



# Episode 18: Why Discomfort Is The Sweet Spot To Aim For

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

purposeful, discomfort, training session, practice, dog, agility, embracing, training, progress, podcast, growth, handling, step, hallmark, avoid, talking, moment, challenge, goals, uncomfortable

This is the agility challenge podcast with Daisy peel. You're listening to Episode 18. 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. This is the podcast for you. You can have the best training and the best skills and the best dog and access to the best trainers, coaches and instructors in the world. But if you don't have your mental game under control, you'll never be able to successfully use all those skills you have to the best of your abilities. Now let's dive in to today's episode. Hey there agility friend and welcome to the agility challenge podcast. In today's episode, I'm going to dive into one of my favorite topics. And that is the importance of embracing discomfort and the principles of purposeful practice when it comes to our dog agility, training and handling journey so that we can really enjoy making the most progress possible. Discomfort is a word that makes a lot of us cringe. Naturally, most of us seek comfort and avoid situations that challenge us. But when we can embrace discomfort, we can really open ourselves up to incredible opportunities for growth and development. Picture this, you're sitting in a cozy room with all your familiar and comfortable stuff around you. It's safe, secure, and predictable. But ask yourself, does growth happen in these spaces of comfort? The answer's no. Real progress occurs when we step out

of our comfort zones and into the unknown. Think about it. Throughout history, great achievers, artists, innovators have all pushed themselves beyond their limits, embracing discomfort as a stepping stone to success. They understand that true growth is outside the boundaries of comfort, and familiarity, and all that good stuff. Now, it may be that you're saying yeah, Daisy, whatever. This is just dog agility. But it's not just dog agility. It's one facet of our lives. That gives us the opportunity to learn how to embrace the discomfort of growth and learning. It's one facet of our lives where we can really explore what it's like to have a growth mindset, where we believe we can make progress and improve at where we're at today. And improvement in this facet of our lives in our dog agility, handling and training absolutely bleeds over into all facets of our lives. So it's not just dog agility, for sure. So how can we embrace discomfort in our lives? One big way, is through something you've probably heard me talk about before, if you've listened to any my podcast episodes, and that is purposeful practice. Sometimes I call it deliberate practice. But I'm gonna stick to purposeful practice here. Purposeful practice involves focused effort towards improving a specific skill or area of expertise. And of course, dog agility, handling and training is what I'm focused on. So let's break it down. Purposeful practice, there's three components to it. First, purposeful practice requires that you set clear goals that are going to stretch your abilities. And these goals should be challenging, but achievable. And ideally, they're really small goals that focus on something you can achieve in a single training session, or maybe a few training sessions. So I'm not talking about your life's purpose, or your big dream goals, I'm just talking about really small, this is what I'm going to accomplish right now. Basically, if you're trying a handling maneuver on a sequence, that doesn't work the first time you make it a goal, to figure out how to make it work right then in there. And then instead of avoiding the discomfort of trying and failing a few times you really lean in, pick it apart, work at it, master it and then move on. Or maybe maybe you don't master it at that moment. But you come up with a plan to work on it. Because you've realized, oh, man, I'm really not as good at this as I thought I was. But I can come up with a plan to get better. And then you master and move on. If you're going to a regular class, and or regular training, and your focus is on just getting through the course, then that's not really purposeful practice. If you're letting all sorts of details slip through your hands, like

your dog didn't hold us its day, or your dog's context weren't that great, or there were wide turns on the course. But you're just going to get through it, then that's not purposeful practice. And you can't really expect to grow from that. Although you might have a great time playing with your dog and doing that kind of practice. When it comes to purposeful practice. You really can't define success by how many obstacles you did with your dog You have to instead define success by something like stopping immediately when something unravels in a sequence. And really looking at your handling, like your footwork or your timing, and then repeating that sequence. And it might just be three obstacles, with the goal of changing your footwork or timing, so that you can be better at that specific thing in that specific moment you're really focusing in on it. Purposeful practice might look like deciding to completely ditch your plans to just get through a sequence, so that you can work on that start line stay instead that stay that you've maybe been neglecting just a little bit. That's purposeful practice. And it might even mean completely bailing on doing any agility at all, because it's clear that you and your dog instead need to work on impulse control or something like that. Now, the second hallmark of purposeful practice is that it demands our undivided attention and focus. Purposeful practice is about being present in the moment and engaging fully in your dog training, dog handling sequencing, or whatever the training session is going to look like. When you eliminate distractions, and you really up your game in terms of concentration, you can get maximum value from practice sessions, and sometimes even with less time than you're currently spending on training. But that means that you have to put your phone away, put your mobile devices away and really focus on being fully present in the moment, it means that you have to be able to clear your mental plate of all the other stuff that might be distracting you from really paying attention during your training time with your dog. And it also means if you can't clear that mental plate, you may need to just not train at that particular moment. Distracted mediocre training is not purposeful. And finally, the best and most purposeful practice benefits from receiving immediate and informative feedback. Now, I know most of us train alone most of the time. So we don't have coaches. We don't have mentors. We don't have instructors with us. But what we do have is our dogs, and our dogs can give us pretty immediate feedback about that wrong step we took or our late cues. And video can also

provide us with feedback that's informative. Although video, you know, technology can get kind of tricky. It's not usually immediate by the time you fumble around with your camera, and oh my gosh, it didn't record or I got a bad angle. And now I have to find a screen big enough that I can watch it on. So it's not usually immediate, but it can be very informative. Because video doesn't lie. And for me personally, I found that just knowing a camera is rolling, helps motivate me to really show up with my A game to a training session. helps my timing be sharper, it helps me really, as soon as something goes wrong and training, if I know a cameras rolling, then I'm really going to be much more likely to ask myself, Okay, what did I just do there to make that happen? Because I know that, that if I don't think about it in the moment, I'm going to end up watching the video and seeing what I did anyway. So you know, if you're one of those people that occasionally blames your dog or says but he knows that, roll the video camera, get a camera on yourself. It's it can be pretty enlightening. And feedback helps us identify areas for improvement. It helps us refine our training, and it helps us really grow with each training session. So those are the three hallmarks of purposeful practice. Now, let me tie all this together. By embracing discomfort, we willingly step into unfamiliar territory, and we challenge ourselves to learn and adapt. Purposeful practice is like our compass. It guides us through that uncharted terrain as we strive for progress and mastery when it comes to our dog agility, training and handling. Purposeful practice can often feel messy, and experimental and really focused on small details. So you might come away from a session disappointed that you didn't get through a course. But once you're on board with the notion of purposeful practice, and really leaning into your weaknesses and your discomforts, and turning them into your strengths, you're going to stop thinking that way, for the most part, I mean, I won't lie, there are days where I really do just want to get through it. And that's fine too. You can engage in purposeful practice all the time, every moment of every training session, or you're going to burn out. So it is totally fine. To have those training sessions that are not purposeful. You just have to recognize that if none of your training sessions are purposeful, you're not going to make much progress and you're training and handling. You'll have fun, and you might spend 10,000

hours doing dog agility. But if you're not purposeful about it, simply spending 10,000 hours doing anything is not going to make you an expert or a master on that thing.

So embracing discomfort and purposeful Practice go hand in hand, when we can accept that discomfort is an integral part of growth, then we can shift our perspective and see it as an opportunity rather than an annoyance or something to avoid. What did I learn? How did I grow? And how did I lean into something I've been avoiding are the questions that can become the hallmark and your like your guideposts of a good training session, instead of just did I have fun, because purposeful practice isn't always fun. It's uncomfortable, which is why I'm talking about discomfort hand in hand with purposeful practice, it's kind of like going to the gym isn't always fun. Staying on a diet isn't always fun, it should be fun for your dog. But that doesn't mean that your dog agility, training and handling is always going to be smooth sailing for you. You have to remember that progress is not always smooth sailing, it's not always linear. Sometimes it's two steps forward, one step back, you're gonna have setbacks, you're gonna have failures, you're gonna have moments of frustration along the way. But it's through those experiences that you build resilience, you learn valuable lessons. And ultimately, you do make progress. So the next time you find yourself hesitating to step out of your comfort zone, or there's something that crops up in a training session that you'd rather just avoid, remind yourself of the immense potential that exists right on the other side of those boundaries that you've set up for yourself that exists right on the other side of that thing that you'd rather avoid. Embrace discomfort and commit to purposeful practice, knowing that it's through those kinds of training sessions, that real progress is possible. Okay, so that's all for today's episode of the podcast. I hope you found this discussion on embracing discomfort and my favorite, purposeful, practice enlightening, and more importantly, motivating. I think it's important for all of us to remember that no matter where somebody is on their dog, agility, handling and training journey, discomfort is still a hallmark of growth and learning. So, if you're thinking, Yeah, but I don't ever want to be on a world team, I just want to have fun with my dog. Ask yourself, and think about this. Okay, so yes, I've enjoyed quite a bit of success in dog agility. But I

promise you that when it comes to growth and learning and pushing my own boundaries of understanding and skill, discomfort is involved. The only real difference is that because I've been at this for so long, I look for that discomfort as, as a as a guidepost to let me know, okay, I was operating on the edge of my skill level, I was uncomfortable, I'm going to grow my skills so that that's no longer uncomfortable. And then it's on to the next thing that makes me uncomfortable. So no matter where you are, in your journey, whether you're a novice who's just starting out, or somebody like me, who's been doing agility for 20 years, there's really no difference if you're after growth, and progress and learning. And if you're after operating on the edges of your understanding, discomfort is going to be a feature, not a bug. Now, the thing that makes you uncomfortable, might be different. So the thing that makes a novice in the sport uncomfortable is going to be really different than something that makes someone who's like me who has been in the sport for 20 years uncomfortable. But the the thing that we have in common is the discomfort. So again, I love to use this analogy. It's like going to the gym, you go to the gym, you pick up a five pound dumbbell for several training sessions until the five pound dumbbell gets easier to pick up. And then what do you do, if you want to keep making progress, you can't just keep picking up that five pound dumbbell, you have to pick up a slightly heavier dumbbell. So if you want to keep making progress, you have to keep picking up weights that are progressively heavier in order to experience the same discomfort. So it's important to remember, progress is not always easy. And again, it doesn't matter where you are on that journey. Progress is not always going to be easy. But it's in those moments of discomfort and deliberate practice, that we truly grow and evolve as dog agility trainers and handlers. So I'm going to encourage you and hopefully motivate you to lean in. Embrace that discomfort, pursue purposeful practice and get a move on on your journey towards progress. If you enjoyed this topic if you enjoyed today's episode, please be sure to subscribe to the podcast and reach out leave me a review. Leave me your comments. I really appreciate your support. And until next time, keep embracing discomfort, keep pursuing your goals stumble, get up, stumble, get up again. In and repeat a million times, or ever. If you enjoyed today's podcast and you've got somebody in mind who you're pretty sure could benefit from discussing the things that I talked about today, head to the

webpage for today's episode [podcast dot the agility challenge.com, forward slash 18](https://podcast.theagilitychallenge.com/18). And scroll to the bottom, you'll see a section that says share the love. And there are some instructions and links for how to subscribe to and share this podcast and also how to leave a rating and review in Apple podcasts. I'm a pretty tech savvy person, but even for me, it was a little tricky. So I've included a how to link for you at the bottom of that page. So go ahead, head on over to [podcast dot the agility challenge.com forward slash 18](https://podcast.theagilitychallenge.com/18). subscribe to the podcast, leave a review and share it with a friend. Also, you can leave a comment below the episode and let me know your thoughts about what I talked about today. What do you think about discomfort and leaning in and purposeful practice? I'd love to hear from you. And maybe discuss your thoughts on a future episode.