Comparative Analysis of Just Behaving vs. Mainstream Dog Training Methodologies

Introduction

In dog training, various methodologies emphasize different philosophies, ranging from fully reward-based approaches to those using physical corrections or dominance. This report provides an in-depth, evidence-based comparison of the Just Behaving training methodology with four other major models: mainstream positive reinforcement, balanced training, force-free training, and dominance-based training. We will examine scientific research findings and expert opinions on each approach, focusing on long-term behavioral outcomes and the psychological impact on dogs. Key differences in training philosophy — including leadership style, use of corrections, preventive strategies, and reinforcement techniques — are outlined. Finally, we compare the emotional effects (stress, trust, and adaptability) associated with each method and present comparative tables summarizing effectiveness, long-term stability, behavioral impacts, and stress factors. Best practices and areas for improvement for each training model are highlighted to guide trainers and owners toward humane and effective training.

Scientific and Expert Perspectives on Training Methods

Modern animal behavior science provides clear insights into how different training methods affect canine learning and welfare. Peer-reviewed studies overwhelmingly support reward-based methods as effective and less risky to canine well-being, while highlighting potential harms of aversive techniques caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu psychdogpartners.org. For example, a comprehensive review of 17 studies by Ziv (2017) concluded that aversive training methods (those relying on positive punishment or negative reinforcement, such as leash corrections, yelling, or shock collars) *"can jeopardize both the physical and mental health of dogs."* The review found *"no evidence that [punishment] is more effective than positive reinforcement–based training"*; in fact, some evidence suggested the opposite caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu. In other words, using force or intimidation does not improve training outcomes compared to rewards, and often comes with serious welfare drawbacks. These findings are echoed by an updated position statement from the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB), which recommends exclusively reward-based training for all dogs, noting *"there is no evidence that aversive methods are more effective than reward-based methods in any context"* psychdogpartners.org.

Expert opinions from veterinarians and behaviorists strongly caution against dominance-focused techniques. A University of Pennsylvania study (Herron et al. 2009)

surveyed dog owners who had used confrontational, “alpha” style methods on aggressive dogs. The findings were striking: many dominance-based techniques (e.g. *“alpha rolls,” hitting, staring the dog down*) not only failed to correct behavior but actually provoked aggressive responses in at least 25% of dogs sciencedaily.com. The lead author, veterinary behaviorist Dr. Meghan Herron, stated that such methods *“do little to correct improper behavior and can elicit aggressive responses,”* highlighting that these techniques are fear-eliciting and may lead to owner-directed aggression sciencedaily.com. In contrast, non-aversive methods (like additional exercise or reward-based training) *“elicited very few aggressive responses”* from dogs sciencedaily.com. This underscores a consensus in the animal behavior community: coercive or dominance-oriented training poses safety risks and can worsen behavioral problems, whereas reward-focused approaches are safer and build better outcomes.

Leading professional organizations in dog training and behavior (such as APDT, AVSAB, and the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists) advocate for *“force-free”* or *“humane hierarchy”* methods. They emphasize using positive reinforcement and negative punishment (e.g. ignoring unwanted behaviors) while avoiding physical punishment or intimidation psychdogpartners.org. The AVSAB, in a dedicated statement on dominance theory, explains that most canine misbehavior is not about pushing for high social rank, but rather stems from normal learning processes (dogs repeat behaviors that have been inadvertently rewarded) pawsontheplains.com. Therefore, owners do not need to “dominate” their dogs, but instead should focus on leadership through guidance and positive influence, which builds willing cooperation pawsontheplains.com. The dominance model’s assumption that every bad behavior is a dog’s attempt to assert rank is considered outdated. Applying dominance theory to human-dog interactions often leads to punishment that might suppress outward signs of behavior without addressing underlying causes (such as fear or anxiety), potentially exacerbating those issues pawsontheplains.com. In short, modern experts agree that training built on trust and rewards yields better-behaved dogs and preserves welfare, whereas harsh methods can create stress, fear, and aggression sciencedaily.com psychdogpartners.org.

Case studies and real-world applications further illustrate these points. Studies of obedience school outcomes show that dogs trained with choke chains or prong collars often exhibit stress signals and avoid their handlers, whereas dogs in reward-based classes are more engaged and attentive psychdogpartners.org. For instance, one observational study reported that dogs in aversive-based classes showed frequent tense body postures, lip-licking, yawning, and yelping during training, while dogs in reward-based classes showed greater attentiveness toward their owners and fewer stress behaviors psychdogpartners.org. Even after training, the effects persist: if a dog learns a command under fear of punishment, the command itself can become a source

of stress. Researchers note that dogs trained with aversives “continued to show stress-related behaviors when the cue was presented, suggesting the cue itself had become aversive.”psychdogpartners.org.

This means a verbally trained command (taught with punishment) might make a dog anxious even in the absence of an actual correction – a clear negative imprint on the dog’s emotional state.

Conversely, reward-based training has been linked to positive outcomes beyond just teaching tricks. Multiple survey studies have found that dogs trained primarily with positive reinforcement tend to be more obedient and less prone to behavior problems in general psychdogpartners.org. In one large 364-owner survey (Hiby et al. 2004), owners who used only reward-based methods had dogs with significantly higher obedience scores and no increase in problem behaviors, whereas those who used punishment (even alongside rewards) were *more likely to report aggression and other issues* psychdogpartners.org. Similarly, Blackwell et al. (2008) found that dogs trained using exclusively positive reinforcement were least likely to show attention-seeking, fear, or aggression, while those with punishment in their training history had a higher incidence of aggression and fearful behaviors psychdogpartners.org. These peer-reviewed studies support what many trainers observe anecdotally: a dog that is trained with patience and rewards often develops into a confident, well-adjusted companion, whereas one trained with intimidation may carry lingering behavior problems.

Importantly, the Just Behaving methodology aligns with many science-based principles while also adding its own unique elements. The Just Behaving approach emphasizes a *holistic collaboration between pet owners , behavior sciences and veterinarians*. This suggests an integration of training with overall health, behavior science and neurological considerations. In a snippet from a Just Behaving publication, they note that *“training methods focusing on positive reinforcement, adequate socialization, and a stable routine are crucial in raising a well-adjusted dog.”* They highlight collaboration with veterinarians as a key component, indicating that they address underlying medical or neurochemical factors that might influence behavior (for example, ruling out pain or medical issues as causes of problem behavior, or using veterinary insight to manage anxiety) justbehaving.com. This multidisciplinary angle is somewhat unique to Just Behaving, going beyond training technique alone and ensuring the dog’s overall well-being is considered. In summary, scientific and expert perspectives strongly favor reward-centric training for effectiveness and welfare. The Just Behaving method is consistent with these perspectives by prioritizing positive reinforcement and structure, while also incorporating expert (veterinary and behavioral sciences) collaboration for a comprehensive behavior plan.

Long-Term Behavioral Outcomes Across Methods

One of the most critical considerations for any training method is how it shapes a dog's behavior in the long run. Training isn't just about quick fixes; ideally, it produces stable, desirable behaviors that last for the dog's lifetime, whether the dog is a family pet, a service animal, or a working dog. This section examines research on the longevity of training effects and any long-term behavioral drawbacks for each methodology, including whether dogs remain reliable without continuous external reinforcement and how each method might influence behavior years down the line.

Positive Reinforcement (Reward-Based) Training – Studies tracking dogs trained with primarily positive reinforcement show generally stable behavior and strong obedience retention over time. Because this approach teaches dogs to enjoy learning (associating commands and behaviors with rewards and praise), dogs often continue to perform even when treats are thinned out to an intermittent schedule. In fact, research indicates that reward-trained dogs may listen *better* over time than dogs trained with corrections. In Hiby's study, owners who never used punishment had dogs with no increase in behavior problems over time and higher obedience, suggesting that positive behaviors persisted without needing ever-present treats psychdogpartners.org. Properly done, positive training transitions from continuous rewards to a variable reward schedule (much like how a slot machine's occasional payoff maintains behavior). This creates behaviors that are resistant to extinction – the dog has learned that eventually good behavior pays off, even if not every single time. Thus, concerns about *"treat dependence"* can be mitigated by trainer technique: as the dog becomes reliable, trainers gradually replace food rewards with praise, play, or life rewards (like going for a walk) at random intervals, keeping the dog motivated. When handled correctly, a dog trained with positive reinforcement will obey happily even when no treat is visible, because the dog has a history of success and positive experiences performing the behavior. Indeed, multiple surveys have found higher obedience levels in dogs trained with rewards than in those trained with any aversives psychdogpartners.org. This implies that in the long term, reward-trained dogs are *at least* as reliable as others, if not more so. One potential drawback to monitor is that over-reliance on food rewards without proper phasing out can create a dog who only responds when a treat is present. Trainers counteract this by varying rewards and using real-life reinforcers. Another long-term consideration is that positive-only trained dogs might test boundaries if they think nothing bad will happen; however, trainers usually address this by removing rewards for unwanted behavior (negative punishment) and rewarding an alternative behavior, which effectively teaches the dog that misbehavior simply gets them *nothing*. Overall, the long-term outcome for positive reinforcement training is a dog that maintains good behavior out of habit and enjoyment, with minimal behavioral fallout. Studies have also noted that these dogs tend to have fewer anxiety-related or aggression issues years later psychdogpartners.org psychdogpartners.org, indicating a stable and desirable behavioral profile in the long run.

Force-Free Training, which is essentially an extreme of positive reinforcement (no physical corrections at all, and often a strong emphasis on managing the environment to prevent mistakes), shows similar long-term benefits. Force-free trained dogs typically learn to trust that *following commands leads to good things*, and they don't associate obedience with fear. Because there is never intentional use of force, these dogs usually do not develop avoidance or fear of the handler that could complicate behavior later. Long-term, a force-free trained dog often exhibits *enthusiastic compliance*: they see training as a game or a source of interaction. However, one challenge can be that if a dog never encounters any corrections, owners must be very consistent in rewarding the good and preventing the bad; otherwise, the dog might inadvertently self-reward (for example, jumping on counters to get food if not managed). *Over-stimulation* can be a concern in force-free methods if trainers rely heavily on excitement and high-energy rewards – some high-drive dogs might become *too* exuberant, making it hard for them to calm down. The best force-free trainers incorporate impulse control games (like waiting for a treat, "leave it" exercises, etc.) to instill patience. When done properly, force-free trained dogs can be remarkably stable and adaptable. Since they are never punished for mistakes, they tend not to develop random fears or aggression tied to training. Multiple long-term studies indirectly support force-free practices: for instance, a literature review found that dogs trained without aversives had *lower rates of problem behaviors long-term* psychdogpartners.org. Additionally, because force-free overlaps with positive reinforcement, it shares the trait of needing reward maintenance – owners should continue to praise and occasionally reward good behavior throughout the dog's life (which is true for any method; even a correction-trained dog needs some reinforcement, if only the relief from correction). A potential drawback noted by some practitioners is that certain behaviors (like serious aggression or prey drive issues) may take longer to rehabilitate with purely force-free methods; it may require extensive time desensitizing and counterconditioning. However, the upside is that once rehabilitated, the dog's improvement is genuine and not based on fear. In summary, force-free methods produce long-lasting good behavior when consistently applied, with dogs that remain trusting and reliable. There is little evidence of any unique long-term downside except the necessity for owners to remain patient and consistent. Notably, force-free dogs often have excellent emotional resilience; since training has been a positive part of their life, they may handle new situations with curiosity rather than fear, even years later.

Balanced Training (a combination of rewards and corrections) can achieve reliable immediate results, but its long-term outcomes can vary depending on how the balance is struck and the individual dog's temperament. In balanced training, a dog learns that good behavior earns rewards and bad behavior has consequences (like a leash pop or a stern "no"). Proponents argue this yields a dog who behaves even when it knows a reward isn't coming, because it wants to avoid punishment. If implemented with skill and fairness, some balanced-trained dogs do exhibit stable, obedient behavior long-term —

many working dogs and sport dogs have been trained with a mix of methods and perform reliably. However, scientific surveys hint at some drawbacks over time. For example, in Hiby's research, owners who mixed punishment and reward had *more behavior issues than those who used rewards only* psychdogpartners.org. This suggests that even occasional punishment can introduce stress or conflict that might manifest later (such as increased anxiety or aggression). One reason could be that the dog experiences ambivalence: sometimes the owner is the source of treats, other times the source of punishment. This can muddle the dog's trust and predictability. Over years, a balanced-trained dog might develop selective behavior — *very obedient when it perceives the handler is in control or a correction is likely, but less so when it thinks it can get away with it*. A common anecdote is the "collar-wise" dog: for instance, a dog trained with an e-collar might be perfectly behaved with the collar on, but ignore commands if the collar is off and it senses no consequence. This indicates a potential long-term instability – the behavior is dependent on the continued presence of the training tool or the handler's authority. That said, balanced methods can produce well-behaved dogs who respond to both praise and corrections, especially if the emphasis remains on positive reinforcement. Many balanced trainers actually use rewards *heavily* and resort to corrections sparingly, which might narrow the difference between balanced and purely positive in practice. If the aversives are mild and used fairly, some dogs show no obvious ill effects years later. But other dogs (particularly sensitive or anxious individuals) might accumulate stress; a dog that often gets corrected may become *"shut down"* (offering very low initiative to avoid mistakes) or conversely may develop *rebound aggression* if pushed too far. Long-term studies on electronic collar training – a common balanced training tool – found that while e-collars can suppress unwanted behaviors like chasing, they offer no advantage in training efficacy over positive methods in the long run journals.plos.org frontiersin.org. In one controlled trial, after 5 days of training for recall, dogs trained by experienced e-collar trainers did not outperform dogs trained by purely positive methods; in fact, the positive-only group responded more quickly and as reliably to commands, and owners of e-collar dogs were *less confident in their dog's continued obedience without the device* frontiersin.org frontiersin.org. This indicates that balanced training's long-term success may rely on continued use of corrections or devices. In summary, balanced training can yield good behavior but potentially at the cost of the dog's complete trust or confidence. Over years, behaviors might remain solid if the owner consistently applies both reward and correction, but if the "stick" is removed, the dog might test limits. Additionally, balanced-trained dogs have a higher risk of developing stress-related behaviors over time compared to reward-trained dogs psychdogpartners.org. Best practice in balanced training for long-term success is to use the least aversive corrections and as much positive reinforcement as possible, thereby minimizing negative fallout.

Dominance-Based Training (old-fashioned “alpha” techniques, heavy corrections, minimal rewards) often produces quick short-term compliance but is notorious for poor long-term outcomes. Initially, a dog may submit out of fear and appear well-behaved. However, over time, several problems can arise. First, the dog’s obedience is typically linked to the constant threat of punishment; if that threat is not present or the handler’s control lapses, the dog may revert or even become dangerously defiant. Studies have documented that dogs trained with confrontational methods can become habituated to punishment or may escalate their resistance. Herron et al. (2009) found that unless owners changed techniques, most dogs continued to be aggressive despite being subjected to dominance-based corrections for a year sciencedaily.com sciencedaily.com. In other words, these methods failed to produce a stable improvement in aggression problems. Instead, the dogs either kept aggressing (perhaps because the underlying emotion, often fear, was never addressed) or became aggressive specifically *because* of the harsh treatment. Long-term, dominance-trained dogs may develop a general distrust of their owner and others. They can become anxious, as they learn that the world is unpredictable and punishment could occur at any time. Some dogs internalize this, leading to chronic stress behaviors (e.g. cowering, appeasement gestures, or a state of learned helplessness where the dog is passive and subdued). Other dogs might eventually fight back, leading to bites or serious incidents if they feel pushed to the wall. Aversive-heavy training can also cause *behavioral fallout* later in life: a classic example is a dog that stops signaling warnings (because growling was punished) and then *bites “without warning”* as the first sign of discomfort – a direct result of suppressing its early communication. Additionally, dominance training tends not to be sustainable without continuous application. The moment the strict regimen is relaxed (say a new family member is more lenient, or the dog is in someone else’s care), the dog has not learned self-control or positive habits – it only learned to avoid pain. Thus any lapse can lead to the dog “misbehaving” since there’s no internalized reason to behave. There are numerous case anecdotes of dogs trained with heavy corrections that require ongoing management with muzzles or strong equipment because the dog is not trustworthy otherwise. Stress-related behaviors also persist long-term: Schilder and van der Borg (2004) famously observed that even outside of training sessions, police dogs that had been trained with shock corrections showed body language indicating fear and stress in the presence of their handlers, suggesting a lasting negative association. In summary, dominance-based methods often lead to unstable long-term behavior – the dog’s compliance is tied to the constant presence of the dominant handler, and the dog may either live in a state of suppressed stress or eventually develop worse behaviors (like hidden resentment or fear aggression). These dogs may obey reliably only under direct supervision and may have poor impulse control or decision-making when on their own. By modern standards, dominance-heavy training is not considered a best practice due to these long-term drawbacks and the

ethical issue of diminishing a dog's quality of life. It's telling that virtually all major guide dog and service dog programs have abandoned dominance-based methods; service animals must be reliable and confident over many years, which is best achieved by building trust and positive motivation rather than fear.

Just Behaving's approach to long-term outcomes focuses on creating "stable, predictable behaviors" through consistency and early intervention. By emphasizing adequate socialization and a stable daily routine, this method aims to prevent behavioral issues from developing in the first place. A well-socialized puppy with a steady routine is less prone to anxiety or reactivity later in life. The collaboration with veterinarians and the behavioral sciences also implies that Just Behaving addresses any medical. emotional or neurochemical contributors to behavior, which can greatly improve long-term outcomes (for instance, a dog with chronic pain might become aggressive over time if untreated, or a highly anxious dog might benefit from short-term medication to aid the training process). By merging training with overall wellness, the Just Behaving methodology reduces the incidence of unpredictable behavior changes down the line. Furthermore, Just Behaving incorporates positive reinforcement as a cornerstone, so it enjoys the same long-term benefits of reward-based training (persistent obedience and low rates of aggression/fear). At the same time, it places value on structured leadership, meaning owners are taught to be consistent and clear. This structure can help avoid the common pitfall of treat-trained dogs becoming "brats" – instead of spoiling the dog, owners maintain rules and boundaries (enforced in non-harsh ways). Over multiple years, a dog trained in this method would ideally remain well-mannered even without a treat pouch on the owner's waist, because it has learned both that good behavior is rewarding *and* that certain behaviors are simply not allowed (due to consistent prevention or mild correction). If "Just Behaving" identifies any long-term drawback in other methods, it might be treat dependency or over-excitability (common critiques of pure positive training) – thus, it addresses those by teaching impulse control and varying rewards. Without an explicit long-term study on Just Behaving dogs, we extrapolate from its principles: one would expect highly stable behavior given the focus on early socialization (which prevents fear periods from causing lasting phobias) and routine (which gives dogs predictability). Additionally, by involving vets and it's focus on behavioral science, any issues like hormonal changes or neurological disorders could be caught and managed, preventing sudden behavior deterioration. In summary, the long-term prognosis for dogs trained under Just Behaving should be very positive, combining the best of reward-based resilience with structured habits to ensure reliability, while avoiding the pitfalls of treat-only or correction-heavy approaches. Owners are encouraged to reinforce desired behaviors throughout the dog's life, but the behaviors should become second nature to the dog, leading to an adult dog that is dependable, low-stress, and socially well-adjusted for years to come.

Training Philosophies and Techniques: Key Differences

Each training methodology stems from a distinct philosophy about how dogs learn and how humans should guide them. This section outlines the key differences in philosophy and technique between Just Behaving, positive reinforcement, balanced, force-free, and dominance-based training. We compare how each approach views leadership, the use of corrections, strategies for preventing misbehavior, and methods of reinforcement. Understanding these differences clarifies why the methods produce the outcomes discussed above.

Leadership and the Role of the Owner

Just Behaving: Emphasizes *structured leadership* without intimidation. The owner is taught to be a consistent, calm leader – providing guidance, rules, and routine so the dog knows what is expected. Leadership in this context means earning the dog's respect through trust and consistency rather than through fear. The Just Behaving philosophy sees the human as a coach or teacher (and caregiver), working in collaboration with veterinarians and behavior experts. Owners are encouraged to take charge of situations (proactively managing the dog's environment) while also being attentive to the dog's needs. This can be described as a relationship of mutual respect: the owner leads by setting the dog up for success and being clear and fair. For example, the owner might require the dog to remain before going out the door (teaching polite behavior) – this is leadership by creating structure. It differs from dominance-based "alpha" concepts; instead of enforcing rank, the owner leads by controlling resources and routines benignly (much like a parent guides a child). This structured leadership is intended to give the dog a sense of security and clarity, which can improve the dog's confidence and impulse control.

Positive Reinforcement (Mainstream R+): Views the owner as a *benevolent guide or partner*. Leadership is present, but it's achieved through positive influence rather than authority. Trainers in this paradigm sometimes avoid the term "leader" due to its misuse in dominance theory, but in practice they do recommend that owners consistently reinforce rules. The owner sets boundaries by controlling access to rewards (e.g. using a "Nothing in Life is Free" approach where the dog must perform a command to earn what it wants). However, there's minimal emphasis on hierarchy. The philosophy is that a dog will follow a good leader because it *wants* to, not because it fears consequences. Owners using positive methods aim to be the source of all things fun and rewarding, thereby naturally gaining the dog's focus and cooperation. Any notion of "pack leader" is replaced by "trusted friend and teacher." In classes, owners are taught to be proactive and to manage situations (e.g. if a dog is likely to misbehave, set them up so they don't get the chance to rehearse bad behavior, rather than waiting to punish). Thus, leadership is manifested in arranging the environment and training sessions for

success, and being consistent with cues and rewards. The underlying belief: a happy, trusting dog is eager to follow guidance.

Balanced Training: Typically encourages owners to be a *confident leader or "alpha"* figure, albeit often in a moderate way. The owner is expected to enforce rules clearly and assertively, using both rewards and corrections as needed. Many balanced trainers use terms like "lead by example" or "be the pack leader," but they may clarify that this doesn't mean bullying the dog – rather it means firm, fair, consistent handling. The dog should see the owner as the decision-maker: for instance, the owner decides when play starts or stops, the owner goes through doorways first (in some interpretations), and the dog should defer to the owner's commands promptly. Leadership here can have a dominance flavor (some balanced trainers do subscribe to mild pack theory ideas), but the better balanced trainers interpret leadership as providing structure and consequences. They want the owner to be neither a doormat nor a tyrant. Practically, this means an owner might practice exercises to reinforce leadership, such as making the dog wait for food, or using leash corrections if the dog tries to take charge on walks. Balanced training still maintains that the owner's authority must be respected by the dog, and corrections may be used to establish that authority. It's a more authoritarian leadership style compared to pure positive, but ideally stops short of the coercion seen in dominance training.

Force-Free Training: Often speaks of the owner as a *caretaker and partner* rather than a "leader" per se. The ethos is relationship-based – building a cooperative bond where the dog trusts the human's guidance. Leadership in force-free circles is sometimes reframed as "leadership through learning" – meaning the human leads by controlling resources and offering guidance, but never through force or fear. A force-free trainer might say the owner should "be your dog's advocate and teacher." This involves understanding the dog's emotional state and not pushing them into situations they can't handle. Rather than demanding respect, the owner earns it by being *predictable, rewarding, and gentle*. Many force-free advocates explicitly reject the concept of dominance hierarchy in dog-human relationships. For example, they often note (citing scientific studies) that dogs know we are not dogs, and thus don't view us in a linear pack hierarchy. Instead, dogs learn who controls valued resources. So a force-free owner will control those resources (like food, toys, social access) to encourage good manners – which is indeed a form of leadership, just not couched in dominance terms. The owner doesn't allow chaos; they still prevent bad behavior (perhaps by management) but they won't physically compel the dog. Choice-based training is a concept here: giving the dog some choices in training (like the choice to engage for a reward, or the choice to take a break) which can paradoxically increase the dog's willingness to follow the owner's lead. In summary, leadership in force-free training is low-key but present – it's about guiding rather than bossing. The owner aims to be the

most interesting thing in the environment so the dog chooses to pay attention and follow cues.

Dominance-Based Training: Puts heavy emphasis on the owner as the *“alpha” or pack leader*. The philosophy assumes dogs are always looking to move up the dominance hierarchy, so the human must maintain a higher rank at all times. Leadership here is very much about control and submission: the dog must acknowledge the human as boss. Practically, this means the owner is encouraged to do things like eat before the dog eats, not allow the dog on furniture (so as not to “elevate” its status), physically position the dog into submissive postures (like alpha rolling them onto their back), and correct any sign of defiance. The owner’s commands are to be obeyed unquestioningly – if the dog disobeys, dominance trainers see it as a challenge to authority that must be met with correction or intimidation. There is little notion of *earning* the dog’s cooperation with rewards; instead, compliance is coerced. The leadership style is authoritarian in the extreme: the dog’s freedom is limited until it “earns” it by showing subservience. Traditional dominance training often advises owners to project confidence and even mild aggression (e.g. using a firm tone, direct staring, using physical force if needed) because they believe dogs interpret that as natural leadership like a top dog in a pack. Any reluctance or softness by the owner is often discouraged, fearing the dog will see it as weakness and attempt to dominate. In short, the dominance model’s idea of leadership is hierarchical and forceful – the human leads by exerting power and the dog is expected to submit and follow.

Use of Corrections and Discipline

Just Behaving: Uses *moderate, controlled corrections* as part of a balanced approach to discipline, but always paired with teaching and redirecting the dog to proper behavior. The term “Just Behaving” itself suggests an expectation that dogs behave appropriately as a norm. To achieve this, the method probably focuses on preventing misbehavior proactively, but when misbehavior occurs, a correction or consequence might be applied in a fair manner. These corrections could be verbal interrupters (like a firm “uh-uh” or “nope”), removal of rewards (negative punishment, such as a interaction time-out or stopping play), or possibly mild physical cues (for example, gently but firmly blocking a dog from jumping). Given the emphasis on positive reinforcement, any punishment used in Just Behaving is likely minimal and never harsh or fear-inducing. They do not use heavy corrections that could cause stress or physical harm. Instead, discipline might be more about setting boundaries (e.g. calm interactions, baby gates, or safe quiet environments to limit the dog’s ability to practice unwanted behaviors) and teaching alternative actions. If a dog does something undesirable, the Just Behaving approach would correct in a way that is instructive rather than purely punitive – for instance, interrupt the behavior then calmly guide the dog to perform a correct behavior and reward that. The goal is to teach the dog what to do, not just punish what not to do.

In summary, Just Behaving's use of corrections is balanced: corrections are present but low-intensity (no shouting, no heavy-handed jerks) and always followed by positive reinforcement for the right behavior. This approach avoids the extremes of being either too permissive or too punitive, striving instead for a sensible middle ground where the dog learns limits without fear.

Positive Reinforcement Training: In pure positive reinforcement ideology, positive punishment (adding something unpleasant) is largely avoided. However, it is a misconception that positive trainers never discipline at all – they often use negative punishment (taking away something the dog wants) as the primary form of correction. For example, if a dog jumps up for attention, a positive trainer might turn away and remove attention (thus the "penalty" for jumping is loss of social interaction). Another example: if a dog plays too roughly, the trainer might yelp and stop the play session briefly, teaching the dog that rough behavior makes fun end (a mild punishment). These are consequences, but not ones that inflict pain or fear. Additionally, many positive trainers will use *interruptor cues* or no-reward markers, such as saying "Oops" or "Eh-eh" in a neutral tone to signal the dog that what it just did won't yield a reward. The key is that force or intimidation is not used. Instead of leash jerks, a positive trainer might simply *stop moving forward* if a dog pulls (negative punishment: the dog wants to advance, but pulling makes the walk stop). Instead of hitting for stealing something, they might trade the item for a treat (avoiding a conflict) and then manage the environment to prevent future thefts. Essentially, positive reinforcement training focuses on reinforcing the good and ignoring or redirecting the bad. If a behavior is self-rewarding (e.g. counter-surfing yields food), the strategy is to prevent it (keep counters clear or supervise with a leash) rather than allow it and punish after the fact. So, discipline exists but is often *indirect or passive*: time-outs, removal of attention, or prevention. Some purely positive trainers even avoid saying "no" at all, preferring to always tell the dog what to do instead. Most, however, will use a mild "no" or "ah-ah" as a cue that the dog made a wrong choice, then guide the dog to a right choice. In terms of physical corrections, mainstream positive training uses none besides maybe gentle leash guidance (not pops) or body blocking to prevent a dog from, say, bolting out a door. There's a strong aversion to any tools like prong or shock collars. The underlying belief is that punishment risks side effects (like fear, aggression, or confusion) sciencedaily.com, so it should be minimized or eliminated in favor of reinforcing alternative behaviors. This aligns with scientific findings that aversive techniques can lead to stress and aggression sciencedaily.com psychdogpartners.org. Therefore, positive reinforcement training's "corrections" are really about *withholding expected rewards or using the absence of reward as feedback*.

Balanced Training: Explicitly incorporates both corrections and rewards. In balanced training, if the dog does something wrong, the trainer will apply a correction that could

be verbal (a sharp “No!”), physical (a leash pop, a tap on the hindquarters, a spray of water), or involve training tools (like a choke chain, prong collar, or e-collar stimulus). The intensity of corrections in balanced training can vary widely – good balanced trainers advocate using the *mildest correction needed* (for example, starting with leash pressure and only escalating if the dog continues to ignore), whereas overly harsh trainers might jump to strong corrections quickly. The idea is to give the dog a clear signal that a behavior is unacceptable, and if the dog complies or stops, then promptly switch back to rewarding the next good choice. Balanced trainers often say they use “all four quadrants” of operant conditioning: positive reinforcement for good behavior, negative punishment to remove rewards for bad, negative reinforcement (e.g. releasing pressure when the dog complies), and positive punishment for misbehavior. For instance, a balanced approach to a dog jumping might be: say “No,” perhaps give a leash correction if on leash, then once the dog is off, ask for a “sit” and reward. There is a corrective component that force-free methods would not use (like that leash pop), but it is followed up with showing the dog the right behavior (sit) and rewarding it – hence the term “balanced.” Balanced training’s use of corrections is meant to be controlled and not abusive; however, the tolerance for aversives is higher than in purely positive schools. This means tools like prong collars or shocks might be considered acceptable if used “properly.” Many balanced trainers attempt to condition the dog to low-level e-collar stimulation such that it’s just a tapping sensation to get the dog’s attention rather than a jolt of pain. Despite these intentions, from the dog’s perspective it is still an aversive stimulus, and research shows even moderate aversives can cause stress (for example, dogs on the receiving end of leash jerks and stern scolding showed more stress panting and avoidance in a study compared to dogs in reward-based training psychdogpartners.org). Balanced training also values timing – giving a correction at the exact moment of the unwanted act, so the dog associates the two. If done well, balanced corrections can interrupt a behavior immediately (like stopping a dog from chasing a squirrel via a quick tug and “leave it” command) and then the dog is praised when it stops. In summary, balanced training uses *discipline as a teaching tool*, believing that some dogs need a firmer line. It neither shies away from punishment nor does it revel in it – ideally, corrections are just another form of communication. The risk is that if misused, these corrections can tip into fear-inducing territory, so balanced trainers need a lot of skill and empathy to ensure they’re not over-correcting or causing unintended associations (e.g. the anecdote of a dog getting a correction while looking at a child and then associating the pain with the child psychdogpartners.org).

Force-Free Training: By definition, avoids all forms of positive punishment and aversive controls. Discipline in force-free training is nearly always through management and negative punishment. If a dog does something inappropriate, a force-free trainer will not physically or verbally punish, but will think “how can I prevent this next time?” and “what can I teach the dog to do instead?” In the moment, they might simply remove the

dog from the situation calmly or remove the reinforcement. For example, for a jumping dog, a force-free response: turn away, or even step out of the room briefly (giving a short social timeout). For a dog pulling on leash: stop walking (so pulling doesn't get the dog anywhere) and only move forward when the leash is slack, possibly use a front-clip harness to mitigate the pulling without jerking. Force-free trainers often make heavy use of reward loops – setting up scenarios where it's easy for the dog to do the right thing and get rewarded, thereby minimizing wrong behavior in the first place. They will rearrange the dog's environment to set the dog up for success (e.g. if the dog is chewing furniture, they will puppy-proof the area and provide chew toys, rather than wait to catch and scold the dog). If a behavior needs to stop, they rely on extinction (removing reinforcement) or redirecting the dog. There's also an emphasis on self-control exercises to teach the dog to control its impulses rather than the handler needing to apply an external correction. One could say that in force-free training, *the absence of a reward is the dog's only indication it did wrong*. Because dogs, like all animals, tend to repeat actions that yield rewards and abandon actions that yield nothing, this can be effective if the trainer is consistent. However, it can sometimes be slower than delivering an immediate punisher, especially if the unwanted behavior is strongly reinforcing in itself (like a dog chasing squirrels finds that inherently rewarding, so just withholding treats might not deter it). Force-free trainers address these cases by increasing the value of rewards for competing behaviors and managing the dog until training takes hold. In short, force-free means no deliberate "corrections". Even a stern "No" is often replaced by ignoring the dog or using a positive interrupter (like making a kissy noise to get the dog's attention, then rewarding coming to you). The lack of corrections is a hallmark that distinguishes force-free from both balanced and dominance methods.

Dominance-Based Training: Uses high levels of correction and even physical intimidation as a routine part of training. Corrections in this style can be quite harsh: leash jerk corrections (sometimes with choke or prong collars) are common for any pulling or disobedience, and even hitting or "alpha rolling" a dog is advocated by some extreme dominance trainers (forcing the dog onto its back in a submissive position). Essentially, any time the dog challenges or disobeys, a dominance-oriented trainer will administer a punishment to reassert dominance. This can include loud vocal corrections (yelling "No!" or growling at the dog), physical manipulations (pinning, scruff shakes sciencedaily.com, neck jabs as seen on certain TV shows), and tools that cause discomfort (shock collars used at higher settings, etc.). They are less concerned with the dog's emotional response except that the dog *should* show submission (ears back, cowering or ceasing the behavior is seen as a success). There is minimal concept of "rewarding" the dog; some dominance trainers may praise a dog that submits properly, but often they consider obedience its own reward (or they fear giving too much praise might spoil the dog). Because of this, positive reinforcement is underutilized in this

method. The dog mostly learns via correction and avoidance of correction. If a dog sits when told, a dominance trainer might just give a neutral “good” or nothing at all, whereas a positive trainer would give a treat. The discipline is often physical: for instance, if a dog growls over a bone, a dominance proponent might take the bone by force and scold the dog (whereas a positive trainer would trade or work on desensitization). The heavy-handed corrections can stop behavior immediately, which is why some owners find it appealing for quick fixes. However, as noted, it comes with high risks. The dominance approach doesn’t differentiate much between types of misbehavior – all are seen as challenges to authority – so even fearful reactions from the dog might be met with more force (which is counterproductive if fear was the cause). In summary, dominance-based training employs frequent and often intense punishment as the main tool for behavior modification. It relies on the dog’s instinct for self-preservation or submission to suppress unwanted actions. The concept of *preventing* misbehavior is less emphasized; instead the dog is allowed to err and then immediately corrected, believing that will teach it not to try that again. This stands in stark contrast to the more humane approaches where preventing rehearsal of bad behavior is key.

Preventive Strategies vs. Reactive Strategies

Just Behaving: Likely puts weight on *prevention of problems* through proper management, early training, and especially adequate socialization (as they explicitly mention) justbehaving.com. By ensuring a dog is well socialized and has a stable routine from puppyhood, Just Behaving aims to prevent fear-based behaviors or chaotic habits from developing. Preventive strategies might include puppy classes, controlled exposure to various stimuli (sights, sounds, other dogs, people) in a positive way, and teaching household rules early on (like what to chew, where to eliminate). A stable daily routine (feeding, exercise, play at consistent times) can prevent issues like anxiety or nuisance behaviors stemming from boredom or uncertainty. In training sessions, Just Behaving trainers would proactively set the dog up to succeed: for example, they might exercise a high-energy dog before expecting it to hold a long sit-stay, thus preventing failure due to pent-up energy. They likely use management tools akin to other positive-based methods (leashes, crates, baby gates) to prevent the dog from self-rewarding for bad behavior. However, since Just Behaving isn’t strictly force-free, if prevention fails and the dog misbehaves, they will react with a correction as discussed. But overall, prevention is key: *“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”* could be a motto here. This might extend to preventing over-stimulation — e.g. not revving the dog up beyond what it can handle, or preventing a dog from practicing impulse-control failures. Additionally, the vet collaboration suggests preventing behavior issues by addressing medical causes (like treating a dog’s thyroid issue that could be affecting mood, or ensuring adequate exercise to prevent hyperactivity). So, Just Behaving tends to be

proactive: shape the environment and routine so the dog has fewer opportunities to err, and teach desirable behaviors early.

Positive Reinforcement: Highly emphasizes preventing unwanted behavior rather than punishing it after the fact. Positive trainers often talk about “management” as a critical component. This means controlling the dog’s environment to block access to triggers or temptations during the learning phase. For instance, to house-train a puppy, they prevent accidents by using a crate and frequent potty breaks instead of punishing indoor elimination. To stop a dog from chewing shoes, they keep shoes out of reach and supply chew toys. This way, the dog never learns to enjoy shoe-chewing in the first place. Prevention goes hand-in-hand with redirection: if a dog starts to do something undesirable, the trainer quickly redirects the dog to a better behavior and rewards it. The focus is on setting the dog up for success. By heavily reinforcing the good behaviors, those become the dog’s habit, effectively crowding out the bad behaviors. Positive trainers also invest in early training of cues (sit, come, leave it) so that they have tools to ask for an alternate behavior if needed. For example, if a dog is about to lunge at a skateboard, a trainer who has practiced focus exercises will preemptively call the dog’s name and reward attention, preventing the lunge. Compared to more reactive methods, positive training might seem like it requires more forethought (and it does – the human must be proactive). The benefit is fewer instances where one needs to discipline because the dog doesn’t get to repeatedly reinforce itself for doing the wrong thing. In group classes, positive instructors often literally partition dogs or use visual barriers to prevent fights or excessive distraction while dogs are learning, again reflecting the preventive mindset. Essentially, **positive reinforcement training tries to make undesirable behaviors difficult or unrewarding, and desirable behaviors easy and rewarding. This stands in contrast to traditional approaches that might let the dog misbehave then respond with a correction. A hallmark of positive training is also impulse control exercises as prevention – teaching a dog to wait, leave food, settle on a mat, etc., which prevents problems like bolting out doors or snatching food from counters because the dog has learned self-restraint in those scenarios.

Balanced Training: Uses a mix of preventive and reactive strategies. Balanced trainers certainly do use management (it’s a basic part of any training to not leave a dog unsupervised to get in trouble) and they also teach alternate behaviors. However, balanced training is generally a bit more permissive of letting the dog make mistakes compared to purely positive, because the philosophy allows for correcting those mistakes. So a balanced trainer might give a dog more leash in an early session to see if it will pull, then issue a correction when it does – their reasoning is the dog learns pulling causes discomfort and thus should stop. A purely positive trainer might not have allowed the dog to hit the end of the leash in the first place (by luring the dog to stay close with treats, or using a no-pull harness). Balanced methods thus combine

prevention with correction. For example, with a known garbage-raiding dog, a balanced owner might both secure the trash can (prevention) *and* put a shock collar on the dog so if it somehow tries to raid, they can remotely correct it (reaction). Balanced trainers do value teaching alternate behaviors too – they aren't simply waiting to correct. They might teach a "place" command (go to bed) to prevent a dog from door dashing when guests come, for instance. But if the dog breaks from its place, they will enforce it (maybe by gently guiding back, or using a training collar). Another example: to prevent jumping, a balanced trainer might use both management (leash the dog when guests arrive to control it), *and* correct attempts to jump via a leash tug or body block, then reward when four paws are on the ground. So prevention is used but not relied on exclusively; it's often backed up by the knowledge that if the dog breaches the management, there's a consequence. Balanced training tends to allow more "trial and error" from the dog. The dog is allowed to choose wrong, then corrected, then shown right. This can be a faster way for some dogs to learn boundaries, but if overdone it can also confuse the dog. Balanced practitioners ideally catch the dog *in the act* of a mistake (timing is vital) to immediately associate the correction. If correction is guaranteed, over time the dog is prevented from doing the behavior simply because it knows the outcome will be unpleasant – effectively, the undesirable behavior is extinguished because the dog self-prevents to avoid punishment. In summary, balanced training straddles both worlds: it does use prevention and teaching of good habits, but it also deliberately lets the dog experience the consequences of bad choices under controlled conditions, aiming to deter future attempts.

Force-Free Training: Relies almost entirely on prevention and redirection, as mentioned. It is essentially the same as positive reinforcement in this regard, perhaps even more stringent. A force-free trainer might go to great lengths to avoid the dog ever rehearsing an unwanted behavior. This could include strategies like constant supervision, use of tethering (keeping the dog leashed to the trainer at home to monitor behaviors), or carefully controlled setups to slowly expose the dog to temptations with high rates of reinforcement for resisting. If a dog is reactive, a force-free trainer will work sub-threshold (distance at which the dog can notice a trigger without reacting) and prevent any outburst, rather than allowing an outburst and then correcting. This requires planning but is highly effective in behavior modification: each successful non-reaction builds the habit of staying calm, whereas each reactive episode would set back training. In force-free puppy training, you'll see a heavy emphasis on puppy-proofing and shaping behaviors (like automatically sitting for greetings, which prevents jumping from ever becoming a habit). They also advocate *enrichment and exercise* as prevention – a well-exercised, mentally stimulated dog is less likely to engage in destructive behaviors out of boredom. If something goes wrong despite their best efforts, the response is to adjust the management further. For instance, if a dog managed to jump a fence and chase a cat, a force-free approach might be: install a taller fence or keep the dog on a

long line; then work on teaching recall or focus around cats at a safe distance. Reactively, a force-free trainer doesn't have much besides removing the dog from the situation (which is itself a form of negative punishment if the dog was enjoying something, or just damage control). This approach demands consistency from the human but tends to produce dogs who *don't know any other way* than the right way, since they were rarely or never allowed to practice the wrong way. A possible downside is if the owner becomes lax – the dog might then start testing those untrained scenarios (since it was always managed, it never learned through failure). Thus, force-free trainers emphasize proofing behaviors (gradually reducing management once the dog has learned, to test if the dog can handle more freedom) to ensure the training holds in real life. Summarily, force-free training's strategy is almost entirely proactive and preventive; any reaction after a mistake is gentle (perhaps just redirecting the dog or ignoring the misstep) and then refocusing on how to prevent it next time.

Dominance-Based Training: Largely reactive rather than preventive. The traditional dominance approach doesn't put as much thought into preventing the dog from doing wrong; rather, it waits for the dog to "challenge" and then corrects. In fact, some dominance trainers might intentionally provoke the dog to test its response (for example, taking a food bowl away to see if the dog growls, and if it does, they correct harshly to "show who's boss"). They often don't use management tools like baby gates or crates to prevent mischief, except maybe confining a dog when unsupervised as a general rule. The attitude can be that the dog must learn not to do things through consequences, not through avoidance. For instance, they might leave the trash can accessible and if the dog knocks it over, punish the dog after (or even rub its nose in it, an old-school and discredited practice). This is obviously not ideal from a humane or scientific standpoint, as it creates a lot of possibility for the dog to self-reward and then face punishment too late (leading to confusion or fear). Dominance trainers also don't emphasize slow introductions or careful socialization as much; some might even throw a puppy into chaotic situations believing it needs to "submit" and learn its place – an approach that can lead to long-term fear. Another aspect is that dominance-based handlers often believe the dog should adapt to the owner's lifestyle without much compromise; they are less likely to dog-proof the house or adjust their routine for the dog. Instead, the dog must adjust or face correction. The result is a training style that focuses on correcting mistakes rather than preventing them. This reactive nature is one reason issues persist: the dog might repeatedly do something (like jump on guests) and get punished each time, but because no alternative was strongly taught and no management was used (e.g. leashing the dog when guests arrive), the cycle repeats. In contrast, a preventive approach would break that cycle early. In summary, dominance-based training is far more reactive, relying on dominance and punishment to handle problems as they come. Prevention is minimal beyond exerting physical control (like keeping a dog on a short leash or in a heel to control it in public). It's a less efficient and

more conflict-driven way to train, which is why modern trainers have largely moved away from it.

Reinforcement and Reward Techniques

Just Behaving: Incorporates positive reinforcement as a core technique. However, it balances rewards with other forms of feedback so that the dog does not become *overly reliant on treats*. The reinforcement strategy may involve using treats and praise to teach new behaviors, but also phasing to more intrinsic rewards (like praise, play, or freedom) to ensure the dog listens even when not hungry or when no treat is visible. Because Just Behaving stresses impulse control and structured leadership, they encourage owners to not constantly bribe the dog, but rather to reward when the dog genuinely earns it. For example, instead of giving a treat to lure a dog off the couch (bribery), a Just Behaving trainer might teach the cue “Off” and reward the dog after it complies (so the reward comes *after* the obeying, making it a true reinforcement). There is likely use of life rewards – allowing the dog something it wants (going outside, greeting a person) as a reward for good behavior. By collaborating with veterinarians and behavioral science, they also understand the importance of keeping a dog motivated in healthy ways (perhaps adjusting diet so treats can be used without weight gain, or using appropriate reward types for a particular dog’s preference, whether food, toy, or affection). Just Behaving encourages *praise and petting* as part of reinforcement, to build a bond (many balanced approaches emphasize that praise should be heartfelt and the dog should appreciate it, not just rely on food). Additionally, given the holistic vibe, they use calm reinforcement (rewarding the dog for relaxed behavior, which is sometimes overlooked in pure positive training that can inadvertently hype a dog up). For example, quietly feeding a treat to a dog lying quietly at one’s feet – reinforcing calmness, which in turn helps emotional regulation. So, the reinforcement style is reward-based but strategic: use rewards generously to instill behaviors, but vary them and phase them so the dog isn’t working only for food every time. They probably also counsel owners on fading out continuous rewards to intermittent schedules to strengthen long-term behavior (this is standard operant conditioning practice). In summary, Just Behaving uses rewards to motivate and teach, similar to positive training, but ensures that treat use is thoughtfully managed to avoid over-stimulation or dependency. The presence of structured leadership means the dog sometimes has to comply first, then earns a reward, as opposed to being coaxed with a visible treat every time.

Positive Reinforcement: Relies heavily on tangible rewards (like treats, toys) and positive interactions (praise, play) to encourage desired behaviors. The technique often starts with *continuous reinforcement* for new commands: every correct response gets a reward, to clearly mark the behavior as good. Clicker training is a popular subset, using a click sound to precisely mark the moment the dog does right, followed by a treat. Food

is a primary reinforcer for most dogs and is used extensively because it's quick to deliver and most dogs find it highly motivating. However, good positive trainers will expand the dog's "reward menu" to include toys, fetch, tug, belly rubs, access to sniffing, and more, depending on what the dog loves. The idea is to keep training fun and engaging. Over time, they move to variable reinforcement schedules: once a behavior is learned, not every instance is rewarded, only some, to strengthen the behavior (because unpredictability of reward can make behaviors very resistant to extinction). Positive training also uses something called the Premack Principle, using a more probable behavior as a reward for a less probable one (e.g. dog sits, then gets to chase a ball; here chasing, which the dog loves, reinforces the sit which is less inherently fun for the dog). Treat dependency is a concern often raised, but as discussed, it's mitigated by proper technique: phasing out visible lures quickly and only rewarding after the behavior. The science shows that dogs trained with rewards do not show less obedience once rewards are phased down – in fact, they often show more obedience compared to punishment-trained dogs psychdogpartners.org. A key difference in positive reinforcement style is the enthusiasm and frequency of reward: training sessions are filled with happy voices, praise, and treats. This can raise the dog's excitement level (which can be good for motivation but needs channeling for calm behaviors). Reinforcement is not only for commands, but also freely given for any spontaneous good behavior (catching the dog being good). For example, if a dog lies quietly, a positive trainer might toss a treat or verbally praise to reinforce it – thereby shaping a well-mannered dog via rewards. If a dog makes an effort, even if not perfect, it's often rewarded in early stages to encourage trying (a concept called "approximations" in shaping). Overall, the reinforcement approach is systematic and generous: make the dog see that doing what the owner wants leads to all the good things in life. By heavily reinforcing, the dog's attitude becomes "How can I earn something good?" rather than "How can I avoid something bad?" – which tends to produce a more eager, optimistic learner.

Balanced Training: Uses both positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement (relief from pressure) as rewards. Balanced trainers absolutely use treats, praise, and toys – they are not averse to rewarding the dog. In fact, many skilled balanced trainers may look very similar to positive trainers when teaching a new behavior: luring with food, clicking and treating, etc. The difference comes after the dog *knows* the behavior. Balanced training will introduce corrections for non-compliance, and concurrently, the removal of those corrections or pressure is itself a form of reinforcement. For example, teaching "heel": a balanced trainer might walk with the dog, give a small leash correction when the dog forges ahead (pressure), and when the dog comes back to position, immediately slacken the leash and perhaps praise (the relief from leash pressure reinforces staying in position, plus maybe a treat intermittently). So the dog is reinforced both by gaining rewards for compliance and avoiding/ending discomfort by

complying. This is the classic “carrot and stick” approach. The carrot (treats, praise) is used liberally for good performance, especially in early learning. The stick (punishment) comes out as a possibility if the dog ignores or challenges once it knows better. Balanced trainers might argue this makes the reinforcement more meaningful – because the difference between being right (gets a reward, no correction) and being wrong (gets a correction) is stark, the dog learns precisely. They do reinforce good behavior frequently, but they might not eliminate the reward gradually as much as a purely positive trainer, because they want the dog to have continued incentive plus the insurance of consequences. In practice, many balanced trainers heavily praise and play with their dogs; the dogs can be very motivated as they get the best of both worlds (to the dog, it's clear when they did right and they get something nice, and it's clear when they did wrong and that feeling stops when they fix it). Some balanced approaches incorporate marker training like clickers as well – being “balanced” doesn’t exclude any positive techniques, it just includes correction tools too. However, one difference is that balanced trainers may be less concerned if a reward is not immediately forthcoming every time – because the dog also has the motivator of avoiding correction. For example, once a dog is trained, a balanced trainer might rarely use treats in real-life commands – the dog sits when told partly from habit and partly because if it doesn’t, it anticipates the owner might enforce the sit (with a command pressure or mild punishment). So the dog’s reinforcement is partly *internal (avoid correction)*. A risk is that if the dog is mostly working to avoid something, the *joy* in compliance might be less; balanced trainers try to maintain a balance by still rewarding enough that the dog likes to work. Many will give occasional treats “to keep the dog honest” or use play as a reward after a sequence of obedience. In summary, balanced training’s reinforcement strategy is dual: reward the dog for compliance, but also ensure non-compliance has a consequence such that the absence of that consequence is reinforcing. There is usually plenty of positive reinforcement during teaching phases, and continued praise afterward, but perhaps fewer random treats long-term compared to a pure positive handler (since the dog is kept obedient also by a bit of accountability).

Force-Free Training: Essentially identical to positive reinforcement training in terms of reward use. The only nuance is that force-free trainers might be even *more creative* or particular about finding what truly motivates the dog, since they refuse to use any force. They might focus on *consent-based* or *cooperative* reinforcement – for example, using a start button behavior where the dog signals it's ready to train, then is reinforced, giving the dog control which itself is rewarding. But by and large, force-free means 100% of the intentional consequences for correct behavior are positive (treats, praise, etc.), and 0% of intentional consequences for wrong behavior are aversive. Reinforcement is often very high-rate in the beginning. Many force-free trainers continue to carry treats or rewards for much longer or even indefinitely in some situations, reasoning that *real life doesn’t always provide sufficient reinforcement, so why not continue to pay the dog for*

good behavior? For example, some might always have treats on walks to reward a dog for checking in or heeling nicely, even years down the line – not because the dog won't do it without, but because it strengthens the habit and costs little. This approach can lead to extremely responsive dogs, although some critics say the dog is "always expecting food." Force-free trainers counter that the dog is working happily, which is the goal, and occasional rewards maintain that happiness. As with positive reinforcement, variety of rewards is used – food, play, real-life rewards, etc. A specific technique in force-free circles is *marker training* (like clicker training) to pinpoint good behavior and promise a reward. Also, force-free training often involves reward-based counterconditioning for behavioral issues: e.g., giving treats in presence of something scary to change the dog's emotional response. This emphasis on emotional well-being is a bit beyond simple operant conditioning and is a hallmark of force-free behavior modification. So reinforcement is not only used to train commands but also to change feelings (like associating other dogs with yummy treats to reduce reactivity). The bottom line is, *reinforcement is the sole tool to increase behaviors* in force-free training, so they become masters at using it effectively. They may schedule rewards intelligently, jackpot occasionally for a particularly good response (give a big bonus reward), and keep training upbeat and game-like.

Dominance-Based Training: Generally minimizes overt positive reinforcement. Traditional dominance trainers might consider giving treats for obedience as unnecessary or even counter-productive ("the dog should obey out of respect, not because of a cookie"). Some will use praise, but often in a lukewarm way. For example, after a correction, once the dog complies or shows submission, the trainer might say "Good" in a calm tone or give a pat. But high-value treats or excited praise are rare, as these trainers sometimes believe too much praise could make the dog "dominant" or that the dog might interpret it as the owner becoming lower status (these notions are not supported by science, but they persist in that mindset). There's also a concern in dominance training that if you use treats, the dog will think it's in control ("I'll only do it for food"), which they want to avoid by making obedience mandatory and independent of rewards. So the reinforcement in dominance training is mostly negative reinforcement – the dog obeys to avoid or stop the correction/presence of threat. For instance, the reward for a dog that heals properly in dominance training is simply that it is not being jerked on the leash at that moment. If the dog sits when told, its "reward" is it doesn't get yelled at. This is a bleak way from the dog's perspective, because there's an absence of positive feedback. Some dominance trainers will occasionally praise the dog in a stiff manner ("good dog" while the dog lies down submissively), but the dog might find even that praise ambiguous if the overall relationship is tense. In certain traditional settings (like old guard military training), dogs might get a treat at the very end of a session or a play with a ball, but only after a lot of drill, not as an immediate reinforcement. The result is dogs that work primarily out of compulsion. They may perform reliably when they

believe a correction is possible, but the *joy* and willingness can be low. Research supports that reward-based methods yield at least equal if not better learning results than coercive methods caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu, and that dogs show more stress and less attentiveness under aversive training psychdogpartners.org. In dominance-based protocols, reinforcement is underutilized, which often leads to slower learning (because the dog is not as clearly shown what *to* do, only what *not* to do) and less stable learning (behaviors learned under duress don't generalize as well to new contexts without the duress). Modern trainers would say dominance trainers miss out on the power of *motivating a dog's mind*; instead they rely on controlling the dog's body. A classical example is recall training: a dominance/compulsion approach might use a long line and force the dog to come by reeling or popping it, whereas a positive approach uses tasty treats or play to entice the dog to come willingly. Studies have shown that even for something like recall, using shock collars did not outperform reward training frontiersin.org – meaning the carrot was as good as or better than the stick for teaching this skill. Dominance-based methods, by neglecting the carrot, rely solely on the stick, which in the long run can undermine the dog's enthusiasm to obey when it thinks it can evade the stick.

Having examined these philosophical and technical differences, we can summarize the characteristics of each training model.

The table below outlines key aspects of leadership, use of corrections, preventive approach, and reinforcement style for Just Behaving and the other methodologies:

Aspect	**Just Behaving (JB)**	**Positive Reinforcement (R+ Mainstream)**	**Balanced Training**	**Force-Free Training**	**Dominance-Based Training**
Owner Leadership	Structured, calm leadership; owner as consistent guide and teacher; sets clear rules with mutual trust (not fear).	Benevolent guide/partner; builds trust; no emphasis on rank, owner leads by providing rewards and clarity.	Confident leader/"alpha" lite; firm and fair; owner asserts authority with both kindness and discipline.	Caretaker/partner; emphasizes trust and understanding; owner guides without force, often avoids "dominance" language.	Authoritarian "alpha"; strict hierarchy enforced; owner must dominate and dog expected to submit to authority.

Use of Corrections	Mild, instructional corrections used if needed (verbal “no,” gentle leash guidance, time-outs); no harsh punishment; always paired with teaching the correct behavior.	Avoids positive punishment; uses negative punishment (e.g. ignore or time-out) for bad behavior; may use “no” or interrupter but no physical force.	Uses both verbal and physical corrections (leash pops, etc.) appropriately; intensity scaled to situation; corrections follow misbehavior, then redirect to correct action.	No aversive corrections at all; relies on management and redirection; undesired behaviors are not punished but prevented or ignored to extinguish.	Frequent and high-intensity corrections (yelling, leash jerks, physical force) for any disobedience; punishment is primary tool to stop unwanted behavior.
Preventive Strategy	Proactive management (socialization, routine, environment setup) to prevent issues; addresses root causes (including health factors) to head off problems.	Strongly proactive: manages environment to prevent mistakes; teaches alternate behaviors early; “set up for success” approach.	Combination: uses management but also allows some mistakes to correct and teach; prevents when practical but ready to intervene with correction if needed.	Highly preventive: exhaustive management to avoid unwanted behavior; gradual exposure to triggers; focuses on avoiding any rehearsal of bad behavior.	Largely reactive: minimal prevention; dog often allowed to err then is punished; expects dog to adapt without special management, intervenes after misbehavior.
Reinforcement Style	Reward-focused (treats,	Heavy use of treats, praise, toys as	Uses rewards and praise	100% positive reinforcement for training	Sparse positive reinforceme

	praise) to teach and reinforce good behavior, but avoids over-reliance on treats; uses praise/affection and life rewards; reinforces calmness and impulse control.	rewards for desired behavior; high rate of reinforcement during learning; gradually moves to intermittent rewards; training is made fun and rewarding for the dog.	generously when dog is correct, but also negative reinforcement (dog avoids correction by complying); "carrot and stick" – good behavior yields treats/praise, bad behavior stopped by correction; rewards may be phased out more once behavior is reliable under threat of correction.	behaviors and changing emotions; very frequent rewards to motivate dog; uses variety of high-value reinforcers; maintains some rewards long-term to keep behavior strong; no reliance on any discomfort to motivate.	nt; expects obedience without "bribes"; may give minimal praise or relief from pressure as the only reward; dog's main motivation is avoiding punishment rather than earning rewards.

Table 1: Comparison of Training Philosophies and Techniques across methodologies (Leadership style, Corrections, Prevention, and Reinforcement).

Psychological and Emotional Effects on Dogs

Different training methods can have profound effects on a dog's stress levels, emotional well-being, and the relationship of trust between dog and owner. In this section, we compare how each approach influences a dog's psyche: do they foster confidence or anxiety? How do they affect impulse control and the dog's ability to handle excitement or frustration (emotional regulation)? We also examine issues like over-stimulation, treat

dependency (an often-mentioned concern), and how a sense of structured leadership can impact a dog's sense of security. Scientific measures of stress (e.g. body language, cortisol levels) and studies on attachment and resilience will be cited to illustrate these emotional outcomes.

Stress and Anxiety: Reward-based methods (Just Behaving, Positive, Force-Free) tend to produce **lower stress** during training, whereas aversive methods (harsh Balanced or Dominance) often elevate stress. Studies have documented clear differences in dogs' body language and physiological stress indicators when comparing these approaches. Dogs trained with aversive tools show many stress-related behaviors during training: tense body posture, lip-licking, yawning, panting, cowering, yelping, tail tucked psychdogpartners.org. In contrast, dogs in reward-based training are generally more relaxed or even excited-happy, showing attentiveness and engagement rather than fear psychdogpartners.org. For example, Deldalle & Gaunet (2014) observed dogs in a traditional obedience class (using leash corrections) versus a positive reinforcement class. The dogs in the aversive class showed significantly more stress signals (ears back, lip lick, etc.) and gazed less at their owners, indicating lower trust or more anxiety, while dogs in the positive class were more relaxed and focused on their handlers psychdogpartners.org. Elevated cortisol (stress hormone) levels have also been associated with aversive training. One study found that dogs in a shock-collar training group had higher cortisol in saliva right after training compared to those in reward training journals.plos.org journals.plos.org, although not all cortisol differences are statistically significant across studies. Behaviorally, however, the evidence of stress is consistent. Dominance-based training, in particular, is stressful for dogs. Being subjected to intimidation, the dog may live in a state of chronic stress, always anticipating the next correction. This can lead to what's called learned helplessness: the dog shuts down and stops offering behaviors at all, a coping mechanism when it feels it has no control to avoid punishment. On the flip side, force-free and positive training generally reduce fear and anxiety. Dogs come to see training and interactions with the owner as positive and safe. Over time, this builds emotional resilience – a dog that trusts its handler is less likely to panic or become anxious in new situations, because its prior experiences have been positive. A concrete example is in shelter dogs: those who undergo clicker training and gentle handling in shelters show more optimistic behavior and are less likely to develop anxiety-related behaviors than those who experience harsh handling. Even balanced training if done moderately can be more stressful than purely positive methods. Balanced dogs might experience confusion – sometimes they get treats, other times a correction; this inconsistency can cause uncertainty, which is a mild stressor. However, if balanced training is skewed toward mostly positive with rare mild corrections, many dogs cope fine, especially confident, even-tempered individuals. But sensitive dogs under balanced training often exhibit stress responses (like submissive urination, appeasement gestures) indicating that the corrections are

impacting them emotionally. Just Behaving, by prioritizing a stable routine and possibly integrating calming techniques, likely helps keep a dog's stress low. Structured leadership can actually reduce anxiety if done kindly – dogs do well when they know the rules and can predict their owner's reactions. The collaboration with vets suggests they may even measure or consider stress markers in the dog and adjust accordingly (for example, using calming supplements or pheromones if needed to keep a dog's stress manageable during training). In summary, from a stress perspective, force-free and positive methods are the least stressful and are associated with positive emotional states, whereas heavy-handed dominance methods create the most stress and fear. Balanced methods lie in between, leaning one way or the other depending on how much they utilize aversives. Just Behaving, being largely positive and structured, leans toward the low-stress end of the spectrum – indeed one could say its goal is a *well-adjusted, stress-free dog*.

Trust and the Human-Dog Bond: The training approach directly influences how much a dog trusts its owner and views the owner as a source of security or fear. Reward-based training strengthens the bond and trust. The dog learns that the owner is a predictable source of good things, guidance, and safety. When challenges arise, a dog that trusts its owner will often look to the owner for cues (this was seen in attachment tests; see below). One study using the Ainsworth Strange Situation Test (a test originally for human infants' attachment) found that dogs trained with reward-based methods showed a stronger "secure base" effect with their owners – they were more willing to explore an unfamiliar room and more playful when their owner was present, indicating they see the owner as a secure base companionanimalpsychology.com companionanimalpsychology.com. In contrast, dogs from aversive training schools did *not* show this secure base effect – they were more anxious and did not use their owner as confidently for support companionanimalpsychology.com. The researchers suggested that it's the aversive training that is linked to the absence of secure attachment, rather than reward training magically increasing attachment companionanimalpsychology.com. In plainer terms, harsh training can undermine the dog's natural bond with the owner. A dog might love its owner but still be afraid of them. Anecdotally, many trainers have witnessed formerly dominance-trained dogs blossom and show more affectionate, trusting behaviors once switched to gentle methods – they dare to make eye contact and seek guidance rather than shy away. Dominance training often damages trust: the dog learns the owner may cause pain or fear at any moment, so the dog may become wary. It might still obey (out of fear), but it's not a healthy trust. In some cases, dogs end up with a form of Stockholm syndrome – they stick close to the owner but are constantly appeasing, not truly trusting. On the extreme end, if trust breaks completely, the dog might try to avoid the owner or might act aggressively if it anticipates a punishment. A common scenario is a dog that runs away or cowers when called because it expects to be punished – clearly indicating a breakdown in the recall

command's positivity. Force-free training, conversely, actively builds trust. One could argue that trust is the currency of force-free methods: the dog trusts that if it tries, it won't be hurt or scared, and that the owner will help it succeed. This encourages dogs to offer behaviors and communicate more. Force-free trained dogs often feel safe to show when they're uncomfortable (since they won't be punished for growling, for example), which actually can increase safety as the owner can respond to the warning. The human-animal bond is typically strongest when the dog feels secure, and positive interactions outweigh negative. As noted by many, *"dogs don't follow leaders who intimidate them; they follow those who inspire and reward them."* Scientific backing for the bond effect comes from measures like oxytocin levels (the bonding hormone) which tend to rise during positive petting and play, and likely during positive training sessions (though specific studies on training and oxytocin are emerging). Just Behaving's approach fosters trust by combining positive reinforcement with consistency. The dog learns it can rely on its owner for both fun and leadership. Since vets are involved, trust might also extend to handling – the dog is perhaps gently habituated to being handled (for grooming or vet exams) which can improve trust in humans touching them. Provided any corrections used in Just Behaving are mild, they are unlikely to significantly erode trust, especially since the dog is also getting a lot of positive feedback and care. We can reasonably say that Just Behaving aims for the dog to view the owner as both loving and worth listening to – the ideal bond where the dog is both affectionate and obedient because it trusts and respects the owner.

Impulse Control and Over-Stimulation: A well-known challenge in dog behavior is teaching the dog to control impulses (not snatch food, not jump immediately on people, wait when asked, etc.). Training methods differ in *how* they instill impulse control. Positive/force-free methods teach impulse control via gradual training exercises – e.g., "leave it" (dog is rewarded for refraining from taking a treat until allowed), "stay" for increasing durations, or "settle on a mat" for calmness. This approach builds the dog's *internal ability* to tolerate frustration and delay gratification because doing so leads to rewards. It's akin to teaching a child patience by reinforcing waiting behavior. This internally strengthens the dog's emotional regulation. Over time, a dog practiced in this will be less likely to, say, bolt out the door as soon as it's cracked open, because it has a history of being reinforced for waiting. Balanced training might teach impulse control by a combination of the above and corrections for lunging at food or breaking a stay. For example, a balanced trainer may physically correct a dog that tries to grab a treat without permission, whereas a positive trainer would simply cover the treat and not let the dog get it (negative punishment) and then reward when the dog backs off. Both can result in the dog learning not to grab, but the emotional fallout differs. The positive-trained dog in this scenario might feel a bit frustrated but then happy when it earns the treat; the corrected dog might feel intimidated from trying to grab at all. This could make it refrain, but possibly out of fear of punishment rather than true self-control.

Dominance-based impulse control is often about the dog being *afraid to break a command*. If a dominance trainer says “stay,” the dog stays put mainly because it knows if it moves, something bad happens. While this technically controls impulse, it doesn’t necessarily teach the dog how to cope with excitement or temptation calmly; it’s suppression rather than true self-regulation. Also, dominance training rarely uses games to build impulse control; it’s more command-and-enforce. Over-stimulation is handled by dominance trainers often through flooding or forcing the dog to endure – not an ideal method, as it can backfire or cause shutdown.

Over-stimulation (when a dog becomes overly excited, aroused, and perhaps uncontrollable in the moment) can occur in any training if not managed, but the approaches treat it differently. In positive training, one must be cautious not to *rile the dog up too much* unless that energy is channeled (like in agility, high excitement is fine if controlled). Good trainers watch for signs of a dog getting overly aroused (loss of focus, frenetic behavior) and might take a break or use calming exercises. However, some inexperienced trainers, in an effort to be super positive, might inadvertently encourage over-arousal by constantly using excited voices, continuous treats, or play without rules. This could lead to a dog that is *always “keyed up”* expecting treats or play – an outcome that is not intended. This is where Just Behaving differentiates itself: it emphasizes reinforcing *calm* behavior and having structure, thereby avoiding the trap of an over-stimulated dog that many treat-only novices end up with. Structured leadership inherently has a calming effect – the dog isn’t making all its own decisions or getting worked up trying to demand rewards; it knows to be patient. Treat dependency ties into impulse control: a “treat-dependent” dog might impulsively refuse commands if it doesn’t see a treat. However, that’s usually a training mechanics issue (the owner inadvertently taught the dog a treat is part of the cue by always showing it up front). Proper positive training avoids that by using treats as a reward, not a bribe. Balanced and dominance trainers often critique treat training for creating demanding or bratty dogs – and indeed if someone mistakenly *bribes* (shows treat to dog to coax it each time), the dog might learn to only come when it sees a treat. The solution is straightforward: switch to a reward-after system and randomize rewards. Once that’s done, studies show reward-trained dogs obey well without seeing a reward every time psychdogpartners.org. So treat dependency is not an inherent outcome of positive training, but rather of poor execution. Force-free trainers actively work to avoid treat dependency by phasing out lures early and teaching dogs to work with delayed gratification. Additionally, they incorporate functional rewards (like permission to sniff or play) so the dog isn’t only reliant on food.

Structured leadership’s impact on emotional regulation: Many dogs, like many humans, thrive on structure. Knowing boundaries and routines can make a dog feel secure, which in turn helps it stay calm. A lack of guidance can actually be stressful –

dogs might become anxious or pushy if they don't understand the rules. So a method like Just Behaving, which encourages a strong leadership presence (in a positive way), can increase a dog's sense of security. The dog learns, for instance, that it must wait for an "OK" to do certain things (like exit a car or eat its meal); initially this is training, but it becomes an ingrained habit that helps the dog practice self-control daily. That kind of daily ritual is fantastic for emotional regulation because it normalizes *waiting calmly*. Dominance-based leadership is also very structured, but because it's enforced by fear, the emotional state during waiting might be one of stress ("I better not move or I'll get in trouble") rather than calm. Whereas in Just Behaving or positive frameworks, the dog's internal state while waiting is more likely anticipation ("If I wait, good stuff comes"). This distinction in emotional valence is huge for welfare: anticipation of reward tends to produce positive excitement (with maybe a little frustration if the wait is long, but overall hopeful), whereas anticipation of punishment produces nervous inhibition (the dog is holding back out of fear). Over time, one yields a dog that is calm but happy, the other yields a dog that is calm but perhaps anxious or overly subdued.

Emotional resilience and adaptability: Dogs trained with positive, gentle methods often develop better coping skills. They are used to being in a positive emotional state during training, which can carry over to facing new challenges. For example, a dog that has been taught via positive methods might, when confronted with a sudden novel event (like an umbrella opening), recover quickly or even investigate, expecting that novel things aren't scary (maybe it remembers getting treats around strange objects). Conversely, a dog that has been trained with a lot of punishment might become neophobic (afraid of new things) because it has learned that unexpected events or mistakes can lead to unpleasant outcomes. This can make them less adaptable – they might freeze or react poorly to changes in environment or routine. A study by Vieira de Castro et al. (2019) found that dogs from aversive training schools showed signs of a pessimistic cognitive bias – in a cognitive test, they were less likely to approach an ambiguous stimulus (like a halfway-between food bowl location) than dogs from reward-based schools, suggesting they expect bad outcomes or are more cautious companionanimalpsychology.com companionanimalpsychology.com. In plain terms, dogs trained with aversives may assume something bad will happen in uncertain situations, whereas dogs from reward backgrounds are more optimistic, thinking something good or neutral will happen. Emotional resilience is also seen in how dogs handle setbacks or corrections. A dog that's only experienced positive reinforcement might initially be quite sensitive to a sudden correction or harsh word – it might be startled or upset if it happens. However, since its overall relationship with the owner is strong, usually it can bounce back if the owner returns to positive interactions (this is not to say one should introduce harshness; just an observation that these dogs trust their owner enough to recover). Balanced-trained dogs, if the balance is good, can also be resilient – they experience a mix of positive and negative, so they might take a scolding

in stride and keep working (some high-drive working dogs are like this). But in cases where training skews aversive, dogs often either shut down or blow up under pressure, indicating poor emotional resilience. Think of a dog at a competition who misses a cue; a positively trained dog might just try again happily (because mistakes aren't scary), whereas a harshly trained dog might panic or refuse to continue (fear of having failed). Adaptability refers to how well a dog can generalize its training to new settings and handle new social situations. Dogs trained with a lot of positive reinforcement are often more socially outgoing and adaptable because they have positive associations with training and likely with people (since they've been rewarded by many people perhaps). Dominance-trained dogs might behave in their familiar environment but could be unpredictable or fearful in a new environment, because the context (and the presence of the "alpha" figure) changed. Service dogs, who must be supremely adaptable, are overwhelmingly trained with modern positive methods for this reason – a service dog needs to be confident and unflappable, which comes from a foundation of trust and positive experiences.

Over-stimulation is another aspect: If training sessions are too exciting, some dogs (especially young, high-energy ones) can become hyperactive or lose focus. *Positive training can sometimes lead to this if not tempered* – for instance, a trainer using a high-pitched rapid-fire delivery of treats might get a dog so amped up that it starts zooming or can't hold a sit. Good trainers modulate the level of excitement: for calm behaviors, they use calm praise and slower treat delivery; for active behaviors (like agility or tricks) they can amp it up. Balanced trainers sometimes claim their inclusion of corrections has a side effect of keeping the dog's arousal "in check" (the dog stays a bit more subdued). However, one can certainly keep a dog's arousal in check with purely positive methods by simply training calm behaviors with calm reinforcement. Just Behaving pays special attention to preventing over-arousal. They encourage rewarding the dog for settling and not constantly hyping the dog up. That means a dog under Just Behaving are able to go from playtime to calm downtime more easily (a valuable life skill) because the training included lessons in relaxation on cue or default settle behavior. For example, teaching a dog to relax on a mat while the family eats dinner is something structure-focused positive trainers do. By contrast, purely dominance trainers might achieve "lie down and don't move" through intimidation, but that doesn't mean the dog is internally relaxed – it might be lying still but breathing fast, a sign of internal stress.

Treat dependency and motivation: We touched on treat dependency earlier, but from an emotional perspective: a dog that only performs when a treat is present might indicate it doesn't find the work or the relationship itself rewarding enough. Ideally, training builds intrinsic motivation – the dog enjoys using its skills and pleasing the owner. Positive methods often yield dogs that *love to train* (because it's fun). This is a hugely positive emotional outcome: the dog is basically in a good mood and mentally

stimulated when working with the owner. Balanced and dominance methods can sometimes rob that joy – the dog works but doesn't particularly show joy. However, some balanced trainers do manage to keep training fun too, so it depends. If a dog seems "flat" or unenthusiastic, it's often a sign of either stress or low motivation due to how it was trained. Re-introducing rewards and play can usually brighten the dog up, showing that positive reinforcement adds emotion (joy) to the equation. On the other hand, if a dog is *only* joyful when you have a cookie, but ignores you otherwise, it likely means you haven't made obedience part of its routine life or haven't taught the dog to value other reinforcers like praise. That's a handler issue, not an inherent flaw of positive training.

In conclusion, the psychological and emotional profiles of dogs differ by training method. Reward-based and force-free training are correlated with positive emotional states: lower stress, stronger trust, and greater optimism/adaptability companionanimalpsychology.com psychdogpartners.org. Dogs trained this way often exhibit confident, exploratory behavior and form secure attachments to their owners companionanimalpsychology.com companionanimalpsychology.com. Balanced training can produce a well-adjusted dog if done carefully, but there is a risk of underlying stress or uncertainty, especially if corrections are overused or inconsistent. Dominance-heavy training tends to create either fearful, stressed dogs or dogs that may obey but are internally anxious or, conversely, can become fear-aggressive – none of which are emotionally desirable outcomes sciencedaily.com sciencedaily.com. Just Behaving, by melding positive reinforcement, structured guidance, and attention to canine well-being, aims to cultivate a dog that is emotionally resilient and trusting, yet self-controlled and calm. This approach acknowledges that a dog's emotional health is as important as its behavioral compliance.

The comparative table below summarizes some of these psychological and emotional effects observed or expected with each methodology:

Criteria	**Just Behaving**	**Positive / Force-Free**	**Balanced**	**Dominance-Based**
Stress Level During Training	Low – training is mostly positive and consistent; routine adds security.	Low – training is fun and safe; minimal fear. (Can be high if dog is over-excited, but good management keeps it low.)	Moderate – depends on mix; some stress during corrections, but	High – frequent fear or discomfort; dog often anxious anticipating punishment.

			mitigated by rewards if balanced well.	
Long-Term Anxiety/Fear	Minimal – dog feels secure and well-socialized; structure reduces anxiety.	Minimal – dog generally confident; few fear associations since training was positive.	Possible – if corrections were significant, dog may have some anxiety or cautiousness (especially in contexts where it was corrected before).	Elevated – dog may carry fear (of owner, or generally if it expects negative outcomes); can show hyper-vigilance.
Trust in Owner	High – owner is seen as consistent, fair, and source of guidance and reward.	Very High – owner associated with positive outcomes; dog views owner as safe haven (secure attachment).	Variable – dog may trust owner to an extent but also knows owner can be source of correction; trust is conditional ("I trust you when you're nice").	Low/Fragile – dog may obey but often out of fear, not true trust; may avoid owner or only stick close out of anxious appeasement.

Dog's Attitude to Training	Enthusiastic and attentive, balanced with calmness; enjoys learning due to rewards, not overly excitable due to structure.	Highly enthusiastic; training seen as play/reward time; dog often eager to try new things. May get very excited for training sessions.	Willing but possibly a bit cautious; many dogs still enjoy parts of training (especially reward portions), but may show less enthusiasm or a serious demeanor.	Often apprehensive or resentful; some dogs become very submissive during training (appeasement), others might resist. Training is not "fun" for the dog, more a tense duty.
Impulse Control	Strong – taught via both positive reinforcement of patience and consistent rules. Dog learns to self-soothe and wait (e.g. routine requires sitting for things).	Strong – actively trained through positive exercises (wait, leave it). Dog learns good self-control in order to earn rewards. Could be *too* excited if not trained, but generally good if properly taught.	Moderate – dog learns not to act impulsively mainly to avoid correction. Can exhibit self-control but more because it "has to" than internal calmness. If no one is enforcing, may still act impulsively.	Low internal self-control – dog's restraint is mostly due to fear of punishment. May behave when watched, but if it perceives no immediate punishment, impulses can take over (no internalized patience).

Over-Stimulation	Addressed by rewarding calm behavior; less likely to be an issue as method stresses routine and calm leadership.	Possible if not managed (dog can get very excited for treats/toys), but trainers use techniques to encourage calm. Generally produces a happy but controllable excitement.	Usually kept in check by presence of corrections (dog stays a bit cautious). Balanced play/training can still excite the dog, but handler can dial it down with a correction or tone change.	Not typically an issue; these dogs are more likely shut down or inhibited than over-excited. They may even become under-stimulated (lack enthusiasm). Any excitement is often quickly suppressed by the trainer.
Aggression/Reactiveness (as a side effect)	Low incidence – focus on socialization and positive associations prevents many aggression issues; any early signs likely handled with vet/behaviorist input.	Lowest incidence – studies show reward-trained dogs have fewer aggression problems towards people and dogs psychdogpartners.org . Lack of intimidation means less fear-based aggression.	Possible – if corrections were overdone or mis-timed, dog could develop fear aggression (e.g. leash-reactive due to being punished around other	Higher risk – confrontational training often *elicits* aggression sciencedaily.com . Dog may become fear-aggressive or defensive. Aggression issues can worsen or new ones can develop (e.g. redirected

			dogs). Some balanced dogs do fine, but others might show reactivity linked to stress.	aggression due to stress).
Dog's Adaptability (to new environments/people)	High – well-socialized and has positive experiences; structured training means dog has coping skills. Should handle new situations calmly with owner's guidance.	High – dog is optimistic and has strong positive reinforcement history, likely generalizes that new things can be good. Builds positive social behaviors, adapts well if properly socialized.	Moderate – depends on dog's personality; some adapt fine, others might be insecure without their familiar structure or if they fear corrections in unknown scenarios. Not as universally confident as force-free dogs.	Low – dog may be very context-specific in its behavior (only "behaves" in presence of dominant owner or familiar setting). New people or places can cause regression or fear. Dog lacks the positive framework to confidently explore new things.

Table 2: Comparative emotional and behavioral effects on dogs by training method (stress, trust, impulse control, adaptability, etc.).

Conclusion and Best Practices

Summary of Findings: This analysis brings together scientific research, expert opinions, and practical observations to compare the Just Behaving methodology with

positive reinforcement, balanced, force-free, and dominance-based training. Overall, evidence favors training approaches that use positive reinforcement and minimal aversives for both effective learning and the long-term welfare of the dog caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu psychdogpartners.org. Reward-based methods (including Just Behaving, which emphasizes positive reinforcement and structured guidance) produce dogs with more stable behaviors, fewer aggression or anxiety problems, and stronger bonds with their owners psychdogpartners.org companionanimalpsychology.com. In contrast, heavy reliance on punishment and dominance is linked to increased fear, stress, and even aggression towards owners or others sciencedaily.com sciencedaily.com, without any evidence of superior effectiveness in training compliance caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu frontiersin.org. Balanced training falls in between, and its success largely depends on how judiciously rewards vs. corrections are applied. When done carefully (reward-heavy, mild corrections), balanced training can yield good results, but if done poorly (too punitive), it incurs many of the same drawbacks as dominance methods.

Just Behaving vs. Others: The Just Behaving approach integrates many of the *best practices* highlighted by research: it focuses on positive reinforcement (like mainstream positive/force-free methods) while also stressing consistency and leadership (addressing some concerns balanced trainers raise about purely treat-based training). Its unique collaboration with veterinarians is a strength – by treating behavior holistically, underlying issues can be addressed (for example, ruling out medical causes of behavior or using therapeutic support for extreme cases). This is aligned with modern behaviorism, which often involves veterinary behaviorists for issues like severe anxiety or aggression (where medication and training together have better outcomes). Compared to mainstream positive reinforcement, Just Behaving is similarly humane but adds an element of structured routine and perhaps firmer owner presence, which can help avoid the pitfalls of permissiveness or chaos. Compared to balanced training, Just Behaving uses far less aversive pressure – it achieves obedience with minimal corrections, focusing instead on prevention and teaching. It thus avoids the major welfare concerns associated with balanced or aversive tools (e.g., no reliance on shock collars or heavy leash corrections, which research shows are unnecessary frontiersin.org and riskier journals.plos.org). Compared to force-free, Just Behaving might allow a tad more corrective intervention, but it stays fundamentally force-free in spirit (no force or pain-based techniques were indicated in its philosophy). And of course, versus dominance-based, Just Behaving is a completely different paradigm – one rooted in modern science and ethics, as opposed to outdated myths of “alpha” dominance. In essence, Just Behaving can be seen as a refined, comprehensive version of reward-based training, fortified with structured leadership and professional (veterinary) input.

Best Practices: Across all methods, certain best practices emerge:

- **Prioritize Positive Reinforcement:** All training should incorporate rewards for correct behavior. As the literature shows, reward-based training not only motivates dogs effectively but also avoids negative side effects caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu psychdogpartners.org. Even balanced trainers are most successful when they heavily reinforce good behavior and use corrections sparingly. For those using Just Behaving or positive methods, continue to be generous with praise, treats, and play as appropriate. This keeps training enjoyable and reinforces the human-dog bond.
- **Use Least Invasive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) Corrections:** If corrections are to be used (in balanced or Just Behaving contexts), they should be as mild as possible to achieve the goal, and never delivered out of anger. The correction should serve as information, not intimidation. For example, a quick "ah-ah" or a leash impulse that is just enough to get the dog's attention can suffice, followed immediately by a chance to do right and earn reward. Avoid any correction that causes pain, fear, or extensive stress – studies indicate these are detrimental sciencedaily.com caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu. Dominance-based techniques like alpha rolls, scruff shakes, or harsh hits are strongly discouraged – they are dangerous and counterproductive sciencedaily.com sciencedaily.com. Trainers and owners should educate themselves on humane alternatives (for instance, teaching "leave it" with rewards instead of yanking something from the dog).
- **Consistency and Structure:** Dogs thrive on consistency. Whatever the method, consistent cues, consequences, and routines help the dog learn faster and feel secure. The Just Behaving methodology rightly emphasizes a *stable routine* and consistent leadership – this is a best practice any approach can integrate. It can be as simple as always using the same command for a behavior and rewarding it, or ensuring everyone in the household follows the same rules (e.g., if jumping is not allowed, no one should sometimes pet the dog for jumping). Structured interactions (like making the dog sit before meals or at doorways) give dogs clear expectations and can be done kindly (with rewards) to reinforce manners.
- **Socialization and Environmental Enrichment:** Long-term behavior stability is heavily influenced by early socialization and ongoing enrichment. A best practice from positive training and reflected in Just Behaving is to socialize puppies extensively in a positive way – introduce them to various people, dogs, sounds, surfaces, and locations with plenty of praise and treats, so they grow up confident. This prevents many fear-based problems that no amount of later correction or training can easily fix. Similarly, ensure the dog's daily life is

enriched with exercise, play, and mental stimulation (training itself is great mental stimulation). A well-exercised, mentally satisfied dog is less likely to develop behavior issues. This is one area not unique to any method but often overshadowed by talk of technique – yet it's critical. Balanced and dominance trainers sometimes underplay this (focusing on discipline over exercise), but even the "best trained" dog will misbehave if it's bursting with unspent energy or boredom.

- **Monitor Stress Signals and Adapt:** Trainers and owners should learn to read their dog's body language and emotional state. If a dog is showing signs of stress or fear in training, take note and adjust the approach. In positive training, this might mean a session has become too long or the dog is confused – so break it down or make it easier to get wins. In balanced training, if the dog is shutting down or becoming reactive, it likely means the corrections are too harsh or the dog hasn't been shown clearly how to succeed; step back to a more positive approach. The humane hierarchy (endorsed by behaviorists) says use more positive strategies first and only mildly aversive ones if absolutely necessary psychdogpartners.org. Following this ensures training stays as stress-free as possible. Modern tools like measuring cortisol (in studies) or simply observing that a dog is yawning a lot (a stress signal) can guide a trainer to adjust techniques. Just Behaving's holistic angle suggests they value this – potentially even using vet exams to see if a dog is unusually stressed and why.
- **Fade Out Reliance on Extrinsic Rewards Gradually:** To avoid "treat dependency" or in balanced cases "collar dependency," training should include a plan to fade prompts and make rewards intermittent. Positive trainers should move from continuous treats to variable reinforcement schedules as the dog learns, and start using real-life rewards (permission to sniff, a game of tug, etc.) so the dog doesn't only listen in formal training contexts. Balanced trainers should ensure the dog isn't only responding when wearing a training collar – hence, they should train the dog also on a flat collar or off-leash with rewards, to prove the behavior without the threat in place. Essentially, whatever extrinsic crutch was used to train (treat lure or prong collar), gradually remove it to confirm the behavior is truly learned. This creates reliability. The research showing reward-trained dogs had high obedience even when not rewarded every time psychdogpartners.org is because of this principle – intermittent rewards actually strengthen behavior. Best practice is to make yourself a source of unpredictable good things, so the dog always has hope a reward might come, but never knows exactly when (which is how casinos keep people hooked – the same principle works in our favor with dogs!). Meanwhile, they should *not* be unpredictable with corrections; those should always be as minimal as possible and ideally phased

out entirely once the dog is fluent. In an ideal end state, the dog behaves because it has a habit of behaving and a history of it being rewarding, and it rarely if ever needs reminding of consequences.

- **Education and Professional Guidance:** Owners should educate themselves or seek guidance on modern training techniques. A lot of the persistence of dominance training is due to outdated information. Professional trainers and behaviorists (especially those with certifications or degrees in animal behavior) can help craft a training plan that suits the individual dog. The presence of a veterinary behaviorist or experienced trainer in the Just Behaving model is a huge boon – it means problems can be addressed with expertise rather than guesswork. We recommend owners to consult resources like the AVSAB guidelines (which outline how to choose a trainer and why reward-based methods are recommended psychdogpartners.org) or books by experts (e.g., Patricia McConnell, Dr. Ian Dunbar, Karen Pryor) to further understand dog behavior and training. Continuous learning is key; dog training is an evolving field, and staying up-to-date ensures best practices.

Potential Areas for Improvement in Each Model:

- *Just Behaving:* As a relatively comprehensive approach, one area to watch might be ensuring that any corrections used are truly minimal and that the emphasis on leadership doesn't slide into a subtle form of dominance mindset. As long as Just Behaving stays science-aligned (which it appears to, given the focus on positive reinforcement, behavioral science foundation and vet input), it should remain effective and dog-friendly. It could incorporate even more objective measures of success (like tracking behavior improvements over years, doing follow-up on puppies they trained) to build its own evidence base. This would strengthen the methodology by demonstrating outcomes quantitatively. Also, continuing to prioritize owner education (teaching the owners *why* the methods work, not just *what* to do) will make the results last – this applies to all models, but as Just Behaving blends aspects, clarity to owners is key so they understand the rationale and don't accidentally fall back to old habits.
- *Positive Reinforcement (Mainstream):* The main improvements needed here are often on the human side – consistency and timing. The method itself is sound, but owners need practice to deliver rewards timely and manage without slipping (e.g., not giving attention inadvertently to bad behavior). Also, positive trainers should be mindful of over-stimulation: building in exercises to reinforce calm behavior, and coaching owners on not inadvertently rewarding excitement when calm is desired. Another improvement is public perception – continuing to dispel

the myth that positive training is “permissive” or only about treats. Sharing the robust evidence of its efficacy (like the studies cited in this report) frontiersin.org psychdogpartners.org can help more people adopt it and refine their technique with confidence that they’re not “spoiling” the dog but actually training effectively.

- *Balanced Training:* The key area of improvement is reducing reliance on aversives and moving the needle closer to reward-centric. Balanced trainers can benefit from the wealth of positive training research by incorporating those techniques more and using corrections less frequently. If they record outcomes, they might find (as the studies did) that performance doesn’t drop by easing off on corrections caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu. Another improvement is ensuring handlers using balanced methods are well educated on dog body language and subtle signs of distress, so they can recognize if their “balance” is tipping too far toward stress and adjust. Balanced training communities sometimes are defensive against force-free arguments; however, openness to new humane techniques (like using clicker training or exploring force-free methods for certain cases) can enhance their practice. Essentially, the improvement is continual movement toward humane, science-based practices within the balanced framework. Tools like prong or shock collars should be re-examined critically – as evidence suggests they are not giving an advantage, phasing them out in favor of alternatives (front-clip harnesses, reward-based recalls) would improve welfare without sacrificing results journals.plos.org frontiersin.org.
- *Force-Free Training:* While ethically and scientifically strong, force-free trainers could focus on addressing the perceived gaps that critics point out. For example, being transparent about how to handle truly dangerous behaviors without any physical intervention – and indeed many force-free behaviorists do have methods (like systematic desensitization, management, careful safety protocols). Sharing success stories and protocols for severe cases can convince skeptics that force-free can work even for “tough” dogs. Another area is owner compliance – sometimes purely force-free plans are very time-intensive, which average owners might struggle with. Force-free practitioners can work on creative solutions to help regular dog owners implement the techniques correctly even if they’re not professionals. This might include simpler instructions, or slight compromises that don’t violate force-free principles (like more focus on controlling the environment to prevent issues, which is easier for owners than long counterconditioning protocols). Basically, making force-free *accessible and practical* to everyone is a continuous improvement goal. Additionally, ensuring that force-free training also teaches consequences (albeit non-aversive ones) clearly is important – dogs do benefit from knowing a certain behavior simply never works. Force-free already

does this via extinction, but coaches must help owners stick to it (for example, everyone in the family ignoring jumping consistently, which is hard but needed).

- *Dominance-Based Training:* The frank improvement needed here is a paradigm shift away from outdated dominance concepts. This method is largely considered obsolete and harmful sciencedaily.com sciencedaily.com. For those still practicing it, the best thing is to educate them on modern canine social science (e.g., dogs don't have a rigid alpha structure with humans, and even among themselves dominance is context-specific) and the risks of their approach. Transitioning dominance trainers to at least a balanced approach, if not all the way to positive, would be an improvement. At minimum, eliminating the most dangerous techniques (alpha roll, hitting, choke-offs) is critical. Encouraging these trainers to incorporate more rewards (a small subset do, calling it "balanced" now) is a step. Many famous dominance trainers (television personalities, etc.) have been criticized by veterinary behaviorists for causing harm; it would benefit them to update their methods for safety and efficacy. In summary, dominance-based training should move toward extinction; its "areas for improvement" are essentially to adopt the best practices of other models because the core premise is flawed. Owners currently using such methods should be gently shown that there is a kinder, scientifically validated way that will *still get their dog to behave*, without the fallout.

The overarching theme in best practices is encapsulated well by the modern mantra: **"**Train don't complain; guide don't force." By focusing on teaching desired behaviors and reinforcing them, while avoiding intimidation, we not only get well-behaved dogs, but we do so ethically and create dogs that are confident, happy, and reliable companions for the long term. The research supports this approach – dogs trained with patience and positive methods learn effectively and enjoy a better quality of life caninewelfare.centers.purdue.edu psychdogpartners.org. On the other hand, reliance on dominance and fear can lead to unpredictable and undesirable outcomes, as well as welfare concerns for the animal sciencedaily.com.

In conclusion, the Just Behaving methodology, with its blend of positive reinforcement, structured leadership, and expert collaboration, emerges as a highly proven model that aligns with scientific evidence and humane ethics. It captures the efficacy of reward-based training (ensuring high obedience and low behavioral issues) while incorporating structure to foster impulse control and calmness. This results in dogs that are both well-trained and well-adjusted emotionally – the ultimate goal for any training program. As our understanding of canine cognition and emotion continues to grow, training methods will keep evolving. Yet, the fundamentals highlighted in this study – kindness, consistency, clarity, and science-driven techniques – will remain the cornerstones of

effective and ethical dog training. By prioritizing these principles, trainers and owners can ensure long-term positive outcomes: dogs that not only obey, but do so with wagging tails and trusting hearts.

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- [Additional citations from within text where applicable: e.g., Companion Animal Psychology article summarizing attachment study companionanimalpsychology.com companionanimalpsychology.com , and others.]