

HOW WE TRAIN NAUGHTY BUT NICE DOGS THAT CHASE, HUNT & STALK  
WITH THE POWER OF 3-MINUTE GAMES

NAUGHTY BUT NICE  
**CHASE**



 **Absolute Dogs**®

Tom Mitchell & Lauren Langman

# WHAT IS CHASE?

Chase is often the most damaging relationship breaker between dogs and their owners.

**Chasing causes distress, noise, anxiety, embarrassment, and at worse, can end in injury and a serious accident.**

Here at AbsoluteDogs we like to be different - we quite like chase! The most driven dogs are those with desire - they are the dogs for us BUT we do live in the real world. Modern society means we need to control the chase, use it and even benefit from it!

We don't need self employed urban sheepdogs finding their own fun. We need to ensure that our dogs can live happily and safely within today's society.

So, so many dogs end up confined because of out of control chasing. Limited to the same 'safe' walks, the same secure field or confined to the limits of their lead. Some find themselves passed on, re-homed, at a rescue or even worse, purely because their chase drive is out of control. Living with them is no longer fun.

Now this is definitely not a blame game. Let's not blame a dog for being a dog or find fault with their owners. These are the owners that have invested hours of time and hard earned money. They've been to countless classes, attended workshops,

studied hard and watched endless videos. These are owners that have driven miles to safe fields, stood in all weathers shouting, crying, pleading, even losing their temper, worrying sick as they watch their dogs disappear into the distance. Ultimately risking their dog's safety, their own and that of others because of chase. Chase can be so dangerous to people, animals and vehicles, as the potential for accident is just so high.

Many dog trainers are presented with chase problems: "it's a recall issue", "they need more obedience, more value" - sound familiar? Does this help?

**We need to ensure that our dogs can live happily and safely within today's society**

Maybe short term but those of us that live with a chaser we know the problem is far deeper rooted than simply a poor recall, right? So let's not fixate on the problem or dwell on our worries, let's get to the root of this...

# WHAT DOES MY DOG GET FROM CHASING?

## How to find a solution to something that is so widespread

Dogs chase for many reasons from predatory chase drivers to fear, the need for social interaction and even for territorial reasons. For something that has such a wide range of causes we need to think outside the box when we go about finding solutions.

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Although the ability to tailor-make the games to fit each different dog and their chase drivers is important, we are pretty confident in saying that true chasing stems from predatory drivers. Let's get that out there, we need to call it and then we can begin to address it, and move forward to a solution.

We have compiled a pretty typical list of chase behaviours. Now think about your dog. Can you tick any two plus the last? If you can it is almost certain your dog is actively engaged in some form of predatory behaviour.

- Your dog will actively seek out opportunities by going out of their way to find their stimulus
- Your dog is heavily movement driven, loves to run after almost anything
- Chase can happen absolutely any time anywhere
- The chase is normally triggered at any opportunity. They don't look like they are thinking hard about it!
- Your dog's chasing may begin with some stalking or searching or scanning and checking out for the stimulus
- Your dog likes to hunt and search for things
- Your dog may become excited earlier and earlier as they pair the chase stimulus with the environment or situation, for example when walking in certain places, it could be at the sight, scent and sound of their moving stimulus, perhaps even starting to get excited and vocalise!
- You will often see it directed to more than one object - that could be cyclists, washing machines, sheep, rabbits, cats, joggers, other people's 'ball throwers'!
- They look like they are having an absolute blast - not fearful, anxious, scared or worried!



# WHY DO OUR DOGS CHASE?

It's what really makes them tick, dogs get a HUGE kick out of chasing

Well it's all about the internal reinforcement. It's what really makes them tick, dogs get a HUGE kick out of chasing. And the thing is - most dogs that chase, they chase in more than one situation. Chase has become a part of how they live their lives and they will find as many opportunities as possible to get their fix, it's pretty hard wired.

I have to tell you guys a little story, I remember visiting a house a few years back for a very chase driven Border Collie, let's call him Finn for the sake of our eBook and his anonymity. Now the issue was little Finn was worrying his owner chasing cars, and he meant business. Just the sound of an engine would send him loopy and he would be off in full blown chase mode. Now as I sat down in this terraced city central property I asked the owners if he chased anything

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else or ever showed this behaviour in any other capacity. They racked their brains but no, he really didn't. On finishing my consult we went back through the kitchen where I saw Finn quite quickly rush at the washing machine and continue to bite it every time it spun. He was trying to stop the movement by throwing himself on it, and the owners

said he had done this since he was around 3.5 months old! They also spoke to me in detail about how they really specifically went to a house to purchase their Border Collie and not a farm, for the very reason that they wouldn't have any of these issues as they had heard that Border Collies liked to chase!

So when we look at behaviour we need to acknowledge that dogs inherit these strong instinctive behaviours. Take Cocker Spaniels for example - are they born to carry socks? Retrievers to fetch the post? German Shepherds to bring down criminals? Well in a way, yes! These are displays of strong inherited behaviours that each dog has indeed been born with the strong desire to carry out. Most Spaniels don't need teaching to carry and retrieve, they are born with that behaviour already hard wired as a 'motor pattern' - they don't have to learn it, they just do it.

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**Strong inherited behaviours that each dog has indeed been born with**  
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# CHASING BEHAVIOUR

## Chasing behaviour is very much hard wired

Dogs are born with an inherited predatory hunting sequence, ALL dogs from the Greyhound to the Chihuahua, this chain of behaviour ultimately enables them to live in the wild, to catch their dinner in order to survive, searching, stalking, chasing and then biting to kill their prey.

How much a dog displays different aspects of this predatory sequence depends on years of selective breeding by us. The fastest Greyhound is the one that wants the lure the most (chase drive). The Border Collie that will work for 12 hours with no break is the one that has the most stalk and chase

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drive. These are the dogs that have been selected to breed from. A dog that is very driven to work generally comes from a dog with the most hard wired desire to perform a part of that predatory hunting sequence. They are internally reinforced to keep doing it.

Let's take this chance to look at reinforcement and how it affects chase. We as humans often think of external reinforcement - what we like. And we use this external reinforcement as a way of training dogs, we give them rewards,

food, usually something really rewarding and tasty like roast chicken or a big fuss or their favourite toy. We give them something nice for making the correct choice, for doing the behaviour we want them to repeat - an “external reinforcement”.

And then there is “internal reinforcement”. This is when the brain gives the body a feeling of complete pleasure. Similar to the amazing feeling we experience when we have a super clear round in agility, a foot perfect obedience round, or even a spot-on recall from a distraction. It's an instant energy hit! This energy hit is powerful, every single time your dog gets to complete their particular hard wired sequence it becomes stronger and better and more ingrained. I think I was hard wired to run agility! Every amazing sequence drives me to want more!!

# SELECTIVE BREEDING

## Born to do it, from thousands of years of selective breeding

Each part of the motor pattern or inherited hunting sequence is internally reinforcing to our dogs. So every time they happen our dogs are being internally reinforced - YES, EVERY TIME!

So whilst here at AbsoluteDogs we love to use external rewards like awesome toys and treats, in this scenario your dog doesn't need any of these as a reinforcer. In fact they are less reinforcing than the internal energy hit. Think of the sheepdog and their sheep or the gun-dog and their pheasant, their desire to do their 'job' is done out of the joy of performing the sequence. They are predisposed - born to want to do it - from thousands of years of selective breeding.

Ok, time for the science part! Let's think of the brain and how it is involved with this. Every time an inherited motor pattern is played out our brains get a shot of dopamine, the feel good drug! These motor patterns that drive our dogs to chase are internally rewarded by a drug, an actual drug, and yes, it definitely is addictive!!

Potentially each breed is made up of the correct amount of hard wired motor patterns to survive, well that's nature's rough plan anyway. So the wild canine would inherit the correct amount of drive for each part of the hunting sequence which would ultimately result in them searching out, finding and then catching the best prey for survival. Chase is a very important part of this sequence and is in this situation, found sandwiched between the searching and finding behaviours and the grab and kill of their potential prey. When we relate this back to domestic dogs, these sequenced behaviours, the drive for each part, can become disorganised and distorted; out of balance.

Selective breeding is the reason for this. We have carefully bred dogs to use different parts of this hunting sequence. Exaggerated traits of the sequence have been brought out in the different breeds (think of the Pointer for example, bred with an exaggerated find and mark of the prey behaviour, this would not help them catch prey in the wild but it does

help the hunter know where the pheasants are for shooting). Due to this breeding process, true predatory sequences are rarely found as in balance within modern day dogs.

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This is where you need to think about your own choice of breed, and even more fun can be had when you have some of the mixed breeds, that's when the variety really appears both between and within breeds. For example in our working Cocker Spaniels we see a huge internal reward from carrying, quartering and searching, but very little or none from stalking, it's simply not within their breed make up. Border Collies on the other hand get huge internal reward from stalking, but should not have an ability to kill-bite, why is this?

Well it's simply because of hundreds of generations of selective breeding for the skills we want, no self respecting spaniel should stalk its retrieve article as no self respecting sheep dog should be out there killing sheep! Obviously there will be variation and individuals within each breed or type will inherit more or less of each part than others. As breeders ourselves this is the variability that makes some spaniels better than others, some Border Collies more sticky than others and basically starts to shape the future of what we want in the breed.





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# CHASE DRIVEN DOGS

**They enjoy it, they get a huge hit from it! It's massive!**

Now every breed is made up of exactly what it needs in very simple terms or at least that's the rough plan. So in wild canine terms, they ideally would inherit exactly the right amount of each part of the sequence to lead into the next. That's how the sequence works.

In domestic dogs, it's slightly different due to how we have bred and the fact we are involved in breeding - we sometimes have selected certain traits and then others are apparently non-existent. Therefore the whole predatory motor hunting sequence is rarely in balance in modern breeds.

Here is the real deal, a very important piece of information for you, so listen in, super carefully. When your dog chases, it's BIG reinforcement, and no I don't mean you give them a cookie, I mean it is a motor pattern, or behaviour that is inherited. It has been inherited down a super long line, generations of inheritance! Dogs that chase are being internally reinforced just by doing it. They really don't need to be externally reinforced with anything because the

behaviour is rewarding in itself, it's BIG TIME FUN! So that makes sense right? It's why it makes it super hard to interrupt, and why you need help and ideas, why you ask everyone around why won't they stop? It's super simple - they enjoy it, they get a huge hit from it! It's massive! They get a huge high from the many endorphins racing around their bodies, you can see it in them if you observe closely, to such an extent that they even close down other senses to concentrate on it. Did you catch that? Yes they actually shut down other senses when in predatory chase! What!?

That's nuts right - but it kinda makes sense when you think about it! When your dog is in full on chase mode, you know all of their focus is on the target as the major source of all fun and pleasure. This is the first and probably the most noticeable reason that owners cannot recall their dogs when they are in full flight. Their dogs simply don't hear them and whilst they may feel their dog is being stubborn, difficult, awkward and deliberately rude - actually no, he is just being a typical predatory chase driven dog!

# PREDATORY DESIRE & DRIVE

That massive hit of energy they crave  
and the positive feeling that it provides for them

Dogs with a high inherited prey drive not only gain great pleasure from herding, moving and performing any kind of chasing, they also have a physical need to perform it.

So it's not as simple as they chose to leave you, they are actually driven to chase, they physically need to do it to receive the boost they need, that massive hit of energy they crave and the positive feeling that it provides for them. They are constantly looking for opportunities for this predatory desire and drive, their complete need to chase!

This is why we here at AbsoluteDogs know that chase is a constant problem for owners and highly strung chase driven dogs. We know that a chase driven dog, at any level, let alone the top end, is not

easy to control because it is very difficult to find something as reinforcing as what they are doing! Basically trying to counter internally reinforcing behaviour with external reinforcement is really tough - it's a mahooooosive task in itself!

So I guess you are beginning to get with the idea that we just don't offer the dog such a good deal, they will not stop chasing for the promise of a reward, maybe some food for example, as it's simply not as valuable or exciting as the chase itself. The supercharged dopamine boost from the chase behaviour that your dog gets every single time that they perform that chase is just so action packed and super fun. In fact, nothing is, or will ever be more valuable than the thrill of chase with these dogs, chase is simply super internally

reinforcing. The other thing I have seen with some sheepdogs, other training schools and many gun-dog trainers is that you can punish as much as you like it doesn't stop chase. You can try a game of ball or the best dog food in town but it's not a good reward for a chase driven dog, it simply won't cut it! Put simply in the dog's terms - it's not a good deal for them, so they won't do it consistently every time!

But, do remember that not all dogs have the same high predatory chase drive. So with lower chase drive types, they will most probably comply a little more, for at least a while, but if they are not given the opportunity or an outlet for their inherited chase behaviour in some way, the drive to chase will eventually outweigh the reinforcer, whether that's a piece of kibble or even

something bigger like a piece of chicken or even a chicken wing or a super duper top value reward. They can't help it, it's how they work, it's how they tick and ultimately it's who they are! The second reason many owners of chase driven dogs cannot control dogs in full on chase flight is that there is nothing the dog wants more than the chase game, or the opportunity to chase. Basically what he is doing now - it's the best thing in his world!

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# WHY DO WE NEED TO KNOW ALL OF THIS?



Understanding why our dogs chase is unbelievably crucial to long term controlling and understanding how to control them, and how to teach them to control themselves. With you knowing that they get a mahooooosive brain-chemical induced big old dollop of enjoyment from the chase itself, that they aren't deliberately trying to make us look ridiculous in the park chasing after them in the rain, they aren't trying to disobey us, but obeying a stronger internal urge that they can't actually help - it's all consuming. They're fulfilling a big hunger inside them, because they were bred like that, wired like that! So if we try to see chasing from the dogs point of view, rather than from how much hassle it is to us, it all

becomes a lot easier to understand how to control it, and how to work with it, because training a dog not to chase is not like going to basic lifeskills classes or going to a recall class. The desire to down or sit or to recall and come back for a reward is more or less the same for every dog, but chase and the likelihood of chase is so hugely variable in each and every single dog that you will own and train and even work with as an instructor! Because these motivations are all different within each and every dog, the solutions need to be tailored to suit each and every individual dog. True chasing really is always a predatory behaviour and we need to identify it as such before we can address the root of the problem. Remember if your

dog is of a breed that was originally bred to chase (many breeds included in here but let's include all herding breeds and terriers for a start) it's a safe bet they have the genetic hard wiring that makes it so super enjoyable. It's also possible and often pretty likely that they accidentally inherit a strong chase tendency in exactly the same way some dogs inherit the wrong structure for the show ring, the wrong ear set, the wrong coat type or colour - so many things we are looking for!

Dogs with these drivers seek out chase and prey opportunities to chase because of the huge innate enjoyment they receive from it. Unfortunately, if left to their own devices they often direct it towards the

wrong targets, although that really is a matter of opinion - for them it's entirely appropriate! Cyclists, ponies, rabbits, cats, washing machines, cars, joggers, livestock, children's mobile toys, aeroplanes and deer, to be honest in the urban sheepdogs mind they are all entirely game. They are actively looking for any moving target to work, and all of these offer possibilities and opportunities to chase because it is so stimulating and fun to perform, and most of all it's addictive! Dogs with these predatory motor patterns often have a favourite, we like to think of it as kind of a primary target, the one they value and seek out the most, like a football maybe and then a hierarchy of others that come in to play as well!



# THE GAME-CHANGERS

## Solve struggles with a drop of creativity and innovation

With problems we need to think outside of the box, you can't solve struggles without a drop of creativity and innovation, well at least that's what we do here at absoluteHQ! It's also important that we don't try to tackle the chase in isolation, there are many little elements we will want to work on together, in a combined effort and in a super fun filled and charged way. After all, we already know that NORMAL just won't cut it with these creative types, and especially not with CHASE!

And then let's not forget the fact that we are working within the rather scary world, remember of internal reinforcement! This is crazy stuff, it's not for the weak hearted as you need to keep in your mind that there is a physical and mental need to go out and seek chase, a huge desire to find, complete and perform the predatory chase behaviour. And then us humans go and get in the way, we can't help ourselves eh? To be fair we are getting involved to try and help,

but in doing so we are interfering with the balance of the dog's emotions. It's not as simple as it first looks when we get involved in chase and predatory motor patterns like these, and we have a limited number of ways that we can improve their emotions. We are in risky territory here!

Scaring you is the last thing we want to do, but you need to be aware that if we temporarily deny them an opportunity to rehearse what they need to rehearse then we compromise their emotional balance, potentially leaving them frustrated, stressed and maybe even anxious.

With this knowledge, first and foremost in our minds, is to scan your dog's environment for stress, worry or any level of anxiety. We want you to get rid of as many struggles and fears as possible, we want to make this as easy as we can for our dogs, and we want to introduce as many emotional and optimism boosts at this stage as we possibly can.

# GAMECHANGER CHALLENGES

To stop your dog from chasing things you first need to address something that appears as a fear

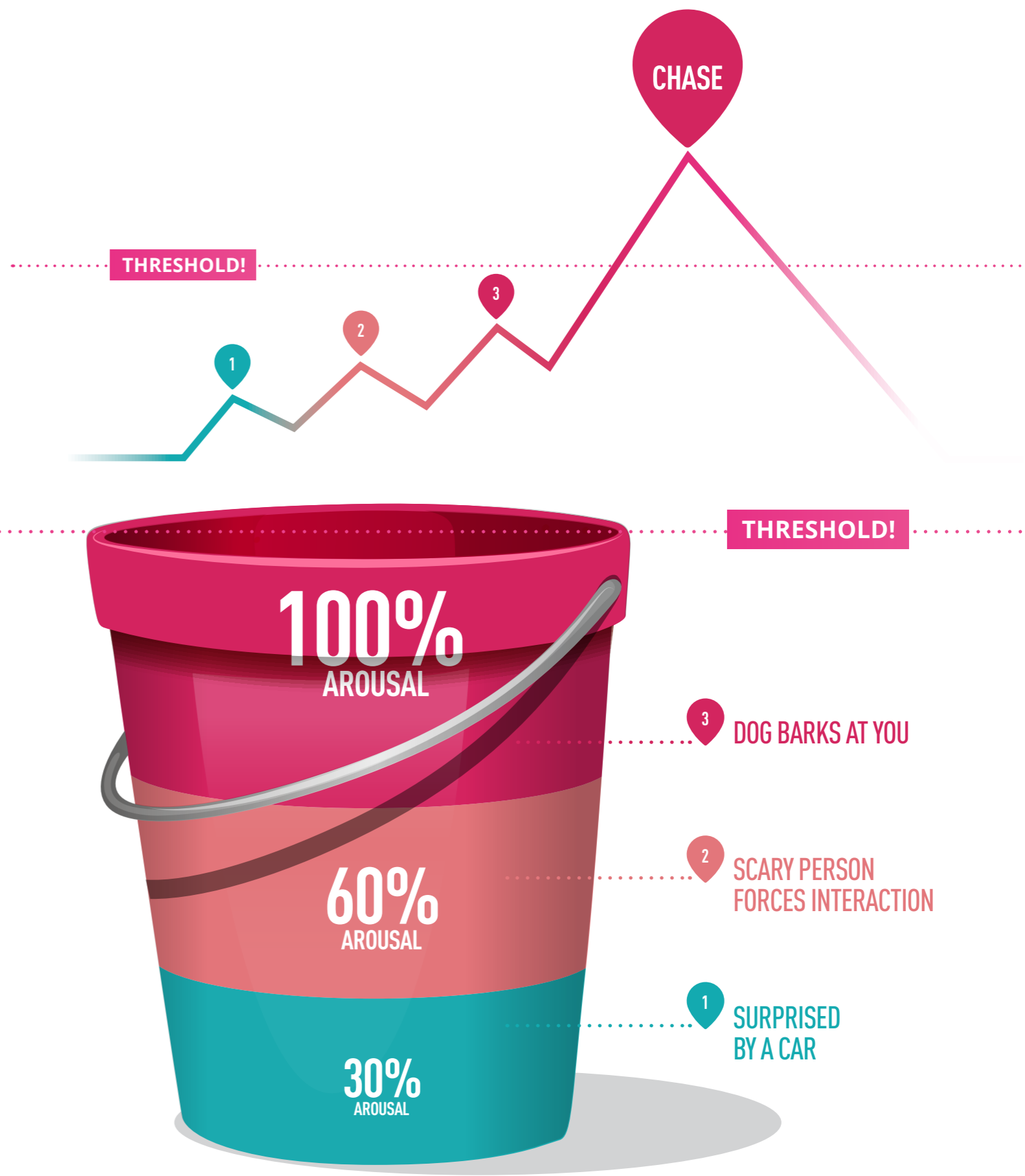
GAMECHANGER challenges for you and your dog will include any fears that your dog already has - do you know of any major fears? Has your dog ever experienced any noise phobias, any separation issues or any social concerns?

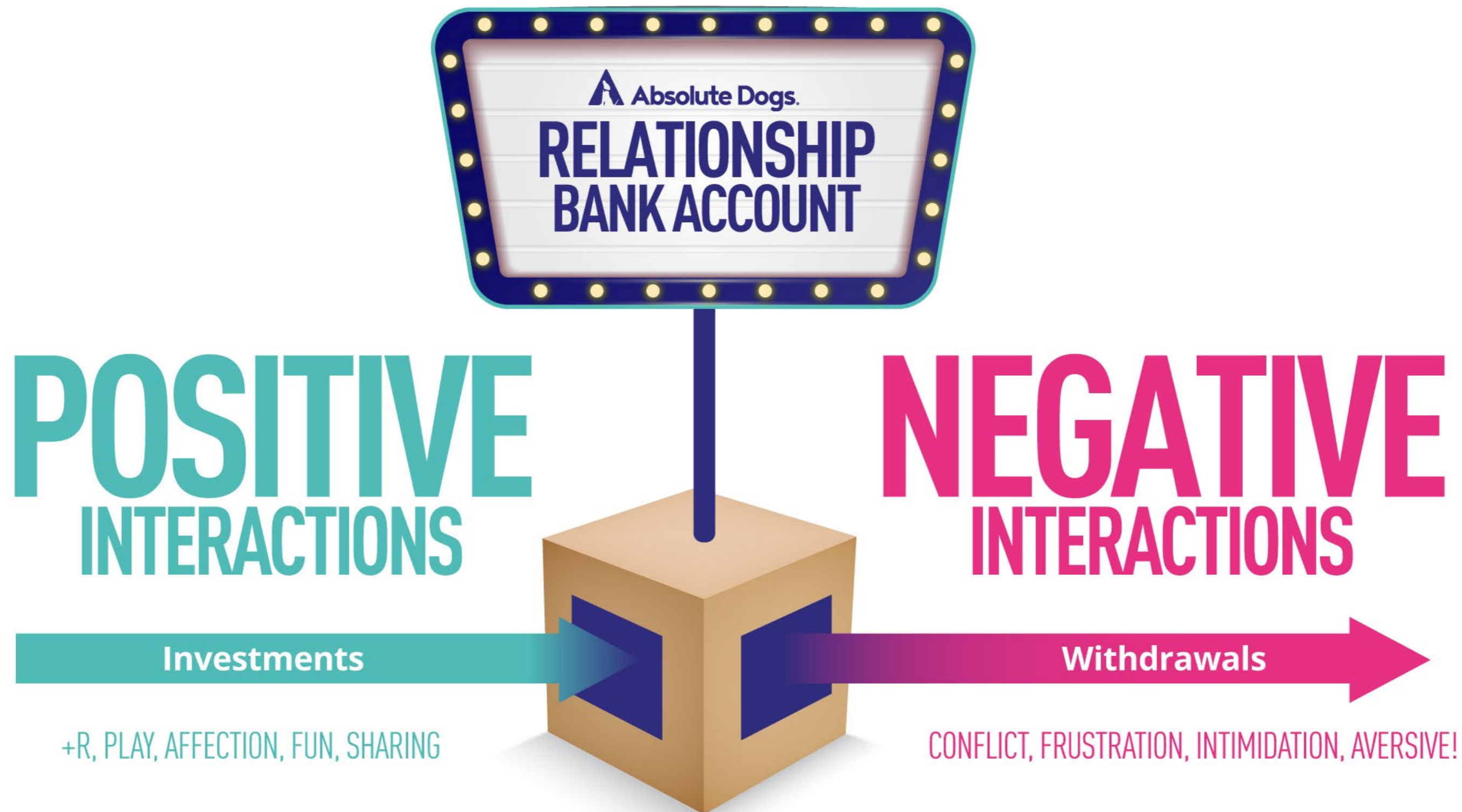
*Dr Emily Blackwell's PhD thesis found that one third of dogs owned by people who stated their dogs did not have separation anxiety, did, in fact, exhibit fear-related behaviours when left alone. **TASK: Film your dog when left alone and take note of how they behave.***

For our own dogs, things we like to consider making them more comfortable with are chews. My dogs all have chews they have a selection of different chew type objects,

some of which they will eat completely and others they will just gnaw on every day. They have tripe stuffed bones and they really seem to be much calmer whilst they are concentrating on un-stuffing! We always love to use them after working.

Another area we feel can help to make dogs more at ease is obedience and life-skills based training. We can see how it improves relationships daily and the opportunities for positive interactions are endless! So remember we said you need to think outside the box, I know it might seem strange that to stop your dog from chasing things you first need to address something that appears as a fear, for example, but remember the anxiety bucket.





Just think about it for a moment. The fear of let's say household noises can generally increase a dog's pessimism. This can lead to your dog being miserable and the anticipation of that worry and ultimately fear causes deep anxiety.

When your dog chases something and gets that hit of dopamine, it is a way for them to forget those anxieties, lose their inhibitions and enjoy a massive pleasure, even if only for a very short while they are improving their emotional state.

So, if we can remove some of the challenges that our dogs may see daily, then their need to chase reduces accordingly. It can really help, we know that much. We know life does happen, we understand that, and sometimes it just isn't possible to totally get

rid of all challenges we face daily. If we can't totally remove the struggles of everyday life, adding in some other things that improve the emotional balance of your dog will go some way towards reducing their physical and emotional need to chase.

# CONTROL THE OPPORTUNITIES

To control chasing, we need to control the dogs primary target

If we firstly try to reduce and even empty the stress bucket, we can then start to look at how to control the actual chasing behaviour itself, for which there should be less need as anxiety is reduced. The real problem arises because we have no control over the behaviour itself. To control chasing, we need to control the dogs primary target. But we know living here that we can't control livestock and rabbits for example, can we? We need to be realistic, it's going to happen! So with that knowledge, if we want to control chasing, we need to change the primary target to one that we can control. Let's have a little think about that!

So where do we start? Well, to begin with we need to first consider what each and every one of our dogs are finding super fun, and then we need to prevent the dog from continuing to reinforce the unwanted chase behaviour - the target or object of desire.

Here is where we think we are different, so many owners try to actually stop the problem when the chase is actually happening, it's too late. You can't train a chasing dog when it is actually chasing, this is a mistake and you will struggle to get them to even acknowledge you at this point. You really can't train them in that mode! It's not a good use of your time and energy or of theirs, forget it, it really won't happen, so we want to save you the effort of trying!

The competition for the reward is so, so high and you simply won't cut it at this level, at least not yet!

Think about your absolute favourite all time exhilarating activity? Think BASE jumping, break dancing, skating, cuddling your dog, rock climbing, swimming, agility, obedience, paragliding? Imagine you are halfway through an agility run or about to jump and I say, "Stop that now and I'll take

you for a nice big pub lunch, do you fancy it?"... Highly unlikely in all honesty? So why should your dog, or mine for that matter be any different?

**The competition for the reward is so, so high and you simply won't cut it at this level, at least not yet!**



# WHERE DOES PUNISHMENT FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

## Punishment not only restricts a source of enjoyment for the dog, but can also introduce pain and anxiety

We all know someone who has used punishment and some people will insist they have used it successfully. Some trainers will even recommend that punishment through pretty severe devices like prong and shock collars will stop your dog from chasing forever. Whilst they might, temporarily do the job, they may also

damage your relationship with your dog for good. In some dogs it can take them over the edge!

Let's take a closer look at exactly what is happening when we use punishment. Our dogs use chase as a way of emptying their stress bucket, remember what we talked about earlier?



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**Our dogs are keen to try to improve their emotional state, to put themselves in a better state of mind**

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Our dogs are keen to try to improve their emotional state, to put themselves in a better state of mind. When our dogs chase, remember they have an emotional need, they are not being difficult, they need to do it. They have a need to chase something to maintain the positive aspects of their life - it boosts their mood!

So, punishment not only restricts a source of enjoyment for the dog, but can also introduce pain and more anxiety into their lives! One of the few ways in which the dog has an outlet, a way to enjoy themselves and be themselves has now become a source of pain. This is scary stuff! The worry is that the overall effect will be to increase the already high frustration levels and stress, and potentially to make our chasing dog even more volatile and to make chasing even more important to them!

What your dog does, he becomes - what he rehearses, he learns! So basically if you don't like something your dog does - for example chasing and herding your other dog, chasing livestock or even rabbits - then you need to take some positive action, and now! Immediately. Don't just think 'oh I must do that'. Actually start by preventing them from rehearsing it now.

If you want success in stopping the chase and starting the relationship success then this really is **not optional**, it is essential to your programme of learning. Everytime your dog practices and rehearses and chases their target they stay in an addictive feedback loop.

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**What your dog does, he becomes - what he rehearses, he learns!**  
**So basically you need to take some positive action now! Immediately.**

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# BRAIN BOOSTING

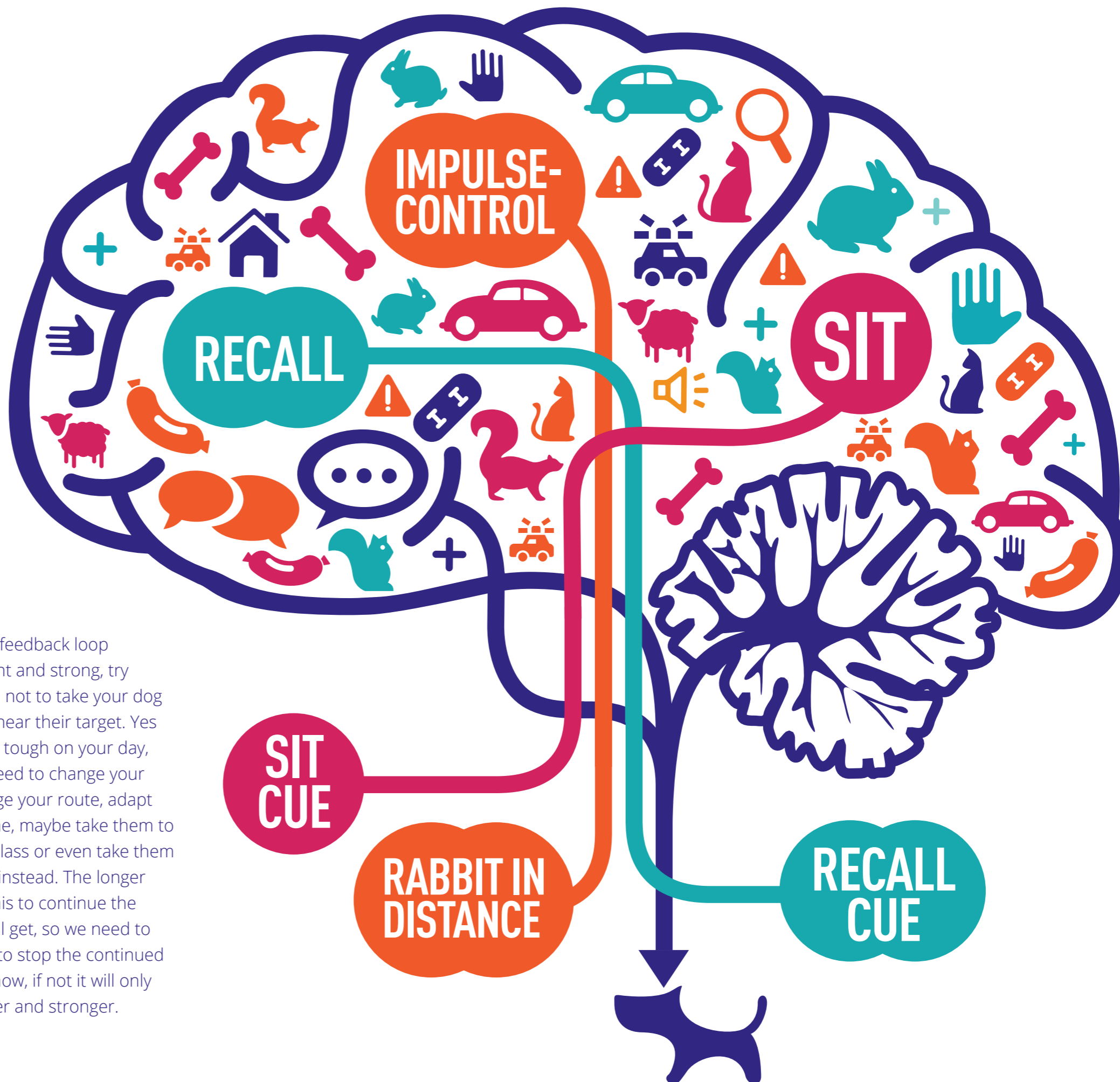
## Strengthening and reinforcing

We like to imagine dogs' brains as a big warren or network of tunnels (neuronal connections). These connect various areas that involve thought and movement. Everytime a dog performs an action, activity shoots from one area of thought to another of movement by means of the tunnels, resulting in motion and the behaviour in question.

By the dog being rewarded for performing the behaviour (but even simply for using the pathway and "rehearsing"), strengthening and reinforcing of the walls of the tunnel occurs and hence that tunnel is even more likely to be used in the future!

So everytime your dog chases they get a chemical brain boost from the chase, whatever that might be, squirrels, sheep, other dogs or rabbits! It gets super addictive to the point that they say, "I need the brain boost, I need to chase to exist!"

Whilst this feedback loop is so current and strong, try super hard not to take your dog anywhere near their target. Yes this can be tough on your day, you may need to change your walk, change your route, adapt your routine, maybe take them to a training class or even take them swimming instead. The longer we allow this to continue the worse it will get, so we need to find a way to stop the continued addiction now, if not it will only get stronger and stronger.



# SO...WHAT CAN WE DO?

Well, to start with we need to change the target!  
Focus your dog's attention onto a toy

Let's start to focus your dog on a toy, but not in competition with the problem, so not when the other chase target is around, that's simply too hard.

Personally when I do this with my own dogs I change the chase context so I play in a different place. For my own dogs I prefer to pick indoors to start with, it is always the best place in terms of distractions, or the garden if your chase target isn't present, you really do need to make sure you have a clean environment.

You can work on the concept of any toy, we particularly like **Tug-E-Nuff** chaser tugs and clams to work on this with our dogs.

We need to get your dog completely and utterly hooked! Your new chase toy may depend upon your dogs old preferred target, for example most of my Collies will work chase towards a chaser tug or ball, but not all of them work this way so be prepared to get creative! Many dogs out there will chase a ball, but when chase becomes super ingrained they may be so focussed on their primary target that they can't even see a toy, they will seemingly ignore toys.

We need you to be smart, creative and inventive. Make your chosen new target as fun and fast and as much like the old one to stimulate your dog to chase, we need them to want to chase it and don't try to put

too much control on it. At this stage just let them chase and have fun! It needs to be super reinforcing! We need to keep this super fast and fun!

This is pure genius dog training, dog training in its purest sense. We need you to think hard on a few things, after all we've all seen those trainers that seem to effortlessly

get clean and dependable, high-quality behaviours and have a great relationship with their dog. The truth is, that anyone can become one of these trainers with understanding, skill and practice. All of you can STOP the chase pattern and start the FUN! We want to give you new skills to practice and use to great effect, and best of all, have lots of fun with your dog.





# HELPFUL TIPS

## Shaping Skills:

We want you to become better at generally becoming your dog's expert, watching them and their mechanics. You can use things like targets, these will help you teach more cleanly. Think about how you attach your cues and how to avoid having a dog that throws behaviours at you when not shaping, getting unstuck and using different markers for different behaviours. If you do have a dog who does throw behaviours at you left, right and centre, have you tried the reward nothing game?

## Transitions:

We like to think about relationship-building transitions, how to avoid pitfalls in transitions, how you can use latent learning and how you can narrow or broaden focus by raising or lowering arousal levels. All of these things can be manipulated and eased with using appropriate transitions!

## We like to help our students in training clean:

You can do this with clearer criteria, using errorless learning, employing planned failure and extinction, being self-body aware and developing great mechanical skills for clarity in your training, cues and reinforcement! This really is action packed!

## Games:

We love to teach through games. We also like to think that you are developing your own games - games to produce optimal arousal in your dog for your present needs and just for fun. Sometimes we simply take it all way too seriously!

## We need you to get pretty good at preparation and planning:

Coming up with clear short and long-term goals, how best to use video and written records, which reinforcers to use for your dog and when, planning for transfer of value, getting more bang for your buck with clever and intelligent reinforcement, creating a resilient learner and super partner in your dog!

## Daily Life:

How to avoid sabotaging your shiny new behaviours and keep that polish on your sessions with your focused and non chaser dog!

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**Getting more bang for your buck with clever and intelligent reinforcement, creating a resilient learner and super partner in your dog!**  
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## Here are a few rules to your sessions:

### 01.

Keep super short bouts and only play for a really fast and fun time! Multi sessions are good, so do lots of them!

### 02.

Try to work in a place with absolutely no other distractions. Always stop before your dog gets bored and always end up keeping the toy yourself.

### 03.

Build up those pathways and connections between the “got to chase” brain and your very new and shiny toy. Play, play and more play to get this party started.

### 04.

Work on your retrieve, it is so super vital and you will be so happy you have it once it's in place. If you have difficulty in teaching your dog to retrieve a toy watch the games in NBN, on our DVD and in P2P.

## We need them to love the game with you!

Personally we prefer to restrict access to your dog's favourite toy when we are this early on in the training - this is super important, and key for progress here at AbsoluteDogs. This doesn't mean your dog won't get them EVER, it simply means they are contingent on interacting with you right now!

Keep your toy super special, it's a high value object and always retain it when the game finishes. Your dog will be quite keen to play with the new toy so long as there are no rabbits about!

Keep practising in a place with no distractions until your dog is desperate to play the games with you, we need them to love the game with you!

Because you are continuing to prevent other chasing, your dog's chase drive will be high, but focussed on the new game and channelled into working with you. Now how awesome is that? A dog who sees you as the human equivalent of chase, that's super awesome!

# THE AMAZING ABSOLUTE- RECALL SUCCESS FORMULA

Now introduce your super name game command, you don't have to use their name, and super high value word, it could be 'missy'? Or 'buddy', or anything that is going to mean WOW to your dog!

“  
The second you say that word deliver your super duper powerful toy in a bright, light hearted and super desirable way!  
”



The second you say that word, deliver your super duper powerful toy in a bright, light hearted and super desirable way! You need to be super excited about it too, use your voice each and every time you throw the toy for your dog, or a whistle, every single time you deliver it so your dog basically sees it as WOW!

Pretty soon your dog will start to associate the super exciting and fun filled presence of the toy. Start to use it when your dog is not expecting it, make it a surprise that can happen just about anywhere, use that high power name game as often as you can and keep the element of surprise! Toy = JOY!!! Basically as soon as your dog gives you

that look, the look where they know it's coming, throw the toy in to the mix! The word becomes paired and therefore super predictive that there is a fun and fast action game on offer and for dogs like these that is a GOOD DEAL!

So now we have mastered the name game it's time to take your training up to the next level, for the best recall ever, like a recall all of your friends will envy and that you will be super proud of and for life!

“  
**A recall all of your friends will envy**  
”

# THE FORMULA

**STAGE 1:** Remember 'fail to prepare, prepare to fail'. Preparation is KEY! Try to work in a place with no distractions at all, the more sterile the better at this early stage, and whenever you are training something new. I prefer to take two top toys, ideally they are identical and the dog is happy to switch between them equally, restrain your dog, leave them in a bed, in a crate or in a wait whilst you throw the first one as far as you can without using any command other than your wait cue. Now as they run towards that toy call them to you to play with the fun toy you have in your hand, move it, run, make lots of fun sounds. Why? Because your toy is alive and you want to have a lot of fun with it!

A second option of this game is: as the dead toy lands, release your dog and throw over their head the second toy and cue them to GET IT! Or whatever your play cue is, as it's a moving object your dog is highly likely to take this one.

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### Trouble shooting:

- If your dog goes for the dead toy, simply have someone stand on it to not allow access to it.
  - Another problem can be that your dog doesn't stop for the moving toy but wants the static one, substitute the first thing you throw for something less valuable.
- .....

**STAGE 2:** After three or four goes, your dog will not set off after the first toy, but wait for you to give your 'get it' cue, and here is where the fun starts - you aren't going to - keep them guessing now at this stage! So this time you are going to send them for the first toy. And the next time, wait until your dog is about a third of the way to the first one before calling your 'get it' cue for your second toy and then throw the second in! Keep them guessing, it's the aim of the game. This can and will supercharge your recall, calling off a deer or a cat will be no problem after you have worked through this programme of awesomeness!

Okay, so the next time send your dog to get it using the cue to chase or play but don't actually throw the second toy in this time, at least not immediately. Keep the toy on you and wait for your dog to see it, as they give you that look and as they start to come back, reward with the throw or tug on you depending on the

reliability of them coming in close proximity to you. Remember the chase driven dogs being able to come in to our space is KEY! We want them to be able to play close to us! Some dogs like to keep us on our toes, these are the creative types, the types that we created NBN for, the types that we can really relate to in the SIT!

So what do we do with these guys? Some don't want to chase the first toy, they are in anticipation and waiting for the second. Don't reward that with the second toy, remember you have to be unpredictable. Send them on, going with them to find and play with the first toy if necessary, remember the find it game is super reinforcing too, they love that. You control the game, it's your

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**STAGE 3:** Gradually and in a timely way we will introduce an appropriate level of distraction, for example for livestock chasers, play the game whilst other dogs are about, or near a football match - safely of course, or where there is fun and excitement and say water, or anything that basically isn't your dogs stimulus! You don't want to try to compete with the

lead, they will follow, don't be too predictable! So now we bring in the big guns. We start to delay the call to bring your dog back off the first toy and then we make it even harder with the time the first toy is static before sending them. Our big and final aim is to throw the first toy, and then send our dogs in arousal to get that toy, wait until they are almost there, call, then cue them to get your toy and wait until they come all the way back in to your space. Yes I know, that's super hard, before playing with the second one. It'll take a little time to achieve, but that's what I call an AbsoluteDogs style recall and is so so so so so worth it at every level! You will be able to call off deer, sheep, another dog, you name it - this **WILL** work!

.....

chase issue just yet! We need to build up some new reward pathways and fun! If you have difficulty finding a good place or if you just need a little more confidence, see whether there are any venues close by you can rent, for example here in Devon we have a great venue you can hire, and that sort of scenario may help you to build your skills and confidence!

.....



# TOTAL FUN & ABSOLUTE-RECALL

Remember that those that play together stay together!

Eventually the complex pathways between the games you play and the chase will outweigh the less desirable ones! We know you can do it! Your dog will start to prefer the toy to the predatory chase game but it does take time, energy and practice on your part. The actual time needed will vary with each and every dog

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**Your dog will start to prefer the toy to the predatory chase game**

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and how much money they have in the bank for chasing. Practice, fun energy and playing together will pay off - remember that those that play together stay together! Remember what they do they become, stop them practising it! Now!

You will know you have hit the absolute-jackpot when your dog whip lash turns back around and wants the game more than the chase each and every time you call and you play the energy name game!

Gradually get closer to your distractions IF, and only IF you need to! If you don't need to walk near stock for example then don't! It's simple for now but let's say you live with stock then you must build in the distractions!

One super important reminder is that you do need to satisfy your dog's chase needs, they will revert to finding their own fun, become self employed and find new targets again, it's seriously inherent and

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**One super important reminder is that you do need to satisfy your dogs chase needs**

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fundamental to their being. But now you have built your absolute reward don't let it lose it's value - play the games and have a lot of fun with it! Keep adding money to that bank account! Make them work hard for it! And don't give it for free!

# WHIP-IT CUE CONTROL

The more a dog rehearses something the more chance they will do it again and again

If we don't like a behaviour, we think it's common knowledge amongst the training world to do whatever you can to stop your dog getting access to repeating the behaviour. The more a dog rehearses something the more chance they will do it again – that's anything - from something they are rewarded for externally, like sitting for a treat or something they get rewarded for internally, like barking at people from the car. So many dog trainers spend a huge amount of time trying to prevent the dog from doing the behaviour we don't like.

Many many times people come to us with their dogs that chase and they have literally changed their lives, altered their friends group, dropped out of their usual agility classes as they have been told not to let their dogs chase - you need to stop them!

In these situations they have no other way of stopping a chase other than avoiding going altogether, one lady said it felt like she and her dog had an ASBO. So WHY are we at AbsoluteDogs doing the exact opposite? We want to teach the dog to chase? What!?

As with training any behaviour, unless we can replicate the situation, in a safe way, it can be very difficult, almost impossible to begin to address it. Spending time working on recall and making our dogs want to be with us is usually the first port of call with a chaser. This normally happens when in a safe quiet area - a town hall, a securely fenced field. This can help but for many reasons it has its limitations.

Can the dogs generalise this focus behaviour to when they see a tiny fluffy dog playing ball on the other side of the beach or a speeding fox heading towards the moors? I think we all know the answer to that is 'No'. We have all felt the frustration as we see hours of well thought out and dedicated training becoming a distant blur on the horizon. We need to recreate the level of desire and arousal that a dog

“  
**We want to teach the dog to chase!**  
”

gets when they are chasing. We need to simulate it so well that the dopamine is being released in the brain. Only then can we begin to build behaviour that can cross over into the real world of chasing.

# HOW CAN WE REPLICATE A CHASE SITUATION

Rabbits and foxes are not very willing volunteers to the NBN movement!

This is where the 'Whip-it' game has become an essential tool for all of us working with chasing behaviour in dogs. The 'Whip-it' game has been devised with the complete intention of being able to develop a high energy, over aroused state of chase but in a safe and controlled manner. How perfect is that? A chase behaviour you can elicit in your own front garden!

Now we have a dog that really really wants to chase our Whip-it – and I mean really - think how much your dog wants the rabbit. That's how much desire you need to build. This is often an area where troubleshooting occurs as adding in the control cues too soon before the dog wants to chase the Whip-it can leave you with a dog that knows it's a game they won't win.

Be prepared to be unpredictable, chasing for dogs is a bit like gambling sometimes they win the chase (very rarely). Mostly it's the hit of the chase the internal reinforcement that builds it as such a strong behaviour and that is what we need to remember every time we play the Whip-it game. Adding the control in too soon can make it boring and predictable and who wants to chase that?

So now we have a dog that REALLY loves to chase the Whip-it. This is when we can add in the control element and build some real life impulse control and cues. As you get your dog chasing the toy in a large circle flip the toy over their head and to the other side of the chase circle, your dog if they love the chase enough (this is a good test of

how much chase you have built into the toy) should immediately dive across to get the toy. Your job now is to repeat this and not let them get the toy. Having a large whip makes this stage a lot easier – remember to practice without your dog - be confident you can do this before you add in the dog. Continue to flip the toy out of their reach as many times as it takes for your dog to stop attempting to dive across and grab it. Once your dog pauses, verbally praise and release them to get the toy and allow them to play with it.

As with all aspects of training, this stage is very individual to each dog. Some may take many flips to stop trying and some may think through it very quickly and begin to offer the stop after only a couple of sessions. You know

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Continue to flip the toy out of their reach as many times as it takes for your dog to stop attempting to dive across and grab it

”  
your dog best - try to monitor whether they are anticipating the stop being brought into the game, in which case you need to mix up the sessions a bit and get them chasing more. Don't be predictable - chasing is never predictable for the dog so your Whip-it shouldn't be either. The aim being you can work up to flipping the toy away and very quickly your dog offers a stop behaviour without any cue. Once you have built to this stage this is where the real fun begins in terms of developing impulse control.

“  
**Mostly it's the hit of the chase  
the internal reinforcement that builds  
it as such a strong behaviour**

# UPPING THE CRITERIA

The more solid verbal cues that you have, the more behaviours you can ask for

Now your dog has stopped and is waiting to be released to the toy, this is when you can ask for a behaviour. Behaviours such as 'sit' or 'down' are usually the strongest inbuilt behaviours for most dogs but you know your dog - ask them at first for whatever behaviour they know best. Be prepared for them to break at the sound of your voice and make a bid for the toy grab as they will be predicting the release that has happened on the previous games. As soon as they give you the behaviour you want, release them to get the toy and play play play. Alternate the reward as well, remember how much they like to chase so release them to a chase occasionally too.

This is where your verbal cues will come in. The more solid verbal cues that you have, the more behaviours you can ask for. This in turn means you can build more and more self control. Every time your dog performs

a behaviour with the anticipation of chase right in front of them, you are rehearsing and reinforcing the impulse control you will need to stop them in real life situations and the BEST thing is you can reward them with more chase!! How neat that you can control and use the very thing your dog is internally reinforced to do - that's next level training right there.

Now time to be pedantic. Start to be sure of your criteria. Do you want a slow stalker sit? Or a creepy forward down? We would say 'No' as these are all signs that your dog is not fully in self-control and only half trying. Once you're well into the built up program of the Whip-it game your criteria can become harder (remember if you make one thing more difficult then make another easier, for example, if you're working on getting a perfect quick sit, only ask for one behaviour before releasing to the toy / chase).

“ You are rehearsing and reinforcing the impulse control you will need to stop them in real life situations and the BEST thing is you can reward them with more chase!!

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF VERBAL CUES!

## Verbal cues matter. Spend time shaping & training them

Be aware of how you accept behaviours outside of the Whip-it game as the dogs will only offer what they have been taught, so don't expect better than you would normally ask for – maybe go back and retrain the behaviour before asking for it in the game.

Revisiting behaviours – the Whip-it game gives us a really good chance to look at how well our dogs understand our verbal cues. Can your dog sit? Well yes is often the answer but when we start to dig a little deeper the answer is not always yes. Do they sit first time? Do they need you to lift your hand? Can they do it in all situations?

Now's a chance to list all of your verbal cues and really look at how well your dog understands them and what situations they find them more difficult. Analysing our verbal cues can give us clear indicators as to how difficult your dog will find responding

to them in high arousal situations, when we need them most. If your dog can't perform the behaviour on a verbal cue alone in all these settings then doing it within the Whip-it game will be tricky for them at first too. The great thing is the more you add them to the Whip-it game and reward with your dogs internal reinforcement the better your verbal cues will be outside of the game, kind of a win win! Verbal cues matter. Spend time shaping and training them separately. This will make a huge difference to how your dog responds in high energy situations like the Whip-it game and in turn real life chase encounters.

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**The more you add them to the Whip-it game and reward with your dog's internal reinforcement the better your verbal cues will be outside of the game**

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# TOY SWITCHING

## Flexibility in learning for chase driven dogs

This is one of my absolute favourite all time games. I simply love it! It's amazing for flexibility in learning but also awesome for chase driven dogs in terms of having the opportunity to offer multiple rewards, and boy it's **FUN!**

**Stage 1:** So how to play the game? I use two completely equal value toys, so it's pretty important that your dog doesn't have a preference. Play with toy one and before your dog gets too attached and hooked let that toy go dead and switch to the other toy. Change all of your energy to the new toy, it's a hot potato! I LOVE this game. The fun energy is INSANE and through the roof! You now want to start cueing the switch if you KNOW it's going to happen! Put the word in just before you gesture the switch so it's new cue word, old cue gesture!

**Stage 2:** So start to do more subtle switches, you want to gradually reduce the arousal for the new toy in the switch as soon as you signal it! See if your dog can switch with less arousal and animation of the second toy!

**Stage 3:** Proofing - so now play like crazy with the chosen toy and move the other toy around a little more, sometimes close to the dog and sometimes further away. If they can keep hold of their toy then they can have the cue to switch! Now you are powering it up!

**Stage 4:** Absolute proofing now at this level, throw the second toy away as you're playing with toy one but only cue switch when you want to switch. If they leave you early to get the other toy go back a stage until you can cue it!

**Play, engage, have fun. This is a super awesome game!**



# USING A LONG LINE

Walking your dog shouldn't be the most stressful thing ever, it's a time to separate from the rest of the world and each get lost in your own thoughts.

Sounds idyllic doesn't it? Those of you that have walked hard core chasers know this is very often far from the truth. Stress levels rise as we desperately try to juggle preventing our dogs chasing and allowing them some sort of freedom and the chance to run and be without constraints. The joy of letting them off lead is masked with the panic of scanning in every direction to spot potential chase opportunities, wildlife, running dogs, bikes, joggers. Our heads are spinning within a few minutes and at no point can we watch our dogs to take joy in what they are doing. In fact even writing this I can feel the anxiety rising as I remember back to those days. Yep we have ALL been there!

So how can we attain that peaceful walk and find a happy balance of safety and freedom for our dogs? The obvious and often forgotten answer is the use of a long line.

Wearing a long line your dog is safe to roam at the distance any off lead dogs should go (we don't like our dogs roaming far away even those with no desire to chase). You can be confident that whatever they spot they are unable to chase. Immediately you can relax your horizon scanning. Obviously awareness of our surroundings is important but the security of a long line means we can stop

the panic and take time to enjoy our dogs. Dogs are masters of reading body language and walking off lead for a dog that chases, not only has the high level arousal associated with being off lead, but also they have to contend with an owner who also has super high level arousal, anxiety and who suddenly turns into a Sergeant Major and barks out commands every three seconds – so maybe it's not as much fun as we think, or as free.

On a long line they can learn from your calm body language that being off lead is not automatically a time to get over excited, or to charge about like a mad thing. Long lines allow a much longer time of freedom for them which also helps to lower their arousal and need to get all their running done in the five minute safety window we find in an empty field.

“  
On a long line they can learn from your calm body language that being off lead is not automatically a time to get over excited

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# BENEFITS OF A LONG LINE

## Being aware of how and when to use one is very important

The benefits of a long line are many, however they don't suit every situation and being aware of how to use one and when to use is very important. We like to introduce our dogs to wearing a long line at home, in the garden they know well. Just as we would take the time to teach a pup to walk on a normal length lead, we take the same time to teach the dog how they should respond to cues on a long line.

Teaching directional commands can be done in the safety of your own garden, left and right can be taught by throwing a treat in the direction you want and moving your body that way. Gradually adding in a cue as your dog begins to mirror your movement.

A 'steady' command is useful so they know it means a pull of the harness is coming. Stand next to the dog and gently apply pressure onto the harness, as you do this throw treats onto the floor directly in front of the dog. Once this has been repeated and your dog pairs the pull

of the harness with stopping for treats, you can add in the 'steady' cue before the gentle harness pressure. Progress this gradually to having your dog and yourself moving around slowly and then at faster speeds. Make sure in this situation that the cue comes before the harness pressure, we want the dog to know that 'steady' means you are coming to the end of the line and to slow down.

Attaching the long line should be a 'no big deal' kind of moment, so many people attach the long line and encourage the dog to immediately engage in high energy play or running. This can end up in a dog that zooms off in one direction the minute their long line is attached and the normal lead unclipped - only to be jarred to a sudden stop by the end of the line, not pleasant for the dog or for your arms!!

Using the long line in many low level arousal situations (in the house, garden, anywhere they're relaxed) means you can acclimatise

your dog to it being clipped on and off and it being a non-event. Keep the threshold levels low. There is real benefit in putting your dog's leads on and off many times a day, it really helps to take away the over the top behaviour you see when so many dogs have their lead put on and this applies to a long line as well.

Keeping everyone and every dog SAFE is paramount when using a long line. If a dog is wearing a long line it should always be attached to a well fitted and strong harness.

Here at AbsoluteDogs we love the Xtra Dog Harness, it's comfortable and strong, perfect for everyday use and great for fitting a long line to. The long line is there to prevent chasing so it too needs to be strong enough that it won't break, with thin lines you also run the risk of rope burn if it goes across the back of your legs, ouch!!

Consider the material and thickness before you buy. Check your dog's harnesses and leads regularly, those of us that have been around horses know checking their tack carefully is included within the daily routine of tacking up and it should be the same for dogs. We see so many dogs with frayed leads, rusty buckles or ill fitting harnesses that potentially endanger your dog's and others safety. Take time every day to check over your equipment, the stitching and buckles are particular areas we like to ensure are in peak condition - it really is very important.

The other important thing to remember with a long line is that you should always be holding it. Allowing it to trail on the floor does stop it getting tangled but it also runs the risk of your dog taking off with a 20ft line dragging behind it, which has serious risks.

So when is it appropriate to use a long line and with which dogs? For us here at AbsoluteDogs if we feel there is a chance we may lose a dog for whatever reason (chase included) then that is the perfect time to use a long line. Losing a dog is without a doubt a very stressful and dangerous situation and one to be avoided at all costs. If in doubt then don't risk it. Out on low arousal walks, when there is room to pass others is ideal. Fields and moorland are where we use our long lines the most. Parks can be great for long lines but again be aware, watch your dog, look for relaxed body language, check there are no high energy ball games if your dog is ball mad or any obvious cyclists if your dog chases bikes. This is a time, again, where you need to be your dog's expert - you know them best and you know what will send them into chase mode. Your judgement of their overall attitude each day can be the best guide for when a long line will be appropriate.

When would we not use a long line? This is easier to describe! There are some definite no go places to using a long line. Using a long line when there is a high potential your dog will chase is a definite no for us. You could be setting yourself up for injury as your dog attempts to run to the end of their line at full speed. A long line is a safety and back up tool. We don't view it as a chance for your dog to practice chasing and become over threshold. Also be aware of what is around you. Take an agility show exercise area for example. A good tip is to go and scan the area before you take

your dog - who else is walking? Are there multiple dogs speeding around? Are toys being used? If you can say yes to any of these then that is not the time for a long line. Long lines can be dangerous to other dogs if they take their legs out.

Remember a long line is not for your dog to use at speed, it's a time for calm mooching and freedom. Also the build and type of dog you have needs to be taken into consideration. A big breed such as a German Shepherd can have quite an impact if it hits the end of the long line at full speed. Know your own strength - don't put yourself in a situation where injury can be caused. How long do we use a long line for? - Well this is quite literally how long is a piece of string (or nice soft webbing!). We often see two types of people who use long lines: those that settle with using one as a way of life and never attempt to change it, and those that are desperate to move on to complete off-lead and take the long line off too soon. There is no hard and fast rule with this but it is important you constantly review your use of a long line. Has your dog improved in different situations? Have they become worse off lead in situations where they were once good?

“

**Has your dog improved in different situations? Have they become worse off lead in situations where they were once good?**

”



For us, using a long line is not a way of life, we don't settle for it with every dog BUT we do know that for some dogs it's always a tool we can fall back on and do often go back to in response to our dog's behaviour and the place we are in. As you work through the NBN program you may well begin to explore different situations and environments, this is a great way to test out your dog's responses to how they will be without their long line. If you have spent time clipping and unclipping it then when you do come to taking it off, the dog should remain calm and continue walking. This is why making putting leads on and off a non-event can have big impacts on how your dog reacts out on walks.

We love using long lines but we do keep reviewing it - behaviour is always either getting better or worse and our use of the long line needs to adapt to mirror this.

“

**If you have spent time clipping and unclipping it then when you do come to taking it off, the dog should remain calm and continue walking**

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 Absolute Dogs.

*Chase your dreams*



DOG TRAINING STRUGGLE?

THERE'S A **GAME** FOR THAT



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