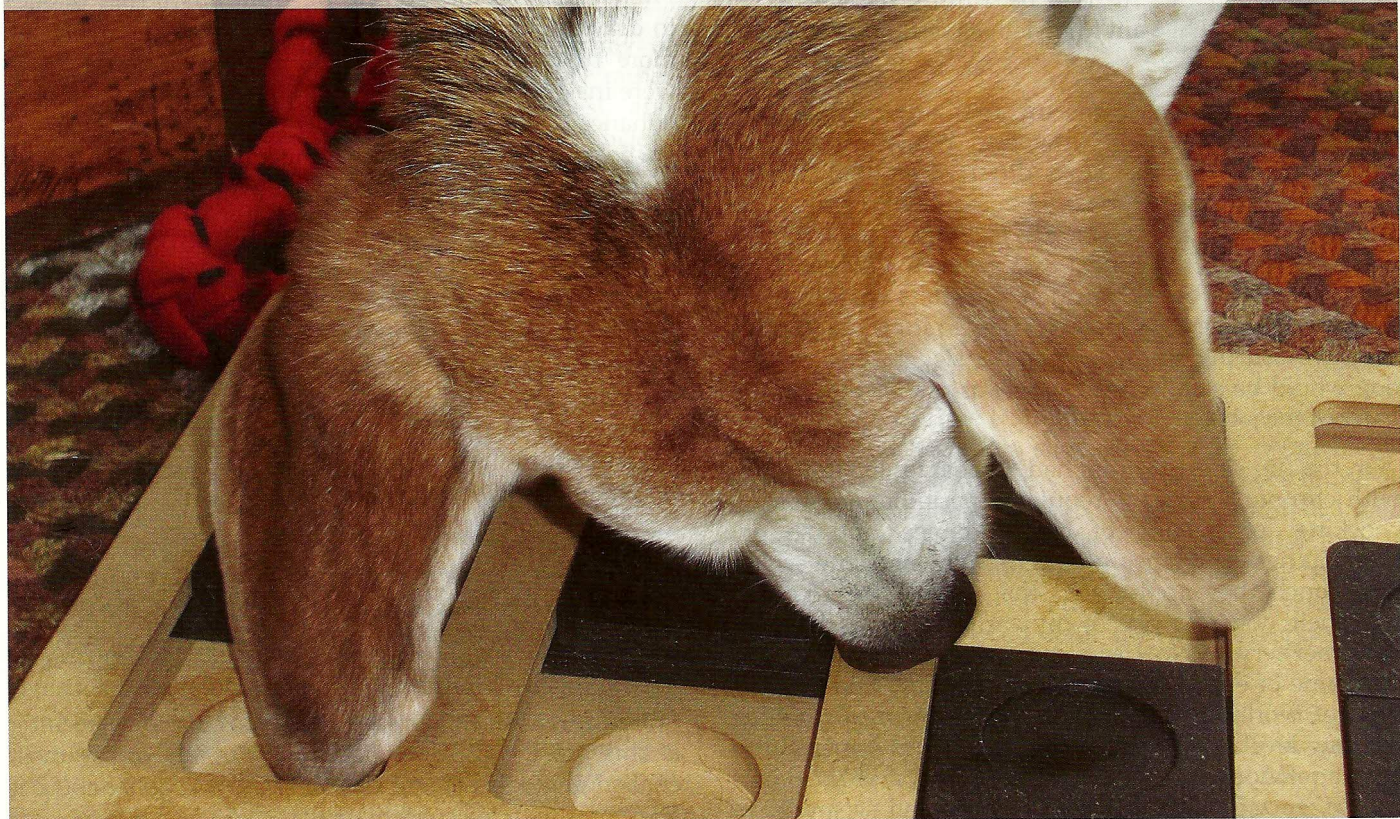


Control, Compassion, and Choices

Part 2 of 2

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One of VanFleet's Beagles, deaf with failing vision, focuses great interest on games/puzzles that involve using her superior olfactory abilities.

In Part 1 of this series, we explored the dimension of control and how that plays out in human relationships with canines, equines, and other animals including our own species. Excessive human control needs are often associated with compulsion-oriented training, yet they can also play a role in positive training if people are always expecting their dogs or horses to do their bidding, or train them so extensively and intensively that the animals' unique personalities are squashed. One way to prevent overworking animals to such an extent that they experience learned helplessness or lose interest in life is to shift our focus to the only thing truly within our control: namely, ourselves. It is incumbent upon us to provide animals with more choices and opportunities to control their own lives to whatever extent it is possible.

Even working animals can be more effective when they are interested in their world and their jobs, and that usually means balancing their work lives with some experiences that are enjoyable for them, much as has been found to be true for humans. As we also discussed in Part 1, having *compassion* for the animals' feelings and needs can lead to more enriched relationships and more

effective partnerships with other species. In Part 2, we offer some thoughts about how to accomplish this way of living and working with the animals in our lives.

Choices

We sometimes hear trainers and animal owners say that their animals "enjoy" activities because they do not resist them. This seems to be an oversimplified and rather human-centered way of thinking. Just because a dog follows his owner into the hospital for a visit with patients or moves smartly around the show ring with her handler does not mean that the dog is actually enjoying the experience. No doubt some dogs do enjoy the activities we select for them, but it is not likely to be true for all. Dogs often go along with what we want, whether they enjoy it or not. They tolerate our choices of activities. Horses may have their own ideas about how to spend the day, but they often do not visibly protest when we saddle them up for a ride.

In our enthusiasm for activities with our animals, we sometimes make an assumption that our animals will like whatever we like. But if we don't want to be controlling

