



Help your dog to Control The Meerkat Self Regulation

What is impulse/self control &
Frustration tolerance



Impulse Control

I see something i want, can i resist that impulse to get it.



This could be something that moves fast like a squirrel or bird. Another dog? A person? Food left on the side? Impulse control teaches them to resist these impulses. However, this is incredibly difficult for our teenage dogs. The brain of a teenage dog isn't wired for impulse control, they just react. In these situations we need to teach self control so they learn regulate themselves and **respond - not react**

Self Control

I see something I want and I can wait, I understand that patience pays off.

Self control exercises teach our dogs to wait, without us asking them to. It helps out dogs to be able to choose to get a chew and settle themselves down rather than annoy us as they don't know what to do. Dogs that lack self control often struggle with a lack of impulse control and frustration tolerance too.

Frustration tolerance

I see something I want, that i can't have, and thats OK I can let it go.

Frustration tolerance teaches our dogs that life sucks and they have to deal with it like everyone else. However, we don't expect them to cope straight away. We break it down into self control first. If you want you can have it. Then progress to 'If you wait, you can't have that, but you can have this'.



What is impulse control, self control & frustration tolerance

So now we're going to have a talk all about self regulatory behaviours like self-control and frustration tolerance. These really important skills for our dogs to be able to learn, and they are vital for every part of their behaviour. This is especially true for those that are more complex and struggle to cope in different situations.

When thinking about self regulation, you'll hear the term self-control, impulse control, and frustration tolerance all kind of bundled together. Despite this, they don't really work in the same way. They affect different parts of the brain and they have to be taught, understood, and learnt by the individual in different ways. They also have a different evolutionary purpose.



So I want us to imagine back to that time when our ancestors used dog's for hunting. That hunting motor pattern needed practise and this is one way they could practise those self-control, frustration tolerance, and impulse control behaviours. They need to resist the impulse to chase and spook the prey. Utilise their self control to wait until the optimum time to pounce. Then learn from their frustration of a failed hunt to try again, or keep going.

So with a puppy when they're playing with their littermates, they can practise these exercises. It's then up to us to continue this learning to build up these vital like skills,



What is impulse control, self control & frustration tolerance

All dogs are born with different levels of being able to regulate themselves. The University of Lincoln even have a questionnaire to give your dog and scale and we have learnt a lot through their research.

We do know that by helping our dogs learn self control we can help them learn to control their impulses and frustration tolerance too! If they don't have a lot of experience of learning these things early on, they will tend to struggle with emotional regulation when they're older.

Dogs that struggle with frustration tolerance, often get overwhelmed quickly. They are fast to react, and that reaction can turn to anger and rage quite quickly, which you want to avoid.



So to help our dogs, we want to start off by teaching them self-control first. Then we can add in some impulse control behaviours and then frustration. We tend to leave frustration tolerance to the last, because it's the hardest one for our dogs. I want to give them lots of little wins and the ability to self regulate in easier situations and really build that self control muscle ,before we work on frustration.

What is impulse control, self control & frustration tolerance

Despite us wanting to avoid frustration early on they will experience it, as it's a part of everyday life. They are going to learn it every day anyway because they can't have what they want when they want to. Life just works that way.

There maybe some things that they struggle with more than others. We can use this to teach them in those situations to see how they're getting on. However, we don't put them in situations where they will struggle on purpose, or are going to frustrate them to a high amount, because that's not fair on your dog. They're going to end up being very, very distressed by this and it's not going to work and could be dangerous if your dog bites or redirects their frustration. Other dogs may learn the opposite and suppress their behaviour. They'll look like they can control themselves, but there's not a happy animal. We want happy animals.



All the training that we do involves inducing very, very small amounts of frustration, see if they can manage it and rewarding them quickly.

If we try and put them in a situation straight away and expect them to control it, they're not going to be able to and we're just set them up for failure.

So how do we help them?

If we go back to that motor pattern, this is what our dogs will start to experience and this is what all hunters will start to experience. When they're young, they learn very quickly to control impulses.

Those impulses are when they see something and act on that impulse, like an impulse purchase.

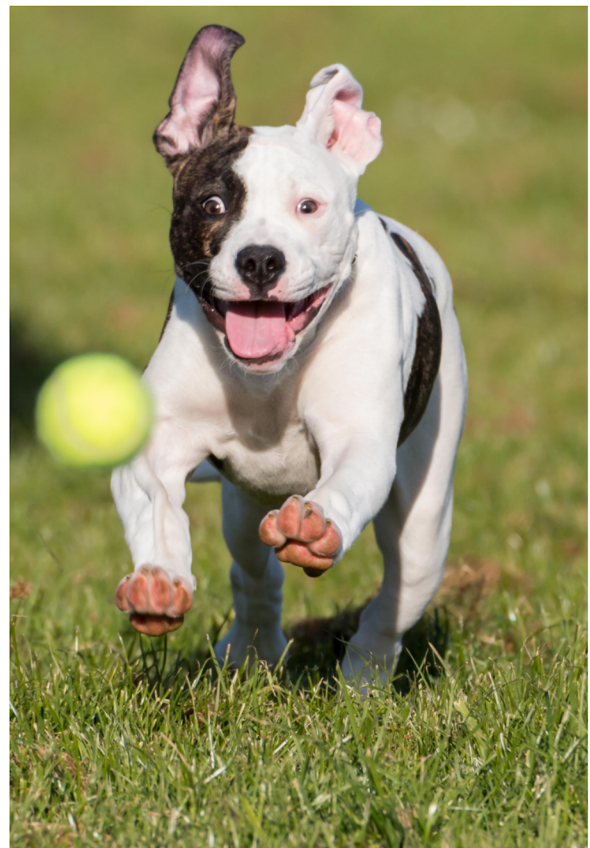


What is impulse control, self control & frustration tolerance

We've all felt that impulse at some point. Some of us struggle to resist, others can pause and think. So people that have low impulse control will see something and go, i want that and get it. We see this a lot in young children and teenagers as their brains aren't developed enough for impulse control yet. If the individual is able to pause and think; they can control the meerkat! If they can't that Meerkat will hijack them and they lose control of their actions and their thinking brain (Dog-ter Spock)

So if you think back to our youngsters, they're playing around the first signs of impulse control these animals will get is when they're playing and when they're kind of bouncing around. So they'll see little bits of creepy crawlies, maybe some rodents, and they'll see something and pounce on it. They will soon start to learn they are more successful if they don't pounce straightaway, if they pause, if they wait and if they start stalking.

If you think back to our youngsters playing when they see an insect. They'll see something and pounce on it, and often miss. They will soon start to learn they are more successful if they don't pounce straightaway. They're learning self control and delayed gratification



What is impulse control, self control & frustration tolerance

The successful individuals are the ones that can learn to control their impulses and learn how to regulate themselves. It's their evolutionary purpose. So if we go back to hunting. We've got our animal and they've got that self-control down, they can stalk. Now they need to be able to hunt the animal. During that time. They're going to start to deal with frustration during the chase, when they're not getting there fast enough.



As the prey is running away, at what point do our dogs give up?

Frustration is designed to make something end, whether they end successfully or not the hunt is going to end. Frustration helps their brain to reset. If they're successful, fantastic the frustration goes away and replaces with a reward. If not they'll have a frustration burst and reset. This is where trial and error comes in and they'll have a frustration burst about it because they don't want the thing to happen again.

The body will always try and reset back to baseline. What's the fastest way to not feel frustration when hunting?, Be a more successful hunter! This involves practice, and persistence. However, if something has been too frustrating and too aversive, then they won't try it again and give up. Frustration will say there's no point trying that let's focus on the things we're good at.

The feeling of frustration is aversive to our dogs and they will do what they can to avoid that feeling or deal with it quickly. Keeping sessions short and preparing them up so our dogs are successful. This is how we start.

What is impulse control, self control & frustration tolerance

Our dogs have the opportunity to regulate themselves all the time, especially when we want them to be safe. When you open the front door, are they going to dart through? When you get the food bowls or if you carry on pans or cups or pots, are they going to jump up to see what's in your hand? Do they try to snatch things out of your hand? These are all behaviours that impulse control and self control exercises can help them work through.

Our dogs can learn to pause and wait. Now, I know a lot of people will go, well, yeah, my dog can do that. I tell them to 'sit and wait' for the food every night.

Really? That's fantastic that your dog can do that. However, it's not a self-control behaviour because you're asking them to do it. It's only self control if then can do it without us asking them to :).

Try and think about all the situations that you want your dog



to control themselves in, without you having to ask them to. We want them to be in these situations, and regulate themselves and we can set up the environment to help.

For example, the food bowl is the easiest one to start off with. Hold the bowl up and wait for them to stop jumping and back away from the bowl. Fantastic. The bowls gets lowered to the floor.

If they move towards it, it moves away. Can you get it all the way down to the floor without the dog moving? When you do give them a release. So they're like, yeah, if I wait, I then get the release cue.

What is impulse control, self control & frustration tolerance

So we're starting to build on our release cue for them. We then gradually start to move them into other areas until they can go, oh, I see a rabbit. Oh, I see a dog. Oh, I see a person. I'm going to control myself, then they will be able to do a different behaviour. They can now be in these situations, and start to think by themselves and self regulate!

Are they able to wait as you go through the door?

Can they wait before they go into the car?

Can they wait before being let off the leads?

Can they wait before being put on the lead rather than jumping up everywhere?

Self regulation is vital for our dogs emotional well-being. We need them to learn to do it all by themselves, and we can show them how !



That's how we Control The Meerkat

Have to think about all the situations where your dog gets really, really excited and see if we can help them learn to manage that. Once they can in these situations we can then help them to regulate other emotions like fear and anxiety, but this is where we start as they need the practice in safe areas first.

Self regulation is vital for our dogs emotional well-being. We need them to learn to do it all by themselves, and we can show them how !



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?

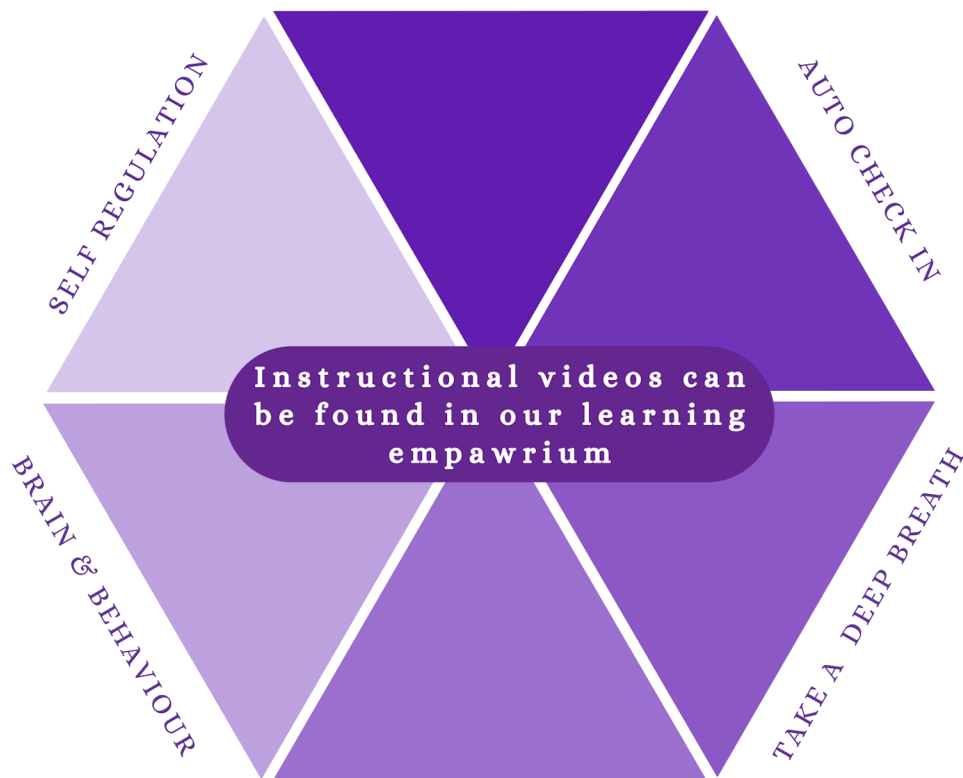
Simply visit the website and choose the course or membership subscription that's best for you! You can even book a consultation with a Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist; and join our 6 or 12 month rehabilitation program.

Click here to get started: [controlthemeerkat.com](https://www.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.

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

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**

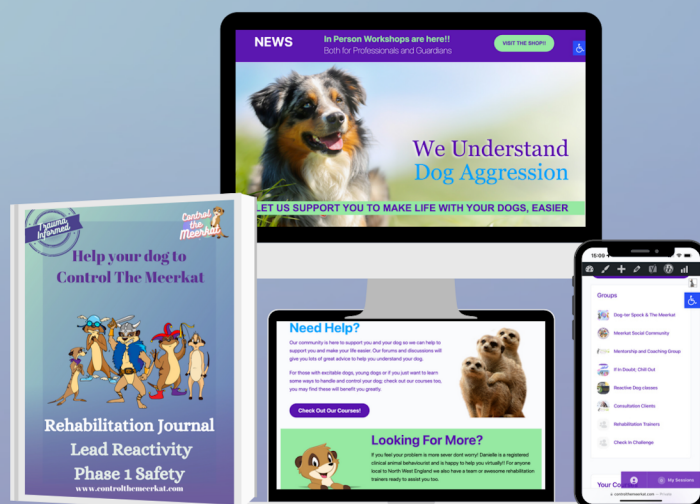
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