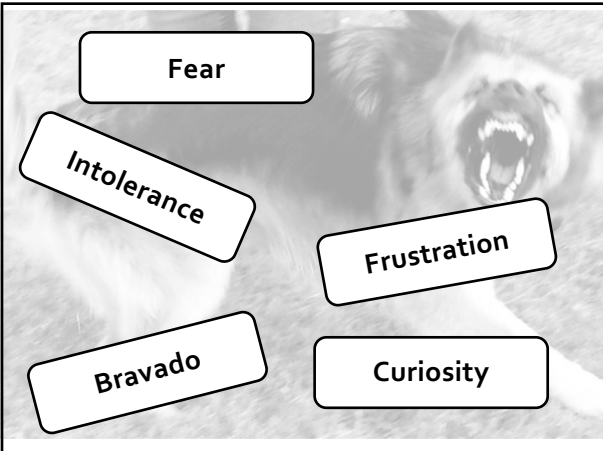


The Reactive Dog Working with Leash Reactivity

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Why does my dog

- Bark and lunge at other dogs when he's on leash?
- Rush up to meet a dog, only to tense up and attack?
- Sit underneath tables or chairs and lunge out at other dogs?
- Like some dogs, but become aggressive to others?



Why can't my dog

- Play in dog parks?
- Meet other dogs when we're walking down the street?
- Sit quietly with me at a coffee shop?
- Greet and play with dogs who come to visit?









It may or may not be the handler's fault....but it can be complicated...

- As soon as you add a leash, you add frustration and you impede body language and voila!

Our expectations of dogs are strange

- Walk politely on leash
- Pay attention to owner
- Be obedient

- Like all other dogs
- Play with other dogs (ONLY) when we want them to..

When you ask dogs to do what goes against who they are and what they want... They get frustrated!



Tight family structure is natural

- Adult dogs are family animals (pack animals)
 - They tend to bond to a certain group of dogs, people, cats and other animals
 - They will defend those in their group
 - They will also defend the territory where they live



Everyone else is a stranger – and suspect

Most puppies don't have those characteristics

- They will approach novel people, animals and objects
 - They think of everything as potentially interesting and entertaining - including your body parts and furniture



Some puppies are not very social

- Shy puppies won't approach the novel, they hang back
- Overly assertive puppies will approach too quickly
- Some of this is lack of socialization; some is genetically determined



As Puppies age, their behavior changes

- Most adolescent dogs retain their sociability level, but change in subtle ways
 - More assertive and bossy
 - More prickly and reactive
 - More submissive or shy
- Most real aggression begins in adolescence
 - And much of it is caused by experiences
 - Lack of socialization
 - Lax socialization
 - Trauma

Adolescents become adults

- Some types of dogs retain sociability to strangers (puppy behavior) into adulthood
 - Generally dogs used for sport or play
 - Retrievers
 - Spaniels
- Some dogs become more picky, less tolerant
 - Terriers
 - Guard Dogs
 - Herding Dogs



Reflexes come into play (fight/flight)

- Active defense reflex (ADR)
 - When faced with threat the dog moves toward it (fight)
- Passive defense reflex (PDR)
 - When faced with threat, the dog moves away
 - Avoidance
 - Escape (flight)
 - Freeze
 - Tend/befriend

Energy – Excitement - Aggression

- We are our Chemistry

- Epinephrine (adrenalin) is released into the body's system when danger or perceived danger threatens (fight or flight)

- Increases heart rate
- Sends blood to the appropriate muscles to facilitate rapid movement



Cortisol

- Cortisol is another chemical that is used to produce necessary energy during flight/fight - it takes a long time to dissipate, and that can cause problems in our dogs

- (long term problems in shelter dogs)
- Fence fighting exacerbates problem



It is difficult to under-estimate the power of frustration





We humans react to reactivity in several ways

- Hope problems will just go away or they will "grow out of it"
- Punish the dog when he "acts out"
 - Punishment suppresses but does not eliminate behavior unless it is done exactly right
 - Timing, size, consistency
- Apply currently acceptable techniques (desensitization and/or counter-conditioning)
 - Timing problems
 - Consistency issues

Assessment & Modification



Questions – The Dog

- Description of the behavior problem
- Is the dog dangerous?
- At what age was the dog at the onset of the behavior?
- How long has the behavior been going on?
- Does the behavior effect others besides the owner and dog?
 - Other dogs?
 - Other people?

Questions - The Owner

- What happens when the dog displays the behavior?
- What has the owner done to modify the behavior?
- What was the dog's response to the modification methods?
- How committed is the owner to modifying the behavior?
 - How much time is available
 - What is the environment in which the dog lives?

How can you tell if a dog is aggressive or "just" reactive

- The dog is probably **not aggressive** if he or she...
 - Can meet dogs off leash with little problem even though he explodes on leash
 - Has several dog friends
- The dog is "**dog selective**" if he or she
 - Has other dogs he lives with
 - Can be introduced slowly to other dogs

- The dog is **aggressive** if he or she

- Cannot successfully live with another dog, or has been able to do so with limited dogs
- Lives with another dog, but has occasional and serious issues
- Is predatory towards small dogs
- Has bitten other dogs



Perception aggression - Fear

- Dog thinks other dog(s) are threats, even when they are not
 - Becomes dog aggressive
- Causes
 - Lack of experience
 - Improper experience
 - Trauma



Common Body Language

- Crouching stance
- Tail tucked, ears back
- Trembles, tongue flicks, stares at fear object
- Often lunges and then stops or backs away







Conflict Behavior – Defensive/Offensive

- Dogs sometimes cannot figure out what they should do...so they compromise by becoming aggressive/reactive
- Body Language
 - Alternates between forward and backward stance
 - Ears and mouth fluctuate
 - Tail generally tucked, sometimes wagging
 - Blonde BC



Fear/Conflict

- Often misdiagnosed by the owner who believes the dog is angry – most try punishment
- Aversive techniques virtually always backfire: the dog becoming as fearful of owner as he/she is of other dogs



Fear Based Behavior Modification

- What does the dog have to learn?
 - That his environment is not a scary as he thought
 - That his owner/handler can take care of him
 - That certain behaviors are expected of him



The handler's job

- Ascertain what is going on, what the dog is capable of and what you are capable of doing
- Come up with a behavior modification plan that takes your lives into consideration
 - Time
 - Commitment
 - Abilities
- Remember to think creatively

Step I



- Relationship building
 - Clear, consistent rules in the household
 - (rules make for clarity, clarity removes conflict)
 - Eating, sleeping, doorways, etc. (the actual rules mean less than the fact that the rules exist)
 - Build trust, so the dog learns to believe you when you say "it's okay"
 - Always remember that panic overrides reasoning

Handling

- Dog should be accepting of all handling from the owner – this means that you may have to work on handling *before* you work on the behavior problem



- The leash is a tool, and the handler should know how to hold and use it correctly, smoothly and comfortably
- Human body language is as or more important than the dog's body language



Training Equipment

- The equipment you choose is very important.... However
- Just for a moment, throw out the scientific definitions....and see training *through your dog's eyes*
 - Equipment - least aversive to most aversive
 - ☐ Back Harness
 - ☐ Flat Collar
 - ☐ Front Harness
 - ☐ Prong/Pinch Collar
 - ☐ Choke Chain
 - ☐ Head Halter
- ❖ Always be aware of your dog's point of view!

Equipment Problems

- **Back Harness**—encourages pulling and sometimes frustration
- **Flat Collar**—puts pressure on the trachea sometimes actually causing pain as the dog tries to pull against it
- **Front Harness**—generally good, but if used incorrectly, can cause pain in the shoulder/chest area and the dog will pull anyway
- **Prong collar**—can cause pain causes the dog to identify the pain with the oncoming dog which exacerbates aggression
- **Choke chain**—almost always a poor choice—causes pain, frustration and can injure the dog
- **Head halter**—aversive to dog unless accustomed can cause neck issues if the dog pulls on it

Equipment

- Essentially... all equipment can be problematic if used wrong
- If the equipment you are using is causing the dog distress, it is not helping your cause
 - Either habituate the dog to the equipment
 - Or choose something that is less distressing



Bomas Muzzle



Freedom Harness

Management

- Care should be taken not to put the dog in a position where he or she feels that they must choose aggression
 - Leash aggression
 - Stranger aggression
 - In-home aggression
- Thresholds are very important, because after the threshold has been breached, thinking stops and reflexes begin

Step II - Obedience

- Is not the same as behavior...but is needed to change behavior
- Dog should understand the rules of the game – what do your commands/cues mean? Does your dog know? Do you know?
 - When you give a cue, do you wait for it to happen or do you lose your cool, and insisssssttttt

Training

- Training is relatively easy – making sure the dog remembers what you teach when you need her to is much more difficult
 - When a behavior is learned under optimum conditions
 - Controlled environment
 - Dog is ready to learn – calm, focused
 - Brains are not computers – emotions color learning
 - How a session ends will determine how well it is remembered
 - If you throw a party at the end of a training session, you may well be tossing the learning away

Teaching

- Potential issues with techniques
 - Luring and modeling
 - Beware of the GPS effect – excessive luring will impede rather than encourage learning
 - Shaping
 - Beware of the frustration factor
 - There are times when dogs get so wound up they cannot retain any behaviors (see previous slide)
- Make sure you know what you are teaching...and what they are learning – they may not be the same
 - Skippy

Training

- Obedience
 - Most important
 - Head snap
 - (Name Game)
 - Polite walking, particularly for leash aggressive dogs, whether they're fearful or frustrated
 - Stationary exercises
 - Stay, wait, down
 - Of lesser importance
 - Recall



Reinforcements



Food – Primary reinforcer
The dog needs food to live, so using food will tend to be successful over time

However
Dogs under stress often cannot eat, even the tastiest of treats
This is a good way to figure out if the dog is actually learning

Using Anticipation

- Anticipation is often not thought of as a reward, but it most definitely is
 - You look forward to R&R at the end of a day... a party... sitting in front of the tv... a lunch date... connecting with friends... this class... an agility match. The world is filled with happy anticipation
- Canine anticipation
 - You coming home... going for a walk... being petted... dinner... dinner... going to the beach... games
 - Often you'll get different behaviors depending on what's coming up
 - Dogs often whine in anticipation of something grand

Touch

Tactile reinforcement can be very powerful, but most of us do not use it correctly

Dogs do not pet each other – after puppyhood, this is something they generally get from humans – for free!



Touch

- Test how often you pet your dog as a reward and how often you do so because you (and they) like it
- Now start using it to reward good behavior
- You'll find out whether your dog sees it as reinforcement or not
 - Some dogs do NOT like it...while others would do almost anything for it





Be Wise --- Know your dog

Habit is Memory

- There is a physiological process that occurs when a habit or memory is formed
 - Muscle memory
 - Teach
 - Practice
 - Retrieve memory (remember that dogs are place learners!)
 - Markers are important – they can actually bring a memory to the surface quickly
 - Most people think dogs have learned something well before they have
 - Acquisition
 - Maintenance

Step III Behavior Mod Choices

- Classical Conditioning – the dog *experiences* something
 - Desensitization and Counter conditioning
 - Create an association between a "bad" thing and a "good" thing
 - Always working the dog below his threshold
 - Bully beh mod Boxer mix behavior mod in pavilion
- Going beyond threshold does much more damage than consistently working below
 - Owners generally want to wait until issues develop before they make any move - this will make things worse (owners are generally reactive rather than proactive)
 - Having strangers feed fearful dogs often backfires

Operant Conditioning

- The dog *does something* - is in control of his own behavior
 - Antecedent - Behavior – Consequence
 - Many choices!
 - BAT, LAT, CAT
 - Abandonment



LAT – look at that

☉ This is a technique named by Leslie McDevitt in her book "Control Unleashed."

- Essentially, it teaches the dog to look at the thing that bothers him, then look back at you.
 - It's a fine technique and works with some dogs. When the dog looks at another dog or person, you mark the behavior with a "yes," or the sound of a clicker, and reward.

BAT – Behavior Adjustment Training

- ☉ This term was coined by Grisha Stewart, who wrote a book about it.
- During this process, the dog tells you that she is heading towards her threshold by her stress signals, or by what are sometimes called calming signals.
 - When you see the signals, you allow her to retreat, thus reducing her stress.
 - Generally, this technique doesn't use treats, although it can. It does require superb observational skills and knowledge of body language. At the least, it helps people learn to watch their dogs

CAT – Constructional Aggression Treatment

- Developed by Dr. Jesus Rosales-Ruiz and Kellie Snider
- Essentially the opposite of BAT. Tester presents a second dog to a reactive (subject) dog at a distance
 - When the subject dog stops reacting, the tester dog leaves.
 - The process is repeated until the REACTIVE subject dog can get close to the non-reactive dog

C-A-M-P

- Cognitive (Creative) Anthropomorphism Behavior Modification (!!)
- Assess the mood of the dog and help him change it
 - Turn fear into fun
 - Understand what motivates the dog when he or she is relaxed and comfortable – practice at home and in safe locations until muscle memory is strong
 - Work outside the dog's threshold until you are sure he or she is ready for the next step
 - If you are working with a fear aggressive dog and he will not willingly look back at you, you are too close or you have been working too long
 - Handler must appear relaxed and in control or the dog will read your energy and your efforts will be in vain

C-A-M-P
Creative
Anthropomorphism
Modification Program
For Fear Based
Behaviors

Assess the dog's perception of danger and help him change it

Turn fear into fun
Understand what motivates the dog when relaxed and comfortable – practice at home and in safe locations until muscle memory is strong

Work outside the dog's threshold
until you are sure he or she is ready for the next step

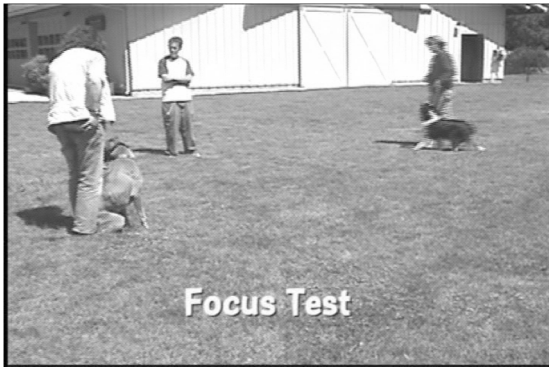
If your dog will not willingly look back at you, you are too close or you have been working too long

You must appear relaxed and in control, or the dog will read your energy and your efforts will be in vain



Abandonment Training

- For dogs who rely on their owner for back up
 - Slightly insecure dogs are the most common candidates
 - Might be fine off leash... reactive on leash
- Need two trainers – one to hold a 30 foot long line, one to hold the demo dog
- Need at least one stable, non reactive dog as a demo dog
- Reactive Dog (RD) is presented with demo dog at a distance
 - When the reactive dog goes off, the demo dog stops and the owner of RD tosses her leash at the dog, then escapes
 - When the RD calms down, the owner comes back and the greeting begins again



Focus Test

Turn and Face

- Denise McLeod developed this method
- When dog begins to react to another dog, the owner handler brings the dog into her knees so the dog cannot see
- The dog is held by the collar, but the handler presses down rather than up in order to facilitate breathing
- When the dog calms down, she is released from the hold
- Repeat—in my experience, many dogs get better over time with this method

From Denise's DVD



Exercises

•“Find it”

My favorite because it uses a dog's natural inclinations and instincts, and helps turn fear into fun

We all know that dogs can get frustrating because they want to sniff *everything*. They also tend to use the behavior when they're feeling stressed or somewhat fearful

Encourage the behavior by giving the dog something real to do, and gradually the stress lessens as the dog has an alternative behavior he is supposed to do.

Treat-Retreat

- Teaches the dog he doesn't have to face his fear – he can escape
 - Begin a bit below threshold, then toss a treat behind the dog.
 - The dog will turn to get the treat, then turn back to its origin (the human).
 - Each time the dog turns back, she will have a tendency to get a bit closer.
 - When she finally comes close to the person *of her own accord*, she received a treat from the person's hand.

Fear > Fun

- “Touch”
- “Find it”
- “Catch”
- Tricks
 - Spin, jump, go rock...



Behavior Modification

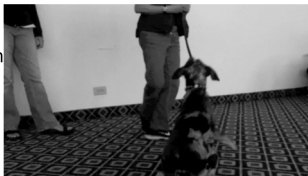
- Use relaxation techniques on a regular basis
 - Relaxation for both guardian and dog
 - Leash technique and handling
 - Zen down





Case Study

- Conflict/Fear Aggression
 - Catahoula
 - Problem
 - Behavior Mod
 - Walk



Leash Reactivity

- Friendliness + frustration
- Fear + frustration
- Practice makes perfect
- Body Language
 - Straining on leash
 - Vocalization
 - Sometimes displaying teeth
 - Ears usually back – tail often out of control





Behavior Mod of Choice

- Relationship work – dog must see owner as leader
- Appropriate equipment
 - Harness/GL
- Teaching alternate behaviors
 - Find it/look away
 - Polite walking
 - Golden
- Abandonment Training
 - Teach dog to escape rather than confront
- BAT
- TAF



Giving Bailey space



Offensive Dog Aggression

- Much less common than fear based aggression
- However, some breeds were bred to be dog aggressive and some aggression should not be a surprise
 - Akita's – **Temperament (AKC)** "Alert and responsive, dignified and courageous. Akitas may be intolerant of other dogs, particularly of the same sex."
 - Pit Bull Terriers – **Characteristics (UKC)**: "...most APBTs exhibit some level of dog aggression and because of its powerful physique, the APBT requires an owner who will carefully socialize and obedience train the dog."
 - Rottweiler – **Temperament (AKC)**: "An aloof or reserved dog should not be penalized, as this reflects the accepted character of the breed. An aggressive or belligerent attitude towards other dogs should not be faulted."

Offensive

- Some dogs seem to enjoy running at, rolling and sometimes attacking other dogs
- Some of this is inbred (many "bully" type dogs)
- Some is caused by experiences
- Some dogs challenge and others just go for it



Behavior Mod

- Besides the regular stuff lots of work on impulse control
 - Wait in motion
 - Sit/downs with long stays with distractions
 - DRI
 - Gracie (pit bull) with owner



Introductory problems

- Dog seems to meet other dog – then reacts inappropriately

Behavior Mod

- Pass-by's first
- Allow brief introductions before letting them greet extensively
 - Use the three second rule



Conflicted hound/pit x



Arousal//Over-Excitability

- Too much excitement and no place to put it
- Many of these dogs seem to have no "off switch"
- Once they begin to get excited, they can redirect their aggression towards innocent bystanders
 - Rottie fence charging



Behavior Mod of Choice

- Management
 - Remove from situations that cause excess arousal
- Relationship work
- Training
 - Relaxation techniques (Zen Down)

Predatory Behavior

- Predatory behavior
 - Hunting
- Body Language
 - Eye/stalk/chase/catch/kill
 - Silent attack
 - Little warning
 - Any dog can be predatory



Behavior Mod of Choice

- Management – do not allow dog into situations which will promote behavior or allow practice
- Teaching Alternate Behaviors
 - Recall
 - Fast Down running away
 - In extreme cases, aversives may be necessary



Social Facilitation

- The fact that “everyone is doing it” causes dogs to become aggressive
- Either by humans
- Or by other dogs
 - Labs w/golden



Behavior Mod of Choice

- Management – separate dogs
- Relationship work – dog should look upon guardian as source of all resources
- Training dogs separately

Trauma



- One episode especially during adolescence can cause lasting damage
 - Trauma is from the dog's point of view, not the owner's
- IE – incident in dog park where one dog is attacked by another

No injuries → Dog appears slightly wary of other dogs
 Over time, the wariness grows and becomes more offensive in nature →
 Dog becomes aggressive to all other dogs

Behavior Modification

- **Slow**, steady exposure to the rest of the world
 - Respect the dog's threshold
 - Like people, dogs have a limited amount of mental stamina to handle high stress situations – keep sessions short, give plenty of rest in between
- Encourage obedience (dependency) until he shows signs of increasing confidence

Rank disputes in the home (or dog park)

- Often facilitated by poor owner management/training

- Male male
- Female female
 - Terriers

Social Dominance

- Dog feels that he or she has the right to do what he wants, to go where he wants and to be handled when and where he wants.
- This tendency – or trait – can start in puppy hood and progress to adulthood
- Body language – various, but mostly intolerance to handling and/or intrusion

Behavior Mod of choice

- Deference to owner/guardian
- Generally, perks of both dogs to equal level
- **If totally necessary**, reinforcement of dog perceived as leader
 - This can backfire as humans are often wrong about status
 - And there is no guarantee that conflicts will lessen for one dog s given preferential treatment

Behavior Mod of Choice

- Establishing leadership
 - Leader acts – follower reacts
 - Establish rules and boundaries
- Big Dogs/Small Dogs
 - Much easier to help bigger dogs than small ones, who generally get away with
 - Often small dog owners will live with the behavior rather than change how they interact

Breed Predilection towards Aggression

- Guard dogs bred for aggression
 - Generally towards human intruders
- Fighting dogs bred for aggression
 - Will kill another dog
 - Combination of prey drive, arousal and intolerance
 - Unemotional, killing bite, grab and hold on

Behavior Mod

- Inhibit natural tendencies by training throughout puppyhood and adolescence
 - Calling out of play
 - Teaching wait before almost everything the dog wants
 - No dog parks
 - Increased dependency on owner

Behavior changes

- Difficult at both ends - owner and dog
 - Dog has no desire to change (especially if he has a long behavior history), and will often revert to previously learned behavior
 - Owner often cannot change for any length of time; he or she will revert to previously learned behavior



Human Leadership

- The Owner Should...
 - Control or **appear to control** strange territory – enter first, then invite dog in
 - Control or **appear to control** all situations
 - Set firm, fair rules
 - Elicit respect with just a tiny bit of fear
 - Maintain dependence



Preventing Aggression

- The Dog Should
 - Wish to rejoin the owner quickly
 - Rely on the owner for defense
 - Be exercised enough to be physically tired at least once a day
 - Have enough sleep to be able to think effectively
- Trust the owner

Relationship work

- Make your dog be contented and happy in a subordinate position
 - Hand feed
 - Handle daily
 - Reinforce good behavior
 - Ignore some of the time – be a little aloof

Owner Management

- Limit the amount of space a dog is allowed
- Tie down for specified periods of time daily
- Lots and lots and lots of directed exercise – not undirected arousal

More Management

- Discourage mouthing and other “controlling” behaviors
- Encourage play with appropriate canine adults
- Monitor play between dogs, encouraging proper play and discouraging excessively rough play



Do

- Understand your dog's temperament and what he or she is capable of handling

Don't

- Don't try to "toughen up" your dog – it either doesn't work or it backfires and the dog becomes aggressive – dogs are not "courageous" or "wimpy." They are just who they are. They don't want to change and they won't try to do so.

Territorial disputes

- Owner takes territory, whether it's a room, a car, or a yard
 - Thresholds are very important!
- Dogs earn appropriate space (go to your room!)

Q&A

