

THE *Mr.*ROGERS *Hack*

WHEN to use it

All the time!

Mr. Rogers mastered the art of gently addressing the difficult situations children might find themselves in, and giving them good simple strategies to cope with those situations. We can do this for our dogs too, as they have incredible receptive language abilities that are often under-utilized in our interactions, communications, relationships, and efforts to modify behavior.



Dogs, like kids, have so many questions about the events that are occurring around them in their environment. So much of their discomfort with circumstances arises from the lack of understanding and information about what is happening as it relates to them, and the **Mr. Rogers Hack** can be a profoundly critical tool to **increase a dog's sense of predictability** in their life experiences as they are better able to comprehend and anticipate events.

As with children, we have a responsibility to our dogs as dependents to be their guide in the world by answering their questions and addressing their concerns and needs.

This type of communication is especially helpful for puppies, newly adopted or anxious dogs that lack confidence or are adjusting to new environments.

This is also a foundational element of building social currency and trust with our dogs, instilling them with the confidence that we have important intel that we can reliably provide for them in a strange world. In addition, talking to your dog changes YOUR behavior in meaningful ways, as your facial expressions, eye contact and body language mirror the words you are speaking. As dogs are experts at reading these social cues in humans, talking to your dog can be more critical than you can imagine!



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HOW to use it

When putting the **Mr. Rogers Hack** into practice think of yourself as a parent, a tour guide, or a **narrator describing a scene** in a movie and the emotions related to the scene. The things you say will help your dog through various challenges.

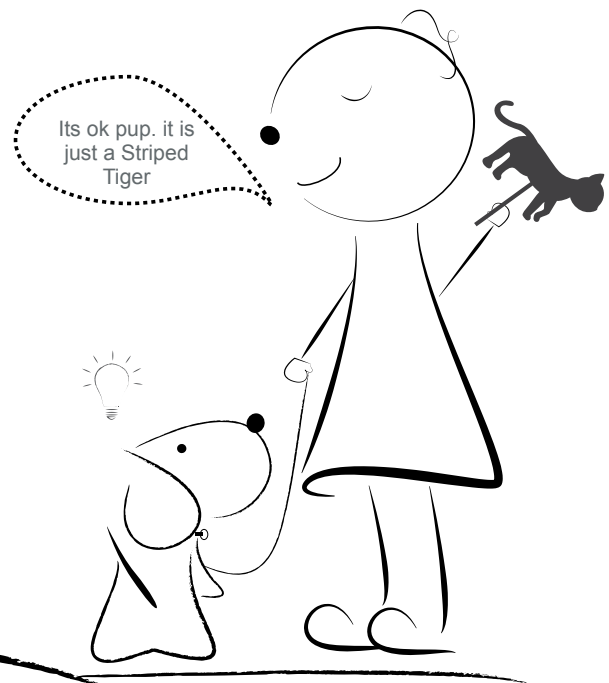
It's a way to acknowledge your dog's emotions and narrate your dog's successes when navigating a tough situation. As with children, being aware of **when a dog has concerns or questions** is an important skill to build so that you are able to provide information when your dog needs it most.

That said, the more you talk to your dog, the more he will learn that he can hang his hat on the things that you say as consistently predictive of all of the things in his life.



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If you only talk to your dog when scary things are happening, your dog could learn that you talking to them predicts scary things
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It is really important, then, to normalize talking to your dog when life is super smooth. You can also give treats as feedback for appropriate responses to the events occurring in conjunction with naming, to help build positive associations and shaping for desirable reactions to life's circumstances. So, in a nutshell, **talk to your dog like Mr. Rogers** - like you are raising or teaching a young child about their entire world. You will be amazed at the results! So don't be embarrassed when people stare at you or act like you're crazy for chatting up your pup.



Example

Label all passing vehicles and your own car a “truck”. Then, if a vehicle is especially loud, you could say, “That was just a truck that made that noise. It's ok, let's go this way.” Your dog having a prior point of reference for that stimulus, a categorical precedent, makes the novelty less foreign and powerful, and tells the dog that at least YOU know what is happening and what it means, even if he doesn't

Video of the Mr. Rogers Hack (Talking to Your Dog) :<https://youtu.be/gpzuUpJ1oaY>

