

'On the Ground' Zine

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Vito Whippet Puppo takes a break from his walk to stop and take in his environment #slowdogmovementphilosophy

The Slow Dog Movement C.I.C. is one and a half! written by Laura Dobb

When the **Slow Dog Movement** was born as a Facebook page in January 2020, I had no idea that our group would grow to almost 4k members, become a Community Interest Company (C.I.C.) and more importantly, affect so many dogs and their guardians.

The feedback that we have received is very moving. People have written to me directly, with stories that are frankly, life changing for them and their furr-family. We have a dedicated group of members on Facebook that interact weekly with their photos and videos. Occasionally we get a good debate going but generally, it's a friendly, information sharing and image sharing platform.



'On the Ground'

How do we create SLOW for our dogs?

written by Pennie Clayton

Sometimes people ask how they can assist their dogs to become slower on walks and in general life.

First of all, let's look at the benefits of SLOW. This is not a comprehensive or detailed list but the most significant benefits include reduction of stress, more relaxation, good quality sleep and enhanced health and well-being.

Not all dogs feel safe and it is up to us to think how we can provide that feeling of safety and trust. If your dog is continually looking for instruction from you he will never find a place where he can cease being hyper-vigilant, this will prevent the connection you are seeking.

"Slow" is not about control or micromanagement.

It is about allowing dogs to make choices, sometimes they will be the wrong choices but instead of being judgemental we need to be around to guide and encourage our dogs into being able to make better decisions.



Sirle Sillaste walking with her dogs in Estonia

This can never be done through training because it is counter intuitive. We as humans need to be free to feel that we can sit in a specific place or stop to look at a view or get a snack from the fridge or take some quiet time out. Without these things SLOW can't be achieved.

SLOW is the opposite of putting pressure on our dogs and it means that many of the things we believe our dogs like may actually be things we like doing and our dogs have no choice but to participate.

Our dogs may actually actively dislike the choices we make for them.



photo credit **Jonas Thulin**

Those of us that are part of the **Slow Dog Movement** dislike competitive activities such as agility and canicross, not only because they cause shifts and peaks in adrenaline levels and the release of stress chemicals but because they also have a huge impact on a dog's physical health, and can lead to arthritic changes and pain within the dog's body.

We know from studies that have been done on street dogs that they much prefer hanging out with other dogs to running about and participating in fast activities. Strong social connections are really important to dogs, but isolation will create hyper activity and anxiety.

To assist us on the path of slow with our dogs we can set up enrichment activities for our dogs or use areas that professionals have set up as enrichment areas, we can and should look for opportunities to include proprioception into our walks with our dogs as nature is good at providing these things!

Encourage free choice but don't set dogs up, they understand this and dislike being set up. There are many people that create what they think are enrichment activities for their dogs and completely miss the fact that they please them, but do not fulfil the dogs need for sniffing and the kind of pleasure that using their noses brings. This does not foster choice or trust, both of which are essential, otherwise what is the point?

Therefore, the answer to the question of helping our dogs to slow down always starts with us. By providing opportunities for our dogs they will elect to explore and fulfil their curiosity.

'On the Ground'

I want to adopt a Border Collie (part 1) *written by Santos Salcines Nazabal*



photo credit Santos Salcines Nazabal

First, I must make it clear that this problem is not unique to our favourite breed, the Border Collie (BC), but along with the Malinois, they are the 'dopaminergic' par excellence.

The BC is considered a dog with such high physical activity needs that if we do not provide them, a lot of inappropriate behaviours will appear. Given this, we do not stop reading on social networks of "about three hours a day of walking, playing, ball, skills, tied to a bicycle...".

The new guardians of Border Collies have doubts about their future with this dog. They wonder "if they will be able to provide the physical activity the BC needs". We are facing the root of the problem. Dogs are treated as a breed and not as a species.

From puppyhood they are subjected to sessions of very high activity for supposedly needing it, and then a little later they want to come to a sudden stop in a sec due to human need. (We will talk another time about the BC puppy). After you have raised the dog's stress levels with the intention of tiring him out, he is expected to go into a state of torpor due to that activity. What we do not know is the physical and emotional cost of following this strategy.

HEALTH HAZARDS — The rapid acceleration, braking, sharp turns and jumps that occur while chasing dynamic objects such as balls or Frisbees are a danger to their joints, muscles, and tendons. For puppies, adolescents, and the elderly in a greater way. According to sports dog specialists, limiting the movement of the dog during its growth period reduces the number of orthopaedic problems in the future. During this intense game, natural analgesics are released that make the dog have no limits due to fatigue or pain. It will sound familiar to you when you come back from the park and the dog begins to limp or complain once you are home. It will also sound like not being able to give the dog the rest it needs after an injury. They don't know how to go outside calmly.

EXERCISE-INDUCED COLLAPSE — Also known as BC COLLAPSE, it is an episodic disorder of the nervous system that is triggered by intense exercise. It can appear between 5 to 15 minutes of intense exercise. "Natural Activity" is totally normal. In these episodes the dog will show intense panting, clumsiness when walking, even staggering, exaggerated lifting of limbs.

OTHER BASIC NEEDS TAKE A BACKGROUND OR DISAPPEAR — Who throws the ball may have the objective of tiring the dog and/or also have control over other facets. Many ball-obsessed dogs stop socializing with other dogs. They also stop developing exploratory behaviours, in addition to eliminating the natural observation of the environment and knowing the changes that occur in it. Some even "forget" to do their physiological needs.

THEY LEARN TO FIX AND CHASE EVERYTHING THAT MOVES — By throwing objects, we strengthen our dog's innate instinct to chase. We promote the stimulation of the sympathetic system and therefore we favour behaviours that we attribute to the race such as chasing cars, bicycles, runners, children. Behaviours that we later try to control with obedience and punishment.

IF YOU LIKE IT SO MUCH — The chemical messenger of this enjoyment is DOPAMINE. It is as comforting as it is addictive. Like Cocaine, its power is in causing the release of DOPAMINE. That is why they have no end; they want you to throw the object at them over and over again. They do not measure their jumps, both falls and heights. There are objects that become invisible. And the pain is forgotten.

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'On the Ground'

I want to adopt a Border Collie (part 1) ...continued

But.... CAN I PLAY BALL WITH MY DOG?

Like everything in life, IT DEPENDS.

During the walk there must be diversity of moments and activities. He would have to find low - activity zones, places to stop to sniff, mingle with us, get a massage, or enjoy doing nothing. Moments of activity with other dogs, playing with other dogs and people, creating positive relationships with their environment. Visiting new places, since in most cases, their place is always the same and doing the same thing every day.

Part two of 'I want to adopt a Border Collie' will appear in our 2nd Edition of 'On the Ground..'

Freedom – or getting to know your dog written by Jonas Thulin

Some years ago, I stumbled across a book that changed my view of dogs, *Merle's Door* by Ted Kerasote. The book is a journey in which Ted, among other things, describes how he tried to find ways to give his dog Merle more freedom. They lived in a small village in Wyoming where most of the dogs ran loose. In order to let Merle do that, Ted first had to teach Merle a number of rules: not to hunt cattle (because then he could be shot dead by a farmer), not to hunt game (because it could be dangerous), and to watch out for the traffic. When Merle was able to do this, Ted put a dog flap in his back door for Merle, so he could come and go as he pleased.

Merle often spent the days with his friends in the village (dogs and people). At set times he liked to go for walks with Ted and he always came home in time to eat. He also slept at home every night. From time to time he took a girlfriend home. This kind of existence naturally involved risks that don't arise when a dog's movements are always controlled, but Merle's life became immeasurably richer. In the book, Ted describes how as Merle became more independent, he also became more responsible, more intelligent and better at handling challenges, thinking for himself and communicating with others (individuals of different species).

Although Merle was only one dog, Ted was able to show that people can stimulate dogs to become more independent and that dogs and humans can find new ways to live together.



photo credit **Jonas Thulin**

My dogs can't go in and out of our home the way Merle could, but I've definitely seen that the more freedom I give them, they become more responsible and handle surprises better. I have also been able to observe that my dogs clearly have become better at communicating both between them, but also with me. If you think about it, it is natural. To be able to handle the freedom, they have to communicate better.

Then there is another side to it...

If you restrain your dog and inhibit him from expressing the behaviours he would choose in certain situations, you will never know who he is. It is only when you have the possibility to freely express yourself, you are really you. This obviously goes for our dogs to.

We speak about the importance of observing and getting to know our dog all the time, but (to me) there is no point whatsoever in this, if what we observe is a dog that is not allowed to be himself.

Slowly, step by step, start giving your dog more freedom. Freedom to choose. To choose which way to go. To choose to just stand and watch the world go by. To choose to not meeting that other dog or maybe the other way around.

And when your dog learns that he is given the freedom of choice, he will start to speak to you in a different manner. And you, if you observe him, will be able to understand.



photo credit **Jonas Thulin**

'On the Ground'

Walking - an Art for Dogs and Humans

written by Namitha PC



photo credit **Kirsty Falk**

Sniffing and exploring is a natural behaviour in dogs. It's a highly enriching experience for them. When a dog sniffs at their own pace, they understand their surroundings and process that information with their brain. This process is a mentally enriching activity which can slow and calm a dog down. Apart from being an activity for fitness, a dog walk should also include sniffing, exploring, and thinking, at their own will and speed.

Dogs have choices just like humans. If we go on a hike up into the hills as our morning walk, we will want to be able to do this with freedom and at our own pace. Similarly, dogs also deserve these choices. When we live in an urban environment, we need to prioritize our dog's safety while also giving them the freedom to exercise their choices on the walk. To achieve this, a long leash with a minimum 3m length is a good alternative to a short leash.

The **Dog Field Study**'s research suggests that dogs who were walked on a long leash spent 280% more time on sniffing compared to a short leash. Sniffing helps lower the heart rate. The higher the sniffing intensity, the lower the heart rate is. Thus, making the dogs calmer. Long leash walking facilitates more freedom, the ability to make good choices, explore, build confidence, slow down and process information, which a traditional short leash cannot do.

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slowdogmovement.org

A few tips to remember:

— Try to get your dog as calm as possible before you go for a walk. If your dog is excited, engage in calming activities such as sitting beside them and doing nothing, a treat search or other scent orientated explore in your own home or garden.

— Ensure you take your dog only at the calmest of hours to minimize stress. Try to have some control within that environment by providing your dog with a calm atmosphere where they are walking. Avoid crowds, noisy areas, or similar places where your dog may be stressed.

— Calmly put the harness on your dog by using appropriate body language.

— If your dog has the tendency to bolt out of the door, use your body as a boundary. If there are people in the hallway, let them leave the building so that your dog can step out calmly. The more reassurance and safety that exists in your dog's life, the more comfortable your dog will become. The slower and calmer they are, the more trust will develop between you.

— Check the vicinity of your home for any dogs who may be a stressor to your dog and to plan the route accordingly.

— In India, where I live, there is a chance that street dogs may be resting under parked cars so look carefully. Street dogs may also be in bushes or drains etc. so keep a watch out for these spots.

— Inspect the surroundings for senior people, kids playing and humans walking. There is the chance that some people may be walking towards your dog which may make him uncomfortable. Try to minimise stress by curving away from direct human traffic or crossing the road.

— This is your dog's walk. You are their caretaker and it's your job to facilitate an enjoyable walk. You are your dog's guardian angel! When your dog stops to sniff at something interesting, let them sniff. Wait for them to process the information and then take the next step.

— Please understand that this is a slow transition and a huge one for your dog(s). When you begin loose leash walks, your dog may continue pulling until the leash is fully extended. Gradually release the leash without increasing the tension. If your dog builds up speed, hold the leash steadily and shorten it quietly. Stop, turn your shoulders to the side, or the opposite direction, and look away to the place you want to move towards.

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'On the Ground'

Walking - an Art for Dogs and Humans ...continued

— If your dog is bolting or lunging, hold the leash steadily, shorten the leash and stop right there. Turn your shoulders to the side or opposite direction.

Do not pull, do not jerk, and do not tighten the leash. Let your dog(s) sniff. Repeat when necessary, during the walk and wait for your dog to understand what you are asking, turn and let your dog accompany you.

Loosen the leash and walk forward. Keep the leash as loose as possible and do not tighten it unless you feel his safety is compromised.

If your dog would like to move in a particular direction allow the choice and let your dog lead if safe.

If you find this hard to practice because of a cramped environment, practise in the early days on your terrace, garden/ backyard, or a car parking area.

Troubleshooting - if you are not progressing here are some ideas of what could be going wrong:

It still may be too busy at the time you are taking your dog out for a walk. What is calm for us might still be busy for them. We need to observe and watch our dogs and understand their triggers. It is worth investing your time helping your dog to a state of calmness. Identify the right environment, the best time of day and week to take your dog outdoors.

Be consistent in practicing agreeable human body language indoors.

Give your dog plenty of opportunities to sniff and be calm inside your house.

We sometimes impose our fears onto our dogs. We love them and may fear if we leave them on a loose leash that they may encounter danger. Do not dismiss the fears and be vigilant about the environment.

Your dog may not be getting enough sleep. Your household may still be busy during the sleeping hours.

The current diet is not working for the dog. A poor diet can cause oxidative stress which can create imbalances and result in your dog being unable to slow down.

Not recognising the impact that other habits may have, for example, eating poop or inedible objects (Pica).



photo credit **Pennie Clayton**

Occasional confinement, yelling or punishment going on at home. I grew up in a very chaotic home and I understand how living in a constantly stressed environment can be. It is very unfair if we put our dogs through the same.

I hope that this is helpful. If you have any questions, please contact me, **Namitha PC**, through the **Slow Dog Movement** Facebook page or website.



Get to know:

Namitha PC

Slow Dog Movement co-director

Namitha PC is a Director at the **Slow Dog Movement®**. Namitha is a Dog Welfare Activist. Based out of Bangalore, India, Namitha loves spending outdoors with her two dogs Micah and Sniper. She believes her love for embracing nature and all the little things around, got into being her lifestyle because of her dogs.

She started a wonderful initiative known as "**Street Dogs are Family Too**" for her love of street dogs. She and her partner Anant, take care of street dogs whom they lovingly call streeties near their residence and it's a visual treat to watch the beautiful dogs all happy and positive around them. She says that street dogs are a huge part of her life and she will go any extent to protect them and do right by them. You can follow them on Instagram to know more.

#streetdogsarefamilytoo

'On the Ground'

The Importance of Sleep

written by Pennie Clayton

Do you ever oversleep?

I hate the feeling of panic as I tried to rouse myself really fast from a deep sleep and that feeling of dread that makes you feel a bit slow and stupid.

And, also that feeling like you never really catch up with yourself during the day as well as a feeling of being slightly drugged and slow witted.

Then I wondered if our dogs ever feel the same?

Obviously they don't have that moment when they anticipate being late and panicking to get up and out and on with the day, but who is to say that they don't wake up like this at points?

We really wouldn't know, but we can speculate as the feeling of leaving a sleep state and waking up suddenly and a little panicky can't only be specific to humans.



photo credit Santos Salcines Nazabal

So what if they do?

It would without doubt impact on the dogs day and perhaps leave him/her feeling a little dull witted and perhaps unable to eat breakfast.

I know that refusing breakfast is nothing new to some dogs, in fact many people often mention this to me – could it be because they have that same slightly nauseous and slow witted feeling in the mornings as we are bustling about?

My lurcher certainly mimicked this on his first days with us. He refused food every morning for around a week – and this is something that has NEVER happened since, in fact he is the opposite.

I think he felt unable to face his new life and the sleep he was getting was just not conducive to him facing the day with a positive outlook.

It is sometimes hard to forget that dogs share most of what we feel and probably have the same reactions that we do. The situation of "oversleeping" might not be identical to our human experience but certainly sleep and rest is essential and specifically the right kind of rest and sleep.

Dogs are polyphasic sleepers which means they don't take their sleep all at once as we might do.

They have 20 minutes cycles of sleep and rest and then they might get up, have a drink, mooch around or just scrape your duvet into a more acceptable heap – I am aware of that one!

The message is to understand why your dog might not always eat first thing, or might just not seem himself and do odd things when sleep is disturbed or if he has been too hot/ cold/ uncomfortable/ not feel safe while everyone else is blissfully "unconscious" and asleep.

Consider this before you get a little stressed with your dog on any one day. Suffering from sleep deprivation is no fun and the need to feel safe when sleeping is paramount.



photo credit Alix Pilet

'On the Ground'

Slow Dog Movement Philosophy *written by Santos Salcines Nazabal and Laura Dobb*

The #slowdogmovement aims to foster deeper relationships between dogs and humans, educate by 'showing the right way' (Turid Rugaas), and grow a like minded worldwide community of dog lovers embracing the value of SLOW.'

The **Slow Dog Movement® C.I.C.** is a social movement. We promote ethical values within the dog/human relationship. In keeping with the human ecosystem, we cultivate our respectful coexistence. We consider the deep knowledge of the physiology and needs of the dog.

The **Slow Dog Movement® C.I.C.** is not a forum to find "quick solutions" or "how-tos." Or to deal with a specific problem without knowing the dog, the family, and the environment in situ. For this reason, it is risky for us to answer these queries. They need a complete review by a friendly canine education professional. On many occasions, they should also include a multidisciplinary holistic approach.

The **Slow Dog Movement® C.I.C.** promotes self-knowledge and emotional development. Members can learn through 'master scenarios.' These are where each dog can display the entire repertoire of known natural behaviours. Due to lack of experience, some dogs do not even know these yet.

Dogs and humans often find slowing down complicated. Dogs may have the feeling that they need to protect themselves. How can they be aware when they don't know that they can feel otherwise?

Many dogs do not know that going outside can be slow. They do not know that they can go for a walk without pulling on the leash. Without barking. Without a concerned human accompanying them during the walk.

The **Slow Dog Movement® C.I.C.** promotes and shares values such as:

#circleoftrust
#beyourdogsbestfriend
#forestbathingwithyourdog
#inpraiseofslow
#inpraiseofslowness
#slowwalks

And other 'non-hashtag' ideas!

We also support initiatives like @streetdogsarefamilytoo in India and <https://www.sensorygarden4dogs.com/>, a worldwide project.

What we suggest as guidelines within our philosophy:

- The relationship with our dog is the primary focus.
- It's a dog's choice – choice to walk, speed, play, meeting other dogs, humans, chews, sleep, contact etc. Choice builds confidence and is a dog's right.
- Slow enables observation. It's important to observe a dog and what they are communicating.
- Humans must slow down so that their dogs can do the same.
- Studying the 'dog ethogram' and support of natural dog behaviours.
- The 90% calm, 10% aroused ratio is a suggested aim.
- Focus on movement and activity that supports a healthy body and brain.
- Respect for our dogs as sentient beings and individuals.
- Appropriate equipment – well fitted harness and long, loose leash, minimum 3m.
- Ask yourself why it's important to you to engage in training/commands, whether it be 'positive' or 'fear free.'
- In terms of dogs and sports/hobbies, ask yourself, would your dog engage in these activities if left to their own desires?
- Always fulfil the basic needs of your dog and remember to check their emotional requirements as well.
- Slow walks and other recommended activities on our page can really help rescue dogs and dogs with fear and anxiety.
- Take your time to get to know your dog and support their individual character and needs.

How to find us at the Slow Dog Movement® C.I.C.

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This '**On the Ground**' ZINE is published quarterly and available via our website as a limited edition copy for **£5** or at a reduced rate if you become a member of our community. *Details coming soon!*

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