

# Canine Conduct

*Teaching the Human End of the Leash*

**Behavior Modification Training Guide for Reactive & Aggressive Dogs**

For Dogs That Are Reactive to People and Other Dogs

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## **Disclaimer**

The Holly's Den "Behavior Modification Training Guide for Reactive Dogs and Aggressive Dogs" is designed for educational purposes only. This product does not cover learning theory, or how to teach basic obedience skills. The services of a competent professional trainer or certified behaviorist should be sought regarding its applicability with respect to your own dog.

Training and rehabilitation of reactive and aggressive dogs carries inherent risk. Holly's Den and owner/instructor Beverly Hebert shall not be liable for any injury or damage to any person, animal, or property, which results from the training or behavior of your pet or pets trained under your direction, whether caused or alleged to be caused either directly or indirectly by information contained in the this guide.

## **Acknowledgments**

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### **Total Training Program Overview**

#### **A comprehensive training program is comprised of the following elements:**

1. Prevention - Management techniques that make safety a priority and prevent your dog from practicing the behaviors you want to change.
2. Basic Obedience - Strong foundation skills to enable your dog to respond to your cues.
3. Follow the Leader - A regimen to train your dog to accept your direction.
4. Behavior modification - Utilizing the techniques of desensitizing and counter-conditioning, in combination with special training exercises, to change your dog's emotional reactions and behavioral responses to his arousal triggers.
5. Owner Training - In addition, providing the owner with the observation and handling skills needed to successfully manage and train the dog is one of the most important parts of the overall program.

The Holly's Den Behavior Modification Training Guide for Reactive & Aggressive Dogs focuses on how to implement and carry out the behavior modification part of the program. However, to place this in context, it is helpful to understand what makes up the other parts of the training program. This can be useful to the professional trainer during the planning process and to the pet owner in evaluating and choosing a trainer and training program.

#### **A good training program and written plan should include:**

1. A list of the behavior problems that require training help.
2. A short description of significant background or history relating to the problems.
3. A list of training and management solutions based upon an evaluation of the dog and upon a detailed behavior history. (See Page 4: The Total Training Program Roadmap).

#### **A good training program uses positive reinforcement and avoids anger and harsh punishment:**

- Punishment increases stress. Any increase in stress will make your dog more rather than less aggressive. (22)<sup>1</sup>
- Punishment can create a negative association in the dog's mind between the punishment and the object of the dog's fear, thus having a negative effect on the owner-dog relationship. (11)
- If used to suppress outward signs of reactivity (such as growling) without changing the underlying emotional state, punishment can produce a dog that strikes without warning.
- It is very important that your reactive dog should feel safe and secure in your presence.

#### **The Training Program should be based upon the following laws of learning:**

Behaviors that are positively reinforced will become stronger and more frequent; behaviors that are not rewarded will become less frequent and eventually extinguish. (15) Therefore, you need to control the consequences of the dog's behavior:

- Proactively reward good behavior with praise and treats.
- Ignore, prevent or neutrally interrupt or reprimand inappropriate behavior.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers in parentheses refer to References on last page.

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### Total Training Program Roadmap

The Holly's Den **Behavior Modification Training Guide for Reactive and Aggressive Dogs** focuses on how to do desensitizing and counter-conditioning work along with closely related operant (obedience) training. However, behavior modification work is only one part of a comprehensive training program for reactive/aggressive dogs, which should also include the following training and management solutions:

1. **Avoid interactions and uncontrolled situations that trigger the reactive behavior:** WHY—First to keep your dog and others safe, and second, because the more your dog gets to repeat aggressive displays, the more reflexive and entrenched they will become. Do not let your dog practice the behaviors you are trying to change!
  - a. **Avoid confrontations:** Walk your dog at times and in places where you are not likely to have uncontrolled encounters with his triggers (strangers or other dogs).
  - b. **Yard behavior and fence fighting:** "Invisible Fences" with Electronic Collars have many serious drawbacks and are contraindicated for reactive/aggressive dogs. (3) Don't allow your dog in the yard without supervision. Practice yard behavior on leash with Sit/Down Stays and reward for calmness; when he seems under good control, begin off leash practice.
  - c. **If your dog barks & lunges from the yard, house windows or car:** Manage by preventing access or blocking his view; transport in a covered crate.
  - d. **If your dog barks/lunges at visitors at the door:** Confine your dog as necessary using a crate or safe room. If you can do so safely, bring him out on leash after your visitors are settled.
2. **Tighten basic obedience training:**
  - a. Train fast reliable responses to verbal commands for Sit, Down, Come, Stay, and "Leave it."
  - b. Train dog not to pull on leash and use a head halter or no pull harness if indicated.
  - c. Teach "Go to Place" commands—"Go to Your Bed/Mat/Crate," etc.
  - d. Teach Hand Targeting (touching his nose to your palm): WHY—To focus his attention on you when he is distracted or fearful and later to give him a safe, polite way to greet others.
3. **Use appropriate management tools when indicated, including:** Crating, tethering, drag lines, head halters and muzzles, prescribed medications and a DAP diffuser.
4. **Teach the "Watch Me" attention exercise:** WHY--to teach your dog self-control and to pay attention to you in the presence of arousing distractions.
5. **Implement "Follow the Leader—No Free Lunch Regimen":** Require the dog to behave appropriately, and to Sit **CALMLY** and make eye contact before you provide him with any rewards.
6. **Meet dog's basic needs:** Address the dog's needs for exercise, mental stimulation, attention, & companionship with combination of walks, training/play sessions, games, and interactive toys.
7. **Improve your observation and handling skills.**
8. **Train dog to relax on cue.**
9. **Have your vet evaluate your dog,** including a thyroid panel check.
10. **Begin behavior modification with a desensitizing and counter-conditioning program** rather than simply suppressing fearful or aggressive behavior, the goal is to alter the underlying emotional state that causes the reactive behavior.

## Socialization—What You Need To Know

Socialization is a process of exposure and habituation to the environment around them that all animals undergo after birth. In addition to genetics, the most important factor in determining your dog's temperament is usually his/her socialization history.

The time window for socialization: For a certain period of time after birth, animals have a much lower level of fear avoidance of the unfamiliar than they will have later, as adults. Trainer and author Jean Donaldson explains that this "window of time" allows young animals to be more easily acclimated to normal sights, sounds and experiences in their environment so they will not go through life being spooked by harmless things like the wind blowing through trees. Once this time window closes, animals seek to distance themselves from novel things, and this too serves an adaptive function, since fear of the unfamiliar increases their chances of survival by preventing exploration of things which may do them harm.

Sensitive period for dogs: This sensitive time window for socialization of dogs occurs approximately between 4 weeks and 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  months of age. This is the when puppies need to be introduced and acclimated in a positive, carefully supervised way to whatever they will be expected to accept and tolerate as adult dogs. (12) This includes new experiences, situations, sights, sounds, people of all ages and other animals. Every new thing your dog *successfully* encounters as a pup is like money in the bank, building up her confidence and ability to "bounce back" to overcome anxiety and stress. Inadequate socialization produces fearful or aggressive adults who react inappropriately to environmental stimuli and to the proximity of people and other dogs. (7)

Routine socialization of puppies and dogs should include the following:

1. Meet several new people each week of many different sizes, ages, and races including:
  - a. People wearing hats, uniforms, and helmets.
  - b. Crowds and people clapping, children running, shouting, waving arms, babies crying.
  - c. Kids on bikes; people using canes, walkers and pushing carts; people carrying umbrellas, brief cases, backpacks, and tennis rackets.
2. Acclimation to gentle touching and handling and mild restraint by family members and your vet.
3. Exposure to common household and yard noises such as vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers and music.
4. Exposure to car rides and to passing traffic.
5. Experience walking on different surfaces—grass, gravel, sand, cement, chicken wire.
6. Regular meetings with dogs, cats and other animals your dog will routinely encounter.

Lifelong Process: Although there is a significant slowdown in acceptance of the unfamiliar, the process of socialization does not come to a complete stop once dogs pass 4 months of age. This means that remedial socialization is still possible, although making up for missed early opportunities requires more time and effort and results are less predictable. It is also important to understand that your socializing duties are not done once your dog is an adult; Donaldson states there is a "use it or lose it" aspect to socialization because over time, an animal's degree of sociability moves naturally in the direction of greater fear-avoidance of things rarely encountered, and in addition, the learned portion of a dog's social skills can become rusty if not practiced. (7)

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### Introduction to Behavior Modification

Behavior modification programs are generally used to treat problems related to shyness, fear and reactive/aggressive behavior. The dog is overly "reactive" to specific stimuli such as the sight or proximity of unfamiliar people or dogs, or other environmental triggers such as thunder storms. At some point the dog's negative responses to these triggers becomes entrenched and automatic. The basic objective of behavior modification is to change this automatic negative emotional response that a reactive dog feels in the presence of one of his triggers into a more relaxed, positive one.

#### Behavior modification works by using a combination of:

1. **Desensitization**: Exposing the dog to the same stimulus/trigger that usually bothers him, be it a stranger, another dog, a noise, etc. but at such a low level of intensity or distance that it will not elicit a negative response. Preventing your dog from becoming fearful, stressed or aroused is called "working at sub-threshold" levels - within a safety/comfort zone.
2. **Classical conditioning**: This is the kind of learning that happens when a dog learns to automatically associate one event or thing with another, in the same way that Pavlov's dogs learned that a bell predicted dinner coming, and so began to salivate as soon as they heard the bell. Counter-conditioning occurs when you replace an automatic negative response with a more positive one. When you train the dog to associate his arousal triggers (presented at a desensitized level) with something pleasant, usually a food treat, you are "countering" the former stress-arousal response by establishing a pleasant one in its place.
3. **Operant conditioning**: This term refers to the type of training that is most common in obedience classes when you provide consequences contingent upon your dog's behavior; your thinking dog learns that his own actions can "operate" to produce good or bad consequences and that through compliance to your direction he can earn rewards such as praise, treats, and play.

**The Goals**: When counter-conditioning, we want your dog to see another person or dog and instead of automatically feeling "Intruder-Danger" to automatically react instead with "Hurray—here comes the Cookie Guy/Gal/Kid or Dog!" The objective is not merely lack of a negative response, but rather for the sight of the trigger to produce a visible conditioned emotional response (CER) as evidenced by salivation, wagging tail, and other happy body language.

In addition, on the "operant" thinking level, we want to teach your dog how to behave appropriately around his triggers. We want your dog to learn that even if he finds himself feeling a bit uneasy at times, there are desirable alternatives to aggressive displays; it is possible to sit calmly and follow his owner's directions, and doing so will reap tangible rewards such as praise and treats.

**Three Keys to Behavior Modification**: If you keep your eye on the big picture and consistently use the following three keys, you will be creating the framework that your dog needs to get better:

**Key #1: Controlled Exposure**: Set your dog up for success in behaving more calmly by controlling the distance and intensity of his exposure to his triggers.

**Key #2: Pair triggers with good things**: Teach your dog to associate his triggers with good things.

**Key #3: Reinforce calm behavior**: Reward appropriate behaviors with treats, praise and play. (12)

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### How to Get Started With Behavior Modification

**Pre Planning:** Assuming that your dog already has a foundation in basic obedience which she or he will need to understand and follow your cues and directives, you should begin by doing the following:

1. **Make a list of your dog's specific triggers:** Include on your list of triggers everything that arouses your dog's fear or aggressive displays. Perhaps he is OK with strangers outside the home but aggressive with visitors in the house; he may be fearful of men with beards, all women, or young children. He may be fearful of sudden movements, or strangers passing within a few feet of him, or of people reaching out to touch him. Become an expert on exactly what sets your dog off!
2. **Make a list of favorite food, toy, or other rewards:** When doing behavior modification, you can't get away with boring treats—you have to use food your dog loves enough to work for—bits of cooked chicken or beef mixed with hot dogs and cheese or whatever you know your dog is crazy for. Always start with a hungry dog and use tiny tidbits so that he doesn't lose his appetite too quickly.
3. **Equipment:**
  - a. Head halters facilitate control of big, strong and/or highly reactive dogs; I recommend the Halti. Do not use prong or choke collars for these exercises.
  - b. When a muzzle is necessary, only use the groomer's nylon type for very short 10-15 min. sessions in a cool environment—otherwise use a basket muzzle available online from either *JAFCO.com* or *morrco.com* or *petedge.com*
  - c. Use a 4-6 ft. leather or nylon leash--absolutely no flexi leashes for these exercises.
4. **Determine Critical Distance:** Closely observe your dog to see at what distance he notices/alerts to a trigger—watch his eyes, facial expression, mouth, tail and body stance, and if the hair on his back is raised. You must begin working at a slightly greater distance where he is still calm in order to successfully change his behavior. *During any of the exercises, if your dog shows signs of arousal or distress including: hackles up, staring, dilated pupils, whining, growling, barking, trembling, etc. you should increase the distance from his trigger.*
5. **Family cooperation:** This is important because your dog needs consistent training and treatment to change his behavior. It is especially important that all family members agree to avoid placing the dog in situations that arouse your dog's reactive feelings.
6. **Recruit some helpers:** Line up any extended family, friends, neighbors or others who may in the same boat with their own dog to help you work with yours.
7. **Plan a training schedule:** Forming new behavior habits requires regular practice, so making and following a schedule can make the difference between failure and success. Plan where and when you can provide your dog with regular and frequent CONTROLLED exposure to his triggers (walks, pet store parking lots, etc.) and write it on your calendar.
8. **After the first completion of the training exercises/protocols:**
  - a. Repeat all tasks in different locations and with different people and dogs; this is very important in order for the new associations that your dog is learning to generalize.
  - b. Repeat all tasks but only reward every second or third one with a treat.

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### Open & Close the Bar

#### **The goal:**

Condition your dog associate the sight and presence of strangers and/or other dogs with getting treats.

**Where to do "Set Ups":** You can practice around the parking lots of pet stores, vet clinics, dog parks, and dog training facilities. You can arrange for friends to walk their dogs by certain spots (where they will pass in and out of your view) at pre-arranged times; long driveways and hallways are ideal for this. You can also practice on neighborhood walks (see "Walking Your Dog").

**Stay "below threshold":** Be sure to initially start at a great enough distance from other people or dogs to keep your dog from becoming aroused. During any of the exercises, if your dog shows signs of arousal or distress including hackles up, staring, dilated pupils, whining, growling, barking, or trembling, increase the distance between your dog and his (arousal) triggers.

**Equipment:** Your dog should be on a regular leash and buckle collar or head halter. Make sure your dog is very hungry and use extra yummy treats that your dog really loves.

**HOW:** You may do this exercise of opening and closing the "doggie treat bar" in or out of your car.

1. Carry soft food that your dog loves in something easy to access like a fanny pack.
2. Set yourself up where your dog's triggers will pass in and out of sight so that you can teach your dog to associate his triggers with the food treats (which you can't do if his triggers remain continually in sight).
3. Maintain whatever distance is necessary between your dog and his triggers for him to alert to their presence without becoming aroused or agitated. It is very important to work within your dog's safety zone and to PREVENT the occurrence of any aggressive behavior.
4. The second that he alerts to one of his triggers coming into sight, announce the that you are "opening the bar" by chirping out "Cookies" in a very happy cheerful tone of voice and feeding small bits of food. Continue to jolly talk and feed your dog as long as the trigger remains in sight. Close the bar by stopping the treats and attention and ignoring your dog as soon as the trigger disappears from sight. (7)
5. Observe your dog for what is called a "Conditioned Emotional Response" (CER) which may include your dog salivating in anticipation of his treat, wagging his tail, and showing other signs of happy, relaxed body language. Only when you have an established CER at one level or distance, should you proceed to the next step of slightly decreasing the distance or intensity of the trigger. Be sure to stop on a high note before your dog loses interest. Continue these sessions as often as possible until your dog's reaction to the sight of other strangers or dogs is: "Oh Boy - here comes a Cookie Dog/Cookie Guy!"
6. After many repetitions, your dog may begin to anticipate getting a treat and automatically turn to you as soon as he spots one of his triggers—if you get this response, immediately praise and treat.

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### **Front Yard Socialization Exercise**

This exercise was developed by trainer Pat Miller with the goal of conditioning your dog to remain calm and confident around people, other animals and the common sights and sounds he may encounter in everyday life in your neighborhood.

Choose a time when people or school age kids are likely to be out and about in your neighborhood. Sit in your front yard or farther back in your driveway with some magazines or a crossword puzzle and a tall drink. Have your dog on leash resting on his rug/mat. Be sure to maintain whatever distance is necessary between your dog and people walking by, pushing strollers, riding bikes, etc. for your dog to remain comfortable, calm and relaxed. When anyone or anything goes by, start dropping treats. Stop the treats when the person or thing passes out of sight. (16)

If your dog is reactive to other dogs, use special caution when someone is walking a dog by your property. Either maintain enough distance to keep your dog calm, or if that is not possible, remove him before the other dog comes close enough to provoke your dog's arousal.

Let your dog's reactions guide you as to how much stimulation he can take without triggering any negative reactions or feelings. When your dog sees a passer-by and turns to you in happy anticipation of his treat, (salivating, wagging his tail, etc.) that is your cue to move a few feet closer to the passing front yard traffic. Do this as often as possible until your dog seems relaxed and comfortable with the proximity of passing people and dogs.

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### **Doorbell Ringing and Behavior at the Door**

#### **Goals:**

- 1) Dog learns to defer to owner as gate keeper of the door.
- 2) Dog may bark but learns to stay calm enough to attend to owner's directions when the bell rings.

#### **Classically condition dog that Doorbell predicts food treats:**

1. Bring your dog to the door on leash. Knock or ring the bell, then feed your dog a treat.
2. Repeat until your dog shows happy anticipation of the treat when he hears the knock or doorbell - look for relaxed facial expression and body posture, a happy wagging tail, and salivation. This may take several sessions.
3. With the door closed, have a helper (preferably a family member the dog is comfortable with) knock or ring the bell and follow by feeding your dog; repeat with door slightly open.
4. With your dog in a crate or on leash in another part of the house where he can still hear the bell, have a helper knock/ring bell and follow by immediately feeding your dog. Repeat several times.

If your dog is responding calmly, and remaining interested in you and your food when the bell rings, proceed to next exercise.

#### **Train the dog to calmly Sit while owner answers the door: (22)**

1. Place your dog on a tether or a Sit (with leash attached) several feet from the door. Ring bell, then click & treat or praise & treat for calm response.
2. Repeat ringing bell, pretend to talk to imaginary person; return to dog and c&t or praise & treat for calm response. (Later for more advanced work you can ring the bell when the dog is in another part of the house so he doesn't know it is you who rang the bell, then when he comes running, put him through the training sequence-Sit-stay, c&t).
3. As a helper rings the bell, remain by your dog, then c&t or praise & treat your dog for Sitting calmly; If your dog is aggressive or tends to break the Sit-Stay, use a leash and head halter and remain next to your dog to check his movement as your helper rings or knocks; c&t or praise & treat for calmness.
4. Repeat but this time walk to the closed door, pause, return and c&t your calm dog.
5. Repeat but this time walk to door, open it slightly, greet your helper, then return and c&t your dog.
6. Gradually increase the time your dog has to Sit calmly before earning the treat.
7. Recruit friends and neighbors as helpers and repeat the sequence, first with door closed, then open.
8. Invent your own variations for proofing; use your pizza delivery arrival as a training opportunity!

**Troubleshooting:** While you are retraining your dog to be calm when the bell rings, if people show up unexpectedly and ring the bell, immediately try distracting your dog by calling out "Cookies" and chucking food, then confine him before dealing with your visitor. If your dog(s) are already aroused and barking before you get a chance to do this, interrupt the behavior asap using your drag line if necessary, then confine the dog. In this situation, avoid "catching" your dogs' stress and arousal. Otherwise the situation turns into one of even higher arousal—instead be a model of calm behavior for your dog.

**Training tips:** 1) Be sure that your dog gets enough exercise and mental stimulation so that someone passing by or the doorbell ringing isn't the most novel and exciting thing that happens to him all day. 2) Teaching your dog the "Wait at the Door" and "Go to Your Place" exercises can be used to reinforce training him not to rush the door when the bell rings. 3) Teach and proof "Stay" as a separate exercise.

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### **Welcoming Visitors to Your Home**

To help your shy/fearful/reactive dog to relax and accept visitors, begin your training routine with only one person. After your dog will relax with that person, you can invite another and then two more and so on until your dog can be comfortable with a group.

Make sure that your dog is somewhat hungry and invite your helper over to train at a time when you can do this without other distractions going on. Have two bags of treats ready (one for you and one for your helper) which should be something special that your dog really loves such as bits of cooked chicken, thinly sliced hot dogs, etc. A variety of treats is even better. If you think your dog will try to jump up and grab the treat bag or bowl, keep the treats in a handy pouch/fanny pack.

If your dog behaves aggressively at the door: When the door bell rings, confine your dog in another room until your visitor is settled. Then, if your dog is able to attend to your direction, bring him out on leash. (Otherwise, allow your dog time to calm down, then run him through a few Sits and Downs behind the closed door before bringing him out on leash). Choose a seat several feet away from your guest. Place your dog in a Down-stay by your side. Your guest should ignore the dog and both of you should maintain a low key manner. If your dog begins to bark or growl or show other signs of distress or tension, calmly but quickly take him back to his crate or safe room. If your dog behaves well and remains calm and quiet on his Down-stay, praise him and feed him some treats. When he seems relaxed, allow him to approach (while you loosely hold the leash) to within 3 feet of the visitor, who should avoid staring and NOT try to pet him. Ask your visitor to tell your dog to Sit, and if your dog complies, you and your visitor can praise him and toss him a treat. Then return him to his resting spot. (16)

Now drop the leash and allow your dog to freely wander around the room. Meanwhile you and helper should talk to one another and pay little attention to the dog as you drop treats on the floor. If the dog only takes your treats and not your helper's, slow down your treat delivery and ignore his attempts to solicit your attention.

If your dog begins to eat your helper's treats, she/he should continue to ignore the dog. If the dog seems to be getting more comfortable with your helper, then the helper may try offering a treat from her hand without making any attempt to touch or pet the dog.

If your dog seems relaxed, call your dog back to your side and have your visitor stand up. Allow your dog to approach your standing visitor for tossed treats. If this goes well, your standing visitor may offer treats from her hand. Before your visitor turns to walk away and leave, call your dog back to your side and pick up his leash. If your dog shows any signs of arousal, put him away before escorting your visitor to the door.

### Head Halters

**About Head Halters:** Head halters provide an effective, gentle way to control dogs that pull or lunge on leash without causing pain or repetitive injury to the dog's trachea as choke chains can do. They are the training collar of choice for reactive dogs because a) they make it possible for you to turn the dog's head away from his arousal triggers and b) they allow you to control your dog's aggressive barking by pulling up on the muzzle loop and closing his mouth. I personally prefer the fit of the Halti to the Gentle Leader and I have also heard good things about the Comfort Trainer—the latter can be ordered on the internet.

**How to use them:** Head halters are not designed to work by jerking or tugging; instead you should steer the dog's head with a steady pull, followed by an immediate release of tension when he responds or is in correct position. Head halters should only be used with regular leashes--they should NOT be used with flexi leashes.

**Dealing with balky dogs:** The only real disadvantage of head halters is that initially most dogs don't like to wear them. The way to change the dog's attitude is to teach him that the head halter predicts treats and walks. Once a dog becomes acclimated to it, the halter often has a calming effect. The dog seems to learn that there is no use lunging and barking because that behavior just doesn't work while wearing a head halter.

To acclimate dogs to head halters, trainer Jean Donaldson suggests the following steps:

1. Hide the halter behind your back or under something—then bring it out so the dog can see it briefly and feed him a series of tiny treats while the halter is in sight; remove the halter from sight and stop the treats. Repeat sequence several times with very long pauses in between each sequence until he starts to salivate when he sees the halter.
2. Cue the dog to touch/target the halter with his nose and give him a click & treat or praise & treat when he does. (If he doesn't yet know how to target, rub something he will enjoy smelling on the halter, and when he touches his nose to it, click & treat). Repeat several times. Now try to get 2-3 nose touches before clicking & treating.
3. Hold the halter up and use a food lure to get the dog to put his muzzle into the nose loop. Slowly feed a series of treats while his nose is in the loop. Repeat several times. Now, slightly delay the time between food treats to increase the time that his nose is in the loop.
4. Be sure that the fit is very loose and snap the neck strap on the dog. Repeat step 3 above, feeding the dog treats while his nose is in the loop. (If there are two people available to help, one can fasten the neck strap while the other feeds the treats through the nose loop). Repeat, but tighten the neck strap each time until the fit is correct per manufacturer's instructions.
5. Jolly talk the dog a bit as you walk him around and feed him frequent treats. Ignore his fussing and use the treats to distract him. Gradually lengthen the time that he wears his head halter while walking.

### Walking Your Dog

#### Stage 1: Open and Close the Bar

1. Carry soft food that your dog loves in something easy to access like a fanny pack.
2. Maintain whatever distance is necessary between your dog and his arousal triggers for him to alert to their presence while remaining under his arousal threshold. It is very important to work within your dog's comfort zone and PREVENT the occurrence of any aggressive behavior—remember, the more a behavior is repeated, the more entrenched it becomes. We don't want your dog to practice the behaviors we are trying to change!
3. Whenever your dog sees or alerts to one of his triggers, say your dog's name or say "Cookies" in a very happy cheerful tone of voice and when your dog turns toward you feed him a yummy treat.
  - a. You may continue walking as you feed your dog bits of treats, or you may stop, tell your dog to Sit and feed him until the person and/or other dog passes out of sight; then stop the treats and sweet talk until the next encounter. Remember to stay relaxed yourself and to keep your dog's leash short but loose. You may also want to use a head halter which makes it possible to control lunging and barking.
  - b. Rather than waiting for the trigger (stranger or dog) to pass out of sight, you may turn and walk away in the opposite direction. This is what you should do if it appears that the trigger will continue to approach beyond your dog's comfort zone. After you have fed the treats, placing more distance between your dog and his trigger is an additional reward for his calm behavior. Gradually you should be able to decrease the distance that your dog needs between him and his trigger to remain calm.
4. Repeat sequence above whenever your dog sees one of his triggers. Eventually your dog will spot one of his triggers, anticipate getting a treat, and turn to you before you say his name or "Cookies." When he reaches this point of spotting a trigger and responding by automatically looking at you and looking for his treat, you should continue to feed the treat but fade out the use of the verbal cues (saying his name or saying Cookies).

#### Stage 2: Practice "Watch me/Look"

When your dog can remain calm and automatically look to you for treats when he spots his trigger at a distance, you may also begin to practice the "Watch me/Look" exercise in the presence of his triggers. By training your dog to maintain eye contact, focus and involvement with you in the presence of distractions, including even his triggers, you begin to teach your thinking dog that he can choose to behave calmly and that you will reward his wise choices.

### Avoiding and Handling Trouble When Out and About

**Prevention & Preparation - Adopt the boy scout motto as your own and "Be Prepared."**

1. **Walk one dog per dog handler:** In an emergency situation, it is much easier for one person to control one dog than two dogs.
2. **Find a safe place to walk and train outdoors:** If you live in a neighborhood where dogs run off leash, locate another place to walk your reactive dog--one possibility is to load your dog in the car and drive to a nearby shopping mall where you are not likely to encounter off-leash dogs.
3. **Bring treats:** Get a fanny pack or attachable bait bag and always bring along a bunch of treats.
4. **Equipment:**
  - a. Use a regular nylon or leather leash and do not walk your reactive dog on a flexi lead.
  - b. Having your dog wear a head halter will facilitate control and safety.
  - c. If your dog is very strong and aggressive, use a basket muzzle (dogs are not able to pant and cool off effectively while wearing groomer's muzzles).
  - d. In the event of a fight, having an old jacket handy provides something to throw over the dog's head.

**About Turn:** This is the key to making a fast get-away when you need to head away from trouble! The About Turn is a 180 degree turn to your right which will set you going in the opposite direction from where you started. This maneuver works equally well on an outdoor walk or in the aisle of a pet store.

About Turns and U turns should be used to increase the distance between your dog and his triggers when your dog is too aroused to remain calm and attend to your direction, or to avoid a volatile situation.

Practicing the footwork ahead of time will make it possible for you and your dog to do the About Turn smoothly when you need to do it under pressure in an emergency situation. (17)

**Follow Up:** As soon as you have placed enough distance between your dog and his trigger for him to calm down and attend to you again, begin to click & treat or praise & treat your dog for eye contact. When it is safe to do so, ask for a Sit and then for a Watch/Look and praise & reward your dog for good response.

**Sit-Stay to the Rescue:** Here's what to do if an off leash dog approaches before you can do an About Turn and leave the area:

**Preparation:** Practice training your dog to Sit-Stay when he/she is slightly behind you and to one side, so that he learns to do this even when not facing you. Proof your dog to Stay in a variety of situations, including while a helper and his dog approach you. Then when faced with the real-life loose dog situation:

1. Stay calm, place your dog on a Sit-Stay and step between your dog and the other dog.
2. Use both a verbal and a hand signal to tell the approaching dog to Sit, and then whether he does or not, throw a bunch of treats toward him or over his shoulder and tell him to "Get It" in a happy tone.
3. When the other dog goes for the treats, do an About Turn and walk away with your dog. (17)

### Handling Skills and Strategies

The more excited your dog is, the more quiet and calm you need to be. Don't "catch" your dog's stressed or hyped up mood - instead help him to catch your calm one!

#### Check List

1. Remember to breathe - take deep breaths to help yourself relax. (24)
2. Keep your body loose and relaxed.
3. Keep your voice soft and low.
4. Greet people cheerfully and maintain a cheerful demeanor in the presence of your dog's triggers.
5. Keep the leash short but loose with the tag pointing down or toward the floor.
6. Use the head halter correctly - assure comfortable fit, direct dog's head with gentle steady pull, never jerk; lift straight up to close the dog's mouth; release pressure immediately when the dog complies with your cues.
7. Observe & be aware of dog's facial expression and body language. (Google "Reading Canine Body Postures" and you will get a link to an ASPCA site with pictures and text).
8. Learn to scan the environment so that you can spot your dog's triggers before he does and take appropriate action.
9. Master how to deal with your dog's distracted behavior in the presence of triggers.
  - a. March or back away and increase the distance between your dog and his triggers.
  - b. Use a body block to block your dog's view and eye contact with triggers.
  - c. Wait for your dog to return attention to you and click & treat/praise & treat immediately when he does.
  - d. Move into your dog and give him a gentle bump to get his attention.
  - e. Cue a Watch if your dog is capable of compliance.
  - f. Engage his brain - cue a Sit, Down, Doggy Push-Ups, or Hand Targeting.
10. Give him an outlet for his energy/stress - do some doggy aerobics (Sit, Down, etc.) or play Tug, but require him to follow the rules including Out/Give and Sit in response to your cues.
11. If your dog is too distracted or stressed to attend to you, make a noise or a movement and/or touch him with repeated gentle taps, tugs or pokes. As soon as he glances at you, repeat Sit - if he does, praise and reward. (5)
12. Train your dog to do About Turns on cue and to walk away from confrontations. (17)
13. Pass oncoming triggers by swinging around in front of your dog and walking backwards (as you face him) to block his view and eye contact.
14. If your (leashed) dog starts to move away from you, quickly move away from him in the opposite direction.
15. Make appropriate use of canine calming signals, (avoid direct stares, make circular angled approaches, etc.).
16. Train your dog to relax on cue/command and to assume a "Play Possum" posture.
17. Reward voluntary attention (both eye contact and returning to your side when off leash) with praise, treats and play.

### Accept Passing Approaches—Using Cookie Power

**The goals:** This is a progression of the Open-Close the Bar exercise.

Train the dog to accept people and/or other dogs approaching and passing.

Train the dog to automatically look at owner when he spots an unfamiliar person or dog.

Train the dog to remain calm when he hears the unfamiliar person speak.

**Equipment:** A head halter is recommended, and when the dogs are working within 4 ft. of each other a muzzle can lend an added measure of safety.

**Positioning:** The preferred set up is a T shape path such as long driveways intersected in front by a sidewalk or a long T shaped pathway or hallway. Begin with your dog within his/her comfort zone with the helper who will serve as the arousing trigger positioned beyond your dog's critical distance point.

**Training sequence:** 1. Dog spots trigger; 2. Say dog's name or say "cookies;" 3. When dog turns toward you, feed a treat. 4. Decrease distance between your calm dog and his trigger.

**Alternate Roles:** Practice this exercise in both of the following ways:

- a. You and your dog remain stationary at the bottom of the T (for example, the back of a driveway) as your dog's trigger (human helper with or without another dog) walks back and forth on the sidewalk across your dog's line of vision. As soon as your dog alerts and looks toward your helper, say your dog's name or say "cookies." The second that your dog turns toward you, feed him. Following each pass, (as long as your dog remains calm and relaxed) you should move 1-4 ft. forward and closer for the next pass.
- b. Your helper and his/her dog remain stationary at the back of the driveway as you and your dog walk back and fourth. As your dog starts to look at your helper, say dog's name and when dog turns toward you, give him a treat. Following each of your passes, your helper may move forward and closer by 1-4 ft as long as your dog remains calm; however, your helper may also occasionally move back again—having his trigger back off is an extra reward to your dog for remaining calm.

**The Auto Look:** Repeat training sequence until your calm dog glances at your helper (the trigger), and anticipating the treat, immediately looks back at you BEFORE you call out his name or call out "cookies"—when this happens give him a jackpot—feed him a series of several treats. Your dog is now automatically looking back at you when he spots his trigger! Encourage this automatic response by fading out the verbal cues—now when your dog sees the trigger, wait for him to look at you, then immediately reinforce/reward him with praise and treats.

**Add Voice Greetings:** So far your human helper has been silent. Now resume your passes and add a greeting; if your dog reacts to the sound of your helper's voice saying hello back to you, do the following: As you are passing in front of your helper, say "Hello Helper" and immediately offer your dog his treat. Your helper should softly answer while your dog is turned toward you and eating the treat. Repeat until your dog shows no reaction to your helper speaking.

### "Watch me/Look" Attention Training

**"Watch me" is an attention training exercise** that teaches your dog to look at you and hold eye contact until you release him. (You may also use another term such as "Look" or "Ready").

**Why:** Being able to get and hold your dog's attention enables you to control your dog, while training your dog to use self-control. Being able to maintain eye contact with you provides a way for the dog to stay involved with you rather than focusing on whatever would otherwise trigger his/her arousal, be it a stranger or another dog.

**How:** Show your dog that you have a yummy treat. Briefly touch the treat to his nose, then move it up to your own nose and as your dog's eyes focus on your face, say "Watch me" or "Look," then click and treat. If not clicker training, say, Watch me/Look, then release the dog by saying "OK" and feed the treat. To increase the length of time he will maintain eye contact, slightly delay the click or delay saying OK and gradually build up the seconds he will hold your glance.

**If your dog looks away before you click or say OK--**Don't repeat Watch/Look, but put the food treat under his nose again and use it to lure his focus back to your face. On your next try reduce the time you require him to Watch before you click or say OK and deliver the food. Do not move the treat away from your face before you Click or say OK to release your dog.

**Fade the food lure--**When your dog will readily maintain eye contact for several seconds, make the same gesture but with an empty hand. Point to your face and say "Watch me/Look." If your dog complies, click or say OK & treat from your other hand. Practice until your dog is fluent.

**Use only a verbal command--**Now test to see if your dog has made the word association by saying "Watch Me/Look" without giving a hand signal. If your dog responds by looking at you, give him a click or say OK, and immediately reward him with a Jackpot of treats!

**Gradually add distractions--** Practice the Watch/Look while standing in different positions and in a wide variety of locations and situations so that your dog will later be able to perform it under pressure.

### Putting "Watch Me" Training To Work With Reactive Dogs

#### The goals:

1. Your dog will respond to your "Watch me/Look" cue in the presence of his triggers.
2. Your dog will automatically look at you when he spots one of his triggers.

**How:** Cue your dog to Watch/Look every time he sees one of his triggers. Time it so that you give the verbal cue as soon as he spots his trigger. Immediately release and reward your dog.

Use a series of short Watches rather than one long watch: It's OK for your dog to glance back at his trigger after each release, as long as you do not allow him to self-release.

**The Auto Watch--**With enough repetition, eventually your dog will spot one of his triggers, anticipate your Watch/Look cue before you even say anything and look at you for his treat. That means that catching sight of his trigger has now become a cue to return attention to you! Mark this with a jackpot by feeding your dog about 7-10 pieces of yummy treats, one at a time. Now you can gradually work to reduce the distance between your dog and his triggers as he performs the Watch exercise, always making sure to keep him relaxed! (18)

# Canine Conduct

## Teaching the Human End of the Leash

### Accept Approaches From Strangers or Other Dogs Using Watch Me - Level 1

#### The goals are:

Train the dog to Sit calmly and accept people or other dogs approaching and passing.

Train the dog to accept other dogs approaching, pausing, & sniffing before passing on.

**Equipment:** A head halter is recommended, and when dogs progress to working within 4 ft. of each other, a muzzle will lend an added measure of safety.

**How:** Begin with your dog within his/her comfort zone and the trigger (stranger with or without dog) beyond the critical distance point. Practice repeated repetitions of the "Watch Me" exercise when your dog alerts to his trigger until the trigger disappears from sight. Your dog should calmly Sit-stay or Down-stay, facing you and angled sideways from the direction where your helper will be walking back and forth. Your dog may glance at the helper/dog after getting his treat, but should look back at you each time you say his name and "Watch Me/Look." If he begins to look at the trigger and automatically look back at you, praise, release and treat following each voluntary auto-watch. (22)

1. Tee T formation Straight Line Passes: Set up is a T shape path with your dog positioned at the bottom of the T and the helper dog and handler at the top; examples are long driveways and hallways. If you don't have a helper, go to a mall and position your dog by your parked car while shoppers pass in and out of your dog's line of vision.
  - a. Helper dog and handler make a fast pass by walking in a straight line path past you and your dog (with the handler walking on the side nearest to you).
  - b. Helper/dog make a medium paced pass.
  - c. Helper/dog make a slow pass.
  - d. Repeat sequence but add glances, noise, and extraneous movements.
  - e. Repeat while reducing the distance by 1-3 ft with each pass until the helper/dog are within 12 feet of your dog.
2. Add Circle or Semi-Circular Passes: Set up in a more open area to practice circular or semi-circular passes. Beginning beyond the critical arousal distance, each angled pass should bring the helper dog (on the far side) and handler (on your near side) a few feet closer to you and your relaxed dog. When your dog can remain calm with the other dog only 18 in. away, give a jackpot to both dogs.
3. Face to face passes: From a starting point beyond your dog's critical arousal distance:
  - a. Each dog and handler (with dogs on the left side) begin walking toward each other in a semi-circular path so that you are furthest apart when you actually pass one another.
  - b. Tell your dog to "Watch" and feed him treats as you pass the other helper dog.
  - c. Close the distance by 1-3 ft with each pass, as long as your dog remains relaxed. If you dog shows any sign of arousal, increase the distance until your dog is calm. Alternate fast, medium and slow passes.

*Eventual end goal is for a) your dog to accept a treat that your helper drops on the ground at his feet or b) the dogs to be calm enough to briefly exchange butt sniffs before you lure them away from each other with yummy treats.*

# Canine Conduct

## *Teaching the Human End of the Leash*

### **Accept Close Approach of Another Dog - Using Watch Me - Level 2**

This "Watch me" exercise to alleviate dog-to-dog aggression is also helpful to reduce tensions between two dogs fighting in a multi-dog household. It should follow the "Open-Close the Bar" classical conditioning exercises and the "Accept "Passing Approaches Using Watch me/Look- Level 1" exercise. One handler is required for each dog.

**Equipment:** Both dogs should be on leash with head halters and the more reactive dog may be muzzled as well.

**Positioning:** Begin with handlers and dogs facing each other at whatever distance is necessary to avoid any initial arousal. Place the more reactive dog on a Sit-stay, next to the owner's left side. The helper with the less reactive dog also on his/her left side should be standing at some distance to the right of the stationary handler and should make an angled approach to the right. (14)

**How:**

1. Each handler should cue his/her to "Watch me/Look" and reward good response.
2. The helper should begin a one step at a time approach, stopping each time for a short Watch followed with a click & treat or praise & treat to reward each dog's calm behavior.
3. Continue to approach as long as both dogs remain relaxed, until you are facing each other, (with right shoulders about 18 inches apart with your dogs on your left sides so that handlers are between the dogs). If dogs make it this far, they each get a jackpot.
4. Switch roles: Repeat sequence above with the helper and dog stationary as owner and more reactive dog advance one step at a time.
5. Repeat with both dogs approaching each other.
6. Gradually make the approaches closer and faster.
7. Each exercise must be repeated several times daily.
8. Practice butt sniffing: Both dogs should be on leash and head halters and reactive dog may be muzzled. Have helper feed helper dog as your dog briefly sniffs butt—after a couple of seconds interrupt by luring the sniffing dog away with a treat. If all goes well, reverse the process.

**Trouble shooting--**If either dog shows any sign of stress or arousal, give a tug on the head halter to regain his attention and then crate him for 10 min to allow him to calm down. (14) Return to the above exercise, but this time stop several steps back from the point of arousal. If the dogs remain calm, praise and treat, then return to the starting point. The retreat of the helper and helper dog provides an extra reward/reinforcement for the reactive dog's calm behavior. Repeat the exercise, taking another step or two before retreating and starting over, until you are able to finally close the distance.

### **Accept Close Approach of People**

This exercise is to help reactive dogs get more comfortable with people approaching inside a 10 ft. radius and then reaching out to feed a treat. (22) If your dog is still reactive when people are more than 10 feet away from him, do not begin these exercises until you and your dog have successfully worked through the preceding exercises for passing approaches at a distance. Do this exercise first with people your dog is already comfortable and familiar with, then with less familiar people. Keep in mind that your objective is not for the dog to merely tolerate touching, but rather to remain relaxed and to enjoy the process. This the type of work where an inexperienced helper can get bitten if you proceed too quickly without making sure that the dog is truly accepting rather than merely tolerating the touching.

You may find it helpful for one person to read the instructions aloud as the other carries them out.

#### **Goal 1: Dog will remain relaxed while helper approaches and drops treat next to him.**

1. The helper should walk toward dog, approaching obliquely, pause and toss a treat from 10 ft. away.
2. Maintain the 10 ft. distance while repeating approach from various angles, directions and speeds.
3. Watch for signs that the dog is happily anticipating the approach of the helper (salivation, a wagging tail, relaxed expression and body posture). When this Conditioned Emotional Response (CER) occurs, begin to decrease the distance where helper stops and throws the treat by one foot at a time.
4. If dog stops responding in a positive way, drop back to the previous step.
5. Repeat sequence until the helper can walk all the way to the dog and drop the treat directly in front of the dog.
6. Repeat approach from all directions and alternate hands dropping the treats.
7. Repeat approach but instead of dropping the treat, helper should offer the treat from his/her hand, using a slow underhand movement toward dog's chin. The dog should be comfortable accepting a treat from the helper's hand before progressing to the next goal level.

#### **Goal 2-Relaxed dog will approach helper and take treat from helper's hand.**

1. Helper should approach, stop 2 ft. in front of the dog, reach out, & offer a treat—dog will have to approach to take it.
2. Repeat until dog happily anticipates getting the treat as helper reaches out.
3. Repeat with helper switching hands; dog should not show concern about hand without food.
4. Repeat with helper changing position from the front facing the dog, to the side of the dog's head.
5. Repeat from side position with helper again switching hands.
6. Repeat several times with helper reaching out with both hands, feeding dog from one hand, then withdrawing both hands.
7. Change sides and repeat this process.
8. Change angle and speed of reaching out.

### **Accept Reaching Hands and Touching**

This exercise is to help reactive dogs become more comfortable with being touched. (22) It is important to begin practicing with familiar and accepted adults first. Again, keep in mind that your objective is not for the dog to merely tolerate, but rather to remain relaxed and enjoy the process, and that an inexperienced helper can get bitten if you proceed too quickly without making sure that the dog is truly accepting rather than merely tolerating the touching.

#### **Goal 1: Relaxed dog will accept owner and/or helper's proximity and arm movements.**

1. Stand 4 ft. or more from dog (depending on dog's comfort level) and alternate raising your right and left hand and arm a few inches from the side of your body. Click & treat or praise & treat following each movement. (10)
2. Gradually increase the distance that you extend your arms and hands.
3. Alternate lifting your hands and arms in different directions and angles and at different speeds. (Reach above your head, flap your arms, make circular movements, etc.). Click & treat or praise & treat following each movement.
4. Move closer to the dog no more than one foot at a time and repeat sequence until you are within 2 ft of the dog. If dog shows any signs of discomfort, back track.
5. Reach out gently and offer treat, relaxed dog will have to approach to take it.

#### **Goal 2: Relaxed Dog will accept face touch from owner and/or helper.**

1. Reach toward dog, stop 6 in. from side of dog's face, click & treat from other hand.
2. Repeat reach toward dog, stopping 3 inches from face, click & treat from other hand.
3. Repeat reach, stopping 2 inches from face, then repeat stopping 1 inch from face.
4. Lightly touch the side of dog's face.
5. Repeat toward chin.

#### **Goal 3: Relaxed dog will accept collar and body touch from owner and/or helper.**

1. As you feed the treat with one hand, touch the dog's head with the other.
2. As you feed the treat with one hand, touch the dog under the ear and on the ear.
3. As you feed the treat with one hand, touch the side of the dog's neck.
4. As you feed the dog with one hand, touch the collar.
5. As you feed with one hand, touch the dog's chest, front legs, back, lower back, belly, down the back legs, the tail, and finally the paws.
6. Progress to touching from different positions and at different speeds.

### Options When You Spot Your Dog's Triggers

You have several choices when you and your dog spot one of your dog's triggers—you can:

1. Click & treat your dog when he spontaneously looks at one of his triggers and remains calm.
2. Say your dog's name and when he glances back at you, click & treat or praise & treat.
3. Chirp out "Cookies" in a happy tone and chuck food at your dog.
4. Tell your dog to "Watch me/Look" (give more prolonged eye contact).
5. Increase the distance between your dog and his trigger.

1. **Click and treat your (calm) dog when he spontaneously looks at one of his triggers:** Use this when your dog is below his arousal threshold and able to look at one of his triggers while remaining calm, to reinforce his calm response.
  - a. Usually it is best to avoid giving a click & treat to your aroused dog—instead remove him to a distance where he can calm down.
  - b. Do not use this with dogs that stare at other dogs.
  - c. Do not use this with dogs who are looking away from another dog as a calming signal. (17)
2. **Say your dog's name and feed him:** If you have taught your dog to respond to his name by orienting toward you, you can use this to distract him from a trigger, by saying his name and immediately feeding him a treat. You can repeat the sequence over and over to encourage your dog's continued involvement with you. When your dog begins to automatically look at you when he spots a trigger, fade out saying his name but continue to reward his attention with praise and treats.
3. **Cookie Power:** Chirping out the word "COOKIES" followed by feeding is my own favorite method to initially get the dog's attention in the presence of triggers - here's why: Because we always follow saying "Cookies" by actually giving one, the word retains its importance/relevance to our dogs and easily grabs their attention. However, because we also give cookies for correct behavior in many different contexts, including when the dog's triggers are not around, the word does not become predictive of the presence of an arousing trigger, so it remains a neutral rather than a "hot" cue. When your dog begins to automatically look at you when he spots a trigger, fade out saying "Cookies" but continue to reward his attention with praise and treats.
4. **Cue "Watch me/Look" whenever you want your dog to maintain extended involvement with you:** This more advanced skill requires a lot of practice in the presence of ordinary distractions before your dog will be ready to do it in the presence of his triggers. Mastering it will help your dog learn that even if he is a little uncertain or tense, he can maintain self-control. Drop the verbal cue when your dog begins to offer an "auto-watch" but continue to praise and reward him. (17)
5. **Increase the distance between your dog and his trigger:** If your dog is unable to behave calmly, immediately move to increase the distance between your dog and his trigger to a point where he can regain self-control and attend to you. If he will accept food, you may feed him as you move.

### **Advanced Meet & Greet**

If your dog is undergoing behavior modification, avoid meet & greet encounters outside of controlled training situations. Otherwise, part of general obedience training includes training your dog that she may only greet other dogs with your permission; otherwise her job is to attend to you and keep walking. (24)

When your dog is on leash, you should only allow a meet & greet under the following conditions:

- Your own dog is not being reactive.
  - You know the other dog is friendly.
  - Both dogs are able to approach each other without pulling on leash.
1. **Approach on leash**: As you and your dog walk toward the other person and dog, if the dogs pull, stop forward motion or turn away. Redirect your dog's attention to you with hand targeting, play, and treats.
  2. **Gauge self-control**: When dogs are able to walk toward each other without pulling on leash, stop about 6 ft. apart and have dogs Sit. Exchange low key cheerful greetings.
  3. **Walk in the same direction**: Test the waters by walking in the same direction for awhile first.
  4. **Gradually close the distance**: Approach each other one step at a time until you are approximately 18 in. apart.
  5. **Give permission to say hello**: Use a cue word/phrase such as "OK-friends" or "OK, say hello!" Allow a very brief two second sniff. In a training situation, the standing dog being sniffed should be fed by the owner and trainer. The sniffing dog should be held with a very short but loose leash, then lured away using great food, not by jerking on leash. Repeat, reversing roles.
  6. **Walk away or allow brief play**: If you feel it's safe to allow brief play, test it out first by dropping the leashes, so that the dogs can freely interact, but if necessary, you can separate them by picking up the leashes. Muzzles can afford an extra measure of safety but may interfere with panting so care must be taken not to let the dogs become overheated. Use treats to lure dogs from play, then give permission to go play again. (24)

### Teach Your Dog to Follow The Leader - Part 1: Sit for Everything

Follow the Leader is a training regimen that can change the dynamics of the owner-dog relationship. These are the goals:

1. To build your dog's trust in you as his leader; when your dog feels that he can trust you to protect him, he will be more secure and calm.
2. To condition the dog to pay attention to you, defer to you, and look to you for direction about how he should behave in any situation; the dog should ask permission before engaging in certain behaviors or activities. Decision making power should be in the owner's hands rather than in the dog's paws!
3. To put your relationship on the proper footing so that you maintain control over interactions with your dog and so that your dog reacts to your behavior rather than you reacting to his.
4. To teach you how to control access to things your dog cares about, so that you can use these things to reinforce/reward good behavior.
5. To teach your dog self-control and encourage emotional maturity.

#### **Follow the Leader Deference Training:**

If your dog knows he can count on you as a leader, he will feel safer and more secure and be more willing to take direction from you about how to behave. The most effective way to establish yourself as the leader in your dog's eyes is not through physical bullying but by teaching him to understand that he depends upon you for access to all the things that he needs and cares about. You play Follow the Leader with your dog by taking control of daily interactions and making him earn his privileges. In a nutshell, Follow the Leader is comprised of two related regimens:

- Sit for Everything
- No Free Lunch Program (see Part 2).

**Sit For Everything** is implemented by requiring the dog to respond calmly and politely to a Sit command before you provide him with any rewards. These include: petting, coming in and out, getting his supper bowl or treats, playing games, being groomed, or going for car rides and walks. Sit is a neutral position that helps an excited dog to calm down, even in distracting and stressful situations.

Having your dog Sit and make eye contact before giving him what he wants may seem like a simplistic or superficial ritual, but over time, as Sit turns into a "default" behavior, it has powerful ramifications. In effect, you are making your dog "say please," which should be a lifelong habit. This reinforces polite behavior, while providing him with a way to obtain real life rewards for responding to your direction. Be sure to wait as long as necessary for a calm relaxed response before you reward your dog, says Dr. Lore Haug, DVM, a behavior specialist at Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine, or else you will be reinforcing arousal instead of calmness.

Note: If your dog has hip dysplasia, spinal arthritis or any other condition which makes sitting difficult to do, substitute another behavior--for example, you may cue your standing dog to "Watch/Look" (make eye contact until released) instead.

Remember that all training is rooted in the relationship between you and your dog. *Your dog wasn't born with an inborn desire to please you; the desire to please grows out of the overall relationship and a history of rewarding your dog for desired behaviors.*

### Teach Your Dog to Follow The Leader - Part 2: No Free Lunch for Dogs

**The No Free Lunch Program:** By taking charge of daily interactions you provide clear structure for your dog, reduce his anxiety, and provide positive reinforcement for desirable behavior. (19) Here are the rules:

1. Begin by feeding Fido his meals by hand whenever possible for one-two weeks. Fido should Sit and make eye contact for each handful of kibble.
2. Make Fido "Sit" and make eye contact before putting his food bowl down.
3. Make Fido do something for you such as Sit, Down, or Shake Paws to earn rewards such as treats, toys, and play.
4. Make Fido Sit and Wait before rushing out the door or jumping out of the car.
5. Do not allow Fido on the furniture or bed without your permission; teach him a "place" command such as "Go to Your Mat."
6. Until Fido has reliable house manners, supervise him at all times - and confine him in a safe space when he can't be under your watchful eye. If he likes to snatch objects and run away from you, keep a leash/drag line attached (but only when you are home to supervise him).
7. Initiate and control interactions - do not respond to Fido's attempts to initiate play; instead, if you want to play with him, cue a Sit or Down, then initiate play yourself; end it by telling him "Enough" /that's all" and ignoring him. Nudging, pawing, barking, and other forms of demanding attention never unlock the goodie box (attention, treats, toys, play) for Fido. Meanwhile be proactive about meeting your dog's legitimate needs for attention.
8. Control the space by using "Body Blocks." Use your torso, not your hands, to assert yourself in gestures your "pushy" dog will understand. Times to use body language include when your dog leans/presses against you (lean right back toward him but look away), when your dog is blocking your path (continue to move forward in small steps), when your dog jumps up on you, (keep your hands still but push back with your back & shoulders) or when he tries to run past you out the door (block his path and "herd" him back). Using your body correctly shows your dog that you are in charge, even when you don't have a leash in your hand. (Caveat- do not use try this if your dog displays aggressive behavior toward you).
9. Take the lead on walks - you are not in a leadership position if your dog is dragging you down the street! If your dog is a strong puller, train him to walk on a loose leash; if necessary, use a head halter or the "no pull" Premier Easy Walk harness. If you have your dog pay respectful attention to you at the beginning and end of the walk, it's OK to give him permission to explore interesting sights and smells in between.
10. Control the house toys - Pick up the toys in between training sessions and keep them in a drawer or closet (exceptions are for chewy bones & chew toys such as Kongs).

The practices prescribed above do not have to be religiously followed every day, no matter how your dog happens to behave. As Dr. Patricia Mc Connell notes, good trainers act like thermostats, turning up the heat when the dog misbehaves, and easing up when all is well. *The No Free Lunch program should remain in force for your dog until his general manners and reactivity are no longer a problem.*

### **Promote Peaceful Pack Living**

The two major sources of conflict between dogs living in the same household are status related tensions and resource guarding (guarding food, toys, or the human). Providing appropriate structure and leadership address the former problem and preventive management should be used to address the latter. (To train proximity tolerance between dogs, refer back to "Accept Approach" exercises).

1. A new dog or pup should be introduced to the resident dogs on neutral territory and to one at a time. If the resident dogs don't readily accept the newcomer, you can use classical conditioning techniques to train them to associate the newcomer with good things, or vice-versa; initially keep the dogs separated except while doing the CC work until they show mutual acceptance.
2. Dogs should be placed on a Follow the Leader-No Free Lunch regimen. (21)
3. If dogs are resource guarders, feed dogs in different areas and maintain separation during meal time by supervision or by using baby gates or tethers.
4. With resource guarders it can be helpful to set up a ritual order in which you hand out supper bowls and treats, etc. Feed and treat the non guarder first, so that food given to the non guarder becomes a predictor of the treat for the guarder.
5. Set up separate specific locations for each dog to chew his toys/bones and enforce with tethers or baby gates; do not allow one dog to attempt to steal items from another—if they do, remove the toys or bones from both.
6. If any dog challenges another while near you, immediately walk away and ignore the dogs for several minutes.
7. Remind dogs to Sit before opening the door and train them to go out without pushing each other.
8. Train dogs to Sit calmly while waiting their turn for treats;
9. Promote camaraderie.
  - a. Walk the dogs together (one handler in the family per dog).
  - b. Take the dogs for car rides together.
  - c. Train the dogs by alternating having one do a short (5 min) Down-Stay as you work the other.

### **For "one person" dogs that guard their owner, or only relate to one family member:**

1. Owner/family interactions with dog should be calm, relaxed, and non-confrontational.
2. Use Down-Stay when people approach the owner.
3. Owner should not allow the dog to park and guard - instead owner should walk away when dog leans on him/her or shows aggression.
4. Use Place commands to send dog away from owner and train dog to relax away from owner.
5. Owner should be pro-active about spending some time in a different room from dog - use baby gates and tethers (under another family member's supervision) if necessary.
6. Involve other family members in obedience training and have others feed and walk the dog.
7. Desensitize & counter-condition to approach, reaching, touch and handling from others.
8. A DAP Diffuser may help to sooth and calm the dogs.

## **Food Bowl Guarding-Management Solutions**

Guarding proclivities should not be ignored because allowing the dog to be repeatedly aroused while eating will make the behavior worsen over time. Instead you should either a) carefully manage the problem, which means controlling the environment to ensure that your dog is always able to eat without being disturbed, or b) manage it, while simultaneously working to modify the behavior. (22)

Obviously, special care must be taken in households with young children. Even if you choose to also do behavior modification to ameliorate this problem, the dog should still continue to be confined and supervised while eating to keep children safe.

### **Rules for Management:**

1. The dog should not be disturbed while eating. The dog should always be fed behind a barrier or under close supervision at specific times (no free feeding).
2. The dog is never fed scraps from the table while people are eating.
3. The dog is not allowed to be free when children are walking around with food and likewise children are not allowed to run around with food in their hands when the dog is present.
4. The dog may not hoard & hide any kind of food, biscuits or bones because he may aggress if someone else finds them; only give biscuits that he finishes while you watch him. Do not give him anything, including bones, that he guards from you or others. (22)
5. Dogs in multi dog households should not be allowed to bother each other while eating. Feed in separate areas, under supervision, and if necessary use barriers or tethers to keep them apart.

### Food Bowl Guarding - Training Solutions

Guarding proclivities should not be ignored because allowing the dog to be repeatedly aroused while eating will make the behavior worsen over time, and could result in someone being hurt. Instead you should either a) carefully manage the problem to ensure that your dog is always able to eat without being disturbed, or b) manage it, while simultaneously working to modify the behavior through training. (22)

**Food Bowl Exercises:** You can condition your dog to be less protective about his food and more comfortable about having people around while he is eating by teaching him that humans and human hands approaching him and his food bowl are to add something good, rather than to take his food away. (11)

The sample exercises below should be regarded as guidelines, not an exact recipe. Care should be taken to keep the dog below his arousal threshold—backtrack if the dog shows any signs of tension. All exercises should be very carefully repeated with different family members. Touch and handling exercises should be incorporated for dogs with those issues. If the dog progresses well, occasional maintenance work including hand feeding will help maintain his improved behavior; as part of maintenance, dogs should Sit and make eye contact (Watch/Look) before being given meals and treats.

#### How:

1. Begin with a different bowl from the dog's usual bowl and in a different place from the usual feeding spot. Make a series of approaches toward the dog adding treats to an empty bowl; vary the starting point from 6 to 10 to 15 feet away, and vary the angle and speed of approach; repeat each approach as many times as necessary and only move on when the dog is calm and relaxed. (10)
  - a. Approach dog and while standing straight, drop one or two treats into empty bowl.
  - b. Approach, bend slightly over bowl, drop treats in and walk away.
  - c. Approach, bend over, dangle hand over bowl, drop treats, walk away.
  - d. Approach, bend over and touch bowl, drop treats and walk away.
  - e. Approach, bend over, touch bowl with empty hand, drop treats from opposite hand.
  - f. Approach, bend over, move bowl around, drop treats.
  - g. Approach, bend over, lift bowl slightly, add treats, walk away
  - h. Approach, pick up bowl, add treats, return bowl to floor and walk away.
  - i. Approach, pick up bowl, carry it a few feet away, add treats, return it, and walk away.
2. Make series of approaches using kibble and treats: With a different bowl, in a different area:
  - a. Approach and drop a single piece of kibble in bowl; walk away.
  - b. Repeat several times until your dog shows happy anticipation of your approach.
  - c. Drop a handful of kibble in with one hand and offer a special treat with the other.
  - d. Drop a handful of kibble in and feed a treat with the other hand, back off, but approach again while your dog is still eating and add another treat to his bowl.
  - e. Approach while he is eating, squat next to him and touch the bowl with one hand while slowly dropping several treats in his bowl with the opposite hand.
  - f. Approach, pick the bowl up, put an extra special treat in it, and return the bowl.
  - g. Variation-in place of kibble, use canned, cooked or raw food, adding one spoonful at a time.

## Dog-to-Dog Food Guarding Solutions

**The following exercises are only recommended for experienced handlers whose dogs are under good control; they will not “cure” dog-to-dog guarding but can significantly reduce the intensity.**

1. With Dog A (the guarder) positioned on Sit- Stay or a tether next to his/her empty food bowl, approach with Dog B on short loose leash. Begin at a far enough distance to keep Dog A under arousal threshold. Approach, stop, feed Dog B a treat and throw a treat to Dog A. Dog B getting a treat predicts a treat for Dog A. Gradually approach closer with Dog B, as long as Dog A remains relaxed and below arousal/aggression threshold level. This exercise helps Dog A to associate the approach/proximity of Dog B with good things, i.e. getting a treat.
2. Do this exercise sometime after and apart from regular meal time when the dogs are not especially hungry. Begin by using a different bowl from the usual bowl and in a different area from the usual feeding spot. Position guarder Dog A in a Sit on side of handler away from the (empty) food bowl and Dog B on side of handler closer to Dog A's food bowl. Dog A may also be on a short but loose leash. Feed Dog A really yummy treats by hand, as you drop/toss treats for Dog B into and around the food bowl. Repeat but this time use Dog A's regular food bowl. Move to the regular feeding spot and repeat with the new bowl. If Dog A is still calm, repeat with the regular old food bowl in the regular feeding space. This acclimates Dog A to having Dog B messing around his space and his food bowl while reinforcing him for remaining calm.
3. Feed both dogs part of their meal in their usual separate areas (so that they will not be super hungry during this exercise). When they empty their bowls, remove the bowls. Bring Dog B in and place on a Down Stay several feet away from guarder Dog A's food bowl area/space (just far enough away to keep Dog A under threshold). Add more food (something dull like plain kibble) to Dog A's bowl, and standing between the dogs, call Dog A back, and allow Dog A to eat again from his bowl. Meanwhile feed Dog B (still on Down Stay) a special treat, then approach and drop a special treat in Dog A's bowl. Again, giving Dog B a treat predicts a treat for Dog A. Dog A learns that good things happen when Dog B is close by, and keeping Dog B on a Down-Stay makes his/her proximity less threatening to Dog A.
4. Begin in a different area from Dog A's regular feeding space and with a different bowl. Place several spoonfuls of something soft and yummy (such as mixture of cooked rice, ground beef and gravy) in each dog's food bowl. Standing, with your hands/arms in front of you and spread far apart, hold one bowl in each hand, then call the dogs and allow them to simultaneously eat this special food out of their respective hand-held bowls. This works well with dogs that are used to coming and sitting next to each other as the handler feeds them treats. This exercise provides the dogs with a very high value reinforcer that the dogs only get when eating close to each other and that they can wolf down so you can immediately and safely withdraw the bowls.

### Guarding Objects—Management and Training Solutions

Start by preventing the dog from practicing the behavior you are trying to change—this means put away any objects that the dog guards except when needed for work on these exercises. It is especially important to prevent any resource guarding behaviors if there are children or other dogs in the household. If the dog is obsessive about a particular item, the best solution is to permanently remove that item. (22)

The purpose of this training exercise is to teach the dog to give up objects on cue, starting with objects of no interest or value, and progressing to objects of low, medium and high value, so you will need to list the objects your dog guards and rank them. The dog is placed on a Sit or Down Stay with a drag line attached, or else tethered. The object is placed a few yards from the dog, and gradually moved closer until it is right next to the dog; eventually you should work up to the exercise of "Take it and Out/Give/or Drop It. If the dog does not Out/Drop the object on cue, either confine him for a few minutes or leave the room and ignore him until he approaches you—at which point you tell him to Sit and start over again. It is essential to begin with an object the dog has no interest in guarding; the goal is to begin and end the exercises without ever arousing the dog's guarding behavior. The steps below are guidelines about how to proceed, not an exact recipe. (22)

1. Make a series of approaches toward the dog; vary your starting position from 6 to 15 feet away from the dog; vary the angle and speed of approach; as in teaching any other behavior, if you increase the difficulty of one part of an exercise, reduce it in another. Repeat each approach as many times as necessary and only move on when the dog is calm and relaxed.
  - a. Approach dog with unguarded object (of no interest to him) about 3 yards away, pick up the object, give a treat from the opposite hand, replace the object but move it slightly closer.
  - b. Repeat above sequence until the object is right next to the dog.
  - c. Repeat sequence but increase the time you leave the object next to the dog before retrieving it; repeat sequence but briefly leave the room before returning to claim the object.
  - d. Encourage the dog to touch or take the object in his mouth, take it back as you give a treat from the opposite hand; repeat sequence immediately so that dog not only gets rewarded with a treat but also with a brief return of the object.
  - e. If dog will hold this object in his mouth, approach, let him take and hold the object with his mouth for a couple of seconds, take the object from him and offer a treat with the other hand.
  - f. Repeat sequence, increasing the seconds dog is allowed to hold the object before you retrieve it.
  - g. When the dog will readily take and relinquish an object from his mouth begin adding the verbal cues "Take it" as you reach to hand the object over and "Give" or "Out" immediately before you reach for the object. As soon as you take the object, feed a treat from the opposite hand.
2. Repeat the same approaches but with the object lowest on the dog's favorite items to guard.
3. Repeat the same approaches gradually working your way up to whatever objects the dog is most protective about. (10)

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Q:** *What determines the success or failure of a desensitizing/counter-conditioning program?*

**A:** Success is not dependent upon whether the reactivity does or doesn't have a genetic component. Assuming that the trainer's evaluation of the dog and the behavior history point to the dog being a viable candidate for behavior modification, then some factors that success depends upon include:

- Keeping the dog below threshold and careful progression from one step to the next.
- Consistently following the appearance of the trigger with the treats.
- Regular practice with multiple triggers in order for the association to generalize. (9)

**Q:** *What happens if I get caught in a situation where my dog is aroused or barking and lunging—should I reprimand him or click & treat/feed him? If I give him treats, won't I be rewarding his bad behavior?*

**A:** The answer to this depends in part on whether or not you are involved in a classical conditioning process when this situation occurs. When doing classical conditioning, the priority is to associate the sight/presence of the trigger with the food; giving the treat is contingent on the presence of the trigger and not upon the dog's behavior. Every time you don't feed the dog in the presence of the trigger, you weaken the association you are trying to establish. (9) Of course, ideally, you would be keeping the dog below his arousal threshold, in which case when you feed the treats you would also be reinforcing/rewarding his desirable calm behavior. However, accidents happen and if you find yourself with an aroused dog on your hands, it is generally best to go ahead and try feeding him, not only to maintain the predictive association of the trigger with the food, but also because if he will eat, chucking food at your dog can help to calm him, whereas punishment is more apt to increase his stress. In either case, you should try to increase the distance between him and his trigger asap.

**Q:** *Under what circumstances should I withhold rewards or reprimand my dog for an aggressive display?*

**A:** This is an area where experience and being able to read your dog come into play. Under certain circumstances, you may choose to work on changing behavior through operant methods, (giving the dog positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, and withholding rewards for undesirable behavior). For example, you can train the dog to Sit and give eye contact in the presence of his triggers. In this case, if you are giving your dog cues such as Sit or Watch me and your dog ignores your cue (to aggress instead), you should handle it much as you would any other lack of compliance by the dog in the presence of a distraction, including a) giving your dog an instructive reprimand instead of a treat and b) removing your dog to where he is able to attend to your directions. (14)

**Q:** *Can drug therapy help my dog?*

**A:** This is a question best answered by your vet or by a veterinarian who specializes in treating behavior problems. To locate the latter, check with the closest veterinary college in your area.. While drugs are not a substitute for behavior training, they can sometimes be a significant help for dogs with certain types of problems.

## Canine Body Language

For online pictures: [www.aspc.org/site/DocServer/CanineBody\\_Language.pdf?docID=6521](http://www.aspc.org/site/DocServer/CanineBody_Language.pdf?docID=6521)

For a book with pictures: Refer to Reference (2)

### **Relaxed dog**

Head erect; Ears up or relaxed but not forward

Mouth relaxed and slightly open; Eyes and area around forehead and area relaxed

Weight balanced on all four feet

### **Signs of Passive Submission/Deference** (to deflect attention or defuse aggression)

Ears back and flat; Eyes half closed, averting eye contact; Mouth partly closed, tongue tip darting out

Lowering head and body; Tail down and tucked

Freezing

Going belly up with tail tucked and retracted lips

Submissive Urination

### **Active Submission** (deferential attention seeking)

Paw lift

Licking and Nuzzling

Rolling over belly up with relaxed facial expression and tail

Ears back

Play bows; Crouching; Pretzeling (twisting body)

Teeth clacking

### **Signs of stress**

Lip licking

Pupils dilated and area around eyes appears to have worried pinch

Avoidance maneuvers--Sniffing ground or turning head to avoid looking at something

### **Signs of Arousal**

Hair on back stands up; Tail up, bristled, wagging stiffly

Eyes large; Ears up and forward

Freeze or stiffening

### **Signs of Fear/Defensive Aggression**

Head down and forward, posture crouched, ears back and flattened

Dilated pupils; Muzzle tense, wrinkled, snarling

Hackles up; Tail down and tense

Weight on back legs

### **Signs of Active Aggression**

Hard stares; Lip curls, teeth bared, snarling

Hackles up; Tail stiff, raised.

Weight forward on front feet

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