

The Inside-Out Dog



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Introduction

Transform Your Dog into a Calm, Confident Companion in Just Weeks

Does your dog:

- Embarrass you by barking uncontrollably when guests arrive?
- Pull so hard on walks that your arm hurts?
- Make walks a dreaded chore instead of an enjoyable activity?
- Jump all over guests even when you tell them "down"?
- Ignore you completely when dogs or squirrels are around?
- Chew up your stuff when left alone?
- Create tension in your home with behaviors that seem impossible to change?

These behaviors don't mean your dog is "broken." They're actually signs that your dog is confused. The good news? Once you understand what's really happening, these problems become much easier to solve.

You might be thinking: "I've tried everything already. Nothing works with my dog."

I hear this all the time from owners who later see amazing changes in their dogs. If it feels like nothing has worked, it's not because your dog can't learn or you're a bad owner. It's because most training methods:

1. Focus on stopping behaviors without addressing why they happen.
2. Rely on perfect timing that is hard for most pet parents to achieve.
3. Don't consider your dog's unique personality and needs.

The approach in this book is different. We won't just try to stop bad behaviors, we'll help your dog feel confident and calm enough that they don't need those behaviors anymore. That's why this works when other methods fail.

Here's a secret that most dog trainers won't tell you:

Physical exercise and treats alone will never solve behavioral problems.

This isn't about quick fixes or "miracle" solutions. It's about understanding what your dog really needs and how to provide it quickly and easily.

Here's why this "inside-out" way works better: We start with how your dog feels, not just what they do. Most training only tries to change your dog's actions.

That's like putting a bark collar on a frustrated dog! That only gets you a pissed off, quiet dog. That's not what anyone wants. You want a dog who doesn't feel the need to bark. That's how our way is different.

And one more thing, you can't MAKE your dog understand these things. With how most dog trainers talk you'd think this was the only way, but the truth is you have to help your dog convince themselves that your way is the best choice for them.

That's what we're experts at doing. I've obsessed over helping dogs "get it" for the last 17 years because that's what leads to long term changes. True transformation.

We help your dog feel safe and sure about what to do. **When your dog feels good inside, they act better outside.** It's that simple. And the changes last because they come from inside your dog.

Who The Heck Am I Anyway?

You might be wondering why you should trust my advice. Fair question! Here's the short version:

I've successfully trained thousands of dogs and helped even more humans fall back in love with their four-legged family members (which is really the whole point).

My approach isn't based on theory, it comes from over 17 years in the trenches:

- Earning dozens of dog training certifications
- Training dogs for commercials and movies
- Teaching countless group classes
- Publishing articles and books on dog training

But what truly sets my method apart? I've never gotten stuck in one training philosophy.

I spent a year channeling my inner Cesar Millan, another year committed to "purely positive" techniques, and many years borrowing the best elements from every talented trainer I found.

This openness to different approaches (sometimes to a fault!) has allowed me to create something uniquely effective by combining the best from each method.

The result? A straightforward approach that turns challenging dogs into dogs who love being obedient with minimal time and effort.

You know, I never planned to become a dog trainer. It just started with a promise to myself.

Growing up, our family dogs were the neighborhood terrors—barking constantly, running away, dragging me down the street when they spotted a cat. I still remember the embarrassment of noise complaints and chasing down my runaway dog in the family Suburban because it was the only way to get him back home.

So when I impulsively got my own puppy as an adult, I made a promise to my pup: I'd do whatever it took to have a happy, well-behaved dog.

I started where many people do, watching videos on TV (Youtube nowadays) and thinking I needed to "dominate" my dog to get results. After that didn't work, I tried bribing with endless treats. Both approaches left me and my dog frustrated and disconnected.

The breakthrough came when I realized dogs are more like children than wolves. They need a gentle teacher who understands their world, someone who can explain why good behavior benefits everyone. When I shifted to training through play and connection rather than control or constant rewards, everything changed.

My dog wasn't just behaving better, he was happier. He was making good choices on his own, without treats or commands. That's when my personal mission became my profession.

17 years later, after helping thousands of "problem dogs," I've discovered why so many owners struggle despite their best efforts. It's rarely about stubborn dogs or ineffective owners. It's almost always about misunderstanding what your unique dog truly needs at their current stage of development.

When owners tell me "I've tried that and it didn't work," I know they're playing the wrong level in the game. They're focusing on the wrong thing, and they'll never

pass the boss for this level! They urgently need someone who has beaten this boss to show them what to do.

Once you understand exactly where your dog is in their development and what specific lesson they need next, problems that seemed impossible often melt away—sometimes in days.

You're about to discover why so many dog owners consider this approach the turning point in their relationship with their dog.

This book contains what I've learned from those transformations. It's the approach I wish someone had shared with me when I was struggling with my own dog.

Turn the page to begin the journey from frustration to partnership!

CHAPTER 1

What's Possible: Discovering Your Dog's Hidden Potential

Three months before we met, Bill couldn't walk his Red Heeler past a stranger without a full meltdown. Last week, he sent me a video of them calmly strolling through Comic Con at the expo center. What changed? Not his dog's breed, age, or personality—just his understanding of what was really going on inside his dog's mind.

In this book, I'll guide you through three phases of transformation:

1. Understanding the most common mistakes dog owners make so you can avoid them!
2. How to set your dog up for success.
3. How to create lasting change so you only have to train your dog once.

The Inside-Out Dog

Have you ever met a dog who seems to know what you are thinking before you say a word? Who listens calmly the first time, even when exciting things are happening?

Who seems to enjoy making you happy, even when there's no treat in your hand?

That's what I call an "inside-out dog." And believe it or not, your "problem dog" has all the ingredients to become one.

Here at Train Walk Poop, we start by fixing how your dog feels, not just what they do. Most dog training tries to stop bad behaviors like jumping or barking. That's like putting a Band-Aid on the problem. I don't want to give you Band-Aids for your dog, I want to show you how to heal them.

Because when a dog feels good inside, they don't need to do those problem behaviors anymore.

Here's a simple way to understand what I'm getting at:

You could use a tight leash to stop your dog from pulling toward other dogs. That might work for the moment. But an inside-out dog walks nicely past other dogs because they genuinely enjoy being close to you. They've discovered that staying connected with you is the most rewarding part of their day. Walking together becomes something special they look forward to, not just a time when they're prevented from greeting every dog they see.

Why You Got This Book

Whether you just brought home a new puppy, have a dog who needs some guidance with making better choices, or simply want to help your buddy reach their full potential - you're in the right place. This book isn't about teaching commands. It's about creating the kind of dog that becomes a cherished family story, the one future generations will hear about when someone says, "Let me tell you about the best dog we ever had."

After working with thousands of dogs and their families over the past two decades, I've noticed one common thread:

People don't just want a well-behaved dog - they want a dog who is a joy to live with. They want a dog who can go on family vacations, greet visitors politely, and be a source of joy in their daily lives. They want a dog who makes life better, not more complicated.

And you, yes YOU deserve the kind of dog that makes everyday life better.

Your Dream vs Current Reality

Picture this: You're walking through the park with your dog, and a squirrel darts across your path. Instead of lunging forward or ignoring your calls, your dog looks to you for guidance. With just one quiet "leave it," they choose you over the squirrel.

Sounds impossible? I get it.

Right now, you might be living a very different reality. Maybe you're the person repeating "come" fifteen times while your dog pretends you don't exist. Or perhaps you've given up on having people over because your dog just won't calm down. You might even feel like you're failing your dog, despite trying everything the internet suggests.

Trust me, I've been there! Both as a dog owner and as a trainer. Here's what you may not realize:

Your dog isn't being stubborn, dominant, or difficult. They're not trying to make your life harder. In fact, most "problem behaviors" are really just signs of a dog who needs clarity, confidence, and the right kind of guidance.

That perfectly behaved dog you dream about? They're already inside your "problem dog," waiting to emerge. Your dog wants to make good choices. They want to make you happy. They just need to understand how.

This isn't about turning your dog into a robot who blindly follows commands. It's about building a partnership where your dog eagerly chooses to work with you because it's fun and they know being obedient always leads to their favorite things in life.

Let me share a quick story that illustrates this perfectly:

Last year, a family came to us with their Shepherd mix, Bernie. They were at their wit's end because Bernie would "randomly" start growling at other people during walks. They'd tried everything:

- Treat training
- Different collars
- Avoiding other people completely

But nothing worked.

The family was convinced Bernie was just aggressive. But when we watched him closely, we saw something different. He wasn't being aggressive; he was uncertain and trying to create space. Every time he saw a stranger, he'd give subtle stress signals that his family had never learned to recognize. When those signals were ignored, he escalated to growling and barking because that's what had worked to create space in the past.

Once the family understood what was really happening, everything changed. They stopped seeing Bernie as aggressive and started seeing him as a dog who needed help feeling confident. Within weeks of working with this new understanding, he was calmly walking past other people.

How did they do it? Three simple steps:

First, they learned to spot Bernie's early signs of worry - his ears would perk up and his body would stiffen slightly.

Second, they taught him a "look at me" game that rewarded him for checking in with them. They practiced this at home where it was easy, then in places with no strangers, then finally near other people who were off in the distance.

Third, they used what I call "understanding your dog's bubble". They started far away from people where Bernie could stay calm. Then slowly, over many short sessions, they got closer as he showed he was comfortable.

This is the power of shifting your mindset. When you understand what's really driving your dog's behavior, you can build their confidence instead of just managing their actions.

Your dog is waiting for this shift. They're ready to make better choices, and to become the amazing companion you know they can be.

But right now, I want you to do something important: Take a moment to imagine your dog's potential. Not just

"better behaved," but truly confident and connected with you. A dog you can enjoy life with anywhere!

That's not just possible, it's virtually guaranteed when you understand what's really going on in your dog's mind.

Real Results from Real Dog Owners

Before we move on, I want to share a few words from people who were once exactly where you are now—frustrated, uncertain, and looking for answers.

These aren't just success stories; they're proof that the approach you're about to learn works for all kinds of dogs and owners:

"I'm a first time dog owner and was nervous of raising a hellion dog. My breeder suggested Train Walk Poop and I'm so glad she did! Ryan has been super responsive and patient with me! He really is just a phone call or text away."

— Cyndi V.

"They really understand dogs and their behavior. More importantly, they understand people and how to teach them to work with their dogs. They've helped us so much with our anxious rescue who had some reactivity issues."

— Jenna M.

CHAPTER 2

Why Most Training Advice Keeps You Stuck

I promise that you and your dog are not stuck, even though it might feel that way right now. That feeling of hitting a wall with your dog's training? It's actually the turning point for many dog owners I've met.

In order to help you break through the invisible wall that is holding you and your dog back, I need to clear away any myths you may have about dogs and dog training.

15 Dangerous Myths About Dogs

Myth #1: "My dog is choosing to disobey me."

Reality: Dogs don't think in terms of obedience vs. disobedience. They make choices based on what feels safe, what's been rewarded, and what makes sense to them in the moment. When your dog "ignores" you, they're usually just confused about what you want or unsure about the benefit of listening.

Myth #2: "My dog is trying to dominate me."

Reality: Your dog doesn't want to rule your household. They want to explore, alert you, and have fun (their definition of fun doesn't always line up with yours, but I promise to help clear that up shortly).

Myth #3: "I've messed up too much already."

Reality: Dogs are incredibly adaptable and respond quickly to change. No matter what happened in the past. Your dog is ready to move on and learn better habits as soon as you are! We see it every single day here at our training facility.

Myth #4: "My dog is just high energy, that's why they [jump/bark/pull/etc]."

Reality: Most "high energy" behaviors are actually signs of uncertainty or lack of clear boundaries. When dogs know what's expected and feel confident in their role, they naturally become calmer. Energy isn't the problem, it's how that energy is channeled.

Myth #5: "If I use treats, my dog will only listen when I have food."

Reality: Treats should be a teaching tool, not a permanent crutch. Think of them like training wheels on a bike, they are essential for learning but not needed forever. The key isn't the treats themselves; it's how and when we use them. (More on this soon)

Myth #6: "I need to tire my dog out for them to behave."

Reality: A physically exhausted dog isn't necessarily a well-behaved dog. In fact, many "hyper" behaviors come from dogs who are physically tired but **MENTALLY BORED**. Mental exercise always creates better results than physical exercise alone.

Myth #7: "If I correct my dog, I'll damage our relationship."

Reality: Clear, fair boundaries actually build trust and respect. Think about your best relationships with people, they probably involve honest communication, not just endless praise. Dogs are the same way. They thrive when they understand both what to do and what not to do.

Myth #8: "Training means my dog can't be a dog anymore."

Reality: Good training actually gives your dog more freedom, not less. When your dog understands boundaries and makes good choices, they are guaranteed to have more opportunities. Why? Because when your dog behaves like a dream you know you can take them anywhere and things will go well. This is every dog's dream! They all want to spend more time with us and go more places with us. This is why the

most well-trained dogs I know lead incredibly rich, fun lives.

Myth #9: "My dog is too old/too young/too stubborn to change."

Reality: I've seen senior dogs learn new behaviors in days. I've watched "stubborn" breeds become the most responsive dogs in class. Age and breed might influence how we train, but they never determine if training will work.

Myth #10: "My dog listens at home but ignores me everywhere else."

Reality: This isn't your dog being stubborn, it's actually completely normal! When your dog "knows" something at home but "forgets" it at the park, they're not being difficult. They simply haven't learned that the same rules apply everywhere. (I'll teach you exactly how to fix it, so keep reading.)

Myth #11: "My dog is aggressive/reactive, so they can't go to training classes."

Reality: Actually, professional guidance is exactly what your dog needs. Working with someone who understands dog behavior can help your dog feel safe and confident in situations that used to trigger them. I've

seen countless "aggressive" dogs transform into social butterflies with the right approach.

Myth #12: "My dog will only behave for me/my partner/the trainer."

Reality: Dogs aren't playing favorites when they listen to some people but not others. They're responding to clarity and consistency. When everyone in the household uses the same clear communication style, dogs respond reliably to everyone.

Myth #13: "Small dogs don't need as much training as big dogs."

Reality: Size has nothing to do with training needs. Every dog, regardless of size, needs clear boundaries and guidance. In fact, many small dogs develop problems precisely because their owners didn't think training was necessary.

Myth #14: Dogs should like everyone.

Reality: Good social skills actually mean being able to ignore other dogs or people when appropriate. Your dog doesn't need to meet every dog they see any more than you need to hug every person you pass on the street. Selective, controlled socialization creates better behavior than a "meet everyone" approach.

Making your dog meet everyone won't help them in the long run either! Just like kids get pickier about who they

want to play with as they grow up, dogs do too. Every dog is different, some like lots of friends and some prefer just a few.

That's why our training classes teach your dog how to be polite around others without feeling scared or upset. We'll show you how to help your dog be their best self in public without all the stress. Your dog doesn't need to love everyone, they just need to know how to behave nicely when others are around!

And even if your dog loves every dog they meet, letting them say hi to everyone will completely undo your dog's training. You'll have a heck of time having a well behaved dog if their brains fall out every time they see another dog. Your pup needs to understand that it's not recess 24/7. There's plenty of time for friends if they can learn to ask permission to go play instead of assuming it's always time to play.

Myth #15: The Most Dangerous Myth of All

"This is just how it has to be."

I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say they've accepted their dog's behavior because "that's just how they are." But here's the truth:

Accepting this as truth will keep you stuck! These myths aren't just wrong, they're actively holding you and your dog back from the relationship you both deserve.

Focus On What You Want

This shift in focus seems simple but creates profound changes in both your training approach and your dog's responses.

Here's how to reframe common challenges:

Instead of...	Think...
"Stop pulling on the leash"	"Walk calmly beside me"
"Don't jump on guests"	"Greet people with four paws on the floor"
"Stop barking at other dogs"	"Stay relaxed when we see other dogs"
"Don't beg at the table"	"Rest calmly during meals"

This reframing is key because it:

- Creates a positive training mindset
- Makes success easier to recognize and reward

Putting It Into Practice:

For the next three days, I want you to become a detective studying your dog. Grab a notebook and spend just 5 minutes each day writing down:

1. Three things you notice about your dog's body language during different activities
2. Two situations where your dog seems most relaxed and confident
3. One moment when your dog seemed confused or uncertain

This simple exercise will train your eye to see beyond problem behaviors to what's happening inside your dog. Many owners are amazed at how much this observation alone begins to shift their relationship.

Remember:

Every "problem dog" is just a great dog waiting for the right guidance. Your dog has amazing potential, and you're about to discover exactly how to unlock it.

Now that we've cleared away the myths that have been holding you back, you're ready to discover how dogs actually think and learn. In Chapter 3, I'll reveal the

simple framework that explains why some dogs seem to 'get it' instantly while others struggle.

Buckle up! I'm about to show you how to help your dog become one of the quick learners.

CHAPTER 3

The Magic of Mental Exercise: Why Brain Games Beat Long Walks

What if I told you that 20 minutes of the right kind of mental exercise could create more lasting behavior changes than two hours of physical exercise? It's true, and here's why:

Your dog's brain is like a battery that needs to be drained in the right way. Physical exercise drains their physical energy, but mental exercise drains what actually drives most unwanted behaviors... mental energy!

Think about dogs in working roles:

- police dogs
- search and rescue dogs
- service dogs

These dogs have a ton of desire to work hard (what we trainers call "drive"), but they aren't running marathons all day. Instead, they're using their brains to solve problems and make decisions. They spend a lot of time doing nothing or resting in crates, but when it's time to work it's a mental workout more than a physical one.

Take Willie, a Border Collie I worked with. His owners were walking him for 3 hours a day and letting him run at the dog park as well, but he was still destroying their

house when left alone. Why? Because he was physically tired but mentally bored!

We replaced most of his physical exercise with mental exercise. His owners started doing simple training games three times a day for about 15 minutes each. Within a week, Willie was lying calmly in his crate while his owners were at work. No destruction, no anxiety, no problems.

The key is working smarter, not harder. Instead of exhausting yourself and your dog with endless exercise, you can:

- Turn mealtime into training time
- Use everyday moments as training opportunities
- Create routines that exercises their mind

When you focus only on physical exercise, you're basically creating an athlete who needs more and more activity to get tired. It's like building up a tolerance. That's why an hour-long walk that used to tire out your pup now barely takes the edge off.

But when you exercise your dog's brain, something different happens. They actually get better at controlling themselves and making smart choices. **The more brain games you play, the calmer and more thoughtful your dog becomes over time.** It's like their brain muscles get stronger in a way that helps them be more relaxed and make better decisions every day.

I've seen this work with every type of dog:

- Hyperactive puppies who learn to settle
- Anxious rescues who find confidence
- Senior dogs who get a new lease on life
- "Stubborn" dogs who became eager to learn

The secret isn't wearing them out, it's teaching them how to use their brain in productive ways. When dogs are mentally satisfied, physical exercise becomes about enjoyment rather than necessity.

Remember: A mentally tired dog will sleep. A physically tired dog will recover and improve their endurance for getting into trouble.

From Marathon Runner to Calm Companion

This is where we see the biggest transformations. Dogs who once needed hours of exercise learn to:

- Settle naturally
- Choose calm on their own
- Focus easily

Here's how to have a calm dog:

1. Replace some physical exercise with mental focus games
2. Reward calm choices
3. Build duration gradually

4. Practice in real life scenarios

Remember how tired you used to get after a big exam in school? Or have you ever been exhausted even though you were sitting in a chair, staring at a screen all day? That kind of tired hits differently, right? Your dog is exactly the same way! While physical exercise is important, mental challenges are the real secret to a calmer dog.

I meet so many dogs each year who seem to have endless energy. The truth is, most of them are actually exhausted. What their owners don't realize is, they have been running on adrenaline for months if not years!

When my team switches things up completely and gives these dogs brain games to play... the transformation is swift and so satisfying to watch!

We see dogs who go from being a nightmare to live with to becoming dogs who:

- Don't need constant activity
- Enjoy relaxing with their family

You know what else happens when you focus on mental exercise? Your dog learns that you're the source of all good things. You become more interesting than the squirrels outside or the dog across the street. They start checking in with you naturally, wanting to engage with

you instead of finding their own entertainment (goodbye, chewed baseboards!).

How to Know It's Working

Watch for these changes:

- Your dog lies down without being asked
- They check in with you more frequently during walks
- Their eyes and face look softer, less "tense" or "alert"
- They settle more quickly after activity
- When they get excited they relax faster than they used to

I love seeing the look on owners' faces when they realize they can have a calmer, more focused dog by doing less physical exercise. It seems too good to be true, but I've seen it work thousands of times.

Want to know the best part? The more you do these mental exercises, the better your dog gets at learning. It's like they develop better problem-solving skills. So while physical exercise needs to increase over time to get the same effect, mental exercise actually gets more efficient. Your dog becomes a better learner, more focused, and more in tune with you.

If this doesn't get you excited, please read it again. I **just gave you the Holy Grail** of having a dog that is a joy to live with!

Now that you know why brain games help your dog behave, the next chapter will show you how to help your dog win at life!

CHAPTER 4

Setting Your Dog Up for Success

If your dog could talk, I believe the first thing they'd say is:

"I want to make you happy, but half the time I don't understand what you want!"

Most dogs need extra coaching to understand what you actually want so they can start making better decisions.

In their heart, I believe every dog wants to make good choices. But sometimes mother nature inspires them to make really bad choices 😏

Most people spend all their time stopping bad behavior. But that's like teaching a child to write by only telling them when they make mistakes. Real learning happens when we catch the good stuff.

I worked with a family who transformed their "difficult" dog by learning to:

- Notice good choices
- Catch the start of good decisions

Their dog Bella taught them something important: She wasn't trying to be "bad", she just didn't know what "good" looked like.

Think about learning to ride a bike. If someone just kept yelling "don't fall!" Would that help? Of course not. You need to know what TO do, not just what not to do.

This is why many dog owners find that the more they try to stop bad behaviors, the worse they get. Why? Because your dog still doesn't know what they SHOULD do instead.

Everything changes when you start thinking differently:

- Instead of stopping jumps, show your dog how to greet nicely
- Instead of fighting pulls, show your dog how walking together feels

I'll explain how to do this in just a bit. It's a lot simpler than it sounds. But reading about it will only plant the seed, you'll need to learn the physical actions to take in order to really help your dog.

Why This Book Isn't Enough

While this book gives you the principles and foundations for success, working with a professional trainer will speed everything up dramatically. Hiring a great dog trainer is like having a personal coach to help you get in shape versus just reading about fitness. A good trainer will help you see subtle signals you might miss and customize everything for your specific dog. Even one or two sessions can dramatically speed up your progress..

By the way, I'm sharing these ideas because I want you to understand how dogs learn. But understanding and doing are different things.

Your dog communicates in tiny signals: the twitch of an ear, a slight turn of the head, a moment of tension before a reaction. These happen in split seconds. It's impossible to learn to read your dog's body language, so you can catch these moments from just reading words on a page.

I remember working with a Great Dane who lunged at other dogs. His owner had read several dog training books and watched countless videos. She knew all the right words. But in real time, she couldn't see the subtle stiffness before her dog reacted. Without seeing that moment, she couldn't help him make better choices.

You and your dog need to learn the steps, get on the same wavelength, and adjust to each other. No book can teach you how to feel that connection.

A good trainer doesn't just train your dog, they train you to understand your dog. They see what you can't see and help you catch those perfect moments to reward.

The good news? A little professional help goes an incredibly long way. Most families see huge improvements within a few weeks.

Your dog is trying their best to understand your world. I am confident all you need is a translator to bridge the gap!

The Most Important Aspect of Training You're Completely Overlooking: Sleeeeeeeeeeeeeep

Just like humans, dogs need quality sleep to learn, make good decisions, and control their impulses. But here's what most people don't realize: the average adult dog needs 14-18 hours of sleep per day, and puppies need even more - up to 20 hours!

When dogs don't get enough sleep, they:

- Have more emotional highs and lows
- Are bad at controlling their emotions
- Learn slowly
- Take soooo much longer to train
- Become hyperactive
- Or Anxious
- Or even aggressive

Think of your dog's mind like a photo being developed. Training provides the image, but sleep develops the picture which makes it clear and permanent. **Without enough sleep, the image stays blurry and might fade away completely.**

Luna, an Australian Shepherd I worked with, is a perfect example. Her family thought she was hyperactive and untrainable. In reality, she was exhausted. Between dog

daycare three times a week, daily trips to the dog park, and constant activity at home, Luna never had a chance to truly rest.

We implemented a structured rest schedule, and within days, her family had a different dog. She was calmer, more focused during training, and actually listened to commands she "couldn't learn" before.

You know how a toddler gets when they skip their nap? All wild, making bad choices, maybe even having meltdowns? Dogs are exactly the same way! After working with thousands of dogs, I can tell you this: **an exhausted dog is usually a "naughty" dog.**

Have you ever dealt with any of these with your dog?

- Crazy zoomies
- Gets the "crazy eyes"
- Barking at everything
- Nipping and jumping worse as the day goes on
- Ignoring commands
- Having a hard time settling down

You probably think your dog needs MORE exercise to burn off all this "extra energy." Am I right? Everyone thinks this way! I fell into this trap with my first dog as well. Long walks, trips to the dog park, off leash hikes, and even doggy daycare can actually make things worse instead of better.

If any of the above sounds like your dog, I'd be willing to bet your dog is tired. Like a toddler who's fighting sleep, they get wound up the more tired they are.

Here are two big changes to make immediately:

- Add nap times in the crate or at your feet multiple times each day
- Cut back on the amount of time your dog runs free in the yard

I know this sounds backwards! But you have to trust me! Within days you'll notice your dog:

- Listens better
- Nips less
- Reacts less
- Spends more time in "chill mode"

So how much sleep do dogs really need?

- Puppies: 18-20 hours a day (yes, really!)
- Adult dogs: 14-18 hours a day
- Senior dogs: 14-20 hours a day

Dogs don't always know how to turn off. That's why I love crate training. It's like giving them their own bedroom. A good schedule might look like:

- 1-2 hours awake
- 2-4 hours rest
- Repeat throughout the day

Remember: Sometimes what looks like "too much energy" is actually an overtired dog who needs a nap! Getting enough sleep can fix so many behavior problems that no amount of training will solve when your dog is exhausted.

The Next Most Important Aspect of Training You're Completely Overlooking: Food

Food isn't just fuel, it's information for your dog's body and brain. What and when your dog eats directly impacts their:

- Energy levels
- Ability to focus
- Emotions
- Learning ability
- Behavior

A dog who's fed a high-quality diet will be more stable emotionally and easier to train. Poor-quality food can lead to blood sugar spikes and crashes that can make your pup seem bipolar. Health issues can sometimes be masked as training problems.

Food Quality Matters More Than You Think

I can't possibly cover everything about dog nutrition in this book - it's truly a science of its own. But I've seen dramatic changes in behavior when dogs switch to better quality food.

Many popular brands you see at the grocery store contain fillers, by-products, and artificial ingredients that can affect your dog's focus and energy. These foods might say "complete nutrition" on the bag, but that doesn't mean they're optimal for your dog's brain or long term health.

If you want to see how highly your current food is rated, visit AllAboutDogFood.co.uk

This independent site evaluates ingredients and nutritional content of hundreds of brands. Many people are shocked to find their "premium" food only rates 2 or 3 stars out of 5. This is really frustrating to find out! Ask me how I know 😞

For a deeper dive into canine nutrition, I highly recommend the podcast "Feed Your Dog Facts" which breaks down complex nutrition topics into easy-to-understand episodes.

At our training center, we've seen such dramatic improvements in behavior when dogs switch to better food that we actually created our own line. You can find it at UtahPaw.com if you're interested.

The most common comment we hear after a food switch is: "My dog seems calmer and more stable." Sometimes what looks like a training issue is actually a nutrition issue in disguise.

Whatever food you choose, look for one with real meat as the first ingredient, minimal fillers, and no artificial colors or preservatives. Your dog's brain will thank you, and your training sessions will go much more smoothly.

Health & Training - The Hidden Connection

Ever try to focus when you feel sick to your stomach? Or after eating nothing but junk food all day? Pretty tough, right? Dogs are exactly the same way. When they don't feel good, training becomes hard for them.

Let me tell you about Cooper, this 4-month-old Springer Spaniel I worked with. His family was at their wit's end because:

- He was bouncing off the walls
- Constantly biting hands and pant legs
- Destroying baseboards and furniture
- Ignoring his mountain of toys
- Having 4-5 loose poops a day
- Waking up to poop at 2 AM
- Couldn't seem to calm down

His family was feeding him one of those popular brands you see advertised everywhere. But here's the thing, it was basically like feeding him Lucky Charms or Snickers bars for every meal! That is a bit of an exaggeration, but no wonder he couldn't control his emotions or hold his poop!

We switched him to a high-quality kibble and wow! What a difference! Within just a couple weeks:

- His energy leveled out
- His potty schedule became predictable (2-3 normal poops a day and none at night)
- He could actually hold it longer
- He started choosing toys over pant legs
- He could finally relax!

His mom was so grateful. She had no idea the food was making everything harder. And trust me, I get it. I made the same mistake with my first puppy! It's not just puppies either. We see this all the time with adult dogs too.

Remember: Sometimes what looks like "bad behavior" is really just a dog who doesn't feel good because of what they're eating. Getting them on good food can be a total game changer for training!

The Power of Routine

The power of routine cannot be overstated. Your dog's ideal day should include:

- Regular meal times
- Dedicated training sessions
- Play with rules
- Enforced rest periods
- Quiet evening wind-down

Having a predictable schedule helps your dog feel secure by knowing what to expect, reducing anxiety and improving behavior.

Remember: A well-rested, properly fed dog with good health foundations will learn faster and make better choices consistently.

Your Dogs Tiny Learning Window = 1.3 Seconds

Did you know that if your dog is rewarded or corrected just a little too early or a little too late they'll connect the wrong dots? You only have about 1.3 seconds to tug on that leash or give your dog that treat or you risk training the wrong thing! Here are a couple of examples of this mistake in action that I've seen recently:

The Missed Sit: Emma called her dog to come, then asked for a sit. She reached for the treat as her dog's bottom touched the floor, which caused her dog to stand up. After weeks of "training," her dog thought the routine was: come, sit, stand up, get treats!

Whoops!

The Leash Lesson

Tom's dog pulled toward other dogs on walks. He'd tug the leash, but usually a few seconds after the pulling started. His dog didn't connect the correction with the pulling. Instead, she felt that seeing other dogs meant unpleasant leash tugs would happen randomly.

As you can see, timing is so important. But it isn't about being quick, it's about being clear. When you say "yes" or "good boy" at exactly the right moment, your dog gets crystal clear information. "That thing you just did? That's what I was looking for!" It's like turning on a light in a dark room, suddenly they can see what works.

Bad timing creates confusion. If you reward or correct too late, your dog connects the reward with whatever they were doing at that moment, not what you intended. This is why some dogs learn to bark for treats or jump up during training. Somewhere along the way, delayed timing accidentally reinforced the wrong thing.

The magic happens when you learn to notice the subtle moments that matter most. That split second when your dog first looks at their favorite "trigger" is your best teaching opportunity.

Timing takes practice. Most people are too slow at first. They wait to see if the dog "really" does the behavior, and by then, the perfect moment has passed. This is where one of our professional trainers can be a HUGE help. Even small adjustments can make a big difference in how quickly your dog learns.

Remember, your dog is always trying to figure out what works. Good timing helps them solve that puzzle faster and with more confidence.

Here's a great example: Instead of waiting until your dog is already barking at other dogs, try to notice the

moment your dog first stares at or locks on to the other dog. Notice the tension in your dog's body and take action right then! Over time, your dog will learn that you notice what triggers them. They feel more connected to you because you're getting into your dog's world a little bit. Believe it or not this will reduce your dog's desire to explode.

How you respond in those moments depends greatly from dog to dog so I can't give you a specific tactic in this book, but one of our skilled trainers will be able to quickly diagnose why your dog is being triggered and develop a game plan to show your dog there is a better way! A calmer way!

Creating Opportunities for Good Choices

Have you ever seen a dog barking and pulling at the end of the leash when they spot another dog? Or maybe your own dog goes crazy when they see squirrels, skateboards, or strangers. This doesn't mean your dog is bad, it just means they're overwhelmed and don't know what else to do.

The good news is there's a simple way to help: start far away and move closer bit by bit.

Finding the Magic Distance

Every dog has a "magic distance" where they can see what bothers them but still "keep it together". For some

dogs, this might mean they need to stay 100 feet away from other dogs. For others, it might mean staying 50 feet away from a skateboarder.

At this distance, their brain can still work properly because they're not too stressed to think. This is your chance to help them learn!

When your dog notices something but stays calm, tell them "good job" and give them a treat. When you do this with good timing your dog learns 2 important things at once:

1. "When I see that scary thing AND stay relaxed, I get rewards!"
2. "My human noticed that scary thing too AND it's not a big deal!"

Compare this to pulling on the leash and/or saying "no" or "leave it" in a stern voice. The difference in your mood will be night and day! You'll be modeling the mood or vibe you want your dog to eventually copy. You're leading the way to a calmer dog by being calm and collected yourself.

Am I making sense? I hope so! Because this concept is super helpful in all sorts of situations with dogs.

Moving Closer Step by Step

Once your dog is comfortable from far away, you can move a little closer - maybe to 40 feet instead of 50. Keep rewarding calm behavior. If your dog starts to get upset, that's okay! Just move back to a distance where they can be successful again.

Some days your dog might need more space, and some days they might handle being closer. This is normal. **The important thing is to go at your dog's pace, not yours.**

Over time, you'll be able to get closer and closer to whatever used to send your dog "through the roof." We've seen dogs who once couldn't be within 200 feet of another dog eventually walk calmly right past one without a care in the world!

Creating Chances to Win

The key to this whole process is setting up situations where your dog can make good choices. If, for example, you take a dog who's afraid of other dogs straight to a busy dog park things will go south in a hurry!

Instead, find quiet spots where your dog can practice being brave from a safe distance. Each small success builds their confidence for the next challenge.

This isn't just about teaching your dog to tolerate specific things, it's teaching them a new way to respond to the world. Instead of panic, they learn thoughtfulness. Instead of reaction, they learn self-control.

We see this amazing change in dogs every day. With patience and the right distance, dogs who once couldn't function around their triggers become calm and confident. And their families can finally enjoy walks without stress!

Remember: good choices happen when we create the right opportunities for success.

Our Secret Weapon: Helper Dogs

Want to know what really speeds this process up?
Having well-behaved dogs at your disposal 24/7 like we do at our facility!

I used to be dependent on random dogs on walks that would only be around for a few seconds as they walked on by. Or worse, I'd run into dogs who would bark right back at the dog I was trying to train. **That's like trying to teach someone to stay calm during an argument by finding random angry people!**

Thankfully, I have a much better setup these days. I have a pack of super-calm dogs I can pick from to help your dog. I can hand pick the perfect helper dogs to fix

your dog's unique issues. And the best part? That helper dog will stick around as long as I need them to.

Think about this: when the package delivery guy shows up, rings the bell, and your dog goes into a barking frenzy, what happens? The delivery person leaves! In your dog's mind, they've scared the "intruder" away - mission accomplished! Your dog just got rewarded for all that barking.

With my helper dogs, I can train the opposite. Your dog can bark all they want, but my calm dog isn't going anywhere. In fact, my dog couldn't care less about the barking, they're completely unphased by these antics. Your dog will learn that their usual strategy simply doesn't work.

Eventually, your dog realizes: "Huh, this dog is boring. They don't react when I bark. Maybe I don't need to make this such a big deal after all."

That's when the real learning happens. And it happens so much faster with the right helper dog than it ever could with random encounters on walks.

This method has helped countless "reactive" dogs become calm, confident companions. With patience, distance, and the right helper dogs, your dog can become the well-behaved buddy you've always wanted!

Your Dog's Reality is Very Real to Them

Let me give you some real examples I see all the time:

1. The Sit-Stand Shuffle

Your dog sits when asked but pops right back up. You might think they're being disobedient, but here's what usually happened:

Every time they sat in the past, you gave them a treat the second their bottom hit the floor. Guess what? They learned that "sit" means "touch your bottom down for one second, then jump up for your treat!" **That's not what you meant to teach, but it's what your dog learned!**

What we actually want to teach is that "sit" means "plant your bottom and keep it there until released." We want your dog to understand that sitting isn't just a quick action to earn a treat - it's a position to maintain until given different information.

This kind of solid understanding makes real-world situations so much easier. Imagine your dog sitting calmly while you:

- Chat with friends on a walk
- Sign for a package at the door

We teach this by slightly delaying treats, gradually increasing the time your dog stays seated, and rewarding calm patience rather than quick movements.

Soon, your dog learns that staying put is actually more rewarding than the sit-pop-up dance they were doing before. It's not just about getting them to sit, it's about teaching them the value of being still and patient.

This is just one example of how understanding your dog's perspective helps us teach what we really want them to learn, not just what they happen to pick up from our unintentionally confusing signals. When we're clear about what we're teaching, dogs learn amazingly fast!

2. The Optional "Come"

Your dog ignores you when called, and you're convinced they're just being difficult. But let's look at it from their perspective:

- a. Sometimes you call them once and mean it
- b. Sometimes you call five times while they finish sniffing that fascinating bush
- c. Sometimes you give up entirely

In your dog's reality, "come" isn't a command - it's a suggestion!

This is where our expertise makes everything faster. We're like dog behavior detectives. We quickly spot these misunderstandings and show you how to clear them up. Instead of getting frustrated with your dog, we help you understand what they're thinking and show you exactly how to teach what you really want them to learn.

Making Success Simple

The trick is breaking things down into pieces your dog can understand. Want your dog to greet guests calmly? We don't start with a house full of excited visitors. We might work through some baby steps like:

1. Teaching a solid "place" command in a quiet room
2. Practicing with one calm person entering
3. Practicing with several people in the room
4. Practicing in the kitchen while someone is cooking
5. Gradually adding more excitement as your dog masters each level

Think of it like levels in a video game - you have to beat level one before you can handle level ten!

The Speed of Success

You know what is so cool about all of this? When you set things up right, dogs learn crazy fast. What might take months of frustration with trial and error can often be achieved in a few focused sessions when you know exactly what to do next. That's not magic, it's just good teaching!

Remember: Your dog wants to get it right. Our job is to make it clear and achievable for them. When we do that, success isn't just possible, it's practically guaranteed!

Setting Up for Success

Making sure your dog can't practice bad habits is just as important as training. If your dog likes to steal food from the counter, keep the counters clear while you teach them better habits. Using baby gates or keeping things out of reach isn't cheating... it's smart!

It helps your dog learn new habits faster. You won't need them forever I promise! But you will reach your goals 100x faster if you keep these teaching aides in place until your dog is ready for more freedom and trust.

Ways to Help Your Dog Succeed:

- Making your house safe and easy for training
- Keeping a regular schedule
- Using helpful tools like gates or leashes
- Making sure everyone in the family follows the same rules

Learning Takes Time

Training your dog isn't a straight line going up. Some days your dog will do great, and other days it might seem like they forgot everything they know. This is frustrating but normal. It's like learning to play a sport;

some days you play really well, and other days you mess up things you usually do just fine.

Two steps forward, one step back is just how learning works. My own dog used to bark and lunge at people on walks, for example. Some days he did great, while others he struggled. But over time, he got better and better. The key was noticing his progress over weeks, not days.

Try not to compare your dog to that "perfect" dog your friend has or even to your last dog. That just leads to feeling frustrated. Instead, think about how your dog was doing a few months ago. Maybe they've gone from barking at everything that moves to just barking at other dogs and skateboards. That's real progress! When you look back at how far you've come together, it helps you stay patient and motivated on the tough days.

Remember, those up and down days are just part of learning. Keep practicing, stay consistent, and celebrate the small wins along the way. That's how real, lasting change happens.

Now that you understand how to set your dog up for success through proper timing, sleep, nutrition, and creating the right opportunities to learn, it's time to dive deeper into your dog's mind. In Chapter 5, you'll discover how dogs actually think (not how we assume they think) which will deepen your bond in ways you never imagined possible.

CHAPTER 5

Understanding Your Dog's Mind

Have you ever wondered what's going on inside your dog's head? Why do they get so excited when you pick up their leash? And why does your dog suddenly act like they don't know a single command when your friends come over?

If we could peek inside your dog's brain, we'd discover three important keys that unlock almost everything about their behavior. When you understand these keys, problems start making sense.

Let me show you what's really happening inside that cute, fuzzy head!

The Three Keys to Your Dog's Mind

1. Dogs Are Pattern Machines

Think about how your dog learned to respond to the sound of the treat bag crinkling or the jingle of your car keys. Nobody formally taught them these "tricks", they figured it out through patterns.

This pattern-learning happens constantly:

- "When I sit by the door, it opens"
- "When I lie quietly on my bed, I get to stay in the living room"

- "When I pull on the leash, we move forward"
- "When I bark out the window, my humans come running"

The fascinating thing is that dogs don't just learn the obvious patterns. They pick up on subtle ones too:

- The slight tension in your shoulders before you get anxious
- The way you gather your things before leaving
- How your breathing changes when you're frustrated
- The difference between "getting ready for work" and "getting ready for a walk"

2. Dogs Live in the Moment

Your dog isn't thinking about yesterday or planning for tomorrow. They're focused on what's happening right now, this very second. It's like they're always saying, "What's going on THIS moment? And what feels good to me right now?"

This present-focus explains so much about why dogs do what they do! When your dog jumps on visitors even though they know "off," they're not being naughty - they're just super excited about what's happening right now. All their training seems to fly out the window because the present moment is SO interesting and jumping feels SO satisfying!

This is also why scolding your dog for chewing up your shoe hours ago doesn't work. In their mind, there's no connection between the shoe they chewed this morning and you being upset now. They're thinking, "Why is my human mad at me while I'm just sitting here doing nothing wrong?"

Thankfully, this means dogs bounce back quickly too. Have you noticed how your dog can be zooming around like crazy one minute and then flopped over asleep the next? That's because they fully experience each moment as it comes, without carrying baggage from the past.

Being Present Helps Dogs Do What We've Bred Them For

What makes this even more interesting is that dogs have been bred for thousands of years to do specific jobs. Some were bred to alert us to danger, others to retrieve birds, herd livestock, or simply provide comfort. These aren't just skills - they're deep desires wired into your dog's brain!

Every dog has all these drives inside them, but each dog has their own special mix. Some dogs live to chase and retrieve balls. Others feel most satisfied when they're alerting you to every person who walks by. Some are happiest when they're snuggled up providing comfort.

When we understand that dogs live in the present AND have these deep-seated desires to perform certain jobs, we can be much smarter about training. The key is finding ways for your dog to feel like they're "doing a good job" while still behaving in ways that work for your home.

Here are some examples:

- I remember Izzy, a cattle dog mix who REALLY wanted to chase everything! Bikes, runners, cars, you name it! Izzy would pull so hard on her leash that her family couldn't walk her anymore. So we found a special toy on a rope (a flirt pole) that she could chase in the backyard. Now Izzy gets to run super fast after her toy for 10 minutes, twice every day. This makes her so happy that she doesn't need to chase other things on walks. Her family is amazed at how much calmer she is!
- Then there was Lucy, the Great Dane who thought she was a lap dog, even though she weighed 120 pounds! Lucy would try to sit on her owners ALL the time - during dinner, while they worked, even in the bathroom! We taught Lucy she could still touch her people but in better ways. Now she just rests her head on their lap or leans against their leg during movie time. She's still getting the cuddles she loves, but her family

isn't squished anymore!

- In a more extreme case, I trained a big Husky mix who pulled so hard on walks that his owner's shoulder needed surgery! Instead of trying to stop him from pulling, we got him a special pulling harness. Now he helps out by pulling his owner's bike on hiking trails. He feels like he has an important job, and he actually walks nicely on his regular leash now because he has a healthy outlet for his passion for pulling.

Instead of thinking, "how can I stop my dog from EVER doing this again?" Try asking yourself, **"how can I give my dog a chance to do this behavior in a way that works for both of us?"**

When your dog gets to be a dog by:

- digging
- barking
- chasing
- Pulling

But in ways you've set up and at times that make sense, they're much less likely to do these things when it's not okay. It's like draining their natural behavior "tank" so they don't overflow with these actions at the wrong times.

Does this make sense? Your dog isn't trying to be bad. They're just being a dog!

When we create special times for these normal dog behaviors, everyone wins. Your dog gets to scratch that itch, and you get a better-behaved friend the rest of the time.

Finding this balance isn't always easy. Each dog has their own unique blend of drives and each family has different needs. But there is always a solution! When we find that magic mix for each dog and owner, it's like everything suddenly clicks into place. You're finally speaking the same language and understanding each other.

3. Dogs Are Always Learning

Let's look at a typical day through your dog's learning lens:

Morning:

- You get up late and rush through the walk → Dog learns that pulling works because you're in a hurry
- You put their breakfast down while they're jumping → Dog learns jumping makes breakfast arrive faster

Afternoon:

- They bark at a delivery person → Person leaves → Barking "works"

Evening:

- They bring you a toy → You play → Toy-bringing gets reinforced
- They jump on the counter while your are cooking → You push them away → They got attention (even negative attention is attention)

The key insight here is that dogs learn from every interaction, whether we intend to teach something or not. This means:

- "Not training" is actually training, just not necessarily what you want
- Small moments matter as much as formal training sessions
- Every family member is teaching the dog something

Putting It All Together

When you understand these three keys, you start to see training differently. It's not about showing your dog who's boss or teaching them right from wrong. It's about creating clear, consistent patterns!

This understanding leads us to a powerful truth:

Your dog is perfectly trained for what you've accidentally taught them. The good news? Once you understand how they think and learn, you can start teaching them what you actually want them to know.

So how do we use what we've learned to make things better with our dogs? It's simple, we need to pay more attention to what we accidentally teach our dogs.

Every time you're with your dog, you're teaching them something, whether you mean to or not! When you pet your dog while they're jumping, you're teaching "jumping gets pets." When you ignore them while they're lying quietly, you're teaching "being calm gets nothing."

The cool thing is, you don't need special training sessions that take hours. You just need to notice what your dog is doing right now, and make sure good behaviors get rewarded. Did your dog sit while waiting for dinner? Say "good dog!" and give them a quick pet. Did they lie quietly while you're on the phone? Same thing, reward them with attention and affection.

When you start paying attention to these everyday moments, you and your dog will understand each other better, and you'll be amazed at how quickly things improve!

A Day of Mindful Interaction

Here's what this might look like in practice:

Morning:

- Wait for calm before opening the crate/door
- Practice "wait" at doors

- Turn morning walk into training opportunity (rewards for checking in and walking on a loose leash)

During the Day:

- Randomly reward quiet settling
- Use meal times to teach politely waiting for something you REALLY want
- Practice "place" during work calls

Evening:

- Channel excitement into play with rules
- Practice calming down quickly after play time
- Use dinner prep time for place work
- End the day with a calm massage (for the dog, not you ;)

Understanding Your Dog's Learning Window

Just like people, dogs have times when they're ready to learn and times when they're not. Think of it like a window - sometimes it's wide open, making it easy for new ideas to come in. Other times it's closed tight, and no amount of treats or practice will help the lesson stick.

Your dog's ability to learn changes based on simple things: Are they tired? Hungry? Scared of a loud noise? Even your mood and energy can affect how well your dog learns. When you understand this, you'll get better

at picking the right moments to teach new things. It's okay to take breaks and try again later when the learning window is open wider.

Signs Your Dog's Learning Window Is OPEN:

- Their ears are up and their eyes are bright
- They're watching you and seem interested
- Their body looks relaxed but alert
- They recover quickly if something startles them

Signs Your Dog's Learning Window Is CLOSING:

- They start looking away from you a lot
- They begin sniffing the ground more than usual
- They're moving slower or seem distracted
- They stop taking treats or take them roughly

This is your dog's way of saying, "I need a break!" or "I'm too distracted by something else to pay attention to you right now." It's smart to stop training before you or your dog gets frustrated.

Making the Most of Open Windows

The best dog trainers don't try to force learning when the window is closed. Instead, they:

- Keep training sessions super short (3-5 minutes for puppies, 5-10 minutes for adult dogs)

- End while the dog is still having fun and doing well
- Train BEFORE meals when dogs are more food-motivated, not right after
- Avoid training when it's too hot, too cold, or when there are lots of distractions
- Pay attention to their own mood; dogs can tell when we're stressed or impatient!

Remember: A 2-minute training session when your dog's learning window is wide open is worth more than 20 minutes when it's closed. Quality beats quantity every time when teaching your four-legged friend!

How We Speed Up Results

After working with thousands of dogs, my trainers and I can spot tiny clues that most people miss. We notice subtle things like how your dog holds their ears, how they're breathing, or how they shift their weight. These small signs tell us exactly when your dog is ready to learn something new or when they need a break.

Because we can read these signals so well, we know just what your dog needs at any moment. Sometimes they need a bigger challenge, sometimes they need things to be a bit easier. We know when to reward them and when to let them work through something on their own. This means your dog won't just learn faster - they'll become more confident and actually enjoy their training.

What would likely take months to figure out on your own, we can help your dog learn in just a few days.

Good Training Creates Clear Pictures

Think of your dog's mind like a camera, taking snapshots of every important moment. When you say "good dog" or give a treat, your dog takes a mental picture of exactly what they were doing at that instant. It's like their brain says "This pose, right here, right now - this is what earns good things!" If you praise them even a second too late, the picture gets blurry - maybe they've already moved on to sniffing the ground or looking away.

The more times you can mark the exact same moment (like the instant their bottom hits the floor for a sit), the clearer that picture becomes in your dog's mind. It's like developing the same photograph over and over until it's perfectly sharp. But if your timing is off, or if sometimes you praise the sit and sometimes you don't, the picture stays fuzzy. Your dog might end up with a confusing album of different snapshots, unsure which one is the "right" picture.

This is why timing and consistency are so important in training. Every learning moment, whether it's your voice saying "yes!" or "good boy", should be like the snap of a camera, capturing the precise behavior you want to see again. Over time, these clear pictures become your dog's guide to making good choices.

Your Dog's Daily Schedule Really Matters!

Let me tell you about one of my trainers and her pomsky (that's a Pomeranian-Husky mix). This little dog was super barky and whiny, always on alert, never settling down. He was free to run around her house and yard all day with the other dogs. Sounds fun, right? But it was actually too much!

Here's the only thing we changed:

- Instead of being free all day, he spent time in his kennel or right by his mom's side
- He got play breaks and walks, but just for 10-30 minutes
- After fun time he went right back to relaxing in his kennel or with mom
- We started with more kennel time, then slowly gave more freedom as he learned to be calm

The change was amazing! In just two weeks, this dog went from being one of our most antsy, whiney dogs to one of our calmest. He finally looked peaceful and content instead of always being "on." That's the power of a strict routine and scheduled naps!

Teaching your dog to have a good daily routine is key! Try something like this:

- Wake up, potty, short walk

- Breakfast in the kennel
- Rest time while you work
- Short play break
- Back to resting near you
- Another activity break
- More quiet time
- And so on...

Just like people need a good mix of work and rest, dogs need structure in their day. When they know what to expect and have plenty of rest time built in, they become calmer and happier. Sometimes the simplest changes make the biggest difference!

A Cool Thing About Dogs

Want to hear something amazing? While it takes kids years to grow up into awesome adults, dogs can learn to be great family members in a few weeks! I've seen dogs go from being total troublemakers to absolute joys to live with in just 3-4 weeks. It's crazy how quick they figure things out when we show them the right way. They really want to make us happy, and it shows!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Pattern Recognition: Dogs are like detectives looking for clues about what happens next. They notice when you grab the leash, jingle your keys, or open the treat jar. Be careful about what patterns you teach them.

Present-Focused: Your dog doesn't remember that they chewed your shoe yesterday or plan to dig in the garden tomorrow. They only think about right now. This means they don't hold grudges, and you can always start fresh.

Always Learning: Your dog is learning all the time - when you play, walk, or just hang out. Every time you pet them when they jump or push them away when they bark, you're teaching them something. Make sure it's what you want them to learn!

Balanced Needs: Your dog needs a mix of exercise, brain games, rest, and time with you. Getting this mix right makes your dog happier and calmer (more on how to find your dog's perfect mix in the next chapter).

Learning Windows: Dogs have times when their brain is ready to learn (window open) and times when they're too tired, hungry, or distracted (window closed). Short, fun training games when they're ready works much better than long, boring sessions when they're not.

When you understand how your dog thinks, you'll become best friends who really get each other.

In Chapter 6, we'll learn how to balance rewards, praise, and discipline for the strongest bond and the fastest results.

CHAPTER 6

FINDING YOUR DOG'S PERFECT BALANCE

Think of training your dog like learning to dance together. Too much control, and you're just dragging your partner around. Too little guidance, and you're stepping on each other's toes. The magic happens when you find that perfect balance, where your dog feels both the freedom to express themselves and the security of knowing where the boundaries are. This chapter is about being able to consistently and easily perform that beautiful dance with your dog.

Every dog needs five key elements to stay in balance:

1. **Physical exercise:** appropriate for their breed, age, and personality
2. **Mental exercise:** that taps into their natural drives (drives = what your dog likes. Or what they feel driven to do)
3. **Rest periods:** enforced throughout the day
4. **Social connection:** with their humans and other dogs. Some dogs prefer more human time, others prefer more dog time, and Chocolate Labs will never settle for anything less than both all the time (only half joking).
5. **Structure:** through consistent rules and routines

The "magic ratio" looks different for every dog. A young Border Collie might need 40% mental work, 30% physical exercise, 20% rest, and 10% social time. A

senior Bulldog might thrive with 60% rest, 25% mental stimulation, 10% physical activity, and 5% social time.

The key is observing your dog after different activities:

- Do they settle better after a puzzle toy or a walk?
- Are they calmer after enforced rest or social play?
- Do they seek out more interaction or alone time?

Your dog will show you what balance they need if you pay attention to how different activities affect their overall mood.

Becoming a Dog Detective

The best way to find your dog's perfect balance is to watch how they respond to different activities:

- Does your dog finally settle down after a puzzle toy, or do they need to get a few zoomies out in the backyard first?
- Do they seem more relaxed after playing with other dogs, or are they more wound up?
- Does a strict routine seem to help them feel secure, or do they adapt well to daily changes?

Your dog is constantly giving you clues about what they need. When you notice them quickly and adjust you won't have to "train" nearly as much. That's what I want

for you! A dog who trains up quickly because their needs are getting met and so are yours!

When the Balance is Off

When a dog's needs aren't properly balanced, behavior problems often appear:

- **Too much physical exercise without mental challenges:** A dog who's physically tired but mentally bored might start chewing on table legs or ripping up carpet
- **Not enough rest:** An overtired dog often seems hyperactive or "stubborn"
- **Too much freedom without structure:** Dogs without clear boundaries often seem anxious or reactive
- **All training, no play:** Dogs who never get to just be dogs can seem stubborn and independent

IS YOUR TRAINING BALANCED? QUICK ASSESSMENT

Give yourself a score by answering these questions:

Usually True (2 points), Sometimes True (1 point), or Rarely True (0 points)

1. My dog knows what behaviors will consistently earn rewards

2. My dog understands which behaviors are never acceptable
3. My dog has opportunities to make choices within safe boundaries
4. My training includes both rewards for good choices AND clear feedback about mistakes
5. My dog shows both respect for rules AND enthusiasm for interaction
6. My dog can stay calm in situations that previously caused excitement or stress
7. My dog looks to me for guidance in new situations rather than making impulsive decisions

Scoring:

- 10-14 points: Great balance! Your dog likely feels both secure and empowered.
- 5-9 points: Working toward balance, but may need adjustment in either freedom or structure.
- 0-4 points: Your approach may be unbalanced, leaning too heavily toward either permissiveness or control.

Why Both Encouragement and Boundaries Matter

Just as dogs need a balance of different activities, they also need a balance in how we communicate with them.

For example: I worked with a family who had tried "pure positive" training with their young dog. They gave him

endless treats and praise, but never set clear limits. Their dog was sweet but chaotic. He would jump on everyone, grab things he shouldn't, rush through doors. He wasn't trying to be "bad." He just didn't know where the lines were, like a kid who's never been told "no".

Another family had gone the opposite way: all rules, all the time. Their dog walked perfectly on leash and obeyed every command. But she seemed shut down. She reminded me of those kids who are afraid to raise their hand in class because they might give the wrong answer.

There is a better way! A training method that will get you maximum LONG TERM results while enjoying the process works more like this:

Think about a playground for a minute. When you put a good fence around it, something magical happens. The kids actually play more freely, not less. They don't have to worry about running too far or getting lost. They know exactly where their safe space is, and within those boundaries, they can let loose and have fun.

That's exactly what good training does for dogs. When they understand their boundaries, both physical and behavioral, they actually become more confident, not less. They don't have a chance to make huge mistakes. They know when they can run and play, and when they need to be calm. They understand which behaviors will

always work (like sitting politely for attention) and which ones never will (like jumping on guests).

I saw this work beautifully with a young English Mastiff named Aiden. At first, his family thought setting boundaries would "break his spirit." But once we showed them how to be clear and consistent, Aiden bloomed. He still had all his playful energy, but now he knew when to use it. He could race around the backyard with his toys, then come inside and settle calmly next to his mom. He finally got to be leash free because he knew when it was appropriate to let loose and when to be polite.

Sometimes you need to be firm with your dog and make it clear that there is no nonsense allowed! Like not letting your dog run into traffic or jump on elderly visitors.

Other times, you need to step back and let them figure things out. Like choosing to lie down during dinner or deciding how to appropriately greet another dog.

The real magic happens when dogs learn to make good choices on their own. They might struggle a bit at first, but soon they'll be following along, proud and confident. That's what we want for our dogs, the confidence to navigate their world while knowing we've got their back.

What Balance Looks Like in Real Life

A balanced dog isn't a perfect dog. They might still get

excited when guests come over, but they should be easy to settle down. They might really want to chase that squirrel, but they can choose to stay with you instead. They might have moments of uncertainty, but they look to you for guidance rather than panicking.

Every dog needs a different balance, just like every child needs different amounts of support and freedom. Some dogs are like those cautious kids who need extra encouragement to try new things. Others are a little too fearless and need clearer boundaries to stay safe. The key is learning to read your dog and adjust accordingly.

Remember: Good training isn't about controlling every moment. It's about creating a framework where your dog can be themselves. When we find that sweet spot between freedom and structure, everything else becomes easier. Your dog knows what to expect, understands how to succeed, and feels secure enough to show their true personality.

That's the power of balance! It doesn't restrict your dog's spirit, it sets it free in the best possible way.

Why "Robot Dogs" Aren't the Goal

Think about the kids you know. Would you want a child who just sat quietly all day, never asking questions, never exploring, never being silly? Of course not. We

want kids who think, learn, and share their personalities with us. Dogs are the same way.

I worked with a family who had been told their happy, go lucky Black Lab was "too energetic" and needed to learn to be still all the time. But that spark of joy, that natural enthusiasm, that's what makes a Lab a Lab! The goal should never be to squash his personality but to help him express it appropriately.

Good training values who your dog naturally is. The bouncy Doodle doesn't need to become a statue; he needs to learn when bouncing is welcome and when calm is needed.

An alert German Shepherd doesn't need to stop noticing the world; she needs to understand which things require her attention and which don't.

The most well-adjusted dogs I've worked with aren't the ones who follow every command like machines. They're the ones whose natural traits have been channeled productively, whose enthusiasm has direction, whose personalities shine through their training rather than being buried by it.

Training should enhance your dog's life, not diminish their spirit. It should give them more freedom, not less. A truly well-trained dog isn't an automaton that performs on command, it's a thinking partner who understands the rules of your shared world and navigates them with confidence.

Remember, you didn't bring home a robot; you brought home a dog with a unique soul and story. Our job isn't to program them, it's to translate between their world and ours, creating a language of mutual understanding that honors who they truly are.

When "Perfect" Isn't Perfect

Let me tell you about two types of dogs I've met repeatedly over the years that really show why focusing only on obedience can go wrong.

The "Perfect" E-collar Dog

I met a dog who could heel perfectly through a busy farmer's market - never pulling, never looking at other dogs, never getting distracted. Most people would see this and think "Wow, what an amazingly trained dog!" But if you knew what to look for, you'd see something very different.

This dog's head was low, his movements careful. His eyes kept darting up to his owner's hand, the one holding the e-collar remote. His message was clear: "Don't look around, don't get distracted, don't make a mistake." **This wasn't a dog who had learned to make good choices. This was a dog who had learned to avoid corrections.**

Think about that for a minute. Would you want to walk around Disneyland being afraid to look at anything fun? That's not the relationship we want with our dogs.

On the other hand, I've met many dogs who have been very highly trained, without corrections, who are an emotional wreck!

For example, I met this amazing competition dog at a training workshop. This pup had won every ribbon and trophy you could imagine: obedience, agility, dock diving, scent work, you name it! Her owner used lots of treats and toys, and watching them work together was like watching a beautiful dance.

But here's the thing, this dog couldn't switch off. While other dogs were peacefully napping between sessions, this poor girl was pacing, whining, and bouncing off the walls of her kennel. She had learned to perform perfectly but had never learned how to just... be. She couldn't enjoy a quiet moment or settle down with a good chew toy. She was like a kid who'd had too much coffee, she was always "on," always needing something to do.

Finding the Sweet Spot

I share these stories to highlight what can go wrong when we focus too much on obedience and not enough on helping dogs learn to navigate life. At Train Walk Poop, we take a different approach:

- We teach commands, but they're just tools, not the end goal

- We help dogs learn to think and make good choices on their own
- We want dogs who can enjoy life AND make good decisions
- We build confidence, not dependence on tools or treats

The goal isn't a dog who looks perfect, it's a dog who:

- Can relax and enjoy a lazy Sunday
- Makes good choices even when you're not watching
- Keeps their wonderful personality

Remember: Real success isn't about having a dog who obeys every command perfectly. It's about having a happy, confident dog who knows how to make good choices and still finds joy in life. That's the kind of transformation we create, and it lasts because it comes from understanding, not just training.

The Joy of Partnership

What does having an awesome relationship with your dog really look like? Well, you know those best friends who just love hanging out together? That's what we want for you and your dog!

When you've got a real partnership with your dog, cool things happen. They actually WANT to listen to you (not because they have to!). **There's this magic moment**

when you see the shift from "I should sit because treats happen" to "I want to check in with my person because we're a team." It's like watching the lightbulb click on.

And the best part? Dogs in true partnerships start figuring stuff out on their own!

The ability to make good decisions on their own is exactly what we'll explore in our next chapter. You'll discover how to turn these balanced training principles into permanent behaviors that stand the test of time, distractions, and real-world challenges.

CHAPTER 7

Creating Lasting Change

Imagine two dogs who both know the "come" command perfectly in your backyard. While hiking an off-leash trail, a squirrel suddenly dashes across the path just 20 feet ahead...

The "surface-trained" dog bolts after the squirrel instantly, disappearing into the woods and ignoring your desperate calls.

The "deeply-trained" dog notices the squirrel, then looks back at you with bright, eager eyes checking in to see what happens next. Maybe you'll say, "go get 'em!" Or maybe you'll pull out their favorite ball instead? Or perhaps this time, you'll say "leave it."

All possibilities are exciting because your dog isn't just responding to a command. They're looking forward to what you'll decide to do as a team. They trust you to make the right call for both of you.

Same command taught. Completely different relationship. The difference? One dog has merely memorized that "come" means move toward the human when there's nothing better to do. The other has embraced a deeper understanding: "We're a team making decisions together. I check in with you because your guidance leads to good things for both of us. **You**

respect my natural instincts, and I trust your leadership."

This chapter is about how to build that second kind of dog. A dog who thinks about what to do and chooses to be your partner, even when:

- Their animal brain is yelling "CHASE THAT!"
- Super exciting things are all around them
- It would be way more fun to just do whatever they want

We want your dog to be your best friend. A friend who is connected to you in all situations, not just the easy ones.

SPOTTING THE GAPS IN YOUR DOG'S TRAINING

Are there gaps in your dog's training? Here's what to look for.

Signs of Surface-Level Training:

- Your dog only responds to commands when you have treats visible
- Performance drastically changes in new environments
- Your dog behaves completely differently with other family members

Signs of Deep Understanding:

- Commands work in multiple environments

- Your dog recovers quickly from distractions
- Your dog makes good choices even when you're in another room
- Your dog behaves similarly with all family members (though perhaps a bit better for the person who trains them the most)

Building The Complete Dog

Here's something that might surprise you - I can teach almost any dog basic commands in two weeks with an e-collar and some treats. Seriously, it's almost too easy. Sit, come, heel, place - boom, done.

But here's the real talk: what happens when that e-collar isn't on? When you run out of treats? Or even more important, what does your dog do when you're not watching?

Think about it like this: Do you want a dog who only listens when you have treats in your pocket, or do you want a dog who makes smart choices even when they think nobody's watching? That's why my programs have actually gotten longer over the years. I've seen what it takes for things to truly click in a dog's head. I don't want your dog to have a surface understanding, I want the lessons deeply locked-in. Like a software download that's 100% complete, not just 60%.

There are plenty of trainers who'll sell you a quick 2-week board and train or a package of just 3 lessons. I

used to be one of them. But experience has taught me something crucial: real transformation takes time.

These quick results programs might change behavior temporarily, but they rarely create lasting results. When we rush training, we're not being fair to dogs or their humans. The dog doesn't have enough time to truly process and internalize what they're learning, and owners don't get the support they need to make everything stick at home.

That's why my approach has evolved. I'd rather be honest about what it really takes than sell you a quick fix that unravels a month later. Think of it as an investment: pay a bit more now for comprehensive training that sticks, rather than paying over and over for programs that don't deliver lasting change.

The truth is, having a well-adjusted dog isn't about installing a few commands – it's about teaching them to make good decisions on their own. And that kind of development simply can't be rushed.

Here's what we really need to build. A dog who:

- Can think under pressure
- Bounces back from surprises
- Stays calm in new situations
- Makes good choices on their own
- Truly understands, not just obeys

Sure, your dog will need refreshers occasionally, all dogs do. Dogs are like toddlers for life, after all! But there's a massive difference between a dog who needs a quick reminder lesson and a dog who's completely forgotten everything they "learned" in that quick two-week crash course you paid for.

I want to build you a dog who actually understands what you want, and is not just following commands

Real Example Time:

A few years ago, I worked with a German Shepherd who had done one of those quick-fix training programs. Sure, he looked amazing in training... with his e-collar on... and his trainer right there... in the same familiar setting. But take him to a new place? Remove the e-collar? Have a kid run by unexpectedly? All that "perfect" training went right out the window.

That's why I focus on building true capability, not just surface-level obedience. Yeah, it takes a little longer and costs a little more \$. But wouldn't you rather invest once in doing it right? So you can enjoy life with your dog anywhere for the rest of their life?

Let's build something that lasts! No shortcuts, no band-aids, just real, solid learning that holds up under pressure. Because at the end of the day, that's what makes the difference between an "obedient" dog and a truly capable companion.

The Magic of Silent Communication

Have you ever seen a dog and their person walking together like they can read each other's minds? They move as one team! No treats needed, no pulling, no yelling "leave it!" when another dog appears. They just smoothly change direction, working together like partners.

I used to watch those teams and feel a bit of jealousy! Ok maybe it was a lot of jealousy. Now, after years of working with dogs and experiencing this connection myself, I can tell you: this kind of partnership isn't magic but it sure feels like it. And it's built through patience, practice, and trust. And yes, you and your dog can absolutely get there too!

Imagine walking down the street, and a barking dog appears ahead. Without saying a word, you and your dog just know: "Let's take this side street instead." Your dog glances at you, you give a tiny nod, and together you calmly turn away. No drama, no stress, just two friends looking out for each other.

That feeling of being completely in sync with your dog is pure joy. It's like you share one brain!

When you spot a skateboarder coming, or kids playing ball, or a reactive dog across the street, you both automatically adjust your path. No commands needed. No treats required. Just two buddies who prefer to avoid the drama and keep enjoying their walk together.

Right now, other dog owners might be watching you struggle with your pulling, barking, or reactive dog. But stick with me, follow the training plan, and soon they'll be watching you with amazement instead.

I promise you: if you put in the work and trust the process, you'll get there. That peaceful partnership you see others enjoying? That will be you and your dog. And it will be worth every minute of practice to get there!

CHAPTER 8

The Best Mistake I Ever Made

It was 2007, and I had no idea that a spontaneous decision would completely reshape my life. The puppy wasn't planned. I wasn't ready. Looking back now, things could have gone sideways so many different times but thankfully they didn't.

Dogs have this way of teaching us what we need to learn, exactly when we need to learn it. That first puppy taught me something profound: the joy of being truly present. When you're training a dog, halfway attention doesn't work. They read everything - your energy, your focus, your real intentions. You can't fake it.

Being fully present led to me noticing many subtle things that could easily be missed:

A slight ear twitch. A shift in energy. A moment of uncertainty. A flash of confidence.

But perhaps the greatest gift dogs have given me is teaching me about quality time. In our busy world, it's easy to believe we need hours to make a difference. Training dogs showed me the power of fully devoted minutes. Those focused moments of connection, whether 15 minutes of training or a quick play session, are often what transform an ordinary day into something meaningful.

This lesson reshaped my entire approach to life. I learned that it's not about the quantity of time, but the quality of presence. A short but focused play session with my kids. Grabbing a cup of coffee with my wife. A quick check-in with a team member who seems stressed. These are the threads that weave a fulfilled life.

Every day, dogs continue to remind me of these crucial truths. The best thing in life is being truly present with those we love.

That unplanned puppy in 2007 wasn't a mistake at all. It was the beginning of understanding what makes life rich: teaching the beings I love a little about life each day, and working hard to ensure they have what they need to thrive.

Looking back, that spontaneous decision to get a puppy wasn't just the best mistake I ever made - it was the moment I discovered my purpose. To give more than I receive. To teach. To leave this world a little better than I found it. My mission is to help every being I encounter, whether they have two legs or four.

Your dog is trying to teach you something important too. Are you ready to listen?

I hope to help you discover what your dog has been waiting to show you. Together, we can unlock the partnership you've always wanted.

Don't wait like I almost did. The journey to understanding your dog starts with a single step. It's time to book that training program!

Thank You

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for reading this book and for caring so much about your dog.

If you need any assistance, please don't hesitate to email me directly. It would be my honor to answer your questions or guide you in the right direction.

Your commitment to your dog's well-being is truly inspiring, and it's what drives me to continue this work. Every success story I hear from readers like you energizes me and my team!

Thank you for embarking on this journey with me.

Your Next Step

Here's the truth: Everyday you wait is another day stuck in the same frustrating patterns. Another day of walks that feel like battles. Another day your dog spends frustrated and stressing you out.

You've read the book, now it's time to take action. The dream relationship with your dog isn't going to build itself while this book sits on your shelf.

Why start today? Because every frustrating walk, every embarrassing outburst, and every anxious reaction is reinforcing those unwanted behaviors. Dogs learn 24/7! Right now, your dog is either learning good habits or strengthening the bad ones. The longer you wait, the more "untraining" you'll need to do later.

Book your dog's first day of training right now. It's as simple as texting us, "I'm ready."

Don't let another month slip by hoping things will magically improve. The dog who truly understands you is waiting just beneath the surface.

Your future best friend is counting on you to take this step.

Your friend with treat-filled pockets,

Ryan Gwilliam.

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About the Author

Ryan Gwilliam is the founder and lead trainer at Train Walk Poop, where he transforms the relationships between dogs and their owners through practical, results-driven training methods. Since 2007, Ryan has helped thousands of families create harmony with their canine companions.

His journey began with a spontaneous puppy adoption that revealed his natural talent and deep passion for understanding canine behavior. Today, Ryan's approach combines behavioral science with intuitive understanding, delivering training solutions that work in real-world situations.

When not teaching dogs and humans to speak each other's language, Ryan can be found exploring mountain trails with his two dogs: Batman, a quick-witted cattle dog mix, and Lou, his gentle giant Great Dane/Lab.

A dedicated family man, Ryan balances his thriving business with life at home alongside his wife and four energetic children. His unique blend of expertise, authenticity, and humor has made him a trusted voice in the dog training community and a sought-after mentor for families ready to unlock the full potential of their relationship with their dog.

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