

Walking the Perfect Course

Have you ever walked the agility course at a trial and thought; geees I hope my dog doesn't go into the wrong end of the tunnel? Or I hope my dog doesn't fly off the contacts? Then when you run the course with your dog sure enough they go into the wrong end of the tunnel and you say "I knew you were going to do that?"



Why does this happen? If our focus is on "I hope my dog doesn't take the wrong end of the tunnel" our brain processes "wrong end of tunnel". The brain cannot distinguish the difference of **doesn't** take the wrong end of tunnel- it processes **take** the wrong end. So we have convinced ourselves it was going to happen and end up cueing to the dog to take the wrong end.

Positive thinking is a big key in the success of this sport of agility. Looking at the very same statements in a different way can change the whole outcome of the event.



For example: Instead of "I hope my dog doesn't go into the wrong end of the tunnel". **Think "here is how I will cue the correct end of the tunnel"**.

Instead of "I hope my dog doesn't fly off the contact" **Try "My dog will give me a perfect 2 on 2 off"**

Strategy for walking a course is to be aware of the "traps" and off course options but do not focus on them. Understand where the trouble spots are on course and focus on handling the **correct** course not the wrong course.

Distance yourself from negative comments. We have all heard people focusing on what can go wrong such as "I will need to scream my dog's name here because my dog will go to the A-frame" or "I will be lucky if my dog makes it past number 4". Your focus must be on the correct course and how to handle it. Call off's will not be needed because giving proper cues will indicate the correct course. One tool I use if I have trouble focusing will be to use my head set and have music on to keep the conversations down to a minimum and allow me to stay on task.

When the walk through is over, step to the side and try to visualize the perfect run. Go through the course in your head visualizing perfect handling and a smooth run. If you can do it perfectly in your mind then when it comes time to running the course for real it is much easier because you have already practiced it correctly many times. I have

found visualization is a very powerful training tool.

One final suggestion I can give you is to invest in the Lanny Bassham **“With Winning in Mind”**. He is an Olympic Gold Medalist World Champion and has coached more gold medalists than any other person in the world. This CD set has changed my life and my outlook on how I view things. I highly recommend it. It is available in paperback; audio CD’s and DVD series.

Surround yourself with positive people and focus on the positive. It is the key to success!

Happy Trialing!
Jacque Hoyer

