



Episode #24: You think YOU'RE struggling with your mental game? What about your DOG?

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

dog, agility, stress, training, handler, threshold, arousal, behavior, aroused, hormones, sport, challenge, literally, cortisol, puppies, canine, people, spaniel, side, weekend

SPEAKERS

Kelly Daniel, Daisy Peel

Daisy Peel 00:00

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 just seems so long that you don't even know where to get started. This podcast is 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 into today's episode, episode number 24. I am so excited to introduce this podcast episode to you. This is such an incredible way to start off the new year. Happy new year by the way. This year I'm starting off the podcast Season Season Two of the agility challenge podcast with an interview. In this episode, I have just a really fantastic conversation with Kelly Daniel of hybrid dog training in New Zealand. Now Kelly has been a contributor at the agility challenge my online dog agility training platform for several years now. And each month she contributes canine fitness content, and canine mindfulness content, both of which I think are just so important. Her approach to Canine mindfulness and fitness just fits right in with all of the mindset and mental game challenges that I love so much about dog agility for us as handlers and trainers. And that I talk about all the time in this podcast, as well as at the agility challenge, which you can find at [www dot the agility challenge.com](http://www.thetheagilitychallenge.com). Before we dive into our conversation, which by the way, we are for sure going to do more of I want to give you a little background on Kelly. So Kelly lives in New Zealand, and her education and background have come together in a perfect storm to allow her to really get the idea of mindfulness for our dogs when it comes to sport. She's got a degree in zoology and anatomy and physiology. She's a dog trainer. She's a dog agility competitor. And she is an instructor. And also she's like me, I mean, she, I was a secondary or high school teacher, she still is a secondary school teacher, which is high school for those of us in North America. So she just has this perfect combination of knowledge and the heart of a teacher. And I just I really enjoyed spending this time with her quote unquote in person. And I know you're gonna love this podcast episode. I'll remind you again at the end, but I'd really love to hear your



comments and questions on this one because Kelly and I are already making plans to record more of these conversations. And I just know that after listening to this one that like me, you're going to have all sorts of thoughts and questions swirling around in your head. So leave a comment on the Show page for this episode, either at [podcast dot the agility challenge.com](http://podcast.thetheagilitychallenge.com). Or if you're an agility challenge member at [WWW dot the agility challenge.com](http://www.thetheagilitychallenge.com). And I'll put it on my pile of questions for my next conversation with Kelly. But for now let's just dive into the deep end my conversation with Kelly Daniel, Happy New Year. How long have you been doing agility? And this kind of goes in line with the podcasts I just put out on the ignition How did you get into the sport?

Kelly Daniel 03:25

And so my first dog that was my own dog instead of a family dog and was after I finished university and I got a husky cross border collie. So a sideboard which was not an ideal first dog because he had no Ricoh he was really pretty, but he didn't really have any drive to do anything other than wandering around on his own. So I started with obedience with him and must have been about 1516 years ago now. And we kind of got booted out of obedience because he failed their like obedience class and we got held back six times in a row. So we went to agility instead because it seemed more fun. So that's how long I've been doing dog sports for I started agility with him. He did it for the cookies. He wasn't fast. We didn't know what we're doing with the training but we both had a lot of fun so sort of kept going from him. Yeah, from birdie.

04:24

Your cyborg. That seems to be a pretty common story about you know, we we failed obedience for one reason or another and then just got totally hooked in agility.

Kelly Daniel 04:37

Yeah, and it was back in the day as well where obedience was still quite far behind agility. So it was still quite old school he was quite a soft boy. Like we still competed in rally and obedient Centrex and everything that we could, but like I didn't have enough training understanding to like train a dumbbell retro wave and that was back in the day where you were told to put a chip collar on them and pull the chain under Next, so head hold the dark dumbbell and I wasn't okay with that. So that's the other reason that I really switched across to agility because back then it was a lot more positive and advanced with the training mechanics, which I enjoyed. Yeah, people

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were people were trying to figure out how do we get the dogs to do these things, when they're not on leash, and discovering pretty quickly that you can't use methods that worked when they're on leash because then as soon as they have the opportunity to leave, they do that. They leave. But

Kelly Daniel 05:31



he was well known for in the ring and obedience on a Rico, I'd call him he'd sprint towards me exactly how halfway had turned 90 degrees and hold us out of the ring and leave. Like just for fun, because he likes around for no other reason. Shooting. So yeah, those things didn't work on him.

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So from there, how did you end up getting into the canine conditioning aspect of the sport, specifically?

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It was really fun birdie as well. So from that first dog, I started a lot of trick training with him, he did well on the trip training. And I enjoyed the sort of challenge of teaching quite intricate tricks. But what I found with Brody is that for some of the tricks, he got quite sore from the way that I was teaching them. So he used to get quite sore on the neck. And we ended up going to the physio and the chiropractor quite a lot for him. And we're sort of trained, we went backwards and found that it was because of these tricks. So I looked at changing how I taught the tricks. And that kind of led naturally to Canine fitness exercises as an alternative way to teach. Teach the tricks. And then that really tied into my background in terms of zoology, and the geeky science. Notice I really enjoyed the biomechanics and the geekiness of canine fitness training. So that's what made me hit in that direction.

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So I guess we better back up and ask you about your zoology history.

Daisy Peel 07:01

Yep, so I've got a zoology degree. And then I've got a master's in physiology, and then I'm trained as a secondary biology teacher, okay, secondary Secondary School, which is at high school in New Zealand. So you have all the

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pieces perfectly aligned, the the zoology, the physiology, and then the teaching skills as well.

Kelly Daniel 07:24

Yeah. And I came from, from a competitive basketball background. So as a representative basketball player, so I kind of had that sports background as well, which kind of tied it all together in terms of the biomechanics, but also the specificity of the exercises to the sport that you want to do.

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That's super cool. Very cool. And I guess I didn't even ever think about my dogs needing a warm up, or, or even any sort of conditioning to just teach tricks. But when you mentioned it, I mean, it makes total sense, they're doing things pretty slow, often very sustained. That could be really fun.

Kelly Daniel 08:00



I didn't think about it either. And the thing with him is this, that was the thing that he really put his full enthusiasm into. So he would do like a, one of his trucks was a combat diver, or we're here, jump over my leg, twist in the air into a rollover and then land on a side on the floor. And he would do that at full speed on any surface with no regard for his body whatsoever, whatsoever. And that's the sort of thing he would do that would get him hurt. And that's really why I had to look into sort of how I was warming up and the conditioning that he was doing alongside the tracks.

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So he probably also if I had to guess got you interested in the the mental aspect of the sport. So you have this dog, who you're not really sure how to help him want to be there. Who also needs this conditioning? So is that kind of how you got into the mental management aspect of the sport for the dogs as well?

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No, well, to be fair, he was pretty easygoing, he could do whatever I wanted, as long as there was treats involved, generally, he would just do he just had like, he was kind of ADHD, he had a really short attention span and easily distracted. And that was workable. And it was kind of the next couple of dogs that I got really, that got me into really that that mental side of the game as well as the physical side. So Chase, my chocolate mill Border Collie, she's 13. Now she was my first like, serious agility dog, because she was a border collie. So she was going to be the, you know, the proper agility dog that wanted to do the agility. But she is incredibly dog reactive to 100% of dogs within about a 10 meter bubble. She can't deal. So that was really what started me down the behavior aspect in terms of spotting dogs because I got this this dog for agility, who liked to train and like to do the things and had a bit more speed than the sideboard was put together a little bit better. But she was the other stuff so the anxiety and the stress and how I trained agility and made it big impact for her because if I did it wrong, she really, really, really struggled. Yeah,

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I feel like a lot. I mean, I feel like the, the mental aspect of it is getting more and more important because we want our dogs to be increasingly responsive to all of these things that are happening on course. And I feel kind of like responsive and reactive are two sides of the same coin. So we breed these dogs, or we get these dogs. And we work really hard on motivating them and getting them really amped up. Or we get dogs that are really responsive. And then we're surprised when they are also tending towards reactivity. What do you think? What are your thoughts on that?

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I think it's a real issue. I've talked about this to other people before, especially overseas people. I don't think in New Zealand, we have very many well bred Border Collies, the vast majority of the Border Collies that I come across MC have structural issues, but most relevant to this, I guess, I would say 95% have behavioral and temperament issues, whether that be that they get over aroused, and a lot of them become over aroused, and reactive. Or whether they be sort of that more lower, we call it a lower



drive, but stressy and scared into the spectrum. And a lot of them also become reactive. Resource Guardian is also hugely, hugely prevalent in the Border Collies that I see here. And all of that effect ties together to make a really tricky agility dog. That's hard. Yeah,

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I tend to agree, I think the and I think the flip side of that, that I have actually seen on more than one occasion, is now I see, I see the opposite side of that, also, I see people will have a client come through, that has really a very stable dog with a very stable, solid temperament. And they and the dogs not stressed, it's not stressed high, it's not stressed low, it's, but it's not moving as fast or explosively as they would like, and I have to explain to them, Look, you have this dog, that when I look at it, I think this dog looks very stable, I think this dog is going to be highly functioning in a highly arousing environment. And where we are right now is not highly arousing. And so you might have to put a little work into creating arousal, so that you understand how things are going to work in the non browsing, I'm gonna mess it up. But you kind of get the idea when you have a real dog, it's it may require a little bit more effort and creativity, to get them to a state of arousal, where you expect them to be at a big event. But on the flip side of that, they might not be blowing it out of the water at a local show, but then you get into a big event, and they actually do get aroused, and they're still functional. So it's kind of an interesting.

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Yeah. And the problem is, is that novice trainers don't want that dog. Right? They want the fast, Crazy Dog. And I don't think a lot of trainers, when they're starting out, understand the implications of the work that comes with that. I will take that stable dog, that I can train new behaviors, easy without stress, without arousal or or stressing out, and then know that I can amp them up and speed them up, especially with things like my handling position. I'll take that dog any day. And I think that that's a perfect dog for a novice handler. But that's not the type of dog that the novice handlers tend to get. There's a reason that I have Spaniels now. And that's because my grid is super soft. He's this, he's literally like curled up on my feet right now, next to the cat cuddling me like an idiot. But he is like, he's quite a stretchy dog. But he is calm, when he's learning new behaviors. He's thoughtful. Even under high distractions, I have a lot of birds that swept my property. And that's really hard for a young dog. But he learns things fast. And when he's got it, he's got it. And I know that I can get speed and amp them up when he's got it. And like, I'll take that any day over a crazy dog that's gonna get to the point where they can't think and they can't perform behaviors under certain conditions.

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Yeah, it's real tricky. And so and so for people like you who are helping people deal with arousal. There's really that sort of multiple pronged approach where you have to help people with the dog they have, who might be really nervy learn how to Okay, well, your dog, whether it's stressing high or stressing low, it might actually be from some of the same root causes. And then how will you choose a little bit differently, potentially for a future dog? And then what's the training implications of that future dog who when you get them you're like, well, this dog just a lump. I can't get this dog to, you know, why



is this dog just laying around? on what a lazy pillow? Yeah, there's a lot of angles, you have to come at that from. Yeah, there is. So I want to ask you a couple of questions that agility challenge members posed. And I think this first one is a pretty interesting one that that you'll be able to uniquely answer with your educational background, your zoology background. The member asks for dogs with high drive that increases to higher levels at trials. Is there anything we should or can do to counteract the effects of the various hormones released? is normal physical conditioning sufficient? And should we incorporate massage therapy into our cooldown routine? Now that might be multiple questions, but I'm kind of curious what your response is going to be to that first one, what happens when the when various hormones are released? And is there any what can we do to counteract some of that?

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That I saw that in the office hours? That is an awesome question? And yes, they definitely is. So I guess the first thing to know is that although specific research isn't super clear on how long it takes for dogs hormones to decrease, a dog that's under high stress and or high arousal is going to have stress related hormones, and also adrenaline released, the adrenaline hormone is going to be relatively short lived in terms of that hormone impact. But though the cortisol and the hormones related to stress, the research says that it's gonna take at least 72 hours for those to clear your dog's body. So this is why it's really important over a trial to manage your dog appropriately and manage their arousal and or their stress, because if you had a hugely ridiculous first run, you've got potential, because that hormone, that hormone surge is going to stay there for the whole rest of the trial. So you really have potential to ruin the rest of your weekend. If you don't manage it all carefully at the start, it's also cumulative. So if you have a moderately arousing run, and then a moderately arousing run, and then a moderately arousing run, your dog is going to reach threshold, because those, those hormones are going to accumulate accumulate as you go. If you manage your dog and keep them low, and keep them low and kick them out, you've got more chance of success over the whole weekend, and more chance of preventing them from reaching the threshold. This is really important, because with my ridiculous Border Collie, and his temperament is amazing. That's why I have him however, he is over aroused only in agility trials, not in training, not anywhere else. The first run is one that I know he does not have the skills and the arousal to perform, I will scratch them and not run him, because then I have ruined any chance that future runs that weekend. Because if he loses his heavy goes beyond the threshold on that first run, I'm likely not going to get him back beyond threshold for the rest of the weekend. So that's kind of the first thing to consider. The second thing to consider is it a dog under high amounts of stress and or adrenaline is not going to feel any minor injuries that might occur because they're going to be too over aroused. So you need to manage their body in the ring and you need to take more care calling them down to watch for any potential issues that might be arising over the weekend. They're not gonna feel anything. Eva could literally run with three legs and have one leg hanging off him and the agility run and be like, I'm good. It's amazing. I love it. And that would be him. One weekend, a while ago, he slipped going over in a frame and slipped on Australian down and it was a very minor slip, but when I pulled them out and caught and called him down I noticed some abnormal curling overs for so his back was sore. He was still amping to go and he ran later runs fine, but that was something to be aware of. So those dogs when it's taking more care cooling them down, so a longer cooldown period of some trotting and some



walking and really watching the Australian and their body and then careful warming up before like subsequent rounds. Over the weekend. I don't tend to have time personally do any massage on my dogs and that Shawn environment My dog is likely to not relax enough for it to be effective. However, at night, I definitely try and do time permitting a smaller amount of body work. That's mostly so I can feel for any areas of potential issue so heat or tightness, or fascial adhesions, so I can consider whether I should run my dog the next day. So yes, bodywork would be helpful for those dogs or longer cooldown period. So you can really watch as that adrenaline comes down to whether they're sore is really important. And then over the days after the trial, you have to manage your dog's body so an enforced rest period and active rest period with some sniffing and some walking and some active stretches and some body work, again to help them relax, and to feel for any issues that might arise after the trial. And I also try to incorporate over that period, because most of these dogs tend to want to do things, decompression activities, whatever helps your dog reacts, relaxed, so sniffing and showing a big one. So my dogs get bones or cones to chew on just to kind of enforce that cooldown period after a trial. So I want

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to kind of loop back to something that you said pretty early on, when you mentioned, you said, you want to keep them low, but that doesn't necessarily mean calm, it just means you want to keep them below, and you want to keep them from basically just flooding with all that cortisol, right? Like they can be Yeah, you want them to be prepared for sport, but not over threshold, basically, yeah,

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so I want to keep them low enough to stay under threshold. So they're able to respond to my cues adequately, that they understand for their high arousal dogs, I don't have to like for my high arousal dogs, I don't have to work on getting the speed in the ring, especially in the ring environment. So it's all about keeping them long enough to be able to respond adequately to cues.

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Yeah, that's super interesting that you like I never had really thought about the ramifications of the cumulative effects of the cortisol, because my so I have two dogs right now. And they're both pretty young, they're both under three. And they're definitely getting better just by leaps and bounds, not only in terms of their skills, but in terms of making it to the end of a weekend. So there would be, you know, we have a multiple day show, the first few runs would be pretty decent, you know, not maybe not a clean run, but they were thinking, but then by the end of the weekend earlier, like eight months ago, the first run of the second day, I could tell we're about to be done. And then maybe the second run of the second day, it's almost useless to keep running them because they're running. But there's not really much thoughtfulness. So that kind of makes sense. In the when you frame it that way. Just the the cumulative effects of cortisol, they're just gone. Their brains are just toast. They're just, it's also

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it's also the physical impact, like a weekend trial is really hard physically on dogs. I think we underestimate that sometimes, because they will keep doing it generally. But when you combine that with that hormone influence and the arousal and the adrenaline and the other things. That's why I have absolutely no, for me personally, if I don't think a run has a course has, you know, the design or the spacing, or my dog has the adequate skills for it. I am happy to scratch my dog, oh, I use it for training. Because I know that it's going to be best for my dog and long term and also for me and my dog and join that weekend. Right? You have a lot of squinting going on right now, with this, wanting to be recognized our hunting machine is ridiculous. He wants to climb on my lap, but he'll literally knock everything off the table if he does.

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So is it is it is it? Is it appropriate to say then that the goal of a lot of the canine mindfulness challenges that you offer in the agility challenge, that the goal of those is to help not necessarily to bring the dog's overall energy level down, but to raise their sort of raise and lengthen their tolerance for the conditions where they have to perform so that they don't go over a threshold as early and they can be in increasingly arousing situations without going over a threshold. Does that make sense? Yeah,

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no, definitely. I'd also say a lot of them are about you learning to read and your dog and respond appropriately. A lot of people when I started out lack the skills to really see when the dog is starting to stress or starting to become over aroused. And then having strategies in place to work on that. So I kind of think about it as a normal distribution curve. And in the middle as an optimal amount of arousal or drive or whatever you want to call it. I'm really trying to use my management and my training skills to maintain my dog to be in the middle. So I don't want my dog to be over aroused and unable to respond to cues, I don't want my dog to be stressed and to be fearful and to be not enjoying that environment and the skills I'm asking them to do. I want them to be comfortable enough in that middle place and be able to ignore whatever was going on in the environment around them. So that able to respond to cues appropriately when they can do that. The speed and the enthusiasm will come right.

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So you kind of want to you kind of want to grow that curve so that it's broader than it's more like a plateau at the top not just a steep up down. Jumping in a different light away.

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Yeah, I need to have a range within there because there are times when I do want to deliberately lower my dog's arousal like around the core board for I'm about to go into rang, I don't want to be amping them up right then, because that is when issues are going to occur from not from my dogs. But for other people managing the dogs, I'm not going to stand around the keyboard guarding my dog. And that's what we do in New Zealand. And like Pain Tag and amp in my dog app if there are lower dog, because that's not fair. So you need a wide range where I know my dog is happy and able to work either if I'm



being lower energy, or if I'm in high energy, and I need to be able to have that option to switch between those modes for me as a handler and my dog happy and able to respond appropriately.

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I feel like we're going to need a part two.

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That's fine. We can do that. Because

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my next I mean, there were a couple of other questions that I if we have time, I'll come a loop back to them. But I want to kind of stick with this more, because the questions that I had for you were more along the lines of the of the question that the agility challenge member had just asked. Because what I am curious about is. So when you talk about the going over threshold and making sure that the dog is in the optimal threshold. So when it comes to people, there are things that we can do. By choice, to put ourselves in situations where we're uncomfortable, and kind of stressed. But then we come out the other side of it, and we feel a sense of accomplishment. So from here's a very simple example, taking a cold shower in the morning, is a is a form of subjecting yourself by choice to a stress, it's very unpleasant even for 10 seconds, maybe not for you in the middle of summer right now. But

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no, no, I would still struggle with it. I'm a wuss with coldness,

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it's very unpleasant. But once you do it for 10, or 15 seconds, and you come out the other side, and you realize, well, I didn't die. I don't really want to do that again. But boy, I feel like I really accomplished something. And you you do actually grow a little bit in terms of your ability to deal with challenge. And so so people do that all the time we go to the gym, we even go into a competition in front of our peers can be uncomfortable and challenge us. And so how do we do that with the dogs? I mean, we can't it just seems to me, we can't make our goal to provide them with the the most comfortable bed and the best food and the most creature comforts, and never expose them to any stress or discomfort whatsoever, and then expect them to function in unfamiliar environments. Of course, on the other hand, with people we do that by choice, and so how do we get the dog involved in the idea of choosing Mallanna? No, I'm gonna do this, but I choose to do it, but it's uncomfortable, just for the purposes of growth, in terms of mental resilience.

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Yeah, and this is my third I've sort of done increasingly as I've got new dogs. First and foremost, I'd like to say that if you're searching for agility dog, a young agility dog, and a good sports dog breeder will be doing these things with their puppies already. So sports breeder that sport specific breeder or a dog breeder that is following a program like puppy culture, or the abbey dog program, or just using those



concepts will already be doing this with your puppy, there'll be exposing them to small amounts of stresses, and helping those puppies work through those and have success and have confidence. I've got a friend at the moment with a working retriever letter, Alex, and he's doing a phenomenal job with his puppies. And he's doing micro doses of stress that is manageable for them that they're able to get through and then have confidence and have a high reinforcement for doing that. So small training, games, activities, barrier challenges, all of those things can be started with very small puppies, especially before they go through any stress periods when they're teenagers where they can be a lot more difficult. So when I'm working on resilience with my dogs and bribery, I like to do this outside of agility first, because I don't want to screw my agility up. So if I do this, and I do this badly, and I'm like, you can do it around this wind job and it's way too hard. My dogs always going to have negative, conditioned emotional response. So bad feelings to wrap in a win. I don't want that. I don't want to screw that up. So with all of my younger dogs, I'm doing this and activities outside of agility to start with and then I will increase the challenge and training and in the competition ring to make sure that my deal dog can deal with it, but I also make sure that I don't condition my dog to feel uncomfortable about agility. Right. So I do this through training specific behaviors that are outside of agility so trick training and fitness. Writing. And but I also do this with bravery based exercises that teach my dogs that there is a challenge, it's uncomfortable, you can figure it out on your own, and then you get highly reinforced for doing so. So we need to balance their feelings of uncomfortableness with that challenge with a high reinforcement rate. And that's really, I think, the key to your dog welcoming further challenges later on. So if they go through and do a barrier challenge, and they get a little bit stressed to start with, and then they get one cookie for doing that. I don't think that's sufficient. Reinforcement rate for the stress that they've gone through to do that activity. Right. Yeah. So does that make sense? Yeah,

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it totally does. Yeah, I mean, we I did some, when I read a litter of the litter of the puppies that we have now that puppies are almost three, we did some of those puppies. Yeah, there's still puppies, we did those kinds of barrier challenges. And they were, you know, when they're really young, it's just a toy that they have to scramble over to get to the mom to nurse just those sorts of things. And then, of course, they scramble over this obstacle to get to the mother. And they get sort of the ultimate reinforcement, which is sustenance. Yep. And roaming and comfort. Yeah,

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as about continuing that with the new handler, though, as well, because when a puppy leaves, the camp, that of ma'am, and home and the other puppies, we really need your dog to see you as the person that will provide support when needed. Otherwise, they're not going to have the confidence to do the difficult things. So I'm looking to teach my dogs to have confidence that they can do it on their own, but I also need them to know that I'm there for them. So it is quite a delicate balance. And for some dogs, you've got to sway the balance in one way. And some dogs, you got to push them in the other direction. So there's some dogs that have too much confidence that I want to be like, Hey, I'm here, you know, you need to listen to me. And other dogs, I really need to push and boast, you can do it on your own grid is one of those dogs, so I really have to push that he can do it on his own. Because if



he had his way he would be here 90% of the day, like literally physically attached to me. Because that's just what he's like.

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Yeah. Yeah. That's just such, those things are so interesting for me to think about, especially when, like that all sounds well and good. And if you have a degree in education, and you know how to teach the youth of today, the leaders of tomorrow, that's all well and good. And, but then it kind of rolls right into, it's kind of like parenting, you know. And then with the so there's that kind of wrapped into it, you have to you have to be skilled as a trainer skilled as a handler, skilled as an owner, skilled as a teacher skilled as a coach. And then if you have any performance anxiety of your own to deal with, when you step into the competition ring, now you have to tell your dog that everything's gonna be okay, when your body is responding as though a tiger is chasing you. And you're giving off all sorts of stress hormones that your dog probably can smell.

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And I definitely think about all those medical alert dogs, his dogs that can literally read your cardiac output, increasing like by minute amount or your glucose level, they can tell, they can most definitely tell when the handler is stressed. And that's why I make people do pattern games, because those pattern games not only settle the dog, they settled handler as well. I've got some students that I make do counting pattern games as part of their warm up activity, but discriminate, especially

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real quick, what a pattern an example of a pattern game. Okay, so

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an example of a pattern game. So for me for grid, you know, the whole like Spaniels don't let them sniff it's the end of the world. We literally start in the marshalling area with a he comes and he does some behaviors on cue, and I feed him and then I stand there. And as normal, I try and remember the course, that usually fills me with a small amount of stress. So I stand and face the course and I throw it one treat to the side, he comes back to me, I throw one treat the other side, he comes back to me, I throw one treat to the other side. So I'm standing facing the course. And he's running side to side in front of me in a marshalling area, doing a pattern of search, look at ma'am search, look at mum search, look at mum, that rhythmic activity that rhythmic pattern suits me as well as him. Sure. And it really gives him an opportunity to take in the environment and do some sniffing in a controlled way where he's not going to also I'm deliberately lowering his head because if he gets swept with a swallow he will spend half his run lifting his head looking because he's a gundog and that's literally bred into him. But I'm reinforcing him low on the ground to get low head position as well. So it's kind of a two fold activity. Some of my really stressy handlers who just get physically there, I can see it, I get them to do this with campaigns, they, they do a one, move to the side, rocketry come back to metal, too. So I'm getting them to physically count out loud, drop a treat to the side, come back to the middle. So as a counting out loud,



rhythmic pattern, because they're concentrating on the counting, and that moving both them and their dog will get calm. That's super interesting. That's hard to do, though. Yeah. But

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it makes me think of, and you've probably heard of this, it makes me think of another strategy. I can't remember if it was like ADHD kids or autistic kids, but it was called tapping, where the kids, I think they were tapping on their face. They were, it was a method to have to look it up. But it was something along the same lines, where you basically, if you're stressed, or you can't concentrate, you start tapping on your face really rhythmically. Because the, the, the repetitive nature of it and the physical nature of it just kind of takes everything down a notch.

36:10

Yeah, it's physically coming. It's the same reason why for some people, not me, hugs are coming at physical pressure at x on a part of your nervous system. Patterns for the same way can be common, it's just a matter of finding a pattern that works for your dog, because all patterns will come a dog. So with some of my dogs thrown a treat to the side, like ego, that movement would increase his arousal, right?

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But it's for a better Buddy Holly head down, might not be what you want. But for a spaniel, head up might not be what you want.

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Yeah, so as a matter of finding a pattern that works for your dog, but also for you. And also in that environment, like I need to remember the course, I'm running multiple dogs and multiple classes, and I'm running different dogs in different ways, because I have a four kg dog up to an 18 kg dogs at all different height classes. So I need that last minute time to run through my plan in my head before we go into the ring. And this way, I'm not losing attention with my dog, he's not getting I'm noticing the birds are getting stressed, or I'm getting over aroused. So this pattern works for both of us.

37:17

I mean, all this discussion on cortisol and threshold, and

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we know you like the geeky science stuff to like me, I do.

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But also, you know, dogs are dogs and people, we're all kind of black boxes, really, you just can't really know. You can I mean, you can measure cortisol, you can chew on a sponge and spit it into a cup and all that stuff. But But beyond that, we can't really know unless we're really tuned in what the internal state of our dogs is. And we do. You know, when I first started teaching way back when or when I first



was working on my master's degree in education, they were really all about making sure that the learner was under an optimal mental conditions for learning at the time, I just discovered BF Skinner and I was like, I don't really care what they're feeling or thinking I just want them to just kick does it really matter what they're thinking if they push the lever correctly? Yes, it does. Yes, it does. It totally does. But you know, I was I was pretty young. And I was the clicker was very exciting to me. And of course, I still use a clicker but but there's so much more to it than just the actual behavior. And if you don't have the feelings, on board, you're really just not going to get, you're not going to get it, you're not going to get what you want. And it just brings so much into it. Because I mean, there's a whole other side to it, that I'd really like to address in terms of I think a lot of people get pretty uncomfortable with the idea of trying to manipulate their dog's emotions, because it

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is, but I think that's the most important aspect to all of this. Yeah, my goal is always to deliberately teach her behavior with deliberately aiming at a specific, conditioned emotional response to that behavior. Like literally, that's how I plan to teach her behavior. So in canine fitness training, I don't want my dog to be like, yeah, because that's not going to help me get adequate form. I want them to be like, Oh, we're doing that thing nice and calm, but very happy. So, literally, I think you have to put that into your planning for teaching our behavior. This is the conditioned emotional response. I would like them to have associated with it. Because that's going to impact how you train the response how you reinforce the response. What reinforces that you like obviously, so the example of the spaniel I've been having with issues because I see, so has first time we've been in the ring. Literally, a sparrow dive bombed him and went about two inches in front of his face between the weave poles that cause some issues at home. He likes to flush their sparrows out of one of my hedges. So I've been reinforcing wave poles with letting them go flush the birds. This, I want him to be there aroused and wave particles and do them no matter what is happening. And that is his highest reinforcer. And it has a little bit of stress, because he's like, the birds, that high arousal, high speed associated with it. So that's a reinforcer that I'm sometimes choosing to use with him and this behavior, because that's the that's the emotional response I want. I want them to be like how, yeah, let me do the waves. Because it, add them after the event. When I tried to go back and retrain, he's like, Oh, God, not the waves go on set. Right? That's not the emotions I want associated with those wave poles. So I changed my reinforcer and changed my approach. And that, we'll see how it goes when

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you make it sound so simple. But you really have to keep your finger on the pulse of how everything you know, is the behavior shaping up the way you want. Can you predict the consequences of what's happening in this moment? And then also all the feelings? Yep. Cool. All right. Well, we're definitely going to do a part two, because this has been so much fun. Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy day in New Zealand right now with me for a little bit. We're going to do this again.

41:12

Oh, no, that's been fun.



41:15

Well, I don't know about you. But I was just totally fired up after this conversation with Kelly. I'm still pretty fired up about it. It really filled up my bucket as the saying goes, I'm just so curious. And I have so many questions. And I can't wait until our next conversation. Like I mentioned at the top of the episode, I'd really love to hear your comments and questions on this one. Because like I mentioned, Kelly and I are already making plans to record more conversations. And honestly at this point, I feel like we could have conversations all year and still have more to talk about. So leave a comment on the Show page for this episode either at [podcast dot the agility challenge.com](http://podcast.theagilitychallenge.com). Or if you're an agility challenge member at [WWW dot the agility challenge.com](http://www.theagilitychallenge.com). And I will put it on my mountain of questions for my next conversation with Kelly. And if you want to get more involved with what Kelly has to offer, check out her website [WWW dot hybrid dog training.com](http://www.hybriddogtraining.com). That's [www dot hybrid dog training all one word hybrid dog training.com](http://www.hybriddogtraining.com) or head to [www dot the agility challenge.com](http://www.theagilitychallenge.com). That's it for now. Until next time, happy training.