



Building Trust Through Animal Communication

Valuable Insight for Pet Parents

a special publication from Firebelle Productions

Harper's Off-Leash Misadventures

I used to envy people whose dogs could be trusted to walk off-leash in public. Now, after just one session with animal communicator Danielle Leicht of Insight with Animals, Harper is maturing into a dog deserving of such trust ... at least in relatively safe environments. But I sure couldn't say that a few weeks ago.

Recently, I began taking Harper to a different park ... not the fully enclosed dog park with artificial turf, but a much larger park with real grass. Though it isn't technically an off-leash park, many people do allow their dogs to play off-leash there.

At first, Harper played nicely with the other dogs ... until she spotted dozens of kids skating on the basketball courts in the distance. Off she ran at breakneck speed to herd the skaters. Only the fence around the basketball courts separated the kids from my little maniac. But that didn't stop Harper from racing back and forth along the fence, barking with glee.

Once I caught my little speed demon, I brought her back to where the other dogs were playing, sat down with her in my lap, and gave her a good talking-to about how she mustn't run off like that and how it could be dangerous. That worked ... at first. But then she did it again! And again, I sternly but lovingly explained to her why that behavior wasn't acceptable.

Well, count us both slow learners. I leashed Harper and headed back to the parking lot. But when we came across a group of smaller dogs playing off-leash, I decided to give her another chance. We were far enough away from the basketball courts that I thought it safe to try. And so it was ... until Harper was triggered by a kid in the distance pulling a cooler on wheels. She raced after the wheely prey, scaring the kid and the adults with him. I figured that was the last time we would be able to enjoy this beautiful park.

The Animal Communication Breakthrough

A couple of weeks later, we did an animal communication session with Danielle. When I booked the session, I primarily wanted unbiased feedback on Harper's spay surgery and how well I had prepped her for it through my own animal communication efforts. However, we also addressed the incident at the park.

Danielle explained to Harper why running off the way she did was a problem. Of course, I had done that too. But I think we all know how children sometimes listen to other people better than they listen to their own parents. It doesn't surprise me that Harper needed to hear it from someone else.

**One animal
communication
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trusted off-leash
at the park.**



**The breakthrough
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more fulfilling.**

Additionally, Danielle gave me insight on what Harper wanted from me, and that was the breakthrough we needed. I wouldn't characterize it as bargaining. There was no sense that Harper was negotiating for better terms in exchange for good behavior. Rather, it was insight as to what would make her life more fulfilling. Harper was craving more freedom to sniff and explore and to "color outside the lines." She wanted more choice about where to go and how to behave in large spaces. She wanted to "be a kid and act like a kid."

Giving Harper what she craved worked like a charm. We've gone back to the park nearly every day since that animal communication session. Harper no longer runs off chasing skaters, cyclists, or people dragging things on wheels. She came close to chasing a skateboarder once, but stopped in her tracks when I said "Leave it."

Meanwhile, I can have Harper off-leash the entire time we're at the park (though I carry her in the parking lot for safety). When I ask her to "walk with me" from the parking lot to the area where her "friends" play, she charts her own course, sniffing and exploring as she generally accompanies me. If she wanders too far, I tell her "close," and she circles back toward me or slows until I catch up.

Harper loves playing chase with her friends. Sometimes when the dogs are running together, Harper runs further than I would ideally like. But I've learned to trust that the pack will circle back soon enough. None of them are interested in escaping the park. They simply want to "play large" in the big open space.

Even the words that I use with Harper are intended to convey the freedom that she craves. I don't ask her to "heel" like a show dog. But I do ask her to "walk with me" like a companion and to stay "close" when appropriate. When I ask her to "check in," she knows that playtime isn't over. So she comes to me eagerly, knowing that I'll reward her with a cookie then let her go back to playing.

In part, I'm preparing Harper for doggy camp in September. Wild Blue Dogs puts on a weeklong camp in South Lake Tahoe for dogs and their humans. Dogs who are well behaved get to play off-leash in some of the common areas and on the beach next to the lake. They are also allowed off-leash on hikes along the lake and in the mountains. I often tell Harper about camp and about the enjoyment she can expect if she can be trusted off-leash. So she understands that everything we are doing now is building up to this fantastic vacation.

So, can animal communication help build trust between you and your beloved fur baby? Absolutely! The difference it has made for me and Harper is both measurable and dramatic.

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