

Building Confidence Through Pressure on and Pressure Off Training

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A great training game for a dog exhibiting caution or fear in a specific situation or in response to an object.

Examples of situations Pressure on Pressure Off may be helpful

- Example 1: Dog exhibits caution or fear at a distance of six feet from a scary object.
- Example 2: Dog exhibits caution or fear when putting a paw onto a scale at the veterinarian's office.

Pressure on Pressure Off supports the dog's trust in their handler thus builds the training/working relationship and the dog's confidence. This in turn makes progress easier for the dog.

The release of pressure is critical to the process to let the dog know he/she will not be pushed or made to feel afraid.

Before you begin know your dog's comfort zone/fear threshold

A dog's behavior changes as they reach the threshold of their comfort zone. Changes of behavior may include refusal to eat treats, stretching out to reach the treat, backing up, barking, etc.

During this entire training process it is important to:

- Support your dog so he/she is feeling comfortable.
- Allow the dog to progress at his/her own pace.
- Never pushed into feeling afraid.

TRAINING STEPS

Step 1 - Pressure On

- Offer a treat just outside of or on the edge of the distance or location that changes the dog's behavior. The dog should be feeling comfortable enough to eat the treats.
 - Example 1: Treat is offered at just over six feet away from the scary item.
 - Example 2: Treats are offered for being near the step. If the dog is comfortable the treat may be placed onto the step for the dog to take without stepping onto it the scale.

Step 2 - Pressure Off

- Toss a treat away from the scary item and allow the dog to go and eat it. This releases the dog from any concerns about going nearer to the scary object. This is also the reset to repeat Pressure On.

Repeat

- Repeat Pressure On and Pressure Off multiple times. If the dog is eagerly playing the game try placing the treat just a bit closer to the scary item. If the dog begins to exhibit caution or fear go back to the training where the dog is comfortable again.

Short Training Sessions

Short sessions that end with success will typically result in the next session advancing more easily.