

# Overcoming Extreme Fear in Animals

Safety – Social Facilitation – Exploration – Play



Creature Conferences  
Trauma in Animals  
Virtual Conference 2021  
Sponsor for this session:



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# Speaker: Dr. Risë VanFleet



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Dr. Risë VanFleet is a licensed psychologist, registered play therapist-supervisor, certified dog behavior consultant, and certified animal ethology and behavior consultant/instructor with over 45 years of experience working with children, families, and animals. She is the cofounder, with Tracie Faa-Thompson of the UK, of the field of Animal Assisted Play Therapy® and heads the International Institute for Animal Assisted Play Therapy®. Core values and practices of this approach include heavy emphasis on reciprocal relationships between humans and animals and full attention to animal well-being. Her book with Tracie, *Animal Assisted Play Therapy*, won a Maxwell Award in 2018 as the best book on the human-animal bond. She has conducted training workshops on this topic numerous times in North America, the UK, and Australia, among other countries.

Dr. VanFleet also works with highly fearful, traumatized, unsocialized, and feral dogs using exploration and play as an important aspect of the multi-modal intervention. She is well-known for her work around the globe and the recipient of over 15 national and international awards for her training, writing, and photography. She has volunteered with a local rescue for 16 years, and credits those dogs, as well as her own, for teaching her how to work with trauma in animals.

Risë lives with 4 dogs, 2 kittens, and a husband in Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania USA.

# Risë VanFleet Brief Background

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© 2021, Risë VanFleet, PhD

- Licensed Psychologist; Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor; Certified Dog Behavior Consultant; Certified Animal Ethology and Behavior Consultant-Instructor
- 45 years of experience in variety of settings
- PhD in Human Development & Family Studies emphases:
  - child/family relationships (1<sup>o</sup>)
  - ethology
  - human-animal bond
  - program evaluation research
- Co-creator with Tracie Faa-Thompson (UK) of Animal Assisted Play Therapy®
- Principal, International Institute for AAPT®
- Provider of international post-graduate training in family, play, and animal-related therapies
- Provider of direct services & training workshops on how to reach highly fearful, unsocialized, and traumatized animals
- Award-winning author of numerous books, chapters, articles, blogs, photos. Research on play to help unsocialized and maltreated animals.



# The Best Helper of Very Fearful Animals...

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Kirrie

2004 – 2021

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She helped feral and fearful cats and dogs, as well as children & families with a wide range of mental health challenges with her play & engagement skills.





# Katie's Lessons

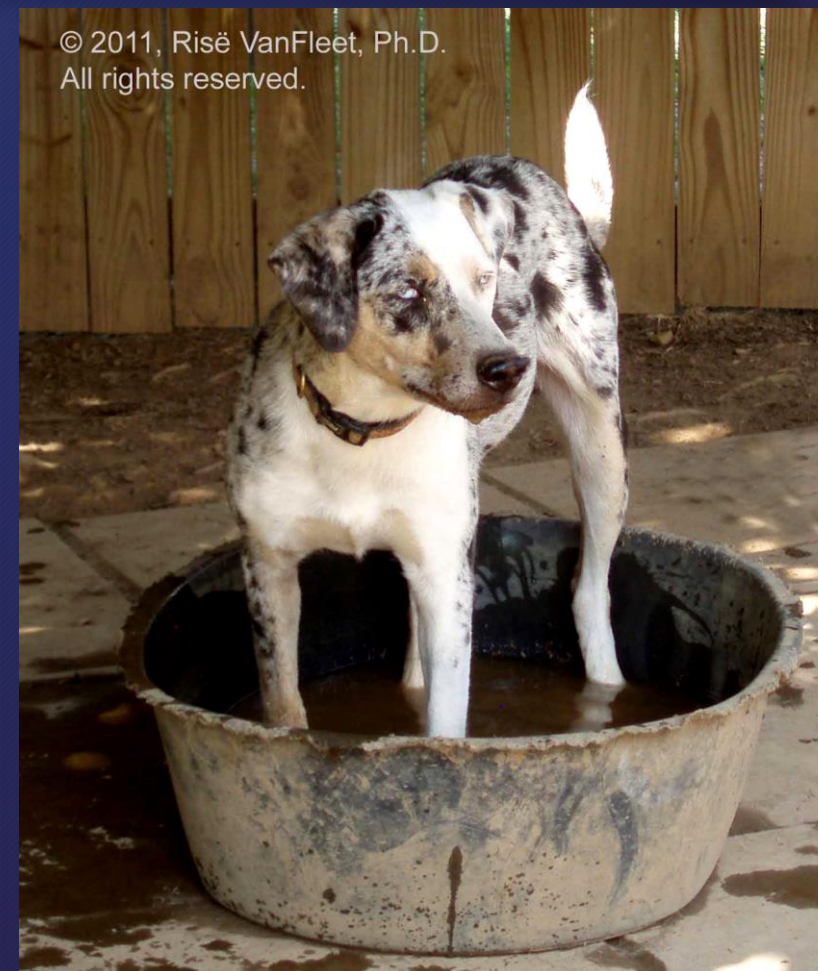
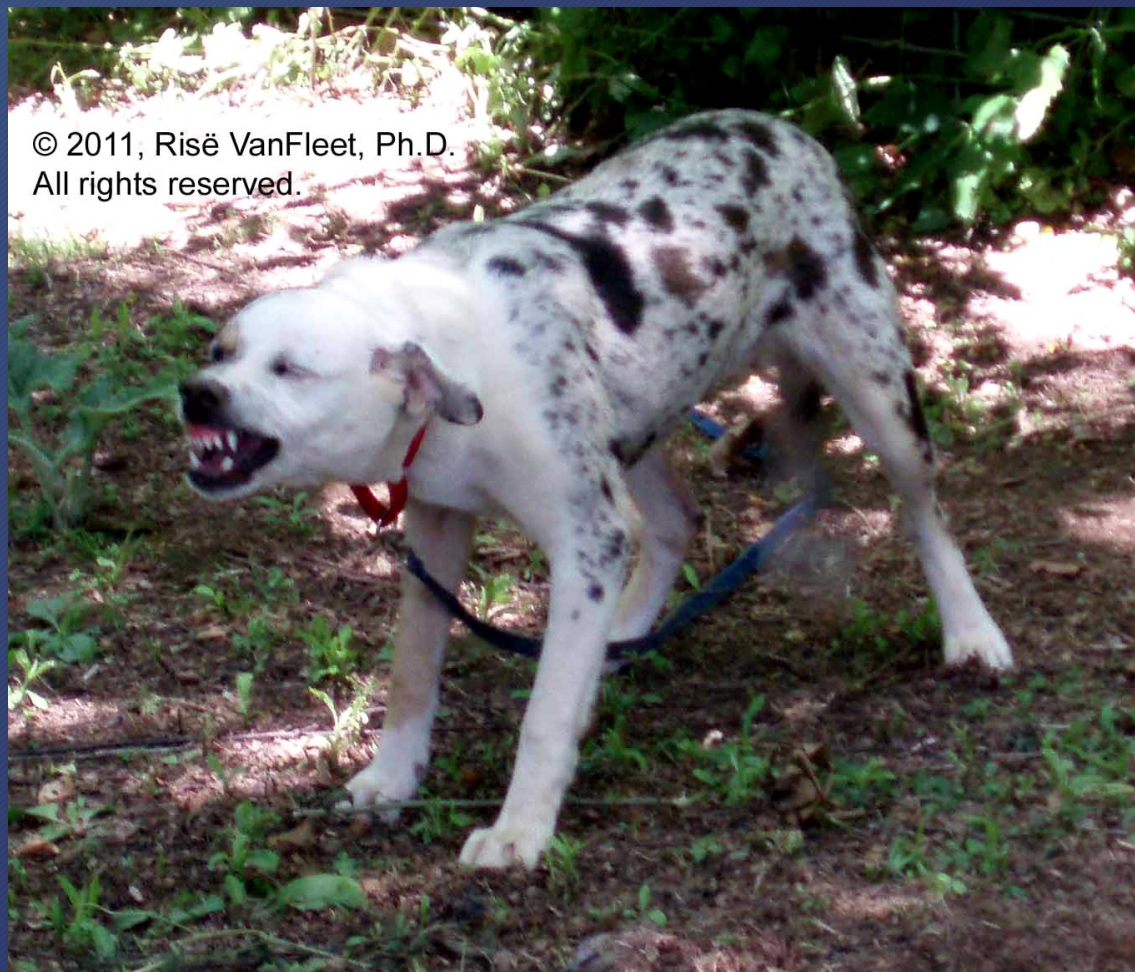
6

- Almost 14 years ago...
- I had decades of experience working with traumatized and attachment disrupted children and families.
- I had experience doing behavior consults with fearful dogs, but none as extreme as this one.
- She taught me a great deal, and continues to do so!
- What I cover here has been used with dozens of dogs since the start with Katie

# Background

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Dogs (and other species) can look very different when traumatized. This is the same dog!



# Segments & Info to Follow

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- History with one dog
  - Successes with dozens of dogs
  - Basic methods and lessons learned
- 

Intervention principles/methods beyond counterconditioning & desensitization

1. Safety
2. Social Facilitation
3. Exploration & Agency
4. Play



# Trauma Reactions in Animals?

## 9

- A form of anxiety disorder brought on by a terrifying event or situation in which the individual feels helpless or out of control
- Resources:
  - \***Dr. Frank McMillan** (speaker in this conference! Books/studies on mental health of dogs)
  - \***Dr. Patricia McConnell** Blog: Dogs and Psychological Trauma  
<https://www.patriciamccconnell.com/theotherendoftheleash/dogs-and-psychological-trauma>
  - \*My own chapters and articles, book to come on this topic
- Possible signs in animals (to an excessive degree)
  - Won't eat, loss of weight
  - Won't eliminate
  - Doesn't seem to sleep; trouble sleeping for long
  - Hypervigilant, constantly scanning the environment
  - Easily distracted; no sustained attention
  - Extreme fear
  - Immobilization, "frozen"
  - Aggressive behavior; distance increasing behavior
  - Startles easily
  - Unpredictable behavior
  - Agitated, pacing; no "off" switch
  - Avoidance of situations
  - Attempts to escape
  - Restricted behavior patterns
  - Inability to play
  - Clinginess
  - Numerous stress signals most of the time
  - Does not function well on a daily basis

# History Like So Many

- Known history because puppy mill was shut down via court
- Virtually no contact with humans (hand throwing in food)
- Removed from mother & littermates early
- Kept caged or in a tiny fenced dirt area
- When puppy mill shut down, she and 8 others were transported to the rescue where I volunteer
- Did NOT look like this in the beginning!



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# Poor Breeding: Merle-Merle Cross

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- 2 male littermates were totally deaf ←
- 1 female littermate was born without eyes →
- All of them were terrified
- Katie was extremely so
- Most went into foster homes & I worked with several of them



# The Great Escape

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- Almost immediately she climbed a high fence (rescue was very secure) and escaped into the woods
- Meat left for her went untouched
- She was sighted a couple times, so she didn't go too far
- Lived in the woods by herself for 2 months at ages 7-9 months old
- Eventually recaptured using a humane trap



*Photo from internet, but one like this but better*

# After Recapture...

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- Once recaptured, had to be kept in a run in a boarding place, on an overhead zip line due to escape risk
- Excessive pacing
- Fear of virtually everything - people, other dogs, the slightest movement of leaves
- Refused food, wild-eyed, many stress signals ALL the time



*"The most damaged dog I've ever seen."*

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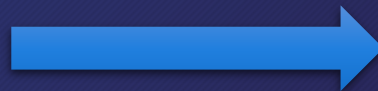
- Unanimous consensus of several rescue owners, veterinarians, vet techs, and trainers/behaviorists
- Refused to eat; no one saw her sleeping; hypervigilant
- Watched everything, especially people , very carefully
- I decided to foster her to see how far we could bring her

# Where We Are Going

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- Journey of this individual dog
- Data recorded
- Lessons learned
- Update on approach with many dogs



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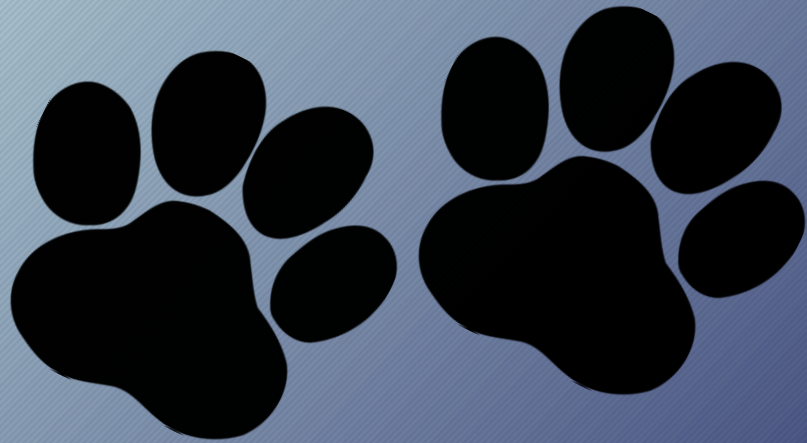


# Presenting Characteristics

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- Dysfunctional or nonfunctional
- Restricted range of affect, shut down, “freeze”
- Ever-present distress
- Withdrawal, avoidance, sometimes extreme, “flight”
- Increased arousal, “externalizing behaviors,” volatile, unpredictable, defensive
- Hypervigilant, can’t tolerate changes in environment
- Vegetative - won’t eat, sleep, eliminate
- “Dissociation”
- Other specific and nonspecific





# Intervention Methodologies: Thoughts on Uber-Fearful Animals

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# Why Usual Methods May Not Work

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- Operant conditioning requires that the dog behave in ways that can be reinforced
  - Few behaviors that one would want to increase
  - Few “reinforcers” except escape
- Counterconditioning and desensitization
  - May not accept any food
  - Toys or other items seen as scary
  - Touch is scary
  - Fear overrides everything
  - *These methods ARE critical for fearful dogs, but just don't work well with the extent of fear in traumatized dogs. They might be useful later for coping skills, but not where one starts.*

# Technically speaking...

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- Much of what I talk about can still be considered counterconditioning, but not in its more commonly used forms.
- There are different theories/lenses with which to look at this.
- Behaviorism; ethology; affective neuroscience; relationship theory; attachment theory, etc.



# CC/DS, Choice, Relationship, Play

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- CC/DS (Counterconditioning & Desensitization) commonly used with fearful dogs (& there are fb groups that focus just on this)
- Some (not most) otherwise positive trainers have been saying that the use of “choice,” “relationship”, and even “play” are “cop-outs” (made as blanket statements)
- Their articles & comments on this suggest that they don’t understand the subtleties and nuances of applying these methods, and the circumstances under which one would/wouldn’t
- These claims sound authoritative, but it’s a narrow view IMO - we need all kinds of tools and ways of thinking
- The science supports this. (Katie example of thunderstorms)

# Play and Welfare, e.g.

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- Marek Špinka's work that shows that play is important for animal welfare, for example
- Jaak Panksepp's work on affective neuroscience that also focuses on exploration and play processes in the brain as being healing in nature
- Marc Bekoff's and Gordon Burghardt's work, among others, shows that the essential conditions for play to occur is safety
- Where to start? Create safety.
- How does one do that if the primary tool one uses is food and the animal won't eat?

# Does Food = Safety???

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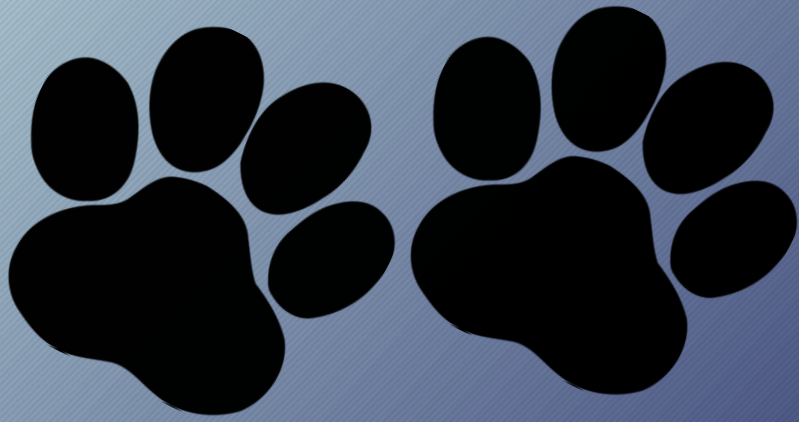
- Animals won't eat when very fearful, either
- If they will eat, luring them closer is NOT the way to go - can make things worse
- There is a mistaken assumption sometimes voiced that by giving food, we are creating safety. This is not true for very fearful animals.



# Medications?

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- Yes, if you have a way to deliver them
- Veterinary or veterinary behaviorist referral
- Dr. Karen Overall on behavior medications:  
<http://veterinarynews.dvm360.com/your-guide-understanding-how-behavior-medications-work?id=&pageID=1&sk=&date>
- On acepromazine, by Dr. Patty Khuly:  
<http://www.petmd.com/blogs/fullyvetted/2009/october/acepromazine-why-im-not-big-fan-when-it-comes-sedation-ace-6937>



Play: Some Background

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# Jaak Panksepp's 7 Emotional Systems in the Brain

25

## 7 Fundamental Emotions:

- Seeking
- Rage
- Fear
- Lust
- Care
- Panic/Grief
- Play



## Panksepp Books:

- Affective Neuroscience
- The Archaeology of Mind

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf4ZFwyVJ2A>

# Reparative Functions

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- Seeking System (exploration)
- Play



# What Is Play?

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- We know it when we see it... Or do we?!?
- Must distinguish from other behaviors that look similar to play, but aren't or that have different purposes
- Gordon Burghardt 5-point definition\*
  - Limited immediate function
  - Endogenous component
  - Structural or temporal difference
  - Repeated performance
  - Relaxed field

\* From his book, *The Genesis of Animal Play*



Albert Einstein:  
"Play is the highest form of research."

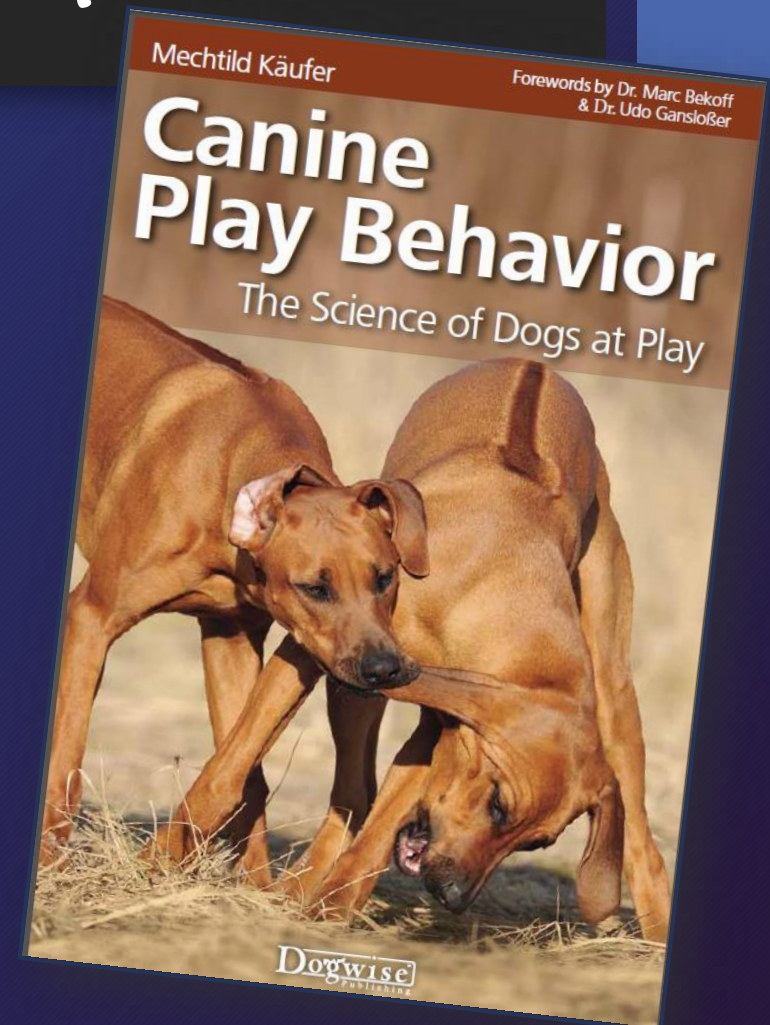
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# Fabulous Book on Dog Play

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- Canine Play Behavior: The Science of Dogs at Play
- By Mechtild Käufer
- Translated from the German & published by Dogwise
- Solid science, easy to read, terrific photos



# Play Benefits & the Traumatized Dog

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- Physical

- Brain & sensory development
- Control mechanism for emotions/behavior
- Gross & fine motor skills

- Emotional/Survival

- Flexibility
- Agency (sense of control)
- Fitness (positive emotions)
- Reduction of stress; coping skills; handling novelty
- Increased emotional regulation

- Social

- Communication
- Cooperation, give-and-take, social handicapping
- Social skill development



# R&T Play

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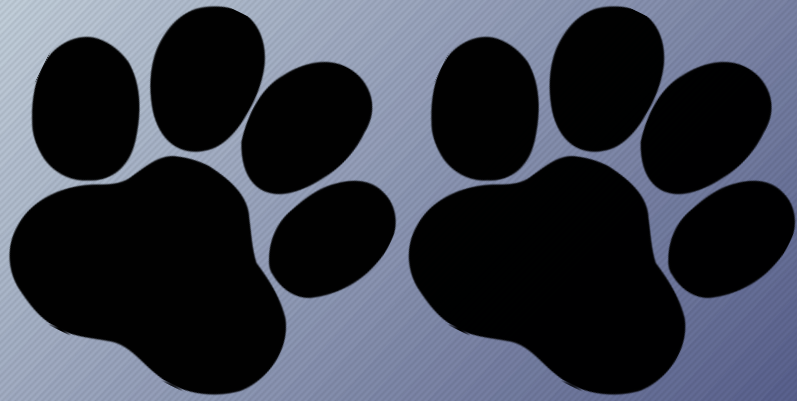
- Rough & Tumble
- Free play (vs. play orchestrated by humans vs. play as reinforcer)
- Benefits listed previous slide come mostly from R&T/free play
- With these benefits, why isn't play used more often?





Parallels with  
Human Play  
Therapy  
Appropriate



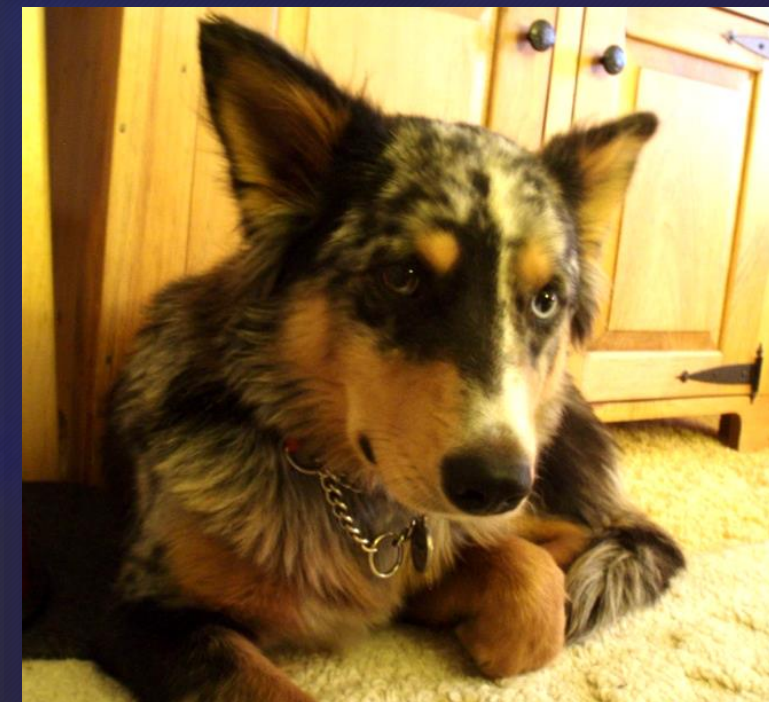


# Katie's Story: Early Days

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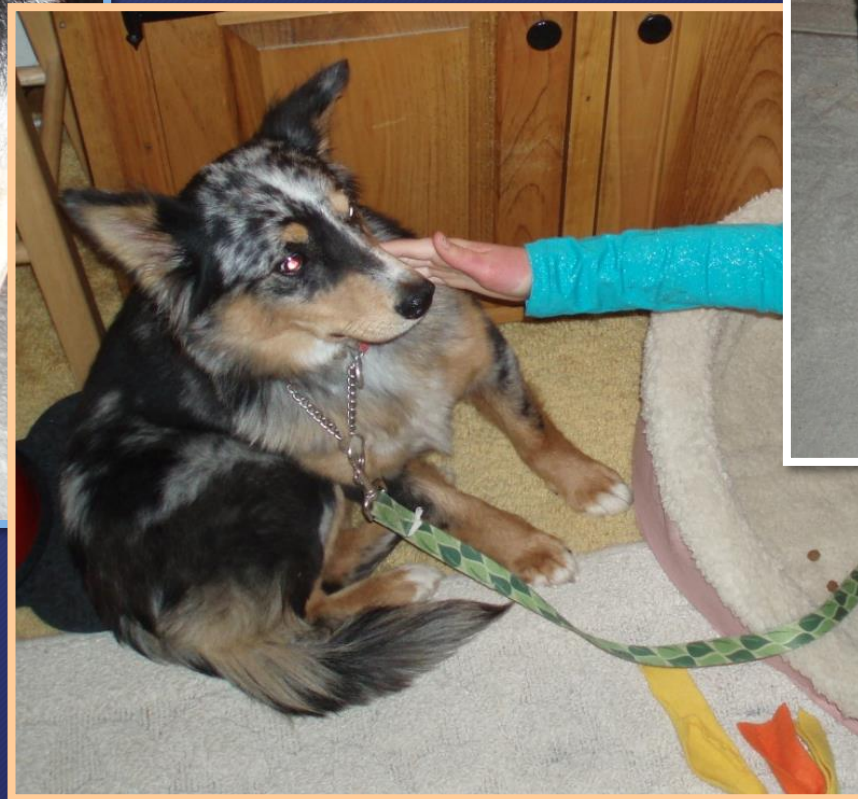
Martingale collar from rescue,  
not a choke...



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# Early Days

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# Safety First

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- First order of business = creating safety
- Simple rule: **EVERY** interaction must be designed to create positive associations with humans!
- Not so easy to apply!

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VIDEO:  
Constant  
Fear

# Safety with Katie

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- Safety: Listen to the animal at all times - consent testing (but without touch)
- Any stress, back off & don't repeat
- Neutral or positive - try again
- When placed on leash or leash picked up - she behaved as if she knew she was "caught"
- Katie's initial requirements of humans:
  - Prone
  - At least 12 feet away
  - Facing away from her
  - Lying still

# Must Feel Safe to Play

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- For Katie, considered that she might feel safer with another dog than with humans.
- Needed the right dog for the job.

# Social Facilitation & Free Play with Another Dog

40







Enter Kirrie,  
Player Extraordinaire

# Plan to Apply “Play Therapy” Principles

42

- Kirrie was an excellent “player”
- Had already helped rehabilitate a highly fearful cat by playing with him
- Resulted in considerable transformation of the cat in daily life
- Large room, mostly empty but with a few dog toys in it
- Kirrie to go into the room with Katie, 5 minutes, twice a day
- I stayed on the floor just outside the room or in a corner behind a small desk

# Characteristics of Canine Social Facilitators & Play Partners

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## Must:

- Be stable, self-regulated
- Get along well with other dogs
- Read & respond well to other dogs' body language
- Have good play skills; strong play system
- Know when to back off
- Have play time of their own



# An Example of Two Shelter Dogs

(with permission of Hans Mansens)



# Kirrie Tried Very Hard to Engage Katie in Play

45



5 minutes, twice a day  
It took 18 tries  
before there was  
any play response.

Success:  
A Play Poke!



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# It Evolved from There Slowly & Steadily

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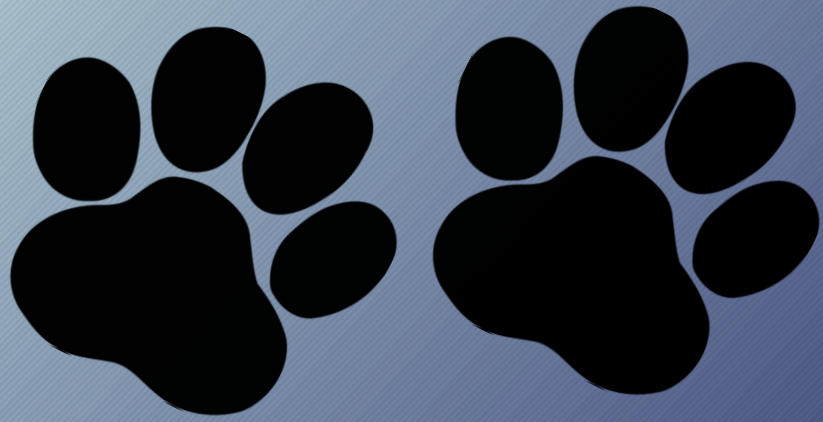
# As Did Social Behaviors

48

Each development in play was followed by a step forward in social behaviors (with other dogs and later with humans) - Consistent and surprising finding in the data







# Katie – Middle & Later Periods

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# Approximate Timeline

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- **October** - came to our house; afraid of everything and any changes in the environment; very shut down, but watchful & wary; gathering information; no trust of us
- **Late October** - began attempts at dog-dog play; still trying to escape
- **Mid-November** - increasingly played with Kirrie; small interactions with other dogs; occasionally came into family room, but remained at doorway
- **January** - much more rambunctious play with Kirrie in the snow (on long line); still very shy with people
- **February** - first “drive-by” when touched my hand (prone on couch)
- **March** - more time in family room, allowed brief scratches under chin when hooking up
- **6-9 months in** - interacting tentatively with other dogs; less fearful with us, but still avoidant
- **1 year** = “normal fearful” dog
- By **4 years** -not much fear, able to be off-lead in our yard; great recall
- By **5 years** - much more like a normal dog, but a little skittish at times
- **Changes have continued** ever since then (now almost 14)

# Patience, Play, & Positive Interactions

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Around 4 years into the process.



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The Power  
of Play!

Around 3 Years into  
the Process

From terror at a  
single leaf to this!

Katie was taught the  
length of the long line  
first

(3:10)

# Completely Off-Leash in 4 Years

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# 5 Years into the Process (6 years old)

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Enjoyed R+  
training, hanging  
out

Pretty normal  
behaviorally



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# Playing with New Dogs

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Play with  
Kirrie  
& Visiting  
Dog

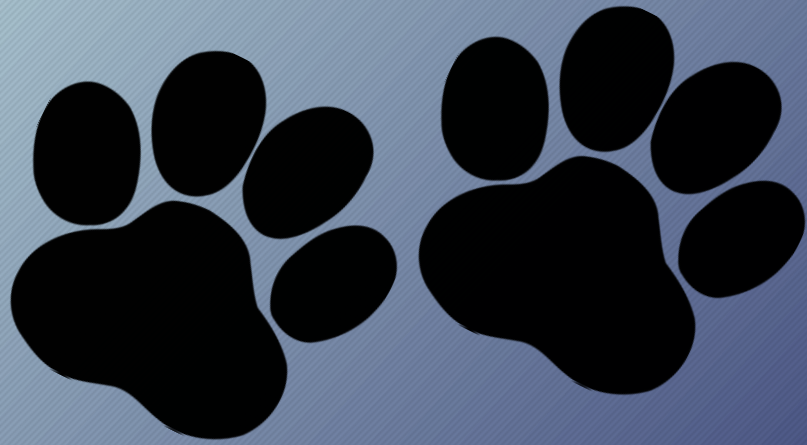
(soundtrack  
a little off)



# Relatively "Normal" Dog

57





Progress Has Never Stopped

58



59



# Began Volunteering to Participate in Workshops

60



Age 9-10 years old

# Jumped in to Show She Knew Clicker Training

61



During Animal Assisted  
Play Therapy® workshop

# Overcoming Extreme Fear in Unsocialized Dogs: A Participant-Observation Study of the Impact of Safety and Play in a Home Setting

Risë VanFleet, PhD, RPT-S, CDBC



## Introduction

Little has been written about ways to overcome extreme fear in unsocialized puppy mill, semi-feral, or feral dogs when brought into human households. Methods such as counter-conditioning and desensitization have been used with fearful dogs, but they are inadequate for treating dogs who freeze as they hide in the farthest corner of a room or in the back of a crate, who refuse to eat, and whose primary focus is an escape by closing windows or looking for opportunities to run away.

When the author adopted an intensely fearful dog from the rescue where she volunteered her behavior services, a review of the literature revealed nothing that could be applied to help the dog who had no prior exposure to people, was highly fearful and evasive of both people and dogs, and who reacted fearfully to any change in the environment.

Because of the absence of information, a participant-observation study was conducted to determine what methods might be useful for reducing intense fear and increasing social interactions while generating hypotheses for more rigorous study in the future.

## Methods

**Subject:** The dog (Kate) was a 7-year-old Australian Shepherd who had escaped from a puppy mill and lived in the woods alone for two months as a puppy. When she was adopted, she was so fearful that she could not be kept in the house with other dogs. She would not eat, even when food was left for her, and her only motivation was to flee. She either froze in position or tried to escape, even crawling through glass to do so. Since her first experiences with humans occurred for the first socialization period for dogs, it was unknown how far she would be able to progress toward living in a home.

**Treatment Methods:** Two primary intervention approaches were adopted. First, all interactions between the two adult humans in the family and Kate were designed to build a positive association with people and to create a sense of safety. If Kate reacted negatively, the person backed off and did not repeat the behavior that provoked her evasive behavior. If Kate had a neutral reaction (e.g., stayed in place, or bowed toward the person), the provoking behavior was repeated. Second, twice each day for 5 minutes, a "social facilitator" dog (Katie) was brought into the room with the fearful dog. Katie was stable, adopted her behavior to other animals of several species, and freely engaged in play interactions. She was a trained play therapy dog for human children. Since Katie had previously helped an extremely fearful feral dog by playing with him, it was hoped that these brief interactions and opportunities to play might add to the sense of safety in the environment. No pressure was placed on Kate to interact, and nouring toward feared individuals or objects was used.

**Observation/Date Collection Methods:** After each interaction, the investigator (author) recorded detailed notes about all aspects of the interaction, including human behaviors (usually the investigator), Kate's observable body language, and when relevant, Katie's behaviors and Kate's reactions to them (again, observable behaviors). At least one human-Kate interaction a day and all interactions with Katie were videotaped by a cameraman or a tripod in the corner of the room. Data collection proceeded in this manner for 1 full year, and then was reduced to three dogs and one video per week. Also, new behaviors of any kind were noted whenever they occurred. This level of observation was maintained for another year, when weekly logs and notations of new or changed behaviors were made, and videos were recorded approximately once per month, mostly of the emerging behaviors. For the final 3 years of the study, logs have been less frequent, noting new or changed behaviors. Videos have also been made of new or changed behaviors. Other than "Does this work?" and "How far can Katie progress?" research questions remained open so that they could emerge from the data as it often does in qualitative participant observation studies.



FEAR



DOG-DOG PLAY



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



WITH DOGS AND HUMANS



RELAXATION, CONFIDENCE, AND FREEDOM



## Analysis/Results

Because there appears little previous work on methods to help extremely fearful dogs social to living with humans, this participant-observation study was designed with relatively open research questions. Analysis of the data used inductive processes to reveal general principles from many specific observations. Because of the rich data obtained during the 5 years of this study, analysis is ongoing. Reported here are two of the most prominent results obtained in the first 2 years.

Initially, the only human presence that Kate could tolerate (without moving away or displaying significant stress signals) was the investigator (ring brook, back turned, 15+ feet away). Very gradual use of the Trust-Reward method coupled with patience appeared to result in Kate's increasing tolerance of human presence, gradually diminishing distances, and cautious, voluntary approach behaviors to people seated in chairs. Touches of people standing and moving did not occur until the 8-month mark. The first voluntary touches of humans occurred at the 8-month point, and were fleeting. These increased in frequency and duration throughout the length of the study. At the 1-year mark, Kate was seeking brief petting from familiar people.

Perhaps most significant was the role of dog-dog free play in turning Kate's social interactions with other dogs and later with humans. She returned a play pole in the 10th play session. After that, a clear temporal pattern emerged in the first 2 months and continued throughout the first 2 years reported here: positive changes in dog-dog play behaviors preceded positive changes in social behaviors. This sequence was never violated—the play changes occurred first each time. Play changes such as playing back, becoming more active, using objects, initiating object play, increasing number of canine play partners, responding to human play invitations, initiating play with humans, and playing energetically outdoors were followed by social changes such as spending more time in areas with other dogs, sitting in the presence of human family members, sitting on the couch with other dogs, eating from human hands, initiating brief touch with humans, seeking massage from humans, exploring the physical and social environment, and increasing freedom in movement and interactions outdoors. There were also dramatic increases in resistance following triggering events.

## Conclusions

This exploratory study suggests that the creation of safety and the systematic use of dog-dog free play with a stable dog can positively influence the development of appropriate social interactions with other dogs and humans for unsocialized dogs past the primary period for socialization. Initial results occur over the course of several months, and the dog's behavior can begin to approximate that of better socialized dogs during the first 2 years of intervention. Play development appears to precede social development. Five years into this project, Kate is indistinguishable from well-socialized dogs and functions as a full member of a canine, feline, and human family. These results have been informally replicated with 18 other under- or un-socialized dogs. Results are strong enough to warrant study using quantitative research methods at this point.

## Contact

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# Research Poster Available

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FEAR

DOG-DOG PLAY

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

WITH DOGS AND HUMANS

RELAXATION, CONFIDENCE, AND FREEDOM



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Freedom  
to Roll  
in the  
Grass

# WHISTLE warning!

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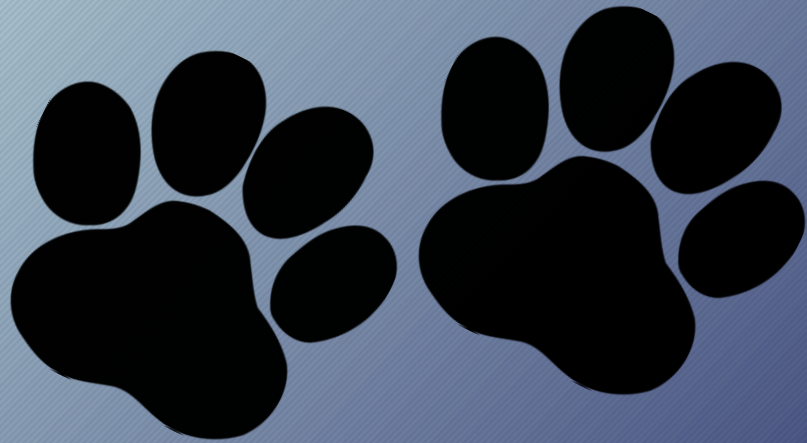
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Whistle  
Recall at  
6 years old

(5 years of  
work with her)





# Lessons Learned from Katie (and 40 other dogs)

65

# Principles Apply to Other Species, Too!

66



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# For You or Your Clients

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- These are tips for anyone who is working with the dog to overcome the fear
- In families, it is important for everyone to be on the same page (more important than ever to engage with everyone in the family to align expectations and provide rationale for the approach)
- Environment should remain stable and without changes
- Dog-dog play aspects require a special dog and supervision (live, livestreaming, or video)
- Clients need hope, encouragement, and frequent check-ins
- Celebrate the tiniest bits of progress
- If you haven't worked with traumatized animals, find a support person or network with those who have

# #1 - Create Safety First!

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- Let the dog tell you what works and what doesn't (listen/follow the body language)
- Go VERY slowly; back off frequently
- Consider:
  - Distance
  - “Protected contact” - where does the dog feel safest?
  - Indoors/outdoors - plan for safety in all environments
  - Height differential
  - Eye contact or direct positioning (avoid)
  - Things behind you and in environment that might be scary
  - Odors/Sounds/ Movement in the environment
  - Sensory input of the dog (empathy for the dog's experience)

## #2 – Consider Medication from Vet if Possible

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- Can be helpful if it's possible
- Challenges with this:
  - Might require visit to the veterinarian which can be terrifying
  - Animal might not take food, so it's difficult to get any pills inside
  - Some will eat, but then become wary if they detect the pills
  - Discuss with vet how the animal will feel on any particular medication

# #3 - Forget Your Expectations

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- This is ALL about the animal
- Try to clear your mind of any expectations (otherwise they will subtly show themselves in your behavior, impatience, tone of voice)
- Harness your patience & live in the moment
- Temporarily let go of methods that work well with other animals (operant conditioning techniques; traditional counter-conditioning and desensitization)
- Let the animal be your guide

# #4 – Save the Training for Later

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- Behavioral principles still apply in terms of basic interactions and behavioral responses
- Any formal training comes later, once the beginnings of a relationship are established
- Focus instead on “attachment theory” - the formation of a secure base from which the animal can explore the world little by little
- Safety and trust must come first
- Trust needs to be established in the environment and with the people in it before specific training can occur readily

# #5 – Avoid All Pressure and Give Choices

72

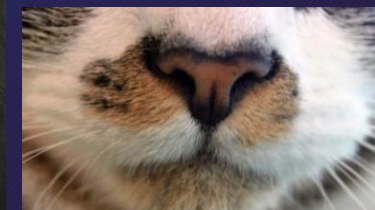
- Pressure is likely to set you back - avoid at all costs
- Whenever possible, give choices
- Choices can be challenging because of the limited behaviors, but even if taking a walk - follow the animal as long as it's safe
- Don't push to go faster, especially in the beginning
- Think of it as “asking questions” - “Are you ready to try \_\_\_\_?” and/or “What will it take for you to feel safe doing \_\_\_\_?”
- Make sure there is an “exit route,” even if the animal is on a leash, rope, or long line



# #6 – Use What They Know Naturally

73

- Watch for sensory preferences - what sense do they rely on the most?
- Provide opportunities for that sense to be used safely in the environment
- Olfaction - consider enjoyable sniffing experiences for dogs (with no expectations)
- Check out the article in the Facebook group, **Sprinkles™ for Dogs**, and use that method. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/728051773924962/>
- Can help build confidence in the environment



# Physical/Sensory Considerations

74

- Sometimes need to start lying or sitting down
- Silence is golden
- Later - soft voice, singing, working to louder
- What do you look like to the dog?
- The more you can “think like a dog” the better
- Working with these dogs will teach you more than almost anything else



# #7 – Consider a Social Facilitator/Play Partner

75

- For social animals (even more for herd animals) - find a “friend” of the same species to assist
  - For walks, going places (vet, e.g.)
  - For short play sessions
- Carefully titrate the play sessions so animal is not overwhelmed
- Always supervise these interactions at first (often from a distance)
  - Ensure safety and comfort (and good reading of each other’s signals)
  - Quick call-aways of facilitator dog if things go awry
  - Keep them short and only gradually lengthen as you learn their reaction patterns

# Supervising Dog-Dog Free Play

76

- Human presence just as an observer might be useful
- Our own demeanor
- When to intervene





## #8 – Use Noncontingent Interventions with People

78

- Suzanne Clothier's version of Treat-Retreat
- Completely noncontingent - dog need not perform a behavior to get the treat (different from Ian Dunbar's version)
- Avoid any luring of the dog closer - it must be the dog's choice
- Use very high value treats - e.g., chicken chunks
- Let the dog set the tone
- Treat-Retreat is designed to help reduce fear of people
- Give true choice at all times

# Treat-Retreat Set-up

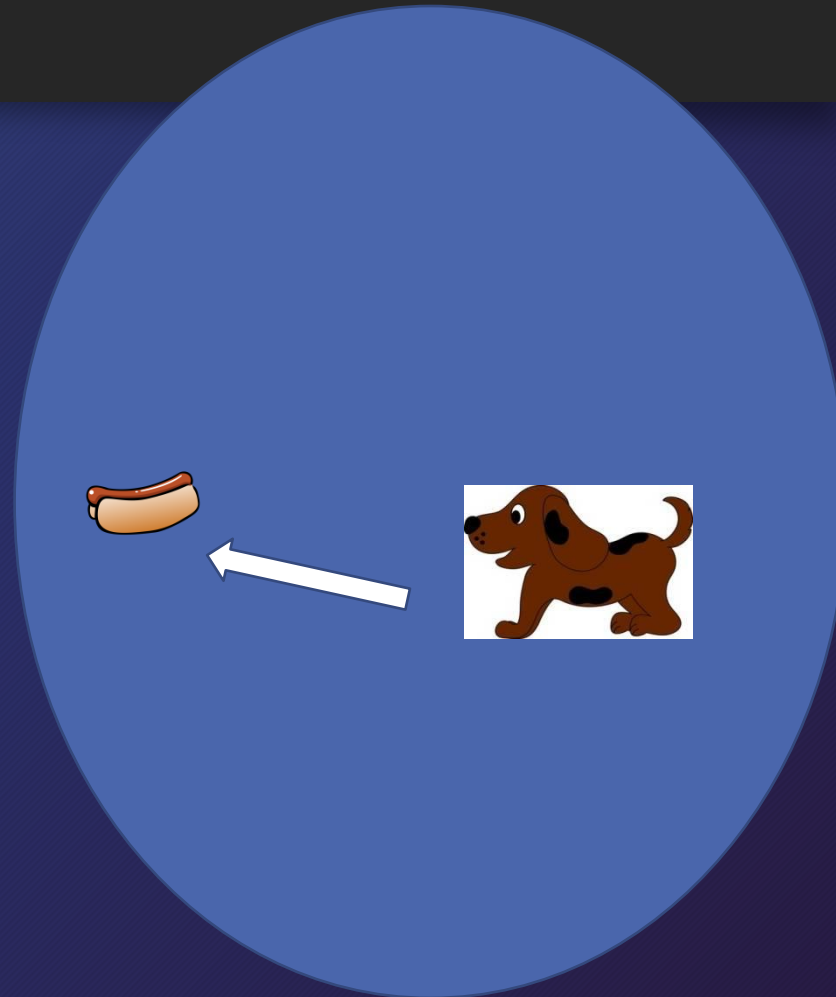
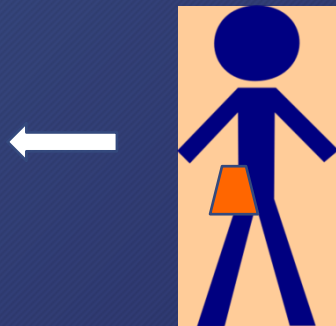
79



The dog determines the edge of the “safety zone” by position taken

# Treat-Retreat Process

80





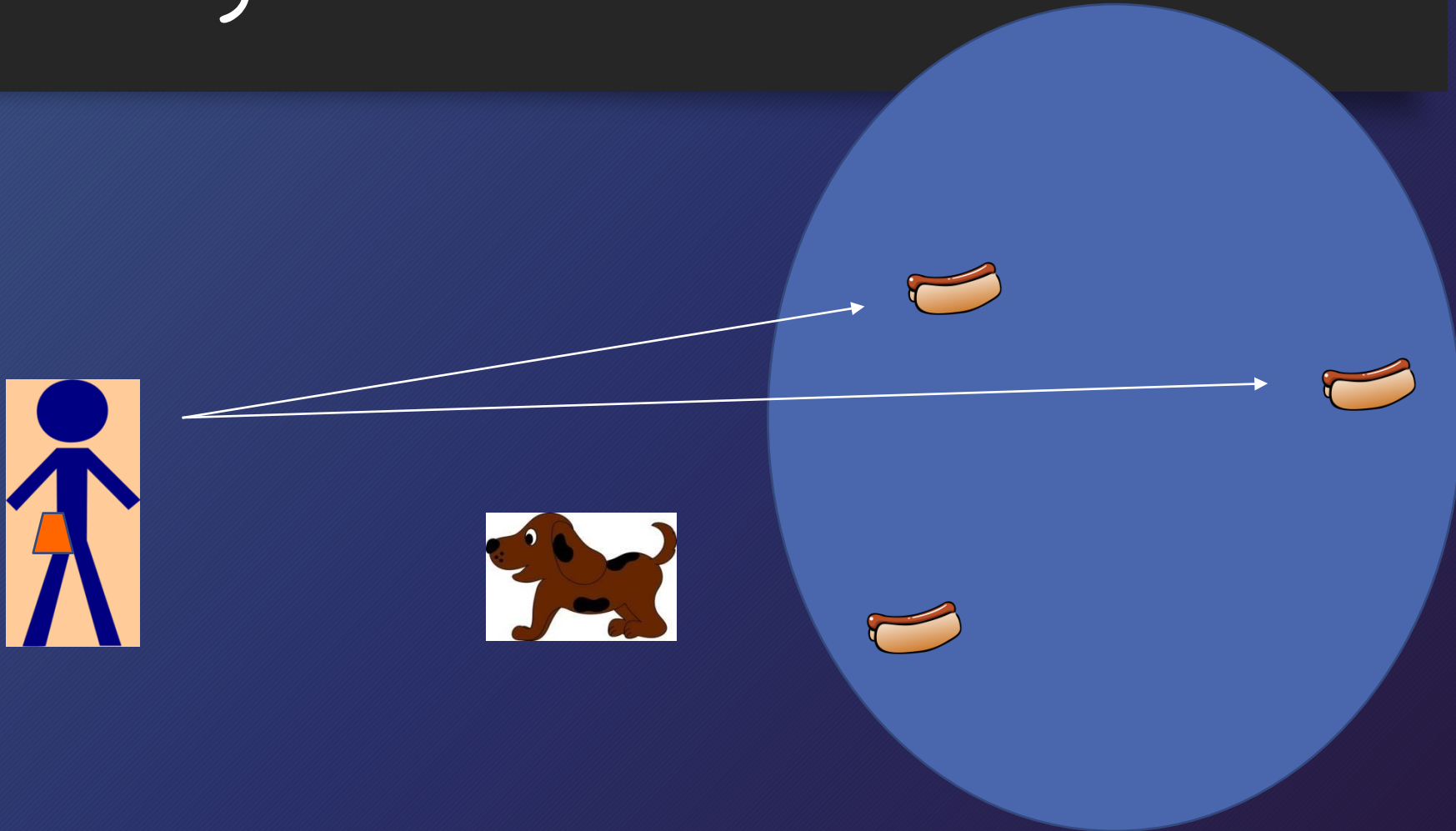
# Treat-Retreat Process (treats one at a time)

81



# Even When Dog Chooses to Come Closer

82



83

Video:  
Overcoming  
Fear of  
People

(1:05)

# #9 – Introduce Human-Dog Play

84

- Can be with or without toys (whatever the dog indicates is okay)
- Test the waters slowly & carefully



# Ask the Dog and Listen for the Answer

85



# Explore Preferences (cautiously--of toys, locations, etc.)

86



# Do It Doggie Style (play, that is)

87



# Confidence Can Be Built Through Play, Too

88

- It's safe
- Can be done on one's own terms
- It's fun
- Can try things without penalty
- It builds bonds



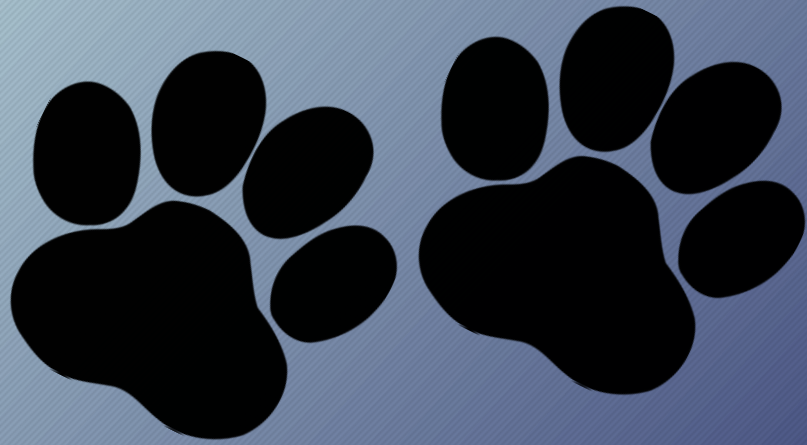


# Other Ideas

89

- Footsie play
- Creep mouse
- 3-second rule
- Simple everyday choices
- Provide for agency - Let them explore new items on their own (don't always have to CC/DS formally).
- Blog at <https://iiaapt.org/do-we-sell-them-short-supporting-agency-in-animals/>





# Summary – What's Next?

90

# Remember...

91

- Time: an evolutionary gift
- Building positive associations is ongoing & critical
- Let the dog tell you what's needed
- Go extremely slowly, back off if the dog asks you
- Learn a bit about attachment theory
  - Secure base
  - Exploration

# Pulling It Together

92

- Treatment planning processes
- Challenges in terms of the dogs
- Challenges in terms of the people
- Challenges in terms of the setting
- Applications



## VanFleet Articles & Poster Session

93

- Focus on early days
- Focus on play interventions
- Request:  
[rise@risevanfleet.com](mailto:rise@risevanfleet.com)
- Subject line: ALL CAPS -  
“ANIMAL TRAUMA RESOURCES”



# More...

94

- Book under way (with more details & several case studies)
- Two relevant Facebook groups
  - **Building Strong Relationships with Animal Companions:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BuildingStrongRelationshipsWithAnimalCompanions/>
  - **Animals and Play:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AnimalsAndPlay/>



# Contact/Requests

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