

A Game for Every Dog

Suggestions for shy and sensitive dogs:

Low pressure, simple games are a good place to start. Progress to confidence building games and training. Treat and Retreat, Quiet Time with People. Round Robin Recall
Touch (hand-targeting), Get It, motivating games such as Tug of War and Fetch

Suggestions for over-aroused dogs:

Impulse-control training (keep all criteria low and give lots of breaks)
Shaping, default behaviors, nosework games, Rucksack Walk, opportunity to quietly chew on a durable toy.
Avoid stimulating play situations.

GET IT

Toss a dry treat (kibble works well) to the left and say "Get it!". Let the dog eat the treat. Toss treat to the right and say "Get it!" Let the dog get the treat. Repeat sequence a couple of times. Start with a short toss at first. Get the dog's attention and be sure he sees you toss the treat. Using a treat that is a contrasting color compared to floor will help him see it and easily succeed. When he gets the first treat, wait until he turns back to look at you then toss the next treat in the opposite direction. Cheese balls are great for this game!

1-2-3 TREAT!

With your dog at your side, count your first 3 steps out loud and on your 4th step say "Treat!" as you give a treat. Repeat. This simple, pattern game helps your dog focus on you and may allow a reactive dog to move through space more easily.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Lure your dog to your side by your knee and feed a tasty treat, then turn and walk away. Encourage the dog to stay by your side using your voice and body language. When she gets to your knee again, treat and repeat. This game can be done on or off leash and is a great way to train leash-walking.

ROUND ROBIN RECALL

Call the dog back and forth between 2 people for praise and treats. Add some distance to build some speed or toss the treat between your legs to have the dog go through for fun.

FIND IT

Ask your dog for a stay (or gently hold her collar if she does not have a stay) and place a treat behind a corner, furniture leg or your foot about an arm's length away. When she is not pulling towards the hidden treat and you have a millisecond of calm, release the dog with "Find It" and help her find the treat. Even though the dog just saw you hide the treat where it is likely that they have no idea where it is. Make sure that you hide the treat in the same place for the first 10 games and then you can start to move on to more complicated hides. Remember to only do 1 treat at a time though so the dog can clearly determine when the game is over. Also, this game is very similar to "leave it" so you want to make sure that the treat is not visible, that is the clue that tells your dog which game it is.

MUFFIN TIN GAME

Take a regular sized muffin tin and tennis balls to fill it. For standard size muffin tins, the tennis ball fits perfectly. Place a treat in each hole of the muffin tin and then place a tennis ball on top of the treat. The goal of the game is to encourage your dog to sniff for the treats and try to dislodge the tennis ball so he can get the treat. Once the muffin tin is set up, place it on the floor and encourage your dog to check it out. You may have to slightly lift a ball so he can see and sniff the hidden treat. When he sees and smells it, drop the ball again and encourage him to find the treat. When he finds it, praise him!

SHELL GAME

All you need are a few plastic containers- yogurt containers work well. To get your dog's interest (if she's



REALLY REAL RELAXATION PROTOCOL™ by Suzanne Clothier

This simple but effective protocol is useful for helping handlers and dogs shift into real relaxation *together*.

Goal

- Teaching the dog to find authentic relaxation through his own choices.
- Teaching the handler to relax themselves, to signal “We are relaxing” & provide a way for the dog to relax.

Benefits

- Dog learns to self modulate through volunteered, not prompted, behaviors, and through attention to the handler.
- Handler learns to modulate the connection without having to disengage from the dog, easily transitioning up and down, from active or intense to relaxed & quiet.

Preparation

- Handler seated comfortably, with body posture, gaze, breathing, etc. that indicates “We are relaxing.”
- Dog on leash to limit to half-circle area in front of handler
 - avoid “arguments” – if necessary, handler steps on leash giving dog enough slack so dog can stand, sit or lay down without any tension on leash
- Supply of high quality, small & easily chewed treats in easy reach

RRR™ - Step by Step

Step 1

1. Identify DOWN as desired behavior of the moment
 - Lure the dog with treat into DOWN
 - Immediately reward with 10-12 treats placed on the ground between dog’s paws and quiet praise
2. If dog stays down, pay him 5 more treats, praising quietly, then release
3. If dog gets up, say nothing

Step 2

1. Repeat Step 1 two more times

Step 3

1. Lure dog into DOWN, reward with a 3-5 treats, praise quietly
 - Continue to reinforce the dog with treats every few seconds
2. If the dog gets up (sooner or later he probably will), say nothing – WAIT
3. When dog chooses to lay down on his own, praise quietly and reward with 5-10 treats
 - Continue to reinforce dog, slowing the rate of reinforcement as the dog relaxes
4. Each time the dog gets up, WAIT for volunteered DOWN, praise, reward
5. After a few minutes of practice, release the dog and move around with him

Step 4

1. Handler sits in comfortable position, indicating to the dog “We are relaxing”
 - Wait for dog to volunteer the DOWN
2. Quietly praise and provide a couple of treats placed between paws
 - Continue to reinforce dog, slowing rate of reinforcement as dog relaxes more fully

Paws for Thought

Short thought-provoking blog posts by
Theo Stewart – The Dog Lady

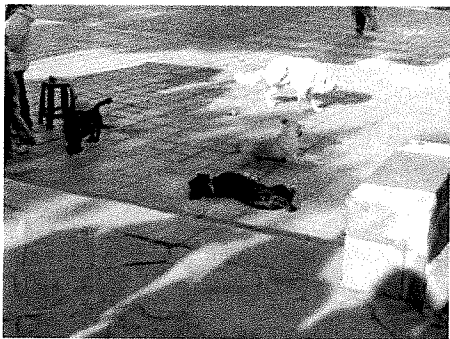
The Rucksack Walk

Posted on [June 20, 2016](#)

I am just back from the [IMDT](#) Conference. Some food for thought indeed, particularly (for me) with regard to what dogs *naturally* would choose to do if no pressure.

So, the Fifteen-Minute Rucksack Walk (or Backpack Walk).

No, it's not some sort of dance! Steve Mann recently went to Cuzco in Peru and observed the many dogs wandering freely round the streets. They have homes but are turned out during the day. His two observations that stick in my mind are 'Dogs don't run in Peru' and that the dogs actively seek out people just to be near them.



Steve gave us his Rucksack Walk which, though he had devised it previously, really makes use of how dogs just can 'be' if left to their own devices – and that they like to just 'be' – with us.

I foresee this really catching on, like Chirag Patel's '[Bucket Game](#)'. It's a good catchy name that makes you curious to find out what it's all about.

It is the answer to many dog owners' three main problems: lack of space near to home in which to walk their dog away from roads, avoiding things that scare him and lack of time.

In fact, the Rucksack Walk is actually *conditional* upon these things: limited space, an environment in which the dog feels secure and a limited amount of time.

To me personally the beauty of it is that it gives legitimacy to what I suggest to many of my clients who feel guilty if the dog isn't walked hard for an hour each day. It's something positive they can do, and do successfully. It's perfect for people finding walks with a reactive dog a nightmare. I go to couples where the dog engages a whole lot better with one person than the other. This could even things out.

The Rucksack Walk, as Steve says, would be especially good for dogs or whose owners are on restricted exercise, newly homed dogs, dogs in kennels, hyper dogs – and actually probably every dog from time to time.

All it needs a peaceful place or quiet corner in a park or field, an area no larger than the size of a tennis court. It's possible even a neighbour's garden could be used if large enough. The dog won't be running free through the bedding plants.

passing scary dogs barking behind gates and hissing pneumatic brakes on trucks. He would need to be taken there by car. By car also if the nearest suitable spot took more than a few minutes to walk to.



One definition of 'mindfulness' is: a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

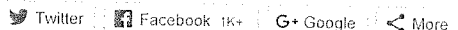
Mindfulness is what the Rucksack Walk is all about. It doesn't lead to anything. It is what it is.

NB. A message from [Lyn Ridley](#). The scent object Steve used was a teabag but you could use a drop of an essential oil (just a single drop) on a piece of cloth. I would suggest that you don't let him/her actually have it, just sniff it in your hand. Lavender for a first time might be good as it is quite calming. For an object Steve used a piece of hose but anything that they can explore the shape and feel of that is safe. Also a tuggy only becomes a tuggy if you tug it. Braided fleece could be interesting to be explored it doesn't have to be pulled. Try and think of something that your dog might find interesting in terms of shape or texture.

Here is another lovely blog about the fifteen-minute Rucksack Walk from [Lyn Ridley](#) 'Clickerpaws' who was also at the IMDT conference.

Advertisements

Share this:



6 bloggers like this.

Related

Worshipping the God of Exercise Walks
In "behaviour"

But Dogs Don't Pull Men Over
In "PAWS for Thought"

Routine - How important is it to a dog and
should we deliberately introduce change?
In "behaviour"



About Theo Stewart

I am a dog Behaviourist (INTODogs-ABTC - AAB) and trainer covering Beds, Herts, Cambs and Bucks, a 'Victoria Stilwell' Positively Dog Trainer (VSPDT) and a member of the IMDT. Graduate ISCP, International School for Canine Practitioners. My main site: www.dogidog.co.uk

[View all posts by Theo Stewart](#) →