



Who's That? Engage/Disengage Game

Level 1: Engage

1. Start at a safe distance away from the trigger, a place where your dog is not reacting. Be quiet and still so that your dog notices the trigger on his own.
2. At the precise moment your dog ENGAGES by looking at the trigger, CLICK.
3. When your dog turns his head toward you after hearing the click, feed him a treat. If your dog reacts or does not turn back to you after the click, move further away from the trigger to reset at an easier distance.

The goal of Level 1 is to succeed with at least 3-5 repetitions in a row at the same distance before moving on to Level 2. A successful repetition is when your dog turns back to you immediately after the click.

If the trigger is moving or changing in intensity, keep playing Level 1 until your dog has calmly looked at or engaged with the trigger from every direction. THEN move on to Level 2.

Level 2: Disengage

1. Again, let your dog notice the trigger, but this time wait 1-5 seconds to see if your dog will offer to look away from the trigger on his own. If your dog is fixating on the trigger for longer than 5 seconds, go back to Level 1.
2. At the precise moment your dog DISENGAGES by looking away from the trigger, CLICK.
3. After the click, feed a treat. If your dog reacts or is not turning back to you after the click, move further away from the trigger to reset at an easier distance.

The goal of Level 2 is to succeed with at least 3-5 repetitions in a row before moving 1-5 steps closer to the trigger. A successful repetition is when your dog disengages with the trigger comfortably on his own.

As you move closer, keep playing Level 2 if the trigger is not moving or changing in intensity. If the trigger is moving or changing in intensity, go back to Level 1 at the new distance.

Each time you play the Engage-Disengage Game, play for 1-5 minutes, and then take a break. If your dog is ready and eager, you can repeat this pattern.



CANINE U
AT KITSAP HUMANE SOCIETY

Games

Learn more at:

www.choosepositivedogtraining.com/single-post/2014/07/01/The-Practice-of-SelfInterruption-The-EngageDisengage-Game

“Many dogs struggle to stay relaxed when they see another dog, a person, or a specific environmental stimulus, and end up reacting with an intense stress response. Stress responses can be categorized into fight (such as barking, lunging), flight (such as avoiding, hiding), freeze (such as cowering, shutting down), or fool around (such as jumping, mouthing) behaviors.

The Engage-Disengage Game is helpful for dogs that respond with a “fight” or “fool around” response. These dogs often become over-aroused quickly and end up hurling themselves toward the trigger out of fear, anxiety, or frustration. Unlike socially savvy dogs that self-interrupt frequently in order to keep interactions fun and safe, these “fight” or “fool around” dogs have immense difficulty disengaging from the trigger in order to self-interrupt.

The Engage-Disengage Game essentially decreases a dog’s stress around the trigger and teaches the dog the peaceful coping skill of self-interruption. If you are familiar with Buddhism, yoga, or the field of psychotherapy, this ability to disengage and self-interrupt is like the skill of practicing mindfulness. You can use this game to teach your dog how to remain calm and happy around other dogs or people that they are scared of; around other dogs or people they love so much that they want to jump and mouth; around a new baby in the home; around bikes, skateboards, doorbells—and the list continues.

Science and research in dog training have revealed that intimidation, pain, or the threat of pain are simply not necessary and cause more problems training an aggressive, reactive, or fearful dog. Instead, using positive reinforcement methods like the Engage-Disengage Game, helps your dog become less anxious and fearful of the world, and teaches him that he has the ability to choose another behavior that is both fun and safe instead.”

Read more at: www.choosepositivedogtraining.com/single-post/2014/07/01/The-Practice-of-SelfInterruption-The-EngageDisengage-Game