



Focus & Fidgets



A Guide to the
ADHD-Like Dog

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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

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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