

# Transforming a Trigger Into an Invitation



Kathy Sdao, M.A.  
Bright Spot Dog Training  
[www.kathysdao.com](http://www.kathysdao.com)



# Is your learner reactive or responsive?



trigger



cue

# Trigger $\approx$ US



- Unconditioned stimulus
- A stimulus that elicits a reflex
  - respondent behavior elicited by antecedents
  - independent of consequences
- Mediated by the autonomic nervous system

$$\text{Cue} \approx S^D$$

- Discriminative stimulus
- A stimulus that signals the availability of reinforcement contingent on a specific appropriate behavior.
- Mediated by somatic nervous system



# Why transfer a functional cue?

- To switch cue modality
- To make the cue more clever
- To add additional “green lights” to a useful behavior
- To create a reinforcement opportunity in an upsetting situation (= DRI)



**Dorothy Carlton Turley** is with Chuck Turley.



Yesterday at 6:41 PM · 🌐

"Shoes? You are putting on shoes?" Eevee caught on to this quickly. Shoes on humans means cookies for pups who are laying down. Shoe cookie time is pretty popular.



# How to transfer a functional cue

- 1) Make sure your current cue works!
- 2) Give new cue, give old cue, reinforce correct behavior.
- 3) Repeat pairing many times.
- 4) Do a probe trial:  
present new cue, pause, reinforce any correct behavior.
- 5) Randomly alternate pairings (2) & probes (4), gradually increasing proportion of probes.
- 6) Mix the new cue in among other familiar cues.

# Tips for success

- Dense reinforcement for the incompatible behavior
- Attenuated “triggers” = wading pool
  - Farther away
  - Different orientation
  - Familiar vs. novel person or dog
  - Changed context
  - Masking sound
  - One stimulus dimension only
- Careful sequencing; learner must notice trigger

# Case 1: Kathy & Smudge



- We walk ~35 miles/week in an urban setting.
- When I adopted Smudge, he lunged & barked as soon as he noticed any dog while on leash.
- My experience training marine mammals biases me to use targeting & stationing as incompatible behaviors.
- I reinforced “nose-to-knuckles” often & generously.

# No sit.



- Reduces option to move or flee
- Can be uncomfortable or painful
- Might have an association with previous coercion



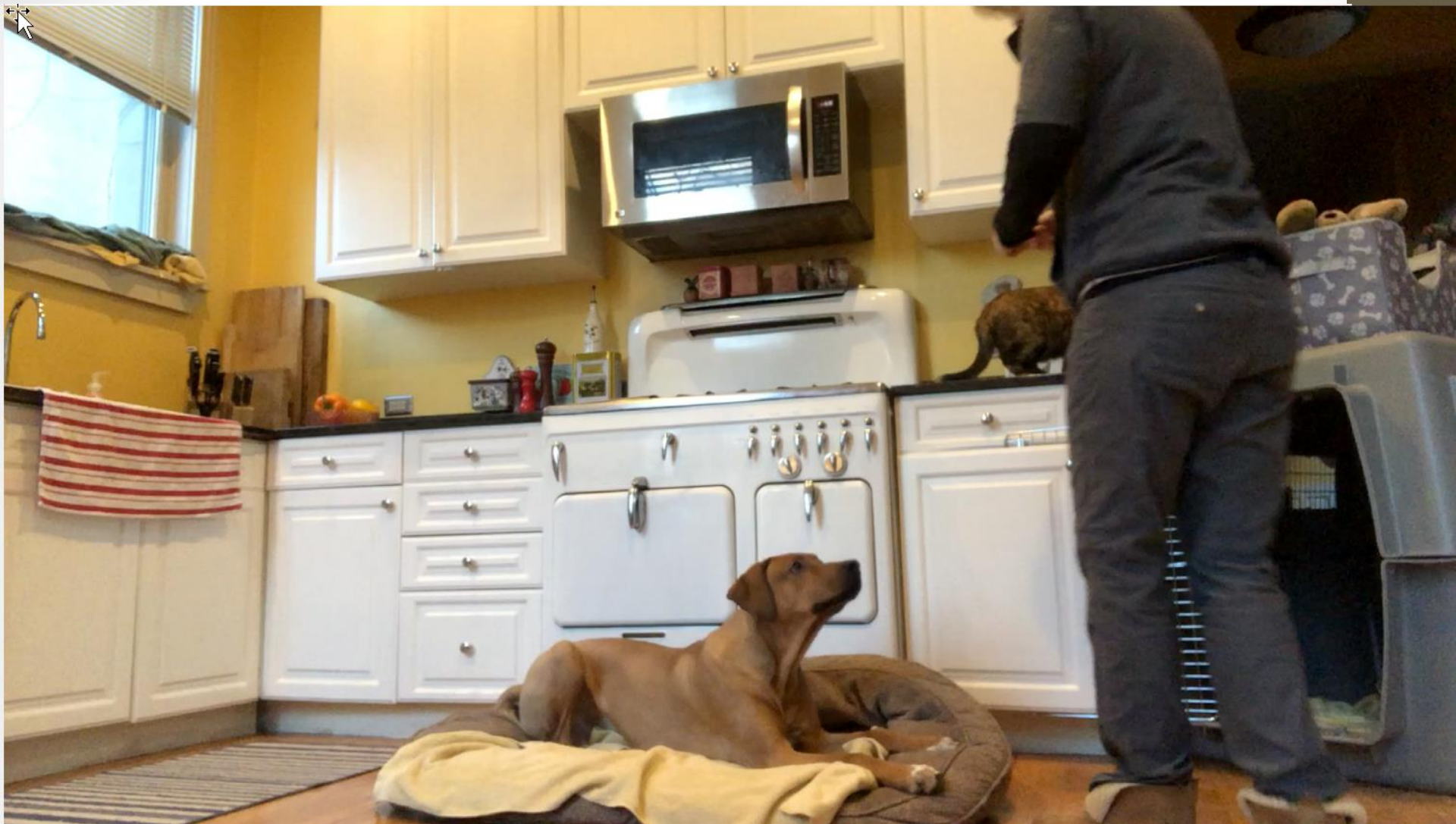




## Case 2: Laura Monaco Torelli, Vito & Topolina

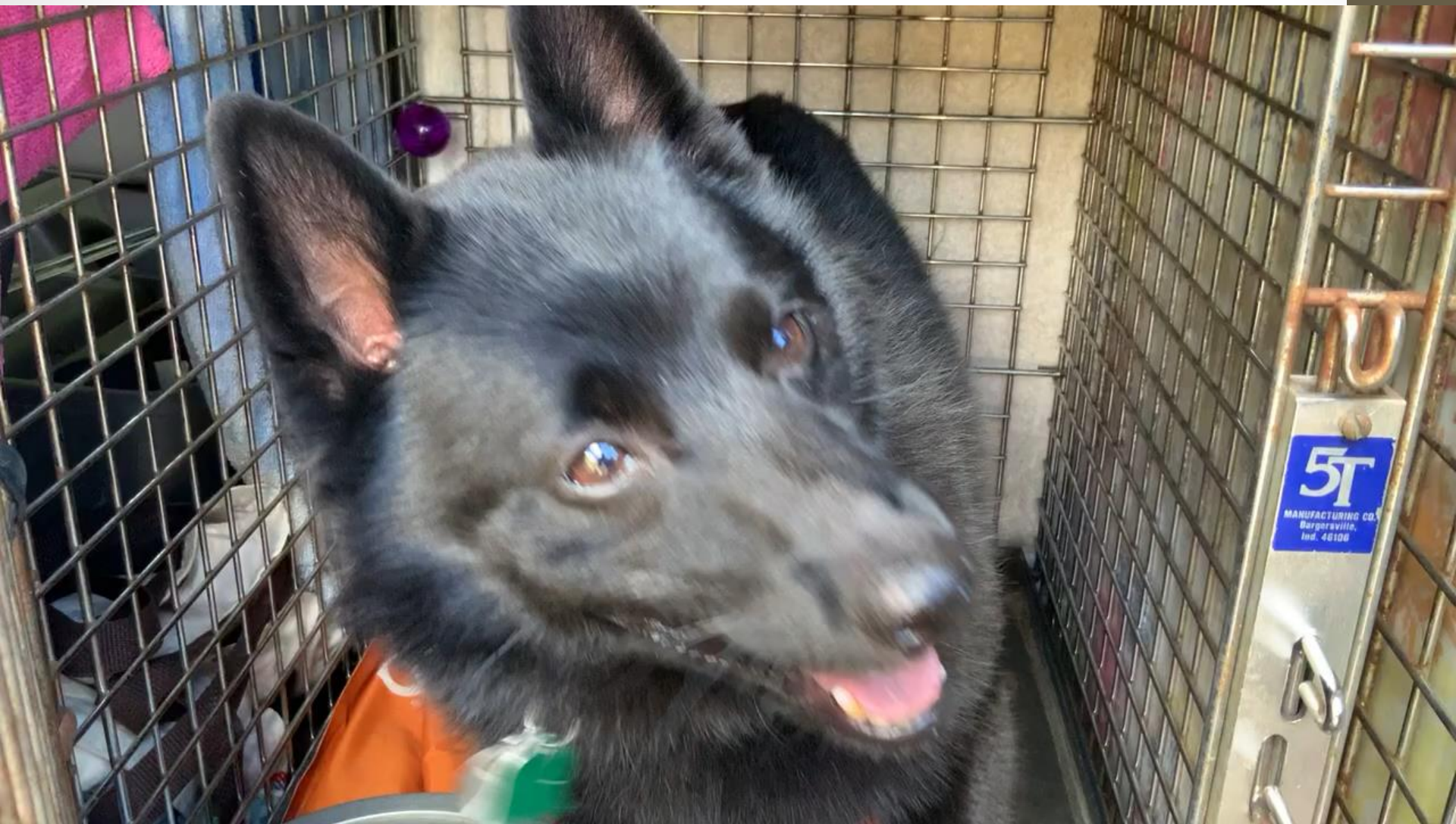
[www.lauramonacotorelli.com](http://www.lauramonacotorelli.com)





## Case 3: Esther Zimmerman & Friday







## Case 4: Molly Timko & Tripp <https://timkopettraining.com>









## Case 5: Karen Crawford & Pepper



Thank you!



