# A Holistic Guide to Anxiety & Reactive Behavior in Dogs

How Nervous System Regulation Changes Training

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**Slide 1 —**

**Slide 2 —.**



**Slide 3 —**
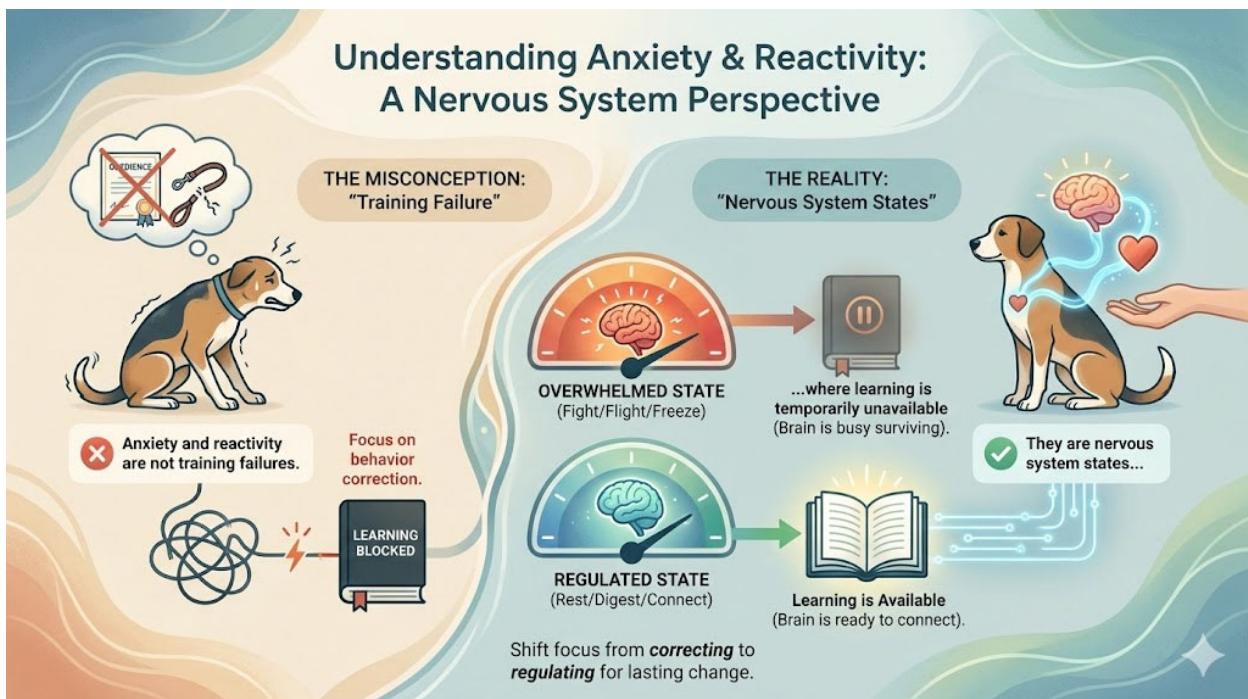
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**What Dogs Lose Under Stress**

Understanding the impact on canine cognition and behavior.

LOW STRESS

RISING STRESS & ACTIVATION

- Perception
  Inaccurate sensory processing

- Choice
  Limited decision making

- Flexibility
  Rigid, repetitive behavior

- Learned responses
  A → B
  Difficulty accessing training

Behavior becomes reflex
No conscious thought, immediate reaction
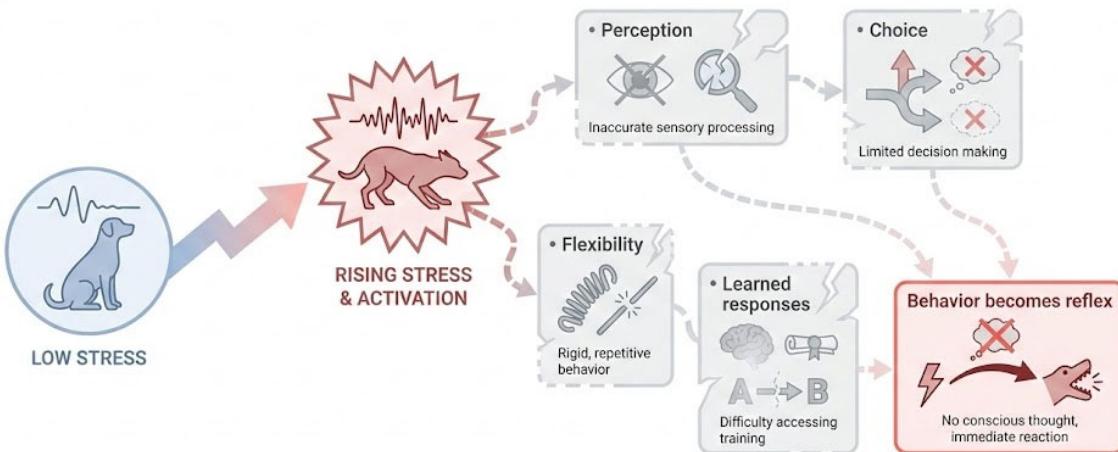
To restore these faculties, we must help the dog de-escalate and return to a state of calm.

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**Why Training Breaks Down**

**1. Traditional Training Requires Cognition**

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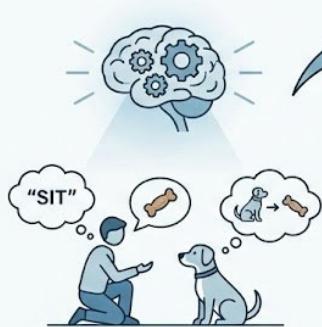
Learning, thinking, choice, and focus are active.

**2. Fear Shuts Cognition Down**

Survival mode takes over; thinking brain is offline. Fight, flight, or freeze response.

**3. This is a Timing Problem — not a Skill Problem**
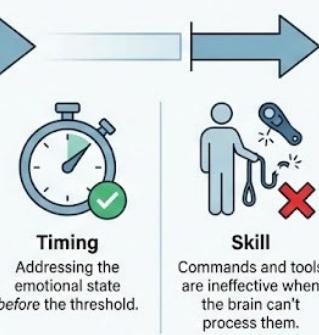
**Timing**
Addressing the emotional state *before* the threshold.

**Skill**
Commands and tools are ineffective when the brain can't process them.

Effective training requires a calm, receptive brain. Manage the environment, reduce fear, then teach.

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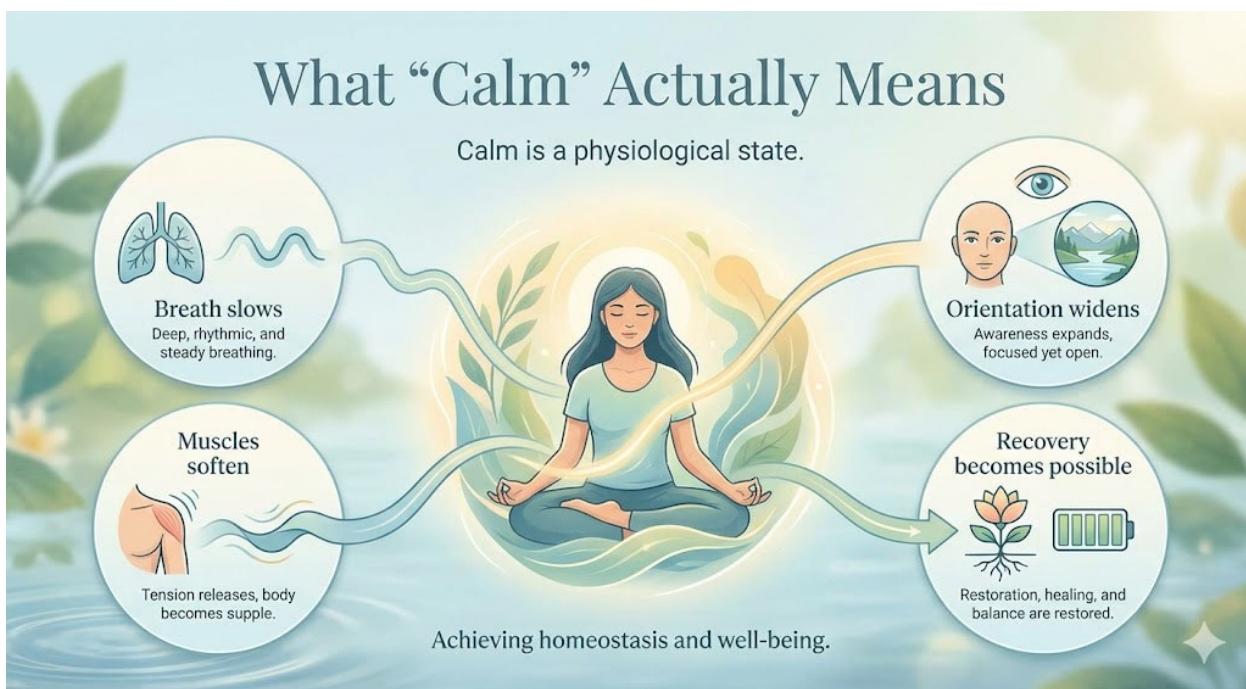
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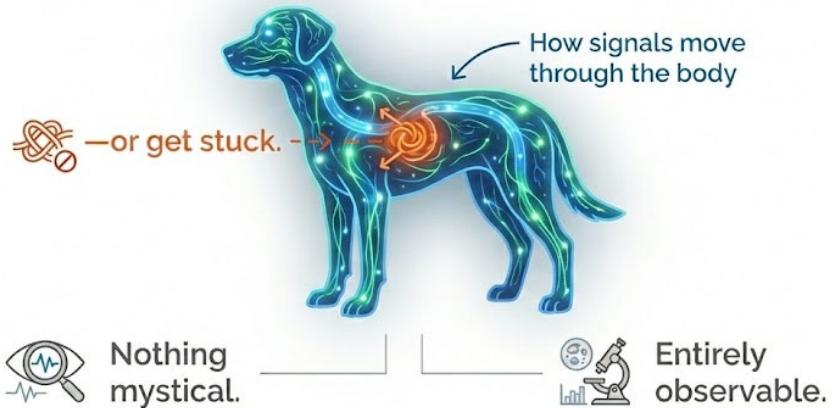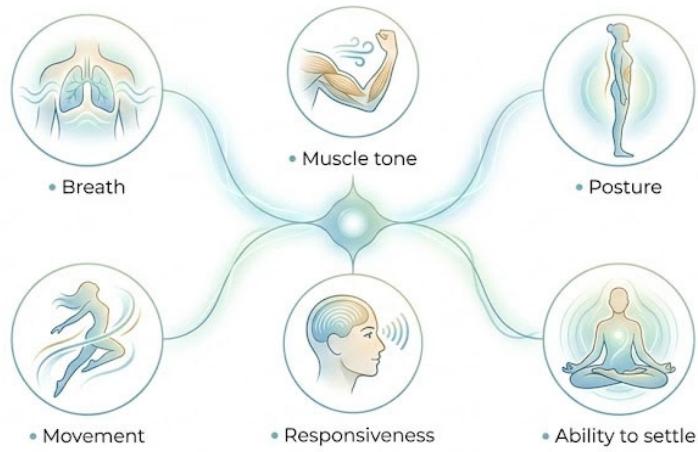


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**When Flow Is Disrupted**

When information flow destabilizes:

SMOOTH INFORMATION FLOW

DESTABILIZATION & DISRUPTION

Anxiety increases — STRESS LEVEL: HIGH / RISING

Reactivity appears — IMPULSIVE RESPONSE, FIGHT OR FLIGHT

Learning disappears — COGNITIVE BLOCK, NO RETENTION, CONFUSION
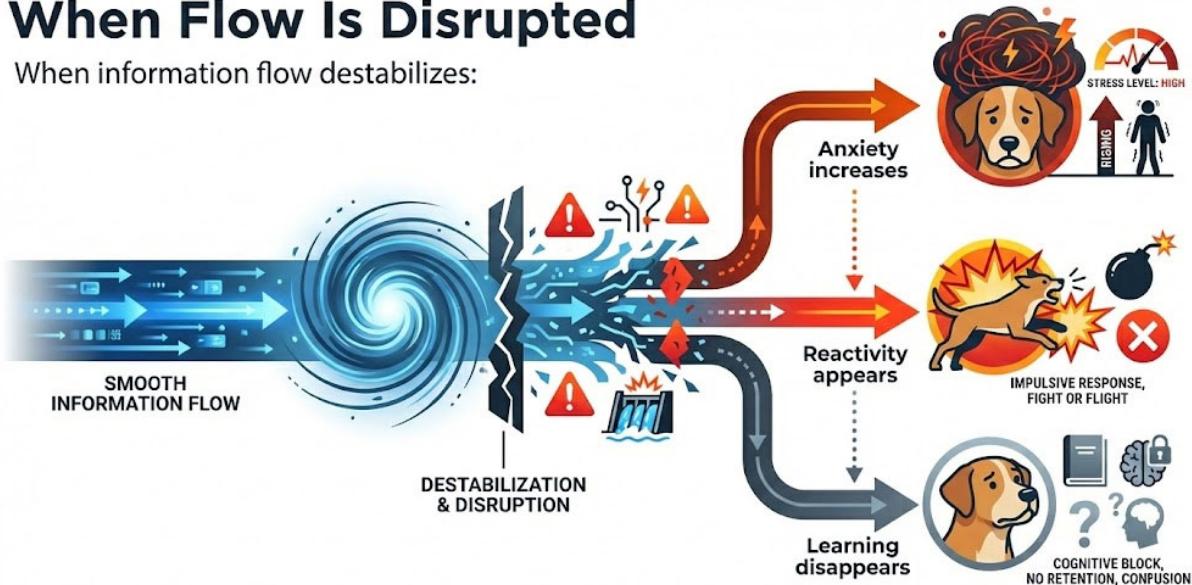
Destabilized flow leads to a cascade of negative outcomes, hindering balanced function.

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**Why Regulation Comes First**

The nervous system responds to regulation, not instruction.

INSTRUCTION & BEHAVIOR (Learning & Action) — Learning is possible. Connection and obedience follow regulation.

BEFORE Before Behavior — Desired actions cannot be performed under stress or fear.

BEFORE Before Cues — Visual signals and tools are ineffective if the brain is offline.

BEFORE Before Words — mute / gibbish — Verbal commands are just noise without a regulated state.

REGULATION (Nervous System State) — Foundation of Safety & Calm. The body must feel secure.

Prioritize the nervous system state to unlock the potential for learning and connection.

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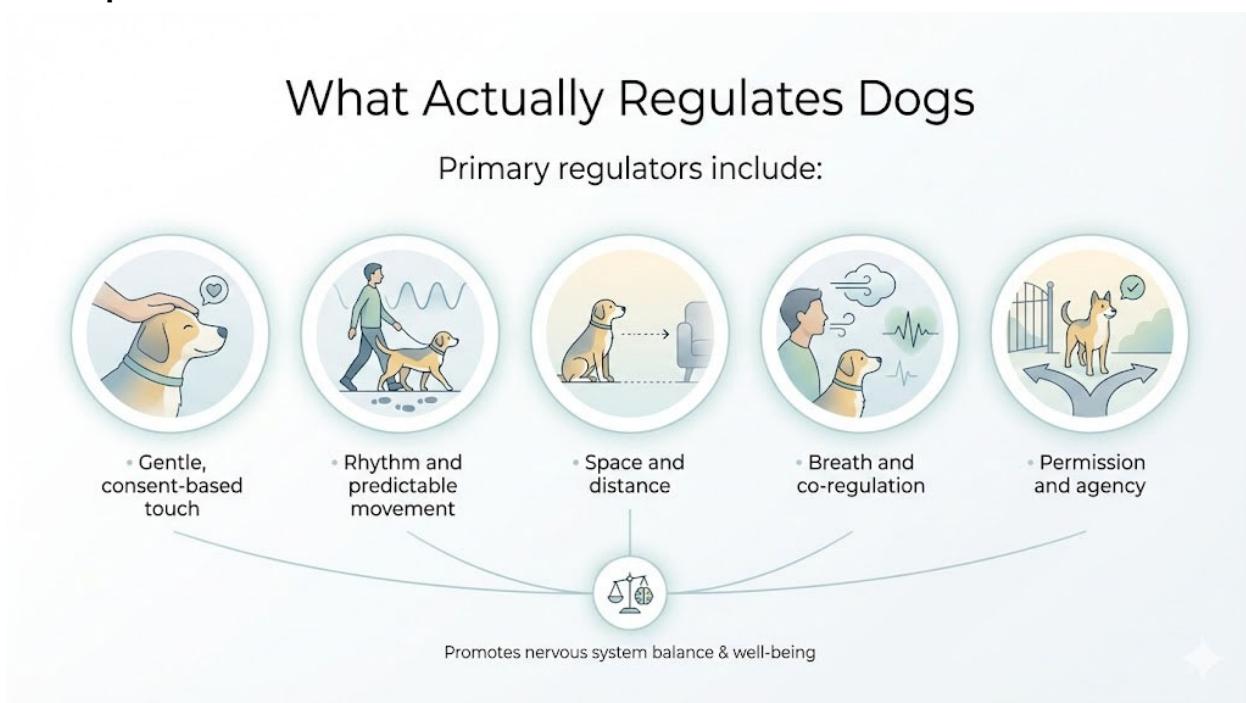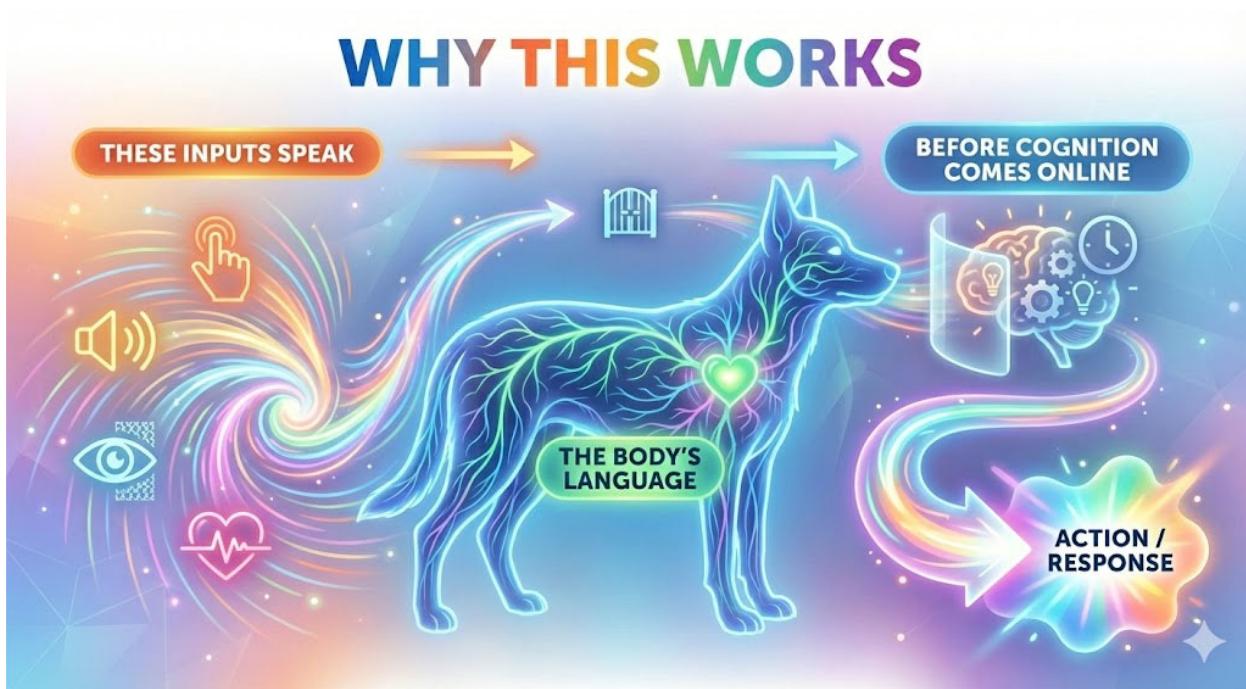


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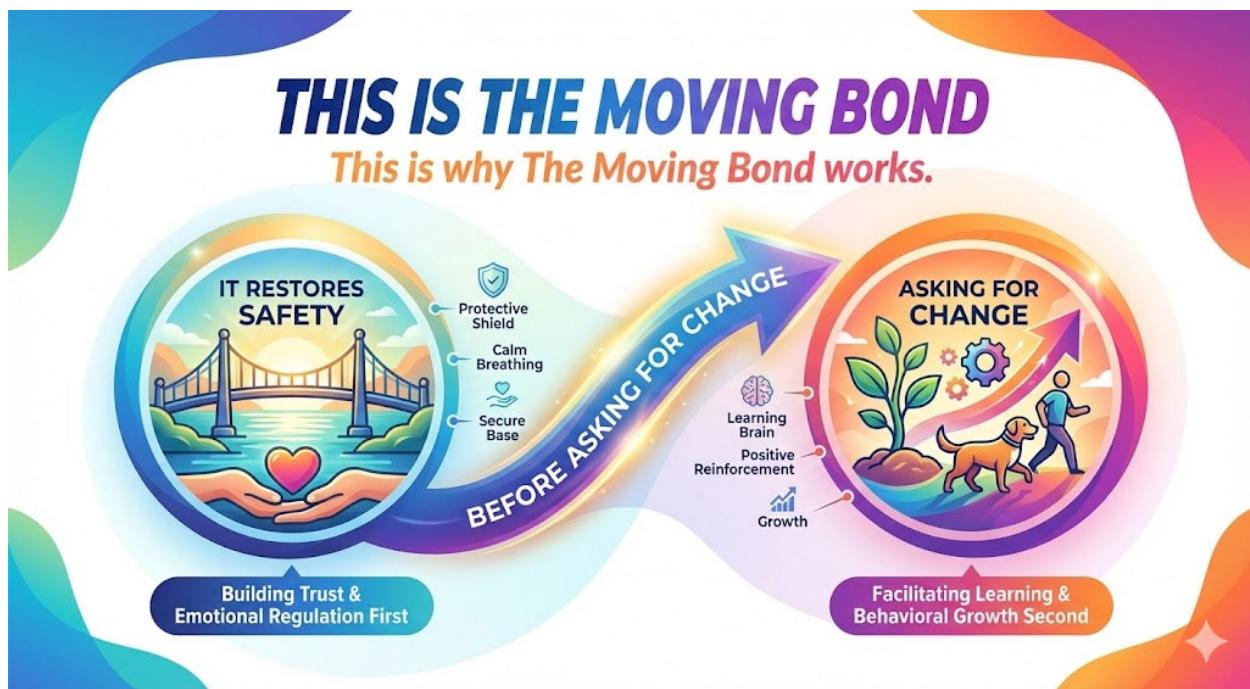
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