

# Helping Your Dog to Stay Calm



Taking your dog out should be fun, but if your furry friend gets too excited, it can be stressful. Luckily, there are ways to help them stay calm, even when there's a lot going on.

In this guide, we'll explore simple methods to promote tranquillity in your dog, whether you're at home or out and about. By understanding and meeting their genetic needs, you can turn your energetic pup into a peaceful companion, no matter the setting.

Just as dogs can pick up on our emotions, they can also be influenced by our energy levels. When an owner is stressed or anxious, it can transfer to their dog, exacerbating any existing tension. Conversely, when the owner remains calm and composed, it sets a positive tone for the interaction and helps the dog feel more at ease.

By practising mindfulness, (being aware and present in the moment) and maintaining a relaxed demeanour, owners can create an environment conducive to teaching and reinforcing calm behaviour in their furry companions. When owners are mindful, they are attuned to their dog's needs and can respond calmly and thoughtfully to any situation that arises. This mindfulness fosters a positive atmosphere where the dog feels secure and at ease, facilitating effective training sessions. Owners of horses will tell you that there is an unspoken connection that is formed when you focus on the animal, speak softly and act kindly. Furthermore, a relaxed owner serves as a role model for their dog, demonstrating how to navigate various situations without becoming stressed. This not only enhances training outcomes but also strengthens the bond between owner and pet, promoting a harmonious relationship built on trust and understanding.

Dogs look to their owners for guidance and reassurance, especially in unfamiliar or challenging situations. When the owner is calm and focused on the dog, it strengthens the bond between them and fosters a sense of trust. This trust forms the foundation for effective communication and learning, enabling the dog to feel safe and secure in their

owner's presence. By prioritising the dog's needs and maintaining a calm demeanour, owners can cultivate a deeper connection with their canine companions.

Dogs are highly attuned to their owner's behaviour and often mimic their actions. If the owner reacts anxiously or becomes agitated in stressful situations, the dog may mirror this behaviour, escalating the situation further. On the other hand, when the owner remains calm and handles challenges with patience and confidence, it sets a positive example for the dog to follow. By modelling calmness and resilience, owners can help their dogs learn to navigate the world with composure and grace.

It's important to recognise when your dog is feeling stressed or overly excited. Knowing what sets them off and keeping expectations realistic is the foundation for a calmer dog.

Dogs thrive on routine, so creating a consistent daily schedule can help promote a sense of stability. Set regular times for meals, walks, playtime, and relaxation, and stick to them as much as possible. Predictability can help alleviate anxiety and provide structure for your dog.

Every dog needs a quiet, comfortable retreat where they can relax and unwind. Designate a specific area in your home, such as a crate or a cosy corner, as your dog's "safe space." Fill it with soft bedding, toys, and comforting items to create a calming environment where your dog can retreat when they need a break from stimulation.

Teach your dog relaxation techniques to help them calm down when they're feeling stressed or anxious. Practice activities like deep breathing exercises, gentle massages, or guided relaxation sessions where you encourage your dog to lie down and relax while you speak to them in a soothing tone. Over time, your dog will learn to associate these exercises with feelings of relaxation.

Mental stimulation is just as important as physical exercise for keeping your dog mentally engaged and preventing boredom. Provide your dog with interactive toys, puzzle feeders, and enrichment activities that challenge their cognitive abilities and keep their minds sharp. Engaging your dog's brain in stimulating activities can help tire them out mentally and promote calmness.

Regular training sessions are not only an opportunity to teach your dog new skills but also to promote calm behaviour. Incorporate short training sessions throughout the day, focusing on commands like "sit," "stay," and "settle." Use positive reinforcement techniques such as treats, praise, and rewards to encourage calm behaviour and reinforce obedience.

Nature offers plenty of opportunities for your dog to explore and unwind. Take them for walks in parks or play interactive games to keep them entertained and calm. And don't forget to create a peaceful spot in your own garden for relaxation time.

Once your dog is relaxing on cue at home, it's time to practice staying calm in more stimulating environments. Start with quieter areas and gradually work your way up to busier places. Reward good behaviour and also work on walking nicely on the lead.

Every dog is different, so it's essential to understand what makes yours tick. By catering to their natural instincts and providing enough exercise and mental stimulation, you can help prevent them from getting too wound up.

#### A Success Story: Meet Max:

Max used to be a real handful, always chasing cars and getting into mischief. But once his owner started engaging him in activities that tapped into his instincts, like flirt pole training, Max became a lot calmer. Now, he enjoys walks without getting fixated on passing vehicles.

Effective training requires clear communication and consistent reinforcement of desired behaviours. When the owner is calm and focused on the dog during training sessions, it allows for better communication and mutual understanding. By providing clear cues and timely rewards, the owner can reinforce calm behaviour and facilitate learning in their dog. Additionally, maintaining focus on the dog helps the owner identify subtle cues and adjust their training approach as needed, leading to more successful outcomes.

Helping your dog stay calm is all about patience and understanding. By following these simple steps and paying attention to what makes your furry friend happy, you can enjoy a more peaceful and harmonious relationship with them, whether you're at home or out on an adventure together.