

Rambling Rose

Sister to Nita and Leah is Rambling Rose. Once Rose gets to talking, you'd best grab a cup of tea and settle in. Leah, of course, cuts Rose off brusquely because it's not all about her. Nita happily lets Rose talk as long as she likes, basking in the glow of Rose's companionship.

Of course, in a private training session or group class, the last thing you want to let Rose do is ramble. Be careful not to feed into it by nodding your head or offering polite "uh-huh"s. That will only encourage her. When Rose launches into a story about "the cutest thing Frankie did the other day, you should have seen it, we were coming out of the store, blah, blah, blah..." cut her off at the pass. It's the only thing to do. Then, quickly redirect! There is no need to be rude about it. Simply wait for Rose to stop for a breath, then jump in quickly with something along the lines of, "That's an interesting story, Rose, but let's get back to Frankie's 'go to bed' exercise. He's just starting to get it and I don't want to lose our momentum."

If Rose interrupts repeatedly during a private session, going off on tangents and launching into anecdotes, you must take control. Be kind and gentle. "Rose," you might suggest, "I think it would be best, since we have limited time together, to keep on track. I want you and Frankie to get the most out of our training sessions as possible." If necessary, you could also remind her she is paying you by the hour.

If you are teaching a group class and Rose launches into yet another long personal story, cut her off politely and redirect the group as a whole to the next activity. Even if you have done so

It's Not the Dogs, It's the People!

previously, at the beginning of the next class remind everyone questions are welcome—but only if they are on topic and only in the context of a general question.

If Rose starts rambling in class while students are practicing with their dogs, give her something to do. Suppose your students are practicing leashwork. “Rose,” you could interject, “You’re doing great. Now for this exercise, I’d like you to take exactly ten steps in-between asking Scruffy to sit. Be sure to count them!” Can *you* chat and count at the same time? I can’t. It is important not to let Rose monopolize class time. If she does, you will end up frustrated and your students will wonder why the instructor doesn’t have better control of the class. If necessary, speak with Rose privately after class. Explain things to her gently but firmly.

Be aware that Rose is probably overly verbal where her dog is concerned as well. She might instruct Frankie to sit by asking, “Frankie, sit; come on, sit; come on, sit down now...” It is important that you make Rose understand verbosity is not productive in training. I ask talkative clients whether they remember Charlie Brown’s teacher in the Peanuts cartoon series. Most adults recall the way the kids heard, “wah-wah-wah” regardless of what the teacher was actually saying. I then tell the owner, “That’s what your dog is hearing, lots of wah-wah-wah.” That usually elicits a chuckle—and a light bulb going on over the owner’s head. You could also suggest Rose give the cue, followed immediately by a deep breath. You might be surprised at how quickly this technique leads to one-word cues. After all, even Rose can’t take a breath and talk at the same time.

Take care that you don’t become a Rambling Rose yourself. It can be tempting to regale your clients with fascinating anecdotes from your training experiences or personal life. While clients