



REACTIVE DOGS

Reactivity is often caused by fear in a dog, rather than aggression. Fear is an emotion that is highly responsive to classical conditioning. If you punish a dog in the presence of something they fear, they will begin to fear that thing more. If you reward a dog in the presence of something they fear before they become reactive, they will begin to associate that thing with good instead of bad and will become less fearful.

COUNTER CONDITIONING & DESENSITIZATION



For counter conditioning and desensitization, you need to bring your dog to a location which may have a low amount of triggers. Stay far away, starting at 100 feet. You want your dog to still be attentive to you, and not paying attention to the trigger which is present at a distance. Feed a continuous stream of food, one bit at a time. Use a blend of flavors your dog loves, their food kibble, small soft treats, small bits of cheese, turkey hotdogs cut into pea sized bits, etc.

🐾 Slowly move closer to the trigger, but never so close that your dog reacts. Continue the process until their treat bag is almost empty then turn and leave.

🐾 Over time, the distance will be gradually reduced, multiple sessions, until your dog is able to play and be comfortable near their trigger.

🐾 Most importantly, quit any training before your dog becomes bored, too hot, or tired.

REWARD THE NOTHING



If your dog is looking calmly at an unfamiliar dog or person, reward them for doing nothing. This is where your clicker can be very handy to mark the behavior you want your dog to perform. As soon as your dog looks at their trigger, before they react, click and reward! This will teach your dog to anticipate good things when they look at something which scares them. They will often look at the object then turn and look back at you for a treat. This makes an enjoyable game out of something which would otherwise be worrying your dog and it also teaches them "head turn" which can be used as a cue or even for doggie dancing!

MANAGE THE ENVIRONMENT



If you go somewhere, make sure you check it for triggers before deciding to get your dog out of the car. If there are people who want to come pet your dog, you must tell them that you are training and they cannot be pet right now. Most importantly, you must say this before they get within 15 feet of you!

Your dog does not have a voice of their own, they cannot speak English. You must advocate for your dog. It is important for your dog to trust you. Your duty is to protect your dog, not just physically, but emotionally as well. Trust is where this happens. If your dog can trust you to manage their environment and to react correctly, they will become much more comfortable.