

# **Exploring the Science of Enrichment to Stimulate Your Pet's Cognition:**

## **A Special Interview With Jo Woodward**

**by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker**

### **Dr. Karen Becker:**

Hi, I'm Dr. Karen Becker and I'm so excited today we have enrichment expert Jo Woodward joining us, and I really wanted to have Jo on because the more that scientific research supports how important enrichment is for our animals, the more I think we need to be focusing on enrichment, not just for mental and emotional wellbeing, but for physical wellbeing as well. So an enrichment expert is who we want to have this conversation [with], and I'm so thankful, Jo, that you're capable of joining us today to share your wisdom and expertise. Thank you.

### **Jo Woodward:**

Thank you so much for having me. I started my business about 12 years ago as a daycare and home boarding and dog walking specialist. And I just realized there was so much more back then before I learned about training and behavior, how to keep our dogs exercised. And I realized very quickly all those years ago, it wasn't just through exercise, and if we overexercised our dogs, we just create an athlete and we had dogs that were and more hyper. So I just really started to enjoy showing dogs how we could keep them mentally stimulated without all the physical exercise. And there would be dogs that would have injuries, dogs that would be suffering from stress, and it's fantastic for relationship building between the owner and the dog.

So as I say, I got into it, gosh, over 12 years ago, and I wanted to stand out. I didn't just want to be the norm and I wanted to really look at the dog's wholeness and look at everything holistically rather than just, "oh, I'm a trainer," or "I'm helping with behavior" or "just a dog walker." And the results have just been fantastic over the years. I have people coming to me with teenage Labradors and they're saying, "My dog's hyper. My dog's dragging me down the road. My dog gobbles their food up really quickly." And you ask the owners what they're doing with their dog and they think they're doing the right thing by taking their dog out for three long walks a day, playing ball with them.

So again, I was starting to look at how this was affecting their brains, how it was affecting their joints, and if we can just take a step back and look at natural enrichment and there are so many products on the market now, I think it's fantastic. And for me as well, I want people to go through their recycling and look at what could be safe that we could use. Obviously we have to treat every dog as an individual. Cardboard, getting the dogs to search through food in cardboard isn't going to be for every single dog, but there is enrichment for every dog out there.

### **Dr. Karen Becker:**

So I didn't realize, Jo, until I was in the middle of researching, talking to experts, writing "The Forever Dog," I knew that dogs needed to smell, of course, but the depth and breadth to which they need to smell, I had underestimated. I know that dogs need to move their bodies, but as you

mentioned, moving their bodies alone doesn't constitute the cognitive aspect of this. So can you talk a little bit about maybe what the research has shown? I feel like this whole topic or the science of enrichment just in the last 10 years has really allowed us to identify the deficits as guardians and veterinarians that potentially we have really overlooked for the mental, emotional and physical aspects of a dog's wellbeing that maybe we haven't taken into account. Can you just talk a little bit about some of the benefits of dogs using their brains and not so much their body?

**Jo Woodward:**

If you think about our dogs and they're waking up every day and they're expecting everything from us, we're their everything. And if we take them for walks and that's all we do with them, and then we run around the home and playing with them and in the garden, there's still many hours where the dogs could be bored. Yes, they need lots of sleep, but again, if we overexercise them, they're going to have a very active brain and they're not going to have very good quality sleep.

For me, the very root of training your dog, looking at any behavioral issues, lack of confidence, being overexcited, let's get them using their brains and slowing them down. As we know, sniffing is a calming activity, there are so many enrichment products now. We've got LickiMats, we've got snuffle mats. There are so many wonderful companies out there that are selling natural chews. Let's get them using their brains, releasing lots of endorphins and calming hormones and meeting our dog's needs this way rather than just physically.

It also helps our dogs to build independence. So many people are working from home nowadays, and of course the dogs, they're wanting the owners to entertain them the whole time, and it's not good for them if we are expecting to entertain them constantly. So if we give them some enrichment activities to do, even if we take them out on a walk, don't play ball with your dog. Don't throw a stick around and have them zooming around everywhere, have them nice and close to you and encourage them to sniff the leaves and do a little bit of doggy parkour in the woods. I love scent work, absolutely love scent work as well, and just getting the dogs to teach them how to use their noses. They know how to use their noses, but let's really channel it and the relationship ... Sorry.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Well, I have a question about scent work because I discovered scent work, Jo, maybe 15 years ago, and I discovered it, when I say I discovered it, I realized I was under-prescribing scent work for many of my patients. That's a better way of phrasing it. And what I realized is that I had owners that maybe themselves had physical, maybe not disabilities, but owners that weren't walkers or physically couldn't exercise their dogs, or dogs that had injuries and couldn't exercise. So I started using scent work as a means of giving dogs something to do. All dogs need a job and it's a job that dogs naturally can do. But for our listeners and readers who don't know what we're talking about, could you explain what scent work is?

**Jo Woodward:**

Okay, so we could teach our dogs to search for anything. We might teach them just to search for a piece of their daily food allowance, their kibble. It's so simple. We don't want them just eating out of the bowl. We want to get them working for all of their food so that we are literally keeping them mentally stimulated day and night, if that makes sense. Through scent work, generally we

find a target odor. So it might be a Red Kong, the Red Kong is universal throughout the world. Dogs can't see red, it's not in their color spectrum, and we would start with a whole Kong and we would teach the dog if you look at the Kong, we reward you. We give them a marker word and we reward the behavior. Dogs learn very quickly, what gets rewarded gets repeated, so they learn very quickly. If I do this, bingo. The relationship, the confidence within the dog because they have lots and lots of quick wins.

And they say that 10 minutes of sniffing might be equivalent to half an hour of a lead walk. So it's so tiring for them, their sense of smell is up to a 100,000 times stronger than ours, so let's get them using those brains but super close to us so we're sharing this experience with them. It really helps to form our relationship with our dogs.

And then once we've taught them to indicate on a whole Kong, we would cut those pieces up and make them smaller and smaller so the dog is then really searching and we give them really, really quick, easy wins. Only last weekend, if this is okay to say, I was working with a very nervous Hungarian Vizsla, she's just over a year old, doesn't like traveling in the car. The owner has to pick her up and put her in there. We've been doing some desensitization work, but understandably, the owner doesn't have lots of time when they're working full time, and we'd only have four sessions so far. The fourth session, we just did some scent work. By the end of the session we moved the Kong nearer and nearer to the boot of the car. Oh my goodness. The dog was jumping in and out of the boot of the car.

The owner cried, we hugged. It was just a wonderful experience because it got the dog's brain thinking about something else instead, rather than overthinking, "I don't want to go in the car." And it was just wonderful. And the dog was sitting up and was alert, and normally she's crouched down and salivating. Also, it gives the owners something to do with their dogs rather than thinking the only thing to do with their dog is just to run around and tire them out. That dog would've been really, really tired at the end of that session. And I regularly do scent work and brain games with my dog. My dog Sonny had major surgery when she was only a year old in December and she was on three 10-minute lead walks a day and she's a Sprocker, so a cross between a Springer and a Cocker spaniel.

And a lot of people said to me, "Oh my goodness Jo, how are you going to manage?" And I said, "It's fine because we do loads of brain games." And she was amazing. And to this day, because she's still on limited exercise, because she has an implant, so I'm going to look after her. She has lovely walks, but they're probably only 20 minutes a day and we do loads of brain games. So I teach her new tricks.

### **Dr. Karen Becker:**

So let's use her as an example. I love that, because so often we think either if we are limited in mobility or if our animals are limited in mobility, that certainly massage is good, but people just tend to use food as a means of treating them without the dog needing to engage in any thinking or mental, brain games. Research is pretty amazing that when dogs are capable of thinking, using their noodles, to have to get to that food, that different centers, that the endorphins are released and that they're forming new neuronal synapses, that they're actually becoming smarter when we ask them to use their brains.

And so there's a difference between just throwing your dog a treat and making your dog work for it. So can you walk us through with your young, vivacious, but exercise-restricted dog, walk us through some of the ways, some of the brain games that you've done for her to keep her brain

flourishing and growing and engaged despite the fact that her body may not be able to keep up with that.

**Jo Woodward:**

From a very young age, I knew she was going to have joint problems, so I was very, very careful with not overexercising her. We would scatter some of her food on the grass and rather than her racing around the garden as a puppy, we would have her sniffing and searching for her food. And it's such a confidence-building exercise. She was very noise sensitive from a very young age as well. Any noise, there's a train in the background, a lawnmower, and I would never overexpose her to any of those stimuli. However, if a noise happened in the environment, she'd be very nervous but if she was using her brain and sniffing and searching, even a favorite toy, if I hid it and then asked her to go find it, you would see her going into working mode and then going to retrieve the toy and then bringing it to me. Anything that the dog finds rewarding is enriching, but we have to be sensible and be their best advocate.

So a lot of my customers will say, "But my dogs enjoy chasing a ball." And I would say, we can switch that up. We can teach your dog to deliver the ball back to your hand. We could roll it so it doesn't travel very far away from them. We could have them offering a sit or a down and a stay and then placing the ball down and asking them to retrieve it and bring it to us. We could put two balls down and we could ask them to wait and then show them which one you want them to get. These are all brain games. They're tiring because the dog has got to use their brain and concentrate and figure out what you are asking from them.

So on any given day, I do so many different enrichment activities with my dog, but there are days that I don't have a lot of time. So if I don't have time to train her a new trick, because I'm always training her tricks, because even tricks are getting them to think and use their brain, and it's a fantastic way of feeding their daily food allowance and rather than it just being food, fuel in a bowl. My last dog, I had a companion breed, a Shih Tzu cross Bichon, and she wasn't very food motivated and my goodness, just for a little companion breed, I could hide a piece of treat on a shelf really high up and she'd sniff her way around the lounge and then just start looking up and then look at me, and I'd think, ah. I had an enrichment ball from my previous dog, and she learnt very quickly, she couldn't get those treats out of that ball, but if she carried that enrichment ball to the top of the stairs and knocked it, they fell out.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Wow. Brilliant.

**Jo Woodward:**

And I think it was my own dogs that taught me about enrichment. That's how I believe I got into it in the first place. And I did use to play ball with my last dog. I did use to throw a ball around before I understood about the damaging effects on the joints, so we can still have fun with balls. And then when I realized I didn't want to be throwing them around and hyping her up, there was a little stream where we used to live and it went downstream and she'd run to one end of the bank, drop the ball, she'd race down the bank and collect it.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Wow. So she was making up her own game. She was entertaining herself. Yeah, beautiful.

**Jo Woodward:**

But in a beautiful, calm, appropriate way rather than crazy, hyper and checking in with me to see if I was smiling. And the relationship between yourself and a dog, we want it to be fun, and our dogs, the reward itself can be praised. My dog Sunny, she does the funniest things. I recently taught her to play dead, but I wanted to call it donk, so I taught her donk. But it's so funny because now when I'm teaching her something new, she'll just decide it's this really exaggerated donk and it's hilarious. And then she just lies there and I laugh and I smile and she comes over for fuss. This to me is all enrichment. It's getting our dogs to use their brains and think about ... Just to have a better life through not just going on walks and looking out the window and barking at what's going on. Can we get them to entertain themselves and build confidence and calmness?

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

So when you think about... It's interesting, I didn't pull these out because you're my guest this morning, but on my desk I have some doo-dahs, but they cost money.

**Jo Woodward:**

Yeah, they do.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

And for people that may not want to spend, oh look, there's still a goodie in this one. For people that may not have 20 bucks to spend, now first of all, these, they last forever, but if you don't have 20 bucks, Jo, what are some options for people that say, I've never thought about this concept of environmental enrichment. If they wanted to do something today without ordering an enrichment device, what would you recommend?

**Jo Woodward:**

Okay. So if they have a garden, they could scatter some of their dog's food in the middle of the grass. If they have a garden, they could provide an area for their dog where their dog could dig. So that would meet perhaps a terrier's needs or a little dachshund, and you can teach your dog, "this is your place," and put some treats in there and a few toys that you've got already and really encourage the dog that this is your area or maybe even a sandpit. If you don't have a garden, everyone has some recycling, whether it's a cereal box, the innards of toilet rolls and kitchen rolls. Don't throw away any of your recycling. A milk carton, a plastic milk carton. Look at it. Empty water bottle work with the dog in front of you. For my dog, if I was giving her a water bottle, I would take the end off.

I would take any plastic, loose plastic, I might put a few bits of her kibble inside. She would have a whale of a time racing around everywhere. We could even boil an egg, peel the egg and give them an egg. For me, watching a dog entertain themselves with a boiled egg around the floor before eating it, it's almost like giving a child a Kinder egg and the surprise of, "Oh, actually look at this", the yoke inside. I give my dogs vegetables and I don't throw my peelings away, so I give Sunny the peelings or the husk of a broccoli and she will entertain herself with it. You could chop vegetables up and scatter in some cardboard. You can make a snuffle mat if you don't have a lot of money. They're really easy to make. You can find the instructions on YouTube, but even a little toilet roll, place a piece of kibble inside, fold the edges down, have a collection of them.

If you look on any of the secondhand sites, you can pick up balls for children's ball pits, and you could put that, I hope it's okay for me to name names, I love an Ikea bag. Absolutely love an Ikea bag because it's rustley like a baby sensory mat. Cut the straps off, roll it down, use it like a tub, fill it with your cardboard recycling, empty toothpaste tubes. Look through your cupboards, and if you've run out, you're about to throw something away. Is that going to be safe? Generally, if you scatter some food in there, the dog will go for the food and they work. And to be honest, if they destroy the cardboard, to me, that's met their needs of letting everything out. And maybe if that's a puppy chewing and dissecting, they have so much fun. Oh my goodness, I could probably write an A to Z on different enrichment activities, and for me it's about recycling as well. Looking at what's out there.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Now, some listeners will be saying, "Oh my gosh, I just rescued the happiest, bounciest Pitbull who will eat the plastic water bottle and eat the plastic milk jug." So of course, listeners, if you have a dog that is going to eat cardboard, obviously you want to make sure that that doesn't happen. But the vast majority of dogs are very well and capable of discerning between food that is ingestible and digestible and indigestible objects. Most dogs, they may want to shred it, of course, but most dogs typically don't eat foreign objects. Some do, but most dogs have the wisdom to not do that. So you do need to know your dog.

**Jo Woodward:**

You have to work with the dog in front of us. Again, any enrichment activities, always, always under supervision because we wouldn't want our dogs swallowing anything. There's very few, I would say enrichment activities, toys that I'd feel confident leaving with a dog if you didn't know how they were going to chew it and leave them unsupervised. Want to make sure that at all times our dogs are safe. And as I say, if you've got, even if you just boil up some chicken and sprinkle some chicken around the cardboard, that is what they're going to go for. Egg boxes. Look in your garden and look at, have you got any plant pots? Could you sprinkle some food even around the plant pot so the dogs have got to navigate and search for the food? They'll be looking for us to see, okay, mom, that was really fun. What can we do next?

Taking some of the toys that they have already, making it really easy to start with, throw a piece of kibble in one direction and hide another piece of kibble or their favorite toy behind the leg of the armchair. And then say, where is it? That's the beginning of scent work, asking them to go and search, and then the dopamine hit they're going to have from finding something and sharing it with us. For me, oh, I just love it. And Sunny, true credit to that because I didn't find it hard work and I have a working breed. I didn't find it hard work with her recuperating.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

So good. That's one of the things that I have found also with my paralyzed patients or my paraplegic patients or animals with degenerative myelopathy where their backend goes or they're in a cart. It's extra important in my opinion, to really focus on creating opportunities for them to be able to use their brain to keep their quality of life valid and amazing and going. And I think that sometimes people who have not worked with paraplegic dogs or animals with disabilities will say, "Oh my gosh." Oftentimes the critics will say, "That dog should be put to sleep. That dog can't use his back legs, what are you doing?" And yet when you see if guardians focus on

intentionally creating opportunities for these animals to have a robust, mental daily multiple exercise sessions, these animals' quality of life, even though they can't physically move as an unrestricted dog, I think oftentimes they actually have a better quality of life if their moms and dads are focused on intentionally doing so.

**Jo Woodward:**

You've touched on a really good point there. In 2019, I was invited out to a rescue center in Cyprus, and they had a two-year-old beautiful terrier who unfortunately had been returned to the center because he'd been hit by a car on Christmas day and lost the use of his back legs. And they heard about myself and they invited me out there as their guest and they wanted me to help enrich Tommy's life. And it was going to be many months before he would have his wheels. And of course he couldn't run around and the chances of him finding a home would've been very difficult because of his situation, and they wanted him to have the best quality life because he was such a happy boy.

And I went out there with my Ikea bag filled with lots of things from ball enrichment activity toys and I took recycling out with me to show people how easy it could be done because we did a big live and it was just wonderful. And it wasn't just Tommy that benefited from that. All the other dogs in the center did. Very nervous dogs that again, they wouldn't overthink, oh my goodness, there's a human there. They were curious to come over. And it's not about food. Food is fuel, but how can we make food an experience? How can we make food ... How can we enrich the dog's lives?

What I say to my customers is if there's a couple and I say, if your husband's going to take you for a romantic meal for your anniversary, he's not just going to give you a piece of toast as fuel. That's what you'd have if you're in a rush to go to work, I need fuel. You would not be impressed if your husband gave you fuel. You want your husband to give you an experience. You want quality food. You want to taste different textures and smells. You want nice plates. You want a nice ambiance. You want service, you want an experience. And all of those things, if we just fed our dog out of the same bowl every single day, it's fine. But is it enriching their lives? And we owe it to them to give them the best life.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Just even the concept of a bowl is very human, that water, obviously you have to contain it, but this concept of you have to feed an animal out of a dish. Many animals do so much better not in a dish, having their food served on unsprayed grass or on dirt with a microbiome, or at least on a cookie or a baking sheet. Or my favorite, like a muffin tin, just especially for wolfers, just dividing up bites of food into a muffin tin slows animals down, but they also have to use their noodle spatial orientation. They're like, oh my gosh, this is different. What's going on? All of those things have brain engagement.

**Jo Woodward:**

They do, and they're problem solving these exercises. If we give, again, I talk about we wouldn't give a four-year-old a 50-piece jigsaw puzzle and then expect them to just get on with it. We would sit down and do a tiny jigsaw puzzle and encourage them, and then when they've got it right, we would celebrate with them. And this is what is important with our dogs. If we show them how, even if we just flick a piece of kibble across the floor and we say, "Can you get it?"

That piece of kibble in my mind, instead of it being worth zero has just raised up in value because you've made it an experience, the dog's had to work for it, and then you can start to make the problem harder and harder for them to solve. For me, even a dog holding a chew because they don't want it slipping away, is them using their brain. Just tiny things I love watching.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

And even, I rescued a dog that literally grew up in a nursing home. He had never met any other dogs. His papa died in the nursing home. But when my rescue dog was 13, his dad died, and he had never been provided any enrichment. And the people at the nursing home said, "Listen, he came as a puppy and he just sat on his dad's lap and he never had any chew toys and never had anything." So when I rescued him, he literally had very few life coping skills. He didn't know how to act around other dogs. He didn't know what to do outside. He certainly didn't know what to do with toys and this concept of play, it almost scared him. When you would flick a piece of, the one treat he loves is like dehydrated chicken hearts, if I flick a piece of dehydrated chicken hearts across the floor, he was like, "What are you doing?"

But if I would put it down two or three feet from him, it was enough for him to say, "Okay, I'm going to go over there and get it, but what are you doing?" But it didn't take him very long to realize, oh, it's a game. So he would play, find the chicken hearts around the kitchen and then the living room and then the office, and just watching him develop curiosity as a geriatric dog makes me cry.

And he was so intimidated that I put a treat under a dish towel and he was like, "Oh, it's gone." But if you just wait, if you just wait, he's like, "Okay, well, maybe I'll try. Is it okay if I move the dish towel?" "It's okay Homer, move the dish towel." So he is now confident enough that I can scrunch up a bath towel, put some rubber bands on the end and basically make an accordion. And shove some chicken hearts in there, and he's confident enough to put his little nose down in there and go find the little bastards. It's wonderful to watch him grow some confidence.

**Jo Woodward:**

Absolutely.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah. Just amazing. But he's such a ... Some of these animals that are so shut down or so timid or just don't have any life skills, especially rescues, in Cyprus where you saw these animals watching another dog be inquisitive sparks inquisitiveness, which is also an interesting thing.

**Jo Woodward:**

And unfortunately, a lot of the dogs at the rescue center hadn't been treated very well by humans. So this was an opportunity for us to engage with the dog, but not head to head. I would be busy touching some things near my bag and they would come over and just be curious because FOMO (fear of missing out) gets the better of all of us. And again, we always have to be mindful of the individual dog and the time of the year. But for me, when we've got leaves that have fallen, and as long as there's no acorns or conkers, I love it because you could just take a tiny bit of their food and off the back of me teaching my dog in particular to find it, if I now say, "Go smell," she'll spend ages just sniffing a pile of leaves or a pile of long grass.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yes.

**Jo Woodward:**

And because I'm not saying you've got to find something, I'm just saying to her, "It's okay to sniff. Let's just stop and sniff." And it's really different. You can hear them really inhaling and taking in the world. And it doesn't always have to be food. It could be going to the beach and running on the sand. It could be going into a stream, running on wet grass. It doesn't matter. It gives them lots of different experiences and textures as well. I want them to feel textures under their feet, so it just wakens them up.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

I was unaware until I interviewed Suzanne Clothier, who raises a lot of puppies for guide dogs, and she starts this early sensory experience with terrain at four weeks of age where she wants her puppies to walk over different levels of surfaces and fake grass and bumpy surfaces and uneven surfaces, and then gravel and sand. Because she said their ability for their brains to grow and be enhanced just from their sensory experiences is really not just important for them in terms of adaptation and stress response later on when they encounter different surfaces, but it actually has been demonstrated that those puppies that are provided this early puppy enrichment are smarter but also happier and calmer later in life. And it makes such perfect sense. And yet it's not necessarily intuitive for us as dog moms or dads.

**Jo Woodward:**

No, definitely. Definitely. As I say, I think I learned, it was my previous dogs that taught me this, when you asked me how I'd got into it. Definitely textures, mats and oh gosh, all sorts of things, even tunnels. I love getting tunnels out for puppies. I'd never force a puppy to go through if they didn't want to, but you see them, they're like, I just did that. And it's not so scary. It's just, as I say, it's wonderful to see.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

So you have to feel like, I don't want to say you fell upon a new career, I know that you are a trainer and people seek you out for your training expertise, but the fact that your heart's passion is one step beyond developing a close, trustworthy relationship with your beloved, you want them to be emotionally and mentally engaged, but also fulfilled. Using our brains is very different than using our bodies. And you have dedicated your career to helping pet parents think about how we can best do our part to help our animals use their cognition. And it's really beautiful. And I think as a veterinarian, we've underestimated the positive effect on their health span for sure. It decreases cortisol. All of these interactions improve all their happy feel-good hormones, their endorphins, but it also decreases their stress hormones.

**Jo Woodward:**

Yeah, definitely. I can say I've seen it with all of my dogs, and whether I go, even if somebody asked me to go and see them for – my dog pulls on the lead. Okay, let's start with some enrichment. Let's slow them down. Let's not even go out of the front door and work on loose lead walking because I feel that would just be putting a plaster over the problem. Let's strip it right

back to basics and calm your dog down, build the relationship between the two of you. I talk about nutrition as well. I try, and I'm not a nutritionist, canine nutritionist, but I want to encourage people to look at the most unprocessed food. And for me, that comes in this as well, because I'm not just going to recommend they buy a LickiMat because then they're going to say, "What can I put on it?"

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yes.

**Jo Woodward:**

We can put loads of things on there. And again, it's about different smells and textures. And I own a variety of LickiMats and lick mats, different branded ones because they've got different textures. I encourage cat owners to buy lick mats for their cats because it shouldn't just be the dogs that are benefiting, but all animals need enrichment.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah. And I have found for animals that need to diet that lick mats are just fantastic because animals that are calorically restricted, they tend to be highly motivated to eat, which means they tend to eat fast and then it's over and the pleasure was 10 seconds because they had to wolf it down. Smearing their food, spreading their food out, and allowing them, basically helping them pace themselves, allows them to have, as they are nourishing themselves, a much more satisfactory, sensory experience with taste and the act of licking, which in and of itself we know decreases cortisol and increases endorphins.

So I think cats are really underestimated when it comes to how much they actually, cats enjoy licking period, but allowing them the opportunity to use lick mats, I totally agree with you. I serve a lot of bone broth that I freeze in the freezer and then pull it out and Homer enjoys licking them frozen, but then with the taller, fingery lick mats, I can just put a quarter cup of bone broth. So it's almost like low soup on a lick mat. And then my kitty is very interested in that, and it takes her 20 minutes to get all of the bone broth off of a lick mat, and that's 20 minutes of her engaging her brain that she otherwise would not have had. So you're right, we tend to forget about kitties, don't we?

**Jo Woodward:**

Definitely. And I think our cats go through so much with, we might have a cat and then we bring a puppy into the household and we think, how can we train our puppy to be okay around the cat? We've got to help the cat as well. That's a huge change for them. But having them both offering an activity that's calming in the presence of each other, I've seen it for myself, I've seen it for myself with my dogs, and it really does work because again, they're not just focusing on each other, they're building calmness around each other. So it's like a desensitization. But as I say, every case that I go out and see, whether it's behavioral or training or a puppy, I run puppy classes and we have snuffle mats and we have cones, and I put egg boxes down so the puppies don't come, in the wintertime, it's in the hall, in the summer months. It's in a field. They don't just come over and say, "Oh yeah, there's another puppy. It's ooh, aah."

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Yeah, it's really good. Jo, if people wanted to learn more, if they're hearing this concept of building this robust, mental, emotional wellbeing through encouraging our dogs and cats to use their brains through simple sensory experiences around the house or outside, this could be very new to some of our listeners and readers. If they wanted to learn more, where would they go to find you, your website?

**Jo Woodward:**

Okay, so my website is [jo@furrytails.dog](mailto:jo@furrytails.dog). That's it.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Okay. And do you do Zoom consultations as well?

**Jo Woodward:**

Yes.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Okay, wonderful.

**Jo Woodward:**

I've worked all around the world before, so yes, definitely. And I'm on Facebook and Instagram as well.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

On the same thing?

**Jo Woodward:**

The link for those is on my website.

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Okay. Beautiful.

**Jo Woodward:**

[Jo@furrytails.dog](mailto:jo@furrytails.dog).

**Dr. Karen Becker:**

Well, this has been quite inspiring and you've given us lots of suggestions, tips and tricks without spending any money, to today, right now, enhance our animals' mental capacity to have fun, engage the brain, spark curiosity and also build your relationship. And I think it's marvelous that you have dedicated your career to helping people make better choices for their animals by providing these opportunities. Thank you for what you do, and also thank you for taking time today to tell us more about what we can do to be better stewards of our animals.

**Jo Woodward:**

Thank you so much for having me. It's been a pleasure.