

## Training Between the Ear's Grade School Model & Melting a Mountain

Everything done in TBTE should be done by following the Grade School Model (GSM) which is all about working where your dog is at and is capable of responding to the training and our TB marker word.

We don't start kids in 5th grade math, instead we start them off learning about numbers and counting. They can't solve simple problems until they have the basics. Likewise we start dogs off with simple problems and clients off with simple problems because clients have a GSL (Grade School Level) as well when they first start training.

We will be setting the foundation of the training inside the house. Dogs must first learn how to relax inside and also understand how to receive rewards. The classical conditioning process also starts inside. Once this foundation is set, our dogs are eating regularly when given food and they are responding to their marker word 100% of the time inside, can we then move the training outside.

*But what about their problems outside?*

Instead of focusing on the problem (dog barking and lunging at dogs on sidewalk) we instead work on melting away their anxiety in the house because the real root of the problem is the dog's fears and poor impulse control.

Barking at dogs is the symptom of that anxiety and showing us they have lack of control and don't know how to relax.

Focusing on easy problems (like the dog learning to relax inside with no distractions) the dog can be successful at (1st grade) instead of the trigger (senior year of High School). Working inside first is following the Grade School Model.

Following this principle helps us train our dogs in the most humane way possible. We train our dogs by using the least amount of punishment and stressors by following the GSM.

Further examination will lead us to the dog most likely having lots of anxiety not related to the dog. This is the reason why counter conditioning typically doesn't work because dogs are not the actual problem, it is the anxiety and fears they hold. People (and in this case) dogs are just expressing their fears and anxieties to the fullest.

If we can focus on lowering the dogs baseline layer of stress by focusing on small stressors we can start to melt the mountain of anxiety and fear and by the time we get to the big triggers they are much smaller problems to deal with.

We are melting a mountain of problems but we never focus on the hardest one when we begin. We lay down foundation for learning and slowly tackle smaller problems then we can tackle the larger ones.

GSM helps us solve big problems by repeating the same operations in very small steps so the dog can practice getting fluent in the exercises and have overwhelming success when a bigger challenge presents itself. That's why most training should start in the living room and build up to where their triggers are.

Once the dog has overwhelming successes in Kindergarten the bigger challenges in Elementary School Levels will melt and be less challenging. The process of the GSM helps build confidence in the humans and our training/communication system.

Approaching the problem of dog reactivity this way helps to solve the big issue of anxiety and fear and not the symptom (most prominent issue at hand) for a more permanent success.

**How can we tell if our dog is within their GSM?**

Your dog will always tell you what their Grade School Level through their actions. They are above their GSL if they excessively barking or unable to consume food. Recognize that if you are above your GSL or the dog's there is nothing you can do to help the dog at that level so do nothing. Many times our dogs reaction to a level 10 difficulty is the same reaction to a level 6 difficulty. Don't try to control the dog or resort to old methods like yelling at dog. You have to be tolerant in the first few weeks of behavior you don't like - you have experienced that behavior before so there is no crisis in the dog doing them again, it is not learning any new bad behavior and we'll be able to change it soon. Focus on the good moments and reward those and don't forget that there are changes occurring inside the dog even if you don't see them on the outside.

We can typically tell if a dog is beyond their GSL by the dog barking, not taking food, staring at the trigger (like a dog or person) or choosing displacement behaviors like walking away or doing something else instead of interacting with us. If you see any of these signs then go back down a few Grades to easier challenges.

**This is important!**

An 'okay' session is a bad session! You want your dog having overwhelming success! If you had an 'okay' day you probably had a bad day. Make sure your dog is happy and excited about the process. We must learn to fall in love with the process and not the end goal. Slow is fast and fast is slow in TBTE!

**Grade School Level Exercise (PDF Attached on the homework page of our website)**

List below your dogs problem behaviors like barking, clingy, whining, reactive (toward; dogs, people, kids), hyper activity, running off, chasing lights or tail, pulls on a leash, excessive licking, can't relax during play, suspicion of people, territorial,

**How to have faster success in TBTE**

Write out and find all your dogs low level challenges. Then fill in the mediums and highs. Throughout this training you'll never move onto medium challenges until you have 'Overwhelming Success' in lower challenges!

- Low level problem behaviors -

- Medium level problem behaviors -

- High level problem behaviors -

**Why stay within your dogs GSL? & Triggers and Stress Hormones**

When dogs react strongly to a trigger they dump stress hormones into their system. This creates a classical conditioning effect that makes them predisposed to similar strong responses in the future and the body releases stress hormones faster than they can be absorbed. They then have a hard time getting back to calmness. (The exercises mention here will help support your dog) Perception modification teaches conscious awareness of this emotional state and the relaxation triad of intentional relaxation

exercises (*condition relaxation, behavioral down and differential reinforcement for relaxation*) helps the animal to be more resistant to the release of the stress hormones and speeds up the reabsorption helping your dog remain calm or help your dog get back to a state of calmness more easily. Decompression helps to reabsorb stress hormones. The dog becomes more aware and cognizant of their own behavior and can change it through training.

Stress & anxiety interrupts processing / thinking abilities and inhibits social curiosity. Anxiety can come from a positive stressor or negative stressor. If a dog stops taking food, you've either been working too long or you're above their GSL. If you find you live in an area above their GSL you can try a higher value food like hot dogs or baloney.

### ***The amazing benefits of staying within your Grade School Level (GSL)***

When staying within our dogs GSL we are trying to create an appetitive response to our dogs seeing people or dogs. Instead of our dogs seeing their trigger and getting stressed and being in a fear/rage/panic system or fight or flight response we want them to involuntarily become appetitive and seek out a reward which will help turn on their parasympathetic system of rest and digest.

This helps to attach a different emotional state to the trigger through the classically conditioned TB or marker word. Every time you use your TB Marker word (YES) outside of your dogs GSL you are diminishing the effect of the classically conditioned response.

**Never use your TB or marker word outside of your dogs grade school level! JUST TOSS FOOD to help support them in rebounding emotionally and eating again.**

Using the relaxation techniques helps the dog think about positive and relaxing outcomes calming them down faster. Eventually your dog will learn how to do it on their own. Your dog will become less predisposed or loaded to have another event in the future. You can then use less and less food once you see your dog needs less support.