



# Help your dog to Control The Meerkat Self Regulation Self Control

Plus printable check list to track  
your progress !



# Welcome



Hello there,

My name is Danielle and I'd like to welcome you to the **'Self Control'**; part of the **'Control The Meerkat, Self Regulation, 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!

The **'self regulation collection'** It's one of the best starting exercises for dogs that struggle with their emotions, nervous dogs and those impacted by trauma, or dogs who get far too excited far too quickly! This collection builds off our foundation exercise **'How To Take A Deep Breath'** and expands on these principles of teaching your dog how to self regulate. It's far easier to help our dogs in the situations they struggle in, if they have the skills to regulate themselves first. This enables them to pause and think, without getting hijacked by the Meerkat.

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**



# Table of Contents

*What You'll Learn*

---

**01 INTRODUCTION TO SELF CONTROL**

**02 WHERE TO START**

**03 MANAGING FRUSTRATION**

**04 INTRODUCING IMPULSE CONTROL**



# Self Regulation

## *Self Control*



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 EMPOWERIUM**





# Introduction to self control



So let's have a look at some of our self control games. Now, self control games nearly always start with having some food in your hands. Then you have the choice of having food in another hand or using the food in front of you. Though depending on the dog, and your own dexterity, toys can work well too. Bottom line, it needs to be something they want.

The idea of self control is to help teach our dogs some patience and anticipatory stillness; that focus you see when a predator starts stalking, that's what we want. This introduction will help you to teach your dog the basics of self

regulation. Can they be highly driven and motivated but focussed, not frantic. WE want to ensure that they can still engage with us and not get hijacked by the meerkat.

Self regulation starts with games and fun! Once they can practice in a place of safety like this, we can then change the context and support them as they learn these life skills are transferable to any situation where they feel overwhelmed. However, first they need to understand how to regulate themselves before we expect them to be able to do it in the situations they struggle in.





# How to Start



## Step 1 - Calm & Treat

Hold the item your dog wants in your hand and wait for them to stop trying to move forward, jump up paw etc then treat from the other hand and repeat 6 times.



Now get 6 more treats and repeat only this time wait for them to back away from your hand and release the treat from your other hand. As they start to get better, and better at this, we can start to open our hand.



## Step 2 - Back away & Treat

Once you're doing this with your hand open, be prepared to close it quickly if they move towards it. Don't move your hand away. Now, this is a really important part. The hand isn't the one that moves away, the hands stay still, it just opens and closes. So imagine that it's like a stick that attaches your hand to their nose, and as they come close, it closes. As they move away, it opens. So we've got that nice motion coming through and they start to learn. If they come towards it, it closes. If they move away, it opens. With a young or novice dog, you would stay keeping the hand closed to really get that back away, before you open the hand. As soon as you open it, you need to be really quick to provide the food for them. In fact, the longer you leave it, the more frustration we build up, which is great for frustration tolerance but it's easier to deal with frustration if you have self control. As we're doing a self control exercise, it's all very, very quick. A little bit of patience means that you get something. If you wait, you'll get something. Until we see them actively shuffling backwards and controlling themselves.



## Step 3 - Duration



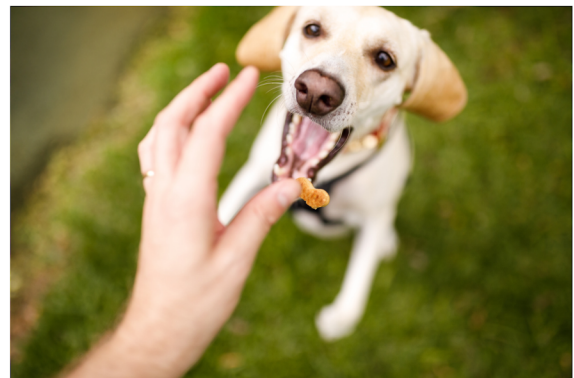
To get duration we need a bit of frustration tolerance. This isn't true frustration tolerance, as they're still getting what they want when we give them a treat from our hand. But they're on that fence of self control and mild frustration tolerance. They're learning if they wait, they get it. We can start to add release cues here too.

Start with your hand open, give them a second and treat. Now you can have it in 2 seconds. Now 3 seconds. Gradually building up that duration.

Remember the longer they have to wait for something, the more frustrated they'll get and we're still on self control so timing is crucial. Just think of traffic jams and then road rage. That's where a lot of frustration bursts come in.

That's what happens if you're doing training exercises and you're holding food in your hands and talking to someone else, or if you're not rewarding your dog for behaviour that they think they got right. They'll start jumping up at you, mouthing at you, chewing the lead and that's a frustration burst, and they often hurt!

They can't cope with the fact they didn't get what they want. Their expectation was too high. So we have to lower their expectations, or we have to adapt our learning strategy to reduce that frustration tolerance in our dogs. They can't apply something they haven't learnt to do.





# Managing Frustration



Remember we're doing self control exercises, so we're not cueing or commanding the dogs, we're not asking them for anything. We're just waiting for them to move back and wait. The behaviour they do doesn't matter. It's that wait that's important. This is what self regulation is all about. Can they do it without our interference?

**Are they able to resist that impulse?**

Fantastic.

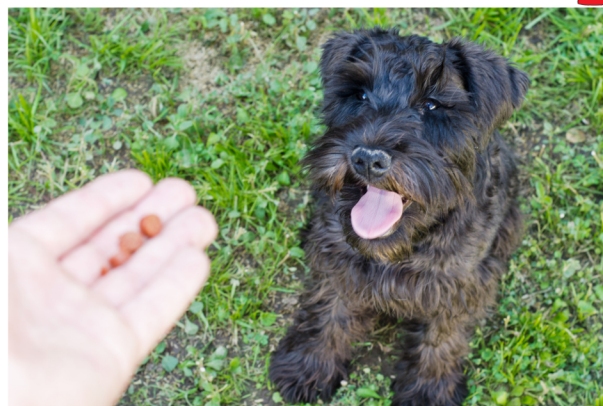
**Are they able to control themselves a little bit?**

Wonderful.

**Are they able to resist the temptation to keep going forward?**

**Are they able to start controlling that frustration?**

**Can they feel it and manage it mildly?**



**If your dog keeps digging your hand, try a bowl first, unless your dog guards their bowl of course**

We're looking for very mild, low levels of frustration when we're doing this, because we're teaching them the skills to regulate and control themselves. We're not expecting them to be able to cope right away with all this food everywhere. Some of them will, others won't. So very, very gradually, until we get to know your dog. Once our dogs are okay with us lowering our hands to the floor, we're going to make it a little bit harder by dropping treats!







# Adding Impulse Control



## Dropping the treats

Now our dogs can wait when the food is in your hand, and as you lower the treats onto the floor. Can they still wait when it's on the floor? Fantastic! The mousey mousey game in our learning empawrium is great for this, and helping to advance it below if your dog is enjoying these exercises. It's fantastic for transitioning self control to impulse control, can they control themselves when you move the treats? How about when you drop them from a low height? higher? what if you flick them, can they control until you release them?

Dropping treats triggers that impulse. So we change that self control game into an impulse control and self control exercise. Can they restrain themselves and can they resist the impulse to run forward to get that food? And this is one where they might understand it in this context, but see if you can change it to other contexts.



Try having treats dotted around your house ready to practise. Are you able to hold a treat in your hand when you walk into a living room without them jumping up at you?

Can you get those auto sits down or auto check in?

Are you able to accidentally drop a treat on the floor without saying anything and your dog not rushing in for it. These are the behaviours that we're building up to. This is how your dog starts to learn how to 'Control The Meerkat'.



Once they can do it with treats, Can they do it with toys? During play ?

This time try holding the ball as you did the treats, when they back away throw and release, then wait and see if you can get those back ups and even auto sit to throw. This is building foundations for sit to movement and chase recalls too !

Now lets start to integrate some of the other foundation exercises like a 'Take A Deep Breath?' Can you use this to help them start to put self regulation into action in ways they can cope with; until they're ready to to put it to use in gradually more difficult situations.

Once they are starting to understand self control, we can then start to work on some harder frustration tolerance exercises. Check out our other E-Books in the self management collections and the accompanying videos in our online learning empawrium!





# Checklist

Make a note of the items you use and how your dog responded for each session and watch their self regulation grow !

Notes





## MOVING FORWARD

### **Sooo, what should I do next ?**

Well now you're starting to understand there's more to helping your dog than training alone, are you curious what else you can try with your 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](http://controlthemeerkat.com)***



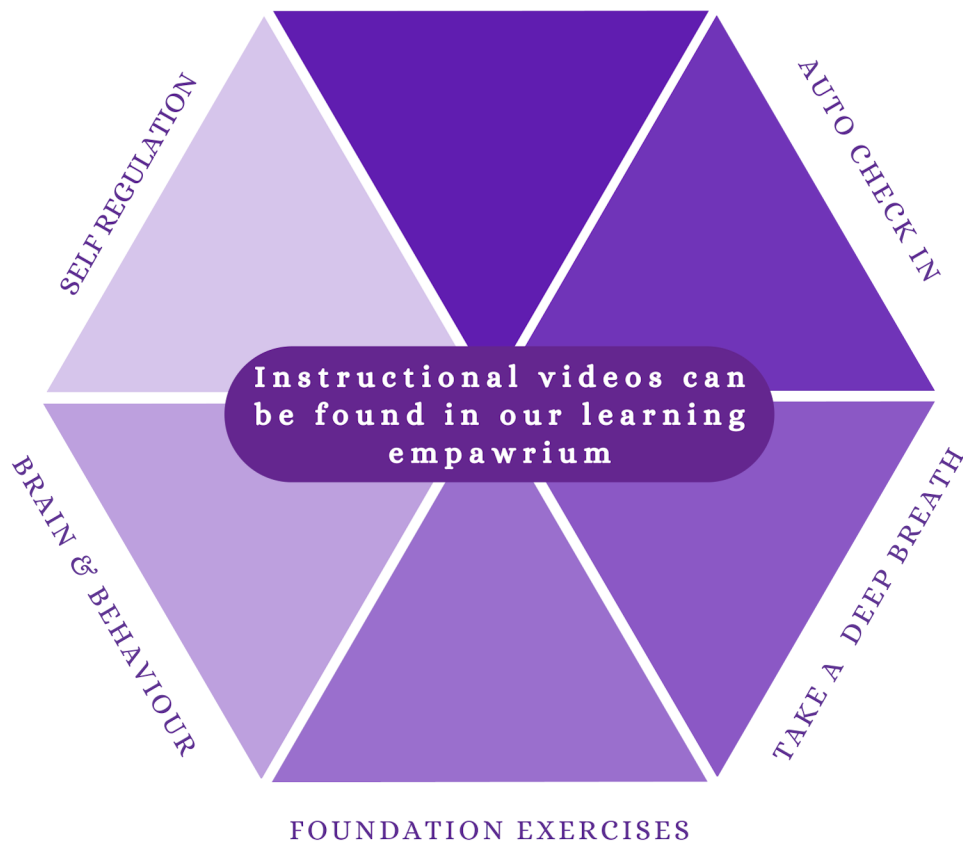
# CONTROL THE MEERKAT



# 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.**

[WWW.CONTROLTHEMEERKAT.COM](http://WWW.CONTROLTHEMEERKAT.COM) | © 2022 DANIELLE BECK



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



# 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



WWW.CONTROLTHEMEERKAT.COM | © 2022 DANIELLE BECK



IG.COM/CONTROLTHEMEERKAT



FB.COM/CONTROLTHEMEERKAT



CONTROLTHEMEERKAT.COM

*PS. Want to take the  
next step?*

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



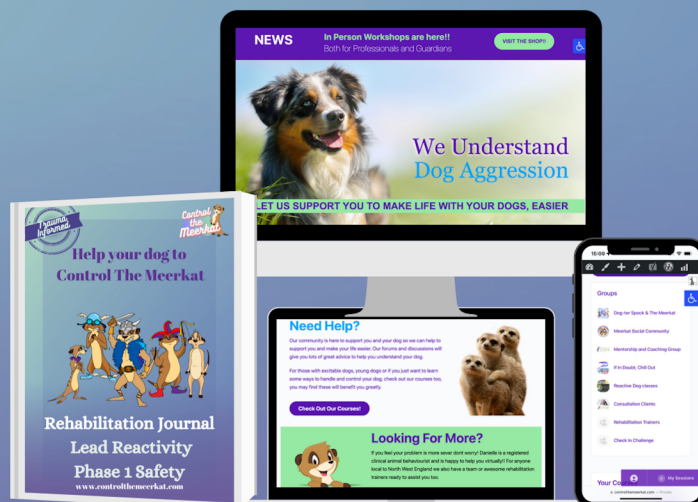
**Learn how to help your dog  
without all the jargon**

**Go to: [controlthameerkat.com](http://controlthameerkat.com)  
to learn more**





Join Our Community and learning  
empawrium today!  
&  
access to support, courses, videos and more!



APBC  
ASSOCIATION OF PET  
BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS



WWW.CONTROLTHEMEERKAT.COM | © 2022 DANIELLE BECK

