

**Carmen Leonard, Midrand, Gauteng, South Africa**

## **CASPRO**

I have decided to write a story about Caspro, as I feel that it was during his sessions that I learnt so much.

Caspro was a very large male Pyrenean Mountain dog, that Anne, his guardian had obtained through the internet. He had been put up for adoption as his owners could no longer cope with him and they had labelled him "Disobedient" and a handful.

It appeared that Caspro had been mistreated as he had a very distrustful expression and if you raised your hands he would cower.

Anne also noticed that if you approached Caspro from behind he would get a fright and sometimes even snap at you. On a hunch she took him to her veterinarian and had his hearing tested...Caspro was not disobedient...He was deaf.

When Anne brought Caspro to our kennel for boarding she was concerned as Caspro did not trust strangers and he needed cream to be put around his genital area due to a persistent irritation. She warned that he could turn on us. Male dogs in general do not like being touched around that area and Caspro being deaf and very wary of strangers, made this very difficult.

I decided to do Ttouch to try build a bond with Caspro and to get him to trust me touching him.

I started off with very basic, non-invasive touches. I did Noah`s march all along his back, gently caressing him and talking him through the process even though he was deaf. I then did slow Zig Zags down his sides and legs adding in gentle hair slides.

At first Caspro was very suspicious and moved around a lot. I just moved with him and continued doing the touches. After a while in spite of himself he started to enjoy the touches. I could feel the tension release from his body as he sat down and gave a big yawn. His shoulders were less rigid and he was not standing as if at any moment he would bolt off. I kept the pressure to about three as he had so much hair and I wanted him to feel the touches.

During the second session I still started off with Noah`s March along his body and the slow Zig Zags with the hair slides But I also felt confident to try some ear slides and small circles on his ears. Slowly I worked my way to his muzzle area. I started with gentle slides along his muzzle and then went on to do slow deliberate small joining circles, slightly moving his lips.

Throughout the sessions I kept a close watch on his face for any change in expression. I watched as the expression in his eyes softened and the look of fear and distrust was replaced with pure love and acceptance and I realised that Caspro was surrendering to the feel of Ttouch. His head became very heavy in my hand and his eyes started to close.

I never had any problem administering the cream to Caspro and through the years he came many times to stay with us. There was never a problem to administer any medications but it was under condition that I did Ttouch. He would walk up to me and place his head in my hands. I felt honoured that I had gained this huge animals trust and acceptance.

Standing next to Caspro one could feel the strength and power in him and had he wanted to, he could have inflicted a lot of damage to me but through Ttouch his trust was restored and it was never a concern that he would suddenly turn on me.

It was an amazing feeling to realise that Caspro and I had connected on such a deep level through Ttouch, that I could actual feel what he was feeling.

