

“Mastering the Barkside”

My goal tonight is to help you understand why dogs react – what’s going on inside their brains – and what’s going to surprise you is that it’s not that different from humans.

Reality check: It’s a dog, not a robot!

The first thing we need to do is give ourselves a reality check. We are so used to everything being instant. Not sure what something is – Google it. Not sure how to do something – YouTube it. Hey Siri – directions to the nearest Starbucks. Hey Alexa – play some music. Hey Rover – come – and Rover doesn’t come. Why not? Rover must be broken – the links not working. No, Rover is a dog, it’s not pre-programmed and just like humans, doesn’t always do as it’s told.

Dogs learn slowly

We often get emails from clients “My puppy is 12 weeks old and still peeing on the floor.” A 12-week-old puppy is equivalent to a 10-month-old child. Is a 10-month child toilet trained? If you’ve had a child, do you remember how long it took to potty train your child? It takes a good 2 – 3 months for them to not have any accidents. Just like children, puppies have no control over their bladders at that age. Just like children, when they suddenly realize they have to go, they have to go right then and there.

Getting your attention

Nipping or biting is another thing people email us about. At 3 months, your puppy is teething and will be for the next 2 -3 months. This is extremely painful for them. Again, if you’ve raised children, you know how painful teething is for babies. Babies usually get 1 or 2 teeth at a time. Puppies can end up with 3 or 4 coming in at a time. Here’s the other thing, puppies can’t use their paws like hands. Sometimes, they grab at us to

get our attention, just like a child pulling on your clothes. Try this... put your hands behind your back. Now, how do you get your friend's attention? You use your mouth – either by speaking/barking or by butting your head against them or grabbing their clothes with your mouth.

Mature quickly; 'terrible teens'

Now, here's the thing with dogs: they mature a lot quicker than humans. At 5 – 6 months, your puppy is now becoming an adolescent. No one ever talks about the teenage phase in dogs because if they did, a lot of people wouldn't get a dog. It's worse than the puppy stage. They become just like human teenagers. They stop listening to you. They become more independent and don't do what you ask or take off and ignore you when you call them. They often don't respond to their name. They are more interested in exploring the environment than you. Just like humans, this is when behavioural issues often develop.

History of dog training

Like everything else, training has evolved, and it continues to evolve. Much research and study has been into the dog's brain and neuroscience over the past few years. There's a great documentary on **Netflix** right now called "*Inside the Mind of a Dog*". Watch it! It's excellent and talks about what they now understand, which is very different from what was originally thought.

Aversive training (corporal punishment)

Let me take you through the history of dog training. During the 2 world wars, corporal punishment was how they trained military dogs. This way of training continued after the war. This is what is referred to as aversive methods. It uses *positive punishment*. Now I don't know about you, but that's an oxymoron in my view. There is nothing positive about punishment. It means doing or using something unpleasant on your dog to change their behaviour. This includes things such as scolding your pup after they have an accident during potty training, pushing on your dog's behind to make them sit, using

a shock collar to stop barking or using a prong collar or choke chain to stop pulling on the leash. A dog is supposed to be our best friend. Would you subject your best friend to those things?

Positive Reward Training

In 1947 a more respectful way of training was developed but it didn't catch on in North America until the 80's. Karen Pryor and Dr. Ian Dunbar spearheaded the movement to train our dogs in a more kind and non-aversive way. This method is called *Positive Reward Based Training* and is also known as *clicker training*. It involves being positive at all times, luring your dog to help them understand the word and what it means, marking it with a Yes or a Click and following through with a piece of food. The food is their paycheque. We recommend using your dog's kibble for training because they have to eat. You only need the good stuff or treats when there are lots of distractions, such as squirrels. Eventually, you start to wean them off the rewards once they fully understand the word and can do it anywhere, anytime.

Vocabulary limits and comprehension

By the way, your dog only has the capacity to learn approximately 160 words. We use around 2000 words because we speak in sentences. Dogs don't understand sentences. They also don't generalize well. If you teach them the word sit only in the kitchen and then one day you ask them to sit in the living room, they often don't understand that it means the same thing that it did in the kitchen. You have to practice the word everywhere. They also need to hear the word about 2000 times before they are consistently doing the action. They also don't understand when a word has more than 1 meaning. For instance, you teach your dog the word Down, meaning to lie down. Your dog is lying on the couch, and you tell it to get down and it just looks at you confused. Your dog is down on the couch. They have no idea what you're asking. They also get confused when we use more than one word for the same action. For instance, you teach the word Sit. One day you tell them to Sit Down. That doesn't sound like sit, and it's 2 words so which do you want? One last thing on this. Your dog will learn certain

words way faster than others. They'll learn the word Treat, Cookie, Dinner, Walk, very quickly. That's because those words are important to them. Words like sit and down aren't important to them, that's why we use food to reward them when they do the action.

Balanced Training

Then there's another type of training called Balanced training. This involves the use of both positive reward-based techniques and when needed punishment. They start out using a kind and respectful method and then switch to fear if the dog doesn't comply. Imagine if someone did that to you? This creates a confused and distrusting dog.

At ***Who's Walking Who***, we use Positive Reward Based training and have been for over 20 years. We also used Games Based Concept Training. PRBT is perfect for teaching your dog words such as sit, down, come, stay, leave it, etc. But it doesn't work for behaviours such as not chasing things, barking at stuff, getting over excited, etc.

Games Based Concept Training

Changing behaviours involves changing the neuropathways in their brains. In other words, changing how they think they should react. You can't tell them how to do that. This is where Games Based Concept Training works and is seen as the next revolution in dog training. It originated in Europe about 15 years ago and started gaining popularity in North America a few years ago. Susan Garrett is a big advocate of Games Based Concept Training. Concept Training works on 16 different behaviours and includes impulse control, disengagement, bringing excitement or fear levels down, confidence, flexibility and a lot more.

How a dog's brain works

Before I get into the how and why this works, let me explain how the dog's brain works.

A dog's brain is just like ours in that it's made up of building blocks. The building blocks represent skills or a lack of skills. So, maybe your dog has good impulse control, or

maybe they don't, maybe they're good at disengaging from squirrels, maybe not, maybe they walk past dogs no problem, maybe they don't. You get the idea.

Dog judgement and reaction to it

A dog will see or hear something and decide if it's important. Dogs hear 4 times better than us. If it isn't important, they'll ignore it. If it is, they'll decide, is it good or bad. You may have a different opinion on that. Your dog may see a squirrel and go Yahoo! Whereas you're going Oh No! If it's good it probably involves them being really excited, having no impulse control, and not being able to disengage. If they decide it's bad, they may react in fear because they lack confidence, they may also have difficulty disengaging, or re-engaging with you. Whether it's good or bad, reactions can be similar.

Experience leads to emotional response

Here's the thing, dogs live for the experience. But we love experiences too. How many here love watching sports or going to sports games? Do you sit there and smile, or cheer the team on? Perhaps you like camping, hiking, going to the movies or live theatre, travelling, or even reading a good book. We love experiences too; we just react differently. Suppose you won the lottery. I'm sure you wouldn't look at your ticket and go – oh look I just won 6 million dollars. Isn't that nice. I guess I better leave for work. You'd be jumping up and down, possibly screaming, and possibly telling your boss what they can do with your job.

Ageing limit of dogs equals 2 to 3 year old child

Now, let's think about a 2 – 3-year-old child. Let's say you tell them you're taking them to Disney World, or somewhere exciting. How would they react? They'd probably jump up and down, maybe scream with glee, or act silly. What would happen if they were scared by something, maybe a loud noise or a bad dream. They might scream, run & hide, jump into bed with you. What about when they get frustrated? Stomp their feet, yell, throw a temper tantrum. Do they have a *behavioural problem*? Of course not. They

simply haven't learned to behave appropriately. Here's the thing. Your dog, when it reaches adulthood will only have the brain maturity of a 2 – 3-year-old child. That's as good as it gets. So, it's no wonder they react the way they do.

“Stress Bucket” and overflow

Here's the other thing that happens. Dogs have a bucket. We have one too. It's called a stress bucket. They may have a very large bucket, or a very small bucket and it's not related to the size of your dog. The size of the bucket represents how much stuff they can handle before their bucket overflows. There are days when my bucket overflows. That's when I go “I'm done. I can't handle anymore.” How many times have you got to that stage? It's not usually one thing that puts dogs over their threshold. It's an accumulation of things.

Hole in the bucket

Every bucket has an imaginary hole. It can be large or small and has nothing to do with the size of the bucket. The hole is where stress leaves the bucket and allows your dog to calm down. New research has discovered that 70% of dogs have some form of anxiety.

‘Bucket flow:’ flowing in and draining out

What may surprise you is what can fill their bucket. Anything positive or negative can fill the bucket. Spending time in the backyard and checking out what's happening, people coming to your door, people passing by the window, going on walks, picking up the leash, you go out, predictors of when things should happen – and then they don't, routines, mealtime, car rides, frustration, groomers and vets, noisy children at home, multi-dog household, medical conditions, itchy skin. The unfortunate part is that when your dog's bucket overflows, it can take 72 hours for some dog's buckets to empty.

Rescue dogs

Let's talk about rescues. Many rescues, depending on their situation, develop ***PTSD*** – *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*, and it's very similar to human PTSD. They can also be

very *pessimistic* and see the world as a scary place. Here's the thing about rescues... the shelter or rescue organization often doesn't know the true history of the dog. Even if you adopt a local dog from Ontario, this dog has no idea what's happening. It may have been with a loving family who for whatever reason had to give it up. It's been in a cage for X amount of time and the owners haven't come to get it. Instead, strangers come to see it and walk away. Then someone actually takes it home. It doesn't automatically think, oh this is my new home. It's confused and for many scared. Imagine if someone took you when you were a child, out of your home, locked you away somewhere, and then someone else came to take you to live with them. How would you feel? A dog that has been *abused* will be even more untrusting and scared.

Rescues from foreign countries

How about rescues from other countries? We see many from Mexico and Texas. The ones from Mexico are usually found on the streets. So how did they get there? Were they born on the street? Did they live with a family and were discarded or got lost? Here is what these dogs go through... they get picked up and put in a shelter. Sometimes they'll get fostered out and sometimes not. Next, they travel from Mexico to Canada on kind of a relay where one volunteer will take them so far and then someone else takes over. It often takes 3 or 4 different vehicles and transportation types, cars, planes, boats and trains, to get to Canada and are delivered to the foster. They stay in foster until they are adopted. They are now in a place where the sights, sounds, smells and language are completely different from where they came from. It's no wonder they develop PTSD.

Please understand that I'm not against adopting. In fact, I'm all for it. We usually have 3 Golden Retrievers at a time – 2 from a breeder which are trained for demo work in classes and 1 that is a rescue from Golden Rescue. Our newest rescue, who we've had almost a year, and we got her at 7, came from a very bad situation. She was used as a breeding bitch for her entire life and kept in a small cage where she also did her business. She came with PTSD. It took us 4 months to toilet train her. Words like sit or down were not

going to help her. What I needed to help her with was building her confidence, security and becoming more optimistic.

Training is continual and consistent

The message I want to get across is that there are no quick fixes when it comes to dog training. People often come to puppy class and then we don't see them again until after the behavioural issues develop. This could have been prevented if they had continued with training. You don't send a child off to kindergarten and then expect them to be able to enter the workforce.

Many people don't bring their dog to training until they're an *adolescent* when unwanted behaviours have already developed. It will now take longer to change those behaviours because their dog has had lots of time to practice them.

You need to have a lot of patience when training. Think about anything you have learned to do. Sports is a great example. Athletes train constantly. You don't read a driving manual and then get behind the wheel of a car and drive off. Everything we do well takes practice. Why would we expect our dogs to learn faster than humans? They are dogs with the brain capacity and maturity of a 2 – 3-year-old child. *We also tend to set our expectations of our dogs too high.* Don't expect your dog to be perfect. I'm not perfect and I'm sure you're not either, so don't expect your dog to be.

What BARKING means

Barking is another thing most people misunderstand. When they bark, we often tell them to be quiet. But we bark all the time. It's called speaking, and sometimes we speak loudly. Dogs don't speak in words like we do. When they bark, they are trying to communicate. They might be telling another dog to stay away, they might be alerting you to something they heard, they might be trying to get your attention because they want something. I remember when I was very young, and my grandmother used to say, "children should be seen and not heard". We do the same thing to our dogs. Dogs are constantly trying to communicate with us. We need to try to understand them.

Support your dog

You also need to have your dog's back! I spoke with a client a couple of weeks ago. She told me her dog was good with medium & large dogs but didn't like it when pups or small dogs jumped in her face, and she wanted to stop her dog's behaviour. The problem is not with her dog. It's with the pups and small dogs. I told her it was absolutely okay for her dog not to like other dogs jumping in her face. That's rude. Most pups don't know any better and most small breeds never learn that it's rude. How would you like it if someone or a child came right up into your face? Instead, let her dog know she's got her back and either get her out of that situation or ask the other people not to allow their dog to approach.

Dogs don't love everything

Here's another misconception... Many people think their dog should be friendly and like all dogs. Why? Do you like everyone you meet? Do you go up to and greet everyone you see? I know I don't and there are people I purposely avoid. Why do we expect our dogs to be fine with every dog they see? That's unrealistic.

Dogs remember fearful situations

We often have students in class with a dog that has been attacked by another dog and now their dog is reactive to all dogs. They want their dog to stop reacting. Put yourself in their paws. You get attacked by someone while on a walk or anywhere. How are you going to feel after that? You might not want to leave the house, or you might be afraid of everyone you see. You are going to be on guard for probably years and might need counselling. Why would we think our dog would be okay after being attacked?

Leash wear

We also expect our dogs to be okay with wearing a leash. Why? They are not born wearing a leash. They probably didn't wear one until you came and got them. Now, they need to wear a leash so we can keep them safe on walks. But how would you feel if someone put a leash on you? You'd try to get away.

“Heel” walking isn’t natural

Another thing about leashes and walking next to you. Dogs see the world through their nose, not their eyes. Their nose is 10,000 times more powerful than ours. But they only see in yellow, blue and greyish brown. So yes, they need to sniff. Have you ever watched a group of dogs off leash? Here’s what happens – they come together and sniff stuff, then they might play or go off on their own way. They might come together again, and then go off. You won’t see 2 dogs *walking shoulder to shoulder* off leash strolling along having a conversation. Hey Rover, what’d you have for breakfast today? That’s not natural for them. That’s what humans do.

Genetics determine behaviour patterns

The other thing is that genetics play a big role in how your dog acts. Up until the 1800’s almost all dogs were bred to do specific jobs. We get all sorts of inquiries for help on this one. Somone with a Husky complains that their Husky pulls them. Of course they do, they were bred to pull sleds. People complain that their Border Collie or Ausie wants to organize them. Yes, they were bred to herd sheep. Then there’s those with Terrier breeds that complain that they constantly chase small animals. Yes, they were bred to chase and go down holes to kill rodents. Then’s there’s the Retriever that constantly brings everything to their owner. That’s why they’re called Retrievers – they retrieve.

Behaviour changes take time

The other thing you need to understand is that it takes time to change behaviours. Think about a time when you’ve had to change your own behaviour. Maybe you decided to lose weight, or needed to cut out sugar, or had to cut back on drinking, stop smoking, discovered you had gluten intolerance and had to cut out gluten, had to change the way you did anything you’ve been doing for a long time. How hard was that? How many times did you fall back into your old behaviour? For our dogs it’s even harder. We can talk ourselves into changing, but our dogs can’t. And the longer your dog has practiced their behaviour, the longer it will take to change it.

Understanding dog behaviour

You need to understand your dog and why they do what they do. People often want to treat the symptom without knowing the cause. For example, my dog pulls on leash. I want him to stop. Okay, but why does he pull on leash? Well, it's because he wants to chase the squirrel. No, that's the trigger, not the cause. Is it because he lacks engagement with you, does he not see value in being in proximity to you, does he have trouble disengaging from the environment, does he lack calmness, or have trouble bringing his excitement or fear level down, does he lack confidence, does he lack flexibility in order to change the way he behaves?

Concept Games Based Training

So, here's how Concept Games Based training works. It works on Training for the Situation. **Not Training in the Situation**. If you try to train when your dog is in a high state of arousal – barking, lunging, jumping, fear state, frustration, etc. – they can't hear us. They can't process what we're saying. We are nothing more than white noise. Concept training trains for the situation. Instead, you practice the exercises in every different room in your house, including bathrooms and closets, if big enough, your backyard, front yard and on walks where there are no distractions. After practicing 1 or 2 weeks in all those places, you'll discover that if the reaction to something happens on walks, like chasing a squirrel or barking at another dog, it will lessen and eventually disappear. Also, they may not do it one day and then the next day they do. It's not consistent at first, but it will become that way if you continue to practice the exercises. Once the behaviour has changed, you can lessen the frequency of the exercises and eventually stop. If your dog slips back into old habits, start doing the exercises again and you'll find the behaviour will change more quickly. Remember how many times you slipped back when changing a habit or behaviour. This happens to our dogs as well.

Practice duration

You only practice the exercises 2 – 3 minutes. You always want your dog to be eager to play again. Use their kibble when working in the house. You may need higher value

outside. Simply take some of their daily food allowance and use it for training. If you raw feed like I do, use freeze dried or dehydrated food or fresh veggies if your dog likes them. My dogs love carrots. By the way, what you consider to be high value may not be high value to your dog. One of our trainers dogs will do anything for cucumber.

Concept training works on these situations

- Arousal Up
- Arousal Down
- Calmness
- Confidence
- Disengagement
- Engagement
- Flexibility
- Focus
- Grit
- Independence
- Novelty
- Optimism
- Proximity
- Self-Control
- Thinking in Arousal
- Toleration of Frustration.

There are over 300 exercises. Each exercise works on 3 – 7 concepts. I'm going to show you 5 of the exercises we teach in class. If your dog is not food motivated, use a toy. There are also different levels to most of the exercises. These are all level 1.

Paint The Town - https://youtu.be/UuaBOt_qHn4

1. Have 5 pieces of food in each hand. Present one hand to your dog and lure them over to the other side of your body, then give them a piece of food.
2. Next, present your other hand and lure them to the other side of your body and give them a piece of food.
3. Keep alternating back and forth. It's important to keep the treat on their nose. Don't hold your hand far away. *This is all about following your hands* and good things happen.

This exercise works on **focus, proximity, engagement, optimism** and helps with **focusing on you** and not the environment, **walking on leash** and **recall**.

Proximity Zone - <https://youtu.be/kJgmY46axhQ>

1. Start this game by dropping pieces of food on the ground close to you.
2. Gradually add a little movement and drop so that your dog learns to remain close to you to get the food.
3. For dogs that continually have their nose to the ground such as hounds, you can feed to the mouth instead. But only feed when your dog is next to you.
Don't lure them with the food to come to you.

This exercise works on **proximity, focus, & engagement** and helps with **building value for hanging out with you, walking on leash, and recall**.

Orientation Game - <https://youtu.be/6oNT46EKxqk>

1. Start this game by tossing a piece of food a little way away from you. Tell them to get it and allow them to eat the food.
2. When they turn towards you – mark that moment with a **Yes** or **Nice** and toss another piece of food away from you.
3. Repeat a few times continuing to mark that choice and to Orient back towards you each time.
4. Start tossing the food further away from you and in different directions.

This exercise works on **disengagement**, **focus** and **proximity** and helps with **recall**, **walking on leash**, and **listening to you**.

DMT – Distract, Mark, Treat - <https://youtu.be/pPafP3-OKRM>

1. In the case of **DMT** we would always look to use a calmly conditioned marker such as a calm drawn out "**niiiiiceeee**" or "**goooooooood**" rather than a more exciting "yes".
2. With your dog in front of you (on or off lead) say your calm marker word e.g. '**Niiiiice**'... then feed your dog.
3. Repeat step a few times making sure there's a short moment of time between "**NIIICE**" and the delivery of the food.
4. The goal here is to pair a calm word with the idea that there's nothing to worry about.
5. Next, add a *simple distraction* such as a blowing leaf, someone walking past, looking at a garbage/recycling bin, something that moves or anything else.
6. When the dog looks at the distraction, say your marker word (**nice** or **goods**) as they look towards you feed away from the distraction.

This exercise works on **disengagement**, **engagement**, **flexibility** and **helps with learning to ignore distractions** both inside and outside the home.

"Caged Food" - https://youtu.be/f6HoWGNFP_0

Your dog can be in any position of their choice.

1. Put some food on their boundary and cover it with your hand.
2. If your dog interacts with your hand, do and say nothing. Keep your hand in place. Wait until they stop interacting with your hand and then reward them with a piece of food by removing your hand that is covering the food.
3. As they get good at this, you can start to uncover the food, but be ready to cover it if they go for it.

This exercise works on ***impulse control, thinking when excited, optimism, calmness, disengagement*** and ***helps with recall, chase, saying hello to everyone*** and ***ignoring distractions in the environment.***