



Help your dog to Control The Meerkat Foundations Foundation Skills

Plus printable worksheets to
track your progress !





You're

IN THE RIGHT
PLACE IF...



1. You're building a relationship with your dog and want to know where to start as you love them but *they're often 'too much' and you just want them to listen to you!*
2. You want them to focus and understand how to manage themselves and are looking for something simple, but don't know how to begin.
3. You've tried so much and you just don't seem to be getting it right and need some structured guidance to help increase their focus and responsiveness to you.

Hello there!

Welcome



My name is Danielle and I'd like to welcome you to '**Foundation Exercises**'; part of the '**Control The Meerkat collection**'. 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!

'Foundation Exercises' is the first step to helping your dog learn how to start to regulate their emotions. 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.

'Self regulation' is a technique I've used for years to help dogs to cope with their emotions rather than relying on us to tell them what to do. This may work for some dogs, though the fallout can be when not told in time they struggle and react. This helps them to become well behaved as they can control their own meerkat and make decisions for themselves making your life with your dog easier!

Good luck with your training!

Danielle Beck, BSc (hons), PGDip, MSc

Clinical Animal Behaviourists & Rehabilitation Trainer

Founder of Control the Meerkat





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Foundation Exercises

Treat delivery and focus exercises



These skills are all based on our dog's 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 practice in different situations we build strong, effective habits that last.



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



Self Regulation

Impulse / Self Control and Frustration Tolerance



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Foundation Skills



Treat Delivery



How you deliver the treat can affect your dog's performance and focus, There are 3 main ways:

- Mouth delivery
- Floor delivery
- Location delivery/feeding station

Mouth Delivery - Take it and Luring

Teaching your dog to take food without getting your fingers nibbled is the first place to start

We want our dogs to understand when to follow the food, known as luring, when to focus and when to take. We want to fade the lure after around 3 goes to prevent confusion.

Start with a treat in your hand and wait for your dog to sit. You don't need to ask them to do anything at this stage, we want them to think for themselves and figure it out. Holding the food high above their head can help, too low and they may keep trying to snatch.

Once they've sat give them a treat, with a flat palm, this will ease any frustration and prevent any grabbing at your hand.

Then hold the treat between your thumb and first finger. When you give them the treat turn your palm up and let them take it.

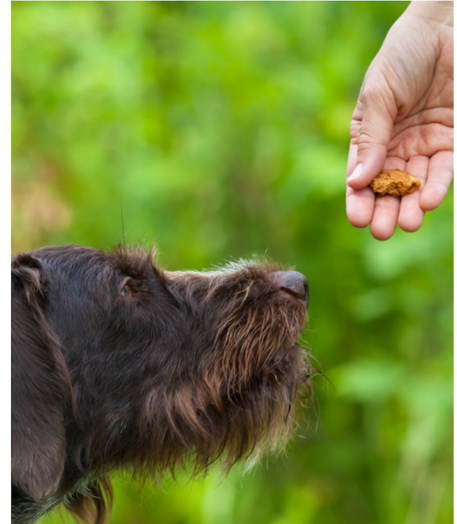
This way they learn to only watch or follow the treat until your hand is palm up. You can also use this exercise to teach a 'release cue' which means 'ok you can have it now you've done what I've asked'. Release cues are great for helping dogs to learn how to be patient and starting self control.





Release Cues

Try to use words that you don't regularly say when talking to others otherwise you might accidentally release your dog from a wait when saying 'ok' to a neighbour. Break, Free, or finish; these work well for most people. Remember dogs don't actually speak our language so use any word you like, just be consistent.



Starting Focus Control



Now we add a bit of self management by holding the treat in your thumb and first finger, then gradually lower it towards your dog's nose. If they move towards the treat, move your hand back, when they move away from your hand quickly give them the treat palm up with your release cue.

Repeat this and you'll soon see them starting to correct themselves, shuffling their paws, trying to keep still as you hold the treat. This is the first stage of them learning how to control their emotions and thus their meerkat!

We want to start with focus, can they follow the food? Start by slowly moving your hand left to right while stationary, if they can keep their body still and move their head, release, treat, repeat.



Focus Follow / Luring

Keep the treat between your thumb and finger and encourage them to follow, often we need to adjust our stance or move slightly to get them to follow. When they do, release, flat palm treat and repeat.

If they jump up, move your hand away, and go back to stationary, movement can be very exciting! Teaching them to follow your hand is great for walking past distractions like other dogs, people, joggers and we can turn it into a hand target later.



NOTE:

Some dogs find being stationary incredibly difficult, particularly cocker spaniels and their crosses. Allow them some wiggle time after you've released them, then ask 'ready' and wait for them to come back and sit. 'Ready' over time will become a cue for are you able to work right now?





This can really help you understand if anything in their environment is too distracting for them. These exercises help with this as they learn that emotional regulation.

You can increase their self control by adding duration so wait for 5 seconds, 8 seconds, 10 seconds, 15seconds, building up. Remember this is self control so we're not asking them we want them to learn how to manage themselves.

Deliver to the floor – The foundation of 'auto check in' !

It's important that your dog learns treats can be delivered in different ways, and not always from your hand.

Dropping treats on the floor is a great way to keep those paws on the floor and prevent jumping up. It also all allows them to sniff, which is proven to help calm and regulate the meerkats of reactive or excitable dogs !



For these exercises it's the engagement with you that's important rather than the sit, it builds the basic of that habitual look in your direction that we can utilise in the auto check in

NOTE: Counting out treats can help you manage your training

Aim for 6 treats and 6 repetitions, then a break



Treating fast will provide accurate feedback that your dog is doing the right thing and reduce any frustration or anxiety around training that your dog may have. To maintain a position delay the treat gradually by 2 seconds, then 4, 6, 8 etc. If they struggle build up the lower seconds for longer. There's nothing wrong with going back to these foundations to build them up again.

Practice delivering treats from one hand, by having 6 in your hand and rolling them towards your palm with your thumb. This technique is great for fast treat delivery when out and about so practise at home, if possible try with both hands and different treat types. It's a mechanical handling skill that's worth building up



Location / Feeding Stations

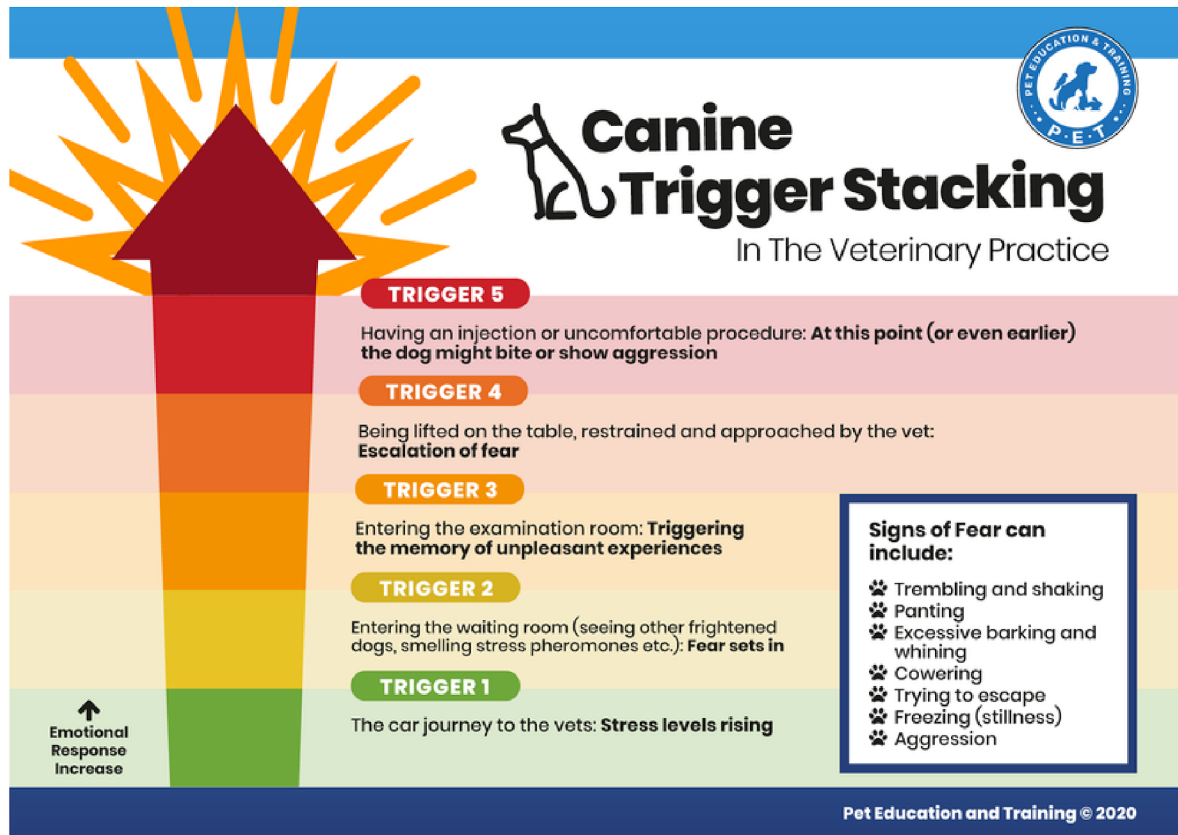
Always having food in our hand can be useful but if overused, our dogs will only start to pay attention if we have food in front of them. This is more like bribery than reward, and something we want to avoid. We want to reward behaviour not bribe them for it.



We can do this by having food in a treat pouch, tubs around the house, or specific bowls that we get our rewards from, or more advanced we send our dogs towards to get their treat. This takes a lot of self control but these exercises are how we start



Foundation Exercises



Have a go at the foundation exercise in different places and with different distractions with your dog. Are there places where they can focus better? What if people are eating? dancing? other dogs are playing?

Monitoring your foundation exercises progress

How long does it take for them to focus on you ?

How often will they focus on you in a 10 minute period?

How long do they focus on you for?

How does this vary? time of day? location etc.

How is this affected when they see/hear/smell things ?



WHAT THINGS MOTIVATE MY DOG TO FOCUS THE MOST ?

HAVE A THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY LIKE TO DO AND ENJOY, WHAT ARE THEIR
FAVOURITE TYPES OF FOOD? TOYS, GAMES, STROKES,

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Checklist

Tick off when your dog can 'carry out foundation exercises' at each step

STEP ONE:

- *My dog can 'carry out foundation exercises' in one room*
- *My dog can 'carry out foundation exercises' in 3 different rooms, and the garden*



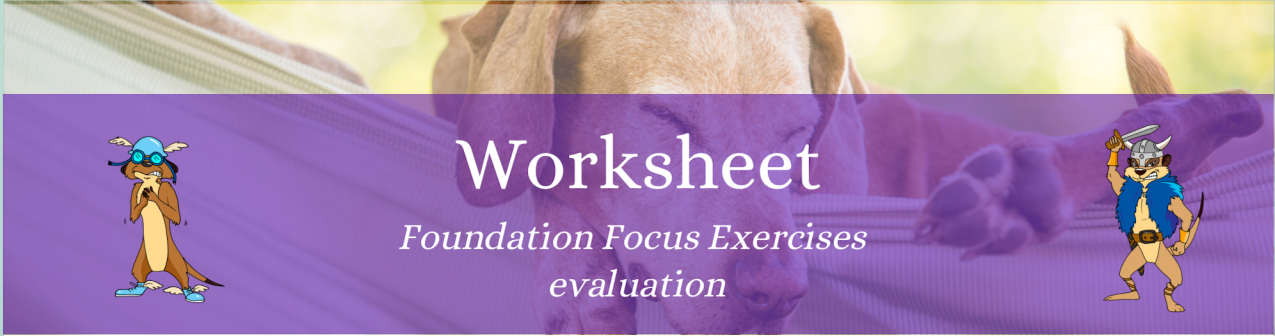
STEP TWO:

- *My dog can engage with me then 'carry out foundation exercises' when taking part in the least exciting activity*
- *My dog can play really exciting activities , then pause, 'carry out foundation exercises' and go back to playing*

STEP THREE:

- *My dog can 'carry out foundation exercises' when we go outside in quiet places*
- *My dog can 'carry out foundation exercises' in busier environments!*





Worksheet

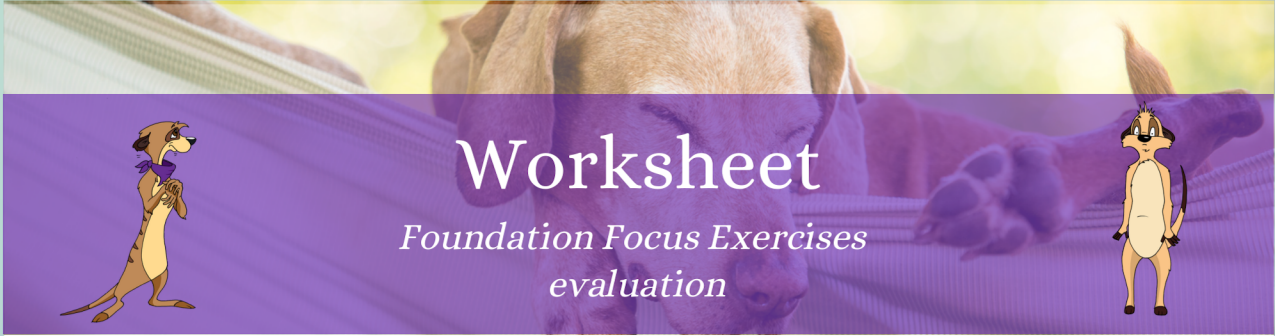
Foundation Focus Exercises evaluation

NO 1: Where are you practicing your 'Foundation Focus Exercises'?

NO 2: How long does it take for them to focus on you in different situations?

NO 3: How long can they remain responsive to you in different situations?

NO 4: What can you do to make it easier or more challenging next time ?



Worksheet

Foundation Focus Exercises evaluation



NO 1: Where are you practicing your 'Foundation Focus Exercises'?

Blank area for response to question NO 1.

NO 2: How long does it take for them to focus on you in different situations?

Blank area for response to question NO 2.

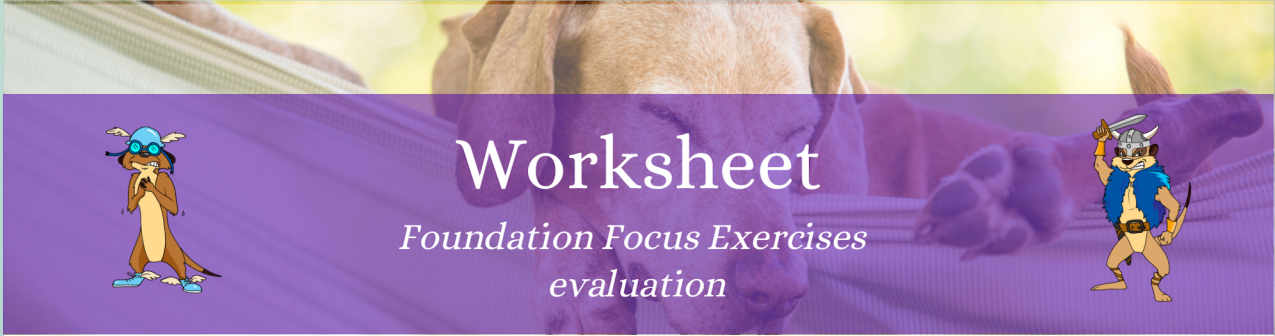
NO 3: How long can they remain responsive to you in different situations?

Blank area for response to question NO 3.

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Worksheet

Foundation Focus Exercises evaluation

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Remember all of these foundations are self management – we're not asking them or cueing them, we're capturing what we see and like. This allows our dogs an element of control within their training to boost their confidence, and allow them to regulate themselves – exactly what we want from a well-behaved dog.



**You get the idea! Now give it a go with your dog !!
want to learn more? Join our community !
After-all, it's often the underlying emotions that
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.

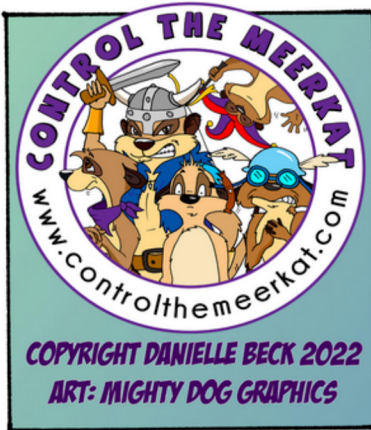


Danielle Beck

Danielle Beck, BSc (hons), PGDip, MSc
Clinical Animal Behaviourists &
Rehabilitation Trainer
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 dogs collar and it's able to hijack them and take over whenever they feel threatened. Why do some dogs seem to have active meerkats and others 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 in 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 rehabilitations.

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're 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

Final Thoughts

aaaaaand relax

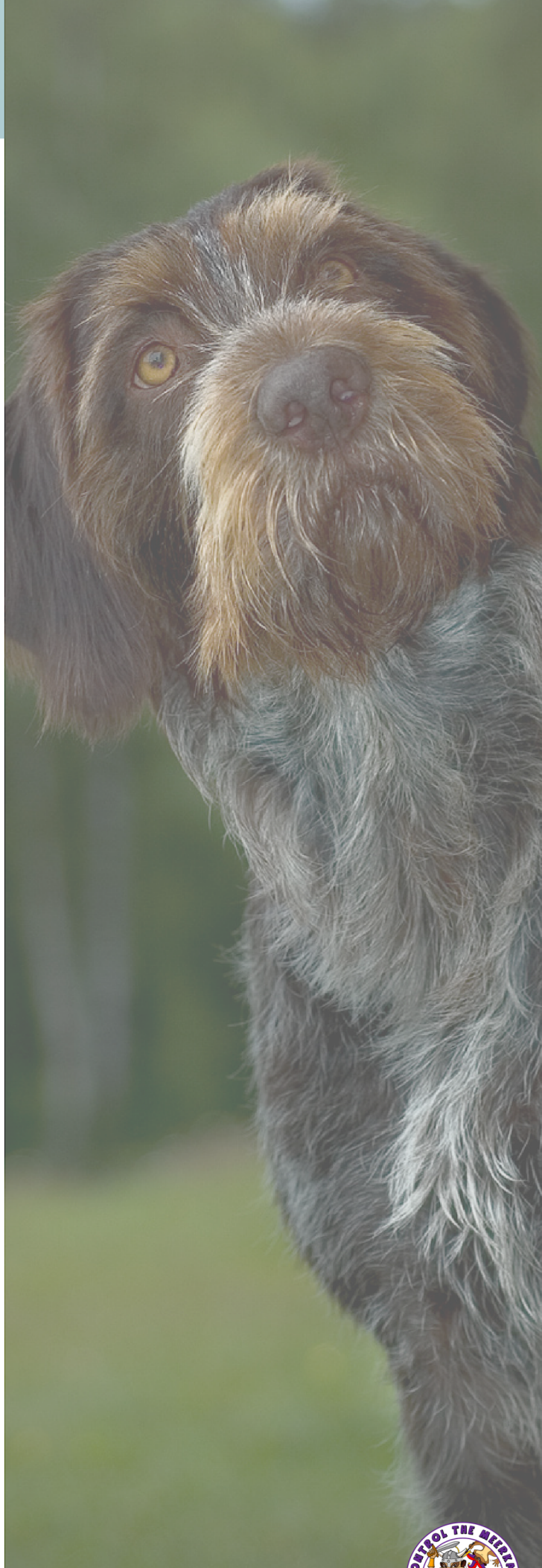
You did it, you reached the end! Your dog should be well on their way to being able to **#ControlTheMeerkat** and **'foundation skills'** in lots of situations, rather than barking at you, trying to steal treats or chomp your fingers, and anything else they did when they were frustrated.

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 →



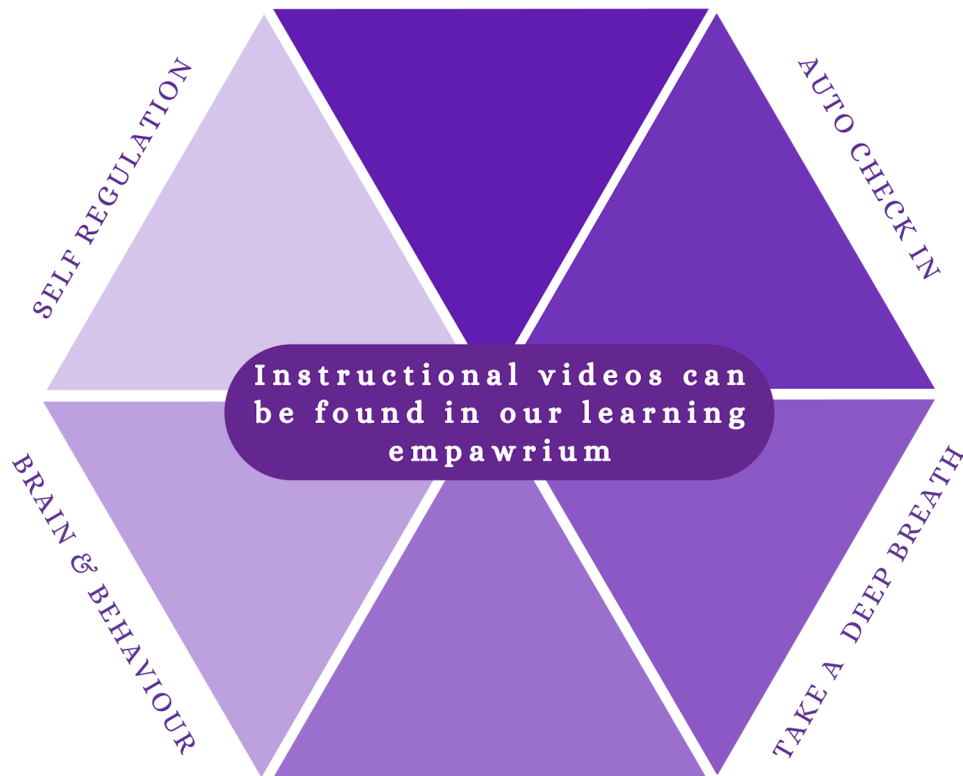
CONTROL THE MEERKAT



collection



IF IN DOUBT; CHILL OUT



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

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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*PS. Want to take the
next step?*

**Come and join us and
over 200 other dog
owners**



**Learn how to help your dog
without all the jargon**

**Go to: controlthemeerkat.com
to learn more**





Join Our Community and learning empawrium today!



access to support, courses, videos and more!



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