



# The Problems with Punishment

- On the surface, it seems to work; “- it works on TV, right?”
- Punishment is an INCOMPLETE protocol; punishment only deals with what NOT to do, not what TO DO.
- Punishment can make behavior problems based in fear or anger WORSE; “violence begets violence”.
- Punishment can cause CONFUSION and LOSS OF TRUST.
- Punishment suppresses only the ACTION, not the INTENT; the wish to do the “wrong” behavior still remains.
- Punishment might lead to the WRONG CONCLUSION on the part of the learner.
- Punishment needs to be VERY consistent to work at all, and it requires PERFECT timing.
- To work properly, punishment needs to be INTENSE enough from the beginning; 1-3 reps should be enough.
- Punishment might cause the dog to suffer SHUT DOWN and LEARNED HELPLESSNESS (“the lights are on but nobody’s home”).
- Punishment easily becomes DEPENDENT ON THE PRESENCE OF THE PUNISHER.
- Some actions that we perceive as punishment may actually be perceived as a REWARD by the animal (“shouting “No!” out the door when the dog is barking in the yard, for example).
- Punishment should NEVER be used for human satisfaction. The goal of an aversive is to quickly and permanently stop an unwanted behavior, not to be a channel for the owner’s frustrations.
- Punishment is NOT CONDUCTIVE TO LEARNING.