Suzanne Clothier RELATIONSHIP (ENTERED TRAINING)
REALLY REAL RELAXATION PROTOCOLTM

This simple but effective protocol is useful for helping handlers and dogs shift into real relaxation *together.*

Goal
• Teaching the dog to find authentic relaxation through his own choices.
• Teaching the handler to relax themselves, to signal "We are relaxing" & provide a way for the dog to relax.

Benefits
• Dog learns to self-modulate through volunteered, not prompted, behaviours, and through attention to the handler.
• Handler learns to modulate the connection without having to disengage from the dog, easily transitioning up and down, from active or intense to relaxed & quiet.

Preparation
• Handler seated comfortably, with body posture, gaze, breathing, etc. that indicates "We are relaxing."
• Dog on leash to limit to half-circle area in front of handler o avoid "arguments" – if necessary, handler steps on leash giving dog enough slack so dog can stand, sit or lay down without any tension on leash
• Supply of high quality, small and easily chewed treats in easy reach

RRR™ - Step by Step
Step 1
- Identify DOWN as desired behaviour of the moment
- Lure the dog with treat into DOWN
- Immediately reward with 10-12 treats placed on the ground between dog's paws and quiet praise
- If dog stays down, pay him 5 more treats, praising quietly, then release 3. If dog gets up, say nothing

Step 2
- Repeat Step 1 two more times

Step 3
- Lure dog into DOWN, reward with a 3-5 treats, praise quietly continue to reinforce the dog with treats every few seconds
- If the dog gets up (sooner or later he probably will), say nothing – WAIT. When dog chooses to lay down on his own, praise quietly and reward with 5- 10 treats. • Continue to reinforce dog, slowing the rate of reinforcement as the dog relaxes.
- Each time the dog gets up, WAIT for volunteered DOWN, praise, reward after a few minutes of practice, release the dog and move around with

Step 4
- Handler sits in comfortable position, indicating to the dog "We are relaxing" wait for dog to volunteer the DOWN quietly praise and provide a couple of treats placed between paws continue to reinforce dog, slowing rate of reinforcement as dog relaxes more fully Handler should look around the environment with relaxed, slow movements, also making brief, soft eye contact with the dog, smile at dog, use low soothing tones (avoid conversations)
- After a few minutes of practice, release the dog and go play!

Practice & Perfect
- Repeat anywhere & everywhere (provided the dog can split his attention between handler & environment).
- Vary the amounts of time you ask for relaxation.
- Shift in and out of PLAY-WORK – RELAXATION to help dog learn to self-modulate based on cues about what you are doing.
- Work to keep the connection between you & dog at all times.
- Add standing & reclining postures that indicates "We're relaxing"

SIGNS that the dog is getting it:
- Lays down and rolls over onto one hip
- Stops staring at handler and/or treats
- Begins to be thoughtfully aware of environment, while keeping handler in his awareness
- Visible signs of relaxation (muscle tension drops, postural shifts, slower respirations & head/eye movements)

SIGNS that something needs adjusting:
- Dog staring at handler with anticipation Be sure handler is not encouraging the dog by sustaining eye contact and/or conversation
- Be sure handler isn't in gunslinger position with tension and focused eyes.
- Be sure handler provides treats with slow, relaxed movements.

Dog gets up and does not lay down again
- Dog may not be clear that DOWN is the behaviour that pays off - repeat first few steps being very generous with treats.
- Handler may need to provide greater rate of reinforcement

Dog is unable to split attention in that environment
- Move to quieter environment

Handler loses focus and drops connection with dog
- Practice!
- Identify what pulls the handler out of connection with dog
- Teach a rhythmic approach to checking in with dog (every X seconds)
- Practice using peripheral vision and soft eyes

Suzanne would appreciate feedback & comments regarding this protocol. Video & photos would also be welcomed! Send any & all information regarding this to:
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