Staying Connected to Your Dog is one of those phrases you hear, but probably don't pay much give much thought to. What does it really mean? In simple terms it means that you and your dog are paying attention to each other and are *attuned* to each other at a given time. It does NOT mean training together by rote. It does not mean deftly going thru the routine as if it where a chore. It does not mean rushing through a training session just so you can say you did it, and it does not mean taking your bad mood out on your dog.

We could probably get away with a lot of that behavior if we were training another human being, since we humans are far less astute at body language than our dogs are. After all, dogs "make their living" reading, knowing and understanding our body language! We really don't fool them much when we train half-heartedly.

A friend made a statement today that got me thinking about this topic. She said that it literally broke her heart when she observed handlers finish an agility run and then snap the lead back on their dog and simply walk away.   The dog's face said it all, she said. That animal had just given it's all and held up it's part of the teamwork and didn't even receive a passing nod from its owner.   Over time, will that relationship last? Maybe – dogs do have a lot of heart. But, just think how far that team could go and how wonderful that relationship could be if the human side made an effort to "stay connected".

Dogs don't ask much of us, but they do know when we are faking it. A short training session with intent and focus on each other will get you much further than plodding through a longer training session with your mind on other things

I've always felt that the human – dog bond that is developed from training in a performance event is truly one of the strongest bonds in the world. You simply must know each other on a very high level in order to succeed. To know your dog at that level is a true privilege and one that is only <u>earned</u> by "staying connected".

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