

## **SAY HI TARGETING - Not Just for Shy Dogs!**

**Say Hi Targeting** is a good tool that is usually used for shy dogs. A friend and fellow instructor, Megan Cruz, KPA CTP, discovered how well Say Hi Targeting works for dogs who are over-exuberant in their greetings with other people. She had my Beardie, Joey, and I give this a try and it worked like a charm.

**Say Hi Targeting** allows the dog to just touch a person's hand and that's all. For the shy/reluctant dogs, **Say Hi Targeting** is a "promise" - all you have to do is touch it, you never have to interact with it. For the over-exuberant greeter, **Say Hi Targeting** is a way to allow a very brief moment of greeting, repeated several times and then that's the end of it.

The targeting exercise involves teaching your dog to nose-touch your closed fist. We use a fist rather than a flat hand because people are not likely to stand around with their hand down at their side in a fist. The dog is *\*never\** to offer this behavior; it is only cued by the handler. If the dog were to perceive the flat hand as the cue to touch, he may offer to go up to people and touch their hands on his own (definitely what we do NOT want!). A fist, even if perceived by the dog as the cue, is less likely to be hanging around available.

### **GET THE BEHAVIOR:**

Present your fist right in front of your dog. Out of curiosity, he is likely to touch it with his nose. Click the INSTANT of the touch and give him a treat. Treat delivery is important in this game. Give the treat right to his mouth with the dog right in front of you.

Present hand

Dog touches

Click (while removing hand)

Treat in front of you

Repeat this many times, many rooms of the house, until you have great solid touches to YOUR fist each time you present it.

### **ADD THE CUE:**

Add cue:

"Say Hi" (the order is important)

Present hand

Dog touches

Click (while removing hand)

Treat in front of you

Repeat this many time, many places, until you can say "say hi" and your dog is looking for your fist to be presented.

### **TRANSFER TO ANOTHER PERSON:**

The instructions that you give the other person are always the same - whether it's a family member or a stranger.

Instructions: "I will tell my dog to say hello to you. When I say that, hold out your fist. Hold it away from your body, out to your side, with your side facing my dog. Please don't look at the dog."

It's important that anyone who is the object of "Say Hi" presents as little social pressure (or as little social invitation) as possible. Trust me - the dog is the easy part; getting people to follow the rules of the game is somewhat harder. :)

Once you have this on cue, start the training over with a family member (no strangers yet!). YOU do the clicking/treating. The other person does nothing more than put fist out to his/her side held out away from the body. YOU click the touch, dog returns to YOU for the treat. Give the treat right to his mouth with him in front of you.

Do this with as many people as you can that the dog knows and has no issues with.

### **STRANGERS:**

#### **Over-exuberant Greeter:**

Your job is to be sure you have a relaxed, calm dog who is paying attention to you before you cue him to "Say hi" to someone. Choose calm, basically inert people at first. No motion, no voice, people who will follow your rules. Be sure to give your stranger the instructions, maybe even more than once.

Ask your dog to sit, do a little attention work, then cue him to "say hi", click the instant of the touch and be sure he returns to you for his treat. You can help that by using his name if you have to or stepping backwards a bit (no leash pulling please - that only invokes more desire to get to the person).

Repeat this several times so the dog has lots of opportunity to have a 1/2 second of greeting. On the last rep give him a jackpot (several treats in a row), turn and walk away. That's it. That's the greeting. :)

#### **Shy/reluctant Dog:**

Working **Say Hi Targeting** with a stranger assumes that you have desensitized your dog to a stranger being about 3 feet away. The dog has no flinching whatsoever, no tightness around the eyes or mouth, tail is relaxed and happy, dog is not stress panting. Dog is

eagerly looking to greet this person. If the dog is in any way uncertain, then it's not the time to play **Say Hi Targeting**.

For this dog it's extremely important that **Say Hi Targeting** \*always\* be just exactly that and no more. The cue "Say Hi" is a promise that the dog will never do more than touch a hand NO MATTER how eager, relaxed and wanting to greet he may seem.

The reason for that is that dogs who are conflicted will look like they are happy to greet and will appear to be just fine. The greeting is prolonged and suddenly the dog says to himself "OH shoot!, I'm in over my head" and has a reaction. **Say Hi Targeting** is always just one nose touch/click/back to mum for the treat.

Your job as the handler of this dog is to be sure the dog is really interested in greeting the person and that the situation has very little other stimulus (no joggers running by, no skateboards, nothing else to add to the stress), that the person is briefed really well and understands that s/he will never have hands on this dog in this game. Your job is also to be ready to body-block the instant the stranger breaks the rules - just step right between your dog and the stranger and block with your body. Forget thinking this is rude! It's all about what your dog is exposed to. If that hand reaches out for a head pat, wham! Your body is right between them!

Repeat this several times so the dog has lots of opportunity to have a 1/2 second of greeting. On the last rep give him a jackpot (several treats in a row), turn and walk away. That's it. That's the greeting. :)

If your dog gets the cue, but won't go touch the hand. Fine, it's entirely dog's choice. After successful touches and you see your dog really being wiggly and wanting to greet in a more normal way, walk away, release him from attention to you, drop the leash and send him back to visit the person (NOT using the "say hi" cue!!) In other words, end the "say hi" status of that person.

Allow about 2 seconds of successful greeting, then call him away and reinforce in front of you. Always always always quit before the dog gets that "oh shoot, what have I done?" look to his body, face or anything.

Anything to do with a stranger MUST be dog's choice. That means no coaxing, no insisting, no badgering, no pressure. Shy dogs will come to those who ignore them. Convince your greeter to ignore the dog and let go of any hope of touching those cute cheeks. :)

Helix Fairweather

Your Dog's Personal Trainer

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