

Lesson Plan : The Zen Sit Down

Is it possible to teach your dog to place themselves in an internal state that does not necessarily reflect the environment your dog is interacting in?

Calming Signals are Patterns of Behaviors which

The dog uses to communicate; avoidance to a threat, to prevent confrontation or violent situations, demonstrated during play to keep others in play by posturing their behaviors to calm one's self (the dog) and others (dogs) (humans) of unknown entity.

The sit down behaviors are natural calming signals and should be used to teach your dog to switch from an aroused state (happy joyful, bouncing off the walls or fearful at behavior threshold) to a calm self controlled behavior.

The Objective of the Zen Sit Down is for your dog to offer the Sit Down Stay pattern of behaviors on cue and to be able to survey the changing environment until you release the dog.

Since we are teaching our dogs to change and control their internal temperature from the happy joyful, bouncing off the walls or fearful at behavior threshold behaviors, our primary goal is to elevate the acquisition of the sit down stay behaviors. The institution of a redirect exercise gives you the ability to start the process of calming the dog by increasing the distance of the dog from the environment they are interacting in and move them closer to you so you can reinforce the positive behaviors. I would recommend a "Reward Marker" be developed to provide specific information to your dog. *A "Reward Marker" marks the desired behavior the instant it occurs and gives the dog the ability to remember this behavior because it is important.* Also a "No Reward Marker" to communicate to your dog that the behavior the dog is offering is not the behavior you asked for. Create a "No Free Lunch Policy" where the reward is only obtained when the dog offers behaviors asked.

The use of *Systematic Desensitization* will give you the opportunity to slowly and systematically expose your dog to given environments and instill an emotional internal temperature of calm.

Desensitization is the gradual exposure to environments that the dog is unfamiliar with.

Systematic Desensitization is the controlled exposure to unfamiliar environments giving you the ability to increase the level of distractions so your dog is slowly conditioned to offer behaviors in an environment which may not reflect the current environment the dog is interacting in.

Another important emotion to consider is what emotions you are displaying to your dog. Is your internal temperature calm or are you on fire. If you have the ability to change your internal state and adequately communicate this to your dog, you will develop confidence to have the ability to direct and redirect your dog to the Zen Sit Down.

Aggression In Dogs- Practical Management, Prevention & Behavior Modification; Brenda Aloff, 2002, Funcraft, Inc Collierville TN