

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE CANINE BRAIN

E-BOOK

FROM "WHY DOES HE DO
THAT?!" TO TRUSTING EACH
OTHER AS A CLOSE-KNIT
TEAM



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HI!



How nice that you bought this e-book. In this e-book we are really going to look at the basics of your dog and human-dog communication. Before you check out any of my other lectures or read e-books, I would always recommend this e-book as a starter. After all, without a good foundation, you can't build a proper house. Without this foundation, life between you and your dog becomes a lot harder, and that's really not necessary.

I'm happy to teach you everything I know.

A LITTLE ABOUT ME

I am Liz Wolting, founder of Animal's Faith and president of Animal's Faith Foundation. Animal's Faith is a training center that specializes in dogs with severe behavior problems and euthanasia counseling. In addition, my foundation takes in dogs whose owners or other shelters have said, "I can't do anything more with this, I don't want anything more with this." We rehabilitate these dogs and rehome them safely.

Because we specialize in dogs with most severe behavioral problems worldwide, we look very deeply into the psyche of both the dog and the owners. Only this way can we form a good bond between the two. In this e-book, of course, I will tell you all about that.

I studied veterinary medicine at the University of Ghent. I did not finish the studies, because at one point I had a side job in an animal shelter and there I lost my heart to the shelter world. Eventually I started my own training center and shelter. That was a long time ago now; I started in 2009. In those years, I have learned so much.

If you want to know more about me, be sure to follow me on any of my social media channels (@lizwolting). You can always send me a message, because I love to help.

LIZ

I have now trained more than 15,000 dogs and saved more than 7,000 dogs from death. And, of course, I will continue to do this for as long as I live.

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INTRO

To start, we will first look at the cause and effect of the behavioral problems we see most often in the Netherlands. Where do these problems come from? Why do things so often go wrong between dogs and people? Then we'll dive deeper into the basic needs of the dog. In other words, the things we need to take into account a lot, so that we can make sure the basis is right and you can build on that. Then we go deeper into the dog's sense of security. This is hugely important, because if a dog doesn't feel safe, we're guaranteed to have a whole host of problems, just like with humans.

In the final section, we'll look at what you can expect from your dog when the basics are in place. We discuss social interaction among dogs, as well as between dogs and people and dogs and other animals. On top of that, we'll dwell on recognition. What is it and how do you recognize recognition? And how do you get your dog into a self-development layer, a wonderful state to be in, and what does that look like? How do you guide that? What are the pitfalls? And how can you guide your dog through life that way? Let's get started.



CAUSE & EFFECT

About 80 percent, if not more, of dogs in the Netherlands have behavioral problems. That's a huge number. In the Netherlands, we are really extreme in this. This is because the Netherlands is a small country with a lot of dogs and a lot of people, so the overall stress level in the Netherlands is high. And because we humans have a high stress level, so do our dogs.

In addition, in the Netherlands we rely heavily on science. We often lag a bit behind because of this, because science needs time to reach conclusions. Someone has to have an idea, test this idea and repeat it several times before there is scientific evidence. This can take 15 to 20 years. During that time, we miss the opportunity to move forward based on logical thinking. This is not to say that science is bad, but relying on science alone can cause delays in what we can learn.

Many behaviors that dogs exhibit are not always seen as problems or are simply accepted in the Netherlands. Think of pulling on the leash or jumping up against someone. Because these behaviors are common, they are considered normal however this is not always the case.

It is very important here to be able to make a distinction. Is the dog doing this because he likes it, because he is comfortable with it, or is there some other motivation? Not every dog has to exhibit the same behavior as the neighbor's or your aunt's. Dogs, like people, have different personalities. What is normal for one dog may be problematic for another.



1.1 PROBLEM BEHAVIORS

I already named some behaviors: jumping up, pulling on the leash, falling out on the leash and **barking** a lot. People then often call their dog "watchful" and say, "Yes, he barks at every bird in the yard." At that point, of course, your dog is no longer watchful, because a dog that watches knows exactly when to bark and when not to bark. A dog that barks continuously experiences a lot of stress, which is not pleasant for him.

Busy behavior and hyperactivity are actually never pleasant for a dog. Dogs can suffer from this, for example, headaches, neck pain and tense muscles. As humans, we often label this behavior as enthusiasm because we find it fun to watch. This is because dogs have different facial expressions than we do. We will discuss this in more detail later. When a dog is very busy, he is rarely enthusiastic. Busy behavior usually comes from the stress hormone adrenaline, which triggers the body into action. This action causes hyperactivity, which is thus directly linked to stress.

Non-social behavior toward others can take various forms, such as reactivity on leash, running at other dogs who are afraid, seeking nose-to-nose contact and then biting, or biting in the heels.

Jumping up to small children and knocking them over is undesirable behavior.

This behavior is not meant to be nice. People sometimes think, "He's just a little clumsy." This is rarely the case; a dog knows very well what he can and cannot do. The chances of him accidentally knocking someone over or hurting them are slim. This behavior is usually a sign that the dog is trying to tell us something. We need to be open to this and take it into consideration.

Lastly, we also see a lot of **coercive behavior**, also called control behavior. This can include a dog bumping under your elbow when you drink coffee to demand attention. Or dogs that walk behind you all day and even want to go to the bathroom with you, or scratch at the door. Also consider dogs that constantly demand attention to go outside, only to want to go back inside.

This **controlling behavior** can also manifest itself in always wanting to be in the eye, lying in the middle of the room, being the first to jump on visitors, and being very hyper around you. Many people think this is joy because the dog is happy to have visitors. But again, for the dog, this is hyperactivity, i.e. stress behavior. What many people consider normal behavior is actually not normal or happy for the dog.

1.2 WHY DO THINGS GO WRONG BETWEEN DOGS AND HUMANS?

We have lived with dogs for so long, but instead of fewer and fewer behavior problems, we actually see more and more behavior problems in our dogs. Why is that? First of all, it's because of our ancestry. Humans are primates and descended from apes, which have a very different way of communicating than dogs, which are descended from wolves.

Despite some people claiming that our current dogs have nothing to do with **wolves**, this is obviously not true. 75% of all dogs on this planet still live in nature, in the wild. The genetic kinship between wild dogs or street dogs and dogs living with humans is very high. In the Netherlands, we even take many dogs off the streets and place them in homes. However, the life of dogs in the wild looks very different from what we humans expect from dogs, which of course can cause **friction**.

Besides, our **communication** differs tremendously. People do a lot based on sight and often assume that dogs also do a lot with their eyes. For a dog, however, this is not helpful because a dog cannot see very well. A dog sees about as well as we can hear. For the dog, its primary sense is the nose, not sight. Dogs see the world through smell.

When stressed, the dog's sense of smell diminishes, just as in humans their sight diminishes when under a lot of stress. This makes life a lot harder, because under stress dogs cannot make full use of their primary sense.

In addition, people **talk** a lot. We try to communicate things primarily through language, and we often try this with our dogs as well. This can be confusing for dogs because they bark mainly in stressful situations and communicate on an energetic level in normal situations. Although it is often said that dogs work on body language, I do not completely agree. A dog cannot see properly and therefore cannot always notice the subtle body language of other dogs. Of course there is body language associated with a dog's state of mind, but the most important means of communication for dogs is energy. When we start focusing only on the dog's body language, we miss many signals because a dog functions purely on that energy. And the more we as humans start talking to a dog, the less space there is to be susceptible to their energy. The more we talk, the less room there is to be sensitive to that energy. Talking is very much in our heads, while energy is in our bodies. When we are too much in our head, we lose connection with our body and it becomes more difficult to communicate with our dog.

Communicating energetically with your dog makes mutual communication much clearer. Today I want to take you a step in that direction and teach you how to do this.

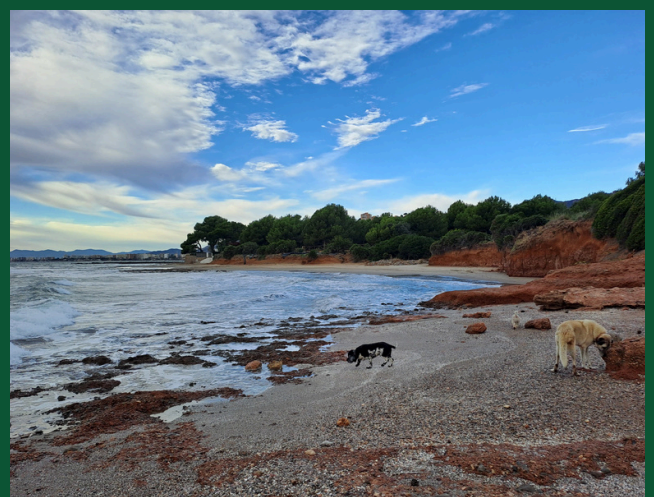
Finally, humans and dogs also have **different needs**. Humans are primates, and something very typical of primates is that we get relaxed from doing things with our hands. When we work in the garden or pet a dog, we produce endorphins, which relax us. Dogs, on the other hand, usually produce adrenaline and cortisol when we pet them. They may also produce some dopamine when they initiate the petting themselves, but that's more because they then engage in a piece of coercive behavior and that behavior was successful, giving them a dopamine shot. Just as humans can develop a dopamine addiction, which is common these days, so can dogs. However, this is not a healthy condition because it creates additional stress, hyperactivity and addictive behavior. Both dogs and humans then become only concerned with getting the next dopamine shot, which is not a relaxed and healthy way to live.

Because we have become distant from nature and have arranged the world in such a way that little natural behavior is possible, both for us and for our dogs, we have become distant from our nature.

This has caused us to think in difficult ways and come up with incredibly complicated solutions for the simplest things, which does not necessarily always make life more enjoyable.

In the Netherlands, this problem is perhaps even greater because there is little room for both people and dogs to exhibit natural behavior. This leads to increased stress levels in both people and dogs, which contributes to behavioral problems.

In this e-book, **I want to teach you to go back a little bit to your own core, your own roots, and your peace**. Back to how we humans were actually made to function, without all the fuss. Don't get me wrong, I am absolutely not against development. I also use technology, such as computers, and find that they can certainly supplement it. But when all the unnatural starts to dominate our lives, you see that people end up higher in stress than people who live more according to their nature, as we have done for centuries.



Because of the distance we have created between ourselves and nature, we have become very focused on our own self-interest. We as humans have become quite individual. We have somewhat lost the sense of group, which is very important as mammals and therefore also as humans. We now often think, "I have to be able to do everything myself and handle the world on my own." As a result, human interaction often falls away. Many people feel lonely and no longer feel they can rely on other people. **This creates an empty feeling, which we often try to fill with our dogs.**



This makes it difficult for a dog because a dog can never take on the position that other humans should actually occupy in our lives. Dogs are true group animals; they want to do everything for the good of the group. They don't have that bit of self-interest. This means they are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the group. This is wonderful and we can learn a lot from it, but it can make their lives unnecessarily difficult.

It means that dogs can make themselves sick with stress because they are trying so hard to do well.

1.3 WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THIS?

Delve into the nature and language of the dog

First, we need to learn about the dog's nature and language. If we do not understand that nature and language well, communication becomes very difficult. A dog has the mental capacity of a two-year-old child. Now we as adults can communicate fine with a two-year-old, but we cannot expect a two-year-old to communicate at the level of a say 35-year-old. It's the same way with dogs. We can adapt our communication to the dog just fine, but we cannot expect the dog to adapt its communication to us. It's us who want the dog in our lives. It's not like dogs ring our doorbell and ask, "Can I please live with you?" So we have a responsibility to immerse ourselves in their language and nature. Understanding dog language and behavior is essential for good communication and a harmonious relationship with our dogs.

Your dog is your mirror, so practice self-reflection

It is incredibly important to know that a dog is always mirroring us. This is not always fun to hear and some people don't want to hear it either. Even some dog trainers try hard to ignore this. But that would be completely illogical, because almost all mammals, including humans, learn through mirroring.

In a normal world, young dogs would grow up with their parents and learn through mirror behavior how to act in different circumstances. What we humans do, which is pretty crazy, is we take puppies away from their parents very early and often forget to take on the parental role. This is not always helpful, because it means the dog only has us to learn from. As a puppy, he comes to a human and doesn't know anything yet. There are then one or a few people to teach him what to do in this strange life. He starts mirroring us because he has no other choice.

Our children still go to school and learn from different adults, but a dog usually only has his owners to learn from. Of course, you can put a dog in-house with a trainer or take him to a training center during your vacation, where he also gets training from others. But in most cases this does not happen and your dog has only you to learn from. Therefore, it is very important that we are aware of this and know that we have to take up the parenting role. It is up to us whether our dog grows up stable or not. This is a big responsibility.

Before you buy a dog, it is important to ask yourself if you want to bear that responsibility. If you find the thought of that exciting, you can also opt for a rehoming, i.e., a shelter dog. These dogs already have a foundation, which can be good or not so good.

Fortunately, a dog is always teachable; even a 13-year-old dog can still learn new behaviors, especially if his circumstances change. Never be afraid of this.

It is often easier to teach a slightly older dog new behavior, because you already know his character well, than to raise a puppy from scratch. The more stable you are yourself, the more stable your dog will become. We say for a reason, "Dogs become like their owners" or "This owner is like the dog." This is because the dog constantly mirrors us and therefore acquires the same traits as us. This is quite normal.

Be logical and simple

As I mentioned earlier, a dog has the mental capacity of a two-year-old child. Therefore, it is crucial to keep training simple. I often come across dogs in my work whose owners say, "I went to training and I had to do step 1 this and step 2 that." But if people themselves already have to think very hard about what certain steps were again, it is a sign that the method is too complicated.

If you as an adult already don't find a training logical and can't easily reason about it, you can 100% assume that your dog won't understand it either. If we have to think very hard about it, you can be sure that your dog is not going to understand it either. This is because dogs don't have the same brain capacity as we do.

I always say: if you can't explain it to a two-year-old child, your dog isn't going to understand it either. Keep it simple and logical so that both you and your dog can follow and understand. This makes communication and training much more effective and enjoyable for both of you.

Ensure adequate rest and relaxation

Rest, relaxation and sleep are incredibly important for dogs. It is also very important for humans, but we often downplay this. With dogs, it is even more important that you let them rest enough and that you teach them to keep their peace in everything in life. We humans admire others who can remain calm under any circumstances. Think of Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela, people who remain calm and grounded even under the most difficult circumstances without panicking. This is important not only for humans, but also for dogs.



The calmer you are as a person and the more you work on your own calmness, the better your dog will be able to maintain his calmness. Teaching rest and relaxation is essential to your dog's health and well-being. So take the time to build in moments of rest for your dog and make sure he gets enough sleep. This will contribute not only to a happier and healthier life for your dog, but also to a stronger bond between you and your dog.

Compare it to raising a young child

So the comparison to raising a child is something we can often extend, because raising your dog is really the same as raising your child. You want to turn a young individual into a stable adult, and that takes practice, training and patience. This is no different with dogs.



THE BASIC NEEDS OF A DOG

In order to better understand what your dog's needs are and, therefore, to fill them correctly, I use Maslow's pyramid. If you don't know this theory, you should definitely give it a quick Google. This pyramid explains in a simple and clear way how to build the foundation and fill needs in both dogs and humans, and what is important in doing so. The bottom layer of the pyramid, that of basic needs, is the most important. By making sure these basic needs are met, you lay a solid foundation for your dog's well-being.

Not meeting the basic needs would mean there is no good foundation and you can't build on it. So with any dog, regardless of the problem, it's very important to look first: is that foundation solid? Do we have everything we need to fulfill those basic needs? What exactly are these basic needs? Simply put, they are the things an individual or an animal needs to survive. On the next page you find the the most important ones.





Food: Without food, a dog will die. So food is an absolute basic need.



Drinking: Water is essential. Without adequate fluids, a dog cannot survive.



Rest and sleep: Sleep is crucial for survival. Too little sleep not only leads to a lower quality life, but can ultimately shorten lifespan.



Exercise: Exercise is essential for all mammals. It keeps the digestive system functioning properly and prevents muscles from atrophying. Without adequate exercise, a dog cannot live long.



Reproduction: Although reproduction is essential for the survival of a species, it is less relevant in dogs because there are currently too many dogs rather than too few. Nevertheless, it is one of the building blocks of basic needs. If you have an uncastrated male or female dog that is not allowed to reproduce, an imbalance often occurs. This is important to address. I am certainly not one to say that all dogs should be neutered immediately. Especially with male dogs, I think it is important that they are confident enough before we proceed with castration. It is a nice goal to work toward a dog with so much self-confidence that he no longer needs his testosterone.

With female dogs, I am quicker to advocate spaying because it makes the bitch more balanced and offers significant health benefits. Especially in the Netherlands, you almost always see unspayed bitches develop uterine infections or mammary tumors (breast cancer). Spaying a female dog later in life carries much more risk. With uteritis, the uterus can pop if you catch it too late, which can be fatal. Mammary tumors have a high risk of metastasis, and even with surgery, there is a high risk that the cancer has already spread. Therefore, in the end, I am always in favor of spaying or neutering. We have more than enough dogs and most are not allowed to reproduce. Constantly asking a dog to go against his instincts can be difficult for any dog.

FULLFILLING THE BASIC NEEDS

Get plenty of rest

Dogs have a great need for rest and exercise, much greater than humans, especially in terms of rest. Dogs are predators, and what do all predators have in common on this planet, be they dogs, lions, tigers, you name it? They need a tremendous amount of sleep, about 80% of their time, which amounts to about nineteen hours a day.

Why is that? Dogs sleep more lightly than humans. They are less likely to enter REM sleep and even less likely to enter deep sleep. As a result, they need more time to process all their stimuli. This is perfectly normal, but we need to give them those hours of rest. In nature, dogs sleep those 19 hours straight, but in humans we often see a problem. Because we ourselves have a rather weak bladder and drink a lot in proportion, we often think that a dog needs to pee very often. Because of this, we take a dog outside way too much and disturb him in his long stretches of sleeping. Then outside, the dog receives all kinds of stimuli, especially in a busy country like the Netherlands. Coming home overexcited, this causes him to sleep less well. It then takes longer before he falls asleep again. So if we go outside with the dog four or five times a day, he hardly sleeps during the day and has to make up for it at night.

Lack of sleep can cause all kinds of behavioral problems. Just imagine sleeping only three hours a night for a week. What happens then? You become irritable, irritable, you pass out faster, you get phantom anxiety, and you start hearing things that aren't there. All sounds come in louder and all of life becomes very unpleasant. This is because you have too many stress hormones in your body.

With dogs it is exactly the same. We humans are primates and a primate needs about 30% of its time to sleep, which is 8 hours a day. So there is already a huge difference in that. Too little sleep is one of the causes of behavioral problems in almost all dogs. This always interacts: the more severe the behavior problem, the more stress and the worse the dog sleeps. The worse the dog sleeps, the more stress and the more severe the behavior problem. A vicious circle.

There is little point in working on a behavioral problem as long as the dog is not sleeping enough. If the dog does not sleep, how is he supposed to learn anything new?

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If the dog does not sleep, how is he supposed to learn anything new? His brain is not capable of learning. So improving sleep is hugely important.

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Get plenty of exercise

For humans, it is often said that we only need 30 minutes of exercise a day. I totally disagree with that. I think that is way too little. We were made to walk and exercise much more each day. That's kind of the norm now, but hopefully that will change someday. I am convinced that we need at least as much exercise as a dog.

A dog needs at least an hour and a half to two hours of exercise a day. This is important to keep his physical well-being, keep his muscles flexible, stay comfortable in his skin, maintain his weight and have meaning in life. If a dog sees very little in life, many fears also arise. Just like in humans. If you always stay in your comfort zone, life becomes boring. You don't grow and after a while it becomes uncomfortable. If you stay in your familiar zone, you lose your meaning in life. This also applies to dogs. Therefore, it is important to take your dog everywhere and do new things with him just outside his comfort zone. This is essential for his well-being and happiness. This is why I am a big advocate of adequate exercise and adventure for dogs, provided the dog can also sleep enough in a day.

Know the differences in energy levels

There are great differences in energy levels between dogs, and fortunately this is becoming more and more accepted and recognized.

Humans also have different energy levels. For example, if you are high energy level but chose an office job, you're out of luck and still have to sit behind that laptop eight hours a day. With dogs, this is better looked at because dogs express it much more clearly.

A dog with a high energy level will show its problems much more bombastically than a dog with a low energy level. Take an average Spanish Mastiff, for example; these are often low-energy level dogs. They may think, "I don't like this very much," but they are so calm and chill that they barely show their displeasure. They do this by very small signals that you, as a behaviorist, have to be able to see well so you don't miss them. Most people who don't work with dogs often miss these signals and think that problems come out of nowhere. They usually don't; there are subtle signals beforehand.

Just like in humans. If you always stay in your comfort zone, life becomes boring.

On the other hand, for example, you have an average Belgian Malinois, which generally has a high energy level. These dogs react very intensely to situations they don't like: they jump, bark and make a big show of it. This is due to the difference in energy levels.

Dogs with high energy levels tend to have more behavioral problems because they want to explore a lot but also get overexcited quickly. If I were a dog, I would put myself under this category because I am a high-energy human. I want to do and explore a lot, get bored easily, but also get overexcited quickly, especially in crowded conditions. Finding a balance is crucial, both for me and for the dogs I work with.

Need for food is smaller than thought

It is important to realize that the need for food in dogs is smaller than in humans. Although there is a need, dogs do not need to eat as often as we do. Many people eat too often and too much, and with dogs this is even more crucial. Most dogs in the Netherlands are fed twice a day, which amounts to fourteen times a week. Because of this, we see more and more hypersensitivities, allergies and obesity in dogs, because their gastrointestinal systems are not actually made for such a frequent diet.

A dog was originally designed to eat only three to four times a week. Then he eats a lot at one time and then belches for two days. I'm not saying that you should only feed your dog three times a week and then eat a lot at one time, especially with kibble food that's difficult. But it can help to feed your dog only once a day, for example. This can cause him to become more fulfilled and have more drive. Looking for food and having to earn it is important for dogs. With an abundance of food, dogs can lose their meaning in life because they no longer have a purpose or mission. This can weigh heavily on a dog's psyche.

So it can be very helpful to feed your dog only once a day. Good veterinarians often recommend giving a dog a day of no food for diarrhea, as this allows the gastrointestinal system to calm down for a while, which is healthier than immediate medication. Occasional days of fasting or eating less often each day can often help dogs a great deal. The better they feel physically, the better they feel mentally and vice versa. If we have not fulfilled these basic needs above, the foundation is not strong, and it becomes very difficult to build on it. What is strongly related to this foundation – and of course everything is related in life – is the next layer, the sense of security.

THE SENSE OF SECURITY

Put yourself in the shoes of your dog. Suppose you come home and go to bed. In the evening someone breaks into your house while you are in bed. At that moment, of course, you feel extremely unsafe. Maybe you don't dare to act, maybe you freeze, maybe you want to run away or maybe you confront the burglar. Whatever you do, they are all expressions of fear.

Chances are, because of what you experienced, your sense of security is affected. You don't sleep well the next night because your adrenaline and cortisol levels in your blood are a lot higher. You are more tense, more susceptible, all sounds come in louder and you don't feel safe. You get into a primal fear and fear for your life. Even if you rationally know that the burglars only came for the TV and not to do anything to you, your lizard brain says, "Danger, this is not good, we have to do something about this."

Many dogs with behavioral problems experience this state of being every day, often for several hours a day, sometimes even all day long.

This, of course, is not a pleasant state of being. Therefore, it is very important that we reinforce that sense of safety in dogs. They need to know that they are safe with us and that we care for them, so they don't have to worry.

If you want to strengthen a dog's sense of security, it is very important to be clear. When there is miscommunication or inconsistency, for example by saying one moment that something does not have to be done and the next moment saying that it does have to be done, the dog becomes confused. I often see this with dogs that are acting out. Reactive dogs are dogs that are very afraid of other dogs and react with a "fight" response. They think, "If I just am behaving ugly enough to that other dog, it will be more afraid of me than I am of it, and it will go away."



The next layer is the sense of security. This is really incredibly important with dogs. You can compare it to a small child's sense of security. A small child needs his parents as caregivers, someone to protect him from the big bad world and teach her how to deal with everything in life. Everything is new, we don't know any of it, we just come to this planet and have no idea. We often forget this with dogs: they have no idea either.

An additional disadvantage for the dog is that at about six months old, he looks like an adult dog, while at that time he is comparable to a child of three in terms of age.

With dogs, you may always multiply age by seven, so if your dog is one year old, that is equivalent to the first seven years of a human's life. The first seven years of human lives are super important and largely determine what behavioral problems we get later. It's exactly the same with dogs. So that first year is very, very important. The better that first year goes, the easier and more stable your dog will grow up. If your dog does not feel safe and thus his sense of security is compromised, he experiences a sense of existence insecurity. This means he thinks he could die at any time. That is not fun.

People then sometimes become afraid of their own dog in certain situations and do not always take their dog into protection. Sometimes they do, for example by having the dog stand behind them, but if, for example, an off-leash dog comes at their dog, they let go of the leash or step aside. This inconsistent behavior can make the dog very unsure of when it can or cannot rely on its owner and causes a loss of sense of security. Just like with humans: if we are not sure we can rely on someone, we prefer not to.

Therefore, it is important to always protect your dog, no matter the circumstances. Even if you think you can't do it, do it together with your dog. Don't abandon your dog and don't say, "Figure it out on your own." The dog needs to know that its owner is always there to help.

The better that first year goes, the easier and more stable your dog will grow up.

Feeling safe is hugely important. Especially in crowded areas, such as the Netherlands, life is more difficult for a dog. If a dog thinks he has the caring task over his owner, life becomes very difficult for him and his sense of security is damaged. The more removed a dog is from nature, the harder it is for him to feel safe. So don't give your dog the idea that he has the responsibility of having to take care of you.

It is important to always protect your dog, no matter the circumstances.



EXPRESSIONS OF A COMPROMISED SENSE OF SECURITY

How do you know if your dog thinks he has to take care of you? How do you know if your dog's sense of security has been compromised? There are several signs that indicate this.

One common behavior is **pacing**. You often see this in dogs walking along the yard fence, back and forth, left, right, left, right. They think they need to ensure safety and keep an eye on the street. Then when someone comes, they try to scare them away by barking loudly. This is a clear sign that the dog does not feel safe. He dares not go to sleep or relax because he thinks he has to be constantly alert and has many responsibilities.

Another common problem is that the dog **follows you around all day**. So if you can't even go to the bathroom without your dog wanting to be there, he's not doing it because he loves you. He does it because he's worried about you. He's thinking, "Are you okay? I have to keep an eye on you, because if I don't keep an eye on you, something might happen and then it will be my fault." This makes the dog think that he has to be awake all the hours we are awake. How else can he keep an eye on you when he is sleeping? He can't. Which means you will always have a lack of sleep.

Now many people say, "Yeah, but dogs follow, don't they? They do that in nature, don't they?" Absolutely, they do. But that's what dogs do outside. So the moment your dog is following you outside, while you're walking or hiking around, that's perfectly fine. But inside, it's different. Dogs naturally live in a den or cave, or somewhere under a container, car, whatever they can find. Small, dark, with only one exit. Inside, dogs never follow each other. That would create too much commotion and noise, letting other animals know where their hiding place is, and that makes the hiding place less safe.

So outside following is not a problem, but inside following is. If your dog follows you inside all day, it means he cannot or dare not take his rest. It is not because he loves you very much, although of course he loves you. He worries about you so much that he is harming himself. This is not a healthy form of love. If you want your dog to grow healthy and old, it is important to help and guide him. Explain to him that it is not necessary to follow you everywhere, so he can learn to rest and feel safe.

If your dog follows you inside all day, it means he cannot or dare not take his rest.

Dogs that follow a lot inside do usually not follow you outside. **Outside, they will often pull on the leash and walk ahead, in front of you.** Why? Because then they don't suddenly think, "I'll walk behind you and follow you." No, they think, "I have to walk ahead so I can be the first to encounter danger and act." This means that the dog constantly feels unsafe. He constantly thinks that danger is lurking and that he must be in an action position. This is very unpleasant for him and absolutely no fun.

Another behavior is **frequent marking**. Many people think that their male dog has to lift his paw at every blade of grass, but this is not true. In the dog world, in nature, the male dog (often the sire) marks the area, and this has a function.

Once the area is marked off, other dogs and roaming groups know, "Oh, this area is already occupied, so we won't go in here." Dogs are conflict-avoiding and don't want an argument. So if they know a pack of dogs already lives there, they will go around that area and find another place to settle.

In the Netherlands, of course, this doesn't work. If your dog starts marking off his area in the hope that other dogs will stay away, he will always fail.

Your neighbor is not going to think, "The neighbor's dog peed here this morning, so I won't let my dog out anymore." So every time your dog goes outside and thinks he has his area safely marked, he comes outside and smells that there have been other dogs after all. This causes him to panic and think, "Oh my gosh, it's not working. What I instinctively know I should do is not working." He panics and starts marking even more. Eventually, excessive marking can lead to prostate and kidney problems, which of course we want to avoid.

Every time we accept marking and say he is right, we are actually affirming that his job is to keep other dogs away and make the area safe. Under that task, your dog will succumb because he can never succeed. He will only fail, and constant failure does not make anyone happy. So it is very important that we always set our dog up for success and not failure.



Then we have **stressbarking**, which we touched on briefly in the beginning. People often think their dog is watchful if he barks a lot, but often it is stress barking. A watchful dog knows what he is barking at and why he is barking. A watchful bark is short, heavy, deep and confident, usually two to three times. After that, it's good: "Hey, watch out, something's coming, you need to be alert for a while." Dogs that stressbark tighten all their muscles and their voice skips, giving you a high, fast bark. This makes the dog very hyperactive because he is producing a lot of adrenaline at that time.

It becomes a stressful situation and your dog can't understand you at that point either. What we humans often do is go along with that stress: "No, stop! Leave that!" The dog then thinks, "Oh, wow, he's joining in, great! I'm doing good because he's copying my behavior." This only motivates the dog more to keep barking at these kinds of stimuli, which is not helpful.

If we want a dog not to stressbark, it is important that we ourselves set the right example. We must exude calmness and not go along with the barking. The dog needs to know that it is not his job to bark at every bird or passerby. Often the problem starts with dogs that bark a lot indoors.

These dogs are often on the lookout and constantly want to look out through the window. When a dog lies down somewhere to keep an eye on everything, he does so not because he likes it, but because he thinks he has to and that it is his job. If we approve of this behavior by saying it is fine, the dog will continue to perform this task and start barking. Then we say this is not allowed, which of course makes no sense and is very confusing for the dog.

This is similar to someone asking me, "Hey Liz, will you train my dog to walk nicely beside you?" If I start with that and then that person says to me, "No, you can't let my dog walk beside you at all, you can't touch my dog," I would feel very confused. So consistency is incredibly important for good communication between you and your dog and for making your dog feel safe. Imagine someone asking something of me first and then scolding me when I try to do that thing. Then I will feel very unsafe with that person because the person is giving conflicting signals. For dogs, this is no different. They need clarity and consistency to feel safe and understood.

Being overalert is another signal that the dog does not feel safe. For example, dogs that lie on the windowsill and bark at every sprite or sound are in an overalert state.

This is often caused by an excess of adrenaline and cortisol in the blood. The stress and tension makes the dog feel constantly on edge, which makes things more difficult for him. Some people joke about it: "Yes, my dog really hears everything." That's not necessarily a good sign. If this bothers your dog, it is important to help him sleep better. Sleeping better helps him break down his stress hormones and get into a calmer state of being.

Another problem are **fears and distrust, grounded or ungrounded**. An example of an ungrounded fear is that many dogs who do a lot on their eyes, because they are too high in their stress levels, get frightened at night by a wheelie bin or garbage bag standing outside. They only see a shadow because they can't see well and because they have "turned off" their nose because of their high stress level. So they don't smell that it's just a bag with garbage in it. Instead, they only see a vague, large, black shape and cannot define it. This can make them very afraid of the garbage bag, which is an unfounded fear. There has never been a garbage bag that has hurt a dog. Ungrounded fears, of course, are not nice to live with. We humans also often have ungrounded fears and this can make our lives quite difficult. The bigger we make these fears in our heads, even though they are not realistic, the harder our lives become. For dogs, this is exactly the same.

My advice is to work on this. Teach your dog that there is no need to be afraid. Calmly approach that garbage bag and let your dog sniff it, so it will activate his nose and he will get the peace of mind of: "Oh, it's just a garbage bag." This teaches him to find that peace and overcome the fear.

Dogs with a **compromised sense of security** exhibit behaviors similar to humans with a compromised sense of security. They are in a constant state of agitation. People who are always hyper, want to be in control of everything, and exhibit nervous behavior often have a high impaired sense of security. With dogs, this is exactly the same. The more nervous your dog is, the greater his compromised sense of security.

What happens when your dog doesn't feel safe? He will always sleep too little. And if he doesn't sleep enough, that sense of security can't recover either. So step one is to work on your dog's sleep. Make sure he sleeps all 19 hours he needs to sleep. Whether that's in a crate, a basket, or somewhere else, make sure he's there so he can go to sleep. As long as he is running around and busy, he obviously can't sleep.

The first thing to do is to make sure your dog becomes less active. He must learn to be inactive and not act. The better he becomes at this, the easier his life will become and therefore your life as well.

EXPRESSIONS OF GOOD AND GREAT SENSE OF SECURITY

Early in the learning process, the owner's state of mind plays a big role. Dogs mirror our behavior and we mirror them too. When we are calm and confident, the dog feels safe. After all, you always feel safer with someone who is calm and confident than with someone who is hyperactive and nervous.

A dog who feels safe will not exhibit fear reactions. This does not mean he will never startle, but he will not react with panic, such as running away hard, freezing ("oh my god, what am I going to do with this?") or overcompensating.

Overcompensation can manifest as busy behavior, lots of controlling behavior, or lashing out at other dogs. This is a way for the dog to hide its fear by acting tough.



A dog that is balanced does not need to overcompensate. First you have to remove that overcompensation to get to the core emotion, fear. Then you have to address that fear. In dogs that overcompensate and lash out a lot, you see that this behavior diminishes as you train properly. They then seem to become more fearful, but in reality the fear comes out because they trust you enough to show it. That is a beautiful development.

It works that way with people, too. When I'm not doing well and someone I don't trust asks, "Hey Liz, how are you?" I often say, "Yeah, I'm fine." This is overcompensation. I'm not doing well at all, but I'm pretending. Whereas if someone I trust asks how I'm doing, and I'm not doing well, I have the courage to honestly say, "I'm actually not doing so well." I then feel safe enough to tell my story. This is a sign of trust and just the right thing to do.

The feeling of safety varies by situation. The more familiar the situation is, the safer it feels. If a situation has gone well every time, you will feel safer there. Just like with people: if I never fly and courageously board a plane alone for the first time, check in and everything that comes with it, I will probably feel very unsafe.

It's exciting and I get stressed, create extra adrenaline and am nervous. But if I've flown 10 times in the last six months and it's gone well every time, then the 11th time I think, "Yeah, I'll be fine." I worry less then because I am familiar with the situation.

Socialization is crucial for both humans and dogs to feel safe. If I never take a plane, I am not socialized in that regard. Socialization can also disappear again. If I fly ten times in a month, but then don't fly again for ten years, I have lost that piece of socialization. It's still there somewhere, but it's no longer easily accessible. If I fly again a few times after that, it comes back faster and I worry less.

The same goes for dogs. If you want a dog with a great sense of security, you should socialize him as much as possible. The more he sees and experiences in life, the easier and nicer his life becomes, and the more he can handle. This also applies to ourselves: the more you get out of your comfort zone and discover new things, the more confident you become. For some these are big steps, for others small steps. It doesn't matter, as long as you take steps.

Sticking to familiar patterns and rituals can be very helpful for a dog. It provides a piece of safe haven and a stable foundation, which can be very important.

For many dogs, the owner is their safe haven, and sometimes so is the home. If the home represents peace and security, it can contribute a lot to the dog's well-being. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many dogs with behavior problems, but by working on this, the home can become a safe place.

I myself travel continuously with my camper throughout Europe to help dog shelters and rescues. My own dogs see me as their number one security and my camper as number two. The camper really feels like home to them; they feel safe there, can rest and relax. That is very important.

By "patterns," I don't mean living according to the clock. If you adapt your whole life to feeding your dog at 6 p.m., you will make your dog inflexible. After a while, he will start whining for food at five to six or ten to six and exhibit control behavior because he is sure he will get his way. This creates more coercive behavior and makes him inflexible.



Suppose one time you are in a traffic jam or something unexpected happens and you are home later, a dog who is always fed at 6 p.m. will be much more stressed by that than a dog who is always fed half an hour after his walk. Sometimes that walk is at five and sometimes at six-thirty. The ritual is that you go for a walk first and then he rests for a while before he gets his food. This is a good ritual, but it is not tied to a strict time. Dogs cared for this way are much more flexible.

My advice is not to work on the clock with your dog. Don't adjust your life so that you always have to be home exactly on time to walk or feed your dog. This makes your life harder and makes you less able to take care of yourself. And the less well you do, the less well you can take care of your dog. Patterns are absolutely allowed to be there, but make sure they are not frenetically tied to time.



SOCIAL INTERACTION

If you have the basics right – your dog rests enough, eats enough, drinks enough, moves enough and feels safe – then that's the time to look at your dog's social behavior. Many people do this the wrong way around. They focus first on social behavior, both in themselves and in their dogs. They think it is important for their dog to play with and meet all other dogs. This is absolutely not true.

We must first provide safety before we can develop social behavior. If your dog does not feel safe, he can never be social. We are going to explain this in more detail here.

WHAT IS SOCIAL INTERACTION?

Social interaction is the need to belong to a group. This need is great in a pack animal, just as it is in humans. Although we sometimes lose this, it is a large human need. The definition of love is very important here. When I love a dog, I understand and accept that dog as a whole and take into account its needs, not my own.

This is where we often see miscommunication.

Many people do things for their dogs because they want to. This means they love themselves a lot, which is a good trait. But it's important to understand the difference. You need to know when you are doing something because you like it yourself and when you are doing something because it is good for your dog. In my profession, I try to teach people that we should do things that are good for our dogs, even though we may not always like it ourselves.

It is important to be aware of this. Suppose I feel like giving my dog a cookie, and my dog stands compulsively beside me as I take the cookie out of the cupboard. He asks, "Now give me that cookie." Then I can say I want to give my dog a cookie because I like it.



But I can also think, "My dog is now exhibiting coercive behavior, which is causing him stress. I don't want to reward this because I don't want him to have unnecessary stress in his life. I want to reward him when he is calm, because I want him to experience as much peace as possible."

Then I put the cookie in my pocket and don't give it to him. Even though I may find that difficult and pathetic, I do it for the greater good because I want my dog to grow up stable. At some point when my dog thinks, "I'm not getting a cookie," and he lies down in his basket and breathes a deep sigh, I take the cookie out of my pocket and put it in his basket.

I then say, "This is the right state of mind. You will get a reward for this." Then my dog thinks, "I was just chilling here and then I got a cookie. Wow, I'm going to chill more often." And, of course, that would be great if he makes that switch.

Social behavior includes the ability to connect with others in a social manner. Many dogs I encounter on my walks are not very good at this. They often exhibit antisocial behavior toward other dogs or animals. Think hunting behavior, barking at horses or sheep, and hounding other animals. None of this is social behavior. We have bred this antisocial behavior into certain breeds, often out of fear and control behavior.

We have heavily bred in control behavior, which has caused these dogs to exhibit more of this behavior. However, this is not fun for the dog. It is important to understand that.

This is not to say that this behavior is always bad, but hunting is of course forbidden in the Netherlands for dogs without a hunting license, so you have to unlearn him anyway, whether you like it or not. This is necessary because the law is there for a reason; it can become very dangerous otherwise. But that doesn't mean you can't see if you can still meet those needs a little bit in other ways. Knowing that you can never meet them 100%. But also knowing that if your dog lived in nature, he would never have developed that behavior so strongly. This is because we have genetically selected those dogs for certain behavioral traits.

For example, suppose a dog showed neurotic behavior toward geese. Then someone thought, "That's handy, I'm going to try to find another neurotic dog like that and cross the two together."



That way I'll get neurotic puppies." This shows how we have bred behavior into dogs in an unnatural way, mostly for our own interest. It used to be very important, because we needed dogs for specific tasks. Nowadays this is not so important, so it is also not useful to make dogs practice with this behavior. Anything a dog can already do by himself, he does not need to learn or train with much, especially if he is not allowed to use the skill.

It is better to teach him things he cannot yet do, to let him grow outside his comfort zone. That will make him confident. Compare it to cooking: if I am very good at cooking, I will always be better than average, and that is fine. But that doesn't mean I have to cook every day, unless I want to become a top chef. If I'm just a functioning human being without the ambition to become a top chef, I don't need to practice cooking every day. Instead, I'm better off practicing something that I care about and want to grow in.

A socially acceptable manner means that a dog is considerate of other dogs' energy. This does not mean that he has to run up to everyone. In some cases it is social, when another dog or human is excited and a dog responds happily and enthusiastically.

That is fun and social behavior. But suppose five minutes later you encounter a dog who is afraid of other dogs and doesn't want to interact. If your dog then still happily and enthusiastically approaches him, he is exhibiting antisocial behavior.

Social behavior means that a dog can read the energy of others, anticipate it and adjust its behavior accordingly. If your dog sees that another dog does not feel like contact and walks around him in a arc, that is social behavior. If he calmly and quietly approaches another dog who does feel like contact, that is also social behavior. However, most dogs cannot do this by themselves. You want your dog to respect others, not scare them, not push them over their limits and not push them to the point where they have to defend themselves.

To accomplish this, your dog must be well rested so that he can properly assess the situation. We have to teach him this, because there is no dog in the world that can do this by itself.

Normally, parent dogs teach this to their pups. If we take a dog away from its parents at an early age, it is our job to fill that parental role and teach them how to handle different situations and moods.

WHAT ARE NEGATIVE SOCIAL ACTIONS?

Claiming direct contact or stepping into another person's personal zone: all dogs and humans have a personal zone. In humans, the personal zone averages 50 centimeters. That's why we shake hands when we get to know each other, so we stay just outside each other's personal zone and it feels safe. If someone comes very close to you or you're standing with 20 people in an elevator, you often feel uncomfortable because those individuals are in your personal zone without invitation. This does not feel comfortable.

It is exactly the same with dogs, with the caveat that a dog's personal zone can fluctuate greatly. If a dog feels very unsafe, he has a large personal zone and does not want anyone to come near him. With a dog that is scared, he may already be lashing out at a dog on the other side of the street. As the dog becomes less afraid, his personal zone will get smaller, and he may eventually be able to pass dogs at half the distance with no problems. The ideal is for your dog's personal zone to become so small that he feels confident and safe even when passing other dogs on the same sidewalk.

Jumping up: especially toward people, jumping up is unkind behavior, especially when done with high energy. With small dogs, jumping up can be functional, because otherwise we have to bend down to fetch them. They jump up quietly so we can get to them better. This is a different energy than a dog that jumps up enthusiastically and can hit your lip in the process. That is antisocial behavior and shows no respect for your personal 50-centimeter zone.

Giving a paw: This is often a trick of dog schools to show that they can teach your dog something. However, every dog on this planet can naturally paw because it has a function. In dog language, it means, "Oi, I think I have more to say than you." Dogs who feel safe with humans often hesitate to give their paw. But a dog with a lot of coercive behavior easily says, "Here, I'll tell you what to do too." This, of course, is not meant to be very social. It's kind of like what kids do in a big family: lean on someone and use them as support. This is not necessarily social behavior. It does not mean that it is meant to be wrong, but it shows that you are using the person as a support and not as a full individual.

Hanging over another dog: This is also not a social behavior. People do this too, especially when they are angry. They make themselves big, look down on the other person, and try to show their dominance. This is overcompensation and comes from fear. From fear, we can never exhibit social behavior. Therefore, it is important to realize that this is not social behavior and that we need to guide our dog in this.

Tense frontal contact: This is similar to people. You can say "hi" in a friendly way, but if you stare someone tightly in the eyes and slightly challenge them, you already know it is not meant to be nice. In dogs, this is also not social behavior.

Hyper behavior: Dogs that are hyperactive have no room in their heads to engage in social behavior. You also see this in hyperactive people. If I walk in somewhere and feel a little down, and someone with a lot of stress starts giving me all kinds of tasks without paying attention to my state of mind, I don't feel seen. That person is too busy with his own stress to read my energy. Hyperactivity leaves no room for social behavior, because there is only room for one's own feelings.

Fear: Fear is not a social act. A frightened dog just wants to get away and think, "We shouldn't go there." This creates a lot of adrenaline and cortisol, as well as hyperactivity, which makes the dog increasingly stressed and makes life less fun for him.

Overcompensation: This is very common in humans. We act tougher than we are, telling cowboy stories to impress. This stems from fear and is not a social behavior. It can be coping behavior, sometimes necessary, but it is not a social behavior. If you get into these non-social acts a lot, you get a busy head, you start grinding, you don't feel nice and restless. This leads to sleep problems, which makes you go back to the basic layer: rest and sleep.

Dogs that are hyperactive have no room in their heads to engage in social behavior.

SOME EXAMPLES - LESS SOCIAL

Here are three pictures that you can see are all less social situations.



At the **left**, you see a blond dog hanging over a black dog. This is clearly overhanging. You can also see it clearly from the blond dog's tail. It is completely erect, indicating high tension. The tail bends slightly to the right, which means the dog intends to attack or bite. The black dog knows this and prepares to run away. Its tail is already flush with its back, streamlined for flight. Its head is not visible, but it is probably flush with its back as well. This situation is bound to lead to a confrontation and it is already too late to intervene.

Then you have the **right photo** with the Rottweiler cross that very clearly indicates a boundary to the shepherd dog. Even though we humans often see this as scary, this still falls under social behavior because the dog is clearly indicating his boundary. However, this does mean that the shepherd dog was antisocial, since he stepped into the Rottweiler cross's personal zone. Given the position of the shepherd dog's ears, he probably thinks "oh oh" and will probably deflect, causing nothing to happen. This means that the German shepherd shows the least social behavior in this case.

SOME EXAMPLES - LESS SOCIAL



In the above photo you see a dog that is very curious. You see a high tail posture, which indicates excitement, but the tail tip bends to the left. This means that the dog is excited, but has no intention of showing ugly behavior. The cat, on the other hand, shows very social behavior: a low tail and clearly no fear of dogs. The sideways posture means "I have no bad intentions," which is very neat.

What you may not be able to see clearly in the photo, but you can on closer inspection, is that the dog is not making frontal eye contact with the cat. He is looking at the cat's buttocks and not straight into its eyes, which is very neat. So here you see more social actions. Because of the slight tension, because the dog does sit in the cat's personal zone, there is slightly less social behavior, but in a way that shows this is going well. Both animals manage to maneuver despite the tension so that nothing exciting or harmful happens.

SO WHAT ARE SOCIAL ACTIONS?

The most important thing is nose-to-tail contact. That is social contact. Nose-to-nose contact is always antisocial with dogs. People sometimes make that mistake because we often make frontal contact, for example by shaking hands while facing each other directly. As a result, we often put our dogs face to face as well.

You see this, for example, when people want to chat for a while and have their dogs face each other. If our dog wants to turn away, we tend to pull him back. After five minutes of chatting, we then say, "Oh, shall we let them off the leash?" We snap off the leash and the dogs clap on each other. This happens because we have put the dogs in an attack position for minutes, whereas dogs by nature do not make frontal contact.

Dogs, if they do it nicely, always go with their nose to the other dog's tail. This allows them to soak up all the information. Good contact moments are short, always calm and relaxed. The tail is low, although a dog may lift its tail for a moment to make room for the other dog to sniff. But there is a lot of relaxation in this act, and the contact moments are always short, usually about three seconds.

Dogs also need three seconds to initiate an attack. If you want to introduce a dog and you are not sure, you can always use the three-second rule. This means you let the dog sniff the other dog's tail and count to three. On the third second, you take your dog away. If your dog found it too exciting and might want to lash out, that happens at the third second. This allows you to get him away in time and prevents him from harming the other dog.



Daring to ignore each other is actually the most social thing there is. In a social interaction, dogs sniff each other's tails, and then they go their separate ways again. They can just be near each other, sniffing or doing something else, without constantly interacting with each other. Dogs that play and interact with each other all the time are often not social. These are often dogs that carry a lot of tension.

It also works exactly the same way with people. If someone enters my house and I don't quite trust that person, it is harder for me to have a pleasant conversation in a social manner. My social skills immediately go down because my sense of security is compromised. Because of that compromised sense of security, I become restless and want to watch that person all the time. That may be very obvious or out of the corner of my eye, but I don't lose sight of that person.



On the other hand, if I feel very safe with someone and there is a lot of trust, I can be very social without feeling like I have to constantly follow that person. Then I'll say, for example, "Nice to have you here, kid. You know where the refrigerator is, make yourself at home, will be fine." I then have no need to constantly monitor that person.

It works exactly the same way with dogs. If dogs trust each other, they dare to ignore each other. If they don't trust each other, they remain constantly engaged with each other. A dog also has a smaller personal zone when he feels safe.

Social skills immediately go down when your sense of security is compromised.

SOME EXAMPLES - SOCIAL

Here are some examples from our own archive of dogs with social behavior:



Two puppies from our puppy class get acquainted, completely relaxed. The Heidewachtel puppy doesn't even look at the white shepherd puppy. The white shepherd's tail hangs nice and low, just like the Heidewachtel's. The shepherd lifts his tail for a moment with his head, so he can sniff better.



My Akita sniffing a small puppy. Again, there is peace and relaxation. The Akita often has its tail up when standing or walking because it is attached to the upper leg muscle, which has little to do with its tension level. The puppy remains calm with his ears pointed toward the Akita, which is normal. It was a brief moment of contact and then they went their separate ways again.



My ex-asylum dog even sniffs a fake cow neatly from behind, without seeking frontal contact.

SOME EXAMPLES - SOCIAL

Here are some examples from our own archive of dogs with social behavior:



A group of dogs lie relaxed together with small personal areas. They dare to lie close together without watching each other. There is much peace and relaxation.



My Akita nicely sniffs a shelter dog, quietly from behind.

RECOGNITION

Once you get that social interaction right, you can move to the next layer: recognition. Recognition can sometimes be a vague concept, so I'll explain it as best I can. I always find it helpful to compare recognition to a work situation.

When we come into a new job, consistency and recognition are very important. When someone explains well what you have to do and exactly what your tasks are, and those tasks are always the same, there is consistency. This means you don't have to do this on Monday and something completely different on Tuesday, which can be confusing. Consistency prevents you from having to do something on Monday that you don't have to do on Tuesday, which can get you upside down for something you don't have to do anymore.

In addition, it is important that the tasks suit you. For example, if you work with me in the training center as a trainer, you don't get managerial duties. This makes it all easier and less complicated. You get tasks that fit your profile and personality, so that it is not too difficult or too high.

In addition, you feel support from your colleagues and employer. This allows your self-confidence to grow. You feel recognized and seen, and you become more and more independent. In the beginning, you may not know what to do in situation A, but over time you recognize similarities to situation C and can make decisions with logic and common sense. This is how you learn to make choices and become more independent.

This is exactly the same with your dog. If you are always very clear about what his task is and is not, what you help him with and what he can do himself, he feels supported and understood. This strengthens the bond between you and makes your dog more confident, which ultimately allows him to handle more tasks. So it is very important to give recognition: seeing who your dog is, where he stands, and what he can do. You must not forget this, because this is where things often go wrong in practice. We will go into that in more detail now.

IMPROPER RECOGNITION

People often give incorrect recognition by giving dogs **more freedom than they can handle**. You see this more and more with children these days as well, giving them more choices than they can handle. It works the same way with dogs. For example, if you have a dog that can't run off leash yet, is reactive on the leash and pulls, these are all signs that your dog is not yet mentally ready to run off leash. But because we like to see the dog loose and not holding a leash, we give the dog that freedom in the name of friendliness. However, this often has more to do with self-interest than kindness.

It is important to understand that we should not give a dog more freedom than he can handle. More freedom automatically means more responsibilities. In my business, for example, I have a lot of freedom because I am the boss and travel around Europe with my camper. But that freedom comes with a lot of responsibility. I bear all the responsibility for my business. With dogs and all mammals it is no different. The one with the most freedom also bears the most responsibility. That responsibility can become too much for a dog.

If we want a dog to have less responsibility, we must limit his freedom so that he feels less responsible. This is very important. If we move too fast, the dog is suddenly given more tasks than he can handle. This creates frustration, ambiguity, miscommunication and turmoil. The dog feels thrown in at the deep end and not understood, leading to regression to the first layer of rest and sleep. It is crucial to proceed calmly and step by step so that the dog feels confident and understood. And if you go through this phase well, then you enter the self-discovery phase, and of course that's fantastic, that's actually what we most want to be in with our dog.



SELF- ACTUALISATION

In the self-actualisation phase, you first want all the previous layers to be properly and stably built up. **This means that your dog really starts to develop and wants to step out of his comfort zone.** Not only is this good for him, but he feels he can do it. He feels like doing and learning new things. This is a great step in your training to move to the next level.

For example, you go from a reactive dog to a non-reactive dog, to free-following or running off-leash in front of you. Every time you want to make such a move, you want to do it at the time when your dog is in the self-development phase.

For example, if you have a dog who is reactive to visitors, first teach him not to be reactive in his basket or crate. If he can do that, he is in the self-disclosure phase. Then you can take it a step further, such as practicing with the crate door open instead of closed. If that goes well, you can practice with a basket instead of a crate. If that goes well, then you can practice in different places, so he can lie in different places while visitors come in.

And if that goes well, you can even let him walk freely through the house while visitors enter. It is important to always build up these steps step by step.

This is how your dog learns to assess new situations better and better and to make the right choices. A dog who used to only bark or bite when visitors came, learns by practicing step by step and building on trust that it will be okay even if he doesn't act. He discovers that he does not have to do anything because it is not his job, and that he can just stay chill. This, of course, is enormously important. It makes the dog less dependent on our guidance and more and more able to function independently, which is great for him.

Your dog learns to assess new situations better and better and to make the right choices.

SELF-ACTUALIZATION, THE DANGERS

Of course, self-actualization also comes with risks. In many cases, the dog's obedience decreases because he thinks he can do it himself.

Especially if we go too fast and give freedom back too soon, the dog can become overconfident and less responsive. This increases the chance of dangerous situations, especially in a busy country like the Netherlands, which can cause irritation, fear and miscommunication.

What do people often do in such a case? Then they start by completely restricting the dog's freedom, but only keep it up for a few days before going back to how it was. This big switch makes it increasingly difficult for the dog and can lead to sleepless nights and a lot of misery for both you and the dog. It is important then to go back to layer one first, make sure you both get enough rest, and then work on trust step by step.

And then what do we humans often do? We think, "Oh, now you can't do anything at all." We keep that up for four days and then we fall back to where we were. That transition is very big, making it more and more illogical and awkward for the dog, and harder for you. As a result, he can't sleep, neither can you, and it becomes one big misery. Eventually you are back to square one.

You have to start back at the beginning first. Make sure you both get enough sleep and adequate rest. After that, work on trust step by step. It's not like you can stay in the self-development phase all your life; that's impossible. **You will always be going up and down the ladder.**

However, the thing is that if you are at level five and fall down, you always return to level one. This means that you always start over at level one. Then you make steps again to level three and fall back to one, then to level four and back to one again, and so on. This is normal and also the intention in life. It is always new things that you practice with, expanding your comfort zone a little bit each time.

So relapse is not a disaster. Don't see this as failure, but as a normal part of life. It is important to be mindful of this. Don't think, "Now I've done this and everything is going well, and I never have to do anything again." You will always have to keep steering.



HOW DO YOU REALIZE SELF-ACTUALIZATION?

You always want your dog to be able to continue to rely on you.

Even though he is incredibly independent, you want you to remain a team. We do this by always standing up for our dog and working with mutual respect and understanding. We expect respect and understanding from our dog. That means he behaves himself, like not causing a blood lip or pulling your arm out of its socket, but also understanding that we humans are not always stable. We can also have a bad day once, and the dog should not take advantage of that, but rather think, "Okay, then I'll be a little calmer today too."

This works the other way around, of course. We have to understand and respect that a dog can sometimes make a mistake, that he is not a robot. We have to respect when our dog indicates he doesn't want to be petted for a while, or doesn't need a long walk, or does. We should always show that respect and understanding.

Take responsibility, no matter what.

Even a confident dog we should always continue to help and not suddenly let him solve everything by himself. The moment your dog gets into a conflict with another dog, or if another dog comes running at him very fast and makes your dog uncomfortable, it is important to be clear and stand up for your dog. A confident dog will not immediately run away in fear, but it may feel uncomfortable. Confident people can also become uncomfortable because of certain situations, and that is fine, it is allowed. In such situations, it is important that we always stick up for our dog. We should always help the dog and find a solution together.

Suppose a dog comes running very hard at one of my dogs. Although my dogs can deal with that, I will still stand in front of or beside my dog and help him in that situation. That way he knows he can always rely on me, and I know I can rely on my dogs.

Always make sure that you yourself always take responsibility. We want a dog, so we, especially in the Netherlands where everything is unnatural, always remain responsible. If your dog makes a mistake, don't say, "Yes, that stupid dog," or "Yes, he never does this otherwise." No, say, "Sorry, I wasn't paying attention. This is my responsibility."

I did indeed not handle this properly. Sorry, I'm going to work on it and make sure this doesn't happen again." That piece of responsibility is hugely important in making our dog feel safe.

Compare it to a situation where someone pushes me in front of another person and that other person bumps into me. If the person who pushed me then says, "Yes, god Liz, what a sucker you are, why did you do that?" then, of course, my trust in that person will immediately disappear completely, because it was his or her fault that I landed in front of those feet. So it's very important to always have that trust and that responsibility.

Stay a team, that is really the most important thing. A dog is a pack animal and so are we originally. As a team you get the furthest; cooperation gets you the furthest in life. It is extremely important that we always push that and go for the win-win, not for self-interest. Then you get the best bond possible with your dog. That's fantastic!



SUMMARY

The biggest problems lie in layer 1: rest (and sometimes exercise)

The cause of behavioral problems often lies in the first layer: with rest, sometimes in combination with movement. In other countries I see that sometimes the problem lies with that movement, but in the Netherlands this is often not the case. Still, it can be a problem if your dog does not walk or only stays in the garden. Then your dog's world remains very small and he never gets enough controlled exercise.

Peace of mind is the red thread and should be reflected in everything.

Tranquility in you and your dog should be found everywhere if you want to help your dog as much as possible. A dog always mirrors our behavior, just like children, friends, and so on. That is quite normal. So dare to look at your own behavior and take responsibility. The more honest you dare to be with yourself, the easier your bond with others will become. This applies to dogs, people, horses, cats, and so on. The more honest you remain to yourself, the easier life becomes.

Logical thinking will get you the furthest.

Make sure your thinking is logical and easy to explain, for example to a small child. Check your own thinking. Don't make it difficult or complicated. Life is actually very simple and easy. Not easy, but simple and straightforward. Solutions are also always simple and easy, especially with something natural like a dog.

Build a solid relationship based on trust.

Always, especially with your own dog, build a solid foundation and bond based on trust, step by step. Don't expect, as you sometimes see on TV, to learn a trick in an instant and everything is solved. Strange eyes compel, and it looks spectacular when we can make a change in no time. But those are snapshots. It is important to understand that it is impossible to build a stable bond with your dog overnight. A stranger has no pre-existing foundation and so the change seems more impressive. With your own dog, you have to earn that trust and respect again. This is very normal and totally okay.

NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS, WHEN IS SOMETHING WRONG?

To conclude, below you will find a list of behaviors that are essentially not good. They are behaviors that your dog displays to indicate that something is not right, that he is not in the best headspace and needs help. Your dog literally yells "Please help me" when he exhibits one or more of the following behaviors:

- Hyperactivity/pressure behavior (often mistaken for "enthusiasm")
- Excessive barking
- Polar Bears
- Whining for attention
- Always catching the eye
- Being the centerpiece
- Impulsive action (no time between action and reaction, dog does not think anymore, has only one neural pathway in the brain, no thinking pause, cannot control impulses and is very clumsy)
- Pulling on the leash
- Falling out on the leash
- Zigzagging/forward (inside/outside)
- Frequent marking
- Overcompensation (not daring to show fears/insecurities)
- Being anxious (in itself better than overcompensating)
- Controlling behavior/ wanting to be with everything
- Following
- Unable to find peace
- Disobedience

POSITIVE BEHAVIORS

Finally, what are desirable behaviors that indicate your dog is feeling nice and content?

- Calmness and tranquility
- Not being moved quickly
- Sit (out of respect, not because you have a cookie)
- Be able to wait
- Being patient
- Great ability to concentrate
- Impulse control
- Compliant behavior (outside)
- Belonging and being part of
- Being respectful
- Not hurting (physically & mentally)
- Not taking advantage of mistakes
- Being gentle
- Being social
- Taking into account circumstances, moods, changes

THANK YOU



I wish you much the best of luck in applying the knowledge and tips from this e-book. It is my hope that it will help you build a deeper bond with your dog and live a happy and balanced life together.

Should you encounter any problems during this process or need additional guidance, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be happy to help you further. In addition, I encourage you to check out our other offerings of lectures, workshops and e-books. You can find all the information on my website and social media channels.

Together we can make sure you and your dog get the best out of your relationship. Good luck and enjoy the beautiful moments together!

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