HUNTING GAMES – THE FOUNDATIONS

🎾 Create a Motivating Toy

Sometimes using a toy is the better option to play!

🎾 Why This Game Matters

Playing with your dog is such a powerful motivator and builds focus and connection for the work together. A lot of people think their dog is “not into” toys, however we can create a motivating toy with a bit of work on your part.

For dogs, who do not innately want to play with toys and are more motivated by food, try this trick. Smear some roasted chicken or other soft treat your dog loves between your hands to get the food scent (and residue) on your skin. Take the toy you want to use and rub the food residue (and scent) from your skin onto the toy. Make sure your dog is never left alone with this toy to avoid digestion. You can seize the rubbing once your dog is keen to engage in play.

The key to make this game work is that you are sincerley intersted in playing with your dog. If you are not having fun, your dog will not have fun and would be more reluctant to join in.

Be persistent and give this time to grow

🎾 What You’ll Need

- Your dog
- High-value treats to rub between your hands
- A tug robe, ball in a sock, stuffed animal
- Phone on Tripod

🎾 Step-by-Step-Guide

1. Set Up

Attach the toy to a string, light line or leash approx. 2 – 3 m long. Put the toy in a drawer in your living area e.g. kitchen, lounge, living room.

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2. Build the Behaviour

- Before each meal, start to act a bit looney
- In a light and excited voice say things like
  - "What is it?"
  - "Oh no!"
  - "Do you want this?"
  - "Where is your toy?"
- Walk, dance, skip your way to the drawer
- Slowly open the drawer while continuing to play goofy
- Stop talking momentarily, then pull the toy out of the drawer as if you have just discovered $100 bill!
- Run into the next room with the toy
- Play with the toy by swinging and dragging it around the floor, showing your dog what great fun you're having
- Toss the toy on the ground, releasing the line it is attached to and drag it around
  - be sure your dog is NOT getting their mouth on it yet!
- End the game by running back to the drawer and put the toy away, snatching it back up, put it in the drawer, close it and say "Oh dear, it's gone!"
  - your poor dog wasn't invited to the fun
  - this process should only take 1-2 minutes the first time you play
- Proceed to your regular routine like nothing has happened

3. Add a Layer

- Re-enact the above before each meal time for a few days
- After 2 or 3 days, allow your dog to briefly get their mouth on it if they're super keen
- Playfully pull on the string to get the toy away from them
- Play again by yourself before putting the toy away

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4. Raising Criteria

- Gradually progress, letting them play with you and the toy (tug of war style) a bit longer each time.
- Always end with you playing on your own before quickly putting the toy away
- Repeat this until you have a dog who LOVES to see the toy come out

🎾 Daily Use

Put all toys away during this time and only have chews/chew toys available. Especially the “magic toy” should only come out during those sessions, not allowing your dog access at any other time. You will soon have a dog who loves to play with you.

🎾 Checklist

1. Did you review your session?
2. Could you see shifts to join into this daily game?

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