

Welcome

Hello and welcome to our group! This group is self-study, where members ask clarifying questions to gain support and help with their techniques when needed. We are a very large group, and the Admin team spends many hours monitoring posts to make sure you are getting only the best science-based advice possible. There is a wealth of information in this group that you **must** read, digest, attempt, and then inevitably, go back, read and digest about 15 more times.

That being said, there is no quick fix for your dog. Other than hiring a professional to teach you, this process takes time (weeks...months...years...), consistency, perseverance and most of all, patience. Your dog is your teacher, and you are the student. Your dog's behavior will tell you when you are doing things well, and your dog will also tell you when you aren't. Listen to them. They are never wrong.

Read this document from beginning to end before trying anything or trimming nails again. Each section of information builds on the next. You may be anxious to get started, but do not skip sections because you think they don't apply to you - everything will apply, you just may not know it yet. When you get to a link, click it and watch/read it before continuing on. Again, this is a progressive document, and skipping around will ensure confusion. Understanding Counter Conditioning and Desensitization is not an intuitive process - and you can't just get a To Do list. You need to understand how all the pieces connect. We learn addition before multiplication, and learn multiplication before fractions for a reason. You can't just jump to fractions and expect things to go smoothly. Do the work, see results. There are no shortcuts.

To make this as easy as possible for you, there has been a study guide created for you to print out so that you can make notes and check off the titles as you watch them. The boxes coincide with the links within this document:

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Are you ready??!

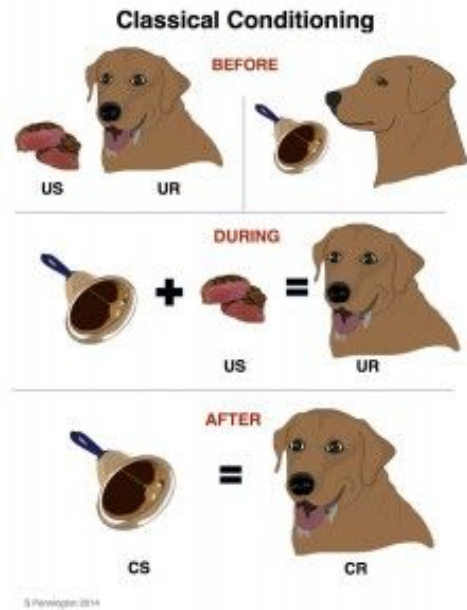


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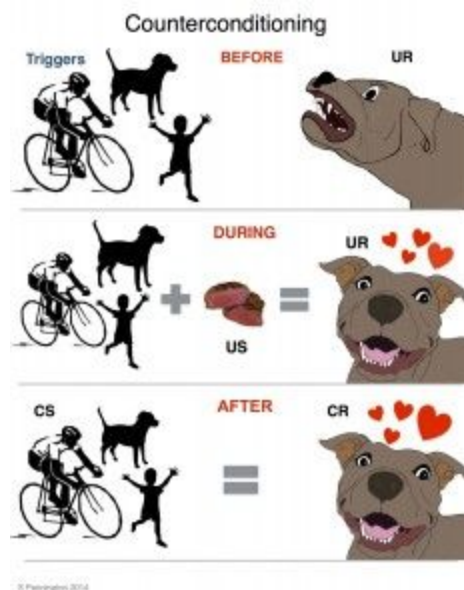
SECTION ONE

Learn The Jargon

Classical Conditioning (CC): a type of learning in which a response is elicited by a stimulus (in our case, our hands, clippers and rotary tool) that has acquired power through an association with a biological necessity (food). *Layman's terms: Our dog begins to feel the same about seeing clippers as he does about being offered a steak, because clippers predict food and are never scary.*



Counterconditioning (CC): the replacement of an undesirable or maladaptive response to a stimulus with a more desirable response, by means of conditioning procedures. *Layman's Terms: A dog that previously ran and hid when the Dremel turned on now salivates and wags his body happily due to Classical Conditioning.*



Conditioned Emotional Response (CER): a learned emotional reaction or response to a certain stimulus.

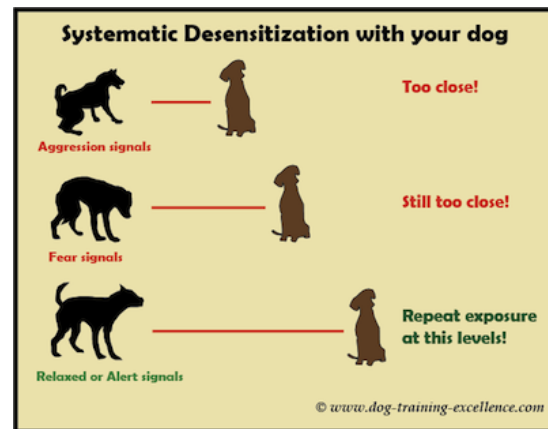
Example:

Negative CER (-CER): a dog that hears a chirping smoke alarm and hides.

Positive CER (+CER): a dog that sees a leash and happy dances at the door.

Desensitization (DS): a technique very often paired with counterconditioning, in which the subject is kept below threshold (relaxed and alert) and exposed to fears in an increasing hierarchy of intensity to diminish the fearful response over time.

Layman's Terms: We keep the scary thing far enough away or at a low enough intensity, that the dog is able to be relaxed during the entire session. Over multiple sessions, the scary thing is able to move closer or be more intense.



Alternative Cut Line (ACL):

trimming the nail along two specific angles, focusing on the nail hood and sides, which encourages the blood supply to recede, allowing the dog's nails to become shorter over time.



Reinforcer: A primary reinforcer is something that an animal is born needing such as food, water, shelter. We encourage the use of food for our

CCDS because it is the most efficient at changing how a dog feels about nail trims. The motivation to eat regenerates each day, and we can control the value and amount of the food - chicken, steak, bacon, cheese, hot dogs, liver, etc are good high-value reinforcers for most dogs. Belly rubs and praise are not.

Threshold: The threshold for CCDS is the point at which your dog's body language is relaxed, and they can calmly eat food while noticing/being exposed to the stimulus. Remember, "being relaxed" is an emotion, not a behavior. Just because a dog is unmoving and does not bite does not mean it is relaxed. Read your dog's body language signs to know whether they are truly relaxed and comfortable:

Body language indicative of being UNDER threshold:

- shows no sign of fear, anxiety or worry
- loose body, soft mouth and ears
- tail untucked, eyes soft, normal breathing, comfortable
- able to watch you or the environment with casual curiosity without attempting escape
- is able to lay down or rest calmly without you asking

Body language indicative of being AT threshold:

- shows increasing awareness/concern with you/environment
- ears up, focused eyes, jumpy
- head turns away from you often
- fidgety, yawning, licking lips
- able to do the exercise, but needs increasing support with food to do so (dog might leave if food wasn't present)
- licking the tool, self or you ("kiss to dismiss")
- moving away from you, hiding paws

Body language indicative of being OVER threshold:

- must be held or physically moved into place
- flinching, quick to startle, ears back
- trying to escape, either by running/moving away or by using teeth
- stiff body, pulling body parts away

- mouth tense
- panting from heart rate increase
- will not eat treats, or is hurting your hand when eating them
- dilated pupils, whale eye
- yelping or whining, mouthing hand or tools, fooling around (stealing items, rolling around, playing "Keep Away", etc)
- squinty eyes, becoming frozen or immobile, "submissive" (aka learned helplessness)
- trembling, shedding, being "overdramatic" or "stubborn"

NOTE: If you bring your dog to a groomer, or vet, or restrain them for trimmings while doing CCDS, your dog's emotions and behavior will not change. In order to make progress, you need to completely alter how your dog feels about trims, which means they must feel safe each and every time they are exposed to a nail trimming tool. Please watch this short video on CCDS and feeling safe:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwnSdvHI8mg>
