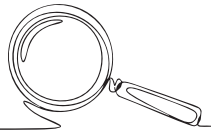
Being a *Detective*



Any time your dog shows a frustrating or unwanted behavior, HEARTS can help you gain insight and get to the bottom of the mystery.

Look at each HEARTS element and ask yourself the questions below. As you answer, consider what you're seeing in your dog's body language and the sequence of events.

This can help you discover the path to a solution.

Heal the body

Could undetected pain, illness, exhaustion, or hunger be contributing to this behavior? Might a tick bite, arthritis, or nutritional deficiency be contributing? Could my dog be feeling unwell?

Enrich the brain

Is boredom or lack of appropriate outlets creating frustration for my dog? Do they get enough physical exercise for their age and abilities? Is the doorbell the only exciting thing that happens all day?

Align the environment

Is something in this space or place mismatched to my dog's needs? Is the environment too stimulating? Too boring? Too chaotic? Too isolating? Does it match my dog's actual temperament and needs, or are they stuck in a situation that isn't a good fit?

Relate with kindness

Is something making my dog feel unsafe or unheard? Are my rules clear and consistent? Am I understanding and honoring my dog's messages? Could my dog feel forced or cornered? Does my tone and posture convey caring and dependability? Are boundaries and expectations consistent and communicated kindly?

Teach compassionately

Does my dog actually have the skills needed for this situation? Can I provide clearer guidance and encouragement? Does the dog understand what to do in this situation (not just what NOT to do)? How can I help my dog become enthusiastic and motivated to cooperate?

Support the individual

Are my expectations appropriate—to this stage of life, to this breed, to this dog's history, to innate genetic drives? Am I fighting who this dog actually is, instead of supporting them? Does my dog have opportunities to express his natural talents and canine instincts?

This suggests the next steps could be...

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