

# Dog Reactivity

## Teach your dog:

**Leave it** (or some similar cue to mean let something go by)

**Look** (or similar cue to mean look your way)

**With me** (heel or similar cue to mean walk next to you)

**Reset** (or similar cue to instruct dog to go back to your side and begin again)

## Warm up Exercises

30 to 60 second Leave it

30 second Look

5 Touches

Hyper pup? Add 5 Push-up's

Practice before walks, during training sessions and anytime your dog loses focus

## Distance

Use distance as your go-to if things go sideways; get your pup away from the other dog or situation

Go to an area where dogs are but where you can get enough distance from them that your pup remains calm

Practice Leave it and Look any time a dog is present. Repeat until your dog looks toward before you ask them to

Be generous! At first mark (Yes!) and treat any time your pup glances toward you, as they get better encourage longer and longer looks

Move closer to the dog traffic, a few feet at a time, and repeat exercises

If your dog is struggling or won't take a high value treat, it may be too difficult. Move a little farther away from the dogs or wait till the weather or another factor has changed.

## What to do when....

**Your pup comes on too strong** – Practice in hand-picked playgroups – with dogs who are more mature and who will correct your pup appropriately when he/she comes on too strong or doesn't listen to basic dog communication

**Doesn't like dogs in his/her space** – teach your dog something to do anytime they're nervous about a dog (come to your leg works great); then make sure to intervene and not let the other dog get too close

Also change your dog's association with other dogs by sitting with them in a place where they can see other dogs but not be too close to them, and give them a treat every time a dog shows up.

**Doesn't have good play skills** – some dogs with the right playgroups and with a lot of practice will learn proper play techniques, others need to be managed to be sure they stay below threshold

## Remember...

Slight changes in the environment can have a big impact on your pup. If your dog is struggling, consider:

- the weather, esp wind
- smells, esp food, dogs
- noises
- vehicles and movement
- activity; people, bikes, dogs, etc
- combining distractions with duration or distance

## Choices Available When a Dog Appears during a Walk

**Wait and Practice Behaviors** - Walk to the side of the trail (or farther if dog needs more distance); Park the dog (by stepping on the leash your dog will sit down quicker than if you're holding it); tell your dog to Leave the other dog; then ask him/her for some behaviors they know well; mark and treat each behavior. At first, you'll be lucky to get them to focus for a second or more, but with practice they'll get better and better at this.

**Moving Leave it** - Continue walking past the other dog using Leave it and Look behaviors; mark your dog as you pass, then treat once you're past

**Emergency U-turn** - An emergency U turn is a great way to get away from a trigger or another dog. Practice these when there aren't any dogs around then use them on bridges or anywhere else when your dog needs distance.

*Be sure to - Protect all the work you've done by guarding your dog from any bad experiences!*

## Generalize

Generalization in dog training is something we say which refers to a dog being taught the same behavior in new environments. The key here is to teach, not expect. For example, if I have a dog that sits perfectly at home I shouldn't expect him to sit perfectly at the vet's office until I teach him to, because he hasn't generalized the behavior yet, right now sit is just at home until we generalize it in other places.

The same is true for reactivity, just because you get your dog used to one dog doesn't mean they're not going to have an issue with another, so be sure to practice, practice, practice. Practice everywhere and often!

Dogs who seem unpredictable will make your dog more uncomfortable than dogs who are relaxed; take note of the dogs who seem to upset your pup.

## Relax

**How's your confidence??** If you tense, flinch or otherwise anticipate a problem - you're communicating fear to your dog; often dogs respond by staying on the defense. Take a deep breath and see yourself and your pup walking past the other dog without an issue, be sure to keep the tension out of your arm/body and definitely out of the leash.

*Scared/Nervous pup? One of the best things you can do is to **Take a Knee** Kneel down next to your pup if they're scared nervous, shy, or otherwise overwhelmed to provide support and encouragement.*

