

Session title: Effective competition preparation – not for our dogs, for us!!!.

Presenter: Sharon Carroll

Time: Sunday (October 8) 1:40pm-3:30pm

Location: Lecture

Session description: We spend a lot of time preparing our dog for competitions, but mostly we don't match that with our own personal preparation.

All dog sports require at least some participation from the human. In some sports our primary role is as our dog's coach and support crew, but in many sports we are also their teammate, performing alongside them throughout.

When we prepare our dog for competition, we help them to develop the technical skills needed, the mental stamina needed, the ability to remain focused in potentially stimulating environments, the ability to remain confident and accurate under "pressure", and the ability to maintain their arousal in the optimal zone for the duration of each performance. However, it can be easy to forget that we too need this exact same skillset in order to be both successful and to be a productive teammate.

Our skills for managing our own thoughts, emotions, and behavior become even more critical if our dog is less robust, less experienced, has had previous negative competition experiences, or is prone to non-beneficial arousal shifts.

It is very easy to inadvertently send our team into a downward spiral of unsuccessful and unenjoyable performances in instances where either end of the leash has not been adequately prepared, or when gaps in preparation have not been rapidly identified or have not been adequately resolved.

In this session we will look at the human end of the leash and the role we can play in preventing unenjoyable competition experiences for us and our dog, as well as the steps we can take to turn around a downward trajectory of unsuccessful and unenjoyable competition performances.

This isn't about winning, it is about having an enjoyable competition experience ourselves, and providing an enjoyable competition experience for our dog. This is where winning starts. Successful performances (winning, placing, fast times, high scores, titles, etc.) aren't achieved by focusing on those end results, they are a biproduct of both teammates being adequately prepared, confident, and in control of their own thoughts, emotions, and actions throughout the competition performance.

This session is a lecture only (no practical) but please bring a pen a paper to get the most out of the session.

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There will be a brief Q & A session at the conclusion of the presentation.