



Help your dog to Control The Meerkat

B.A.S.E. Relaxation



Welcome



Hello there,

My name is Danielle and I'd like to welcome you to '**Promoting Relaxation**'; 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 dogs behaviour than just simple training. Our dogs are complex, emotional being 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. Rest, sleep, and relaxation is vital for our dogs and we need to ensure we focus on ensure they can rest as much as we do keeping them exercised. Being able to relax in different situations and when you can't get what you want is a vital life skill that often gets put on the back burner as we focus on more formal training. However, we believe that teaching out dogs to 'chill out' in different situations is actually one of the best things you can teach your dog and it will kick start any behavioural rehabilitation plan.

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.



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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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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.

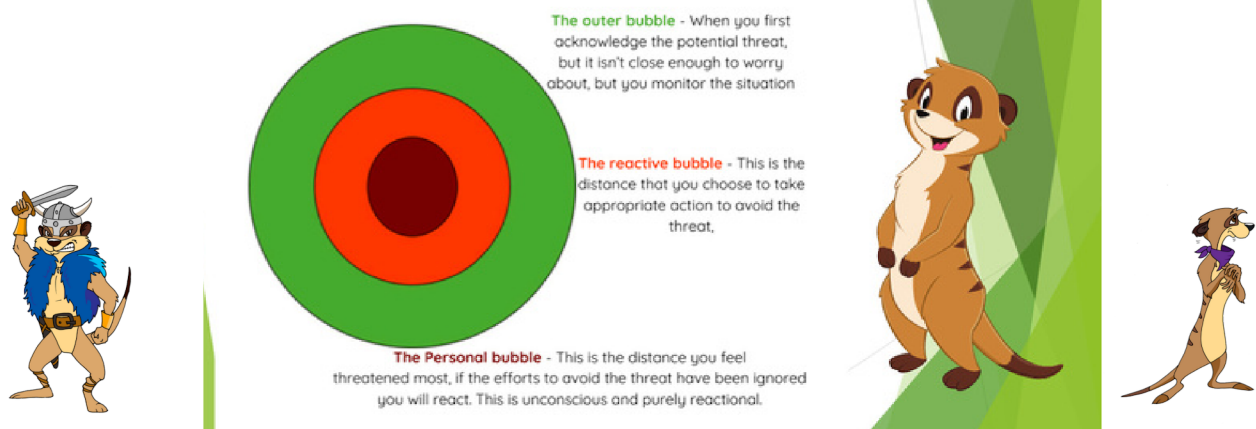


These distractions can include changes in weather, temperature, illness, pain / discomfort, fireworks, over excitability, people jogging, livestock, sounds from a school yard. Anything that will increase your dog's arousal or sensory levels will make it harder for them to focus, more so if they have 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.

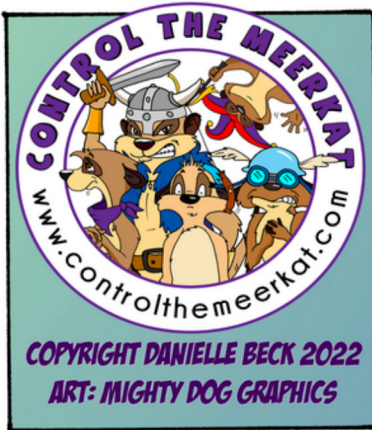
Everything starts at home. They need a safe **B.A.S.E.** to start from. Then we can create that space with you and you can become their safe place. Once they can control the meerkat in safe environments we can gradually start to expand this to new situations to help them relax and control the meerkat.



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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.



Promoting RELAXATION



Welcome to - Promoting Relaxation



RELAXATION IS VITAL FOR OUR DOGS AND THIS IS DIFFERENT TO SLEEP. MANY DOGS CAN SLEEP THEN WAKE UP, PACE, VOCALISE, RUN AND EVEN PLAY, WHEN WHAT THEY REALLY NEED IS TO RELAX AND CHILL OUT. OFTEN THEY ONLY UNDERSTAND HOW TO GO FROM 0-60 AND CAN'T RELAX UNLESS THEY'RE BEING TOLD WHAT TO DO OR BEING ENTERTAINED. OTHERWISE ARE TOO HYPER- VIGILANT AND ANXIOUS TO EVEN THINK ABOUT RELAXING

This is similar to a toddler who is learning to play alone. They start needing you there all the time to play, the thought to pick up a colouring book and entertain themselves just doesn't occur to them, they need a prompt from us. As they grow they are able to recognise their feelings and calm themselves down and seek out what they need. This is where we start,

FOR MANY DOGS, THE MISSING NEED IS RELAXATION AND THE ABILITY TO SETTLE THEMSELVES, WHEN THEY CAN'T DO WHAT THEY WANT.



PROMOTING RELAXATION

STAYING CALM AND RELAXED

When at home, utilise the 'Chill Out' exercises from our 'If In Doubt; Chill Out' course, helping your dog to switch off and relax at home is where we start.

Once they can do this we can move onto can they relax when everyone is in the same room? When someone is eating? When the tv is on? What about in the garden? Then on the walks themselves, starting in a quiet empty field, building up to a dog / person occasionally at a distance, can they people watch ?

Including chill out time in between games can help with their emotional regulation, as they learn to calm themselves down. Our self regulation exercises really help your dog to understand and apply those skills to relaxation.

If they react, get out of the situation ASAP, then scattering some food on the floor for then to sniff can help to give them a coping outlet. These are great at distracting, and managing your dog ,but they wont fix the problem long term.



The food is to sniff, it doesn't matter if they dont eat it, snuffling can help to calm our dogs and help them self regulate.

Remember, we want low stress days in the house and walks for both you and your dog. It's ok to skip a walk or turn back and end the walk early. This is not a failure on either of your parts, rehabilitation is hard. It's up and down and it relapses. What does change is the intensity of the reactivity, and the speed at which they can calm down, and recover after an episode. These are the parts to focus on, not that your dog still reacts. Stickers to mark good days can help us to focus on the good.



PROMOTING RELAXATION

IF IN DOUBT; CHILL OUT

This course teaches you how to help your dog apply the principle of 'if I don't know what to do; just chill out'. For many dogs we want to give them as much choice and control over this environment as possible, as this helps with confidence and bonding. However, life happens and sometimes our dogs have to deal with a situation. This course helps our dogs to understand that if your foot is on their lead, regardless of where they are, it means nothing is happening that involves them and they might as well 'chill out'. Our online course guides you through this in full, however here are the basic steps to start you off.



1. Start in a quiet place, with your dog on a lead.
2. Drop the bulk of the lead to the floor, holding onto the handle.
3. Place your foot on the lead. You want to have enough slack that your dog can comfortably stand up and sit, without it pulling on them.
4. Shift your weight so the ball of your foot is diagonal on the lead and lean into it, using your hips if standing, and wait.
5. We want your dog to feel a small amount of frustration and then go ok I'll just pause and think. When they do, drop a treat for them when they're not looking at you. If your dog struggles, then we know they need some extra support with self regulation. For these dogs we want to drip feed treats to help them regulate. Then check out our self regulation exercises.
6. Over time they learn that if they wait when the foot is on the lead, they get rewarded with the walk or food.



PROMOTING RELAXATION

BREATHING AND CO REGULATION

We know that people who have undergone trauma and prolonged stress find it difficult to relax. That part of their brain doesn't allow them to. Their 'meerkat' can't turn off enough to let them relax. They're on sentry duty constantly, which is exhausting for both you and your dog.

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 always 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 and can suddenly react or shut down.

Unless your dog is able to feel safe and relax, their ability to learn and progress will be hindered indefinitely. This is why we put a huge emphasis on safety and relaxation, without these we're just constantly reapplying bandaids.

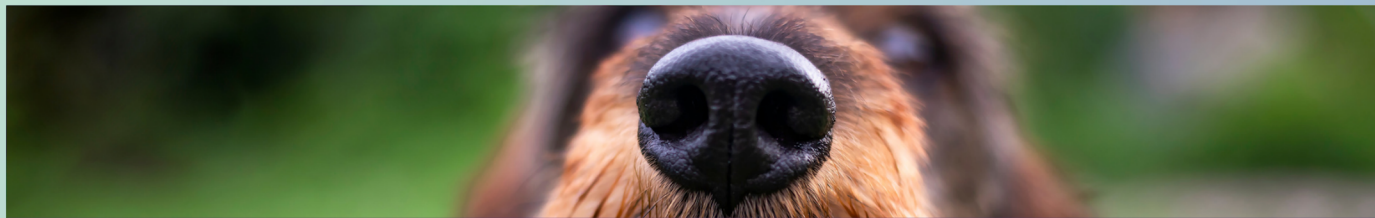


The secret to successful rehabilitation is not how much training you actually do, it's how well you can encourage your dog to relax, self regulate, and provide situations for them to explore, and learn how to apply their skills safely. Trust and connection are the key, not training. In these situations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

Once they are able to relax with you in the house, we can then start to try different rooms, or alone in a room for short periods. Then gradually introduce them to other areas like the gardens, car, quiet walks, fields, and relaxing there too, building through your goal tracker. Picnics are great for reactive and sensitive dogs too. Simply pick quiet spots out of the way and do nothing, let them experience the world with no pressure, and no threats. Are they able to relax?

How does your dog look when they're relaxed? What are their ears doing? Tail ? Eyes? Nose ? Knowing this helps us know when it changes





PROMOTING RELAXATION

BREATHING AND CO REGULATION

To help our dogs to learn how to calm themselves they need some foundation self regulation skills. These include impulse/self control and frustration tolerance and learning they can control their breathing.

Each of these sounds difficult but they're really easy for your dog to learn and with practise they can become incredibly self aware and able to apply these self regulatory behaviours in real world situations.

Some of these you may already be doing! Things like asking for your dogs to wait/stay while you do something or leave something is one way of starting. What we want next is for our dogs to start to wait, or leave without us asking them to. This is true self regulation and where we want to start. Can they wait without you asking, leave food that you have dropped? If yes, great you're on the right track. If not check out our learning empawrium for the self regulation exercises!

We can often help our dogs by staying calm and relaxed too. If we take a deep breath and calm ourselves down, often our dogs will mirror this. This is why it's important that we try to maintain that place of safety and relaxation for our dogs. Taking a deep breath in times of stress can help us too





PROMOTING RELAXATION

PLAN RELAXING TIME TOGETHER INTO YOUR DAY

Plan a time to just sit with your dog and do nothing, no pressure, no exercises, no food. Just you and them at home, books or movies are great for this. When you start doing this a number of things may happen,

Responses will vary but most are either relax close or away from you, or jump all over you. These are ok, it's about spending time together and enjoying each others company with no pressure or conflict.

1. Your dog comes and lies next to you or near you, enjoys some fuss then sleep – This is good, some may want soft, massaging strokes, others just want to be near you. They don't want you to touch them. This is ok, its quality time.

2. Your dog jumps all over you, brings you stuff, barks – This is a dog that needs to keep busy. Sometimes this is due to them not knowing how to switch off unless they're being told what to do. For others it can be due to anxiety and they need to keep distracted, which can be a fawn, fool or flight response.





PROMOTING RELAXATION

CO - REGULATION TOGETHER



To help our dogs just sit with them in different places, in the house, outside, a field, woodland, the park etc. and different times of the day.

For this exercise we're not asking them to do anything. We're just watching and observing both ourselves and our dogs. Often sitting with them so they have a choice to be close or move away can be good.

Start with yourself. How are you? How's your breathing and heart rate? Do you feel calm? happy? stressed?

Then look at your dog. What's their breathing rate? heart rate? are their pupils small or dilated? what are their ears doing and how does this change?

How does this change as you start to relax or if you start to feel stressed ?

Observing our dogs in this way can help to understand more about how different things affect them and can really help you to help them





PROMOTING RELAXATION



MENTAL STIMULATION TO PROMOTE RELAXATION

It is important that dogs have plenty of things to occupy them, which are reinforcing and mentally stimulating. Mental stimulation is very important for the general wellbeing of all dogs, especially working dogs, which will build confidence and independence. Mental stimulation will also help them to feel safe in the environment through exploration. This starts to build their confidence & allow them to work through their emotions to help them relax. Mental stimulation is all about allowing your dog to use their brain and harness natural instincts, working things out for themselves rather than being directed or shown what to do. Use your imagination and let them show you what they enjoy, and work with them to create new games that will keep them occupied. There are also a wide variety of toys available for this purpose, which you can fill with different foods and your dog will have to figure out how to get the food out.

Start with simple things like hiding food for them to find, loose treat scattered in the garden or snuffle mat, yoghurt in a toy like Kong, a kitchen roll tube to rip up, or a long lasting chew like an antler or buffalo horn.

Let them have the items and sit with them in the room while they enjoy it. Don't try to take the item and let them relax with it and you. If you leave the room will they continue to chew the item or do they follow? This is a way to see if they're able to relax without you around or if they're more relaxed alone and gives you an idea about how to help them moving forward.



PLEASE NOTE IF YOUR DOG GUARDS OBJECTS PLEASE SPEAK TO A MEMBER OF OUR TEAM OR A PROFESSIONAL CLINICAL ANIMAL BEHAVIOURIST BEFORE TRYING THIS EXERCISE.

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.

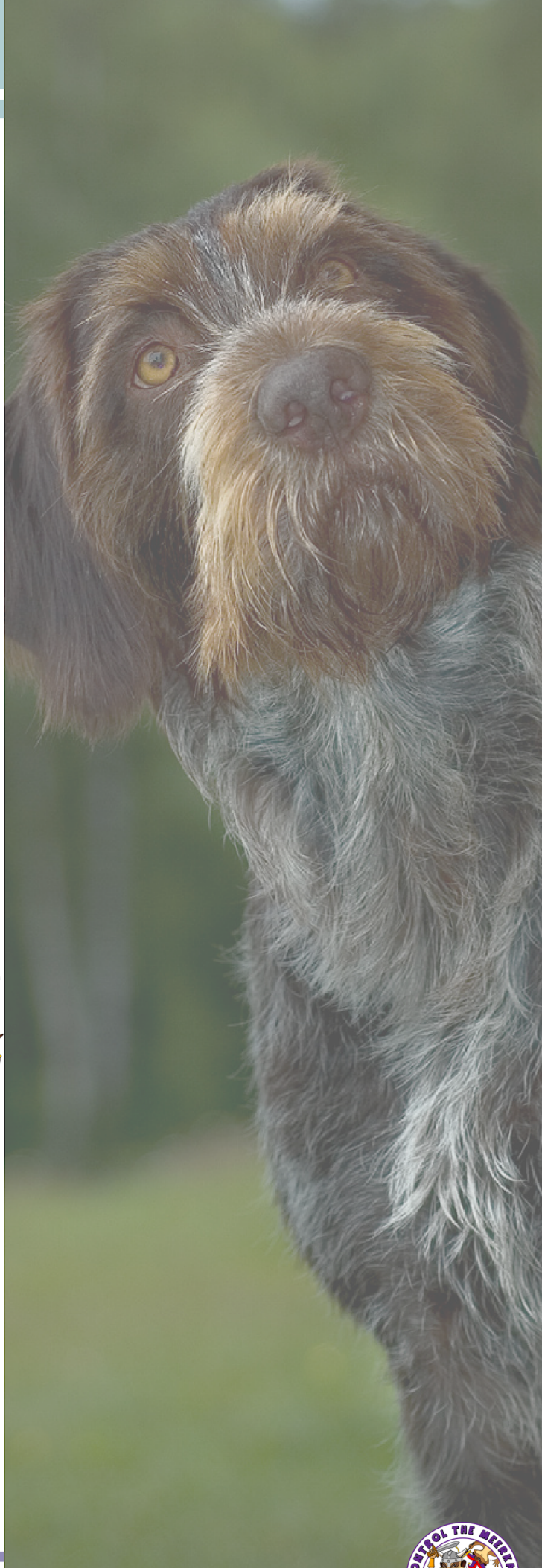
If you are still struggling, there may be more going on than we originally thought, and your dog may be experiencing more emotional difficulties than previously believed, or even something worth discussing with your vet.



There's lots of advice and courses to try in our learning empawrium at controlthameerkat.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 →



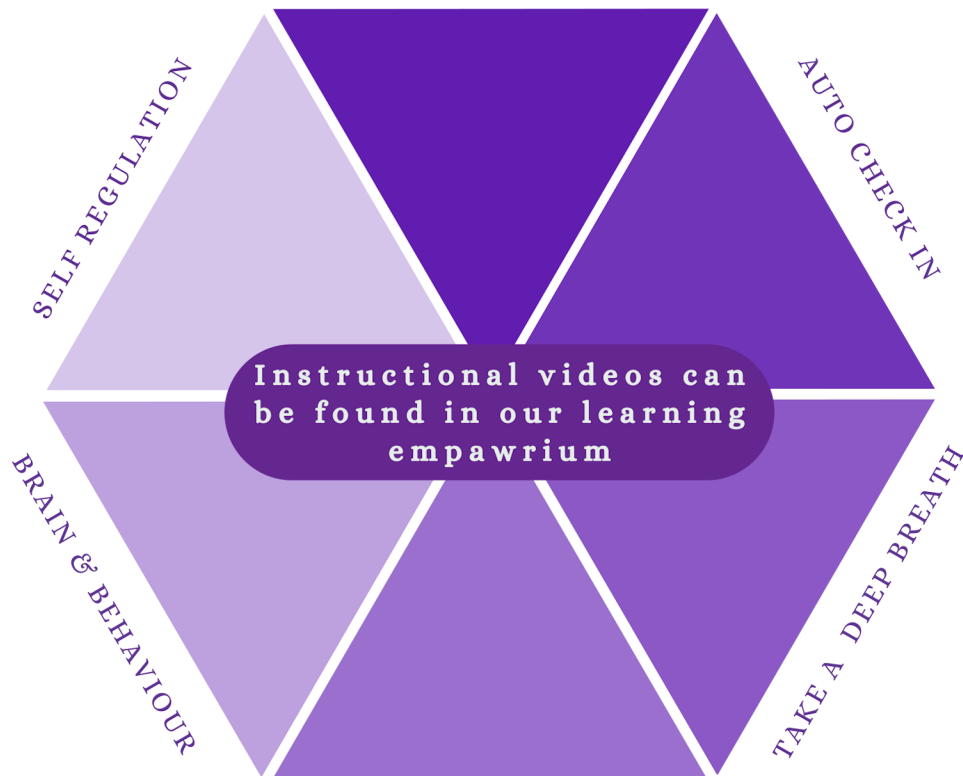
CONTROL THE MEERKAT



collection



IF IN DOUBT; CHILL OUT



FOUNDATION EXERCISES

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 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 objects 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

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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