

Dog Training with a Russian Twist



Soviet born dog trainer uses his unique talent to help shelter dogs become more adoptable

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His resume reads like that of a Russian KGB agent. He is the son of a Soviet biologist, and his job was to provide training for the Red Army. His mentor was a deaf mute who helped him develop Russian-Chinese border patrollers and skilled paratroopers. His students would seek out gas leaks in broken pipes, would deliver mail to military ships, and would sniff out bombs. He immigrated to the United States in 1995, and is now taking America by storm. He is . . .
...Vladae Roytapel, The Russian Dog Wizard

Vladae's Background

Vladae Roytapel's passion for dogs began when he was a young boy growing up in the Soviet Union near the Turkish border of what is now Azerbaijan. His grandfather was a Soviet biologist who conducted behavioral experiments on farm animals based on the theories of Russian scientist Ivan Pavlov. Roytapel assisted his grandfather on the farm, working with wolves, foxes, coyotes and chickens, and won his first prize for dog training at the age of 12 at an obedience championship with his pet Siberian Husky, Berta.

Roytapel's dramatic turning point came when he was mentored by a deaf-mute dog trainer who was legendary throughout Russia. He was taught how to teach a dog without words, and he went on to train dogs for the Red Army. During his 13-year stint in the army, Roytapel taught dogs to do things such as search for leaking gas in broken pipes and deliver mail between military ships. He also trained dogs to sniff out bombs, and work for customs officers on the Soviet-China border - even jump out of airplanes as "doggy paratroopers".



Chasing a Dream

Vladae, now 46 and a married father of two, eventually started a dog obedience school before coming to the United States about a decade ago. His focus on the dog-human relationship in civilian life earned him the nickname "The Canine Dr. Phil" because of his ability to resolve conflicts between man and his best friend.

Prior to relocating to the West Coast last August, Roytapel spent a decade in Detroit, MI, where he achieved dog training fame in Michigan. He eventually became so well known that people there would stop him on the street to ask for his autograph. A few years ago, Roytapel appeared on Letterman, after which he accepted a job hosting segments on Animal Radio, a nationally syndicated pet show. But that was not enough for Vladae. He had the hottest dog trainer on his radar, and decided to move to California to size himself up to Cesar Millan.

Vladae's Unique Techniques

Vladae Roytapel created "Doglish" as a way to communicate with dogs based on how dogs communicate with each other. He has learned to speak to dogs on their own frequency, using a combination of sounds and body language he calls "Doglish." While some might laugh about the name, he's serious about the results. According to Roytapel, dogs don't understand words, but they are finely tuned to tone.



There are three basic sounds to Doglish - a high-pitched voice that mimics a howl and signifies approval, an abrupt bark-like tone used for commands, and a deep, growling intonation for discipline. Vladae provides an example: Your playful dog grabs a shoe and won't let go. Instead of hitting the dog or shouting to "let go", gently retrieve the shoe and use your best high-pitched howl-speak to say, "Good girrrllllllll!" or "Good boooyyyyy!" He further explains, "You can't say 'no' to the dog. He doesn't even understand your 'no.' He might even like your 'no.' He might think 'no' is his nickname."

Non-verbal communication consists of various types of body language

Roytapel says that mother dogs communicate with their pups by licking (to praise) and nipping (gently, to correct). You can imitate that by patting (not rubbing) a dog on his head to praise, and by snapping his leash (one tug, not hard) to get his attention for correction. Other examples of "doglish" gestures are:

- Leaning over the dog, just slightly, means "sit"
- Towering over him will communicate "down"
- A step forward is translated as an invasion of space and should be used for corrections
- Moving backward is translated as an invitation to follow
- Lowering yourself (kneeling down) is seen as a friendly gesture
- Raising yourself into a posture over the dog is seen as a gesture of dominance

One of the most important lessons in dog training is to never let your dog lead while on the leash. "You walk the dog; the dog doesn't walk you," he says. "Pulling on the leash is a sign that your dog



believes he's in charge of you. It's putting him in a position of authority. Teaching your dog to walk at your side or behind you eliminates many problems, such as on-leash aggression, excessive barking and possessiveness of the owner, according to Roytapel.

Giving Back

Roytapel is currently expanding his Southern California clientele, and is also working on a lecture tour and TV show. Despite his hectic schedule, he realizes that his gift is a blessing that should be used to help the community that is embracing his talents. "I am offering free training seminars to shelter and rescue groups for a limited time. I can teach these people how to work with abandoned, abused, and homeless dogs to help them become more adoptable."



A perfect example is Vladae's work with Azure, a stabbed pit bull that was recently relinquished by her owner to the [Pet Rescue Center](#) in Mission Viejo. Vladae volunteered his training services to help Azure overcome aggression issues, and he trained the staff to continue working with her. After just a few

sessions with Vladae, Azure is now comfortable around other dogs and children, and is ready to be adopted into her new forever home! To read the complete story about Azure, which includes adoption information and a video clip of Vladae working with her, [click here](#) .

According to Dr. Matthew Wheaton of the PRC, "Vladae has been a great help to The Pet Rescue Center with our more difficult dogs. He has worked extensively with Azure, the previously stabbed pit bull with major dog aggression. Her response to training has been amazing, and I credit the unique approach of Vladae. Vladae is a certified animal behaviorist and a dog trainer with extensive experience in using a combination of positive reinforcement and teaching pet owners to understand dog behaviors and "doglish", which is the body language that dogs use to communicate. We are very thankful for his commitment to helping rescued dogs find their place with forever homes." To schedule an appointment with Vladae, call 949-244-0615 or email socaldogtraining@gmail.com. You may also visit his website here <http://www.socaldogtraining.com/> Photos courtesy of Vladae Roytapel and the Pet Rescue Center