

How To Train A Rock

by Paul Steven Stone

The first thing one notices about rocks is they are essentially quiet creatures. Adverse to long discourses or extended bouts of conversation, they nevertheless are quite engaged in life. Constantly pondering the deepest and densest of life's mysteries, thereby distracted to an apparent state of inertia, they are thought to be dull companions and highly unsuited to racquet sports or most other forms of physical activity.

Here at the International Rock Training Institute we have discovered, and proven, I believe, that rocks are far more capable and sentient than we humans generally believe. In fact, it's the rocks' very ability to conceal their considerable capabilities from the general population that underscores the scope of their hidden powers.

So, what to expect when you bring home one of these seemingly inanimate creatures as a pet?

Expect *love*. Lots of love. Pound for pound, there isn't a more loving, open-hearted creature than a rock, though they can be fickle at times. Until recently it was thought rocks heated up in the sun because of the sun's rays. After much research, we now know their rising temperatures are psycho-romantic reactions. Rocks tenderly exhibiting warm feelings for their cousin, the Sun. Similar to the way their temperatures will flare-up when they're with their masters. Unfortunately, such displays of affection often go unnoticed, leading to a deep-seated fear of rejection and humiliation in most mature rocks.

As unfortunate as that may sound, this fear of rejection will prove an important tool in helping you train a rock of your own. A simple example will prove the point.

Let us pretend we are training a rock to keep us company while watching TV in the evenings. Right off, most of us would make the mistake of placing the rock on a nearby chair or perhaps on the TV itself.

Ask yourself, could you watch TV if you were sitting on top of the TV? Of course you couldn't. And neither could a rock.

As for the chair, it demoralizes the intimacy-starved rock to be placed so far away from you. It derails the very trust and intimacy you were seeking to instill. Far better to place your rock on a nearby coffee table at the beginning of the training cycle. The idea being, of course, to gradually inch the rock closer to you on successive evenings. By tantalizing the trainee rock with your increasing proximity, you enflame its desire for closeness, and will soon find not only a docile rock sitting on your lap, but a companionable one as well.

The majority of rocks that visit the International Rock Training Institute come here for our "Good Companions" curriculum, which trains rocks for companionable relationships with all types of masters except toddlers, who need to be first trained not to eat rocks or stick them in their playmates' eyes. We also offer a curriculum focused on "Security" for rocks being channeled into careers as Watchrocks or, possibly, projectiles.

Training a rock requires, well, rocklike patience. Much like human beings, rocks form impressions and psychological patterns in their early years that help shape their entire lives going forward. These impressionable "teen" rocks should be treated with great care and with great tolerance for their periodic mood swings and narcissistic bingeing. Should you discover you're in possession of a teen rock rather than a mature one, don't expect to win its trust anytime soon.

Unfortunately, we won't have time this week to discuss "strays", the wild, untamable rocks you find scattered most everywhere. Suffice it to say, many of the wild stories one hears about these highly independent rocks are true. They are unstable creatures to say the least. Unfriendly, sharply cunning and not very trustworthy. I would not want a stray rock living in my home, not even with my children fully grown and out of the house.

More about strays later on. For now, I'll close this week's *"A Rock's Throw"* by inviting you, as always, to send me your questions

about rocks and their proper training. Again, I must sternly request you do NOT send me the rocks themselves. And whoever threw that rock through the Institute's lab window yesterday, I should warn you your rock has already conveyed your vital information to the police who are now on their way.

I forgot to mention, rocks are notoriously disloyal.

