

Behavior Adjustment Training®

BAT® helps animals gain confidence and social skills.¹ BAT is a natural method that creates an emotionally safe interaction with minimal intrusion. BAT is especially useful when the “triggers” for frustration, aggression, or fear are living beings, for example when dogs bark at or bite other dogs or people.

- *BAT gives animals maximum control of safety and other significant events in their lives.*
- *BAT arranges safe scenarios where animals can socialize naturally and interact with triggers in socially acceptable ways.*

What to Practice

- Recall cue²
- BAT leash skills (see handout) – practice wandering walks without a trigger
- BAT set-ups
- Survival Skills for real life, smaller spaces, or close up, including Mark & Move (see handout)



▪ **BAT in Brief:** Follow your dog on a loose leash. Any direction is okay, except for straight at the trigger.

Tip: If he walks toward the helper in a focused way, slowly stop him. If you see any signs of increasing stress, call your dog away.

Set-Ups are Dress rehearsals for Real Life: Your dog’s major attitude shifts will happen when you do *set-ups: rehearsals for your dog to practice healthy behavior*. Specifically, set-ups are practice sessions with “helpers”—dogs or people that would ordinarily trigger a bad response—who are *far enough away that your dog is not at all concerned*. The ideal set-ups are like those potty walks where you follow your dog around, looking for the perfect spot. **If you want your dog to be calm in real life, use set-ups to let him practice being calm!**

Set-ups **give your dog maximum control within a safe, natural framework**, like a lifeguard protecting swimmers at a beach. Good lifeguards keep things fun and safe by staying out of the way, but acting quickly when they need to set boundaries or rescue a swimmer. Such a lifeguard uses just the right level of intrusion to interrupt unsafe activities.

BAT allows dogs to explore their environment. Intervene if—and only if—it is necessary. Watch carefully for signs of stress to maintain scenarios in which your dog feels safe. If the stress level goes above curious interest, encourage your dog to move on in the least intrusive way that works.

Helpers: The right working distance from your helper may be across the street, the length of football field away, or even further at first. A good rule of thumb is to go about three times the distance at which your dog typically barks or double the distance at which your dog will not bark

¹ BAT isn’t just for dogs! It can also be used for other animals, including horses.

² To get a really strong recall cue, follow the tips on the Emergency Recall in the Official Ahimsa Dog Training Manual. A clicker will also work in this situation.

at the helper and will easily work for treats, whichever is greater. The helper should be allowed to act as naturally as possible, so that the dog can interact with the helper (at the right distance). If the helper is a dog, movement reduces stress. You may need to have the helper dog working for treats at some points, but not constantly, unless the helper or student dog needs that.

What To Do: *Your dog should walk around naturally, check things out, sniff, and occasionally look at the helper.* Follow your dog around on a loose leash, but be ready to slow to a stop or even call your dog away if he gets too intensely focused on the helper.

You can occasionally look at the helper and move a little toward the helper to encourage your dog to investigate that direction, but *your dog should initiate most of the movement toward the helper.* With BAT for dogs, we use a long line to help the dog feel free while still maintaining safety. See the Leash Skills handout for information and tips on safe and effective leash handling. The leash skills are fairly simple to learn and will make it more fun to walk your dog.



Think of your dog's stress level as the water level on the beach. Let's say the water is dangerous today, with an undertow and sharks out in the water. The lifeguard allows people to stay on the beach, but prevents them from going in. Your dog can wander around the "beach" (no big interest in the helper), even occasionally approach the "shoreline" (show interest in the helper), but you will not let him step into the "water" (stressed, too focused on the helper). *We want the dog to be curious about the helper, but not showing signs of fear, frustration, or aggression.*

Manage the activity and distance of the helper to keep your dog's stress level low. If you do that well, he will keep himself out of the "water." You can just stay out of his way. This empowered exposure lets him learn that the helper is not a threat (even possibly fun) and that he can explore and move away. If your dog is used to interacting and needs a verbal connection to normalize the situation and keep his stress level low, calmly talk or pet him for a bit when he checks in.

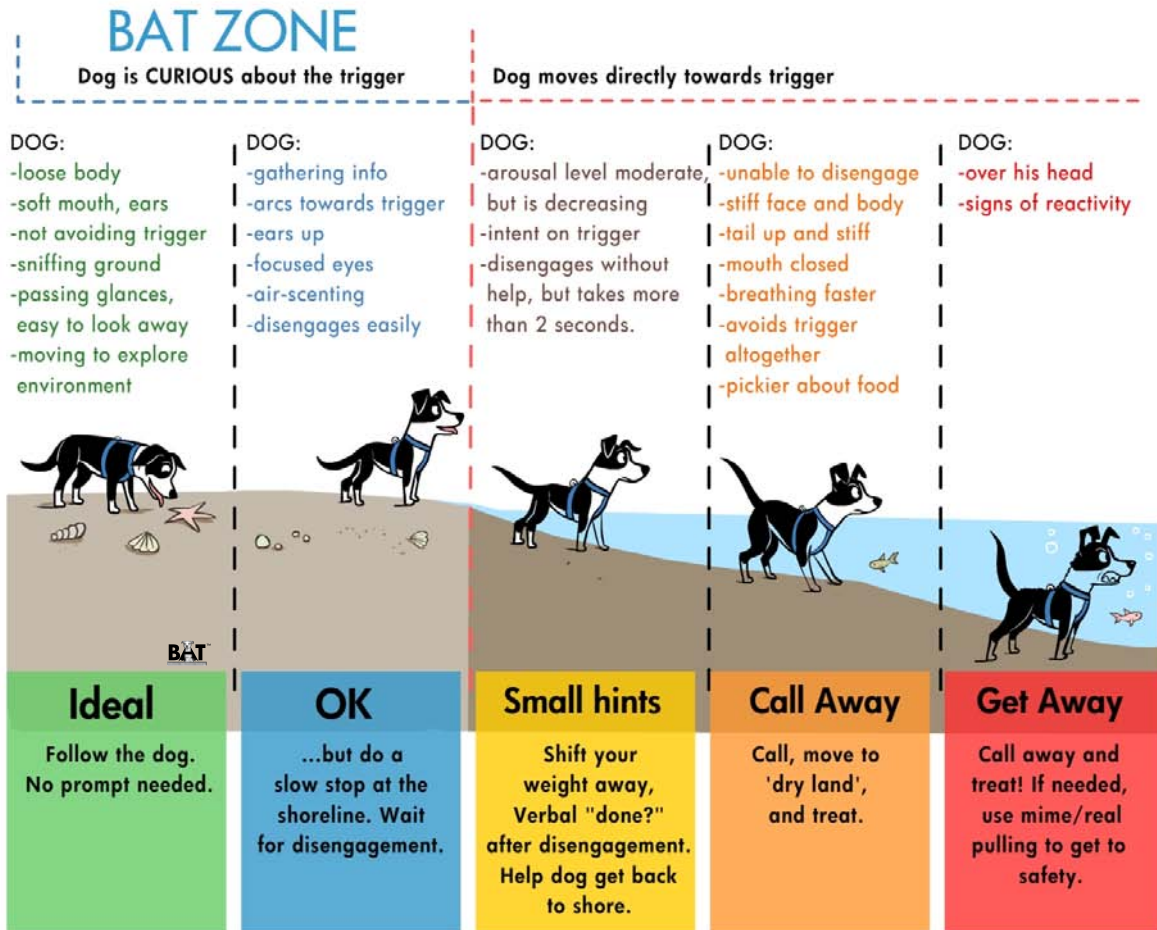
If you see your dog walk directly toward the helper at any point, think of that as reaching the shoreline. Slow your dog to a stop at the shoreline, giving him a chance to calm down, gather information, and decide what he wants to do next. After your dog comes to a full stop, relax the leash so that the leash makes a U-shape or "smile" between you and your dog.³ This allows him to decide what to do next without added tension from your leash.

When your dog is done looking at the helper, he will *disengage*, meaning that he turns away, stops focusing on the helper, etc. The most obvious behavior here is a head turn and a shift of his weight. Praise (optional) and follow him on a loose leash in whatever direction he goes, except for directly at the helper. If your dog immediately starts to go directly toward the helper again, he is too focused and needs his lifeguard, so call him back and try again from farther away.

That's it, that's BAT done correctly! Everything else is just what to do if life isn't perfect. **See the BAT Troubleshooting handout and/or work with a trainer who knows about BAT 2.0 before trying out your own BAT set-up.** Find a Certified BAT Instructor using the link above.

³ See the BAT Leash Skills handout. Thanks to Claire Goyer, CBATI for the visual of the "smiley leash."

Dog's stress level is analogous to rising water level



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Tip: Film your sessions! Review your videos with your trainer for signs that you should make changes, like stopping sooner. Did you accidentally keep the leash tight? Stop him too quickly? Hold your breath? Think of these examples as the tide coming in, meaning you have to move farther away for the dog to easily handle the situation.

The New Normal: To convince your dog's brain that these set-ups are real, do set-ups in different places with a variety of helpers over time. Include urban locations if your dog might experience that kind of environment. Also vary: whether you have food on you, whether you're talking, and even where your trainer is standing. Changing contexts helps prevent a relapse.

Help your dog stay calm during walks to help the BAT set-ups take effect. The set-ups may seem slow at first, but each set-up should get you farther or take less time to comfortably get close, even with a new helper. At some point, you'll realize that your dog no longer needs set-ups. Doing BAT at the right pace pays off in terms of safety and fun in the long run. By paying attention and taking it slow, you will soon have a reliable way to communicate with your dog.

Notes: 1. Moving straight at the trigger is not the only sign that the dog is at the shoreline, but it's the most common. Complete avoidance is another sign, for example. 2. Instead of a recall cue for calling away, you can use Mark & Move (see Survival Skills handout).

BAT 2.0 FLOWCHART

