



Suzanne Clothier  
RELATIONSHIP CENTERED TRAINING

## REALLY REAL RELAXATION PROTOCOL™ by Suzanne Clothier

This simple but effective protocol is useful for helping handlers and dogs shift into real relaxation *together*.

### Goal

- Teaching the dog to find authentic relaxation through his own choices.
- Teaching the handler to relax themselves, to signal “We are relaxing” & provide a way for the dog to relax.

### Benefits

- Dog learns to self modulate through volunteered, not prompted, behaviors, and through attention to the handler.
- Handler learns to modulate the connection without having to disengage from the dog, easily transitioning up and down, from active or intense to relaxed & quiet.

### Preparation

- Handler seated comfortably, with body posture, gaze, breathing, etc. that indicates “We are relaxing.”
- Dog on leash to limit to half-circle area in front of handler
  - avoid “arguments” – if necessary, handler steps on leash giving dog enough slack so dog can stand, sit or lay down without any tension on leash
- Supply of high quality, small & easily chewed treats in easy reach

### RRR™ - Step by Step

#### Step 1

1. Identify DOWN as desired behavior of the moment
  - Lure the dog with treat into DOWN
  - Immediately reward with 10-12 treats placed on the ground between dog’s paws and quiet praise
2. If dog stays down, pay him 5 more treats, praising quietly, then release
3. If dog gets up, say nothing

#### Step 2

1. Repeat Step 1 two more times

#### Step 3

1. Lure dog into DOWN, reward with a 3-5 treats, praise quietly
  - Continue to reinforce the dog with treats every few seconds
2. If the dog gets up (sooner or later he probably will), say nothing – WAIT
3. When dog chooses to lay down on his own, praise quietly and reward with 5-10 treats
  - Continue to reinforce dog, slowing the rate of reinforcement as the dog relaxes
4. Each time the dog gets up, WAIT for volunteered DOWN, praise, reward
5. After a few minutes of practice, release the dog and move around with him

#### Step 4

1. Handler sits in comfortable position, indicating to the dog “We are relaxing”
  - Wait for dog to volunteer the DOWN
2. Quietly praise and provide a couple of treats placed between paws
  - Continue to reinforce dog, slowing rate of reinforcement as dog relaxes more fully