



Play is our brain's favourite way of learning

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### **FUNDAMENTALS**

Ditch The Bowl - Use Coco's food even more strategically to reinforce desired behaviors, help her make good decisions, and play games to build confidence and promote calmness—especially during moments where she may struggle (see Ditch the Bowl eBook). Additionally, apply the same strategy with her toys and chews. Instead of giving her access to all her toys 24/7, reserve them for key moments when she may need extra help to calm down or focus on something other than what's going on. For instance, offer her a chew or an empty bottle when things might get exciting or overwhelming, like when the kids are getting ready to leave for school. This way, the toys serve as tools to help manage her energy and emotions, just like her food.

Calmness Strategies - Our goal is to help Coco "empty her stress bucket" throughout the day so she can cope with life's challenges. Give her time to sleep—this could be in her existing crate or a crate set up in the lounge area, so she can still be with everyone but doesn't have the option to get up and move around.

Increase Your Value - Coco finds the outside environment highly exciting, so you're competing with a fierce contender! Outshine the environment by making yourself irresistible. Play games that promote proximity (being near you) and always reward her when she responds well, like coming when called (rewards could be food or a game—just be mindful of her stress bucket!).

Clear Communication - Be clear and specific with Coco about what you want her to do. Vague commands like 'stop it,' 'stop barking,' or 'get down' can be confusing. Instead, use direct instructions like 'In your crate,' or try a scatter feed to divert her attention. If she ignores you, she may not understand, or her "bucket" could be too full, so give her some help.

Mental Stimulation - Coco is super smart! Teaching her new tricks and challenging her brain with games will help tire her out mentally, encouraging more rest. This, in turn, will help empty her bucket and promote calmness.

**Control the Controllable** - You can't always control the environment or the people in it, but you can help Coco build skills to move away, feel safe, and focus on something else. When you cannot assist her because you're busy with the kids, use her crate to give yourself some freedom while keeping her comfortable.

**Crate Training** - Although Coco is familiar with her crate and pen area, it has become associated with negative experiences. You will need to take a few steps back and start rebuilding its positive value. Use the pen for fun activities and management to make it a positive experience again. You could also introduce a favourite toy or blanket she only gets to enjoy in the crate during rest time (see Crate Training eBook).

**Your Energy!** - Our dogs mirror our energy, so it's essential to be mindful of your own energy and the energy of those around your dog. If you want Coco to calm down, you'll need to remain calm too. This may be tricky in your busy household, so focus on managing your energy and helping Coco as much as possible.

**Your Bucket!** – It's extremely important to be aware not only of Coco's stress bucket but also of everyone else's. If things are getting stressful, do whatever you need to (as calmly as possible) to give yourself a moment to empty your own bucket.

### LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

Following are games to play with Coco - always start easy and increase the difficulty by increasing the duration, distance and distraction. *If Coco* struggles with a particular game - THAT is the game she needs to play!

There are A LOT of games to choose from - don't overwhelm yourself and try play them all! Choose 3-4 to start with and gradually grow your repertoire.

Remember, it is not only Coco who is learning how to play, but you too! It takes coordination and practise so be patient with yourself as you learn:-)

**Reward Nothing**- whenever Coco chooses calmness or makes a good choice e.g. goes and lies down in her crate/bed, calmly give her a treat. Do not worry if it unsettles her - keep capturing those moments and growing that tunnel in her brain.

**Luring with food** - have a small treat in your hand (hold it firmly between your thumb and palm) and get Coco to follow your hand from left to right. Be sure to keep the food right in front of her nose and move slowly - release the food before she loses interest - start off with a short distance and work your way up. Watch my video for tips <a href="here">here</a>

## THERE'S A GAME FOR THAT CATCH

HELPS WITH...

- Recall
- ✓ Walk on the leash
- Barking at passers by
- Reactivity

Helps Boost: Focus, Proximity,
Confidence



Start with a piece of food that's easy for them to see and easy for you to handle



Reinforce them for EFFORT.

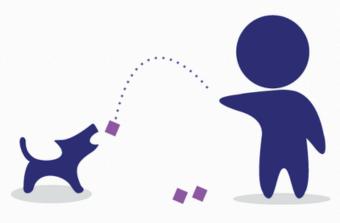
If they try REWARD IT



They can catch more than food....play catch with toys too



Toss food towards your dog. Make it very informal and fun, if they drop it don't worry

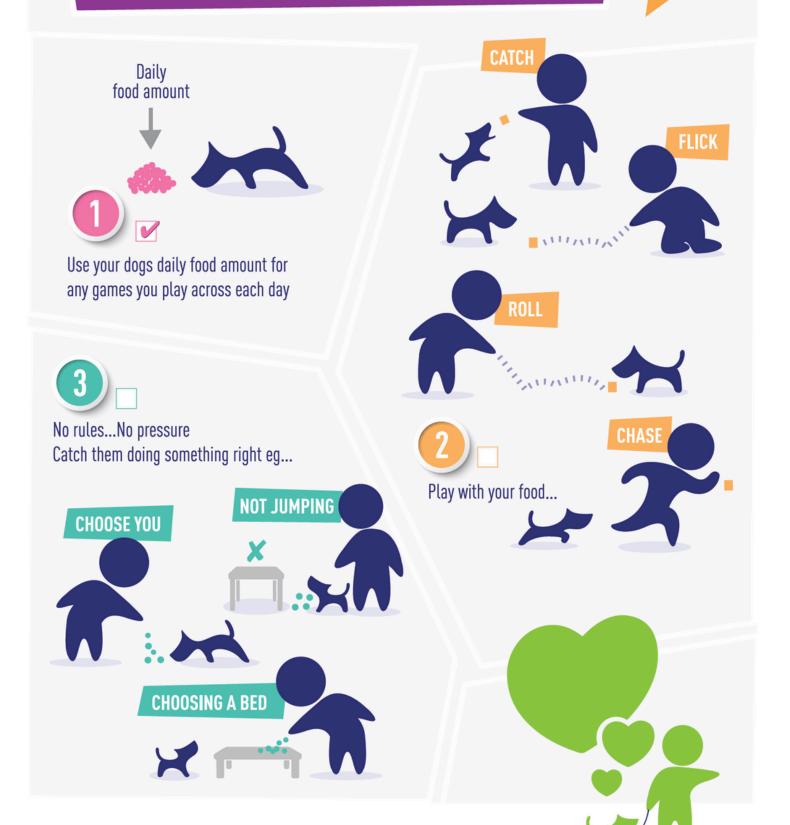


As they begin to catch more and more, begin to drop food down towards them from above

## THERE'S A GAME FOR THAT! FOOD FUN

### **HELPS WITH...**

- Engagement
- ✓ Focus
- Reactivity
- ✓ Relationship





Helps Boost: Disengagement, Focus and Value for Proximity

Start this game by dropping a piece of food on the ground. Allow them to eat the food



Repeat a few times continuing to 'mark' that choice to orientate back towards you each time



HELPS WITH...

Listening to you

✓ Recall

And when they TURN towards you - mark that moment with a word like 'yes' or a click with a clicker, and drop another piece of food away from you



Add a leash and play the same game



## THERE'S'A GAME FOR THAT! SCATTER FEEDING

#### HELPS WITH...

- Lowering stress levels
- Reactivity
- A dog that worries
- Relationship building



Scatter feeding is a simple but effective strategy to use in different situations. It lowers excitement levels, allows us to achieve better focus and a calmer behaviour with one or multiple dogs, as well as growing tolerance of frustration.

HELLOOO...

Scatter feeding when you arrive home is a great way to lower excitement levels.

3 🗆

Entering a vehicle can be an exciting event.

Lower the excitement levels by scatter feeding into the cage or crates as your dog enters the vehicle.





Life is exciting, and daily distractions can increase energy levels. Scatter feed away from distractions to regain focus with one or multiple dogs.



Taking dogs out of a vehicle can send energy levels skyward again. Lower the excitement levels by scatter feeding as your dog exits the vehicle.

### HELPS BOOST...

- ✓ Arousal up/down
- Calmness
- Thinking in arousal
- Optimism
- ✓ Grit and tolerance of frustration

## THERE'S A GAME FOR THAT! AEROPLANE FEEDING

#### HELPS WITH...

- 🖊 Jumping up
- Counter-surfing
- ✓ Barking at visitors or passers-by





Use a boundary (a bed, mat or anything your dog can sit or stand on). SLOOOOOWLY deliver a piece of food (aeroplane) in your hand to your dog's mouth.





When your dog settles, SLOOOWLY deliver the food again. If there is no snatching or grabbing, give the food to your dog.



This game helps make your dog much more thoughtful and calm around things that excite them. SL0000W delivery is vital when playing this game.



### HELPS BOOST...

- Listening to you
- ✓ Recall
- Body

# THERE'S'A GAME FOR THAT! MOUSE GAME

### **HELPS WITH...**

- Chasing
- ✓ Recall
- Counter-surfing
- Jumping up



Place a small handful of food in front of your dog, on the floor or on the edge of the boundary.



If they show impulse control, deliver pieces of food from the pile. If your dog tries to get the food, cage it with your hand.



While the food is caged you might find your dog sniffs, paws or licks your hand. Wait for that moment of back off before you reward with another piece of food from the pile.





Increase the difficulty by keeping the food uncovered for longer, playing with it before feeding or using higher value food.

Vary your delivery. Feed straight to your dog's mouth, flick food from the pile or occasionally release your dog to "get it!"



### PLANT POT PRISON LEVELS 1 & 2

**Boost Engagement & Relationship** 







As soon as your dog shows some self control... (stepping back, a sit or similar) lift the plant pot and allow your dog to access the food. Repeat a few times



Repeat steps 2,3 & 4 a few times and remember to balance control with allowing them to get it too....



Repeat step 2...while they are sniffing ask for a simple behaviour they know well eg. 'Sit'. When they do...allow them to get the piece of food





#### HELPS WITH...

- ✓ Recall
- ✓ Chase
- Saying hello to everyone
- Relationship



Slooow delivery of food!



Begin to grow CALMNESS on the bed. As you slow yourself down and remain calm, your dog will become calmer too.



Wait a few seconds between delivering one piece of food and the next, then deliver one or two pieces a little closer together.

Look for moments of relaxed behaviour and feed those too.

g one er one



Food fiddle —play with the food in your hands. If your dog remains on the boundary when you move around, deliver food to the bed.



Begin to pair Step 4 with real-life distractions.

Reward your dog for CHOOSING to stay put when distractions are at a distance. If playing outside, use your lead to keep your dog safe.



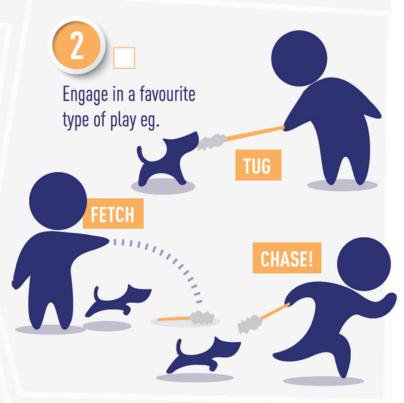


### PICK ME!

**Boost Engagement & Relationship** 













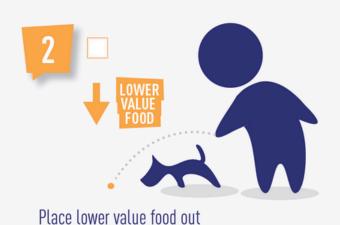
# THERE'S'A GAME FOR THAT! PROXIMITY VORTEX

#### HELPS WITH...

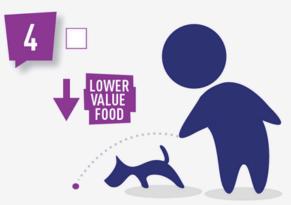
- Recal
- Walking on leash
- Relationship

Helps Boost: Engagement, Disengagement, Value for proximity











Place lower value food out



#### **HELPS WITH...**

- Reca
- ✓ Walking on a leash





When they get it let them have it





When they come to you – re-engage with play but let them keep it!







## THERE'S A GAME FOR THAT! CARDBOARD CHAOS

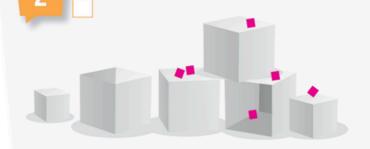
#### HELPS WITH...

- ✓ Reactivity
- Being cool with novelty
- ✓ Recall



Make sure your dog is ok with scatter-feeding first

Build your cardboard chaos, be creative. Include spaces to go under, over, on and through. Scatter some food among the boxes





Allow them to investigate. As they investigate scatter more food amongst the boxes without them noticing



Build gradually to make sure they are confident. Every now and then call them to you and then send back in to the cardboard.



Observe carefully. Notice their reactions. Are they comfortable and confident?





#### HELPS BOOST...

- Confidence
- ✓ Optimism
- Optimis
- ✓ GRIT
- ✓ Flexibility

# THERE'S A GAME FOR THAT! NOISE BOX

#### HELPS WITH...

- Novelty situations
- ✓ Noise reactivity
- Fear reactivity



Start with your empty box.
Drop food near the box.
Reinforce any slight
interaction with the box.

As your dog's confidence grows, drop food into the box. Hold the box to keep it steady to avoid your dog becoming frightened.





Items can be a mixture of paper, foil, bubble wrap, plastic bottles, etc. Add food to the box when they choose to get in and explore. If your dog is cautious, one item is enough to begin with.





# THERE'S'A GAME FOR THAT!

### HELPS WITH...

- Recall
- Staying close
- Walking on leash

Helps Boost: Confidence, Proximity,
Disengagement



Start this game by throwing a piece of food and see of they will chase it



This time throw the food through your legs for them to chase running through your legs to get the food



Turn around and throw another piece of food through your legs for them to chase again running through your legs to get the food

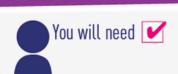




# THERE'S A GAME FOR THAT AROUSAL UP, AROUSAL DOWN

### HELPS WITH...

- Calmness
- A dog who can listen
- Reactivity





Begin by calmly stroking, massaging your dog. Everything is relaxed.



OR TOY





Back to arousal down

– let your dog keep
the toy and return to
calm stroking and
gentle massage.







Keep rotating around exciting play and back to calm strokes and gentle massage.



Keep sessions super short! Training should be a fun time, not a long time.



### HELPS BOOST...

- Calmness
- Thinking in arousal
- ✓ Self-control
- Confidence



### THERE'S'A GAME FOR THAT! NOSE TOUCH

HELPS WITH.

✓ Optimism

✓ Retrieve

✓ Focus

This is a great game with many practical uses. We love to play this game to get the process of retrieve started. If your dog has an amazing nose touch, they are more likely to be able to figure out how to deliver an object to your hand. This game can grow confidence, as well as optimism.



With your dog's attention on you, extend your palm out to the side at your dog's eye level, perhaps 2-3 inches away from their nose. If they move toward your hand and touch your palm with their nose, say "Yes" and then toss a piece of food away. Remove your hand and as soon as they have eaten their reward and turn back, offer your hand again.

If, for some reason, your dog is hesitant to touch their nose to your palm, that's okay. Offer your hand and then with your other hand deposit a piece of food into your palm. This should encourage them to interact. Quickly fade this out once their confidence in moving toward your hand grows. Alternate hands and then, when your puppy is doing really well, delay your "Yes" and reward to see if they'll press even harder.

## THERE'S A GAME FOR THAT LAND MIDDLE & SIDE

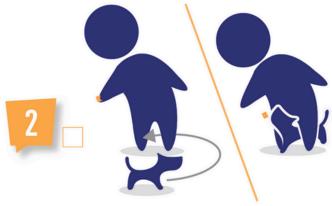
**HELPS WITH...** 

- Reactivity
- ✓ Recall
- Listening to you

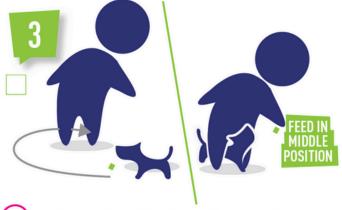
Helps Boost: confidence, Value for Proximity

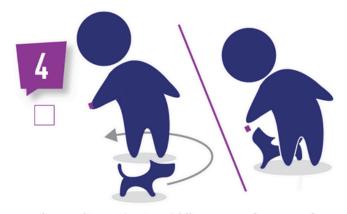
Arousal Concepts





With your dog in front of you lure your dog around your leg & into a 'Middle' position between your leg, feed in the 'middle' position





Toss a piece of food away & as your dog returns lure again around your leg

As an alternative to middle you can lure round to your side & feed in position at your side... feed in that position



Remember to play the game in both directions and both sides

### THERE'S A GAME LEG WEAVES

**FOOD OR TOY** 

#### HELPS WITH...

- ✓ Recall
- Lead walking
- Greeting without jumping up



Warm up with a short play with the toy



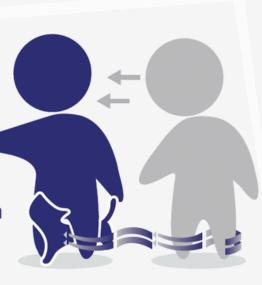
Step forward with one leg & present your toy behind your leg, let your dog go through your legs to get the toy... play!



As you play allow your dog to wrap around your leg & play in front of you



Build up by stepping forward to allow your dog to go through one way and then the other...then reward and have a play.





the opposite leg & repeat step 2



### HELPS BOOST...

- Value for proximity
- Confidence
- Resilience



# THERE'S A GAME FOR THAT! TWO PAWS ON

Helps Boost: Confidence, Optimism,
Arousal Concepts, Focus

### **HELPS WITH...**

- On leash walking
- Listening to you
- Relationship
- Heel work
- Perfect 'conversation starter'



YES!

**WAIT** for your dog to <u>choose</u> to return back to the item and reward steps towards it



As they get closer each time then reward <u>any</u> paw on the item. Then throw a treat away



Begin to reward for choosing to stay and add duration and begin to add a 'release' cue eg. 'Break', 'OK', 'Free'



### THE CONE GAME

#### HELPS WITH...

- ✓ Novel situations
- ✓ Reactivity
- Visits to the vet
- Relationship



2 PES!

Present the cone to your dog... As your dog moves towards the cone mark 'yes' and reward with your other hand away from the cone



As they move towards the cone again 'mark' and reward movement closer and closer to the cone, each time still feed away from the cone



food away from the cone.

Build duration

up gradually





Switch the cone for another item to generalise to other things...a muzzle, a harness, a plant pot.



### HELPS BOOST... ✓ Confidence ✓ Optimism ✓ Flexibilty



- Value for proximity
- ✓ Focus

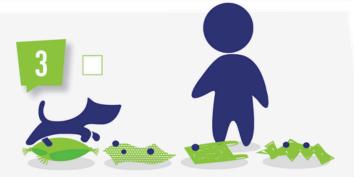
### THERE'S'A GAME FOR THAT BALANCE PATH

#### HELPS WITH...

- Relationship building
- Reactivity
- Making novelty normal

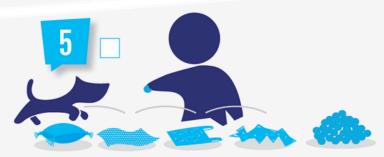


Make your balance path with items you have available – be creative.



Have your dog walk along the balance path (on or off-lead), picking up the pieces of food as they go.

Look for slow and steady, not racing across at speed!



Each time your dog negotiates the balance path, reinforce their confidence. Change the order of the items and add new ones to build their confidence, optimism and grit.





As your dog chooses to walk and feel the different textures underfoot, reward them with more food, feeding to the balance path.



### GIVE IN TO LEASH PRESSURE LEVEL 1

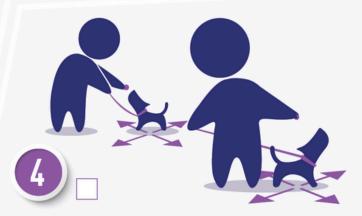
**Boost Engagement & Relationship** 





With your dog on leash apply gentle pressure to the leash & feed\*





Repeat step 3 but apply light pressure in different directions... Backwards feed / Forwards feed / Sideways feed



Reinforce each time your dog 'gives in' to the leash pressure...master this game before adding another level of difficulty...Coming soon!





### GIVE IN TO LEASH PRESSURE LEVEL 2

**Boost Engagement & Relationship** 







With your dog on a harness and leash add a piece of food to the bowl and apply gentle tension\* on the leash and wait



As soon as your dog turns towards **YOU** turn away and reward... Repeat steps 2 & 3 a few times









### REMEMEBER ....

Coco is learning lots of new things .... it will take repetition and time for her to learn new skills and grow her confidence

Notice the small steps in the right direction :-)

Training is not linear - you will have good days and not so good days.

Be patient and consistent :-)

When you are not sure what to do, ask yourself 'WHAT DO I WANT COCO TO DO?

Then help her achieve that :-)

If you have any questions along the way don't he sitate to get in touch!

Debxo

