



# MODULE 1

# WORKBOOK

Your Dog's Not  
the Problem...

You Are!

Toolkit for Nervous Dogs



# Welcome!

Welcome to the Animal Energy Therapies toolkit 'Your Dog's Not the Problem - You Are!'

The intention of this program is to address issues of nervousness, fear, or anxiety relating to your dog. The unique aspect of this program is that we will be including you, the owner, as part of the program. You will go on a journey of self discovery to identify just how your emotions may be playing into the timing or expression of the anxiety displayed by your dog.

Each day we will go through progressive steps in identifying the core issue for your dog and also you, the owner. Together, we will use some Animal Kinesiology techniques to diffuse the stress before finally working on some training techniques to help clear the final remnants of learned behaviour.

Many studies have linked how the emotional resilience of an owner greatly impacts the emotional stability of their dog. In simplistic terms, if you are the type of person who is easily stressed or panicked and who takes just a bit longer than normal to calm back down in stressful situations, then chances are your dog is going to be the exact same.

We share such a strong emotional connection with our animals, dogs in particular, that it is only reasonable that we accept they absorb and mirror our negative emotions as much as they do our projections of love.

So, let's do this!!!

# **Why Do Your Emotions Matter?**

Let me give you a scenario:

One day you are out enjoying a beautiful, relaxing walk with your dog. Out of the blue a dog rushes at you and attacks your dog. You had no warning, no control and no idea of how to handle the crisis. Your dog may have been hurt and you may also have exchanged angry words with the other dog owner leaving you shaken long after the event.

The reality is that most dogs will bounce back from attacks and altercations with other dogs relatively quickly. What you do as a dog owner immediately after a dog attack is crucial in bringing your dog back into emotional balance. Instead of turning the situation back to a positive one most people are so traumatised by an attack that they become fearful of it happening again. On future outings they scout the dog park for signs of dogs off-leash, or they avoid other dogs altogether. The sight of another dog approaching brings up all of the unresolved fears and emotions. Does this sound like you?

The result is that your anxiety of walking your dog has increased significantly. Your dog has never resolved the negative emotions because you have been reluctant to allow new and spontaneous interactions with other dogs. So now you AND your dog have unresolved anxiety. The key factor in this scenario is that your dog is so connected to you emotionally that when a dog approaches it will respond directly to YOUR anxiety as well as its own. If your dog feels nervous about a dog approaching and then immediately feels the waves of anxiety coming from you, it merely confirms that this is indeed a dangerous situation and your dog may begin acting aggressively or defensively from fear. As a dog approaches, both you and your dog move into a state of fight/flight. You will instinctively tighten up the lead as you try to maintain control of the situation. This takes away the flight/run away option your dog had now has no option but to become defensive.

This has now become a vicious cycle of anxiety feeding anxiety and possibly reinforcing aggressive behaviour in your dog.

How good would it have been if you could have cleared your stress and anxiety immediately after the initial dog attack? You could then have straight away taken your dog to meet some friendly dogs which would have reinforced good interaction skills and reaffirmed that being around dogs is a rewarding and enjoyable experience. How different would life be for you both now?

This is just one example of how our emotions can greatly influence the behaviour of our dogs, and there are of course many other scenarios.

Your dog may be anxious for any number of reasons. It may be a learned behaviour, the result of an incident or it may be genetic. If you have a rescue dog you may not even be aware of the root cause. Whatever the situation, how *YOU* respond in situations that your dog finds difficult to cope with will determine the outcome more than anything else you do.

## **Identifying the Triggers**

The first thing to do in solving a problem is to actually identify what the problem is. You may think you know what the problem is, but sometimes we need to break it down even further. We need to be able to find all the common elements of the problem to help us understand it fully.

The first thing we are going to do is look at the triggers for the anxious behaviour in your dog, or the behaviour that causes *YOU* anxiety. A trigger is anything that brings on the emotion or behaviour.

I want you to list ALL of the situations where this behaviour or emotion shows itself e.g each situation where your dog shows the behaviour or reacts this way. Be specific such as every location, every sound, every person etc.

Note them all below - remember to be thorough as there may be a pattern you have not seen before!

I now want you to rate the intensity of your dogs anxiety or problem behaviour out of 10. 10 being extremely high.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

I now want you to switch your attention to your own stress levels.

Sit comfortably and relax. Hopefully your current stress levels are between 1 and 3 with no anxiety triggers. If your stress levels are higher than that currently, then just note it, especially if this is normal for you.

Once relaxed, I want you to think about being in the situation with your dog when the anxiety is triggered. If this is when a dog approaches you or when a certain sound is heard then try and make it as realistic as possible in your head. Maybe even thinking about taking your dog for a walk sends you into a panic. See the situation through your own eyes as if you are experiencing it right now.

What happens to your stress levels?

Now rate your stress levels out of 10, with 10 being extremely high.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Did you notice your anxiety levels increase as you thought about the scenario?

I now want you to note down the areas you physically felt it in your body. Maybe you felt a knot in your stomach or maybe your heart rate increased. Did you notice if your temperature increased or if you felt anger rising. Perhaps you felt your chest tighten.

Note all of this down as it will be important when we come back to recheck this later in the week. Be precise and really connect with the feeling it brings up for you.

## **What Now?**

Today was about assessing where you and your dog are currently in terms of stress levels, and hopefully you have seen how your emotions are involved, whether it be as a result of your dog's behaviour or as a precursor to the behaviour.

### ***IMPORTANT***

Now that you have identified all of the situations, scenarios and triggers to your dog's anxious behaviour, and your own, I want you to remove all of those triggers for days 2, 3 and 4 of the challenge. This means I want you to avoid as many of these triggers as possible.

In order to change behaviour, we need to change the environment. To release the stress, we need to remove the stress triggers whilst we clear the way for a new response and a new, positive mindset.

I appreciate this may be hard, but please implement this as much as possible. If the idea of removing the triggers creates anxiety in you, then note that too!

# **Facebook**

You will find the link to our very own 'closed' Facebook group in your email today.

The purpose of this group is to bring together everyone who is taking part in the program to share experiences. I will be checking in on this page a few times a day to check how everyone is going, but the emphasis is to share your experiences with others in similar situations. I will be holding a Q & A live event at the end of the Program to answer any questions you have, so be sure to add it to your diary!

## **Task 1**

I would love for you to post a photograph of your dog and write a short post explaining the problems you are having. I can guarantee there will be so many others who will be in the same position as you!

Let's all connect together and change the world - one dog at a time!