



# Focus & Fidgets



## A Guide to the ADHD-Like Dog

# 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.



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# 1. Is it Training or Brain Chemistry?



Some dogs learn quickly, react quickly,  
and struggle to pause.

This does not automatically mean poor  
training — it may mean a busy brain.

Research shows many family dogs  
display ADHD-like traits of:

- Inattention
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity

# 1. Is it Training or Brain Chemistry?



This is not a medical diagnosis.

It is a way of understanding behaviour more clearly so we can help dogs better.

When we change how we see our dog,  
we change how we train them.

– That changes outcomes.

## 2. From “Bad Dog” to “Different Brain”



Instead of:

“They won’t listen,”

Try:

“They can’t yet — they need support.”

Instead of:

“They’re naughty,”

Try:

“They’re overwhelmed.”

Labels like “stubborn” or “disobedient”  
often hide stress, confusion, or sensory  
overload.

## 2. From “Bad Dog” to “Different Brain”



Kindness builds trust.  
Trust makes learning possible.

Your mindset is your dog's first  
training tool.



### 3. What ADHD-Like Traits Look Like



- Inattention
  - Hard to stay focused
  - Easily distracted
- Starts tasks but doesn't finish them
  - Hyperactivity
    - Always "on"
  - Struggles to settle indoors
- Overreacts to small noises or movements
  - Impulsivity
    - Acts before thinking
  - Jumps, grabs, or lunges
  - Finds waiting very difficult

None of this means your dog is broken

- It means they need different support.



## 4. The ADHD–Stress Loop



Stress can look like ADHD.

ADHD-like traits can increase stress.

Correction-based training often:

- Raises cortisol
- Increases fear
- Worsens behaviour

Lower stress = better learning.

Calm is not “soft” — it is effective.

## 5. Trauma-Informed Training



Trauma-informed training prioritises:

- Safety over speed
- Calm over control
- Reward over punishment

It uses:

- Predictable routines
- Gentle communication
  - Enrichment
- Short, successful training sessions

Your goal is emotional regulation first.  
When your dog feels safe, they can learn.

6.

## The Goldilocks Environment



- Not too busy.
- Not too boring.
  - Just right.

Reduce:

- Constant barking triggers

Visual chaos

Overcrowded spaces

Increase:

- Sniffing opportunities
- Quiet resting zones (For both of you)
  - Calm routines

Your environment shapes your dog's behaviour more than any single training session.

## 7. Games for the Busy Brain



Forget one long walk.  
Try short brain games instead.

Examples:

- Scatter feeding in grass
- Treats hidden in a towel
- Simple waiting games
- Scent searches around the house

Aim for 5-minute brain sprints.  
Little and often works best.

## 8. Rest, Sleep & Learning



Work for about 10 minutes.

Rest for about 30 minutes.

Sleep improves:

- Focus
- Emotional control
- Memory
- Training progress
- Your relationship

Rest is training.

## 9. You and Your Dog Together



Your emotions affect your dog.  
Their emotions affect you.

On a walk, you are allowed to:

- Leave early
- Choose quieter times
- Protect your energy
- Protect your dogs energy
- Have non walk days

You and your dog are a team:

- Your nervous systems are connected.
- The family and your dog are all connected

Busy family = Busy Dog

[www.callanderk9.com](http://www.callanderk9.com)

## 10. What To Do Next



- Check with your vet to rule out any concerns .
- Reduce triggers at home.
- Add daily short brain games.
- Prioritise sleep and calm time.
- Choose kind, force-free training.
- Learn Scent / Nose work for Dogs.
- Reach out for support from  
Callander K9 / Serenipaws Scotland