



Absolute Dogs

SECRETS TO RAISING A PUPPY

The AbsoluteDogs Way



Calmness is King! Puppy Edition

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CALMNESS IS KING!

Calmness is an essential concept for a puppy (or any dog) to understand as they navigate life.

Calmness allows a dog to choose contented independence over separation relation behaviours. Calmness makes it possible for a puppy to choose a quiet, relaxing activity over biting your arms and feet. Calmness is king!

WHY IS CALMNESS VITAL TO RAISING YOUR PUPPY?

A puppy that has learned to relax in any and every environment is less likely to be reactive, barking and lunging at things that startle, scare, or frustrate them as they grow older. It's a powerful skill and concept to be able to perceive change in the world and to think clearly enough not to overreact, feel threatened, or control fast impulses.

At the start of their life with you, your puppy will have already come to you with unique impulses in how they interact with the environment around them. Calmness is a lifestyle and starting your puppy off in the right way can be the best way to prevent problem behaviours from starting in the first place.

You can never have too much calm in a dog. If your puppy is a calm puppy, they are behaving appropriately. If your puppy is calm, they cannot be experiencing frustration. If your puppy is calm, fear can't overwhelm them.



Imagine that your puppy has a box for every emotion from which they pull their behaviours.

For example, when a car cuts you off in traffic, what is the behaviour you might pull from your box of Fear? Fear because a reckless driver can easily cause an accident. Do you pull a sigh and maybe a muttered word under your breath out? Do your knuckles tighten on the steering wheel instead and does anger come out in the form of a frustrated slam of a palm on the wheel to communicate that emotion to the other driver? You could have picked a behaviour from your Calm box... and the situation, while frustrating, would diffuse and you would then be able to make clear, deliberate choices that would not escalate the situation.

THAT IS WHERE YOUR PUPPY'S BUCKET COMES IN TO PLAY...

What determines whether your puppy is experiencing calm or not? Every dog has a bucket, and that includes your puppy! Every dog has a different sized bucket. In fact, your puppy could come home with a gigantic bucket, or a thimble-sized bucket. The size of the dog doesn't not determine the size of their bucket. Some puppies do have smaller buckets that grow over time.



The size of your bucket is not fixed. You are able to make changes to the size of your dog's bucket, as well as the impact of things that are paying into the bucket. Eventually, that bucket overflows, and that is when your puppy will choose the wrong emotion box. They will select behaviours that are inappropriate.

When your puppy's bucket overflows, behaviour can be outwardly expressed or inwardly expressed. What does that mean?

A bucket overflowing isn't always obvious. For example, a puppy that is inwardly expressing their bucket overflow may be incapable of keeping their nose off of the ground. They may be sniffing excessively or pretending that things in the environment are not there (other dogs, people, you even!). Sometimes they curl up and sleep to avoid what is overwhelming them.

Puppies can also express that bucket overflow with outwardly expressed behaviour and this is more obvious between 10-12 weeks and up when they start expressing their fear or frustration more overtly. Some behaviours include barking, lunging, growling, and sometimes snapping.

Understanding that you can nurture your puppy's bucket from the very get go can be empowering as a puppy owner.

THE FOUR COMPONENTS TO YOUR PUPPY'S BUCKET



Size of the Bucket

(varies uniquely to every dog)



Hole in the Bucket

(where the bucket empties, varies in size also)



Natural State of the Bucket

(the baseline - some dogs have a full bucket as a baseline, where others have an emptier bucket)



What Pays into the Bucket?

(what fills the bucket - both positive/exciting and negative/frustrating and/or frightening)

**Just being aware that you influence these factors can change the way you approach your training. **

Life can naturally be bucket filling, and yet understanding that your dog has events around them (tv sounds, children running and making sounds, loud construction sounds, the neighbour's dogs barking, playing, and more) that impact their bucket can be really important. We dive even deeper into what you can do to impact your puppy's bucket in our **Calm badge** because the power of calm plays an amazing role in setting any puppy or dog up for success.

As a puppy owner, on a weekly basis, evaluate your puppy's bucket. Does your puppy need a couple days of relaxation and games that focus on calmness to empty their bucket?

What are some things that can contribute to your puppy's bucket?

- Other dogs in the house
- Cat in the house
- Going for walks
- Going to puppy class
- Hearing sounds outside of the house
- Daily household chaos
- Exciting, fast games that encourage excitement UP!
- Keys jingling to indicate you're leaving or a car ride!

So many things that we often do not think about can have an impact on our dog's emotional state. Having this knowledge as you start this journey with your puppy can change everything.



HOW CAN YOU CREATE CALM IN YOUR HOME (and everywhere else)?



PASSIVE CALMING ACTIVITIES

Activities that you can employ your dog in and by the nature of them doing it, they are behaving appropriately, and the activity itself encourages calm.

- Long lasting chew
- Filled Kong
- Calm Mat
- Scatter feeding
- Scenting/Sniffing
- And more!

ACTIVE REST

An opportunity in your puppy's life where choices are simplified and only a singular choice (rest, calm) is available.

Have you ever been exhausted by all of the choices you make on a daily basis? Just imagine a puppy having way too many choices with a lot of overwhelming information being thrown at them, every minute of every day. They need active rest (a crate, settling on a bed, etc)

A PRIORITY

CALMNESS PROTOCOL

This is all about using your dog's daily food allowance, not feeding them in a bowl, but putting that value into calmness. Capture spontaneous moments of calm.

- Stillness
- Deep breathing
- Real calm with chin resting on the bed

Try to avoid rewarding:

- Fake Calm
- Quick, jerky behaviours that are actually prompting you to reinforce them before they actually are calm. (Otherwise known as action prompting)



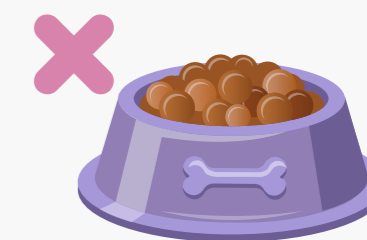
Implementing the Calmness Triad or Calmness Wheel (see above) in every aspect of your dog's life, including walks, at home, and anywhere else your adventures may take you will help your puppy choose to be calm more and more often. Encouraging calm in as many areas as possible prepares your puppy to navigate life with optimism.

As you progress in your puppy's calmness training, you'll also start introducing excitement in a controlled way through games so that your puppy can start to think through exciting events in a much cleaner, clearer way. Without that baseline of calmness, however, it can be hard to successfully move from a low excitement level to a higher excitement level. Working on calmness every day will layer in such a solid foundation of great decision making that it will be easier and easier for your puppy to control their impulses when opportunities arise.

EVERYDAY STRATEGIES THAT CAN HELP WHEN YOU GET STARTED....

Ditch the Bowl

This is when you take your puppy's daily food rations, and you use the food to provide instant feedback to your puppy when they make great choices.



You can also use their daily food to provide them with passive calming activities mentioned earlier.

Ditch the Bowl is easy to implement. If you have other dogs in your household, we recommend working with your puppy separately while they are in another room, crated, or confined in a separate area of the house.

Ditch the Bowl

Ditch the Walk

If your puppy is struggling on every walk and walks have become frustrating because of their behaviour (lots of sniffing, barking, lunging, pulling, balking, etc) it may be time to consider Ditching the Walk, which means, no more walks for a little bit!



Whatever the reason for your puppy's behaviour, that needs to be addressed first before they walks can continue. This gives you an opportunity to play games that focus on the concepts or skills that your puppy needs to grow before they can feel calmer in those situations.

Ditching the Walk doesn't have to be forever.

Ditch the Routine

To Ditch the Routine, it can help to figure out what things might be getting your puppy excited or worried. For example, if every time you grab the leash, your puppy starts jumping and wiggling in joy because they think a walk might be happening, it's a good time to work on calmness in that scenario instead!

The goal of Ditch the Routine is to make exciting or worrisome events unpredictable, and uneventful, so that it eliminates any exaggerated emotions and focus on calmness instead.

Ditch the Routine

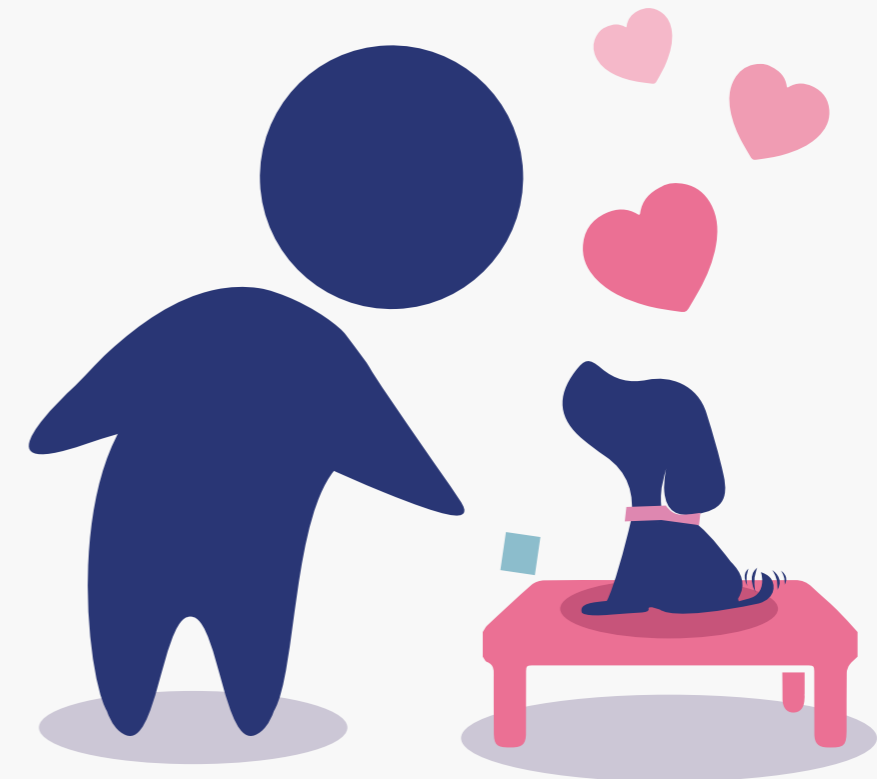
AND THAT'S WHERE BOUNDARY GAMES COME IN!

Boundary Games are bed games that allow you to teach your puppy to settle on a bed (or any surface really) and stay there until you release them.

Boundary Games can help prevent problem behaviours like:

- Counter surfing
- Jumping on Visitors
- Chasing Cats
- Barking out the Window or Front Door
- Being Unsettled in the Car
- Jumping/Nipping/or Chasing Excited and/or Running Children
- And MORE!

Boundary Games





 **Absolute Dogs.**