

I CHOOSE YOU!

March 28, 2017

I teach this game to puppies. To adults. To sport dogs. To pet dogs. To reactive dogs. To therapy dogs. I teach this game to everyone! It's very simple, but it has a big impact psychologically. Basically, the pup is learning that when it sees something of interest; it should look back to you for guidance or instruction.

It lays a great foundation for recalls and off leash work. It helps reactive dogs change their focus. It improves your bond and relationship. And all it takes is a leash and some things the dog thinks is interesting.

To start you will need:

- A leash,
- Some low-value treats; low-calorie cookies, air popped popcorn, cheerios...
- Some high value treats
- Clicker (if you use one)
- And your dog!

Start in a distraction free environment.

1. Hook your dog up and stand quietly.
2. Toss a low value treat just out of your dog's leash.
3. DO NOT pull on your dog! The leash is only to stop him from getting to the treat.
4. Your job is to wait and watch. Don't say anything, don't move, don't pull. Just wait!
5. At some point, your dog is going to look back at you. The moment he turns his head, click, praise, and reward with something BETTER than what he just left!

Some dogs get this right away. Some dogs take time. I had a dog take 20 minutes to finally turn away!

If your dog is getting frustrated, you may need to change the set-up. You do not want him to fail! Perhaps what you tossed out is too enticing. Try a crumpled piece of paper or something less interesting.

Once your dog starts to understand the game; up the stakes. Start tossing out more and more interesting things; but remember – always reward with something better!

Eventually, you will get to the point where you can't offer a more interesting item. Then it's up to you to make what you have better than what he left! If you tossed a steak, then offer a steak with so much enthusiasm that the dog thinks the one you have must be that much better! If it's a toy, then make sure the one you offer is alive and fun! (in the video, Kod leaves a Frisbee for a Frisbee....but... the Frisbee on the floor is just laying there, and the one in my hand is engaging and fun!)

Play this often, and make it fun! It will translate to real world application; dog sees a squirrel, but turn back to see if what you have is better! Dog sees another dog, and turns back to you to see what you've got!

Whenever your dog CHOOSES YOU; acknowledge it, praise it and reward!

<https://youtu.be/z1QycU1wKgE>