

HOW WE TRAIN DOGS THAT BARK, LUNGE, PULL & GET DISTRACTED
WITH THE POWER OF 3-MINUTE GAMES

OPTIMISM ROCKS



 **Absolute Dogs**®

Tom Mitchell & Lauren Langman

GAME 1

PLAY MAGIC, LET'S PLAY!

Fill the house with your favourite smells, maybe it's a lavender diffuser or an energy spray, turn on some motivational music and a few times a week for the length of just one track enjoy the art of play: be present; play for fun; play for energy and enjoy the moment with your dog! Those that play together, stay together.

Play should be pressure free, remember it's fun, so if you're feeling pressure your dog may be feeling pressure and sometimes you may need to just take a step back and reassess.

“
enjoy the art of play: be present; play for fun; play for energy and enjoy the moment with your dog! Those that play together, stay together
”

Reward good choices, maybe reward any behaviour with play. Play is super FUN and can reward your dog's good decisions more easily!





“ This game is a super confidence builder in relation to novelty and noise. The key is small progression - you can't tackle everything at once ”

GAME 2

THE NOISE BOX

We like to use a cardboard box, an empty child's paddling pool, a laundry basket or any small space that would contain the noises. You could even use your bathtub!

Fill your noise box with:

- ✓ Carrier bags
 - ✓ Noisy paper
 - ✓ Bottles
 - ✓ Empty cans
 - ✓ Bubble wrap
 - ✓ Children's noisy toys
- (you could also fill them with things that rattle) (Of course, only use objects that are safe for your dog)

You can decide the level of difficulty from looking at the dog in front of you. Remember that the dog in front of you is who you are training and they will dictate your training session and the difficulty level!

Allow your dog to explore the objects whilst scattering a small amount of food into the box. They get the food by exploring the box. This is going to hugely boost their confidence. If at any moment your dog is worried by the box go back a stage and try to develop their

confidence more gradually, maybe help them out a bit - this is an exercise to grow their confidence, not to worry them! Remember how to 'listen to your dog'. Vary the box and it's contents as often as you can and utilise all recycling and boxes that arrive at your house!

Write down your progress along the way and, where possible, video your sessions. Review your progress in 3 weeks time - we bet you will notice a real change!

This game is a super confidence builder in relation to novelty and noise. The key is small progression - you can't tackle everything at once; break the exercises into manageable bite size chunks and you will be onto a big winner.

The more you think outside the box about what to put in to the box and the more you allow your mind to make that leap, the easier it will become. Be brave, be optimistic, show us your GRIT as an owner. We can't wait to hear how you get on with this!

GAME 3

REWARD ANYTHING

To follow on from our 'don't do' about correction, the very opposite is reward anything. This is a great game for building optimism and confidence in our dogs. It's pretty much what it says on the tin: reward anything, especially anything brave or inquisitive, when you can see your timid dog overcoming a fear or a concern. Anything that looks like optimism or interest – reward, reward and reward it.

It's a good job we don't use a dinner bowl anymore, right? So what we do is we sit down, we maybe have a new object with us or maybe just our dog and we literally reward anything they do that is different. This is a game for a pessimist, not a busy dog. So if your dog is busy and fast this is not the game for you. We want to work with the dogs who have closed off to trying here, this is the moment to reward them for anything, any trying, literally anything, do exactly what we say in the name!

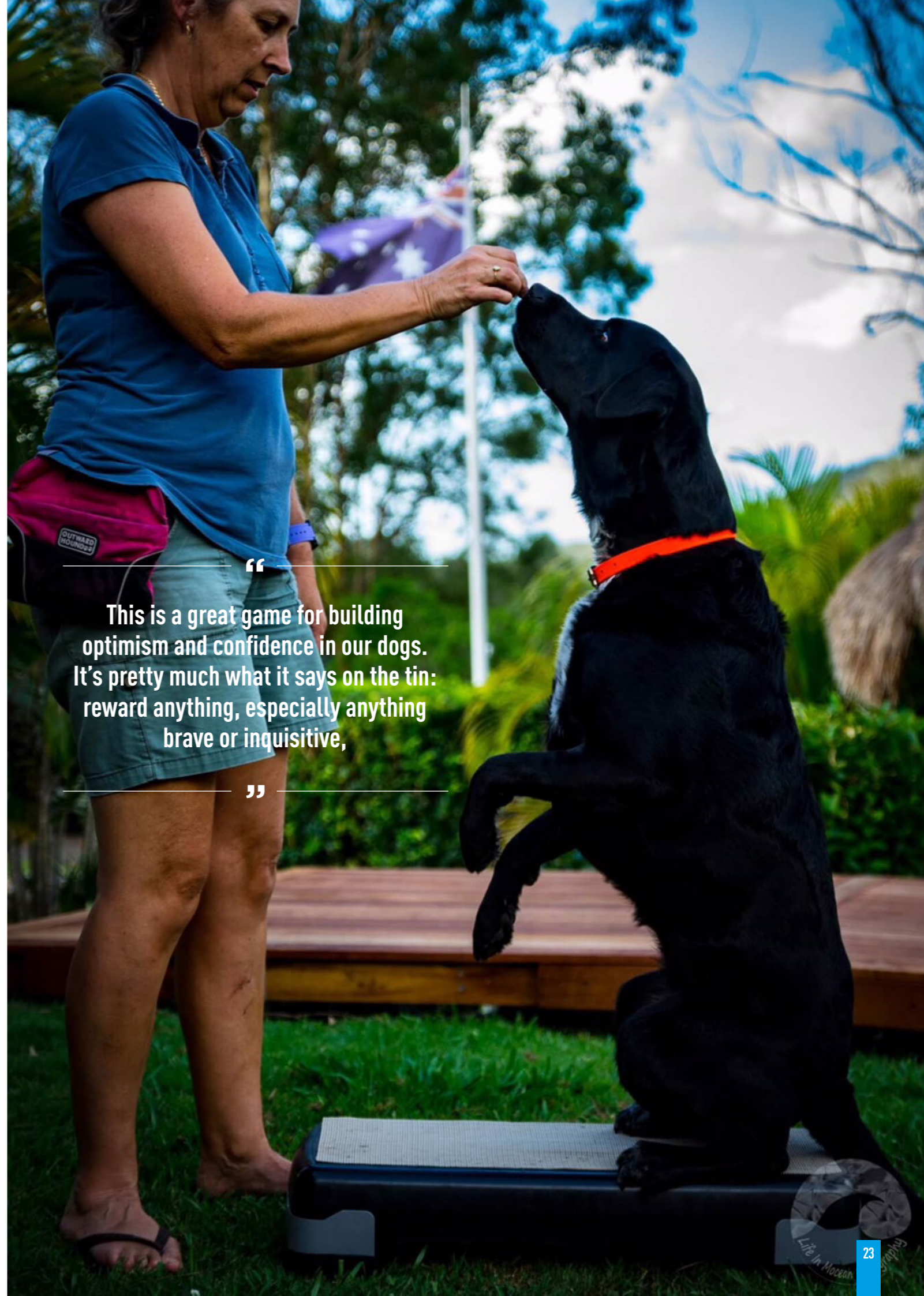
And for a pessimistic dog, you can broaden this game out to some everyday challenges.

For example, your dog might stick his head into your shopping bags. How super awesome is that? How brave and confident and gritty is it to want to explore that bag. Reward it.

Or your dog might run off with your socks. You know what? That is amazing. Your dog wants to play, your dog wants to explore, your dog wants to engage with the world around. Reward it.

Of course, rewarding these behaviours is an ideal, gentle and optimistic way to distract from the behaviours that we don't want. Don't want your anxious dog to stick their head in your bag? That's fine, reward the bravery with a treat or a toy from one hand while you lift the bag out of harms way with the other. A little sleight of hand and a super step forward towards an optimistic dog.

“
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GAME 4

RECALL REIMAGINED

Let's add some new dimensions to this:

Haunted house recall: Play restrained recall through a narrow channel, maybe make it dark, add a slight obstruction or add some different surfaces on the ground.

Use additional novel items along the way so that your dog has to go past them or get through them. Make your dog's job a little harder but still super achievable! Use empty bottles, bubble wrap, cushions, paper filled bags. Creativity is KEY- remember, think outside the box!

Remember the rules we talked about for the noise box? Train the dog in front of you and mindfully manage the difficulty level to gently and gradually challenge your dog.

Hide and seek recall: Hide somewhere in the house, somewhere easy to start with, increasing the difficulty as your dog gets quicker and braver. You can add novel items to this one as well - reuse before you recycle - boxes, polystyrene blocks, bottles, noisy paper. Did we mention that the possibilities are endless?

Chase me recall: find some space and recall but zig zag, change direction and make it hard for your dog to get to you. This is so much fun. There's just one rule - don't fall over!!

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Manage the difficulty level to gently and gradually challenge your dog

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GAME 5

GO COMMANDO

We love to build many mini and suitable obstacle courses with multiple challenges: your dog can go over, around, under, through and on top of obstacles. You name it: we love it. Mix up easy options and more challenging ideas amongst the obstacles - remember to listen to your dog and always work with the dog in front of you on the day. Build the difficulty level gradually. Try not to force your dog over things as confidence can take time.

Use household items. Guess what, household recycling comes in super handy for this game too. You really can go crazy with this one, in fact we actively encourage you to! If you want to add a new dimension add wobbly objects or noisy surfaces into the equation. Remember to start with easier objects and add challenges gradually!

Lay out the course and all you have to do is either lure (let them follow food) or shape

(wait for them to offer you something) and you will see amazing confidence developing right in front of your eyes! If you're luring, keep it super slow and let them take time out if they need to. Not only is this an amazing confidence building activity, it is also great for body awareness.

We are super keen to see you and your confident dog have a ball here! Post some of your pictures on the NBN page for dog owners or our absoluteDogs page, we love to see your creativity on this one.

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GAME 6

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Teaching your dog to accept being touched is super important for so many reasons. For a dog that's wary of being touched or even if you just have a young dog who you want to get used to physical contact, we LOVE body contact play.

Can you play with your dog and then gently touch them in various places as you play? On a paw, a hand on their side or a firm but gentle stroke over the head.

Remember, gentle contact is more than enough and listening to your dog is really important.

We really like to video training and play sessions and this is a game where videoing the play would be massively helpful.

Watch the session back and look out for any subtle responses that might indicate wariness to being touched in a particular area – what a great record of your dog's developing confidence.

“
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GAME 7

NOVELTY SCATTER FEEDING

So this game is pretty simple and we simply love it! Every day your dog has a certain amount of food and we like to try to grow CALMNESS and confidence through timing our scatter feeding closely with outside distractions.

For example, when we know that a dog is in the next door garden but we want to let our dog out to explore the garden we can reinforce CALMNESS with a dog next door.

Scatter a good portion of your dog's dinner into the garden and then allow your dog out to hunt it out (remember to read our ditch

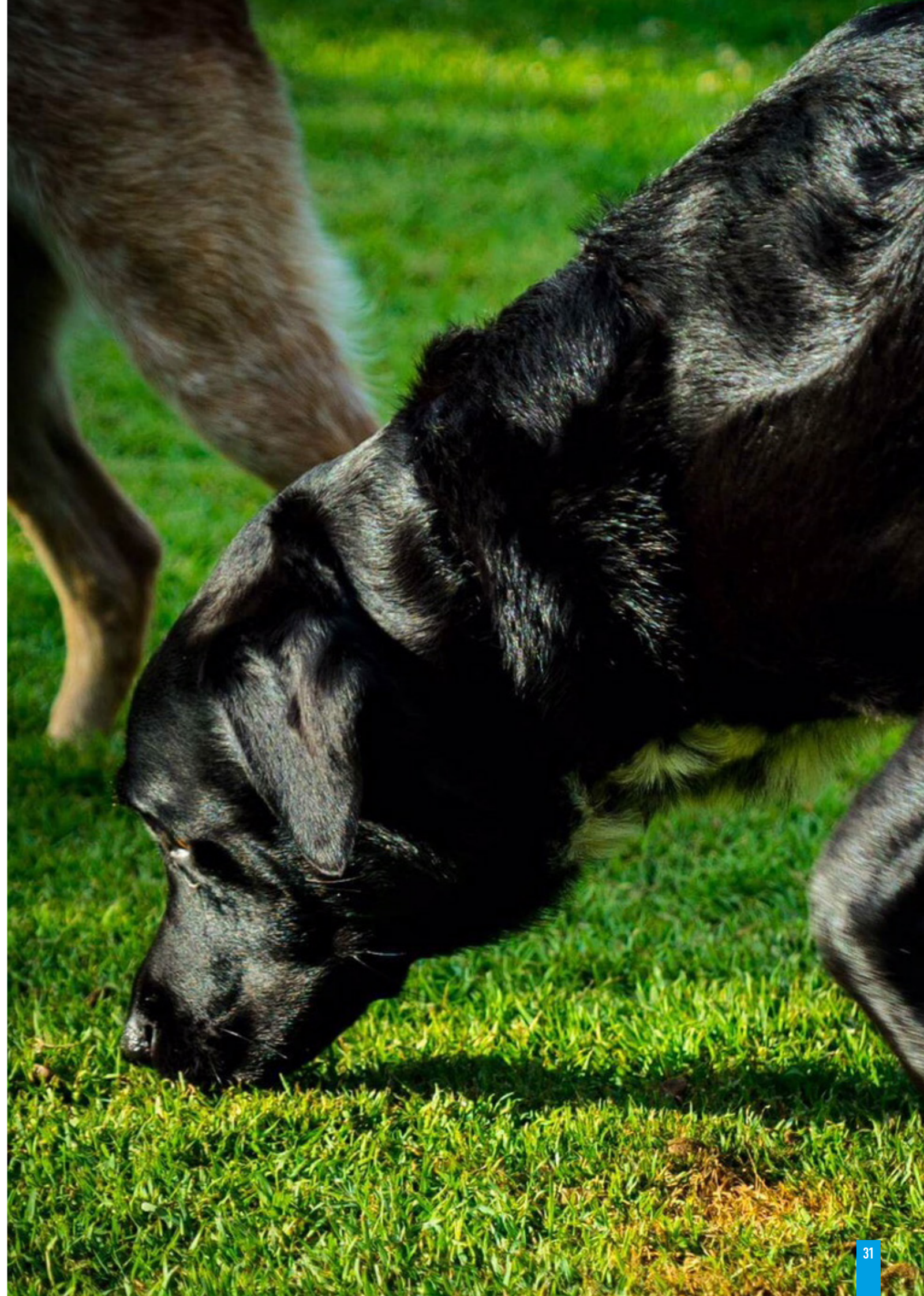
the food bowl eBook). Bring them back into the house or kitchen when they have finished, before they make any wrong decisions (like barking at the neighbours dog).

Have you noticed how many different concepts these games are building for your dog and how they overlap? Objects, surfaces, people, noises, novelty, calmness, confidence, GRIT!!!

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GAME 8

PICKING AWESOME PAIRINGS

This game is so straightforward yet it's one of the most powerful games in town.

Let's pick something your dog might usually respond to or 'notice': a neighbour in the vicinity or an unusual household sound, a person dressed as a clown or a large stuffed toy, a dark building or maybe a new person coming into a training class.

Take that last example, as the new person enters the building immediately feed your dog. Make an awesome pairing with the novelty of the new person. Do this in a cool, calm and protective way where we don't

over expose them but we also forewarn and reward our dogs for making some excellent decisions each and every day.

The big tip for this game is to use it before a 'problem' develops. Get used to pairing new and unusual things in the environment with something awesome.

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GAME 9

DMT: DISTRACT, MARK, TREAT

Now if you've seen our games before, then you will know all about DMT. See a distraction, use a calm marker and then deliver a treat. There are 3 stages for developing DMT. The second stage is to mark and reward when your dog notices the distraction; the third stage is to wait for your dog to notice the distraction and then orientate back to you before you mark and reward.

For the purposes of building optimism, confidence and grit, though, we want you to appreciate and we mean really appreciate, the first stage of this game.

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When you start to play DMT, you mark and reward as soon as you see the distraction whether or not your dog has apparently noticed it

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When you start to play DMT, you mark and reward as soon as you see the distraction whether or not your dog has apparently noticed it.

Chances are they know that the distraction is there, but you are pairing the early presence of something in your dog's environment with a positive experience. This first stage of DMT is a great confidence builder and you will find that your dog will begin to be braver and you can seamlessly move to stage 2.

Build your stages as you move through life, you may need to adjust to the setting you are in and this is one of our absolute favourite NBN confidence games: see the NBN game changer eBook for more ideas.



GAME 10

BOUNDARY GAMES

Okay, so this must be the most requested learning EVER - super cool Boundary Games!

We teach the dogs the VERY important, in fact, vital, job of staying on a boundary until released and we want to share with you the top tips and super tricks that will supercharge the learning and ensure the end result is exactly as we want it. We couldn't live without them and we are pretty

“
A very important aspect of developing an arousal balance, an on/off switch, in training your dog is boundary games
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sure you won't be able to either once you get this journey started!

SO HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

A very important aspect of developing an arousal balance, an on/off switch, in training your dog is boundary games.

These are **games where your dog has to stay in a designated area until released** - this may be a mat, a crate, a tent, a platform, your household steps or even from room to room - you name it, we call it a boundary!

Boundary games have numerous benefits. They promote and develop impulse control. They can help to balance and level out arousal as needed and can even boost motivation and enhance your overall relationship with your dog.

They can also decrease arousal and help to promote calmness (yes boundaries can do both). On a practical level they will help with dogs who counter surf, they can help to prevent jumping up, help to improve recall and generally help to improve all basic behaviour and manners in many different places and habitats.

Build Optimism using boundaries: have you checked out our boundaries eBook? Boundaries are super key for success and we love the endless fun you can have. It's all recorded in the boundaries game eBook - check the link out to make some awesome progress.



GAME 11

THE BOTTLE BATTLES

In previous lives we used to throw away our plastic bottles, then we started recycling them. Now we re-use before we recycle. How cool is that?

We like to pair the noise of bottles with additional food. So, as part of ditching the food bowl (see the ditch the bowl eBook) we use a lot of our food for doing bottle hunts and bottle noise games.

As well as using bottles in our noise box – with or without rattling contents, try these other bottle games. Drop a bottle and feed your dog; allow your dog to walk through bottles and scatter food amongst them to hunt out; move the bottles and see if your dog is still happy to eat; hang bottles up and encourage your dog to walk through –

gradually reducing the gap available for them to knock their way through; stand a bottle up and see if your dog will knock it down to get some food out of it; or let them crackle it, make noise with it and play with it.

Make sure to supervise; of course plastic bottles are not designed as dog toys but they make super good confidence builders!

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GAME 12

PAWS UP

**Remember the multi purpose stool?
We like to teach paws up on almost
anything, even ourselves.**

You need to decide if this is appropriate for you and your dog but for us it's something that our dogs will only do on cue. It's a great way to add confidence when exploring the world and empowering our dogs!

Paws up on your feet or legs means you have an instant safe spot for your dog to interact with out and about. You decide the rules. Paws up and empower your dog!

“
A great way to add confidence when exploring the world and empowering our dogs!
”



GAME 13

THE CRAZY LADY

So we all love a crazy lady, what's not to love? This game might sound a little, well, crazy but we really know it works. You are going to regularly practice saying hello to no one.

Yes, you heard us correctly you are going to be saying hello to thin air whether in the house or out and about, say hello and feed your dog.

So what is the point of this game?

We explained before how dogs are born predicting and how being unpredictable really

helps them to be flexible, more chilled out and able to adjust.

Some dogs get over the top about new people whether they like them or they don't. Your dog is going to learn that you saying hi or hello (and you can change what you say as frequently as you like) is a fairly uneventful event that doesn't always end up with a new person for them to greet.

We play crazy lady whilst there is very little else going on in the environment and we watch carefully to see our dog's emotional response to each cue they hear. We want to grow confident optimists and this starts on basic food games like the crazy lady game when no one is around!

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GAME 14

VISITOR VICTORIES

Okay we like to set up people to come in or out of our house (whilst our dog is behind a stair gate, in a crate, separate room, puppy pen, dog room or on a boundary) and we will feed our dog. Imagine getting food just because there are visitors in the house.

Give them a long lasting kong, maybe frozen (see the ditch the bowl eBook) or a simple chew or be anywhere on the CALMNESS triad.

For our dogs confidence and let's be honest, our own comfort, we want a visitor to be a non-event!

The more your dog can be calm and collected with a visitor the happier we are and in turn the happier they are. Truly confidence at its best, it looks seamless and it looks easy!

Remember confidence is a muscle that needs to be flexed.

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For our dogs confidence and let's be honest, our own comfort, we want a visitor to be a non-event!

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GAME 15

LUGGAGE WITHOUT LIMIT

We do not want to hear about luggage limits at absoluteDogs. A suitcase really can provide you and your dogs with amazing fun and unlimited games. It can be used as a super focus to grow your dog's confidence in many ways. But firstly, what on earth are we talking about.....

Okay, so let's start with a big suitcase or whatever you have available. Can your dog get in and out happily? Use scatter feeding (thank goodness we've ditched the dinner bowl) and this suitcase will very quickly turn into a boundary for your hungry hound (see Boundaty Games eBook if you haven't already checked it out).

“
Confidence grows like a muscle!

Now that you know your dog is happy to jump in the suitcase you can start filling the suitcase with all sorts from carrier bags to noisy cans (like a transportable noise box).

The suitcase is just a portable container for FUN! You can also try to gently close the lid on your dog and let them pop it up again. As with all of our games, the key is softly, softly. Confidence grows like a muscle!

Gradually, your dog may get brave enough to lift the lid of the suitcase themselves before jumping in and searching out their reward. How cool would that be and what an awesome achievement for a once wary dog.

GAME 16

IT'S A KNOCKOUT

Okay, so one of the things we want to do to empower GRIT and bravery into our young dogs is to teach them that they have some level of control over things. Like what? I hear you cry. Like this. Take any object that you have at home maybe an old plastic bottle and your game is to try to encourage your dog to knock it over, yes, you heard us, knock it over!

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what we love about this game is that we teach our dogs to actively control noise and changes in their environment

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So what we love about this game is that we teach our dogs to actively control noise and changes in their environment and we don't really mind how you encourage them to knock it over. **We can use:**

- ✓ Mimic
- ✓ Shaping
- ✓ Targeting
- ✓ Luring

or to be honest any way you want to teach it ... as long as it's kind and fun!

After some practice, pick a more difficult object. Maybe something bigger, noisier or generally a little different! Mix it up regularly and pick more new objects and have fun!





GAME 17

YOU CAN TOUCH THIS

So many dogs would choose to avoid being handled. For confidence and optimism choose to reward handling and choose to reward the opportunity to handle your dog regularly.

We don't make a huge deal of this we just calmly stroke and feed and add value to being stroked when our dogs are a little more settled and calm. For general confidence it's important that we encourage our dogs to be confident being handled whenever possible.

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Choose to reward handling and choose to reward the opportunity to handle your dog regularly
”

Try:

- ✓ Gently stroking ears
- ✓ Lifting paws
- ✓ Checking pads
- ✓ Looking under their tail
- ✓ Cleaning their eyes
- ✓ Massaging their gums
- ✓ Stroking the length of their bodies and limbs including all the way to the end of their tail.

You really can go with whatever works for you and your dog and remember to guard the optimism and listen to your dog.

Only work where you and your dog are happy - stay safe and happy!

GAME 18

THE CONE

To play this game all you need is a plastic cone or cup that your dog can fit their muzzle in and their dinner!

In this game you reward your dog for any kind of interaction with the cone and then progressively become more specific about placing their nose in the cone. Once your dog has this behaviour down, you can switch the cone for all kinds of things.

The benefits of cone game:

- It builds **optimism**
- It promotes **confidence**
- It arms your dog with a crucial skill should they ever need to wear any of the following

1. Muzzle
2. Buster Collar
3. Head Collar
4. Harness



We have a video of this game to share with you.

<https://game.absolute-dogs.com/muzzle-love6fpimq5e>

”
It arms your dog with a crucial skill
”



GAME 19

TREASURE HUNT

We are sure you have all played this, it's a super great game for actively building confidence, resilience, problem solving, developing frustration tolerance, thinking in arousal and so much more.

It also encourages our dogs to use their noses, which really works their brain but can give them amazing focus and actually help to calm them too.

Sometimes we hide ourselves and other times toys and food – something really awesome; real treasure to your dog.

It's all down to you and your dog as to which level you want to play at. We love to see them winning so play at a level where they get a lot of success before you gradually increase the difficulty and the challenge. We love this game and we know you can have endless fun with treasure hunt!

“

Sometimes we hide ourselves and other times toys and food, something really awesome; real treasure to your dog

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GAME 20

ORIENTATION

We want our dogs to be super happy to come back to us; to think that we are the best thing in their environment. This is amazing for dogs who need to grow confidence – we are their safe zone, we are where they need to be when something scary is happening in the environment.

So, in this game, we want to reward our dogs just as soon as they look at us. Start in an easy environment and build up difficulty slowly, ever so slowly. You simply throw some food away from you, let your dog go and get it and as soon as they look back at you – like the instant their gaze orientates back to you – you mark and reward.

For more information on the Orientation Game please refer to our eBook 'NBN Game Changer.'

“
Play this everywhere, anywhere and as often as you can!
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How to play:

1. Start this game in a very easy, low distraction environment where your dog is used to playing with you!
2. Throw a piece of your dog's dinner out (about one meter away)
3. After they finish eating it, of course, they are going to look back at you for more. At that moment of them orienting back to you, mark the movement with a

- “YES” or a CLICK (if you use a clicker). If they do not look back at you right away, just wait them out and mark the moment they do look back. You may have to start playing this game on lead first.
4. Follow the marker with the reward of throwing another piece of food out to continue the game.
 5. Play this everywhere, anywhere and as often as you can!



GAME 21

GO SNIFF

Go sniff is an amazing game for getting your dog working with you and for using their natural instinct to sniff as a way of getting their focus on you.

Yep! We said that – use their desire to sniff as a way of getting focus on you.

Begin with marking when they sniff. When that nose goes down, mark and treat. And again, when that nose goes down, mark and treat. After a couple of super short sessions, begin to command the nose going down. So, the nose goes down, say 'go sniff', mark

and treat. Soon, telling your dog to sniff is a reason for them to look at you.

They get to sniff and yet they want to look at you: simple but true.

“

An amazing game for getting your dog working with you and for using their natural instinct to sniff as a way of getting their focus on you

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GAME 22

FOOD CATCH

Food catch is a great way to get your dog to focus on you. So when you are out and about and there is something in the environment that might challenge them, you can play food catch and their eyes will be on YOU.

Catching can be really hard for some dogs, but even if they do struggle, you can still play this game. What we really want is a genuine attempt to catch. This real desire to catch ensures that there is focus on you. And focus on you is an amazing space for a dog who needs to grow their confidence.

Food catch is also a great game for dogs who aren't entirely comfortable with proximity to you. You can deliver great treats without getting in their space and they have to focus on you too. How great is that?

Start the food catch game somewhere super familiar and without distraction; inside your house is ideal. Keep your throw smooth and

gentle. Make it really easy and see how it goes. If your dog has difficulty with the game at first, try to make it even easier for them. We want some success so that they don't lose interest, so think about the colour and size of the treat. Use a light coloured treat in a dark space and a dark coloured treat in a light space. Make it a great treat too, so they really want it and they really try to catch. You can make it a little more challenging as they get better – they need to work for it a bit, but not too much, to make it more rewarding.

When you get that awesome focus inside the house, take it to the garden, outside the front door or in a quiet open space. Remember though, when you move to a new space, take the difficulty level back a bit to keep them working with you and so that they don't get frustrated and give up.

We love this game; it's so easy to start playing at a moments notice and is super rewarding for our dogs.

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If your dog has difficulty with the game at first, try to make it even easier for them. We want some success so that they don't lose interest
”





GAME 23

DOG ON TOUR

Stage 1:

We like to try to bring our young dogs almost EVERYWHERE with us but here is the important, in fact VITAL, information.

When they come anywhere and everywhere with us most of the time we are just allowing them to watch the world go by and we add very little pressure to the situation and at this stage we don't even interact with anything/ anyone unless we really think we need to.

We simply want to watch how they take the world in! We don't play all of the games until we see how they are responding. Slowly, slowly catchy monkey!

Stage 2:

A great example of how ditching the routine and flexibility can build on the games you know and improve confidence anywhere and everywhere.

We've all been there, we've practiced and practiced and practiced a behaviour in our kitchen at home. We meet some friends out and about or turn up to our training class.

We puff out our chest, all proud, knowing how much we've practiced and we ask for the behaviour. And it doesn't happen. Why? because we haven't generalized that behaviour in that environment.

Just like generalising trained behaviours we need to generalise confidence; and this game is just the thing.

Take an object – preferably something that's easy to move around – a wobble cushion is ideal. Work on a behaviour – for example, front paws on. Make it great fun, make it high value but, maybe, not too exciting. Take the wobble cushion or other object, on the road and every time you stop, ask for the behaviour.

Having a well-practiced and high value behaviour associated with an object gives your dog a positive experience in any environment. Supermarket car parks, service stations, garage forecourts, country fairs, dog shows, the list is endless. You might look a bit crazy but, it could be worse....did you see the Crazy Lady Game?

GAME 24

REST FOR SUCCESS...

Rest and recoup-reaction, we like to think of it as R&R time, is one of the least appreciated exercises out there - and it's so very vital for success with building confidence.

We know that confidence is like a muscle and just like all muscles it needs good rest time and we need to ensure that we facilitate that good rest.

We suggest:

- ✓ a calm space
- ✓ a crate
- ✓ a raised bed
- ✓ a puppy pen
- ✓ a spare bedroom
- ✓ a quiet kitchen
- ✓ a conservatory or off set room

Try to ensure that your dog has good rest time to allow that confidence muscle to grow. Remember to ensure that this happens each and every day.

It is our responsibility as owners and will allow our dogs to make good choices. Think about how much better you perform after a good rest, compared with being over tired. This is another area where listening to your dog pays off. Spot when they are making bad choices and wonder if, actually, they need some sleep to feel better and give you optimum results. Don't forget the CALMNESS triad!

“
Think about how much better you perform after a good rest
”



OPTIMISM BOOSTER

Finally, we want to leave you with a final thought - building that super strong bond and relationship with your dog is in itself an OPTIMISM BOOSTER and the rewards have no limits. So we insist that you play games, that you have super fun and keep making progress and moving your learning journey forward.

Grow your vikings.....we like to think of our dogs as our vikings, our little warriors who can face the world and be real life ready.

“
Grow your vikings and have a lot of fun on the confidence journey!
”

We like to see them develop in their own individual ways so remember that when you are out there playing with your dogs, pick the games that suit them best at that moment. It's always changing and there is no right and wrong game, just the right game for the dog in front of you at the time!

Grow your vikings and have a lot of fun on the confidence journey!

We know that you've got this..... grit, bravery, desire, passion, optimum energy, rest and absoluteOptimism, its all in your grasp, at your finger tips, seize the opportunity.

**GROW YOUR VIKINGS AND
HAVE A LOT OF FUN ON THE
CONFIDENCE JOURNEY!**



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