



# Help your dog to Control The Meerkat B.A.S.E. Confidence



Hello there,

# Welcome



My name is Danielle and I'd like to welcome you to '**Building Confidence**'; 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 don't.  
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's 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 string, effective habits that last



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

# Self Regulation

## *Impulse / Self Control and Frustration Tolerance*



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's 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.

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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.



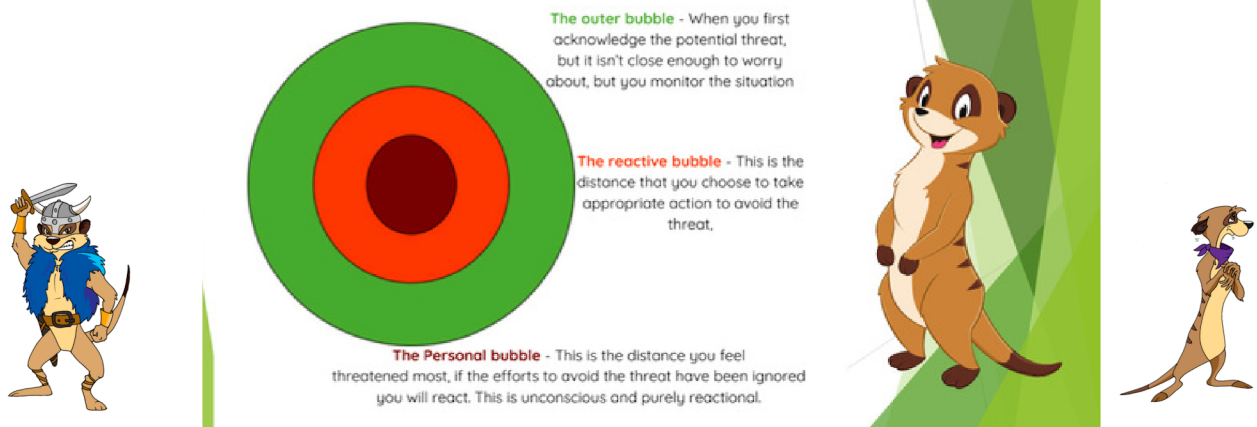
These distractions can include changes in weather, temperature, illness, pain / discomfort, fireworks, over excitability, people jogging, livestock, sounds from a school yard. Anything that will increase your dog's arousal or sensory levels will make it harder for them to focus, more so if they have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

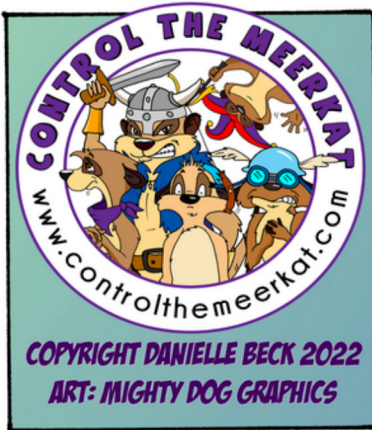
Everything starts at home. They need a safe **B.A.S.E.** to start from. Then we can create that space with you and you can become their safe place. Once they can control the meerkat in safe environments we can gradually start to expand this to new situations to help them relax and control the meerkat.



*Danielle Beck*

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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'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  
[Controlthemeerkat.com](http://Controlthemeerkat.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**  
Building Confidence



boasting.  
**brave** adj. COURAGEOUS,  
fearless, intrepid, pluck  
ic, bold, daring, un  
lion-hearted, spirited, c  
valorous.  
bravery & COURAGE, CO  
www.controlthameerkat.com



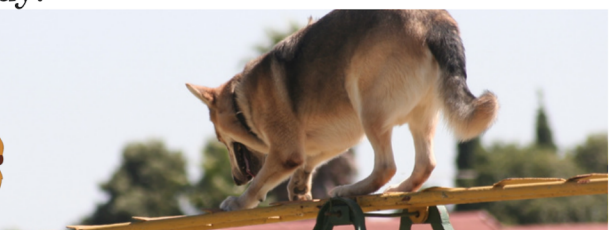
# BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Helping your dog to have confidence in themselves helps them to relax, reduces anxiety, and helps them to cope in situations they struggle in. We can help your dog to find confidence in their abilities, manage their emotions, and engage in exploratory behaviours, which will all help your dog to engage their brain

more effectively and 'Control The Meerkat'. Through helping your dog to feel safe and relax we can now start building their confidence! Confidence in themselves and their abilities can help them to engage their brain and take control of their actions, so they can make their own choices rather than being hijacked by the Meerkat.



Confidence building is all about helping our dogs to feel like they can rely on themselves, which helps them to feel a sense of safety. We want to create safe opportunities for our dogs to learn how to explore, play, relax and interact with the world. To do this we have to ensure that nothing bad will happen, from their perspective, during this learning process. We don't want to lure them using food, or cue them to do something they're uncertain about and put unnecessary pressure or conflict on them, **AT THIS STAGE**, they're not ready.





# BUILDING CONFIDENCE

## WHY START WITH SAFETY AND RELAXATION?

To build your dog's confidence and help them to feel safe they need to be exposed to different situations, AND FEEL SAFE! This starts with building up your dog's **B.A.S.E.**

We do this by starting in the places they show the most calmness and spend time with them there. For the dogs most affected by trauma our presence alone is scary and for these dogs we need to look into how to break your presence down into stages they can cope with. Check out the facebook page 'Drax's Galactic Adventures' or 'dogs impacted by trauma' for some additional fab tips and resources.



Once your dog is comfortable with you, we can give them novelty items to explore and process with no pressure, like using food as a lure. We recommend that you don't try to lure nervous dogs with food, as it can put them into conflict. It's best to let them explore freely, and if they do go

close to a 'scary thing' reward them with a treat behind them allowing them to retreat. This allows them to approach and avoid without conflict, which builds confidence rather than conflict and mistrust. We can also teach them how to take a deep breath and calm themselves down, how to chill out, how to explore. Check out our other courses for instructional videos on how to teach these.

Once they can do these things in a place of safety, we can gradually increase the novelty items, games, and exercises. Then we can take it to a different place where there are few 'threats' and try there for 10 minutes, then 15 minutes and gradually work through until our dogs are calm and responsive, in many different situations, working only at a distance and duration they can cope with, and going back to their **B.A.S.E.** each time so they can process and decompress the experience.



# Predictions

## BUILDING CONFIDENCE

### INCREASING PREDICTABILITY

Dogs that have a reduced ability to manage their emotions often struggle when they can't predict what is going to happen, or if something doesn't meet their expectation. By increasing predictability we can make life easier for your dog, reduce any anxiety, and help them tolerate frustration. We can do this by only asking them to do things no more than twice. If they don't they either don't fully understand what you are asking of them, are uncomfortable OR they are unsure about the situation; stubbornness is actually quite rare in our dogs. A daily, predictable routine, can help to



manage day to day interactions; the higher the predictability, the lower the anxiety and/or frustration. Capturing good behaviours when they happen is a great way to increase that behaviour and build connection with your dog. Try having pots of treats out around your

house. When you see your dog lying down, chewing, or playing with a toy, or doing anything you like, give them a treat. Let's start to bank those good behaviours, we'd like to see more of them. Around 50 treats a day to use as rewards is a great start. If your dog does something in the house you don't like, try thinking about what you'd like them to do in that situation, and focus on teaching them how to do that. It's faster and more effective to change a behaviour that stop one. Also take a step back and think of different reasons why they may be reacting in this way and think about how you can prevent this from happening again or support them.





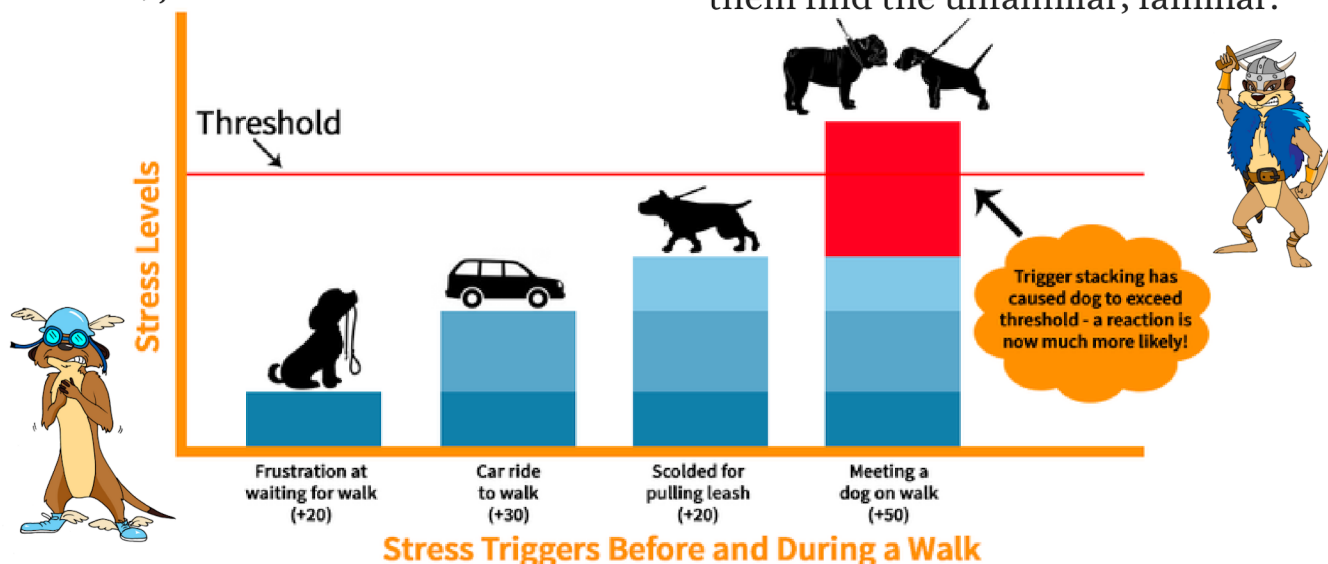


# BUILDING CONFIDENCE

## INCREASING PREDICTABILITY

Predictability can simply be things like waiting for calm, then opening a door, or putting on a lead, or throwing a ball. Putting the food down and walking away until they're done. Not leaving them alone and starting with them relaxing away from you when you're in the house before you start leaving them. For dogs that steal items don't chase them, drop treats by them without taking the item. If this is too much for your dog break it down into smaller steps and if you're unsure; just ask a member of our team.

Predictability can help your dog to have a reduced reaction to triggers and lowers their chance of being hijacked by their Meerkat. Going to a field or car park to have a search game is more predictable than not knowing what to do. Going to a location and understanding that 'foot on lead means chill out', means your dog understand what they are meant to do in that place and reduces their anxiety. This helps them find the unfamiliar, familiar.



**Predictability, helps reduce anxiety and ease frustration. Building predictability in different situations, allowing them to explore, process, and relax helps your dog to make the scary and unfamiliar things, familiar!**





# CONFIDENCE THROUGH PLAY

Play and games are often underestimated when it comes to helping reactive dogs and those impacted by trauma. However, play is an incredible tool to have to help support your dogs. It helps build their confidence in their abilities and strengthens their bond with you !



Play is all about having fun, there's no pressure just fun. Some caregivers often say, " but my dog doesn't play" and that may be true but lets think why?



Often these dogs are nervous and do not feel safe enough to play. Others are worried about novelty and new environments and can't bring themselves to try something new. For others you just haven't found their play style yet.

## WHAT DOES PLAY LOOK LIKE?

Play is loose and bouncy and fun, It often involves chasing, holding, grabbing, shaking and destroying things There are different toys designed for different purposes!

Some toys are made for tugging, others for chewing, destroying, chasing, problem solving and a mix of the above. For dogs that love a game of tuggy can you see if they can wait while you hold the toy? What if you move it slightly? Running with the toy trailing behind you changes tuggy into a chase game! Many dogs love chase games especially when their caregivers is the one they get to chase. Have you tried running away calling your dog and then pulling out a toy for them ?

Chasing is fun too but repetitive can be harmful long term. Try holding your dog then throwing the toy for them to search and find...So many dogs love that game !



# CONFIDENCE THROUGH PLAY

## CANT GET IT WRONG & WRECK IT GAMES

Not all games involve toys. Some are about building confidence through exploration and rewards. This is what these games are all about! They help our dogs to learn that trying new things isn't scary, and can actually be quite rewarding. This can build up their confidence to try new things without fear of failure. It also really helps to boost your bond and connect with your dog. You'll be amazed at what they can do once their confidence starts to grow. First we need about 5 different safe, stable items that they can explore.

We're aiming to treat around every 5 seconds to start with. This way they get high levels of frequent rewards, instant wins with no pressure, and a confidence boost to keep going!

"No criteria means no failure, the no pressure as they literally can't get it wrong!"





# CONFIDENCE THROUGH PLAY

## CAN'T GET IT WRONG & WRECK IT GAMES

This is a lovely confidence building game where your dog is just allowed to explore and try new things. You're basically marking and rewarding around every 5 seconds, nothing is bad. You'll start to get the idea of what your dog likes to do and how confident they are at exploring new things and stepping on things. Once they start to understand the game they'll try new things and you'll see their excitement at trying things and getting a reward. You can then add new things, moving things, things to go into or climb on. These items are more challenging, especially for nervous dogs so make sure it's a stable carpeted surface so nothing slips or makes too much noise. When combined with the 'Wreck It' game they really learn how to explore.

This can eventually be taken outside and you can reward so many good things. It's a great confidence builder and helps build trust and connection with you. This can be utilised in the garden, car parks, woodland walks etc.

Allowing your dog to freely explore like this is a greatly underestimated tool for many caregivers but the results can be incredible. If you want to learn more we have instructional videos and ebooks for these games in our learning empawrium. It's also worth checking out Sarah Fisher's ACE Freework



# SCENTWORK

## SEARCH VS SNUFFLE



We talk about scent work a lot at Control The Meerkat but why?

Well it's the easiest and most natural way to help your dog in so many ways. Scentwork can help

- Build Confidence
- Encourage exploration
- Build resilience
- Enhance the caregiver - dog bond
- Help dogs to self regulate
- Calm a dog down
- Tire them mentally
- Act as a form of meditation

### SNUFFLE



Snuffle is slow paced sniff, where your dog finds hidden treats or scents in an area. This slow pace is like meditation for our dogs and 10 minutes a day can make a huge difference

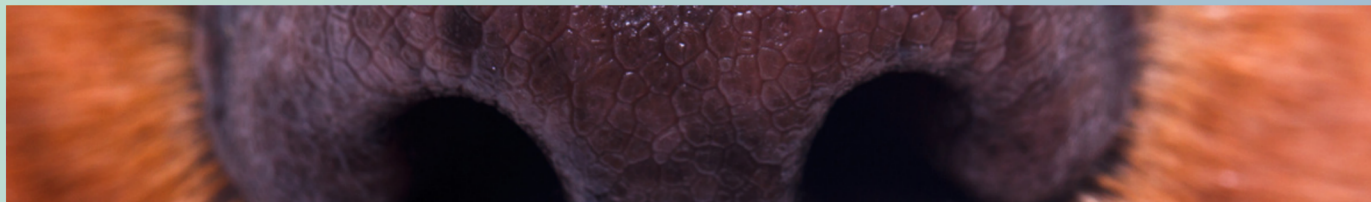


### SEARCH

When a dog is searching, they are looking for, or following, a specific scent or scents. This is far more active sniffing and more engaging for your dog, so much so you can even compete in it!

This is the searching work that operational 'sniffer' dogs complete on duty.

You can start by simply hiding food or a toy in a room, easy at first, and standing back and letting them seek it out. Gradually adding more hides and boxes, or outside, and watch your dog work!



# SCENTWORK

## SEARCH VS SNUFFLE

Giving your dog opportunities to use their nose in this way is hugely beneficial to them, as they already do it! This way you get to join in the fun with them!

For dogs that are wary about being left alone, room searches can be great to build independence to move away from you as you walk around and build up to out of sight.

For dogs that bark in the garden, this is an activity they can do instead of barking and will keep them occupied. You may notice they will hear something and choose to continue with the search !



Scattering treats in the grass, squeeze them into trees, rocks, lamposts etc can give your dog something to do if they're worried on a walk. It's great fun for them and a wonderful way of seeing how overwhelmed they are and helping them work through it.



**IF YOU HAVE ANY  
QUESTIONS COME AND JOIN  
OUR LEARNING  
EMPAWRIUM AND ASK OUR  
SCENTWORK INSTRUCTORS  
HOW TO PROVIDE THE BEST  
SCENTWORK FOR YOUR  
DOG!**



## PARKOUR AND PROPRIOCEPTION



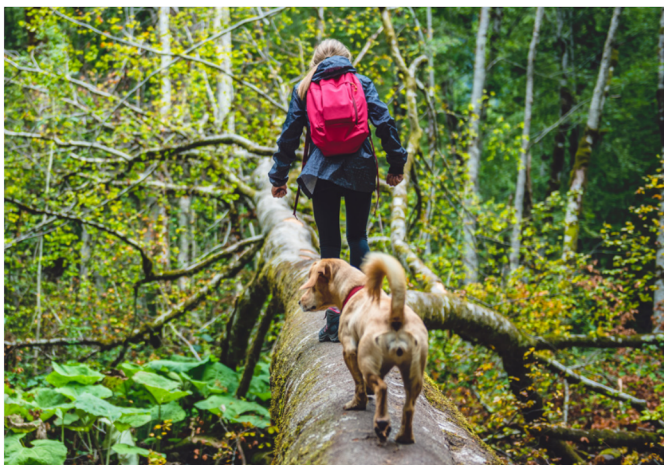
Canine Parkour is like urban agility and an incredible way to help build your dogs inner confidence. It's all about helping your dog understand how to use their body and gain confidence over it.



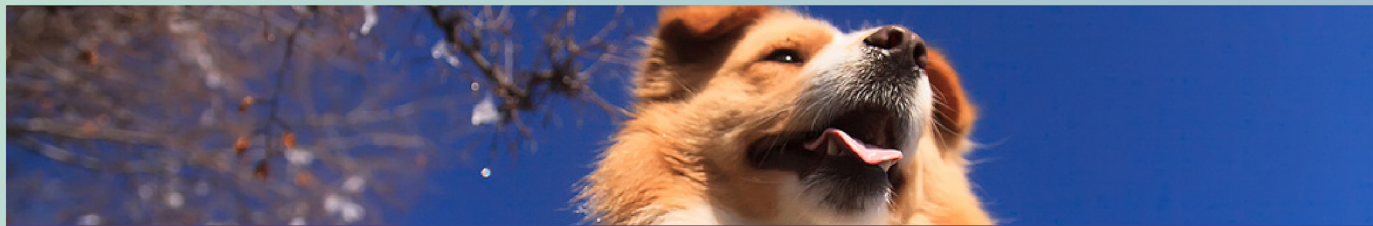
Many dogs can be unsure about walking on new surfaces and textures and dont have the confidence to put their paw up onto something or jump on or across something. Our 'Can't Get it Wrong Game' can form the foundations to



canine Parkour. It's fantastic for bond building as you learn how to support your dog while they jump on , off and over things. It also gives you a very handy way of sending your dog out of the way if they are lead reactive, they can literally jump on a wall or up a tree!



The proprioception that accompanies parkour and other activities we've discussed helps a dog learn more about their body and balance them out. Often dogs that are stressed hold a lot of tension or may walk low to the ground. These exercises help you dog be more self aware and gain control over their own body and choices, boosting confidence



# PARKOUR AND PROPRIOCEPTION



The International Dog Parkour Association has this to say "Dogs get introduced to the world of jumping, climbing, balancing over, crawling under, and going around different obstacles in their everyday world. Parkour can be done anywhere and is limited only by one's imagination. Dog parkour helps with confidence and overcoming fears, and it is a low impact but challenging activity for any canine athlete".

**IF PARKOUR INTERESTS YOU, WE HAVE A BRAND NEW CANINE PARKOUR ONLINE CLASS STARTING NEXT YEAR!! COMMUNITY AND LEARNING EMPAWRIUM MEMBERS WILL GET PRIORITY ACCESS :)**





# Final Thoughts

## aaaaaand relax

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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 [controlthemeerkat.com](http://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 →



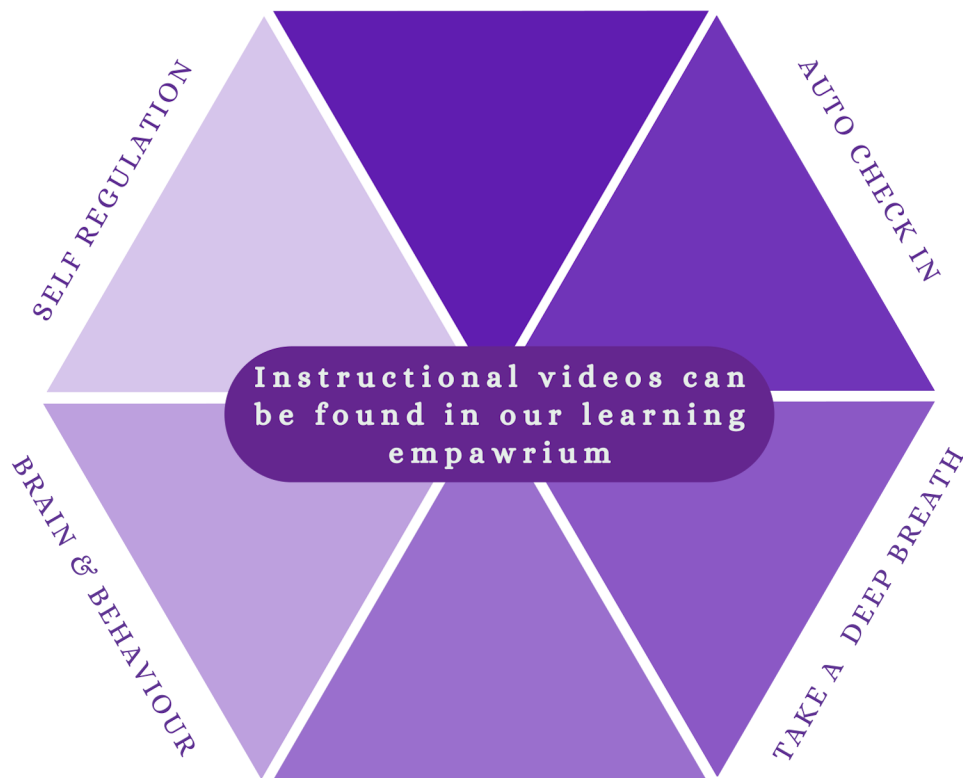
# CONTROL THE MEERKAT



# 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.**

[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."*

# 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: [controlthemeerkat.com](http://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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**access to support, courses, videos and more!**

