

PET CONSENT TEST



Picture it. It is a beautiful sunny day and you have walked to the park to sit and read your book by the duck pond. A child with sticky ice cream hands rushes up, grabs your arm and asks if you see the ducklings. Your significant other sits down and puts his/her arm around your shoulders and starts playing with your hair. A friend from college sees you, screams and hugs you. Your child walks up behind you and taps you on the shoulder, asking for money for an ice cream. A stranger sits down next to you and begins to brush his/her hand up and down your arm.

You are equally likely to sit happily and allow each situation to continue, right?!? No?!?! Why not?

Unfortunately, the majority of dogs are expected to sit quietly and allow anyone and everyone to pet them, hug them, pat them and cuddle them. When a dog says "no", we label him a bad dog. Just like every sentient being, our dogs have the right to opt out, to say "no". It is our job as dog owners to acknowledge this right and to advocate for our dogs.

The Pet Consent Test is a simple way to allow our dogs the opportunity to opt in or out of petting. Its simplest form, **Pat-Pet-Pause** (Figure 1), was created by The Family Dog. It can be used with your own dog with whom you have a positive relationship:

PAT your leg and call to your dog. Does he come over and start trying to interact?

No? ... leave him alone. He does not want to be petted right now ... and that's okay.

Yes? ... go ahead and **PET** him under the chin, on his side or chest. Most dogs do not enjoy petting on the top of the head.

Pet for 3 seconds and ... **PAUSE**. Repeat this procedure.

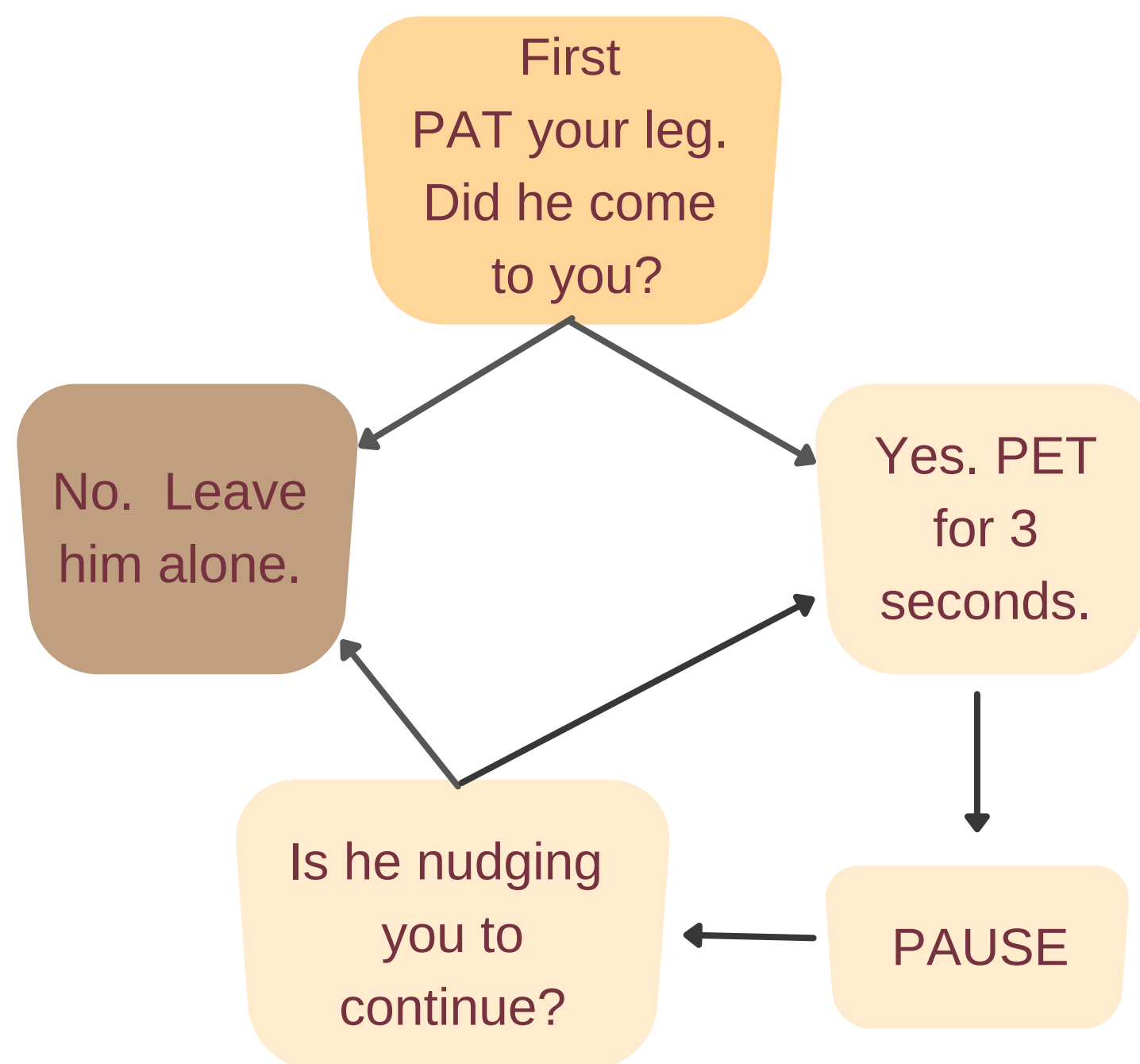


Figure 1. Pat-Pet-Pause
Recreated from The Family Dog

At every step, monitor the dog's body language for any signs of stress. If you see any of these signs, immediately stop and re-assess the situation.

Check out my Canine Body Language Resources:

[Canine Body Language Blog](#)

[Canine Body Language for Pet Parents Webinar](#)



Figure 2 outlines the pet consent procedure that should be followed based on on your own history and relationship with that dog. To see what a pet consent test might look like, check out this [great video created by Eileen Anderson](#).

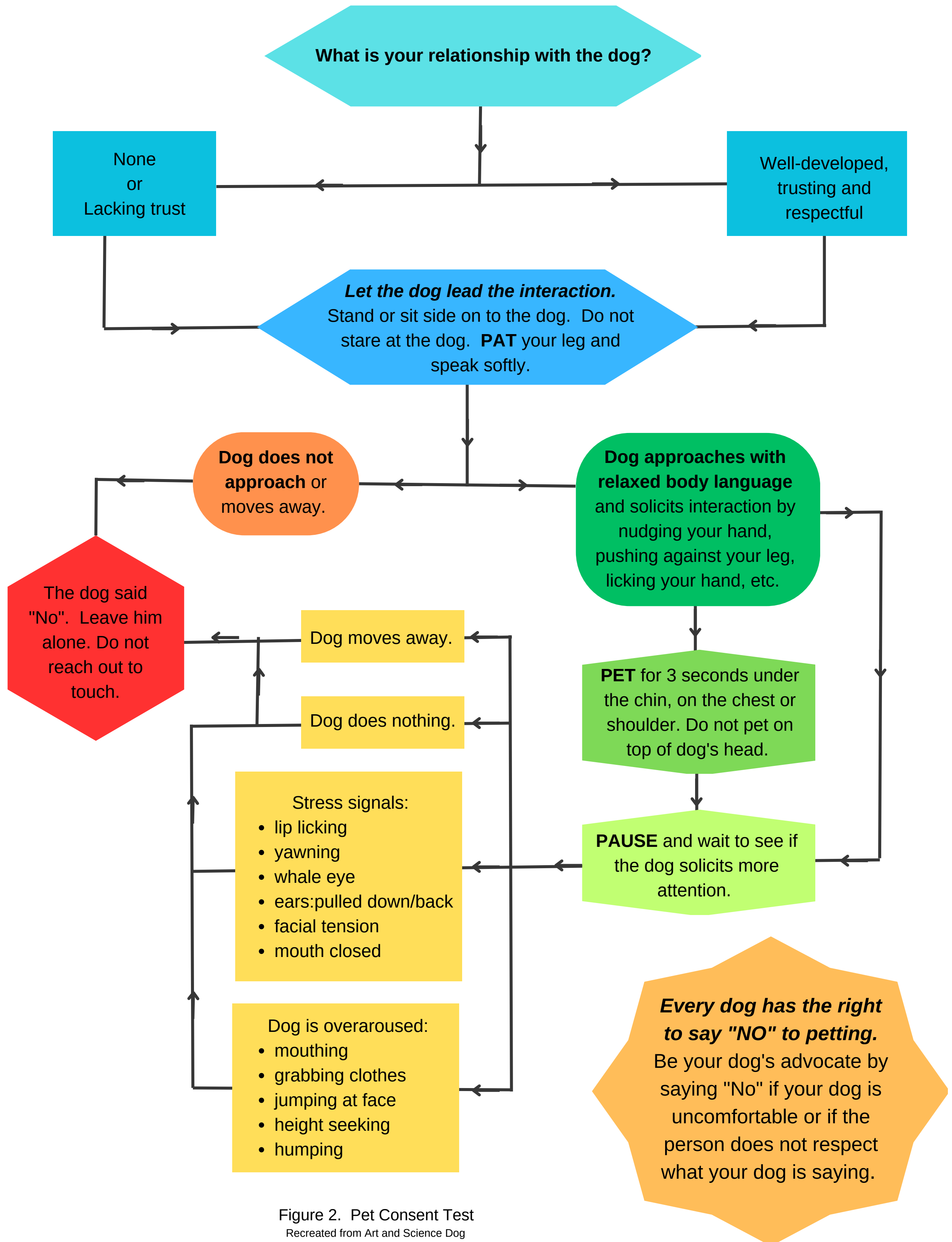


Figure 2. Pet Consent Test
 Recreated from Art and Science Dog