



# Episode #1: Welcome to The Agility Challenge Podcast

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

agility, dog, circumstances, thought, training, actions, challenge, pretty, thoughts, feelings, chemistry teacher, league, fail, mental, result, podcast, teaching, frustrated, play, felt

Hey there, are you may be looking for courses to set up in a small space that will challenge you and your dog in a fun and educational way? Well, head over to the website for this podcast [podcast.theagilitychallenge.com](https://podcast.theagilitychallenge.com) and scroll to the bottom where you can sign up to get all of the agility challenge league play courses from the last couple of years. For each month of those two years, agility challenge league players enjoyed competing against fellow league players around the globe on small space courses, which were always in a 50 by 50 foot space, and large space courses in a 60 by 90 foot space. League play for the agility challenge has started up again in 2023. And now, we have international league play with courses on a 70 by 100 foot playing field and with international style challenges. So that's three different league play divisions. courses for 2023 will be designed by me Daisy Peel, as well as guest designers throughout the year. Even if you're not an agility challenge member, now you can join as a league play only member. Find out more at [podcast.theagilitychallenge.com](https://podcast.theagilitychallenge.com). And don't forget to sign up for your free book of over 40 league play courses including CourseBuilder maps in both metric and English units.

This is the agility challenge podcast with Daisy Peel. You're listening to Episode One.

Welcome to the agility challenge podcast. I'm your host, Daisy Peel. Join me as I talk about everything related to the mental side of the sport of dog agility. If you've ever felt overwhelmed by negative self talk or lack of confidence, or if your dog training to do list seems so long that you don't even know where to get started, then this podcast is for you. For more podcast episodes, training, content and coaching from me, head to [www dot the agility challenge.com](https://www.theagilitychallenge.com) where members get access to monthly training and handling challenges. In addition to league play, and a whole lot more. Let's dive in with today's episode.

Hello, and welcome to what is kind of a new feature and kind of a returning feature in the agility challenge. It used to be before COVID That every month one of the challenges I presented was a mental toughness challenge it was I called a clear mind. Because years ago, I published a book called Clear Mind along with a psychologist who was a student of mine, and it was all about mental toughness and mental training. And that was also the name of my facility in Oregon before I moved to Ohio. And then COVID happened. And it was kind of hard for me to be in a position to help other people with their mental game when I felt like my own mental game was pretty wimpy. And it just kind of fell by the



wayside. But it's back and in a little bit different format. Rather than giving you guys tasks to act on. Each month, I'm going to take a different route and just work on connecting with you more frequently. Because one of the things that did come out of office or out of COVID was office hours where we just had a sort of freeform, my door is open, come hang out with me. I'll answer your questions, comments and concerns. That's been a really popular feature for the agility challenge for a lot of members.

So I thought I would reboot the mental toughness, mental training growth mindset challenges into a video log slash podcast, where we could connect with each other, not quite as directly as office hours because there's we can't really interact with this. It's pre recorded. But it's back in terms of giving you access to some thoughts, to some things to think about with regards to mental toughness, growth mindset, and that sort of thing. So I'm going to try and do these every week. We'll see how it goes. We're 2023 There's definitely a lot on my mind about this stuff. It's one of my favorite topics. And we'll get into that over the next several episodes of this video log slash podcast. So first off, I want to start at the very beginning since this is episode one, and give you a tiny bit of background. Most of you who've been in the agility challenge for any length of time, kind of know my history, but I wanted to give you a brief overview. So I've been doing agility since 1999. I started thinking about it in 1998. And the 1999 I really started. So gosh, that was a long time ago. I don't even want to do the math on how many years that that was at the time. I was a chemistry teacher. I got my bachelor's degree in chemistry. And then I stayed on for an additional year to get my Master's in science education and became a chemistry teacher. I really enjoyed teaching. I really loved teaching chemistry I loved chemistry, but when I got into agility was pretty much at the same time that I graduated from university and started teaching high school. I realized pretty pretty quickly that while the other teachers were Thinking 24/7 about teaching their particular subject. And while I felt like I was good at what I did, and I worked hard to be a good teacher, what I was really thinking about 24/7 was dog agility training dogs, teaching people how to train their dogs to do agility. And that was what I was obsessed with.

So I thought, you know, I think if I really want to be good at something that should be something that I can be obsessed with 24/7. So I was lucky to be in a position to do just that I sort of dove off the deep end, and quit my job as a high school teacher and became a dog agility instructor full time I managed a big training facility. So I did some board and train I developed curriculum, I managed several other instructors, I've ran a pretty big business. So it's kind of a transition between being fully self employed and being fully employed as a teacher, I was traveling all over the world teaching seminars, and, and making lots of contacts and competing all over the world. And back in 2011, I could see that online instruction was kind of the wave of the future. So I started teaching some online classes. And fast forward to I think it was 2017 when the agility challenge first started, and now here we are in 2023. So that's kind of a very short abbreviated version of how I got from 1998 to 2023.

So like I said, I wanted to start this video log slash podcast, because I want to have an opportunity to reboot all of the tips and content that I've presented over the years with regard to mindset and the mental challenges associated with dog agility, specifically, dogs for more generally. And really, anytime that we are walking into the ring, whether it's obedience, or rally, or dock diving, or anything really, but



specifically dog agility, since that's my area of expertise. But when it comes to performance and competition, it's one thing to be training your dog and making progress. And it's another thing to perform. And sometimes, for some of us performance can mean stepping into the ring on a national stage with your dog, it could mean going to a local show for the first time with your dog, it could mean trying to run a course with a friend watching when you're accustomed to doing it by yourself. It could mean trying to perform in a class situation where people are watching and evaluating. I mean, it could be as simple as maybe you're doing some at home stuff or even agility challenge league play where you have to video and it's really just any situation where there's some pressure to perform to get it right on the first try.

And even though with the home stuff, the you know the the league play stuff the UK at home, the USDA at home stuff, you don't have to get it right the first time, you know that the camera is rolling, and there's some pressure, you'd really like to get it right. The first second, maybe third time. So that's what I wanted to talk about in this ongoing series of video logs and podcasts. And if you want to know where I you know, why do I Why should you listen to me on this? Well, I'll talk to you about it in this series. But again, the the quick and dirty version is I never played sports as a kid. I mean, my parents signed me up for soccer. I'm pretty sure I kicked the ball in the wrong direction more than I kicked it in the right direction. I really didn't care. I was kind of like Fernanda bowl, I wanted to look at the daisies and lay in the grass and read a book, I really didn't want to run anywhere, much less back and forth on a soccer field. And I got into music and marching band and I was into, I did I did compete because I always wanted to be first chair.

But that was a little bit different than a team sport, which is what I think dog sports it is it's a team sport, where not only are you, the handler, and the trainer, but you're also the coach, you're pretty much everything for the dog, you're you take care of their physical needs, their emotional needs, their mental needs, their performative needs, and you have to do all that for yourself as well. So it's quite a bit different. So when I got to dog agility in 1998 1999, I really had no experience with performance. I struggled quite a bit with performance anxiety, that took me about 10 years to make it to the finals. Part of that was training, I had a dog who I hadn't done a very good job training so that we didn't have very good skills. I wasn't very good at maintaining criteria in the ring. I didn't really have a good handle on how to channel and direct arousal. So I had a lot of unfocused arousal with my early canine partners.

So it took me quite a while to figure it out. So but I learned a lot. I made a lot of mistakes when it came to mindset along the way. And also, I was one of those kids who was in the you know, as in the talented and gifted program, I was always told I was really smart. And so when it came to failing and failing a lot, there's a lot of failure involved in dog training, I really didn't have the experience of picking myself up frequently after mistakes. So I got frustrated, really easy, I just, I didn't have a really it turned out, it didn't really have a great growth mindset. Because I was accustomed to being told I was smart. And then I felt like, well, if I fail, that must mean I'm not smart. And it was, it was a big challenge for me to look at things consistently in terms of, well, if I don't fail, I just need to try harder, or better or different or focus my efforts. And, and it's success really is not a matter of talent. It's a matter of a lot of hard work



behind the scenes, a lot of consistent work behind the scenes, and a lot of smart work behind the scenes a lot of purposeful practice. So I got really into purposeful practice, growth mindset, and a lot of that kind of stuff.

So I'm going to talk a lot about that in this series, this video, vlog series podcast series. And also, I discovered that when I made errors, on course, are in training, I got pretty emotional about it, I got really frustrated really quickly, then you might have heard the saying that frustration begins where knowledge ends, well, I had a lot of frustration, and a lot of moments of jumping off of the knowledge cliff into the abyss of I don't know, but I'm really super frustrated. And when you're training a dog, or any animal really frustration, and emotion really doesn't play a productive role in that. So I had to learn how to balance all of that stuff, you know, you want to be happy with your dog, and really help them be happy about the activities that you want to do with them. But then what do you do when you're frustrated? What do you do when you're disappointed? What do you do when you're upset?

What do you do when things don't go the way you planned on them going? And a lot of people will say things even now like oh, well, you should just be happy that. I mean, look how lucky you are to do this sport, lots of people just can't even put food on the table. And that's fine. And that's true. But in the moment, nobody's thinking that in the moment. So being able to work on productively channeling those emotions, I don't want to squash them, I don't want to be a robot, it's okay to be frustrated. It's okay to be happy. It's okay to be sad, it's okay to be disappointed. But learning how to channel those things so that I can more thoroughly enjoy my experience with my dog. And also more thoroughly enjoy failure for the challenges it presents and the growth that it presents.

And instead of just, I failed, I suck. All of that stuff I'm going to talk to you guys about because I think it's a big important topic. And a lot of people, a lot of us aren't really comfortable talking about it. And a lot of us, I think, I mean, I guess I can only speak to myself, but I know that people have agreed with me over the years that it's we can't really talk about it. Because we know right off the bat, we're going to be told well, it's just dog agility. It's not that important. So get over it. At least you can do this at least you can do that at least your dog is this at least your dog is that. And again, all that stuff might be true. But it's not necessarily helpful. So that's going to be part of this. But then what do I want to talk about right now in episode one to get you started? Well, one of the things I want to talk about is something that I like to think about quite a lot. And again, this is going to apply to all sorts of things.

So it might apply to your dog training, it might apply to your handling, it might apply to maybe you're on a diet this year, maybe you've got some diet and nutrition goals, maybe you've got some fitness goals, maybe you've got some relationship goals, it doesn't really matter. I mean, honestly, all the stuff is pretty much the same. It's the same framework, it's just what you apply it to. So I want to talk about something called the thought model. And this kind of plays into our beliefs. And how do we come to believe these things? And, and really are our beliefs, the truth? So and this, this also plays into dog training, because when I talk about how to train our dogs I talk a lot about when you train your dog, you couldn't. You should sorry, you shouldn't.



You can't, you can't, you shouldn't try to control the dog directly. Smart training typically involves manipulating the environment around the dog, so that the dog makes choices that you pretty much wanted to make anyways, but has some agency they feel like they had a choice because they did have a choice that just had limited choices. So they make the right choice. And they have some thoughts about the circumstances, their environment, and then they have some feelings about those thoughts. And then they take particular actions, which is the behavior that you're trying to reward them for. And then there's a result. You give them a cookie You're not. So that thought model even can apply to the way you train your dog. So the thought model is basically this.

There are circumstances, facts, the objective circumstances that are happening in, in the in the environment around you. And pretty much immediately those circumstances trigger your thoughts, you have some thoughts about those circumstances. Now, when I was a chemistry teacher, we used to call those observations versus inferences. And we are so good at making inferences, we observe something and we immediately make some inferences that involve judgments about the thing that we're observing. So it's kind of like the scientific method as well. So you got these circumstances, these observable facts.

And again, back in my chemistry, teaching days, it was let's look at a candle, let's make some observations. The observation is that you can stick a thermometer in the flame and report the number that the thermometer gives you. That's effect. But there's a lot of stuff that just cascades out of that immediately. That's thought and it happens so fast, that it can be difficult for us to separate thoughts from circumstances, we almost immediately think that our thoughts about the circumstances are the circumstances. So let's take the weather, for example. And this happened pretty recently to my husband, and we had a cold snap. In Ohio, it got down to I think, like 10 degrees, maybe a little colder. I don't remember what the number was. But the observable fact was single digit temperatures, let's say. So that's the observable fact that's the circumstance. Now, almost immediately, there are thoughts and feelings that happen about that. So I walk out the door, in this single digit weather.

Actually, before I even walk out the door, I see on the thermometer that it's single digits, and I think it's cold, I'm gonna freeze. And I really am uncomfortable when I'm cold, because my fingers get cold, they turn white, and they kind of start to like, feel really painful on the tip. So let's see how that happened. Thoughts and Feelings calm just like that immediately after circumstances, I see the temperature. That's the circumstance, I look out the window, I see snow on the ground, that's the circumstance immediately, I think it's cold, I'm going to be in some discomfort, I don't like discomfort, it's uncomfortable. And then the actions are, I bundle up. And the result is, I go outside, and I am not as cold as I feel like I would be and so the result is always going to be this is the kicker is that the result of all of your actions, which were based on your feelings, which were based on your thoughts, which were based on circumstances, the result is pretty much always proof or evidence of the original thought.



Now, my husband, on the other hand, looked at that thermometer, single digit temperatures, looked out the window saw the snow, and he did not have the thought that it was going to be cold and that he was going to freeze and he was uncomfortable freezing. I'm not exactly sure what he thought, because I can't see into his mind. But I can tell you that what the action was, was that while I bundled up to go shovel snow off of the front porch, he wore shorts and sandals. He's that kind of guy. shorts and sandals, single degree single digit temperature shorts and sandals. So well, I can't tell you exactly what his thoughts and feelings were, I can tell you they were different than mine. Because his actions were quite a bit different than mine. Now, we can both walk into the same room, we can both walk into a room that 75 degrees, and I'm going to think it's perfect, and he's gonna think it's too hot. So the circumstances are the same, the observable temperature is exactly the same, but our thoughts are different. And our feelings are different. And our actions are different. So they diverge.

And then again, the results of our actions is typically proof or evidence of the original thought. Now, how does this all apply to looping back to performance and your mental game and stuff like that? Well, I mean, think about it. So you go to a show a competition. And you look at a course map, that is an objective fact, the Course Map, everybody's looking at the same course map, the obstacles are numbered the same for everybody, the spacing is the same for everybody. But somebody with a large dog is going to have different thoughts about the spacing between the obstacles on the map, then somebody with a small dog. And those thoughts are going to trigger some feelings and those feelings are going to trigger different actions on your part as a handler. And typically, the result of your actions is going to serve to further bolster your thoughts and feelings.

So if we get to, we kind of grind down and we think about alright, I go to I go to a show, I see a map. It's the same map everybody else is seeing. But I immediately think I can't do this. I look at a sequence on the course and I think I can't do this I've never done this before, even that I've never done this before might be a circumstance. But the I can't do this, there's no way I can do this. That's a thought. And it's pretty tightly wrapped up with a feeling, I can't do this, the unspoken part might be, I'm gonna fail, I suck, people are watching me, my dog is going to hate me, I, well, this is a waste of my time. And then our actions are going to unfold based on those feelings about the thoughts and circumstances. So instead of going for the front cross that you probably could have done objectively for instructor or instructor was there saying, Yeah, you can totally make that I've seen you make that front cross hundreds of times, if you're by yourself, you're thinking, I can't make it, I'm too slow. I'm a failure. I'm gonna go for the rear cross. So there's an example of an action that stems from your feelings and thoughts that were based on the circumstances. So you hang back, you handled tentatively, you do the rear cross. And the result is your dogs not really sure where they're going, because you're handling is not as assertive as it could be, your dog goes off course, or takes an obstacle that you didn't direct them to take, and you don't qualify.

So that result of not qualifying, not running clean, is going, you're in your mind, you're gonna be thinking, See, I knew it, I knew we were going to fail. I knew I just I knew it, when I saw this map, that it was going to go this way, and it totally went this way. So that kind of stuff is what I want to grind down





and get into the nitty gritty of in this series of videos, blogs, and podcasts, I'll probably loop back around to the same topics over and over again. Because basically, one of my goals is that you just hear this stuff and see this stuff and think about this stuff over and over again. Because I know that it has helped me over the years, just these constant reminders of Oh, yeah, I should sit back and think about this. You know, when I have a feeling about something, why am I feeling that way about this thought? That's based on this circumstance? What is it about this circumstance that triggered this thought would you know what is my past history of reinforcement. And remember, same as with dog training, reinforcement can be it doesn't have to be good, doesn't have to be pleasant reinforcement can simply be if I thought it wasn't going to if I thought I was going to fail, and I failed, then my belief gets reinforced. So that's an example of reinforcement.

So we have some beliefs to get reinforced. And, and then we buy into them. So just taking a moment to sit back and think, Okay, I had this thought about this circumstance, I had this feeling Why did I have this feeling? Is it true? Do I have to take action based on this feeling? Or could I take a different action? What would be the result of a different action be? If I think I might fail? Either way? Should I hang back? And and make sure that I'm careful? And then what would I? What would happen if I failed? doing that? Or should I go for it and see what happens? And maybe I should go for this front cross and see if it happens. And if I fail? Is it because I suck? Or could I tweak something about that front cross and do it better next time? And, and then questioning, you know, if you if you have results questioning whether or not okay, look, I didn't fit, I didn't succeed? I tried and I didn't succeed.

But does that mean I'm a failure? Does that mean I should never try it again? Or is there something else here that I could tweak? So just coming back, I'll come back around and around to this, you know, the idea that circumstances, objective circumstances can trigger or will typically trigger subjective thoughts. And then almost immediately, feelings pile up right behind it. And then we take action based on that. And then the results of our actions serve to reinforce our beliefs. So we're grownups though, we get to choose our beliefs, or we at least get to evaluate them. And think about them. And again, think about how you can apply this to dog training, fitness, training, diet, nutrition, relationships, pretty much anything.

So that's it for today. This is episode one for 2023. I'm going to try and get these out to you later in the week, each week, Thursday or Friday. Because I want you to be able to think about this stuff. When you're on your way to a competition or at a competition. Maybe you want to re listen to it on your way home from a competition. So go ahead and leave some comments below and let me know what you think. And we'll press on with our first full weekend in January this weekend. I have a UK trial UK competition at my house that I'm prepping for. I hope that whatever you're doing this weekend, you learn something you're really going to learn you're going to win. And even if you win, you're going to learn so have a great weekend. Enjoy the rest of your week and I will see you guys online.

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