



Help your dog to Control The Meerkat Foundations Take A Deep Breath

Plus printable worksheets to track
your progress !



Hello there!

Welcome



My name is Danielle and I'd like to welcome you to **'Take A Deep Breath'**; 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!

'Take A Deep Breath' is one of 4 main exercises to help your dog learn how to start to regulate their emotions. It was taught to me by the wonderful Dr Karen Overall and is the best place to start to help our dogs learn that they can have control over how they feel. 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



Foundation Skills

Take A Deep Breath

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 practice 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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Take A Deep Breath



Introduction

Deep breathing is a great way to help regulate our emotions whenever we feel overwhelmed. Many of us have heard the advice "just breathe" or "Take a deep breath", when people are panicked, frustrated, or overwhelmed. This is because deep breathing activates the part of our brain and nervous system that enables us to calm down, relax, and Control The Meerkat; allowing us to think more clearly. This is also true for our dogs!



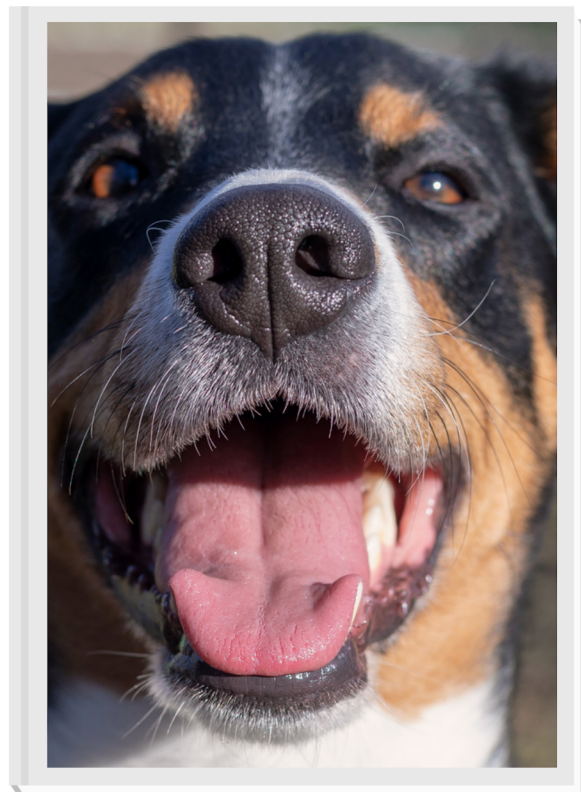
Below is a step by step guide to teaching your dog how to take a deep breath and then use this in real life situations; to help them 'chill out', 'focus' or 'check in'. It's been adapted from Dr Karen Overall's deep breath protocol. Her work is worth checking out.

Step 1

Start in a quiet area where you are going to be comfortable, with minimum distractions for a few minutes, ideally 10 minutes' minimum. Count out 36 treats and put them in 6 piles of 6.

- Take the first 6 treats in your hand and close your hand around them
- Hold your hand out to your dog, wait for them to move back & treat
- Repeat for the next 4 treats and your dog should start to wait patiently for the food when you hold out your hand

Break to pick up the next 6



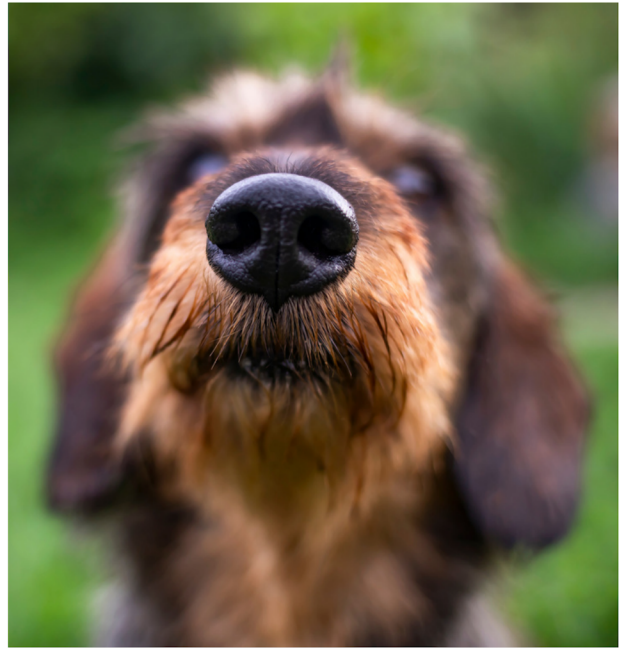


Take a Deep Breath

Step 2

- Take the next 6 treats in your hand like before
- Wait for your dog to close their mouth & treat
- Repeat for the next 5 treats, gradually increase the duration their mouth is closed from 1 - 5 seconds

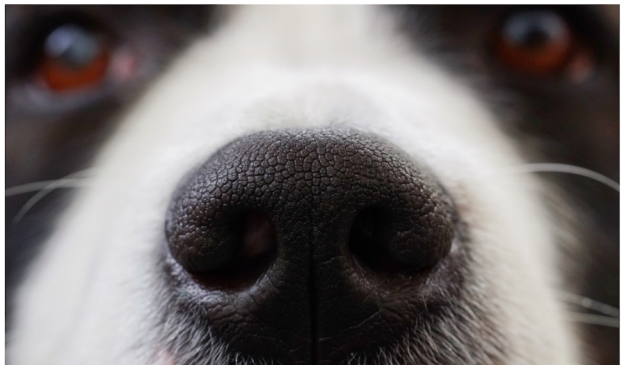
Break to pick up the next 6



Step 3

- Take the next 6 treats in your hand like before
- This time we want to wait for your dogs nostril to 'flare' as they breathe in through their nose
- Repeat for the next 5 treats, always treating after the nose flare

Break to pick up the next 6



Repeat this until the treats run out, remembering to break after 6 treats to pick up the next. When you know your dog is starting to understand you want them to flare their nostril, then add the cue you want, not before. We want them to understand what we want before adding a cue :)



Now our dogs are understanding that the cue 'breathe' mean take a deep breath in through your nose, we can ask them to do it in different situations. As always start in quiet calm places. Cue - Behaviour - Reward. Then see if you can ask them to breathe before you throw a ball? Before you put the lead on? When barking at the door ?



You'll find the more wound up they are, the harder it will be to respond, therefore it's worth practicing in calm situation and making it part of routine. This helps form a habit and habits are hard to break and will make it easier to ask them to breathe in these situations. Once they start to apply this to the situation, it becomes self reinforcing as it makes them feel better. Then you'll start to see them using this technique on their own as it's so self reinforcing ! Give it a go!





WHAT THINGS EXCITE MY DOG THE MOST ?



HAVE A THINK ABOUT WHAT GETS YOUR DOG EXCITED AND CHECK OFF WHEN THEY
CAN TAKE A DEEP BREATH TO CALM THEMSELVES DOWN.





WHERE DOES MY DOG STRUGGLE TO TAKE A DEEP BREATH?



HAVE A THINK ABOUT WHERE THEY STRUGGLE TO TAKE A DEEP BREATH ON CUE AND COMPARE IT TO WHERE THEY CAN; WHATS THE DIFFERENCE ? ARE THEY OVERWHELMED? EXCITED? HAVE YOU PRACTISED HERE OFTEN? THEN NOTE DOWN THE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO BREAK IT DOWN TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM





Checklist



Tick off when your dog can 'take a deep breath' at each step

STEP ONE:

- My dog can 'take a deep breath' in one room
- My dog can 'take a deep breath' in 3 different rooms and the garden.

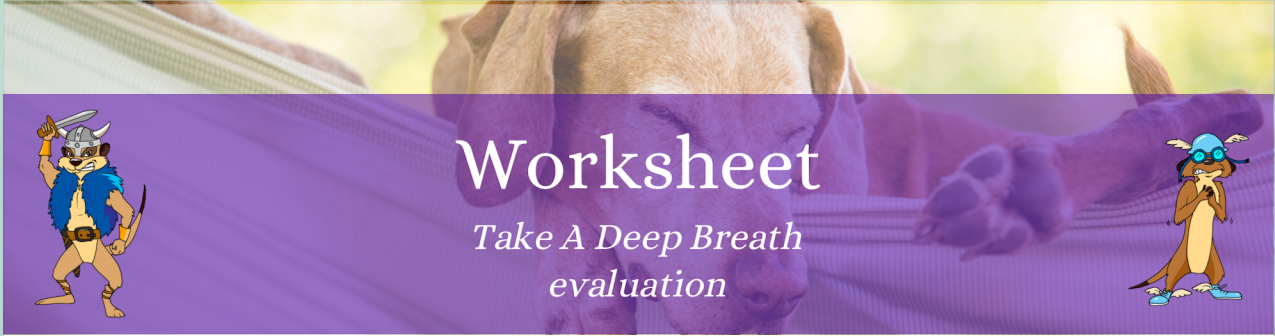
STEP TWO:

- My dog can engage with me then 'take a deep breath' when taking part in the least exciting activity.
- My dog can play really exciting activities , then pause, 'take a deep breath' and go back to playing.

STEP THREE:

- My dog can 'take a deep breath' when we go outside in quiet places.
- My dog can 'take a deep breath' in busier environments!





Worksheet

*Take A Deep Breath
evaluation*

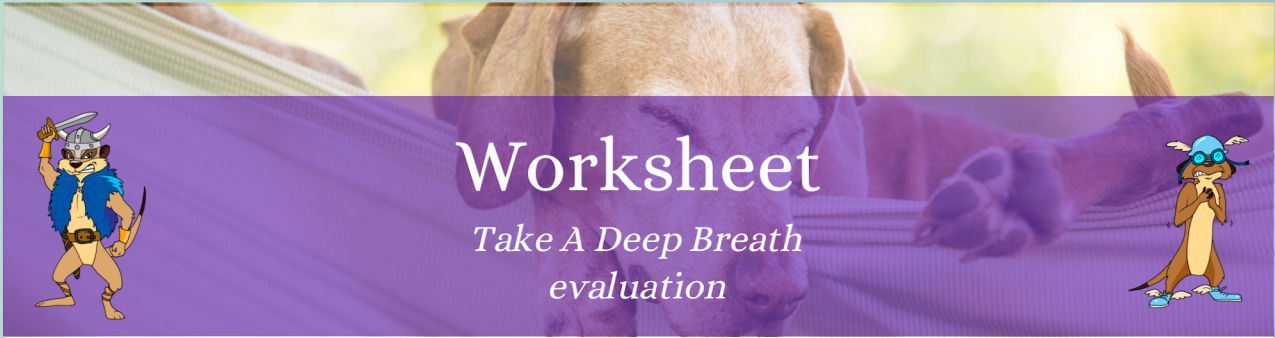


NO 1: Where are you practicing your 'take a deep breath'?

NO 2: How long does it take for them to respond to the cue?

NO 3: Can they 'take a deep breath' without you asking them too; where?

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



Worksheet

Take A Deep Breath evaluation



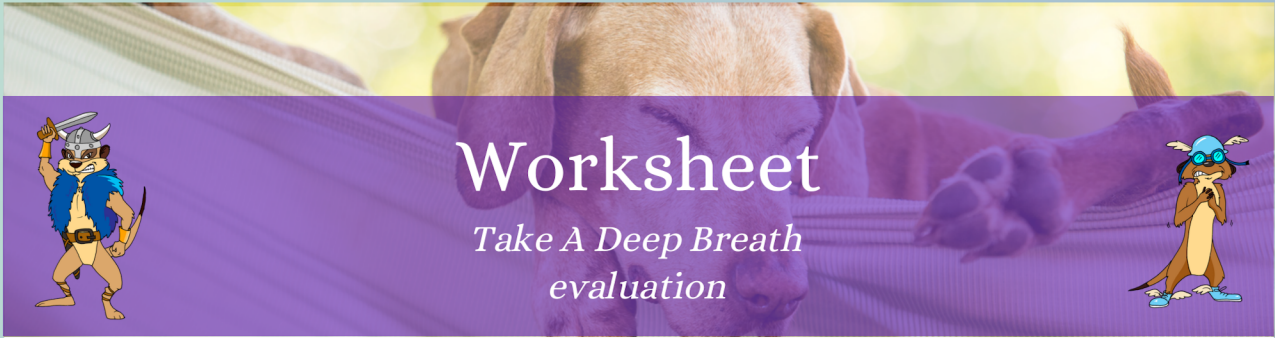
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Worksheet

Take A Deep Breath evaluation



NO 1: Where are you practicing your 'take a deep breath'?

NO 2: How long does it take for them to respond to the cue?

NO 3: Can they 'take a deep breath' without you asking them too; where?

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

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.

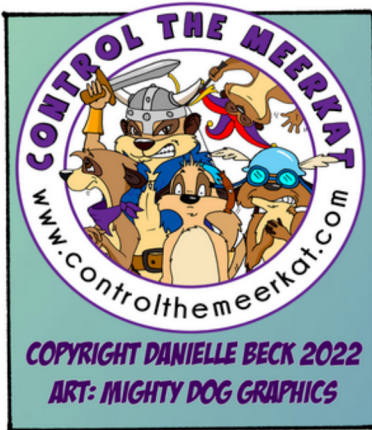
Everything starts at home, they need a safe B.A.S.E. to start from. Then we can create that space with you and you can become their safe place. Once they can control the meerkat in safe environments we can gradually start to expand this to new situations to help them relax and control the meerkat.



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 dog 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 dogs 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 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

Final Thoughts

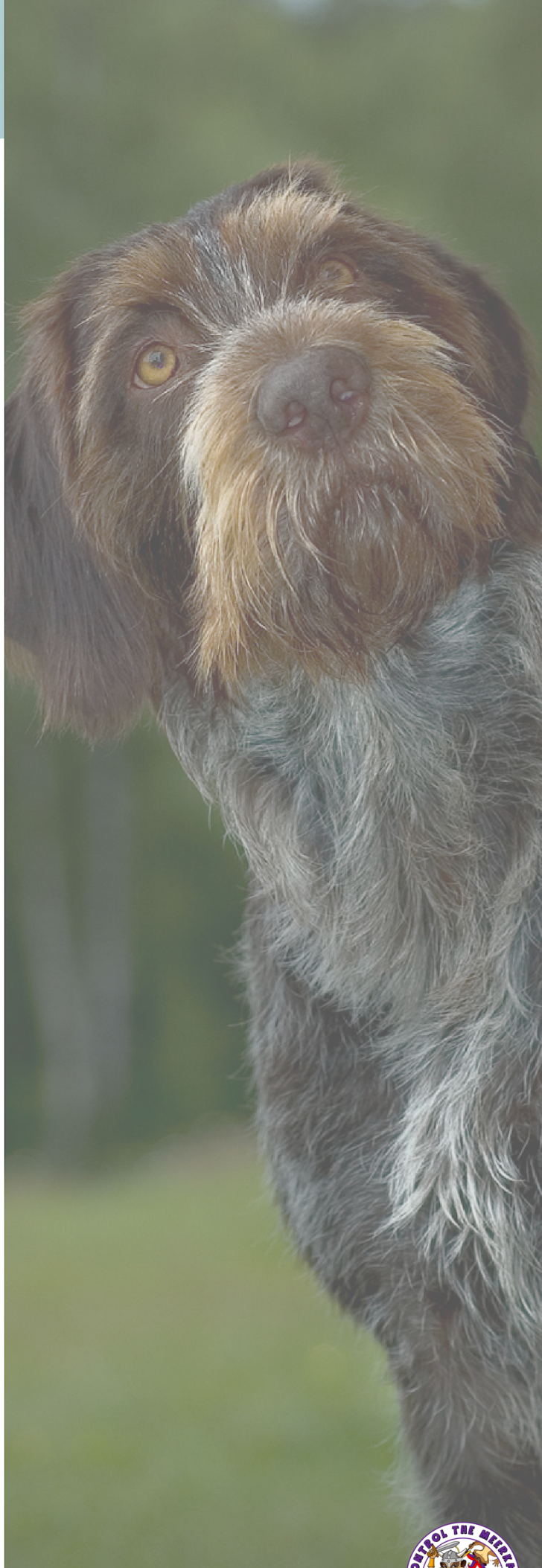
aaaaaand relax

You did it, you reached the end! Your dog should be well on their way to being able to **#ControlTheMeerkat** and **'take a deep breath'** in calm situations and slowly building up to more stimulating situations rather than barking at you, or getting overwhelmed at not knowing what to do. This allows them to pause and think, then 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 



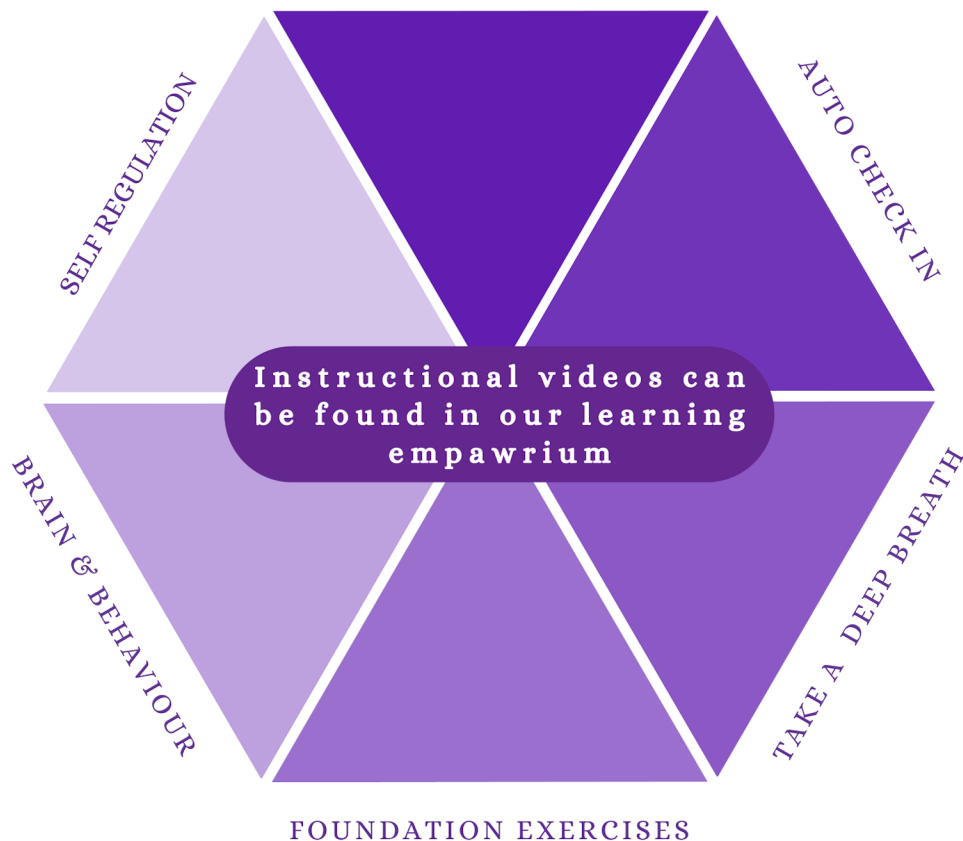
CONTROL THE MEERKAT



collection



IF IN DOUBT; CHILL OUT



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 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: controlthameerkat.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*

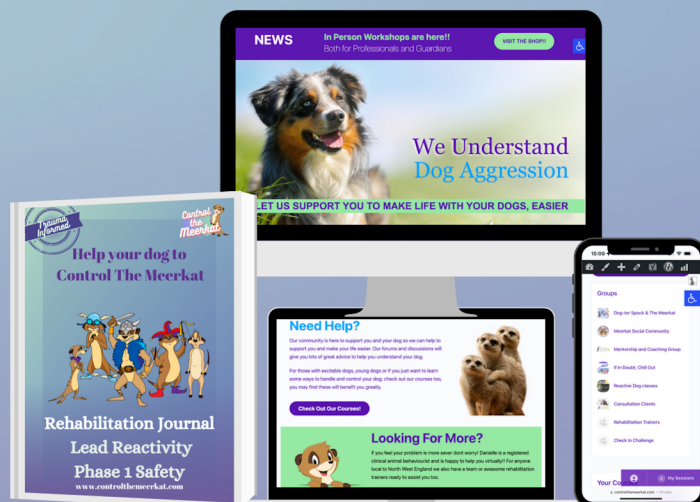




Join Our Community and learning empawrium today!



access to support, courses, videos and more!



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