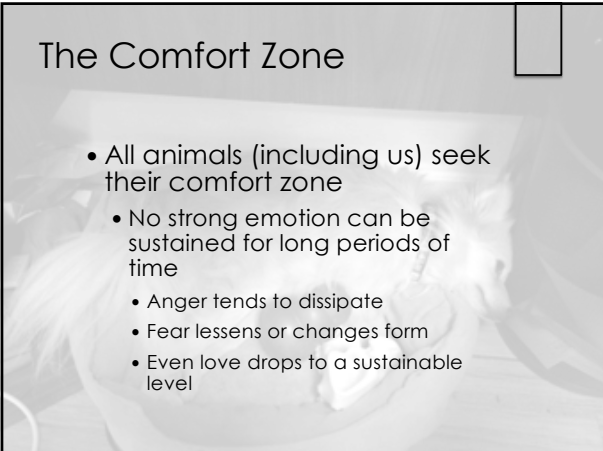




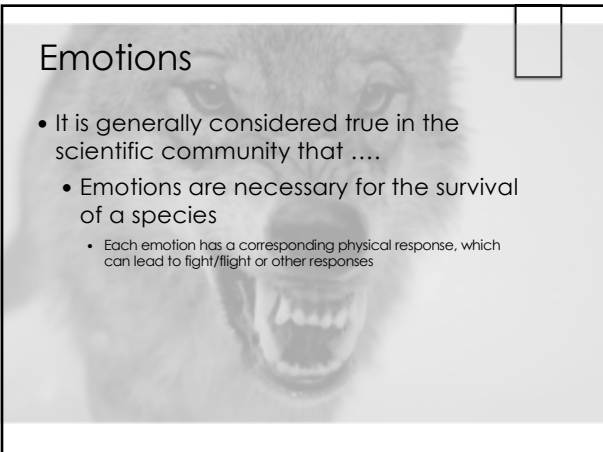
Fear & Anxiety in Dogs

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The Comfort Zone

- All animals (including us) seek their comfort zone
- No strong emotion can be sustained for long periods of time
 - Anger tends to dissipate
 - Fear lessens or changes form
 - Even love drops to a sustainable level



Emotions

- It is generally considered true in the scientific community that
- Emotions are necessary for the survival of a species
 - Each emotion has a corresponding physical response, which can lead to fight/flight or other responses

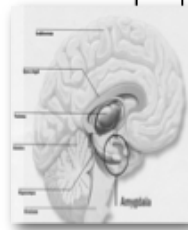
On the other hand....

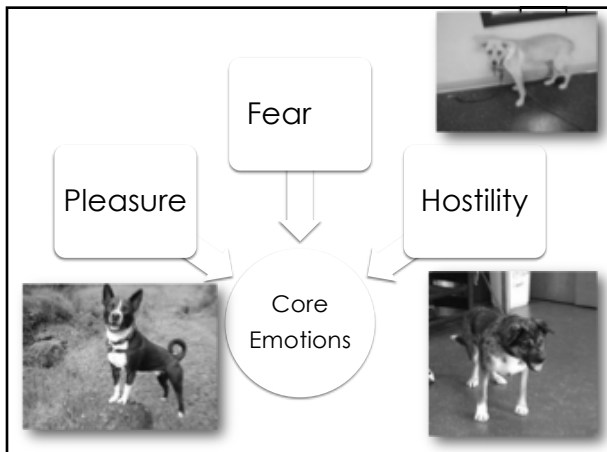
- Emotions in animals has always been controversial
 - Rene Descartes postulated in the 16th century that animals did not feel emotions – that any reaction to stimulation was purely mechanical
 - Including cries of pain or signs of fear
 - This view of animal emotions seemed to resonate, because it is popular to this day
 - Perhaps because it makes people feel okay about being cruel...

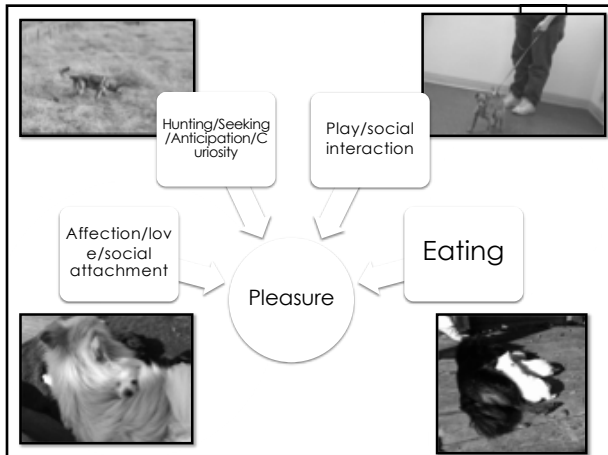


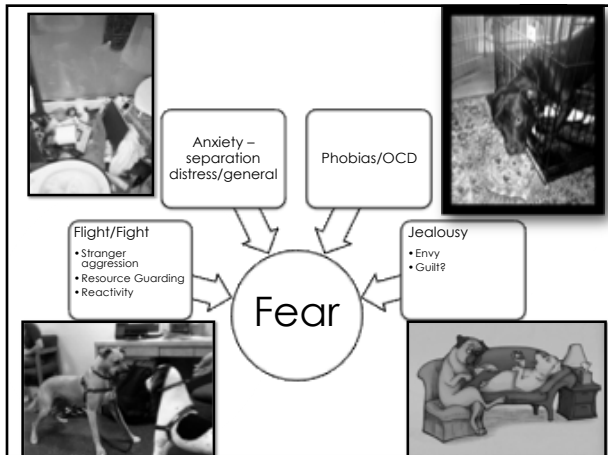
Emotions Review

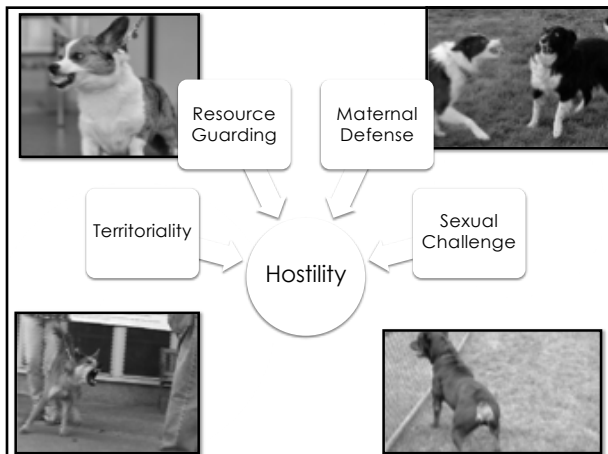
- Originate in the Amygdala
 - Deep in the reptilian brain
 - Paul Ekman studied human expressions of emotions, which he said we cannot control
 - Nor can we control their outward expression
 - Animals, of course, do not even try to











Emotional response

- Circumstance causes an emotional response in the animal
 - (ie person comes towards the dog)
- Dog then responds reflexively and physically
 - Flight/fight/freeze/faint/fool around



Emotional response

- The emotion we are dealing with is fear, but we must understand that it is not controlled by any cognitive function
- The dog is not controlling the emotion, the emotion is controlling the dog
- The pleasure area of the brain is separate from the fear area – dogs cannot feel pleasure and fear at the same time



Reflex and Cognition

- ▶ Reflex
 - ▶ Involuntary action or response
 - ▶ Produced as an automatic response or reaction: I pull, you pull back
 - ▶ Reflexive actions take place without thinking
 - ▶ Strong emotions elicit reflexive actions
 - ▶ Emotional response is reflexive
- ▶ Cognition – Voluntary action or response to stimuli
 - ▶ Cognitive actions can only take place one at a time
 - ▶ It is important to ascertain a dog's emotional state if you want to know whether he or she is in a state where learning is possible

Emotions

- ▶ When modifying dog behavior, *all* the emotions must be kept in mind
 - ▶ They will have them whether you want them to or not
 - ▶ We can often use emotions for the benefit of the dog and her behavior mod
 - ▶ The most important to us are
 - ▶ Affection/social attachment/Pleasure



- Dogs will tend to seek attachment to humans or other dogs
- Dogs will feel driven to seek sustenance, and that drive uses pleasure

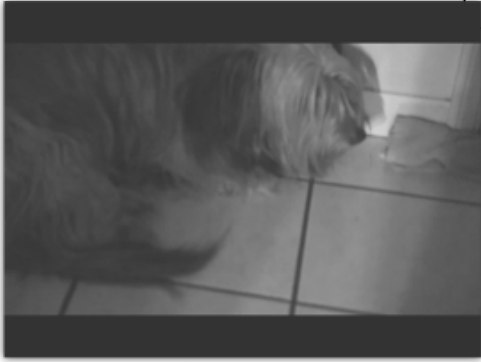
Fear/Anxiety

- ▶ Is probably the strongest emotion, as it is necessary for survival
 - ▶ Without fear, organisms would not know when to retreat or what to do when they cannot
 - ▶ Animals born without fear in the wild probably do not live very long
- ▶ Fear triggers fight/flight
- ▶ Fear is specific/anxiety is general (fk)



Pain Elicited Fearful Behavior

- ▶ When a dog is injured or has chronic pain, their behavior will be very similar to a fearful dog
 - ▶ They will tend to hide under objects
 - ▶ They may show aggression towards even well-loved family members



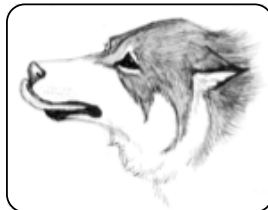
The difference between fear and anxiety

- ▶ Fear has a target or targets
 - ▶ Some dogs are afraid of other dogs
 - ▶ Some are afraid of men
 - ▶ Some are afraid of noises
- ▶ Anxiety is generalized
 - ▶ An anxious dog is worried about the environment he is in
 - ▶ He or she may also be worried about the future, if they cannot predict it
 - ▶ A dog with separation anxiety is worried about both – she cannot handle being alone and cannot believe that the owner will ever return



Physical state

- If dogs are like us, their interior state is in chaos
 - Stomach churning
 - Confusion
 - Overly excited at times, with no behavioral goals – except to remove oneself



When a dog is afraid or anxious

- ▶ His chemistry changes
 - ▶ Cortisol floods the system
 - ▶ Thought processes disappear
 - ▶ The dog doesn't act – he reacts, particularly when startled
 - ▶ Fight – flight – freeze
 - ▶ There's a reason these dogs are difficult to work with – they are in their primitive (hind) brain – they are not thinking



Fearful dogs are in a state of high stress

- ▶ Stress is exhausting and hard on the physical body
 - ▶ Many fearful dogs have digestive and skin problems
 - ▶ Lowered immunity issues – get sick more often than others
 - ▶ Chronic diarrhea
 - ▶ Skin allergies
 - ▶ Many cannot handle *any* change in routine or feeding

Stress - Dogs show stress in a variety of ways – in many combinations

Stress signals (calming signals) often are just responses to internal stress, rather than intentional communication



- ▶ Stiffness
- ▶ Stretching
- ▶ Yawning
- ▶ Dilated pupils "whale eye"
- ▶ Avoidance
- ▶ Hair loss
- ▶ Pilo-erection
- ▶ Sweating from Paws

Stress signals

- ▶ Pacing
- ▶ Sniffing at ground
- ▶ Tongue flicks
- ▶ Dropped tail
- ▶ Tail held under
- ▶ Penis crowning
- ▶ Genital checks
- ▶ Spontaneous elimination



Behavior progression of fear

- ▶ Avoidance
 - ▶ Anxiety
 - ▶ Escape
 - ▶ Aggression
 - ▶ Shut down



Fearful dogs try to *increase* space by whatever means they can

- ▶ Retreat to increase space
- ▶ Charge to move other back
 - ▶ Very common to see both (lunge/retreat)
- ▶ Lack of threat will cause animals to decrease space
 - ▶ Offensive body language decreases the space between two dogs
 - ▶ Taking space increases control
 - ▶ Defensive body language increases the space
 - ▶ Giving space decreases control

A dog's reaction to threat..

- Is determined in large part to his genetics
 - ADR (Active Defense Reflex)
 - PDR (Passive Defense Reflex)
- Fight/Flight/Freeze/Faint/Tend-Befriend



Fearful Curiosity

- ▶ Though it may seem like an oxymoron, many if not most fearful dogs are very curious!
- ▶ This usually looks like this
 - ▶ Aussie in house



All animals are curious...

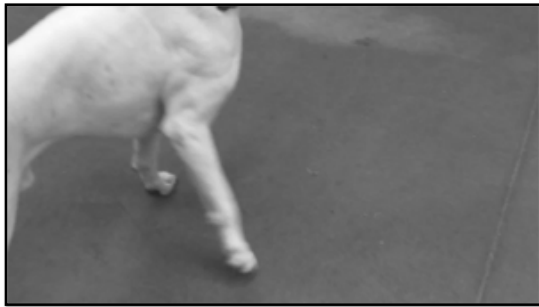
- ▶ They need to know that what they think of as a threat really is
 - ▶ So they will spend substantial time and attention checking out the scary thing
- ▶ If it is not, they need to return to their primary job – searching for food
 - ▶ (we forget how important food seeking is, as we always have plenty)



Halloween fear



Fear of dolls and kids



Once investigated

- ▶ Dog can decide whether to accept, ignore or avoid object or organism
- ▶ If the dog remains in her reflexive brain, she will startle again when she sees it...even if it is only minutes later





Space

- ▶ Although we *know* about space, it is difficult to remember it all the time; with the result that many anxious dogs are made more anxious or become aggressive

Fear Aggression

- ▶ Should be called defensive aggression, because that is what it is
- ▶ The dog believes that he or she must be proactive in order to be safe
- ▶ Most of the time, if whatever the dog is afraid of does not move (particularly forward), the issue is

Fear/Anxiety

▶ Fearful dogs often target their fear to...

- ▶ All Strangers
 - ▶ Men
 - ▶ Tall, loud, hairy, physical
- ▶ Children
 - ▶ Move rapidly; unpredictable

▶ Other dogs

- ▶ Big, black, certain breeds
- ▶ Places
 - ▶ Homes
 - ▶ Shelters

Fear/Anxiety

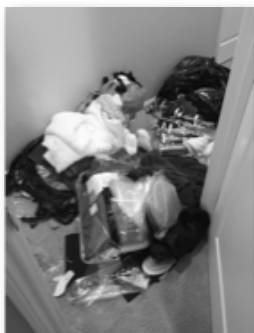
▶ General types of anxiety and their manifestations

- ▶ Separation anxiety
 - ▶ Inability to be left alone without going into high levels of distress
- ▶ Generalized anxiety
 - ▶ Hyper vigilance and nervous behavior much of or most of the time
- ▶ Obsessive/compulsive behaviors
 - ▶ Repetitive behaviors, often occurring with no known trigger

Fear of Noises

► Very common fear

- Thunder phobia
- Fear of strange sounds that tend to come out of nowhere
 - Smoke detectors
 - Alarms
 - Beeps



Anxiety

► What causes a dog to be or become anxious?

- Often we will never know...but...

► Genetics

- Temperament is heritable
 - Breeding one high strung, anxious dog to another will result in anxious puppies



- Breeding one high-strung, anxious dog to a stable dog will likely result in some anxious puppies
- Breeding two stable dogs will likely produce a few anxious puppies
 - Fear will always pop up

Breeding for Fear/Anxiety

► There are some breeds where the temperamental trait shows up way too often

- German Shepherds
 - ...when bad becomes normal

► Physical characteristics of anxious dogs often include

- light boned build
 - The heavier the bones, the less likely the dog will be anxious (like thoroughbred horses)
 - (careful – this isn't always true!)

Most difficult situations

- ▶ Areas where the dog is already comfortable, and something or someone novel is introduced
 - ▶ (SEC)
- ▶ Situations in which they already have a pre-conceived idea of what to expect
 - ▶ Vet offices, certain walks or environments

Observation

- ▶ What is the dog's response to the environment?
 - ▶ Sights
 - ▶ Sounds
 - ▶ Smells
- ▶ What happens when a human makes direct eye contact?
- ▶ What happens when s/he sees another dog?

Observation & Analysis

- ▶ What is the dog like when she is in a comfortable area?
- ▶ Does she have allergies or troubles with digestion?
- ▶ How long does it take her to get to an agitated, fearful state?
- ▶ How quickly can she return to normalcy?
- ▶ Can she respond to a behavior cue?
 - ▶ Confused? Slow response?
- ▶ Eye contact
 - ▶ Dilated pupils? Staring into space?
- ▶ Might she be dangerous?

Observation and Analysis

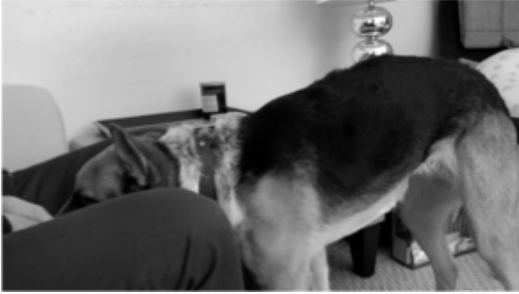
- ▶ What might be the origins of the fearful behavior?
 - ▶ Puppy behavior
 - ▶ History of trauma
 - ▶ Inappropriate living conditions
 - ▶ Is there any chance that pain is involved?
- ▶ Is the condition chronic, episodic or intermittent?
 - ▶ Has there been any success in modifying the behavior?

- ▶ What has the owner done in response to the behavior?
- ▶ If the owner has tried behavior mod, how long have they kept to one method?
- ▶ Is the family on the same page?

Flo

- ▶ Guatemalan street Dog
 - ▶ Found under a car in a storm
 - ▶ Brought to the US and adopted last May at about four months
 - ▶ Extremely fearful, but was making good progress
 - ▶ Couple had a baby...and Flo has been growling at people since
 - ▶ Biggest issue - growls at Nanny to the point that they cannot leave the two alone together

Flo – Guatemala Dog



Why is this dog behaving like this?

- ▶ Security is her territory, her family, her known friends
- ▶ Anything else is perceived as dangerous
 - ▶ It is MUCH safer for Flo to assume that she must protect her own
 - ▶ She is curious ..but only to a limit



Getting the analysis right

- ▶ Dog will tend to want to stay in a comfortable location
 - ▶ Crate
 - ▶ House
 - ▶ Room
 - ▶ Bed
- ▶ Dog may show defensive aggression when attempts are made to move her

ADR in the home

- ▶ Tend to be very territorial towards strangers
 - ▶ Strangers may include anyone outside of the group they originally bonded with
 - ▶ People
 - ▶ Other dogs
 - ▶ Cats
 - ▶ Dog may be comfortable with strangers until the stranger moves



SEC - Sudden environmental change 52

- Affects fearful and conflicted dogs the most
 - Can be outside or inside
 - Can be a person who moves from one room to the other
 - Many fearful dogs are quite vocal

Modifying the behavior of fearful or conflicted dogs

- **Remember that fear is not under the control of the conscious brain**
- The dog is in her hind (primitive/emotional) brain if
 - She cannot respond to the owner
 - She cannot eat (and usually would have)
 - She takes food by biting hard, grabbing or not noticing the hand feeding her
 - She shows multiple stress signals

Relaxation

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- Should be a precursor to as many activities as possible



Modification

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Step 1 – Reduce Incidents

- Taking a hiatus from training is far preferable to over-training
- Reduce stimuli that cause the fear to escalate
 - Try not to expose the dog to things that scare him

Modification

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► Daycare/Dog walkers?

- Dogs are not naturally active all day long
 - They are crepuscular (active at dawn/dusk)
 - If daycare is utilized, play periods should be shorter than rest periods – dogs should actively *like* other dogs in the room
 - Dog walkers – Morning/afternoon usually better than midday

Modification



- Enrich the environment and add low stress activities for the dog
 - Create safe space – crate, bed, room – and add sounds/smells that encourage relaxation
 - Adaptil
 - Music
 - Create activities that use the dog's primary senses –
 - Hunt for food, new 'stuff' in the home and yard to explore

Step 2 – work with owner's emotional state (fear is shared)

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- Breathing/aikido/yoga
- Prepare for incidents
 - Visualize the worst and the action to be taken
- Sometimes take the guardian completely out the picture
 - (dog walkers, friends)

Operant Conditioning

► Obedience

- Calm sit/STAY
- Zen Down
- Extended attention (with or without direct eye contact, depending on the dog)
- Polite walking or standing without strain on the leash

• Games

- Find it
- Touch
- Safety games
 - Jump (into arms, onto chairs, rocks, logs)
- Problem solving games
 - get out from under a blanket or box
 - Sniff treats from various areas in the house or yard

Desensitization/counter-conditioning

► Exposure at a level where the dog can actually think

- Signs of thinking –
 - Calm searching behavior



Desensitization/counter-conditioning

- Ability to pay attention for appropriate amount of time
- Relaxed body posture
- Ability to eat (but not from strangers)
- Ability to acknowledge or enjoy physical touch



What you shouldn't be seeing

- ▶ Panting, sweating, pacing, hair loss
- ▶ Hyper-vigilance or fixation on one thing
- ▶ Digestive issues
- ▶ Inability to eat
- ▶ Inattentiveness to affection

▶ Keep Going Signals

- ▶ All training is information, and information needs a conduit
- ▶ You can use a clicker or not, but physical and verbal praise at a low level often is appropriate

Habituation/social learning

- ▶ Habituation
 - ▶ Getting used to stuff!
 - ▶ Works well if the dog is exposed at a low, continuous level
 - ▶ During habituation, there is no information flow from you to the dog
 - ▶ This often works WAY better if there are other dogs in the picture
 - ▶ OTOH, if the other dog is hyper-vigilant, it can backfire

► Gradual increase in self control

► Understand that working too long will be counter-productive, as will working too little

► Operant conditioning for self control
– inside first, then outside

► Mat, rug or bed stays

► Polite leash manners

► Turn away (touch) for quick avoidance

Counter conditioning

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- Always working the dog below his threshold
 - 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
- Having strangers feed fearful dogs often backfires
 - Dog goes even further into conflict –
 - "I want the treat, but I'm afraid of the person"

Counter Conditioning

- Associating good thing with bad thing
 - Must be practiced on frequently to have an impact
 - The location and subject should be moved when the dog becomes acclimated
 - Need evidence of success before moving on
 - Even breathing, ability to respond to handler, ability to make fairly long eye contact



Combine with Operant

- ▶ Associate good times with object of fear
- ▶ Owners often think of these activities as diversions, that the dog needs to overcome the fear
 - ▶ Rather than thinking overcoming, better to think lessening the impact



Operant Conditioning

Obedience

- Calm sit/STAY
- Zen Down
- Extended attention (with or without direct eye contact, depending on the dog)
- Polite walking or standing without strain on the leash

Games

- Find it
- Touch
- Safety games – Jump into arms, onto rocks, chairs, etc.
- Problem solving games – get out from under a blanket or box, sniff treats from house or yard

BAT and CAT

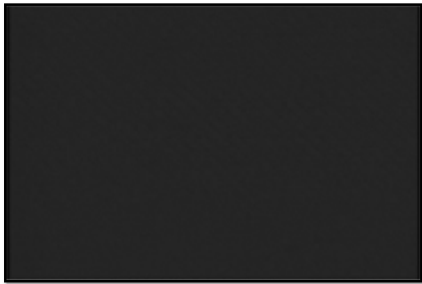
- ▶ All useful, as long as the environment is under the control of the trainer
 - ▶ Stimulation should be geared to what the dog can handle
 - ▶ Demo dogs must be calm and under control
 - ▶ You need enough demo dogs to begin the process of generalizing learning

Turn and Face

- ▶ Denise McLeod's method, which uses the following:
 - ▶ Removes stimulation
 - ▶ Controls dog
 - ▶ Controls the environment
 - ▶ Reinforces calm behavior
 - ▶ Allows for a repetition of the trigger

Abandonment training

- ▶ Allows escape
- ▶ Reinforces rejoining the owner



Does consoling fear work?

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- **Conventional dog training wisdom (still) indicates that consoling dogs will lead to poor behavior**
 - The idea is that it will increase fear because it is being reinforced, but fear is fear
 - If there's a snake in the room, someone hugging you might make you feel better, if only because the situation is shared – but it won't make it worseunless the other person is hysterical



- It is probably more correct to indicate that consolation probably won't lead to better behavior
 - It's unlikely to make things worse
- On the other hand, calm acceptance will help
- Reinforcing other behavior will help even more
 - Especially naturally enjoying behaviors or relaxation
- Care should be taken not to amp a dog up too much – that can set the stage for recurring problems

Good to remember

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- ▶ We are not magicians – a dog that is temperamentally fearful is likely to remain fearful
 - ▶ What we can do is help them cope and make them feel safe