

Reactive Dog

Reactivity on the lead to things, including other dogs or vehicles is often based on two different feelings for the dog.

Low confidence and high stress.

The dog's confidence is low therefore he or she feels unable to cope with the environmental trigger. The dog's stress is high because of repeated exposure to that trigger. When a dog shows signs of stress on a walk, they are usually experiencing a fight or flight reaction which is an ancient, evolved reaction triggered by the brain and body, to keep the dog safe.

The dog that tries to run away is attempting to take flight and will display body language like this:



The one that pulls forward on the lead believes that he can chase the scary thing away by threatening a fight and will display this body language:



The first thing we do with a dog who becomes fearful or noisy on walks is give them a break. This will allow the physiological stress reaction to settle down and give the dog a proper chance to relax, away from the scary things.

It is suggested that your dog is given walk breaks for Days.

The time where your dog would normally go for a walk must be filled with a different activity that will help your dog to relax. Mental stimulation and activity is extremely relaxing when carried out carefully.

It is suggested that you carry out the following activities with your dog during the time you would normally walk:

- Scatter feeding
- Food dispensing toys and/or frozen Kongs.
- Clicker training.
- Sprinkles.
- Search games in the house and/or garden.
- Other
-

Try to avoid playing fast games of fetch with toys as this can prevent the body from de-stressing. After the de-stressing period is over, try to return to walks with as little stress as possible. Imagine that your dog is in a safety bubble and try to learn how close you can get to things and your dog still feel safe. If reactive behaviour or fear begins, something scary has entered your dog's safety bubble.

Increasing the distance from the trigger will help your dog to recover quickly.



When your dog has begun to relax, we can implement a longer term behaviour plan that focuses on the underlying feeling that causes the behaviour.