are not allowed out of their chairs without permission and that they are not allowed to touch the teachers possessions without being invited to do so, etc...

LIMITATIONS – control the length or intensity of an activity

-Teachers need to set limits on time and energy levels in each and every activity done in class.

We both say – “*They* want you to tell them what behaviour is expected. When *they* have rules, boundaries and limitations, they don't have to figure out what they are supposed to do. It's a lot less stressful for *them*.”

-Chaos often occurs when students don't understand what is going on in class. If rules, boundaries and limitations are not clear and established, children don't know what is expected and they find that stressful. It's not fun for a child to try and figure out what the teacher wants from them. It's up to the teacher to make clear what is expected and appropriate.

-It's also important to remember that when children feel that there is injustice in the classroom, they protest. I have seen time and time again that discipline becomes an issue when children feel that something isn't fair. Injustice can be avoided by having and establishing clear rules in each and every activity that is done in class.

Cesar says - “As a Pack Leader, it's **your goal** to bring your dog to a place of calm, submissive energy. **It's not about your dog**. Everything begins with **you, your energy, your state of mind, your approach**. **You** are the source of your dog's calm, submissive state, and your dog is looking for to you for **guidance**.”

Karen says - “As a **TEACHER**, it's **your goal** to bring your **STUDENTS** to a place of calm, submissive energy. **It's not about your STUDENTS**. Everything begins with **you, your energy, your state of mind, your approach**. **The teacher** is the source of your students' calm, submissive state, and they are looking for to you for **guidance**.”

-I have observed many teachers over the years and I truly believe that 99% problems with class control and discipline have much less to do with the students than with the teacher. Teachers need to tackle difficult classes/students head on but with a calm, assertive energy. As mentioned before rules, boundaries and limitations need to be set and it's up to the teach to train the students.

-Teachers should go in to every class with a positive attitude. While training students it's important not to lose your patience but rather to stay calm. Assertiveness is very important while training as well. Teachers need to make it clear that students need to follow classroom rules, but they need to do it in a way that is neither too aggressive nor too passive. Teachers must insist in the behaviours that they want from their students.



We both say – “*They* need to feel affection, *they* need to feel that you are one of *them*, but *they* need to have clear that **you are the leader.**”

-Kids need to feel love and affection from their teacher. It’s important to always greet students with a smile. Just a simple touch, like an arm around their shoulder, will make them feel special and welcome in your classroom. It’s important that your kids feel that you belong to their group and that you are happy to be in class with them.

Cesar says – “Because our dogs want to please us, their Pack Leaders, our **approval** becomes the **positive reinforcement** they need. We just have to be **clear** and **consistent** with what we want.”

Karen says – “Because our **students** want to please us, their **teachers**, our **approval** becomes the **positive reinforcement** they need. We just have to be **clear** and **consistent** with what we want.

-As you train your students and as you earn their respect and affection, you’ll be surprised that the only “reward” they need is for you to be happy with their performance in class. In my classes I have systems that I use to train and reward but once my kids are trained, I really don’t even have to use these systems. My kids just want to make me happy!

Get control of your class!

1. Create the group that you lead!

- Show them affection and be the pack leader!
- Students need to work with everyone in class, use random seating every day so that they get used to working with different partners
- Don’t allow for any bullying! Put an end to any teasing from the start!
- Train kids to be happy for students who win games and competitions instead of sulking for having lost.

2. Use a system to train your students!

- Find a system that works to train your students – Good/Bad charts, Sticker Charts, etc..
- Be clear and consistent in your rules, rewards and punishments.

3. Be fair and consistent!

- Rules must apply to everyone!
- Rewards and punishments must be consistent!

4. Bring a calm, assertive energy to every class!

- Even when children are challenging you, it’s important to stay calm and assertive! Insist calmly and assertively in correct behaviours!

You can do it!

1. Change your way of thinking - TRAIN!
2. Expectations create outcomes!
3. Reflect on your achievements and failures!
4. Build on successful moments! Stay positive!