



DIFFICULT DOGS

Behavioural problems solved

Understand | Assess | Solve



OUR SYSTEM



Add time, discipline
and patience.



Follow the rules
of the 5 solutions



In six weeks,
life with your dog
can look completely
different.

5

THE 5 SOLUTIONS

FOR CALM, CLARITY AND
LASTING BEHAVIOUR CHANGE.

FLORIAN VERHOEF

Colophon

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Introduction

This book is written from one clear promise: whatever behavioural problem you are experiencing with your dog, there is a way forward. Lunging, pulling, fear, insecurity, claiming, control, aggression, restlessness, fixation or being unable to relax may look like separate problems on the outside. Under the surface, however, the same mechanisms are often at work. That is why we do not believe in isolated tricks, isolated commands or symptom management. We work with a system: a fixed route with five solutions that can solve behaviour problems when they are applied consistently.

Of course, you first have to understand what is happening and assess where the behaviour comes from. Without that, you miss the core. But ultimately, a dog does not change through analysis alone. Change begins when the right solutions are applied in daily life. The five solutions in this book form a proven foundation: teaching the dog to follow, putting the dog to work, eliminating the dog's claim, positioning the dog correctly and creating a low-stimulus period. When these five parts are addressed together over time, a complete system emerges in which problem behaviour no longer has a function.

In PART 3: SOLVING, the practical parts are explained with concrete instructions for recovery. The real strength lies in personal guidance, so that we can support you in applying the five solutions. Every situation has unique details, and every person needs another person - a teacher - in order to learn efficiently. That is simply how learning works. Read this book carefully and practise for yourself, but private training gives this book the practical value it needs in order to lead to success.

The strength is not in one part, but in the combination. One adjustment can help, but five solutions together change the entire pattern. Add time, discipline and patience, and you have what is needed. Time to let old behaviour fade out. Discipline to apply the system the same way every day. Patience to let the dog build trust again. If you follow this route seriously, you will usually see a clear shift within four to six weeks. Not because the dog is suppressed, but because the problem is addressed at its cause.

For five years I drove across the Netherlands to help people at home with their problem dogs. Because of that, I have seen hundreds of dogs not only on a training field, but inside their own system: at the front door, in the living room, on the leash in the street, with visitors, children, neighbours, other dogs and the owner's daily tension. That is exactly where it becomes clear where behaviour comes from: not in one isolated moment, but in the rhythm of the household.

My own view of dogs has also been shaped by different living environments. First, I lived on a mountain in Austria, where dogs dealt daily with height differences, snow, scent trails, wildlife, great distances and a lot of freedom. There I learned that freedom is something different from simply letting a dog go. In the mountains, you see how important following, orientation to the group, stamina, hunting instinct and recovery capacity are. A dog can seem physically strong and still take on too much mental responsibility if the human gives no direction.

After that came the farm, with multiple dogs, litters of puppies, adult dogs and mothers in one living environment. At the peak, I had about twenty dogs on the farm. Behaviour became even more visible there - not as an isolated exercise, but as a daily system. Who takes space? Which dog raises tension? Which dog takes tension out of the group? When do puppies need correction, calm or freedom? On a yard, you see that behaviour is shaped not only by training, but also by atmosphere, rhythm, boundaries and the way the group responds to itself again and again.

After that, the urban environment became a different issue again. Less space, more stimuli, less distance and much more repetition. Cyclists, traffic, other dogs, narrow pavements and sounds come closer. A dog that seems to have a lot of capacity in the mountains or on a farm can still become overwhelmed in a busy living environment. No environment is right or wrong in itself. The question is always: does this environment fit this dog, and what can the dog carry?

Sometimes that question leads to training. Sometimes to different guidance. Sometimes to fewer stimuli, more structure or clearer boundaries. And sometimes to the conclusion that a situation is not suitable enough. Rehoming can feel like failure, but it can also be a form of responsibility. With Dana, my Greater Swiss Mountain Dog, that became visible. Space, calm and overview suited her better than a life with many daily city stimuli. The choice to rehome her was painful, but it was also honest towards what she needed.





UNDERSTANDING

PART 1

Introduction to Understanding

Behavioural problems do not begin when they become visible. They begin earlier: in predisposition, character and genetics. A dog does not enter the world as a blank slate. Stress sensitivity, stimulus processing and impulse control all have a foundation in the DNA.

But predisposition is not the endpoint. The environment determines how strongly certain traits come to the surface. A sensitive dog can function in a stable way in a calm, clear environment. That same dog can fall apart in a busy, unpredictable environment.

That is why there is rarely one single cause. It is about patterns. Who takes initiative? When is tension noticed? When are boundaries set? How much space does the dog get to steer things independently? What does the day look like? Is there calm, rhythm and clarity?

Understanding therefore does not begin with correcting. Understanding begins by looking at the context. Which traits does the dog bring with it? Which daily habits strengthen the problem? Where is the dog carrying too much responsibility? Only when that is clear can you make targeted changes.

1. General knowledge

1.1 What dogs teach us

My love for dogs began at my parents' home with our family dog, Jansen. As a child I was not thinking about training systems. I simply played with the dog. Later, when I started raising dogs myself, I thought it would mainly be about technique. A dog pulls, lunges or refuses to listen, so you learn a method and apply it. That seems logical, but dogs quickly taught me that it is not enough.

Dogs respond not only to what we do, but to who we are in that moment. They read our pace, posture, breathing, doubt and tension. When I was rushed, dogs became busier. When I hesitated, they took initiative more quickly. This is why dogs are such honest teachers: they do not argue and they do not explain. They show the effect of our presence immediately.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat introduction to understanding as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

1.1 What dogs teach us (continued)

A difficult dog can feel like a burden, and I understand that. Pulling, barking, claiming or lunging can make daily life heavy. Yet difficult dogs teach the most. An easy dog lets you continue as you are. A difficult dog forces you to look more carefully at the dog, at the environment and at yourself.

In my early years I made mistakes. Not because I did not care, but because I did not yet see enough. I worked with dogs that were already far beyond their limits. I was bitten more than once. Those moments made me humble. Every mistake forced the same questions: what did I miss, where did tension begin, which signal did I ignore?

On the farm I saw every day how honestly dogs read people. My young nephew could walk calmly through a group of dogs and nothing happened. Another person could enter the same yard with good intentions but with pressure in the body, and within seconds the group changed. Dogs do not react only to commands. They react to the whole person standing in front of them.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat what dogs teach us as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

1.2 Why most people with problem dogs struggle

Most people intervene only when the problem has already become too large. At first the behaviour is explained away: the dog is enthusiastic, sensitive, young or strong. Meanwhile the pattern gets time to grow. When the owner finally wants relief, the search often turns to quick solutions: a tool, a trick, a hard correction or a method that promises immediate results.

Quick solutions often work on the symptom. They can stop what is visible for a short time, but they do not change the system underneath. The dog may look easier for a moment, while the same tension and responsibility remain present. Real change requires slowing down. What was built slowly must also be rebuilt calmly.

The second problem is discipline. Behaviour change is created in small daily moments: how you leave the house, how you respond to light tension, when you set a boundary and when you give space. Discipline here does not mean being harsh. It means being reliable. A dog does not need a perfect owner. A dog needs a human who repeats the same clear framework every day.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

1.3 Two groups of people with problem dogs

There are roughly two groups of owners. The first group does not yet fully see the problem. They see the barking, pulling or claiming, but not the role the dog has taken inside the system. The dog reacts faster than the human, scans the environment and tries to steer situations. Because this grows gradually, it is often mistaken for character, age or breed.

The second group already feels that something is not right. These owners often say: "My dog regulates too much, but I do not know how to change it." They are usually easier to help, not because the problem is smaller, but because the most important step has already been taken: the behaviour is no longer seen as an isolated issue.

Knowledge helps you read behaviour. Skill helps you act at the right moment. Self-reflection connects the two. How do I respond when my dog shows tension? Do I speak faster, pull the leash, become insecure or start avoiding? That is not a question of blame. It is the starting point for change.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

1.4 The three most common problems

Behaviour problems often look separate. One dog barks, another pulls, another lunges. In practice, these behaviours are often expressions of the same underlying problem: the dog experiences too little support and carries too much responsibility.

The first common problem is too much affection at difficult moments. Many people respond to tension with closeness: petting, talking, eye contact or comfort. That is human and well meant, but for the dog it can teach that tension creates access to attention. The answer is not to remove affection. The answer is to change the timing. Give affection when the dog is calmer, and guide tension without enlarging it.

The second problem is too few boundaries. When boundaries are unclear, the dog begins to make decisions. Not because the dog wants to dominate, but because clarity is missing. The third problem is an insecure dog walking at the front of the group, literally and mentally. That dog scans, assesses and reacts first. For an insecure dog, that is too much responsibility.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat the three most common problems as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

1.5 Boundaries versus correction

Boundaries are often confused with correction. A correction usually comes after behaviour has already become visible and intense. The dog is already pulling, barking or lunging. At that point the system is activated and learning is difficult. A harder intervention may interrupt the moment, but it rarely changes the underlying pattern.

Real boundaries begin much earlier. They are present in small daily moments: how you leave the house, how you receive visitors, how attention is given, how space is shared and how you respond to early tension. If boundaries are clear every day, the dog does not have to guess. Tension builds less quickly.

Stable dogs set boundaries for each other early and clearly. Usually it is small: a look, a step forward, taking space, blocking for a moment. People often miss those early signals and then intervene too late. Good human guidance therefore means seeing sooner, acting calmer and making the boundary predictable.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat boundaries versus correction as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

1.6 What is energy?

In the dog world people often speak about energy. That can sound vague, but it does not have to be. Energy is the way emotion becomes visible in the body. When someone is tense, the body changes. Breathing becomes shorter, muscles tighten, the voice changes and movement becomes faster or stiffer. A dog reads that immediately.

Dogs do not know why we are tense. They do not understand our work pressure, fatigue or thoughts. They simply receive information from our body. If the owner tightens the leash, holds the breath and starts scanning, the dog can read the situation as unsafe. The dog becomes more alert, and the owner becomes even more tense. That is how human and dog pull each other upward.

Calm works in the other direction. A slower pace, lower shoulders, softer breathing and less pressure on the leash give the dog different information. Not: there is danger. But: I have overview. Energy is not magic. It is body language, tension, pace and breathing.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat what is energy? as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

1.7 Dog schools with too much reward

Reward has value. A dog can learn sit, down, come and focus through reward, and that can be useful. But rewarding is not the same as raising a dog. Raising a dog also means structure, boundaries, calm, position and responsibility. A dog can know many commands and still function badly in daily life.

Too much reward can activate some dogs. They begin to look for food, confirmation and attention. Eye contact becomes a demand. Attention-seeking becomes claiming. What was intended as positive training can keep an insecure or busy dog switched on all the time.

1.8 You have to do it yourself

Guidance is not takeover. A trainer can look, explain, demonstrate and give direction, but the trainer does not live with the dog every day. Real change happens at the door, on the walk, with visitors, during ordinary moments. The owner has to carry the system.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

1.9 Guarantees and responsibility

Many owners want certainty before they begin. How long will it take? Will it really go away? Can you guarantee that my dog will no longer lunge? The need for certainty is understandable, but hard guarantees in dog behaviour are misleading.

Behaviour depends on predisposition, environment, health, previous experiences, daily guidance and the owner's consistency. No trainer controls all of those factors. A good trainer can provide analysis, structure, safety, practical steps and an honest picture of what is realistic. But the result is created between sessions, through repetition.

A serious trajectory is therefore not a miracle promise. It is a process: first understand what is happening, then assess where the core lies, and only then solve the problem through daily action. Sometimes the outcome is strong improvement. Sometimes it is stabilisation. Sometimes the honest conclusion is that the situation or combination is not suitable enough.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

1.10 The three most common mistakes when training dogs with behaviour problems

The first mistake is working at the wrong moment. Many owners begin training when the dog is already too high in tension. The other dog has already been seen, the body is already activated and the owner must now steer harder. Good timing means starting earlier, while the dog can still process information.

The second mistake is restlessness in the handler. When the dog shows tension, the owner often becomes tense too. Heart rate rises, the leash shortens, the voice changes. The exercise may be technically correct, but the state of the handler turns it into an extra stimulus.

The third mistake is taking steps that are too large too quickly. If the dog succeeds at twenty metres, the owner immediately tries ten. Then five. Then a busier area. Progress must become solid before it is tested. Smaller steps, more repetition and better timing often achieve more than stronger technique.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat the three most common mistakes when training dogs with behaviour problems as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

1.11 How to handle behavioural relapse

Relapse feels discouraging. The dog was calmer, recovery was faster, and suddenly old behaviour returns. That does not mean the whole process has failed. Old behaviour is often closer to the surface than new behaviour, especially when the dog is tired, overloaded or exposed to too much stimulus.

Relapse is information. It often shows where the load became too high: too many stimuli, too little recovery, a step that was too large, social pressure, or an owner who was less stable that day. Instead of asking why everything went wrong, ask where the system became overwhelmed.

The reflex is often to train harder. That can make things worse. If relapse comes from overload, the system does not need more intensity. It needs recovery, simplicity and clarity. A dog does not need a perfect owner. A dog needs an owner who returns to the framework without panic.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat how to handle behavioural relapse as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

1.12 Symptom management versus behaviour change

Symptom management focuses on what is visible: less pulling, less barking, less lunging. That can be necessary for safety, but it is not the same as solving the problem. The visible behaviour is usually an expression of tension, insecurity, overload or too much responsibility.

Real behaviour change goes deeper. The dog needs to check less. The role division becomes clearer. The human carries more responsibility. The nervous system settles. In the beginning, symptom management can look faster. A tool or correction can create immediate effect. But the real question is whether the dog remains stable when the situation changes.

1.13 Why speed in behaviour change works against you

Behaviour usually develops slowly, and lasting change also needs time. If you increase pressure faster than the dog can process, the outside may look better while the foundation remains fragile. Slow work is not weak. It is how stability is built.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat symptom management versus behaviour change as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

1.14 When getting help really is necessary

Doing the work yourself does not mean doing everything alone. Sometimes you are too deep inside a pattern to see it clearly. What first felt concerning begins to feel normal. Boundaries move slowly. In that phase, help is not a luxury; it is a way to regain overview.

Help is necessary when behaviour structurally escalates. The dog reacts faster, recovery takes longer, lunging happens more often, or tension at home becomes normal. Continuing in the same way usually strengthens the pattern.

Help is also necessary when safety is at stake: bite incidents, serious threat, intense lunging or risk for children, visitors, other dogs or the owner. In those situations, the first task is not training. The first task is safety, management and a clear plan. Good help does not replace responsibility. It strengthens it.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

1.15 What this book does and does not do

This book is not a collection of tricks. It does not offer a universal step-by-step plan that works in exactly the same way for every dog and every owner. Problem behaviour always depends on predisposition, environment, tension, timing, recovery and the role of the human.

What this book does offer is a way of looking. What happens before the behaviour becomes visible? Where does tension build? Which role has the dog taken? Where does the human take too little responsibility, or take it too late?

When you learn to look better, you need to correct less afterwards. You see earlier when tension begins and can slow down, set a boundary or simplify the situation in time. The approach is less spectacular than a quick correction, but it is stronger because it works on the system that produces the behaviour.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

1.16 Who this book is not suitable for

This book is not suitable for people who only want one trick, one tool or one correction that immediately stops the behaviour. A tool can sometimes create temporary safety or overview, but without looking at the underlying cause, it remains symptom management.

This book is also not suitable for people who place the entire problem inside the dog. Predisposition matters. Breed, character and genetics matter. But the human and the environment determine how strongly those traits come forward. A dog lives in a system, and the owner is part of that system.

1.17 When acceptance is the best outcome

Not every problem disappears completely. A watchful dog may remain watchful. A sensitive dog may remain more easily stimulated. A strong independent dog may keep initiative. Training can improve a great deal, but it cannot turn every dog into a different dog. Sometimes acceptance is not giving up; it is realistic guidance.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat who this book is not suitable for as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

1.18 When rehoming is better

Rehoming can feel like failure, but sometimes it is responsibility. If the environment structurally does not fit the dog, training can only go so far. A dog that needs space, calm and overview may be constantly overwhelmed in a busy city. A dog that cannot handle children may live under continuous pressure in a young family.

Sometimes the character of the dog and the life of the owner simply do not fit. A strong guarding dog with a person who struggles to set boundaries, or a high-drive working dog in a household that needs quiet, can become a mismatch. Love alone does not make an environment suitable.

Good rehoming is not dumping a dog or passing the problem on. It is looking carefully for an environment that fits the dog's needs better. Letting go can be painful, but holding on to a situation that keeps everyone under pressure is not always loyal. Sometimes responsibility means giving the dog a life that suits him better.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat when rehoming is better as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

1.19 Addiction instead of separation anxiety

Many dogs that cannot be left alone are quickly labelled as having separation anxiety. That may be true in some cases, but very often the problem begins long before the owner leaves the house. It begins while the owner is still present.

The dog follows everywhere, lies against the owner, gets up when the owner gets up, pushes in between conversations and asks for constant confirmation. The owner becomes the dog's safe place. Then the front door is only the final trigger. The real problem is dependence.

When that is the case, practising departures alone is not enough. Ten seconds away, thirty seconds away, putting on a coat, picking up keys: those exercises may be useful later, but they do not solve the whole relationship. First the dog must learn independent calm while the owner is still present.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat addiction instead of separation anxiety as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

1.19 Addiction instead of separation anxiety (continued)

A dog that has become dependent on the owner needs a different foundation. There must be a fixed place in the house, less response to attention-seeking, calmer greetings, clearer walking and more structure in the day. The dog must learn that the owner does not have to be checked constantly.

The dog's basic needs also matter. A dog with too little rest, too little suitable work or too much stimulus will find being alone harder. Leaving the dog alone is not a separate exercise. It is the result of a whole daily system that either creates calm or creates dependence.

At first, owners often feel that we are avoiding the real problem. They want to practise leaving. But if the dog cannot rest when the owner is in the same room, the dog is not ready to carry absence. First calm in the presence of the owner, then calm with small distance, then short absence.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

1.19 Addiction instead of separation anxiety (continued)

Independence must be built without drama. No emotional goodbye, no emotional reunion, no constant explanation and no constant reassurance. The dog learns from the pattern, not from the words. If departures and returns are loaded with emotion, the dog learns that they matter too much.

The owner must also change. Many owners of dependent dogs are warm, involved and careful. That is a strength, but it can also make the dog too central. When every small signal receives a response, the dog learns to use the owner as regulation. The goal is not coldness. The goal is calm availability without constant service.

Being alone becomes fairer when the dog has a life that can be carried from within. The dog needs to know where to be, what to do, how to recover and when nothing is required. Only then can short absences become training instead of panic.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

1.19 Addiction instead of separation anxiety (from practice)

A dog I worked with was described as having severe separation anxiety. The owner had practised every departure exercise she could find: coat on and off, keys in hand, stepping outside for ten seconds, returning before barking began. The problem did not become smaller. In fact, the dog watched every ritual more closely.

During the home visit, the cause became visible. The dog followed the owner from room to room, lay against her when she sat down and pushed himself between us when we spoke. The issue did not begin at the front door. The issue was the whole relationship.

We stopped making absence the starting point. First came a fixed place, less claiming, calmer movement through the house, clearer walking and less emotional greeting. Only when the dog could rest while the owner moved around did short absence become learnable.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat addiction instead of separation anxiety (from practice) as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

1.20 Recall

Recall is often treated as a command. The owner calls the dog, the dog must return, and if that fails people practise more with food, toys or a whistle. But reliable recall is not just a trick. A dog does not come back because he knows the word. A dog comes back because the relationship, distance and level of freedom are right.

Recall begins on the leash. If the dog already scans, pulls and decides direction on the leash, off-leash freedom is too big a step. The dog has not learned to orientate to the human. Calling from a distance then becomes a test, not training.

Good recall grows from connection, position and rhythm. The dog learns to check in, follow direction and return before the environment takes over completely. Rewards can support that, but they cannot replace the relationship. Freedom must be earned gradually, not given because the owner hopes it will go well.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat recall as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

1.20 Recall (continued)

A reliable recall also depends on the environment. Calling a dog away from a calm path is different from calling away from wildlife, another dog, a group of children or a fresh scent trail. The owner must assess whether the dog can carry the situation.

If the dog cannot carry it, use a leash, a long line or a simpler environment. That is not failure. It is responsible training. Every successful return builds the pattern. Every ignored recall teaches the dog that the cue is optional.

From practice, many recall problems did not begin off leash. They began in the walk before the leash was removed. The dog was already mentally ahead, and the owner was already following. When we first changed the walk on leash, recall became much easier. The dog no longer had to be pulled back from a completely separate world.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat recall as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

1.21 Barking

Barking is communication, but not every bark means the same thing. A dog may bark to warn, claim, release tension, respond to fear, invite action, guard territory or express frustration. If all barking is treated in the same way, the solution will be random.

The first question is therefore: what function does the barking have? Does the dog bark at the window because he is guarding? At the owner because he wants attention? At sounds because the nervous system is switched on? At dogs because distance is too small? Each function asks for a different answer.

The goal is not to punish sound. The goal is to change the system that makes barking necessary. Sometimes that means less access to windows. Sometimes clearer boundaries around visitors. Sometimes more recovery after stimuli. Sometimes a job that gives the dog something better to do.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

1.21 Barking (continued)

Barking often becomes stronger because it works. The dog barks, the postman leaves. The dog barks, the owner talks. The dog barks, everyone reacts. From the dog's perspective, barking has influence. That does not mean the dog is bad. It means the behaviour has been rewarded by the situation.

Early timing matters. If the dog is already in full barking, you are late. Watch for the first signs: ears forward, body stiff, staring, moving to the window, holding breath. Intervene there. Redirect, block, give a place or change distance before the behaviour has taken over.

A calm boundary is stronger than noisy correction. If the owner begins shouting over a barking dog, the system gets louder. If the owner calmly takes position, reduces access and gives the dog a clear alternative, the dog receives a different message: you do not have to handle this.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

1.22 Overheating

Overheating is not a training problem, but it affects behaviour directly. A hot dog has less patience, less impulse control and less recovery capacity. Dogs cool themselves less efficiently than people. Panting is limited, and a warm car, direct sun or heavy activity can become dangerous quickly.

Never underestimate heat in a car. A window slightly open or shade at the start is not enough protection. Temperature can rise fast, and dogs can get into trouble before the owner realises it.

In training, heat means you must reduce load. Shorter sessions, more shade, water, slower pace and more recovery. A dog that seems stubborn in heat may simply be physically unable to regulate. Safety comes before progress.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat overheating as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

1.23 Strategic thinking

Working with behaviour problems is more like chess than like pushing a button. You do not only respond to the move that is happening now. You think ahead. Where will tension build? Which corner is too narrow? Which dog is approaching? Where can I create distance before it is needed?

Many owners react too late because they wait for behaviour. Strategic thinking means reading the situation before the dog has to solve it himself. You choose routes, positions, distance and timing so that the dog can succeed.

This is not avoidance. Avoidance is running away from every difficult situation without a plan. Strategy is arranging situations in a way that teaches the dog something better. You do not throw the dog into pressure to prove progress. You create repetitions that build capacity.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat strategic thinking as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

1.24 Stopping pulling through equipment

Pulling is rarely solved by equipment alone. A harness, collar, slip line or leash can help, but the tool is not the method. The method is the way the human uses the equipment to divide force, give direction and create a clearer position.

In our system, the harness carries pulling force and the neck line gives gentle direction. The dog should not be corrected harshly through the neck. The goal is not to punish pulling, but to make the physical situation manageable while the dog learns a different position.

The leash must help the human stay calm. If the human loses physical control, the human also loses mental overview. Good equipment gives the owner time, grip and safety, so that the dog can be guided before escalation.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat stopping pulling through equipment as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

1.24 Stopping pulling through equipment (continued)

The position matters. A dog that walks far in front of the knee often takes the whole walk mentally. He scans first, decides pace, reaches scents first and responds first to stimuli. Bringing the dog beside or slightly behind the knee changes the role. The human becomes the reference point again.

This is not about making a beautiful obedience exercise. It is work. The dog receives a job: walk with me, follow my pace, do not scan everything, do not solve the environment yourself. For many dogs this lowers tension because the task is clear.

The equipment supports that task. Grip points on the leash allow the owner to shorten or lengthen calmly without grabbing in panic. A second contact point gives steering without fighting the full pulling force through the neck. The body of the handler must stay relaxed and stable.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

1.24 Stopping pulling through equipment (continued)

Pulling is often a rhythm problem. The dog accelerates, the owner follows, the leash tightens, the dog leans into the pressure, and the owner ends up behind the dog physically and mentally. To change this, the human must stop following the dog's tension.

Start with the first step. Leaving the house, passing the gate, entering the street: these moments set the tone. If the dog begins the walk in front, activated and scanning, the rest of the walk will usually be harder. Slow the start down until the dog can leave under direction.

The goal is not constant tension on the leash. The goal is a clear framework with moments of soft contact. The dog learns where to be and what the job is. Over time the equipment should become less central because the behaviour is integrated.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

1.24 Stopping pulling through equipment (continued)

The owner's hands matter. One hand can absorb force through the harness line; the other can guide softly through the steering line. If both hands fight, the dog feels conflict. If the hands are clear, the dog receives two pieces of information: the human carries the force, and the human indicates direction.

Do not turn every walk into a battle. Short, successful repetitions are more valuable than long walks in which the dog rehearses pulling. A dog that has pulled for years does not need one heroic correction. He needs hundreds of calm repetitions in which the old pattern no longer works.

When the dog becomes more stable, more freedom can be added. Freedom without structure often brings the old pattern back. Structure first, then space. That sequence protects both the dog and the owner.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat stopping pulling through equipment as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

1.24 Stopping pulling through equipment (from practice)

A strong dog that pulled hard was not only physically leading the walk. He was mentally taking charge. He decided pace, direction, distance and reaction to stimuli. The owner tried to hold him back with one line, but every walk became a physical negotiation.

With two points of contact the situation changed. The harness absorbed force, the neck line gave soft direction and the owner could keep the body calmer. We also changed the route, the start of the walk and the position of the dog. The equipment did not solve the problem by itself. It made the right guidance possible.

After several weeks the dog began to follow pace more naturally. He scanned less and recovered faster. The biggest change was not the tool; it was the role division. The owner was no longer dragged through the environment. The owner was leading the walk.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat stopping pulling through equipment (from practice) as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

1.25 Alternating modes

A dog needs to understand which mode he is in. Many owners mix everything together: sometimes the dog may sniff, sometimes he must follow, sometimes he is corrected, sometimes he is allowed to pull. The dog receives unclear information and begins to decide for himself.

Modes create clarity. A following mode means the dog works beside the human. A free mode means there is space to sniff within limits. A survival mode means the human manages a difficult situation with extra structure. A recovery mode means the dog gets time to settle.

The clearer the mode, the calmer the dog can be. The dog no longer has to guess what is expected in every second. The human decides the framework and switches deliberately.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat alternating modes as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

1.25 Alternating modes (continued)

Mode changes must be visible. If the dog is expected to follow, use the same leash setup, the same position and the same pace. If the dog may sniff, give that space deliberately. Do not let the dog steal it by pulling. Freedom that is given is calmer than freedom that is taken.

This also helps the owner. Many people become frustrated because they are unclear themselves. They want the dog to have freedom and control at the same time. Alternating modes means you do not have to choose one permanent state. You choose what fits the moment.

From practice, dogs often become calmer when owners stop negotiating every metre. The dog learns: now I follow, now I sniff, now we pass, now we recover. Clarity reduces conflict.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

1.26 Sniffing versus walking on

Sniffing is important. It allows a dog to gather information, process the environment and sometimes recover. But sniffing can also become avoidance, pulling, claiming or scanning. The question is not whether a dog may sniff. The question is what function the sniffing has in that moment.

A calm dog sniffing within the framework is different from a tense dog dragging the owner from scent to scent. In the second case, sniffing does not create calm. It keeps the dog in control of the walk.

Walking on is therefore not punishment. It can be guidance. The human decides when to move, when to pause and when to give sniffing space. That teaches the dog that scents are part of the walk, but not the leader of the walk.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

1.26 Sniffing versus walking on (continued)

For insecure dogs, unlimited sniffing can be too much responsibility. Every scent becomes information, every corner a decision, every pause a moment to scan. The dog may look busy and satisfied, but the nervous system stays open.

Use sniffing as a tool, not as an escape from structure. Give deliberate sniffing moments. End them calmly. Continue walking before the dog disappears mentally into the environment. This is especially important with dogs that pull, hunt, scan or have difficulty recovering.

Good walks contain both structure and release. The dog follows, works, processes and receives space. The balance depends on the dog. Some dogs need more task before they can handle freedom. Others need controlled sniffing to recover. The human must assess that, not the dog.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat sniffing versus walking on as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

2. The insecure dog

2.1 How insecurity develops in the dog

Insecurity does not always look like fear. It can look like control, barking, pulling, claiming, freezing, hiding or constantly checking the owner. A dog can appear bold on the outside while the inside is unstable.

Insecurity begins with predisposition, but the environment determines how much it grows. A sensitive dog in a calm, predictable environment can function well. The same dog in chaos, pressure or too much freedom can begin to take responsibility it cannot carry.

2.2 How a dog's insecurity is influenced by the environment

A dog is not separate from the household. Visitors, children, other dogs, routes, noise, routine and the owner's emotional state all influence the dog. When the environment gives too little support, insecurity often turns into behaviour.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat the insecure dog as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

2.3 The most important trait of insecure dogs

The most important trait of many insecure dogs is not weakness, but over-responsibility. The dog tries to organise the world before the human does. He scans, blocks, follows, guards, reacts or claims. That behaviour is often misunderstood as dominance or stubbornness.

The insecure dog needs the opposite of more responsibility. He needs clear human direction. Not pressure, not chaos, not endless reassurance, but a stable framework in which he does not have to decide everything himself.

When that framework is missing, the dog begins to create his own. That can become barking at windows, controlling visitors, pulling ahead on the leash or staying close to the owner at all times. The form differs, but the function is often the same: the dog tries to create safety.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat the most important trait of insecure dogs as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

2.4 How claiming behaviour develops into problem behaviour

Claiming behaviour often begins softly. The dog asks for attention, pushes against the owner, follows through the house, blocks space or wants to control who comes close. At first it can look affectionate. Later it becomes pressure.

When the dog receives attention every time tension rises, he learns that emotion creates access. When he is allowed to block people, choose resting places or place himself between the owner and the world, the role grows. The dog begins to manage the relationship.

Solving claiming behaviour is not about rejecting the dog. It is about restoring the role division. The owner gives affection at the right moments, sets boundaries around space and teaches the dog to settle without controlling the owner.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

2.5 How to recognise insecurity in puppies

Insecurity in puppies is often underestimated because the behaviour is still small. A puppy that checks constantly, startles quickly, follows everywhere or struggles to recover after stimuli may be showing early signs of a pattern that can grow later.

The goal is not to make a puppy hard. The goal is to build confidence through calm structure. A young dog needs suitable exposure, recovery, boundaries and predictable guidance. Too much freedom can be just as harmful as too much pressure.

Puppies learn roles quickly. If the puppy is allowed to decide everything because the behaviour is still cute, that role can become difficult later. Early boundaries are not harsh. They are support.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

2.6 When insecure dogs really become difficult

2.7 Which insecure traits you must take very seriously

Insecure dogs often become difficult when the environment becomes too demanding. Adolescence, moving house, a new baby, another dog, more visitors or busier walks can expose the limits of the system. What used to be manageable suddenly becomes too much.

Take traits seriously when the dog cannot recover, when reactions become faster, when the dog begins to control space, when the dog follows the owner constantly, or when the dog shows threat to people or dogs. These are not just personality quirks. They are signals that the dog needs more support.

The earlier those signals are addressed, the easier the change. Waiting until the dog has repeated the pattern for months or years makes the work heavier.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat when insecure dogs really become difficult as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

2.8 Why insecure dogs need work as support

2.9 Why insecure dogs do badly with busyness and too much voice

Work gives direction. Insecure dogs often carry too much responsibility because they scan, check, claim or react to stimuli. A clear task moves attention away from the environment and towards the human framework.

Work is not the same as tiring a dog out. A tired insecure dog can still be unstable. Real work has a beginning, an end and a clear role. It helps the dog know what to do instead of deciding for himself.

Busyness gives insecure dogs too much information. Sounds, movement, scent, body language and voice all come in at once. Too much talking from the owner can add to that load. A calm body, fewer words and a clear task are often more helpful than constant encouragement.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat why insecure dogs need work as support as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

2.10 Insecurity in combination with different breeds

2.11 Separation anxiety

Breed matters because predisposition matters. An insecure herding dog may control movement. An insecure guarding dog may control territory. An insecure hunting dog may disappear into scent and distance. The insecurity is shaped by the breed's natural tendencies.

This is why one method does not fit every dog. The guidance must match the dog's genetic background, capacity and daily environment. A strong dog may need clearer physical management. A sensitive dog may need more recovery. A high-drive dog may need structured work.

Separation anxiety should also be assessed through the whole system. Is the dog truly panicking only when left alone, or is he dependent on the owner all day? The answer changes the solution.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat insecurity in combination with different breeds as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

3. The dog as an animal

3.1 How the dog developed from the wolf

To understand dogs, we must remember that they are animals before they are companions. Their behaviour did not begin in the living room. It developed through survival, cooperation, senses, movement and group dynamics.

The dog developed from wolf-like ancestors through a long relationship with humans. Animals that could live near people, read social information and cooperate had an advantage. Over time, this created a species that is deeply connected to human life but still carries animal needs.

A dog therefore needs more than love. He needs movement, scent, rest, task, boundaries and social clarity. When those needs are ignored, behaviour problems become more likely.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

3.2 How the dog developed through human interest

People shaped dogs for human purposes: guarding, hunting, herding, pulling, retrieving, tracking, companionship and protection. Those purposes still live inside breeds and individuals. A dog is not a blank product that can become anything through training.

When behaviour seems difficult, it may also be logical. A guarding dog that reacts to strangers, a herding dog that controls movement or a hunting dog that follows scent is not acting randomly. The question is how those drives can be guided inside modern life.

Good training does not deny nature. It gives nature a framework. The dog does not lose his instincts; he learns where those instincts fit and where the human takes over.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

3.3 How the different dog breeds developed

3.4 Common behavioural problems by breed

Breeds developed because people selected dogs for specific traits. Those traits can be useful, beautiful and powerful, but they also create behavioural risks when the environment does not fit.

A working dog without work may invent work. A guarding dog without clear leadership may guard too much. A social dog without boundaries may claim too much. A sensitive dog in a busy household may become overwhelmed. The breed does not excuse the behaviour, but it helps explain why it is logical.

Assessing breed tendencies prevents unfair expectations. The goal is not to fight the dog's nature. The goal is to guide that nature so the dog can function safely and calmly in daily life.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat how the different dog breeds developed as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

3.5 The most important organ: the nose

The nose is central to the dog's world. People live strongly through sight and language. Dogs live through scent. A scent can contain information about other dogs, people, food, stress, direction, time and territory.

This means that a walk is not just movement. It is information. For some dogs, scent helps recovery. For others, scent increases activation because it opens hunting, scanning or pulling. The same activity can therefore calm one dog and overload another.

The human must decide how scent is used. Controlled sniffing can be valuable. Unlimited scent-chasing can become self-direction. Again, the question is function: does this help the dog settle, or does it make the dog take over?

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat the most important organ: the nose as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

3.6 Scents, vibrations and energy from our body

3.7 The importance of eye contact

Dogs read more than we realise. They smell changes in our body, hear changes in our breathing and notice tiny shifts in movement. What we call energy is often the dog reading physical information before we are aware of it ourselves.

Eye contact is also powerful. Soft eye contact can create connection. Hard staring can create pressure. Avoiding all eye contact can create uncertainty. The meaning depends on the dog, the relationship and the situation.

Many owners try to solve tension with words while their body says something else. The dog believes the body first. That is why calm handling begins before the command.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat scents, vibrations and energy from our body as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

3.8 Everything the ears tell us

3.9 The surprises of the tail

Ears are valuable indicators. Forward ears can show interest, alertness or fixation. Ears back can show insecurity, pressure or concentration. But ears should never be read alone. The whole body tells the story.

The tail is also often misunderstood. A wagging tail does not automatically mean friendliness. It can mean excitement, tension, conflict, social uncertainty or high arousal. Look at height, speed, stiffness and the rest of the body.

Good observation prevents late correction. If you see the body change before the behaviour explodes, you can guide earlier and softer.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

3.10 Shaking, yawning, scratching and stretching

4. The human as leader

4.1 The human as an animal

Dogs often show small behaviours that release or reveal tension: shaking off, yawning, scratching, stretching, licking or turning away. These signals can be easy to dismiss, but they often show that the nervous system is processing something.

The human is also an animal in the system. We bring posture, breathing, emotion, movement and pressure. We may think we are only giving commands, but the dog is reading our whole body.

Leadership therefore begins with presence. Not dominance, not theatre, not shouting. Leadership is the ability to bring calm, direction and responsibility when the dog cannot carry the situation alone.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

4.2 What I have learned about leadership

4.3 How to become a leader without natural leadership talent

Leadership with dogs is not about being the loudest or the hardest. It is about being stable. A dog follows the person who creates clarity, not the person who produces the most pressure.

Some people have natural leadership. Others do not. That does not mean they cannot guide a dog. Leadership can be built through habits: slower movement, clearer decisions, better timing, consistent boundaries and less emotional reaction.

The dog does not need you to become someone else. The dog needs you to become more reliable. Small daily improvements in posture, rhythm and decision-making can change the entire relationship.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat what I have learned about leadership as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

4.4 How to get your emotions under control

Working with a difficult dog can bring frustration, shame, fear and exhaustion. Those emotions are understandable. But if they enter the leash, the voice and the body, the dog receives extra tension.

Emotional control does not mean feeling nothing. It means not making the dog responsible for your emotion. Breathe before you act. Slow your body. Use fewer words. Lower the pressure on the leash. If necessary, create distance and make the situation smaller.

The owner's state is part of the training environment. A calmer owner does not solve everything, but without that calm many techniques become heavier than necessary.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat how to get your emotions under control as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

4.5 How tension arises

4.6 How to prevent tension

Tension rarely appears from nowhere. It builds through small steps: a rushed start, too little recovery, a busy route, a tight leash, the owner's anticipation, the dog scanning and one stimulus too many.

Preventing tension means noticing the build-up earlier. Choose routes wisely. Leave the house calmly. Give the dog a job before the environment becomes too much. Do not wait until the dog has to explode to be heard.

Prevention is not avoidance. Prevention is responsible timing. You create situations in which the dog can learn instead of merely survive.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat how tension arises as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

4.7 Why self-control is more important than persuasiveness

4.8 Why dogs react to what you feel, not to what you say

Many owners try to convince their dog with more words, more commands or more emotional energy. But dogs are less impressed by argument than by consistency. Self-control is therefore more important than persuasiveness.

A dog reacts to what you feel because feeling changes the body. If you say “calm” while your body is tense, the dog receives tension. If you give a command while already expecting failure, the dog reads the expectation.

This is why leadership is practical. It is not a title. It is a state that becomes visible through your body, your timing and your decisions.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

4.9 Why consistency is necessary

Consistency is not perfection. It is repetition of the same framework often enough for the dog to believe it. If something is allowed today, forbidden tomorrow and corrected harshly the day after, the dog cannot build trust in the system.

Consistency lowers the dog's need to check. The dog learns where the boundary is, what the role is and what happens next. That predictability creates calm.

Owners often become inconsistent when things improve. They loosen structure too quickly because the dog seems better. Then the old pattern returns. Keep the framework until the new behaviour is strong enough to carry more freedom.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

4.10 Why willpower and discipline are necessary

4.11 What I learned on my dog farm

Behaviour change asks for willpower because the owner must repeat the work on ordinary days. Not only during sessions. Not only when motivated. Also when tired, busy or disappointed.

On the farm I learned that systems matter more than tricks. With many dogs, you cannot solve everything through commands. You must manage space, rhythm, rest, movement, food, tension and recovery. If the structure is right, many dogs can live calmly together. If the structure is wrong, everything becomes harder.

That lesson is the foundation of this book: behaviour lives in a system. If you only look at one isolated action, you often miss the cause.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat why willpower and discipline are necessary as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

5. Working method in practice

5.1 Understanding - Assessing - Solving: what this looks like in real life

In practice, people often want to go straight to the solution. Which exercise should I do? Which tool do I need? How do I stop this behaviour? But without understanding, solving becomes guessing.

First you identify why the behaviour exists. Is there insecurity, too much responsibility, too little rest, too much freedom, a wrong environment or a mismatch between dog and owner? Then you assess where the main pressure lies. Only after that do you choose the solution.

The order matters because the same visible behaviour can have different causes. Pulling can come from excitement, insecurity, habit, lack of boundaries or too much freedom. If you do not know the cause, you may work hard in the wrong place.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat . working method in practice as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

5.2 Why order is more important than content

5.3 When to slow down instead of pushing through

Many techniques can be useful, but the right technique at the wrong moment can increase tension. Making a dog follow while the dog is already over threshold creates conflict. Giving freedom to a dog that cannot carry it creates responsibility. Correcting a dog without relationship creates pressure.

Order creates safety. First understand, then assess, then solve. First calm, then task. First structure, then freedom. First recovery, then expansion.

Slowing down is necessary when recovery becomes slower, when the dog becomes more reactive, when the owner must work harder, or when relapse appears repeatedly. Slowing down is not weakness. It protects the foundation.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat why order is more important than content as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

5.4 How to assess progress without forcing it

5.5 When a trajectory is successful

Progress is not only measured by whether the dog performs an exercise. Look at recovery, body softness, ability to disengage, quality of sleep, lower scanning, better response to boundaries and calmer daily rhythm.

A trajectory is successful when the dog and owner live inside a clearer, safer and more stable system. That may mean the dog can do more. It may also mean that the owner understands limits better and stops putting the dog in situations he cannot carry.

Success is therefore not always the same as doing everything. Sometimes it is calm within realistic boundaries. Sometimes it is acceptance. Sometimes it is rehoming. The honest question is always: is the dog functioning better, and is the human taking responsibility?

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

6. Relationships

6.1 The dog inside the family

A dog does not live with one person only if the household contains several people. Every family member influences the system. One person may set boundaries, another may comfort tension, another may give freedom, and children may create movement or pressure.

For the dog, contradiction creates uncertainty. If the rules change depending on who is present, the dog learns to test, claim or choose the weakest point in the system. This is not manipulation in a human moral sense. It is learning.

A family therefore needs shared agreements. Where does the dog rest? Who receives visitors? Who handles walks? What happens when the dog claims attention? Clear agreements reduce conflict for both dog and humans.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

6.2 Contradictory guidance: when several people are involved

6.3 Roles inside the household

When several people guide one dog differently, behaviour often becomes unstable. The dog receives mixed messages: follow here, pull there; stay calm here, get excited there; boundaries today, freedom tomorrow.

Roles inside the household must be made visible. The dog does not need to control doors, visitors, children, the sofa or the owner's attention. The human group must decide how space and attention are organised.

Visitors and children also matter. A dog that already carries tension should not be given too much responsibility around vulnerable people. The human must position the dog, create distance and prevent rehearsal of controlling behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat contradictory guidance: when several people are involved as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

6.4 The influence of visitors, children and social pressure

6.5 Problems with several dogs in the pack

Visitors often create social pressure. Owners feel they must be polite, relaxed or tolerant, while the dog is already struggling. The dog should not be sacrificed to social expectations. If the dog needs distance, a place or a leash, that is responsible guidance.

With several dogs, behaviour becomes a group system. One dog can raise tension, another can copy it, another can try to control it. Problems are rarely isolated. Look at who moves first, who blocks, who receives attention and who creates pressure.

Multiple dogs require more structure, not less. Resting places, feeding, doors, walks and attention must be organised. A calm group is not created by hoping the dogs work it out. It is created by human responsibility.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat the influence of visitors, children and social pressure as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

Part 1 closing: Understanding as the foundation

Understanding does not solve the problem by itself, but without understanding every solution becomes unstable. The dog's behaviour is connected to genetics, environment, tension, recovery, relationships and daily rhythm.

When you understand the system, you stop chasing isolated moments. You begin to see how the day feeds the behaviour. You see why the dog takes responsibility, where the owner comes in too late and which habits keep the pattern alive.

The next step is assessment. Assessment turns understanding into direction. It helps you decide where the main pressure lies and which solution should come first.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat part 1 closing: understanding as the foundation as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

ASSESSING

PART 2

Introduction to Assessing

1. Relationship with the dog

After understanding comes assessment. This is a crucial step. Many people skip it: they see behaviour, create an explanation and immediately move to solving. But without good assessment, the approach quickly becomes too general.

Assessment means looking honestly at where the problem is most strongly fed. Is it in the relationship, the atmosphere, the boundaries, the dog's needs or the pace at which boundaries are expanded?

The relationship with the dog is the first point. Does the dog follow direction, or does the dog make decisions independently? Does the dog trust the human to carry tension, or does the dog take that role? A good relationship is not only affection. It is role division, reliability and direction.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

2. Atmosphere in the group

Atmosphere is the emotional climate in which the dog lives. A household can be loving and still too busy, too tense or too unpredictable for a specific dog. The dog responds not only to rules, but also to rhythm, voices, movement, visitors, children and other animals.

Assess whether the home gives the dog recovery. Is there rest after stimuli? Are there quiet places? Does the dog sleep deeply? Is the owner calm, or does tension move through the house all day?

A tense atmosphere makes every exercise harder. Sometimes the first intervention is not a training exercise, but a calmer daily rhythm, less access to pressure, fewer triggers and clearer places in the home.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat . atmosphere in the group as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

3. Boundaries for the dog

Boundaries give support. They are not meant to suppress the dog, but to make the world clearer. During assessment, look at whether boundaries are set early, calmly and predictably.

Late boundaries often feel like corrections. The dog has already crossed the line, the owner becomes frustrated and the intervention becomes heavier. Early boundaries are lighter: a change of position, a calm block, less space, a clear place, a slower start.

Also assess whether boundaries are consistent between people and situations. A boundary that changes every day does not create clarity. The dog should not have to guess which version of the system is active.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat boundaries for the dog as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

3. Boundaries for the dog (continued)

A dog with too much freedom often does not become happier. He becomes responsible. He decides where to go, who to greet, when to react, where to lie and when to demand attention. For some dogs that is manageable. For many problem dogs it is too much.

Good boundaries create a frame with space inside it. The dog can relax because the human carries the main decisions. This is different from micromanagement. Micromanagement keeps the dog dependent on constant instructions. Boundaries create predictability.

If boundaries make the dog more tense, assess the relationship and timing. The boundary may be too late, too emotional, too hard or unclear. The goal is always calm direction.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat boundaries for the dog as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

4. Needs of the dog

Needs are not the same for every dog. Some dogs need more sleep. Some need structured work. Some need less stimulus. Some need more controlled movement. A high-drive dog without a task can become restless. A sensitive dog with too much activity can become overwhelmed.

Assess rest, movement, recovery, work, food, medical load, social pressure and environment. Behaviour can be worsened by pain, hormones, poor sleep or chronic overload. Not every problem is solved by stronger boundaries.

Needs must fit what the dog can carry. More exercise is not always better. More socialisation is not always better. The right amount is the amount that leaves the dog more stable afterwards.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

4. Needs of the dog (continued)

Many owners try to solve tension by adding activity. Longer walks, more play, more dog parks, more training. Sometimes that helps. Sometimes it keeps the nervous system active and makes recovery worse.

A useful question is: what is the dog like after this activity? Softer, calmer and more able to rest? Or more alert, more demanding and more reactive? The effect afterwards tells you more than the activity itself.

When needs are met well, the dog has a better foundation for learning. When needs are wrong, even good exercises can fail because the body is not ready to process them.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

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5. Gradually expanding boundaries

Progress must be built gradually. Many owners move too fast when things start to improve. The dog succeeds in a simple situation, and immediately the owner tries a harder route, smaller distance or more stimuli. The old pattern wakes up again.

Gradual expansion means the step is only increased when the previous step is truly stable. Not once, but repeatedly. Not only during the exercise, but also afterwards. The dog should recover well and remain calm for the rest of the day.

The pace is determined by the dog's nervous system, not by the owner's hope. If relapse appears, make the step smaller. More pressure is rarely the answer. More repetition and better observation usually are.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat . gradually expanding boundaries as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

5. Gradually expanding boundaries (continued)

Help must also be phased out. In the beginning, the dog may need a lot of guidance. Later, the owner gives slightly more space inside the same framework. That is how you see whether the new behaviour is integrated or only controlled.

Doing nothing can also be training. Sitting calmly, waiting, not giving new instructions and allowing the dog to process can be more valuable than constantly adding exercises. The dog learns that stimuli do not always require action.

Durability is more important than speed. Quick progress can look impressive, but fragile. Lasting change grows through repetition, small steps and enough recovery time.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

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Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

SOLVING

PART 3

Introduction to Solving

1. Following on the leash

Solving means changing daily behaviour. Not once, but structurally. The dog receives new experiences inside a clearer system. The five solutions are not separate tricks. Together they reduce the dog's need to control, claim, scan or react.

Following on the leash is the first solution. This is not a neat obedience exercise. It is work. The human determines pace, direction and distance. The dog no longer has to walk in front, scan everything and decide what matters.

When a dog follows, responsibility shifts. The dog can orientate to the human instead of the environment. That creates calm, especially for insecure or reactive dogs.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

1. Following on the leash (continued)

Following must be built calmly. Start with simple routes and short repetitions. The goal is not to force the dog into position, but to make the position understandable and repeatable. The dog learns: when we are in this mode, I walk with the human.

The owner's body is part of the exercise. Walk slower, breathe lower, keep the leash organised and intervene early. If the owner rushes, the dog will often rush too.

Following is successful when the dog scans less, recovers faster and no longer takes the first role in every situation. It is not about perfection. It is about role division.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

2. Creating a job for the dog

A dog with a job has something to hold on to. That is especially important for dogs that otherwise create their own job: guarding, claiming, scanning, chasing, controlling visitors or pulling the owner through the street.

A job must be clear. Follow beside the human. Stay on your place. Wait while visitors enter. Sniff only when released. Carry a task during the walk. The task gives direction and lowers the need to invent behaviour.

The right job depends on the dog. A herding dog, guarding dog, hunting dog and companion dog may need different forms of work. The principle is the same: the dog receives a role that fits within human direction.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat . creating a job for the dog as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

2. Creating a job for the dog (continued)

A job is not entertainment. Entertainment can make a dog busier. A job creates organisation. The dog knows what to do, when to start and when to stop. That structure is what makes it calming.

Do not overload the dog with tasks that are too hard. Work should create stability, not more pressure. Start small and clear. Repeat often. Make the task part of daily life instead of a special exercise that only happens during training.

When the job is right, the dog often becomes softer. The eyes search less, the body settles and the dog can stay connected to the human without constant correction.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

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Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

3. Eliminating the dog's claim

Claiming can be directed at attention, space, visitors, the owner, food, resting places or other dogs. The dog places himself in the middle and begins to control access. This often begins as affection, but becomes pressure.

Eliminating claim does not mean rejecting the dog. It means ending the dog's responsibility for the human or the environment. The owner decides when attention is given, where the dog rests, how visitors enter and when the dog receives space.

Timing is important. Do not wait until claiming becomes intense. Intervene when the dog begins to push, block, stare, follow or demand. Calmly redirect the dog to a place or task. Affection returns when the dog is calmer and no longer claiming.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat eliminating the dog's claim as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

3. Eliminating the dog's claim (continued)

Claim often grows because owners respond to it. The dog pushes in and receives touch. The dog barks and receives speech. The dog blocks and everyone moves around him. The dog learns that claiming works.

Change the pattern without anger. Less response to demanding behaviour, clearer places in the home, controlled greetings and less emotional intensity around the dog. This creates space for the dog to settle independently.

From practice, many dogs with separation problems, visitor problems or leash reactivity also claim inside the home. When the claim decreases, the dog often becomes easier outside too because the whole relationship has become clearer.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

4. Positioning the dog

Positioning is one of the most underestimated solutions. Where the dog is placed in relation to the human, visitors, doors, other dogs and stimuli changes the role the dog experiences.

A dog in front often becomes the first receiver of information. He sees first, reaches first, reacts first and decides first. For a confident stable dog this may be manageable. For a problem dog it is often too much responsibility.

Positioning means the human takes the place that carries the situation. The dog does not have to receive visitors, stand at the door, block the hallway or walk ahead into tension. The human becomes the buffer.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

4. Positioning the dog (continued)

Position is not only physical. It is also mental. If the owner mentally waits for the dog to decide, the dog feels the space. If the owner takes calm initiative, the dog receives direction.

Use positioning at doors, during walks, when visitors arrive, around children, near other dogs and in the living room. Small changes in where the dog stands or lies can change the entire atmosphere.

Good positioning prevents escalation. You do not need to correct a dog for receiving the situation if you prevent the dog from being placed in that receiving role.

From practice

In practice, improvement often begins when the owner stops searching for a spectacular intervention and starts repeating the basics with precision. The dog then receives the same information again and again: the human sees the situation, carries the pressure and gives direction before the dog has to solve it alone.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat . positioning the dog as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

5. Introducing a quarantine period

For dogs with high tension, a temporary low-stimulus period can be necessary. This is not punishment and not isolation. It is a period in which the dog's life becomes simpler so the nervous system can recover.

During this period, avoid situations that repeatedly confirm the problem: busy routes, uncontrolled dog meetings, constant visitors, window guarding, chaotic play or too much freedom. Replace them with calm rhythm, clear places, structured walks and predictable guidance.

A quarantine period gives the dog space to stop rehearsing the old pattern. Only when the baseline activation drops can new behaviour be learned properly.

Daily application

In daily life, this subject is not proven by one good training moment. It has to become visible in ordinary repetition: how the dog leaves the house, how the owner holds the leash, how tension is noticed early and how quickly calm returns afterwards. The smaller the moment, the more important consistency becomes.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat . introducing a quarantine period as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

5. Introducing a quarantine period (continued)

Many owners resist a low-stimulus period because it feels like stepping back. In reality, it is often the first real step forward. A nervous system that is constantly activated cannot learn deeply.

The period should be temporary and purposeful. You simplify life, build calm, introduce clear tasks and then gradually expand again. If you never expand, the dog becomes dependent on avoidance. If you expand too early, the old pattern returns.

The five solutions work best together: following, work, claim reduction, positioning and a low-stimulus period when needed. Together they create a system in which problem behaviour loses its function.

Common mistake

A common mistake is to treat . introducing a quarantine period as a separate exercise instead of part of the whole system. The dog then performs for a moment, but the daily rhythm remains unchanged. Lasting change comes when the owner repeats the same message in the home, on the walk and around visitors.

Practical focus

The practical focus is simple: make the situation smaller before it becomes too large. Create distance, reduce speed, give the dog a clear role and avoid adding emotion to the moment. The owner should not wait for escalation before taking responsibility.

What to look for

Look for recovery rather than only performance. Does the dog become softer after guidance? Does breathing slow down? Does the dog check the owner more naturally and release the environment faster? Those signs matter because they show that the nervous system is changing, not only the outside behaviour.

Book list

1. The Other End of the Leash - Patricia McConnell. Valuable for understanding how human behaviour influences dogs and how much communication happens through posture, timing and movement.
2. Canine Body Language - Brenda Aloff. Useful for learning to read signals before behaviour becomes intense.
3. On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals - Turid Rugaas. A helpful introduction to subtle signals and social communication.
4. Animals in Translation - Temple Grandin. Important for understanding how animals experience the world differently from humans.
5. Inside of a Dog - Alexandra Horowitz. A clear book about the dog's sensory world, especially the importance of scent and perception.
6. The Culture Clash - Jean Donaldson. Useful for understanding the difference between human interpretation and dog learning.
7. Don't Shoot the Dog - Karen Pryor. A classic on learning principles and reinforcement.
8. The Domestic Dog - James Serpell. A broader scientific view of domestication, breed development and dog-human relationships.

Book list (continued)

9. Wild Minds - Marc Bekoff. Useful for thinking about behaviour in an evolutionary context and for remembering that many problem behaviours become more logical when natural needs and living environments are taken seriously.

This book has been written from practice: real dogs, real owners, real homes and real pressure. Use the books above as background, but keep looking at the dog in front of you. Behaviour does not live in theory alone. It lives in daily rhythm, relationships, boundaries, recovery and responsibility.

Difficult Dogs www.difficultdogs.nl