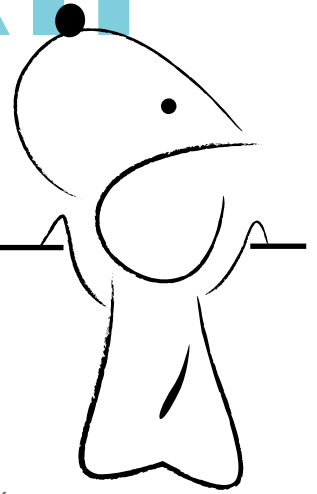


THE GET A GRIP Hack



WHEN to use it

Emotional regulation is an important life skill that benefits any individual, and the lack of it can present very real obstacles to navigating life's challenges as they occur.

Many modern dogs experience high levels of frustration in their pet lives, and can benefit profoundly from some development of better tolerance to that frustration.

The “Get a Grip” Hack uses the process of feedback through shaping the internal state of our dogs, and empowers them to regulate themselves through whatever means they find functionally calming, rather than requiring a specific behavior or cued response.

It is used to help dogs who have difficulty regulating their emotions (*no or little filter*) learn to meaningfully calm themselves in the presence of exciting triggers, with very little human intervention, therefore helping them to develop

the important life skill of emotional regulation in the face of arousing conditions (*filter installed*). This hack can be a powerful way to help any dog handle life better as it unfolds, and can be a key to working complex impulsivity & reactivity types of cases.

HOW to use it

This is less about “*training*” and more about using arousing situations as a teachable moment for the development of a foundational aptitude for handling big feelings that arise for our dogs.

“**Getting a grip**” simply becomes a general contingency for access to all the stuff in life that arouses our dogs. The dog does not need to be doing any specific overt behavior, like sitting, or lying down.

We want to practice this in real time in everyday circumstances (*dog wants to go out, dog wants to eat dinner, dog wants to go say hi to their friend*) to build up the dog's skill with low stakes excitement before we expect that the dog would be able to “get a grip” in high arousal scenarios. Dogs will discover that a “grip” not only works much better than the lack of it on a practical level, but also that they feel so much better internally as they face life's exciting conditions with significantly reduced frustration.

“
**Powerful way to help any
 dog, handle life better as it
 unfolds**
 ”

Equipment needed

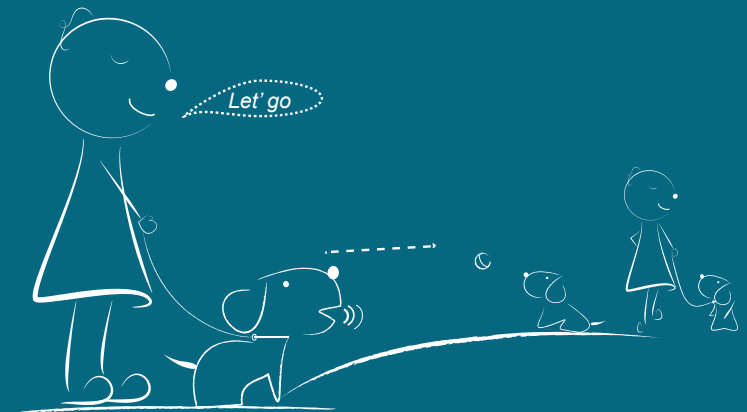
barriers such as doors or baby gates, drag leashes, regular leashes, flat collars or harnesses, and tethers may be useful



THE GET A GRIP Hack

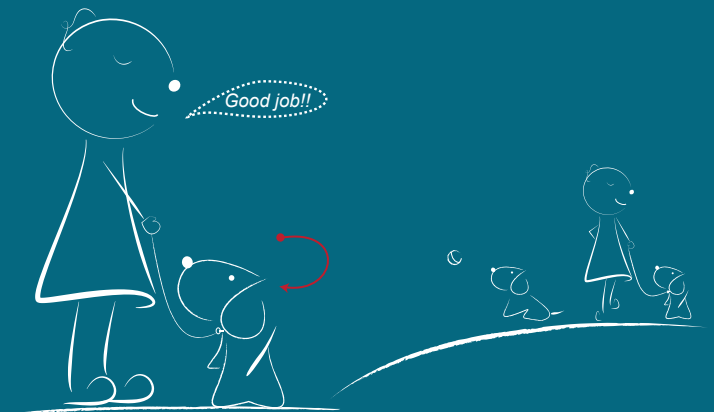
Step 1

When the dog becomes over-aroused in anticipation of response to a desired stimuli, **prevent access** to the target object or event/ activity until the dog has regulated their emotional state **OR remove the dog** further away from the arousing stimuli until the same (*using gates, leashes, etc*).



Step 2

Capture and reinforce a “grip” as contingency for access. “**Getting a grip**” can look different for different dogs, and it is important that we observe the ways in which a given dog expresses a calmer state and allow a variety of behaviors to be acceptable as the effective demonstration of a “grip” to access various opportunities in life. Some dogs might sit or lie down, but others might just walk away or shake off, stretch, scratch, or go get a drink or water. Anything that demonstrates a solid de-escalation from the aroused state (*or the absence of reaching a highly aroused state*) in the face of the presenting stimulus will do! Simply “**capture**” the **emotional state** through shaping via feedback (“**good job buddy**”, **click of a clicker, etc.**) when the dog has a “grip” and allow the door of opportunity to open, granting the dog access to their goal in that moment. Do not try to get the dog to calm down through prompts, cues, distractions, etc.



Step 3

If the dog becomes highly aroused and emotional once granted access to the stimuli, simply repeat the steps of removing the dog from the access again until they become regulated again. Repeat as needed until the dog can maintain regulation in the presence of the stimuli.

