



Help your dog to Control The Meerkat B.A.S.E. Safety



Welcome



Hello there,

My name is Danielle and I'd like to welcome you to '**Creating Safety**'; part of the '**Control The Meerkat, B.A.S.E.**'. We all know that life happens and it's not all fairies and puppy tails; despite our best effort! Therefore, I've created 'Control the Meerkat' to help **YOU** to understand **YOUR DOG**, and learn all about what you can do to help them to cope, when life happens!

As you may be starting to understand, there is more to our dog's behaviour than just simple training. Our dogs are complex, emotional beings that need to understand how to regulate those emotions just like the rest of us. For those that struggle it can become detrimental to both them and you and we're here to help. As with all mammals your dog will find it difficult to learn, remember and recall from memory if they don't feel safe. This is where we start. Let's have a look at your dog now and how we can help them to feel safe.

That's what **Control The Meerkat** is all about. We show you how to help your dogs help themselves. It's not about obedience and telling them what to do; it's about teaching them the skills they need to manage themselves. By doing this our dogs learn how to regulate their own emotions, and calm themselves when they feel excited, frustrated, scared, or overwhelmed. This is where we begin.

Good luck with your training!

Danielle Beck, BSc (hons), PGDip, MSc
Clinical Animal Behaviourists & Rehabilitation Trainer
Founder of Control the Meerkat



ABOUT THIS JOURNAL



We feel it's important to keep track of progress when rehabilitating our dogs. It's a long journey with many setbacks and at times, isolating and frustrating.

Logging difficult days along with good days can help you to really see the progress, strengths, and weaknesses and spot patterns that you might not have seen otherwise.

We want to make an already difficult journey as easy as possible for you and your dog and have come up with our journals to help!

Over the next few pages you will find tips and different ways that you can monitor and log your progress. We have

- Daily Routines
- Weekly Planners
- Monthly Planners
- Goal Trackers
- Weekly Goal Targets
- Monthly Goal Targets
- Dog Walk evaluations
- Self Evaluations
- Phase planners



These are designed in different ways to suit as many people as possible.



Use what you like, leave what you dont.
You can print a page for the fridge or the
whole thing, or keep everything keep
digital.

The choice is yours.





Table of Contents



What's inside

- 01 WELCOME TO CONTROL THE MEERKAT**
- 02 THE SECRET? - UNDERSTANDING YOUR DOGS B.A.S.E.**
- 03 MEET YOUR DOGS MEERKATS**
- 04 WELCOME TO CREATING SAFETY**
- 05 CREATE SAFETY**
- 06 CREATE A SAFE PLACE**
- 07 INCREASE PREDICTABILITY**
- 08 NOISES AND STARTLE**
- 09 SNIFFING TO SAFETY**
- 10 BONDING ACTIVITIES**

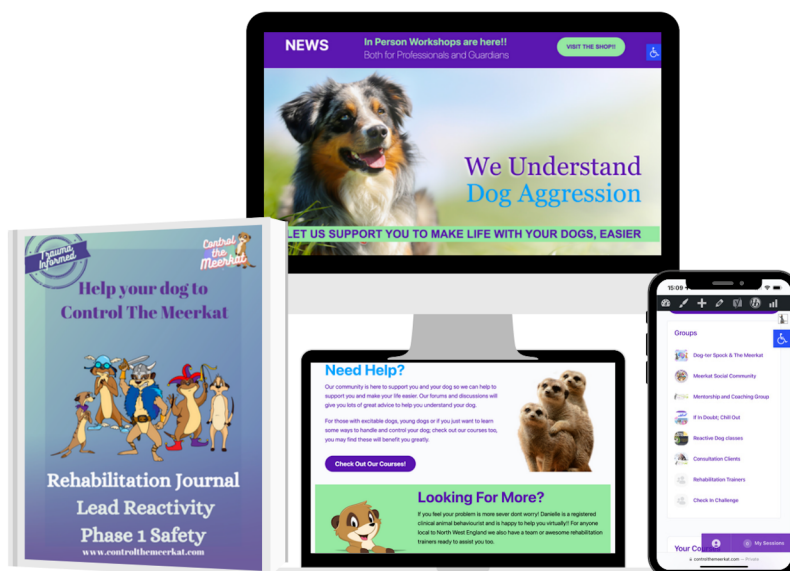


Foundation Exercises

Auto Check-In, If In Doubt; Chill Out, Take A Deep Breath & Foundation exercises

These skills are all based on our dogs ability to think for themselves and work out what to do. We need to support and guide them by setting up the environment and being fast with marking when they made the choice. By giving them opportunities to make the right choice, it speeds up their learning and ability to regulate themselves. This type of training can help build confidence in anxious / fearful dogs and reduce frustration in excitable dogs and those that get overwhelmed.

The skills are small and simple at first but with regular practise in different situations we build strong, effective habits that last



**INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS AND SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE IN
OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY & LEARNING EMPOWERIUM**

Self Regulation

Impulse / Self Control and Frustration Tolerance



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The skills are small and simple at first but with regular practise in different situations we build strong, effective habits that last.



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Welcome To Control The Meerkat



We believe that dogs are incredible beings that have wonderful brains with amazing capabilities. Here at Control The Meerkat we can help you to understand how your dog's brain affects their behaviour enabling us to work **with** your dog to make life easier for you both.

We are going to set your dog up for success by managing their environment to prevent them from performing any unwanted behaviours while we build up their confidence to create safety and relaxation.

The best way to do this is to **avoid** problem areas as much as possible **in the beginning**. For our lead reactive dogs this can mean not going on a walk for around 2 weeks, sometimes more. It may mean going out in the car to quiet areas, changing the location or time of your walks, or skipping walks completely for now.

For many dogs these situations are just too stressful for them at present, and they need some time to feel safe and confident before starting any training.

It's important for us all to have a distress holiday. Not taking your dog for a walk can be difficult as we feel our dogs need a walk, but for many dogs they'd rather stay at home where they feel safe.

Sometimes only going to certain places where you can avoid other people, and dogs, can be a great compromise. Many areas have secure fields that are ideal for building confidence when outside again. Some cemeteries can also be a great compromise if you don't find them too spooky!





When living with a reactive or sensitive dog it's difficult to always understand their point of view. We can't always figure out why they're reacting the way they are; it can be so frustrating. During the Meerkat course 'Dog-ter Spock & The Meerkat' we discussed why your dog can't always have control of their own actions, as they get hijacked by their emotional Meerkat. We need to understand exactly what is going on for your dog so we can help them to 'Control The Meerkat'. It's important that we remember this when they do react, it's often not within their ability to control themselves yet. If they react it's because they're not ready for that situation yet, we need to advocate for them and help build their confidence and emotional control so they can cope in these situations. The first things we need to be aware of when living with these dogs is distance from the 'threat', duration exposed to the 'threat', and other distractions in the

environment.

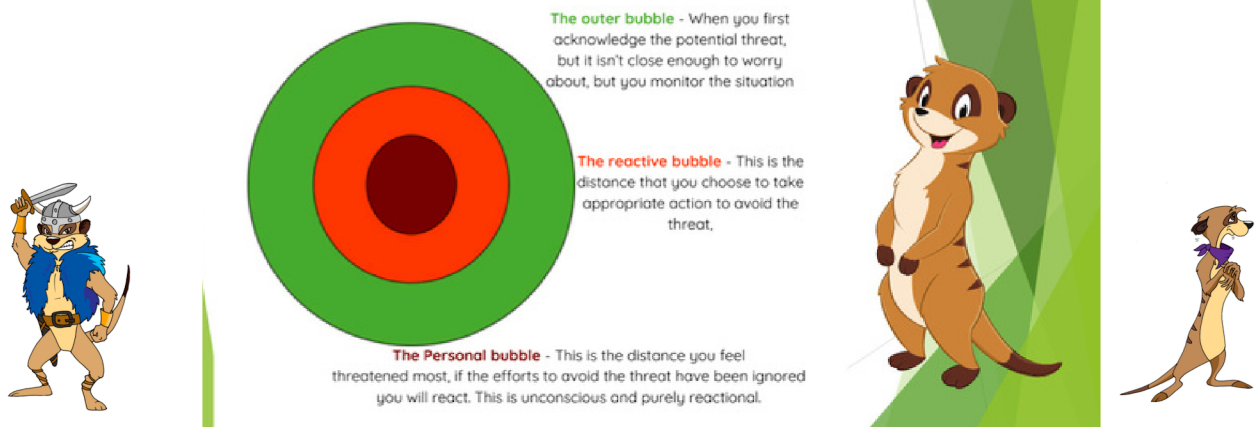


These distractions can include changes in weather, temperature, illness, pain / discomfort, fireworks, over excitability, people jogging, livestock, sounds from a school yard. Anything that will increase your dog's arousal or sensory levels will make it harder for them to focus, more so if they have an overactive Meerkat. You will notice that your dog is often able to take food and focus in some situations but not others or may even start to snap at the food, spit it out, or ignore you completely. They may be able to take food at one moment and listen, then stop. This is often due to how close they are to something they feel threatened or overwhelmed by. If they get too close their brain shuts down and their emotional Meerkat takes over! The longer something is present for can increase that threat level for your dog rather than lowering it.



If they get too close or get overwhelmed their brain shuts down and their emotional Meerkat takes over! The longer something is present can increase that threat level for your dog rather than lowering it. Our dogs may be able to cope for a short amount of time, but they soon can't. Other times they can relax in a situation but if anything changes, like a visitor moving, they're back to reacting. Occasionally, rather than our dogs relaxing with duration, some will shut down. They will stop reacting, but they're not calm. Their breathing rate is still high, they are jumpy and almost robotic. These dogs have a passive response to threats and are often our 'fawn' Meerkat. Please be aware that no behavioural reaction doesn't always mean relaxed, some may be our 'freeze' Meerkat, others the 'fool, Meerkat and appear ok as they're masking. Therefore, we have to Control The Meerkat, to relax your dog, before we can work effectively

Life in Bubbles



with them. We want to keep your dog in the green zone, as much as possible to help support your dog. All animals live within a series of bubbles, which are used when we feel threatened. These bubbles will change in size depending on the situation. For example, when walking down a busy street during the day you won't feel too threatened by the people passing you by, unless they come within your personal bubble.

However, if you walked along the same street at night you will notice people walking towards you sooner and you may even start to feel threatened before they get close. When they reach your reactive bubble you may choose to cross the street.

This assessment of threat is normal behaviour for every species and the distances at which we feel threatened are fluid and will change depending on the context of situation. In the above example, the only part that changed was the time of day.



It's important that during this time we keep your dog mentally and physically stimulated in other ways. This stress break allows us to teach our dog new coping behaviours and to increase your bond so they feel safe and secure with you.

We will be teaching them, in a safe environment, what they are expected to do in the situations they struggle in and reward them for doing so, gradually working through the rehabilitation until they can do this in other areas. Safety and relaxation will be a huge focus for your dog's rehabilitation, as many dogs really

struggle to regulate their emotions and switch off.

This inability to calm themselves down exacerbates their reactions when on lead. If they can't control themselves in quiet places when they're excited, how can we expect them to control themselves when they're reacting?

Helping your dog learn how to relax and chill out helps them to 'Control Their Meerkat' so they can help themselves and think in situations they struggle in. This is how our rehabilitation journey will begin



The management strategies within this journal and within our online membership community, and learning empawrium are to help you and your dog to learn new coping strategies and remain as calm as possible. These techniques will not fix the problem, as you can't remove a learned behaviour, but they will make it easier to manage your dog whilst you are working through the program to have more long term results. As we go through the rehabilitation journal your dog will learn new ways to 'Control The Meerkat', which will help change their behaviour into something more manageable to make your life with your dog easier.

After-all, it's often the underlying emotions that often drive their unwanted behaviours.



The Secret?



The secret to effective rehabilitation is understanding which emotions are driving your dog's behaviour. The consultation enables our Clinical Animal Behaviourists to do just this! Once we understand what is driving your dog's behaviour we can help them to cope and set them up for success!

We start by managing the environments they're in, to prevent their Meerkat from taking over when they become too scared, frustrated, or overwhelmed. Then we help them to learn how to 'Control The Meerkat', through games, relaxation exercises, and teaching them alternative behaviours and coping skills.

We need to avoid any situations that cause your dog stress in the short term, so they are able to start to relax. So this is where we will start. Until your dog can feel safe and relax they will find it difficult to learn, and utilise their new skills.

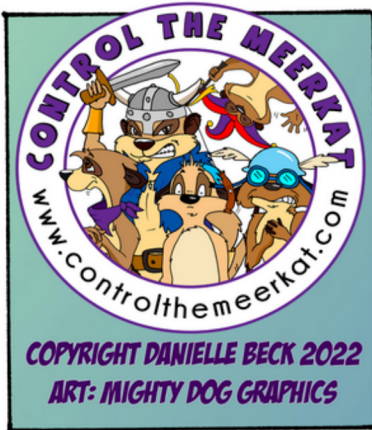
Everything starts at home. They need a safe **B.A.S.E.** to start from. Then we can create that space with you and you can become their safe place. Once they can control the meerkat in safe environments we can gradually start to expand this to new situations to help them relax and control the meerkat.



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Founder of Control the Meerkat

IT'S all ABOUT their B.A.S.E!



BONDING

SPEND TIME TOGETHER. NO NEED TO DO ANYTHING, JUST RELAX. IT MAY NOT SOUND LIKE MUCH BUT IT CAN HELP YOUR DOG FEEL CALM AND SAFE WITH YOU WITHOUT ANY PRESSURE TO DO ANYTHING.

ADVOCATE

LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR DOG WHEN A MEERKAT SUDDENLY HIJACKS THEM! GET THEM AWAY FROM THE POTENTIAL THREATS AND SAY NO TO OTHERS LOOKING TO PET OR PLAY IF NEEDED. **BE THEIR VOICE.**

SUPPORT

HELP THEM MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES IN A SITUATION. GIVE THEM TIME AND ALLOW THEM TO BUILD CONFIDENCE IN THEIR DECISIONS.

EMPATHIZE

TRUST YOUR DOG IF THEY'RE TELLING YOU THEY ARE SCARED OR UNSURE. THEY NEED TO KNOW YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THEY FEEL.

WHEN YOUR DOG FEELS THREATENED OR OVERWHELMED THEIR BRAIN GETS EMOTIONALLY HIJACKED WE CALL THIS THEIR **MEERKAT**

HELP YOUR DOG CONTROL THE MEERKAT WITH A SOLID

B.A.S.E



TO BE CONTINUED...



IT'S ALL ABOUT THEIR B.A.S.E.

CREATING SAFETY & BUILDING
CONFIDENCE



BONDING



It can be difficult at times to stay connected with our reactive dogs. Every day things happen. We struggle to leave them, walks become a chore that we now start to worry about; it's exhausting. That's ok and it's normal to feel this way, help is here! The first step is stop doing the things that you and your dog find difficult. Then start to enjoy your time together again. Spend time relaxing in the same room, capturing calmness, understanding your dog's body language, playing together with no pressure to actually do anything. Sharing space and relaxing together is a great way to bond and help your dog start their rehabilitation journey.

ADVOCATE



Our dogs need us to use our voice and actions to help them. They're not ready to make the right choices on their own when we keep putting them in situations where they struggle, as they can panic. Their meerkat takes over and accidents can and do happen. Advocating for our dogs means to stand up for them, often to friends and family. Their walks will be different for a while and we need to be more hands off rather than hands on. Many reactive dogs have a history of trauma; therefore pressure and suppression won't help them. We need to ask other people not to approach, keep their distance, and keep their friendly dog away. This is easier said than done but our dogs rely on us to help them in these situations and to get them out of the situation ASAP

IT'S ALL ABOUT THEIR B.A.S.E.

CREATING SAFETY & BUILDING
CONFIDENCE



SUPPORT



Although we can greatly reduce their exposure it's a sad fact of life that there will be times where it's not always possible to avoid everything that will trigger or overwhelm our dogs. A situation can't be avoided, or you get closer than you would like, and your dog will react. It's these moments our dogs really need our support to feel safe. They can't learn while they're reacting and having their handler react at them, jerk their collar/harness or shout. This will only affect your relationship, or make them more overwhelmed. We can support them by not making the situation worse. This is not the time for training. This is the time for distractions, comfort, or increasing distance. What ever they need to feel safe.

EMPATHIZE



Trust your dog when they're telling you they're scared, worried, or overwhelmed. Our dogs don't lie. They tell it how it is and it's up to us to listen and show compassion. If they're tensing up their muscles, looking around constantly, holding their ears tightly back, showing the whites of their eyes, or refusing to walk, they are telling you they're not comfortable and need support. So let's put ourselves in their shoes and show some compassion. Yes the scary thing could be a plastic bag, we know it's harmless - they don't. Let's not invalidate them by thinking we know what they're feeling better than they do. Let's guide them and support them to safety.

Meet your Dogs Meerkats!



TO BE CONTINUED...



Meet The Meerkats?



The Meerkat is an analogy developed by Clinical Animal Behaviourist Danielle Beck, MSc, to help caregivers to understand how the brain affects your dog's behaviour. Often our dogs react so quickly we lose control, they're like a different dog and the treats just don't work. This emotional hijacking we refer to as 'The Meerkat' and we can show you how to 'Control The Meerkat' so you can train your dog.

All dogs have a meerkat hanging out on their dog's collar and it is able to hijack them and take over whenever they feel threatened. Why do some dogs seem to have active meerkats and other calm? This depends entirely on your dog, their personality, genetics, development and breeding history, socialisation, their environment, any trauma they may have faced, and many more factors.

You can find out how active your dog's meerkat is by taking our Meerkat Quiz on the website!

Each Meerkat is based off the fight/flight responses available to your dog when they feel threatened. For many dogs when they are in a situation which they feel is threatening their brain literally changes and they get hijacked by their emotional brain – their Meerkat. Each dog will have access to all Meerkats. However, there is often a primary Meerkat that will be the main Meerkat for your dog and understanding which Meerkat hijacks your dog can really help boost their rehabilitation.

You can find out which alert or active Meerkat hijacks your dog by taking our new quiz!

We want to take the pressure off the dog when training as we can't train our dogs until we can control the Meerkat, and often we can't do that through conventional training. That's where we are different. We can help you to teach your dog how to help themselves!

Meet your dogs Meerkats

FIGHT



For most species this is a last resort as it's very costly, but if all else fails you may be left with no choice. For many dogs with fight, they charge first and ask questions later. The best defence is a good offence. Many appear confident and some are, as this technique has often been tried and tested. These dogs are not nasty and many have a false sense of confidence and bravado as shouting at everything is a reliable way to keep threats at bay,

FREEZE



These dogs are too scared to move so they freeze, hoping the threat may see they're no threat and leave. This response can be misinterpreted as calm and ok. However, their body will be very stiff, you may see lots of nose licks, small lip curls and low vibrating growls. These dogs are not 'fine' or 'calm', they are shutting down and withdrawing. They are often highly tolerant but will react if pushed, which appears to come 'out of the blue'.

FOOL



Dogs that fool are goofy by nature and often unaware if a threat is 'real'. They're often confident in situations they know and 'play up' in others. They will try to avoid conflict through play and distractions, which generally gets them into trouble. They may appear over excitable, or over friendly. They often zoom and start interacting with their environment in a fast way with little thought behind their actions. They are often seen as 'thick' or 'stubborn' when they're actually overwhelmed

Meet your dogs Meerkats

FAWN



These dogs try to calm situations to avoid threat and conflict. Often the play police in group situations, they are often seen being over the top wiggly, often with their bellies close to the floor or rolling onto their back and repeat this. They will lick their nose / mouth, to appease the 'threat', to try to calm them and avoid punishment. They are seen as very biddable and compliant when often they're unsure and have a high need to 'people please' to avoid conflict.

FLIGHT



Avoid the threat, run away and/or hide. These dogs will try to move away, often bolting with their ears back and tight against their head, tail tucked, and panting heavily with large eyes. If they can't run, as they're on a lead or cornered they get scared and frustrated and will start to display more fight type behaviours as they try to intimidate the threat. These dogs are often better off lead and will choose to avoid situation.

How do the meerkats affect your dog?

Take the quizzes at
Controlthameerkat.com
to find out !

4 Phases & 4 steps



01

CREATING SAFETY & BUILDING CONFIDENCE ✓

- Safety
- Relaxation
- Confidence building
- Foundation skills

02

FOUNDATION BEHAVIOURS & EMOTIONAL REGULATION ✓

- Foundation exercises
- If In Doubt; Chill Out
- Check -In
- Emotional Regulation - impulse/self control & Frustration tolerance

03

DRESS REHEARSAL! PRACTICING IN SAFE PLACES IN THE REAL WORLD ✓

- *Can they listen and relax in the home?*
- *Can they listen and relax in the garden?*
- *Can they listen and relax in quiet areas?*
- *Can they regulate themselves?*

04

LIVING WITH THE MEERKAT ✓

- Have a plan
- Be prepared
- Support
- Advocate



PUT IT ALL TOGETHER AND GRADUALLY TAKE ON THE WORLD



B.A.S.E. - PHASE 1

CREATING SAFETY & BUILDING CONFIDENCE

01

CREATE SAFETY



For reactive dogs, especially those who are conflicted, nervous, anxious or fearful, feeling safe is essential for rehabilitation. If they don't feel safe they can't learn and they can't recall from memory. It's our responsibility to ensure they get a stress break and are then reintroduced to situations gradually, at their pace.

02

RELAXATION



For many of us relaxation is hard. We like to be doing things and struggle to switch off. This can be true for our dogs too, particularly those with anxiety or those that are easily frustrated. If they can't relax and calm themselves down in safe situations they will really struggle to control the meerkat in triggered situations.

03

BUILD CONFIDENCE



For many reactive dogs they don't always have confidence in themselves and their own abilities. These confidence exercises can help them to feel more confident in new situations and with novel objects. By learning how to control themselves in these safe situations they are learning the skills needed for the areas they don't feel safe. Learn a new skill together like scent work, dog parkour, or some tricks. Most of all have some fun. There's more to having a dog than dog walks :)

04

FOUNDATION SKILLS



These are key skills which we need your dog to understand and be able to do in different situations, often without asking. We want our dogs to learn how to manage themselves so they can calm themselves when they start to feel overwhelmed. We can support them through this

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER AND GRADUALLY TAKE ON THE WORLD



Welcome to Control The Meerkat Foundations!



B.A.S.E.
Creating SAFETY





Creating Safety is where we start. It's often hard for us as we're desperate to do something, to train and stop this reactive behaviour. However, if we start there we're not going to get very far long term.

Unless our dogs feel safe, they're going to struggle to listen, learn, and recall from memory. this will lead to further frustration for both of you.

However, if our dogs feel safe, they are in a better place to listen, learn, and remember how to make good choices; rather than act on impulse.



CREATE SAFETY

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOUR DOG BEHAVES THE WAY THEY DO AND HOW YOU CAN HELP THEM TO HELP THEMSELVES.

If your dog doesn't feel safe; they're going to get hijacked by the Meerkat faster and more often. Safety is key. Knowing they have a place they can go to where no one will bother them is so important, we all need our space. But what about when we're outside? How can we help our dogs to feel safe on a walk?

We support them. We teach them that we won't put them in situations they can't cope with. We make a promise to them that we will do everything we can to keep them away from triggers and difficult situations. We can learn to read their body language and find out what uncertainty and apprehension look like in our dogs.

How do they hold their tail? Their ears? Their body? Do they stare or look away? Lick their lips or yawn? Prick their ears or hold them back?

For many reactive dogs, the ability to relax is extremely difficult for them. Many live in a state of anxiety, fear, or emotional conflict.

Once we know what this looks like for our dog we can start listening and getting them out the situation, or give them prompts to help themselves to cope. Yes this isn't easy but it is necessary at this stage if we want to build safety and trust with our dog.

When outside, WE need to become their place of safety. We will advocate for their needs and get them out the situation until they feel like they're ready to cope with it on their own. Once you get there it's a wonderful feeling. But you have to earn their trust first. This is where we start.





CREATE SAFETY CONT...

We know that people who have undergone trauma and stressful times find it difficult to relax. That part of their brain doesn't allow them to. Their 'meerkat' part of the brain can't turn off enough to let them relax, they're on sentry duty constantly, which is exhausting.

If your dog has a medical concern on top of this they are even more sensitised and will often bark, tense up, snap and be irritable in ways that don't make sense. These dogs often react 'out of the blue', as their trigger was internal not external. The same can be said for dogs affected by trauma, as many appear to experience flashbacks.

Unless your dog is able to feel safe and relax, their ability to learn and progress will be hindered indefinitely.



The secret to successful rehabilitation, is not how much training you actually do, it's how well you can encourage your dog to relax and provide a safe environment for them to explore and learn safely. Trust and connection are the key, not training. In these situations less is more.

Once they are able to relax with you in the house, we can then start to gradually introduce them to other areas. For example the gardens, car, quiet walks, fields, and they can relax there too, building through your goal tracker. Picnics are great for reactive and sensitive dogs. Pick quiet spots out the way and just do nothing. Let them experience the world with no pressure, and no threats. Are they able to relax?

If your dog struggles, a consultation with one of our clinical animal behaviourists may be needed so we can tailor the plan to your dog's individual needs.





CREATE SAFETY CONT...

What Does A Safe Place Look Like?

Anything! As long as it's reliable; they can include:

- **A Bed** - Your dog's bed can be their safe place. Ensure it's cosy and out of the way of any footfalls, avoid narrow kitchens, hallways, and doorways. Let them have chews and don't bother them there. It's their place to get away and watch from a place of safety. If you walk past drop a treat and walk on. If you want to interact with them ask them to come to you. Give them a choice, if they don't that's ok. Trust is formed when boundaries are respected not pushed.
- **A Crate** - Just like a bed but for many more secure, as they're confined which can help them feel safe. However, they can make some dogs feel trapped and for these dogs crates should be avoided. Start with the door open, you never really need to close it unless it's for safety. The ability to make choices without worrying about the consequences is the foundation of safety and trust.

- **The car** - For some teaching them they can go back to the car when on a walk can encourage them to explore. Their confidence in knowing if they don't want to go somewhere you'll take them back to the car often encourages them to explore more, as they have that option. Choices and control are important when building confidence and trust.
- **You!** - If your dog understands that you are safe it can make a huge difference to their confidence and reactivity. They'll come to you for reassurance or to ask to leave. Support your dog and you can help them work through situations. You'll be amazed at how far they will come.



Trust is not putting pressure on them to move faster than they're able to. It's about providing safe opportunities for them to explore and learn alongside you, no pressure, no conflict.



CREATE SAFETY CONT...

STAYING CALM AND RELAXED

One of the hardest things to do when living with a reactive or sensitive dog is to remain calm and relaxed when your dog is barking, or growling, or when you're worrying about what will happen next. We often feel we should be reprimanding the dog for their behaviour. However, this may only interrupt the behaviour momentarily, and may actually make things worse, as they can add to the already rising arousal levels within your dog. Therefore, it's more advantageous to set your dog up for success by avoiding these situations or preparing for them and guiding them to more preferable behaviours, as this will make you more efficient at managing the situations.

The first thing we need to do is avoid problem areas. This can mean not going for a walk, driving out of the area where possible to avoid other dogs and people, certain noises, changing walking times, or utilising secure fields.



This is to give our dogs a stress break and to help their meerkat calm down.

For some dogs avoiding a walk all together for at least two weeks is vital to help bring their body back to baseline and reduce their stress. For these dogs we are often eager to get out there and train but they really do need time. They need us to take the pressure off and let them be themselves with you there to support them. All the training in the world won't help your dog if they don't feel safe. That's where we come in. We can help fill that gap to get the right foundations in place to boost the training when your dog is ready !





CREATE A SAFE PLACE

Create a place of safety within your home for your dog. they may or may not choose it but it's vital they have somewhere to go, or a way to let you know they're not ok

Some dogs like enclosed spaces like pens, rooms and crates. For others these spaces create panic and anxiety, they need a place in the open, but away from footfall. Hallways and door ways and by regularly used cupboards are not good resting places. corners of the room where people are less likely to walk, under tables etc are far better for most dogs. Others just prefer the sofa next to you as they need the security of you being near, for now.





CREATE AN ANCHOR

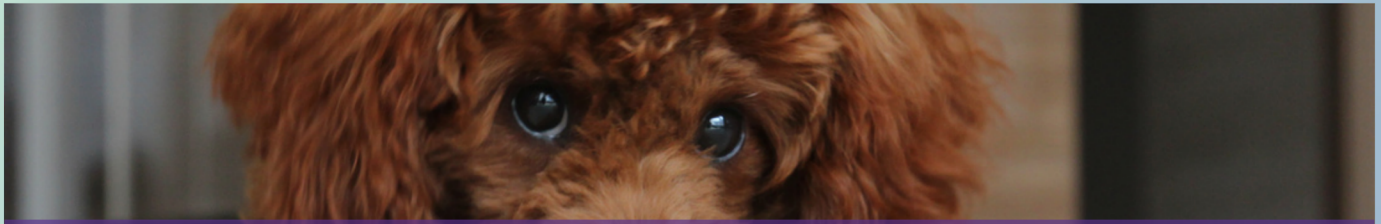
Anchors are things that help us feel safe. These are our comfort items, like our favourite hoody, book, tv show, smell etc. These are things that help us to stay grounded, and feel that bit safer when going out. Some may refer to them as good luck charms.

We can create these anchors for our dogs too! They may be a favourite toy our dogs like to play or sleep with, a blanket, a location or smell. Have a think about if your dog has any of these items already. Do they always grab a certain toy if they're nervous? Does a certain smell always cheer them up?

If not we can create them by having these items on show during safe times and relaxation times and remove after to build an association between these items and relaxation.

Once we have these anchors, we can use them to support our dogs in other situations. Some can even become safety signals that mean if this is here, everything is ok





INCREASE PREDICTABILITY

predictability can help your dog to feel more secure in different situations and throughout the day in general in two main ways

1. **predictability reduces anxiety as your dog starts to understand what they need to do in different situations**
2. **lowers frustration as your dog's expectations of the situation changes.**



Predictability can help your dog to make the leap from unfamiliar and scary to familiar and safe.

With distance and gradual exposure we can help dogs to find the unfamiliar, familiar by teaching them what to do when they're unsure. this is what 'if in doubt; chill out' is all about.

the environment may be new, but the cue is based on safety and familiarity.



Over time, the combination of self regulation and progression to you becoming their reliable safe place they'll start to understand that if you say it's safe to 'chill out' then they can confidently relax.





NOISES AND STARTLE

Many lead reactive dogs are also window barkers. practising this behaviour daily can keep their meerkat on high alert and they are able to regularly practise barking behaviour.

to help with this and make life easier, block off the windows short term, as we help your dog to feel safe. frosted vinyl for windows is excellent at blocking the view for the dog but allowing daylight in. as a cheap alternative sticking some grease proof paper up can also do this, though it's not as durable.

white noise machines or background tv / radio can also help to dim external noises. Lofi music channels on youtube can be quite relaxing for dogs. Avoid anything highly stimulating like dog tv with birds, as your dog may get too wound up and bark or jump at the tv.

We have two games to help your dog build confidence and resilience to startle, that are worth checking out

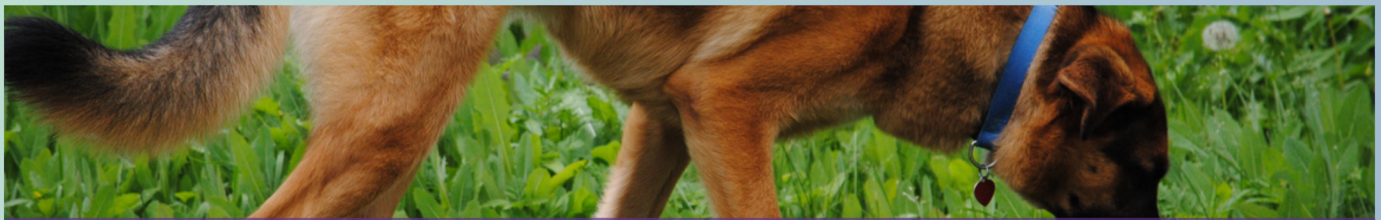
CAN'T GET IT WRONG GAME

This game helps your dog to explore and gain confidence in trying new things, without external pressures, and building their bond with you and having fun!

WRECK IT GAME

This game encourages your dog to explore moving items, which may trigger small startle responses safely so they can learn to recover & build resilience.

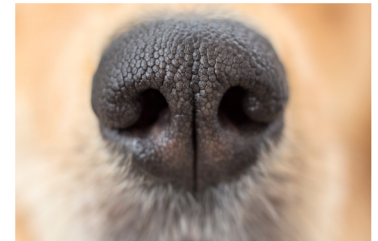




SNIFFING TO SAFETY

IMPORTANCE OF SNIFFING AND SCENTWORK

It may seem obvious but our dogs learn about their environment through their nose. You may have noticed that when a dog is unsure they will start sniffing. Sometimes this is air scenting, other times it's focused



sniffing on the ground. This can vary between just checking out and not really focusing to really focused sniffing. Our dogs use sniffing as a way to feel safe, explore the environment and calm themselves down. They also use it for search and hunting games, which are fun and build confidence. For all dogs, even those that won't take food. Sniffing to safety is where to start. It's simple and can start in safe places, then build to others. Scentwork has many different forms and we're here to help you find what works best for you and your dog!



SNUFFLE

VS

SEARCH

Snuffle exercises allow your dog to explore calmly, it's like meditation for dogs. Snuffling involves scattering food, scented items, boxes around for them to investigate and explore. It engages the brain in learning and safety mode and is an essential foundation

This is hiding specific scented things like food, or scented items in and around different objects for them to explore and find. It's a more active exercise and a great bond building experience for you both. You'll feel proud of how smart your dog is and is a must if you need to increase your bond and enjoy spending time with your dog

HUMAN OR DOG SCENT ON FBRIC, LEAVES FROM OUTSIDE. SCENTWORK ALLOWS YOU TO BRING SCARY INTO SAFETY SLOWLY





BONDING ACTIVITIES

When living with a reactive dog, it's so important that you're able to look after your own wellbeing, as well as your dogs. It's normal to go through periods of resentment and frustration, as the life you thought you were going to have with your dog is no longer possible...for some that's forever, others it's temporary. Discovering activities that you can do together and enjoy together can really help your relationship, it's takes the focus off the can't.



A SMALL WORLD DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A BAD THING

Find an activity you can do together and often scentwork is key. It allows you to explore together, meet people and engage in social activities as there are scentwork classes and groups all over the country, not just here at Control The Meerkat.

Sure your dog can't go for a walk in the local country park on a weekend, but they can find a hidden item or person in a ScentOps trial; Or they are the best cosy buddies to people watch at a distance; Or they're a Parkour Pro and can climb trees and jump on and accross walls that other dogs only dreamed of; Or they are a trick master and can put your shopping away !

THEIR ABILITIES ARE ONLY LIMITED BY OUR IMAGINATION; IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE WALK



Final Thoughts

aaaaaand relax

You did it, you reached the end! You should be well on your way to being able to understand your dog and think about the ways you can help them to feel safe and supported by you. First in calm situations and slowly building up to more stimulating situations, rather than your dog getting overwhelmed at not knowing what to do. Being safe allows them to think, then you can use our program to help them make the right choice or be able to listen to your guidance.

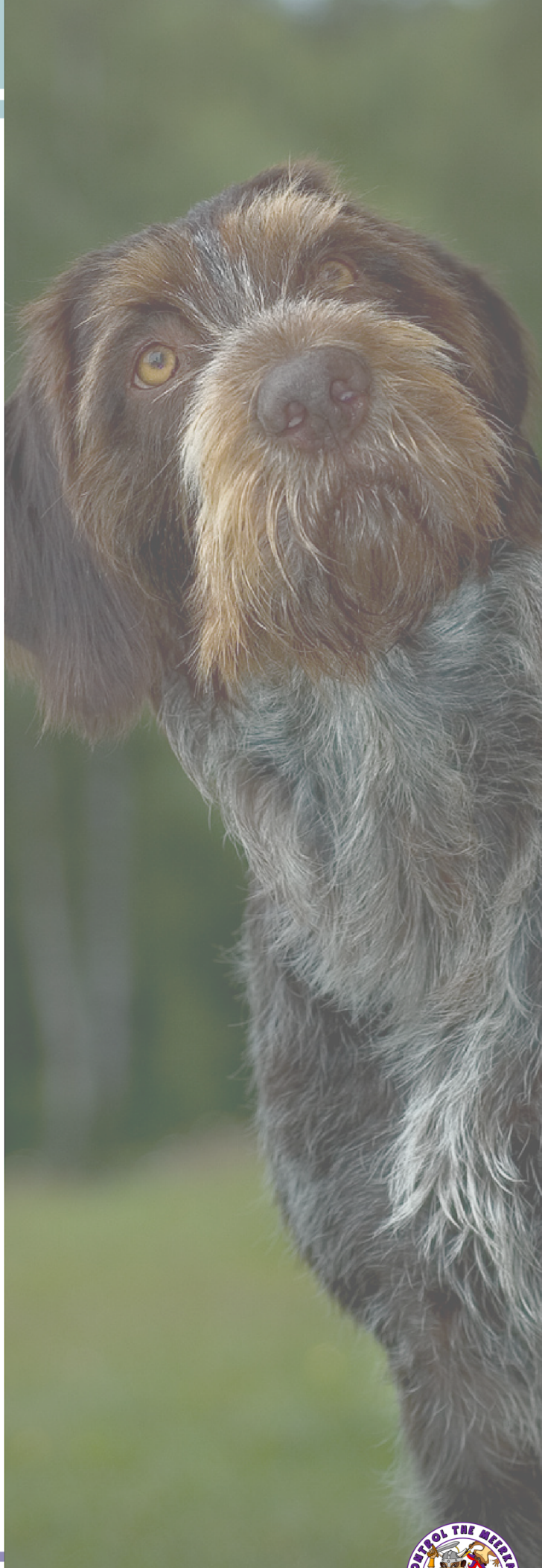
If you are still struggling, there may be more going on than we originally thought, and your dog may be experiencing more emotional difficulties than previously believed, or even something worth discussing with your vet.



There's lots of advice and courses to try in our learning empawrium at controlthemeerkat.com plus a community forum where you can meet and talk to other owners with reactive dogs, and get some peer support, or book a session with Danielle or a member of the Control The Meerkat Team :)



Take A JOURNEY
WITH ME →



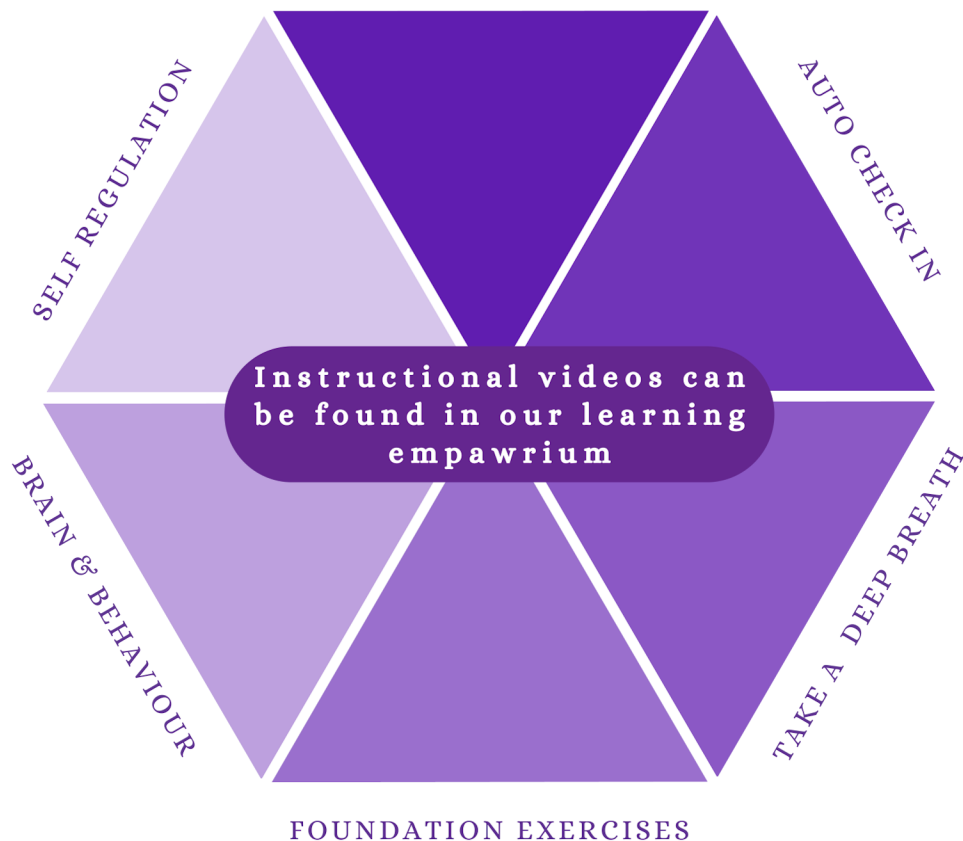
CONTROL THE MEERKAT



collection



IF IN DOUBT; CHILL OUT



The management strategies and games within Control The Meerkat are to help you and your dog to learn new coping strategies, and remain as calm as possible. These techniques will not fix the problem, but they will make it easier to manage your dog, whilst you are working through the program to have more long term results. As we go through the rehabilitation journey your dog will learn new ways to 'Control The Meerkat', which will help change their behaviour into something more manageable to make your life with your dog easier.

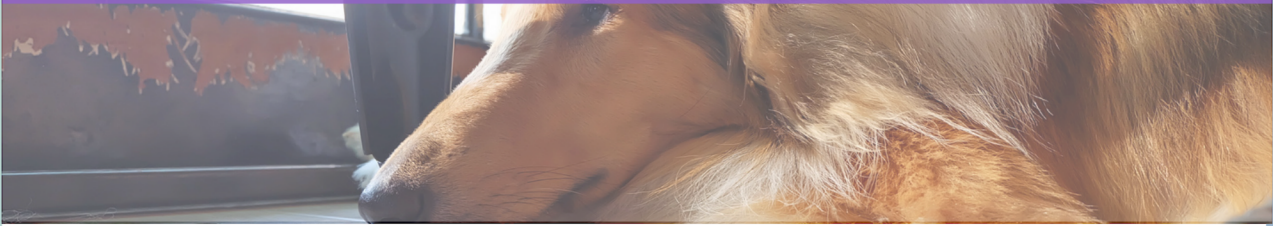
After-all, it's often the underlying emotions that often drive their unwanted behaviours.

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"Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life."

MOVING FORWARD



Sooo, what should I do next ?

Well you've come such a long way, are you curious what else you can try with you dog? Would you like them to be more responsive? Are you still struggling and finding your dog can settle inside, but struggles outside as they are reactive on their lead? Do you just want to be able to take them out for a walk without them barking and lunging? Or be able to actually leave the house as they struggle when left or even take object off them without conflict? Then the 'Control The Meerkat' series is for you!

I love it! Who is this for exactly?

Control The Meerkat is for all people who want to understand and help the reactive dogs that share their lives. It's a community built to help owners to meet others in the same boat, and learn how to help their reactive dogs help themselves. There are private forums, learning resources like this, instructional videos and webinars too



Sounds AMAZING! How does it work?

Simply visit the website and choose the course or membership subscription that's best for you! You can even book a consultation with a Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist; and join our 6 or 12 month rehabilitation program.

Click here to get started: controlthemeerkat.com

Notes



MEET THE *Author*



Danielle is an enthusiastic and passionate clinical animal behaviourist, rehabilitation trainer, and mum of one. Her mission is to help, and inspire dog owners to create an easier life with their dogs. She aims to help caregivers to understand their dogs, and enable them to manage themselves by sharing her knowledge and experience with you. She currently lives in Greater Manchester, UK, with her partner, 9 year old son, 2 dogs, and a cat.

"Define success on your own terms, achieve it by your own rules, and build a life you're proud to live."

-Anne Sweeney



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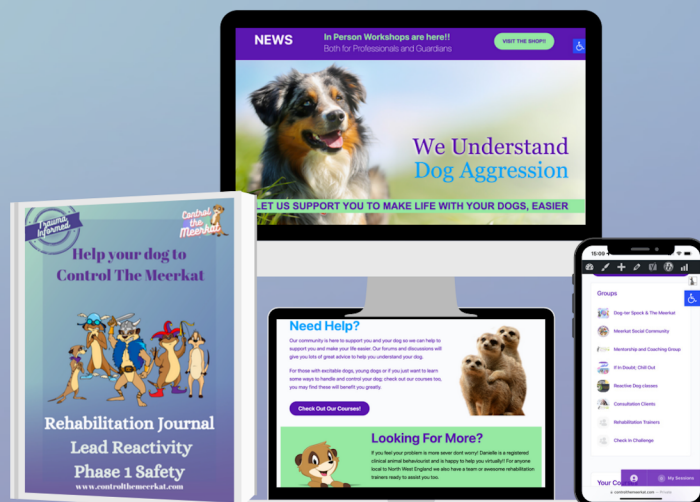
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