

# The Leash Reactive Dog



## A Leash Reactive Dog

- ◆ Overreacts to certain stimuli - sight of other dogs, people, kids, loud noises, moving vehicle and chaos.
- ◆ Reaction - usually a bark and lunge type of behavior that is frightening to you and others. Dog may growl, bark, scream, lunge and snap.
- ◆ Reactivity is predictable - most dogs who exhibit this behavior problem do so in specific circumstances and most do it only on leash.

Changing your dog's behavior is a long process. Unfortunately no quick fix exists for reactive dogs. Right now your dog sees whatever his trigger is and instantly reacts negatively. Changing that reaction into a more positive reaction is going to take a lot of work, time, management, and patience. The dog will not get over/grow out of it

## Never Use Punishment

Anger and punishment increase stress. Any increase in stress will make your dog more rather than less reactive. Punishment can create a negative association in the dog's mind between the punishment and the object of the dog's fear. If you punish your dog when he see another dog (or

whatever his trigger is), you are setting up a negative association that will cause your dog immense stress when he does see one of his triggers. He will associate punishment with his trigger. Punishment can also be equipment used such as head halters, prong collars, remote collars and, slip collars. These tools are considered aversive and not recommended in any circumstances.

Punishment of any type suppresses outward signs of reactivity (such as growling) without changing the underlying emotional state. You can punish the warning signs such as growling and barking out of the dog and produce a dog that strikes without warning.

## Management

You must avoid interactions and uncontrolled situations that trigger reactive behavior. You must prevent your dog from continuing to practice reactive behavior. If you do not, the behaviors will become worse and more entrenched. To help your dog, you need to break the cycle of reactivity now! This means constant

management of your dog's life to stop the behavior from recurring.

- ◆ Don't allow your dog in the yard without supervision. If your dog is reactive in your yard, you must be outside with the dog on a leash or long line at all times. If you allow your dog to charge at anything going by your yard, you are allowing the dog to practice reactive behavior.
- ◆ If dog reacts from the yard, windows or car - manage the situation by preventing access/blocking his view. In the car, crate your dog and put a cover on the crate. Block the dog's view or access to any windows or doors where he reacts.
- ◆ If dog reacts to 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.

## Training

This handout is just a brief summary of information about reactive dogs and is NOT a training program. I strongly suggest you work with a positive trainer who will help you learn how to help your reactive dog.

Through a combination of management and behavior modification, you can help your dog learn to behave calmly in the presence of his triggers.

