

Interventions

Over time, the variety of ways in which your dog will be able to benefit your family may develop. Once the bond between your child and dog has been established, you can start to think of and train your dog to help in different situations. One possibility is to train your dog to help break a repetitive behaviour in your child, such as hand flapping.

Please note: dog facilitated interventions are only designed to provide a momentary interruption of a behaviour, in which time you can direct your child onto a more desirable activity.

Why?

Sometimes when we intervene to stop a child from continuing with a repetitive behaviour, we can inadvertently make it worse and our involvement can be perceived as negative. However, for many reasons, you may still want to find a way of directing your child onto another behaviour.

One option is to train your pet dog to offer a behaviour upon a verbal cue or hand signal. Through resting their head on the child's lap or fetching a toy to initiate play, the dog may be able to break the repetitive behaviour but in a more positive way.

When?

It is important that neither your child nor your dog is put under undue stress and you should bear this in mind when you are considering how you might utilise your pet dog to help in these situations.

For example, if your dog is not confident being near your child when they are displaying a repetitive movement, it may be more appropriate to teach your dog to perform an amusing trick at a distance.

If your child is not keen on the dog's face being close to them, it might be that the dog placing their paw on your child's knee is more acceptable.

It is advisable to start working with the dog alone at first, training the dog to perform the desired behaviour before continuing working on it alongside your child.

How?

The way in which you train your dog to provide an intervention will depend on your child, your dog and the relationship they have. Some ideas include:

- Dog placing head on child's lap
- Dog placing paw on child's knee
- Dog nudging child with nose
- Dog performing speak command
- Dog bringing toy to child to initiate a game
- Dog performing a trick: roll over, crawl etc.

