



## **Decompression Walks (Sniffari's!)**

Living in an urban jungle with high expectations can be stressful for many of us, including our dogs who were designed to roam freely and explore. We all need ways to escape: We may travel to a scenic destination, seek adventure, relax on a hammock, head to the beach, go camping, etc. Basically, getting out to nature and enjoying ways to relieve ourselves. While we provide these outlets of decompression for ourselves, our dogs also strongly need it!

Your dog's innate behaviors include: sniffing, running, chasing, playing, relaxing, shredding, digging, exploring, rolling in things, etc. On our everyday structured walks, our dogs don't always get to partake in their natural behaviors. While practicing structured walks are very important for your dog to learn how to coexist in the human world, it's also crucial that your dog has an outlet to fully be a dog without all of the structured pressure we put on them.

### ***Cue in the Decompression Walk!***

#### **What is a Decompression Walk?**

- Your dog has an outlet to truly be a dog and explore the environment by engaging in innate behaviors: sniffing, climbing, running, rolling, etc.

#### **What are the benefits?**

- They provide stress relief and calmness for all dogs, along with physical and mental exercise. You're providing enrichment at the same time!
- Your dog is able to freely move. You can reinforce check-ins, engaging with you, work on some basic obedience like down, sit, stay, recall to generalize/proof your dog's behaviors. Just keep in mind you are there for your dog to decompress and enjoy themselves too.
- Dogs who are reactive, fearful, or anxious will really benefit from these walks. Rather than encountering stressful/triggering moments on your daily walks (other dogs, people, noises, etc.) you and your dog can both take it easy and breathe. Enjoy the outdoors

without worrying that your walk will be full of conflict. Remember, practicing unwanted behaviors such as reactivity is crucial to your overall training progress. Decompression walks can help you practice wanted behaviors and emotions: sniffing the ground (“Go find it!”), calmness outdoors, enrichment, more freedom.

### **Where to go for a Decompression Walk:**

- Sports fields that allow dogs
- Cemetery (not many people, not many dogs!)
- Big grassy area safe of hazards
- Trails
- The beach
- Drive around and see what you find, get creative, yet avoid high traffic areas.

### **What equipment do you need for your Decompression Walk?**

Safety is extremely important. Here are the tools we recommend you use while enjoying a decompression walk:

1. 10-20 foot longline (not a retractable leash!)
2. A harness your dog cannot wiggle out of. A longline should never be attached to a gentle leader/comfort trainer.
3. Treat pouch with a variety of high value reinforcers.
4. For reactive/fearful dogs:
  - a. You may consider purchasing a vest that indicates “Please Give Me Space” or add a sleeve to your leash providing information that you do not want to be approached.
  - b. Remember, don’t be afraid to advocate for your dog!
5. Comfort Trainers/Gentle Leaders/Head Halti’s are great training tools that we encourage, however, for your decompression walks we do not recommend attaching the longline to this walking tool. For safety purposes, attach it to a harness.

### **CAUTION**

If you have never utilized a longline before, get familiar with it in your home, backyard, or frontyard first. Start with 10 feet and graduate to 20 feet. Start at kindergarten and make sure you’re comfortable reeling it in, handling the length, and maneuvering the line. You can easily get tangled, so be careful and always watching where the line is.

Stay aware of your surroundings. Triggers can pop up at any time. **\*\*importance of low traffic areas\*\***

### **PULLING**

The LAST thing you want is a dog who pulls 20 feet away from you and does not stop! Much like our loose-leash walking rule, pulling should never work. Meaning, you are not following a dog who is pulling at the end of the leash. Instead, teach an alternative (explained next).

Dog pulls = you stop and redirect immediately. The second your dog reaches the end of the line, call them back and reward them. This will teach your dog that when they get too far and hit the end of the line, they should turn around. This will only happen if you teach them and remain very consistent with your practices.

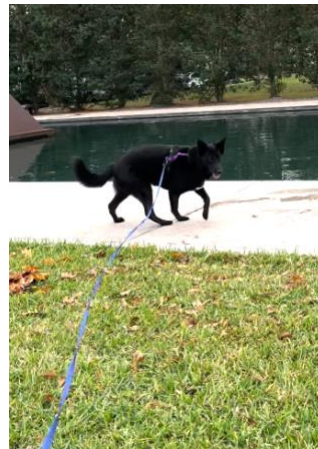
Refer to the **pictures** below for what this looks like (TIP: Start with a short distance first).



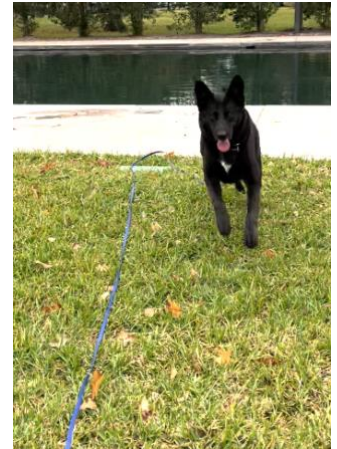
Dog is walking,  
loose leash, no  
tension



Dog reaches end of  
leash, creating tension.  
Simultaneously  
redirect or recall



Make sure you're  
excited and pleased!  
Keep your dog coming  
towards you



Happy dog!  
Reinforce them

Not only will your dog enjoy themselves, you will also find how relaxing decompression walks can be. Give it a try!

**Checkout our “Decompression Walk” YouTube video for a visual:**  
[Decompression Walks with Believe In Dog Training - YouTube](#)

**Happy Decompressing!**