

## Matching Humans and Dogs

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This article is a follow-up to the presentation given at the National Training Workshop of the North American Police Work Dog Association during the summer of 2016 in Fort Wayne, IN. The presentation drew heavily on the work of Virginia Satir, the famous human family therapist and Job Michael Evans, the equally famous dog trainer who adapted her materials for use in counseling dog owners. Satir's premise was that humans have 5 modes of communication and these "Satir Modes" have proven very useful to this author over the years in matching humans with appropriate animals, both horses and dogs.

As a reminder, all 5 communication styles are normal and we use most of them every day, but each human has a favorite mode and when they are in crisis or under stress (a misbehaving dog creates stress in the handler) they switch to this favorite mode and remain there until the crisis has passed. It is this favorite mode to which this article refers. Let's review the basic definitions:

**Placater** – A person who is not interested in solving the problem at hand. They seek to survive the crisis by keeping everyone involved happy.

**Blamer** – A person who is not interested in solving the problem at hand. They seek to survive the crisis by making sure that everyone knows that it is not their fault, but someone else's.

**Computer** – A person who is not interested in solving the problem at hand. They seek to survive the crisis by shutting down all emotions, not even agreeing that there is a problem and not dealing with personal details.

**Distractor** – A person who is not interested in solving the problem at hand. They seek to survive the crisis by not allowing anyone to focus on the details. They often rotate through the first three modes randomly so no-one can match their style.

**Leveler** – A person who seeks to solve the problem at hand and can switch to any Satir mode they wish in order to handle any dog properly. They can placate when the dog needs it, blame when necessary and compute when it is to their advantage. Leveling can be learned and we should all strive to be in this category.

To identify which mode is a handler's favorite, create a way for you to unfairly criticize them for being wrong, even when they are not, preferably with witnesses to increase the stress of the situation and pay careful attention to their communication immediately afterwards. The Placater will keep you happy by accepting the blame and sometimes help you out by punishing themselves (at least verbally). The Blamer will shoot back immediately and argue to explain why they did what they did, with the insinuation that they were correct and your criticism was wrong. The computer will not be upset at all on the outside and will not agree that what happened was actually a problem. The distractor will alternate randomly between placating, blaming and computing and attempt to keep you from focusing

on what actually happened (Note: merely changing the subject frequently does not make someone a distractor – they have to rotate modes to be included here). The leveler will calmly state that they do not understand your criticism and will ask for clarification and suggestions for improvement so they can solve the alleged problem.

The following “Matching Table” is a visual representation of the probable results of pairing different types of dogs with the different types of humans.

Matching Table:

			Satir Mode		
	Placater	Blamer	Computer	Distractor	Leveler
Dog Type					
Dominant	Bad	Decent	Bad	Bad	Good
Submissive	Good	Bad	Decent	Bad	Good
Fearful	Good	Bad	Decent	Bad	Good
Confused	Good	Bad	Bad	Bad	Good

Key:

Good – Team performance will be optimal and the dog will thrive

Decent – Team performance may be acceptable but will never be optimal and the dog may not thrive

Bad – Team performance is often poor and the dog usually suffers