



The Balanced Dog Handbook

North Shore Dog Training™

Calm. Confident. Connected.

www.northshoredogtraining.co.nz

Understanding Your Dog – Psychology, Structure & the Pack Walk connection

At **North Shore Dog Training™**, we believe every dog has the potential to be calm, social, and well-balanced—but they need the right structure and leadership to get there.

Dogs aren't small furry humans. They process the world through **energy, body language, and patterns**. They're not being "naughty"—they're doing what works. It's our job to show them better options.

Structured **off-leash pack walks** help them practice calm following, confidence-building, and balanced socialisation. But to get real results, it all needs to be supported at home by you.

We're not chasing perfection. We're creating **clarity and calm**, so your dog can relax into their role in the pack.

Your Role as the Owner: Responsibility, Leadership & Life at Home

You don't need to be perfect—you just need to be clear, calm, and consistent. Dogs don't follow the rules you sometimes enforce. They thrive on routines, boundaries, and earned freedom.

At home, your role includes:

- Making your dog work for things (food, affection, space)
- Providing mental stimulation (sniff walks, obedience, play)
- Daily structure (movement, rest, calm interaction)
- Calm correction and fair consequences

"Structure doesn't mean control—it means clarity. Clarity leads to calm." – Yorkshire Canine Academy

"Connection over correction. Get the relationship right, and the training gets easier." – Zak George

10 Principles of a Balanced Dog

1. Be the Calm in Their Chaos

Your dog reflects your energy. If you're tense, loud, or frantic, they will be too.

How:

Slow your movements. Lower your voice. Use stillness and calm posture to influence behaviour.

Real-world tip:

Approaching a reactive moment? Stop. Breathe. Drop your shoulders. Show your dog there's no reason to worry.

"Dogs don't follow unstable energy. They follow calm, assertive leadership." – Cesar Millan

"The calmer you are, the faster they change." – Tom Davis

2. Rules Before Cuddles

Affection is powerful - but mistimed affection reinforces chaos.

How:

Only give affection when your dog is calm, respectful, or after doing something you've asked.

Real-world tip:

If your dog barks at you for attention or throws themselves into your lap, don't reward it. Wait for calm before giving love.

"Affection given at the wrong time can reinforce the wrong behaviour." – Cesar Millan

"Dogs don't need love on tap—they need love with clarity." – Yorkshire Canine Academy

3. Own the Doorway, Own the Walk

Most reactivity and pulling starts *before* you leave the house.

How:

Your dog should wait at thresholds (doors, gates) and only move forward when you do.

Real-world tip:

Leash up calmly. No “walkies!” excitement. Use a slip lead or no-pull harness if needed—but structure is more important than tools.

Leash pulling tip:

If your dog starts pulling - stop. Wait. Or change direction. Reward walking at your side with calm praise, not food.

“How you leave the house is how the walk will go.” – Cesar Millan

“The leash is a symbol of leadership—not just a piece of equipment.” – Dog Daddy

4. Ditch the Guilt, Keep the Structure

Guilt leads to inconsistency. Dogs need rules more than they need freedom.

How:

Stick to routines. Don’t give in because “he’s had a rough day.” Dogs love structure—it builds confidence.

Real-world tip:

Dogs with reactivity often need *less* freedom, not more. Set clear boundaries indoors and on walks.

“Guilt creates confusion. Structure creates confidence.” – Tom Davis

“Your dog needs a guide, not a pushover.” – Peter Caine

5. Let Them Work for It

Every dog needs a job—even if they're not herding sheep.

How:

Ask for a sit, wait, or trick before meals, walks, or play. Keep their brain switched on.

Socialisation tip:

Working for rewards in the presence of other dogs builds *focus around distraction*—a key skill for reactive or overexcited pups.

“Structure isn’t mean—it gives your dog purpose.” – Zak George

“Earning creates satisfaction. Free creates entitlement.” – Dog Daddy

6. Silence Can Be Louder Than Shouting

Dogs listen with their eyes and instincts, not just their ears.

How:

Use posture, presence, eye contact, and space. Avoid frantic correcting or yelling.

Reactivity tip:

If your dog reacts—don't freak out. Stay still. Redirect calmly. Move away, ask for a sit, and wait for calm.

“Dogs react when they don’t trust the handler to handle the situation. Earn that trust.” – Tom Davis

“A calm body says more than a loud voice.” – Cesar Millan

7. Control Play, Don't Kill It

Play is important—but overarousal leads to trouble.

How:

Interrupt wild play before it tips into chaos. Reset with a break, then resume.

Social tip:

Supervise play with new dogs. Interrupt pushy behaviour early. Calm group interaction > manic wrestling.

“Play isn’t bad. Uncontrolled play is.” – Yorkshire Canine Academy

“Overstimulation is a gateway to behaviour problems.” – Peter Caine

8. Don't Let Them Be the Boss of the Bed

The couch isn't the problem. Ownership is.

How:

Only invite dogs up when calm. If they guard the space, they lose the privilege for now.

Real-world tip:

For reactive or insecure dogs, less furniture freedom = more emotional stability.

“Your bed isn’t the issue. Who owns it is.” – Dog Daddy

“It’s not dominance—it’s boundaries.” – Cesar Millan

9. Long Leash = Long Life

Freedom is earned. A long line helps bridge the gap.

How:

Use a 5–10m line in open spaces. Practice recall, check-ins, and calm walking at a distance.

Socialisation tip:

Use the long line around new dogs. If your dog gets nervous or overexcited, you have safe control without killing the vibe.

“A long line is freedom earned safely.” – Tom Davis

“Recall is built with repetition, not hope.” – Yorkshire Canine Academy

10. It's Not Just a Walk – It's the Reset Button

The walk is where leadership is built, anxiety melts, and behaviour resets.

How:

Walk with purpose. You lead, they follow. Keep it structured. Stop often. Check in. Reward calm.

Real-world tip:

Skip the dog park. Pack walks on private land, with calm dogs, lead to real social growth, not just chaos in a field.

“If your dog is pulling, they're not following. If they're not following, you're not leading.” – Dog Daddy

“Structured walks change behaviour. Chaos walks reinforce it.” – Tom Davis

Final Thoughts: Progress Over Perfection

Your dog doesn't want to be difficult. It wants to be *good*. But it can only make the right choices when you've shown them what those look like.

Dogs learn through repetition, pattern, and clarity—not one-off commands or bribes.

The job of a leader isn't to punish—it's to guide. You're raising a companion, not controlling a machine.

Be clear. Be consistent. Be kind.

And don't forget to have fun along the way!

