The Goldilocks Setup

Environment Before Obedience

Important Information Disclaimer

This guide discusses ADHD-like traits in dogs.

ADHD is not a formal veterinary diagnosis.

The information provided is educational and does not replace veterinary advice.

Always consult a veterinarian or qualified behaviour professional for medical or behavioural concerns.

Training advice in this book is welfare-based and force-free.

Contents

1.   Environment Shapes Behaviour

Before we add more training, we look at environment.

Many behaviour struggles are not obedience problems.

They are environment problems.

If the nervous system
is overwhelmed,
learning shuts down.

Environment comes first.
Skills come second.

2.   The Arousal Curve

Every dog moves up and down an arousal curve throughout the day.

Low arousal:

Sleepy, calm, disengaged.

Mid arousal:

Focused, trainable, responsive.

High arousal:

Reactive, impulsive, scattered.

2. The Arousal Curve

Training works best in the middle.

Too low

= no engagement.

Too high = no thinking.

Our

job is to protect the middle

zone.

3. The Nervous System Ladder

Think of the nervous system like a ladder.

Bottom rung:
Shutdown.

Middle rung:
Calm engagement.

Upper rung:
Fight or flight.

3.   The Nervous System Ladder

You cannot teach complex skills on the top rung.

If your
dog is barking, lunging, or pacing, they are not being disobedient.

They are too high on the ladder. Bring them down first.

4.   Trigger Stacking
in Real Life

Trigger stacking does not start on the walk.

It starts in the morning.

- Doorbell.

- Busy street noise.

- Neighbour's

dog.

- Visitors.

- Delivery van.

By the time you clip the lead on,

the bucket may already

be close to full.

Lowering exposure -

lowers reactions.

5.   Sniff > Sprint

Sniffing regulates the nervous system.

(Empties their bucket!)

Sprint-style exercise raises arousal.

Busy-brain dogs often benefit from:

More sniffing.

More searching.

Less constant chasing or high-speed

play.

Sniff first.

Sprint

later.

6. Designing a Regulation - Friendly Home

Reduce:

– Constant window access if reactive.

– Background noise overload.

– Unpredictable chaos.

Increase:

– Predictable routines.

– Clear resting zones.

– Low-demand downtime.

Calm spaces create calmer brains.

7.   Designing a Regulation - Friendly Walk

Before leaving:

Ask:

What is my dog's bucket level today?

If high:

Lower expectations.

Choose:

- Quieter routes.

- Shorter walks.

- Sniff-based sessions.

The goal is regulation — not distance.

8. Daily Rhythm: Work, Rest, Repeat

Busy-brain dogs do not need constant stimulation.

They need rhythm.

- 10 minutes structured work.

- 30 minutes rest.

- Mid-day calm.

- Evening decompression.

Structure reduces chaos.

If your dog is:

– More reactive than usual.

– Recovering slower.

– Struggling to settle.

Lower the bar.

– Less exposure.

– More rest.

– Simpler tasks.

Progress is not linear.

Regulation comes before complexity.